

**Did You Know?** NYS recently passed new legislation requiring public schools to meet certain mental health instruction requirements. Is your school in alignment with this new requirement? How do social and emotional interventions meet or miss this law? Here's some quick info.

### NYS Mental Health Curriculum Requirements:

Students must learn to: "recognize the multiple dimensions of health by including mental health and the relationship of physical health and mental health, so as to enhance student understanding, attitudes, and behaviors that promote health, well-being, and human dignity." -NYS Department of Education

- Intended for grades K-12, this education will typically happen in a health class, but can be integrated into other classes, too.
- Should create an awareness of each student's own mental wellness and wellness of others, and instill awareness of when and how to access treatment or other services, for self and others.
- Lesson plans should involve participation of mental health experts, advocates, providers, and recipients.

### SEL Practices and Curricula:

- Social emotional learning includes five core competencies: self-management, self awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and positive decision making.
- NYS also has benchmarks for social emotional learning skills for students K-12. Young people learn these skills through explicit instruction, integration with classroom learning, and positive environments.

**Will an SEL curriculum meet the new mental health law requirements?** Not completely. Some curricula are primarily focused on supporting social and emotional skill development rather than informing about mental health. However having strong SEL skills and competencies is an important foundation for mental wellness, so we see SEL as a critical component of mental health instruction.

## Ideas to Get You Started



- Take a public health approach to mental health education—talk about it, include your entire school community, acknowledge that mental health is equally important to physical health, and publicize available services. Increasing awareness will also increase access.
- Build out some regular activities that highlight the integration of physical, social, emotional, and mental health. For example, have fitness classes that incorporate yoga. Focus on stress management that helps young people with study/organizational skills and mindfulness. Teach meditation and good sleep habits. Incorporate conflict resolution strategies into your sports program. Have your nurse and counselor co-teach lessons to highlight the connections.
- Create environments in which social and emotional skills go hand in hand with wellness and mental health. Talking about these things empowers young people to take action and create real change.

Still have questions? Reach out to us: [SELCenter@Childrensinstitute.net](mailto:SELCenter@Childrensinstitute.net) • (585) 295-1000