

2021 Special Committee on Education

December 1, 2021

Social Emotional Learning and Data Collection

Testimony by Linda Highland

Chair, Representative Kristey Williams; Vice Chair, Senator Molly Baumgardner; Ranking Minority Member, Valdenia Winn; and Committee Members thank you for your service and for this opportunity to come before you to at the 2021 Special Committee on Education.

I wish to address that Kansas Social Emotional Character Development Curriculum (SEDC) and its accompanying data collection is a blockade to academic achievement for students. My concern, as a trained professional in Secondary Education and as a parent and grandparent, is that the practice of giving certain tests, questionnaires, surveys, and examinations is overused in our schools and takes away from academics, and that the collection and storage of data on students is a violation of the students' rights.

What kind of behaviors are youth focusing upon in school today? Increasingly, the school day is concerned with surveying as a tool in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)(please see Attachment 1 for a list). SEL became a trend 27 years ago when introduced by CASEL, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, which is funded by many foundations. In a press release CASEL announced, in part: "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." Kansas Department of Education was the first in the nation to fully adopt a comprehensive SEL K-12 curriculum.

Unfortunately, the lessons under SEL give more attention to harmful behaviors, than to a healthy lifestyle. This is most evident when it comes to the widespread use of the twenty or more behavioral tests and surveys promoted by KSDE in the SECD, Social Emotional Character Development Curriculum. That list, which comes directly from KSDE Measuring Social Emotional Growth Locally 182-page document, is included in my testimony.

Let's take a deeper look into behavioral data collection questioning. The Kansas Communities That Care Youth Survey (KCTC) is just one example of a survey that has been widely used in Kansas schools 27 years as a tool for collecting data and receiving grants for many programs. It is worth noting that The Communities That Care organization (KCTC) and Collaborative for

Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL) both began 27 years ago and are used in conjunction. A growing number of agencies use the unreliable data collected from the KCTC survey. It is also the survey used to support the need for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and to establish the need for drug testing students. This hour-long survey, administered four times in a student's life in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, uses leading questions and violates a student's right to privacy by asking very personal questions about drug and alcohol use, family life issues, gun usage, violence, and worst of all, if they "made a plan how you would kill yourself." The questions are depressing at best and, in some cases, place dangerous suggestions in the minds of our youth. Page 124 from the KSDE Measuring Social Emotional Growth Locally document is attached to my testimony (see Attachment 2). It gives you a sample report of questions from the KCTC survey. I encourage you to read all this 182-page KSDE document.

The KCTC is a program in the office of the United States Government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, who funds it through the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services/Behavioral Health Services (KDADS) and administers it through the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center- Greenbush. It has been given in Kansas since 1994, and was first developed by Drs. J. David Hawkins and Richard Catalano at the University of Washington's Social Development Research Group.

As it turns out, this author feels the best training for alcohol and drug abuse and other dangerous behaviors is the KCTC survey. After you read the KCTC survey, please ask yourself if a sixth grader, or any student for that matter, should be asked the KCTC survey questions. I feel these questions are never appropriate for a sixth grader. Students are told in the instructions, "This is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers." However, the survey incriminates the students and feels very much like a test.

Young adults, whom I have asked if they recall taking a drug survey in school, state that occasion was one they will never forget. It is disturbing that, of all the tests in their education career, this survey stands out and is always remembered by young people. I am also told that they so disliked like taking the KCTC Survey and reading the questions that many self-reported the worst possible answers just to get it done. And who could blame them. More and more legislators, parents, teachers, and citizens groups are questioning the validity of the KCTC survey, and all such surveying based upon the known widespread false reporting by students. Data from this survey is not valid. Juvenile justice reliable data should be used in its place.

How would you have reacted as a sixth grader to these probing questions?

"How old were you when you first smoked marijuana, smoked a cigarette, had more than a sip or two of beer, wine or hard liquor, began drinking alcoholic beverages regularly, got suspended from school, got arrested, carried a handgun, attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them, and belonged to a gang?"

“How many times in the past year have you been suspended from school, carried a handgun, sold illegal drugs, stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or a motorcycle, been arrested, attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them, been drunk or high at school, taken a handgun to school, stolen something worth more than \$5, purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you (not counting family property), taken something from a store without paying for it?”

Should your sixth grader be asked if they want to kill themselves? “In the past 30 days and in the past year, have you ever tried to kill yourself? In the past 30 days and in the past year, have you ever made a plan about how you would kill yourself? In the past 30 days and in the past year have you ever seriously thought about killing yourself?” Is this appropriate during the recent difficult years, or for that matter, any year?

Next, the KCTC survey inquires about your sixth graders drug usage. “On how many occasions (if any) have you used in your lifetime and during the past 30 days marijuana; LDS or other psychedelic, cocaine or crack; MDMA (“ecstasy”); sniffed glue, breathed the contents of an aerosol spray can, or inhaled other gasses or sprays, in order to get high; Tyrexatine (“T-Rex”, “Reck”); methamphetamines (“meth”); prescription opiate pain relivers, such as Vicodin, OxyContin, or Tylox without a doctor’s orders; prescription tranquilizers, such as Xanax, Valium, or Ambien, without a doctor’s orders; prescription stimulants, such as Ritalin, or Adderall, without a doctor’s orders; or other illegal drugs.” Leaving nothing to chance exposure, every sixth grader has lost all innocence after just reading the questions. Remember, there is nothing wrong with any answer, say the instructions.

Questions probe into the family and community life of your sixth grader. “Do you feel very close to your mother and your father? Do you enjoy spending time with them? Do people in my family have serious arguments? Have any of your brothers or sisters ever (long list of bad behavior)? If you carried a handgun without your parents’ permission, would you be caught by your parents?” This is a training on opportunities to turn in family members!

What is the outcome for students taking this survey? Naturally, youth will learn that all the dangerous behaviors listed in the survey are normal. The school has reinforced and normalized all the possible ways to consume drugs and alcohol and how to get into trouble. I believe the KCTC Survey is a teaching tool that trains students in many dangerous lifestyles, just by the very reading of the survey. What youth focus upon comes about in their lives. By taking this survey a young sixth grader is fully introduced to the world of drugs and fully informed on all possible dangerous activities of which they could become involved. The questions are worded assuming that the youth have engaged in drug activity and are guilty of any number of dangerous lifestyle decisions. Why are you allowing this to be done to these young minds?

After statistical analysis of the surveys, it may be determined that the students in the school district have problems so serious that the next obvious step must be drug testing. So, the

answers did matter after all! If they come up positive on the real drug test with consequences, it could mean suspension, having it reported on their school record for at least two years, and off extracurricular activities. The positive things in life are taken away! The parent usually is not allowed to opt their child out of the drug testing program.

I am outraged by the nature of the questions. Our own children were coerced into taking the KCTC without our consent. From that time on I have wanted Kansans to read the KCTC survey and other offensive and dangerous surveys. Parents and guardians have the right to read all documents when very personal and destructive line of questioning is going to be administered to their children.

Questions must be asked. Is any of the behavioral data being collected valid? Where is the data stored? Are the sites secure? What kind of a data records will the schools have accumulated on students upon graduation? Will this follow them for life? Is taking surveys going to solve anything in a student's life? How will the damage from the very taking of behavioral surveys be reversed? Are the millions coming into Kansas to survey students a good investment in education? Is money being made selling the student data? Has SEL and behavioral testing become a blockade to learning? Is the wellbeing of our youth and pursuing excellence in a student's academic strengths really the focus of Kansas schools?

In summation, Social Emotional Learning and behavioral surveys and data collecting: 1. Have failed to solve anything for students 2. Promote dangerous lifestyles and drug and alcohol usage 3. Have questionable data validity 4. Violate a student's right to privacy 5. Violate parental and guardian rights 6. Is costly to the state and local school districts 7. Wastes precious classroom time and is a detriment to academic learning and achievement.

I humbly ask you to recognize that behavioral testing and Social Emotional Learning is being overused in our Kansas schools. Hopefully soon the KCTC survey and other such behavioral testing violations of students and families will no longer be used. Please help protect our Kansas students from Social Emotional Learning and growing data collection invasion of their private lives.

Parental oversight is needed to correct this ominous trend. Today I call upon parents and guardians to take action. Let your child's school know in writing that all behavioral data collection and SEL curriculum may not be used with your precious child. Now is the time for **PARENTS IN CONTROL!**

Attachment 1

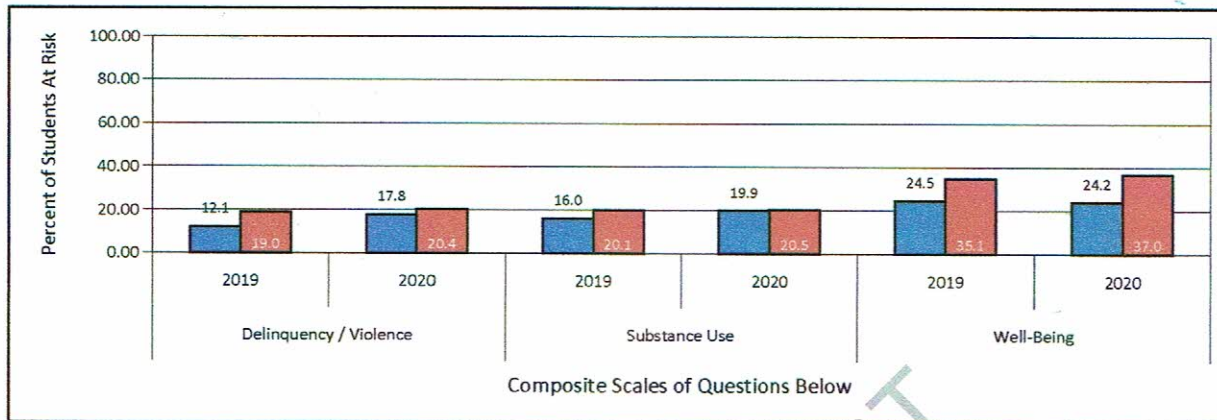
Data Collection Systems Used in Kansas Schools to Data Mine Students

Kansas was the first state in the nation to adopt comprehensive Social, Emotional, and Character Development (SECD) Model Standards for grades K-12. This Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum collects an enormous amount of data on each student. The list below of behavioral tests and surveys was taken from Measuring Social-Emotional Growth Locally, KSDE.

1. Kansans Can Competency Framework – Research Collaboration Surveys.org – Data Dashboard
 - a. Competency Framework Needs Assessment
 - b. Knowledge & Situational Judgement Tests
 - c. Formative Questionnaires
 - d. Performance Based Observations
 - e. Performance Based Reflections
2. Universal Risk Screening
3. School Culture/Equity Screening
4. Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL)- Social Emotional Character Development (SECD) Likert Scale
5. Panorama - Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Survey
6. Climate Measures – Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Report based on measures collected by Kansas Communities That Care (KCTC):
 - a. The Kansas Communities That Care Survey (KCTC) – 6th, 8th, 10th, 12th grades
 - b. Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Surveillance System – CDC – 9-12 grades
 - c. Family Engagement Survey (FES)
7. Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social Emotional (ASQ – SE2)
8. Spence Children’s Anxiety Scale (SCSA)
9. Social Skills Improvement System – Social Emotional Learning (SSIS – SEL)
10. Holistic Student Assessment (HAS)
11. Employability Skills – Measuring and Reflecting Student Learning – Work Based Learning (WBL)
12. Aperture - Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA)
13. Committee for Children - Second Step
14. Resilience School Self-Assessment

Personal Development Standard**District: 29.4****Kansas: 39.2****Definition:**

Identify, understand and effectively manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.



* Numbers shown below are percent of students responding.

Delinquency / Violence

	Prior Yr	District	KS
How many times in the past year have you carried a handgun? (At least once)	5.3	10.0	5.3 ■
How many times in the past year have you been suspended from school? (At least once)	3.0	5.3	8.8
How many times in the past year have you attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them? (At least once)	4.3	5.3	6.7
How many times in the past year have you stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle? (At least once)	0.0	0.6	0.9
How many times in the past year have you sold illegal drugs? (At least once)	0.8	0.6	2.1
How many times in the past year have you been drunk or high at school? (At least once)	3.0	3.4	6.0
In the past year, have you gambled for money or anything of value? (At least once)	14.3	15.4	13.8 ■
How many times in the past year have you taken a handgun to school? (At least once)	0.3	0.0	0.5
How many times in the past year have you been arrested? (At least once)	0.8	0.9	2.1

Substance Use

	Prior Yr	District	KS
On how many occasions (if any) have you had beer, wine, or hard liquor during the past 30 days? (At least once)	14.2	19.2	16.4 ■
How frequently have you smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days? (At least once)	1.6	1.3	3.0
On how many occasions (if any) have you used ANY illicit drug other than tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana during the past 30 days? (Any substance - At least once)	5.1	6.8	7.1
On how many occasions (if any) have you used marijuana during the past 30 days? (At least once)	2.7	4.3	7.2

Well-Being

	Prior Yr	District	KS
I feel safe in my neighborhood, or the area around where I live. (NO! no)	9.5	10.9	16.9
During the past year, how often did you miss school because you felt unsafe, uncomfortable or nervous at school or on your way to or from school? (At least once)	6.0	6.8	14.8
During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities? (Yes)	23.8	23.8	31.6
During the past year, have you ever tried to kill yourself? (Includes 'In the past 30 days' and 'In the past year')	2.8	2.2	5.3
During the past year, have you ever made a plan about how you would kill yourself? (Includes 'In the past 30 days' and 'In the past year')	6.3	6.8	11.9
During the past year, have you ever seriously thought about killing yourself? (Includes 'In the past 30 days' and 'In the past year')	13.1	11.7	18.7

July, 2020