

Collaborative for Schoolwide SEL

1. Project Description

Our mission at John F. Kennedy Elementary School is to prepare our students to live in and contribute to a changing world and engage in active, life-long learning. We aim to provide a balanced curriculum designed to meet the academic, cultural, and social needs of our students. We provide an education for the child as a whole, focusing on the body, spirit, and mind allowing each student to be equipped for their rigorous learning experience. At JFK, the physical and psychological well-being of our students is paramount within our school culture. Every year, the students from grades 4 to 6 participate in the OurSchool Survey. The survey measures student engagement, well-being, classroom climate, and other factors known to affect learning outcomes. According to our most recent data, only 42% of students surveyed feel safe attending school as compared to the Canadian norm which was 65%. As a result, in order to improve our students' well-being, our school has focused its efforts on the heavily researched practices of Social Emotional Learning; the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Our PDIG project, directly rooted in our mission, aims to create a safe and thriving learning environment by organizing and developing the systemic and sequenced implementation of a School-wide Social Emotional Learning Curriculum. This systemic approach to SEL implementation would intentionally cultivate a caring, participatory, and equitable learning environment and develop evidence-based practices that actively involve all students in their social, emotional, and academic growth. Our diverse and representative PDIG Team would collaboratively design a school-wide guide to SEL that would include research-based SEL practices and the development of a comprehensive and integrated SEL curriculum map. The plan would infuse social and emotional learning into every part of students' daily lives—across all of their classrooms, during all times of the school day, and when they are in their homes and communities. Furthermore, the team would be tasked with setting goals and priorities for improving staff's foundational learning on SEL and establishing and monitoring outcome data. The project would ultimately create a team of SEL leaders who would provide training and support to all school staff ensuring the sustainable implementation of our SEL Curriculum. The finalized program would ensure all members of the school community consistently model good practices, proactively engage in community building, focus on relationships, use positive discipline, and explicitly teach evidence-based SEL practices ultimately fostering a positive and safe learning environment for all.

2. Project Goals

The SEL Leadership group successfully supported the implementation of Collaborative Classroom social emotional learning program by:

- Providing a mentorship program for teachers new to JFK
- Supporting implementation through teacher coaching at the Kindergarten cycle and cycle 1 groupings
- Case conferencing utilizing learnings through "Social-Emotional Learning and the brain" book study on a monthly basis. Creating a support system for tier 2 and tier 3 students. We developed case conferencing into a solution focused approach to talking about students.

- Supporting teachers to explicitly teach to matrix of school values and the 5 SEL competencies
- Planning and organizing Community Events (we were somewhat limited in this area as we could not allow community into the school due to COVID). Community events became opportunities for home/school connections and providing workshops for parents around SEL topics of interest.
- Created topics and questions to be covered in monthly teacher and lunch supervisor circles that were done with the students to promote building relationships with support staff in the school.
- Created and carried out monthly Social-Emotional Well being activities for staff SEL development
- Supported a buddy system between Kindergarten cycle and cycle 3
- Created clubs to promote student voice: Game changers; Leadership; Student Council

3. Project Outcomes

- We were able to create material for the year as well as begin the process of planning for the 2021-2022 school year. The teachers in the school as a whole have completely bought in to the importance of our SEL initiatives because they see great gains in student overall positive feelings about school, readiness to learn, decrease in incidences. The SEL group managed to support teachers which made implementation easy and increased willingness from the part of less invested teachers.

4. Reinvestment

- The intention is to continue to work at building the materials and goals developed in the 2020-2021 school year. The SEL leadership group has been maintained, coaching continues. Due to the fact that we have created a bank of materials, the SEL team is working at creating more material, providing more support and adjusting and improving on a yearly basis.
- A portion of the SEL team has presented at Pedagogical committee at the SB level, the Principal of the school is mentoring two vice-principals, utilizing the model, the Center of Excellence for mental health has joined in partnership with this initiative as well.

Concrete documents have been uploaded as sources of material created by the SEL Leadership Committee.