



Connecting Behavioral Health and Social Emotional Learning to Success in School

A safe and supportive learning environment is essential to ensuring a student's academic success. Behavioral health and emotional well-being can have a profound impact on students' motivation, engagement, and ability to learn in academic settings. Integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into curriculum and instruction can help teachers learn how to foster caring, and participatory learning environments that will allow students to feel safe, supported and motivated to learn. In addition, social and emotional competencies are protective factors against both interpersonal aggression and violence such as bullying and self-directed violence and suicidal behavior.

This course contains four sessions that address specific areas of social and emotional learning that all Massachusetts schools are required to address. The sessions are designed to help teachers support all students in the classroom. The four sessions are: Managing Stress and Anxiety, Preventing and Addressing Bullying in and out of School, and Supporting the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students, and Suicide Prevention and Postvention. These are complex and sensitive topics and each session can be a starting point for learning how to ensure that all students feel comfortable and supported in school so that they are able to reach their academic potential. Each session will provide participants with resources to help them self-assess their understanding on the topics covered, resources to build their understandings, and activities that guide them to reflect on and apply what they learned in a variety of formats. There are additional resources in the "Extend" section of each session so that participants can continue learning.

Goals and Objectives

During this self-paced course, participants will learn skills and strategies to:

- Help students to develop self-awareness and self-management skills to handle stress well in order to be successful in school and in life
- Understand effective bullying prevention strategies and school and district policies around bullying prevention to ensure that students and staff adhere to the policies
- Address instances of bullying or threatening behavior effectively to ensure all students feel safe in classroom and school environments
- Facilitate opportunities for students to express their questions, concerns or confusion in a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment
- Help students improve their self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills

- Identify and respond effectively to students experiencing severe anxiety and help them learn how to manage their anxiety so they can regain focus and productivity in school.
- Recognize at risk behaviors for suicide and understand actions that can be taken as prevention or protection
- Develop and facilitate lessons and use teaching approaches that avoid bias and that include positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events

Audience

This workshop is intended for Massachusetts’s teachers of grades K-12, technology specialists, curriculum specialists, and professional development specialists. This course will address the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education mandates stating that public school districts must provide staff members with professional development on the topics of bullying prevention and intervention, and suicide awareness and prevention to comply with legislation passed since 2010. Participants are expected to have regular access to computers and be proficient with email and web browsing.

Structure

This online, self-paced professional development course is divided into four sessions: an orientation and four content-based sessions. Each session includes readings, videos, and activities that ask participants to apply what they learn. The time for completing each content session is estimated to be between two and four hours and the total amount of time required for the entire course is estimated to be 15 hours.

The four content-based sessions are:

Session One: Helping Students Manage Stress and Anxiety (4 Hours)

Session Two: Preventing and Addressing Bullying In and Out of School (4 Hours)

Session Three: Supporting the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students (4 Hours)

Session 4: Suicide Prevention and Postvention (2 Hours)

Course Readings & Activities

Each session will provide participants with resources to help them self-assess their understanding on the topics covered, resources to build their understandings, and activities that guide them to reflect on and apply what they learned in a variety of formats. There are additional optional resources in the “Extend” section of each session so that participants can continue learning.

Participants can complete the Orientation and one or more of the sessions contained in this self-paced course and can earn a certificate noting the PDP's earned after successful completion of each session.

As a final product, participants will complete a **Reflection and Implementation Guide** using the template provided to explain how they will apply what they learned in the course to support the social and emotional learning needs of all of their students. The template is a Microsoft Word document and is also available in PDF format. Participants are welcome to adapt the template to meet the needs of their own students and teaching style. Participants should save this document and keep it on file as documentation of successful completion of the course for renewal of their professional Massachusetts teaching license.

Session Assessments and Certificates

The following criteria will be used to determine successful completion of each Session

- Completion of all assigned readings and activities;
- Completion of all interactive self-assessments and associated templates;
- Completion of the **Reflection and Implementation Guide**; and
- Completion of the Session Assessment

After completing session readings, activities, and the final project, participants will be expected to complete a short assessment at the end of each session. **Participants with a passing score of 80% will receive a Certificate of Completion that documents their successful completion and the number of PDP's earned for that particular session.**

Participants should save all associated documents and keep them on file as documentation of successful completion of the course for renewal of their professional Massachusetts teaching license.

Session Overviews

Orientation: (1 Hour)

The Orientation session is designed to help familiarize you with the structure and content of this self-paced online course. In this session, you will learn about the background and context of recent Massachusetts legislation and license renewal requirements related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and how this online course will help you to meet those requirements. Resources in this session will help you define Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), understand the five Core Competencies of SEL, and the impact of SEL on academic performance. These competencies can provide a strong foundation for addressing stress, bullying, and suicide prevention and for creating a safe and support environment for students all of sexual orientations and gender identities.

The Orientation session also provides some guided activities to become familiar with the course navigation and organization, as well as to make sure your computer is set up to take this online course.

Session One: Helping Students Manage Stress and Anxiety (4 Hours)

One of the core competencies for social and emotional learning is self-management, which refers to the ability to handle daily stresses and control emotions under difficult situations. Students with anxiety struggle with self-management and often lack the ability to regulate their emotions and this can have a significant impact on their memory and the cognitive resources needed to succeed on academic tasks. It is important for teachers to be able to recognize signs of anxiety so they can be more aware of situations that cause stress, frustration, or emotional upset and so they can work with students and also with parents to develop strategies for reducing stress and anxiety. This session will help teachers to understand how various anxiety disorders present themselves in children and teens and will describe the implications for learning in academic settings. The content will provide you with resources, strategies and tools that will allow you to support all of your students and help them manage stress and anxiety so that they can experience success in school.

Session Two: Preventing and Addressing Bullying in and Out of School (4 Hours)

Recent studies show that bullying can have serious and lasting negative effects on the mental health and overall well-being of students not only for students who are frequently bullied but also for those who are bystanders and those who engage in bullying behavior. The state of Massachusetts has passed [anti-bullying laws](#) designed to ensure that all students feel respected and supported while in school. Teachers in Massachusetts must follow strict requirements to protect students from bullying and all schools must have an updated plan to address bullying prevention and intervention. This session will help you to learn how you can help to prevent incidences of bullying, how to support students who are being bullied in and out of school, and how to address incidences of bullying when they occur. The goal of this session is to help teachers learn how to support all students and to ensure that your classroom and school maintains a positive climate that is conducive to learning.

Session Three: Creating Supportive and Safe Learning Environments for LGBTQ Students (4 Hours)

In 1954, Abraham Maslow synthesized his research about what energizes, directs, and sustains human behavior with his [Hierarchy of needs](#) theory. Many students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning are not able to achieve the basic needs on the hierarchy of safety and belonging in school and this negatively impacts their self-esteem. LGBTQ students report incidences of verbal and physical harassment more frequently than their straight peers and these experiences negatively affect their ability to be successful in school. These experiences and feelings of exclusion commonly lead to feelings of depression and sometimes thoughts of suicide. This session will also provide you with an understanding about the differences between sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression so you can build an understanding about how identity formation and expression

is an ongoing developmental process that your students may go through. Resources and sample lessons in this session will help you understand the struggles your LGBTQ students face in school and you will learn what you can do to create a classroom and school environment that is accepting and inclusive to all of your students.

Session Four: Suicide Prevention and Postvention (2 Hours)

Recent Massachusetts's [laws](#) require that teachers and other school personnel undergo targeted suicide prevention training so that staff can learn to recognize students who may be at-risk for suicide and how to appropriately support them and intervene. The resources in this session will help you to identify the warning signs and risk factors related to youth suicide and provide you with concrete action steps to respond to their needs. There are also resources to inform you about how to respond in the aftermath of a suicide (or other death) in the school community. Understanding risk factors and warning signs and how to support all of your students will help you to ensure that your classroom and school maintains a positive climate that is conducive to learning.