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North Carolina Using \$50 Million in COVID Funds For "Social Emotional" Learning

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The State plans to spend millions on a controversial psychiatric program.

by: Sloan Rachmuth



North Carolina was recently awarded \$1.4 billion from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III Fund, earmarked to help schools reopen following COVID closures.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) plans to use roughly \$50 million to "support all students' SEL needs," according to a proposal they sent to the Fed's back in June of this year. The DPI, headed by Superintendent Catherine Truitt oversees the uniform set of learning content for every public school in the State.

CASEL SEL (short for Social Emotional Learning) became North Carolina's top-down academic standard system in [June 2020](#). Schools will prioritize SEL lessons on "creating caring, just, inclusive" communities in all twelve subjects. DPI's website says that K-12 students will also learn to "examine biases, reflect on and address the impact of racism and other isms" in every class.

Let's look at DPI's SEL roadmap to learn more about how SEL will present in K-12 Math:

Social Awareness (Perspective-taking, Respect for others)	
Standards for Mathematical Practices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. 4. Model with mathematics. 6. Attend to precision. 	
Sample Lesson: Mathematicians Work Together <i>Teachers should review the suggested activities below and integrate into the lesson as appropriate to highlight the SEL Competencies.</i>	
Lessons/Activities	Teach an age-appropriate lesson on how to communicate effectively during public speaking, including a discussion of why it is important to identify how others feel and what to look for (facial cues, body language).
	Define and discuss the word “empathy” as part of vocabulary.
	Discuss the expectations and demands of different settings for public speaking—how we dress and behave for school, places of worship, formal

Teaching Practices	Routinely discuss characters in literature or figures in history in terms of how they felt and why they took certain actions or behaved the way they did.
	Create small reading groups that allow students a chance to talk about the kinds of things they like to read and why, so that students can begin to see the ways in which other students have similar or different preferences and learn from each other about why other types of reading materials may be fun to read.
	Discuss how we know the way characters in literature feel, based on what the author tells us about the character’s behavior
	Routinely examine literature in terms of the perspective of characters or identifying feelings and thoughts.

It is unclear how critiquing literature and taking part in de facto group therapy while studying math will boost students' already suffering test scores. Time will tell.

But if you think the DPI plans to equal this out, and put some algebra and calculus in its English and Literature standards; think again:

Instructional Practice #7: Students think critically while reading, writing, speaking, and listening about texts.

- Encourage students to reflect and analyze through writing and/or speaking how their emotions/feelings affected their own behavior and impacted their feelings of and actions on others.
- Provide students opportunities to explore topics of their own interests through research projects. Encourage students to develop their own driving question(s).

(W.3, W.5, SL.1)

Instructional Practice #8: Teachers apply formative assessment practices to gauge student mastery and inform instruction.

- Routinely provide authentic feedback and ask questions that help students reflect on their own strengths and interests.
- Ask students to identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses that they'd like to work on for independent reading, a writing assignment, speaking and listening task, etc.
- Listen deeply to what students say and reflect what you heard about their feelings, (e.g., "It sounds like you're feeling very frustrated right now....").
- Encourage students to reflect and analyze in writing or speaking how their thoughts and emotions affect decision-making and responsible behavior.

(R.10, W.1, W.2, W.3, SL.1)

North Carolina's K-12 English & Literature Standards

Instructional Practice #3: Activities and instruction support building academic vocabulary systematically.

- Ask students to generate additional emotion vocabulary words that extend from those expressed in the text to increase their emotion vocabulary acquisition.
- Encourage students to use emotion vocabulary in context while discussing the feelings and emotions expressed in the text. Ask students to apply emotion vocabulary to different contexts and situations.
- When discussing word choice, allow students to explore its impact on tone, mood, connotation, and nuances as well as how they may affect others.

(R.4, L.4, L.5)

Analyzing character motivation has a place in the study of literature, but so does examining conflict, plot development, and symbolism. Overall, academic exercises typically include analyzing logic and scrutinizing evidence. But these State SEL directives seem like psychological exercises dedicated to examining and engineering emotions.

Teachers have sent us copies of their district's curriculums because they fear their classrooms will focus more on emotional experiences than education.

Look at the SEL exercises fourth-graders in Mecklenburg county will complete in Social Studies classes within a 3-month period:

Starburst Identity Chart

Directions: Write your name (or the name of a person or character) in the circle. At the ends of the arrows pointing outward, write words or phrases that describe what you consider to be top aspects of your identity. At the ends of the arrows pointing inward, write labels others might use to describe you. Add more arrows as needed.



My Cultural Identity Map

Food	What hobbies/activities do you enjoy?	Language
Text/Image Here	Text/Image Here	Text/Image Here



We can say the same about these SEL exercises sent to us by Orange County middle school teachers for use across the district:

Section B: Self-Management Activities

Materials: Three large pieces of construction paper with the following words written in very large letters: "Agree," "Disagree," and "Unsure."

Process

- 1) At one end of the room post (or have students post) a large sign labeled "Agree" and at the other end post a sign labeled "Disagree." In the center of the room post a sign labeled "Unsure."
- 2) Explain to the students that you are going to read several statements, none of which have a right or wrong answer. As each statement is read, tell them they are to take a position in the room based on whether they agree or disagree with the accuracy of the statement.
- 3) Read some or all of the following statements and allow time for students to take a position in the room. Observe how people change positions from one topic to the next.
 - A) Students should be required to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in school.
 - B) Public schools should require all students to wear uniforms.
 - C) Parents should carefully monitor how their children use the internet.
 - D) Video games make teens violent.
 - E) Prejudiced people cannot be changed.
 - F) Most young people do not respect adults.
 - G) Most adults do not respect teenagers.
 - H) Rap music makes teens violent.
 - I) Rap music glamorizes drug use.
 - J) Jokes that focus on race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation reinforce prejudice.
 - K) The media unfairly portrays certain groups of people.
 - L) There is too much focus on diversity and multiculturalism in the school curriculum.
 - M) If the United States government sends you to prison, you definitely deserve to be there.
 - N) Terrorists are evil.
 - O) Anyone who wants to come to the United States should be allowed to enter.
 - P) Since the World Trade Center and the Pentagon attacks, the world is no longer safe.
 - Q) Bullying is a normal part of life at school.
 - R) School violence is a major problem in this country.
- 4) Ask students to make general observations about the lesson and to explain how they felt about the topics. Guide a whole-group discussion using the following questions. (Or have students select a student leader to ask the following questions):
 - A) How did it feel to take a position on some of the topics?

Learning to express opinions on controversial topics is an important skill for teens to acquire, but it's hard to tell if this exercise is to achieve that outcome or to measure students' personal beliefs and values.

Questions I have about my face/hair/chest/body are _____

More about me:

My favorite activities are _____

When I grow up, I want to be _____

I think the two most interesting things about me are

1) _____

2) _____

Questions I have about are growing up are. Check all that apply.

- ☐ Why am I changing?
- ☐ Does everyone change the same way?
- ☐ When is it okay to kiss someone?

Where will the answers to this questionnaire go after students complete the activity? It's a fair question since students identify themselves by name. What happens if a student wants to opt out of divulging the intimate, personal details of their inner thoughts? Will teachers single her out in class? Importantly, will her grade suffer?

Constant self-examination and self-disclosure drills are central to SEL lessons. These teachings may be an attempt to re-shape values, attitudes, and beliefs to fit a very different world vision than parents teach at home. Some may call this "Brainwashing."

But SEL is not just a belief-altering curriculum; it is a psychiatric program too.

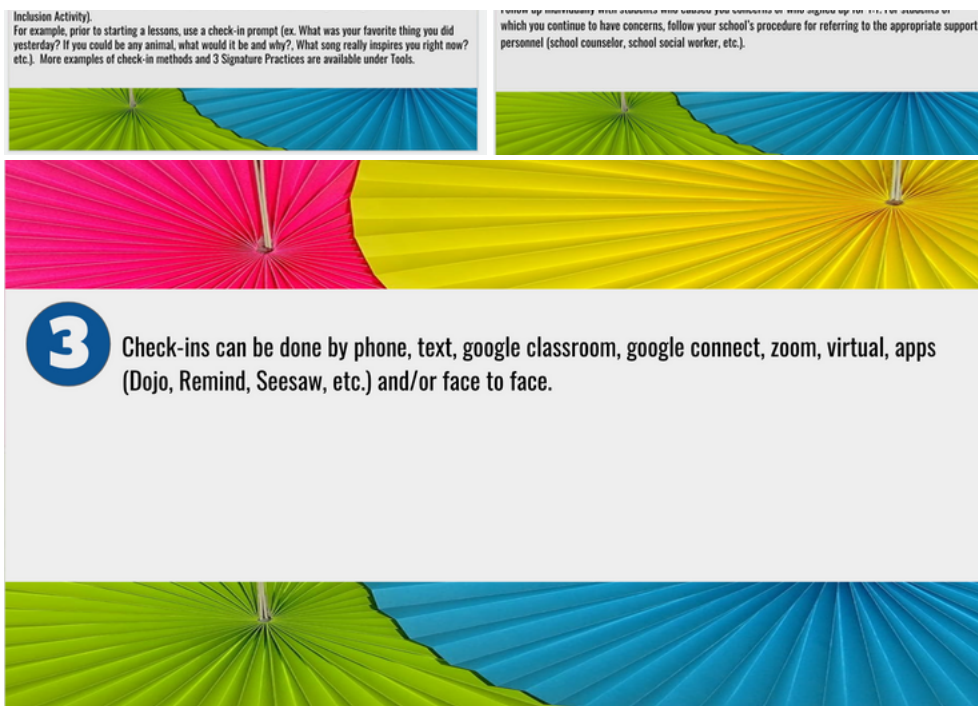
The Federal Department of Education already requires the DPI to evaluate children who need special services, and then provide them with personal educational options. To qualify for an evaluation, the State stipulates children must have fallen short in several academic areas or referred by parents. Evaluation requires an observable, measurable behavior.

But under the new SEL guidelines, school officials will screen all students to determine whether they have attitudes, beliefs, or values that require "intervention." By utilizing information gathered during SEL drills and through other psychological tests; teachers will asses children's' "social-emotional" landscape to determine if they are "at risk."

These slides come from a CASEL SEL presentation. They illustrate how a student might trigger a clinical response from responding the wrong way to a teacher's class greeting:

1 Use CASEL 3 Signature Practices. (Welcome Inclusion Activity, Engaging Strategies, and Optimistic Closure) at beginning of class, during class and closing of class, respectively. Check-in methods welcome students and support school connectedness. Examples of check in methods include check-in electronic form, chart in the classroom, Morning Meeting, Mood Meter, Welcome

2 Make note of students who will not respond or respond in ways that may cause concern. Follow up with students if there is a concern. Encourage students to sign up for 1 on 1 time via an online secure form. Follow up individually with students who raised any concerns or who signed up for 1:1. For students of



Slide two suggests teachers should closely monitor how students respond, and then report them, or refer them to an "intensive" behavioral intervention. The DPI reports that 20% of students have previously needed support, but that percentage will surely climb given these screening dictums. What the DPI has not specified is the attitudes or beliefs that the State finds undesirable, making teachers serve as therapists.

It's easy to predict that teachers will take these guidelines to unimagined lengths.

DPI's website says that SEL is a lever for "creating equitable learning environments." Hence, it's reasonable to assume that intensive interventions, including those led by psychologists, could be done in the name of "equity." If true, application of the State's SEL program could lead to civil rights abuses on an epic scale.

We have reported that parents across the State are complaining about schools administering invasive surveys without their prior consent. This practice violates the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, which protects students from revealing personal information on school surveys. Many schools continue the practice with impunity.

What about the children that teachers think need psychiatric treatment while at school? Will parents have a say in the matter? In North Carolina, no state law specifically states that a parent needs to consent. It is conceivable that a 10-year-old child could incriminate himself on a survey, then diagnosed with an emotional condition, and then receive in-school psychiatric care without parents' permission.

And children need not incriminate themselves. Some SEL class exercises will lead students to subject their classmates and family to scrutiny unknowingly. This example is also from an Orange County middle school:

Section A: Self-Awareness Activities

- Do I have to diet?
- It is okay to be excited about growing up?
- What if I don't like my legs/breasts/lips?
- Others? _____

About my friends:

My best friend's name(s) is/are _____

My best friend/s think/s I
am _____

Something my friends do/say/think that worries me
is _____

Something my friends do/say/think that inspires me
is _____

About my mom/caregiver:

My mom/caregiver's name is _____

Today I would describe my relationship with my mom/caregiver
as _____

Section A: Self-Awareness Activities

Other days I would describe my relationship with my
mom/caregiver _____

One thing I love about my mom/caregiver
is _____

Orange County SEL Lesson in English Class

See question one on page one? It's hard to believe that these SEL standards give cover to adults asking 13 year-olds how they feel about their "legs/breast/lips." Apparently, sexual grooming now has a pedagogical purpose in North Carolina Schools.

Legal Intervention Needed

Suppose the State was strengthening its early intervention system for students showing academic or behavioral difficulty, fine. But North Carolina's new educational priority of examining and shaping personal values is problematic rather than knowledge transfer. The State's amassing an army of psychiatric experts standing ready to treat yet-defined "social and emotional" problems in children, and can do so legally without consent, deserves an immediate legal review.

Last month we published a report about CASEL SEL in [The Federalist](#). The program is bankrolled by Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook. CASEL's program literature describes concepts of critical race theory such as "White racial entitlement and dominance." It promotes leftist ideology under the guise of student and parental "critical social awareness," and raises concern with "most" teachers being "middle-class White women."