SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT
REENTRY TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

This document is designed to provide information and linked resources to support social, emotional and behavioral needs of both students and staff for the 2020-2021 school year. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. The goal of SEL is to prepare students for long-term success in life and to become responsible, caring members of our society.

Research demonstrates that students who receive support for social and emotional learning in schools do better academically, socially and behaviorally. Social-emotional learning has also been shown to positively impact economic mobility and mental health outcomes. Developing these skills in our students is an important part of meeting the needs of the whole child.

One of the most important factors to keep in mind is that, while we are all experiencing the same events, the impact of these experiences will vary widely across individuals based on a myriad of influences including: past experiences, previous trauma, age, socio-economic circumstances, family and home supports, and the presence of medical conditions or other disabilities. This means that everyone will need some type of support, but not everyone will need the same level of support – thus the need for tiered support.

In preparing for school reentry, it is important not to presume the emotional impact these events may have had on students and staff but rather work to:

- create/sustain positive, relationship-driven school and classroom settings for all students;
- approach students from a strengths-based perspective;
- understand that students will exhibit different levels of social, emotional and behavioral variability, and that is normal and expected; and
- support students who appear to have social, emotional or behavioral challenges, but don't assume these challenges are due to events related to the pandemic.

REENTRY SUPPORTS

Provide staff resources that will help them support social/emotional needs at reentry and beyond. Such resources supplement naturally occurring social support systems by providing guidance on how to support adaptive coping for themselves and the students they support. The following resources were provided by the USC Family Engagement Center:

- [SCDE: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING](#)
- [SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING: TEACHER SELF-CARE](#)
- [SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A COURSE FOR EDUCATORS](#)

- [TRUAMA INFOMRED CLASSROOMS TRAINING](#)
- [TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIPS: SELF GUIDED COURSE](#)
- [TRAUMA-INFORMED RESILIENT SCHOOLS – A COURSE FOR TEACHERS](#)
- [CHILDREN OF TRAUMA AND RESLIENCE: A COURSE FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS](#)
- [SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING ALLIANCE FOR SOUTH CAROLINA](#)
- [SOUTH CAROLINA FMAILY ENGAGEMENT K-12 FRAMEWORK](#)
- [SCHOOL REENTRY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH](#)

SUPPORTING SOCIOAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five core competencies of SEL: *Self- Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, and Relationship Skills.* Children who learn how to express emotions in healthy ways and engage in caring and respectful relationships are happier, more competent, and more capable of dealing with the pressures of life with greater strength, wisdom, and resilience.

Research indicates that SEL instruction enhances academic achievement. Although anyone can benefit from developing social and emotional skills at any age, the earlier the better. Children who are socially and emotionally competent by the age of eight have a decreased risk for depression, violence, substance abuse, and other serious mental health issues as young adults.

Strategies to Support SEL Student Growth

1. **Self-awareness.** Take time to talk about feelings every day by sharing your own feelings and asking students to name their feelings.

2. **Self-management.** Teach and model positive ways of managing stress, disappointment, and anger.

3. **Social awareness.** Use story time/class discussion to develop social awareness by asking students how they would feel if they were in a similar situation as the characters in the story.

4. **Relationship skills.** Develop the ability to resolve a conflict by asking questions about the situation instead of giving advice (e.g. What do you think your friend was feeling? How can you work to make things right?)

5. **Responsible decision-making.** Talk to your students about consequences by asking questions like: What might happen if you choose not to do "x?" How might your friend feel if you "x?"

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As students and staff return to school in the fall, whether it is face-to-face for the hybrid model of instruction, or through remote learning via the CCSD Academy, attention to relationships, positivity and feelings of connectedness are critical. Maintaining connectedness during times of disruption helps students feel safe and supported and healthy school-to-home relationships will create a vital partnership during this crisis.

As we prepare for the return to school, it is important to explore innovative ways to maintain school connectedness, build relationships and cultivate a positive climate within the new safety guidelines. The following strategies are designed to bridge this gap:

- ❖ **Sense of Community**: Create a school and classroom community no matter where instruction is taking place. Maintain connections virtually and based on social distancing guidelines with students, families and community partners.

- ❖ **Positivity**: Prioritize uplifting staff and students by sharing positive actions and behaviors through announcements, social media posts, newsletters and/or bulletin boards.

- ❖ **Build Familiarity**: Help young children get familiar with their new environment with pictures, social stories, videos of the building, or meet and greets with teachers.

- ❖ **Belonging Routines**: Children thrive on consistency; create a classroom motto, song or chant that is repeated at the beginning or end of class every day.

- ❖ **Personal Sharing**: Allow students to talk about and share their feelings connected to what happened at the end of last school year and what is happening with the new school year. Younger students may need help labeling feelings and may express their feelings through activities such as play, art and music. Provide an outlet for staff and students to share about their personal experience with COVID19.This outlet could become a safe place of healing and comfort for students

- ❖ **Mask Comfort**: Help students normalize and accept the wearing of masks by allowing them to individualize them. Personalizing masks affords students a sense of control in a medical situation that is beyond their control.

- ❖ **Shared Project**: Complete a class, grade-level or school project together, whether virtually or in the school building designed around connectedness, relationships and/or safety.

- ❖ **Coping skills**: Teach, model and practice coping skills to support self-regulation (deep breathing, progressive relaxation, physical activity, drawing or writing).

SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR

In response to the stress related to COVID-19, as well as the extended time outside of the school environment, staff can expect to see significant changes in student behavior. Young children do not have the cognitive ability or verbal skills to understand and articulate strong emotions. Classroom teachers, both hybrid and online, may see behaviors such as crying, aggression, helplessness and difficulty with separation. Similarly, older children and teenagers may struggle to identify, express and manage the complex emotions they are feeling.

During times of uncertainty, it is common for individuals to express their internal emotions with outward displays of behavior. For some students, this expression could look like defiance or verbal and physical outbursts. Whereas for other students, it could look like withdrawal or increased trips to the school nurse for headaches or stomachaches. Teachers may see changes in students' abilities to focus and remain on task. Compared to previous years, changes in student behavior may continue for a longer period of time and take longer to respond to interventions. When challenging behaviors arise, looking at the "why" behind the behavior, staying proactive and addressing the student's needs rather than immediately reacting to behaviors with a disciplinary measure are key for creating safe and supportive environments.

At the start of the school year, the CCSD staff will use the first few weeks to teach, model and practice the school wide expectations, rules and routines. These practices and routines will then become habits throughout the year as we are cognizant that our students will need additional teaching and prompting to return to the more structured environment of school. Suggested activities are as follows:

- ❖ **Promote familiarity with safety requirements**: Create and share videos prior to the start of school that outline the new safety requirements and how these will look in the school environment, including on the bus. This allows students and their families to prepare for the changes.

- ❖ **Prepare lesson plans that teach and model safety requirements connected to the pandemic**. This may include lesson plans that explain the distancing practice of standing six feet apart, how to wash hands thoroughly and when to wear a mask. Younger grades and students with disabilities may benefit from social stories, online videos, puppets, pictures of staff or famous characters, or books demonstrating the behaviors.

- ❖ **Set clear expectations**: Review expectations, such as being respectful or being kind, and how these expectations can be used for the prevention of harassment, intimidation and bullying connected to the virus and new safety precautions.

- ❖ **Recognize good behavior**: Acknowledge appropriate behavior frequently at the start of the year, and transition to intermittent acknowledgement as the year progresses. Depending on the location of school, adaptations may need to be made in how acknowledgement and reinforcement is provided. Work with parents if school is taking place remotely.

- ❖ **School environment**: We have prepared the school environment with cues such as markers on the floor in the cafeteria that demonstrate six feet of space between students in the cafeteria line.

ACCESSING SUPPORT WITH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

Along with teaching behavior expectations, all K-12 schools in the CCSD will continue to employ tiered intervention to all students who require academic and behavioral support otherwise known in previous years as Response to Intervention, or RTI. Students will move fluidly throughout the tiers as needed. The tiers as defined as follows:

<u>Tier I (Universal)</u>

Tier I is the foundation of a tiered delivery model and refers to the universal instruction provided to all students in the school. The development and support of Tier I strategies are critical to a functioning intervention system.

In Tier I, teachers deliver research-supported, differentiated instruction with fidelity. Universal screening 3 times a year (PALS, MAP Growth, MAP Reading Fluency) helps to document the progress of all students in core instruction. Teachers should use the results of formal and informal classroom assessments to differentiate instruction. Approximately 80% of students should succeed with Tier I instruction.

If less than 80% of students do not succeed with quality Tier I instruction, the administrator and staff should examine all variables (e.g., attendance, class size, behavior observations, instructional fidelity, staff development issues, curriculum choices, and/or student progress monitoring data) to determine how to strengthen Tier I instruction.

A list of Tier I strategies can be found on pp. 5-7 in the **CCSD Guide for Documentation and Data Collection**.

Tier II (Targeted)

Tier II consists of research-and evidence based small-group interventions for students not meeting grade-level academic and behavior expectations using the Tier I curriculum. Approximately 15% of students will need Tier II intervention in addition to high-quality Tier I instruction. Tier II interventions include increased collaboration among parents, interventionists, classroom teachers, instructional leaders, and other stakeholders as well as more frequent progress monitoring to facilitate teachers in making data-based adjustments to instruction in response to student needs. Progress is monitored more frequently (e.g., 2-3 times a month). Additionally, certain grade levels have specific intervention programs that are used with fidelity at this level of tiered support (i.e. EDGE intervention for elementary reading support).

A list of Tier II interventions can be found on p. 19 of the **CCSD Guide for Documentation and Data Collection**. Behavior supports for Tier II can be found on pp. 30-31 of the **CCSD RTI Handbook** and on Intervention Central's website for Chester County: https://www.interventioncentral.org/chester

Tier III (Intensive)

Tier III provides research-supported, small-group/individualized, intensive intervention, and even more frequent progress monitoring for students not responding to Tier II interventions. Approximately 5% of students will need Tier III intervention in addition to instruction at Tier I and Tier II. Collaboration and support among professionals increases in Tier III to reflect the level of services needed by students. Certain grade levels have specific intervention programs that are used with fidelity (i.e. Read 180 intervention in high school).

A list of specific Tier III interventions can be found on p. 26 of the **CCSD Guide for Documentation and Data Collection**. Behavior supports for Tier III can be found on pp. 30-31 of the **CCSD RTI Handbook** and on Intervention Central's website for Chester County: https://www.interventioncentral.org/chester

Students who do not respond to Tier III targeted interventions may be eligible to undergo additional screenings in order to be considered for special educational services. Qualifying students would receive services provided by special education teachers.

Please note: If a student does not qualify as a student with a disability (or tests out of Special Services),the classroom teacher is required by law (IDEA, Section 300.307 a.2. and R2S, Section 59.155.150 B) to continue to provide interventions for as long as necessary for the student to become academically successful.

Teachers should refer to the CCSD Academic Flowcharts for K-5, 6-8, or 9-12 for additional information. Flowcharts for socio-emotional, mental health and behavior will be generated during the 2020-2021 school year.

- ❖ **CCSD Flowchart for K-5**
- ❖ **CCSD Flowchart for 6-8**
- ❖ **CCSD Flowchart for 9-12**
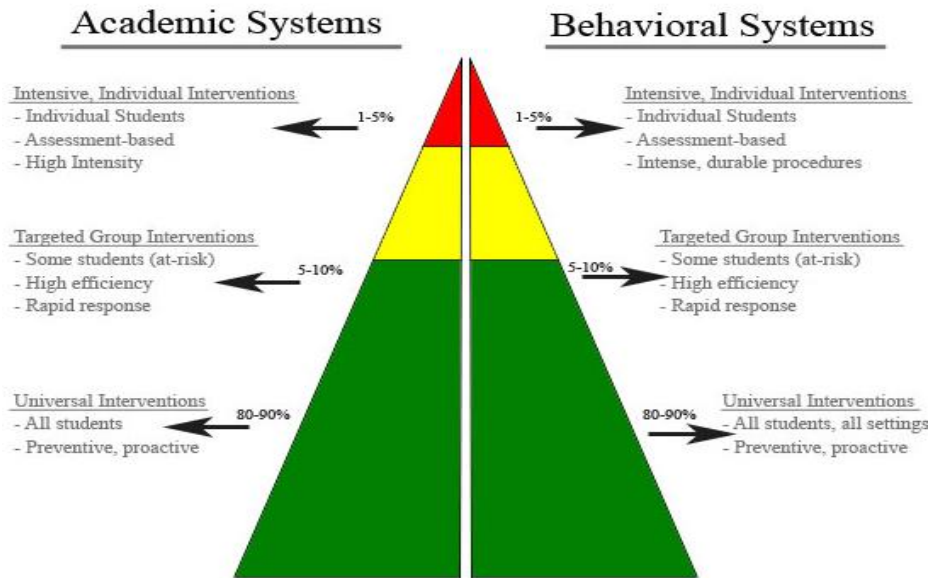
MTSS AND THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

The CCSD, along with many other school districts throughout the state, began the migration from an RTI framework of support to the MTSS model of support during the 2019-2020 school year but was interrupted by the school shutdown. During the 2020-2021 school year, District Office staff will convene a task force of K-12 Assistant Principals (school-level MTSS Coordinators), teacher-leaders, nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, finance personnel, human resources personnel, Catawba Mental Health, and community stakeholders to meet throughout the year to create an implementation and evaluation plan for MTSS in Chester County Schools. The goal of the task force is the creation of a robust, PreK-12 MTSS plan that encompasses the needs of the whole child. The team will use the following two existing RTI documents as guidance documents: the **CCSD RTI Handbook** and the **CCSD Guide for Documentation and Data Collection**. The professional development timeline for the district's task force can be found here: **K-12 MTSS Development and Support**.

Together, the information and resources provided in this document will provide educators with a framework for supporting social/emotional needs for a successful reentry to the school environment.