

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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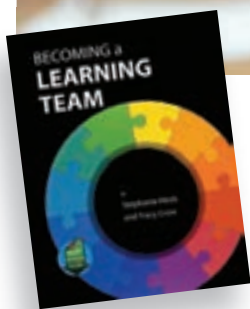
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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



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PHOTO BY Raftermen Photography for Atlanta Public Schools.

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WE SAY

Taking risks

Council of Distinguished Educators, National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development.



“ Learning necessitates taking risks. It means challenging oneself to master new skills and explore new understandings. It means tolerating ambiguity and being willing to make mistakes. Effective academic development requires an environment where students feel socially and emotionally safe in taking the risks necessary to learn and grow. ... The social and emotional environments of the classroom and school have a profound impact on students' ability and willingness to learn.”

SOURCE: *The Practice Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development: Consensus Statements of Practice From the Council of Distinguished Educators, National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, The Aspen Institute.* Available at <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/03/CDE-Commission-report.pdf>.

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HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

Social and emotional skills are learning skills

Great teaching, including high-quality professional learning, can render the invisible visible. It can make the implicit explicit. In that spirit, this issue of *The Learning Professional* focuses on a core element of excellent teaching and learning that is not always stated explicitly or afforded time in educators' busy schedules: social and emotional learning (SEL).

In a recent national survey in the U.S., elementary school principals were asked to name their greatest concerns for schools and students today. The 10 most common concerns related to students' social and emotional development. Those needs didn't appear anywhere in the top 10 on the same survey a decade ago.

Whether students' needs have changed or we have simply become more aware of the role of social and emotional factors in schools is a matter of debate. What is no longer a debate, however, is that students' social and emotional development matters, and it cannot be separated from their academic learning.

According to the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, there are at least a dozen specific social and emotional skills that impact learning, from paying attention to coping with frustration to understanding others' perspectives. Increasingly, we are also recognizing that adults' own social and emotional skills impact teaching by influencing

their ability to connect with students, understand students' struggles and motivations, and model the kinds of learning approaches we hope students will embrace.

SEL is more than a program or a classroom management system. It is a mindset and a way of interacting with students and colleagues on a daily basis. That mindset takes time and support to develop fully. Like professional learning, social and emotional development is never done.

The authors in these pages share examples of innovative, impactful professional learning strategies that build educators' capacity to support students' social and emotional skills. Importantly, these strategies make SEL part of academic learning, not an add-on or discretionary program. In this issue, you will find tools for understanding how educators can make SEL part of their ongoing practice and for guiding discussions about where SEL strengths lie and where they can grow.

As I step into the role of editor at *The Learning Professional*, I believe it is fitting that this issue focuses on SEL, not just because it is a topic near and dear to my heart, but because



SEL is fundamentally about building relationships. I am inspired by the relationships I have already begun developing with readers, and I look forward to learning from you and with you. I encourage you to reach out at any time to share your ideas, questions, and expertise.

Social and emotional learning is a core strength of true learning organizations. Organizations that continually learn, innovate, and grow tend to foster trust, enable energetic and respectful dialogue, value differences in perspective, see challenges as opportunities, and prioritize communication. I am honored to be part of such a culture at Learning Forward and to support educators in the great work you do with and for students.

•
Suzanne Bouffard (suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org) is Learning Forward's associate director of publications. ■

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THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

STAFF

Executive editor: Tracy Crow
Editor: Suzanne Bouffard
Managing editor: Sue Chevalier
Designer: Kitty Black

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BUSINESS OFFICE

504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
513-523-6029, 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638
office@learningforward.org
www.learningforward.org

LEARNING FORWARD STAFF

Stephanie Hirsh

Executive director
stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org

Frederick Brown

Deputy executive director
frederick.brown@learningforward.org

Anthony Armstrong

Associate director of marketing and communications
anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org

Suzanne Bouffard

Associate director of publications
suzanne.bouffard@learningforward.org

Tracy Crow

Director of communications
tracy.crow@learningforward.org

Elizabeth Foster

Associate director of standards, research, and strategy
elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org

Carrie Freundlich

Associate director of conferences and meetings
carrie.freundlich@learningforward.org

Melinda George

Director of policy and partnerships
melinda.george@learningforward.org

Michael Lanham

Chief operating officer
michael.lanham@learningforward.org

Michelle Bowman

Associate director of communities
michelle.bowman@learningforward.org

Tom Manning

Associate director of consulting and networks
tom.manning@learningforward.org

Renee Taylor-Johnson

Associate director of business services
renee.taylor-johnson@learningforward.org

Carol François

Learning ambassador
carol.francois@learningforward.org

Shirley Hord

Scholar laureate
shirley.hord@learningforward.org

Joellen Killion

Senior advisor
joellen.killion@learningforward.org

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VOICES

FOCUS ON THE WHOLE PERSON

“Leading with SEL is a mindset or way of being that focuses on whole persons. It promotes the values and vision of equity by understanding each person’s needs and strengths and providing the supports for his or her learning and growth. School leaders can steward the transformation from SEL as a program to SEL as a way of being through what they *believe, know, and do.*”

—Deborah Childs-Bowen

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CALL TO ACTION

Stephanie Hirsh

Integrating social and emotional learning should be standard practice

As more practitioners and researchers recognize the importance of addressing students' social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools, we can't leave to chance the professional learning needed to make these efforts effective. Far too often, the professional learning linked to essential emerging topics is a distant afterthought in many educators' contexts. We should also recognize that social and emotional competencies are embedded in the principles of high-quality professional learning.

Let's first examine Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning to uncover how SEL aligns with what we know about effective professional learning.

The introduction to the standards describes four prerequisites for professional learning, the first of which is educators' commitment to all students: "Committed educators understand that they must engage in continuous improvement to know enough and be skilled enough to meet the learning needs of all students. As professionals, they seek to deepen their knowledge and expand their portfolio of skills and practices, always striving to increase each student's performance" (Learning Forward, 2011, p.15).

The obligation to address the needs of all students is not negotiable, and all students are individuals. "Learning needs" of students are broadly conceived in the standards, and research shows that social and emotional

development shape readiness to focus, engage, and process content.

As we state in the stem of each standard, "results refers to all aspects of student growth and development. Academic success is the primary results area [but] ... Academic, social, and emotional development work together to ensure student success" (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 21).

THREE REQUESTS

To support your colleagues and teams in implementing SEL with high-quality professional learning, look to these first steps:

Address SEL within a coherent learning plan: Educators will benefit from deepening their understanding of SEL in the context of implementing rigorous content as well as serving students from a range of cultures and backgrounds. Fully integrating SEL professional learning may mean, for example, that collaborative teacher teams include aspects of SEL in learning cycles through data analysis, goal setting, and setting the adult learning agenda.

Engage adults in SEL: Just as we expect adults to have the opportunity to experience the rich shifts in learning associated with the implementation of college- and career-ready standards as they transform their teaching, so, too, will they deepen their understanding when they can participate in SEL experiences. And, as Deborah Childs-Bowen writes on p. 14, we can't ignore

adults' own SEL needs in ever more demanding teaching contexts.

Use a continuous improvement cycle to set goals and monitor progress: Expecting results from professional learning isn't optional. Schools and districts may need to collect or analyze additional sources of data to identify the most pressing needs. They may need new kinds of support to understand and put into context new data sources and set relevant goals. External expertise may be crucial for implementing a learning agenda. Expand your network to take in new sources of information as you support educators in building capacity.

Embracing SEL as a critical component of creating equitable learning environments for students isn't exactly new for many educators. What has changed is the visibility of the topic, thanks in part to a multitude of studies, organizations, and strategies now available to support SEL — several of which are covered in this issue. I invite you to stand with me and help shape effective professional learning coupled with SEL implementation.

REFERENCE

Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning.* Oxford, OH: Author.

•
Stephanie Hirsh (stephanie.hirsh@learningforward.org) is executive director of Learning Forward. ■



BEING FORWARD

Leigh Wall

If we join forces, we can identify students who are at risk

It has been just a few months since the unimaginable tragedy that occurred here in Santa Fe, Texas, when a high school student shot and killed 10 classmates and teachers and wounded 13 others. Our community is healing, and we know the healing process will be long.

As we move forward — and we must, even as we continue to grieve — mental health and social-emotional awareness are absolute priorities for all of our students, staff, and community members.

In Santa Fe, we have always focused on safety protocols. We have a strong crisis management and security plan, as well as a well-trained and well-equipped school district police department. They are critical to school safety, but they are not enough on their own. Safety and wellness have to go hand in hand.

We have always believed in the importance of social and emotional supports. Now we are building on the supports we already offered and extending them across the board. Our goal is to ensure that no struggling student goes unnoticed, whether the concerns are in academics, social-emotional development, or mental health.

We recognize the need for more systems to help educators connect personally with students and fortify relationships so that we can identify warning signs and follow up on adjustment problems or mental health concerns. For years, we have had



processes for teams to identify and support students who need special education and other learning support services; Response to Intervention (RTI) is just one example. These can be models for comprehensive, team approaches to assessing and addressing mental health issues through tiered systems of support.

The determined and intentional focus of this effort should be ingrained in the work of every educator, staff member, parent, and community member. We must all play a vital role in this process. A struggling high school student might interact with 15 different adults during the day, but exhibit warning signs in the presence of some and not others.

The football coach, the student teacher, or the school secretary might witness troubling behavior or comments. We need all of those adults to know the process for referring a student for further assessment. When we see a single area of concern — be it flagging grades, repeated disciplinary

referrals, or angry comments to a teacher — it may not appear to indicate a crisis, but combining it with data and observations from other staff can provide a fuller picture. If we join forces as a community, we can identify students who are at risk. I believe we can make a difference going forward.

Even as we “harden” the Santa Fe schools with metal detectors, alarms, door locks, panic buttons, and increased police presence, we are committed to strengthening the human connections that we have always known underlie strong, safe, and successful teaching and learning. Metal detectors and other facility adjustments increase our awareness of safety in an immediate way, but the social and emotional piece is ongoing, forever.

Leigh Wall is superintendent of schools for the Santa Fe (Texas) Independent School District and president-elect of Learning Forward. ■

Beth Brockman

WHY LEARNING FORWARD IS MY PROFESSIONAL LIFELINE

Position: Assistant superintendent for employee services in the Plano Independent School District in Texas.

In education: 25 years.

Learning Forward milestones: Member since 2008. Academy Class of 2012. Two-time member of Annual Conference Host Committee.

Current role with Learning Forward: Dallas 2018 Host Committee chair.

Why she is looking forward to the 2018 Learning Forward conference:

I'm looking forward to meeting people I haven't met yet so I can hear their stories and learn together. Learning should be a joyous process, but sometimes we lose the joy. The Learning Forward conference is a great time to celebrate learning. It's my favorite of all conferences.

How you can connect with her at the conference in December: Find her on Twitter @BethBrockman.



"I connected with people who were working toward the same goals I was and struggling with the same challenges at the same time."
— Beth Brockman

When Beth Brockman transitioned from being a school leader to a district leader, she had big goals and a small staff. As the new district director of staff development, she was tasked with revamping the district's approach to professional growth, moving it from a focus on compliance and onboarding new teachers to creating a comprehensive and coherent approach to professional learning.

To serve a district with 2,500 teachers and over 45,000 students, she oversaw just two staff members and a secretary. As she faced this exciting

challenge, she reached out to the Texas affiliate of Learning Forward for connection and support. Immediately, she found a group of kindred spirits and says she "saw a lot of alignment between what they were doing and what I wanted to be doing."

Learning Forward Texas and its members quickly became invaluable resources, serving as her professional lifeline. Over time, her engagement grew with what she calls "the mother ship" (Learning Forward's national organization). Brockman has since been selected as an Academy member, served as a Texas affiliate board member, and

helped organize regional and national Learning Forward conferences.

This year, she serves as Host Committee chair for the Learning Forward Annual Conference. She talked with us about her past, present, and future with professional learning.

Q: Why do you describe Learning Forward as your professional lifeline?

A: I'm a big fan of learning from other people's lessons (what worked, what didn't, pitfalls, unanticipated consequences), especially when you are new to a job or a field. But being the district leader for professional learning can be a little lonely because you are often the only one doing this work.

Through Learning Forward Texas, and later Learning Forward, I connected with people who were working toward the same goals I was and struggling with the same challenges at the same time. They became a great source of support.

Not only did we meet every four to six weeks [at affiliate meetings] and talk about all the issues I was struggling with, but the other members become my "phone-a-friends." We were in constant communication.

Learning Forward has also helped me step back so that I can spend time and energy on important problems of practice that could otherwise get lost. When I was selected to be an Academy member, I tackled an issue that doesn't always get enough attention in school districts: professional learning for principals and other campus administrators.

The context for the project was my strong belief that our principals and

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assistant principals need to be engaged in rich, differentiated, student-needs-driven professional learning themselves if they are going to oversee effective professional learning for their teachers. You cannot provide what you haven't experienced yourself.

I focused on creating collaboration opportunities for campus leaders and then widened it out to include other forms of professional learning for them. This involved assessing the needs and interests of principals, students, and the district as a whole.

You have to build a professional learning system that addresses all three levels in a coherent way. It might be that administrators are interested in working on gifted and talented approaches, but our data tell us we need to focus on the needs of low-achieving students. The priority always has to be on the greatest student needs.

Q: You have worn many hats in education. How has professional learning shaped your career?

A: Professional learning is a powerful shaper of thinking. It helps us stay focused on the end goal — student achievement. In schools, you always have to start with the end goal and work backwards.

As a result of my work in this field and the support I've gotten from Learning Forward, I have gotten into an evaluation mindset that shapes

everything I do. I'm always asking what the data say, how we are evaluating whether something is working, and, if not, what decision do we make to fix it? Evaluation is probably some of the hardest but most important work professional learning leaders grapple with.

In my current position, I marry my passion for professional learning with my human resources role, because I believe that strong professional learning is one of the best recruitment and retention strategies we have. I've been a teacher and a principal, so I know it's a big selling point that we are focused on employees' learning and growth.

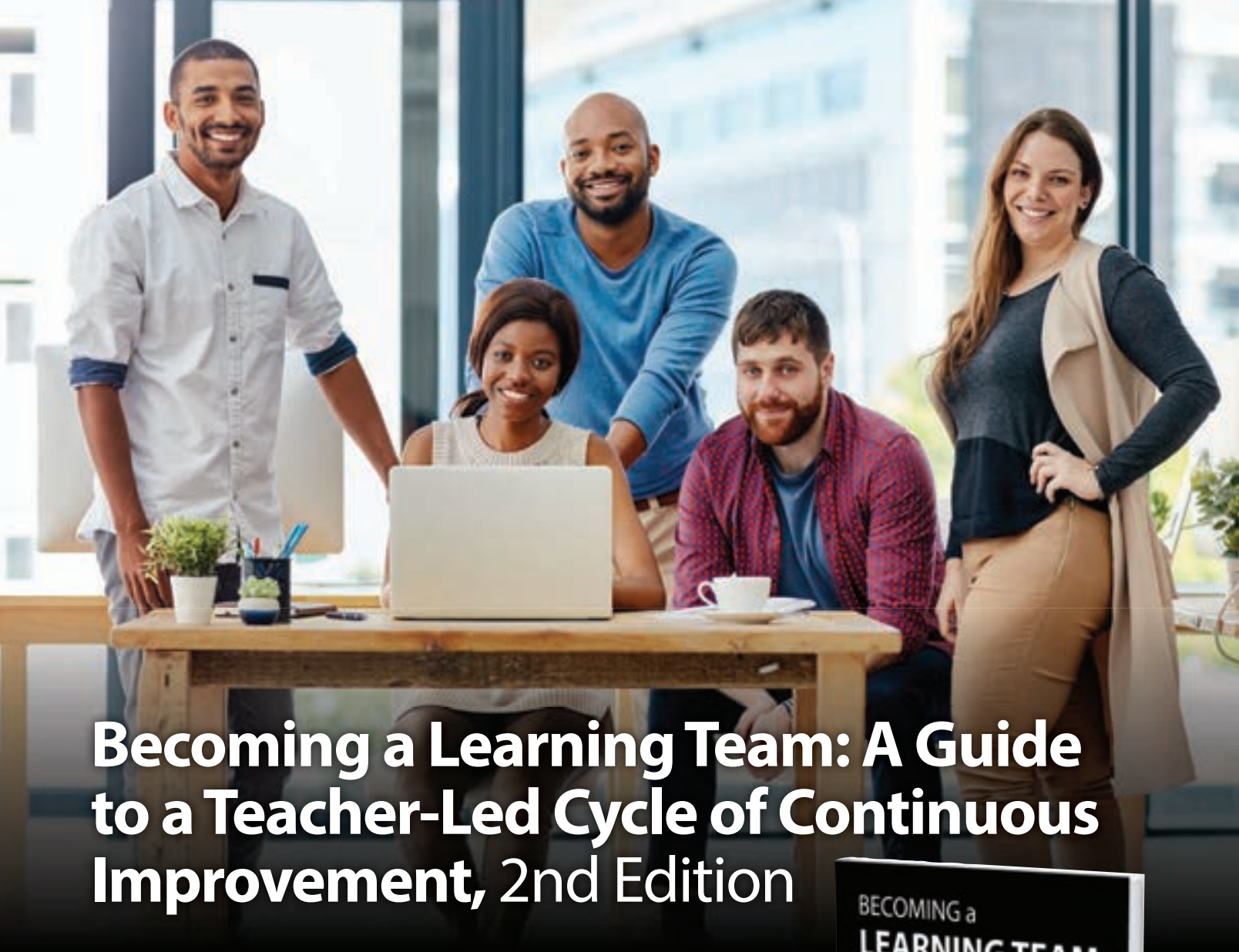
The next step for me is becoming an advocate for professional learning at the federal level. I feel strongly about the advocacy piece because schools have to change and the lever for change is professional learning.

Q: You are serving as Host Committee chair for Learning Forward's 2018 Annual Conference. Why is the conference important for you and your work?

A: The Annual Conference is my favorite conference because it is one of the only times I can focus on my own learning.

As a teacher and then as a campus principal, I was always focused on learning more and doing better. But when I became a district professional learning leader, I found that I was spending most of my time facilitating other people's professional learning. I went from being a learner to a facilitator.

Even when I went to conferences



Becoming a Learning Team: A Guide to a Teacher-Led Cycle of Continuous Improvement, 2nd Edition

By Stephanie Hirsh & Tracy Crow

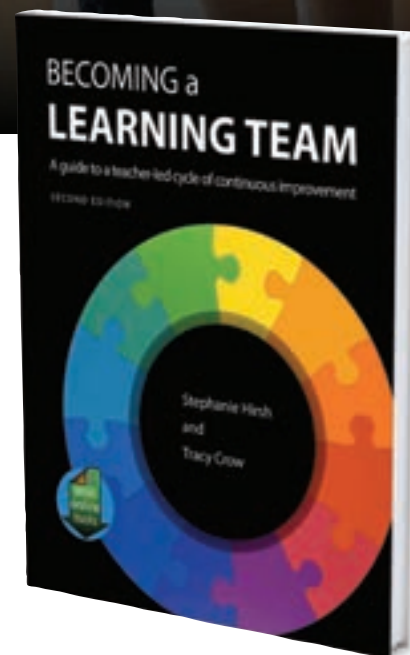
The second edition of *Becoming a Learning Team* offers teachers step-by-step guidance in using collaborative learning time to solve specific student learning challenges. This book outlines a process for using student data to craft student and educator learning goals leading to learning plans, implementation steps, and progress monitoring.

The second edition focuses more explicitly on the role of learning teams in implementing high-quality instructional materials and what that means for student and educator learning goals and agendas.

Teacher teams can use the tools and strategies to:

- Understand the value and importance of collaborative learning to improve teaching and learning;
- Launch a learning team cycle with five key stages;
- Support the meaningful implementation of high-quality instructional materials;
- Implement each of the five stages with specific strategies and supporting protocols;
- Adapt the cycle to fit specific school and district calendars and initiatives; and
- Engage external support in sustaining learning teams.

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with colleagues from my district, I was usually the one facilitating the learning of the team. There were a number of years when the Learning Forward conference was the only time I could focus on areas where I or my department needed to grow. I would often keep two columns of notes from the sessions — one on the content and one on the facilitation strategies, because the presenters were great models for my own facilitation role. If you look at my history of session attendance, it would tell a story of what I was working on at the time, both personally and with my district.

What I value most are the relationships I have formed and sustained at the conference. The sessions and events really emphasize the collaborative and relationship-driven nature of our work. We have round tables and dialogue and meals together

— it's not a sit-and-get.

I volunteer to help with the conference because I value so highly the people who come. I want them to see Learning Forward as a partner, like I do. They are all walking this walk with me.

Q: What are your tips for getting the most out of the conference?

A: Don't miss the opportunity to meet people you don't know. It can be scary to sit down with people you haven't met, but it's worth it. I have stayed in touch for many years with people I met at the conference, people whom I would not have met any other way. Now I look forward to seeing them each year in December.

Another very important piece of advice came to me when I started as an Academy fellow from a wise woman who was an early graduate of

the Learning Forward Academy. She pointed out that it becomes even more difficult to take care of ourselves when we are responsible for professional learning because we are taking care of everyone else.

She advised me to take an extra day every time I went to Academy meetings so that I could be a tourist for the day. I took her advice, and I'm so glad I did. It was a very easy way to invest in myself so that I would be in a better place to be focused and do the hard work.

If you're not careful, the conference can be like standing in front of a fire hose because there is so much good information. So after the conference sessions, even though I'm tired and I have work emails to catch up on, I make sure to go out and do something in the evening, even if it's only once or twice. I always appreciate the time I take to meet new people and connect. ■



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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Deborah Childs-Bowen

School leaders set the tone for social and emotional learning

When we talk about building social and emotional learning (SEL), we often focus on students. But adults must model, teach, and prioritize the way we want our students to learn and live. School leaders set the tone for SEL just as they do with academic expectations. To do that, they must lead not only *for* SEL but *with* SEL.

Leading with SEL is a mindset or way of being that focuses on whole persons. It promotes the values and vision of equity by understanding each person's needs and strengths and providing the supports for his or her learning and growth. School leaders can steward the transformation from SEL as a program to SEL as a way of being through what they *believe, know, and do*.

SEL LEADERS BELIEVE:

- That putting people and relationships first promotes a school culture of equitable practices for all.
- That the sum of a human being is greater than a single aspect of that person.
- That all people have the potential to learn and improve their lives when provided with academic and social-emotional learning opportunities.
- That professional learning is essential for assessing, reflecting on, and building socially and emotionally aware educators and school cultures.

SEL LEADERS KNOW:

- That staying abreast of current research on and best practices for SEL can help them develop skills and increase impact on others.
- That the five SEL domains described by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning apply to both students and adults. They are:
 1. **Self-awareness:** Recognize and label one's feelings and accurately assess one's strengths and limitations.
 2. **Self-management:** Regulate emotions, delay gratification, manage stress, motivate oneself, and set and work toward achieving goals.
 3. **Social awareness:** Show empathy, take others' perspectives, recognize and mobilize diverse and available supports.
 4. **Relationship skills:** Communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, and resolve conflicts constructively.
 5. **Responsible decision-making:** Make ethical choices, anticipate obstacles to goals, and make sound plans.

SEL LEADERS DO:


- Communicate clearly and listen

actively to differing perspectives.

- Resolve conflict in a manner that promotes growth and leaves each person with dignity and wholeness.
- Reflect on their own SEL competencies and use a continuous improvement process to keep growing.
- Know the triggers that make them angry, frustrated, or impatient, and practice strategies to manage their responses.
- Identify and leverage staff members' collective strengths and impact.
- Constantly survey the school's human, intellectual, and social capital to determine the supports available and those needed to ensure a socially, emotionally, and academically healthy environment.
- Steward the resources needed to weave SEL into school culture and instructional practice.

Leading with SEL is an ongoing process. In that process, it is important to remember that professional learning is the backbone of growth and improvement. SEL has a place in everyone's learning — not just students and teachers, but yours and mine.

•
Deborah Childs-Bowen (deborah.childs-bowen@learningforward.org) is a senior consultant with Learning Forward. ■

A smiling woman with curly hair, wearing a light blue striped shirt, is looking at a tablet held by another person. The background is a classroom with colorful letters and a globe.

Examine. Study. Understand.

RESEARCH

CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF THE VALUE OF COACHING

A recent meta-analysis of the empirical literature about teacher coaching strategies and programs details the impact of coaching on teacher practice and student achievement.

The study, conducted by Matthew Kraft, David Blazar, and Dylan Hogan, is an important read for anyone in the field, but it has particular implications for policymakers and school leaders who make decisions about whether and how to invest in coaching.

For naysayers and critics of professional learning, it provides convincing evidence that coaching does matter and is a worthwhile investment.

RESEARCH
REVIEW
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RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

The impact of coaching on teacher practice and student achievement

► THE STUDY

Kraft, M., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018, August). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547-588.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Do you have thoughts about this study or have recommendations of other research you'd like to see us cover? Email me at elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org.

•
Elizabeth Foster (elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org) is associate director of standards, research, and strategy at Learning Forward. In each issue of *The Learning Professional*, Foster explores a recent research study to help practitioners understand the impact of particular professional learning practices on student outcomes. ■

Educators who have experienced coaching — either as the coach or the coached — often speak to its positive impact on their development and growth and frequently to positive impacts on student learning.

Coaching is a key job-embedded professional learning strategy that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice, addresses immediate problems of practice, and targets instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010).

Coaching is a core element of Learning Forward's comprehensive professional learning work with districts and schools. We therefore have a special interest in research findings about its impact.

A recent meta-analysis of the empirical literature about teacher coaching strategies and programs offers a clear, thoughtful analysis that details the impact of coaching on teacher practice and student achievement. The study, conducted by Matthew Kraft, David Blazar, and Dylan Hogan, is an important read for anyone in the field, but it has particular implications for policymakers and school leaders who make decisions about whether and how to invest in coaching.

For naysayers and critics of professional learning, it provides convincing evidence that coaching does matter and is a worthwhile investment. This study is one that Learning Forward will be calling upon as evidence of the

impact of effective professional learning investments in our advocacy efforts at the local, state, and federal levels.

Coaching is not a new strategy, as evident from Kraft and colleagues' review of the literature, from Joyce and Showers' foundational conceptual work in the 1980s to recent studies that employ a causal research design to examine the impact of coaching. But, as the authors highlight, in the last decade, researchers, funders, and policymakers have made important progress in increasing the rigor of studies about coaching (and other educational interventions) and gaining clarity about causal links.

In 2007, a review of “the entire canon” of teacher professional learning research found that only nine studies out of more than 1,300 were “capable of supporting causal inferences” (p. 549). Fast-forward to 2018: This study by Kraft et al. is based on 60 rigorous studies of coaching as a subcategory of professional learning and speaks to meaningful impacts on instruction and achievement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study addressed three research questions:

- What is the causal effect of teacher coaching programs on classroom instruction and student achievement?
- Are specific coaching program design elements associated with larger effects?



WHAT IS COACHING?

Kraft et al. characterize coaching as the process “where instructional experts work with teachers to discuss classroom practice in a way that is (a) individualized — coaching sessions are one-on-one; (b) intensive — coaches and teachers interact at least every couple of weeks; (c) sustained — teachers receive coaching over an extended period of time; (d) context-specific — teachers are coached on their practices within the context of their own classroom; and (e) focused — coaches work with teachers to engage in deliberate practice of specific skills.”

more “short-term and generalized.” (They acknowledge that coaching is often one element of a larger professional learning strategy, but they aimed to examine the specific impact of coaching.)

- Do changes in teacher practice from coaching programs translate into improvements in student achievement?

The researchers began with a theory of action consistent with Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Their theory states that coaching impacts teacher knowledge and behavior, which in turn impacts students’ academic and social and emotional outcomes. The conceptual framework aligns well with Learning Forward’s **Outcomes standard** in its

appreciation of teaching and learning as the interaction of teachers, students, and content in context.

Kraft and colleagues defined coaching programs broadly as any approach in which “coaches or peers observe teaching instruction and provide feedback to help [teachers] improve.” They made a distinction between coaching — which is intended to be “individualized, time-intensive, sustained over the course of a semester or year, context-specific, and focused on discrete skills” — and other professional development strategies that might be

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Kraft and colleagues reviewed studies using meta-analytic methods. The benefit of this approach is that the results of multiple studies are aggregated to provide a broad understanding of the impact of coaching and highlight patterns of similarities and differences across different approaches.

All of the studies included used research designs that allowed the researchers to examine the causal effect of coaching and therefore have a high

level of confidence that positive findings are attributable to the coaching rather than other differences between the groups of teachers being compared. (The vast majority were randomized controlled trials, but a few were not randomized and instead compared the change over time in one group with the change over time in the other.)

To identify the studies for inclusion, the authors conducted a systematic review of the literature, identifying articles using electronic databases, reviewing the references of all the studies, and contacting experts in the field to fill in any additional studies. They included studies on both content-specific (e.g. literacy) and generalized coaching programs conducted in the U.S. and developed countries, across the pre-K through 12th-grade range.

The researchers eliminated studies that did not use observation

measures of classroom instruction or a measure of student achievement from a standardized assessment and those that could not ensure participants were selected randomly. A total of 60 studies met the inclusion criteria. Most of the studies focused on pre-K and elementary school literacy, although other coaching program designs (including 13 virtual programs) were included as well.

BIG-PICTURE FINDINGS: COACHING WORKS

The meta-analysis found large positive effects of coaching on teachers' instructional practices. This is a simple yet important finding. Across 43 studies that included an outcome measure of instructional practice, the researchers found a pooled effect size of .49 standard deviations (SD). By way of comparison, this effect is greater than

the difference researchers have found in instructional quality between novice and veteran teachers.

In addition, teacher coaching had an independent, positive effect on student achievement, as indicated by performance on standardized tests. These effects are similar to or larger than estimates of "the degree to which teachers improve their ability to raise student achievement during the first five to 10 years of their careers" (p. 569).

Strikingly, the effects of coaching were also larger than previous studies of other school-based improvement strategies, including teacher preservice training, merit-based pay, and extended learning time for students. Because most of the studies examined only reading tests, the researchers were limited in their ability to examine the impact of coaching on performance in separate subject areas, but the patterns

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they examined suggested the effect holds up across subjects.

It is a foundational assumption in all coaching and other professional learning designs that the above findings are linked — that is, that coaching improves instruction, which in turn improves student achievement. Limitations in existing studies made it difficult to answer this question with confidence, but exploratory analyses found support for this assumption.

However, it is important to note that the researchers found that there needs to be a substantial change in teaching practice to have a positive impact on student achievement. It appears that coaching that leads to small improvements in instructional practice may not translate into achievement increases for students.

FINE-GRAIN FINDINGS

The authors also delve into some subanalyses of the rich findings. First, they explore features of effective coaching programs, although they note that their methods did not allow them to assess the causal effects of specific program features. The authors found:

- Pairing coaching with group training is associated with a larger effect on instruction and on achievement (.31 SD and .12 SD respectively), suggesting that building content knowledge along with or before coaching is beneficial. Ninety percent of the studies combined coaching with other strategies, which is encouraging, given that Learning Forward's **Learning Designs standard** emphasizes the importance of complementary and contextualized professional learning strategies. This is why the Standards for Professional Learning are interconnected — no one element is the solution.

- In the coaching programs studied, the number of hours of coaching varied widely — from 10 hours or fewer to 60 hours and more — making it difficult to draw conclusions about how much time resulted in certain effects. Within this wide range, there was no clear evidence that more hours of coaching were associated with larger impacts, suggesting that “the quality and focus of the coaching may be more important than the actual number of contact hours” (p. 565).

The positive effects were greater from small coaching programs with fewer teachers than from larger programs. This finding surfaces a challenge common to strategies in professional learning and education in general: How much can you scale an effective practice before you compromise the elements that make it effective?

Scale is an ongoing challenge for the field. Learning Forward is working to address it in many places by building in protected time for coaching and ensuring there are enough expert coaches to provide this kind of effective professional learning across a district or state. But the needs and challenges are ongoing, and issues of scale are important to consider as we think about advocating for funding and support for professional learning.

FROM RESEARCH TO POLICY AND PRACTICE

Highlighting the impact of effective professional learning strategies like coaching is a high priority for Learning Forward. Studies like this one help us make the case for continued and increased investments in educators. We encourage advocates and practitioners to share the findings with policymakers, who do not have time to read the

research themselves.

Some additional considerations about the research, which can help all of us frame our messages, can be found in Education Next's recent coverage of the Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan study at www.educationnext.org/taking-teacher-coaching-to-scale-can-personalized-training-become-standard-practice.

This study also has implications for education professionals working at many levels. Educators can use the findings to support the coaching work they are already doing or enhance other professional learning approaches with coaching strategies. The study also points to a body of research to explore more deeply, from the positive multistudy findings about literacy coaching to single studies that can be leveraged, cited, or built on in future research.

Learning Forward will continue to explore questions raised by the study, for example about the best total hours, duration, and sequence of coaching and other professional learning strategies, and about identifying the sweet spot for coaching in our systems as we think about balancing time and investments.

How will you use this study? What ideas or questions does it raise for your work? Tweet us @LearningForward or email me at elizabeth.foster@learningforward.org.

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ESSENTIALS

■ PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR INITIATIVE

A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors: Evidence from Six Districts in the Principal Supervisor Initiative
The Wallace Foundation, July 2018

This report examines the first two years of the Principal Supervisor Initiative, a project funded by The Wallace Foundation that aims to enable principals to shift from operations and administrative duties to focusing on instructional practice. The initiative leverages principal supervisors as change agents, helping them revise principals' job descriptions, reduce the scope of their responsibilities, and provide more support.

An evaluation conducted by Mathematica Policy Research and Vanderbilt University found that in the first two years, the six participating urban districts made changes to supervisors' practices in all the components targeted. Changes included spending more time coaching principals and doing classroom walk-throughs and less time focusing on operations and paperwork compliance.



www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/A-New-Role-Emerges-for-Principal-Supervisors.pdf

■ COMMON CORE IMPLEMENTATION

Reading and Writing Instruction in America's Schools
Thomas B. Fordham Institute, July 2018

The Fordham Institute conducted a second national survey of English language arts teachers to examine implementation of the Common Core State Standards eight years after they were created and five years after the institute's first survey. This recent report found both "real progress" and "real cause for concern." The authors provide four main recommendations, including more support to help teachers understand how to assign readings based on students' grade level rather than reading level.



<https://edexcellence.net/publications/reading-and-writing-instruction-in-americas-schools>

■ DISCIPLINE DISPARITY

Teacher coaching, threat assessment can reduce disparities in discipline, studies show
Education Dive, June 25, 2018

Education Dive reviewed a special issue of the journal *School Psychology Review* on "Closing in on Discipline Disproportionality." Articles reported teacher coaching and student threat assessment to be promising methods for reducing the disproportionately high rate of suspension, expulsion, and arrest among African-American students. But the issue's editors call for more research on additional strategies, noting that "the field has made some progress in nudging the gap rather than closing in on it."

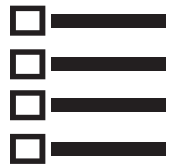


www.educationdive.com/news/teacher-coaching-threat-assessment-can-reduce-disparities-in-discipline-s/526395

■ DESIGN THINKING

This Year, Lead Like a Designer
Education Update, July 2018

Two long-time educators and administrators share their tips for leading schools from a perspective of design thinking. "What if you intentionally choose to practice the habits and mindsets of designers as you lead your school?" they ask in this commentary.



The authors point out that the foundational concepts of design in the industrial and commercial worlds (for example, being user-centered and focusing on identifying rather than solving problems) run counter to many traditional school leadership practices. They suggest ways design thinking can be incorporated into schools and benefit students.

<https://bit.ly/2NwhvoH>



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FOCUS

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

REACHING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF CHILDREN

“If you want 100% of kids to have a successful school experience, you have to meet them where they are at and teach the whole child. If students don’t think they matter or don’t think you care about them, doubling down on math isn’t going to help them. They will never learn the academics — even if they memorize the content for a moment, they won’t have a deep understanding.”

— Atlanta
Superintendent
Meria Carstarphen

p. 22

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



Q&A WITH MERIA CARSTARPHEN

Meria Carstarphen, superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, has nearly 20 years of experience in educational leadership, primarily in urban school districts. Her previous roles included superintendent in Austin, Texas, from 2009 to 2014 and administrator in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the District of Columbia. She serves as a commissioner and distinguished educator on the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, hosted by the Aspen Institute.

Q: Why have you made social and emotional learning (SEL) a priority in your work as superintendent in Atlanta and previously in Austin?

A: If you want 100% of kids to have a successful school experience, you have to meet them where they are at and teach the whole child. If students don't think they matter or don't think you care about them, doubling down on math isn't going to help them. They will never learn the academics

— even if they memorize the content for a moment, they won't have a deep understanding.

From where I sit, I believe it is a moral imperative to do SEL work in schools, because we undid it for so many years. I think high-stakes accountability is part of why we have the problems with school culture and behavior problems that we are seeing today. When I was the superintendent in Austin, schools were being closed by the state for missing proficiency targets



“By the time a kid actually gets to a classroom teacher, there are several adults who could have built a relationship, set the standards, and reinforced the behavior expectations.”

people’s children, but kids today aren’t getting that support anymore. For many children, if social support isn’t provided and SEL isn’t taught in school, they aren’t getting it. It becomes reinforced in their hearts and minds that no one cares about them.

When I make the case for SEL in schools, people often mention a case of an extraordinary person who “made it” despite difficult circumstances and a lack of support. But I always ask: For every one child who succeeded, what about the other hundred who didn’t?

Q: How do you communicate to staff that SEL is an important part of their work?

A: You need to have an articulated vision from the leadership and to demonstrate with resources that SEL is a priority — that is, by dedicating time, people, and money. And then you have to bring everyone on board.

The commitment to SEL starts with adults. They have to work on their own SEL skills and also understand the core competencies for students. In Atlanta, we provide professional learning on SEL for everyone from support staff (like maintenance staff and bus drivers) to teachers to school administrators.

I present at trainings for our staff,

by very small margins and for very small subgroups of students. Teachers and kids were so stressed. Some kids can succeed in that environment, but many won’t. I had to give everyone permission to do the whole job again, to let teachers do the job they were hired to do.

SEL is particularly important in

the high-poverty, urban communities where I have focused my career because kids are coming to school with so much stress and trauma. There are a lot of challenges in their communities, and the social support networks have broken down.

It used to be that communities would wrap their arms around other

and I start by asking, “Who is the first teacher?” Parents and guardians are the first answers I hear. Then when I ask, “Who is the second teacher?,” people immediately skip to the classroom teacher. But I say, “Let’s back up. Who is the next teacher the child sees after walking out the door in the morning?”

We go through the bus driver, the crossing guard, the cafeteria workers. By the time a kid actually gets to a classroom teacher, there are several adults who could have built a relationship, set the standards, and reinforced the behavior expectations. If any of those people are not greeting the child with kind words or attending to their health and safety, the child’s day doesn’t start off the way we want it to.

The best hope we have for helping kids be the best people they can be is getting every adult we work with on board with embracing and modeling SEL in all they do. This includes how we approach our district and school processes, policies, and procedures that should be created through an SEL lens.

For example, in Atlanta Public Schools, we revised our student behavior code to be more progressive and restorative so a child doesn’t necessarily have maximum suspension days out of school for minor infractions. We have taken it one step further so school Behavior Support Plans (what used to be called school discipline plans) are now aligned to this revamped student behavior code and that those school-based plans, which include the campus rules and expectations for students and staff, are also supportive and restorative when mistakes are made.

We also have invested time in training of staff to get them to where they need to be around our expectations of behavior in schools — training on the protocols, training on how to hold regular community meetings with each other and with their students



“[My staff and I] model positive responses like, ‘You have probably had a rough morning, so I’m going to let that slide, but we are going to go to the peace corner and have a conversation when you are ready to talk.’”

so they can build those important positive relationships, and also training on restorative practices so that when mistakes are made and children or colleagues are not treated the way we expect, the harm can be repaired and the learning and work can continue.

Q: How can district leaders build a team approach to SEL across the district?

A: We have changed the way we hire and onboard people. When I interview principals and hire people who report directly to me, we talk about school culture and behavior expectations. It’s bigger than ethics and human resources policies. It’s about the culture we want to create and making sure they share our district’s vision.

As the superintendent, I participate in all new employees’ training. If you are new to our district, you are going to meet me, and we are going to discuss SEL and school culture and what is expected. I role-play the part of a student, and I go up to one of the new hires — it could be a mechanic or a teacher — and I make some smart-aleck comment and then ask, “How would you show me you care about me? What

would you say to me?”

People struggle because it’s hard. But when I flip it and ask, “How would you show you don’t care?,” everyone has an example, because they remember things that were said to them when they were students. So [my staff and I] model positive responses like, “You have probably had a rough morning, so I’m going to let that slide, but we are going to go to the peace corner and have a conversation when you are ready to talk.”

Q: The culture shifts you are describing can be difficult to effect at a systemwide level. What was your first step in making these shifts?

A: During my first week on the job in Atlanta four years ago, school culture and behavior were out of control. Kids were unbolting seats on the buses and throwing them out the emergency door onto the highway. Bus drivers were spraying pepper spray on children and staff.

I even saw staff members threaten to physically fight one another in meetings. This was all happening on the heels of a cheating scandal [during which several former administrators

and teachers were convicted of felonies for falsifying student achievement test data]. The district's culture had to change if we wanted our community and our students to succeed.

I called CASEL [the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, which has an initiative to support school districts on implementing SEL]. They weren't taking on any more districts at the time, but I said, "We need support. We need you to take us on."

When they agreed, I set up a districtwide meeting to kick off the work with CASEL and told staff, "I have seen enough of our culture to last a lifetime. We need to have a conversation about changing our environment." The meeting was held during our June expanded cabinet meeting, so we not only had principals, but district office leaders there as well.

While we were gearing up for the CASEL kickoff that June, CASEL was also helping us develop a plan. We created a dedicated SEL team with a coordinator and coaches to support school implementation, and we began the rollout in the first 25 schools (including middle schools) in August of that same year, incorporating SEL districtwide within three years of that initial meeting.

This dedicated SEL team also implemented SEL 101 training across the district for school leaders, staff, and parents, because we wanted people to understand the whole-child approach. We also trained school resource officers and campus police. We invested in training on restorative practices, mental health, trauma-informed care, and strengths-based teaching through a cross-functional approach involving several district departments.

I also created the position of chief engagement officer, who reports directly to me and oversees school and district culture. This office has spent much time



"In two years, the number of students arrested at school is down by 34%."

focusing on what's strong, rather than what's wrong, plus how we as a district can effectively engage all stakeholders so they feel valued and heard. And just this past year, we redesigned our district SEL team to deepen the work beyond the SEL foundation we had set in place across all our schools.

In my position on the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, I hear from research experts that this work has to be about changing the whole culture, where SEL is incorporated into the academic curriculum and instruction throughout the student's day, including all aspects of their school environment.

This revamped SEL team, which includes a director and three coordinators, now purposely resides in our teaching and learning department to do this important academic integration and support.

Going one step further, some of our schools and clusters have additionally opted to hire their own SEL coaches for even more targeted work with their staff, students, and families. It's so

rewarding to see how much our schools value this work, but also how far we have come in such a short time.

Q: What changes are you seeing as a result of your SEL efforts?

A: During my first year, we were putting out fires all year long — and not just about culture. The second year, we were focused on getting the SEL efforts off the ground. We really started seeing results in the third year, and now, after four years, we have data showing our efforts are making a difference.

In two years, the number of students arrested at school is down by 34%. And for the first time in seven years, we are no longer on the state's list of districts that suspend African-American students with disabilities by a disproportionate amount relative to their peers.

These changes have been made in part because we started giving students a chance to participate in restorative practices, and we have also been training staff and school resource officers to understand that students with special education placements and disabilities need different kinds of support and skill-building.

Previously, students were being arrested or suspended for things we should have been redirecting and using as teaching moments. Again, the focus has been about ensuring everything we do is done through the SEL lens.

These changes are fundamental to academics because teachers can't teach and students can't learn if their basic needs aren't taken care of and if they don't feel that someone cares about them. It has only taken about two years of attention to SEL and school culture to start seeing changes. But we have more work to do, and we are in it for the long haul. ■

ALIGNED IN ANCHORAGE

FRAMEWORK EMBEDS SEL THROUGHOUT ALASKA DISTRICT

After three decades, SEL is now embedded throughout the Anchorage School District — and not just in pockets of excellence. The backbone of this work is an SEL framework and a five-year plan for implementing it. But the overarching keys to the district's success are adaptability and vision.

BY JAN DAVIS

The Anchorage (Alaska) School District has been committed to social and emotional learning (SEL) for the last 30 years. Throughout this time, we have made progress and gone through many changes. Although we had been implementing SEL programs since 1988 and were the first district in the country to adopt SEL standards in 2006, a major turning point in our SEL

work came around 2014.

Our district had pockets of excellence but lacked an embedded, systematic SEL approach that reached all students effectively. We realized that our SEL efforts needed to become consistent across the district and we needed to focus on a key lever to realize that vision: professional learning for all teachers.

Thanks to the support of district leadership and our partnership with the Collaborative for Academic, Social,

and Emotional Learning (CASEL), today we are able to design powerful professional learning that ensures students are engaged in SEL programs with fidelity, even as we grapple with decreasing resources.

HOW DO WE APPROACH SEL?

The Anchorage School District achieves SEL in three ways:

- **Climate:** Creating a safe and respectful learning environment,



which is well-managed, supportive, and engaging with active participation.

- **Direct instruction:** Using a variety of programs to deliberately teach the SEL skills students need to be successful learners.
- **Infusion:** Integrating SEL skills throughout the day and in all curriculum areas through modeling of instructional practices that promote SEL skill practice and maximize learning. The district embraced this approach

to SEL in 2012 to move our work forward and address new challenges. The district was forced to cut its budget due to economic hardship within the state of Alaska, and we were also approaching the end of a grant from the NoVo Foundation that provided key support for our SEL work.

It was apparent that we needed to change how we build districtwide capacity for SEL. We had to work smarter, not harder, to make the SEL work become sustainable.

At this time, our SEL leadership group expanded to include not only upper district leadership but principals and teachers from elementary, middle, and high school divisions; leaders from multiple academic departments; the president of the teachers union; and the entire district SEL team, including the director, SEL/professional development specialists, and a grant manager.

Tasked with getting districtwide buy-in, building districtwide capacity, and increasing efficiency, this team incorporated the three-component approach to SEL described above. The overarching strategy was to integrate a framework that included three types of SEL initiatives happening in our schools: multitiered systems of support, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and SEL curricula (such as Second Step and Lion's Quest).

THE VITAL ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

All three components of the district's SEL approach rely on supporting teachers to understand SEL and build

CASEL'S COLLABORATING DISTRICTS INITIATIVE

In 2011, CASEL launched the Collaborating Districts Initiative to study and scale a systemic approach to implementing high-quality, evidence-based academic, social, and emotional learning in large, urban school districts. The original cohort of districts included some of the most complex school systems in the country. As of 2018, the initiative has expanded to 21 partner districts, serving more than 1.7 million students a year.

Partner districts receive consulting and support for a systemic approach to SEL implementation. SEL becomes a way of doing the work, embedded in everything from district strategic plans and budgets to hiring decisions, school climate initiatives, and classroom instruction. School leaders create safe and supportive learning environments.

To support their work, partner districts also engage regularly with each other in a learning community to share implementation strategies, successes, and challenges, and they explore critical questions around SEL implementation such as assessment, equity, adult SEL, and academic integration.

Districts are seeing results. Teachers create classrooms where students are engaged, respected, and empowered — and where they succeed academically. Academic achievement, graduation rates, and attendance are up, suspensions and disciplinary incidents are down, and staff and students are more positive.

Key lessons, strategies, and resources from the initiative are available at <https://casel.org/resources>.

STUDENT	AWARENESS	MANAGEMENT
SELF	I AM ... knowledgeable	I CAN ... capable
SOCIAL	I CARE ... caring	I WILL ... responsible

ADULT	AWARENESS	MANAGEMENT
SELF	I SEE YOU ... knowledgeable	I BELIEVE IN YOU ... capable
SOCIAL	I CARE ABOUT YOU ... caring	I SUPPORT YOU ... responsible

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT K-12 SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) STANDARDS	
<p>SELF-AWARENESS</p> <p>1A. Student demonstrates awareness of his/her emotions. <i>"I am able to identify and communicate how I am feeling."</i></p> <p>1B. Student demonstrates awareness of his/her personal traits. <i>"I am aware of what I like and dislike as well as my strengths and challenges."</i></p> <p>1C. Student demonstrates awareness of his/her external supports. <i>"I am aware of where I can find help and support."</i></p> <p>1D. Student has a sense of personal responsibility. <i>"I am aware of my responsibilities at school."</i></p>	<p>SELF-MANAGEMENT</p> <p>2A. Student demonstrates ability to manage emotions constructively. <i>"I can appropriately handle my feelings."</i></p> <p>2B. Student demonstrates honesty and integrity. <i>"I can act in an honest manner."</i></p> <p>2C. Student uses effective decision-making skills. <i>"I can make appropriate decisions."</i></p> <p>2D. Student demonstrates ability to set and achieve goals. <i>"I can set and achieve goals that will make me more successful."</i></p>
<p>SOCIAL AWARENESS</p> <p>3A. Student demonstrates awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives. <i>"I care about the feelings and opinions of others."</i></p> <p>3B. Student demonstrates consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to the community. <i>"I care about others and do my part to make my school community better."</i></p> <p>3C. Student demonstrates an awareness of cultural issues and a respect for human dignity and differences. <i>"I care about and respect the individual differences of others."</i></p> <p>3D. Student can read social cues. <i>"I care about how I read others and how they read me."</i></p>	<p>SOCIAL MANAGEMENT</p> <p>4A. Student uses positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others. <i>"I will interact appropriately with others."</i></p> <p>4B. Student develops constructive relationships. <i>"I will work on having positive relationships."</i></p> <p>4C. Student demonstrates the ability to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. <i>"I will learn to handle conflicts in constructive ways."</i></p>

Source: Anchorage School District.

the skills to embody it, teach it, and integrate it throughout their teaching.

The foundation for this capacity building is the ASD K-12 Social & Emotional Learning Standards, a set of 15 standards outlining the skills students and adults need to be successful at home, at school, in the workplace, and in life. (See table above.) With those standards in place, we can tailor SEL support to teachers' needs while ensuring consistency across the district.

At the core of our professional

learning are SEL specialists, who are former teachers and experts in both SEL practices and professional learning methods. Their responsibilities include working with district staff to build capacity for SEL; working with principals and teachers; supporting staff; troubleshooting issues with implementing the framework; and collaborating with CASEL and other districts.

Because the SEL specialists are housed in the professional learning department, they have helped infuse SEL

throughout the district's professional learning, including a template that guides the planning for professional learning activities. When we began developing and using the framework, the district employed seven SEL specialists to get the work going. Over time, that number has decreased out of financial necessity.

The specialists have proven helpful for differentiating the support we provide to teachers across the district. When we began implementing the framework, schools were in different

starting places. Some had already implemented fully certain components but not others, while some were new to all components.

Each school chose which component it would focus on in the first year and the order in which the three components would be implemented over time. Once those decisions were in place, the SEL department put together a learning plan for the next three years.

Scheduling the first-year professional learning involved striking a delicate balance. With only two SEL specialists, we couldn't schedule all the activities to be overlapping or back-to-back, but we had to ensure that the professional learning occurred before the start of the school year.

With careful planning, the majority of the professional learning activities took place before the start of school and ended before the end of the first quarter.

Fortunately, because some of the SEL programs had been implemented in the district for many years, we had a cadre of teachers willing to assist with the professional learning — a bonus not just for our short-term goals but for long-term sustainability.

The professional learning varied based on the programs schools were implementing, but all included ongoing support throughout the year. Outside consultants with special expertise facilitated some of the programs, while the district's SEL specialists led others in a train-the-trainer approach so that school-based personnel (including principals) could lead the efforts at their own schools.

We also offered dedicated sessions for teachers and other certified staff new to their schools. Professional learning activities were never one-shot workshops, and we encouraged participants to form learning communities with colleagues in the district.

COLLABORATING DISTRICTS INITIATIVE

As we began to envision the systemic framework and a plan for implementing, we began our collaboration with CASEL, leaders in the field of SEL. In 2011, CASEL began the Collaborating Districts Initiative, an effort to build capacity for SEL at the district level.

Anchorage was one of the original three members of the community of practice, along with Austin Independent School District in Texas and Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Ohio. The initiative later added seven more districts.

Through this collaborative, we not only learned from CASEL's expertise and resources, but also from other districts engaged in making SEL systemic. Through a Collaborating Districts Initiative grant, 10 members of the Anchorage SEL leadership team (district senior staff, principals, classroom teachers, and SEL staff) visited Chicago Public Schools to learn how the district integrated SEL into its multitiered systems of support framework, how students accessed the supports, and how the district structured professional learning.

On the last day of the trip, our team worked on applying what we had learned to the needs of our district. This extra day devoted to reflecting and group work was important. We began to take ownership of the vision for our own district and left Chicago with a draft framework ready to be vetted by the entire SEL leadership team.

KEY STRATEGIES AND LESSONS

The following conditions have made our progress possible:

Leadership and vision for SEL: In the beginning, it was important to get buy-in not only from teachers and site administrators but at all levels of district

leadership. In 2011, the district formed an SEL executive committee whose focus was to build SEL capacity within the district office and foster SEL champions.

The committee included the SEL coordinator, Title VI director, elementary, middle, and high school executive directors, and assistant superintendents. In 2014, once this group got people on board, it was time to make the effort districtwide and build the capacity of teachers and other staff to do SEL.

Focusing our SEL programming and supporting its implementation:

For many years, schools had flexibility to select curricula. But with a variety of SEL curricula, programs, lessons, and materials in the district, it was difficult to provide resources and effective professional learning along with the support needed to ensure fidelity — and it would only become more so with fewer SEL specialists.

By limiting the number of SEL curricula used in the district, our two SEL specialists could support teachers to implement the programs effectively even with limited resources. For elementary, we selected two programs from which schools could choose. For middle school, the district required one program. For high school, the SEL team made a decision that a direct-instruction SEL curriculum would not be taught. Instead, we would use a crosswalk between the skills embedded in the district's SEL standards and employability standards with implementation supported by the SEL specialists.

Taking time to plan and build:

Because the decision to limit curriculum choices amounted to a big change, we dedicated a year to planning. During this time, the specialists met with elementary principals monthly to help them feel

Continued on p. 35

SOWING SEEDS OF SEL

UNIVERSITY-DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUILDS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACROSS THE TEACHER PIPELINE

BY NANCY MARKOWITZ, WENDY THOWDIS, AND MICHAEL GALLAGHER

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to the success of students from preschool through high school — and for educators, across all stages of the career continuum.

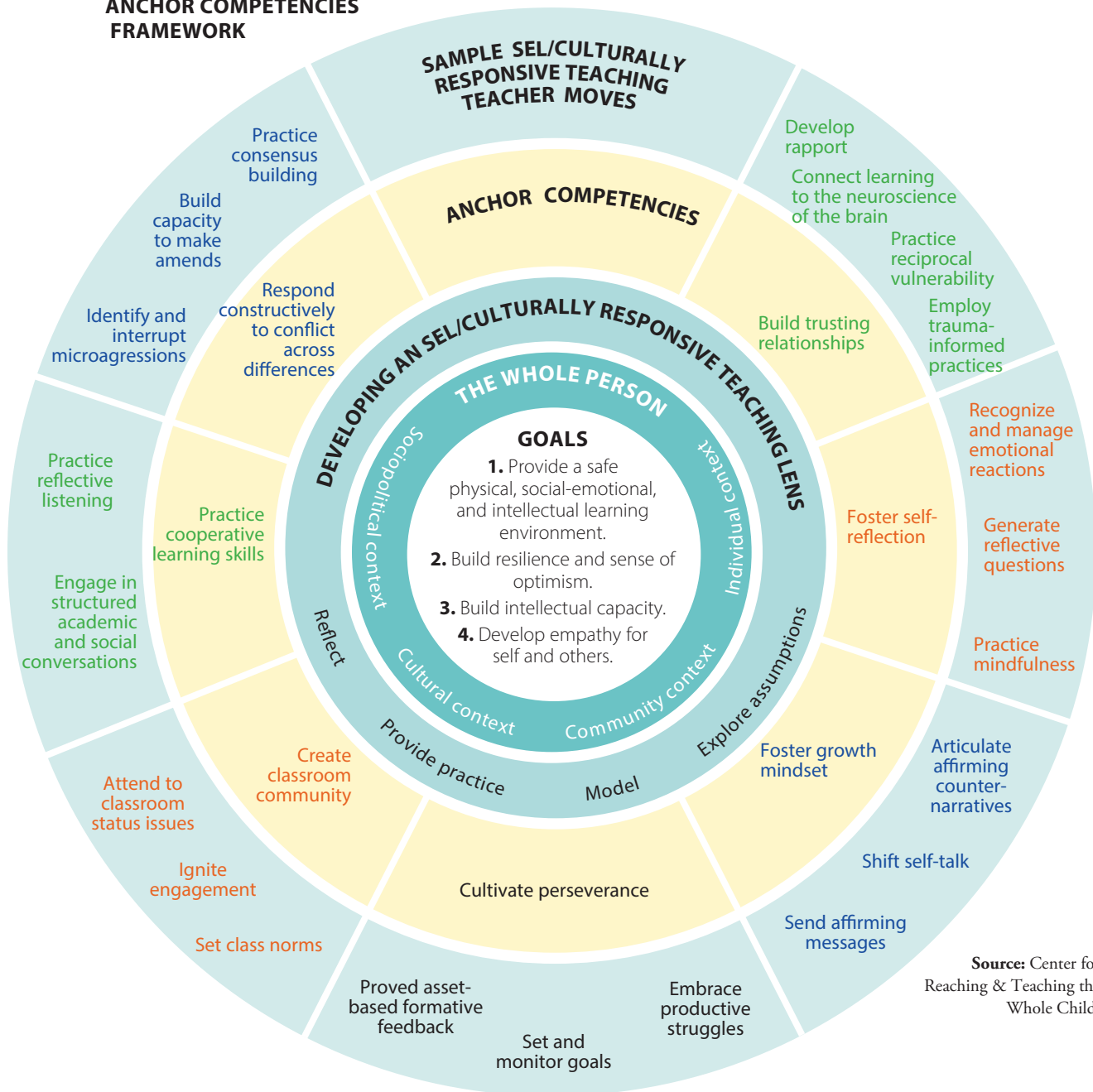
Because SEL skills take time to develop and mature, they should be part of the content addressed in teacher preparation programs, beginning teacher support, and ongoing teacher professional learning, including advanced teacher leadership. Unfortunately, training and support for SEL are rare at all of these levels.

A national scan of U.S. teacher preparation programs found that these programs pay limited attention to SEL, and when they do, they address only some dimensions of this complex area (Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, 2015).

Surveys show that most K-12 teachers believe SEL is important and teachable (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). However, teachers report limited training to enable them to support student SEL skill development (Reinke et al., 2011; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006).

But even with effective preservice education, teachers need support to identify the SEL outcomes school communities desire for their graduates and to employ an SEL lens to improve academic outcomes. Additionally, SEL skill development needs to be placed within the context of student and teacher cultural, political,

ANCHOR COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK



Source: Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child.

community, and individual contexts to be successful (Aspen Institute, 2018).

One case study (Bouffard, 2017) followed two novice teachers who received their credential from San José State University, a program that is among the very few to address SEL skills, and found that, while the two new teachers were both committed to SEL, the support provided by their schools determined whether they

followed through on that commitment.

The teacher who took a job in a district that had SEL as a leadership goal thrived because of the support she felt from colleagues and because she was equipped to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional challenges she encountered in her classroom.

The teacher who took a position in a district not supportive of SEL was frustrated and overwhelmed by student behavior problems, and she ended her first year of teaching not sure she wanted to continue in the field.

How do we create effective and meaningful SEL learning across the teacher professional development continuum that improves teaching and learning? A powerful yet underused

way is through a university-district partnership. This is the approach taken by the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child together with San José State University and Sunnyvale School District in California.

Working together, these three partners use student teacher placements to build SEL capacity in two generations of teachers simultaneously. They lead professional learning with cooperating teachers — district teachers who serve as supervisors for teacher candidates' student teaching experiences.

The cooperating teachers then build and reinforce teacher candidates' SEL competencies by modeling and discussing the SEL capacities that have been taught during coursework. Importantly, first- and second-year teachers participate in comprehensive new teacher induction that supports the content they learned about SEL during the preservice program.

The end goals are a pipeline of well-prepared new teachers who understand the need for SEL and how to do it, meaningful professional learning for existing teachers, a cadre of teacher leaders equipped to move SEL forward in schools, and a district culture with consistent language and support of SEL competencies.

This kind of university-district partnership is not the norm in teacher preparation. Typically, student teaching placements are made based on convenience, and cooperating teachers participate in little or no professional learning in how to work with teacher candidates in a way that is intentionally tied to learning goals for the districts' students or for the program's teacher candidates.

This kind of intentionality is especially lacking for SEL. As teachers vary widely in their knowledge of and skill in SEL, teacher candidates may or may not get exposure to what high-

quality SEL teaching looks like.

We set out to change this pattern. Instead of making student teacher placements as a matter of convenience, we are designing them intentionally to create change toward greater attention to promoting a common language, commitment to, and competence in SEL.

THE SEEDS FOR GROWING SEL

The term “social and emotional learning” is a big tent, so it was important to ground the professional learning for cooperating teachers in a clear framework. We used the Anchor Competencies Framework and Guide (see p. 31) created by the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child, which spells out a broad but focused set of SEL competencies needed by teachers, along with specific strategies to bring them to life in the classroom. The framework incorporates culturally responsive teaching competencies, which are foundational to SEL but not always explicitly addressed in SEL work.

The framework is a road map for both teacher preparation programs and teachers in the field. The ability to use the anchor competencies in the classroom takes time and an iterative process that involves examining assumptions, modeling and observing competencies, practicing strategies, and reflecting throughout the process.

The seven anchor competencies for integrating SEL and culturally responsive teaching into teaching and learning are:

- Build trusting relationships.
- Foster self-reflection.
- Foster growth mindset.
- Cultivate perseverance.
- Create classroom community.
- Practice cooperative learning skills.
- Respond constructively to conflict across differences.

As can be seen in the visual representation of the framework, these competencies and the sample teacher moves depend on attention to the individual, community, and sociopolitical contexts of both teachers and students.

CULTIVATING THE SOIL

Over the past five years, we developed and implemented a model that includes a series of four professional learning sessions for cooperating teachers who work with teacher candidates.

The sessions occur during the school day to send a message from the district about the importance of this work for teachers and students. The district recognizes the importance of SEL to teaching and learning, and especially the alignment between SEL competencies and Common Core State Standards, and therefore agreed to provide funding for teacher candidates to be paid as substitute teachers while their cooperating teachers attend four two-hour professional learning sessions throughout the academic year.

This arrangement allows teacher candidates to practice solo teaching while their cooperating teachers get the gift of time to think, discuss, and learn with colleagues across their school district. These teachers can then serve as teacher leaders, sharing their learning with the entire school faculty. See program goals and objectives on p. 33.

The Anchor Competencies Framework and Guide have proven to be a powerful road map for this work. Session topics include fostering a growth mindset, cultivating perseverance, and fostering self-reflection, along with the development of a common SEL and culturally responsive teaching vocabulary. Additionally, sessions cover topics such as cheating, racism, parent-teacher relationships, and how

to develop an inclusive classroom for diverse learners.

We primarily use videos, written teaching cases, and practice activities to help teachers practice using the SEL and culturally responsive teaching lens as they analyze classroom practice. Materials such as teaching cases and videos can act as catalysts for discussion about how to develop the lens and also how to teach others to develop the lens.

Some of the videos created by our partnership group, for example, demonstrate the integration of SEL into math instruction. Teachers get to watch a university faculty member teach about math instruction through an SEL lens, pinpointing the explicit language that can be used to promote growth mindset, foster perseverance, and address status issues in a classroom while learning new and difficult Common Core math content.

We also use videos from other sources, including some available online that may not have been developed as professional learning tools. For example, we discuss a 12-minute video called *Immersion* that prompts participants to look at a teacher who misses the chance to support a second language learner who clearly excels in math.

Viewing this video together allows us to engage in conversations and practice using SEL skills that could have led to a better outcome for student and teacher. Through these kinds of activities, cooperating teachers develop their SEL lens as well as their ability to observe SEL strategies and talk about them with teacher candidates.

SEEING SEL BLOOM AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

In surveys and informal feedback, cooperating teachers and teacher candidates tell us that these experiences have helped them develop an SEL lens—that is, not just an understanding

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS

1. Understand and use a common language to discuss SEL and culturally responsive teaching.
2. Develop cooperating teachers' ability to integrate SEL and culturally responsive teaching into their own practice.
3. Strengthen the cooperating teachers' ability to help teacher candidates integrate SEL and culturally responsive teaching into their practice.
4. Connect co-teaching and social and emotional learning.
5. Explore the dispositions necessary for teachers and students to thrive and feel successful.

OBJECTIVES

1. Be able to explain the importance of SEL to academic achievement and students' ability to thrive.
2. Be able to explain the connection between SEL skill development for teachers and learners and the achievement of Common Core State Standards.
3. Be able to generate and try lessons with SEL foundational anchors to build a safe physical, social-emotional, and intellectual learning environment.
4. Be able to identify SEL skills needed within content-specific lessons.

of why SEL matters, but how to incorporate it into their day-to-day teaching.

One cooperating teacher said of her experience: "I went in thinking it was going to be all about strategies and programs, and somewhere along the way, I realized, SEL and culturally responsive teaching are not one-off lessons. Rather, they're completely embedded in my day-to-day teaching. It's [about] constantly reflecting on how my students are feeling, wondering if anything might be getting in the way, listening for and interrupting microaggressions, and monitoring status issues. ... I think I was a reasonable teacher before, but I know I am a better teacher now. I am more compassionate and better able to think long-term rather than just reacting to challenges in the moment. My lessons are more effective, and I've seen greater gains in student achievement."

Some cooperating teachers have developed leadership skills that have

renewed their excitement about teaching, and they have become either school site or district leaders, driving broader change to incorporate SEL into their schools. They are expanding their own competencies while at the same time learning new skills to support colleagues.

As one teacher explained: "It's helped me become a better listener when fellow teachers are struggling with issues. I've transitioned to a dual role as a classroom teacher and part-time instructional coach, and I've been able to apply many of the ideas and skills I've learned through the professional development to my coaching. I'm not sure I would have been effective in that role before the professional development."

The Sunnyside School District also benefits because the initiative is developing a pipeline of highly qualified new teachers, many of whom end up teaching in district schools and are already prepared to fulfill the district's

commitment to SEL and culturally responsive teaching.

Several essential conditions have led to these kinds of growth and positive outcomes: a supportive school district; consistency in SEL language and approaches across university, district, and nonprofit partners; a solid framework in which to ground the work; and that most essential but elusive element for schools: time.

Dedicated time across an entire school year allows ample opportunities for learning, practice, reflection, and improvement. Those processes are not only helpful for teachers, but are at the heart of the SEL competencies we want students to develop so that they can learn and thrive.

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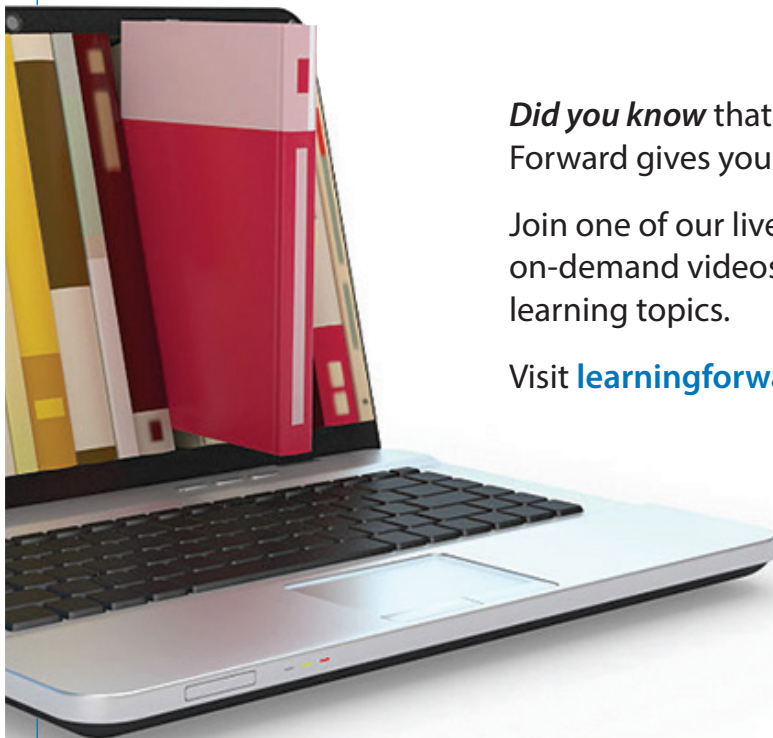
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Nancy Markowitz (nancy.crtwc@gmail.com) is executive director of the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child and professor emeritus at San José State University Department of Teacher Education. Wendy Thowdis (wendy.crtwc@gmail.com) is assistant director of the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child and a lecturer in the Department of Sociology & Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at San José State University. Michael Gallagher (michael.gallagher@sesd.org) is deputy superintendent of human resources at Sunnyvale School District in Sunnyvale, California. ■



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Continued from p. 29
comfortable and buy in to the programs.

We gave schools three years to implement the multitiered systems of support, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and SEL programs, and they could choose which to start with. The SEL specialists provided intensive support in the beginning stages.

During the first school year of implementation, all elementary teachers engaged in professional learning on the programs they were implementing. Each school also had an SEL site-based specialist, an existing staff member who received a salary addendum to participate in monthly meetings with district SEL staff and support colleagues in implementing SEL.

Planning for sustainability and

We know that SEL helps leaders, teachers, and students thrive.

flexibility in the face of change:

The success of the last two years of implementation has not only provided the needed professional learning to school staff, but also has built capacity within schools to lead and support SEL programs and efforts going forward.

This will be important in the 2018-19 school year as the SEL team undergoes change. SEL is now part of the teaching and learning department, and we are moving from having two SEL specialists to one coordinator of social and emotional learning and behavior support.

After three decades, SEL is now

embedded throughout the district and not just in pockets of excellence. The backbone of this work is the framework and the five-year plan for implementing it. But the overarching keys to the success we have seen are adaptability and vision.

We never forget why we are doing this work. We know that SEL helps leaders, teachers, and students thrive, and SEL becomes a habit of practice when the entire community remembers that we use our SEL skills all day long, not just for a 30-minute block once a week.

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Jan Davis (davis_janet@asdk12.org) is an SEL/professional learning specialist in the Anchorage School District in Anchorage, Alaska. ■

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Staff and students in the New York City Public Schools conduct a restorative circle with support from Morningside Center.

A PROMISING PATH TOWARD EQUITY

RESTORATIVE CIRCLES DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND BRIDGE DIFFERENCES

BY TALA MANASSAH, TOM RODERICK, AND ANNE GREGORY

Racial inequity is a pernicious problem in American schools. Among its many manifestations are discrepancies in school discipline. Study after study has shown that black students are two to three times more likely than their peers to be suspended and expelled, even for

similar infractions (Fabelo et al., 2011; Losen & Martinez, 2013).

New evidence suggests that this pattern directly contributes to the racial achievement gap, and in the long term it is related to school dropout and increased involvement in the juvenile justice system (Morris & Perry, 2016; Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014).

In 2014, federal and state agencies recommended that schools reduce reliance on suspensions in favor of alternative practices. School and district leaders are increasingly seeking such alternative tools and strategies, but these resources are not yet widely available or used.

At Morningside Center for

Teaching Social Responsibility in New York City, we have a longstanding commitment to improving educational equity by supporting schools in implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) and restorative practice approaches. In 2016, we received a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant to help schools weave together these three threads of equity, SEL, and restorative practices so that schools approach discipline differently and more students thrive.

As we build capacity for this work in more than a dozen schools in New York City, we think of integrating the three strands like building a house: You need SEL skills as the foundation to build meaningful relationships. Restorative practices, and circles especially, offer a powerful container in which to practice the skills and build a powerful sense of community.

When you add brave conversations about race among members of the school community, leading to putting systems and structures in place that elevate the worth and dignity of every student, the three parts become a full house: a more equitable school. Our approach has been inspired and influenced by Glenn Singleton, Zaretta Hammond, Michelle Alexander, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and James Baldwin, among others.

At the heart of this i3 project are tools we are developing for professional learning for principals, teachers, and support staff to lead with SEL,

implement restorative practices, and move toward equity. We will develop these tools initially for the schools in our project but they will ultimately be disseminated publicly and widely.

We believe that the concrete guidance offered by implementation manuals, coaching rubrics, and other tools are essential for building both understanding and skills. Most teacher education and school leadership programs do not provide meaningful training in SEL or restorative practices.

Moreover, these approaches run counter to what most adults have been exposed to in our own lives — that is, traditional punitive methods of discipline. Implementing restorative practices and SEL effectively requires a mindset shift and often a new skill set.

INTEGRATING SEL AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices and SEL each show promise in addressing the enormous challenges related to school discipline and academic underperformance in high-needs schools. However, neither approach by itself has been shown to reliably overcome these challenges or close the wide discipline gap between black students and their peers.

SEL and restorative practices have some related goals, but historically, they have been implemented separately. The two approaches come out of different traditions. Until recently, SEL has come from an equity-neutral background,

WHAT ARE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Restorative practices differ from traditional school discipline:

They focus on strengthening relationships, collaborative problem solving, and giving voice to the person harmed and the person causing the harm. Restorative practices in schools arose from the restorative justice movement in which victims, offenders, and others involved meet to resolve conflict and repair relationships.

While many restorative practices programs focus primarily on changing the way adults address discipline problems when they occur, some also aim to prevent conflicts from happening in the first place by fostering trust and a sense of community among students and adults through strategies such as classroom circles. Circles are a particularly powerful strategy for addressing the developmental needs of adolescents because they offer deep opportunities for cultivating a sense of belonging and for self-expression.

whereas restorative practice, which grows out of criminal justice reform, is fundamentally concerned with the school systems and structures that disadvantage students of color and other students from oppressed groups.

In recent decades, SEL has grown in popularity but has largely been siloed from social justice. A major reason is that schools have found it easier to offer lessons that help children behave better than to rethink their entire system of discipline and reeducate professionals to focus on restoring community.

At Morningside Center, however, we have always believed that building SEL must include a focus on seizing teachable moments to build and restore community and to rethink discipline, and that schools must be a model of the world we wish to see and not merely a replication of the world as it currently exists. Our i3 project builds on a long history of integrating these pieces in elementary, middle, and high schools.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Our project has four main components that work together to build capacity for SEL and restorative practices throughout schools' different levels and community members' varying roles.

Build principals' capacity to lead with emotional intelligence and move toward greater racial equity. Principals are, of course, key to facilitating a mindset shift in their schools. To make this shift themselves and broaden it to the community, they need support.

Throughout the year, principals engage in 10 to 12 coaching sessions with retired principals who are experienced coaches. The coaches help principals with everything from how to schedule and develop an advisory period to how to present the project to their faculty. As we develop the coaching model, we are using an iterative process to construct tools that

Experiencing five circles over five days is transformative for many.

will guide former school leaders in this coaching capacity.

We also partner with principals to form a leadership team of diverse staff, including people who do not initially buy in to the idea of SEL and restorative practices or who may be attached to more traditional modes of discipline. They serve as a core group who work through issues to rethink discipline practices and policies and engage in brave conversations about race.

The leadership team works with the principal and our staff developers to roll out the initiative in the school community with administrators, instructional staff, support staff, families, and students, building buy-in and capacity. Building the capacity of the leadership team itself is also a key investment toward sustainability.

By building distributed expertise and shared leadership around these issues, adults in schools become better equipped to advocate and lead with an equity lens. To make a culture shift, everyone in the community must be involved. That includes staff like cafeteria workers, paraprofessionals, and aides who interact with students directly and frequently but are often left out of professional learning.

Co-power and equip educators who work directly with students to teach our curricula. We engage educators in 25 hours of professional learning on restorative practices, SEL, and racial inequity and injustice to all teachers in the participating schools. As part of this learning, they participate in restorative circles over the course of five days so that they have firsthand experience with the structure

of the circles and the power they have to develop relationships, build community, and bridge differences.

For many teachers, this kind of dialogue is new and uncomfortable. Experiencing five circles over five days is transformative for many of them. About half of the 25 hours of professional learning is dedicated to examining equity issues. We discuss the fact that we are all part of a system that is hurting our children and that it is not about blame but about working together to figure out a better way. After the initial training, curriculum implementers receive push-in and pull-out coaching that is tailored to individual needs.

Help school leaders and staff implement restorative interventions effectively. Even when we lay the groundwork for community building and preventing incidents, we are all human and inevitably make mistakes.

Our staff works to ensure that there are people in the schools equipped to ensure that the school remains safe for everyone and respond to incidents in a way that is consistent with SEL and restorative practices. This requires a particular mindset and skill set, so we provide training and assistance to deans, assistant principals, restorative practices coordinators, and others involved in school discipline.

Create opportunities for student and parent leadership around school climate and culture. Whether through student-led circles or parent association meetings that are held using a circle format, parents and students can and must be leaders and partners in driving this work forward.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

At every stage of this project, we are thinking about making our work scalable and replicable. With every strategy and tool, we ask ourselves, "How would this work in a district that is not as ready as those in our study?"

What if the initiative is coming down from the superintendent and many staff are not yet bought in?” These kinds of questions will be addressed in our tool kits and resources.

One of our primary products will be a whole-school racial equity implementation manual that incorporates restorative practices and SEL. We are also developing video resources including models of effective restorative circles.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

As of summer 2018, we have completed 75% of the first phase of the project, in which we piloted our approach and began developing key resources in three New York City public schools — one each at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. We are committed to an iterative development and improvement process, and through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, we have learned important lessons, including the following:

Schools have the capacity to start brave conversations about race right from the get-go if we set up a structure that makes people feel safe and opens new frontiers for dialogue. Skilled facilitation and deliberate tools are key.

For example, we have been able to address teacher concerns that the approach is too soft or unstructured by sharing a sample discipline ladder that spells out what will happen when students commit specific kinds of infractions. We can then work with principals to tailor this to their schools. As a result of this kind of support, we have not experienced any extreme resistance to conversations about racial equity.

It is essential for school teams to collect and use data to inform their decision-making. Even thoughtful and enlightened adults can fail to see patterns cropping up in their schools that should be addressed.

Schools have the capacity to start brave conversations about race right from the get-go if we set up a structure that makes people feel safe and opens new frontiers for dialogue.

We saw a compelling example of this at the middle school involved in our pilot. At this school, the student body is almost 100% black, as are the vast majority of staff. The principal and the three deans, all black men, are well aware that their female students have a higher incidence of behavioral issues than male students. Yet when they examined their discipline data, they discovered they were doling out more frequent and harsh punishments to boys. It was a light bulb moment for the school leaders, who realized that they have more work to do, despite having a strong racial consciousness.

An effort to transform school culture and structures must tackle both the big-issue conversations and the daily practicalities of running a school and educating students.

The mind-changing dialogues about emotional intelligence and implicit bias cannot happen without school leaders and staff grasping the nuts-and-bolts aspects like when to schedule an advisory and who will lead it.

Lasting change is possible only if capacity is built at the school level. In the onslaught of daily responsibilities, school leaders were understandably ready to rely on our staff developers for leading the racial equity work and communicating the importance of the initiative.

But such an approach would not

build principals' ability to develop the skills they need to lead and sustain the work for the long term, after our staff developers have left. Similarly, when staff developers were asked to deal with student crises, they lost valuable time coaching teachers and building their ongoing capacity.

Any model that is intended to be scalable must take into account the high levels of turnover that are common at many schools, especially schools with the most vulnerable students. It is essential that the model have a bidirectional approach to building support and capacity from the bottom up and the top down, simultaneously and continuously. This underscores the importance of having a diverse and widely representative leadership team.

NEXT STEPS

In fall 2019, we will kick off a randomized controlled trial with 18 schools in the Queens and Brooklyn sections of New York City to examine the effectiveness of our tools, professional learning supports, and overall approach to integrating restorative practices and SEL from an equity perspective.

We will track 12 indicators of how well schools implement restorative practices, using a tool being developed. We are interested in tracking specific and concrete ways school leaders can support restorative practices, including: designating a space in the building for restorative practices interventions; making time in the curriculum and schedule for SEL skill-building efforts; and limiting the ratio of students to advisors in advisory periods.

We hope that the resources we are developing will ultimately help educators in the field move forward on achieving racial equity using SEL and restorative practices, but there are important steps schools can and should

take in the meantime.

One is revisiting existing discipline policies and assessing whether they are oriented toward fairness and student growth, rather than just punishment. An environmental scan of the school can also be valuable, particularly for helping understand the relationships and resources that exist.

For example, which groups of students, parents, and staff have more access to supports and supportive relationships? Which groups have less access? What activities are in place that are intentionally oriented toward community-building and positive relationships?

Our belief is that educators enter the profession to improve the world. We can and must be the ones to lead this work. If we each start where we are and engage in a conscious and collective effort toward fostering more equitable

schools, we can make tremendous strides toward building schools that align with our original intentions and are safe, productive, and joyful for all children.

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Tala Manassah (tmanassah@morningsidecenter.org) is deputy executive director and Tom Roderick (troderick@morningsidecenter.org) is executive director of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility in New York, New York. Anne Gregory (annegreg@gsapp.rutgers.edu) is associate professor at Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in Piscataway, New Jersey. ■

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A WELCOME SPACE FOR TAKING RISKS

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
CREATES A POSITIVE CLIMATE
FOR LEARNING

BY SHANNON WANLESS
AND DANA WINTERS

Have you noticed that the same professional learning can be transformative in one school yet have seemingly no impact in another? There are a lot of reasons for that difference, and many of them have to do with the climate for teacher learning in the school.

Just as a teacher creates a classroom learning climate that can promote student learning, a school leader can create a climate for teacher learning. Some of the social and emotional components of that adult learning climate are strikingly similar to key components of the classroom learning climate. Warm and authentic relationships with others, access to trusted peers to scaffold and validate learning, and opportunities to take risks and make mistakes without ridicule help us all learn, no matter whether we are children or adults.

Principals and professional learning

leaders can take specific steps to create a conducive teacher learning climate before embarking on a new professional development program and can ensure that professional learning experiences maintain this climate during coaching and group sessions. But, too often, education leaders worry about how they are going to get teachers to *implement* a new practice rather than focusing on how to engage teachers in positive *learning experiences*.

There are key social and emotional aspects of the school's learning climate that can indicate to teachers that this is a safe place to engage in deep and meaningful learning. One of those key aspects is psychological safety, a concept that has grown out of research in the business sector but has major implications for schools.

Psychological safety is the feeling that you can tolerate — and even feel comfortable with — an inherently uncomfortable situation. When adults feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to take risks, ask questions, welcome diverse opinions, and generate more productive and creative solutions to problems (Edmondson & Roloff, 2009; Foldy, Rivard, & Buckley, 2009; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). In other words, they are more likely to engage in deep and meaningful learning.

Psychological safety is important for educators because trying a new teaching practice can feel uncomfortable, especially when doing so in front of colleagues, when being evaluated on performance, or when there is a perception that professional identity is being threatened. Discomfort is a problem when it is overpowering and leads to disengagement, but feeling uncomfortable is not necessarily a problem. In fact, it can be a positive experience if it pushes us to grow, develop, and build resilience (Wanless, 2016).

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS LEARN ABOUT MATH

In a National Science Foundation-funded project, early education teachers used Simple Interactions to improve their teaching of math and social-emotional skills. The teachers learned to engage with children using *Peg + Cat*, an animated math-based PBS television show accompanied by games and resources. They also participated in Simple Interactions learning sessions that included video clips of them working with children on the math resources.

Reflecting on the experience, one teacher said, "I learned from seeing myself up there that what I am doing is what I am supposed to be doing. It's so different to see yourself doing something positive. It's a good thing."

A school director said, "It was so nice to know that what we do is validated. ... What we do does matter." This group of educators, from four different schools, did not know each other before the project but were able to use the safety and trust built within the group to explore practices and learn from one another.

One major goal in creating a school climate for teacher learning is to create a sense of psychological safety: a sense that it is alright to enter a state of discomfort together because we have warm relationships with trusted peers who will support us as we take risks and learn together.

SIMPLE INTERACTIONS

An example of why psychological safety is important, and how it can be

fostered, can be found in the Simple Interactions approach to professional learning. Simple Interactions, a program of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, based at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, helps educators and other adults build connections with the children and youth they serve.

Originally developed for early childhood teachers and later expanded to include K-12 and informal educators, it is based on the understanding that children's learning and growth are built on a foundation of consistent responsive and reciprocal adult-child interactions.

Recent research (Akiva, Li, Martin, Horner, & McNamara, 2016) focuses on four essential ingredients of supportive adult-child interactions: connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and opportunity to grow. In learning sessions, educators and those who coach and support educators explore a theoretical and practical framework on how to identify and understand positive daily interactions with children as the active ingredients of teaching.

The major task of Simple Interactions' practice-based and theory-informed process is to capture these relationship features on video and emphasize them in professional learning. The goal is to amplify these practices within small peer groups that can discuss, understand, and disseminate these four critical elements of developmental interactions.

Simple Interactions facilitators videotape teachers in their own classrooms to capture existing and emerging practices that embody these relationship dimensions and encourage teachers to use them more often. Video clips allow educators to view their own practice, something they rarely have an opportunity to do, and creates a space for educators to reflect, notice, and wonder about interaction moments that

contribute to the overall practices of educating children. Ideally, these clips help teachers to see strengths they had not noticed before and find ways to build on them.

Videos can also be intimidating, especially for those of us who are not used to seeing ourselves onscreen or talking about our practice with others. Because Simple Interactions participants share video from their own practices with the group, it is important to work toward a safe and trusting environment for learning and growing together.

Simple Interactions is built on the importance of relationships and developmental interactions between adults and children, but the same kind of developmental relationships support the learning and growing of adults who work within an education system. The foundational tenets of the Simple Interactions approach (connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and the opportunity to grow) are universally applicable to all developmental interactions that result in the building of human relationships, and ultimately, learning.

HOW SAFE IS YOUR SCHOOL?

Psychological safety is a feeling, although we might infer it from noticing certain behaviors in our staff. Staff meetings are one place that can be useful for noticing how safe your adult learning climate feels.

Based on research by Brian Pentland and colleagues, Daniel Coyle (2018, pp. 14-15) describes five behaviors in a staff meeting that indicate psychological safety:

- Everyone in the group talks and listens in roughly equal measure, keeping contributions short.
- Members maintain high levels of eye contact, and their conversations and gestures are energetic.

- Members communicate directly with one another, not just with the team leader.
- Members carry on back-channel or side conversations within the team.
- Members periodically break, go exploring outside the team, and bring information back to share with others.

These signals are not the only indicators of psychological safety, but give a hint as to whether everyone feels included and able to speak up and engage in the work of the group. Likely, that engagement will transfer to a professional learning setting as long as staff agree that the goals for learning are valuable.

Sometimes, though, looking for visible signs of psychological safety is not enough to get the full picture. Talk to teachers directly to hear how they are feeling. By having one-on-one or small group conversations, you can quickly get an accurate assessment of their perceptions and convey to them that you care about creating a safe workplace.

In that sense, these conversations may be both an assessment and the beginning of an intervention to improve the climate. When teachers know you care about how they feel at work, they may begin to recognize your efforts and be more responsive to them.

When you are talking with teachers, there are questions that might be useful for guiding the conversation. Researcher Amy Edmondson created seven statements about psychological safety that we have adapted for use with teachers (Edmondson, 1999). Although they were meant for use in a written questionnaire, these statements might help get the conversation going. (Note: Endorsing the first four statements would indicate a sense of psychological safety, and the last three indicate the opposite.)

1. Teachers at this school are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
2. Teachers at this school feel it is safe to take a risk (e.g. trying something new in the classroom).
3. No teachers at this school would deliberately act in a way that would undermine my teaching.
4. Working with teachers at this school, my unique skills and talents are valued and used.
5. If you make a mistake at this school, it is often held against you.
6. People who work at this school sometimes reject others for being different.
7. It is difficult to ask other people who work at this school for help.

We used these statements in a written survey to figure out how teachers' sense of psychological safety might relate to their readiness to engage with a new professional learning program. When assessing almost 100 teachers, we found that teachers' ratings on these seven items were highly related to readiness (Wanless, 2018).

We also found that teachers used the whole range of responses (on a scale from completely disagree to completely agree), showing variability in how psychologically safe teachers feel, sometimes even within the same school. This suggests that, although there are moves that a school leader can take to promote school climates that feel safe, individual teachers may feel otherwise and figuring out how safe they feel may be key to getting new professional learning off to a good start.

FOCUS ON WHAT TEACHERS DO WELL

One of the ways Simple Interactions promotes psychological

safety is by focusing on what teachers already do well and value. Simple Interactions focuses on positive developmental interactions with children, something that already resonates with most teachers. It is based on positive deviance (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010), which originated in public health, and suggests that there are individuals who succeed in any community despite facing similar challenges as their peers.

Positive deviance focuses on how communities can identify these successful behaviors and plan ways to adopt them widely for the success of all. The positive deviants in education are those who, regardless of resource limitations and ongoing challenges, find ways to provide consistent developmental interactions for children in their care.

Through the Simple Interactions approach, these moments are highlighted as the innate strengths of child-serving adults to promote the development of children. When professional development programs align with teacher values, like Simple Interactions, teacher motivation for learning is higher and taking risks to try new teaching practice is more tolerable.

Regardless of what professional learning initiatives are happening at the time, school leaders can promote psychological safety by sending regular messages to staff that uncertainty, differing perspectives, and admitting difficulty are welcome.

One powerful way this can happen is for a school leader to be a role model and share his or her own challenges. Many leaders hesitate to display any signs of difficulty for fear of looking vulnerable when, in fact, sharing vulnerability tells teachers that they are safe to share mistakes and challenges as well. Over time, sharing vulnerabilities is what will likely lead to trusting teams of teachers that become adept at

learning and growing together.

Another way to let teachers know that differing perspectives are welcome is to be ready to handle criticism or counter-ideas. How will you respond when a teacher says your new idea for assessment is not working in his or her classroom? Getting defensive will let a teacher know that you are aiming for compliance, not team learning. But probing for more information and asking others for their thoughts will let a teacher know that your ultimate goal is growth and development of high-quality teaching practices.

Overall, research and our experiences with schools point to one strong message: Creating a psychologically safe climate at school matters for adult learning in the same way that it matters for children's learning. School leaders can help teachers feel safe to take risks, share differing opinions, and be vulnerable in front of colleagues before and during professional learning activities, which can impact a program's success. This aspect of leadership can make a school feel like a productive place for everyone to learn.

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Shannon Wanless (swanless@pitt.edu) is director of the Office of Child Development and associate professor of psychology in education at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. Dana Winters (dana.winters@stvincent.edu) is director of Simple Interactions and academic programs at Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media and assistant professor of child and family studies at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. ■



Reach. Investigate. Discover.

IDEAS

LEARNING ISN'T ALWAYS VISIBLE

I once heard a conductor tell an orchestra that a good bass section should be felt and not heard. I knew what he was talking about: the stage-rumbling, hair-tingling awareness of vibrations at a very low frequency that round out a sound before you can put your finger on where they come from.

Similarly, some important parts of the learning process are not observable in the exact way or at the exact moment in which we look for them. Some lessons marinate for days after the formative assessment meant to mark their effect. Sometimes students don't demonstrate a visible aha moment, but incorporate what they learned in an end-of-term paper.

REFRAMING OBSERVATION:

CREATE A CULTURE OF LEARNING WITH TEACHER EVALUATION

p. 46

REFRAMING OBSERVATION

CREATE
A CULTURE
OF LEARNING
WITH TEACHER
EVALUATION

BY RACHAEL GABRIEL

Classroom observations and the feedback they generate have great potential to support educator development, especially when compared with other components of teacher evaluation systems. Too often, however, they are the site of missed opportunities, broken trust, and frustration.

To address the priorities outlined in *Race to the Top*, the federal grant program initiated in 2010, teacher evaluation systems must include measures of student achievement and multiple observations for every teacher, regardless of experience level. In my work evaluating and supporting the implementation of these new-generation teacher evaluation systems, I have learned that three key challenges to

observation, sewn into the very fabric of evaluation, consistently obscure learning opportunities for teachers and leaders.

Overcoming these challenges requires intentionally reframing the purpose and possibility of the evaluation tools and processes we often take for granted. With that reframing, skilled leaders can create a culture of learning around the tools and routines of teacher evaluation.

CHALLENGES TO OBSERVATION
The dual foci of teacher evaluation cannot be addressed simultaneously.

New generation teacher evaluation systems have two simultaneous goals for educators: accountability and development. Each goal is supported by an implicit logic that guides the structure of current policies, but these



logics sometimes conflict.

The logic of *accountability* holds that the goal of observation is to measure and sort teachers by matching observable behaviors to specified indicators that align with different categories of effectiveness (Gabriel & Woulfin, 2017). The successful accountability observation is one in which the evaluator sees the greatest number of ratable behaviors and gathers the most evidence for a rubric score.

On the other hand, the logic of *development* holds that the goal of observation is to support teacher growth by learning something about the teacher's practice that could inform individualized professional learning opportunities (Gabriel & Woulfin, 2017). This requires identifying and prioritizing a range of needs and areas for growth, including those that may not be previously specified and may not

appear on the evaluation rubric. This logic requires observers to prioritize the *why* and *how* of teacher practice over *whether* the teacher did something specific during an observation.

When I work with beginning teachers preparing for observations, I notice that their efforts and expectations seem to follow either the logic of accountability *or* the logic of development, but rarely both at once.

Teachers who are focused on the “measure and sort” goal try to perform as many of the rubric indicators as they can during the observation — whether or not the lesson they teach represents their best, most interesting, or most typical instruction.

Teachers who are focused on the “support and develop” goal seem more likely to show their most interesting or pressing instructional challenge during the observation. Ideally, this opens

rich possibilities for discussion and feedback. But sometimes it backfires.

For example, one student invited his evaluator to come toward the end of a lab activity so that he could get feedback on something he was struggling with in the classroom: supporting students' independent problem-solving. But the evaluation rubric included indicators about setting a purpose for learning, asking questions,

assessing understanding, and managing classroom procedures, none of which the evaluator was able to see while watching the students work in pairs with the teacher circulating to provide assistance.

Even though both parties approached the observation with a clear and reasonable intention, the mismatch between those intentions meant that no one got what they needed. The evaluator was left with a mostly unratable sample of instruction and wasn't able to categorize the teacher's performance as expected.

Furthermore, he spent so much time searching the rubric for something to rate that he wasn't able to look at the issue the teacher was concerned about, and the teacher got no useful feedback or ideas about professional learning opportunities.

In this example, neither the teacher nor the evaluator had the "right" approach to the observation. Both the accountability and development goals are potentially valuable, but when the parties attempt to apply them simultaneously, or have competing priorities, the result is usually conflict and frustration.

It is essential for the evaluator and teacher to have a brief conversation about the primary purpose of the observation at the moment the observation is scheduled (or when the window for unscheduled observations opens). This creates the conditions for shared goals and expectations, so that both parties can prepare and plan accordingly.

Excellent teaching is specific, but most rubrics are generic.

The first time I accompanied a principal on walk-throughs, he had a clear focus for observation: teachers' questioning and discussion techniques to promote higher-order thinking in English classrooms. The rubric we were using included several items about

how teachers asked questions and encouraged critical thinking in large-group discussions, so we went looking for examples of class discussions.

The first classroom we entered was taking a test — no student questioning or discussion to observe. The second classroom was watching a movie — no student questioning or discussion to observe. The third classroom had students reading independently while the teacher circulated to confer with individuals — no student questioning or discussion to observe, or so we thought.

When we met with the third teacher later that day, she explained that some of the most fruitful questions and discussions happen within individual conferences. According to her, had we listened more closely, we might have heard a range of question types, student-formulated questions, and the high-level thinking and discourse we were expecting to find only in a whole-class discussion.

Because we were focused on group discussion, we weren't observing one-on-one conferences for questioning and discussion techniques. Unfortunately, we overlooked what could have been valuable evidence.

Rubrics can help us focus our observations, but they can also be limiting. One of the main reasons for the popularity of rubrics is that they standardize expectations for different levels of effectiveness in teaching.

Within the logic of accountability, this standardization is a necessary element for fairness. However, within the logic of development, standardization limits what counts as good teaching and stymies the production of meaningful feedback.

The problem stems, in large part, from the fact that most rubrics are written in relatively broad, generic terms meant to apply equally well across subjects and grades. They focus on some of the more generic aspects of "good

teaching" rather than the more specific, nuanced aspects that vary across subjects and grades and that really make a difference for student learning.

Yet studies suggest that excellent teaching is specific, not general — and so are useful rubrics. When compared to generic rubrics, subject-specific rubrics have a greater percentage of indicators focused on instruction (as opposed to other teaching elements like professionalism and classroom environment; Gabriel & Woulfin, 2015). Not surprisingly, they are also more predictive of student achievement outcomes (Grossman, Cohen, & Brown, 2014).

In addition, they seem to be less prone to inflation. For example, in a large-scale study of the value of teacher evaluation systems, the majority of teachers earned proficient or distinguished ratings on general evaluation rubrics but very few earned the highest ratings on subject-specific rubrics for math and English language arts lessons (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2012). Of course, subject-specific criteria also enable evaluators to provide more useful feedback to teachers.

However, it is unrealistic to create, validate, and reliably apply separate rubrics for every subject and grade, and it would be inequitable to do it for some and not others. Instead, evaluators have to find other ways to honor and engage the subject-specific nuances of effective instruction.

One powerful way to do this is to work with teachers and instructional leaders (e.g. coaches, coordinators, department chairs) to annotate and expand the general rubric with specific examples and indicators for each area. For example, when the general rubric calls for equitable participation among all students, evaluators could ask teachers and instructional leaders to articulate specifically what that means

for them, understanding that it might look different in the context of a 1st-grade literacy block, 5th-grade science, and 9th-grade social studies.

Questions like this can create opportunities to develop a shared language and vision for effective teaching throughout the school that each grade level and department can own and can increase collective capacity to achieve the vision.

Learning isn't always visible at the moment we look for it.

I once heard a conductor tell an orchestra that a good bass section should be felt and not heard. I knew what he was talking about: the stage-rumbling, hair-tingling awareness of vibrations at a very low frequency that round out a sound before you can put your finger on where they come from.

Similarly, some important parts of the learning process are not observable in the exact way or at the exact moment in which we look for them. Some lessons marinate for days after the formative assessment meant to mark their effect. Sometimes students don't demonstrate a visible aha moment, but incorporate what they learned in an end-of-term paper. Some teaching moves are only meaningful if you know what happened before and after them.

In these cases, and so many others, a 30-minute, rubric-guided observation is not the best way to assess effectiveness. Yet I don't subscribe to the philosophy of a principal who told me he could "just feel" whether a teacher was effective or not within the first 15 seconds of entering the classroom. I don't believe we need less observation. I think we need more conversation so that we can build a fuller picture of teacher effectiveness and student learning.

"More" doesn't always mean additional classroom visits. It can also mean asking more questions and

reporting more information (Gabriel, 2015). Good evaluators ask insightful questions that fill in the generic indicators with specific explanations of the intentions, goals, challenges, and successes that are just below the surface of the observable behaviors.

They do not just note that student participation was uneven; they ask why the teacher returned to a particular student over and over again. They do not just note the absence of student discourse; they ask when and how students have discussed or will discuss this topic in previous or future lessons. They do not just count the number of minutes students spent reading; they ask what they were reading, why, and how it was selected.

Asking questions is vital for understanding the meaning of what was observed and is far more valuable than feedback that simply recites the ratings on a rubric. If teachers do not have answers to the "why" and "how" questions, that may indicate a place for support.

Likewise, if the answers are disappointing (for example, "I called on Tommy the most because he's the smartest"), the discussion has revealed an area for growth. Sometimes, the answers will make the evaluator think about teaching and learning in a different way. Either way, the questions create a space for discussion focused on pedagogy rather than performance.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

The tools and routines of teacher evaluation can sometimes get in the way of the very growth and development they were created to support, but this doesn't have to be the case. Across the challenges highlighted here, three key strategies can help evaluators get the most out of observation:

1. Communicate the purpose of each observation.
2. Adapt indicators from generic

rubrics for each subject and grade.

3. Ask about the thinking behind the teaching that was observed.

These strategies do not require special tools, training, or materials, but they just might maximize the enormous investments educators have had to make in teacher evaluation activities. They might allow discussions aimed at improving teaching to live up to their potential to transform it.

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Rachael Gabriel (rachael.gabriel@uconn.edu) is associate professor of literacy education at the University of Connecticut. ■



WHERE ARE GIFTED STUDENTS OF COLOR?

CASE STUDIES OUTLINE STRATEGIES TO INCREASE DIVERSITY IN GIFTED PROGRAMS

BY KATIE D. LEWIS, ANGELA M. NOVAK, AND CHRISTINE L. WEBER

Educators are learners: Most of them know that there is always more to know. The question, then, is not whether educators should engage in professional learning, but in what areas they should focus to best serve students.

In the difficult process of choosing

and designing professional learning, the needs of some students tend to get overlooked. Due to a lack of federal legislation and requirements, gifted students are often forgotten by the educational system at large, and, in turn, district professional development catalogs omit an ongoing understanding of this population.

The needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students such as Native American, black, Hispanic, bilingual, and English language learners (Ford, 2014) are often overlooked as well. Together, these trends create a big hole in professional learning opportunities: supporting gifted students of color.

Professional learning is essential to increase educators' awareness of the needs of students who do not share their cultural or class backgrounds.

According to the federal definition of giftedness, gifted children show “evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields” and should receive services designed to help them develop fully those capacities (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Giftedness occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, yet students of color are underrepresented in gifted programs (Ford, 2014). By underserved, we mean that the identified population (gifted students) is not similar to the general population from which it is drawn.

For example, consider a school with 1,000 students, 50% of whom are Hispanic, 25% white, and 25% black. If the gifted program accepts 15% of the student body, that group of 150 students should include 75 Hispanic students, 37 white students, and 37 black students. But too often, nonwhite students are underrepresented in gifted programs.

Researchers have found that this phenomenon may be linked to assessment and identification instruments such as standardized tests or identification checklists, which can often be culturally biased. It may also be linked to teachers' lack of knowledge about giftedness and implicit bias about students of color (Lewis, Novak, & Coronado, 2015; Irby & Lara-Alecio, 1996).

Professional learning strategies can help narrow the representation gap and increase diversity in programs for the gifted. Because personal beliefs and experiences influence instruction, professional learning is essential to increase educators' awareness of the needs of students who do not share their cultural or class backgrounds.

There is also reason to believe that teachers recognize the need for this kind of opportunity. In Burkman's (2012) study on preparing novice teachers for success in elementary classrooms, participants identified teaching gifted and talented students in the top 25% of challenges they face in the classroom.

STANDARDS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

A starting place for increasing professional learning to benefit underserved gifted populations is the National Association for Gifted Children's National Standards in Gifted and Talented Education.

Four sets of standards cover a variety of stakeholders: one set provides skills for general education teachers, the second details standards for advanced practitioners in the field of gifted education, the third lists teacher preparation standards for gifted specialists, and the final set highlights professional learning design and evaluation standards.

These standards serve as

benchmarks to guide professional learning for preservice and inservice teachers. They provide direction for gaining expertise in meeting the needs of gifted learners. These standards, supported by research, emphasize the knowledge and skills to become an exemplary teacher in the field.

Johnsen (2012), who writes about standards in the field and their effects on professional competence, reminds us that it is students who reap the benefits of high standards for teachers. In addition to covering evidence-based practices that teachers should use with gifted students, the National Association for Gifted Children's standards call on educators to reflect on professional learning efforts with students' outcomes in mind.

By providing systematic, ongoing professional learning that requires educators to assess instructional practices, includes regular follow-up, and requires evidence of teacher implementation and resulting student outcomes, as suggested by National Association for Gifted Children's standards, research-based professional learning practices can facilitate teacher change.

When these professional learning experiences address underserved populations, changes in teacher practice can contribute to a reversal of the underrepresentation plaguing K-12 gifted education programs.

LEARNING FROM CASE STUDIES

While the best way for educators to analyze and reflect on various situations in education is through hands-on practice, it is not always easy or even possible to organize the wide range of experiences that educators may encounter when working with gifted learners. To address this, two books of case studies highlight critical issues related to meeting the needs of gifted and talented students (Weber, Boswell, & Behrens, 2014) and differentiating instruction (Weber, Behrens, & Boswell, 2016).

Using case studies as a vehicle to support sustained professional learning serves several goals and purposes. Case studies allow teachers to imagine themselves in settings they might not have encountered, have yet to encounter, or have encountered but were not sure how to proceed. Even more importantly, engaging in ongoing discussions about different teaching and learning models and strategies with an opportunity to integrate the learning into the classroom supports job-embedded practice.

In addition, case studies are an excellent resource to support professional learning communities (PLCs). Each case includes a variety of issues for analysis, encouraging mentoring, coaching, and demonstration lessons. Most importantly, case studies invite reflection about and evaluation of teaching. Analyzing cases in a workshop format within the school setting such as PLCs can empower staff to use decision-making strategies (Weber, Boswell, & Behrens, 2014).

The cases in these two books are suitable for a variety of audiences, including parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Readers can work in pairs or small groups to investigate and analyze the scenarios. Each case study starts with a brief overview that

Gifted learners from diverse backgrounds may need complex support that acknowledges and respects the hidden rules of culture.

introduces the case and sets the stage for a learning scenario narrative.

Within each case, a short introduction guides the reader's thinking without imparting an explicit action, recommendation, or solution. Discussion questions, activities, extensions, and suggestions for additional readings support the standards. Aligning the cases with standards in the field helps educators expand their content and instructional repertoires with a focus on improving student growth.

One case study involves Jessica, an 11-year-old twice-exceptional student. (Twice-exceptional students have both gifted and special education needs.) Her classroom and achievement test scores are typically in the average to low-average range. This is somewhat of a surprise given her 3rd-grade Cognitive Abilities Test score of 129 and past participation in the elementary gifted program.

Jessica's parents are concerned about the apparent discrepancy between their daughter's efforts and achievement. Jessica's parents are not aware that Jessica reads very slowly, often rereading passages many times for basic comprehension. They have no idea how hard she works or how frustrated she is about schoolwork. The case study encourages educators to explore how students with special needs who are gifted and learning disabled can be challenged in the classroom and

what course of action educators can take to address those needs.

Another case study introduces educators to important issues of cultural competency — the ability of people to successfully interact with and understand others whose culture differs from their own. For educators of the gifted, cultural competency is one of the most essential skill sets to better identify and support gifted students from underrepresented populations.

Gifted learners from diverse backgrounds may need complex support that acknowledges and respects the hidden rules of culture. In this case study, Raul, a high school student and the son of immigrant parents, appears to lack the motivation and engagement to attend class.

The ability to successfully interact with and understand others whose cultures differ from their own is necessary if educators are to identify students, such as Raul, from underrepresented populations. The case study encourages educators to consider the ongoing impact of culture on students, such as the role of family and community, the values of self-sufficiency and family support, and the corresponding lack of dependence on outside assistance, and the complexity of attendance issues in Hispanic and Latino cultures.

Furthermore, an essential understanding for educators is that generational poverty impacts what students think about themselves, school, and aspirations for the future (Weber, Boswell, & Behrens, 2014).

GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We recommend the following guidelines for designing professional learning.

Take a pulse. Facilitators should conduct a brief survey of teacher beliefs before beginning any professional

Where are gifted students of color?

learning activity. It is critical that this survey be confidential so that everyone feels comfortable responding honestly. The results provide a pulse of teacher perceptions toward the underserved populations to guide professional learning.

Like all pulses, it needs to be monitored throughout the sessions so that facilitators can assess areas of growth and continuing concerns. This survey should focus on the topic of the professional learning. For example, if cultural competency is the focus, the Colorado Department of Education (2010) has an equity toolkit for administrators that includes a self-assessment for teachers and administrators, available at www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/equitytoolkit.

Create a safe zone. Professional learning allows teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to come together to discuss ideas of what works in their classrooms. Facilitators who guide the discussions maintain a safe environment where everyone can feel comfortable sharing ideas and expressing concerns.

Creating a safe place to discuss ideas is critical in increasing awareness of underserved populations of gifted and talented learners. Everyone needs to feel comfortable in sharing his or her thoughts, ideas, and questions. For example, in conversations about gifted black students, teachers may share generalizations or misconceptions about race and ask questions about culture. Providing a safe space to do so is essential for the growth of the teacher.

Provide training that is uniquely tailored. Facilitators should design professional learning based on the pulse survey results and the unique student body of the school and district. Pay close attention to underserved populations: English language learners, twice-exceptional, and minority groups.

For example, when engaging in professional learning on the twice-exceptional population, the presenter might survey teachers and focus on meeting the needs of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder/gifted students, learning disabled/gifted, and others, incorporating research, specific examples, and professional learning activities relevant to teachers' needs and the school population. Partnering with special education teachers can facilitate communication and co-teaching.

Research shows that targeted professional learning has a direct impact on teacher perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and understandings (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Similarly, educators should engage in differentiated professional learning based on results of their pulse surveys.

Share culturally relevant information. Culturally relevant information addresses special populations' cultural traits, unique characteristics, challenges, and success stories, while also acknowledging that students are individuals with unique stories whose family culture may not fit that generalized mold.

Professional learning needs to explore culture below the tip of the iceberg (Ford, Moore, & Milner, 2004). Facilitators and participants must dig below the visible aspects of culture to get to the heart of what makes up the culture through sharing and dialogue, acknowledging that in a culturally focused session, everyone has knowledge and experience that they bring to the table.

Lead courageous conversations. Candid conversations about underserved populations are important to changing teacher beliefs and increasing awareness of underserved populations. These conversations happen when there is a safe environment and accurate information about underserved populations.

Engage culturally diverse families.

Parents are a key component to the success of students in the classroom, but parental involvement can be a struggle for educators. Coaching can help teachers learn how to reach out to parents from underserved populations and engage them in their child's education. Parents may have misconceptions about the gifted and talented program, which can inhibit the student's identification and enrollment in the program; parental involvement can mitigate this barrier.

Encourage collaboration, capitalize on strengths. Give teachers opportunities to share successful strategies with each other. While a school may have staff support to serve under-identified populations of gifted and talented students, teachers may not be aware of it or take advantage of it. For example, teaming with ELL instructional specialists can help teachers of gifted classes learn strategies for supporting ELL students and therefore be better able to identify and teach them.

Great teachers are lifelong learners eager to look for ways to improve their instructional strategies and meet students' needs. Professional learning should provide teachers with a safe learning environment to explore case studies, ask questions, and develop a school culture that is culturally responsive and aware of underserved populations.

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WHEN TEAMS HIT ROUGH WATERS

NAVIGATE
CHALLENGES
WITH A
DEVELOPMENTAL
APPROACH

BY ELEANOR DRAGO-SEVERSON, CHRISTY JOSWICK O’CONNOR,
AND JESSICA BLUM-DESTEFANO

Teaming — when done well — can make all the difference. Nearly all the teachers and leaders we work with serve on one or more teams. Yet where do we learn how to be effective team members? What common challenges do teams face? And how can a developmental approach help teams thrive?

As part of our work in schools and districts, we have the gift of facilitating developmental teacher leadership institutes. These institutes focus on helping teacher leaders understand adult development. Participants learn how to grow other adults and themselves, and they hone practices conducive to good teaming.

In one of our institutes this past

year, we asked participants what they did when difficulties arose on their teacher teams. One senior teacher with 15 years of teaching experience said, “I understand how important teams are and how they make the school function better. And it seems natural to me that whenever you work with a group of people, there will be difficulties. But isn’t it easier to just keep working and ignore the difficulties that arise? Not only is it hard to address those situations, but I don’t even know where to begin. No one has ever taught us how to work through challenges as teammates.”

In this article, we address the painful challenges many adults encounter when working in teams. We discuss how adult developmental

theory can help us better understand why teaming can be challenging for adults and how to support teaming as a developmental practice.

DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

In our teacher leadership institutes, we focus on teaching teacher leaders about adult development (that is, how to understand and build their own and other’s capacities) and what we call pillar practices (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2016).

Let’s look at each of these in turn. (For a more in-depth discussion of these concepts, see “The DNA of development: A new model for school change focuses on adult learning” in the June 2018 issue of *The Learning Professional*.)

ADULT DEVELOPMENT: FOUR WAYS OF KNOWING

Nearly 40 years of research suggest that adults make meaning of the world with one of four qualitatively different developmental ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016, 2018b; Kegan, 2000). A way of knowing dictates how a person will make sense of one's relationships, roles, and responsibilities and what a person believes constitutes an effective teacher, leader, and team member.

Each way of knowing has both strengths and growing edges. If someone is offered developmental supports and challenges, he or she can develop greater internal capacities over time. Teaming is a structure that can help adults grow. This is important and hopeful.

Adults with different ways of knowing experience teaming quite differently. *Instrumental knowers*, for example, are most comfortable when following what they see as the "right" team rules and procedures but are challenged when considering perspectives other than their own.

Socializing knowers orient strongly to the feelings, needs, and approval of teammates and, as such, are challenged by conflict. *Self-authoring knowers* thrive when they have opportunities to share their expertise, perspectives, and ideas. Their challenge is learning how to critique their own ideologies or the ways they think things should go.

Finally, *self-transforming knowers* delight in exploring the complexities and paradoxes of an issue but may have a harder time working with team members whom they experience as more rigid. No matter one's way of knowing, taking developmental

diversity into account can help team members manage difficult situations and enhance team effectiveness.

THE PILLAR PRACTICES

Teaming is also one of the four foundational pillar practices for collaboration we highlight in our work (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018b), along with providing adults with leadership roles, engaging in collegial inquiry, and coaching and mentoring with developmental intentionality.

These four practices put a developmental spin on collaborative initiatives that are regularly employed in schools. Implementing them can help educators accomplish logistical tasks, such as learning new curricula or overseeing the completion of testing criteria.

However, they also support adults by creating safe spaces for reflecting, examining assumptions, broadening perspectives, collaborating, and even engaging in productive conflict (see table on p. 56).

WHAT WOULD YOU DO AND SAY?

In our work with educators, when we address the possibilities and challenges of teaming, the following questions typically surface:

- How can we help team members be more vulnerable and open to hearing others and their ideas?
- How can we make change OK and not scary?
- How do we work with team members who seem negative or unmotivated?
- How can we work with people

who seem closed off to change?

- How can we communicate better? Within grade-level teams? Vertical teams? District teams? Between buildings?
- How can I stand up more often and say what I'm honestly thinking and feeling to teammates?

In our experience, learning about adult development, the four ways of knowing, and the pillar practices can help educators not only better understand some of what drives these questions but also differentiate supports and solutions accordingly.

In addition, practicing the application of a developmental lens through role-playing can be a powerful support. With that in mind, we offer several dilemmas below that readers will probably be familiar with. With a partner, select one of them, with one partner playing the role of team leader and the other acting as the team member demonstrating a challenging behavior. Debrief for about five minutes after the role play and then switch roles.

The new team leader can either choose to retry the same dilemma, with the intention of diving deeper, or select a new one.

As you read through these dilemmas, think about what you would say and do if you were faced with one of these situations. Review the descriptions in the tables on pp. 56-57. How might that information guide you?

Dilemma 1: THE COMPLAINER

During a team meeting, you're discussing a new initiative that the district has rolled out. One teacher expressed during the past two team

TEAMING AND FOUR WAYS OF KNOWING			
WAY OF KNOWING	EXPERIENCE OF TEAMING	SUPPORTS FOR GROWTH	CHALLENGES (Stretches for growth)
Instrumental knowers	Are supported when the correct rules or procedures are adhered to; are challenged when considering other team members' perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish guidelines for teamwork. Provide a clear timetable and concrete goals and due dates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities to consider alternative paths to reach team goals. Model flexibility and acceptance. Encourage dialogue that extends past the right solution and stretches thinking by considering other viewpoints.
Socializing knowers	Orient toward gaining approval from valued others, team leaders, and colleagues. Are challenged by conflict or a difference of opinion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities to share individual perspectives in pairs before sharing with the whole team. Provide guidance from the team leader when determining the best ways to accomplish a goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model that a difference of opinion doesn't destroy personal relationships. Challenge them to accept conflicting points of view as part of teamwork. Encourage them to voice their perspective, and have the team make space for this. Support them in creating their own standards for evaluating effective teamwork.
Self-authoring knowers	Feel supported by learning from multiple perspectives. Appreciate opportunities to evaluate initiatives. Need space to share their own perspectives and engage in dialogue about proposals. Are challenged when asked to critique their own perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create the opportunity for them to identify and share their own goal for teamwork. Engage in discussing all possible ways to accomplish a goal before making a decision. As a team, analyze and critique all ideas when considering how to accomplish a given task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support different approaches to the process of exploring a problem. Encourage them to identify and pursue goals even if they're not their original ideas. Create opportunities for them to critique their own perspectives. Invite them to serve in the role of facilitator in difficult team discussions rather than as the leader.
Self-transforming knowers	Are both supported and challenged by diversity. Value multiple perspectives, seek collegial exchange, and harmonize multiple points of view. Seek to engage in deep exploration of contradictions, paradoxes, and inconsistencies within teams, schools, themselves, and peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build teams with adults who have diverse experiences and perspectives (in terms of age, gender, race, sexuality, and experience). Create opportunities for making long-term goals that orient toward the common good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide space and time for discussion and exploration of paradoxes and contradictions. Challenge them to be patient and allow others to work at their own pace.

Source: Drago-Severson, 2009. Adapted with permission.

meetings that there are “too many changes” and “not enough support.” After the meetings, and sometimes even during them, she talks disparagingly about coworkers, teammates, students, and parent involvement.

Dilemma 2: THE SLACKER

As a team, you've distributed the work of planning the upcoming field trip among all your teammates. Everyone has done his or her part except for the person who was supposed to coordinate

the bus. Now you may have to cancel or reschedule this trip. This is not the first time he has proven unreliable.

Dilemma 3: THE OVERACHIEVER

A new young hire on your team

PILLAR PRACTICES AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT		
PILLAR PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION	HOW IT SUPPORTS ADULT DEVELOPMENT
Teaming	Adults collaborate on curriculum, literacy, technology, teaching, and diversity teams to increase individual and organizational learning.	Adults question their own and other people’s assumptions while sharing perspectives and challenging their own and other’s thinking.
Providing leadership roles	An invitation for teachers to share authority and ideas with other colleagues and leaders.	Supports adults in uncovering their assumptions and testing new ways of working in current and new roles.
Collegial inquiry	Purposeful dialogue aimed at examining one’s own and others’ beliefs.	Supports adults by listening to and learning from their own and others’ perspectives.
Mentoring	Learning from another colleague in the supportive and more private way of 1:1 coaching.	Supports adults by broadening perspectives, examining assumptions, and sharing expertise and leadership.

Source: Drago-Severson, 2009. Adapted with permission.

is working very hard. When she does more than she signed up for, veteran teachers on the team make comments like, “This makes the rest of us look bad.” They also make these comments behind the new teacher’s back, and they choose not to share their work with her. This is creating a rift on the team.

Dilemma 4: STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

As a team, you’re working together to interpret the curriculum. One teacher feels strongly that fractions need to be taught before decimals. Another teacher disagrees. As a grade level, you need to reach consensus. The team is divided. You don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings, and you need to maintain a working relationship with all of your teammates.

Dilemma 5: THE BOAT ROCKER

As a new member of the team, you started off the year by doing what everyone else was doing. Your team is known for being consistent across all classes. However, now you have some different ideas you’d like to try. You feel your students have needs that aren’t being met by the one-size-fits-all approach. You don’t want to rock the boat, but you also value

professional autonomy. One team member is adamant about “maintaining consistency as a team.”

HOW TO RESPOND

Role-playing — with an understanding of our own and others’ ways of knowing — is a powerful strategy to engage in because it allows us to practice applying a developmental lens in ways that are less sensitive and personal.

Specifically, the following developmental questions and phrases are helpful entry points into sensitive collegial conversations and powerful tools for exploring the why behind colleagues’ actions and resistance.

- I’ve noticed that at our team meeting ...
- I feel a little nervous sharing this with you, but I respect you and our work together, so I think it’s important for me to say ...
- I’d like to share some of my experiences on the team. But before I do, I’m wondering how you are feeling about our team meetings.
- I wonder what would happen if ...
- When _____ happened, I felt _____.

- What would make our work together feel more productive for you?
- What kinds of supports do you think would be most helpful as we move forward as a team?
- What’s hardest for you about our work on the team?
- Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about the situation?

Although there are no magic words that will guarantee a swift and easy resolution to a teaming challenge, investing time into learning more about how a challenging teammate is thinking and feeling can go a long way toward improving the situation, as can expressing genuine appreciation for the things that are going well. This can help us meet people where they are — developmentally and otherwise — as we strengthen relationships, trust, and connections.

TEAMWORK AT ITS BEST

Engaging courageously in these kinds of conversations is key to leveraging teams as powerful forces for change, growth, and good. It’s essential, however, to situate them as part of a larger tapestry of developmental

leadership and collaboration (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018a, 2018b) and to recognize the ever-present press of political, economic, and societal factors — for example, how personal and group identity demographics as well as bureaucratic and accountability mandates influence group dynamics.

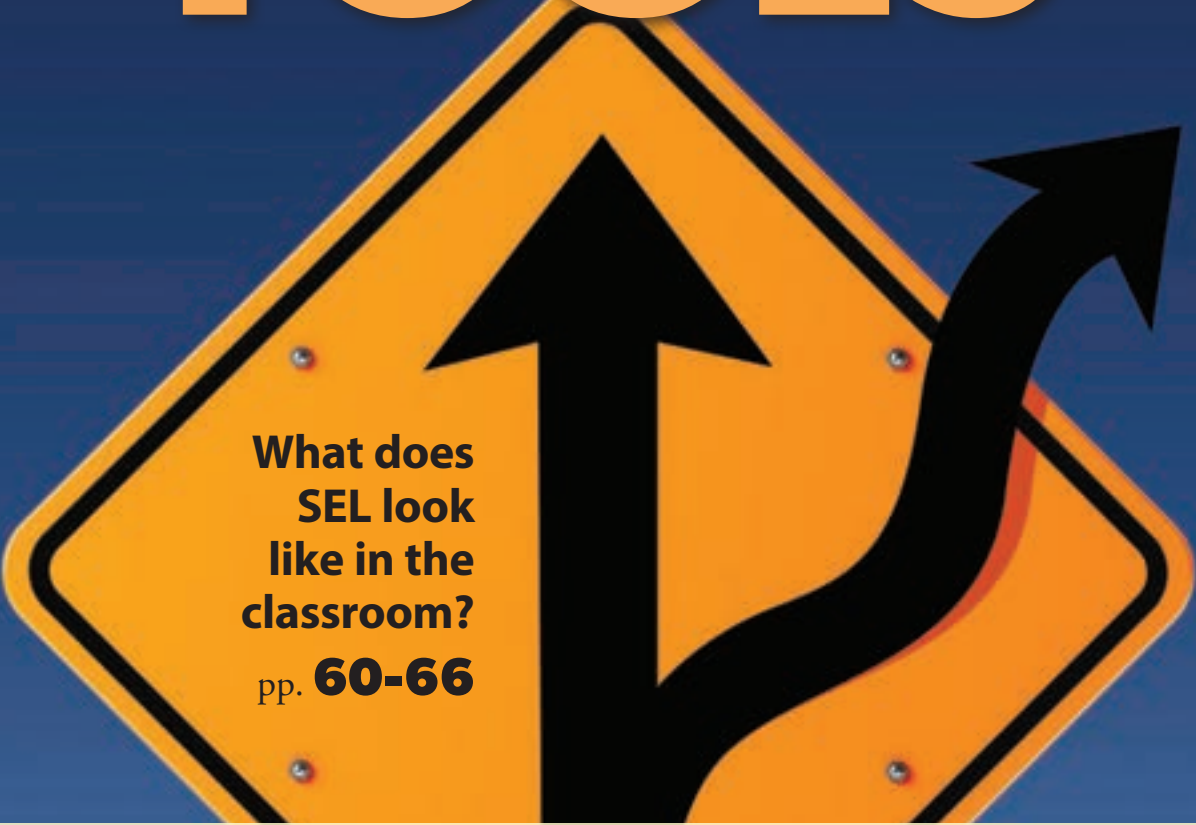
Developing a language and lens to understand and converse about urgent challenges is necessary — in our group norms, in the leadership and teamwork we model, and in the everyday ways we come together across lines of difference to make schools better places for students and one another.

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- Eleanor Drago-Severson (drago-severson@tc.edu) is a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. Christy Joswick O'Connor (christy.oconnor@fpks.org) is a doctoral student and curriculum supervisor in New Jersey. Jessica Blum-DeStefano (jblumdestefano@bankstreet.edu) is an instructor at Bank Street College, New York. ■**
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- Katie D. Lewis (klewis15@ycp.edu) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at York College of Pennsylvania. Angela M. Novak (angelamnovak13@gmail.com) is an assistant professor in the College of Education at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Christine L. Weber (cweber@unf.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Childhood Education, Literacy and TESOL at the University of North Florida. ■**

Discuss. Collaborate. Facilitate.

TOOLS



**What does
SEL look
like in the
classroom?**
pp. **60-66**

COACHING TEACHERS THROUGH THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

The American Institutes for Research developed the *Social and Emotional Learning Coaching Toolkit: Keeping SEL at the Center* to help schools embed SEL into academic instruction. Built into the tool kit is the understanding that, if we want teachers to support students' social and emotional development, we first need to consider coaching as an SEL process for adults. Coaching is a way to support teachers as they work through the challenge of change, and effective coaching considers the humanness of teachers and incorporates best practices of SEL.

The tool kit focuses on 10 teaching practices that research shows promote social, emotional, and academic development:

- Student-centered discipline
- Teacher language
- Responsibility and choice
- Warmth and support
- Cooperative learning
- Classroom discussions
- Self-assessment and self-reflection
- Balanced instruction
- Academic press and expectations
- Competence building

WHAT DOES SEL LOOK LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM?

BY NICK YODER AND LIZ NOLAN

Many teachers and administrators recognize the importance of social and emotional development for student success inside and outside of school. However, they often feel as though they do not have the time or tools to support social and emotional learning (SEL) (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; DePaoli, Atwell, & Bridgeland, 2017).

In our work with schools, we are frequently asked, “What does SEL look like in the classroom — both in teacher implementation and student behavior?” and “How can we facilitate discussions and strategies that simultaneously build students’ social, emotional, and academic growth?”

The American Institutes for Research developed the *Social and Emotional Learning Coaching Toolkit: Keeping SEL at the Center* (Yoder & Gurke, 2017) to answer those questions and help schools embed SEL into academic instruction. This tool kit is designed to support coaches and administrators as they facilitate teachers’ learning about SEL practices through planning, classroom observations, reflective feedback, and action planning (the coaching cycle). The tool kit is most useful when it aligns with other professional learning opportunities for SEL, including professional learning communities where teachers can share their strategies and challenges with one another.

Built into the tool kit is the understanding that, if we want

GET THE TOOLS

Social and Emotional Learning Coaching Toolkit: Keeping SEL at the Center is available at www.air.org/resource/social-and-emotional-learning-coaching-toolkit.

teachers to support students’ social and emotional development, we first need to consider coaching as an SEL process for adults. Coaching is a way to support teachers as they work through the challenge of change, and effective coaching considers the humanness of teachers and incorporates best practices of SEL. It creates safe and supportive spaces for teachers to reflect on their existing practices, let go of the old ways, step out of their comfort zones, endure uncertainty, and try out new practices (Bridges, 2009).

As part of the tool kit, we developed a rubric for observing and recording teacher implementation of each practice. Here we present a modified tool that incorporates two components of the rubric. The left column describes indicators that reflect high-quality implementation for each practice, including both teacher behaviors and corresponding student behaviors that would be expected if teachers are implementing the practices with high quality. The middle column provides a space to record the teacher’s performance level. Finally, the right

column includes discussion questions tied to each practice that can be used for planning, feedback, and reflection between coaches and teachers.

It is important to note that you should not expect to observe all of the practices in the same lesson. Coaches and teachers may want to work together to identify focus areas and specific targeted practices before the observation.

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Nick Yoder (nyoder@air.org) is a senior technical assistance consultant and Liz Nolan (enolan@air.org) is a research associate at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C.

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

RUBRIC DESCRIPTION

For each targeted SEL practice, select the performance level that best reflects the evidence you collected while observing the teacher:

1. SEL practice **is not yet present** in the classroom. Neither the teacher nor the students demonstrate any of the behaviors associated with the practice.
2. SEL practice **is minimally present** in the classroom. The teacher and students demonstrate some of the behaviors associated with the practice but only a small number of times throughout the lesson.
3. SEL practice **is moderately present** in the classroom. The teacher and students demonstrate some of the behaviors associated with the practice but inconsistently so throughout the lesson.
4. SEL practice **is fully present** in the classroom. The teacher and students demonstrate the behaviors associated with the practice consistently across the lesson.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
1. Student-centered discipline refers to the types of classroom management strategies teachers use.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher has discussions with students about classroom procedures, including incorporating student voice with the rules and procedures of the classroom. The teacher provides students strategies so that they can monitor and regulate their behavior and emotions in the classroom. The teacher consistently implements classroom rules and consequences but also considers pupil-specific factors when trying to help students correct their behavior.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how you create a classroom environment to encourage student engagement. What norms and values do you discuss with students? Do these include high expectations, respect, and caring for all students? • Describe how you create a classroom environment that incorporates student interests and experiences. • Describe ways you help students identify and articulate their feelings. • How do you help students learn to regulate their behavior (e.g. when others do something they do not like)? • Describe how you respond to students' misbehavior. Which strategies have you found are most effective/ineffective? • Describe approaches you take to assist students who have a difficult time following behavioral expectations.
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students exhibit positive classroom behaviors, regulating their own behaviors and emotions in the classroom. If students misbehave, they have tools and strategies to accept the consequences of their behavior, problem solve situations that may arise in the future, and articulate how their behavior influences the ways the classroom operates.</p>		
<p style="text-align: right;">Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017). <i>Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.</i> Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.</p>		

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017). *Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
2. <u>Teacher language</u> refers to how teachers talk to students.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher acknowledges specific positive behaviors and asks students to reflect on their behavior — both social skills and work habits. The teacher also provides specific affirmation to let students know their efforts lead to positive results.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how you communicate encouragement to motivate your students. • Describe how you communicate desirable outcomes for behavior and academic performance (e.g. positive behaviors, academic performance). • How do you help your students use language effectively? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you enable your students to use language to monitor and regulate their own behavior? To work well with others and resolve interpersonal conflict? – What opportunities do you provide your students to develop, practice, and improve their academic language? – Describe how you address the cultural and linguistic differences in language between you and your students and among your students. What do you do if socioeconomic, linguistic, or cultural language differences lead to confusion or misunderstanding?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students use positive language with the teacher and their peers, including appropriate academic language. Students become more motivated, persist in tasks, and modify or continue positive behaviors based on the language the teacher uses in the classroom.</p>		
3. <u>Responsibility and choice</u> refers to how students are allowed to make decisions.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher engages students in how they are going to learn. The teacher asks for student input, provides meaningful choices, and creates opportunities for students to be responsible in the classroom. The teacher ensures that students make connections between their choices and potential consequences.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you help students take responsibility for their actions or connect actions to potential consequences? • How do you model and encourage learning from mistakes (both behavioral and academic)? • Describe a time when you integrated student choice into a lesson. How often do you provide similar opportunities to your students? • What are the barriers to incorporating more student choice? How can you overcome those barriers? • How do you help students take responsibility for their actions or connect actions to potential consequences?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students have opportunities to be responsible within lessons as well as classroom procedures. Students are aware that there are multiple ways to solve a problem. Students accept responsibility for their own behavior and the class's behavior, holding each other accountable. They also have opportunities to help their peers and teacher.</p>		

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017). *Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
4. Warmth and support refers to the academic, social, and emotional support students receive from their teacher and peers.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher demonstrates that he or she appreciates each student as an individual and is concerned about how and what each student learns. The classroom is structured so students feel included and appreciated, creating a space where it is OK to make mistakes and where the teacher checks in with students about academic and nonacademic concerns.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do students feel valued, respected, and supported by their peers in your classroom? How do you know that? • What opportunities do you provide for students to develop and foster positive relationships with their peers? • Think about a lesson from this past week. Did the lesson offer students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in a respectful environment?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students express academic and emotional support for their teacher and peers. Students know about each other's interests and backgrounds and take into account the perspective and emotions of their classmates and teacher. Students communicate with each other in meaningful ways and feel comfortable taking academic risks.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you acknowledge and support the concerns of students, whether academic, social, or emotional?
5. Cooperative learning refers to a specific instructional task in which students work together toward a collective goal.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher creates learning experiences in which the students apply positive social skills to succeed, depend on each other, and work through difficulties they may have with assignments. Individual students and the group are held accountable for learning during small-group work. In addition, the teacher provides opportunities for students to share their work, receive feedback from others, and collaboratively process how they work together.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you use cooperative learning in your classroom? Is there a particular model or approach that you use? Which elements do you use (interdependence, accountability, team encouragement, social skills, group processing)? • How do you encourage students to collaborate with one another, particularly when they are having difficulty with classroom content? • How do you ensure that students have the appropriate social and emotional skills (e.g. communication, self-regulation) to successfully accomplish group tasks?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students work with their peers in meaningful ways and hold each other accountable during group work. Students process how they work together and focus on promoting the group's success. Students provide specific, high-quality feedback to each other and are receptive to feedback from their peers. Students resolve conflict that arises during cooperative learning.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you help students provide and receive feedback from their peers?

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017). *Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
6. Classroom discussions refers to conversations students and teachers have about content.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher helps students identify how to listen to, respond to, and learn from other students in a discussion. The teacher helps students learn how to effectively communicate their point of view, allowing students to hold in-depth discussions about content and reflecting on their peers' thoughts.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you incorporate questioning techniques into your lesson plans? • Think about a lesson from this past week. How did the lesson offer students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in a respectful environment? • What kinds of questions do your students ask? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do student-generated questions move beyond simple clarifications to more complex questions that prompt further, more sophisticated reflection? – How can you help your students learn the skills to ask more complex questions? – To what extent does your instruction facilitate thoughtful classroom discussions by developing the listening skills of students? By building their skills to conduct inquiry? Their ability to collaborate with others to arrive at a deeper understanding or a decision?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students listen attentively and can paraphrase and analyze the speaker's main points as well as extend their own thinking in response. Students can ask clarifying questions as well as use effective communication skills to present their own point of view and reflect on their peers' points of view.</p>		
7. Self-assessment and self-reflection refers to teachers and students actively thinking about their own work.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher is clear about the learning goals and asks students to reflect on and monitor their progress toward meeting those goals — both social and academic. The teacher ensures that students have time to analyze their own work, think together about the effectiveness of learning activities, and provide feedback for improvement.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your most successful lessons in the past two weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How did you ensure that your students learned, and how did you know that your students understood the learning goals? How did you help them reflect on their progress in understanding the learning goals? – How did you help your students reflect on their behavior (both positive and negative)? • What self-assessment techniques did you use most frequently in the past two weeks? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Describe how you used the results of student self-assessment to inform your practice. – Describe how you helped students use the results of their self-assessment to inform their learning.
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students understand their goals and actively think about how their work is related to achieving them. Students are able to monitor progress and know where to go when they need assistance. Students are able to identify what they do and do not know as well as effective strategies for learning. They can provide feedback on how strategies are working for them.</p>		

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017). *Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
<p>8. <u>Balanced instruction</u> refers to the balance between active and direct instruction as well as individual and collaborative learning.</p>		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher uses multiple instructional practices to keep students engaged, knowing when to best use direct instruction and when to use active engagement activities. The teacher asks students to extend their learning when they provide simple answers. In addition, they have students work on real-world products that not only are fun but also represent one of the best ways for students to learn.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you define “active instruction”? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you use active instruction in your classroom to ensure students understand the content? Engage in the content? – What types of instructional strategies do you use in your classroom to engage students? How do you integrate multiple strategies into a lesson or unit? • What types of products do you ask your students to develop to demonstrate their work? • How do you ensure that you use the correct balance of direct and active instruction for you and your students? • What types of strategies do you employ to help students solve problems throughout the learning process?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students interact with content in multiple ways, actively solving problems and working both independently and collaboratively. Students identify challenges in solving problems and find potential solutions. Students create products for different audiences and develop an understanding that these audiences may require different communication strategies.</p>		
<p>9. <u>Academic press and expectations</u> refers to the implementation of meaningful and challenging work and expecting that students will succeed.</p>		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: Students are given more challenging work once they have mastered easier material, ensuring that students feel responsible for their successes and their failures and that they understand the connection between effort and results. The teacher supports students socially and emotionally while challenging them to achieve and surpass their goals.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know where each student’s level of academic challenge is — and keep the student moving forward? • What tells you that your students have understood the relationship between the effort they make and their ability to move to a higher level of achievement/challenge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you help students regulate their emotions (e.g. frustration) when they are presented with more rigorous content? – What skills are students learning to manage their social or emotional responses to rigorous academic content? • What learning skills are you teaching and modeling to help students manage their social or emotional responses to rigorous academic content? • How do you help students feel responsible for accomplishing work that meets high expectations? How does the school culture support academic press and expectations? How does a school culture of high expectations support students’ social and academic growth?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students feel a need to succeed as they work to master increasingly challenging material. Students understand that they are responsible for their academic outcomes and can analyze information to solve problems. They are able to identify and regulate their emotions when facing new challenges and barriers to success.</p>		

MODIFIED OBSERVATION TOOL

Source: Yoder, N. & Gurke, D. (2017).
Social and emotional learning coaching toolkit: Keeping SEL at the center.
 Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

DESCRIPTION OF SEL PRACTICE	Score (1-4)	Questions for planning and debriefing
10. Competence building refers to using the instructional cycle to develop social and emotional skills.		
<p>TEACHER PRACTICE: The teacher uses a variety of tools to model and practice new learning with students. The teacher has students correct mistakes and improve their work using multiple strategies, including relevant feedback from both the teacher and their peers. The teacher uses student misconceptions to guide instruction without singling out individual students.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you help build your students' social and emotional competencies throughout academic instruction? What additional ways can you brainstorm to accomplish this in your daily practice? • How do you model and encourage prosocial behaviors throughout your instruction? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you incorporate feedback on your students' behavior into the normal course of instruction? – What do you do if a student needs extended coaching in a social and emotional competency? • How do you model and encourage learning from mistakes (both behavioral and academic)? • What types of strategies do you employ to help students solve problems throughout the learning process? • What opportunities do you provide students to take responsibility in the classroom and in their learning?
<p>STUDENT BEHAVIORS: Students are engaged with the content throughout the entire instructional cycle. Students use support and feedback from teachers and peers to improve their work, and they recognize that this is an important part of the learning process, especially when they notice mistakes. Students are aware of their emotions and behaviors during instruction, and they respond appropriately.</p>		

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UPDATES



PROBLEM SOLVERS IN PORTLAND

At the Learning Forward Summer Institute in Portland, Oregon, in July, educators and leaders came together to learn from one another and work toward the vision of excellent teaching and learning every day. For members of the Learning Forward Academy, the institute was a valuable point of connection during their 2½-year learning experience as they address significant problems of practice in their schools, districts, or organizations. This year, we welcomed the Academy class of 2020, and the class of 2019 spent its third convening working through theories of change and reflecting on professional learning strategies. The group also found time for a little fun and plenty of bonding, anonymously exchanging favorite books and sporting T-shirts reading, “What’s your problem?” That’s problem of practice, of course.

Members of the Learning Forward Academy class of 2019 met for three days during the Learning Forward Summer Institute in Portland, Oregon, in July.



Photo by BULLHORN MEDIA for Learning Forward

Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh speaks at the Learning Forward 2017 Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida.

LEARNING FORWARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEPHANIE HIRSH TO RETIRE

Stephanie Hirsh, who has served as Learning Forward's executive director since 2007, will retire on June 30, 2019.

"Under Stephanie Hirsh's leadership, Learning Forward has expanded its influence among many education stakeholders, from practitioners to thought leaders to policymakers," said Alan Ingram, Learning Forward president. "Because of the strategic direction that Stephanie and her leadership team have

established, we are better equipped than ever before to continue to serve educators," said Ingram.

Hirsh joined the then-National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in 1988 as deputy executive director. Hirsh has contributed to every aspect of the organization during her tenure, including facilitating the first class of the Learning Forward Academy, coordinating the Annual Conference, writing books, and securing philanthropic support from several

foundations and organizations.

Hirsh began her career in education as a social studies teacher, then became an administrator in the Richardson (Texas) Independent School District. In 1996, she was elected to the Richardson school board and served for three terms.

Through the course of Hirsh's leadership as executive director, Learning Forward's significant milestones include:

The most recent revision of the Standards for Professional Learning,

now adopted or adapted in more than 35 states. Developed in conjunction with more than 40 partner associations and organizations, the standards influence the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning in schools and districts.

The development of a rigorous definition of professional learning included in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Learning Forward’s advocacy achievements also elevated educator voices in demanding and securing full funding for Title IIA of ESSA, the primary federal source of funding for professional learning in the U.S.

The establishment of several educator networks and communities of practice that address longstanding adult and student learning challenges.

The evolution of the organization’s focus to ensure Learning Forward is positioned to serve all students and all educators, including a recent shift to promote the intersection of high-quality instructional materials and professional learning.

Massive growth in Learning Forward’s consulting services division, which offers direct support to school systems and states.

At its core, Learning Forward remains a membership association with a range of benefits from publications to learning programs and conferences, and relies on its members to serve as champions for learning in their spheres of influence.

“As a lifelong learner in a learning

“I’m excited to find balance among family, community, and education.”

organization, my greatest lessons have come from our members. I talk to educators daily who help me understand the urgency of Learning Forward’s mission and who inspire me to seek the most effective pathways for supporting the work they do with students,” said Hirsh.

“When I embraced the role of executive director in 2007, I thought it would take about 10 years to accomplish the things I wanted to and I’m proud of our achievements. It’s time for someone else to have the opportunity to lead this amazing organization,” continued Hirsh. “My passion to advance the causes most important to me hasn’t diminished. I’m excited to find balance among family, community, and education. I will continue to be a champion for individuals and initiatives that advance professional learning in meaningful ways.”

Hirsh has been married to her husband, Mike, for more than 40 years. They have a son, Brian, and a daughter, Leslie, who is an assistant principal in the Dallas area. “I’m really looking forward to spending more time with my family, including my beautiful granddaughter and one more we will welcome in September,” said Hirsh.

Learning Forward has retained an executive search firm to lead the search for a new executive director. ■

LEARNING FORWARD TO HOST CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING ON TITLE IIA

Learning Forward will host a special Capitol Hill briefing this fall that will bring together nationally recognized professional development expert practitioners to show Congress, the Trump administration, and K-12 education stakeholders how school districts are using funding from Title IIA of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

This panel will focus on how Title IIA-supported initiatives in instructional coaching, mentoring, and team teaching are making a difference in teacher practice and student outcomes.

Title IIA of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the only federal funding dedicated to professional learning. Over the past two years, both the Trump administration and Congress have attempted to eliminate this funding altogether.

Thanks to the efforts of educators across the country — many of whom are Learning Forward members — funding was restored in Fiscal Year 2018 and is looking more promising for Fiscal Year 2019. However, our advocacy work is not done.

Educators need to make the case in favor of continued and increased funding for professional learning. To do this, we need to demonstrate the impact that Title II and the professional learning supported by Title II are having on educators and students.

Details about the briefing will be posted on the Learning Forward website at <https://learningforward.org/get-involved/advocacy/title-ii-advocacy>.

ACADEMY PARTICIPANT LEADS CHANGE IN HER TEXAS DISTRICT

BY JULIET CORRELL

For many of us who work in curriculum and instruction, Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) resonate as relevant and even intuitive. However, putting those concepts into practice can be more elusive.

One way the Learning Forward Foundation facilitates meaningful use of the standards is by supporting members' participation in the Learning Forward Academy. In a 2½-year learning experience, Academy participants identify a problem of practice and work with coaches and educators from around the world to address it as a way to improve their district's professional learning and, ultimately, student achievement.

By providing scholarships to select Academy participants, the foundation broadens access to this career-changing opportunity to use the standards and

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learning Forward Academy:
learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/academy

Learning Forward Foundation:
foundation.learningforward.org

transform professional learning practice.

Tammy Chambers, curriculum coordinator at Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District in Texas, is an Academy participant and recipient of the foundation's Patsy Hochman Scholarship. Reflecting on the changing expectations for educator professional learning across the 15 campuses in her district, which lies at the southern tip of Texas near the border with Mexico, Chambers said her Academy experience is helping her focus on her own



Tammy Chambers is shifting professional learning to ongoing and job-embedded.

learning and growth and, in turn, apply those outcomes to rethink professional learning at Los Fresnos.

Historically, Chambers says, her district's central office organized professional learning only to develop knowledge and understanding of the concepts behind a skill or strategy. For her Academy project, she has focused on adding the pieces needed to translate that knowledge into practice.

To begin, she worked with a dean and a principal at one of her district's high schools to create a shared vision of what high-quality professional learning could look like. From there, her district created a plan for professional learning to strengthen instructional coaching of building-based administrators.

The effort is leading to real change. Professional learning includes follow-up modeling and coaching. By embedding regular follow-up, they are setting an expectation that teachers will apply and

use what they learn to improve one or more practices in the way they teach English or science. As one teacher told Chambers, “You are actually holding us accountable for what we are learning.”

Chambers talked more about her first year in the Learning Forward Academy and how her own learning and growth has influenced the changes that she is leading in her school system.

Q: How has the Academy influenced your decision to start doing something new?

A: My aha moment came during my first day at the Learning Forward Academy. Our coaches, Syeda Woods and Ana Mary Smith, shared Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers’ professional development outcomes. It made me question the decisions my team was making for our district. There were so many areas that I had left up to campus administrators to support that I realized were important for me to guide and support as part of our plan at the district level.

I knew we focused on student data to address teachers’ learning needs and based our sessions on what the teachers needed to learn to improve in those areas. However, I realized the follow-up to support teachers after those sessions was left up to each campus. So I started changing my sessions to include modeling, coaching, and reviewing the learning in professional learning communities throughout the year. I also worked with campus administrators to build their coaching skills. More than anything, the follow-up piece is what we were missing.

Q: Is there anything that you have stopped doing, in light of what you’re learning about the Standards for Professional Learning?

A: I chose to stop doing any professional learning where the follow-up coaching component was not feasible. Now everything I plan has the ultimate goal of seeing it working in the classroom and producing student achievement gains. I am much more intentional with how I plan and, if the coaching and team planning piece cannot be incorporated, then the professional learning is put on hold until we can include the follow-up needed for the effort to have impact.

Q: Are you continuing any of your previous initiatives or specific learning designs, perhaps in a different way?

A: I am continuing to plan professional learning based on our student data from district assessments and state exams. We will continue planning high-quality sessions that include all the components of the Learning Designs standard.

Q: What are a few promising results that you’re starting to see?

A: We have seen major gains in targeted areas, such as scores on our state standardized tests in specific areas on the English section, with an 8.6% increase in understanding and analysis of literary texts and a 21% increase in composition from fall 2016 to spring 2017, after our implementation of a comprehensive literary pattern folders

professional learning program. The student achievement data has been very helpful in proving how vital these professional learning changes have been to our continued success.

I have seen teachers embrace what they have learned and how, with follow-up support, they transition from being new to the process to becoming skilled in implementation. They reach out and support one another and provide valuable tips and tools in their team planning.

Q: What are your next steps with this work?

A: I will continue to support the campuses with my team of content-area strategists in our implementation of coaching within learning communities and effective learning designs to ensure we continue to grow and improve.

The Learning Forward Academy has transformed my practice, and I am grateful for the Patsy Hochman Scholarship from the Learning Forward Foundation that made it possible for me to have this time to improve our collective practice.

REFERENCE

Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning.* Oxford, OH: Author.

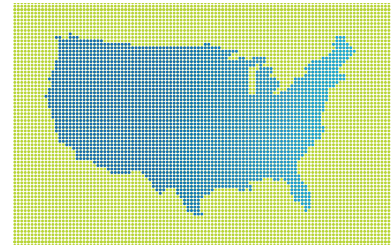
•
Juliet Correll (@jcorrell@frontlineed.com) is a Learning Forward Academy graduate, vice chair of the Learning Forward Foundation, and co-chair of the Learning Forward board of directors. ■

AT A GLANCE

THE STATE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



50 All 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia include aspects of teachers' social and emotional skills or relationship building in certification requirements.

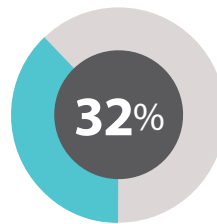


MORE THAN HALF include a comprehensive focus on developing students' SEL.⁽¹⁾

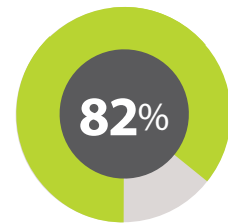
YET In every state in the U.S., at least half of preservice teacher education programs neglect to address any of the SEL competencies recommended by a national SEL organization. In some states, no programs address those competencies.⁽¹⁾

LESS THAN HALF

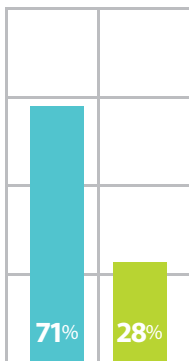
Less than half of principals believe their teachers are prepared to successfully teach SEL, and **60%** say lack of teacher development in SEL is a big challenge.⁽³⁾



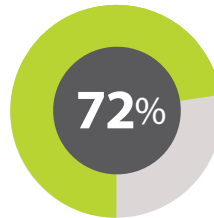
Only **32%** of teachers have participated in some form of SEL professional learning since they began teaching.⁽²⁾



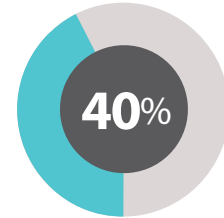
82% of practicing teachers would like further professional learning on SEL.⁽²⁾



One in three parents fear for their child's physical safety at school, and **71%** would rather see school staff prepared to prioritize student mental health compared to **28%** who would rather see schools arm teachers.⁽⁴⁾



72% of principals believe their district emphasizes developing students' SEL skills...



...but only **40%** say district leadership requires schools to have a clear plan for teaching SEL.⁽³⁾

SOURCES

1. www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/SEL-TEd-Executive-Summary-for-CASEL-2017-02-14.pdf
2. www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-missing-piece.pdf
3. www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ReadyToLead_FINAL.pdf
4. <http://pdkpoll.org/results/arming-teachers-trails-other-school-security-measures-preferred-by-parents>



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

THROUGH THE LENS

OF LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

LEARNING FORWARD'S STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students ...

Learning Communities

... occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Leadership

... requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Resources

... requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Data

... uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Learning Designs

... integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Implementation

... applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

Outcomes

... aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Many of the articles in this issue of *The Learning Professional* demonstrate Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning in action. Use this tool to deepen your own understanding of what standards implementation might look like and to explore implementation in various contexts. In this issue, we highlight three examples.

STANDARD

IN ACTION

TO CONSIDER

DATA

Data can highlight unexpected patterns in student outcomes, even when educators are highly focused on their students' needs. The authors of "A promising path toward equity" (p. 36) share an example of school leaders who were committed to racial equity but discovered through a data review that they were engaging in harsher discipline with boys although girls exhibited more behavior problems.



1. What kinds of data are important for measuring equity in continuous improvement cycles?
2. How can systems and leaders ensure that data informs professional learning and doesn't sit on the shelf?

IMPLEMENTATION

District leaders in Anchorage, Alaska, strategically limited the number of SEL curricula schools could select so they could provide more targeted and consistent professional learning. At the same time, they offered school leaders flexibility in the timing and sequence of the professional learning. See "Aligned in Anchorage" (p. 26).



1. How can focusing on a small number of curricula and materials help schools make professional learning meaningful and sustained for long-term success?
2. What are other effective ways to balance focus and flexibility in professional learning opportunities?

OUTCOMES

In "Sowing seeds of SEL" (p. 30), teacher educators and supervisors describe a professional learning community (PLC) for cooperating teachers who supervise student teachers. The PLC built the social and emotional learning skills of both current and future teachers.



1. What are the unique professional learning needs of cooperating teachers, and how do the desired outcomes for their work connect to those for the teachers they support?
2. How can investments in cooperating teachers' professional learning spread throughout a school community?

Learn more about Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning at www.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning.



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