DOVETAIL LEARNING

Our school partners are expressing more inquiry and interest in *measuring students' SEL competencies*, so we have put together some considerations when mapping out your SEL competency assessment plan.   It is important to note that *SEL competency assessment is an emerging area*, it is also important to acknowledge there are differing philosophies of how, when, and what measurement tools to use and why. Dovetail Learning emphasizes that *'data'* should act as a *'blinking light'* to help indicate areas of deeper inquiry in the pursuit of trying to understand the whole child and how to best support them.

 Within the *Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)* there is an explicit emphasis on "the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, *monitoring progress frequently* to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response *data* to important educational decisions" (Batsche et al., 2005)

For a comprehensive resource in measuring SEL, see the ["Choosing and Using SEL Competency Assessments" resource](#).

Before choosing an SEL competency assessment, it is important to identify the intended use. At the end of the assessment cycle, you should be clear about the answers to a few essential questions:

- *What information do you want to know?*
- *What do you hope to have learned?*
- *Is this assessment __FOR__ learning?* (Formative Assessment)
- *Is this assessment __OF__ learning?* (Summative)

Some practical reminders:

- It is important to follow district procedures to notify parents about the survey and offer them the opportunity to opt their student out of the administration.
- How, when (frequency), and by whom will the assessment be administered?
    - Teachers and educators are very busy. It is important that assessment expectations and procedures are clear, simple, and well planned in order to be accurate measures of the information you are seeking.

Below is a list of various types of feedback loops that are available and some suggestions as to why a school might want to use them.

School Climate Survey:

- Brief, reliable, and valid for assessing *perceived school climate among students*.
- School climate surveys measure an assortment of different facets of the environment, depending on the school's goals and the variation of the measure being used.
  - Including but not limited to:
    - Training needs, school safety, career and intentions, school leadership, students and learning, the teaching experience

Screening **is characterized by the following:**

- Serves as an initial indicator to determine the need for further evaluation and support
  - If students are identified with concerns, instructors or staff will administer a formal assessment to understand more specific needs.
- Identifies immediate and current needs
- Is typically *short in length and quick to administer and score*
- Does not typically result in the ability to diagnose conditions
- Our favorite screener is the [DESSA mini](#) by our partner [Aperture Ed](#) because it is quick for teachers (1-2 minutes per child) and has scientific reliability.

Assessment **is characterized by the following:**

- Provides a more complete picture of an individual
- Is comprehensive and usually considers multiple domains of functioning
- Gathers key information and enables providers to identify concerns or diagnoses, and it can identify strengths and barriers that may impact engagement in support services
- May include screening measures that are used in conjunction with other information from the assessment, providing a broader context for interpreting the results.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Inventory ([click here for more information](#)):

- Immediate feedback about experiences in the children's lives, [click here for information about ACEs Screener Tools](#)
- Helps teachers know their students' lives outside of classroom and therefore understand why they sometimes behave the way they do
- Allows school personnel to address specific educational needs in the school community
- Identify trends of multi-generational transmission of trauma to give indicators of where to try and disrupt the cycle of perpetuation.

We agree that information about students in the form of data that can be tracked over time, seeks to find trends, and is *one* dimension of a multiple sources of evaluation is meaningful for educators. We encourage thoughtful planning, selection, and execution of an assessment initiative in order to make meaningful and informed educational decisions.