

The Intersection of MLSS and Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Education

If we are going to believe in a whole child approach to education, we have to consider what each child brings with them to class. When looking at a student we have to learn about their family, their physical and emotional health like access to food, physical activity and safety. We have to acknowledge that without their basic needs being met, academic gains may fall short.

The [NMPED manual for Multi-Layered Systems of Support \(MLSS\)](#) mentions Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as a means to “manage students identified as experiencing behavior crisis or not making expected progress with Layer 2 interventions...”. It is important to remember focus on structured supports, SEL programs aim for a more comprehensive look at student wellness. A true SEL program is more of a way to of doing business not only with students but also between administration and staff, staff with staff and staff with students. It is a framework of common understanding that self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making must be intentionally taught, modeled and continuously practiced by all in the school community.

The [Collaboration of Academic and Social and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#) explains, “SEL is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”



By doing so, [“SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.”](#)

What better class to instruct, model and practice the SEL competencies than PE?

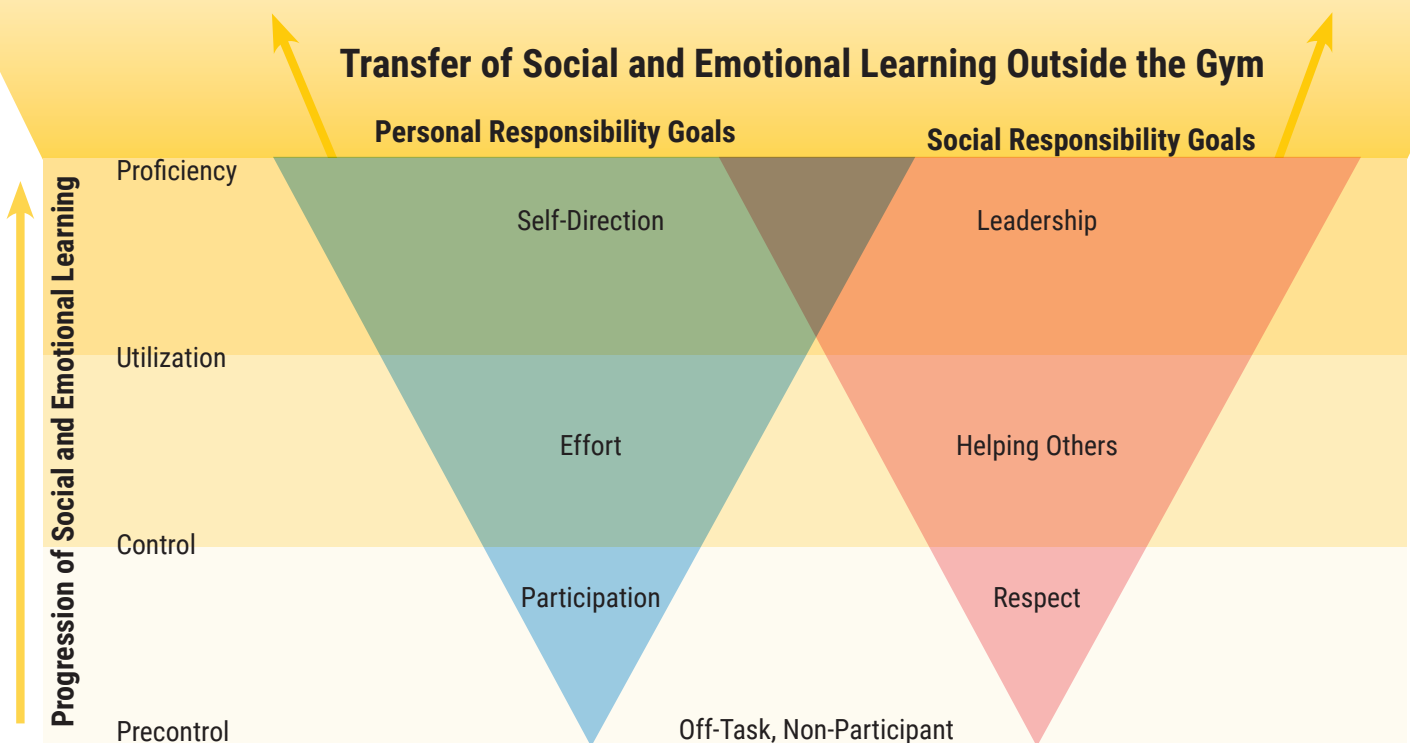
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In [Combining the Skill Themes Approach with TPSR to Teach Social and Emotional Learning](#), the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) “[model is a humanistic, developmental and student-centered approach to teaching physical education that seeks to build on students’ enjoyment of physical activity to initiate discussions about personally and socially responsible behavior both inside and outside of the gymnasium \(Gordon & Doyle, 2015\). Importantly, the focus on responsibility instruction is pursued concurrent with, rather than in the place of, physical activity and motor skill-development goals \(Hellison, 2011\).](#)”

Empathy, problem solving, the ability to persevere, and the ability to manage one’s emotions are critical skills for students to learn. Students can learn these skills by observing an appropriate model, such as the teacher, a parent, or a classmate. Students require repeated practice and specific corrective feedback, and they need to revisit these skills on a regular basis so that

learning can take place. For example, students may hear instructions about how to perform a basketball layup and watch a demonstration performed by the teacher or classmate. However, in order to become proficient, the student should be provided with various learning experiences to practice this skill. When practicing these skills, teachers can enhance a student’s ability to learn and perform more successfully by creating an emotionally safe classroom environment that acknowledges student capabilities through targeted, positive feedback in addition to specific corrective feedback. A positive learning environment can help students feel better about themselves and motivate them to keep learning and to be successful. How students perceive themselves could potentially affect their ability to learn. Therefore, [it is critical that physical educators provide an environment that fosters the necessary skills for developing students’ emotional growth, to motivate them to keep learning and to cultivate a positive self-concept.](#)



Relationship between Personal and Social Responsibility Goals

Now, you may be thinking that all of that sounds great and that using SEL competencies in my PE class would be great, but I need help and ideas. Moreover, how does this have anything to do with MLSS?

More broadly, MLSS supports a focus on the eight primary components to the Coordinated School Health Model, which include health education and life skills, healthy and safe environment, nutrition, physical education and activity, health services, social and emotional wellbeing, staff wellness, and family, school, and community partnerships. MLSS also recognizes the roll that outside community partners play in promoting holistic student success. Please access the most recent MLSS Manual to review progress measures aligned with student health and wellness.

To help PE learn more about the integration of PE and SEL, there are many resources. On a national level, several entities can assist the individual teacher as well as the school or the entire district. The Society of Health and Physical Educators, [SHAPE America](#), houses information and professional development on integrating

[SEL in to the PE classroom](#), [Backward Design SEL/Health and PE Education Units](#) as well as [School Reentry Considerations](#). [CASEL](#) holds long-term research and data on the efficacy of implementing SEL as well as support for implementation at the school and district levels.

Closer to home, the University of New Mexico Physical Education Teacher Education program is available to provide answers to questions and personal assistance with the implementation of SEL in PE. The team consists of several doctoral student and professors who have a passion for all aspects of PE in public education. The program coordinator can be contacted [here](#). SHAPE New Mexico is hosting an open meeting of PE teachers throughout the state two Fridays a month. You may register for those [here](#). At the NMPED, there is a [site dedicated to PE](#) as well a contact for PE, Jimmie Thompson (Jimmie.Thompson@state.nm.us) and a contact for SEL, Leslie Kelly (Leslie.Kelly@state.nm.us).

Student health is important to student success. A hungry, tired or depressed student has difficulty succeeding in class. The MLSS allows teachers and schools to coordinate an approach to intervene with students on all the factors that contribute to their academic success.



SAT and 504 within MLSS— What does it all mean?

SAT takes on a new role under the new MLSS framework. Within the layered process, there are three different opportunities for students to receive a continuum of services and interventions.

In the end, students win! Why? Simply put, MLSS provides a framework of how schools and their systems should operate to ensure that ALL students get what they need at the right time without delay. It eliminates the “wait to fail” model of the old Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework, according to the research done by Dr. Margaret McLaughlin who was the expert witness in the Yazzi/Martinez court case.

» Read more here: [NM MLSS](#)

The Student Assistance Team (SAT) has been around since the NMPED first implemented the RtI Framework in 2004. The intention of the SAT has always been to assist struggling students by providing supplemental and individualized support. Through the years, however, SAT has been misinterpreted as a pathway to Special Education. In the past, a student struggling in academics or behavior was referred to SAT to access interventions. The SAT met, developed interventions, and determined how the student will be monitored for progress. The teacher implemented the interventions for 4–6 weeks, monitored the progress of the interventions, and waited for the next meeting to share how effective or ineffective the interventions were.

Under the MLSS framework, students can be given interventions and supports at any time and move through each layer of interventions more fluidly. The school develops systems in which layered interventions can be delivered. School teams work together in data meetings or professional learning communities (PLCs) to determine who will deliver the interventions and how they will be monitored for efficacy. Teacher PLCs are now key to discussing the progress of students and collaborating on what supports

or interventions a student might need. SAT becomes more targeted to the students with the most need.

» Read more here: [MLSS Supplemental Guide for SAT](#)

SAT is necessary under certain circumstances which are indicated by laws or NMPED requirements. Students should only be referred to SAT if they are being recommended for retention, suspected of being gifted or exhibit an immediate and obvious need. Students who are being recommended for retention or are in danger of being retained must still be in the SAT process, as well as any student who has been exited from Special Education. A parent can still request their child to be tested, however, the request does not automatically indicate the student will be evaluated for a learning disability. A parent request initiates the SAT process for the child. The team, together with the parent/guardian, determine what is the best plan of action for the child. If the team agrees with the parent, then an evaluation is conducted. If the team declines the parent request, a prior written notice must be issued in accordance with 34 CFR Sec. 300.503(a) Federal Register.



SAT Previous Role

SAT referrals included:

- » Obvious disability
- » Gifted referral
- » Student has been retained
- » Student is in danger of being retained (must follow NMAC requirements)
- » Student has been exited from Special Education
- » Student has been restrained two or more times in a 30-day period

A parent who requests his/her child be in SAT or referred for an evaluation of a learning disability

A student could only be referred to SAT in Tier 2

Tier 2 & 3 targeted interventions could only be accessed through SAT

Teachers had to wait until the SAT meeting to change an intervention if ineffective
SAT Intervention plans were monitored and adjusted for efficacy after a certain time period

The previous SAT process only allowed for interventions to be developed and placed on the Academic Intervention Plan, Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) or Academic Improvement Plan (AIP)

The SAT team was usually the only place to study student performance and create interventions

SAT within MLSS

SAT is only required for the situations specified by law:

- » Obvious disability
- » Gifted referral
- » Student has been retained
- » Student is in danger of being retained (must follow NMAC requirements)
- » Student has been exited from Special Education
- » Student has been restrained two or more times in a 30-day period

A parent who requests his/her child be in SAT or referred for an evaluation of a learning disability

A student can be referred to SAT at any layer in MLSS

Targeted interventions can be accessed at any layer

Based on data, a teacher can adjust or change an intervention that is not effective at any time

Accommodations and interventions can be included in the Student Support Plan (Academic Improvement Plan or Behavior Intervention Plan)

Teacher PLCs collaborate weekly/biweekly to study student performance and create school-wide supports for interventions instead of just a SAT team doing this

- » For more [information on interventions, read here](#)
- » For more [information on flex schedules at the secondary level, read here](#)

- » For more information on Section 504, read the [US Dept of Education Office for Civil Rights](#)
- » View the [NMPED Section 504 Overview](#)

Section 504 is a completely different process and should not be confused with SAT, however, many districts use the SAT as the 504 team. Section 504 is a federal civil rights law under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It provides protection against discrimination for individuals with disabilities. Since it is a federal law, it overrides any state mandate and must be done. In New Mexico, most SAT teams also serve as the 504 team. Some districts might be fortunate and have a separate 504 team. The plans developed for students focus on accommodations that best fit the needs of each individual student and must be updated yearly. In summary, 504 remains the same under the MLSS framework.

Doing what is best for students and ensuring that all of their needs are met is the focus of MLSS. The SAT and Section 504 are two processes that assist

to identify the needs of individual students and create a plan of action to support them to be successful in school. Schools in New Mexico have already been implementing these procedures. While the 504 process remains the same, the SAT process might need some redefining within a school's structure under the MLSS framework. MLSS is a multi-faceted structure with a wholistic child approach which reinforces the fact that ALL means ALL. Every student, every day, having every need met. Period.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[View MLSS guidance and online resources](#)

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