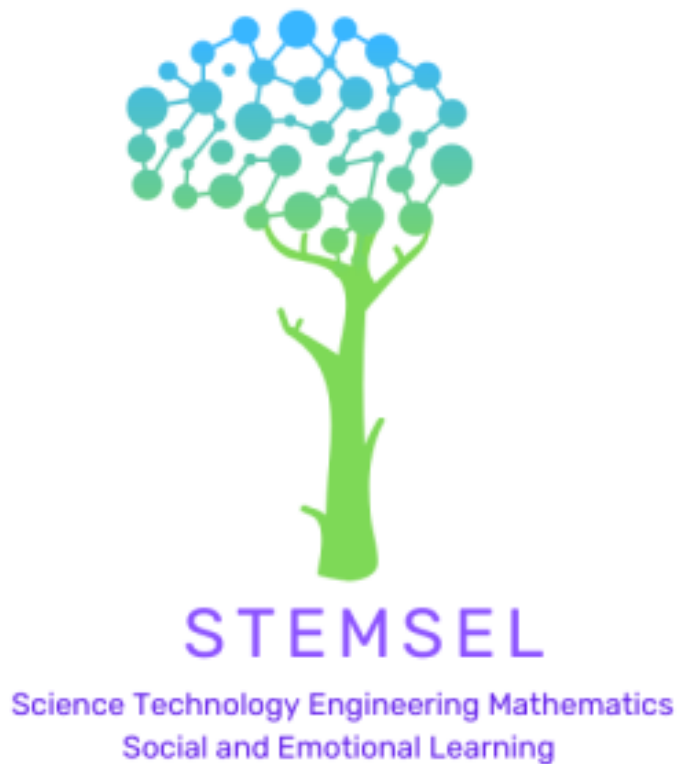




Miller School to Study Impact of Digital Mental Health Resources Among Florida High School Students

The collaborative STEMSEL initiative includes mental health education for school leaders, access to and study of digital resources to support students' social and emotional learning.

The Media and Innovation Lab (MIL) at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine today announced a new effort to evaluate the clinical efficacy of digital mental health care services for K-12 students, teachers, and staff in four Florida school districts, at a time when children's mental health concerns have reached emergency status, according to experts. The centerpiece of the STEMSEL initiative includes a clinical evaluation of the Neolth digital mental health platform among a population of more than 7,000 Florida students in grades 6-12.



The primary objective of the STEMSEL clinical study is to assess whether Neolth, a preventative, self-guided mental health support technology with care escalation, is effective in increasing social and emotional intelligence in school-aged children. In previous studies, Neolth has demonstrated clinical reductions in stress,

depression, anxiety, and stigma, as well as increases in self-efficacy. The University will make the Neolth platform available to students at Florida schools in four districts, including South Walton Academy in Walton County, Palmetto Bay Academy in Miami-Dade County, Lakeland Institute of Learning in Polk County, and Florida Virtual School in Orange County.

In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association issued a joint statement classifying the pandemic-related decline in child and adolescent mental health as a national emergency. More recently, the 2022 KIDS COUNT® Data Book, compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, reported a 26% increase in children experiencing anxiety or depression between 2016 and 2020, "representing 1.5 million more children struggling to make it through the day."



The STEMSEL program is designed to increase the understanding of and access to digitally based, on-demand social-emotional learning (SEL) platforms by studying the impact of these new resources on the mental well-being of children, and providing professional development and support for teachers, administrators, and school staff, and resources for parents and caregivers.

“A foundational pillar of The MIL is to engage, serve, and educate our local and global communities about health innovations, and enable them to co-create and consume new technologies,” said Azizi Seixas, Ph.D., founding director of The MIL and associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Miller School of Medicine. “Given the mental health crisis our children are facing, it is vital that we explore ways to make effective mental health services more available and accessible to all. This program has the potential to shift the care delivery paradigm in support of our most precious resource – our children.”

Through The MIL’s partnership with Neolth, participating school districts will have free and open access to the on-demand SEL activities and community delivered through the Neolth app. The Neolth program content is designed to help students build resilience through personalized relaxation techniques, SEL practices, and increased emotional awareness. The community module within the app includes videos from clinicians that educate students about mental health; vlogs by students discussing their own mental health, to break down stigma; and livestreamed community events to connect students across the country. Connecting with peers invites students to understand their shared experiences and encourages them to seek help rather than suffer in silence.



Researchers at The MIL will carefully study program implementation and conduct independent research to evaluate the program's impact to establish new pathways for expanding access to digital mental health tools as part of its service and outreach mission.

"Dr. Seixas and his team have deep expertise in providing mental health support through the use of digital health tools. His work has focused on precision neuroscience approaches to personalized behavioral interventions, which is highly aligned with Neolth's scientific underpinnings," said Katherine Grill Ph.D., founder and CEO of Neolth. "Working with the University of Miami to both implement and evaluate our digital solution will help us improve our platform's utility and reach in Florida. Adding the professional development component is fantastic, because education about best practices for student mental health and digital tools is sorely needed following COVID."

As part of the STEMSEL initiative, The MIL has launched a companion educational outreach program to schools throughout the state to increase awareness of student mental health needs and the use of digital tools within schools. Under this aspect of the program, The MIL is hosting webinars with leaders from some of the top digital mental health platforms, including Calm, Headspace, Moshi Kids, Neolth, and Little Otter.

MIL researchers plan to add more schools and districts to this study throughout the 2022-23 academic year. All schools will receive implementation support from the MIL team at the Miller School and Neolth.

Schools interested in learning more about this initiative should contact Khrystina Warstadt at Neolth,



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