

## **New Haven Public Schools Case Study**

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Go to almost any school in New Haven, CT, and you're likely to see a familiar symbol of social and emotional learning. The symbol has its origins in the earliest days of New Haven's district-wide SEL programming in 1989. The passing years have done nothing to diminish its power and validity.

The symbol, often on poster-sized paper, is a stoplight, accompanied by captions in large, bold letters. The red light at the top stands for "Stop—calm down and think before you act." The yellow light means "Wait—until you set a positive goal and think of solutions." The green light means "Go—with the best plan of action."

Several generations of New Haven schoolchildren—and their teachers, parents, and other adults connected with the schools—have learned this simple problem-solving method through classes and workshops organized by the school district's Social Development Department. As described in the department's literature, the stoplight is based on "our program's main thrust: teaching participants how to recognize a difficult—even possibly threatening—situation, to problem-solve creatively and to go forward with solutions that will effectively diffuse tempers, make the problem better, and avoid violence."

The stoplight is far from being the only SEL method used in New Haven's schools. On the contrary, the school system now offers a wide range of SEL programming for grades K–12. The Social Development Department brochure lists an extensive menu of programs, workshops, and other supports for SEL in the schools, including evidence-based curricula, student support services, and co-curricular programs and activities. Nevertheless, the stoplight represents a concept—a structured, higher-order thinking approach to problems—that has endured in New Haven long beyond the lifespan of most school-based problem-prevention programs.

### **SEL IN THE SCHOOLS**

Although the stoplight was first developed at a time when today's high school seniors were in kindergarten, it remains an important learning tool. Roy Araujo became principal of Hill Central, a K-8 school in one of New Haven's poorest neighborhoods, in the summer of 2004. He took over at a time when the school had been experiencing serious problems. Student discipline and staff morale were at worrisome lows. In addition to being a highly competent educational leader, Araujo had also been a trainer in the Social Development Department for many years. Under his leadership, Hill Central's climate changed dramatically soon after his first year as principal began. The school became a welcoming, friendly place, and referrals to the principal's office dropped from hundreds during a typical school year to hardly any at all.

"I use the social problem-solving stoplight a lot," says Araujo. "When children come to my office, I go through the steps. I explain that it's not about punishment. It's about correcting misbehavior and taking responsibility. I emphasize that we are a family at this school, just as they have a family at home. I tell the students they have the power to make it a good day or a bad day. They have choices."

Mauro Elementary School, a K-5 school not far from Hill Central, has experienced many years of on-site support for SEL programming. Nancy Charest, one of the staff trainers for the Social Development Department, has provided coaching and professional development support for this school since 1999. Her influence is evident throughout the building.

- In a hallway two fifth-graders have organized a brief, impromptu meeting with two younger children to discuss a conflict on the playground. The older students are part of the school's peer mediation program. The peer mediators, nominated for this role by their fellow students, are trained in a seven-session workshop.

- All teachers at Mauro have gone through training for one of the elementary curricula recommended by the Social Development Department. At this level Project Charlie is used in the primary grades and Second Step in the upper grades.
- Fifth-grade teacher Barbara Best, who has been at the school since 1987, is teaching a lesson in which she has integrated language arts and an activity from Second Step. The focus is to identify feelings associated with pictures that show students like themselves in a variety of stressful situations. During the lesson the teacher emphasizes a set of vocabulary words that describe feelings of empathy. As a way to draw closure, she asks the students to write a clearly constructed paragraph using several of the new vocabulary words. Later she comments to visitors, "It's easy to make learning these skills part of the school day. There are opportunities everywhere—in the cafeteria, during our literacy work, and whenever there are student conflicts. There are so many teachable moments."
- Also visible throughout the school is a program called Peaceful Classroom, facilitated by Nancy Charest. Signs are posted outside many classrooms that proclaim, "This is a Peaceful Classroom." Initiated in 2003, this pilot program encourages children to take responsibility for their behavior and practice self-control. The teacher hangs a "Peaceful Classroom" sign at the classroom door if things are going well that day. "It's become a kind of status symbol for the teachers and the kids," says Nancy Charest. "If there is a conflict that can't be resolved peacefully, the teacher takes the sign down. That creates very strong positive peer pressure to avoid conflict and resolve it quickly when it occurs."

In short, the approach embodied in New Haven's problem-solving stoplight can be viewed as a keystone for social and emotional learning and a way of framing relationships between adults and children. The stoplight represents the potential to affect the overall climate of a school and the behavior of all members of a school community in profound ways. As one teacher noted in a comment on the offerings of the Social Development Department, "Teaching problem solving to students had a lot of impact on me as well. I found myself stopping (momentarily anyway) in stressful situations, breathing more slowly, and trying to generate more solutions for problems that I had in and out of my classroom. In dealing with my own small children at home, I feel that I have more patience and control because I try to practice what I preach" (Weissberg, Jackson, & Shriver, 1993).

## **READINESS**

Flash backward to 1987. Like all of Connecticut's other major cities, for many decades New Haven suffered from suburban flight, deteriorating public schools, and a host of social problems. New Haven was—and remains—among the poorest cities in the United States. Approximately 40 percent of its children live at or below the poverty level. The presence of Yale University, one of the nation's most prestigious private educational institutions, had little economic impact on New Haven despite efforts of Yale's leaders to address the city's social inequities.

Drug abuse was particularly problematic. By the late 1980s the crack epidemic had reached a peak. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, between 1984 and 1987 cocaine incidents nationwide increased fourfold (DEA, 2004). Drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, school dropout, and gang violence were seriously hurting large numbers of New Haven's youth.

## **Assessing Needs**

In 1987 Superintendent of Schools John Dow convened a task force to examine problem behaviors of New Haven students in five areas: substance abuse, teen pregnancy and AIDS, delinquency and aggressive behavior, truancy, and school dropout. Comprised of teachers, parents, administrators, students, pupil personnel staff, and community representatives, the task force presented two key findings: (1) a significant proportion of students were engaging in high-risk behaviors that interfered with their academic performance and jeopardized their potential to become competent, responsible adults; and (2) many of these problem behaviors had common roots such as low self-esteem, poor problem-solving and communication skills, and a lack of monitoring and support by positive adult role models (Weissberg et al., 2003).

The task force's main recommendation was implementation of a comprehensive, district-wide social development program for kindergarten through grade 12. The recommendation received the approval of the board of education, and Superintendent Dow proceeded immediately to move the district forward in developing a proactive plan.

### **Laying a Foundation**

Toward that end, New Haven established a district-wide Social Development Steering Committee and broadly representative curriculum committees for the elementary, middle, and high school levels. All were charged with several interrelated tasks:

- Articulate the broad mission and goals for the Social Development Project
- Identify a scope and sequence for the social development curriculum that includes student learning objectives at each grade level
- Design or select social development and health promotion programs to address these learning objectives
- Coordinate school, parent, and community activities to support classroom instruction
- Design professional development programs to train and support school teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel staff who implement these programs (Elias et al., 1997)

The basic approach was sound. Nevertheless, much of the Social Development Department's success was due to a unique combination of individuals and organizations coming together to support and enhance SEL.

Yale University played a vitally important role by contributing leadership and support to SEL programming in the New Haven Public Schools since the program's earliest days. Eighteen years after the first meetings of the superintendent's task force, Yale continues to be involved.

Three key components of Yale's sprawling New Haven campus have influenced the evolution of the Social Development Department. One is the Yale Child Study Center, which has been continually involved in the school district's evaluation and assessment of its SEL programming.

Also closely involved with the Social Development Department has been Yale's Department of Psychology. Particularly important in the early years was the role played by Dr. Roger P. Weissberg. Having focused on children's social development since his graduate student years, he was a principal developer of New Haven's earliest SEL programs.

Also involved with the Social Development Department have been program developers and evaluators based in the pediatrics department of the Yale Medical Center. Drs. David Schoenfeld and Kimberly Freudigman of the medical center have taken the lead on numerous grant-funded projects to develop and evaluate new SEL program components in the New Haven Public Schools.

### **PLANNING**

An important step toward district-wide SEL programming in New Haven was the creation in 1990 of the Social Development Department. Its first supervisor, a Yale graduate and doctoral candidate in education at the University of Connecticut, was Tim Shriver. A natural leader and a nephew of U.S. President John F. Kennedy, Shriver presided over the selection of a staff of facilitators and the introduction of the department's initiatives throughout the school district. He and Weissberg worked together in a close partnership.

No one at the beginning was naïve about how easy it would be to introduce SEL programming throughout New Haven's generally low-performing schools. If Weissberg and Shriver were two key legs of a three-legged stool, the third was Superintendent Dow, who had conceived the bold

idea of implementing SEL districtwide immediately. By the mid-1980s, most urban school districts had seen waves of reform come and go, often as a panicky reaction to the alarm sounded by the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation At Risk." The conventional approach to urban school reform was to introduce new programs on a relatively small pilot basis and hope they would eventually gain acceptance. The risk of such an approach is that new programs will be overcome by inertia and resistance.

In contrast, realizing the importance of SEL to students' basic ability to succeed in school, Dow insisted that social development programming be introduced districtwide without waiting for the results of tentative pilots. "He said it had to be in all classes," recalls Weissberg. "He wanted to be able to walk into class and know it was happening. People resisted that. They would say, 'There's no place in the curriculum for this.' He would say, 'Fine, we'll get rid of something else—we'll make room for it in the curriculum.'"

Another member of the Social Development Department staff in the early years, Karol DeFalco, recalls the sense of urgency that made broad acceptance of the program possible. "Most school districts would do it piecemeal," she says. "Dow said, 'If we do it that way, we'll all be dead before it's done district-wide. He said we were going to implement it in every sixth-grade classroom in the district, including special education and bilingual education. That was very daring. I remember a group of ministers from mainly Hispanic congregations approached us because they were concerned that the curriculum taught sex education. They thought that should be taught in the home, not the schools. We presented them with data about Hispanics dropping out and getting pregnant. The meeting was very friendly. At the end of the meeting we agreed that before we did the sex part, we would notify them so they could do their church-based curriculum at the same time. Principals and teachers were not resistant either. We met with the principals and presented the statistical data about their school's environment—dropouts, absentees, academic failure, suspensions, expulsions, and so on. We had a lot of data. They were on board right away. We all realized we had to do something to help our kids."

Pressing needs and Dow's brand of iron-willed determination alone were not enough to create fast-paced system-wide reform. Dow, Shriver, Weissberg, and the district's SEL steering committee recognized that a solid implementation infrastructure would have to be in place. Establishing the Social Development Department was critically important. In addition, the steering committee solicited support for SEL programming among many different stakeholder groups. The teachers' union was among the most important of these. Key union leaders became strong supporters of SEL, and several of them signed on as SEL trainers or facilitators.

Another critical innovation was the creation, with the support of the teachers' union, of system-wide coaching positions to support initial training and ensure effective SEL program implementation by modeling SEL lessons and providing support to classroom teachers implementing them. The district created two categories of coaches: "itinerant" coaches who assisted several different schools and "building-level" coaches assigned to one school only. The infrastructure included a hierarchy of accountability headed by district-level assistant superintendents responsible for SEL implementation. It also enjoyed a solid funding base. "At the beginning several of the top administrators became strategic geniuses at combining strands of money to support this," says Weissberg. One of the main sources of funding in the early days was the federally funded Title 1 program for schools with large percentages of low-income students. New Haven had Title 1 funds in abundance.

Also central to the success of establishing social development as an important district priority was the decision to include in the definition of social development a variety of state-mandated course requirements. These included AIDS prevention, drug abuse prevention, suicide prevention, and numerous others. "Social development became the umbrella for those mandates," recalls one long-time staff member of the Social Development Department. "As we phased in the various curricula, people were always told it was a mandated program."

Despite Superintendent Dow's desire to implement social development programming across the board immediately, however, actual introduction of the curricula took place over a period of several years. The curricula for grades 6 and 9 were introduced in 1989-90, for grades 7 and 10 in 1990-91, for grades 8 and 11 in 1991-92, and for the elementary grades in 1992-93.

### **A Shared Vision for District-Wide Programming**

The early leaders of SEL programming in New Haven were clear about their mission. It had been hammered out during the course of a year's worth of meetings of the various task forces, committees, and subcommittees. As stated in an overview of the program's history, it was "to educate students so that they (a) develop a sense of self-worth and feel effective as they deal with daily responsibilities and challenges; (b) engage in positive, safe, health-protective behavior practices; © become socially skilled and have positive relationships with peers and adults; (d) feel motivated to contribute responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and (e) acquire a set of basic skills, work habits, and values as a foundation for a lifetime of meaningful work" (Weissberg et al., 1997).

### **INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION**

With the infrastructure for SEL in place, the Social Development Department moved quickly to introduce an array of SEL programs and strategies at all levels. These included:

- K–12 curriculum, including 25-50 hours of instruction at each grade level. The curriculum emphasized self-monitoring, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and communication skills; values such as personal responsibility and respect for others; and content about health, culture, interpersonal relationships, and careers.
- Reinforcement of classroom instruction through educational, recreational, and health promotion activities. These included programs such as adult and peer mentoring, peer mediation and leadership groups, after-school clubs, and an outdoor adventure class.
- Involvement of school mental health teams at each school for planning and implementation of schoolwide social development approaches and initiatives. The mental health teams consisted of pupil services staff, teachers, administrators, and parents.

A core element of SEL programming in New Haven was the development of the Social-Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents (SCPP-YA). Developed by Roger Weissberg and colleagues both at Yale and within the New Haven Public Schools, the curriculum, which targeted all sixth-graders in the district, consisted of 45 sessions divided among three modules: (a) Social Problem-Solving (the most extensive set of lessons, including the problem-solving "stoplight"), (b) Substance Use Prevention, and © Human Growth and Development, AIDS Prevention, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention. Throughout, the problem-solving model was critically important. According to Weissberg, teaching the skills of problemsolving was just a beginning. Also needed was constant reinforcement of those skills, both in and out of the classroom.

Karol DeFalco was one of the first to join the permanent staff of the Social Development Department. She did so after extensive pilot testing of the sixth-grade curriculum as a veteran New Haven classroom teacher. "When I finished teaching the curriculum and the rest of life went on and we started utilizing the skills in the classroom, I started to see changes," she says. "By the end of the year I was astounded by the changes. The biggest change was in stress management. There was much less negative interaction between the kids." DeFalco particularly remembers a student named Billy. One of the lessons in the curriculum focuses on timing, i.e., "When is the best time to try to solve a problem?" DeFalco recalls that one day when she was working with a small group in the front of the room, Billy didn't understand his assignment. "Normally I'd say, 'Not now, Billy,'" she recalls. "Then he'd stamp off across the room, yelling and kicking chairs. After the lesson on timing, Billy came up to me while I was working with a small group and said, 'Can you help me?' I said, 'Not now—timing!' He said, 'Timing?' I said, 'Yes, timing.' Then he

said, 'I get it, Ms. DeFalco—you mean I can ask you another time.' That seems like such a simple concept for most of us, but here was a sixth-grade boy who was getting it. It was that kind of stuff that made it easier for me to have discipline in my classroom and make my relationships with the kids better. I could say 'Timing!' instead of 'Not now!'"

### **Selection of Curricula**

The Social-Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents was only one of an extensive menu of curricula and programs the New Haven planners selected for implementation as social development programming expanded to include all the grades. Other well-known, evidence-based curricula and program approaches have included Project Charlie (grades K-4), Second Step (grades 4-5), cooperative learning (multiple grades), peer mediation (all grades), and adult mentoring. All choices of programs and methods have been guided by a set of clearly articulated principles:

- School-based prevention programs should embrace a broad conceptualization of health and positive youth development, addressing children's social, emotional, and physical health through coordinated programming in order to help them reach academic and social success.
- Programs should offer developmentally appropriate, planned, sequential K-12 classroom instruction, using culturally relevant information and research-based materials.
- Effective prevention involves teaching methods that ensure active student engagement, emphasize positive behavior change, and improve student-adult communication.
- Peers, parents, the school, and community members should work together to reinforce classroom instruction.
- Team members must design programs that are acceptable to and reach students at risk, including students already engaging in risky behaviors.
- Classroom instruction must be coordinated with social, mental health, and health services provided to high-risk youth.
- Districts must develop system-wide practices and infrastructures to support social and emotional development programs. (SDD pamphlet)

### **EXPANSION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

After nearly 15 years of system-wide implementation, SEL is well-established in the New Haven public schools, and numerous nationally available evidence-based programs are in place. During the 2004-05 school year, the staff of the Social Development Department consisted of 18 full-time professionals, most of them working as school-based program facilitators and coaches. The department has received widespread recognition and praise, including a news segment on national public television, appearances by program staff on the Oprah Winfrey show, extensive multimedia documentation by the George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF), and a slew of articles documenting the program's success in professional and scientific journals.

#### **Assessment, Re-assessment, and Revision of Existing Plans**

One reason for the department's sustainability has been the extensive work of evaluators from the Yale Child Study Center. Study teams from Yale, working closely with the staff of the Social Development Department, have continually collected data from New Haven's SEL programming and reported impressive results. They have also assisted in writing grant proposals to fund new studies and expanded programs. Particularly important in assessing and reporting on New Haven's SEL impacts have been two instruments that Yale developed in collaboration with the Social Development Department.

- The Social and Health Assessment (SAHA) scale is implemented annually among 3,000-4,000 New Haven students in grades 6 and 9. This instrument assesses students' attitudes toward school, emotional well-being, and risk-related behaviors. Data analysis enables Yale researchers to pinpoint problems and issues specific to individual schools

and also to track improvement in students' school-related problems over time. The SAHA is similar in some ways to the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is distinctly different in providing information about risk-related behavior and trends specific to individual New Haven schools.

- The Teacher-Child Rating Scale (TCRS) is implemented once a year by all teachers in grades K-5. Taking just a few minutes to fill out, this one-page observation form is completed for approximately 7,000 students annually. The scale offers an accurate picture of how well individual children are doing according to socialemotional criteria in four categories: behavior control, peer social skills, task orientation, and assertiveness.

Mary Schwab-Stone is the project director for the Yale assessments. When Yale initiated the SAHA in 1992, Schwab-Stone recalls, "One of the most troubling findings was about having seen someone shot or stabbed. The rate was very high. We wondered if it could possibly be valid. Since that time we've seen remarkable changes. By 1994 there was 3-4 percent positive change across the board. Two years of improvement do not amount to a real trend, but those positive results continued for the next several years. Exposure to violence in the community changed dramatically. There was a 20 percent improvement in response about race relationships in schools. In 1996, after four years of collecting data, we held a press conference to announce the findings. The superintendent of schools, the chief of police, and Dr. James Comer were all there." Schwab-Stone acknowledges that the SAHA cannot establish a causal connection with the work of the Social Development Department, but she is confident it played an important role.

Equally impressive have been more recent findings associated with the TCRS. In 2004 the TCRS found clear correlations between positive social behaviors and high achievement on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), a statewide assessment of students' academic skills. For example, as noted in a summary of the findings, "Those students who were at low risk [in all four categories of the TCRS] in both 2000 and 2002 performed better on CMT reading than any other students."

Observes former social development staffer Karol DeFalco, "One reason the program has stayed alive in New Haven is that we walloped the district with data and assessment. The school district couldn't ignore that type of information. One of the results is that in the schools that had strong social development programs, the students did better academically. We had charts and graphs, and we spoke at the board of education meetings. Those are the kinds of things we did to get a strong foothold in the school district. That helped the program get strong and powerful."

Assisted by the Yale evaluators, the district has undergone a continual process of assessing its social development programs to ensure the best fit between program design and local school and staff needs (process evaluation), as well as the optimal program impact on students (outcome evaluation). Over time, some programs that were initially considered appropriate have been replaced by others. During the 2004-05 school year, 15 years after the Social Development Department was first established in New Haven, the district embarked on a systematic test of the PATHS curriculum for the elementary grades. According to Yale evaluator Kimberly Freudigman, "Our goal is to update all the evidence-based curricula. In the past there have been too many curricula requiring too much training. Ideally students will experience several consecutive years with the same curriculum. That's why PATHS was appealing to us. It has a sequential curriculum so teachers across levels can be trained."

The pilot study of the PATHS curriculum reflects the continual assessment and revision of existing plans and projects that has characterized New Haven's social development programming since its inception. On the one hand, the updating and revisions have been driven by the extensive data collected by the Yale researchers. Because of this unusual amount of data collection and analysis, the New Haven public schools are able to pinpoint which programs are effective and why. This enables corrections in course that can lead to more efficient and improved delivery of programs and services.

It would be misleading to claim that New Haven's SEL programming is driven solely by scientific data. Although that is true to an unusual degree, particularly for a hard-pressed urban school district, the New Haven Public Schools have also been buffeted by numerous changes—social, economic, and political—in the broader society. In addition, as with any other large urban school district, the New Haven public school system has its own unique internal dynamics and crosscurrents. Considering the effect of these crosscurrents over a period of 15 years, it is even more remarkable that the Social Development Department continues to be the school district's largest.

### **Turning Points and Challenges**

The New Haven Social Development Department has encountered a steady progression of major turning points and challenges.

#### *The Challenge of High District Staff Turnover*

One of these, the constant turnover of key staff, is such a pervasive factor that it could be more accurately described as an unending continuum of turning points. New Haven experiences an annual turnover rate of approximately 20 percent of administrators and teachers. According to one recent count, there were 18 new principals in one year.

Perhaps surprisingly for a large urban school district, frequent turnover at the highest level has not been an issue. John Dow retired as superintendent in 1992. His replacement, Dr. Reginald Mayo, a veteran of the New Haven Public Schools, has been a strong supporter of the Social Development Department. His current tenure is nearly triple the average of urban school superintendents.

The Social Development Department itself has had four directors. The current director, Dee Speese-Linehan, a former New Haven school principal with a strong background in children's mental health, has held the position since 1998. She has worked tirelessly to ensure the department's sustainability and viability in the face of new and shifting challenges. Even among the department staff, turnover has been relatively low. The average tenure of department staff is five years, and some have been with the department since its earliest years.

Yet turnover at the school level is a formidable obstacle to effective system-wide change. "It requires constant re-education of everyone and constant training and retraining," says Dee Speese-Linehan. "With such high rates of turnover, it's difficult to build any continuity or demonstrate the long-term effects of social development programming." Asked if the high turnover is an indication of dissatisfaction among teachers and administrators with the New Haven schools generally, Speese-Linehan counters with, "I don't think so. It's mainly about salary. Some of the nearby school districts are paying teachers almost one-third more than they can earn in New Haven. Who can blame them for leaving?"

#### *The Growing Importance of Standardized Test Scores*

Another important development has been the growing emphasis on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), the statewide assessment of basic literacy and mathematics skills. According to Speese-Linehan, "The principals in particular have been focused on this and are less inclined than ever to want to devote time to social development. For example, many teachers are still doing morning meetings, but instead of having the focus be on social development and building community, many now do math morning meetings." New Haven, like all school districts that receive federal funds, must abide by the rules of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Ten schools in New Haven have been categorized as failing under NCLB, and, beginning in 2003, they became the focus of intensive school improvement efforts. Even among the better-performing schools, however, concern about students' CMT scores pervades the district.

Social Development Department staff member Mike Twitty says he has seen the effects of these pressures among all the teachers with whom he works. "They feel overwhelmed by what is mandated by downtown," he says. "They feel they don't have the time to work on the social development piece." To counter that, he emphasizes modeling of SEL lessons and helping individual students. "I encourage them to focus on one or two kids in their classroom that may be challenging," he says. "I try to show them how social development can create positive changes in kids. Then they get the connection that this curriculum will help you teach your class." Twitty also believes the consistency of the curriculum from one grade level to the next has had an important positive impact. "You can see how the programs are integrated through the grade levels," he says. "That helps staff members to see how it progresses and why it's important for them to do their part in supporting it."

#### *District-Wide Planning for Change*

In 2003, the New Haven Public Schools received a major long-term grant from the Stupski Foundation, based in Marin County, California, to undergo an extensive process of priority setting, planning, and organizational change. A high-level team of district administrators traveled to California for an intensive planning retreat that led to a mission statement, a major theme ("Kids First"), five "Bold Goals" for all schools in the district, and an action plan to achieve them.

The vision statement embodied several principles of social and emotional development. It states: "New Haven Public Schools will be nurturing, healthy, safe school environments that exhibit equitable systems of support and resources; family and community engagement; effective leadership; quality teaching; respect, trust, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of individual differences among all stakeholders; and higher-achieving students as measured by standards and assessments."

The five bold goals are:

1. 95% of students will be ready to succeed by the end of kindergarten
2. 95% of students will meet literacy and math standards
3. Achievement gap will be no more than 5% for defined subgroups
4. 95% of students will demonstrate necessary social skills for success in school and life
5. 95% of students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade will graduate ready for college, postsecondary education, military or the workforce

A statement of the five goals is posted in every public school classroom in New Haven. Staff of the Social Development Department are understandably grateful for goal 4. "It's because of the superintendent that social development is one of the goals," says long-time social development facilitator Nancy Charest. "He made a point of including it. The social development goal helps bring people on board and shows that social development is still an important part of the district's overall plan."

Some are not so optimistic. Social development staff member Carolyn Ross-Lee says she is grateful for goal 4 but sees it only as a beginning. "Right now we're the smallest voice in the room of the bold goals," she says. "Training is required for teachers to see how the integration of social development relates to the other goals. Otherwise they don't have time to think about it. We need to have a louder voice. Math and literacy are always in their faces, and social development is not as much of a priority. The teachers don't have time to think about integrating it. That's where we come in, but it's a challenge. We're working on it."

#### *Internal Reorganization*

In the spring of 2002, the Social Development Department embarked on its own intensive reorganization and planning process. After the complete staff met for a one-day retreat, with another half-day follow-up meeting, a new plan began to take shape that resulted in significant changes in the department's structure and operations. The primary change, according to Dee Speese-Linehan, was a shift away from focusing on the entire spectrum of SEL programming. "The new focus is more on prevention," she says, "particularly on the teaching of SEL curricula,

with an emphasis on teacher training, training of trainers, modeling, and coaching.” She believes that the shift back to prevention has been a positive change. Each year the staff meets to reaffirm their direction.

Notes social development staff member Louis Campbell, “It’s clearer now what our focus needs to be. Before we were jumping between prevention and intervention. Intervention can consume you, because you’re dealing with daily problems. People were calling us to put out the fire. Now we’re saying let’s prevent the fire. We’re focusing on what we all believe is the key.”

### **Securing Resources and Support**

For the New Haven Social Development Department, fund-raising has been a way of life. In its early stages the department was supported primarily by state and local grants. From the beginning, however, resources provided by community agencies and institutions played an important role in sustaining SEL in the New Haven schools. For example, early in its development the department established a partnership with the local police department that enlisted police officers in a highly successful district-wide mentoring program.

The department’s funding picture changed dramatically in 1999 when the district successfully competed for a federal Safe Schools Healthy Students grant. The nearly \$9 million three-year project, funded jointly by the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services, doubled the size of the Social Development Department staff. The department moved from a crowded high school classroom into new offices occupying an entire floor of a former convent close to downtown. This major expansion of resources enabled the department to increase its outreach to schools significantly. At the same time, it came with some unexpected costs. “When there were just nine of us in one room,” says staff member Sandra Duhaney-Johnson, “it was like a big family. With the new grant, suddenly there were so many new people.”

The new grant was limited to three years, and the end of the funding period coincided with belt-tightening throughout the district. This required Speese-Linehan and her staff to become diligent proposal writers, churning out requests for additional funding on a regular basis. New grants have helped to support the department’s staff at a consistently high level, making it the largest single department in the district. But that, too, has exacted a price. Job descriptions and assignments have often had to be adjusted to the requirements of specific funding sources. The result has been a continual process of subtly shifting priorities and staff assignments while at the same time keeping the basic goal of system-wide social development programming in mind.

### **Looking Toward the Future**

New Haven’s Social Development Department has been in existence for 15 years—but is it sustainable?

Dee Speese-Linehan is confident about the future of social development in New Haven. “The district has made a commitment to the bold goal on social development,” she says. “More and more, we can present data in ways that make it easier for teachers to understand it and schools to use it. It’s exciting that people see there’s a role for social development across the board. They want to include it in everything. People are beginning to connect the dots. We’ve done a lot of work in presenting our data. When you start to see people understand that social development does fit together with academics, that’s what gives me hope. We have a new mantra now. We say we want everyone in our schools to be in a safe, caring, disciplined environment. What does that mean? It means we need the social development programs. Caring and discipline have different meanings now than they did five years ago. It’s never the same; it’s always dynamic.”