



Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health: Making Connections with VTmtss

Purpose

This document is intended to be used by school systems that are reviewing and improving their system of social-emotional learning and mental health supports, and will be most effective when used in conjunction with the [VTmtss Systems Screener](#), the [VTmtss Framework](#), and [VTmtss Driver Diagram](#) as an organizational tool for action planning.

Terms within this document:

- **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** is learning and developing competencies or skills that support healthy development, mental health and wellness. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as the “process through which children and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” These skills also underlie students’ academic success.
- **Social Emotional Behavioral (SEB)** represents how the student is presenting in the realms of thinking, feeling, behaving, and relating to others. These are typically components of the student’s current mental health and wellness status. Screening tools, supports, and interventions that address SEB are available. It is important to distinguish how a student is functioning behaviorally at any one point in time from their knowledge of SEL skills. In other words, students will optimally have both SEL knowledge/skills and the capacity/internal resources to apply them.
- **District-level Leadership Team:** A supervisory district or supervisory union-level PreK-12 leadership team that includes representation from district administrators, school administrators, general and special educators, and mental health experts (including mental health community partners). This team could be the District EST, a District-level Continuous Improvement Team, or another District-level leadership/coordinating team, and should not be any one staff member making decisions in isolation.
- **Performance Indicator (PI) Categories** are the essential elements representing effective SEL and SEB system implementation.
- **Performance Indicators** describe what a school or system would want to realize within each PI category.
- **Effective Practices** are examples of some best practices within each Performance Indicator.
- **Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component Indicators** reference prompts within the VTmtss Driver Diagram that uniquely support a conversation about SEL and SEB. Users seeking to have improvement conversations about SEL and SEB through the VTmtss Driver Diagram are encouraged to use these prompts to structure those discussions.

How to Use this Document as a Needs Assessment?

1. Assemble a team to complete this needs assessment. Although the composition of review teams will vary from LEA to LEA, we would strongly recommend that, at a minimum, your team include at least one staff member who can speak to the status of your general education system, special education system, and PreK programs, along with a school or district administrator. Additionally, review teams should include staff and/or community partners who are directly engaged in the implementation and supervision of SEL and SEB supports within your school system.
2. Team members independently complete the needs assessment by reviewing each Effective Practice in the first column and responding to each practice with a “yes” or “no” answer in the second column. NOTE: The default setting is "No". Please change to "Yes" when appropriate.
3. Team members convene to review and discuss their answers. Each effective practice that is in place in a school system counts for one point. An Effective Practice is only considered to be in place if all scorers agree (with a “yes” answer) that it is currently being supported within your school system.
4. Tally the total number of practices that your school system supports. There is a total of 42 Effective Practices listed for SEL and MH.
 - **Low Need:** If your score is **34 or above (80% or more)**, you likely don't need to prioritize the systemic improvement of this systems lever at this time, although you may identify Effective Practices that you choose to target and improve upon.
 - **Medium Need:** If your score is **21-33 (between 51% and 79%)**, or if you get a 0-1 in any one category, the AOE recommends that you consider focusing on these systems lever in your improvement work. Emphasize improving categories and effective practices that you identify as being the most critical within your school system.
 - **High Need:** If your score is **20 or below (less than 50%)**, the AOE recommends that you focus on these systems lever in your improvement work. Emphasize improving categories and effective practices that you identify as being the most critical within your school system. The AOE also recommends that you contact the Agency's VTmtss team to discuss AOE technical assistance offerings.

If you have questions about this document or this process, please contact Tracy Watterson, VTmtss Program Manager, at [Tracy Watterson](#).

PI Category 1: The System is Articulated and Coordinated at the SU/SD Level

Performance Indicator:

1. The District appropriately coordinates social-emotional learning, behavioral expectations, and supports for mental health and wellness throughout the SU/SD.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The District has a supervisory district or supervisory union-level PreK-12 leadership team that includes representation from district administrators, school administrators, general and special educators, and mental health experts (including mental health community partners).

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team coordinates the LEA's work supporting SEL, behavioral, and mental health supports to include consistent participation from school district personnel.

Yes No

c. The district-level leadership team has developed a shared mission and desired district-level outcomes reflecting SEL and behavioral expectations.

Yes No

d. The district-level leadership team is consistently involved in school improvement, Consolidated Federal Programs (CFP), and other budget processes to ensure that those conversations incorporate social-emotional learning, behavioral support, and mental health support.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component for Category 1 - Indicator 1:

Systemic and Comprehensive Approach:

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

Coherent and comprehensive plan that outlines our approach to developing, implementing, monitoring, and sustaining the VTmtss Framework.

Performance Indicator:

2. The District's coordinated curriculum includes standards for social-emotional learning, behavioral expectations, and supports for mental health and wellness that are vertically aligned to be age and grade-appropriate and integrated within the academic curriculum.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team has defined proficiencies for all students PreK-12.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team uses the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) to frame the articulation of SEL/SEB standards and curriculum in PreK-grade 3.

Yes No

c. District administrators have scheduled opportunities for teachers to collaborate district-wide to develop instruction and assessment of SEL proficiencies across subject areas.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Component for Category 1 - Indicator 2:

High-Quality Instruction and Intervention:

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

High quality, evidenced-based, and standards-driven instruction in every classroom and every setting.

Performance Indicator:

3. The district-level leadership team has consistent processes, protocols, and tools in place to identify, operationalize, and coordinate services to address individual, group, and schoolwide mental health services, and supports.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team has protocols in place for collecting data from schools to inform district-level decision-making, consistent with their role.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team has district-level crisis response processes and protocols in place.

Yes No

c. The district-level leadership team has trained staff in district-level crisis response processes and protocols.

Yes No

d. The district-level leadership team has processes and protocols for determining the equitable allocation of social-emotional learning, funding for behavioral supports, and mental health funding sources throughout The district-level leadership team.

Yes No

e. The district-level leadership team has provided staff with training to determine the equitable allocation of funding for social-emotional learning, behavioral supports, and mental health throughout the district.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Components for Category 1 - Indicator 3:

Systemic and Comprehensive Approach:

(characteristic 2, indicator 3)

Leaders employ expertise across their system to inform and sustain a focus over time.

Performance Indicator:

4. The district-level leadership team's input on social-emotional learning (SEL), behavioral expectations, and supports for mental health and wellness is represented within their district's Continuous Improvement Plans (CIP), Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) "Title" investments, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) investments.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The District CIP vision and mission statements include references to social-emotional learning, behavior, and mental health.

Yes No

b. The District CIP Action Plan incorporates SEL, behavior, and mental health initiatives and programs.

Yes No

c. The District CIP SEL, behavior, mental health goals are measurable.

Yes No

d. The District CIP SEL, behavior, and mental health goals, initiatives, and programs are reflected in the District Title investments.

Yes No

e. The District CIP SEL, behavior, and mental health goals, initiatives, and programs are reflected in the District IDEA investments.

Yes No

f. The District CIP SEL, behavior, and mental health goals, initiatives, and programs are being actively implemented and evaluated.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Components for Category 1 - Indicator 4:

Systemic and Comprehensive Approach:

(characteristic 3, indicator 2)

We regularly consider the quality and appropriateness of our instruction and intervention.

Performance Indicator:

5. The District's system of SEL, behavioral, and mental health and wellness supports includes a robust data infrastructure and consistent data analysis.

a. The district-level leadership team uses data reflecting student needs to inform the equitable allocation of SEL, behavior, and mental health funding sources throughout The district-level leadership team.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team consistently uses school and community data to inform SEL, behavior, and mental health and wellness professional learning needs and strategies for school and district professionals.

Yes No

c. The district-level leadership team uses data to evaluate its SEL, behavior, and mental health and wellness coordination efforts.

Yes No

d. The district-level leadership team uses data to revise the goals and outcomes of its SEL, behavior, and mental health and wellness coordination efforts.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram Components for Category 1 - Indicator 5:

Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment System:

(characteristic 1, indicator 1)

Strong leadership and an underlying systemic structure in place to facilitate and support the use of data.

(characteristic 1, indicator 2)

A focus on improving social emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students.

(characteristic 2, indicator 2)

Our system identifies students who need more support, extensions or challenges.

(characteristic 3, indicator 1)

Collaborative structures are in place for data discussions on essential standards, common assessments, systemic interventions, and extended learning.

"Yes" total: _____ /22

PI Category 2: The System is Articulated and Implemented Consistently at the School Level

Performance Indicator:

1. The District ensures that each school has consistent processes and protocols in place to identify, operationalize, and coordinate services to address individual, group, and schoolwide mental health services and supports.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team has oversight of documented processes and protocols in place at each school to consistently identify student(s) SEL, behavior, and mental health needs.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team has oversight of processes and protocols in place at each school to consistently link student needs to appropriate services.

Yes No

c. The district-level leadership team has oversight of processes and protocols in place at each school to consistently ensure that appropriate staff are trained to deliver student services and support with fidelity.

Yes No

d. The district-level leadership team has oversight of processes and protocols in place at each school to consistently determine whether student services and supports are having their intended impact.

Yes No

e. The district-level leadership team ensures that crisis response protocols are in place at each school.

Yes No

f. The district-level leadership team has oversight of protocols in place at each school for processing requests for assistance related to concerns about a student(s).

Yes No

g. The district-level leadership team ensures that School Counselors or designees assume a preliminary case-management role for student mental health concerns.

Yes No

h. The district-level leadership team ensures that every school has specific protocols for Child Protection Team (CPT) meetings.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram for Component Category 2 - Indicator 1:

Expertise

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

Expertise resides in every aspect of the comprehensive system.

(characteristic 2, indicator 2)

Programs, policies, and resource allocation decisions allow access to the appropriate expertise.

(characteristic 3, indicator 2)

Expertise is used flexibly and efficiently to develop, maintain, and employ resources as needed to ensure success for all students.

Effective Collaboration:

(characteristic 1, indicator 3)

Administrators share leadership responsibilities and empower others to participate in decision making about substantive issues.

Performance Indicator:

2. The District ensures that each school has consistent processes and protocols in place to identify, operationalize, and coordinate services to address individual, group, and schoolwide mental health services and supports.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team has oversight of clear and known protocols at each school for immediate training and access to crisis screening services.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team ensures that each school has protocols for developing a coordinated service plan with an interagency team under Act 264.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram for Component Category 2 - Indicator 2:

Effective Collaboration:

(characteristic 2, indicator 3)

There are respectful school-family and school-community partnerships that include participation in decision making, input into improved student learning, and culturally responsive teaching.

Performance Indicator:

3. The District ensures that each school within the district has tools in place to identify, operationalize, and coordinate services to address individual, group, and schoolwide mental health services and supports.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. A district-wide universal screening assessment is used that includes a protocol for its administration and a plan to support students once the result of the screener is known.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team provides all classroom teachers training in the SEL proficiencies appropriate to their students' age/grade level.

Yes No

c. The district-level leadership team provides all classroom teachers training in trauma-informed approaches appropriate to their students' age/grade level.

Yes No

d. The district-level leadership has documented expectations that each school administrator schedule sufficient opportunities for teachers to collaborate to develop instruction and assessment of SEL proficiencies across subject areas.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram for Component Category 2 - Indicator 3:

Effective Collaboration:

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

There are purposeful collaborations formed to meet specific needs, have defined norms, roles, responsibilities, and processes.

Expertise:

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

Expertise resides in every aspect of the comprehensive system.

Performance Indicator:

4. The District ensure each school has access to a baseline of mental health professionals for in-school services.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team uses data to identify hiring needs with the goal of providing students access, as needed, to mental health professionals (school social worker/school-based clinician/SAP) 4.

Yes No

b. The district-level leadership team actively seeks to build its expertise to meet the SEL, behavior, and mental health needs of students.

Yes No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram for Component Category 2 - Indicator 4:

High-Quality Instruction and Intervention:

(characteristic 2, indicator 3)

All instruction and intervention approaches and supports respond to student need and ensure equity of opportunity and outcome.

Performance Indicator:

5. The District's schools have robust data infrastructure and consistent data analysis incorporating SEL and behavioral data.

Needs Assessment for Effective Practices:

a. The district-level leadership team collects SEL and mental health student-level data in each school's Student Information System (SIS).

___ Yes ___ No

b. The district-level leadership team analyzes school-level data to identify district-wide trends and set goals.

___ Yes ___ No

c. The district-level leadership team provides training to all staff on how to use screening tools and assesses student performance data to inform and adjust planned instruction and interventions.

___ Yes ___ No

d. The district-level leadership team makes data readily available to be shared with community partners as appropriate to inform planning of services and supports.

___ Yes ___ No

Relevant VTmtss Driver Diagram for Component Category 2 - Indicator 5:

Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment System:

(characteristic 2, indicator 1)

Periodic benchmark progress monitoring system aggregated by class, grade, school, and system level with diagnostic assessments used to plan for individual/group needs.

(characteristic 2, indicator 2)

Our system identifies students who need more support, extensions or challenges.

(characteristic 3, indicator 1)

Collaborative structures are in place for data discussions on essential standards, common assessments, systemic interventions, and extended learning.

"Yes" total: _____ /20

Total "Yes" across categories: _____ /42

Resources:

- [Mental Health Integration through an Interconnected Systems Framework](#)
- [Interconnected Systems Framework 101: An Introduction](#)
- [Interconnected Systems Framework 201: When School Mental Health is Integrated Within a Multi-tiered System of Support: What's Different](#)

Refer to "How to Use this Form as a Needs Assessment" section of this form for recommended next steps.

Contact Tracy Watterson at Tracy.Watterson@vermont.gov with questions.