



### Special Points of Interest:

- ❖ 8th Grade Parent News - Page 4
- ❖ Yearbook Sales - Page 7
- ❖ Snapshot NMS - Pages 10-12



## Principal's Corner

*A message from Thomas Einhorn, Principal, Newtown Middle School*

As I write this column I am reminded of the "gift" our parent community becomes for us each and every week. These are "gifts" not dependent on a season. Whatever would we do without our parent volunteers who "gift" us regularly with their time and talents?

For example, many thanks to parent volunteers **Karen Smiley, Cheri Bisson, and Jen Sinapi**, who distributed 1,707 tubs of cookie dough recently for our 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Our current PTA officers, **Co -Presidents Kristen Bonacci and Melissa Beylouni, First Vice President Jennifer Chaudhary, Second Vice President Monica Kwarcinski, Treasurer Brooke Heinen, and Secretary Julia Crisci** – devote countless hours to help the middle school be a great place for our students and staff. Wonderful events are planned for each year, including Luncheons, Ice Cream Truck for students and staff, Coffee Carts, to name a few. This board also oversees and distributes invaluable PTA Grants to our Staff. We truly appreciate their time and effort! Our recent successful Book Fair was chaired by **Kristin Kinsey and Stacy Walton**, and made possible by numerous parent volunteers. Our student assemblies, such as Internet Safety speaker Scott Driscoll would not happen if not for our PTA. We are looking forward to the Musical Performance of Andes Manta in February sponsored by our PTA. **Julia Crisci** chaired our PTA membership and **Melissa Baylouni** took on our Directory this year. Our Welcome Back luncheon was graciously coordinated by **Melissa Beylouni**, and a big thanks to **Kristen Bonacci, Melissa Beylouni, and countless parents** for a delicious luncheon, including quite an array of desserts and appetizers for a staff holiday treat.

Big thanks to **Dawn Roman-Weide** for her work with our Spirit Wear Sale this year, and also to **Jill Baimel**, who facilitated our PTA Reflections Contest, along with **Kris Powers, Renee Deveau, Nora Murphy & Kat Banas**. In addition, no matter which cluster requests parents to accompany them on field trips, or for classroom assistance, the volunteer list is long, with many parents even willing to take time off work in order to join their child's class

adventure. We are looking forward to the installation of our Ben's Bells Be Kind Tile Mural in April with the support of our PTA. And the list continues...

Your "gift" of volunteer time is **deeply** appreciated by our entire school community. If you are reading this and have an idea about some way you'd like to help and get involved, please telephone me at 426-7642 and share your idea. What a difference you, our volunteers, make to our school! My warmest thanks on behalf of our students and staff!

As you well know, it seems that technology is playing a larger and larger part in our daily lives. Unfortunately, this can also lead to distractions that can interfere with teaching and learning. To that end, we would like to remind our school community of our expectations when it comes to cell phone and electronic devices brought from home. We ask that students put away these devices away during school hours and only take them out when a teacher indicates that it is appropriate to do so. Students are not permitted to use their cellphones during the day. In the event of extenuating circumstances where a student does need to contact a parent, we are more than happy to allow the student to use a phone, they need only ask. This also applies to text messaging, we ask that you not text your children during the school day. If you have an urgent message that you need to share with your child, please call the Main Office, and we will get the message to them.

All the best!!  
Tom Einhorn, Principal

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Assistant Principal News	Page 2-3
Student Council	Page 8
PTA News	Page 9
SBHC News	Page 13

# Assistant Principal's Message

By James Ross, Assistant Principal

## Newtown Middle School Homework Guidelines and Tips

Homework allows students the opportunities to practice and apply their learning. On average, students should have ten minutes of homework per night for each grade level that they are in. For example students in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade should expect to have an average of 70 minutes of homework.

### **Homework: A Guide for Parents**

By Peg Dawson, EdD, NCSP

Seacoast Mental Health Center, Portsmouth, NH

### **Homework Routines**

**Step 1. Find a location in the house where homework will be done.** The right location will depend on your child and the culture of your family. Some children do best at a desk in their bedroom. It is a quiet location, away from the hubbub of family noise. Other children become too distracted by the things they keep in their bedroom and do better at a place removed from those distractions, like the dining room table. Some children need to work by themselves. Others need to have parents nearby to help keep them on task and to answer questions when problems arise. Ask your child where the best place is to work.

**Step 2. Set up a homework center.** Once you and your child have identified a location, fix it up as a home office/homework center. Make sure there is a clear workspace large enough to set out all the materials necessary for completing assignments. If possible, the homework center should include a bulletin board that can hold a monthly calendar on which your child can keep track of long-term assignments.

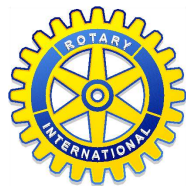
**Step 3. Establish a homework time.** Your child should get in the habit of doing homework at the same time every day. The time may vary depending on the individual child. Some children need a break right after school to get some exercise and have a snack. Others need to start homework while they are still in a school mode (i.e., right after school when there is still some momentum left from getting through the day). In general, it may be best to get homework done either before dinner or as early in the evening as the child can tolerate. The later it gets, the more tired the child becomes and the more slowly the homework gets done.

**Step 4. Establish a daily homework schedule.** In general, at least into middle school, the homework session should begin with your sitting down with your child and drawing up a homework schedule. You should review all the assignments and make sure your child understands them and has all the necessary materials. Ask your child to estimate how long it will take to complete each assignment. Then ask when each assignment will get started. If your child needs help with any assignment, then this should be determined at the beginning so that the start times can take into account parent availability.

## Assistant Principal's Message (cont.)

*By James Ross, Assistant Principal*

### Newtown Rotary Club Students of the Month



**Rotary Award**

**December 2019**

**Grade 8  
Newtown Middle School**

Mary S

Mary is an incredible, young lady. Her determination to do well and work diligently is exemplary. She is kind, caring and goes out of her way to find the good in each and every day. Mary's sharp sense of observation allows her to understand others and lend a helping hand or advice to her peers and teachers. Mary has a mature outlook on daily activities and life which she approaches with a keen sense of humor. She is a problem solver who can ascertain logical solutions to a problem. Mary is an avid Disney lover and dreams of one day working at the theme park. Mary has been involved in many charities, and she continues to envision ways to make our world a better place. We, the teachers of 8 Red, would like to congratulate Mary on her Rotary Award. We are honored to have the opportunity to know and teach Mary.

## Counseling Office News

### Career Day

A tremendous thank you to all of the parents and members of our community who helped to make this year's Career Day a success! Each year, our 8th grade students have the opportunity to hear about such wonderful careers with hands-on, engaging presentations, and this year was no exception. The students had 20 different occupations to choose from ranging from the Coast Guard to Global Diversity to Precision Machining. We are grateful to our parents and Abbott Tech for taking the time to share their knowledge and expertise with our students.



## Counseling Office News - (cont.)

### “Updated Timeline”

High School Transition Timeline from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade counselors

**Attention all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and parents/guardians.**

**Believe it or not, it's that time of year when we start talking about high school! Mrs. Hague-Doehr and Miss Connelly have been busy providing classroom lessons through Road Trip Nation to help 8<sup>th</sup> graders deepen their knowledge about their own strengths, skills and interests as they relate to career and post-high school choices. We want you all to be keeping your eyes on the calendar with some very important upcoming dates in mind. Below is an outline on those that are key.**

- 12/20/19 Program of studies available online. This can be found on the NHS Counseling Office Webpage <https://sites.google.com/newtown.k12.ct.us/school-counseling-office/home?authuser=0>
- Early to mid January- Mrs. Hague-Doehr and Miss Connelly will be presenting HS course selection lessons to 8<sup>th</sup> graders in cluster classes. Students will be provided with worksheet which they will then need to bring to their HS counselor scheduling meeting in March.
- Mid January- 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers begin to make course level recommendations through the portal - these are based on the criteria which is set by the department coordinators at Newtown High School
- End of Q2- (1/22/20) 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers complete course level recommendations
- January 23<sup>rd</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Counselor Coffee- parents will experience the same lesson their students received regarding HS scheduling (7:30-8:30 AM in B6 and 6:30-7:30 PM in the LMC)
- 2/4/20-(tentative date based on end of quarter needing adjustments due to weather related school closures) HS recommendations available on the portal
- 2/5/20 Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Info Night at NHS (for students and parents)
- 2/7/20 Shadow day at NHS
- 2/13/20- NHS HAWKS (honor society) and teachers from BEAT here to present to 8<sup>th</sup> graders about electives, clubs/activities and expectations.
- March 2-11- HS counselors here to schedule students in 1:1 meetings set for 10 minutes each.

## Counseling Office News - (cont.)

# Coffee with the Counselors Newtown Middle School



**Date:** Friday, January 10, 2020

**Time:** 2:00-3:00PM

**Location:** Room B6, NMS

Please join the NMS School Counselors for an open forum discussion to answer any questions you may have.

All parents are welcome.

We would appreciate an RSVP to:

**RSVP:** Stacey Premus  
203-426-7645 or  
[premuss@newtown.k12.ct.us](mailto:premuss@newtown.k12.ct.us)

## Yearbook Club



### YEARBOOK PRICE TO INCREASE!

After January, the cost will increase to \$38 -  
ORDER YOURS TODAY for only \$36!!!

Don't miss out on the memories!

[~ CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE ORDER PAGE ~](#)

Or call 877-767-5217 during regular business hours.

Email Miss Lang if you have any questions.

### January Yearbook club meetings

We will meet on 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and possibly 1/29 [TBA].

Please arrange a ride home; see Miss Lang with any questions.

## Student Council News

By: Susan Musco, Shari Oliver, Advisors



The Student Council food drive in November helped WIN (Women Involved in Newtown) provide food for 75 families in need over the holiday season! Great job NMS!

The Student Council, in cooperation with the NMS PTA, is raising money to have a Ben's Bells Be Kind mural installed at the middle school this spring. To help support this effort student council is selling NMS tee shirts. The shirts are \$12 each and were sold in the cafeteria during lunch. Proceeds from the sales will go toward the cost of the mural. The tee shirts will also help support our Spirit Day initiative where students are asked to wear school colors and/or spirit wear that represents NMS every Friday. We made a good start, but we need to sell more to reach our fund-raising goal. More information on where you can buy a tee shirt will be coming soon. If you have any questions about the tee shirt sales please email Mrs. Musco.

*Thanks for all of your continued support.  
We wish all families a peaceful and healthy new year; may 2020 be your best year yet!*

**Happy  
New Year!**



### Special Thanks

Greetings NMS families and friends;  
The NMS PTA would like to wish all  
of our NMS Parents, Teachers, and  
Staff a happy and healthy New Year!

We would also like to thank everyone  
who made our Holiday Staff Luncheon a huge success! Please look  
for our updated information regarding our Ben's Bell Mural installa-  
tion to find out how you and your student can be a part of this very  
special addition to our Middle School!

NMS PTA Executive Board





# Snapshot NMS

Chelsea Calderbank

## Stressed Out?

On Tuesday, November 12th, I interviewed Susan Connelly. Ms. Connelly is a school counselor at Newtown Middle School. In the interview, we talked about stress, how to reduce it, and what causes stress.

One of the first things we discussed was what she thought the definition of stress was. Ms. Connelly's definition of stress was anything that makes you feel overwhelmed, angry, or upset. However, sometimes stress can be positive. Positive stress is what motivates you to do your work and remember to turn that work in.

Since I wanted more information about what causes stress, I asked her what were common stress factors for students. Ms. Connelly replied that common stress factors for students were friends, family, tests and projects, and lack of sleep. Most people did not know sleep affects stress so this proves that sleep actually does affect stress. At one point in our interview, she explained how what you eat can cause stress or reduce stress. Foods that increase stress usually contain caffeine, or sugar, and much more. This means the food you consume can also affect your stress levels.

Now for the big question. How do you actually reduce stress? In Ms. Connelly's opinion, some good stress relievers are music, quiet time, nature, and LAUGHTER! The reason I asked for Ms. Connelly's opinion is that everyone has different stress relievers. The definition of a stress reliever is anything that helps you reduce your stressed, upset, or angry feelings. It is very important to find the right stress reliever for YOU. Everyone is different and most likely will have different stress reliever.

But even though there are good options open to help with stress, there are still many things you shouldn't do if stressed. According to Ms. Connelly, some things you should never do are stay in a stressful situation or ignore the situation. When you ignore the situation, your negative emotions will continue to build up until you are very enraged or depressed.

As we talked more and more about stress, it became clearer that school was a common stress factor for students. I decided to ask Ms. Connelly if teachers should let the students take breaks when they are stressed out. Ms. Connelly answered with an absolute yes, because if a student is stressed they won't be paying attention. Some teachers provide "fidgets" for their students. Fidgets are supposed to help kids who have trouble paying attention, stressed or not. Fidgets don't work for everyone though, some kids tend to get distracted when they have fidgets. So don't take a fidget just because they look "fun", take one if you are feeling stressed or distracted.

We then wrapped up the interview talking about how stress can affect students both positively and negatively. I learned from the interview that stress can affect students in different ways. I also learned that students should take breaks and try not to stay in stressful situations for a long period of time. This information is very important for having a good time at school, and feeling good emotionally!



# Snapshot NMS

## Stress In the Middle school

By: Lorelei Cullen

I was interested to know if stress in middle school has gone up a tremendous amount from past years so I interviewed Miss. Connelly, an NMS school counselor. We talked about stress levels in middle school, how to deal with stress and how to decrease stress as a whole. Miss. Connelly said that children today seem to be more stressed than children in past years. Sleep has had a very big impact on children's stress levels due to the use of phones and other electronic devices that keep kids up at night. Therefore, they are not getting enough sleep which leads to an increase in stress for kids in middle school. We also talked about how teachers can help students deal and cope with stress. Miss. Connelly said that a lot of the teachers in the middle school model with their students ways to deal with stress like doing breathing exercises before tests and using stress toys.

Stress has seemed to escalate throughout middle school. Everybody has something that stresses them out more than other things. According to Miss. Connelly, things that stress kids out in middle school the most are: not having done the homework for that night, not being prepared for a test, and not understanding a topic that they are learning in school. Ways they can deal with this are by taking deep breaths, counting back from ten, always being prepared and doing your homework and having a positive mindset. One of the things that stresses students out the most is class presentations. Presenting in front of an entire room of your peers and teachers can be terrifying. But, if you come prepared and know what you are presenting it takes most of the pressure off. Plus, it is difficult to listen and pay attention to other people's projects when you are stressed about your own. Therefore, you should always come to school ready to present.

We also talked about how stress can be a good thing because in some cases stress is helpful. For instance, stress can be helpful when you need to study, do homework, finish a project or to just motivate yourself to finish your work. For example, if you are more stressed out for a test this could mean you weren't as prepared for the test as you should be so you know to study more.

In conclusion, overall the stress of students in our Middle School has become very apparent and has seemed to increase through the years. Many students who are stressed don't know how to deal with it. This is why teachers and counselors should be teaching their students ways to minimize stress levels. Students should always come to school prepared and have all of their work done before they get to class so they won't have to stress over not having the homework or not being prepared for a test. If you or someone you know is trying to find a way to handle stress the school counselors are always there to help.



# Snapshot NMS

## Does Music Really Help You Study?

By: Olivia Kelly

**We have all been there sitting at our desk studying or doing our work and wanting to listen to music. We raise our hands and ask to listen to music, but the teacher will most of the time deny that privilege to us. Why? They say because it's distracting, but... is it really? I wanted to further investigate this topic and in doing this, I decided to interview a teacher of mine because she plays music at the beginning of class and is an energetic teacher.**

I scheduled an interview with Newtown Middle School's science teacher, Ms. Neff. She worked at Newtown High School for a year, and she has been working at the middle school for four years now. Before I interviewed Ms. Neff, I did my research on how music affects your focus when working and/or studying. Ms. Neff plays music for about 2-3 minutes when we first enter her classroom; the songs are requested by students and we listen to them while answering the question on the board to complete her 'Do-Now' task.

I asked Ms. Neff if she thought listening to music during class would help students concentrate.

Her reply was "it depends on the student and the type of music. It can be more distracting than helpful because when listening to words in the song, it can be hard to process information."

She also added, "It also really depends on the subject and material, Math can/could be the only exception."

In my research, I found an article called "Is It Good to Listen to Music While Studying?" by Nicky Dans. The article informs that "Background music may improve focus on a task by providing motivation and improving mood." (Dans).

I continued to ask Ms. Neff, "Do you think when students listen to music it can help with memorization for a test?"

She responded with, "...only if you could listen to the same song/music while taking the test."

Referring back to Nicky Dan's article it states that, "In some cases, students have found that music helps them with memorization, likely by creating a positive mood, which indirectly boosts memory formation."

Talking to Ms. Neff was a pleasure of mine. The conversation was very intriguing and I would be delighted to converse with her again. If I were to engage in a conversation with her I would like to explore her thoughts on this topic once more but with the factor of ADHD.

I found in Rachel Tustin's article "Can Music Help Children with ADHD Focus While Studying?". She explains, "Some people with ADHD have a smaller frontal lobe, which is the area of the brain that controls concentration and impulse." In relation to that, she states, "Music can be chemistry to the brain." With this information, I wonder how Ms. Neff might accommodate students with ADHD in her classroom. Would she consider letting them listen to music after I show her my research?

# School Based Health Center



## 25 New Year's Resolutions for a Healthy and Happy 2020

*Happy New Year from the SBHC Staff*

1. Drink a glass of water upon waking in the morning — aim for eight ounces.
2. When taking an escalator, don't just ride but walk up those moving steps.
3. Read the nutritional labels of the packaged foods you eat for an entire day. Check out the portion sizes, while you're at it.
4. Get outside for 10 minutes daily.
5. Food journal for a day (or a week) and track what you're really eating.
6. Floss before bed. Your dentist will love you for it and your own gums will love you for it.
7. Focus on your breath when you feel the stress coming on. Yep, it's a mini meditation session.
8. Stretch while watching TV.
9. Turn off all electronics 20 minutes before lights out at bedtime.
10. Walk for 10 minutes three times a week.
11. Stay off of social media for 24 hours and see how you feel not being "connected."
12. Time how long you are brushing your teeth. ADA recommends two minutes, twice a day.
13. Write down everything you're grateful for at the end of the day.
14. Eat some protein at breakfast — or at least eat some breakfast.
15. Eat fruits and vegetables daily for a week.
16. Ditch soda for a day (or a week). Drink water!
17. Give someone you don't know a compliment. A smile goes a long way.
18. Read a book — it's good for your brain.
19. Do squats while brushing your teeth — make use of those 2 minutes!
20. Sing the ABCs every time you wash your hands to ensure you're really getting your paws clean.
21. Get your vision checked.
22. Sleep eight hours a night for a week.
23. Carry a reusable water bottle with you and stay hydrated all day long.
24. Skip the fries and order a salad with your burger.
25. Adopt an attitude of gratitude!

## Dates to Remember

Look for details in the Lion's Roar or on the NMS website: <http://nms.newtown.schooldesk.net/>

### January

**January 17**

Delayed Opening  
School starts @ 10:00 AM  
Lunch Served

**January 20**

Martin Luther King Day  
No School

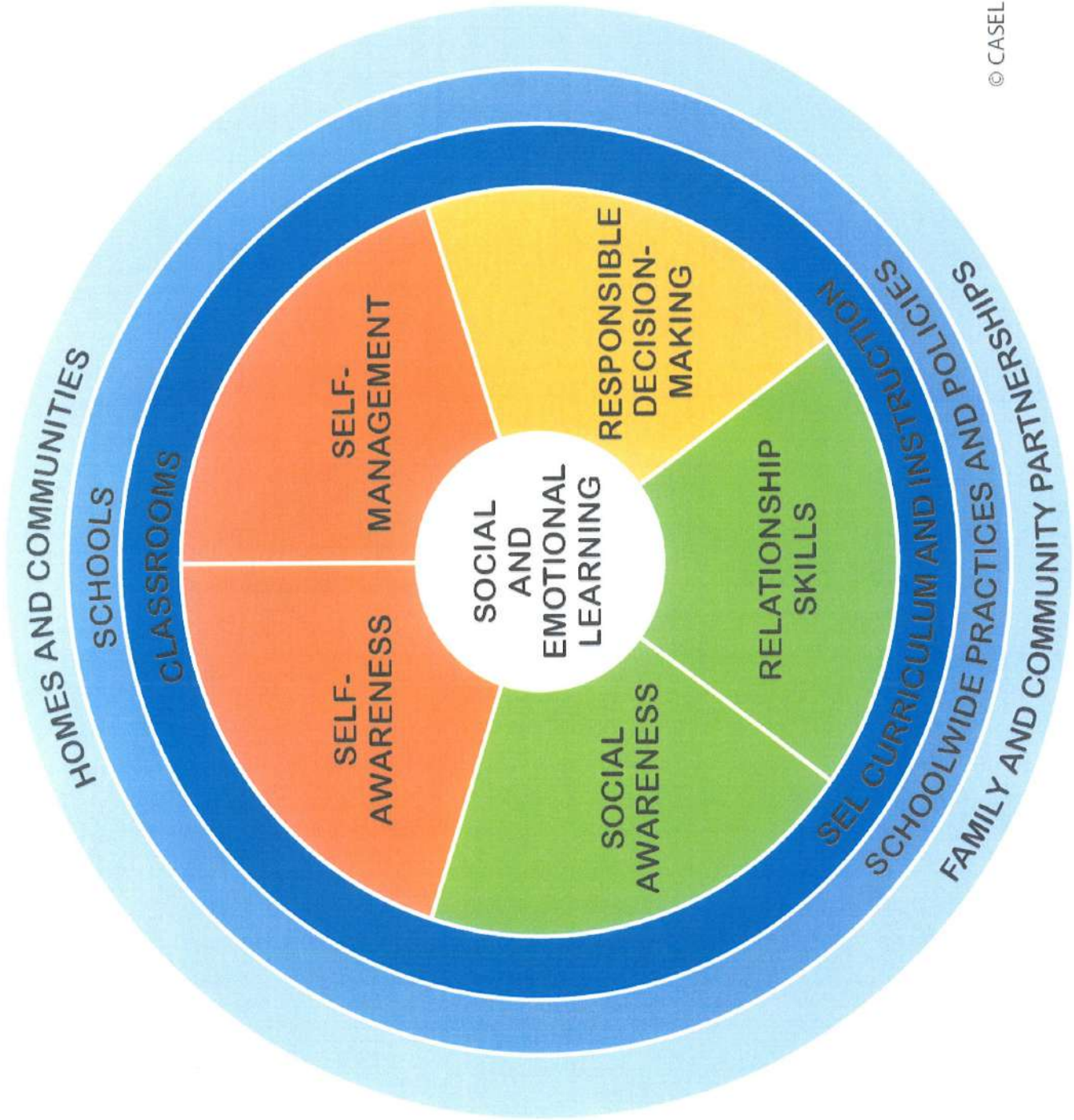
### February

**February 15**

Early Release  
Students Dismissed @ 11:32  
Lunch Served

**February 17-18**

Winter Break  
No School



© CASEL 2017