PRESS RELEASES

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Chicago Public Schools Celebrate Social Emotional Learning

Schools across the District are showcasing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities the entire week, leading up to CPS SEL Day on March 7

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CHICAGO – From “Walls of Kindness” to calming brain breaks, social emotional wellness is taking center stage across Chicago Public Schools (CPS) this week. The District is joining schools worldwide in celebrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Week from March 3-7, culminating with CPS SEL Day on March 7.

As part of the designated week, school staff are finding meaningful ways to incorporate SEL moments into classroom activities and with staff, to encourage conversations about the importance of helping students cultivate social and emotional skills and enhancing

"When students come to school, we want them to feel welcome, connected, and comfortable and our staff are doing a phenomenal job of this," said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. "As a District, we recognize that our young people have many needs beyond academics. A learning environment that promotes social and mental wellbeing will better prepare our students to become well-rounded, emotionally intelligent adults."

While SEL initiatives are being highlighted this week, CPS schools are continually focused on ways to support students and increase connectedness and wellbeing year round. This includes everything from assembling teams of counselors and support staff for behavioral health to allocating time for daily check-ins or student-centered town halls, and adding SEL areas in classrooms for calm and self-reflection.

At Chappell Elementary School, school leaders, teachers, and counselors have worked together to launch monthly SEL themes, such as generosity or kindness, which then ties into morning assemblies and buddy activities where older and younger students are paired up. When challenges and conflict arise, students are encouraged to self-reflect and learn from their mistakes, rather than putting a focus on punitive actions. An awards program, called Chivalry in Action, allows teachers to recognize students for their kindness and thoughtful behavior through weekly certificates and photos displayed on a wall in the school.

"The impact has been profound. Our numbers for school connectedness and emotional health have skyrocketed and, at the same time, we are seeing big decreases in misconduct and school suspensions," said Chappell Principal Thomas Peri. "This work is really intentional and it makes the kids more engaged and excited to be in the building each day. When the kids are eager to be here, it creates a wonderful environment for all of us."

SEL is an integral part of education and human development. It transforms the ways through which people acquire and apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to social emotional competencies. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provides guidance, resources, and program recommendations through an evidence-based lens to cultivate SEL instruction, strong, supportive environments, school-wide practices and policies, and healthy relationships. The model is centered around five core competencies:

different situations.

- Social awareness: Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills: Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
- Responsible decision-making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

In Illinois, SEL competencies and skills are organized as ISBE SEL Standards. These standards align with CASEL's five core competencies and provide goals, age-appropriate benchmarks, performance descriptors that guide the developmental progression of social-emotional skills, and instructional practices that foster skill acquisition.

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