

# Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Case Study

## *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

### Introduction/Background

#### **HISTORY**

The Mequon-Thiensville School District is a suburban district with a student population of around 3,771 students. The student body demographics consist of 76.5% Caucasian, 7.1% Asian, 6.4% Black, 5.4% Hispanic and 4.5% two or more races. Students with disabilities consist of 9.4%, while the economically disadvantaged is 11.4% and English Language Learners are at 3.1%.

The MTSD began implementing a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) model by training all six schools in universal systems; by the 2013-2014 school year, all six MTSD schools were Tier 1 trained. Additionally, all three MTSD elementary schools participated in Tier 2 training by the 2015-2016 school year.

In the 2017-2018 school year the MTSD transitioned from having shared School Social Workers to investing in a full-time Social-Emotional Coach in each building. A dedicated social-emotional coach (a licensed School Social Worker or School Counselor) at each of our schools provides leadership and coaching to grow teachers' capacity in social-emotional welfare and support our students & families. Additionally, there are three full-time school psychologists that are shared between five buildings, with a fourth full-time school psychologist at the high school.

The MTSD began engaging in the first steps of transitioning to standards-based instruction in the 2018-2019 school year. A small team was convened to engage in study around the implications of standards-based learning, beginning with kindergarten. In August of 2019, all KG-8 staff received training to deepen organizational understanding of standards-based instruction. Then throughout the 2019-2020 school year, representative teams from KG-5 began prioritizing standards, academic & social-emotional, and updated report cards to reflect the shift to standards-based instruction.

#### **THE MODEL**

The MTSD engages in a strategic planning process every three to five years. The strategic plan is a critical tool in guiding our district's mission, vision, unifying efforts across our organization. As a part of the 2018-2021 strategic plan, a goal dedicated to Social and Emotional Well-Being was developed to support and enhance the social and emotional well being of students, staff, and families. Initiatives are related to SEL instruction and collaborative student support.

Each MTSD school engages in a School Growth Planning process every two years. Each School Growth Plan includes a goal specific to social-emotional learning in addition to goals in academic areas. School leadership teams review universal data including School Perceptions, behavior referrals, and student services data (ie: referrals for support, attendance, office visits) to create goals specific to their greatest area of need. Action plans then outlined the steps that will be taken to ensure adult practices in behavior and SEL lead to desired student outcomes.

In order to achieve our goals, the MTSD utilizes CASEL's five competencies for social-emotional learning as a guiding framework. Additionally, as we transition to standards-based learning, we have engaged in a process to prioritize DPI's SEL competencies, identifying the high leverage skills that students will learn and practice during their MTSD education. Instruction of SEL and behavior skills occurs both during dedicated instructional time as well as being integrated into academic instruction. Each building has a universal level team that plans and supports instruction at the universal level for all students, through PBIS systems and SEL instruction.

Additionally, a district-wide leadership team meets to review, revise, and implement common, district-wide systems and expectations.

## **THE PLAYERS**

- **Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services:** *supports the development and execution of the strategic plan goals and action steps, oversees the school growth planning process, oversees the transition to standards-based learning.*
- **Executive Director of Student Services:** *supports the development and execution of the strategic plan goals and action steps, oversees district Student Services team, provides support for training and professional learning around behavior and SEL*
- **Building Administrators:** *oversees the implementation of universal systems within each building, supports building level teams that engage in the work of implementing the district vision into building-wide systems*
- **Social-Emotional Coaches:** *supports teachers in lesson development, engages in direct instruction and co-teaching of lessons, provides problem-solving support for students, staff, and families, and facilitates professional learning on systems & tools*
- **MLSS Specialist:** *facilitates district-wide SEL/PBIS Leadership team, supports the development of practice profiles for universal systems, supports school growth planning process and other professional learning opportunities*
- **Classroom Teachers:** *implements behavior and SEL lessons in the classroom environment, designs instruction that integrates opportunities to learn and practice social-emotional skills, provides meaningful feedback to students as they learn and practice social-emotional skills*

## Big Ideas from Mequon-Thiensville School District

### **INSTRUCTION**

- As a part of our PBIS structures, our district-leadership team developed a Universal Instruction Practice Profile to formalize our practices district-wide. Each building team then prioritized a line item for professional learning and implementation in their building in the 19-20 school year
- As a part of universal instruction of SEL skills at the KG-8 level the following tools and structures are utilized:
  - Zones of Regulation lessons and tools (KG-5)
  - Mindfulness lessons and tools
  - Universal behavioral lessons (“Cool Tools”)
  - Classroom Community Circles (KG-5)
  - School-wide Community Circles (KG-5)
- Through the use of MTSD’s instructional framework and AVID (*Advancement Via Individual Determination*) implementation, CASEL’s 3 Signature Practices (Welcoming Activity, Engaging Pedagogy, & Optimistic Closure) are integrated into academic instruction
- Social-Emotional Coaches engage in co-planning of instruction with teacher teams at the KG-5 level
- After the Social-Emotional Coach team engaged in prioritization of DPI’s SEL standards, the team worked through an audit of curricular tools to ensure that each standard was directly addressed in universal instruction. The team is currently seeking out tools to fill existing gaps.

### **ADULT**

- Ongoing professional development to staff on topics such as trauma-informed practices and behavior management strategies

- Professional learning lead by building and district specialists are formatted around CASEL's 3 Signature Practices and principals of adult learning
- Social-Emotional Coaches offer building-based Professional Practice Goals (PPG's) focused on a variety of social-emotional & behavioral topics
- All staff were invited to participate in a PPG provided by district specialists around Elena Aguilar's work, *Onward, Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Social-emotional learning is integrated into district, building, and classroom initiatives and goals
- Our strategic plan ensures that all of our work is guided by our mission and vision- by integrating a social-emotional goal into our strategic planning process, we ensure that it remains a top priority in MTSD.
- All work done in our buildings is guided by their School Growth Plans, which also includes a goal dedicated to social-emotional learning. This goal defines the adult actions necessary to lead to expected student outcomes.
- Through the implementation of continuous improvement practices, district and building level teams engage in data-based decision making to improve adult practices and systems
- Ongoing professional learning around social-emotional and behavioral topics is offered to staff members through the use of PPG's and is driven by goals in both the strategic and school growth plans

## **EQUITY**

- In the MTSD we believe that all students prevail in a school culture rooted in equity- all students get what they need, at the time they need it, in order to find their path to success.
- The MTSD began studying the Integrated Comprehensive Systems (ICS) model in the 2015-2016 school year
- Through ongoing professional learning, our district adopted ten Equity Non-Negotiables that guide our work and decision making
- Our systems center the universal level of instruction, minimizing the opportunities in which students are pulled out of the classroom for additional instruction/intervention and
- Our systems prioritize universal instruction and resources to ensure that we have co-planned high-quality instruction that is designed with entry points for each student

## **CONCLUSION**

The Mequon-Thiensville School District is committed to equity and supporting each student's social-emotional wellbeing & growth. In MTSD we are working to systematically implement a framework of social-emotional and behavioral learning so that we support and enhance the well-being of students, staff, and families, in order to ignite each students' passion for learning.

## **Resources:**

- Universal Skills Instruction Practice Profile: [KG-5](#), [6-8](#)
- [CASEL's 3 Signature Practices](#)
- [Equity Non-Negotiables](#)
- [Prioritized Competencies document](#)