ISSUE BRIEF NO. 3

District administrator reports of academic and social, emotional, and behavioral standards in U.S. public school districts

The NEEDs² Project

In recent years, there has been a shift in education toward proactive models of service delivery for students who exhibit signs of social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) health concerns. In 2015-16, our NEEDs² team conducted five online surveys of district administrators, school building administrators, student support personnel, teachers, and parents. As part of the survey, 1,330 district administrators were asked to report on current academic and SEB standards and practices in their districts.¹ ²

Key Findings

➤ Whereas almost all U.S. public school districts report having academic standards (99% at both the elementary and secondary levels), less than half (44% at the elementary level; 40% at the secondary level) have SEB standards. Thus, the presence of school-based SEB standards is the exception, not the norm.

➤ For those District Administrators (DAs) that report having academic standards, state mandates primarily influenced that choice, followed by district-level decisions. For those that report having SEB standards, on the other hand, decisions are widely district- or building-level. [See Figures on page 2]

➤ In districts with SEB standards (i.e. less than half), DAs report similarly positive rates of use for both academic and SEB standards. On a scale from 1 (not successfully) to 5 (very successfully), DAs reported:
  * Academic standards are used successfully at the elementary (Mean = 3.82) and secondary (Mean = 3.65) levels
  * SEB standards are used successfully at the elementary (Mean = 3.53) and secondary (Mean = 3.36)

¹ 98% of respondents report that their district served elementary grades and (87%) report that their district served secondary grades.
District Administrator Reports of Academic and SEB Standards, and Influences on the Presence of those Standards

Elementary Grades

**Academic Standards**

- State mandate: 80%
- Building-specific decision: 15%
- District-wide decision: 15%

**SEB Standards**

- State mandate: 9%
- District-wide decision: 21%
- Building-specific decision: 14%

Secondary Grades

**Academic Standards**

- State mandate: 83%
- Building-specific decision: 3%
- District-wide decision: 14%

**SEB Standards**

- State mandate: 7%
- District-wide decision: 18%
- Building-specific decision: 15%

For Additional Information