

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

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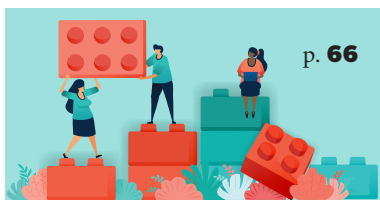
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ISAY

Justina Schlund

Senior director of content and field learning at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)



"SEL and equity work are interdependent. ... When we implement SEL in a really systemic way — when we're thinking about it in terms of how it builds strengths and supports adults in doing their own SEL work, and really is about affirming students in their own interests and talents — it is a way to create more robust developmental learning opportunities, to improve instruction and engagement ... [and] to address longstanding inequities. On the flip side, if you care about SEL ... you have to care about the equity work or you're shortchanging students."

Source: Kim, T. (Host). (2021, May 21). *Advancing SEL, equity, and social justice.* [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Growing Kinder Podcast*. www.cfchildren.org/podcast/advancing-sel-equity-and-social-justice-with-justina-schlund/

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Selecting learning designs



HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

In diverse places and ways, learning leaders are building the capacity of educators to support students, showing how to weave together the academic, social, and emotional dimensions of learning.

THE NEED FOR SEL IS GREATER THAN EVER

In 2018, my first editor's column in *The Learning Professional* made the case for integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into professional learning in more explicit and visible ways. Three years and multiple global crises later, the need is more urgent than ever, and the justification for ignoring it in professional learning nonexistent.

Even in the best of times, SEL affects learning. As David Adams explains in this issue (p. 22), high-quality teaching interactions rely on social and emotional skills like reading social cues, taking others' perspectives, and understanding how students respond to challenges.

Of course, these are not the best of times. Not only have many students lacked the connections that allow for such interactions with educators, but up to 40% of K-12 students and more than 60% of young children have experienced negative mental health, emotional, or social impacts during the pandemic (CRPE, 2021; Hanno et al., 2021).

As we start a new school year, students will not leave those struggles at the schoolhouse door. The closure of school buildings played a significant if unavoidable role in social and emotional turmoil (CRPE, 2021), but the reopening of schools can and must play a role in healing it.

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, a report from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development (n.d.) challenged all educators to fulfill "an amazing calling: to foster in children the knowledge, skills, and character that enable children to make better lives in a better country."

This issue demonstrates how professional learning leaders are fulfilling that calling. In diverse places and ways, learning leaders are building the capacity of educators to support students, showing how to weave together the academic, social, and emotional dimensions of learning.

They are also demonstrating how we must do more to support educators' own SEL skills. As Barbara Patterson Oden says (p. 10), no prior professional learning prepared her to support colleagues and students as they experienced immense losses and stress over the past year.

We can change that, and this issue's authors show us how. School and community leaders are bridging divides to build consistent SEL approaches among all the adults who work with students (p. 30). Coaches in San Antonio are showing teachers why and how to integrate SEL into math class (p. 36). Educators are speaking truth about why and how SEL efforts should address race and racism (p. 12 and p. 40).

Although the pandemic makes this work urgent, SEL will always be necessary. There will always be new educators and students to support and both new and ongoing societal problems to address — racial injustice chief among them.

According to a CRPE review, only 31% of schools mentioned building social and emotional skills in reopening plans for fall 2020; only 7% mentioned tracking students' social and emotional outcomes (CRPE, 2021). Students need that to change now.

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THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

THE LEARNING FORWARD JOURNAL

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

The Learning Professional is published six times a year to promote improvement in the quality of professional learning as a means to improve student learning in K-12 schools. Contributions from members and nonmembers of Learning Forward are welcome.

Manuscripts: Manuscripts and editorial mail should be sent to Christy Colclasure (christy.colclasure@learningforward.org). Learning Forward prefers to receive manuscripts by email. Notes to assist authors in preparing a manuscript are provided at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us. Themes for upcoming issues of *The Learning Professional* are available at learningforward.org/the-learning-professional/write-for-us.

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url: www.learningforward.org

THE LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
ISSN 2476-194X

The Learning Professional is a benefit of membership in Learning Forward. \$89 of annual membership covers a year's subscription to *The Learning Professional*. *The Learning Professional* is published bimonthly at the known office of publication at Learning Forward, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, TX 75260 and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Learning Professional*, 800 E. Campbell Road, Suite 224, Richardson, TX 75081.

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The Learning Professional follows the guidelines set forth in the AP Stylebook. However, we defer to authors' preferences for terminology and capitalization with regard to race. We reserve the right to exclude any terms we consider to convey insult or harm.

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A person is climbing a rock wall. The wall is divided into two main sections: a light grey section on the left and a bright yellow section on the right. The person is wearing a black tank top, grey leggings, and a climbing harness with an orange bag. They are reaching up with their right hand towards a blue hold on the yellow section. The wall is covered with various colorful holds in shades of blue, red, green, and yellow. The person is also wearing climbing shoes. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor climbing gym.

INSPIRE. EXPRESS. ADVOCATE.

VOICES

GROWTH ISN'T COMFORTABLE — AND THAT'S OK

"Building educator capacity to respect and nurture all aspects of student identity doesn't happen by accident, but rather through structured, intentionally designed professional learning. Educators deserve support and trust to engage in this vital learning.

... [C]onversations about race and other aspects of identity may cause discomfort for educators seeking to understand how their own experiences and beliefs impact what they do within and beyond the classroom [but] ... discomfort is often a part of growth and development."

— *"Learning Forward affirms the importance of educators learning about race,"*

p. **8**



Learning Forward affirms the importance of educators learning about race

Each student has the right to experience rigorous and relevant teaching and learning in school. High-quality professional learning for educators is the pathway to create such a reality for students. Learning Forward opposes any effort or policy that impedes educators' capacity to serve each student equitably, including efforts to limit educators' and students' learning about race and its role in history, society, and education.

Several states have passed or are considering specific legislation that censors and limits learning. At a time when educators are determined to understand precisely what their students need and create solutions to accelerate their learning, such policies exacerbate existing inequities in schooling and harm students.

Learning Forward defines equity as the outcome of educator practices that respect and nurture all aspects of

student identity rather than treat them as barriers to learning. In addition to race, aspects of student identity include gender, socioeconomic status, ability, ethnicity, and many others. Building educator capacity to respect and nurture all aspects of student identity doesn't happen by accident, but rather through structured, intentionally designed professional learning. Educators deserve support and trust to engage in this vital learning.

Professional learning related to racial equity helps educators understand how aspects of student identity are assets that can inform and inspire the student learning experience and dismantle structures that treat those aspects of identity as deficits.

Professional learning related to racial equity isn't tied to a singular theory, curriculum, or approach. It is informed by relevant local and national data, students' and educators' identified needs, and the goal of serving every student.

It may involve implementing, improving, and adapting culturally relevant curriculum materials and classroom practices so that each student has access to rigorous and relevant teaching. It may help educators understand the practices and policies that ensure each student has access to challenging courses in all subject areas — and help them understand the policies and structures that get in the way of equal access. It may include examining data such as rates of disciplinary action and students' placement in advanced courses, coupled with reflection on the causes of and remedies for discrepancies.

Throughout, professional learning related to racial equity helps educators understand how aspects of student identity are assets that can inform and inspire the student learning experience and dismantle structures that treat those aspects of identity as deficits.

Collaborative learning among educators about how race and other aspects of student or educator identity

impact the student learning experience is essential and complex. The ability to understand and navigate complexity is a vital skill of good educators. For example, when educators can examine both the societal progress for students of color and the enduring racist structures that impede learning, they are better equipped to serve each student.

Nonetheless, conversations about race and other aspects of identity may cause discomfort for educators seeking to understand how their own experiences and beliefs impact what they do within and beyond the classroom. Such conversations are critical to ensure that student needs are met. Discomfort is often a part of growth and development, as students know well from learning new and unfamiliar concepts.

Accomplishing these necessary but sometimes challenging conversations requires high-quality professional learning. Skilled learning facilitators create safe and trusting conditions for learning, adapt learning processes to engage educators and personalize the learning experience, support individual and collective reflection, and consider next actions to improve school and classroom practices.

When educators focus their

professional learning on the specific needs of their educator colleagues and the students they serve, they strengthen their capacity to create a rich learning experience for each student.

Learning Forward calls on our members, allies, and partners to:

- Build their own understanding of how race impacts educator and student learning, beginning with examining their own beliefs;
- Sustain and expand professional learning to improve practices to reach each student;
- Celebrate and support intentional explorations of all aspects of student and educator identity, including race, to achieve equitable outcomes for each learner; and
- Advocate to policymakers at all levels for each educator's right to study how history, culture, society, and student identity and assets impact teaching and learning.

Learning Forward's equity position statement informs this position and is foundational to all Learning Forward services and initiatives. Read more at learningforward.org/about/vision-mission-beliefs/. ■



ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Barbara Patterson Oden

‘YOU HAVE TO CAPTURE PEOPLE’S HEARTS BEFORE THEIR MINDS’

Barbara Patterson Oden is assistant principal at Truitt Intermediate School in Chesapeake, Virginia, the president of Learning Forward Virginia, and a member of the advisory board of *The Learning Professional*.

Professional learning has played a central role in your career. Why is it important to you?

Early in my career, I served as a gifted resource teacher because I wanted to work with talented, underserved kids. Over time, I realized I wanted my work to impact far more students than I would have the ability to teach myself. And I learned that I loved helping teachers grow their capacity, so I became an instructional coach. After three years in that role, I became supervisor of professional learning for a district in southeast Virginia.

Through those experiences, I found that teacher capacity is the thing most capable of changing the lives of students for the better. I believe that every teacher has the capacity to grow into the teacher their students need, under the right conditions. Those conditions are created through powerful professional learning.

You made an unusual career transition — at an unusual time — last year. What was that like?

After I got my degree in school administration in 2007, I was sure I didn’t want to be a school administrator. But during seven years supervising professional learning, I worked with some of the most amazing school leaders, and I realized the deep impact school leadership has.

They made me see that the work could be done with passion, integrity, and a commitment to learning for students and teachers. Plus, after seven years at central office, I missed kids! They are my “why.” That’s why I decided to become an assistant principal. Now I’m bringing my love of professional learning to this new role — and I need it more now than ever.

I walked into my first year as a school leader in a pandemic, so it was a rigorous year both emotionally and logistically. We were basically running two schools — one for in-person students



The “heart” work of being an educator is far more important than the “head” work we do.

and one for remote students.

Our district was one of the only ones in our state to have students in the building five days a week as early as mid-September 2020, and at multiple times during the year, we had well over a 20% COVID positivity rate. Luckily, the safety mitigations did keep in-school spread to a minimum.

The hardest part is that our school community has experienced so much loss. I had kids whose parents died of COVID in the home with them, and another child who lost a parent to domestic violence. Then there were the losses that my staff faced in their own lives, and yet they bravely came into our building day after day to be there for our students. I am still in awe of them.

What were some of your and your colleagues' biggest learning needs last year?

COVID has laid bare the need for districts to develop and provide more robust, systematic social supports to staff and students. I have done so much professional learning on leadership and school improvement, but nothing I have learned prepared me for consoling staff members and students who lost family members to COVID, week after week. The emotional toll was greater than I could have ever imagined.

In addition to my faith and my supportive family, what helped me get through this was my professional coach. She helped me to reflect and keep things in perspective so I could sharpen my emotional fortitude and be who my staff and students needed.

All educators need to have an intentional support system to help them

develop their emotional resilience. The “heart” work of being an educator is far more important than the “head” work we do. I hope this realization is one of the good things that comes of this pandemic.

What do you see as the biggest professional learning needs for next year?

The main needs for teachers are twofold: understanding trauma-informed practices and applying equitable practices. Those are hugely important for meeting kids' needs. And they are very philosophical for people. People tend to see one as fluff and the other as political.

In order to change that, I've learned, you have to capture people's hearts before their minds. We've been talking about diversity and inclusion for a while now, but have hearts moved? As I look at the equity pushback among some teachers and parents across the country, it is clear the answer is no for too many.

We have talked about the whole child forever. That means it is my responsibility as a leader to do what's best for all the kids who come into our building. If I learn Spanish for my students' parents, it has nothing to do with how American I am. It's not about me. It's about them. It's about asking, “What are their needs, and how can I help them?”

What are some Learning Forward experiences that stand out to you?

I did not know about Learning Forward until I became supervisor of professional learning and was looking for an organization for support in my

work. Little did I know how much it would impact the entire course of my career.

I began as a member of the Virginia affiliate, and, among those amazing professional learning leaders, I found my squad. I started as a regional representative and am now serving as president.

I was afforded the opportunity to be part of the Class of 2016 Academy cohort, and that experience was nothing less than transformational. I credit it for much of the impact I had as supervisor of professional learning. Now I am serving as an Academy coach, one of the greatest joys of my professional career.

I was also honored to be involved in Learning Forward's advocacy work on Capitol Hill in support of Title IIA funding. I even got to meet then-senator and now Vice President Kamala Harris, and I proudly display a picture with her in my office.

Additionally, I serve on the journal's advisory board. I appreciate *The Learning Professional* because it's nice to see the work in action and learn from the experiences of people I don't know who are doing the work in other places. I appreciate seeing how the research meets the reality, as well as the tools, which I can put into practice immediately to elevate any professional learning I might be leading.

I have found the topics of the journal over the past year have profoundly resonated with my real-time experiences as assistant principal. It is simply impressive. I am so looking forward to October's school leadership issue. ■



An antiracist SEL pushes adults to see our loved ones in the faces of the students we have no connection with.

Angela M. Ward (angela@2wardequity.com, [@2WardEquity](https://www.2wardequity.com)) is founder and CEO of 2Ward Equity.

EQUITY IN FOCUS

Angela M. Ward

ANTIRACIST SEL CENTERS THE COMFORT AND NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

As educators responsible for the academic development of the students in our care, we must meet the needs of every young person, whether we personally identify with them or not. The first step is to frame social and emotional learning (SEL) from an antiracist lens that prioritizes community building, belongingness, and identity safety.

Antiracist SEL centers the personal identity of *each* student in *each* teacher's care. It is not a tool to deny white students identity safety but rather to offer that safety to everyone, including the children of color to whom it has long been denied.

Centering the personal identity of each student does not mean the teacher creates a separate lesson plan for every student. It means the teacher uses differentiation, accommodations, and modifications of expectations to understand how to coexist with and support a student who has not yet reached a developmental stage to be in community with their peers.

I liken this differentiated method of SEL to the differentiation a reading teacher leverages to move all students to grade level by the end of the year or the differentiation a math teacher engages to teach new concepts and hold space for knowledge gaps that might prevent a student from succeeding.

SEL through an antiracist lens uses welcoming and closing practices that invite students to co-create the classroom community serving them. Antiracist SEL embeds engaging strategies in the academic day that create windows into the lived experiences of students and mirrors that reflect those same experiences back as important to the overall learning of the students.

When reviewed over the decades across the United States, academic and discipline data show that educators go above and beyond for the students who remind us of ourselves or our loved ones. An antiracist SEL pushes adults to see our loved ones in the faces of the students we have no connection with. This approach to belonging and community in schools and classrooms pushes adults to center the comfort and needs of the student.

For far too long, many educators have been indifferent or hostile to students of color when those students do not comply with what the educators expect of them. When teachers are indifferent or hostile, when they refuse to find a way to connect with students, black boys and girls, in particular, are pushed to the margins, often out of the learning environment altogether by way of suspension or expulsion.

Antiracist SEL requires that educators get curious about why a student causes them enough discomfort to push that student out of the learning environment and deny them opportunities

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COACHES CORNER

Sharron Helmke

SHOW YOURSELF THAT WHAT YOU DO MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Coaches are called upon to meet teachers' needs, but we have some of the same needs in our own professional lives. One of those needs is validation that our efforts are making a difference.

That's often harder to find for coaches than for teachers, who can see their impact on an almost daily basis — the aha moments of students, the notes and drawings left on our desks, the growth in our student outcomes, and more.

Where does a coach find proof of impact? Coaching takes place behind the scenes, supporting teachers' mental processes and problem-solving skills. The ideas generated in a coaching session rightfully belong to the teacher, as does the successful implementation and outcomes of those ideas.

Teachers deserve praise for making changes in their practice and student outcomes, but coaching's impact on those successes is often left unspoken. That can leave coaches feeling underappreciated or even unsure about whether we're making a difference at all.

This lack of acknowledgement can hit especially hard around late October, when early feelings of excitement and optimism wane as coaches recognize the difficulty of making meaningful and sustained growth across the school. The road ahead can begin to look very long, dark, and isolated. We may experience a lack of efficacy and fulfillment.

To experience the work and its impact differently requires self-reflection and choosing an intentional shift in perspective. Start by thinking about where you can observe the impacts of your efforts. Perhaps you identify a teacher with whom you have enjoyable, almost effortless coaching conversations that really spark the teacher's creativity. Those kinds of interactions tend to result, almost immediately, in visible impact on instruction.

When you need a lift, spend a few minutes in that teacher's classroom observing effective instruction. If time permits, spend a few minutes in conversation, absorbing

some of the teacher's enthusiasm for learning and growth. Not only will you get an immediate boost of positivity, but also affirmation of the value of growth mindset, professional learning, and improved practice — the interaction that forms the heart and soul of coaching.

Next, examine the expectations and beliefs that have given rise to these feelings. Be willing to let go of those that are unrealistic and self-sabotaging. Make a list of the expectations placed

Continued on p. 14



To experience the work and its impact differently requires self-reflection and choosing an intentional shift in perspective.

Sharron Helmke is a Gestalt and ICF certified professional coach. She's a senior consultant for Learning Forward, facilitator of the Mentor and Coaching Academies, and co-facilitator of Learning Forward's virtual coaching class *Powerful Communication Skills for Coaches*.

Continued from p. 12

to learn. It forces adults to recognize that they often use the concept of “self-management” to rationalize their desire for student compliance instead of engaging in dialogue and navigating conflict that occurs when compliance is demanded of the student.

An adult on an antiracist SEL journey gets curious about (and critical of) traditional approaches to discipline. They might ask: What does “behave” mean to me? Who defines “behave”? Who determines when behavior is out of compliance with our classroom community expectations? Who are the members of this community and would they agree? How might members of this community exist in this space versus spaces outside this community, and how does that impact their ability to be successful in school and life outside school?

When I was a public school administrator with a desire to nurture

An adult on an antiracist SEL journey gets curious about (and critical of) traditional approaches to discipline.

a humanizing culture in schools, I was given the charge to develop a restorative practices focus across the district. SEL became the foundation my colleagues and I used. We took on this charge with the belief that restorative practices and social and emotional learning are not programs, but ways of being.

Both ways of being fit nicely into the structure of a strong Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), so we set out to create an MTSS that responded to the cultural needs of students of all races, backgrounds, and personal needs. SEL can be a strong foundation to any program or intervention, but it must center practices to nurture school environments that are identity-safe for

everyone.

To make SEL truly antiracist, adults must engage in critical self-reflection, individually and in professional learning communities. Learning in community offers teachers multiple perspectives and windows into the ways of being of people who have different backgrounds. It is the critical self-reflection that allows adults to uncover ways to meet students where they are in a learning partnership.

SEL traditionally was seen as a program that would make students feel like they belong and that it would feel good to go to school daily. Critical self-reflection invites teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders to get curious and ask, “Do all children in our care feel like they belong, and does going to school daily feel good?” The answer will not always be yes. When it isn’t, an antiracist approach to SEL can give educators the ability to make needed change for student success. ■

COACHES CORNER / Sharron Helmke

Continued from p. 13

on you (by yourself and others) and responsibilities you assume in your role.

Now compare that list to your official job description. If you are taking on more than intended, unrealistic goals or workload could be hurting your self-efficacy. “Job creep” is a real thing, and it can rob us of our sense of fulfillment and belief in our ability to succeed (Wolverton, 2019).

Note which responsibilities are not stated in your job description and ask yourself where they have come from. Are they self-imposed? If not, do they come from administrators or teachers? Once you have determined those answers, have conversations with stakeholders (and with yourself!) to reset reasonable expectations that

If you are taking on more than intended, unrealistic goals or workload could be hurting your self-efficacy.

will increase your well-being and your impact.

Finally, identify where you will you go and what you will do when feelings of frustration, doubt, or overwhelm surface. Who is in your support network? Is it other coaches, professional learning leaders, a national organization like Learning Forward? Whoever you identify, talk with them *before* you run into challenges and make a plan for how they can support you by helping you shift your perspective

(Suttie, 2021).

With these strategies and others, you can build your resilience and stay in touch with the meaning and fulfillment of your work as a coach. Just as flight attendants tell us, only by putting on your own oxygen mask first can you help others.

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EXAMINE. STUDY. UNDERSTAND.

RESEARCH

THE CASE FOR PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

“**T**he shift from traditional teaching to project-based learning teaching appears to be supported when professional learning adheres to the Standards for Professional Learning: The learning in these studies was curriculum- or content-specific, provided on an ongoing basis for substantial amounts of time, featured active learning and collective participation of teachers, and met other criteria in the standards.”

— “Studies show the impact of project-based learning,”

p. **16**





RESEARCH REVIEW

Elizabeth Foster

STUDIES SHOW THE IMPACT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

► THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDY

Saavedra, A.R., Liu Y., Haderlein, S.K., Rapaport, A., Garland, M., Hoepfner, D., Morgan, K.L., & Hu, A. (2021, February 22). *Knowledge in Action efficacy study over two years*. USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research.

► THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDY

Krajcik, J., Schneider, B., Miller, E., Chen, I., Bradford, L., Bartz, K., Baker, Q., Palincsar, A., Peek-Brown, D., & Codere, S. (2021, January 11). *Assessing the effect of project-based learning on science learning in elementary schools*. George Lucas Educational Foundation.

Project-based learning is popular with many parents, students, and teachers because of its focus on problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, and real-world application (Gallup, 2019). It encourages teachers to act as facilitators while students actively engage in teacher- and student-posed learning challenges, working alone and in groups on complex tasks organized around central questions leading to a final product.

Does it work? Several recent studies from the George Lucas Educational Foundation suggest that the answer is yes — when it is implemented with intentionality and quality. High-quality professional learning is part of that equation.

Two recent randomized control trials are the focus of this column. Together, the studies involved more than 6,000 students in 114 schools with more than half the students from low-income households. They found positive impacts of two different project-based learning approaches across grades, subjects, and specific groups, and professional learning played a role in both of them.

Professional learning aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning is important for project-based learning because project-based learning is a pedagogical and philosophical shift for many educators. It is “not a simple matter of adding another tool to a teacher’s toolbox” or “another way to ‘cover standards’ that’s a little more engaging for students,” according to the organization PBL Works (n.d.). Professional learning for project-based learning might include a re-examination of student and educator learning goals and new strategies for understanding student experiences and challenges — work that takes the kind of sustained, job-embedded professional learning that should be the standard.

AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

The first study, *Knowledge in Action: Efficacy Study Over Two Years*, looked at project-based learning at the high school level. The Knowledge in Action program is a project-based learning approach to advanced placement (AP) courses, developed by the University of Washington. The initial group of courses aims to develop students’ civic, political, and environmental awareness and engagement.

The randomized controlled trial study, which was conducted by researchers from the USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research with support from Lucas Education Research, examined Knowledge in Action’s impact by looking at students’ AP test scores, a well-known measure of student success but one not often used in research studies.

A high score on the AP examination can count as college credit in some cases, and these scores are correlated with college enrollment and persistence.

The study examined five districts in 2016-17 and a follow-up study in 2017-18, including

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3,600 high school students in AP Environmental Science and AP U.S. Government and Politics courses.

Researchers looked not only at impact but implementation, including a broad range of project-based activities in the sciences and humanities as well as the associated resources and professional learning. PBLWorks facilitated the professional learning, which included a four-day summer institute, four full days during the year, and ongoing job-embedded on-demand virtual coaching support during the first year. During the second year, the supports were optional and the teachers did not have access to the supplemental coaching.

The study found that treatment teachers who used the Knowledge in Action curriculum and professional learning supports changed their pedagogy to place greater emphasis

on deeper learning objectives, use student-centered pedagogy in ways their students felt were authentic, and spend less time on lectures or explicit exam preparation — all aspects of high-quality implementation of project-based learning.

Looking at impact, researchers found that students in the project-based learning classrooms outperformed students in traditional classrooms on AP examination pass rates by 8 percentage points. When teachers in the study taught the same curriculum for a second year, that advantage increased to 10 percentage points. Positive results occurred within and across courses, and across specific groups of students from different economic circumstances.

The fact that the results are consistent across student backgrounds has important equity implications. The researchers made an interesting

observation that the student-centered approach that is embedded in project-based learning could make engagement and learning more accessible to all students, including those who are traditionally marginalized: “Students from low-income households saw similar gains compared to their wealthier peers, making a strong case that well-structured project-based learning can be a more equitable approach than teacher-centered ones.”

One researcher noted that the findings provide evidence that students of all backgrounds are ready to take on increased agency and responsibility for their own learning, pushing back against the belief some educators hold that students from low-income households are not ready for such opportunities.

AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

A second study, *Assessing the Effect of Project-Based Learning on Science Learning in Elementary Schools*, looked at a project-based learning intervention designed to achieve the Next Generation Science Standards. The Multiple Literacies Project-Based Learning intervention centers on inquiry related to real-world challenges and complex scientific phenomena and includes curricular and instructional resources, assessments, and professional learning.

Researchers at Michigan State University and the University of Michigan conducted a randomized controlled trial of 46 schools across Michigan that had a total of 2,371 3rd-grade students representing a range

of economic and racial diversity to determine if this project-based learning approach improved students' science learning and social and emotional learning.

Implementation measures showed the key role of professional learning in the treatment group, which was intensive and ongoing to help teachers understand and implement the pedagogical shift needed for project-based learning.

The professional learning included in-person and virtual sessions (approximately seven days' worth), a key feature of which was that it used guided, active, inquiry-based learning for educators designed to mirror what their students would experience. For example, educators practiced strategies such as encouraging students to pose questions to make sense of phenomena, engaging students in scientific and engineering practices, and facilitating

students' building of artifacts.

An excerpt from the study report illustrates the ongoing nature of the professional learning: "In addition to the face-to-face meetings, team leaders (who were experienced elementary teachers) met with groups of teachers via video conferencing. These sessions occurred approximately every two weeks to solicit information from the teachers; they included discussions on what worked and what was challenging, as well as questions they and the students had while enacting the lessons."

In addition, teachers were encouraged to call the program developers' hotline with questions at any time. A team member collected the questions and reviewed them with the development team in weekly meetings.

The researchers found that on average, students in Multiple Literacies Project-Based Learning classrooms

performed 8 percentage points better on the science assessment as compared with students in the control group classrooms. The project-based learning intervention also had significant positive effects on students' engagement in reflection and collaboration, two aspects of social and emotional learning that the researchers related to science learning.

As in the previous study, researchers found this positive effect across schools with differing racial and ethnic backgrounds and household-income status. The results remained consistent across reading ability levels, a finding that indicates project-based learning supported by professional learning for educators has the potential to reach and engage each student.

IMPLICATIONS

These studies highlight how project-based learning can be a powerful

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classroom strategy when supported by high-quality, job-embedded professional learning. Professional learning was an integral part of both programs studied. Indeed, one of the reports notes that the impact of the professional learning could not be disentangled from the impact of the curriculum intervention overall. That shouldn't be seen as a weakness, however, because meaningful changes in practice take changes in teacher knowledge, understanding, and capacity.

The shift from traditional teaching to project-based learning teaching appears to be supported when professional learning adheres to the Standards for Professional Learning: The learning in these studies was curriculum- or content-specific, provided on an ongoing basis for substantial amounts of time, featured active learning and collective

participation of teachers, and met other criteria in the standards.

Looking at specific standards, the **Data** standard came into play because establishing clear and specific measures of student outcomes contributed to the design of effective professional learning. These studies also illustrate an important concept in the **Learning Designs** standard: Learning for educators can be especially powerful when it offers them an opportunity to experience what the students will experience, such as engaging in the same kinds of questioning techniques.

The study also suggests ways that professional learning leaders can embed components or key lessons from project-based learning into professional learning about other pedagogical approaches. For instance, including student voice and choice is often something that is desired in schools and a request that professional learning

is expected to meet. But findings authentic ways to include student voice and agency can be challenging.

Leaders can uncover the ways that project-based learning professional learning teaches and facilitates strategies for student voice and apply them to other interventions. That shift requires ongoing, job-embedded professional learning. These experiences could represent engaging new challenges for educators as well as an opportunity to look at professional learning from a new angle.

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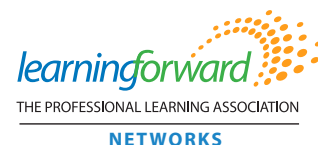
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DATA POINTS

81% OF DISTRICTS USE TITLE IIA FUNDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Title IIA of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides funding for the preparation, recruitment, and training of educators. A report from the U.S. Department of Education examined how states and districts spent Title IIA funds in 2019-20, based on surveys of district and state leaders.

Almost 60% of the funding was spent on professional learning, with 81% of districts allocating funding to that purpose, compared to 34% of districts that applied the funding to teacher recruitment and 21% to class size reduction, among other uses.

Although 93% of districts used funding for “short-term training,” 77% also applied it to “longer term training and education” and just over half (52%) used it to support job-embedded professional learning.

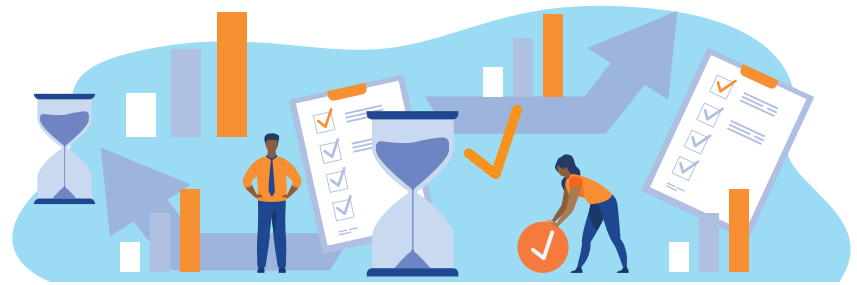
About half of states and a quarter of districts took advantage of increased flexibility in allowable uses of the funds, which was introduced in 2015. For example, 23 states reserved some funding for principal and other leadership support, and 25% of districts transferred funding to other programs, resulting in a 67% decrease in Title IIA funds in those districts.

bit.ly/2UGtb14

80% OF TEACHERS WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SEL

In a RAND survey, 80% of teachers responding said they want more opportunities to learn about SEL, especially in integrating SEL with academic instruction, adapting SEL to different cultures and learning needs, and using SEL data.

The spring 2019 survey from the American Teacher Panel also showed that an overwhelming majority believed promoting SEL



would help their students learn and felt confident in their ability to support SEL even for the most difficult to reach students. Yet nearly two-thirds said their schools lacked a clear vision for SEL, and even more said their school lacked clear SEL practices.

About three-quarters reported engaging in some SEL professional learning in the previous year, with more elementary than secondary teachers participating.

bit.ly/3e9uzA8

96% OF STUDENTS FELT SUPPORTED IN 2020

To examine the impact of COVID-19 on schooling, the Tennessee Education Research Alliance analyzed data from fall 2020 in six Tennessee districts and, when possible, compared it to data from previous years.

Among the good news: Nearly all students felt supported by their teachers, with 96% saying their teachers cared about them and 97% saying their teachers were able to help when they had questions.

Nonetheless, more than half of students (and more than two-thirds of high schoolers) said worries, stress, and lack of motivation prevented them from doing their best in school. Indeed, two-thirds of teachers said they needed strategies and support to keep students engaged and motivated.

The second most common need was how to catch students up to

grade level, with fewer but still notable percentages of teachers reporting the need for more high-quality materials for instruction and social and emotional support. Large proportions of teachers had “major concerns” about their increased workload (66%) and burnout (55%).

bit.ly/3xA3dLt

360 VIDEO HELPS TEACHERS NOTICE MORE

A recent study examined the use of 360 video, a classroom observation technique in which the viewer can see all angles of the classroom either by wearing a virtual reality headset or navigating around the room with a mouse on a flat screen.

The study measured 33 preservice teachers’ noticing patterns in mathematics classes, using quantitative measures such as where the teachers looked and for how long, and qualitative measures such as teachers’ written reflections on pivotal moments in the lesson.

When comparing teachers who watched through a virtual reality headset, a 360 video on a flat screen, or standard video, researchers found that those with the headset attended visually to more areas in the room and reflected on more student actions in their written notes. Though preliminary, the study suggests intriguing directions for professional learning.

bit.ly/3kanMu4

INFORM. ENGAGE. IMMERSE.

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STARTING STRONG

THE URGENT NEED FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has taken on new dimensions and a new urgency in recent months, as students and educators grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustice, climate change, and other stresses that no one can be expected to leave at the schoolhouse door. What does that mean for schools moving forward, and how can professional learning equip educators for the challenges?

“As we look at how students are going to get back into school buildings after the pandemic-related closures, we need to understand that SEL and academics are deeply integrated,” Urban Assembly CEO David Adams recently told *The Learning Professional* (p. 22). “Too often, people have treated social and emotional learning as a separate component of school, thinking of it as a program that teaches skills alongside an academic program that teaches content,” he continued, “[when] in reality, academic learning has social and emotional dimensions, and SEL has academic impact.”





David Adams

How to make students college, career, and community ready

As CEO of the Urban Assembly, a nonprofit organization that oversees a network of 23 student-centered schools in New York City, David Adams knows what it takes for students to succeed not only in school but in the real world. Adams

recently shared with *The Learning Professional* his insights on how social and emotional learning (SEL) is important for academic development, how the pandemic has heightened the urgency of attending to students' holistic needs, and how professional learning can build educators' capacity

to integrate social, emotional, and academic skills.

Q: Why are social and emotional skills core to teaching and learning?

A: When you look at high-quality teaching interactions, social and

DAVID ADAMS, CEO, THE URBAN ASSEMBLY

Before serving as CEO at the Urban Assembly, Adams was the organization’s director of social-emotional learning and created the Resilient Scholars Program, an approach to integrating social and emotional learning into curriculum and classroom practices that serves not only the Urban Assembly

network but also schools across the United States.

Adams sits on the board of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and has authored books and articles on the topic for educators. In 2021, Adams received the Champion of Equity Award from the American Consortium for Equity in Education.

emotional skills are embedded. Recognizing students’ social cues helps guide teachers’ pacing. Taking the perspective of learners improves teachers’ feedback. Understanding students helps teachers ground their questions in things that are salient to students’ lives. So much of what good teachers cue in on is about students’ interactions with their work, and that is deeply affected by social and emotional development — for example, how students respond to struggle.

During remote learning, teachers did not have as much access to these cues and information, so it was harder for them to scaffold learning. Students, teachers, and content interact to produce learning. But during the pandemic, that complex interaction was often missing. It was all student to content.

If we equip educators to recognize that their own social and emotional skills are embedded in high-quality teaching, we will not only impact students’ social and emotional development in a positive way, we will also ensure that students are equipped to engage in learning, even in challenging situations like the pandemic. Even if you don’t believe

social and emotional development is part and parcel of the education system, it’s an important start to recognize that teachers’ social and emotional competence affects their teaching and therefore students’ learning.

Q: How has the pandemic changed educators’ understanding of the social and emotional dimensions of learning?

A: The social and emotional dimensions of learning have always been important, but during the pandemic, more people came to understand that. They came to see that having students talk to each other helped develop their understanding of ideas and concepts, that the quality of relationships impacts students’ focus and willingness to take risks, that a positive classroom environment helps students overcome challenges, whether they’re intellectual, social, or emotional challenges.

As I watched virtual classrooms, I was shocked to understand — or re-understand, really — how much it matters to have a caring adult in the classroom for pushing student thinking. I saw students struggle to take on the challenges that would help them grow

and put them in what developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky would call the “zone of proximal development.” They would have been more likely to take on those challenges if they had a teacher or supportive peer right next to them.

As we look at how students are going to get back into school buildings after the pandemic-related closures, we need to understand that SEL and academics are deeply integrated. Too often, people have treated social and emotional learning as a separate component of school, thinking of it as a program that teaches skills alongside an academic program that teaches content. In reality, academic learning has social and emotional dimensions, and SEL has academic impact.

Q: Many educators are concerned that students have lost academic ground during the pandemic. How do you recommend schools focus on simultaneously developing academic, social, and emotional development next year?

A: For schools that have thought a lot about growth, this notion of learning loss we’re hearing so much about is a strange way of understanding what

we need to do to support our young people. Many schools in many cities have had students who were behind grade level for many years. High-quality schools have taken that challenge and focused on individualizing learning for students so they can grow.

At the Urban Assembly, we have prided ourselves on student growth. For example, our students come in with proficiency in English language arts around 23% and, by graduation, about 85% of them are college-ready in ELA. The way we achieve that growth is through attending to all the dimensions of learning.

For the last six years, the Urban Assembly has focused on organizing our schools around the principles of social and emotional development through the Resilient Scholars Program, which provides supports to educators to help them attend to those dimensions in working with young people.

Through the pandemic, we really doubled down on the social and emotional dimensions of the schools because of the engagement challenges many of our students were having. For example, we looked at how advisories were building relationships and how to best leverage those social and emotional inputs for our young people.

We have always had advisories, but, because of the pandemic, we had students in smaller pods. We were surprised to find that when you structure the groups this way, when you provide a frame that says “you are a group,” it facilitates some kinds of interactions that may not have been there before because of differences in grade level, gender, race, or other factors. The intentionality of those groups helped young people build interactions, and through those interactions, they built relationships over the past year.

As we come back into schools in the fall, we will continue these kinds of supports as well as our other supports like social and emotional skill development, restorative practices, and assessing social and

Having difficult conversations in which you take the perspectives of others and resolve conflicts is well within the realm of SEL, but it is also in the realm of content areas like history.

emotional development using the DESSA [Devereux Student Strengths Assessment].

But we’re going to do this with even more intentionality about providing students with space to share who they are and build connections with each other and with teachers. It’s these connections and skills that will equip them to solve the kinds of problems they’ll be called upon to address in the world.

Q: How can schools start, or strengthen, their focus on social and emotional learning?

A: At Urban Assembly, we learn from our network of schools and share those lessons as we consult in other schools across the country. We always recommend that schools start by examining their mission and vision. Most schools talk about producing problem-solvers who will contribute to the community and the world. But then when we ask them to look at the inputs the school has organized that would result in a young person who is equipped to do that, there is often a disconnect.

The goal of schools should be to make students college, career, and community ready. But educators are not evaluated on the community aspect. We’re asked to speak to how students perform on math tests but not to how well students relate to themselves and others and bring themselves to solving problems that don’t have equal signs attached to them.

To paraphrase [SEL expert] Maurice Elias, we focus too much on

the life of tests instead of the tests of life. All the standardized assessments in the world are not going to save us from the challenges our country and our communities face if we can’t produce people who can disagree without being disagreeable, who can take others’ perspectives, who can communicate effectively.

We have to build those skills throughout our schools. Too often, people want SEL programs or curricula to do more than what they are equipped to do. Having difficult conversations in which you take the perspectives of others and resolve conflicts is well within the realm of SEL, but it is also in the realm of content areas like history.

For example, SEL skills and tools can help us grapple with history and construct a path forward. But that doesn’t mean difficult conversations about history should be relegated to advisory period or other structured “SEL time.”

Q: How can professional learning build educators’ capacity to integrate the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning?

A: Professional learning is a big focus for us at Urban Assembly. We need to give educators tools and opportunities to practice, not just concepts, because that leads to clarity, and I believe in clarity.

Through the Resilient Scholars Program [which is designed to fully integrate the social, emotional, and academic dimensions of learning], we developed tools that guide professional learning and therefore educator practice. The tools include a program matrix that spells out how to cultivate students’ skills, an implementation support system, and tools for sustainability.

We started by being intentional about building social and emotional skills in four areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management. For each of those skills, we spelled out specific

competencies we expect students to develop. Then we mapped out how our instructional, behavioral, social and emotional, and extracurricular practices address those competencies.

Some of those practices are universal (for all students), while others are targeted (for students at risk of not developing those skills), or tertiary (for students with identified needs in those areas).

Some of the social, emotional, and behavioral supports our schools offer include the Positive Alternative to Student Suspension (PASS) room, where students can reset and de-escalate; restorative circles; a girls empowerment group; counseling; and wraparound services from community-based organizations. We also use a number of instructional practices throughout the day and year that build social and emotional skills, such as group talk routines, academic advising,

and student-led conferences.

Coaching on those practices is a big focus for us at Urban Assembly. We believe it's important for coaches to give specific, actionable feedback to teachers. Sometimes, coaches give teachers a lot of information and ideas, and teachers really struggle to act on that.

We ask our coaches to focus on one area and then stay with that until the coach and teacher see progress. When you approach feedback this way, people know you care about their growth. We see this with students, too.

One of the greatest things you can do for a student is give really high-quality feedback. I've heard students say, "I don't think this teacher cares about me," and when you ask them why, they say, "Look at this assignment. They didn't put much thought into this assignment, so they probably don't care about me."

It's the same thing with feedback.

When the feedback is specific and actionable, students (or teachers, in the case of coaching) can't help but feel seen and understood. Students say, "The fact that the teacher took the time to help me learn about myself shows she cares more about me than my grades."

Q: What advice do you have for educators as they start a new school year?

A: As we plan to return in the fall, we need to remember the purpose of schools. It's not just about what students know, but who they are. When students graduate, they should not only know things but understand themselves and others and integrate all of those things so they can solve the problems they and their communities and country face. The social and emotional dimensions of learning are important for that. ■

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What should SEL look like this fall?

EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS WEIGH IN ON HOW TO FOSTER RESILIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused enormous stress and trauma for students and educators, exacerbating existing needs for mental health support and underscoring the importance of social and emotional learning. With the new school year on the horizon, it is vital for educators to consider the social and emotional needs of students and staff as some of them return to school buildings for the first time in more than a year, some continue to cope with trauma, and many experience anxiety and uncertainty.

The Learning Professional asked teachers, students, administrators, SEL leaders, and our online community: How should schools address students' social and emotional needs and foster resilience in the coming school year? Here are their responses, which have been edited for length.

LINDA ROST
Science teacher,
Baker High School, Baker, Montana
2020 Montana Teacher of the Year



Rost

TO SUPPORT

SEL in the future, we must critically question every practice that we use. We must evaluate whether that practice actually promotes

student lifelong learning and growth or if the practice is there to have power over the student.

The past year and a half has really had me rethink a lot of the structures of “normal school.” So much of how we structure the school day and classroom time does not focus on learning. Rather, the focus is on control and making the teacher’s life easier.

During this time, while teaching online and fully in person, I decentered these practices and centered student learning more than I ever had before. I questioned all of my practices and methods and reflected on their impact on learning.

Educators were referring to the idea of Maslow before Bloom throughout the pandemic, meaning we need to focus on the basic human needs outlined by psychologist Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs before the learning objectives outlined in educator Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy of pedagogy. I am hoping it doesn’t become cliché.

As we move forward, we must prioritize student autonomy and student-centered learning and let go of the stereotypes about what learning should look like. It is time to rethink and reimagine how we do school and learning and evaluate the structures that actually harm children.

SHELDON A. EAKINS
Founder of the Leading Equity Center
and host of the Leading Equity
Podcast



Eakins

WE NEED TO

SPEND the first week or more welcoming students and families back. A lot of parents and guardians have taken on the

role of teacher at home, a role they never asked for, and we wouldn’t have made it through the school year without them. So I would love to see a welcome celebration for families, not just for students. And I would like to see administrators thank their teaching staff, too.

In the beginning, we need to give kids time for play and time to interact, because they missed out on those things last year, even if they were in school. I would also like to see schools place more emphasis on social skills — and not in a deficit-focused way.

Last spring, I saw educators applying a lot of harsh discipline. I had to remind my colleagues to be patient. Kids have been dealing with a lot — losing loved ones, families breaking up, added responsibilities at home. Last year, I worked on a reservation, and I had kids who became homeless because COVID spread so fast through their housing project that residents were displaced for two weeks.

We need to remember that they have struggled just as we have. Patience is key. We may have to reinforce and model social and emotional skills more, but that’s OK. We can start by modeling patience and empathy for them. We can’t say we’re a social and emotional school and not practice it ourselves.

If we put too much emphasis on testing in the first weeks of school and use it to place kids in remedial courses,

we are punishing them because of a pandemic that’s not their fault. If you have a kid who has been an A student and now tests two levels behind, they’re going to say, “I was a thriving student, but now you put me in the slow class because I had something going on in my life.”

We need to give those students some time to get back into school. If we don’t, they’re going to question whether we actually care about them and they’ll tune out.

As we go back to school, I hope to see administrators remind staff that paying attention to social and emotional development is not an add-on. It should be embedded in everything. It’s the way I speak to someone, the things I model when a student tests me, how I respond to challenges. We need leaders to make sure educators know that all learning is social and emotional.

AY’LONNIE GILBERT
Student at Akron Early College
Highschool, Akron, Ohio



Gilbert

I THINK I CAN

SPEAK for all students when I say that this last year has been very detrimental to the social and emotional health of most students. I

have spoken to many of my peers from several schools about the situation, and we have all seen a common issue within each of our schools.

There are always resources for academic advancement but rarely resources that help to positively affect students’ mental, emotional, and social health. If schools can strive to have resources like counseling, support groups, or any other creative ideas based around the overall stability of their students, then I feel as if that would be a huge step in the right direction.

MICHAEL GALLAGHER
Superintendent, Sunnyvale School District,
Sunnyvale, California



Gallagher

SUNNYVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT has a strong commitment to balancing academic, social, and emotional outcomes. That commitment

positions us well to start the new school year. We will build on our existing work on social and emotional learning, which includes coaching and other professional learning for staff as well as student skill-building, supports, and assessment, by leaning into the concept of a “restorative restart.”

We will be using concepts outlined in Policy Analysis for California Education’s blueprint for the first six weeks of school, *Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center*. This report, which has been endorsed by every major education advocacy group in the state of California, calls for schools and districts to create a restorative restart by focusing on five areas during the first six weeks of school and continue with an emphasis in these areas as the year progresses: center relationships; address whole-child needs; strengthen staffing and partnerships; make teaching and learning relevant and rigorous; and empower teams to reimagine and rebuild systems.

These concepts resonate with us in Sunnyvale, especially in the emphasis on taking care of adults as well as students, rebuilding the community, and re-establishing partnerships with community agencies.

In addition, we will continue significant work around equity and antiracism. Each of our schools created equity action plans last year to assess where they were. Now we will be consolidating that data and creating districtwide plans.

We will also be working with Playworks and Substantial founder Jill Vialet at the Stanford D-School to cultivate a design thinking approach as we make plans to return and re-evaluate existing practices. We want to be thoughtful about how we are trying new things in the name of “reimagining education.” That term is frightening to many who really just want to return to “normal.”

We want to be cognizant of where everyone is so they can continue the journey together. Last year we adopted the theme of “Learning Together, Arriving as One,” accompanied by a bridge metaphor, to convey a sense of community and collectivism and to commit to making sure we left no one behind. That spirit will continue to guide us in ensuring that students progress on their academic, social, and emotional journeys.

VAL BROWN
Principal academic officer,
Center for Antiracist Education
Former member of Learning Forward Board of Trustees



Brown

A SOLID SEL APPROACH needs to address a wide range of human experience. During the past year, some students experienced disruption and

major losses, including death in their families, housing dislocation, food and work uncertainty, while other students connected with their families, felt valued as learners, and had enriching learning experiences.

Because of the vastly different realities of our students, we need to remember that students will have different social and emotional needs. We will have to listen with patience and compassion in order to meet those needs and extend grace when moments get rocky.

Any SEL approach needs to intentionally center authentic relationship building. Practically, educators should make time and space for that and school leaders should ask teachers to support students in processing their emotions through discussion or writing activities. The processing will not only help students identify and reinforce their coping skills, but help refine their listening skills and develop empathy for others.

#TheLearningPro

CATHERINE G. MURPHY
ESL teacher

MENTORING is a sure way to build relationships and grow a sense of stability and belonging for families and students. Mentoring is a key contributor to SEL and would be a great addition to any school’s SEL tool kit next year.

SARAH POTLER LAHAYNE
Founder & CEO, Move This World

TWO THINGS all schools should do to support #SEL & #mentalhealth next year: 1) Prioritize deliberate, sequential, evidence-based SEL for students & training for staff and 2) Remember that educators, administrators, and parents need to put on their own oxygen masks before taking care of others.

SOPHIE LEWIS

**Student at Yorktown High School,
Arlington, Virginia**



Lewis

THE ISSUES

pertaining to students' mental health are vast and complicated, yet many solutions don't address the fundamental causes or deeply

explore the "why." The issues need to be addressed at the root. Students need to be supported through crisis, and they need resources.

Many times, schools have mental health weeks, where the school raises awareness and discusses mental health. But that talk is empty if it's not backed up by individualized attention. For example, students need adults to notice when they aren't getting to class or if they are showing up every day but never turning in assignments.

Even students who never miss class or assignments need people to notice them and understand them. They may be struggling, too. Adults need to understand when students are falling into bad habits and help them address why.

It would help if people like behavior analysts and therapists were added to school environments. Unfortunately, in our current system, this would most likely begin in wealthy, white neighborhoods like my own, even though disenfranchised communities face more challenges

and worse repercussions when coming face-to-face with mental health issues in school.

In wealthy communities, students who struggle with drug abuse, engage in criminal activity, or face mental health issues tend to have a large safety net and treatment options available to them. In lower-income communities and predominantly Black communities, students often receive harsher punishment and less support for the same behavior, not because the people around them don't care about them, but because of lack of available services, the ongoing destruction of generational wealth that results in fewer resources, the prison industrial complex, and other structural issues.

While we cannot solve all those problems overnight, we can change the attitudes adults have toward students. If adults begin noticing students as people, giving them confidential outlets for discussing their mental health, then we can make the change. If adults provide opportunities for students to take mental health days or weeks without failing or falling behind in classes, and if we can support students facing poverty and racism, then we can begin to tackle mental health in schools.

BETSY BOWMAN

**Instructional coach
and restorative justice trainer,
Boston, Massachusetts**



Bowman

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

need adults to resist silver bullets, quick fixes, and flashy smartphone apps that promise to remediate learning loss and heal us

from the trauma of the pandemic. We need common practices and regular opportunities that center students' voices and experiences to teach and practice the social and emotional skills that our students will rely on to heal and move forward.

One important practice that we should have in every classroom is restorative justice circles. Restorative justice is often mistakenly understood to be a discipline program or approach to behavior management. It is neither of those. At its heart, restorative justice is a way of being in relationship and community, and circles are a way of practicing those relationship skills together.

In circles, we are challenged to speak from the heart, listen deeply, consider others' perspectives, develop connections with the community, and trust the wisdom of our own lived experiences. Circles are how we practice social and emotional learning, and we can do them in every classroom if we have the political will and leadership to make it a reality.

CONSTANCE EASTON

**Coordinator of mental health, SEL, & counseling,
Richmond School District No. 38, British Columbia, Canada**

CONNECT-MODEL-TEACH. We need to focus on connection and cultural humility to create a gathering place where all feel heard and seen. When SEL becomes the schoolwide focus, it becomes the water we swim in. ... But to do that, we have to go back to the basics: Prioritize educator SEL and wellness, support explicit SEL in classrooms through scaffolding, coaching, modeling, and teaching, and check in with our learners daily.

MIRIAM LOPEZ

NYCDOE Universal Literacy Reading coach

I BELIEVE we need to take the precious time to get to know our students and their families on a personal level. We need to continue reaching out to families and creating a welcoming environment where transparency and community building continue to be valued.



To make SEL stick, align school and out-of-school time

BY SUZANNE BOUFFARD

For 20 years, Prime Time Palm Beach County, a nonprofit organization in Florida, has supported local out-of-school time programs with professional learning, capacity building, and other resources. One of the organization's most popular and longest-running professional learning offerings is called Bringing Yourself to Work, which helps out-of-school time practitioners develop self-awareness, understand and facilitate positive group dynamics, and strengthen their relationship-building strategies.

Those are key social and emotional learning (SEL) skills that out-of-school

time programs typically strive to foster in the young people they serve. Prime Time leaders believe you must foster the skills in adults first. As Katherine Gopie, the organization's director of professional development, puts it, "Adults have to first understand what SEL is, then they have to embody it, then they can model it."

That approach resonates with Kristen Rulison, social and emotional learning manager for the School District of Palm Beach County. Rulison develops and oversees the district's approach to SEL and works with Prime Time to ensure that elementary students experience a consistent

approach across the school day and out-of-school time hours. Like Gopie, she believes that starts with adults' skills.

In 2017, when Rulison began developing an SEL professional learning plan for a group of elementary schools, she kept hearing about Bringing Yourself to Work from community partners. She brought it to the schools as the first professional learning offered to school staff. It fit nicely with two of the core components in a framework of five SEL competencies from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, And Emotional Learning (CASEL): self-awareness and self-management. (The other three are social awareness,



relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.) Focusing on those skills, Rulison says, helps staff focus on “being the best you” for students.

Prime Time and the School District of Palm Beach County aren’t the only organizations focusing on professional learning to develop adults’ SEL skills. That strategy is one of the themes emerging from a study of six communities working to foster SEL across school and out-of-school time settings.

The Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative, supported by The Wallace Foundation, is a six-year effort to prioritize social and emotional learning in Boston, Dallas, Denver, Palm Beach County, Tacoma, and Tulsa. The initiative focuses on simultaneously building capacity in schools and out-of-school time programs.

Team members from two of the participating communities — Palm Beach County, Florida, and Tulsa, Oklahoma — spoke with *The Learning Professional* to share what they’ve learned during the first half of the grant period. Although they take slightly

different approaches, both communities are committed to professional learning for adults as the backbone of improving practice and student outcomes.

Their insights complement the findings of an October 2020 interim report by RAND, the project evaluator. Both communities are encouraged by the growth they see in staff and students. In fact, leaders in Tulsa are so pleased with the changes at their district’s pilot sites that they are expanding the SEL supports to all elementary schools in the district.

WHY SEL PARTNERSHIPS?

SEL, which includes skills and capacities such as empathy, self-regulation, and conflict resolution, is a key element of success in school and life, according to decades of research (Jones & Kahn, 2017). It develops in all of the places where children and youth spend their time, not just at home, but also in school, after-school, and community settings (Durlak et al., 2015).

Research suggests that students benefit when all of those settings take a consistent approach to fostering SEL

SPOTLIGHT ON TULSA AND PALM BEACH COUNTY

Palm Beach County, Florida, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, are two of the six communities participating in the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative, which is supported by The Wallace Foundation. In each community, the local school district and an out-of-school time intermediary facilitate the partnerships, bringing together multiple schools and community-based programs.

In Florida, Prime Time Palm Beach County, a local nonprofit intermediary organization, co-leads the partnership with the School District of Palm Beach County. Prime Time had a longstanding presence in the community, but its relationship with the district had been limited to the department of afterschool programming.

The partnership grant has provided an opportunity to create more alignment across the school day. Kristen Rulison, the school district’s social and emotional learning manager, says this “has pushed us to be more explicit and intentional about SEL and well-being and to acknowledge that all educators are caregivers.”

Tulsa Public Schools is partnering with The Opportunity Project, a citywide intermediary for expanded learning. Previously, out-of-school time programs across the city were scattered and disconnected, according to Paige Kennedy, The Opportunity Project’s associate director of professional learning & quality improvement.

Some programs had partnerships with individual schools, but the lack of a systemic approach led to gaps in access and quality. The Opportunity Project team aims to change that so that all students have equitable access to high-quality experiences.

(Jones et al., 2018; Jones & Bouffard, 2012), just as children’s literacy skills improve when they read not only at school but also at home, on the bus, at the laundromat, and everywhere they go.

Schools and out-of-school time programs can build that consistency. They share students and often the same physical space. Rulison describes out-of-school time as “a continuation of the school day experience” for many students and says, “The more we can align those experiences, the more positive experience school will be for students.”

School and out-of-school time also offer complementary skill sets and resources from which each can benefit. “SEL has always been a focal point for us in the OST space,” says Prime Time’s Gopie, because it “dovetails with positive youth development practice, which is the grounding for much of our work.” Schools often have more infrastructure for professional learning and access to financial and human capital, as well as expertise about student learning and curriculum.

The Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative is based on the idea of combining those strengths to weave a tight net of SEL supports for students. The project provides financial support, technical assistance from national experts, and facilitated networking among the six communities to help educators across settings use consistent SEL language, messaging, and strategies.

In each community, the school district and an out-of-school time intermediary organization lead the partnership, working together to create consistency across five to seven elementary school sites with co-located out-of-school time programs. A research study is underway to determine if the initiative results in better implementation of SEL practices and whether students benefit.

Although the six participating communities vary in their structure, needs, and approaches, all are focused

WALLACE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS FOR THE PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE GRANTEES IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION		
Form of support	2017-18	2018-19
Annual implementation grants to districts and out-of-school time intermediaries	✓	✓
Additional grant to expand out-of-school time enrollment and enhance the quality of out-of-school time services in Phase 1 sites		✓
Weekly newsletter emailed to system-level managers	✓	✓
Annual daylong meetings with system leaders and Wallace program staff to discuss the community plan for implementation	✓	✓
Technical assistance from CASEL, the Forum for Youth Investment, Crosby Marketing Communications, and Education First	✓	✓
Learning communities		
For system leaders from the six communities (twice per year)	✓	✓
For staff from the 38 sites (once per year)		✓
Role-alike retreats for school principals, SEL coaches, and out-of-school time site leaders*		✓
RAND formative feedback reports for each community	✓	✓
Website that contains each community’s initiative-related data (surveys, observations, SEL student assessment data, RAND reports)	✓	✓
* Role-alike meetings or retreats bring together educators that hold similar positions or roles and encourage professional learning and networking.		
Source: Schwartz et al., 2020.		

on the following four elements, which they are developing in a staged way:

- Create a positive climate in school and out-of-school time programs (including welcoming physical space, supportive culture, positive norms, goals, and values);
- Offer SEL-specific instruction to students;
- Integrate SEL into academic instruction and enrichment activities; and
- Create consistent and mutually reinforcing SEL practices.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning is a major focus of the initiative. It is prioritized at every level, from the technical assistance provided to participating communities

(see table above), to each site’s ongoing support for leaders’ SEL capacity, to professional learning for frontline staff. After two years, some key themes and lessons have emerged.

Focus on adult SEL.

Like Palm Beach County, most of the sites began their professional learning with helping adults understand SEL and build their own SEL skills (Schwartz et al., 2020). In Tulsa, Paige Kennedy, The Opportunity Project’s associate director of professional learning & quality improvement, says, “Before we talk about students, we talk about ‘what does this skill look like in myself?’ because it’s hard to teach a skill to students that you don’t have.”

She acknowledges that this can be a challenge: “People were so excited to

get started with students, so we've had to constantly go back" and maintain the focus on adults as the foundation.

Kennedy's colleague Jessi Hicks, the SEL continuous improvement coordinator for Tulsa Public Schools, says this focus on adults' SEL capacity has multiple benefits. "It helps the adults deal with their own stress management skills, build positive climate and culture, and impacts their practice," Hicks says.

SEL skills enable other aspects of high-quality practice. "We plan to have a big focus on culturally responsive leadership next year, and you need the self and social awareness to be able to do the deep work on equity," Hicks says.

The emphasis on adults' SEL seems to be paying off so far. According to the RAND researchers, at the end of the planning year (spring 2018), three-quarters of school and out-of-school time staff said that building their own SEL skills was a professional learning need. A year later, after the beginning of implementation, that proportion was down to two-thirds of staff, and community leaders plan to continue addressing that need in an ongoing way (Schwartz et al., 2020).

Model SEL signature practices.

Another emphasis has been building staff members' capacity to implement core SEL practices. Both Tulsa and Palm Beach County are focusing on the three signature SEL practices recommended by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2019):

1. Open every class, meeting, or professional learning experience with a *welcoming ritual* such as greeting each person by name or holding morning meetings;
2. Embed *engaging strategies* into the learning experience, such as interactive and reflective exercises and "brain breaks"; and
3. Include an *optimistic closure* to provide a sense of collaboration,

accomplishment, and future directions, such as a reflection prompt or "one-minute accolade."

In keeping with best practices of professional learning, and the initiative's core belief about the importance of adults' own skills, leaders model those practices in their meetings and in the professional learning they facilitate with staff.

Rulison says this has been an intentional approach with each site's implementation team — the group of stakeholders who meet regularly to move the initiative forward that includes the school principal, OST director, SEL lead (designated teacher, school counselor, or administrator), teacher representatives, and other SEL "champions."

In Tulsa, Kennedy says this willingness to reflect on and model the skills has helped leaders understand the goals and led to a supportive and "highly functional" work environment. She credits routines like ensuring that meetings kick off with stating the norms the group agreed to at the beginning of the project and a closure such as reflecting on participants' feelings about the work or naming the next step they will take to move the work forward.

Prioritize collaboration.

One of the tenets of all the professional learning is that school and out-of-school time staff should learn with and from one another. That kind of collaboration has traditionally been rare. As the RAND researchers documented, there is a longstanding status differential between out-of-school time staff and school staff, with the former seen more as babysitters than as educators.

Hicks attributes that misinterpretation, in part, to the fact that "so many school folks don't see what happens on the OST side." Correcting that is a priority for her and others in the initiative. She says out-of-school time providers have "a

lot of expertise in SEL processes and in building relationships with kids, and that can foster a more positive climate and culture."

One way that Hicks and Kennedy bridged the gap is by facilitating a session with out-of-school time staff from different programs who work at the same school site, along with the school principal, about what out-of-school time looks, sounds, and feels like. Kennedy says that having the principal there was "a game changer," especially when she pointed out to the principal that her presence sent a message to the out-of-school time partners that she was invested in their collaborative work.

To further strengthen connections, both communities are working to create shared professional learning opportunities where out-of-school time and school staff learn together. Specific strategies have included shared learning opportunities and communities of practice facilitated by local leadership teams that include representation from both sectors.

But creating shared professional learning opportunities poses a number of challenges, scheduling chief among them. "OST staff are going to work when the school day staff are ending, so you have to be creative," Rulison says. She and her colleagues have found a summer service week to be helpful. In Tulsa, Kennedy says that bringing all the school and out-of-school time leaders for a two-day kickoff over the summer "was a pivotal moment."

When shared professional learning time is not possible, Hicks recommends ensuring alignment across the professional learning offered in each setting. She and Kennedy both credit Tulsa project manager Jessica Stittsworth — an employee of both The Opportunity Project and Tulsa Public Schools — with serving as a linchpin for that kind of alignment.

In Palm Beach County, Gopie believes that such efforts to collaborate are beginning to change the lopsided power dynamic between schools and

out-of-school time staff. Out-of-school time practitioners report that they feel more seen, heard, and respected by school staff, she says.

On the school district side, Rulison said she is seeing stronger relationships not only between school and out-of-school time staff, but also among school staff who don't typically work together. "Often in the school day professional development, you meet by grade level or subject area. By intentionally mixing people up, we really saw relationships strengthen, which has impacted the climate" in a positive way.

She says the district has also been intentional about including noninstructional staff, who don't typically have opportunities to engage in professional learning but who need the SEL skills for interacting with students just as much as teachers do.

A SEAMLESS APPROACH FOR STUDENTS

A goal of the initiative is to change the culture of and practices in schools and out-of-school time programs so that SEL is woven throughout the day. For that to happen, all staff need to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for SEL.

Rulison says this has been a shift for many staff. "Before this partnership, we've always had school counselors, and often they did explicit instruction of SEL with students. This grant has really helped us see how SEL goes across the school day, and it doesn't just happen at one time and place where you explicitly teach it."

She says school leaders now take what they call a "robust SEL implementation" approach, which draws from a Multi-Tiered System of Support framework, in which educators explicitly focus on SEL with all students but engage counselors, interventionists, and others to provide additional support to students who need it.

It is too soon to make quantitative claims about the specific benefits of the initiative for students, especially because most communities have yet to

"This grant has really helped us see how SEL goes across the school day, and it doesn't just happen at one time and place where you explicitly teach it."

fully implement direct SEL instruction for students and academic integration strategies. But the leaders involved say they are seeing a range of positive developments, including decreases in discipline referrals at schools.

Tulsa Public Schools' Kennedy believes that is related to collaboration between the out-of-school time and school staff. For example, she says, "One day, the OST director said at a meeting that the 4th graders had a lot of challenges the previous day. The assistant principal said, 'Oh, I should have told you something happened in the last part of our school day.'"

As a result, the assistant principal planned to find the out-of-school time director at the end of every day to give her a five-minute update to equip the out-of-school time staff with information to help them support students.

There are also some benefits from a staffing perspective that can ultimately benefit students. In Palm Beach County, many out-of-school time practitioners are working in their positions while going to school at night to get degrees in education. They are supported by a system that Prime Time has built intentionally to professionalize the out-of-school time field through partnerships with local colleges, a career advising model to support progression along degree pathways, a scholarship program to pay for the cost of classes and books, and an educational incentive program that rewards attainment of educational milestones.

When these practitioners attain education certificates and degrees, many of them are hired by schools in the district. That's a benefit for everyone involved, because the new teachers already know the students, the community, and the SEL approaches,

and are able to "take their experience in positive youth development practice (which includes SEL) from the OST setting and apply it to classroom teaching very successfully," according to Gopie.

MOVING FORWARD

As the six communities' 38 sites in the first phase of the project continue to deepen their work, each community is adding five to seven sites. The expansion phase was originally planned to begin in the 2021-22 school year, but The Wallace Foundation gave sites permission to begin a year earlier because of the many SEL-related needs caused or exacerbated by COVID-19.

Leaders and staff have been grateful for the support during the pandemic. "Principals said they were so grateful for the SEL foundations they had developed to keep things going strong" for staff and students, according to Rulison. "Because we've been doing a lot of work around handling stress, they were better equipped to handle it," she said.

Gopie says Prime Time's SEL specialist also conducted a lot of check-ins with leaders and staff, "almost like a wellness check." In Tulsa, leaders have prioritized responding to "many asks for self-care recommendations," and Kennedy has offered 30-minute Zoom sessions about stress management, "pint-sized" professional learning sessions such as "mindful Mondays" and "read and reflect Fridays," and other strategies.

Leaders from both communities also believe the focus on SEL has helped students during the pandemic. In Palm Beach County, Rulison said that morning meeting — one of the signature SEL practices her district's schools use — helped students feel connected at a time of uncertainty and isolation.

In Tulsa, school leaders were surprised when a spring survey of elementary students showed that teacher-student relationships had actually increased from the previous

year. The number of students who said they would be excited to have the same teacher next year increased as well. Those findings are encouraging at a time when national studies are finding many students feeling disconnected and struggling with anxiety and other mental health issues (Sparks, 2021).

Still, there is work to do. As students returned to school buildings in spring 2021, educators in Tulsa saw more peer conflicts than they expected, as well as regression in social skills like self-regulation and coping with stress, according to Hicks. Kennedy points out that it may be a difficult transition for some students to be surrounded by large groups of people and cope with other changes.

Both leaders say their organizations are well aware that they will need to continue focusing on those skills, not only in the pilot sites but at all schools and programs. The district has set an expectation that next year all schools will implement the signature practices, regardless of where students are learning.

Leaders in both Tulsa and Palm Beach County are grateful that they have laid a foundation for SEL across schools and out-of-school time programs. The collaboration across sectors, says Kennedy, “illustrates that it takes a village” to support students on

the path to success.

When her community embarked on the project four years ago, she says, “a lot of folks were saying, ‘We don’t have the time,’ and we were saying, ‘We don’t have the time not to do this.’” The collaboration takes time and effort, she says, but “we’re seeing that it’s really paying off for both kids and adults.”

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Coaching with SEL in mind

BY CARRIE EDMOND, REBEKAH KMIECIAK, RACHEL MANE, AND ASHLEY TAPLIN

Social and emotional learning skills such as growth mindset and perseverance have always been important for learning mathematics, but educators are not always explicit about how or intentional about integrating them into math classrooms. In the North East Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, we are working to change that.

Two years ago, Ashley Taplin, a math specialist and co-author of this article, attended a district-led session

where co-author Carrie Edmond and her SEL/behavior team from the office of student leadership and well-being were sharing the importance of integrating social and emotional learning into instructional practices.

Our district was in the early stages of this SEL integration, but Taplin was excited about the idea of applying it in mathematics instruction. She approached Edmond about next steps for putting the ideas into practice, and the four of us began to collaborate across our two offices.

Since that time, we have integrated SEL language and practices into multiple math curricula, prompting more intentional use of SEL across the district.

A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

When we began collaborating in 2019, we chose to start by integrating SEL practices into the scope and sequence of Algebra II classes, because it is Taplin's content focus and we were aware of the need for it in upper-level secondary classes. We grounded this work in CASEL's

EXAMPLE OF A WELCOMING ACTIVITY

SEL competency	Definition	Indicators	Example Use and adapt for your own classroom
Self-awareness	The ability to accurately assess one's traits with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a growth mindset, as well as recognizing one's emotions and how they impact behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding that ability grows with effort and persistence. • Demonstrate an understanding that the language we use positively or negatively impacts our environment. • Demonstrate understanding of one's emotions. • Recognize common stressors and effective behavioral responses (positive and negative). • Identify when help is needed and how to access available resources or supports in your family, school, or community. 	<p>WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITY</p> <p>Mix and mingle: Consider using this activity as an introduction by using a question such as, "What is one thing you remember about systems of equations?" or a review of topics with a question such as, "What is one new thing you have learned about systems of equations?" This will help incorporate student reflection while promoting self-awareness about their levels of comfort with the topic and their participation.</p>

five SEL competencies (see casel.org/sel-framework): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

In each Algebra II unit, we integrated one of CASEL's three signature SEL practices (CASEL, 2019a): a welcoming activity, an engaging practice, or an optimistic closure to the unit content. (See example of a welcoming activity from our Algebra II curriculum above.)

When we used the mix and mingle strategy with students, you could feel a heightened energy in the class. Students were engaged and willingly discussing math content while building self-awareness. When we used the

optimistic closure strategy called one word whip around, teachers said that the self-management skills needed here allowed them to formatively assess their learning through summarization.

This successful integration spurred more ideas. The following year, we created more resources for teachers and expanded our focus to include additional math courses. For example, we created play cards (Taplin, 2019) based on CASEL's three signature practices that helped teachers plan and implement in-the-moment SEL-based strategies.

We also wrote sample language for explicit dialogue (see "Explicit dialogue for social emotional learning" on p. 39) (Taplin et al., 2020), one area CASEL

identifies as essential to high-quality SEL-focused classrooms (CASEL, 2019b). These sample prompts (Taplin, 2021), such as explaining the purpose of lesson check-ins for building self-awareness or that the reason we do group work is to deepen our relationship skills, gave teachers ideas for helping students hear the why behind SEL.

We also provided opportunities for teachers to learn with us through team-based, campus-based, and districtwide professional learning. We helped teachers build their own SEL capacity through check-ins, celebrations, and self-care activities and explained how each of these built on teachers' self-awareness, social awareness, and

relationship skills. With campus and district-based professional learning, we provided strategies and ideas for teachers to transfer their knowledge to students.

For example, at one session in which we were showcasing an optimistic closure, a teacher commented during the closure that she used to think SEL was just the fluffy stuff, but now she knows that SEL deepens the learning of math through reflection and communication.

This transfer of knowledge was exciting and affirming that what we were doing was working. Teachers were not only learning strategies for embedding SEL, but also understanding the meaning behind SEL. (See “Strategies play card” at right.)

A COLLABORATIVE COACHING MODEL

As we increased our collaborative efforts, we began to notice that we were infusing the SEL practices into the coaching that each of us engages in with teachers (Taplin and co-author Rachel Mane on math instruction; Edmond and co-author Rebekah Kmieciak on behavior support). Our coaching had become more rooted in reflection and in ideas we developed together.

Reflecting on our process led us to the understanding that the coaching cycle we engage in with teachers lives within a bigger cycle of reflection and collaboration among coaches and across traditional disciplinary boundaries. We call this the collaborative coaching model. (See diagram at right.) It has five recurring, cyclical steps:

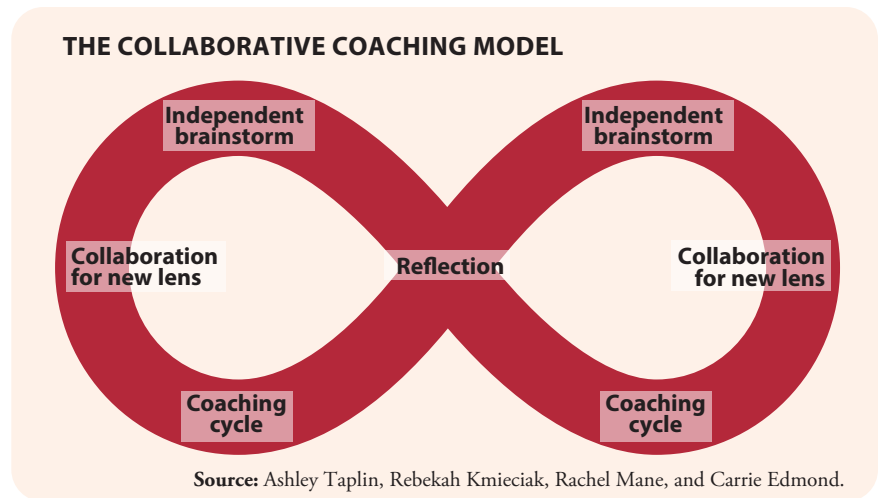
Reflection. This step happens on the individual level when a coach or specialist engages with a thought, connection, idea, or a curiosity. For example, one of the math specialists was thinking about how to embed SEL into the curriculum in a way that was more explicit.

Independent brainstorm. The coach or specialist then generates new ideas that are born out of the original reflection. The specialist in the example

STRATEGIES PLAY CARD				
Welcoming/ inclusion activity	Engaging practice	Optimistic closure	Ideas for student voice	Sample questions/ prompts
Four corners	Gallery walk	Human bar graph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circle sharing • Think, pair, share • Chalk talk • Quick writes • Scale it! • Pear deck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What am I still curious about? • What might be a different perspective? • What would happen if ...? • What is one takeaway from this experience? • How has your thinking changed about ...?
Mix and mingle	Give one, get one, move on	My next step		
What’s new	Mindful minute	One word whip around		

Source: Ashley Taplin, Carrie Edmond, and Rebekah Kmieciak.

The play card is a tool to help organize instructional practices for intentional planning or in-the-moment instructional decisions. Teachers use this play card as a reference when planning a welcoming activity, engaging practice, optimistic closure, strategy for including student voice, or prompt for deeper questioning. This play card was created by Ashley Taplin, Carrie Edmond, and Rebekah Kmieciak.



just mentioned began thinking of what she learned at the SEL session. She began digging deeper to consider how this could tie into the work she was already doing with teachers.

Collaboration for new lens. At this stage, the coach or specialist seeks input from others, looking for additional insight and varying perspectives. The math specialist reached out to the SEL specialist, and the two in turn decided

to include additional colleagues. The newly formed team met several times during this phase to generate ideas, develop plans, and set priorities.

Coaching cycle. This stage is where the coach/specialist takes the new idea, resource, or strategy to the educators they support. (It may be accompanied or preceded by professional learning to provide an overview to teachers.)

For example, the math specialist

EXPLICIT DIALOGUE FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING
 BASED ON CASEL'S 5 CORE COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness CHECK-INS	"We're doing this check-in as a way for you and me to be aware of your energy level before beginning today's lesson."
Self-management GOAL-SETTING	"When you set a goal based on today's target, we are working on self-management to achieve it."
Responsible decision-making SELF-ASSESSMENT	"When you tell me where you're at in your understanding, you are making a decision to help me know how best to help you."
Relationship skills PARTNER WORK	"I'm pairing you up so we can develop effective communication, collaboration, and relationships."
Social awareness PROBLEM SOLVING	"Someone might not have seen it the same way you did, when we talk about different strategies and perspectives, we're working on social awareness."
Source: Ashley Taplin, Rebekah Kmiecik, Carrie Edmond, and Rachel Mane.	

engaged in professional learning with Algebra II teachers on the three signature practices we wrote into their curriculum. Teachers experienced them and shared how they would use them in their math classroom.

Return to reflection. During this stage, the coaches and specialist come back together to debrief and reflect, share insights and new ideas, and adjust accordingly. This often leads to the larger cycle repeating itself.

This final stage is critical and can often be overlooked. We must prioritize the practice of reflection both individually and collectively. From the example above, the math specialists brought teacher feedback to our team to discuss plans for future professional learning opportunities.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead, we are eager to continue spreading this work to the remainder of our math content areas. As our superintendent joked at a districtwide meeting, if Algebra II can embed SEL, anyone can. While this gave us a laugh, we know math and other subjects have always been deeply rooted with SEL — we just need to be

explicit in crafting how so teachers can help students experience it.

Doing this involves breaking down stigmas that exist about collaboration between departments, disciplines, and educators to normalize the kind of collaboration and reflection that are making a difference in our mathematics classes.

As we reflect on this past school year full of immense change and trauma from the pandemic, we often think about what practices have been most effective in our work and what we will carry forward into next year. In a time where we had to distance ourselves physically, we realized it was the power of collaboration that enhanced all we did.

Breaking from the silos and relying on each other's knowledge enabled us to grow, share, and deepen our learning. Our work as math specialists and social emotional learning coaches may typically be seen and defined as separate roles, but when we realized our connectedness, our work was transformed. We created powerful partnerships, became more reflective and intentional, and were ultimately able to create a new model that could

transfer to any coaching cycle.

The collaboration among the four of us has been key to success in part because it models collaboration for those we support; indeed, we have begun to see teachers and administrators forging stronger connections with one another. Our process of building and maintaining a collaborative relationship is simple yet practical and effective.

First, we have built trust through consistent communication. We follow up with one another in a timely way and offer grace when we are unable to follow through, because we all understand the flexibility needed to support teachers districtwide. We also prioritize time and space for collaboration. And finally, we share a commitment to our own personal growth through continued professional learning and educational networking. What began as an organic curiosity has turned into an intentional practice for growth and connection.

HOW TO BEGIN

Reflection has been the front and center of each step in this work, and we recommend making it a centerpiece of all coaching to integrate SEL and content areas. As new connections are created and our collaboration branches out, we find ourselves coming back to reflect and naturally begin to flow through the model and deepen our work. This has enhanced our work and impact as coaches.

As you begin to incorporate social and emotional learning or any collaborative coaching efforts at your campus or district, we encourage you to start with reflecting on your own skills and areas for growth.

The following questions can help you assess what you need as leaders and learners to support those you work with, emphasizing how you build and maintain relationships and how well you recognize how others build relationships.

- How do I see myself as a

Continued on p. 44



To thrive, students need a ‘homeplace’ at school

BY SHATERA WEAVER

“Next stop: Vaaaalhallaa; Where the Vikings go to die.”

I can still hear each additional “a” the train conductor used to embellish his pronunciation of Valhalla. I remember not only because it made passengers chuckle each time, but also because his melodic announcement was music to my ears.

It meant I was only two stops away from home: White Plains, New York. Valhalla may have been where Vikings went to die, but it was also the train stop I awaited to resume living fully.

I had the privilege of attending a renowned private middle school in upper Westchester, New York. On the other end of that 35-minute Metro North train ride, I was able to dabble in

softball, figure skating, theater, dance team, and more. I earned awards, learned Latin, and had access to a middle school education for which my classmates were paying college tuition prices, all with the support of a needs-based scholarship I worked tirelessly to lose.

From 6th to 8th grade, I got into fights, broke dress code, even purposefully dropped my grades,

because amid all the standards-based critical thinking skills I learned there, I also learned that I didn't belong. Ostracized as a result of otherness, I never felt at home.

When we pulled off from Valhalla, it seemed that both the train and I let out a sigh of relief. My shoulders relaxed and the clench in my jaw loosened. That lighthearted announcement meant my heart could lighten.

A couple of decades and educational degrees later, I know now that it wasn't home I was looking — and sometimes fighting — for at school. It was a *homeplace*. In her essay *Homeplace*, social activist and author bell hooks defines a homeplace as a space where Black people are able to “recover our wholeness” and “where we can be affirmed in our minds and hearts ... where we could restore ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world” (hooks, 1990).

In her book *We Want to Do More Than Survive*, Bettina Love references hooks's idea of a homeplace as a “space where black folk truly matter ... where souls are nurtured, comforted and fed” (Love, 2019, p. 63). My middle school experience leaves me wondering how many minds schools are feeding, but souls they are starving.

As dean of culture at the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in New York, my approach to social and emotional learning (SEL) is not just about building skills. It's about making school a homeplace for all

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Here are student responses on a survey given to gather feedback in February 2021.

Anything you'd like to say or ask about BAM!?

- i love it, and i will continue to be consistent and keep joining every friday ;3
- It's pretty valid, more or less like an escape for me.
- Can I plz be a co leader for the Club!!! It would be a great experience.
- Well I hope I become a leader, if only this is the one time I have stepped forward yo lead something because I believe in it.
- This Group is great
- This group is really chill and I actually look forward to coming here every week :D

students, particularly Black students. I have made it my mission to tend to the souls of our Black students because I want them to do more than just survive and bide their time until they begin living again when they head home.

Creating a homeplace is central because SEL is a process that begins with creating safe and equitable spaces for students to first be their whole selves. This is the foundation on which they can develop effective knowledge and skills to be able to feel and show

empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

I began cultivating a homeplace for Black students with an affinity group, and that work has grown to include affinity spaces for other student groups, alongside professional learning for staff that is laying the foundation for other important work to come.

THE BAM! AFFINITY GROUP

Inspired by the work of Love and hooks, I created an affinity group for Black students as a homeplace and piloted it over the past school year. Research reinforces the importance of belonging in a learning community (Allen, 2021), and this affinity group is my way of offering a “small private reality where Black [students] can renew their spirits and recover themselves” (hooks, 1990).

Unfortunately, the research on school-aged racial affinity groups is limited. Yet I find that the most important facilitation move I make is to simply be myself and allow students to do the same. With that foundation, this homeplace that students and I continue to curate with one another is a mutually gratifying space where we can learn, support one another, and nurture growth.

The Black at MELS (BAM!) affinity group formed at the onset of the 2020-21 school year. We meet every Friday after school and have four core portions to our time together.

First, we check in with a reflection

of the week we're bringing to a close. Black joy is fortified through games, then we move on to the day's topic of learning and discussion. It might be learning about the life and legacy of the late Cicely Tyson, co-designing our BAM! uniform T-shirts, or mourning the murder of Daunte Wright.

To close, we provide space for students to share anything they want to be heard. The center of our circle is there to hold whatever it is that students may wish to put down or uplift.

Students describe BAM! as the highlight of their schooling experience. In a survey given during one of our Friday afternoon meetings in February 2021, one student even asserted that BAM! was an escape for him.

This declaration speaks volumes, especially in the context of remote learning, when students have spent much of the past school year at home. A number of students even reached out to me when they realized that there was no school for the Lunar New Year, asking if we could meet anyway. Never have I ever heard of students asking for school activities on their day off!

In the affinity group, students have made meaningful connections with learning in and out of school. One high school junior writes: "Unapologetically Black and Cultural Diversity are two principles of BLM [Black Lives Matter] that I see exemplified in my life because in the black affinity group with Ms. Weaver that I joined we talk about how being black doesn't necessarily mean one thing or the other, the black community is vast, and they shouldn't be ashamed of who they are or try to change because of society's norms."

BEYOND BAM!

The BLM Week of Action in Schools is a national campaign to promote a set of national demands based on the Black Lives Matter guiding principles that focus on improving the school experience for students of color.

In recognition of the week of action, a few staff members at

STAFF REFLECTIONS

6th grade

In Cities expedition students are investigating who has access to green spaces and who doesn't. They are learning the historical factors and systemic racism that created these conditions today. They are designing plans to address this inequity. There is also opportunity to connect this local example to what's happening in the country and world.

In Decision 2020, we also studied voting rights as a part of the case study, specifically addressing racism historically and today.

7th grade

7th Grade Science brought in experts for our PANDEMIC case study. We had doctors who worked on the frontlines come to speak with and answer questions about their experiences. Students were amazing and so engaged.

Favorite Moment: X asked Dr. Pean, a Haitian/Mexican American, if he felt a sense of belonging when going through school/work. He then shared his experience and encouraged all students to pursue their goals regardless of the "norm." It was beautiful and amazing. <3

9th grade

In our Spring expedition, we planned a kickoff experience in which students engaged with a poem "The Tradition" by Assata Shakur. Students examined the message of the poem, which focuses on the legacy of Black resistance. Our Expedition, "Carry It On" aims to continue this exploration of resistance and revolution culminating with students joining existing resistance movements.

11th grade

During our expedition class, we used the lens of access. This has allowed for deeper conversations than we've had in the past. It set a good tone for discussions for our classes throughout the year.

We specifically looked at access to SATs, redlining, disability rights, financial access. Students made personal connections, but we also talked about it on a bigger level.

Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School created affinity groups for students from other backgrounds. That week, we offered a variety of affinity groups to meet the needs of our diverse student population. The action continues with four racial affinity groups that are now ongoing at the school so that all students have the chance to show up as their authentic selves and achieve their best.

But our work to create homeplaces goes beyond affinity groups. In her book, Bettina Love states that "there is no one way to be an abolitionist teacher. Some teachers will create a homeplace for their students while teaching them with the highest expectations; some will

protest in the streets; some will fight standardized testing; some will restore justice in their classrooms; some will create justice-centered curriculums and teaching approaches; some will stand with their students to end gun violence in schools; some will ... and some will do a combination of all of these" (Love, 2019, p. 90).

This school year, I have chosen to lean into the former, but other educators at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School are leaning into some of the other methods Love mentions.

Some teamed up to develop schoolwide experiences for students to process and learn about anti-Asian

racism and violence. Others created curricula that presented students with the opportunity to explore the Black Lives Matter at School 13 Principles, including a six-part series of lessons that asked students to reflect on personal experiences, engage in freedom dreaming, and ultimately take action toward a vision for how the 13 BLM principles can and should live within the school community.

A couple of colleagues shared homework assignments and class journal entries that their students wrote featuring their thoughts and experiences about participating in BAM!.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ABOUT ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY

To support students' sense of belonging and their social and emotional development, educators have to continually listen, reflect, and learn about race and culture. This work cannot happen in isolation.

Fortunately, in my first year at the school, I met an educator, now friend, who was hired at the same time. I had never met a white woman who not only spoke openly about antiracism, but acted on it both in and out of the classroom.

After I spent an entire school year scoping out her intent and determining it wasn't purely performative, she and I started a brown bag learning circle that a handful of our colleagues opted into focused on antiracist pedagogy.

In that group, we developed a shared language to discuss topics regarding race and racism as a school. Once we had the language, we leaned into inquiry cycles about antibias education and how we can implement those practices in our classrooms. We also read literature with one another to inform our discussions and inquiry.

That informal brown bag has since evolved into our school's equity team. Established in 2018, the equity team's mission is to ensure that students have opportunities in classrooms to reflect on how their own identities and [hi]stories impact their understanding of the world

TO LEARN MORE

- www.dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter-week-action
- www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/
- www.dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter/13-guiding-principles
- www.nycoutwardbound.org/select-strategies/crew/
- www.edutopia.org/video/addressing-anti-asian-racism-students
- www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/13-guiding-principles.html
- eleducation.org/who-we-are/our-approach



around them, while faculty participates in similar work through thoughtful and continuous professional development.

To meet that mission, our team created a three-year trajectory for staff in the form of long-term learning targets.

Year One: I can engage in courageous conversations about identity.

- Who we are as individuals, including, but not limited to: race, class, gender and sexuality, privilege, ability, etc.

Year Two: I can explain how my identities affect the way I see and interact with the world.

- For example, my students, my classroom, coworkers, the curriculum I create, how I teach that curriculum, etc.

Year Three: I can implement antibias practices in my curriculum.

- Underpinning our work with the four goals of antibias education: identity, diversity, justice, and activism.

The first year, the staff read *Why*

Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? (Tatum, 1997) over the summer. In the fall, we established racial affinity groups composed of four to six staff members to debrief and discuss the text within.

It was important that, alongside all the courageous conversations we were facilitating as a whole staff or on teaching teams, we also provide safe spaces for discussion to happen among those with shared identity. I see this as the base for eventually piloting racial affinity groups with students.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As the final year of that three-year plan comes to a close, we're discussing where to go from here, as the work is far from done. In fact, we acknowledge there is no such thing as being "done" with this work.

For true social and emotional learning to take place, it must be intersected with antiracist social justice education. Dena Simmons finds that "educators often teach SEL absent of the larger sociopolitical context, which is fraught with injustice and inequity and affects our students' lives" (Simmons, 2019).

She asks, "Why teach relationship skills if the lessons do not reflect on the interpersonal conflicts that result from racism? Why discuss self and social awareness without considering power and privilege, even if that means examining controversial topics like white supremacy?" (Simmons, 2019).

I find that to be a powerful inquiry that educators should continue to grapple with as we equip students with the tools to create positive change within themselves and the world.

While we plan where the next three years take us, we have much to appreciate about the strides our school is making toward becoming a more actively antiracist institution — a school where all our students can find their homeplace. During our spring 2021 whole-staff professional development day, we reflected on the changes we had made in our school

because it’s always appropriate to celebrate your progress before mapping out next steps.

In addition, we recorded reflections from teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators on each grade team’s successes throughout the first half of the school year. (See p. 42.) These demonstrate some of the ways we were able to turnkey our efforts into practices for equity with and for our students.

These reflections illustrate the positive impacts our focus on antiracist and culturally responsive pedagogy had on our curriculum and our students. That curriculum is collaboratively built in interdisciplinary learning units called expeditions and case studies. The reflections refer to a number of those thoughtfully planned curricula (e.g. We’re Biased expedition and PANDEMIC case study) as inspiring meaningful learning experiences for students.

BELONGING AND JOY

Teaching in the midst of this simultaneous pandemic and racial reckoning, I find myself bringing to mind the quote often attributed to Maya Angelou: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

What I want my students to feel is both belonging and joy. My work is guided by Bettina Love: “Black joy is finding your homeplace and creating homeplaces for others” (Love, 2019). I’ve found mine and am purposed with creating it for others.

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Coaching with SEL in mind

Continued from p. 39

learner? What learning styles do I learn best from?

- Am I coachable? Am I flexible? What are my strengths, and how can I continue to grow?
- How do I see myself as a leader? Am I willing to be open to feedback? Do I consider the viewpoints of others?

Your responses from these three questions will help your self-awareness before building relationships or entering into a coaching cycle. The next three questions focus on social awareness as you work your way through the collaborative coaching model. Each of your responses can be used to guide your own professional learning on coaching and social emotional learning.

- How do I provide support and advice?
- What does collaboration look like and feel like to me?
- How do I connect with others? How do I create opportunities

to connect?

Finally, ask yourself the following to determine your next steps:

- What ways do I reflect best?
- What are my takeaways from my reflection?

In the spirit of collaboration, please reach out to us if we can be your thought partners or answer any questions.

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Understanding mentor roles, responsibilities, and expectations



Applying a three-phase mentoring cycle



Establishing and maintaining trust with beginning teachers



Conducting classroom observations



Mentoring for classroom management



Analyzing observation data



BY LORILEI SWANSON, JULIA BEATY, AND LAURANN GALLITTO PATEL

The need for social and emotional learning (SEL) has increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented school closings have led to social isolation, illness, and economic hardship — exacerbating anxiety — and reopening plans continue to cause

uncertainty and stress. These factors heighten the urgency to equip educators and school leaders to support the development of student SEL.

SEL experts around the country have responded to the crisis by giving educators and school counselors resources, tool kits, guides, and professional learning to support student

SEL. Federal and state governments have responded by providing COVID-19 relief funding specifically tied to supporting student SEL. But, too often, a key piece is missing: To sufficiently nurture their students' SEL, educators must partner with families.

Parents and guardians are the experts on their children's unique



Schools and families can work together to build positive and safe school climates and develop effective strategies to reinforce SEL at home and school.

social, emotional, and behavioral development. As their children's first teachers, they have been influencing and developing social and emotional skills since birth. Given the influence of both families and educators, a plan that focuses on one without the other is likely to fall short.

The Carolina Family Engagement Center is positioned to help schools implement SEL strategies in partnership with families and community partners and model effective strategies for other districts and schools, especially during crises like the pandemic. The Carolina Family Engagement Center is one of 12 statewide family engagement centers funded by a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Our work is based on over 40 years of research demonstrating that increased levels of family engagement are associated with numerous desired student outcomes, including improvements in student achievement, behavior, attendance, and graduation rates (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These benefits hold true across all racial, ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

During the pandemic, we saw the immense capacity that families have to share responsibility with schools in supporting students. As schools

asked parents to instantly become teachers, administrators, attendance monitors, and information technology experts, adding to their typical family and work roles, parents rose to meet the challenge of supporting academic learning. Families are equally capable of collaborating with educators in supporting students' social and emotional development and its connection to academics, but too many schools are missing the opportunity to nurture those partnerships.

In this article, we share what we've learned during the pandemic about how schools and families can work together to build positive and safe school climates that promote learning and growth, develop effective strategies that reinforce SEL across home and school, and provide opportunities for students to practice and apply those strategies in multiple contexts.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

The Carolina Family Engagement Center, which is part of the College of Education at the University of South Carolina, engages in professional learning with and provides technical assistance in family engagement to identified districts, schools, families, educators, and communities through five regional family engagement liaisons across South Carolina.

Although the center supports all families, it promotes equity by

focusing on families and students who historically experience disparities in educational opportunities. During the midst of the pandemic, we supported schools in South Carolina via remote work with school partners who were making decisions about virtual, in-person, or hybrid models, as well as about their start date, school calendar, and methods of instruction.

As part of the center's work, we work closely with pre-K-12 schools in seven school districts across South Carolina. The center helps build capacity of families to engage in and support their students' learning and helps build capacity of educators to work collaboratively with families.

We base our work on the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2019), which explains that school communities are better equipped to collaborate and engage with families when their approaches are relational and trusting, asset-based, collaborative, interactive, linked to learning or development, and culturally responsive and respectful.

Also key to our approach with schools is partnership with state and local organizations, linking school communities with resources to better support the educational needs of students and families.

To equip educators, parents, and administrators with the skills necessary to build SEL at school and at home, we

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK		
Family-school partnership strategies recommended by CASEL	Guiding questions developed by Swanson & Beaty	Examples from Anderson School District Two and Chester County School District
Use two-way communication with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the two-way communication vehicles your school or district has in place to maximize teamwork and minimize misunderstandings as to what SEL is and why it is important to high-quality education? • What opportunities are there to invite families to share their expertise about their children? 	Used a variety of formats for communicating with families, including email, phone calls, text messages, digital platforms, and paper copies of newsletters about SEL to ensure that all families have access to information and feel welcome to participate in SEL opportunities.
Engage families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What events and activities are planned that give families opportunities to learn more about and engage in SEL? • What initiatives do you have in place that give an open door and welcoming invitation for all families to be involved in SEL? 	Partnered with the National Alliance on Mental Illness to invite families to wear lime green at a football game to build awareness for mental health and facilitated a parent-led suicide prevention awareness event for students and community members.
Increase family involvement in academic, social, and emotional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the initiatives or strategies your school or district uses to help families be more involved in SEL at home? 	Created virtual summer family Olympics packets and gave away resiliency kits with materials and fun activities for families to engage in at home to support their student’s SEL and academic learning at home.
Involve families in decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the opportunities that your school or district has in place to give all families an opportunity to have a seat at the table when it comes to decision-making about SEL? • Do families participate on SEL teams? 	Invited families to serve on student well-being advisory boards and conduct surveys and virtual town hall meetings to learn from families how to best support students during the pandemic.
Bridge constraints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the unique measures your school or district has in place to bridge barriers for families, such as language, work schedules, limited access to technology and Internet, transportation, child care, lack of knowledge about opportunities, previous negative school experiences, and perceptions about availability of school staff? 	Offered paper copies of essential information and learning packets delivered by bus drivers along with school lunches during school closings.
Increase capacity of school staff to partner with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the professional learning opportunities you have provided school staff to help them gain skills in building meaningful, culturally responsive family-school partnerships to support student learning and development? 	Offered professional learning in adverse childhood experiences, youth mental health first aid, and trauma-informed skills and strategies.

follow three recommendations of the EASEL Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Shafer, 2018).

First, trust is critical to the success of family-school partnerships and SEL. Building trust starts by learning about families, whether through surveys, phone calls, or open houses, to learn

about concerns, unique talents, and likes or dislikes.

Second, schools should invite families to create SEL goals for their children, including specific skills, listen to families’ ideas about ways their children’s SEL skills are benefitting them at school and at home, and provide

information about how SEL practices connect to learning goals for literacy, math, and other core content areas.

Communication is key and can be supported by selecting an internal staff contact focused on SEL and family engagement who can serve as a liaison between educators and families and

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK		
Strategy	Guiding questions developed by Swanson & Beaty	Examples from Anderson School District Two and Chester County School District
Respond to COVID-19 (resource allocation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the district or school plan to use state and federal funds to support SEL and family engagement in response to the impact of COVID-19 on student mental health and well-being? How does the district or school provide additional supports to students and families to help students recover from losses in both academics and social and emotional well-being? 	School improvement council members shared their COVID-19 experiences about student, family, and teacher well-being after unexpected school closings and substantial changes in school routines and made spending recommendations for available federal funding (i.e. Title I and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds).
Develop systemic approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the systemic strategies that your school and district are using to ensure that SEL is embedded throughout the school community? 	Assessed, supported, and evaluated student behavior, SEL, and academic interventions throughout the district, as well as embedded throughout instructional guidebooks for teachers, giving teachers strategies necessary to consistently use SEL practices supportive of whole student development.
Expand mental health services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What strategies and practices are in place to meet the needs of students requiring the highest level of mental health interventions and supports? 	Streamlined referral processes to virtually delivered services; formed active partnerships with local mental health agencies to provide one mental health counselor in every school who offered virtual and in-person counseling services to students and families; and increased access to mental health-supportive resources for students, educators, and staff.
Form partnerships with community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What local community resources will you use to strengthen SEL and build connections with all families (e.g. partnerships with nonprofits, businesses, and faith-based institutions)? 	Conducted weekly wellness visits and phone calls by district and school staff at families' homes for students facing barriers to learning such as chronic absenteeism, failing grades, food insecurity, illness, poverty, etc., and linked them to community-based supports through organizational partnerships (i.e. SC Thrive, a nonprofit linking eligible beneficiaries to local, state, and federal supports).
Find a program champion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has considerable influence within the school community and capacity to influence staff and schools to support your SEL initiative? Who is key to this effort? 	Identified a well-respected leader in the school community willing to play an instrumental role in promoting SEL and expanding internal capacity to develop a cohesive, comprehensive approach to supporting student SEL and mental well-being. Both Phillips and Pickens are exemplary program champions who partner with other leaders in their district.
Celebrate and recognize success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the practices you use to recognize and celebrate your achievements in SEL and family-school partnerships? 	Celebrated both small and large achievements in SEL across school communities (e.g. Kid of the Month Award, social media posts, honorariums during school board meetings, and newsletter articles featuring school community wins).

by developing “a ‘notes-back-and-forth’ journal highlighting student successes and SEL skills, giving families [opportunity] to reply with information about SEL in the home” (Albright et

al., 2011, p. 6).

Finally, schools should create a resource center for families, considering not only physically accessible resources, but also digital ones for remote learners

who may have limited in-person contact with school facility-based resources, as well as for families who have barriers to visiting the school building. To ensure equitable access for all families,

educators should offer any printed or digital materials in a language-accessible format and arrange interpretive services to support meetings with families.

STRATEGIES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

To help schools apply these principles to their family engagement work, we developed a series of guiding questions, drawing on six key strategies identified by CASEL (2019) for implementing SEL through a family-school partnerships framework. (See table on p. 48.) These questions are intended to help school partners evaluate how they implement equitable strategies and think about ways to strengthen their efforts.

We piloted these questions by interviewing two SEL leaders, Teresa Phillips in Anderson School District Two and Will Pickens in Chester County School District, two South Carolina school districts leading the way in SEL.

Phillips is a licensed, master’s-level social worker and the mental health services and Project AWARE coordinator with the Anderson district, which received a five-year federal grant funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to increase awareness, identification, and supports to students facing social, emotional, and mental health issues.

Pickens is the chief administrative services officer in Chester County, a rural school district using multiple approaches to support student SEL and holistic well-being. These interviews suggest that using the guiding questions helps schools ensure that they are reaching all families in an equitable manner by evaluating their strengths and gaps in implementing effective strategies.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The challenges of COVID-19 spurred us to create six additional strategies and guiding questions to use with our school partners. (See table on

p. 49.) During the pandemic, widespread isolation and disconnection have put students’, families’, and educators’ emotional well-being at risk. It is crucial for educators to engage in responsive listening about evolving needs amid the changing landscape of learning formats, with remote, hybrid, and in-person learning occurring simultaneously, sequentially, and cyclically depending on the school district.

Based on the interviews with the two school district leaders described previously and on regional family engagement liaisons’ experiences in school communities, we identified six strategies and guiding questions to help schools create responsive, systemic approaches to mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on their communities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EQUITY

The questions and strategies we have developed are based on our belief that it is imperative to use an equity lens when implementing SEL within a family-school partnerships framework. The challenges we have collectively faced over the past year, including the pandemic and heightened awareness of racial injustice, have only underscored the importance of equity and the strides we need to make.

This requires we stop telling students how to behave and instead focus on providing them with opportunities to reflect on their behavior and build self-regulation in positive and supportive environments (Education Trust, 2020). It requires moving beyond simply providing students with access to adequate mental health support and instead creating learning spaces where students feel emotionally and physically safe.

Finally, and most importantly, it involves going beyond teaching students how to empathize and respect diverse cultures and moves toward building empathy and cultural competence in the adults who care for them.

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SYNERGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Many school librarians actively and regularly seek out opportunities to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess lessons and units of instruction [with teachers] ... This collaboration, when intentional and well-implemented, results in a synergy in which the participating educators develop new competencies and learn how to successfully use new resources within the context of the curriculum over a sustained period.

— *“A certified school librarian is a professional learning powerhouse,”*

p. **52**





A certified school librarian is a professional learning powerhouse

BY MELANIE A. LEWIS AND KATIE McNAMARA

School administrators often seek out personnel to facilitate embedded professional learning, usually by asking a skilled classroom teacher to serve as an instructional coach, curriculum specialist, or teacher on special assignment. One source administrators do not often consider

is a certified school librarian, but these professionals are ready resources for professional learning in improving student literacy, integrating technology into the curriculum, and other areas.

“School librarian” is frequently used as a catch-all term for any individual who works in a library space, but a state-certified school librarian (also

known as a library media specialist or teacher librarian) is an educator who has completed a master’s level certification program in school librarianship and successfully obtained the appropriate state-level school librarian certification.

Certification requirements vary by state, and some states require that

school librarians hold both teacher certification and school librarian certification (Jesseman et al., 2015). In contrast, paraprofessionals generally serve as technical and clerical support staff in school libraries and hold titles such as library assistant, library technician, or library clerk (AASL, 2019a, 2019b).

Many educators may assume that school librarians serve only as managers of the school library facility. On the contrary, certified school librarians are trained to serve in four distinct roles in addition to that of a school library program administrator: information specialist, leader, instructional partner, and teacher (AASL, 2018).

One key expectation that cuts across these roles is that the certified school librarian “deliver professional development designed to meet the diverse needs of all members of the learning community” (AASL, 2019a, p. 14) and lead “professional learning to cultivate broader understanding of the skills that comprise success in a digital age” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2020, p. 1).

Besides school administrators, certified school librarians are among the only faculty members tasked with serving all students and staff. Many school librarians develop a deep knowledge and understanding of each level and subject of the school’s curriculum and content-area standards. In addition, since they are often voracious readers, they typically bring a

love for learning and sharing knowledge as well as expertise that can equip teachers and other school personnel to meet students’ needs.

The primary vehicle for school librarians to take an active role in professional learning is collaboration with classroom teachers. Many school librarians actively and regularly seek out opportunities to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess lessons and units of instruction, within which they can integrate multiple literacies and a variety of diverse resources.

They use tools such as videoconferencing, email, messaging, and cloud-based office suites to facilitate this in face-to-face and virtual learning environments. This collaboration, when intentional and well-implemented, results in a synergy in which the participating educators develop new competencies and learn how to successfully use new resources within the context of the curriculum over a sustained period.

POTENTIAL FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING

One of the main benefits of engaging school librarians as professional learning leaders is their ability to personalize the learning to teachers’ (or other staff members’) needs. But because most teachers and school leaders are not in the habit of partnering with librarians in this way, finding an opening for collaboration is the first step.

A school librarian who obtained certification via a program aligned to the ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019a) is equipped to bring the following benefits to the professional development table at K-12 schools:

- Expertise in multiple literacies: literacy (reading), information literacy, digital literacy, and media literacy;
- Expertise in digital citizenship;
- Familiarity with the school’s mission and instructional goals;
- Knowledge of the resources available via the school library, local public and academic libraries, community organizations, open educational resources (OERs), and subscription-based digital content;
- Knowledge of the legal and ethical guidelines for sharing information and copyright laws pertaining to the use of print and digital content;
- Ability to investigate, select, curate, organize, and recommend print and digital learning resources and assistive technologies to meet specific instructional needs; and
- Ability to facilitate instruction in both face-to-face and virtual learning environments.

A SCHOOL LIBRARIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

ON SUPPORTING TEACHERS DURING THE PANDEMIC

The abrupt shift to virtual learning in mid-2020 caught many teachers off-guard. Suddenly, teachers who had little to no experience with videoconferencing and learning management systems were forced to engage with students through new platforms. This understandably generated a great amount of anxiety.

As a teacher librarian, I (Katie McNamara) always make an effort to stay current in instructional technology trends. When COVID-19 took hold, I made sure to familiarize myself with the new platforms



our school was using and made a plan to help prepare my teacher colleagues.

I chose to work with them in small groups, in which they learned how to navigate the platforms, deliver instruction virtually, and integrate the platform with the existing curriculum. I personalized each session for each group and the subject matter they taught (e.g. math or English).

I found that these small-group learning experiences reduced teachers' anxiety by providing a safe place to try out the new platform, ask questions, and receive instant feedback. It was particularly helpful for teachers to be learning from a colleague with whom they had an ongoing relationship and daily access.

They have been able to ask follow-up questions whenever they needed, whether it was the day, week, or month after a session. One such follow-up request spurred me to create a series of asynchronous tutorials on how to use closed captioning with Zoom.

This can be an informal connection with one or more teachers. One effective strategy is asking the simple question, "What is something you are worried about teaching?" This often sparks a conversation and opens the door to collaboration and engaging the teacher in personalized professional learning.

For example, Katie McNamara, a teacher librarian in the Kern High School District in Bakersfield, California, and co-author of this article, talked with an English teacher colleague who expressed frustration that her students were resistant to exploring multiple sources.

Her students were required to write an expository essay on an assigned topic, and she was concerned that they weren't developing a true understanding of the subject because they would open the first result from a Google search and simply copy much of what they found. McNamara's immediate response to her was, "Can I try something?" The teacher relaxed upon hearing the offer of help.

McNamara began by asking, "What are the students interested in?" and learned that the most popular topic was The Fair Pay to Play Act, a California statute that would allow college student athletes to be paid. To encourage students to seek out answers from reputable sources, she created a text set of multiple resources focused on the topic. These resources consisted of articles, graphs, photos, and social media posts that reflected a variety of perspectives and varying levels of length and readability.

On the day of the lesson, McNamara and the teacher set out large sheets of paper, each of which had one of the sources glued to it, and some markers on the classroom tables. Students visited each sheet of paper, reviewed the source, and generated questions about points that needed clarification or areas in which they wanted more information.

During a debrief of the activity, students said that they had learned about the differences between sources

and the value of reading multiple sources. At the end of the lesson, she debriefed with the students. She asked them what they thought of the activity, if they enjoyed the activity, and if this helped them understand the topic. One student said that she learned she needed to review at least three sources to find out the truth.

Following the lesson, McNamara debriefed with the teacher, who expressed her gratitude and said that she appreciated seeing how McNamara implemented the lesson in a simple yet successful way so that her students not only learned the concept but also enjoyed their work. To help the teacher apply the learning and continue developing throughout the year, the pair discussed how to modify the task in the future and how to apply follow-up activities.

When co-author Melanie Lewis was a high school library media specialist, her administrator directed her to collaborate with each grade level to design interdisciplinary research projects. Over an eight-year period, she collaborated with teachers of English, history, math, science, computer science, and special education to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess large-scale units of instruction.

Each teacher benefitted from examining the requirements of each subject area and identifying points of connection. As Lewis taught lessons within these units on how to access, evaluate, and use multiple formats of information, the collaborative teaching partners grew in their knowledge of how to integrate these concepts into their own curriculum. They also developed valuable literacy skills that they were able to apply to their personal and professional pursuits.

Years after Lewis and many of the teachers moved on from that school, Lewis was at a local event when she bumped into a teacher who had not been an enthusiastic participant in the interdisciplinary units. However, after having time to reflect, he told her that he finally appreciated all that he

had learned through the experience — especially that she had introduced him and his students to cutting-edge technologies.

Today, Lewis teaches school librarian candidates how to design these types of collaborative interdisciplinary research projects. Her students often comment that, although finding time to collaborate can be challenging, they find that they learn many new things from their instructional partners and vice versa. The synergy that develops within the instructional team is a win-win situation. The teachers grow in knowledge and skill and are thus able to deliver more relevant and rigorous learning experiences for their students. (See sidebar on p. 54.)

PAVING THE WAY FOR LIBRARIANS AS LEADERS

We recommend that all schools harness the potential of certified school librarians to lead professional learning. School and district leaders should provide structure and support to maximize this potential.

To do so, they should enable librarians to prioritize collaboration and teaching over program administration and clerical/operational tasks. Leaders should also encourage librarians to regularly cultivate their own professional learning to stay current in school librarianship, instructional

technology, curricular changes, and media literacy.

It is also important for leaders to integrate librarians into the daily operations and professional learning of the faculty. They can include librarians and welcome them to contribute expertise on school site leadership teams, literacy and technology committees, and professional learning communities.

Leaders can encourage classroom teachers to express their professional learning needs and collaborate with their certified school librarians to meet them. In addition, everyone can benefit from librarians having opportunities to observe other staff and be observed themselves, lead a project or initiative, and reflect and debrief as part of collaborative teams.

Certified school librarians are in a unique position to offer learning and growth experiences to teachers, as their expertise reflects that of technology coaches, literacy coaches, curriculum and subject specialists, and more. Looking at teacher and student needs through all these lenses can result in professional learning that helps teachers make the most of every day and every resource.

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Coaching — anytime, from anywhere — empowers teachers

BY GINA FUGNITTO AND KELLY STUART

Teaching children to read fluently is one of the major goals in early elementary classrooms, and it requires teachers to have knowledge and skills about literacy development.

In the past few years, literacy experts have been calling for more attention to the research underpinning the science of reading. This evidence base has clarified that a combination of attending to systematic, explicit instruction in phonics and deep reading comprehension work is the most

effective approach to teaching students from all socioeconomic backgrounds to read (Defining Movement, 2021).

However, teachers don't learn the skills or get support to use these practices. Only 51% of teacher preparation courses teach scientifically based reading instructional practices (Drake & Walsh, 2020), and professional learning is inconsistent. Although school districts spend over a billion dollars a year on literacy materials that promise to improve instruction (AAP, 2021), those efforts do not

achieve substantial positive impacts on teacher performance and student outcomes (Short & Hirsh, 2020).

In our experience, teacher professional learning is often disjointed and not aligned with the new curricula teachers use in daily instruction. This lack of preparation has led to fragmented approaches to teaching young students to read, in part because initiatives lose momentum, teachers modify the instruction beyond recognition, and programs are soon eclipsed by newer curricula that face

the same structural limitations. Schools have a long way to go in scaling effective reading instruction.

Collaborative Classroom is a mission-driven nonprofit organization working to close that distance. It is our goal to provide teachers with high-quality curricula that authentically integrate social and emotional learning into literacy instruction in a way that strengthens teacher practice and improves student learning.

We intentionally design our curriculum materials to be educative; that is, teachers learn new skills and content as they teach student-facing lessons (Sawyer, n.d.; Ball & Cohen, 1996). But in recent years, especially during remote learning due to COVID-19, we have recognized that teachers need more intensive and personalized support, and we have been exploring ways to extend that support through coaching.

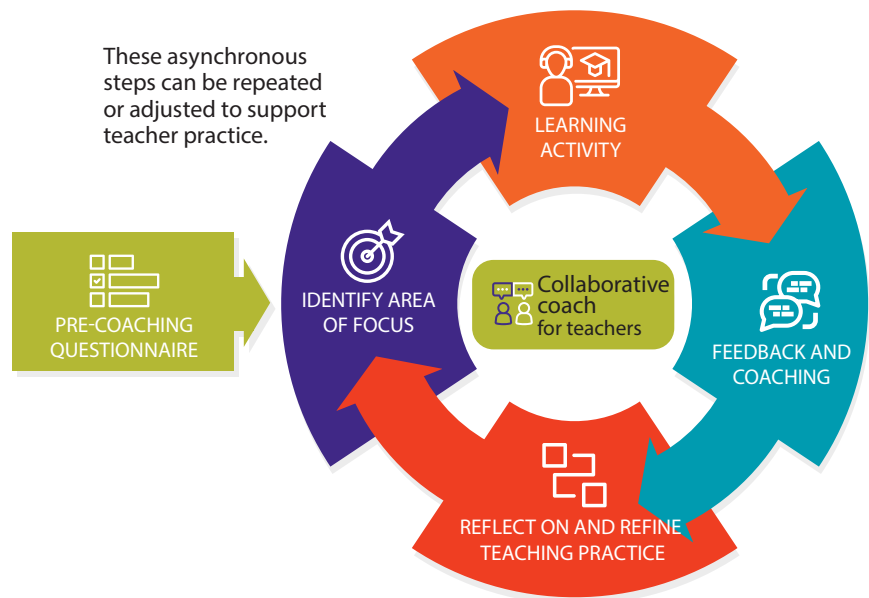
Our colleagues at Javelin Learning introduced us to their asynchronous coaching approach in the health care field, and we saw its potential for providing coaching to teachers at scale — an ongoing challenge for the education field.

In partnership, our organizations developed Collaborative Coach, personalized coaching support for teachers to be paired with our evidence-based curriculum. This combination has the potential to transform the way teachers support students.

WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE COACH?

Collaborative Coach is a personalized, video-based asynchronous coaching approach using a web-based coaching tool. It pairs each teacher with

THE COLLABORATIVE COACH CYCLE OF LEARNING



an instructional coach who provides curriculum-specific support.

Without geographical or scheduling limitations, asynchronous coaching provides flexibility for teacher engagement and allows us to more effectively scale our efforts to provide curriculum-based coaching.

We piloted this new model with teachers implementing Collaborative Classroom’s foundational literacy skills program Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words and are now extending its use to more of our instructional programs.

Collaborative Coach includes the following steps (see diagram above).

Pre-coaching questionnaire:

The teacher completes a curriculum-focused questionnaire that identifies

a problem of practice. In the initial part of the questionnaire, the teacher answers a few general questions about curriculum implementation. Next, the teacher reflects on his or her practice using a curriculum-focused elements of implementation tool. Finally, the teacher selects a coaching focus from a list of common problems of practice.

Identify area of focus: The coach reviews the questionnaire and provides a short, targeted learning activity via the coaching tool that might include opportunities to delve into program materials, read curriculum-specific blogs, rehearse instructional routines, or analyze progress monitoring data.

Learning activity: The teacher engages in the learning activity and creates and uploads a brief video demonstrating his or her learning to the

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coaching tool. The video might include reflections from the learning activity or demonstrate an instructional routine.

Feedback and coaching: The coach reviews the video via the coaching tool and records personalized feedback and additional coaching tips.

Reflect, refine, and identify next steps for learning: These efficient, asynchronous steps can be repeated or adjusted to support specific teachers.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Twenty-seven teachers applied to be a part of the Collaborative Coach pilot. Of those teachers, 17 completed the seven-week pilot. Though excited to engage in coaching, the teachers who did not complete it cited reasons such as a change in teaching format (virtual, in-person, hybrid) or medical issues. The pilot teachers included 11 interventionists, two reading coaches, a district resource teacher, a classroom teacher, a reading specialist, and a special education teacher.

The asynchronous experience allowed teachers to participate from across the country: four from Florida, two from West Virginia, two from Illinois, two from Virginia, and the remaining teachers from California, Montana, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Texas. A Collaborative Coach in Florida coached the teachers throughout the pilot experience.

All pilot teachers shared their insights by completing a post-pilot survey. Additionally, four pilot teachers provided additional insights into Collaborative Coach by engaging in an in-depth post-survey interview. Here we share findings from these sources, using teachers' first names only to protect confidentiality.

The pilot went smoothly, and teachers and coaches reported benefits from participating. Coaches provided timely, personalized feedback. Teachers appreciated the flexibility of using the coaching on their own schedule and engaging in just-in-time learning. For example, Robin, a Tier 2 interventionist in Seminole County,

Florida, reported that she was able to improve her practice with a manageable time investment, and Kendra, a reading specialist from Salem City Schools in Virginia, said that the swift response from her coach made it feel like the coach was right beside her at all times.

We gained insights into the practices that best support curriculum-based coaching and teacher learning in a video-based, asynchronous setting. Because of the asynchronous approach, the coach had to actively listen to the reflections of the teacher without interrupting. As a result, the teachers directed their learning and made visible the new learnings, wonderings, and struggles.

This was different from many typical coaching conversations, in which the coach might interrupt, interject, or unintentionally manipulate the conversation. As Marcie, a classroom teacher from Horry County, South Carolina, said, "This type of coaching was unique because it was not conversation-based; rather, I had to navigate my own learning in the reflections, and the coach has to respond to that learning." She said the feedback felt very personal and encouraged her to think deeply about her own teaching.

The opportunity to create reflection videos pushed teachers to reflect on their own practice, resulting in more self-awareness and internalizing new learning. Kendra, the reading specialist from Virginia, said, "I think the value of recording yourself and framing growth and reflection around personal noticings is the best professional development in which a professional can engage. I can hear my own voice and my coach's voice from my reflection video each day I work with my groups."

The focus on curriculum-based learning spurred teachers to deepen their practice. The coach promotes active learning by directly linking content knowledge to classroom practice (Sawyer & Stuckey, 2019). For Katie, a reading coach in Seminole

County, Florida, Collaborative Coach was an efficient way to improve a very specific element of her practice: understanding how to more effectively support students with polysyllabic decoding when encountering a schwa. It also deepened her knowledge of how the science of reading is embedded in the curriculum.

For Joy, a special education teacher in Chicago, Illinois, the Collaborative Coach experience exposed aspects of the curriculum and instructional questions that had not yet been discovered: "At first, I did not know what I wanted to know more about. The feedback and guidance were motivating for me. The more feedback I received, the more I dug into the program materials, the more I was able to generate questions and identify things that I wanted to learn more about. The very specific feedback from the coach offered me things that I could chew on and help me think about my instruction and the student experience."

BUILD YOUR OWN PROGRAM

Whether you're a district or school-based leader or coach, you can take these ideas into your own curriculum-based professional learning and tailor them to your educators' needs. As Jim Short and Stephanie Hirsh pointed out in a recent report, "Curriculum-based professional learning experiences are most successful when they are designed to move teachers through different stages of learning. Like their students, teachers engage in sense-making, though that plays out differently because teachers have different experiences and needs" (Short & Hirsh, 2020). Here are some steps to take and questions to think about as you apply the lessons from our Collaborative Coach pilot.

Identify the technology. Consider what technology tools you have available that might best support coaching in an asynchronous format.

- What tool might you use to generate a questionnaire? We initially used a GoogleForm and

then transitioned to JotForm.

- What tool might you use to share the learning activity? We initially used GoogleDoc shared via a Google SharedFolder.
- What tool might you use to generate the video reflections and coaching feedback? We initially used Zoom as a tool for recording and shared videos via a Google SharedFolder.

Determine a focus for learning.

Consider your educators' most pressing needs and craft questions that will drive reflection and learning.

- We initially focused on a single program to focus and refine our work.
- We developed a questionnaire to determine educators' specific needs, support teachers' reflection, and provide initial data for the coaches.

Create learning activities. Based on the questionnaire, generate learning activities that cause teachers to reflect on practice and students' response to instruction, practice instructional moves, or otherwise support teaching and learning.

Plan for engaging in the cycle of learning. Determine when, how, and with whom you will engage in the cycle of learning.

- Who might engage in the cycle of learning? We initially sought teachers from our implementing districts who were interested in professional growth around phonics instruction.
- What will your timeline be? We initially engaged in a two-week cycle, but learned that that felt rushed. We are extending the cycle to eight weeks.
- What is your anticipated workflow for engaging? We initially provided feedback within 24 to 48 hours. Teachers confirmed that they preferred immediate feedback (48 to 72 hours).
- How will you adjust to meet teachers' needs? We realized

that the asynchronous steps needed to be adjusted for different situations.

IMPROVING TEACHER PRACTICE

Although Collaborative Coach is a recent development, we are already seeing high levels of satisfaction and learning among participants in our pilot. For example, Kelly, an interventionist in Bethalto School District #8 in Illinois, said, "This is the most powerful professional learning I have participated in throughout my career. This process allowed me to reflect on my own practice and have individual coaching feedback."

Kimberly, a district resource teacher in Hillsborough County, Florida, told us, "My collaborative coach was a valuable asset to me. This process allowed me to self-reflect, redirect, and refine my teaching techniques based on her recommendations. ... Overall, this gave me a designated time to examine my [reading curriculum] materials and appreciate the depth of knowledge included within the program."

As we strive to better support implementations of Collaborative Classroom curriculum programs, improving teacher practice is at the heart of the work. Cycles of asynchronous coaching with a knowledgeable coach and focused on problems of practice offer an efficient, effective, and emotionally safe way to address teacher learning. The cycles offer teachers choice and ownership of their learning.

Ultimately, we believe this deep reflective curriculum-based learning will enhance student achievement and address learning loss. Collaborative Coach embodies our commitment to empower individual teachers to develop their capacity, growing in their understanding of literacy instruction and their skill as facilitators of student learning.

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Science teachers learn to be policy advocates



John Metzler (foreground) and Brian Kays (background), high school physics teachers and AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Fellows, converse with staff at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine about the role of evidence-based policies to advance science education. Used with permission.

BY REBECCA VIEYRA, TREY SMITH, AND REBECCA HITE

The AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Leader Fellowship is a one-year fellowship that aims to build teachers' policy knowledge, skills, and dispositions to act as change agents in science education policy spaces.

Funded by the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Institution of Physics, the fellowship is composed of a cohort of 11 teachers in nine self-selected state-level teams who came together

from across the country for a weeklong summit in Washington, D.C.

During this summit, teachers developed action plans to improve equity in science education — from petitioning state legislatures to allocate funding for science teachers' professional learning, to enlisting science teaching societies to promote evidence-based pedagogies to help girls and young women feel more welcome in science classrooms.

Amy and her colleague Catherine, both elementary science specialists

from a rural region of the Midwest, applied as a team to the fellowship to explore the underemphasis on elementary science education in their state. (Teachers' names are pseudonyms in accordance with requirements of our project.)

They knew from their professional experiences and research that elementary teachers are often less comfortable teaching science than other subjects (Banilower et al., 2013). Further, the No Child Left Behind reauthorization had influenced schools



Jennifer Wise (second from right) leads fellows on a tour of the U.S. Capitol. From left: John Metzler, Amanda Whitehurst, Andrew Edmondson, Katie Martino, Becky Bundy, Jennifer Wise, and Brian Kays.



2018-19 AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Fellows at the U.S. Department of Education. From left: Becky Bundy, Andrew Edmondson, Katie Martino, John Metzler, Julie Dahl, Amanda Whitehurst, Brian Kays, Jeff Hengesbach, Seth Guiñals Kupperman, Matthew Peterie, and Nichole Spencer.

to replace instructional time for science with literacy and math, precipitating a drop in science scores on internationally benchmarked assessments (Gonzales et al., 2009).

Yet they knew that science provides meaningful contexts for math and literacy learning (NRC, 2014b) and that early exposure to quality science education lays an equitable foundation for success in later science courses and careers (NRC, 2007; Saçkes et al., 2010). Armed with their professional experiences and research, Amy and Catherine planned to rally others in their region to address these issues to increase the amount of classroom time devoted to science.

Amy and Catherine returned to the fellowship for a second year to meet with other fellows from across the U.S. and share data they had collected showing that elementary students had less than an hour of science instruction per week — fewer than 12 minutes per day. Their data

were consistent with national estimates that elementary students study science for only 20 minutes each day (NCES, 2012) despite figures that suggest local elementary teachers routinely wanted to teach more science.

Surprise erupted in the room when Amy and Catherine said that many teachers believed state-level policies limited instructional time in science, even though no such formal policy exists. Their findings eventually led them on a campaign to meet not only with area school principals, but also to meet with their state science supervisor to petition for more explicit guidelines for increased classroom time devoted to science.

Amy and Catherine both learned from this fellowship that, from their vantage point as educators, they had perspectives worth sharing with policymakers and were capable of doing so. For the first time, they delved into the world of academic research, acquiring university institutional

review board permissions for human subjects research to conduct wide-scale data collection from teachers on time dedicated to teaching science.

They arranged for community gatherings of parents and administrators to use survey data to petition for change at the local level and met with their state science supervisor to petition for change at the state level. They partnered with local professional teaching societies to bring in other fellowship participants from across the country to share with their peers how quality science education in elementary schools has lifelong impacts. In sum, they learned that small changes can have big impacts on even very complex systems.

TEACHERS AND POLICYMAKING

The AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Leader Fellowship is a form of professional learning, though not a typical one. The locus of teachers' work is typically perceived as occurring in classrooms or school buildings, directly

IDEAS

oriented toward students and their learning.

However, this fellowship was founded on the idea that what happens in the classroom is inextricably linked to policies, particularly at local and state levels, that govern teachers' practices. Teacher participation in policymaking improves policy design, in part because teachers are able to anticipate consequences of policies (Sunderman et al., 2004) and facilitate smoother policy implementation (NASEM, 2017).

Yet teachers are often boxed out of formal education policy processes (Hite & Milbourne, 2018) unless these processes involve union negotiations. Unlike other professions in which policy knowledge and action are included in training (Heiman et al., 2016), policy is frequently excluded from teacher preparation and rarely discussed during professional learning (NRC, 2014a). Moreover, teachers are also discouraged from expressing their opinions on matters of policy or politics in their capacities as educators (Powell, 2016).

Organizations such as the National Network of State Teachers of the Year and Teach Plus have developed programming to support policy advocacy by classroom teachers. However, very little work has focused on specific disciplines or content areas. Similarly, as teachers unions focus on collective concerns, they may attend less to the discipline-specific needs of teachers.

Teachers engaged in discipline-specific policy advocacy traditionally rely on representatives of national organizations to craft messaging and coordinate meetings with policymakers (AAPT Physics Master Teacher Leader Task Force, 2017). This approach leaves limited opportunities for the wider community of practicing teachers to make their voices heard, particularly on issues of local importance.

Discipline-specific professional learning for teacher advocacy helps to not only empower more individuals who have more direct knowledge of

TO LEARN MORE

For information about AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Fellowships, visit aapt.org/K12/Aspiring_to_Lead.cfm.

classroom practice, but also attends to the needs of teachers that might be unique to their discipline or context, which includes the underrepresentation of women and people of color in most science fields or the need for highly specialized professional learning for teachers of science.

To change these patterns and encourage science teachers' involvement in policy, the AAPT/AIP Master Teacher Policy Leader Fellowship leveraged resources and experiences from D.C.-based professional organizations and a research team to support teachers to take on state-level issues.

DESIGNING THE FELLOWSHIP

In coordination with the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Institution of Physics, and in collaboration with four other former science teachers experienced in policy and research, we developed a fellowship to address discipline-specific needs of teachers of physical science who desired to learn more about policy, connect with like-minded teachers, and facilitate meaningful change at local and state levels through advocacy.

Educators applied to this fellowship in self-selected teams by describing an issue of concern related to equity in K-12 physics education, which included topics as diverse as supporting the development of elementary teachers' science teaching self-efficacy and recruiting teachers in high-needs fields such as physics and engineering.

Our design team selected fellows in state-based teams from Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, New York, South Dakota, and Wyoming, with the intent to leverage peer support within a common

state context. Catherine and Amy were among the first cohort of 11 fellows.

After attending the first summer workshop, the first cohort returned to mentor 11 new fellows during the following year's workshop. Two months before and 10 months after the workshop, fellows participated in monthly video conference calls.

The design team included education experts from the American Association of Physics Teachers, science and science education policy experts from the American Institution of Physics, and science teacher policy leaders who had previously participated in a similar policy-based fellowship, the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). We drew on resources from the Teach to Lead initiative (ASCD, n.d.), as well as research on problem-based learning to establish these guiding program principles:

- **Envision the self as advocate** to build self-efficacy for advocacy at local, state, or national levels;
- **Visualize the issue within a system** to support systemic understandings of teachers' interests and needs related to science education policy; and
- **Leverage system resources and building support** to address the problem through scaffolding, case management, and planning.

ACTIVITIES

Based on these principles, we designed five interlocking activities to help fellows address issues that they identified as important in their local contexts.

1. **Fellows collaboratively created written and visual representations of a problem and possible solutions.**

As part of their applications, teams of two to four teachers from the same state or pair of states described a problem and possible solutions in a one-page document. During

the summer workshop, each team constructed a system map in which they tried to account for possible causes and effects as well as stakeholders and resources at local, state, and federal levels.

They also iterated on a logic model that included a statement of the problem, goals, planned actions, outputs, and intended outcomes. One-pagers, system maps, and logic models allowed fellows to make their thinking visible, develop a shared language, and identify gaps or disagreements in their group's understanding about issues and possible solutions.

2. Experts presented case studies and advice for engaging in policy spheres.

We invited guests to present their local and state-level advocacy work in science education. These included Tamara Anderson, an educator and advocate who leads racial justice work in Philadelphia by building grassroots coalitions, and Mike Vargas, a high school physics teacher from Arizona who has helped to craft state legislation to recruit more certified physics teachers.

Additional experts discussed their organizations' roles in education policy. Experts came from multiple sectors, including federal agencies (e.g. U.S. Department of Education and National Science Foundation), national organizations (e.g. National Governors Association and National Association for Colleges of Teacher Education), and local-level organizations (e.g. union president and representatives from chambers of commerce).

Topics included statuses and histories of science education policies; roles of local, state, and federal agencies in science education policy; roles of research in policymaking; and effective communication strategies.

3. Critical friends provided feedback on issue framing and proposed solutions.

After each expert's presentation, fellows pitched their ideas and shared one-pagers detailing their selected issue

“After the Hill visits yesterday, I feel confident to bring our message back to our school, district, and state.”

and requests for support. Experts served as critical friends by aiding fellows in identifying relevant data, revising their messages, and connecting them with other possible supporters. Members of the fellowship design team also served as critical friends throughout the week.

4. Fellows had authentic opportunities to practice.

In addition to the opportunities to practice describing their policy issue, fellows visited Capitol Hill to speak with staffers and members of Congress. Although fellows focused on state-level issues, congressional visits provided opportunities to prepare for and navigate meetings with state legislators and legislative staff. The day fellows spent on the Hill was highly effective, particularly in terms of supporting teachers' self-efficacy.

5. Throughout, fellows engaged in reflection.

They reflected on shifts in their thinking about and approaches to addressing the problems of policy that brought them to the fellowship. Throughout the year following the summit in D.C., fellows met virtually to set goals and reflect further on what they were doing, why, and what they were learning.

WHAT THEY LEARNED

Data from interviews, document analysis, and observations of both cohorts' interactions suggested strong alignment among the three program principles and activities, which helped fellows **envision the self as advocate**.

Fellows were able to advocate for change by viewing themselves differently, growing in confidence in their abilities to advocate, and engaging with policymakers. One educator, reflecting on the importance of sharing her message first with critical friends

and later on the Hill, said, “I was very apprehensive coming into this fellowship. I did not feel my voice had much weight, nor did I have authority to be working on policy. Since being here, I have been given many tools to help build my confidence. I have been forced to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. After the Hill visits yesterday, I feel confident to bring our message back to our school, district, and state.”

Fellows were likewise able to better **visualize the issue within a system**, as many described their policy issues as part of a larger sphere of interworking parts. This shift in fellows thinking about problems of policy became most apparent when they encountered obstacles in their policy projects.

One team arranged meetings with the governor and state legislators from opposing political parties to craft a bill that allocated \$1 million in scholarship funds to allow current teachers not certified in STEM fields to acquire a certification in high-needs STEM fields. In less than 12 months, that team was able to maintain state interest on the topic, get the bill passed, have the funds appropriated in full, and dozens of eligible teachers apply for the funds.

As their knowledge of systems grew, they also realized they had more work to do — an important outcome in and of itself. After meeting with the state department of education that distributed the funds, the team realized that they had left out one critical element of their system view of the problem — colleges.

One fellow explained the shifting understanding of the team's perception of what needed to be in its system this way: “What I really learned is that all of the things that we didn't know going into this process, we have educated ourselves, and I think we get a better and better picture of the situation the further we go through this. There are so many moving pieces that we just didn't talk to the heads of the colleges before we started this process. Those sorts of things are just unknown unknowns.”

IDEAS

In tandem with building self-efficacy and better understanding policy issues, fellows also focused on **building support and leveraging resources to address the issue** by creating logic models replete with a yearlong plan to tackle the issues. Some issues, particularly those relating to science teacher certification and preparation, must be addressed in legislative and regulatory spaces, while others, such as supporting underrepresented students in science, require changes that might better begin within communities.

For example, fellows from three states developed a nationwide program to support African American secondary physics teachers. Their purpose was to identify and appreciate their unique experience as underrepresented persons in physics, teaching, and amplify their ability to serve as role models as persons of color.

As another example, fellows from a rural state worked beyond boundaries of a single school district to engage in professional learning with teachers in their region using a partnership model with universities.

NEXT STEPS

To elevate the teaching profession, we must more formally empower teachers to participate in policy processes, leveraging their content-specific (e.g. science) and experiential (e.g. classroom-based) knowledge (Bundy et al., 2019; NRC, 2014a).

The fellowship evidences how principled professional programs could develop teachers' policy identities and knowledge so they can identify, explore, and act on policy-based issues within education. Ultimately, we believe such support should be woven throughout the teacher professional learning continuum, starting in teacher preparation programs and continuing professional learning.

With an intentional, career-building approach, teachers can develop policy awareness, understanding, and advocacy early so they may participate in policy throughout their careers. This

can help elevate teacher professionalism, foster a new appreciation for teaching as a profession, and forge new pathways for teachers as bold leaders in policy spaces.

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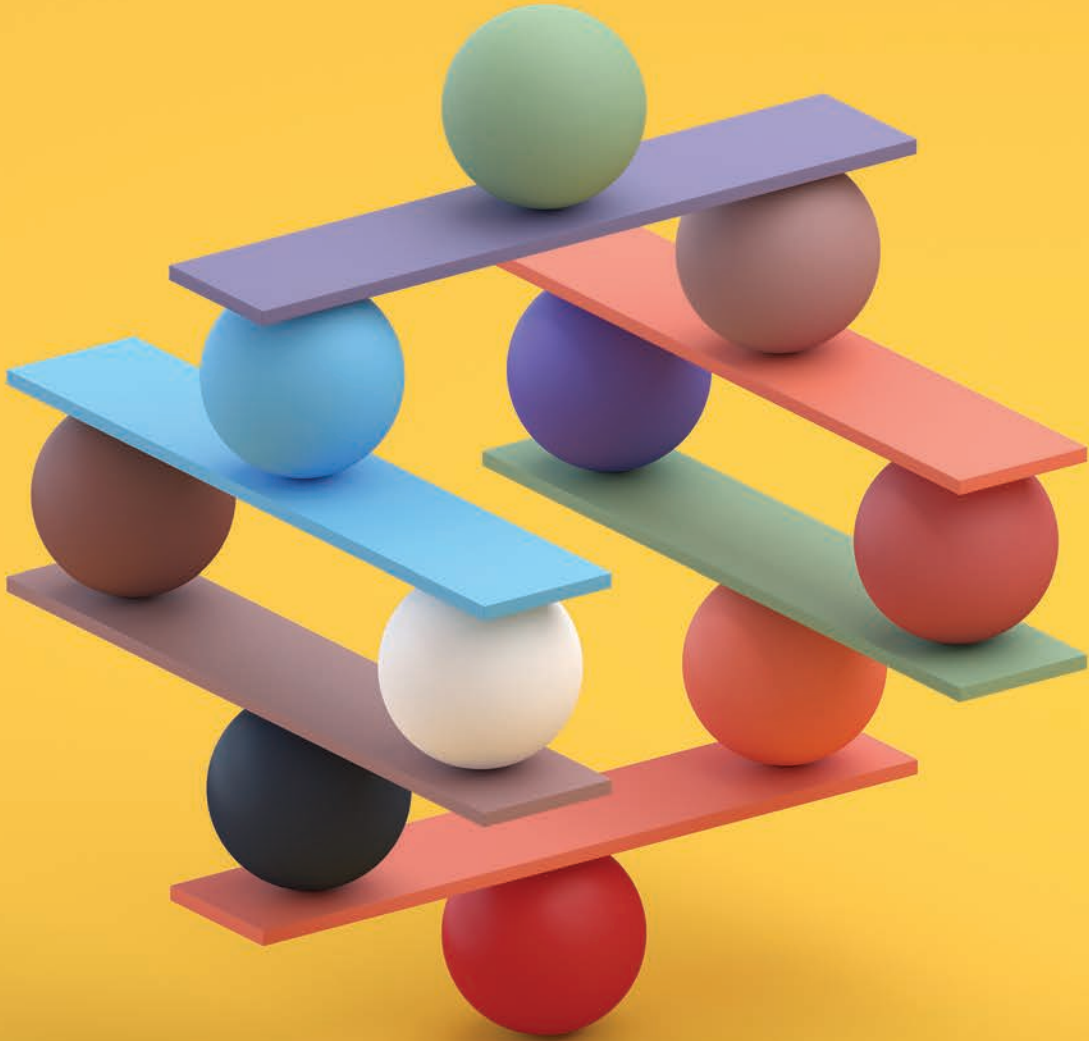
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DISCUSS. COLLABORATE. FACILITATE.

TOOLS



BUILD YOUR SCHOOL'S SEL CAPACITY

Social and emotional skills aren't just for students; they're essential for educators, too. This issue's tools are designed to help professional learning leaders cultivate deep listening skills and build the social and emotional learning capacity of their staff.



Build your SEL staff

BY JENNA BUCKLE

As educators increasingly recognize the value of social and emotional learning (SEL), many school districts are rethinking staffing and reorganizing central offices to prioritize SEL from preschool through high school (CASEL, 2018). Some are creating full-time central office positions for SEL or building entire divisions or offices of SEL. Many districts have also begun hiring for new SEL positions in response to student needs during the pandemic and remote learning.

For leaders who are thinking about making a first (or next) SEL hire, the first task is to gain clarity on the roles, responsibilities, and skill sets needed. To help districts in this task, Panorama Education (see box) created an overview of social and emotional learning jobs to hire for, based on the most common roles the organization currently sees in

ABOUT PANORAMA EDUCATION

Panorama Education partners with K-12 school districts to support systemic social and emotional learning through research-backed SEL measurement, actionable data reports, and intervention tracking. Panorama serves 12 million students in 1,500 districts across 50 U.S. states. Learn more at www.panoramaed.com.

the field (Buckle, 2021).

We collaborated with Learning Forward to adapt that list of jobs into a tool for keeping track of which SEL-related positions you have, those you are planning, and those you don't need. We encourage you to add to or adapt the tool to meet your needs.

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SEL JOBS CHECKLIST

Review the job roles and adapt them as needed. Mark which roles you have, plan to hire for, or don't need at this time. On a separate piece of paper, take notes about your needs and plans.

JOB TITLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	Already hired	Plan to hire	Still considering	Not needed
Director of social and emotional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides leadership and direction for a comprehensive districtwide SEL approach for all students. Ensures this approach aligns with district priorities. Partners with academic directors to integrate SEL and academics. Supervises ongoing professional learning and adult SEL initiatives. Measures and assesses impact of SEL efforts. Oversees allocation of resources for SEL efforts. Forges partnerships with community stakeholders. Oversees infrastructure that creates the conditions for equity-centered SEL. 				
SEL specialist or coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports effective implementation of district's SEL vision. Helps create, adapt, and execute SEL initiatives in schools. Provides technical assistance and best practices to district and school staff. Works collaboratively with stakeholders to build positive school climate. Collects and analyzes data to select SEL approaches and interventions based on student needs. 				
SEL interventionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates SEL approaches with Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Develops and implements SEL supports at universal (Tier 1) level. Assists teachers and staff in providing Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students needing intensive SEL support. Facilitates professional learning. Serves as liaison with families and community organizations. May also assist with monitoring student data. 				
SEL coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in professional learning, including individualized coaching, with school leaders, teachers, and staff. Supports educators to apply best practices of SEL during classroom instruction and other interactions with students. Ensures that SEL is integrated into daily practice. Works with leadership to build SEL into school schedules and daily activities. Models and coaches SEL instruction in the classroom. 				
SEL teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports students with identified social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs. Teaches academic, social, and emotional learning lessons to students using evidence-based strategies such as restorative practices or social and emotional learning circles. Helps students learn, practice, and demonstrate social and emotional skills in small-group settings. Develops intervention plans in collaboration with special and general education teachers, administrators, parents, social workers, or social services. 				
SEL data strategist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and leads district's data collection, analysis, and reporting systems related to ongoing social and emotional learning programs and services. Drives continuous improvement of SEL efforts. Helps break down silos that house different types of student data by collaborating with district's research and evaluation teams. 				
SEL instructional specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports adult SEL. Cultivates a safe and supportive learning environment. Shares best practices and research-backed resources for trauma-informed and equity-centered SEL. Supports educators with timely challenges such as creating a sense of belonging and engagement during remote learning, improving climate in virtual settings, and facilitating SEL lessons and curricula virtually. 				



The art of listening

The *Learning Principal*, by Kay Psencik, Frederick Brown, and Stephanie Hirsh, is Learning Forward's latest book in a series focused on putting professional learning at the heart of improvement for leaders, teams, and systems. The book is full of practical tools, many of which are useful for leaders at multiple levels, including principals.

In the April 2021 issue of *The Learning Professional*, we shared a tool about implementing change effectively. In this issue, we're featuring a tool about effective listening skills.

Chapter 6 of the book homes in on the role leaders play in providing feedback and coaching as well as the skills they need to fulfill that role effectively. Listening is one of those core skills. As the authors write, "Effective listening skills are a prerequisite to success in the coaching

ABOUT THE LEARNING PRINCIPAL

The Learning Principal: Becoming a Learning Leader supports school leaders in developing a learning orientation to each challenge they face, ensuring they are ready to identify solutions that put students' equitable outcomes at the fore.

Chapters cover principals' roles and responsibilities related to designing professional learning, implementing curriculum, managing change, leveraging feedback and coaching, maximizing resources, and more. Online tools complement each chapter.

Purchase the book through Learning Forward's bookstore at learningforward.org/store.

role. When principals are listening from others' perspectives — listening to understand, listening without judgment or obligation to solve the problem or without having to be the expert — they give individuals and teams space to struggle with an issue, experiment with new ideas, and determine their own learning paths" (p. 88).

The following tool can help principals, coaches, teacher leaders, and others deepen their listening skills "so that individuals and teams begin to think in new ways, question current practices, and reflect about the impact of their work on student learning" (p. 89).

PRACTICING COMMITTED LISTENING

Purpose	To increase principal effectiveness in listening.
Recommended time	2-3 hours for initial practice
Materials	Listening Guide, p. 70
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="387 655 1402 795">1. This tool is designed for the principal. The principal may want to share it with others after completing some of the exercises in it. <li data-bbox="387 795 1402 1110">2. Consider this: Listening is a difficult skill to develop in our modern world of sound bites and tweets. Your goal is to practice listening throughout an entire conversation. Don't interrupt or offer your advice or opinions. Your disposition is: "I am listening to you. What you have to say is the only thing that matters." Reflect on what you are learning about the other person and about yourself. <li data-bbox="387 1110 1402 1381">3. Go to the school library, media center, or cafeteria and sit with students. Just listen. Do not make judgments about the students, their assignments, their teachers, the cafeteria, or media center. Note what you are learning by listening. Practice listening like this often. <li data-bbox="387 1381 1402 1675">4. Attend a learning community session in your school. Just listen without judgment. What new observations are you making about the team by being in their presence and listening? About team members? About the trust among team members? About their interactions? What is different about you when you simply listen? <li data-bbox="387 1675 1402 1919">5. Use the Listening Guide on p. 70 to determine the quality of the listening that you do and guide goal setting for improving your skill as a listener.

TOOLS

LISTENING GUIDE

DESCRIPTOR	REFLECTIONS	PERSONAL GOAL
I listen carefully to what is said without interruption — refraining from comment, commiseration, and offering assistance — until the person is finished. When the person seems to be done, I inquire, “What else?” to make sure the person has fully spoken on the subject at hand.		
I convey nonverbally my full attention and interest in what is being said.		
I minimize my use of statements or questions that direct the conversations or subtly convey a point of view. I trust that people will reveal to me as little or as much as they wish.		
I genuinely honor the speaker’s views even though I might not agree with them. I am working on listening, not defending my position.		
I refrain from analyzing what has been said and why it is being said so that I am fully engaged with, and respect, the other person.		
I reflect on the skills I am developing as a listener and recommit to my practice of becoming a powerful listener.		
<p>Adapted from <i>Leading for Results: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Relationships in Schools</i>, 2nd edition, p. 71 by Dennis Sparks. Copyright 2005 Corwin.</p>		

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UPDATES



NEW WEBINAR SERIES BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER

Since the start of the pandemic, more than 56,000 educators have participated in Learning Forward's webinars about how to navigate the evolving context of teaching and learning.

The next series of webinars kicks off with "Where Do We Go From Here?" at 3 p.m. Eastern time on Sept. 16.

Join us for a conversation about how to leverage our best lessons from last year to transform education for the better. We will explore innovations, consider resources that can help facilitate a great school year, and discuss how to support educators to sustain their energy and creativity.

To stay up to date on all of our webinars, visit learningforward.org/webinars/ and follow us on social media @LearningForward.



Teams create a new vision for professional learning

The first cohort of Learning Forward's Design Professional Learning in a Virtual World (DPLV) Network completed its cycle of work in June, and a second one will conclude in November.

The network helps schools and districts learn to navigate how remote, hybrid, and blended learning environments could accelerate and broaden the impact of effective professional learning. Teams from 11 school districts, a state education agency, and Learning Forward Affiliate leaders worked together to vision and plan for the leadership of adult learning in alignment with each organization's strategic priorities.

The teams worked with professional learning tools and resources aligned to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. They outlined goals and activities to implement learning models based on lessons learned from the emergency shift to online, remote, or hybrid learning.

Teams then translated their work into a document to share that can serve

DPLV NETWORK PARTNERS

Cohort 1

- Alaska Department of Education
- Broward County Schools, Florida
- Miami-Dade County Schools, Florida
- Fort Sam Houston Independent School District, Texas
- Fort Wayne Community Schools, Indiana
- Frederick County Schools, Virginia
- Stafford County Schools, Virginia
- Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma

- Learning Forward Affiliate Leaders (Alaska, Florida, Texas, Virginia)

Cohort 2

- Cobb County School District, Georgia
- Loudon County Schools, Tennessee
- Northshore School District, Washington
- Parkway School District, Missouri
- Learning Forward Affiliate Leaders (Georgia, Missouri)

as the basis for professional learning going forward. The network plans align to each organization's strategic plan and intentionally include work across departments, including a framework of responsibilities and the required investment to deliver against the performance goals and expand the scope of operations.

Over time, the plans seek to include or extend the use of new adult learning opportunities across multiple staff categories.

The plans outline teams' sustainable solutions to immediate challenges and a professional learning infrastructure that transcends the 2020-21 pandemic. The collaboration between like-minded state and district leaders facilitated understanding how short-term COVID-19 lessons can inform long-term professional learning plans and support building a contextualized, comprehensive professional learning plan that is equity-focused.

New network will redesign PLCs

Learning Forward is launching a new network to redesign professional learning communities in a way that builds on lessons learned and opportunities found during the pandemic.

The Learning & Inquiry in PLCs Network will support districts as they rethink and reinvent the ways they prioritize and facilitate collaboration to ensure equitable access to professional learning. In this facilitated network, each team will have a dedicated coach and multifaceted support grounded in the Standards for Professional Learning and equity-centered improvement theory and practices.

District teams will design, implement, and assess professional learning that improves teaching and leadership practices and learning for all students. Using continuous improvement methods, network members will implement effective practices, measure the outcomes, and continue to improve their professional learning system.

NETWORK BENEFITS

Benefits of network membership include:

- Regular, intensive, face-to-face, and virtual convenings for collaborative learning, planning, and professional development;
- Cycles of inquiry within teams;
- Critical friend conversations between teams;
- Virtual team coaching sessions; and
- Opportunities for facilitated peer-to-peer learning.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds through the American Rescue Plan Act can support participation in this network. For more information or to apply, visit learningforward.org/networks/learning-inquiry-in-plcs/



ONLINE COURSE SUPPORTS INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Powerful Communication Skills for Coaches, Learning Forward's latest online course for instructional coaches, continues to sell out as fast as we can schedule it. Led by expert coaches Joellen Killion and Sharron Helmke, participants engage in a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning and coaching practices to enhance their critical coaching skills of self-awareness, listening, questioning, and supporting the critical thinking of others.

Each course combines the expertise of Learning Forward coaches with cutting-edge technology to create virtually facilitated live sessions, synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences, and collaborative experiences within Learning Forward's online learning community.

Visit learningforward.org/events to see when this and other online courses are scheduled.

Learning Forward welcomes 2 new staff members

Stephen Helgeson has joined Learning Forward as vice president, content architecture.



Stephen Helgeson

He will support Learning Forward's networks, professional services, and learning experiences. Most recently, he was vice president for new products and services for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, where he was the architect behind Atlas, a video database of accomplished teaching practices funded through a federal i3 grant.

Tim Taylor is Learning Forward's operations director in professional services.



Tim Taylor

His role will include developing and managing online learning tools and systems. Previously, he was the senior director for online professional development and operations at PBS, where he managed business operations for PBS TeacherLine, an online professional learning initiative funded through a federal Ready-to-Teach grant.

PROPOSED FEDERAL BUDGET INCLUDES INCREASES IN EDUCATION SPENDING

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a spending bill for fiscal year 2022 that would increase Department of Education funding by 41%, including major investments in Title I, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and mental health that President Biden

sought in his full proposed budget.

The bill would improve on the president's proposals in many other key programs, including a \$150 million funding increase for the Title IIA professional development program and an \$85 million increase for the Title IV

flexible block grant program.

The bill will be sent to the Senate, where its fate is much less certain.

Learning Forward members and stakeholders can help by reaching out to senators to encourage them to support Title IIA funding.

100+ SESSIONS AT VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Learning Forward's 2021 Annual Conference, to be held Dec. 5-7, has doubled the number of preconference and concurrent sessions offered last year, bringing 20 preconference and 80 concurrent sessions for even more of the great content that you have come to expect from Learning Forward.

Presenters for the 100-plus sessions include experts such as Thomas Guskey, Marcia Tate, Michael Fullan, Zaretta Hammond, Nancy Frey, Doug Fisher, Joellen Killion, Jim Knight, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Kyle Schwartz.

These sessions offer collaborative opportunities to:

- Network with other educators who are experiencing similar challenges;
- Stay on top of best practices from leaders in the field; and
- See firsthand the kinds of dynamic, interactive learning experiences that change educator practice at all levels.

Learning Forward members receive exclusive pricing for conference registration. Register soon to combine your member discount with early registration pricing for even more savings.

Learn more at **conference.learningforward.org**.

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FEATURED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Follow us on social media. Share your insights and feedback about *The Learning Professional* by using **#TheLearningPro**.

ABOUT LEARNING FORWARD

Learning Forward shows you how to plan, implement, and measure high-quality professional learning so you and your team can achieve success with your system, your school, and your students.

We are the only professional association devoted exclusively to those who work in educator professional learning. We help our members effect positive and lasting change to achieve equity and excellence in teaching and learning.



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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 understanding of the standards and strategies for implementing them.

Ways you might use this tool include:

- Discuss the questions in a professional learning community;
- Share one or more articles from the issue with your staff and facilitate a conversation; and
- Do a self-assessment of what you have learned from this issue.

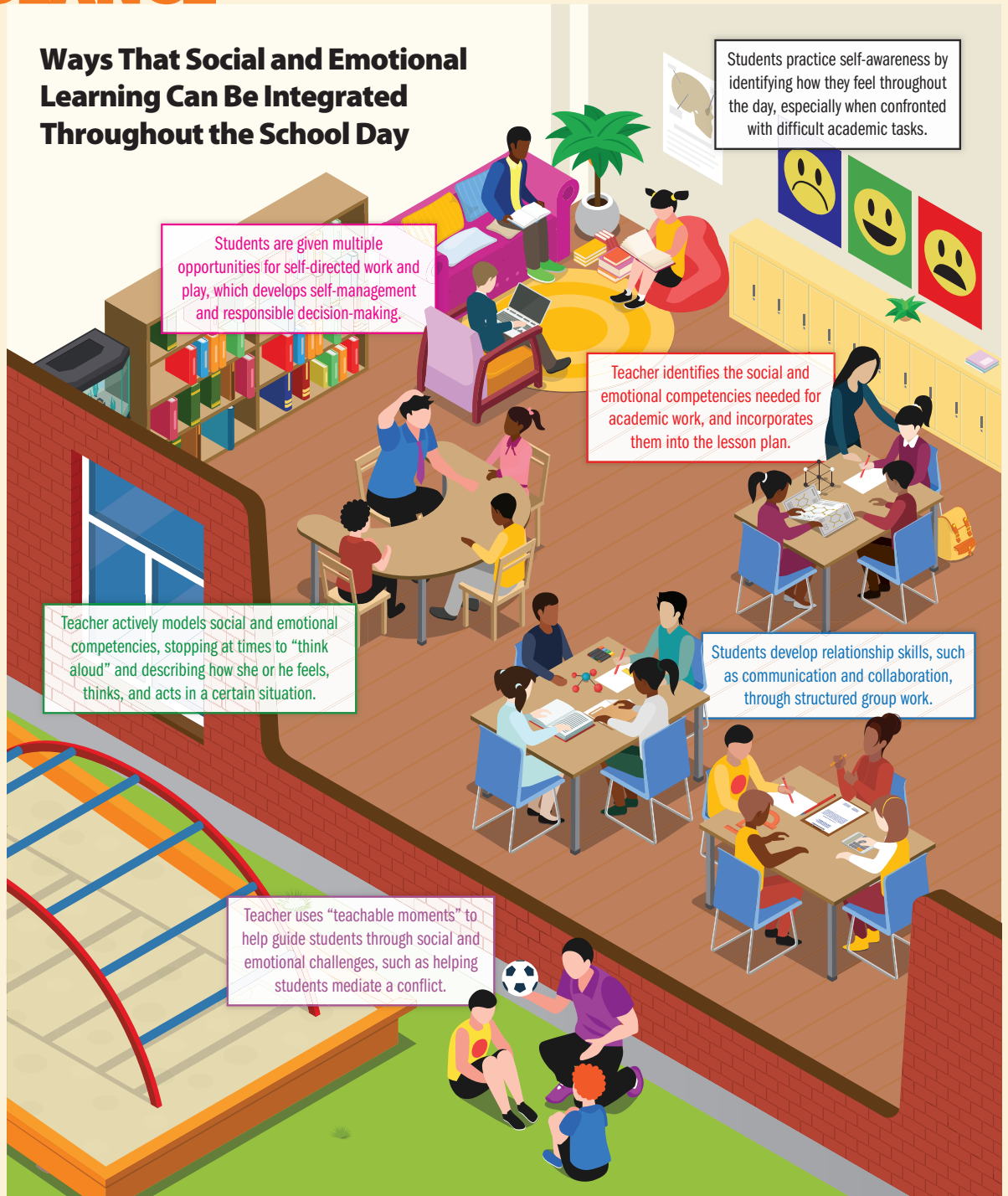
<p>STANDARD: LEARNING DESIGNS</p> <p>IN ACTION In high-quality professional learning, educators have opportunities to practice the strategies and skills they are expected to use with students. Leaders in the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative embody this approach for building SEL capacity among school and out-of-school time staff (p. 30). For example, professional learning leaders in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Palm Beach County, Florida, apply a set of SEL "signature practices" in their own meetings.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the strategies you expect educators to use with students that you model and practice in professional learning? What additional student-facing strategies might you use in your professional learning? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paige Kennedy from The Opportunity Project in Tulsa says that sometimes educators are so motivated to focus on students that professional learning leaders have to "constantly go back" and remind them to focus on themselves first. How do you maintain focus on adults' skills while keeping student goals in mind? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>STANDARD: IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>IN ACTION When a group of colleagues in San Antonio, Texas, set out to integrate social and emotional learning into math classes, they knew they needed to provide teachers with comprehensive, ongoing support (p. 36). They started with a set of core instructional strategies for SEL and resources for implementing them, next created multiple opportunities for "team-based, campus-based, and districtwide professional learning," and then integrated SEL into coaching.</p>	<p>TO CONSIDER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEL became part of ongoing instructional coaching to encourage teachers to integrate SEL skills with academics. What can you incorporate in your ongoing coaching that will support educators' and students' holistic needs? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating SEL and academics required the coaches to break down barriers between departments and disciplines. What barriers do you need to break down to help your colleagues learn something new? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

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

AT A GLANCE

Ways That Social and Emotional Learning Can Be Integrated Throughout the School Day

Social, emotional, and academic development are intertwined. Students benefit when educators weave social and emotional learning (SEL) throughout the school day, building, and curriculum.



Source: Learning Policy Institute (2018). *Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning*. <https://bit.ly/3zcLMAJ>

To illustrate how one school integrates SEL, the Learning Policy Institute created this graphic as part of a case study of Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale, California. The school developed holistic SEL approaches in partnership with the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child and San Jose State University.

How does your school integrate SEL? Discuss these reflection questions with your colleagues.

- Which strategies shown here resonate with you and why?
- Which strategies would you like your school(s) to try?
- Which staff need to be involved?
- What kind of support do they need?
- What else can you do to integrate SEL and academics?
- What challenges do you anticipate, and how can professional learning help?



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

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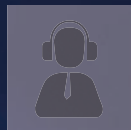
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