



NAVIANCE
by HOBSONS

Everett Public Schools: Focusing on SEL to Increase Graduation Rates by Over 64%

MIDDLE SCHOOL | HIGH SCHOOL | DISTRICT | HIGHER ED



Social Emotional Learning 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 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Everett Public Schools, Snohomish County, Washington

College and career readiness has long been centered around academic skills, career knowledge, and college knowledge. However, research shows that for many students, this is not enough. The College, Career and Life Readiness (CCLR) Framework includes additional competencies that research shows are critical for student success. By serving the whole student, schools and districts are beginning to prepare their students for life beyond high school in all aspects - including transition skills, interpersonal competencies, and social emotional learning (SEL).

The Challenge

Everett Public Schools is located just north of Seattle, Washington and serves over 20,000 students. Approximately 37% of students in the district qualify for free and reduced lunch, and another 13% are English language learners. **In 2003-04, the district found themselves facing a graduation crisis, in which only 58% of students were graduating from high school on time.** The district understood that they had to take a holistic approach to create change. What began as a movement to increase graduation rates developed into a deliberate focus on social emotional learning.

SEL encompasses emotional intelligence, grit, self-awareness, the ability to make informed decisions, and an understanding of one’s strengths and interests. Students who understand their strengths can begin to build goals toward a future that best fits their interests and skills. When students develop grit and perseverance, they are better able to overcome obstacles they are faced with in school and life.

After shifting focus to include social emotional learning, the district increased their on-time graduation rate from 58% to 95%, representing a 64% increase.

The Approach

In 2005, high school principals began holding weekly meetings with other administrators to evaluate the data they had on students who were and were not graduating on time. “Very soon



Today's employers are looking to hire individuals who have mastered 21st century learning skills:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Self-awareness
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Grit and perseverance
- Leadership and responsibility
- Initiative and self-direction
- Productivity and accountability

into the initiative, we realized that we needed to focus more on the relationships with students," said Dr. Jeanne Willard, Director of College and Career Readiness & On-Time Graduation at Everett Public Schools.

"Each student came with a story of what was going on in their lives that was preventing them from graduating and achieving their high school and postsecondary goals," said Becky Ballbach, Director of Student Support Services at Everett Public Schools. "Naviance provides us with information about students' strengths and interests and that gives us a much fuller understanding of their story," said Willard. "We use every single tool in Naviance."

"We didn't have that one-stop shopping. And none of our tools did all that Naviance does."

Becky Ballbach,
Director of Student Support
Services at Everett Public Schools

Through their efforts, on-time graduation rates began to rise. Ballbach believes those results go well beyond academics. "If a student cannot cooperate and communicate with classmates and teachers, they are not going to learn. When a foundation for

social and emotional skills is established early on, students transform into effective adults," said Ballbach.

Taking SEL Culture District-Wide

For years, school counselors were known as the social emotional learning experts in Everett Public Schools. However, Ballbach and other administrators realized the necessity to expand that responsibility to others in the district. "Research tells us that social emotional learning should be shared by the entire school system."

Today, the responsibility for implementing SEL is shared by all school staff. Willard credits district leadership with leading the charge on establishing SEL as a district-wide initiative. The district's strategic plan was revised to provide a specific focus on supporting students not only academically, but also emotionally. The following strategic goals and key performance outcomes laid out in the strategic plan speak directly to Everett's commitment to SEL.

Strategic Goal 1.1: Each student graduates from high school ready for college, career and life with 21st century skills.

Key Performance Outcome 3.4.a: Our students and staff learn and work in an emotionally, physically, and intellectually safe and secure environment.

Strategic Goal 5.1: Our district-wide strategic relationships contribute directly to achievement of district priorities and goals, and improvement on student learning.

Key Performance Outcome 5.1.a: Strategic partnerships (family, corporate, and community) promote the health, well-being, and learning of all students.

Previously, the district operated on the goal that "all students graduate college and career ready." Today, the goal has been expanded to "all students will graduate college, career and life ready."

SEL has been integrated into all classrooms throughout Everett Public Schools, from elementary to high school. The district established a specific scope and sequence that includes many Naviance activities and lays out the particular goals and performance indicators that students should achieve in each grade level. For example, students in 7th grade are required to establish a SMART goal in Naviance, complete the career cluster finder, and complete a reflection activity about what they've learned and how they will apply it. Activities like these help students to have a better understanding of themselves, and help them to begin thinking about their future.

The Results

While measuring SEL can be difficult in the traditional sense, Everett Public Schools uses student response surveys to identify progress and trends. "We are able to measure growth mindset, grit, school safety, teacher/student relationships, self-management, a sense of belonging, and social awareness," said Ballbach.

Ballbach and Willard still feel that Everett is only in the beginning stages of their SEL focused implementation. However, since starting on this path towards preparing students for college, career and life, the district's on-time four-year graduation rate has risen to 95%.

With their focus on social emotional learning, Everett Public Schools is helping to prepare a new generation of students to be successful in college, career and life.

The Naviance CCLR Framework provides a blueprint to prepare middle and high school students for success after graduation. This practical tool set helps schools and districts define, measure, and track success for their college, career and life readiness initiatives. The result is a purposeful approach to CCLR that drives long-term student engagement and better outcomes. Learn more by contacting us or downloading the CCLR Framework today.



Hobsons helps students identify their strengths, explore careers, create academic plans, match to best-fit educational opportunities, and reach their education and life goals. Through our solutions, we enable thousands of educational institutions to improve college and career planning, admissions and enrollment management, and student success and advising for millions of students around the globe. Hobsons works with more than 12,000 schools, colleges, and universities and serves more than 13 million students.

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