



The SEL4NJ School Provider and Quality Implementation (SPQI) Work Group

Overview

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a critical component of a child's education. While there are many definitions of SEL, SEL4NJ defines "SEL" as an umbrella term that includes social and emotional development, character education, positive youth development, whole child/whole school approaches, caring schools and communities, and efforts to create positive school climate and culture. SEL also includes efforts to promote mental and physical health and to prevent substance use and bullying.

In July 2022, the Newark Trust for Education (NTE) partnered with SEL4NJ to launch the School Provider and Quality Implementation (SPQI) Work Group to explore issues around how SEL providers and schools can work together in effective and sustainable ways. The group is now a collaboration of eight high-impact education- and health- focused organizations across the state of New Jersey, under the umbrella of SEL4NJ, and facilitated by NTE.

The purpose of the group is to expand understanding of SEL implementation needs, challenges, opportunities and best practices regarding school-provider partnerships in New Jersey in order to inform stakeholders across the state.

Background

Why this Project?

SEL4NJ partners across the state have routinely expressed gaps in the way schools and districts utilize external partnerships to enhance schoolwide SEL efforts. Approaches are often ad hoc, and experts from fields outside of education can struggle to adapt to school environments. In order for students to benefit the most from SEL programs, schools and providers need guidance on best ways to create high quality partnerships.

Key concerns include lack of coordination, integration, and alignment between SEL providers in schools:

- While there are guidelines for school-based mental health providers, there are no universal standards for high quality school-SEL provider partnerships broadly defined, and none specific to New Jersey.
- Providers bring a standard set of practices and lenses into schools without adaptation to unique environments
- Regular intentional interactions and coordination across school stakeholders and SEL providers



- Lack of common language, strategies, communication around SEL-related efforts

Why now?

There is a need now more than ever for educational and SEL providers to use their resources wisely and collaboratively.

- Pending influx of ESSER dollars for SEL-related services threaten to exacerbate the “jumbled schoolhouse” effect, allowing for more providers to enter schools and districts that may not have the capacity to embed and integrate services to maximize impact.
- A [recent survey](#) conducted by CASEL found that aligned community partnerships was among the least frequently reported SEL practice.
- SEL4NJ partners, including NTE, have documented successful school- SEL provider partnerships that lead to greater outcomes for students.

Why SEL4NJ?

- SEL4NJ has a member network of approximately 2300 individuals across the state that equally represent education associations and organizations, SEL providers, and school-based practitioners. SEL4NJ has a unique role in unifying these groups across disciplines and sectors.
- Core partners/members come from influential education organizations such as New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, New Jersey Education Association, New Jersey Association of School Psychologists, Garden State Coalition of Schools, NJ Community Schools, Social Emotional and Character Development Lab at Rutgers, New Jersey Schools of Character, School Climate and Culture Initiative, School Climate Transformation Project, and NJDOE Office of Student Support Services.
- Organizations and experts across the SEL4NJ network have noted the need for better integration and alignment of SEL services within schools, as discovered during SEL4NJ’s [landscape assessment](#) conducted in 2019.
- Schools, providers, and other key decision-makers in the network each have a responsibility to ensure that integration and alignment of SEL services within schools are happening.



Work Group Members

<p>The SPQI Work Group is a collaboration of eight high-impact education- and health- focused organizations across the state of New Jersey, under the umbrella of SEL4NJ.</p>	
Arts Ed NJ	<i>Arts Ed NJ was established to provide a unified voice for a diverse group of constituents who agree on the educational benefits and impact of the arts; we advocate for embedded, intentional, and sustained application of SEL-informed arts education.</i>
BRICK Education Network	<i>The BRICK Education Network's mission is to relentlessly knock down all barriers to students' academic success. Their innovative two-generational model incorporates holistic supports for students including SEL.</i>
Newark Trust for Education	<i>NTE is an independent non-profit dedicated to coordinating and focusing ideas, people, and resources to address the crucial educational needs of over 78,000 youth by advocating for safe and supportive learning environments.</i>
NJ Assoc of School Psychologists	<i>NJASP is a not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to collaborating with school staff and families in supporting all children to reach their full potential. In securing the necessary conditions for effectiveness, we incorporate SEL concepts in psychological principles in addressing academic, cognitive and mental health growth</i>
NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention	<i>The mission of the NJ Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention is to increase community awareness of bullying as a common serious problem of school-age children and to advocate for the implementation of effective bullying prevention approaches in the State of New Jersey.</i>
The Academy for SEL	<i>Housed at Saint Elizabeth University and in collaboration with Rutgers University, the Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools is a professional learning community and mentoring program led by experts in the field of social-emotional learning (SEL), school culture and climate (SCC), and character development (CD).</i>
SEL4NJ	<i>SEL4NJ a network of organizations and individuals in New Jersey that are committed to the importance of developing students' social and emotional competencies and to promoting a systematic and intentional integration of SEL.</i>
Teach for America NJ	<i>Teach For America finds, develops, and supports a diverse network of leaders who expand opportunity for children from classrooms, schools, and every sector and field that shapes the broader systems in which schools operate.</i>

Project Description

The SPQI work group is tasked with developing a customized framework for effective school-provider relationships based on existing research and new data collected from NJ stakeholders between June and December 2022. The group will also develop a set of long term goals and a logic model for the establishment of a provider network.

Key Objectives

- Elevate the need for effective school-provider partnerships related to SEL;
- Provide reliable and relevant information and tools that can be used by SEL providers, schools and funders to create effective partnerships in schools;
- Educate and influence providers, school practitioners and decision-makers across the state;
- Create a long term strategy for continued learning and conversation about effective school-provider relationships;
- Curate resources and establish networks for ecosystem alignment;



- Work towards advancing common vocabulary and shared understanding across SEL-related disciplines working in schools.

2023 Project Deliverables

- A customized framework based on established research and stakeholder input across New Jersey
- A checklist that providers and schools can use to self-assess their readiness and ability to effectively integrate SEL services in partnership with each other
- Logic model for a state-wide provider's network
- Set of learning module topics based on framework
- Preliminary plan for network launch and long term project goals

How to get Involved

Become a work group member

If you represent an organization that is interested in advancing SEL in the state of New Jersey by examining school-provider relationships, you may join our SPQI work group. Work group members meet bi-weekly, shape the direction of the project and contribute to all deliverables. We seek members that are actively engaged and represent different geographies, expertise areas, and demographics across the state.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the work group, please contact Stephanie Parry at sparry@newarktrust.org.

Become a collaborating organization

If you are interested in helping advance the work of the SPQI work group but can't commit to bi-weekly meetings, we welcome you to become an advisor/contributor to the group. We are looking for experts, researchers, school practitioners, youth and community members to review our work products and give feedback on the progress of our work.

If you are interested in becoming an advisor, sign up [here](#).

Volunteer to take our survey

We will be launching a state-wide survey in September and October 2022 that is geared towards school practitioners, providers, and experts.

If you are interested in taking the survey, sign up [here](#).



Donate

If you are interested in supporting the SPQI work group through a financial contribution, we are looking for opportunities to deepen our research and communications work through increased funding.

Please contact Liz Warner at lwarner@sel4nj.org for more information about donating.