



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

Spring Convening 2024 Materials

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> Building Community Partnerships to Support Newcomer & Migrant Populations

Presenters: Sara Niño & Emily



Agenda

1. Agenda, Agreements & Connector
2. Creating & Supporting Community Partnerships
3. Community Asset Mapping
4. Discussion
5. Close & Questions

Group Agreements

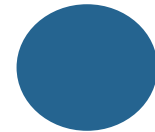
- Engage actively in a way that works for you
- Share your own experiences and expertise with us
- Connection
- Listen with curiosity

Today's Facilitators



Emily Baton

SEB Academy – May Institute



Sara Niño

SEB Academy - Faculty & TTA



Connector

What is your school/district's Vision for all learners?

What role do community partnerships play in supporting your Vision?

Creating & Supporting Community Partnerships



Family-School-Community Partnerships and Learning Outcomes

(Adapted from [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2024](#))

- Partnerships contribute to improved academic outcomes for ALL STUDENTS
- Partnerships break down barriers and increase access, communication, and agency
- Prioritizing partnerships strengthens and protects engagement and academic achievement



Creating & Supporting Community Partnerships



“Schools might not have the resources and expertise needed to provide wraparound services for newcomer families. To support schools, there may be community organizations that have the expertise, resources, and mission to address the diverse needs of newcomer families. Through partnerships with various community organizations, schools can support newcomer families more comprehensively.”

—[USED Newcomer Toolkit, Chapter Two: Partnering with Community Organizations](#)

Acknowledging & Disrupting “Damage-Centered” Beliefs/Ideologies



What are the assets/
resiliencies immigrant-origin
students bring to school?

- Immigrant Optimism
- Models of Strong Work Ethic
- Value and Hopeful about Benefits of Education
- Cohesive Extended Families
- Bilingual advantages
- Socio-emotional advantage
- Cognitive flexibility/perspective-taking
- Ability to code switch and navigate between cultures
- Experience adapting to new conditions

Adapted from Carola Suárez-Orozco

[Image Sources: Re-Imagining Migration](#) (n.d.)

HARNESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL CAN EMPOWER STUDENTS

The six forms of capital, also known as community cultural wealth, that T.J. Yosso argues can potentially empower all students are:

1. aspirational – the “hopes and dreams” students have,
2. linguistic – the various language and communication skills students bring into the classroom,
3. familial – the social and personal human resources students have,
4. social – students’ “peers and other social contacts” outside of their family resources,
5. navigational –a students’ skills and abilities to navigate “social institutions”, and
6. resistance – the ability to advocate to attain equal rights and social justice.

Equity Begins from Within

“Close attention must be paid to the lives, experiences, and daily environments of people of color who suffer from and offer resistance to oppressive systemic pressures that manifest in various ways in their personal and collective lives.”

- Robin Hughes & Mark Giles (2010, p. 46)

Acknowledging & Challenging Barriers to Partnerships



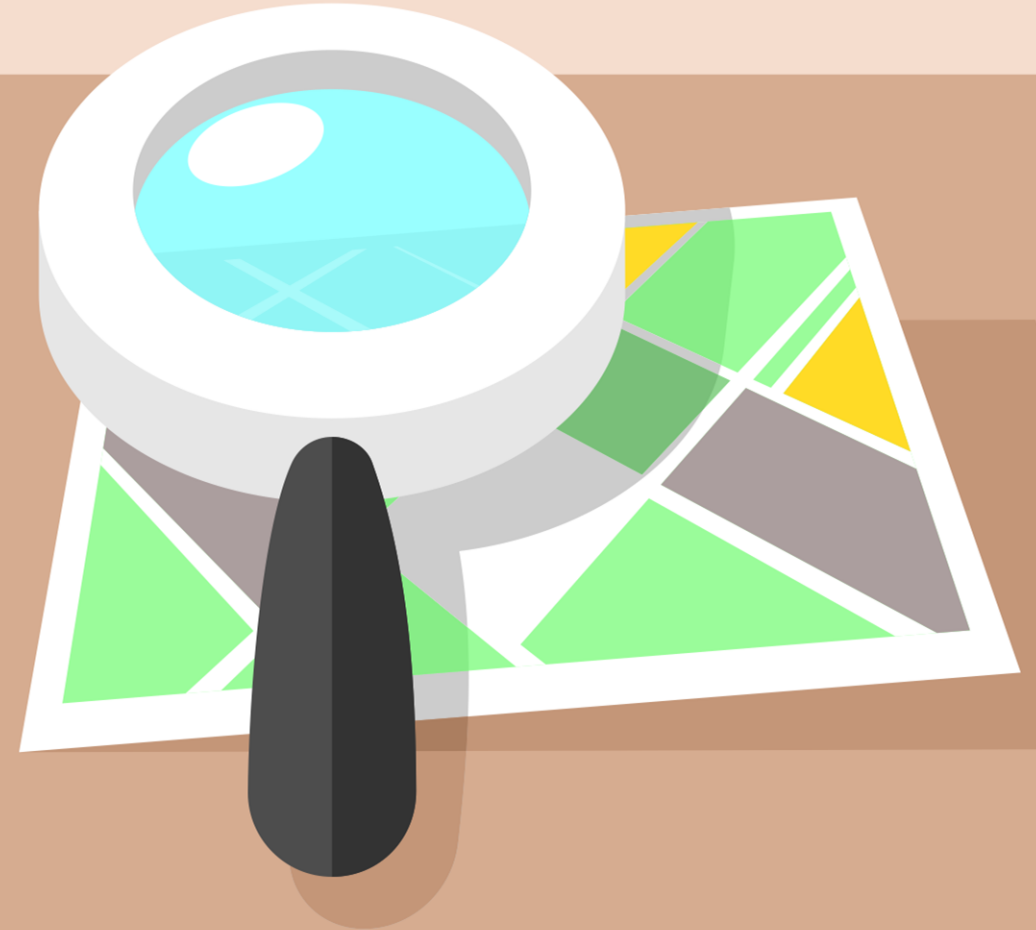
Asset Mapping as a Strategy



What is Community Asset Mapping?

“Asset mapping provides information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. Finally, asset mapping promotes community involvement, ownership, and empowerment.”

- [UCLA CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH \(n.d.\)](#)



Asset Mapping Example: UCLA Policy Center for Health Policy Research (n.d.)



UCLA CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH

Section 1: Asset Mapping

Purpose

Asset mapping provides information about the strengths and resources of a community and can help uncover solutions. Once community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted in a map, you can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. Finally, asset mapping promotes community involvement, ownership, and empowerment.

What is a community asset?

A community asset or resource is anything that improves the quality of community life. Assets include:

- The capacities and abilities of community members.
- A physical structure or place. For example, a school, hospital, or church. Maybe a library, recreation center, or social club.
- A business that provides jobs and supports the local economy.
- Associations of citizens. For example, a neighborhood Watch or a Parent Teacher Association.
- Local private, public, and nonprofit institutions or organizations.

When to use Asset Mapping

- You want to start a new local program and need information about available resources. For example, you are interested in teen mothers finishing their education. You could draw a community asset map that identifies school drop-out prevention, tutoring, and education counseling programs for young teen mothers. This helps you see what already exists, or if support services are lacking. You may find it is necessary to develop a program to help young mothers finish their education.
- You are making program decisions. An asset map can help you identify community assets and concerns. The map results help determine new directions for your program or identify new programs that need to be developed. For example, an asset map of food banks and nutrition resources for low-income families in your neighborhood may reveal that there is a lack of programs, or that existing programs are located in areas that are not accessible to families in your service area.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research
Health DATA Program - Data, Advocacy and Technical Assistance

Figure 1. Map of a Los Angeles Community



1. Determine community boundaries
2. Identify and engage partners
3. Determine assets to include
4. List assets of groups
5. List assets of individuals
6. Organize/present assets on a map

Asset Mapping Example: National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc. (2021)



Table 1

Emergency Services	Social & Cultural Orgs
Food Bank Police Red Cross First Aid Soup Kitchens	Radio/TV stations Historic/Arts council groups Councils for cultural affairs Faith-based organizations Museums/galleries
Local & State Govt	Education
Housing programs Nonprofit Organizations State/City/Local government Chamber of Commerce Federal government agencies Public transportation City programs City Council	Colleges and universities Migrant Head Start/Education Programs Libraries Schools After-school programs State education agency
Healthcare	Neighborhood Resources
Hospitals and clinics Mental health facilities Urgent care Elderly care facilities	Community centers Parks & recreational facilities Neighborhood Associations Citizen groups/clubs

Community Asset Spreadsheet

Type your information in this spreadsheet and the data will automatically fill out the asset map on page 5. You can type the information in this PDF, on the attached spreadsheet files, or by printing out this page. To customize, add your Health Center Logo above. We have provided the Central Texas Food Bank entry as an example for how to fill out the information.

Partner Name	Contact info	Point of Contact / Website	Resource/Strengths	Collaboration Goals	Organizational Benefits
Organization Name	Phone number / address	Best member to contact?	What do they offer?	What goals can you accomplish together?	How can each group benefit?
Central Texas Food Bank	212.385.0554 / 6802 McCombs, Austin, TX	Relations Manager	Food & groceries	Seeking new partners in the city	Potential referrals for clients in need
Health Care - i.e. - Hospitals, Urgent Care					
Education - i.e. - Migrant Education, Head Start					
Social and Cultural Organizations - i.e. - Faith-based organizations					
Local and State Government - i.e. - City programs					
Neighborhood Resources - i.e. - Community centers					
Emergency Resources - i.e. - Food bank, police					

- Partner Name
- Contact Information
- Point of Contact/Website
- Resources/Strengths
- Collaboration Goals
- Organizational Benefit

Asset Mapping Example: Co-Design LeanLab Education, What Are Community Asset Maps? Here's how to map them



How to Map Community Assets

- 1 Set the ground rules**

Ask the group to form a circle and make sure everyone is comfortable with sharing
- 2 Share stories**

Ask participants to share their personal stories or experiences that highlight the identified pain point
- 3 Rewrite the stories**

Break participants into smaller groups and ask them to reflect on the following questions:

 1. What is the new story we would like to tell?
 2. Who is impacted in this new story?
 3. How does this new story promote equity and justice?

Have each group share their new stories. Help the whole group identify common themes and goals.
- 4 Identify community assets**

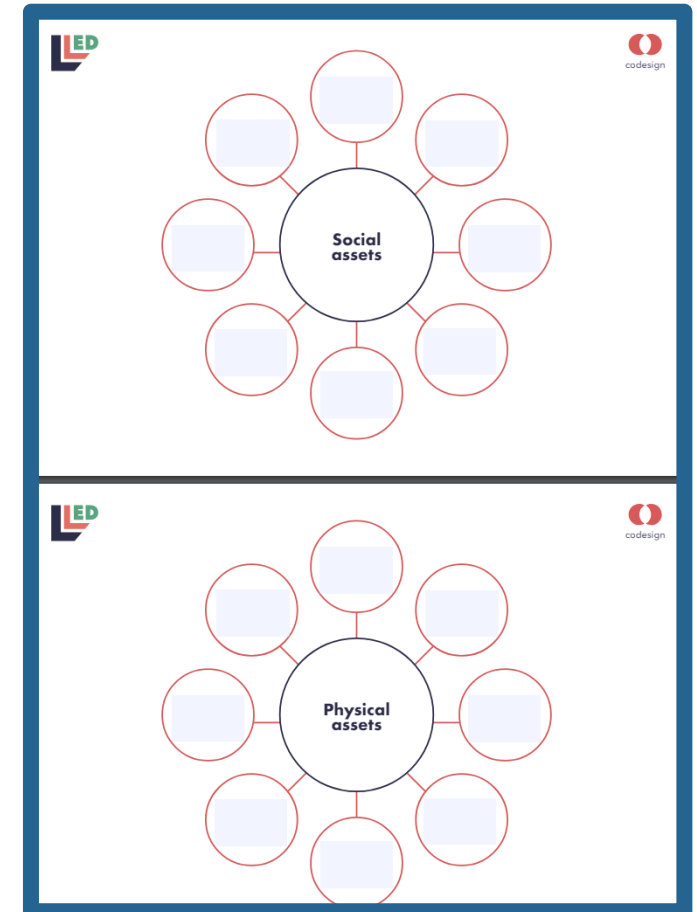
Create a poster titled "Community Assets" and ask the whole group to share their answers to the following questions:

What knowledge and skills exist within this group that will help solve this problem (create a new story)?

What outside community/neighborhood groups: cultural, nonprofit, business, and activist organizations can support us in this work?

What physical spaces, tools, and resources exist in this school and our community that can support us in this work?

Note their answers on the poster to create your community asset map.





Critical Partnership Indicators

- Center “Equity”
- Honor strengths
- Identify and acknowledge assumptions and interpretations
- Challenge and disrupt deficit- and damage-centered beliefs
- Dedicate and protect resources
- Provide ongoing training and support

(Niño & Gutierrez, 2024)

Activity: Let's Map!

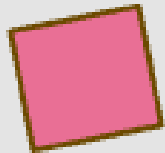
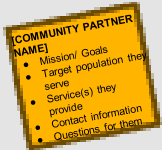


Community Asset “Crit-Walk”

[COMMUNITY PARTNER NAME]

- Mission/ Goals
- Target population they serve
- Service(s) they provide
- Contact information
- Questions for them

[Your Team/Table Name Here]



1. List the name and information of the community partners you discover / wish to learn more about on a post-it.
2. Add a post-it for each community partner.
3. Consider each of the critical partnership indicators as you think through who is represented/served by these relationships.

Discussion



Share Out

- What thoughts and feelings came up for you in this activity?
- What partnerships/connections do you already have?
 - What's working?
 - What's missing?
 - What questions do you have?

Establishing New Partnerships

(Adapted from [Engaging ELL Families Tips for School Leaders](#))

- Gather ideas from students and families (e.g., conversations, interviews, focus groups)
 - Get feedback on families' perceptions of top needs
- Build partnerships within the community
 - Exchange thoughts, ideas, resources
- Reach out to neighbors
 - Support relationship-building



Closing and Next Steps





REFLECTION & CLOSING

What is one action you can take build community partnerships that will bring your closer to achieving your Vision?



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➤ Thank You





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> Centering Belonging in Schools

SEB Academy Spring Convening
May 15, 2024

Presenters: Akira Gutierrez Renzulli & Jim Vetter
Co-developer: Tori Todd



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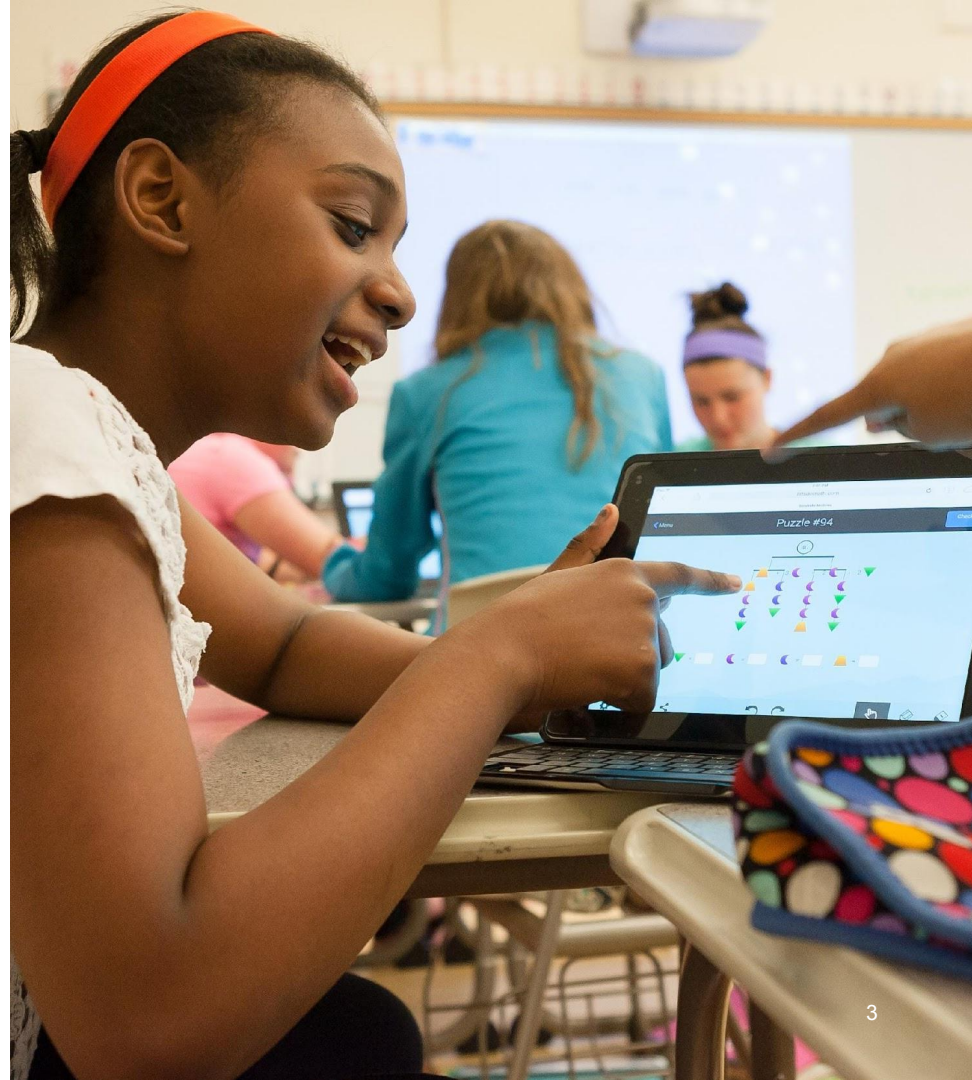
Centering Belonging: Session Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Identify equitable, high-leverage opportunities for fostering student belonging by engaging educators, families, and the local community
- Begin to draft an action plan to implement a strategy aligned to key levers of belonging, relevant to their own communities
- Articulate immediate next steps for implementation of action plan in participants' school

Connector

Please take 1-minute to introduce yourself & share a “community gem” - something you love about your local community.

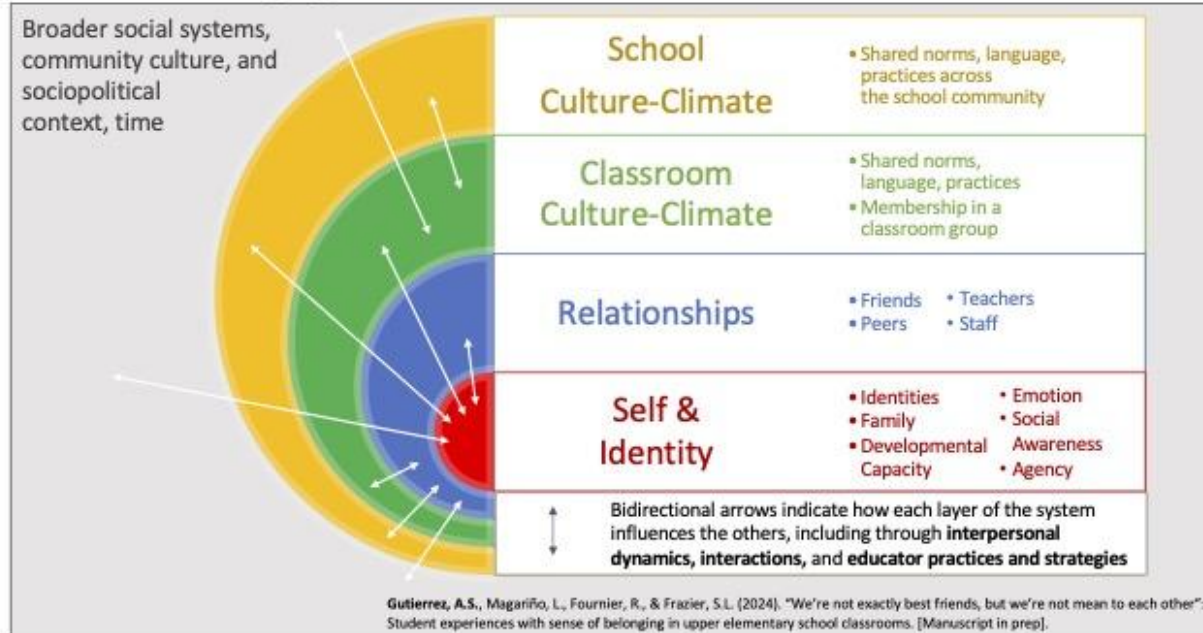


Agenda

- 01 Connector
- 02 Introduction to Belonging Framework
- 03 Explore-Pair-Share
- 04 Debrief
- 05 Closing

A Framework for Sense of Belonging

Sense of Belonging in Schools



A Framework for Sense of Belonging

Self & Identity

As youth work with others in ways that help them **feel competent and valuable**, they **increasingly understand the complex intersections** of their (own and others') social identities, group statuses, and societal systems (Jagers et al., 2019)

A Framework for Sense of Belonging

Positive Peer Relationships

- Help students build knowledge, social skills, and perspective-taking through interactions with peers and friends (Goldstein, Kaczmarek, & English, 2002)
- Can decrease loneliness, increase self-esteem, avert victimization, and buffer the mental health consequences of bullying and dysregulation (Osher et al., 2020)

A Framework for Sense of Belonging

Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

- Characterized as **warm, trustful, nurturing, and responsive**
- Students who feel **emotionally secure**, immerse themselves more confidently into their learning, **demonstrating on task engagement, appropriate help seeking, increased effort, and greater academic gains** (Cook et al., 2017)
- Benefits **also extend** from positive relationships with **other school staff** that occur outside the classroom (DuBois et al., 2011)

A Framework for Sense of Belonging

Classroom & School Culture-Climate

- Schools provide environments in which children naturally practice and apply social and emotional skills and can also create meaningful opportunities for children to practice these skills towards mastery (Garibaldi & Josias, 2015)
- Whether students benefits or not depends on their individual perceptions and experiences of the environment, which may vary relative to their histories, needs, and lived experiences (Frazier et al., 2015)

Think-Pair-Share

- **Think:**
What resonates?
What is surprising?
- **Pair:** Turn to someone at the table behind/next to you.
- **Share** - Whole-group debrief.

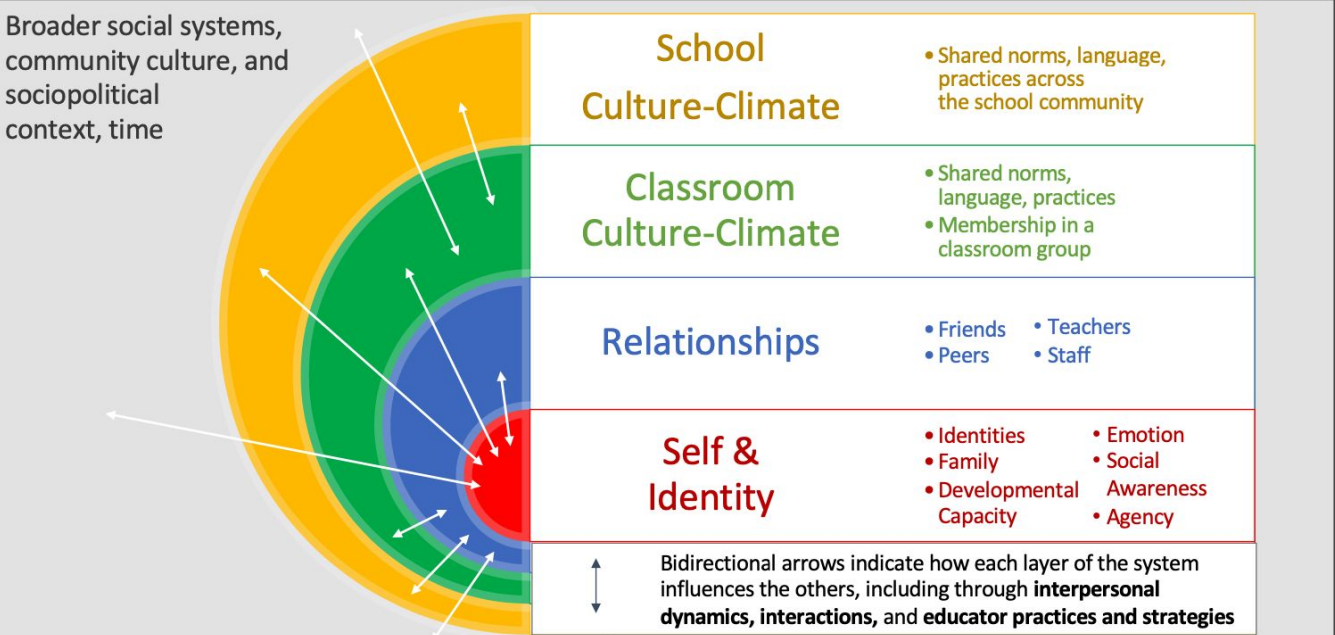
Whole-Group Debrief

- What takeaways do you have from your breakout conversations?



Belonging: Levers and Opportunities

Sense of Belonging in Schools



Gutierrez, A.S., Magariño, L., Fournier, R., & Frazier, S.L. (2024). "We're not exactly best friends, but we're not mean to each other": Student experiences with sense of belonging in upper elementary school classrooms. [Manuscript in prep].

Belonging & Social Identities



Belonging: Levers and Opportunities

transforming education

Stories from the Field: Building strong teacher-student relationships in the classroom

Alina B. Gutierrez & Katie H. Buckley | Transforming Education | October 2019

About TransformEd's Series on Fostering Strong Relationships

Transforming Education has developed the [SEL Integration Approach](#) to guide classroom educators in how to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into academic curriculum and daily classroom routines through six key components. One of the foundational components in our approach is *Strong Relationships*: intentionally building connections with students, having a personal regard for them as individuals, and facilitating meaningful peer interactions. In order to further understand what educators can do - and are doing - to build strong relationships, TransformEd has produced a series of briefs or "stories from the field" that are intended to share student and educator perspectives about developing and sustaining strong relationships within the classroom and throughout the school.

These briefs emerged after a series of visits to school campuses across the country in which students reported having strong social-emotional skills and favorable perceptions of the school environment. The goal of these visits was to learn directly from students, teachers, and administrators about the practices and supports being implemented that may be leading to more favorable school culture and stronger student social-emotional competencies and mindsets. In this series, we draw from what we learned about fostering strong relationships through our conversations and on-site observations at these schools. These briefs are grounded in student, teacher, and leader voice; present the latest research on the importance of building strong connections in the classroom and school; and provide additional resources that school teachers and leaders can easily implement in their schools to foster stronger relationships with students, among students, and with staff.

This brief focuses on ways teachers can develop and sustain strong relationships with their students, based on the theoretical underpinnings of the importance of this component, the perspectives of educators and students in the schools we visited, and evidence-based best practices.

[Explore teacher-student relationship strategies](#)

colorado! A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders

Part V: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

17. Build partnerships with the local community

A. What you need to know

Community organizations are a valuable ally in engaging ELL families, whether it's by providing key services such as interpreters and medical care or educational opportunities such as GED, ESL, and citizenship classes. These partnerships can benefit your family and your partners alike, and they may lead to great opportunities for your students as well!

B. Reflections

Have you built any relationships with organizations in the community? If so, what are the successes and challenges you've experienced? Which social services do your families need most?

C. Strategies

- Consider offering local organizations free space in your school as a way to encourage them to bring their services closer to your families (Hovak, 70).
- Ask your families which organizations they think would make good partners for the school community and which issues are of concern to them.
- Find out if your district has a community education department that might be able to support a partnership with a local organization.
- Invite members from the community to inform parents about their services, such as a local librarian, a nurse, or a firefighter.

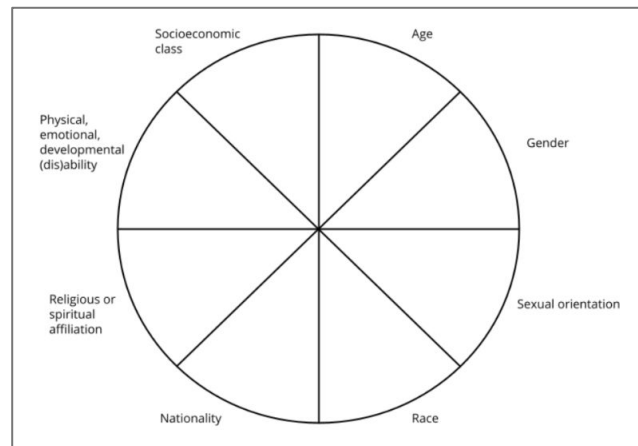
Note: When inviting guests from the community to the school, assure parents that identification will not be checked and explain that they do not need to show proof of legal residency to sign up for a library card.

D. Examples

- Christine Purnell from New York shares the following on the National Education Association's website: "Our school hosts monthly Latino Family meetings - hosted and conducted entirely in Spanish by Spanish-speaking staff. The turnout is incredible every time. We discuss issues of concern to the parents and community, as well as periodically bringing in outside speakers (i.e. reps. from the library, Census bureau, etc.)" She also recommends using students from local adult ESL programs as translators in these informal settings as "it helps them practice English, get extra credit for themselves" and support their fellow country people (Flansburg, NEA.org).
- Highland Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland was chosen as a Blue Ribbon turnaround school by the Maryland State Department of Education in 2008. Part of its success, according to school principal, was its increased inclusion of the families. According to *The Washington Post*, "The school positioned itself as the center of its community, offering weekend soccer tournaments, English and computer classes for parents, and an array of other community services, from housing assistance to mental health counseling (de Voe, 2006)."

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[Explore strategies for engaging community partnerships](#)



[Social Identity Wheel for Students/ for Teachers](#)

Explore. Pair. Share.



(Access resources by scanning this code or visiting <https://go.edc.org/belonging>)



- **EXPLORE:** Strategies for identity, relationships, and community partnerships. Select 2-3 strategies that you would like to try in your district.
- **PAIR:** Turn to your partner.
- **SHARE:** about the strategies you chose with your partner:
 - a. Why did you choose those strategies?
 - b. Which communities/populations do you hope to engage?

Strategies & Planning for Implementation

**PROMOTING BELONGING WITH AN EQUITY LENS
ACTION PLAN**

Date _____

Goal/Vision _____

My Social Capital (Accountabuddies; Thoughtpartners): _____

Strategies to Foster Belonging	Resources Required (people, materials, time, etc)	Resources Available	Resources Needed + Social Network to Tap Into	Timeline: Implementation + Thought Partner Updates	Indicators of Success & Plan for Student Feedback
[strategy to promote social identities]					
[strategy to promote empathy]					
[strategy to intentionally build connection]					
[strategy to expand students' social capital]					
[strategy to mitigate systemic inequities/ add protective factor]					

Think. Pair. Share.

Strategies to Foster Belonging	Resources Required (people, materials, time, etc)	Resources Available	Resources Needed + Social Network to Tap Into	Timeline: Implementation + Thought Partner Updates	Indicators of Success & Plan for Student Feedback
[strategy to promote social identities]					
[strategy to promote empathy]					
[strategy to intentionally build connection]					
[strategy to expand students' social capital]					
[strategy to mitigate systemic inequities/ add protective factor]					

1. Select 2-3 strategies to try with your students.
2. Fill out 2-3 rows of the action plan.
3. Discuss the following questions with your partner:
 - a. What challenges/barriers are you anticipating?
 - b. Who are critical supports that may be able to help you remove barriers & implement your action plan?

Intentional Closure

What is your next immediate step toward developing or implementing your action plan?





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 Thank you!



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HANDOUT

Social Identity Wheel¹

Directions: *Social identity* refers to your sense of who you are based on your membership in certain groups. **On the next page**, complete the social identity wheel by writing the number of each statement in the box(es) that correspond to your answer. For example, write a “1” in the box(es) of the identities that you think about most often. There can be more than one number in each box, and some boxes might not have any numbers.

As you are working, think about situations where you might feel or be more aware of different aspects of your identity. Also think about how these identities impact how you see and treat other people. **You will not have to share this graphic organizer with anyone else.**

Statements:

On the next page, write the number of each statement in the box(es) that correspond to your answer.

1. Identities you think about *most* often
2. Identities you think about *least* often
3. Identities that have the strongest effect on how *you perceive or define yourself*
4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how *others perceive you*

¹ [Social identity wheel](#) adapted from University of Michigan LSA Inclusive Teaching.

Socioeconomic class

Age

Physical, emotional, developmental (dis)ability

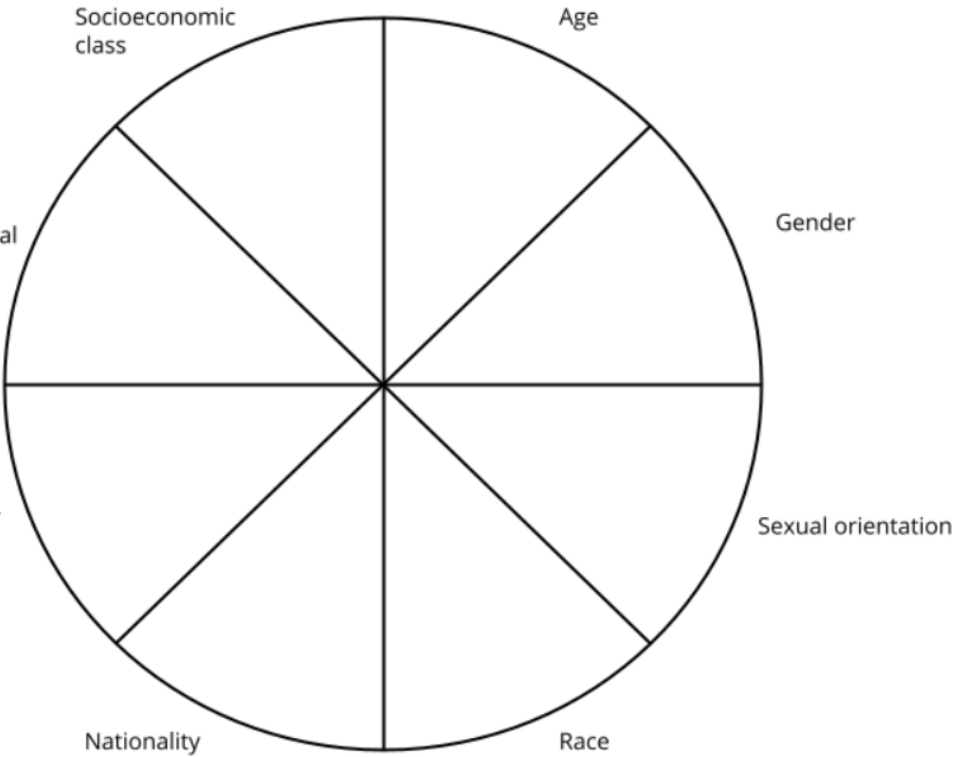
Gender

Religious or spiritual affiliation

Sexual orientation

Nationality

Race



Personal Reflection Questions

Directions: Use your social identity wheel to help you respond to the following questions in your journal. As you reflect, consider how your membership in certain social groups, whether by choice or because you were born into them, can impact your sense of who you are and your interactions with others. **This is a private response that you will not have to share.**

1. Which identities do you think about or feel *most* often? When are you most aware of these identities?
2. Which identities do you think about or feel *least* often? Why do you think you aren't aware of them a lot of the time?
3. Which identities have the strongest impact on how you perceive or define yourself?
4. Which identities have the strongest impact on how you think other people perceive or label you?
5. Review your answers to questions 1–4. How might your age and/or circumstances influence, or even change, some of your answers?
6. Which identities, if any, have changed or are changing as you grow up?
7. How well do you think the social identity wheel graphic represents your social identity? Would you add or change any categories? If so, which ones? If not, why not?

Social Identity Wheel Activity: Reflection Questions for Educators

- 1. What identities most substantially influence how you perceive yourself, manage, or behave in the classroom?**
- 2. How do your social identities inform your socialization with students, in general?**
- 3. In what ways do your identities affect your approach to teaching?**
- 4. In what ways might your approach to teaching affect the learning of students with different identities, cultural beliefs, norms, and values?**

Social Identity Wheel

<p>Overview</p>	<p>The Social Identity Wheel worksheet is an activity that encourages students to identify social identities and reflect on the various ways those identities become visible or more keenly felt at different times, and how those identities impact the ways others perceive or treat them. The worksheet prompts students to fill in various social identities (such as race, gender, sex, ability disability, sexual orientation, etc.) and further categorize those identities based on which matter most in their self-perception and which matter most in others' perception of them. The Social Identity Wheel can be used in conjunction with the Personal Identity Wheel to encourage students to reflect on the relationships and dissonances between their personal and social identities. The wheels can be used as a prompt for small or large group discussion or reflective writing on identity by using the Spectrum Activity Questions on Identity.</p>
<p>Goals</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To encourage students to consider their identities critically and how identities are more or less keenly felt in different social contexts. The classroom and the university can be highlighted as a context as a way to approach questions on barriers to inclusion. 2) To illuminate how privilege operates to normalize some identities over others. For example, a student who speaks English as their first language can reflect on why they rarely need to think about their language as an aspect of their identity while some of their peers may identify language as the aspect of their identity they feel most keenly in the classroom. 3) To sensitize students to their shared identities with their classmates as well as the diversity of identities in the classroom, building community and encouraging empathy.
<p>Implementation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) View this video (at the 6:46 mark) to see how to facilitate this activity in your classroom. 2) There are three ways you can approach this activity: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Option A: This can be done as an independent activity where students answer the questions on their own and then you lead a whole-class discussion. b. Option B: You can post the different social identity categories around the room and have students go through the questions on the handout, moving to the identity that best answers the question. Students can then discuss with other students who chose the same identity. You can then lead a debrief after the activity. c. Option C: In combination with Option A or B, have students complete the Personal Identity Wheel as well.

	<p>3) If you are choosing Option B or Option C/B, place the social identity categories around the room before class.</p>
Challenges	<p>1) The students may not perceive the activity as relevant to the course and thus may exhibit resistance.</p> <p>2) Students may not be familiar with particular concepts, or they may have different assumptions about those concepts that the activity assumes. For example, they may not know the difference between the terms “sex” and “gender,” or they may be resistant to the distinction between the two.</p> <p>3) If the wheel is used as a discussion prompt or if students are in close quarters and are able to see what their peers have written on their worksheets, this exercise may feel especially vulnerable to students with invisible identities that they may not want to disclose to the class. Disclosure in verbal or written form should be voluntary and discussion questions should be broad enough that students can opt to not talk about more vulnerable aspects of their identities while still leaving space for them to share if they wish.</p>
Materials	<p>1) Social Identity Wheel Handout (Options A, B, C)</p> <p>2) Social Identity Categories (Options B, C)</p> <p>3) Personal Identity Wheel Handout (Option C)</p>
Citations	<p>Adapted for use by the Program on Intergroup Relations and the Spectrum Center, University of Michigan.</p>

Option A Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	3 mins	The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview of the activity: students will critically consider their social identities, reflecting on how they shape and inform their lives.
Social Identity Wheel and Social Identity Groups	15 mins	<p>Individual student activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Distribute the social identity wheel handout. 2) Review “Social Identity Groups” as a class, noting additional examples of the different identities presented. 3) Give students time to answer the five questions on the front and to review “Social Identity Groups” on the back of the page.
Large Group Debrief	15 mins	<p>Lead the class in a debrief of the activity.</p> <p>Some possible debrief questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Go through the five questions on the handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What identities do you think about most often? b. What identities do you think about least often? c. What identities would you like to learn more about? d. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? e. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you? 2) Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities? 3) What is the value in completing activities like this in our class?

Option B Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	3 mins	The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview of the activity: students will critically consider their social identities, reflecting on how they shape and inform their lives.
Social Identity Wheel and Social Identity Groups	20 mins	<p>Whole class activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Distribute the social identity wheel handout. 2) Review “Social Identity Groups” as a class, noting additional examples of the different identities presented. 3) Having posted the different social identity categories around the room, ask each of the following questions out loud, allowing time for students to self-select the identity that best answers the question and time for students to discuss with others who chose the same identity. If there is a student alone in an identity, you can join them in conversation. Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What identities do you think about most often? b. What identities do you think about least often? c. What identities would you like to learn more about? d. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? e. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?
Large Group Debrief	15 mins	<p>Lead the class in a debrief of the activity.</p> <p>Some possible debrief questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Go through the five questions on the handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What identities do you think about most often? b. What identities do you think about least often? c. What identities would you like to learn more about? d. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? e. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you? 2) Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities? 3) What is the value in completing activities like this in our class?

Option C-A Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	3 mins	The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview of the activity: students will critically consider their personal and social identities, reflecting on how they shape and inform their lives.
Personal Identity Wheel, Social Identity Wheel, and Social Identity Groups	20-25 mins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Distribute the personal identity wheel handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give students 5-10 minutes to fill out. 2) In pairs or small groups, have students share their personal identity wheels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give students 5 minutes to share. 3) Distribute the social identity wheel handout. 4) Review “Social Identity Groups” as a class, noting additional examples of the different identities presented. 5) Give students time to answer the five questions on the front and to review “Social Identity Groups” on the back of the page.
Large Group Debrief	15 mins	<p>Lead the class in a debrief of the activity.</p> <p>Some possible debrief questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Go through the five questions on the handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> f. What identities do you think about most often? g. What identities do you think about least often? h. What identities would you like to learn more about? i. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? j. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you? 2) Which components of the personal identity wheel were hard to fill out? 3) Which components of your personal identity were harder to share out? 4) Which personal identities, if any, are informed by your social identities? 5) Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities? 6) What is the value in completing activities like this in our class?

Option C-B Session Sequence

Lesson Structure	Time <i>(Estimated amount of time for each component)</i>	Activity Content and Instructions
Introduction	3 mins	The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview of the activity: students will critically consider their personal and social identities, reflecting on how they shape and inform their lives.
Personal Identity Wheel, Social Identity Wheel, and Social Identity Groups	30-35 mins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Distribute the personal identity wheel handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give students 5-10 minutes to fill out. 2) In pairs or small groups, have students share their personal identity wheels. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give students 5 minutes to share. 3) Distribute the social identity wheel handout. 4) Review “Social Identity Groups” as a class, noting additional examples of the different identities presented. 5) Having posted the different social identity categories around the room, ask each of the following questions out loud, allowing time for students to self-select the identity that best answers the question and time for students to discuss with others who chose the same identity. If there is a student alone in an identity, you can join them in conversation. Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What identities do you think about most often? b. What identities do you think about least often? c. What identities would you like to learn more about? d. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? e. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?
Large Group Debrief	15 mins	<p>Lead the class in a debrief of the activity.</p> <p>Some possible debrief questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Go through the five questions on the handout: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What identities do you think about most often? b. What identities do you think about least often? c. What identities would you like to learn more about? d. What identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself? e. What identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?

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| | | <ol style="list-style-type: none">2) Which components of the personal identity wheel were hard to fill out?3) Which components of your personal identity were harder to share out?4) Which personal identities, if any, are informed by your social identities?5) Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities?6) What is the value in completing activities like this in our class? |
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Stories from the Field:

Building strong teacher-student relationships in the classroom

Akira S. Gutierrez & Katie H. Buckley | Transforming Education | October 2019

About TransformEd's Series on Fostering Strong Relationships

Transforming Education has developed the [SEL Integration Approach](#) to guide classroom educators in how to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into academic curriculum and daily classroom routines through six key components. One of the foundational components in our approach is *Strong Relationships: Intentionally building connections with students, having a personal regard for them as individuals, and facilitating meaningful peer interactions*. **In order to further understand what educators can do - and are doing - to build strong relationships, TransformEd has produced a series of briefs or “stories from the field” that are intended to share student and educator perspectives about developing and sustaining strong relationships within the classroom and throughout the school.**

These briefs emerged after a series of visits to school campuses across the country in which students reported having strong social-emotional skills and favorable perceptions of the school environment. The goal of these visits was to learn directly from students, teachers, and administrators about the practices and supports being implemented that may be leading to more favorable school culture and stronger student social-emotional competencies and mindsets. In this series, we draw from what we learned about fostering strong relationships through our conversations and on-site observations at these schools. These briefs are grounded in student, teacher, and leader voice; present the latest research on the importance of building strong connections in the classroom and school; and provide additional resources that school teachers and leaders can easily implement in their schools to foster stronger relationships with students, among students, and with staff.

This brief focuses on ways teachers can develop and sustain strong relationships with their students, based on the theoretical underpinnings of the importance of this component, the perspectives of educators and students in the schools we visited, and evidence-based best practices.

Why do teacher-student relationships matter?

Strong, positive relationships between teachers and students in the classroom are fundamental to promoting student engagement, social-emotional development, and academic growth.¹ Teachers can foster such relationships by establishing personal connections with their students, making sure their students feel cared for and supported, establishing high expectations for student success, and providing constructive guidance to ensure their students are meeting those expectations.² When students have the emotional security brought about by meaningful connections with their teachers, they can immerse themselves more fully into their learning.³ Studies suggest that warm and trusting teacher relationships are associated with positive school outcomes—including increased effort, academic self-efficacy, and better grades and standardized test scores.^{4,5} Moreover, positive teacher-student interactions have been found to result in fewer disruptive behaviors from students and longer periods of engaged academic time.⁶

Teachers also benefit from having strong relationships with students. A recent study found that teachers who felt positive connections with their students were more likely to report experiences of joy and less likely to report feelings of anxiety and anger.⁷ Furthermore, positive teacher-student relationships motivate teachers to dedicate more time and resources to promote their students' success.⁸

From early school experiences, teachers can provide students with the support they need in order to explore and adapt to their learning environment. These connections continue to be valuable through transitions into more advanced grades, as supportive relationships with teachers help maintain students' interest in academic activities and foster positive peer relationships.^{9,10} Overall, positive connections with teachers can promote students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing, safety, and belonging in learning environments that can have long-term impacts on social and academic outcomes.^{11,12,13}

Given these benefits, the importance of building strong teacher-student relationships in the classroom cannot be underestimated. While developing strong relationships may come easier with some students than others, it is important for teachers to use a variety of strategies to find ways to connect meaningfully and authentically with all students. By finding different approaches and learning what works for each individual, teachers will be able to connect with a greater number of students.¹⁴ The next two sections of this brief offer insights from students and teachers about their experiences with building relationships and provide promising practices teachers can use to foster positive relationships with their students.

I think the teachers really pay attention and they really want to make sure that we're okay. I like that.

ANTHONY
UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENT

What do students and teachers say about building positive teacher-student relationships?

In seeking to learn more about what makes a learning environment conducive to positive social-emotional development, we identified six school campuses across the country in which students reported having strong social-emotional skills, a strong sense of belonging, and strong connections with their teachers. We then talked to both students and teachers in grades 4-6 about their relationships with one another. Several themes arose in those conversations that suggested how and why teachers and students felt connected. For example, in one student's words, their school was described as a place where "Adults treat us awesomely!" In this section, we share more of what we heard and learned.

Making time to check-in with students can have a meaningful impact on them. Teachers and students that we spoke to talked about the importance of connecting with each other on a personal level.

Students expressed the importance of having teachers recognize if they were having a hard day or needed help navigating difficult emotions. One student said, "When something really troublesome happened at home, I came to school the next day. When I came in, my teacher asked me to her desk and asked me what's wrong and she gave me a hug and asked me if I wanted to talk to her about it. And, if I needed to go into the hallway and have a minute, then I could." Checking in with students intentionally like this communicates to students that adults in their school are available to help them. For teachers, helping students address what was on their minds was an important component of supporting the student in making space to focus on their academic activities.

Using positive approaches to help students navigate setbacks in behavior, learning, and peer interactions goes a long way. Teachers and students highlighted positive approaches to resolving conflicts or addressing challenges in the classroom. One teacher explained, "We talk about consequences, and what's the better decision, and how we're going to try not to do that next time. Just problem solve together. I'm like, 'Okay, well what can we do better next time? What should we have done?'" This approach to problem solving was recognized by students as a welcome experience that offered the opportunity to do better, while treating students with kindness and patience. "[The teachers] support you to try again and try and regroup," explained one student. Additionally, engaging students in finding solutions that aligned with shared classroom community expectations, norms, and values helped to frame conversations that made the goal for alternative behaviors more evident to the student.

My teacher...asked me what's wrong and she gave me a hug and asked me if I wanted to talk to her about it. And, if I needed to go into the hallway and have a minute, then I could.

CLAIRE
UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENT



SEL CONNECTIONS

Helping students find ways to cope with overwhelming emotions and persist through challenges is also great for supporting students through self-regulation. Some examples from the classrooms we visited included having students sketch a drawing or take deep breaths when they felt stuck in the middle of a problem. As one teacher said, “[We] teach strategies to help support kids when they’re in ... those different zones so that they can learn to regulate and come back to safe space.” Find additional strategies to support students’ self-regulation [here](#).

Building relationships is also about creating a welcoming classroom environment that can be achieved through personal connection and engaging in fun moments. Teachers discussed the importance of sharing stories about themselves as well as inviting humor into the classroom and finding moments to laugh with their students. Making room for joy and celebration were important elements of making students and teachers feel connected. One teacher explained, “I’m a very tough teacher, and school is very serious, but we have to have fun too. Little things like that [help] us connect on a different level.” Students agreed, often describing their experiences and communities as positive, inviting, and “fun.” One student reflected, “A lot of teachers can be serious, but a lot of them are actually really fun once you get to know them.”

What strategies can be integrated into the classroom easily to build stronger relationships with students?

In this section, we recommend strategies to implement in the classroom to build and sustain strong relationships with students. This list is by no means exhaustive; the strategies described are ones that we’ve observed implemented well in our partner schools, that align with research on best practices, and that can be integrated seamlessly into daily activities with little additional time required.

DEMONSTRATE CARING

As students shared, it mattered to them that their teachers noticed how they were doing and showed that they cared about them. Spend time showing students care and concern through warm greetings and by checking in with them. Invite a positive connection from the moment students enter the classroom by [standing at the door to greet them](#).¹⁵ When you see students show strong emotions (whether excited, angry, or anything in between), check in with them with a quick, “What’s going on?” (Consider whether the check-in should occur in front of the entire class or in a more confidential setting.) Make sure to listen intently, sincerely, and with empathy, to help students feel seen and heard. Find additional strategies to demonstrate caring [here](#).¹⁶

FINDING SIMILARITIES

Teachers and students talked about the importance of getting to know one another on a personal level. Finding shared interests can help facilitate conversations and build relationships. Ask students questions about themselves to discover what you share in common with them. A recent study found that when a teacher found five similarities with their students' responses in a [“Get to Know You” survey](#), teachers rated those relationships more positively.¹⁷ When teachers learned about those commonalities, their students earned higher grades in class. Learn more about the study [here](#).¹⁸

THE TWO-MINUTE RELATIONSHIP BUILDER

Being more intentional and aware about connecting with all students can help build the foundation for equitable classroom practices and collaborative problem-solving with each child. The “Two-by-Ten” strategy is described as, “a way to not only break the ice but also form the foundation for a sustainable relationship—and better classroom behavior.”¹⁹ Teachers who have used this strategy have found it particularly helpful to engage students with whom they are having a hard time connecting due to behavioral challenges. To use this strategy, teachers spend two minutes a day getting to know a student for ten consecutive days. By having at least one teacher or staff member use this plan with every student at the school, it offers all students the opportunity for positive connection with an adult at their school, which can encourage a sense of safety and security. During these points of connection, teachers seek to learn more about students outside of the classroom, for example, about their hobbies, favorite foods, or after school activities. Read more about how other teachers have used the strategy [here](#).²⁰

What have we learned?

Fostering positive teacher-student relationships helps create environments conducive to optimal learning experiences and social-emotional wellbeing. From speaking with teachers and students, we learned that taking the time to check in, using positive approaches that demonstrate kindness and patience, and incorporating fun in the classroom can help students feel more connected and valued by their teachers. While building these kinds of relationships takes time, by incorporating small, intentional practices into the day, teachers can find ways to strengthen their relationships and have a positive and long-lasting impact on the whole child.

Additional Resources to Explore

[“How to Build Relationships Quickly”](#) by Eyka Stephens & William Sprankles. Offers a list of simple, quick practices and practical advice to help create an authentic teacher-student connection.

[“Improving Students’ Relationships with Teachers to Provide Essential Supports for Learning”](#) by Sara Rimm-Kaufman and Lia Sandilos. Offers more information about the impact of strong teacher-student connection, as well as “Do’s and Don’ts” to cultivating positive relationships.

[“Developing Positive Teacher-Student Relations”](#) by Mark Boynton and Christine Boynton. Offers strategies to integrate into everyday interactions with students.

Learn more about the importance of strong relationships and other key components for fostering optimal social-emotional learning (SEL) with Transforming Education’s SEL Integration Approach by clicking [here](#).

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A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders

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Colorín Colorado is a free, bilingual web-based service that provides research-based information, activities, and advice for the families and educators of English language learners (ELLs).

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Introduction

Imagine that a new immigrant family has moved into the neighborhood your school serves. What is already in place to make this family feel welcome? What programs does the school offer that would inspire and challenge their children? What still needs some work?

If you feel there is a lot of room for improvement in meeting the needs of your English language learner (ELL) students and their families, you're not alone! With more than 5.3 million ELLs in U.S. schools who make up roughly ten percent of the PreK-12 population (NCELA, 2011), numerous school leaders around the country are, as Buffalo principal Kevin Eberle puts it, "[flying the plane while building it](#)." It's never too late to start engaging your ELL families, however, no matter how limited or ineffective those efforts have been in the past.

Making ELL Success a Priority

School leaders are in a unique position to create a culture of success within their school community. As with other students, an important aspect of ELL success is family engagement. While you may be fortunate to have an energetic and passionate ELL teacher or bilingual liaison who has worked successfully with ELL families in the past, this is not the job of a single person. Engaging ELL families can only work if *all* members of the community (including administrators, staff, parents, and students) are committed to the broader mission. The road will probably be bumpy at first and will most certainly require you to think outside of the box – the keys to your success may surprise you! In the end, though, the result is the same: parents, students, and educators working together towards a brighter future.

When you find what works for your ELL families (which may or may not be the same as what works for the ELL families at a neighboring school), you will feel as though you have won the lottery. Engaged ELL parents possess depths of dedication and wisdom regarding their children that will take your breath away. They have so much to offer – if the community is ready to embrace them and listen to what they have to say. This is where you, as a school leader, can make important strides in changing the conversation from "What can they learn from us?" to "What can we learn from each other?"

"Parent Involvement" vs. "Parent Engagement"

In their book [Building Parent Engagement in Schools](#), Larry Ferlazzo and Lorie Hammond explore a distinction between *parent involvement* and *parent engagement*. Parent involvement, as they define it, starts with the school: "The ideas and energy come from the schools and government mandates. Schools try to 'sell' their ideas to parents. School staff and public institutions might feel they know what the problems are and how to fix them, and determine the criteria to use in evaluating success."

Parent engagement, however, begins with the parents: "Ideas are elicited from parents by school staff in the context of developing trusting relationships. They emerge from parent/community needs and priorities. More parent energy drives the efforts (6)." This approach is more sustainable than asking your busy staff to plan numerous parent activities, take on extra responsibilities, and dig even deeper into their energy reserves (2). In addition, the more parents have the opportunity to shape activities and programs that help their families, the more invested they will be in seeing those efforts succeed.

Think of your ELL parents as a team waiting to be mobilized; while it will take some time and energy to get the team up and running (and to help them understand how valuable their contributions are), once everything is working, you will wonder how you ever got along without them!

Using This Guide

This guide offers twenty big ideas to help you create a new ELL family engagement plan. These ideas are designed to help you:

- Strengthen home-school partnerships on behalf of ELL students
- Recognize and build upon your ELL parents' strengths
- Harness the energy and ideas of staff, parents, and students in shaping those partnerships
- Mobilize and empower staff to become teacher leaders
- Engage school-wide staff members beyond the ELL/bilingual departments
- Create a culture of respect throughout the school community
- Learn how to advocate for and allocate resources on behalf of ELL families
- Encourage all participants to keep trying new, creative approaches until they find what works
- Implement the changes needed to make your new plan successful.

The ideas are organized around six major themes:

- Connecting with ELL Families
- Communicating Important Information
- Parent Participation
- Parents as Leaders
- Community Partnerships
- Creating an Action Plan

Each idea has four components:

- **What you need to know:** Background information and context
- **Reflection:** Questions about your own school setting that can be used for professional development activities with individuals or groups
- **Strategies:** Specific, concrete strategies targeted for an audience of PreK-12 administrators
- **Examples:** Stories shared by educators and administrators around the country

As you get started, we recommend that you look for the ideas that best fit your population rather than trying to absorb all of the strategies at once. You will most likely need to try different approaches in order to find what works best for your families — but the important thing is to keep trying until you do.

Note: Links to additional resources on Colorín Colorado and other ELL websites are included in each section, as well as highlighted notes and recommended resources in the appendices at the end of the guide. If you have additional ideas or resources that you would like to recommend, feel free to share them in an e-mail to info@colorincolorado.org!



Part I: CONNECTING WITH ELL FAMILIES

1. Learn about your ELL population

A. What you need to know

Learning about your ELL families provides an important foundation for everything else you do at the school. Even basic information about students' ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, or the situations from which they have come, can help you match students with the appropriate services and programs.

B. Reflection

Answer the following questions about your ELL families using a [KWL chart](#):

- What do you know about your ELL students and families?
- What do you want to learn?
- Who on the staff works most closely with your ELL families?
- What would be valuable for your school-wide staff to know?

C. Strategies

If you do not yet know this information about your ELLs, find out:

- What countries your families come from
- How many of your ELLs were born in the U.S.
- What languages they speak (which may be at least two or three!)
- If families who speak the same language, such as Spanish, come from different countries or different regions within the same country
- The educational background of families and the school system of their countries
- If any of your ELLs are [migrants](#), [refugees](#), or [students with interrupted formal education](#)
- If your families have experienced war or another [traumatic event](#) such as a [natural disaster](#).

In order to learn more about your ELL families:

- Start with your ELL/bilingual educators.** These individuals are an important resource whose experience working with ELL students and families can benefit the entire school community – and they will appreciate the opportunity to share their expertise!
- Find out what resources are available from the district and community.** This may include helpful background information as well as a network of interpreters.
- Enlist a knowledgeable staff member, community member, or parent.** If you find such a person, examine his/her background as it relates to what you need. For example, you may know a Somali young adult who is bilingual but doesn't remember Somalia. He may be more helpful as an interpreter than as a liaison for Somali families who have just arrived in the U.S.
- Ask the families.** You may want to include some questions in your [home language survey](#) or a very basic questionnaire that ELL parents fill out with an interpreter during student enrollment.

Note: Remember that your ELL population is not homogeneous. The child of a migrant worker from Mexico and the child of a teacher from Mexico probably won't have the same educational and economic needs. Learn what you can about each child's unique circumstances to the extent possible.

D. Example

- ❖ An administrator from Minnesota wanted to better understand the needs of the children who were arriving at her school directly from Kenyan refugee camps. She wrote a grant that enabled her to travel to Kenya and visit the camps from which they were coming. What she learned at the camps was not only helpful for her; it was helpful for the entire staff. Based on her experience, she was also able to prevent some major misunderstandings around discipline issues. (Related video: [Understanding Student Background](#), Dr. Cynthia Lundgren)



2. Integrate cultural traditions of your ELL families throughout the school

A. What you need to know

Becoming familiar with and including the cultural traditions of your ELL families within the larger school community not only enhances your ability to create a welcoming and respectful school environment – it has practical considerations as well. These include:

- **Scheduling:** Scheduling around important cultural or religious holidays will help prevent large numbers of students from missing important instruction time, exams, and school events.
- **Classroom opportunities:** Familiarity with ELL families' cultural traditions will provide teachers a base from which to build upon ELLs' [background knowledge](#), create educational opportunities for other students, and foster a sense of respect among students for their peers.
- **Improved communication:** Learning about your ELL families' traditions may help avoid miscommunication or cultural blunders that can damage a budding relationship.

B. Reflection

What are your ELLs' cultural behaviors and values? Which celebrations and holidays do they observe? How does your staff feel about the changes in your school population? How do they feel about working with ELLs?

C. Strategies

- Avoid scheduling important events such as conferences or tests on major holidays and celebrations that large numbers of students are likely to miss.
- Share these dates with the entire staff.
- Share information about cultural celebrations with teachers so that they are able to positively support them and incorporate them into lessons. Even a simple memo that explains why students will be out and offers some ideas for follow-up activities will be helpful. (Encourage teachers to start with children's books, which often have background information and activities, such as these titles about [Ramadan](#), [Chinese New Year](#), and [Día de los muertos](#).)
- Learn about, recognize, and celebrate [special events or holidays](#) throughout the school.
- Invite parents to share food, activities, and music at school events and in the classroom.
- Encourage students to share traditions in school assemblies, talent shows, potlucks, and fairs.
- Offer food that reflects the cultural influences of your families on the cafeteria menu.
- Be mindful that students who are fasting may be less energetic in the afternoon. If possible, avoid school-wide parties or food-centered activities during these times.

Notes: Staff may resist the changes happening around them, and they may be uncomfortable discussing those changes. Such was the case of a school custodian in Minnesota who asked a receptionist “why they (the Muslim students) get special days off and we can't even celebrate Christmas.” Dr. Lundgren explains the importance of having an open, non-threatening conversation with the entire staff that acknowledges the challenges of serving a new ELL population and explores steps the school can take to address those challenges. (Related video: [Cultural shifts](#), Dr. Lundgren)

You may find it helpful to bring in a neutral, outside party who specializes in cross-cultural education and communication in order to help moderate these conversations if they seem particularly fraught with tension. An open dialogue with a professional will give your staff the tools they need to adjust to the new reality and create a more positive, welcoming environment for everyone in the school.

D. Examples

- ❖ Storyteller Lucía González remembers a storyteller-in-residence program she led at a Colorado elementary school. The program was going to culminate with a Spanish-language story hour for the Latino families at the school. On the night of the event, the weather was bad, and few people had arrived as she was getting ready to start. Seeing the small crowd, the principal turned to her and said, “Don't worry if they don't come, because usually they don't come.” At 7:00 p.m., however, the parents began to arrive, led by the excited children who had heard her stories. (Related video: [A dream come true - The Storyteller's Candle](#), Lucía González)
- ❖ A group of Muslim students at Forest Heights Collegiate Institute in Ontario approached principal Jim Woolley about finding a place to pray within the school. After working with an immigration settlement worker and local *imam*, the school reserved a classroom in which students pray on Friday afternoon after the school is closed. They use the classroom and then lock the door when they finish. According to Mr. Woolley, it doesn't cost the school anything and it doesn't require supervision. “We trust them,” he said (D'Amato, 2011).



3. Create a welcoming environment for families

A. What you need to know

A welcoming environment can make a tremendous difference for all families, including ELL families. Entering a friendly, vibrant atmosphere lets families know that the school is “an integral part of the community” (Houk, 63) and that they are valued members of that community. This is especially important for immigrant families who may be intimidated by the formal school environment and the English language needed to participate.

Another way to think of this is to keep your ELLs visible. ELLs are often treated as an invisible minority, but ELLs and their families should “see themselves” throughout the school:

- On the walls, through student work and photos
- In the classroom, with books and lessons that incorporate their experiences and traditions
- In school-wide cultural activities
- In the faces of staff and volunteers who come from similar backgrounds.

B. Reflection

Imagine that you have arrived in a new country where you don’t speak the language and where you will be enrolling your child in a local school. Think about arriving at the school for the first time, only to discover that no one at the school speaks English. Imagine the feeling of leaving your child in the hands of people with whom you can’t communicate. Now envision, instead, that someone who speaks English greets you at the door, and you see a picture of an American flag in the front hallway. What might you be able to accomplish as a parent in the second situation that you wouldn’t in the first?

C. Strategies

- Make sure parents know how to get into the building, especially if doors are usually locked during the school day.
- Post signs in multiple languages.
- Display student work on the walls.
- Display student and family photos on the walls.
- Display the maps and flags of your students’ native countries.
- Display a large map in the front lobby where parents can mark their native countries with a pin.
- Enlist a bilingual morning greeter to welcome students and families.
- Ensure that your bilingual staff and volunteers are visible throughout the building.
- Create a parent room (such as a lounge or classroom) with bilingual information and magazine subscriptions, a bulletin board, a lending library, and a computer (Houk, 58, 63).
- Include bilingual books in the [school library](#) and classrooms.
- Consider playing music in the front entryway or lobby.
- Encourage teachers to create a [welcoming environment](#) within the classroom.
- Consult the federally supported [Parent Information Resource Centers](#) (PIRCs) for other ideas. Your state chapter may have a “walk through” protocol, such as this guide from [PIRC Vermont](#).

D. Example

- ❖ At [Lincoln Options School](#), in Olympia, Washington, there are photos of the entire school community – students, staff, and families – to greet guests in the front lobby. Each year, the school hires a photographer to attend its annual back-to-school barbeque and take informal photos (Houk, 9). In addition, student work is posted throughout the building (16).



4. Make a personal connection with families

A. What you need to know

Getting to know ELL families helps build an important relationship based on trust, which in turn can pave the way to student success. This approach is most effective when the communication is personal and face-to-face (Hori, 40; Alford 85). While it will require additional time and effort, building a more personal relationship with ELL families early in the year will yield big dividends throughout the rest of the year (Hori, 40). It will also provide opportunities for the staff to see just how deeply ELL parents care about their children's education.

Indeed, as Dr. Lundgren notes, many ELL families have come to this country with the hopes of offering their children a better future, and they are eager to talk with their children's teachers about what they can do to help their child be successful. (Related video: [A better life](#), Dr. Lundgren)

B. Reflection

What are the challenges in meeting your ELL families personally? What are some ways to facilitate more personal interaction?

C. Strategies

- Hold a special back-to-school event or picnic for ELL families in which they have time to meet you, other school leaders, their children's teachers, and school staff.
- Create a welcome DVD in multiple languages. This may even be a great student project!
- Provide staff the opportunity to learn some common phrases in your families' languages, as well as cultural gestures.
- Visit local neighborhoods to meet families.
- Connect new families with a contact person who speaks their language as soon as they enroll in the school for guidance and information (Houk, 66).
- Create an "ambassador" program in which students and parents are trained to give tours.

D. Examples

- ❖ Educator Maricela Rincon in Las Cruces, NM calls a different parent every day to share something positive about his/her child. According to Rincon, some parents say, "This is the first time I've had a positive phone call about my child." While Rincon is enthusiastic about the calls, they weren't her idea - they were required by the school principal (Flannery, NEA.org). (Related video: [Parent outreach in high school](#) under *Adolescent ELLs* playlist, Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens)
- ❖ A group of school educators asked experts from a local university to help them learn more about their ELL community. After the initial conversation, it was clear that the school leaders assumed that the parents' lack of input, communication, and attendance reflected a lack of interest in their child's education. After getting some parent input, however, the educators discovered that the parents weren't enthusiastic about the school letters inviting them to events. They didn't feel that the events were planned with them in mind, and the letters seemed very impersonal. The parents didn't see the letters as the invitations they were intended to be. They expressed preference for more personal contact and invitations from the school, at least in the beginning of the year, in order to establish a strong relationship (Alford and Niño, 81-82).

- ❖ This is an excerpt from a parent letter to the principal about her first visit to her child's school:

I was very surprised when we were not able to speak to Lupe's teacher, Mrs. Gibbons, individually. In Guatemala we all knew the teachers and the teachers knew the parents...We do not know anyone here nor does anyone know us...we would have liked to tell Mrs. Gibbons how much we value education (Amaya, 53).



5. Show that you value families' native languages

A. What you need to know

As the school leader, one of your most important roles is defining the terms of engagement when it comes to ELLs' native languages. Do you see those languages as a barrier or an asset? Do you see native language literacy and instruction as a crutch or a tool?

Unfortunately, the political climate often dictates district or state policy regarding native language support (Wright, 51), and important information regarding the value of native language literacy is often left out of the debate. Frequently, ELL parents themselves are the party most resistant to promoting their native language at home or in school because they believe it will hinder their child's ability to learn English. While this belief is entirely understandable, the research is clear that strong native language skills contribute to ELLs' academic success throughout their education – in their native language *and* in English.

What can you do to navigate this tricky terrain and encourage the continued development of students' native language skills, as well as biliteracy and bilingualism for all students?

- **Respect parents' intentions:** It is critical to assure parents that you respect their wishes and goals for their children; you can do so by explaining that strong native language skills will help their children learn English. This reassures parents that you have their children's best interests at heart and that you view their native language as an asset, not an obstacle.
- **Encourage native language use at home:** Don't miss any opportunity to encourage parents to use their native language, whether it's through reading (which will help their children's [reading skills in English](#)) or taking the time to talk to each other at home. Look for ways that the school can support this interaction by offering bilingual books, educational materials, and activities.
- **Professional development:** Provide training to all staff on the importance of maintaining students' native language and ways in which they can support students' bilingual development. Understandably, many teachers still feel that the best way to help ELLs is to forbid native language use in the classroom. Often, in this case, the teachers have good intentions – they just need more information. There may also be some anxiety about not being able to understand what students are saying. The best way to address this issue is through good professional development with an expert in [second language](#) or [dual-language acquisition](#). Not only will the staff learn strategies that will help them and their students, they will learn how to answer parent questions about this topic with confidence as well!

B. Reflection

What is the current attitude towards ELLs' native languages in your school? Is a student's use of his/her native language encouraged or discouraged in the classroom? Do parents know where to get information in their language? How do teachers approach this issue?

C. Strategies

- Post information in multiple languages.
- Discuss with parents the value of strong native language skills and being bilingual.
- Encourage parents to read or tell stories to their children in their native language.
- Offer parent sessions, workshops, and classes in parents' native languages (Meyers, 44).
- Include [books in students' native languages](#) in the school and classroom libraries (Freeman, 42).
- Make resources available to students in their native languages to support content learning.
- Consider the possibility of adding academic coursework (such as Spanish Literature for Spanish speakers) or AP courses in students' native languages.
- Hire bilingual staff and recruit bilingual volunteers to the extent possible.
- Inform parents that they are welcome to bring their own interpreter to a school meeting.
- Provide training to all staff on why maintaining students' native language is important and how to support students' bilingual development.
- Offer staff guidance on how to respond to parents' questions and comments.

D. Examples

- ❖ In Illinois' Evanston/Skokie School District 65, parents are continually encouraged to use their native language at home and read to their children in their native languages daily. Washington School, a two-way immersion school, offers a family literacy program funded with a state grant in which parents participate in afternoon and evening literacy activities at the school and public libraries. Parents also learn how to help their children with homework - all in their native language (Yturriago, 51-52).
- ❖ At Webster Elementary School in Long Beach, California, the school library has a large collection of books in Spanish and Samoan, the two dominant languages of the school's ELLs. Parents are encouraged to borrow books and bring younger siblings to the library (Houk, 45-56).



Part II: COMMUNICATING IMPORTANT INFORMATION

6. Find ways to communicate with ELL parents

A. What you need to know

One of the greatest challenges for schools and ELL parents is communicating with each other. While educators may feel frustrated that they can't get their message across to parents, parents may be just as frustrated that they can't communicate easily with the school and their child's teacher. Like your other parents, however, ELL parents want to know what's happening with their child. Two important pieces of this puzzle include:

- **A reliable translation process:** In [*Supporting English Language Learners: A Guide for Teachers and Administrators*](#), Farin A. Houk underscores the importance of establishing two-way communication on both sides, as well as the necessity for a translation process that is “formal, steady, and reliable” (64). What does not work, she says, is sending notes home in English, talking slower or louder, using students to translate, or asking a friend or relative to translate confidential or detailed information. She also underscores the importance of having options for families with limited literacy skills (65-66).
- **Phone calls:** Offer staff training on communicating in simplified English on the phone. Monolingual staff may be reluctant to call the homes of bilingual students because “they won't be able to understand anyway.” As a result, the bilingual staff members are frequently called upon to stop what they are doing to translate. With some guidance, however, teachers can learn how to communicate basic information through a simplified conversation or message.

B. Reflection

How would you describe the communication at your school with ELL parents? Have you had some success stories? Have you explored all of your available options? Are you familiar with applicable local, state, and federal regulations regarding translations and parent access to information?

C. Strategies

In order to improve school-home communication, Houk suggests:

- Hiring, when possible, staff that matches the linguistic needs of your population
- Developing an ongoing relationship with community organizations
- Scheduling home-school communication time into the school day for e-mails or phone calls
- Using parent phone trees (65-66).

In addition:

- Find out what the applicable regulations are that relate to parent communication.
- Find out what translation and interpreting resources are available in your district.
- Use school staff to help interpret on a rotating or scheduled basis so that the same individuals aren't frequently pulled away from other duties.
- Ask parents how they prefer to receive communication (phone, e-mail, text message, etc.).
- Ask parents which language they prefer – it may be English.
- Inform parents that they can bring an interpreter to the school or that one can be provided.
- Avoid using translation websites, which are imprecise and often inaccurate.

Notes: You may have parents with strong bilingual skills that can assist in translating school forms or interpreting. If you do plan on using these parents, however, offer training, provide a list of translated terms, give them enough time to complete the translation, and have other native speakers review written translations (Rodriguez, 48). This is critical because school terms can be complicated and easily misrepresented, especially when translated into varying dialects of the same language.

D. Examples

- ❖ One educator shares the creative way she used an automated voice message: “Over the entire Christmas holidays, parents heard my recorded voice remind them of the financial aid workshops. That proved very helpful...They just need those reminders. They want our students to go to college, but sometimes that fear about the ability to pay is overwhelming” (Alford and Niño, 88).
- ❖ The Bilingual PreK-3 Teacher Education Program, a federally-funded grant administered through Pacific Oaks College Northwest, was created to increase the number of certified educators from ELL/minority communities teaching in the public schools. One way they accomplish this mission is by helping talented early bilingual childhood educators in the local preschool programs fulfill the necessary requirements to become certified (Houk, 33-34).



7. Make the enrollment process manageable for ELL parents

A. What you need to know

School enrollment is a complicated process for any family. There are forms to be filled out, decisions to be made, policies to be read, programs to learn about, and questions to be answered. For ELL families, a number of other obstacles can arise:

- There is no interpreter available.
- Parents are unaware of services (such as free- and reduced-lunch) for which they qualify.
- They don't understand how bussing works.
- They are confused about their rights and their children's rights.
- They are reluctant to show any form of identification.

In addition, your ELL families may be coming from:

- A school system very different from the U.S. system
- A situation with a lot of mobility (as in the case of migrant students)
- A situation without any schooling at all (such as a refugee camp).

Yet regardless of how it's done, ELL parents **must** have access to the same information as non-ELL parents. Sending information home in English will not ensure that it is read and understood. Getting this information doesn't just help the school operate more smoothly – it can make a critical difference in keeping children healthy and safe.

Whether through translated forms or an interpreter, ELL parents need to know about the basics, such as:

- Enrollment procedures
- The school schedule
- Their child's schedule
- Attendance policies and procedures for absences
- Bussing and transportation
- How breakfast and lunch work (such as lunch accounts, codes, or policies)
- Free- and reduced-lunch options
- Holidays and school closures
- Weather delays
- Procedures for alerting the school to their child's medical conditions, medication, and allergies.

ELL also parents need information about their child's academic program, such as:

- Their child's classes and [who their child's teachers are](#)
- The school grading system and report cards
- [Assessments](#) (classroom and standardized)
- [Parent conferences](#)
- Information about the English-language program and placement procedures (121)
- Special services, such as gifted programs or [special education](#) as needed
- Homework help and resources
- The school library
- Clubs, sports, and extra-curricular activities.

Finally, Debbie Zacarian underscores the importance of sharing information about the following in her book, [Transforming Schools for English Language Learners: A Comprehensive Framework for School Leaders](#):

- ❑ Student and parent rights
- ❑ Emergency contact cards and procedures
- ❑ The student handbook and code of conduct (121).

Additional topics are included in the article [Helping ELL Newcomers: Things Your Students Need to Know](#), an excerpt from [The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher](#) (3rd edition) by Barbara Law and Mary Eckes.

B. Reflection

Think through your enrollment process step by step. How does it work for ELL families? Do parents get all of the information they need? What might be some possible obstacles to that process? Which steps do you think need improvement?

C. Strategies

There are a number of ways to approach the enrollment process for ELL families, including:

- **Bilingual staff:** When possible, hire bilingual staff to work in the main office.
- **Translated forms:** Many of the more general forms are available in other languages from the state education sites, and there may already be some translations available through your district.
- **Enrollment night:** Schedule an “enrollment night” in which families can learn about the enrollment process and school policies with interpreters on hand.
- **School liaisons:** Assign each family a school contact who speaks their language and guides them through the enrollment process (Houk, 66).
- **Welcome centers:** Having a centralized ELL welcome/intake center managed by bilingual staff may help streamline enrollment and placement procedures.
- **Welcome kits:** Put together a “[welcome kit](#)” that includes key information, basic school supplies, and educational activities for your ELL families.
- **Technology:** Consider offering translations of your forms online, such as these from [Los Angeles Unified School District](#), or an automated enrollment form in multiple languages.

D. Example

- ❖ In the article [Lessons Learned from Immigrant Families](#), Young-Chan Han of the Maryland Department of Education shares the story of a young boy from El Salvador who waited outside the locked school on a cold January morning for an hour until the janitor let him in. It was his first day, and it happened to be the morning of a snow delay.



8. Make the enrollment process accessible all year long

A. What you need to know

Keep in mind that your school must be ready to enroll ELLs throughout the school year. Many schools are prepared for enrollment only at the beginning of the year, and anyone who registers after that gets a short-cut “fill and drill,” especially if no interpreters are available. Staff may be pulled from their regular duties to translate and help families fill out forms; this is not an acceptable solution.

B. Reflection

How does the experience of a new student enrolling at the beginning of the year compare with a student enrolling in November? January? March? How does it compare for ELLs?

C. Strategies

- Ask the staff involved in ELL student enrollment (including the main office staff and the ELL/bilingual departments) for ideas on how the school can make the enrollment process welcoming and accessible all year long.
- Make sure all of the information available for parents and staff at the beginning of the year is accessible throughout the year.
- Ask parents who enrolled their children after the beginning of previous school years what their experience was like and what could have been improved through a survey or questionnaire.

D. Example

- ❖ Kristina Roberston shares a creative approach that her school employed in order to limit the impact of new student enrollment on lost classroom time. This involved training paraprofessionals who could be pulled more easily from support work to help enrolling families. The paraprofessionals received training on the packet of information that parents received, and this allowed the school to have more than one person available to assist new families. The school also set up regular testing times after school when teachers would be available, even if a student had already begun classes.



9. Provide opportunities for parents to learn more about important topics and skills

A. What you need to know

For [parents who are not familiar](#) with the U.S. educational system, there is a lot to learn – and it’s pretty complicated! If your ELL families aren’t “involved” in activities and events, one reason may be that they need more background information about our school system in a language they understand.

B. Reflection

Let’s return to the hypothetical new country where you are preparing to enroll your child. Imagine that you are handed a thick booklet with information about standardized testing, grading systems, and college applications written a language you don’t understand. Where would you begin in order to help your child?

C. Strategies

Whenever possible, offer parents the opportunity to attend workshops in their native language about complex topics such as:

- The U.S. school system (The AFTs’ bilingual [Pathways to Success](#) brochure is a helpful guide.)
- Information on how to check school websites to track their child’s progress
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Standardized testing
- Gifted programs
- Special education services for speech, hearing, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, etc.
- The college application process
- Information on the benefits of reading at home (Start with Colorín Colorado’s reading tips in [11 languages](#) and [family literacy outreach toolkit](#)).

Note: Consider enlisting other staff members, parents, volunteers, or community partners to help organize and run these workshops.

D. Examples

- ❖ At Greenfield Elementary School, ELL parents participate in an ESL class which teaches computer skills in addition to basic English skills. Parents write a bilingual cookbook of recipes as a final project, and each week they attend a potluck dinner together. Children work on their homework with high school volunteers while their parents are in class (Fugate, 50).
- ❖ A local educator decided to hold a Spanish-language information session about college enrollment at a local church. The meeting was listed in the newspaper, announced at the church, and publicized through personal outreach. The organizer had planned for about twenty parents; instead, more than eighty attended (Alford & Niño, 83).
- ❖ Another educator at a different school helped organize a “Math Power Path Night,” in which class projects were arranged along a guided path so that parents could see the sequence of recommended math classes that their children should take. The principal had expected fifty parents; more than two hundred came (83)!



Part III: PARENT PARTICIPATION

10. Look for ways that ELL parents can help with children's schoolwork

A. What you need to know

ELL parents may feel intimidated by or unprepared to help with homework or other schoolwork, especially if they have limited educational or English skills (Zarate, 9). You can help them understand their important role in supporting their child's success, however, with a few simple suggestions. (Related video: [Reaching out to families](#), Kevin Eberle)

B. Reflection

What kinds of support do you expect your parents to give their children in terms of schoolwork? What kinds of resources and educational background (and language skills) do parents need in order to give their children that help? What are other ways parents can help?

C. Strategies

Encourage parents to:

- Provide a place where children can do [their homework](#)
- Check that homework is completed each night
- Ask their children to tell them about what they learned each day
- Keep in regular contact with a teacher or staff member about their child's progress
- Ask teachers about any questions that arise
- Learn more about homework help programs through before-/after-school programs and the public library
- Read and tell stories in their native language.

D. Example

- ❖ Marty Izaguirre is an ELL teacher in Okatie, South Carolina. Her elementary school holds [Family Literacy Nights](#), which take place after school every other month and provide working parents with an opportunity to read to their children in both English and Spanish. Once parents come in, they find read-aloud circles (where teachers read books aloud to a small group), as well as areas where they can go and read with their child separately. The variety of activities provided to the parents allows them to join in an activity in which they feel comfortable. Adults and children are allowed time and space to read together. The school also provides an opportunity for parents and children to create their own special bookmark as they enjoy some refreshments. The events offer parents an opportunity to meet other parents, show their children the importance of reading, and learn how to support literacy development at home (Izaguirre, 2006).



11. Look for ways that ELL parents can participate and volunteer

A. What you need to know

There are a number of ways to include parents in the school community and to bring them together with other families at the school. This might include school visits, volunteering, or activities that draw upon their skills and hobbies.

B. Reflection

How likely are ELL parents at your school to sign up for events or volunteer? Do they know about all of the opportunities at the school? Are there certain events or places in the school where your active parents tend to gather? Do you know what skills and talents they might have to offer?

C. Strategies

- Invite parents to visit the school and their child's classroom regularly (Houk, 66).
- Invite parents to speak with their child's class about their native country, a hobby, or their job.
- Encourage teachers to have an inviting activity ready for visiting parents.
- Encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, main office, lunchroom, or library; during events or field trips; or in a student club or after-school program (Meyers, 45). (Keep in mind that volunteering may include simple things like preparing items for an activity – such as cutting out shapes and organizing supplies.) Judie Haynes offers a number of ideas in [Working with Bilingual Parent Volunteers](#) on [EverythingESL.net](#).
- Find out what your parents' skills and hobbies are, and look for ways to draw on their talents.
- Find ways to bring ELL and non-ELL families together through student performances, a student cultures night, storytelling, workshops, and exhibits (Meyers, 46). Your families might just realize that they have more in common than you – and they – originally thought!

D. Examples

- ❖ Indiana teacher Miriam Soto-Pressley invites the parents of her ELLs into her classroom during reading time. The parents follow along with their children and they learn about read-alouds and how to interact with text. This helps them work with their children at home to increase reading comprehension.
- ❖ A group of Latino parents at a preschool center in Florida who frequently sat outside in the sun waiting for their children each afternoon built a parent gazebo for the center, as well as a butterfly garden (Alvarado, 2010).
- ❖ Following the arrival of a new group of students from El Salvador and Puerto Rico to a school in Massachusetts, a group of teachers decided to organize a school play that would be performed in Spanish. They distributed bilingual flyers to tell parents about auditions and asked parents to help with costumes and refreshments (based on earlier conversations they had had with the parents). On opening night, the auditorium was filled, and the school held multiple performances to accommodate parents' different work schedules. Word soon spread around the community about the play, and the students were invited to perform at other schools. By the final performance, more parent volunteers were participating in the school community than at any other time in the school's history (Zacarian, 119).



12. Think outside the box about parent engagement

A. What you need to know

One of the most important steps in engaging ELL parents is to realize that they may be coming from a very different cultural perspective when it comes to the educational system and their role in their child's education (Houk, 60). This may be due, in part, to:

- **Deep respect for teachers:** Many ELLs come from cultures which revere teaching and where the teachers are considered the experts, not the parents. As a result, parents may be reluctant to ask questions so as not to question the teacher's authority, or they may assume that the schools don't want them to "interfere" in their child's education. Upon arrival in the U.S., newcomer parents may wonder why they are suddenly a school partner, and why in fact the school is asking the parent to do the teacher's job. As Betty Alford and Mary Catherine Niño note in [*Leading Academic Achievement for English Language Learners: A Guide for Principals*](#), you wouldn't expect a doctor to ask the parents which medical procedure they would recommend for their child (80), and ELL parents may feel the same way about what their school is asking them to do.
- **Education vs. *educación*:** These parents are likely to see an entirely different role for themselves in their child's education (Hori, 40). For Latino families, the idea of *educación* focuses on a child's personal and moral development, which has an important impact on the child's academic development. The authors of [*Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education: Perceptions, Expectations, and Recommendations*](#) note that, when asked, "(Latino) parents believed that monitoring their children's lives and providing moral guidance resulted in good classroom behavior, which in turn allowed for greater academic learning opportunities (9)."
- **The group vs. the individual:** It's also important to keep in mind that many cultures outside of the U.S. are oriented more towards the group (the family, the class, the society, etc.) than the individual. In their book [*Managing Diverse Classrooms: How to Build on Students' Cultural Strengths*](#), Carrie Rothstein-Fisch and Elise Trumbull explore this concept as it relates to the Latino ideas of *educación*:

One's social behavior in a group (such as the family or the classroom) is of paramount concern; being a respectful contributor to group well-being rather than focusing on one's own achievement is highly valued. So when immigrant Latino parents come for a parent-teacher conference, their first question is likely to be "*¿Cómo se porta mi hijo/hija?*" ("How is my son/daughter behaving?"). A teacher may find it difficult to stifle her consternation after hearing the same question from 25 or 30 sets of parents, believing that all the parents care about is their child's behavior, when the teacher's goal is to discuss the child's academic progress (13-14).

Nevertheless, what looks like a lack of interest to the teacher actually reflects a deep interest on the part of the parent in the child's personal development and how this will affect the child's ability to be successful in the classroom.

B. Reflection

Make a list of five things you hope or expect that "involved" parents will do at your school. What do parents need to know in order to participate in these events? What challenges might ELL parents face in participating in these events?

C. Strategies

Form small focus groups with ELL parents and an interpreter. Ask the parents:

- How they define their role in their child's education
- What their concerns, priorities, and hopes are regarding their child
- What kinds of events they would be interested in attending
- The obstacles that discourage them from participating and changes that would help
- Events where being part of a larger group might make them feel more comfortable.

D. Example

- ❖ Carrie Rothstein-Fisch and Elise Trumbull share the example of a teacher who redesigned her parent-teacher conferences into group conferences for her Latino parents. She divided children by ability levels and met with the parents of children in similar levels at the same time. She also offered both English and Spanish groups. She explained report card formats, grading, her expectations for students, and what parents could do to help. Parents then had the opportunity for a personal consultation after the group discussion. One of the key benefits was that parents' questions helped each other as they felt confident to speak up in a less threatening environment. She saw all twenty-eight parents in three days (62).



13. Consider alternative schedules, locations, and kinds of events

A. What you need to know

Sometimes, when families can't come to the school, the school has to go to the families. Meeting families in other settings such as community centers or churches can provide an informal way to start building a relationship, especially if ELL parents feel shy or nervous about going to the school. In addition, going into the community indicates a strong level of commitment on the part of the school to the families (Alford & Niño, 86). You might also try planning parent or family events around the schedules of the families, especially if they are working a couple of jobs or shifts.

B. Reflection

Do you experience low attendance at family events held at school? Have you ever held any school events in the community? Were they successful? Why or why not?

C. Strategies

- ❑ Visit your students' neighborhoods. Find out where families are congregating and who local community leaders are that can connect you with parents.
- ❑ Collaborate with apartment complex managers to make a recreation room available for families.
- ❑ Plan events in the community and put them on the school calendar before the school year starts, setting aside funds, such as Title I or Title III grants, to provide support for the events.
- ❑ Consider giving parents a few different options for meeting times based on teacher availability.
- ❑ Consider contacting parents' employers about parent schedules or holding conferences closer to parents' workplaces.
- ❑ Don't limit yourself to meetings. Ask your families what kinds of events they would find enjoyable, beneficial, and convenient.

D. Examples

- ❖ In Philadelphia, a preschool held a parent meeting in the afternoon for parents who worked in the food service industry in the evening. More than twenty parents (mostly fathers) came to the meeting (Alvarado, 2010) to discuss their children's preschool program.
- ❖ In Oregon, parent liaison [Ma'Lena Wirth](#) wrote a letter to her parents' employers, sharing her goals for building a stronger partnership with the families and explaining that most parents couldn't attend conferences due to their work schedule. As a result, the employer agreed to give parents time off for school events if the events started after the employer's busy season.
- ❖ In New York, Susan Lafond held parent-teacher-translator conferences at the food court where her students' parents worked so that parents could take turns coming to meet with her.
- ❖ In California, a group of teachers organized a meeting for the school's Hmong and Cambodian parents (whose people had been farmers for many generations), in which they would discuss the creation of a new school garden. The teachers were disappointed when just a few parents attended the meeting, and they took that as a sign that there was little interest in the garden. On garden day, however, eighty family members arrived with hoes and dug up the garden in a single day. As one of the parents said, "We don't do meetings. We do gardens" (Ferlazzo, 45).



14. Look for the successes

A. What you need to know

Encourage your staff to look for all of the different ways, big and small, that ELLs' families (including parents, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives) support their children's well-being and education. For example, different relatives may be involved in taking the children to school and picking them up, providing child care, or making sure that they are getting fed and getting a good night's sleep. While we expect all families to manage these responsibilities, ELL families may be going to extraordinary lengths to meet their children's basic needs. In addition, [older ELLs](#) have a lot of responsibilities in their family, including working, taking care of siblings, and translating for their parents. What looks like laziness, irresponsibility, or absenteeism may in fact be the result of a lot of responsibility at home.

Some of the successes and strengths of ELL students and families may include:

- Commitment to the family's well-being
- High expectations for children
- Making education a priority
- Respect for the teacher
- Good attendance and behavior
- Well-developed cooperation skills
- A strong sense of responsibility one's self and others
- Resourcefulness

Note: ELLs' parents might be largely absent from the picture, whether it's because of difficult work schedules or a family separation (or worse) that happened before moving to this country.

B. Reflection

What is a typical day like for your ELL students? Does that differ from the typical day of your other students? Where are they sleeping? Who is taking care of them? How do they get to school every day? What do they do after school? What challenges are they facing in their daily lives?

C. Strategies

- Learn what you can about your ELLs' routines (which will vary tremendously), including the responsibilities they have in their families. Share what you learn with your staff (observing confidentiality rules) and encourage your staff to look for all of the ways, big and small, that ELLs' families and extended families are supporting their children's well-being and education.
- Find out whether these responsibilities are taking a toll on students' school work or health, and if so, brainstorm some ideas with staff members about possible solutions.

D. Examples

- ❖ Susan Lafond notes that her elementary ESL teachers had students whose families brought them to the restaurant or family store where they worked so the children wouldn't be home alone. The kids helped out on the phone or register and did homework until the parents closed for the evening, which was often 9:00 PM or later.

- ❖ Kristina Robertson remembers a 3rd-grade student named Lisbeth. Lisbeth was very conscientious and came to school with neat clothing, clean and braided hair, and notebooks and pencils ready to go. When the staff did home visits, they were welcomed graciously by Lisbeth's parents to their home. In the apartment for a family with four children, the only furniture consisted of two chairs, a kitchen table, and a mattress. The parents spoke about the importance of their children's education and explained that every night they had their children do their homework at that kitchen table even though the parents didn't understand English. The teachers, who had been unaware of the family's limited circumstances, were incredibly moved by what they saw and developed a new appreciation for the parents' commitment to their children's education.
- ❖ Kristina also shares the experience of a 2nd-grade student who was missing school frequently. Kristina soon discovered that she was helping her mom (a single mom) babysit her younger siblings since they didn't have regular childcare. The staff met with the mom and helped her find resources to provide affordable childcare support.
- ❖ Finally, Kristina remembers her high school students who attended school from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and then worked from 4:00 p.m. until midnight. All of their money supported their relatives here and in their home country, so they never had extra money (or time) for special activities. Homework was a struggle, but in Kristina's eyes, her colleagues' attitudes were the most difficult challenges to overcome. Once teachers discovered why the students were coming to class so tired and how hard they were working, however, they worked to modify assignments and help the students.



Part IV: PARENTS AS LEADERS

15. Encourage ELL parents to take on leadership roles

A. What you need to know

While ELL parents may be underrepresented in leadership roles, some guidance and encouragement from school leaders can go a long way in building their confidence. It may be something small, such as soliciting ideas for school events, or something bigger such as asking them to serve on a parent advisory council or speaking at a school board meeting (Meyers, 45). Your parents know their children and community best, and they are likely to offer successful solutions to problems that the school community hadn't thought of before, particularly if they represent a large number of ELL families.

B. Reflection

Do your parent committees reflect your ELL population? Who is advocating for your ELL students?

C. Strategies

- ❑ Make sure that qualified interpreters are available so that parents can feel comfortable communicating their ideas in their native language. The negative encounter experienced by a gentleman who spoke in front of a recent [legislative hearing in Texas](#) underscores the importance of having an interpreter who can communicate nuances and intent.
- ❑ Consider developing a branch of the PTA for your ELL parents, organized by language. While it may seem to isolate or favor certain parents, it will allow ELL parents to become comfortable with the role the school is asking them to take on, to learn more about the school, and to build capacity. Once the parents feel more confident, bring them together with the larger PTA on a regular basis, and help the two groups communicate. (As in other cases, the way people respond to this step will depend on how you frame it. If people understand why you think it's beneficial for the entire school for ELL parents to become more involved in the PTA, they are more likely to support a separate ELL parent group. If you can organize such a group, sit in on a meeting to get a sense of what it's like to follow a PTA meeting in another language!)
- ❑ As your ELL parents become more familiar with the school policies and environment, ensure that ELL parents are represented in the PTA and parent advisory groups.
- ❑ Offer your ELL parents frequent and convenient opportunities to share input, ideas, and concerns with you and your teachers in a variety of venues (Houk, 67).
- ❑ Encourage parents to attend and speak up at school board meetings, even with an interpreter.
- ❑ Remind the school board members and district leaders to communicate policies/changes in your families' languages.
- ❑ Take parent input seriously, and don't ask for it until you are prepared to listen. As Houk notes, "Parents should not be 'included' to rubber stamp school decisions, or to provide affirmation for school staff about decisions made with no real input (68)." The message parents send may not be what you want to hear (69) and this may require some more flexibility and cross-cultural understanding on everyone's part. However, once you begin to hear their good ideas, you will realize that the learning curve is worth it!

D. Example

- ❖ Marla Hori from Skokie, Illinois describes a program in her district called “Bridge Parents.” One or two parents are enlisted from each language group to serve as leaders in engaging other parents around school during coffee hours at the school or parents’ homes. Marla also notes that these parents have helped the school as translators (40-41).



16. Look for ways to make parent leadership more sustainable

A. What you need to know

Parent leadership can be lost easily as students get older and transition to new schools. Think about putting a mentorship program in place to keep new parents engaged. The mentorship piece is essential because, in these roles, bilingual parents are asked to speak up and make decisions in a new cultural environment – and the cycle of building trust and respect must begin again.

B. Reflection

Think about your strongest parents at the school. How do you plan to replace them once their children move to another school? What barriers exist to developing bilingual leaders?

C. Strategies

- Form a panel of ELL parents to address questions and concerns.
- Designate parent leaders in each language group to engage other parents.
- Brainstorm with your ELL parent leaders about ways to recruit and mentor new parents.
- Learn from your parents' experiences and find out what they think will make a positive impact on future parents who are new to the U.S. school system.
- As parents prepare to step away from leadership responsibilities, ask them if they would be willing to mentor new parent leaders who are joining the community.
- Ask them for recommendations of other parent leaders that they have gotten to know.

D. Example

- ❖ ELL parents serve on a district Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) in Illinois' District 65, as mandated by Illinois Administrative School Code. Parents on the BPAC help the district:
 - Review grant applications and implement grant activities
 - Organize Spanish classes for the community
 - Review standardized assessment data
 - Advocate for programming at school board meetings
 - Volunteer and tutor in classrooms
 - Organize school events.

The BPAC parents were also instrumental in successfully lobbying the school board for a new two-way immersion program despite the board's initial resistance (Yturriago, 50-51).



Part V: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

17. Build partnerships with the local community

A. What you need to know

[Community organizations](#) are a valuable ally in engaging ELL families, whether it's by providing key services such as interpreters and medical care or educational opportunities such as GED, ESL, and citizenship classes. These partnerships can benefit your family and your partners alike, and they may lead to great opportunities for your students as well!

B. Reflection

Have you built any relationships with organizations in the community? If so, what are the successes and challenges you've experienced? Which social services do your families need most?

C. Strategies

- ❑ Consider offering local organizations free space in your school as a way to encourage them to bring their services closer to your families (Houk, 70).
- ❑ Ask your families which organizations they think would make good partners for the school community and which issues are of concern to them.
- ❑ Find out if your district has a community education department that might be able to support a partnership with a local organization.
- ❑ Invite members from the community to inform parents about their services, such as a local librarian, a nurse, or a firefighter.

Note: When inviting guests from the community to the school, assure parents that identification will not be checked and explain that they do not need to show proof of legal residency to sign up for a library card.

D. Examples

- ❖ Christine Pearsall from New York shares the following on the National Education Association's website: "Our school hosts monthly Latino Family meetings – hosted and conducted entirely in Spanish by Spanish-speaking staff. The turnout is incredible every time. We discuss issues of concern to the parents and community, as well as periodically bringing in outside speakers (i.e. reps. from the library, Census bureau, etc.)." She also recommends using students from local adult ESL programs as translators in these informal settings as "it helps them practice English, get extra credit for themselves" and support their fellow country people (Flannery, NEA.org).
- ❖ Highland Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland was chosen as a Blue Ribbon turnaround school by the Maryland State Department of Education in 2008. Part of its success, according to school principal, was its increased inclusion of the families. According to *The Washington Post*, "The school positioned itself as the center of its community, offering weekend soccer tournaments, English and computer classes for parents, and an array of other community services, from housing assistance to mental health counseling (de Vise, 2008)."



18. Get to know your neighbors

A. What you need to know

Changing demographics can lead to tensions in the local neighborhood. (Think Clint Eastwood's character in the movie *Gran Torino*.) You may find it very productive to build a stronger relationship with your school's local neighbors, for your sake and theirs as well!

B. Reflection

What is your school's relationship like with the local community? If your local demographics are changing, what is the community's response to that change? What are some of the needs of your local community? What are the social/emotional/health issues your students face that community agencies might be able to help with?

C. Strategies

- ❑ Look for ways that students can contribute to their neighbors (especially those who have young children or the elderly) by doing neighborhood clean-ups and volunteer work.
- ❑ Inform local neighbors about the opportunity to tutor, volunteer, or donate used goods to the school and ELL families.
- ❑ Look for places where interests and activities overlap. Consider posting a community board where everyone can post what they need or can offer.
- ❑ Look for fundraising opportunities, such as a local yard sale that raises money for a new parent center.
- ❑ Tell the community about the challenges your ELL families are facing. For example, if you have a new group of refugees arriving, collaborate with their placement agency to collect household items, furniture, and winter clothing.

D. Examples

- ❖ When the Extreme Makeover™ show came to Buffalo, NY, the students at [Kevin Eberle's school](#) took on an "extreme" neighborhood clean-up and food drive, raking leaves for the neighbors and collecting a record-breaking 85 tons of food. Their efforts did far more to change the attitude that local residents had about the school than any meeting could have done, and they attracted great publicity for the school's students.
- ❖ Following the 2010 Haitian earthquake, the phones at [Evans High in Orlando, FL](#) began ringing off the hook and the office was filled with visitors as concerned neighbors asked how they could help the school's more than 600+ Haitian students and families.



Part VI: CREATING A PLAN OF ACTION

19. Solicit ideas

A. What you need to know

A good place to begin developing a new approach to family engagement is by soliciting ideas from the school's ELL community – they know what they need. Remember, however, that no matter how many good ideas your teachers, parents, and students have, those ideas won't go very far without the support of the administration. The "idea well" will run dry if people feel that their ideas aren't welcomed by school leaders.

B. Reflection

Is there currently an avenue for teachers, parents, and students to share ideas about family outreach ideas at your school? Who tends to come to you with ideas about engaging or supporting your ELL students and families? What steps can you take to start that conversation and let the community know that their ideas are welcome?

C. Strategies

Ask for feedback from:

- ❑ **Staff:** Ask people across the school community what could be done to better engage ELL families. This includes ELL teachers, bilingual teachers, mainstream and content-area teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, the school nurse, cafeteria and custodial staff, and coaches. In what kinds of situations do they interact with ELL students and families? How could that interaction be improved?
- ❑ **Parents:** Get feedback on bilingual families' perceptions about the most burning needs for improving bilingual family involvement. This could be done through a survey about setting initial priorities and followed up with focus group conversations on selected topics. While it's not geared exclusively to ELL students, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, edited by Anne T. Henderson, Vivian Johnson, Karen L. Mapp, and Don Davies, offers a number of surveys as a starting point.
- ❑ **Students:** Don't forget to ask the students what they think – even the young ones! What information would really help their parents? What would make school events easier for their families to attend? How might their parents be able to contribute to the school? Since ELLs tend to have a lot of responsibility in their families, they often are unusually attuned to their parents' needs and strengths, as well as their own.

Once two or three priorities are set, the school can look at the resources available and think about how best to proceed in implementing these approaches. A small committee of staff members, parents, and students may also be helpful in designing an action plan.

D. Example

- ❖ At an early childhood program that Farin A. Houk visited, parents are encouraged to share ideas for monthly parent nights during their first meeting of the school year. Program leaders ask parents to think about what information they would like to have, and families might request help with topics such as supporting learning at home or discipline.



20. Look for the funding

A. What you need to know

Perhaps the juices are starting to flow and you are excited, but you know that it will be tough to find the necessary resources for your ELLs in this budget climate. The good news is that, with creativity and effort, you can fit some of these strategies into your existing structures. More importantly though, as a school leader, you are in the position to make ELL family engagement a priority by allocating the resources, no matter how limited, needed to make it happen.

B. Reflection

What sources of funding are you currently using for ELL family outreach? Are you familiar with Title I and Title III guidelines? Who offers local grants for family literacy and outreach?

C. Strategies

- ❑ Find out how familiar your staff or district contacts are with Title I/Title III possibilities. If you need more information, get in touch with your district grants administrator or your statewide offices for ELLs and federal grants. (The names of these offices and positions may vary from one district to the next.)
- ❑ Look for grants targeted to ELL, minority, Latino, and at-risk students, with a special focus on family literacy, parent outreach, and science and math initiatives (such as STEM). Possible sources include local foundations and businesses, as well as larger national family literacy initiatives, such as Reading Is Fundamental or FirstBook. Verizon, Dollar General, Toyota, and Target also sponsor nationwide literacy initiatives. Lee & Low Books offers a list of [literacy grants](#) on their website.
- ❑ Look for volunteers such as ELL staff or parents with fundraising experience to search for grants.
- ❑ Consider pooling your resources with other schools in the district for family events and outreach initiatives. You may even be serving the same families who have children of different ages!

D. Example

- ❖ As part of its mission, the [Toyota Family Literacy Program](#) focuses on increasing “basic language and literacy skills among Hispanic and other immigrant families.” According to the program website, Toyota has funded 256 family literacy sites in fifty states.



Final Thoughts

Let's take a breath. This is a lot to think about! As we mentioned in the beginning, an important first step is to focus on a few small changes that fit your population. Even small steps help set the right tone and show the students, staff, and families that ELL family engagement is a school-wide priority. One small success will lead to another and before you know it, staff members, parents, and students will be coming to you with new ideas and energy that you didn't know they had. Rather than building the plane and flying it at the same time, you may just find yourself flying a brand new plane!

Final Reflections

- ❖ Which ideas would best fit your ELL population?

- ❖ Are there any that you could implement within the next month?

- ❖ What about in the next year?

- ❖ If you are only able to focus on one major area this year, which will be the most important/plausible within your school community?

- ❖ What are your next steps for getting started?

- ❖ Who will be your partners in this effort?

- ❖ Are there any successes, ideas or resources you would like to share with our audience? Feel free to send an e-mail to info@colorincolorado.org!



Appendix A: Resources from Colorín Colorado

[Recommended Bilingual Books for Children and Teens*](#)

[Building Strong Parent-Educator Partnerships*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2008)

[Connect Students' Background Knowledge to Content in the ELL Classroom](#) (Robertson, 2007)

[Culturally Responsive Instruction for Holiday and Religious Celebrations](#) (Lundgren and Lundy-Ponce, 2007)

[Family Literacy Night](#) (Izaguirre, 2006)

[From the Heart Interview: Ma'Lena Wirth](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2008)

Graphic Organizer: [KWL chart](#)

[Helping Students Cope with Global Disasters](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2011)

[Helping Your Child Succeed at School*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[Helping Your Child with Homework*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[How to Create a Welcoming Classroom Environment*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[How to Know When Your Child Needs Extra Help*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[Identifying Language Proficiency for Program Placement*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[Lessons Learned from Immigrant Families](#) (Han, 2010)

[Let's Read*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[Meet the Author: Lucía González*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2010)

[Meet the Expert Interview: Kevin Eberle](#), Buffalo, NY (Colorín Colorado, 2011)

[Meet the Expert Interview: Dr. Cynthia Lundgren](#), Hamline University (Colorín Colorado, 2011)

[Reading Tip Sheets for Parents in 11 Languages \(PreK-3\)](#)

[Resources for Migrant Student Success](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2010)

[Resources for Refugee Student Success](#) (Robertson, 2008)

[Resources for Supporting Students with Interrupted Formal Education](#) (Robertson, 2008)

[Social and Emotional Needs of Middle and High School ELLs](#) (Lawrence, 2009)

[Testing: An Introduction for Parents*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2009)

[Toolkit for Teachers: Reaching Out to Hispanic Parents of English Language Learners*](#)

[Things Your ELL Newcomers Need to Know](#) (Law and Eckes, 2010)

[Welcome Kit for New ELLs](#) (Robertson, 2008)

[Who's Who at Your Child's School*](#) (Colorín Colorado, Reading Rockets, and AdLit.org, 2008)

[Working with Community Organizations to Support ELL Students](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2009)

[Why Reading to Your Kids in Spanish Will Help Them Become Better Readers*](#) (Colorín Colorado, 2007)

[10 Ways to Support ELLs in the School Library](#) (Jules, 2009)

**Also available in Spanish*



Appendix B: Recommended Reading and Resources**

Alford, Betty J., and Niño, Mary Catherine. *Leading Academic Achievement for English Language Learners: A Guide for Principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2011.

[American Federation of Teachers: Pathways to Success Brochure](#). (Available for order)

Campos, David; Delgado, Rocio; and Soto, Mary Esther. *Reaching Out to Latino Families of English Language Learners*. Alexandria, VA: 2011.

[EverythingESL.net](#): K-12 Resources from ELL expert Judie Haynes

Ferlazzo, Larry, and Hammond, Lorie. *Building Parent Engagement in Schools*. Denver: Linworth, 2009.

Hamayan, Else V., and Freeman, Rebecca, eds. *English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing, 2006.

Houk, Farin A. *Supporting English Language Learners: A Guide for Teachers and Administrators*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

Law, Barbara and Eckes, Mary. [The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher](#), 3rd edition. Winnipeg: [Portage & Main Press](#), 2010.

National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools: [Strategy Briefs](#).

[National Parental Information and Resource Centers: PIRC Network](#)

Rothstein-Fisch, Carrie. and Trumbull, Elise. *Managing Diverse Classrooms: How to Build on Students' Cultural Strengths*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008.

Wright, Wayne E. *Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners: Research, Theory, Policy, and Practice*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing, 2010.

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[World Refugee Awareness Month: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#).

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**Many of these books are included in Colorín Colorado's [ELL Strategies Booklist for Administrators](#).



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About the Authors

Lydia Breiseth has been the Manager of Colorín Colorado since 2008. In this capacity, Ms. Breiseth oversees the bilingual content, multimedia production, partnerships, and outreach on behalf of ColorínColorado.org, including collaboration with Colorín Colorado's major partner, the American Federation of Teachers. Ms. Breiseth has presented Colorín Colorado's resources to educators and parents at a number of national professional development conferences, including TESOL, NABE, CABE, NAEYC, OELA, the AFT's QuEST Conference, and the Latino Children's Book Conference. Ms. Breiseth has written extensively for Colorín Colorado's educator and parent audiences, and her article "Reading Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners" was published in the ASCD Express in March, 2010. Prior to working at Colorín Colorado, Ms. Breiseth taught both English and Spanish to high school students and adults, and she spent a year in Ecuador teaching English to graduate students with the educational exchange program WorldTeach. She resides in Arlington, Virginia.

Kristina Robertson is an ELL specialist with extensive experience as a classroom teacher and professional development leader. Kristina is the current Titles Coordinator and Teacher on Special Assignment for the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District in Minnesota. Kristina has 20 years of education experience as a teacher and leader in English language instruction, with licenses in ESL, Administration, and Reading. She started her career as a Peace Corps volunteer in Sri Lanka and then returned to Minnesota, where she has taught many language and cultural backgrounds in the K-12 setting, as well as ESL teacher preparation courses at the college level. Kristina is a member of the American Federation of Teacher's ELL Educator Cadre and has authored a number of our [Bright Ideas articles](#). She is also featured in a Colorín Colorado [Meet the Expert](#) video interview. Kristina resides in Minnesota.

Susan Lafond, a Nationally Board Certified Teacher in English as a New Language (EAYA ENL), has 20 years of combined experience teaching ESL and foreign languages. She currently works as a professional development assistant for educators with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). Susan was appointed to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) English as a New Language Standards Committee in February 2009 to review and revise the existing English as a New Language Standards and most recently participated as a member of the ELA Work Team for the Common Core State Standards Initiative. She won the Union College Excellence in Teaching Award and the Employee Recognition Award in her own district, and she serves on the American Federation of Teacher's ELL Educator Cadre. She also has served as an expert practitioner and advisor to Colorín Colorado and is featured in the AdLit.org / Colorín Colorado webcast [ELLs in Middle and High School: An Introduction](#). Susan resides in upstate New York.



All Popular Posts Success Stories Multi-Tiered System of Supports Behavior Other Categories

POPULAR

101 Inclusive Get-to-Know-You Questions for Students [+ PDF Download]



Jenna Buckle



The last few years have highlighted the importance of [relationship-building](#) and [checking in with students](#) on a regular basis.

For learning to happen, students need to see their identities valued. They need to feel safe

physically and emotionally—and they need to feel a sense of connection to peers and adults. You can do that by creating space for students to tell their stories, learning about their lives outside of school, and creating rituals that [cultivate belonging](#) and connectedness.

To help you get to know your students, we've curated this list of 101 asset-based, inclusive questions. Most are open-ended questions, but you can also adapt them into a multiple-choice format.

Table of Contents:

1. [How to Use These Questions](#)
2. [Interests and Hobbies](#)
3. [Relational and Social-Emotional Learning](#)
4. [Family and Cultural Background](#)
5. [Academic Strengths and Opportunities](#)
6. [The Transition Back to School / First Day of School](#)
7. [Virtual Learning](#)
8. [Would You Rather? Icebreaker Questions](#)

Key Takeaways:

- Relationship-building and regular check-ins with students are essential for fostering learning and well-being.
- Students require an environment where their identities are valued, feeling physically and emotionally safe, and fostering connections with peers and adults.
- Creating opportunities for students to share their stories, understanding their lives outside of school, and establishing rituals that promote belonging are crucial for creating a supportive learning environment.

[Free PDF Download: Panorama's Full Check-Ins Question Bank](#)

How to Use These Questions

If you are a **district or school administrator** focused on improving relationships and belonging campus-wide, we invite you to share this article with your teachers and staff. This is a great resource to include on district or school resource sites, [Tier 1](#) resource hubs, or in staff newsletters.

If you are a **teacher, practitioner, or instructional coach**, feel free to borrow these questions to get to know your students in the classroom—virtually or in person! These questions are great for small group brain breaks, icebreaker games, morning meetings or morning circles, and advisory periods. Or, use them as conversation starters in a 1:1 setting.

Click on the following links to jump to a section:

- [Interests and Hobbies](#)
- [Relational and Social-Emotional Learning](#)
- [Family and Cultural Background](#)
- [Academic Strengths and Opportunities](#)
- [The Transition Back to School / First Day of School](#)
- [Virtual Learning](#)
- ["Would You Rather" Icebreaker Questions](#) *(These fun icebreaker questions are also great for students to ask each other!)*

Interests and Hobbies



- 1.** What are your favorite hobbies?
- 2.** In your free time, what do you like to do?
- 3.** Have you volunteered in your community?
- 4.** What was the hardest part of the past week for you?
- 5.** What is your favorite book?
- 6.** What is your favorite TV show?
- 7.** What is your favorite movie?
- 8.** What is your favorite color?
- 9.** What is your favorite food?
- 10.** What do you like to eat for breakfast?
- 11.** What is your favorite sport, if you have one?
- 12.** If you could be an animal for a day, what would you be and why?
- 13.** What kind of music do you like to listen to?

14. If you could play any instrument, what would it be?
15. What is something you like to do outside of school?
16. Outside the classroom, what type of learning do you enjoy most?
17. What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?
18. What is your favorite thing to do over the weekends?
19. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?
20. What is your most frequently-used or favorite emoji?
21. What are three awesome things about yourself?

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- 27.** What is your social-emotional learning superpower?
- 28.** Which of the following traits do you think best describes you: funny, thoughtful, caring, or outgoing?
- 29.** How do you most like to connect with your friends? Through social media, by talking over the phone or texting, or by meeting up in person?
- 30.** What is one thing your teacher can do to get to know you better?
- 31.** How can your teacher help you if you are feeling down?
- 32.** What is one thing you want to know about your teacher?
- 33.** What do you think is the most important quality for a teacher to have?
- 34.** Who is an adult at school that you know you can count on?
- 35.** Who is a friend at school that you know you can count on?
- 36.** When you are stressed, what do you do to relax?
- 37.** What makes you feel the most appreciated and understood?
- 38.** How would your friends or a relative describe you?
- 39.** What is something that you are thankful for?

Family and Cultural Background



- 40.** Where do your family members work?
- 41.** What does dinner time look like at your house?
- 42.** What are some family items or artifacts that represent your culture and identity?
- 43.** Which languages do you speak (even just a little bit)?
- 44.** Who is someone in your family that you look up to?
- 45.** What is a favorite memory you have with a family member?
- 46.** What do you like most about your family?
- 47.** What is a family tradition that you have?
- 48.** Does your family have pets? If not, would you like to have a pet? What kind?
- 49.** What is your favorite family recipe?
- 50.** Do you have siblings? If not, would you want to have siblings or do you like being an only child?

Academic Strengths and Opportunities



- 51.** What is your favorite subject and why?
- 52.** What is your least favorite subject and why? What is the best way I can support you when we work on that subject?
- 53.** What is one thing you think you do well as a student?
- 54.** What is one thing you would like to do better as a student?
- 55.** What do you like most about school?
- 56.** What do you like least about school?
- 57.** What is something you would really want to learn about at school?
- 58.** Which of the following is your favorite way to learn: by talking with others, by listening, or by reading?
- 59.** What would be your dream field trip?
- 60.** Would you rather do schoolwork as a group or by yourself?

- 61. What is the best school project or lesson you can remember?
- 62. What is the best way I can support you outside of class?
- 63. How would you like to be recognized if you get a good grade on an assignment or project?

The Transition Back to School / First Day of School

- 64. What is one thing you are looking forward to this school year?
- 65. What is something you learned over the summer?
- 66. What is something you would really want to learn about this year?
- 67. What is one thing you would like your classmates or teacher to know about you this year?
- 68. What is one thing you want to know about your teacher(s) this year?
- 69. What was the best part of the past week for you?
- 70. What was the hardest part of the past week for you?
- 71. What can teachers or other adults at school do to better support you?
- 72. How much did you enjoy class today?
- 73. How included did you feel in class today?
- 74. What was your favorite part of class today?

Virtual Learning

- 75. What is the best part of virtual learning?
- 76. What is the most challenging part of virtual learning?
- 77. How is your internet connection at home?
- 78. Where do you do your school work?
- 79. What is something your teachers could do to improve virtual classroom time?

80. What is your favorite Zoom background?
81. How do you prefer to be communicated when learning online? By email, a messaging app, on a video call, or by phone?
82. When you take breaks from school at home, what do you like to do?
83. What is your favorite way to get in touch with your classmates and friends online?
84. What would help you feel more connected to your classmates and your school?

"Would You Rather" Icebreaker Questions

These questions can also be used between classmates to help students reconnect with one another, discover similarities, and learn new things about one another.

85. Would you rather read a book or watch a movie?
86. Would you rather eat pizza or ice cream?
87. Would you rather do a school project by yourself or with friends?
88. Would you rather play a video game or play outside?
89. Would you rather have a dog or a cat?
90. Would you rather have chocolate or vanilla?
91. Would you rather go to the beach or go camping?
92. Would you rather eat salty or sweet snacks for the rest of your life?
93. Would you rather win the lottery or be famous?
94. Would you rather dance or sing in front of a group of people?
95. Would you rather be the oldest sibling or the youngest sibling?
96. Would you rather give a presentation or write a long paper?
97. Would you rather do your homework or do chores?
98. Would you rather travel back in time or travel to the future?
99. Would you rather live in snow or rain for the rest of your life?
100. Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible as a superpower?

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is relationship-building emphasized in education, especially in recent years?

Relationship-building has gained emphasis due to its significant impact on students' well-being and academic success. Building strong connections with students fosters a supportive learning environment, promotes positive social-emotional development, and enhances student engagement and motivation.

2. How do inclusive questions contribute to relationship-building in the classroom?

Inclusive questions help educators understand students' diverse backgrounds, interests, and experiences. By asking open-ended questions that encourage students to share their stories, educators can demonstrate genuine interest in their students' lives, thereby building trust and rapport. This fosters a [sense of belonging](#) and connectedness within the classroom community.

3. How can educators adapt the provided questions to suit different learning environments, such as virtual classrooms or in-person settings?

Educators can adapt the questions based on the specific needs and dynamics of their learning environments. For virtual classrooms, they can use digital platforms for group discussions, breakout rooms for small group activities, or online surveys for collecting responses. In-person settings may involve incorporating questions into morning meetings, advisory periods, or one-on-one conversations during downtime. Adapting questions ensures they remain relevant and effective in facilitating meaningful connections with students.

[Download Panorama's Check-Ins Question Bank](#)



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

Gathering and Using Data Effectively

Facilitators:

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sfuxman@edc.org

Presenter:



MayInstitute
Shaping Futures. Changing Lives.



Human Likert Scale

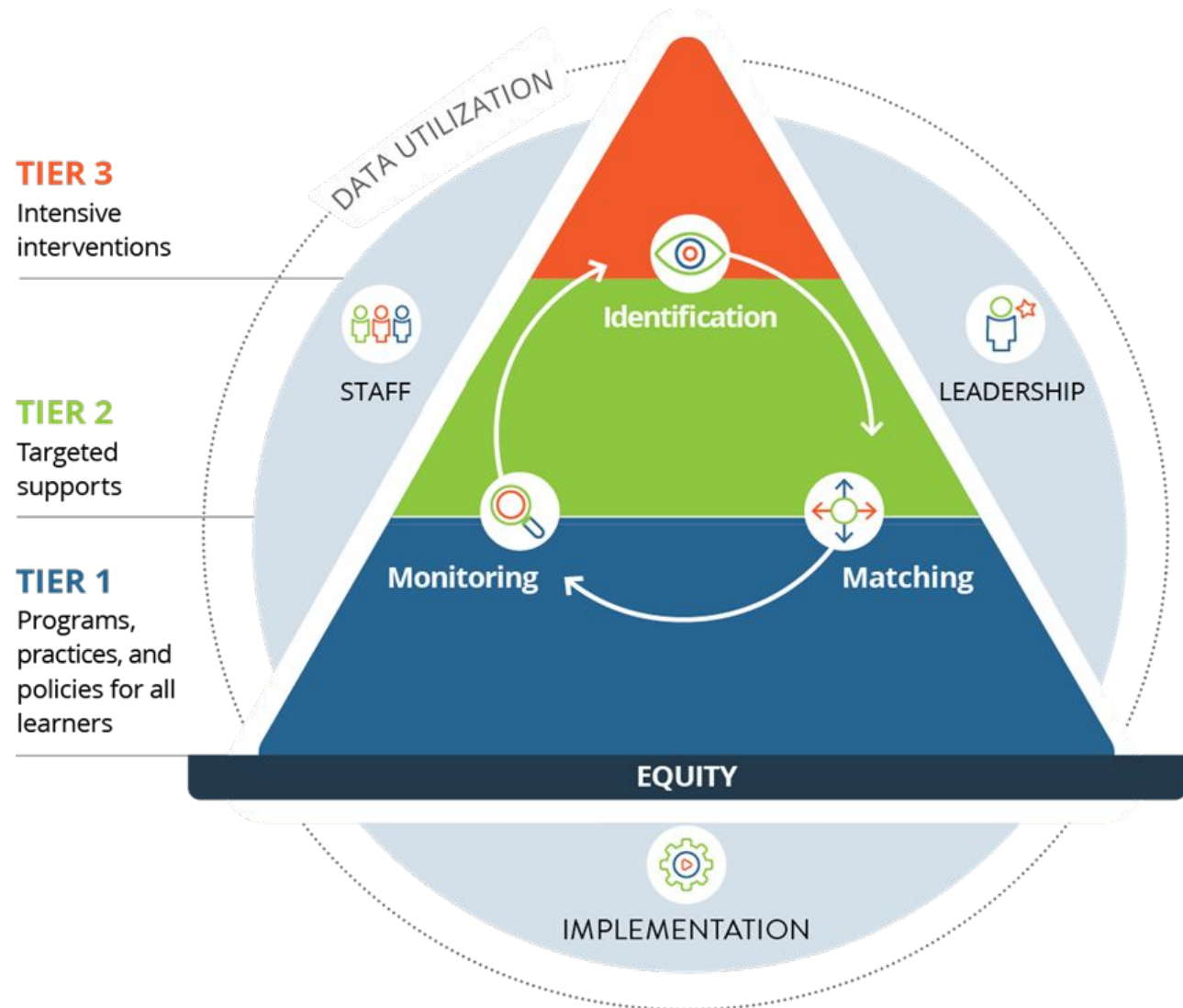


Agenda

Session Focus

1. Identifying Data Goals
2. Identifying Data Sources
1. Establishing Data Routines

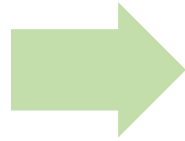
Data informs all that we do in an MTSS Model



Gathering and Using Data

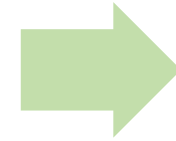
Data Goals

- What do you want to know and why?



Data Inventory

- What data do you have?
- What data do you need?



Data Process

- How will you use data to answer your questions and take action?



Data Goals

Ask the Right Questions:

	Student Outcomes: Attendance	Student Outcomes: Behavior	Adult Outcomes: Climate	Fidelity: Tier 1 features
Question	Are students attending class regularly?	When and where are behavioral concerns occurring?	Do staff (or families) feel the school is a safe and welcoming environment?	Are we making progress implementing Tier 1 features with fidelity?

Ask the Right Questions: SEL and Mental Health

Questions

What are our students' SEL strengths and weaknesses?

What mental health challenges do our students face?

What are the main stressors facing our students?

What type of negative behaviors are our students manifesting?



Examples

Strong interpersonal skills,
weak emotional management

Depression, anxiety

Familial trauma, academic
stress

Substance misuse,
absenteeism



Data Sources

SEL assessments

Mental health screeners

Qualitative data, data
from community partners

Health surveys, school
records

Activity: Data Goals

<https://sebacademy.edc.org/data-inventory>

Part 1

Identify Goals for Data-Informed Decision-Making

Social, emotional and behavioral data, whether implementation or outcome, can be leveraged in many ways. Consider your goals for collecting data. Check off how you would like to use data to inform your MTSS.

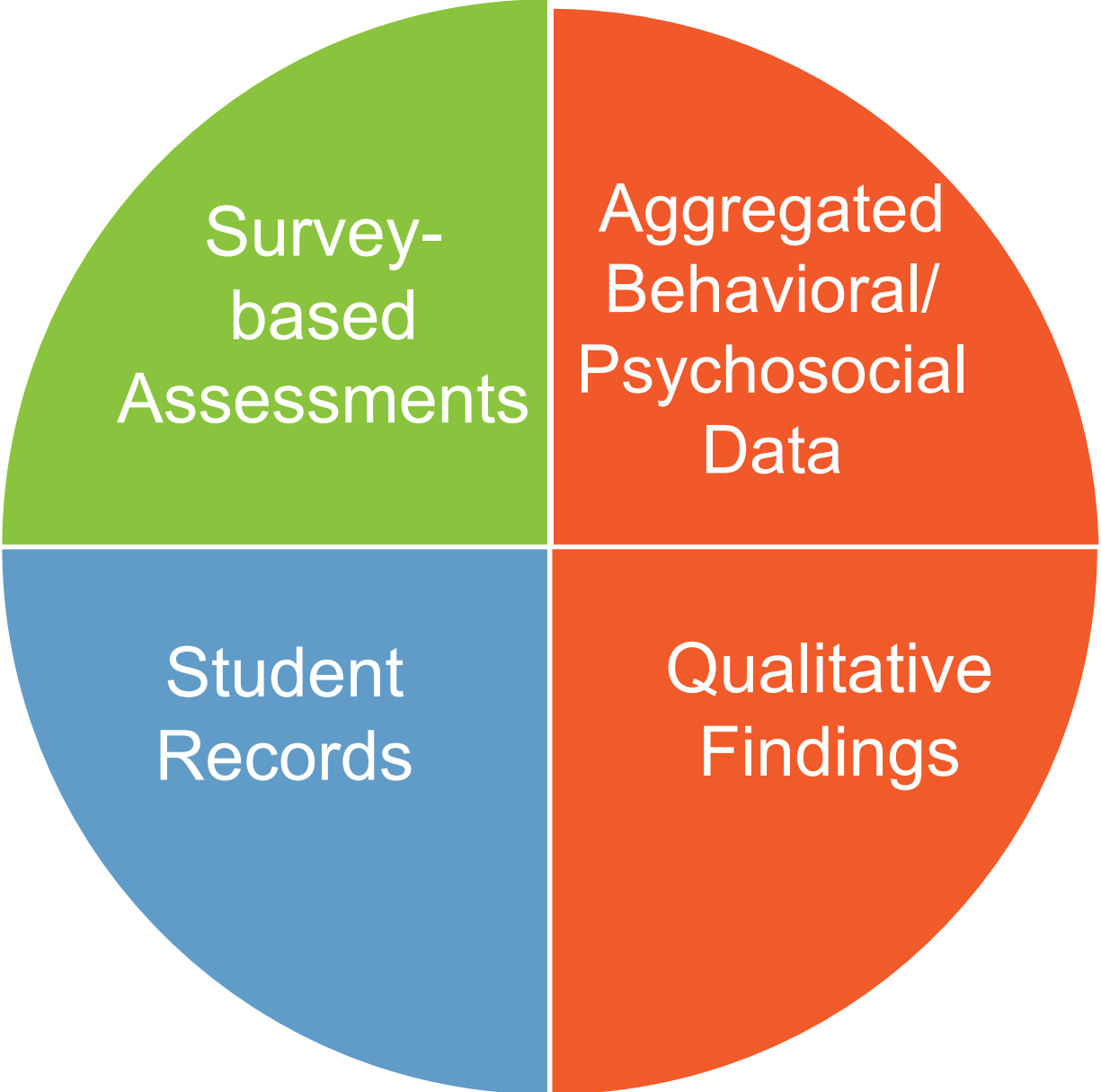
Data Goals

	Understand the needs and strengths of students, staff, and families
	Inform what tiered supports to offer or how to match students to appropriate supports
	Monitor the implementation of tiered supports
	Learn about student and program outcomes
	Adjust and improve tiered supports
	Understand how particular groups of students are doing
	Monitor the fidelity of systems or processes
	Identify disparities based on subgroup analysis
	Other
	<i>If you selected other, please describe:</i>



Data Inventory

Data Examples



Data Examples



Tiered Support for students:

- SEL Assessments
- Screening data
- Discipline referrals
- Attendance
- Nurse visits
- Guidance checks
- Reflection sheets
- Referrals to SPED



Adults:

- Fidelity Surveys/Tools
- Surveys of staff/families re: school climate
- Surveys of families re: engagement and access to school-wide activities
- Adult well-being



Implementation:

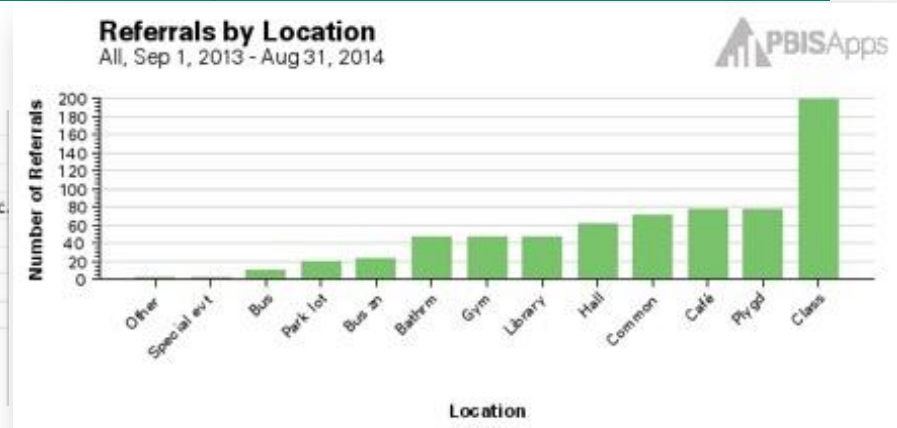
- Checklist of weekly SEL instruction
- Observation of non-classroom settings for universal practices
- Interviews with students

Data Source: EXAMPLE

Step 2: Identify indicators or measures.

What information can be collected?

	Student Outcomes: Attendance	Student Outcomes: Behavior	Adult Outcomes: Climate	Fidelity: Tier 1 features
Question	Are students attending class regularly?	When and where are behavioral concerns occurring?	Do staff (or families) feel the school is a safe and welcoming environment?	Are we making progress implementing Tier 1 features with fidelity?
Data Source	Attendance data	Major & minor discipline referral data	Climate Survey results	Tiered Fidelity Inventory (self-assessment)



Activity: Data Inventory

Part 2 Identify Data Sources

Complete the table below to clarify the purpose, access, and use of SEB data currently available in your school/district.

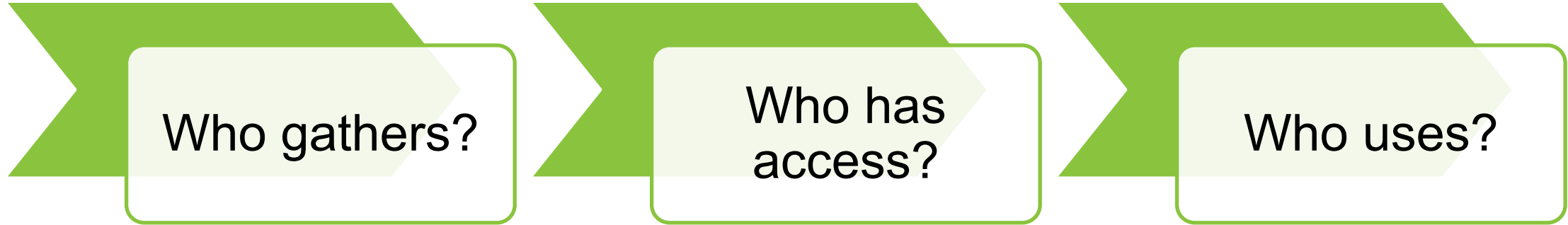
Data Goals	Data Questions	Data Sources*	Where is the data stored?	Who has access?
EXAMPLE: Understand the needs and strengths of students	What are <u>students SEL</u> strengths?	Panorama	Panorama dashboard	All teachers have access to Panorama data through <u>Panorama dashboard</u> .

* Put "Missing" if currently no data sources are available to answer question.



Data Process

Data Plan: Roles



Ex: SEL Assessment

- Students
- Teachers

- Teachers
- SST Team
- Admin

- SST Team
- SEL Team

Data Plan: Frequency



How often is it gathered?

➔ Twice a year

How often is it used/discussed?

➔ Every two weeks @ SST

Data Plan: Decision-Making Processes



- Start with your data goals/questions
- Establish team processes
- Determine decision to be made

Examples:

- Curriculum selection/review □ Which Tier 1 curriculum? Is it working?
- Implementation monitoring □ Are we implementing interventions as planned?
- Student Support Teams □ Which students need what supports? Are supports working? Need more, less, or different?

Activity: Data Processes

Part 3 Data Processes

Data Purpose?	Data Source?	How Often Looked at?	By Whom?	Decisions
EXAMPLE: Identifying student needs	PHD-9 and GAD-7 (Universal Mental Health Screening Tools)	Twice a year when data collected	Panorama dashboard	Based on universal screening data identify students who need Tier 2 and/or 3 supports

* Put "Missing" if currently no data sources are available to answer question.

Wrap Up

One action step from today?



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

Human Side of Systems Change for your MTSS for SEL and Mental Health

May 15, 2024



Jim Vetter
jvetter@edc.org

AGENDA

- » Overview of session
- » Inclusive welcome
- » Managing change
- » Challenges
- » Problem-solving in small groups
- » Intentional Close

Introductions

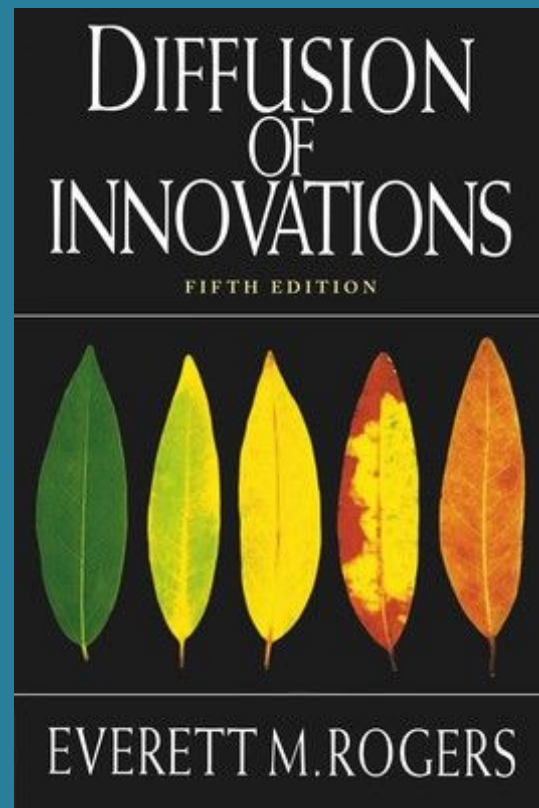
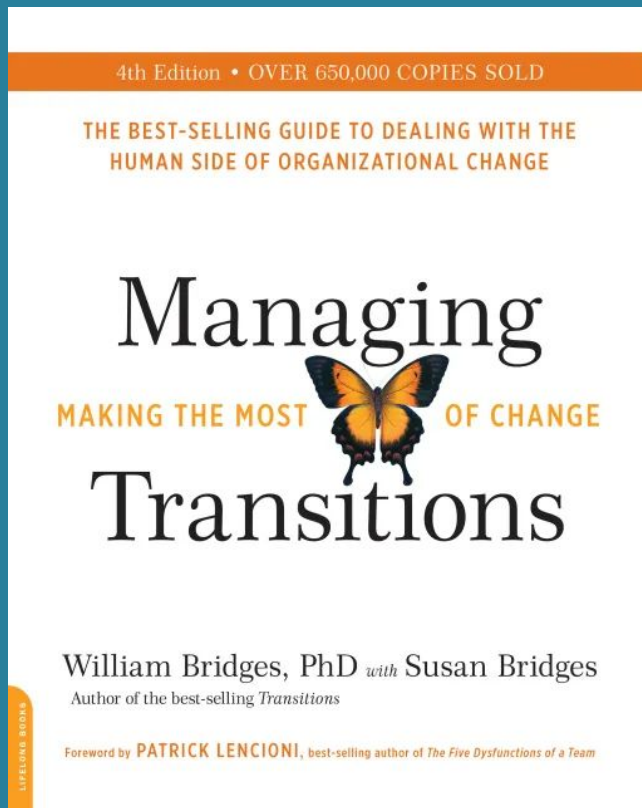
- Name
- School/district
- Location
- In 1-2 sentences, one change you want to make to improve your MTSS for SEL and mental/behavioral health

What makes change stick?

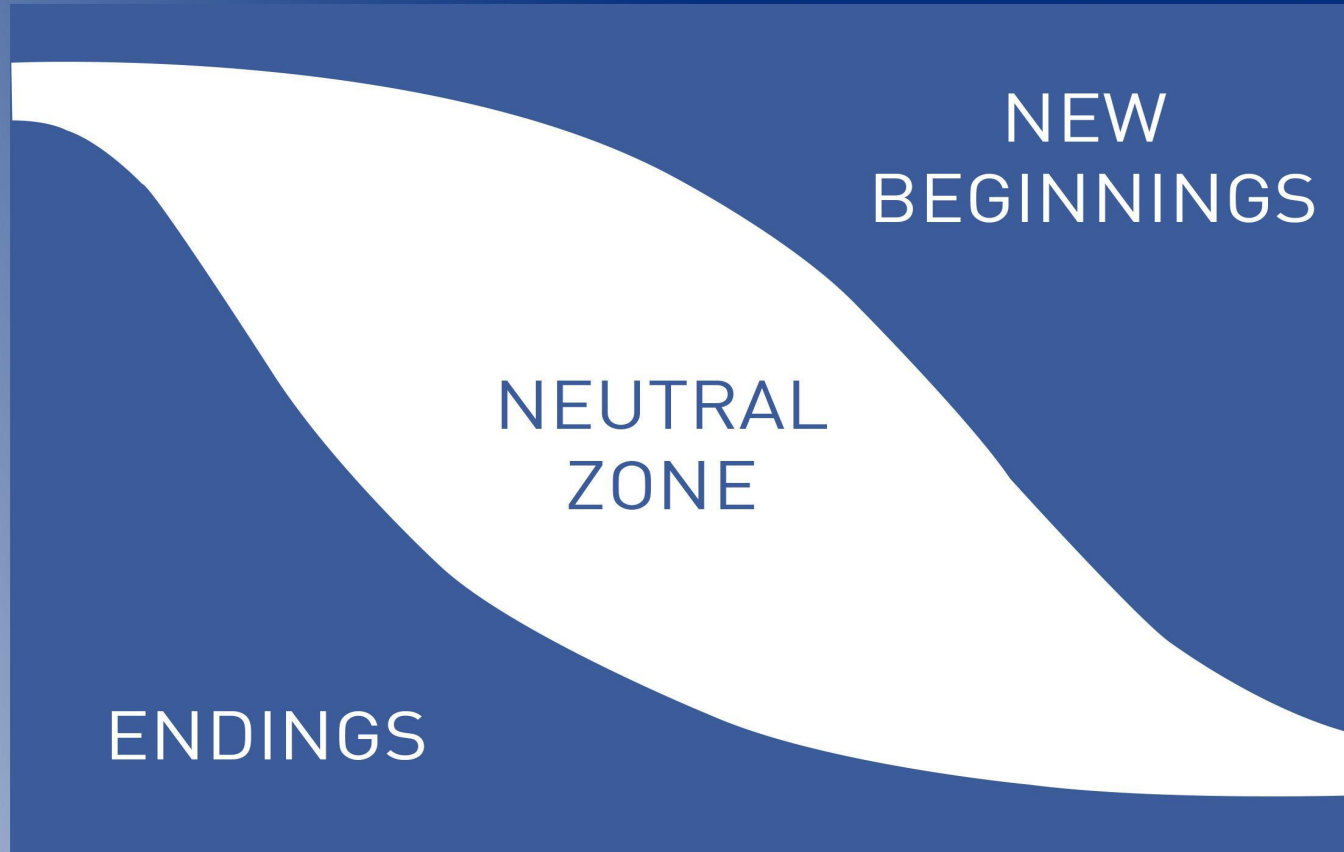


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Key Sources

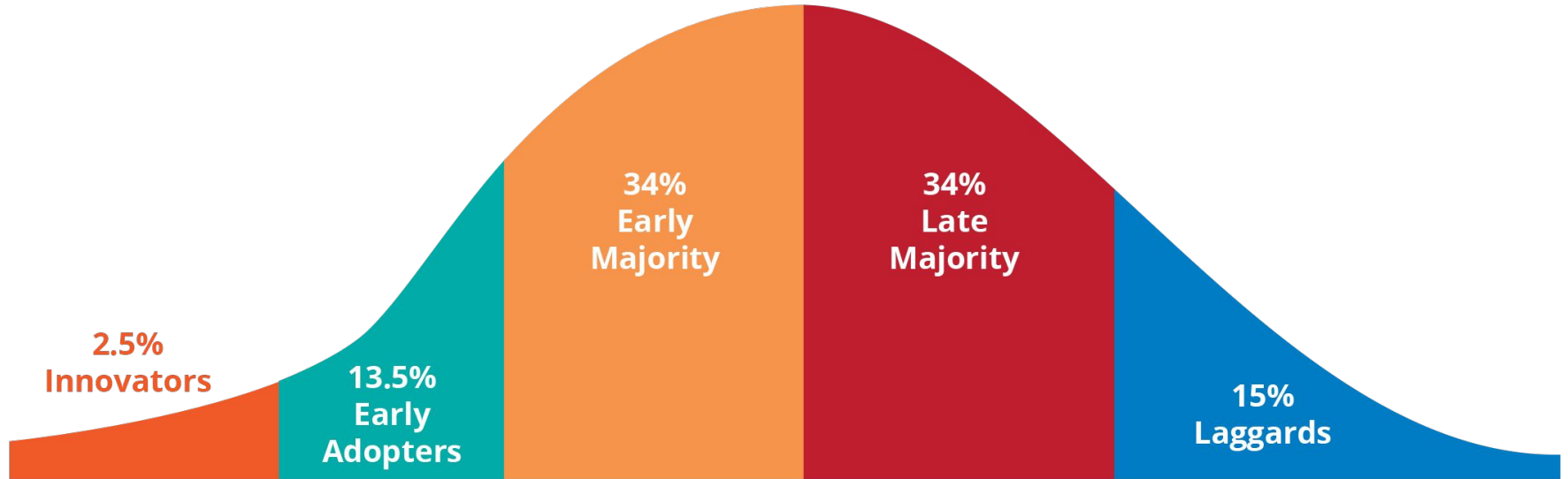


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Diffusion of Innovations



Human Challenges

- Write on a sticky note: one human challenge you're encountering in making your intended change
- Post it on the flip chart page for your table

Problem-Solving Protocol

1. Each person reads out a challenge they posted on the whiteboard
2. As a group, decide on one challenge to address that seems relevant to multiple teams
3. “Owner” of challenge presents a brief description (1-2 minutes)
4. Others ask clarifying questions (1-2 minutes)
5. Rest of group offers ideas and suggestions
6. “Owner” responds and/or asks questions, gets more details
7. “Owner” shares what they are taking away from the discussion to try in their school/district

Report Back!

Each group shares
one challenge and
one potential
solution, idea, or
takeaway



Questions?



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Actions

- Write on a sticky note: one action you would like to take to address the human challenge that you're encountering



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Questions?

Ideas?

Email Jim Vetter at
jvetter@edc.org



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Incorporating an Equity Approach to MTSS in SEB



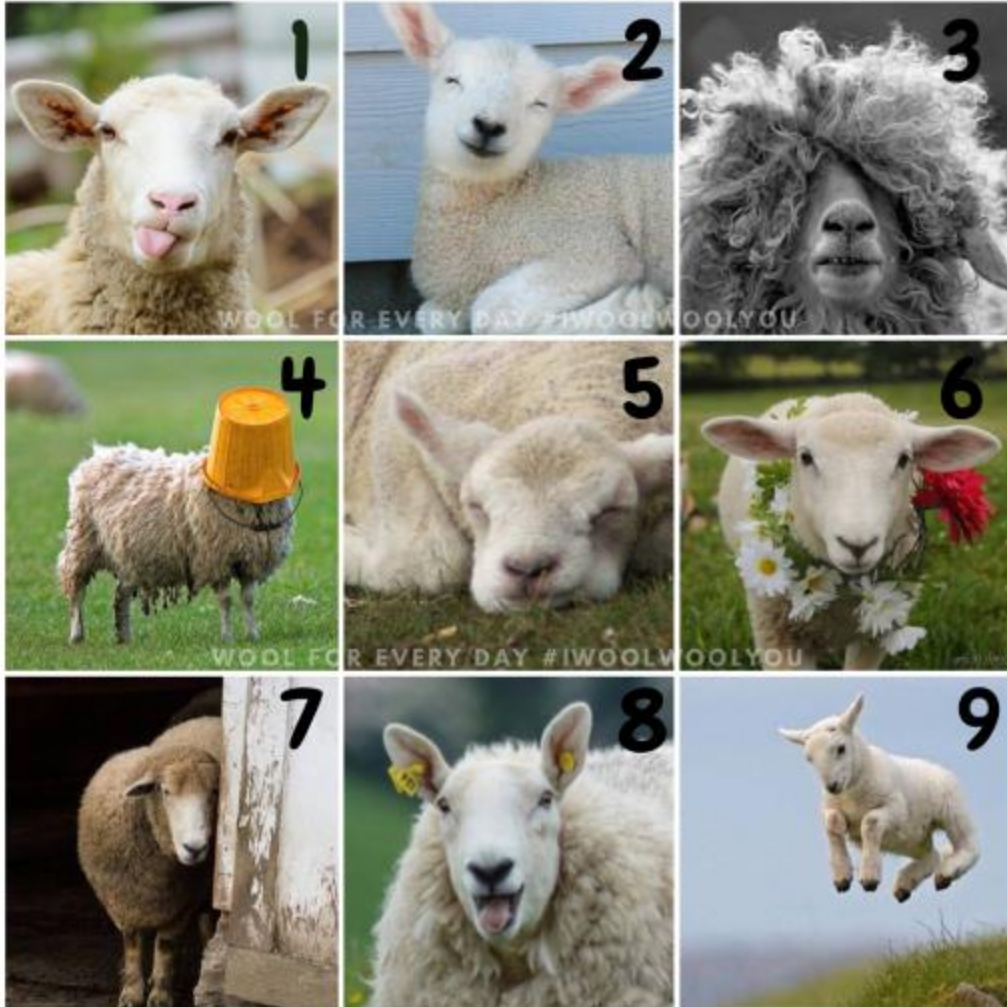
SEB ACADEMY
SPRING CONVENING

May 15, 2024

Presentors: Sara Niño & Bonnie Lipton



**On this sheep-scale,
how do you feel today?**



WOOL FOR EVERY DAY #IWOOLWOOLYOU

Connector

**On a Sheep Scale of
1 - 9, which sheep
best represents how
you are feeling right
now?**

Today's Presenters



Sara Niño

SEB Academy Coach/Technical Assistance
Provider



Bonnie Lipton

SEB Academy Coach/Technical Assistance Provider

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Agenda, Agreements, Objectives
3. Equity in MTSS
4. Equity Examples
5. Next Steps/Planning
6. Reflection and Closing

Agreements

- ✓ Use “I” statements to speak from your own experience; we do not expect others to speak for anyone but themselves.
- ✓ Consider *impact* of your words over what you *intended* to say.
- ✓ Practice confidentiality - share learning, keep the names and personal stories you receive.
- ✓ Expect and accept non-closure.
- ✓ Engage actively in a way that works for you.



OBJECTIVES



- + Explore equity as an outcome
- + Discuss the ways equity shows up/doesn't show up
- + Consider your role and relationship with equity
- + Critically Reflect and Envision Possibilities



Table Discussion #1

What does equity mean to you?

How does it show up/not show up in your work/life?

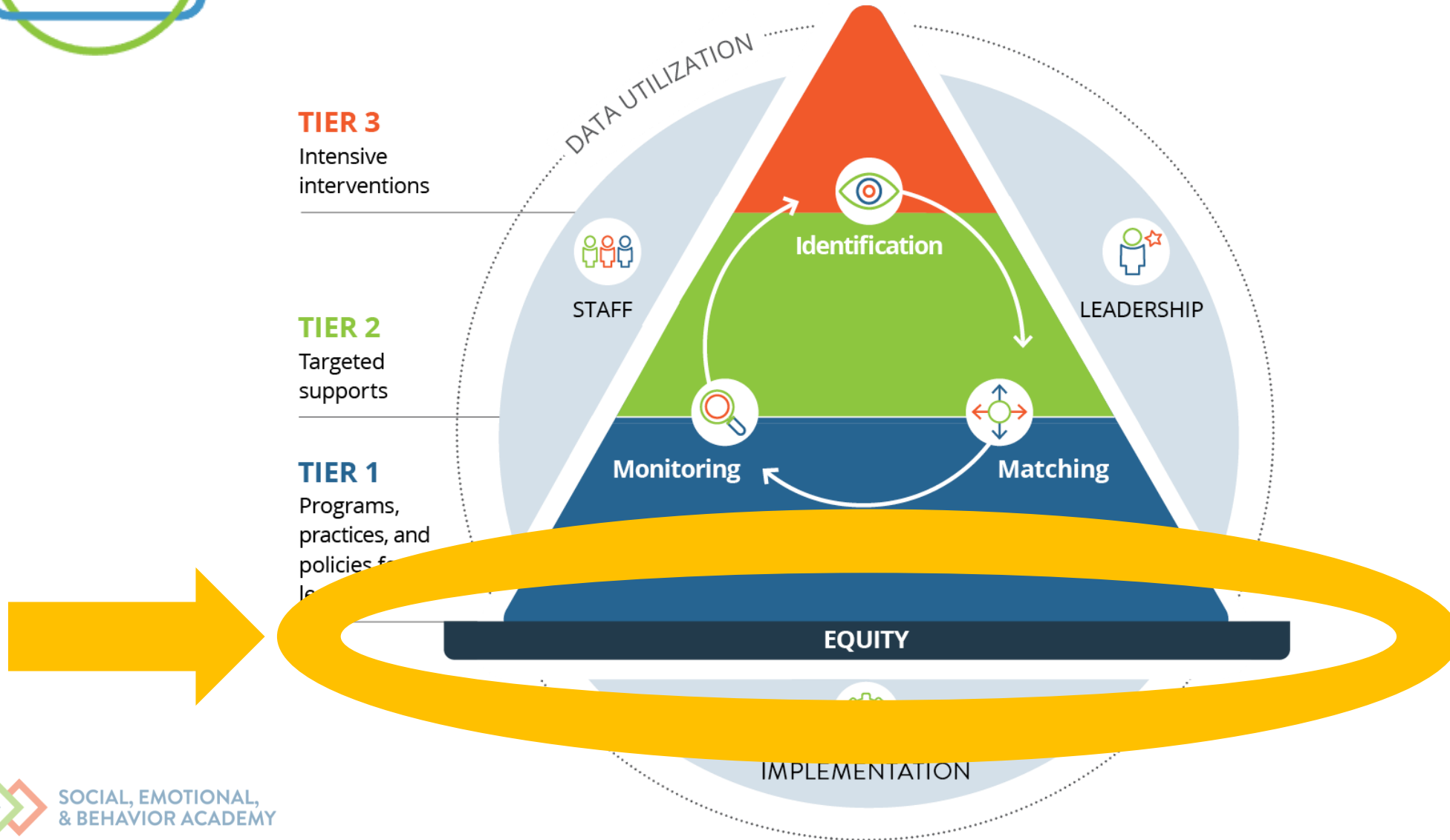


Overview of Equity & MTSS - Building Background Knowledge





MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS





What is *EQUITY*?

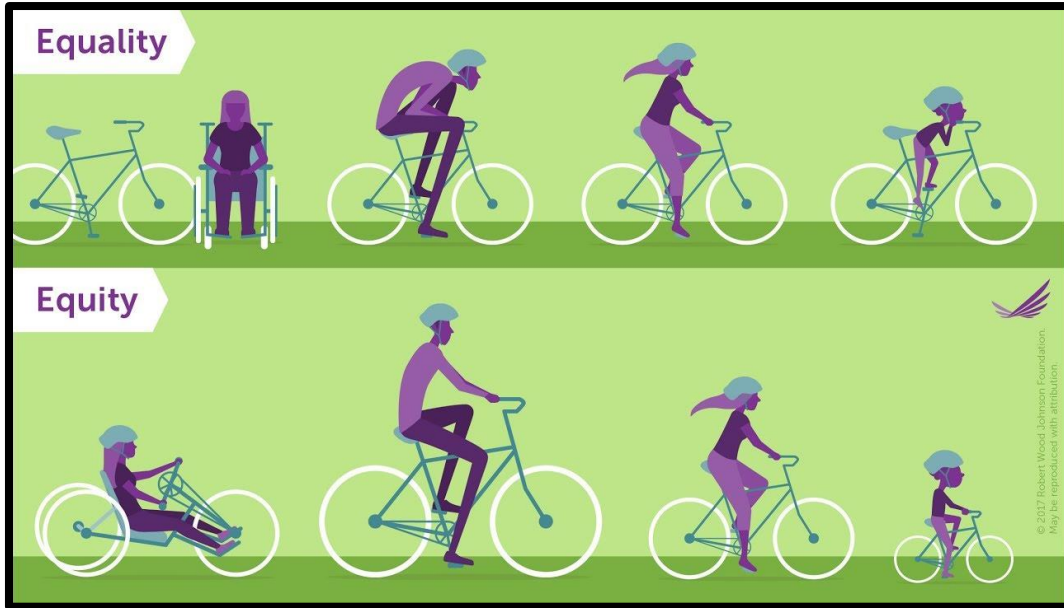
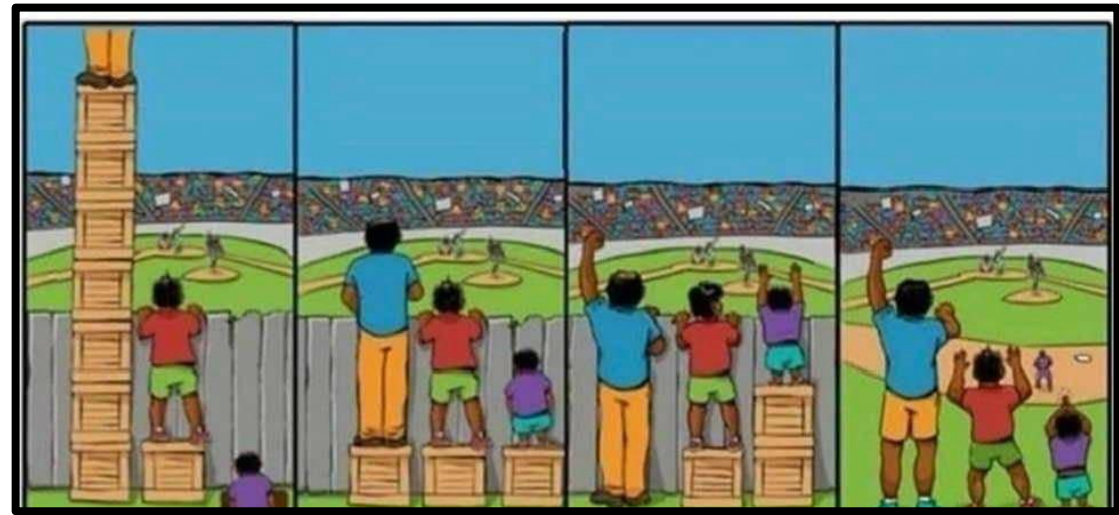
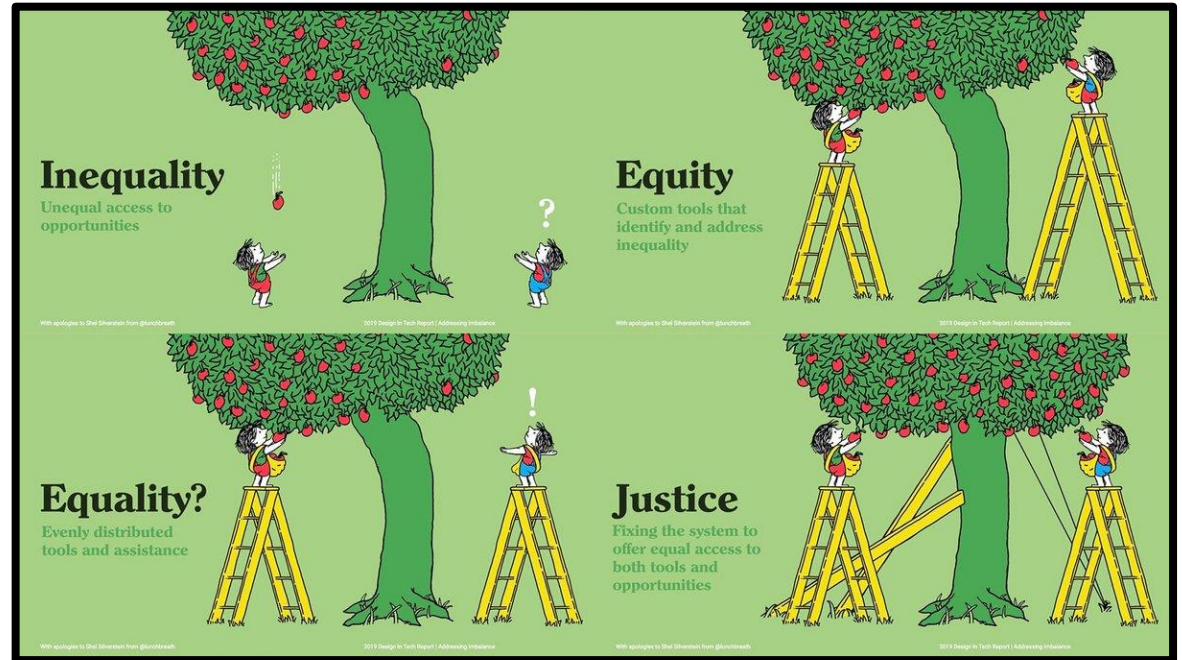


Image credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017



Adapted from: Interaction Institute for Social Change, interactioninstitute.org | Artist: Angus Maguire, madewithangus.com



2019 Design In Tech Report | "Addressing Imbalance" Illustrations by @lunchbreath



EQUITY AS AN OUTCOME

“MTSS may be a vehicle for advancing equity; however, MTSS alone is not enough if it does not explicitly and consistently center equity as the primary goal.”

Sullivan, Nguyen, & Shaver, (2022). *Equity by Design: Foundations of Equity-Centered MTSS*. Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center.

Critical Consciousness and Reflection

Leadership for Equity

Aligning Language with Intent

Policies and Practices for Equity

Equity & SEB





EQUITY - SEL, CULTURE, & SENSE OF BELONGING

Adapted from *Social Emotional Learning - The National Equity Project (2023)*

Building Equity Consciousness and Capacity

- Increase self-awareness of social identities and how these shape experiences, definitions of success, and interpretations of behavior (e.g., race, class, gender, language, etc.)
- Learn about and reflect on histories related to race, racism, and exclusion in the US and build skills for facilitating discussions within the context of lessons
- Deconstruct, reflect on, and create lessons that value, engage, and develop the whole child
- Grow knowledge about the neuroscience of learning; signals triggering a “threat” response, and strategies designed to explicitly decrease stress, increase a sense of calm, and support well-being
- Build a library of approaches that build and sustain trust across social identities



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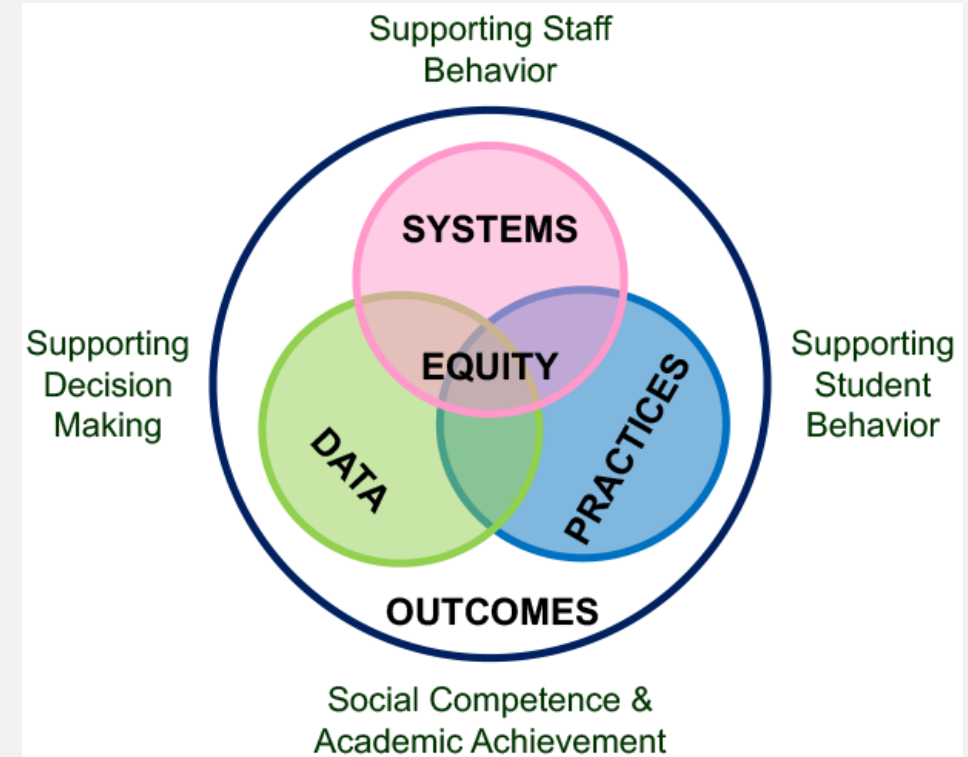


EQUITY - PBIS, BEHAVIOR, & MENTAL HEALTH

Adapted from *Centering Equity within the PBIS Framework: Overview and Evidence of Effectiveness (2022)*

Key Components of an Equity-Centered Approach

1. Gather, use, and report disaggregated data
2. Apply a preventive, multi-tiered, and **culturally responsive** behavior framework
3. Reduce opportunity gaps with engaging instruction
4. Create equity accountability in disciplinary policies
5. Practice strategies that neutralize implicit bias



Center on PBIS. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports. PBIS 5 Elements. What is PBIS? Retrieved from <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/what-is-pbis>.



Table Discussion #2

What does equity look like in your learning community?

***Who? What? Where? When?
Why? How?***



Equity Examples



External Examples for Implementing Equity



Disaggregate data to better understand experiences of student subgroups



Match students to interventions that are strengths-based and culturally/linguistically affirming



Develop programs/processes that help students feel a sense of belonging and safety



Administer evidence-based mental health/SEL screeners to students in their native language

Internal Examples of Implementing Equity



Implicit bias training



Professional development sessions on equity (like this one!)



Join a community of learning on equity, diversity and inclusion



Read books/articles about equity



Table Discussion #3

Visioning Activity:

How do you want equity to be expressed/experienced in your learning community?



Next Steps 

Next Steps

What is one small step you can take as individuals in team today to get closer to vision?

What is one big step you can do back in your community?

Health Equity Resources

1. **Equity By Design: Foundations of Equity-Centered MTSS**, *Great Lakes Equity Center* <https://go.edc.org/EquityByDesign>
2. **Learning for Justice**, *Southern Poverty Law Center* <https://go.edc.org/LFJPLC>

FREE professional development PLCs to learn and grow individually and as a cohort!
3. **Resources & Recommendations for Equitable Data Use**, *SEB Academy* <https://go.edc.org/Equitabledatause>
4. **Social Emotional Learning and Equity**, *National Equity Project* <https://go.edc.org/NEPresources>
5. **Centering Equity within the PBIS Framework: Overview and Evidence of Effectiveness**, *Center on PBIS* <https://go.edc.org/EquityPBIS>



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

➤ Thank You



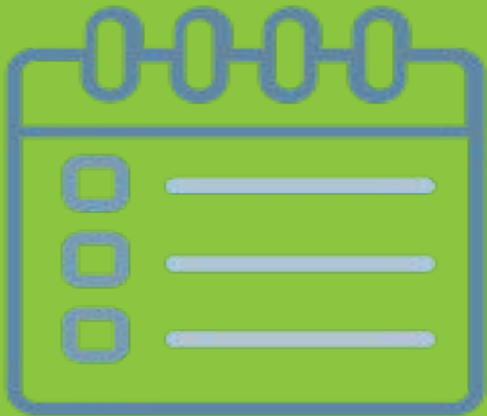


SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

> Integrating SEL into Academic Instruction



What Will We Cover Today?



- 01 Connector Activity
- 02 Activating Prior Knowledge and Brief Review
- 03 Context
- 04 Integrating SEL Practices into Academic Scope and Sequence
- 05 Wrap-Up

Connector Activity



Peer Teaching and Brief Review



WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?

**SELF
AWARENESS**

Recognizing and appreciating differences
Resilience
Empathy and Compassion
Goal Setting

**SELF
MANAGEMENT**

Positive relationships
Self efficacy

**SOCIAL
AWARENESS**

Ar
Growth mindset
consequences
Problem solving
Effective communication

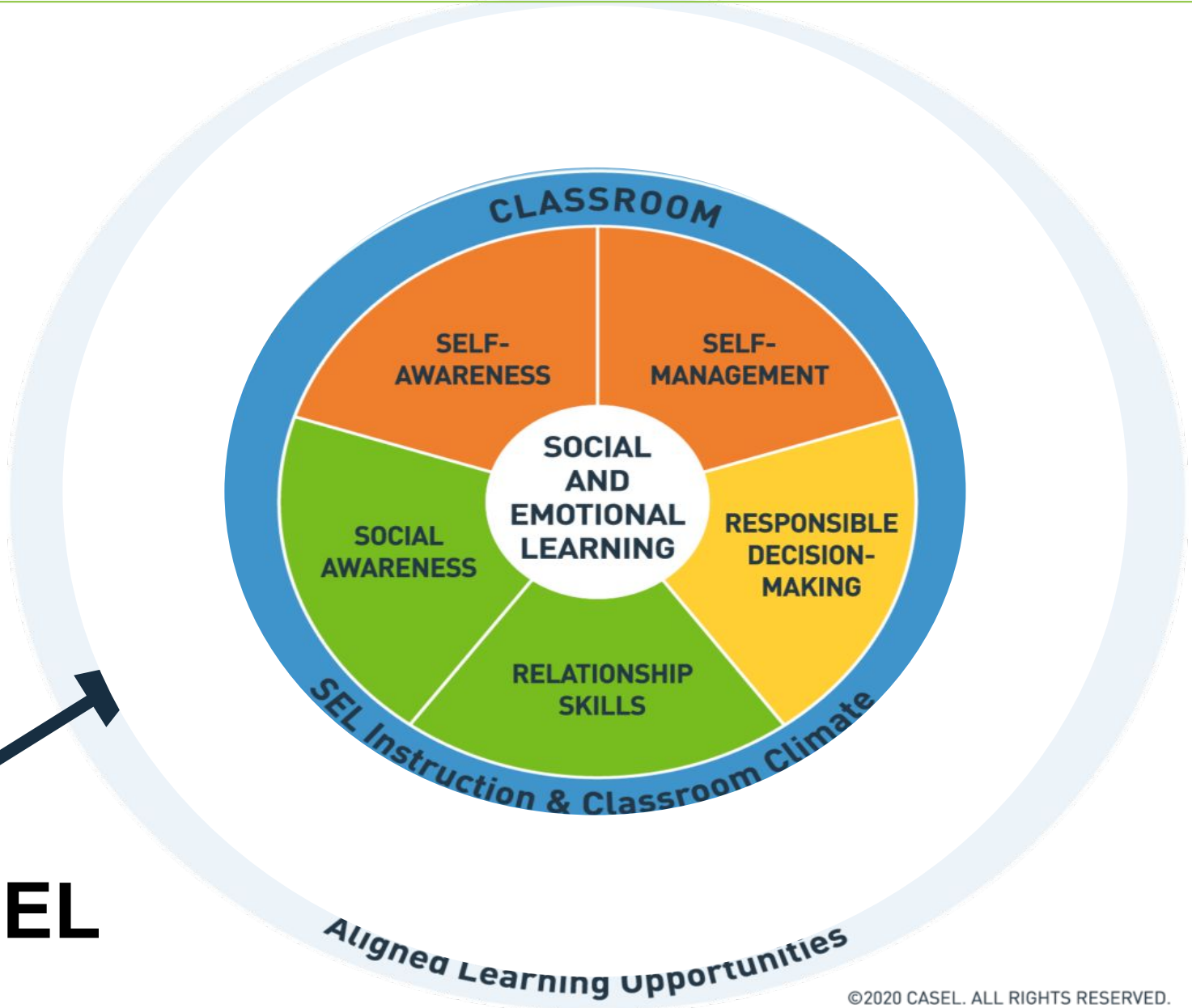
**RESPONSIBLE
DECISION MAKING**

St
Co
Social Identity
Growth mindset
Sense of purpose

**RELATIONSHIP
SKILLS**

Organizational s
Curiosity and open-mindedness
Self initiative

WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING?



The "L" in SEL

SEL DEFINITION

SEL is the *process* through which all young people and adults *acquire and apply* the **knowledge, skills, and attitudes** to develop **healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.**

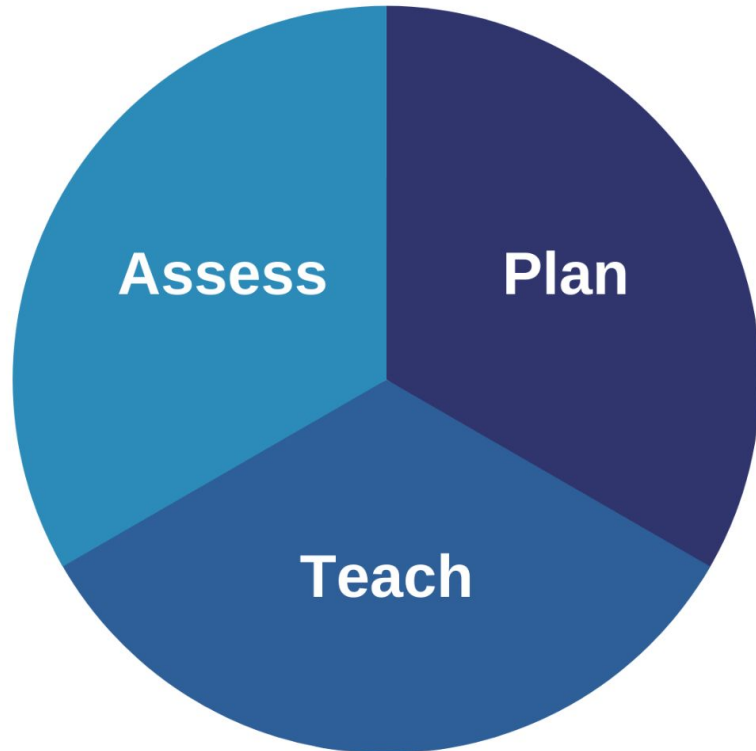
SEL INSTRUCTION

Explicit teaching of
SEL-related skills

Integrating concepts
into content
(e.g., character motivations
in literature)

Teacher modeling
of strategies

Explicit Adaptive Practices



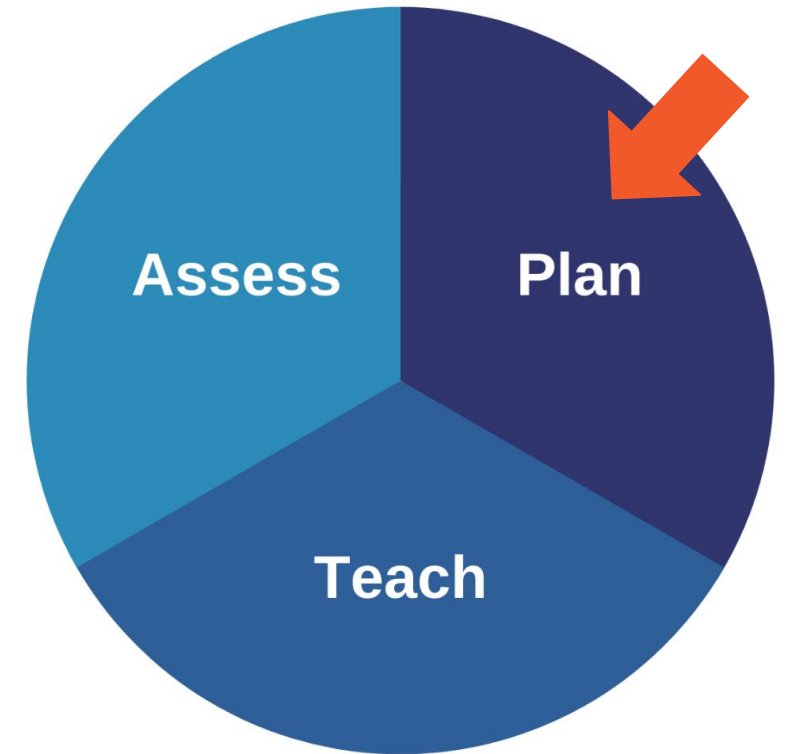
Like students, educators can benefit from **structures** and **routines** that continually remind and guide them in using SEL skills.

Educators' Social And Emotional Skills Vital To Learning

Plan

Intentionally plan for the incorporation of social-emotional learning within the educational experience.

1. Establish SEL goals/objectives that align with related district, school, programmatic, grade-level and/or content area standards/goals/objectives
2. Incorporate academic content that includes social-emotional learning in context
3. Incorporate instructional experiences that leverage specific social-emotional skills and strategies



Plan

Connect **SEL Skills** to Academic **Benchmarks**

Academic Standard	SEL Skills Required	SEL Objective
<p>With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.5)</p>	<p>Students will need self-management to develop plan for how to improve writing and relationship skills to give and receive feedback with peers.</p>	<p>“I can set goals and create a plan to achieve them”</p> <p>“I can give specific and constructive feedback to peers”</p>

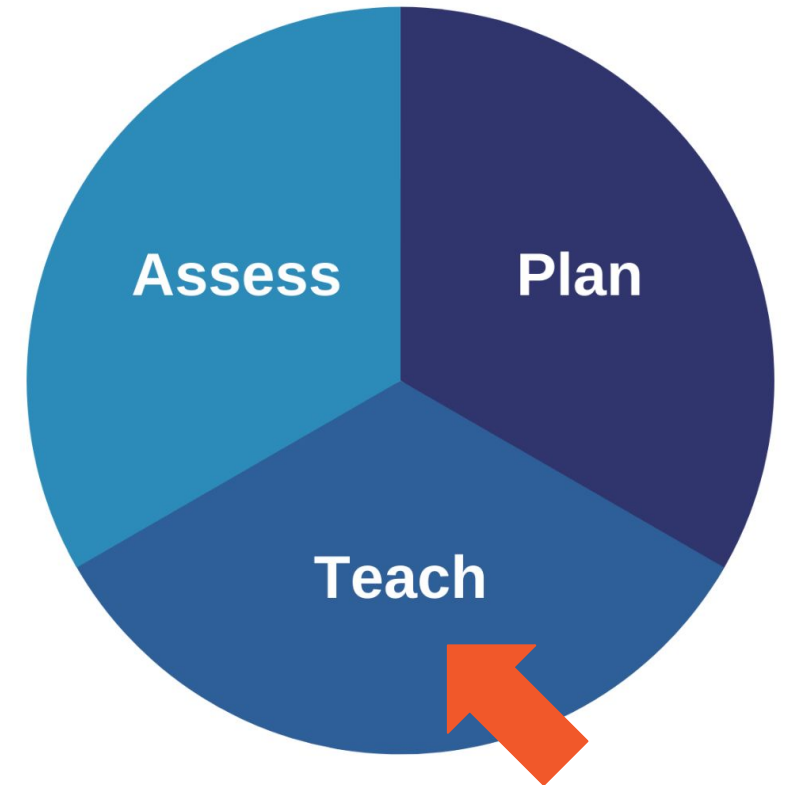
Plan

Subject	SEL Skills	Example
ELA	Perspective Taking	Students describe specific scene in book from the perspective of different characters
Math	Collaboration	Students work in teams to resolve complex word problems involving multiple mathematical steps
Science	Goal Setting and Self-Awareness	Students set goals for their involvement in group science labs, and reflect on how well they accomplished their goals at the end of the lab.

Teach

Name, explain, and teach the specific social-emotional skills and strategies → make it explicit .

1. Engaging in **group-work** involves a combination of skills such as **relationship-building** and **conflict resolution**
2. Providing **peer feedback** draws on **trust**, **clear communication** and **vulnerability**
3. **Independent reading** requires **self-awareness** and **self-management**



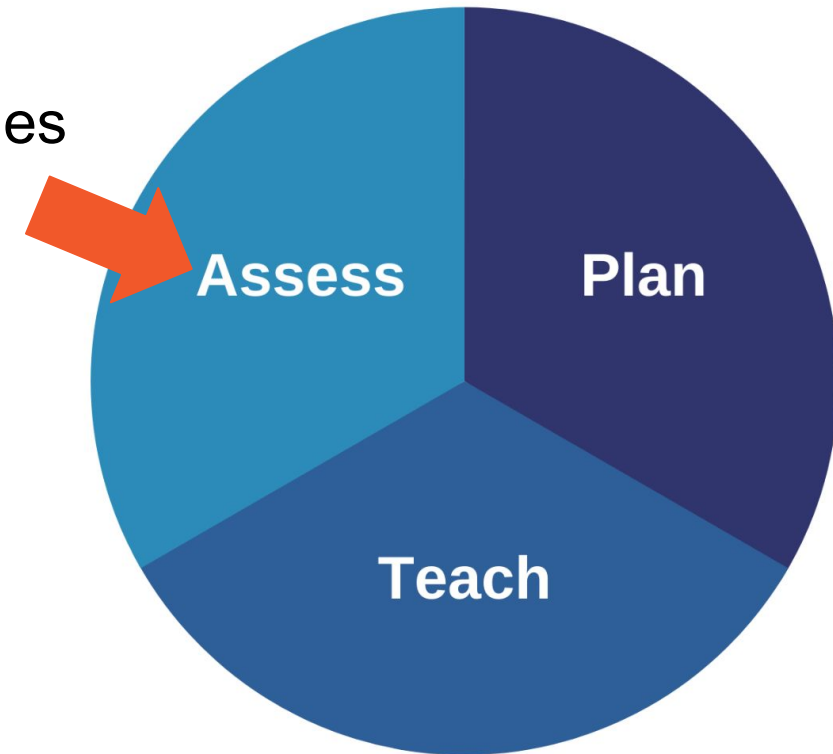
Example (Revisited):

SEL Objective	Instructions	Reflection Questions
“I can set goals and create a plan to achieve them”	Using self-management skills develop a writing plan for writing your assignment across multiple drafts to strengthen your writing.	How was your writing plan helpful in guiding your process for improving your writing? What steps were helpful and which ones were less helpful?
“I can give specific and constructive feedback to peers”	Using positive relationships skills, provide your partner with constructive feedback that will help them to improve their writing; listen to the feedback you receive and incorporate into your writing improvement plan.	How did you make sure the feedback you gave was constructive and not discouraging? What aspects of the feedback you received were helpful and which ones were not helpful?

Assess

Use a continuous improvement model to assess the ways in which social-emotional learning is (or is not) showing up in the systems and structures.

1. **Observe** students application of SEL skills and strategies
2. **Review** specific SEL skills and strategies as needed
3. Save time for **self-reflection** (for you and for students)
4. Gather **feedback** from various stakeholders



Peer Teaching:

Turn and Talk

1. Share an example of a SEL practice you have adopted in the past month.
2. Share an example of how you may have “ASSESSED” through reflection or feedback how SEL instruction is (or is not) happening with your students.

Integrating SEL Practices into Academic Scope and Sequence



Example 1: ELA



Example 2: Math

Unit:	Grade 7 Geometry Math Standard: Draw, construct, and describe geometrical figures and describe the relationships between them.
Academic Objective:	Solve problems involving scale drawings of geometric figures, such as computing actual lengths and areas from a scale drawing and reproducing a scale drawing at a different scale. Draw (freehand, with ruler and protractor, and with technology) two-dimensional geometric shapes with given conditions.
SEL Skills:	Collaboration: Demonstrate cooperation and teamwork to promote group wellbeing and collective efficacy. Goal Setting: Reflect on how decision-making skills contribute to their study habits, academics, relationships, and participation in group activities in and out of school.
Lesson Plan/ Activity:	Students work in teams to develop a two-dimensional model of an amusement park at different scales. As part of the activity, students develop a team plan (group norms, roles, responsibilities), and then reflect on decisions they made individually and collectively, and the relationship between the two.

Activity Instructions:

1. Select a Unit Topic
2. Write the academic objective(s) for the unit
3. Select an SEL Competency (CASEL 5) and specific SEL skills (*see reference guide*)
4. Describe an activity that incorporate the SEL competency and skill into a specific lesson
5. Reflect on the Resources needed
6. Reflect on the what Evidence will demonstrate progress was made in both academic and SEL skills?



CASEL's 5 SEL Competency Categories

Category	Definition	Examples of Competencies
Self-Awareness	Our ability to recognize our emotions, behaviors, thoughts, strengths, and limitations, and how they all impact ourselves and those around us.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifying emotions▪ Accurate self-perception▪ Recognizing strengths▪ Sense of self-confidence▪ Self-efficacy▪ Growth mindset
Self-Management	The ability to harness one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. (California Department of Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Impulse control▪ Stress management▪ Self-discipline▪ Self-motivation▪ Goal setting▪ Organizational skills
Social Awareness	A person's ability to consider the perspectives of other individuals, groups, or communities and apply that understanding to interactions with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Perspective-taking▪ Empathy▪ Appreciating diversity▪ Respect for others
Relationship Skills	The ability to build positive relationships, especially with diverse individuals and groups, using a variety of methods such as active listening, collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution skills. (Greater Good in Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Communication▪ Social engagement▪ Building relationships▪ Working cooperatively▪ Helping/seeking help▪ Resisting social pressure
Responsible Decision-Making	The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. (California Department of Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Problem identification▪ Situation analysis▪ Problem-solving▪ Evaluation▪ Reflection▪ Ethical responsibility

* Adapted from the Collaborative for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning, 2024.
<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>

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SEL & Academic Integration: Unit Planning Template

1. Unit

Unit Topic:

2. Academic Objectives

What specific skills, related to this topic, are stated or implied in the Curriculum Framework?

3. SEL Competency/ies

What SEL competencies align with academic objectives

4. Lesson Plan/Activity

Brief description of the lesson plan/activity including how it will address SEL competency

5. Resources Needed

6. Evidence of Success

How will you know students made both academic and SEL progress?

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SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
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Data Inventory

OBJECTIVE

Our team can capture what SEB data is already being collected, how that data is (or is not) being used and consider whether there are ways to fill “data gaps”, improve data collection and leverage data-informed decision making.

OUTCOME

Our team will have a clear inventory of what data we have available, identify any “data gaps”, and identify steps to improve data collection and systematically leverage data to inform decision making.

Parts of this Tool:

- + [Part 1: Identify Goals for Data-Informed Decision-Making](#)
- + [Part 2: Identify Data Sources](#)
- + [Part 3: Data Routines](#)

It is likely that your school/district is already collecting multiple sources of data related to social, emotional and behavioral needs.

Some examples of such data sources are:

- student, staff, and family surveys
- school climate data
- observations of student behavior
- attendance records
- student discipline data
- focus groups or empathy interviews
- classroom observations
- school walkthrough

These data can be captured at the student level, aggregated to the classroom, school, or district level, and/or broken down by various groups



Resources

- + [Recommendations and Resources for Equitable Data Use.](#)

➤ Part 1 Identify Goals for Data-Informed Decision-Making

Social, emotional and behavioral data, whether implementation or outcome, can be leveraged in many ways. Consider your goals for collecting data. Check off how you would like to use data to inform your MTSS.

Data Goals	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand the needs and strengths of students, staff, and families
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform what tiered supports to offer or how to match students to appropriate supports
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor the implementation of tiered supports
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn about student and program outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust and improve tiered supports
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand how particular groups of students are doing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor the fidelity of systems or processes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify disparities based on subgroup analysis
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If you selected other, please describe:</i>

Part 2 Identify Data Sources

Complete the table below to clarify the purpose, access, and use of SEB data currently available in your school/district.

Data Goals	Data Questions	Data Sources*	Where is the data stored?	Who has access?
EXAMPLE: Understand the needs and strengths of students	What are students SEL strengths?	Panorama	Panorama dashboard	All teachers have access to Panorama data through Panorama dashboard.

* Put "Missing" if currently no data sources are available to answer question.

➤ Part 3 Data Processes

Data Purpose?	Data Source?	How Often Looked at?	By Whom?	Decisions
EXAMPLE: Identifying student needs	PHD-9 and GAD-7 (Universal Mental Health Screening Tools)	Twice a year when data collected	Panorama dashboard	Based on universal screening data identify students who need Tier 2 and/or 3 supports

* Put "Missing" if currently no data sources are available to answer question.

Next Steps:

+ When ready to review and discuss data, refer to the [Recommendations and Resources for Equitable Data Use](#).



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

> Internalizing Behaviors

Presenter:



Agenda

9:30

Guided Meditation

9:55

Defining Internalizing Behaviors

10:00

Impacts of Internalizing Behaviors

10:30

Appropriate Interventions

11:00

Case Studies

Agreements

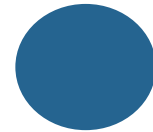
- ✓ Use “I” statements to speak from your own experience; we do not expect others to speak for anyone but themselves.
- ✓ Consider *impact* of your words over what you *intended* to say.
- ✓ Practice confidentiality - share learning, keep the names and personal stories you receive.
- ✓ Expect and accept non-closure.
- ✓ Engage actively in a way that works for you.

Today's Presenters



Tiffany Howard

Trauma-Informed Specialist



Erik Maki

Licensed Psychologist, PBIS Clinical Consultant



Content developed with the support of Stephanie
St. Joseph



OBJECTIVES



State the impact of internalizing behaviors on students



Demonstrate ways to recognize internalizing behaviors in students



Identify how to address internalizing behaviors in students

BREATHE



MELTING

FLOW

GoNoodle.

Defining Internalizing Behaviors



Internalizing Behaviors

- Instead of “acting out” students may “**act in**” and at times have negative feelings and thoughts about themselves or others
- Feelings that stay “inside”
- Expressed through avoidant or self-destructive behaviors

Internalizing symptoms/behaviors usually present in four basic ways:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Social Withdrawal
- Somatic (physical) problems



High levels of anxiety and depression reported from high school students

68.5%

report clinically significant anxiety

52.6%

report clinically significant depression

44.6%

struggle with both anxiety and depression

joon.com

Distinguishing Externalizing from Internalizing Behaviors

- **Externalizing behaviors** are highly interactive and social
- **Internalizing behaviors** = social and academic “treading water” or “disappearing” while others are moving forward

Examples: requesting to leave events, reduced participation in activities, poor completion of work, frequent trips to the school nurse , withdrawal from peer interaction

Thank You for Your Commitment!



Source: Forness, S.R., Freeman, S.F., Paparella, T., Kauffman, J.M., & Walker, H.M. (2012). Special education implications of point and cumulative prevalence for children with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 20, 4-18.

What Fight or Flight Looks Like in the Classroom

(Fostering Resilient Learners)

Flight	Fight	Freeze
Withdrawing	Acting out	Exhibiting numbness
Fleeing the classroom	Behaving aggressively	Refusing to answer
Skipping class	Acting silly	No action to get needs met
Daydreaming	Verbal refusal	Giving a blank look
Seeming to sleep	Appearing hyperactive	Feeling unable to move/act
Avoiding others	Arguing	
Hiding or wandering	Screaming/yelling	
Becoming disengaged		



Children's
**Anxiety
Iceberg**

A child's
behaviour
is **NOT** always
what it seems

What we see
Behaviour



Feelings

What we don't
see: What's under
the surface



Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

www.thepathway2success.com

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

www.thepathway2success.com

Clipart by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino



Internalizing Behaviors Through an Equity Lens

When we don't utilize an Equity Lens in our work the following can occur:

1. Higher disciplinary actions for students with diverse racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds when they exhibit more externalizing behaviors.
2. Overlooking diverse students who may be struggling with more internalizing behaviors
3. Misidentifying internalizing behaviors because we are looking through the lens of “majority group”

Example #1

Black girls in high school are...

6x more likely than white girls to be suspended

3x more likely to receive 1 or more in school suspensions than white female students

2x more likely to receive corporal punishment than white female students

4x more likely to be arrested than white females

Source: Discipline data for girls in US public schools, Department of Education office of Civil Rights, 2018 via <https://pushoutfilm.com/>

Education



59.5%

of LGBTQ+ students **felt unsafe at school** because of their sexual orientation.



42.1%

of transgender and gender nonconforming students have been **prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun**.



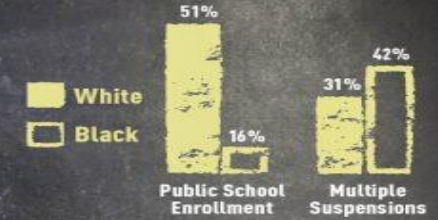
70.1%

of LGBTQ+ students **experienced verbal harassment** (e.g., called names or threatened) at school based on their sexual orientation.

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

School disciplinary policies disproportionately affect Black students.

Zero-tolerance discipline has resulted in Black students facing disproportionately harsher punishment than white students in public schools.¹



Black students represent



31%

of school-related arrests²

Black students are suspended and expelled

3x

more than white students.³



Students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are nearly three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.⁴



BROWN AT 60: STILL SEPARATE. STILL UNEQUAL.



1. Data Snapshot: http://datacenter.k12data.org/Data/View/Study/CRSD_School_Discipline_Snapshot.pdf
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Breaking School Rules: http://tag.meredith.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Breaking_School_Rules_Report_Final.pdf

Impacts on Students



Factors Affecting Early Identification

A percentage of students with internalizing problems **use academic achievement as a coping mechanism**; hence, are doing “well” and are even less likely to be identified and offered support/help.



Effects of Anxiety on Students

- Affects a student's classroom behavior
- Affects academic performance
- Affects social interactions
- High absenteeism rates
- Difficulty processing and retrieving information
- Increased somatic complaints, such as stomachaches

Effects of Depression on Students

- Can hinder a student's learning, concentration, memory and participation in activities in and out of school
- Increased substance abuse, conduct problems, dropping out
- Can exacerbate health problems
- Impedes on relationships with peers and adults
- Can also lead to thoughts of suicide

Interventions



PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- Enhancing predictability and supporting self-regulation
- Provide daily schedule with advanced warning of variants in the schedule
 - Schedule check-ins throughout the day, especially before known difficult times
 - Include time in schedule for self-regulation, such as movement or breathing

PREVENTION STRATEGIES con't.

- Strategic seating arrangements (eg., away from distractions, not next to a student who moves a lot, etc.)
- Provide student with a role/job in new situations
- Provide choices so a student feels they have some control
 - Ex. You can do either the spelling worksheet or the math worksheet.

Teaching Social Emotional Behavioral Competencies



Teaching self-regulation routines/strategies

Focused breathing

Moving to another space to regulate



Skills-based groups

Self-identification of thoughts/feelings in real time

Identifying the feeling of perceived threat

Social skills for forming and strengthening relationships with adults and peers



Self-monitoring

Identifying and adjusting appropriately

TEACHING SEB COMPETENCIES

- Teaching self-regulations routines/strategies
 - Focused breathing
 - Moving to another place to self-regulate
- Skill-based groups
 - Self-identification of thoughts/feelings in real time
 - Identifying the feeling of perceived threat
 - Social-skills groups for forming/strengthening relationships with peers and/or adults
- Self-monitoring
 - Positive self-talk
 - Identifying physiological state

ANXIETY AND MY BODY

Color in the reactions that happen to your body when you start getting anxious.



What are some other physical symptoms that you experience?



These are tough for us to see. We're often left with the behavioral symptoms

REPLACEMENT BEHAVIORS

- Many of the **behavioral signs of internalizing** (e.g. work refusal, running/bolting, shutting down, perfection seeking) **serve a NEED that helps them to regulate their emotions.**
 - To ask or make a student stop using these behaviors, without an alternative, can lead to increased distress
- A **replacement behavior** is a positive alternative behavior that allows the student the same outcome (usually calming)
 - For example, a student who has anxiety and is trying to escape something can instead engage in self-calming techniques or asking for a break.

15 Ways Teachers Can HELP STUDENTS MANAGE ANXIETY

Incorporate Mindfulness Exercises Throughout the Day	Check In With Students & Focus on Relationship Building	Exercise and Get Moving!
Have Structured Routines	Encourage Positive Self-Talk	Read Books About Managing Anxiety
Maintain Clear Rules and Expectations	Set Achievable Goals	Model Using Coping Tools Yourself
Cultivate a Calming Classroom Environment	Create a Strong Classroom Community	Give Students A Choice to Work Alone or With Others
Provide a Calm Corner in Your Classroom	Validate Your Student's Feelings	Refer Out for Additional Support

Case Studies



How would you assist these students?



1) A student gets a bad grade and you overhear him telling a friend how stupid he is and how he fails at everything.



3) A high-achieving, people-pleasing student is about to share their big presentation, before it's their time to present they "suddenly" refuse to give their presentation and walk out of the classroom.



2) A student who is normally quiet and low energy is suddenly angry with you over something seemingly inconsequential.



4) A student with ASD is put into a small group for a task. The student begins swinging a lanyard, narrowly missing hitting his classmates. You tell them to put the lanyard away. They do, but then begin screaming.

Resources 

Screeners

o Screening for Child Anxiety and Related Disorders (SCARED)

o Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Point Scale (GAD)

o Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS)

o Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)

o Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)

o Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)

o Beck Anxiety Scale

o Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC)

o Systematic Screeners for Behavior Disorders (SSBD)

o Student Risk Screening Scale (SSRS)

o Behavior Emotional Screening System (BESS)

Curriculums

- ❑ Coping Cat
- ❑ Facing Your Fears
- ❑ Strong Kids
- ❑ MATCH-ADTC
- ❑ Reaching New Heights
- ❑ First Step to Success
- ❑ ERASE-ESPS
- ❑ Building Confidence
- ❑ Anxiety Workbook for Teens
- ❑ The Incredible Years
- ❑ Second Step
- ❑ Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
- ❑ RULER
- ❑ SPARK
- ❑ TRAILS

Questions ? 



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➤ Thank You





SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY



Elevating Student Voice in Elementary School

Presenter:



Agenda

10 minutes

Opening and Framing

6 minutes

Hearing from Elementary students

10 minutes

Table Group Debriefs

10 minutes

Sharing Student Voice Strategies


15 minutes

Collaborative Brainstorm Activity


10 minutes

Shareout and Closing

Student voice is not just a “nice to have”

 Elevating student voice is linked to motivation and engagement

 Students are key members of the school community

 When students feel their voice is heard, they are more likely to give us honest feedback - a positive loop

 Provides “street level” data

Hearing from Elementary Students



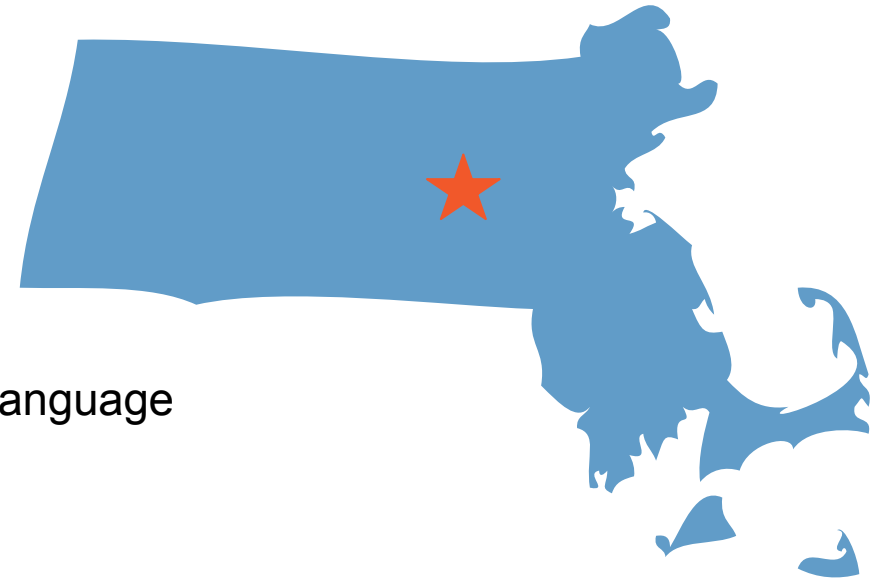
Thorndyke Road School

PK-6 school located in Worcester MA
Serves 352 students






51.4% of students speak a language other than English as their first language
31.1% of students are English Language Learners
68.2% of students qualify as low-income
23.6% of students have disabilities
81.8% of students qualify as “high needs”

Thorndyke Road is in their first year participating in the SEB Academy, and previously participated in the DESE funded Sense of Belonging Networks





Their goal has been focused on enhancing sense of belonging at school through an aligned MTSS of social, emotional, and behavioral supports.



Students were asked to respond to a set of questions

-  When you walk into school, how does it make you feel? How do you want to feel?
-  What is your favorite thing about school?
-  How would you describe the school to a new student?
-  Describe a time when you have felt supported at school
-  What advice do you have for teachers at your school?

Debrief

-  What stands out to you from these student responses?
-  What, if anything, surprises you?
-  What questions do you wish we had asked?
-  What initial ideas do you have about ways you might collect student voice reflections at your school/district?

Student Voice Strategies



Strategies for Elevating Student Voice

 Focus Groups


 Amplify/Sunset/Create

 Written Student Reflections

 Student Participation in Committees/Decision-Making Teams

Focus Groups

A focus group is a moderated conversation with 5-10 students to collect data about students' lived experiences at schools. Focus groups allow us to collect data from a broad range of students over a short period of time. A focus group follows a protocol, with an opening statement and agreements, a set of questions, and a closing. Much of the data collected in focus groups comes from discussion between the participants and follow-up questions, not just from direct answers to specific questions.

-  Has anyone in the room ever conducted a focus group with students? What was the experience like?

Written Student Reflections

Written student reflections allow a school or district to gather information about a small number (1-3) of specific questions. Students can complete written reflections as a “do now” or “exit ticket,” allowing schools to gather responses from as many students as possible about the same set of questions.

-  Has anyone in the room ever collected written responses from students? What was the experience like?


Amplify/Sunset/Create

This protocol allows groups of students to provide feedback about what they want more of at school (amplify), what they want less of at school (sunset), and what they want to add to the school experience (create). Educators can use this strategy with a small or large group of students, and it is adaptable to many formats (virtual, anonymous, class discussion, etc.). Students are given three specific questions to respond to and can share their reflections.

-  Has anyone in the room ever engaged in this strategy with students? What was the experience like?

Student Participation in Committees/Decision Making Teams

Students can - and should - be invited to participate in committees and decision-making teams. Including student representatives in decision-making brings authentic student voice into the process and supports adults to center the student experience. Students as young as 4th or 5th grade can participate in decision-making teams with proper support. Many MA School Committees have student representatives. Consider broadening student involvement to groups such as culture/climate committees, strategic planning committees, and other decision-making teams

-  Has anyone in the room ever included students on a decision-making team? What was the experience like?

Collaborative Activity



Table Group Brainstorm

Use the post-it notes provided to brainstorm as a group at your tables:

- Questions you would want to ask students at your school/district
- Ways to bring students into decision-making processes
- Challenges that you anticipate might arise

Then, add your post-its to the posters around the room.



Share-out and Closing





Poster Walk

- Take 5 minutes to walk around and view other groups' brainstorm posters



Final Debrief/Closing

-  What questions are you excited to ask students?
-  What is one takeaway you are leaving this session with?



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY

➤ Thank You





SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL,
& BEHAVIOR ACADEMY



Elevating Student Voice in Secondary School

Presenter:



Agenda

10 minutes

Opening and Framing

6 minutes

Hearing from secondary students

10 minutes

Table Group Debriefs

10 minutes

Sharing Student Voice Strategies


15 minutes

Collaborative Brainstorm Activity


10 minutes

Shareout and Closing

Student voice is not just a “nice to have”

 Elevating student voice is linked to motivation and engagement

 Students are key members of the school community

 When students feel their voice is heard, they are more likely to give us honest feedback - a positive loop

 Provides “street level” data

Hearing from Secondary Students



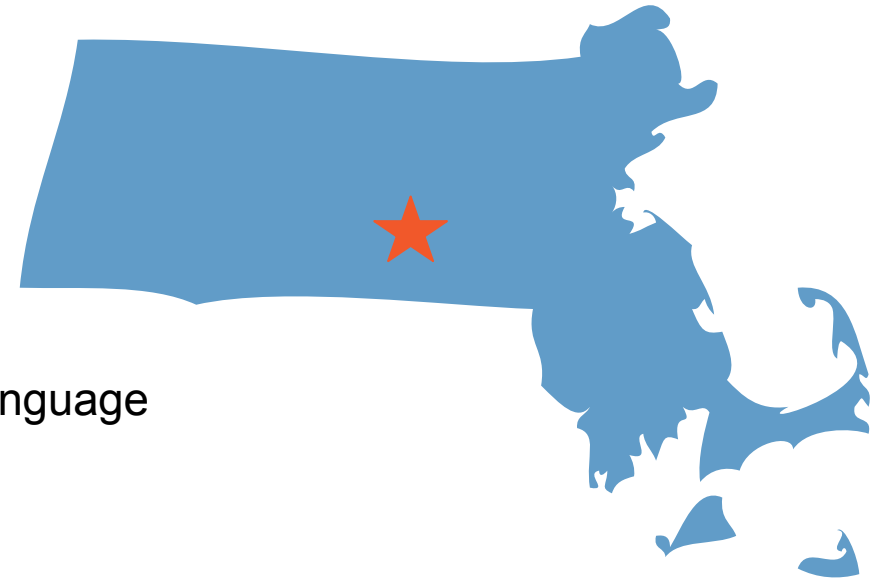
Tantasqua Regional High School

9-12 school located in Sturbridge, MA
Serves 663 students

2.9% of students speak a language other than English as their first language
1.8% of students are English Language Learners
23.7% of students qualify as low-income
10.3% of students have disabilities
27.9% of students qualify as “high needs”

Tantasqua Regional School District is in their first year participating in the SEB Academy, and previously participated in the DESE funded Sense of Belonging Networks

Their goal has been focused on enhancing sense of belonging at school through an aligned MTSS of social, emotional, and behavioral supports.



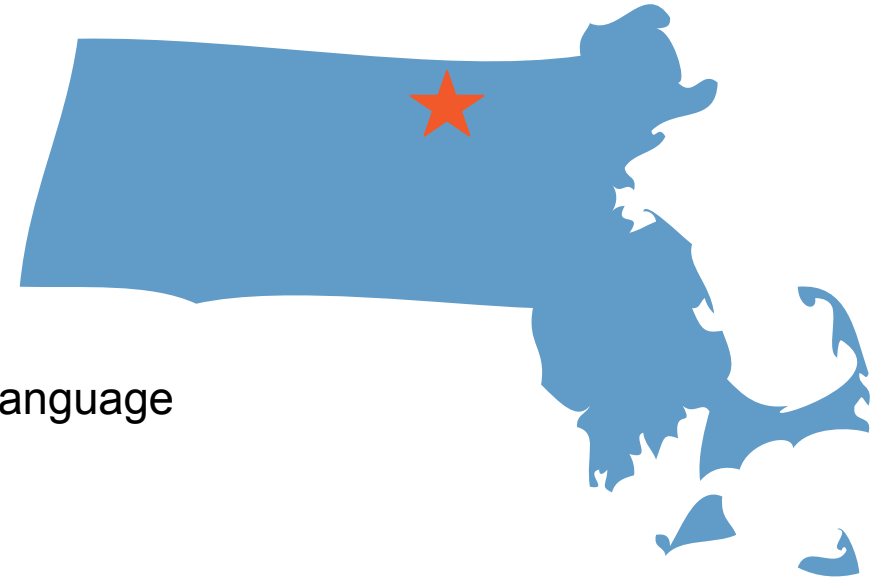
Gardner High School

9-12 school located in Gardner, MA
Serves 809 students






13.8% of students speak a language other than English as their first language
5.2% of students are English Language Learners
58.8% of students qualify as low-income
19.7% of students have disabilities
65.3% of students qualify as “high needs”

Gardner High School is in their second year participating in the SEB Academy.

Their goal has been focused on implementing Tier 1 PBIS supports with fidelity.



Students were asked to respond to a set of questions

-  When you walk into school, how does it make you feel? How do you want to feel?
-  What is your favorite thing about school?
-  How does your school support students in getting along with each other? In doing well in school?
-  In what ways do you feel like your school offers you opportunities to share your opinion? To shape your learning? To make decisions that affect you and your peers?
-  What can schools do better to help their students know that they are important members of the school community?

When you walk into school, how does it make you feel? How do you want to feel?

I'm happy. I like school.

I want to feel safe and that's how I feel when I walk into school.

Safe and idk school is ok

I kind of want to go home. It's like too early.

when i walk into school i wanna go straight home and never wanna go back because it's way too early for me to be learning i want it to make me feel like uplifting

It makes me feel sad knowing I have to go somewhere for 7 hours and learn things that I won't remember in the next two years.

When I walk into the school, I feel tired and just want to get the day over with. I WANT to feel confident.

It makes me feel bored and unenthusiastic. I want to feel enthusiastic and motivated at school

It feels comfortable I like being more at school than I like being at home tbh.

I don't really feel anything but I feel somewhat welcomed and that's what I want to feel.

Frankly I walk into school not feeling much, mostly tired or kind of bored until I see people. I would most want to feel super excited or energized at the start of a day.

What is your favorite thing about school?

Being able to see friends and teachers that I like.

Hanging out with my friends and being able to set myself up to go to a good college.

Gym class

I like math. I like the topic. I don't like the people in my class but I like learning math.

Seeing my friends and favorite teachers.

My favorite thing is talking to people.

The fruit juice boxes they give in the mornings.

I like my biology class, but mainly because I know people in there. I like my English class, but it's kind of hard when 90% of the time it's partner work and I don't know anyone in there. So it's hard to do stuff. I feel like that's one thing I don't like, that some teachers that rely mainly on, oh, go work with a group and stuff, and it's like, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. But I like biology because it's optional if you want to work with people, and I know people in there, so I don't have to be alone.

Probably lang or any English class in general. It's just what I'm better at.

seeing my friends and my cool teachers

How does your school support students in getting along with each other? In doing well in school?

By talking to each other and enforcing our CARE expectations

They try to have all the students involved with things like clubs and sports. They offer homework club and things like that.

They try putting kids next to kids they don't talk to.

Our school supports students in getting the education that everyone needs and is good with finding what everyone enjoys even if they don't know at first. Our school also supports us with great options for things we can do other than the classes we have to do.

I just I wish I was in higher classes because I know I can do good in higher classes. Like I said, there's it's like a process, like I can't just, there's no way for me to just like jump up into higher classes. I have to like work my way there. And that's like what I don't like because I wish I could just like I know it's hard for them because they don't want like me who I've only taken CP classes to like go into an AP class. But there I wish there was like some type of track to get there

This school limits conflict but I don't think that they reward the students who are constantly doing the right thing.

In what ways do you feel like your school offers you opportunities to share your opinion? To shape your learning? To make decisions that affect you and your peers?

I don't think the school helps me to share my opinion. Shaping students learning is done well, they're able to pick the level of each class we take so that's okay. I feel like I'm on my own with decision making.

We have a student council that listens to our requests and makes changes.

We share our opinion and help make decisions on surveys like these where we can talk about changes that might need to be made and what we would like to see.

I wish there was a better way to get different classes and easier way to get different classes.

It's always a small group of people who ruin it for everyone else and I wish there was a way for them to punish those kids more instead of closing the bathrooms in between class for multiple kids fighting the kids who get caught fighting should just not be allowed to use the bathroom like the rest of the year or like they have to use a nurse's bathroom

Being able to communicate with the staff

You can join class officers or student council but I don't think that that offers a big position to make a difference. If you want to make a difference you have to put yourself out there.

What can schools do better to help their students know that they are important members of the school community?

being more understanding, letting students finish what they are saying and not judging yelling or jumping to conclusions on things. let them take their time for things don't rush everything.

not let teachers get us in trouble for things they "think" they know or saw just because there adults doesn't mean they're always right also just because your an adult doesn't mean you have my respect respect is earned you respect me i respect you.





Give them a say in what they do and when they leave school. Don't make us feel controlled we want to feel human not like robots

idk, have teachers who actually know how to teach their students rather than just yelling at them whenever they feel like it, have patience with the students because some students may be going through a hard time and the teachers yelling at them doesn't make it any better for them and stresses them out even more

I wish more teachers were as accepting as you guys. If somebody's going through something in a class, say somebody was having a bad day in math or whatever, the teacher wouldn't take time out of their day to make sure the kid's okay. They would probably just be like, oh, this kid just doesn't want to work today.

treating them more like adults and less like kids. obviously not giving them complete freedom, but letting them do what they know is best for their learning capabilities.

Debrief

-  What stands out to you from these student responses?
-  What, if anything, surprises you?
-  What questions do you wish we had asked?
-  What initial ideas do you have about ways you might collect student voice reflections at your school/district?

Student Voice Strategies



Strategies for Elevating Student Voice

 Focus Groups


 Amplify/Sunset/Create

 Written Student Reflections

 Student Participation in Committees/Decision-Making Teams


Focus Groups

A focus group is a moderated conversation with 5-10 students to collect data about students' lived experiences at schools. Focus groups allow us to collect data from a broad range of students over a short period of time. A focus group follows a protocol, with an opening statement and agreements, a set of questions, and a closing. Much of the data collected in focus groups comes from discussion between the participants and follow-up questions, not just from direct answers to specific questions.

-  Has anyone in the room ever conducted a focus group with students? What was the experience like?

Written Student Reflections

Written student reflections allow a school or district to gather information about a small number (1-3) of specific questions. Students can complete written reflections as a “do now” or “exit ticket,” allowing schools to gather responses from as many students as possible about the same set of questions.

-  Has anyone in the room ever collected written responses from students? What was the experience like?


Amplify/Sunset/Create

This protocol allows groups of students to provide feedback about what they want more of at school (amplify), what they want less of at school (sunset), and what they want to add to the school experience (create). Educators can use this strategy with a small or large group of students, and it is adaptable to many formats (virtual, anonymous, class discussion, etc.). Students are given three specific questions to respond to and can share their reflections.

-  Has anyone in the room ever engaged in this strategy with students? What was the experience like?

Student Participation in Committees/Decision Making Teams

Students can - and should - be invited to participate in committees and decision-making teams. Including student representatives in decision-making brings authentic student voice into the process and supports adults to center the student experience. Many MA School Committees have student representatives. Consider broadening student involvement to groups such as culture/climate committees, strategic planning committees, and other decision-making teams

-  Has anyone in the room ever included students on a decision-making team? What was the experience like?

Collaborative Activity



Table Group Brainstorm

Use the post-it notes provided to brainstorm as a group at your tables:

- Questions you would want to ask students at your school/district
- Ways to bring students into decision-making processes
- Challenges that you anticipate might arise

Then, add your post-its to the posters around the room.



Share-out and Closing





Poster Walk

- Take 5 minutes to walk around and view other groups' brainstorm posters



Final Debrief/Closing

-  What questions are you excited to ask students?
-  What is one takeaway you are leaving this session with?



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➤ Thank You



Questionnaires / Reflection ?s

What would make our school more welcoming to students who are bilingual?

What is 1 thing you'd change about your school day?

Why do ^{PK-1} you like to come to school?

How would you describe our school to a new school? ^{PK-1}

How does your teacher make you feel? ^{PK-1}

How do your teachers help you at school?

Ask Amplify / Sunset Create questions

Can you tell about a time you felt important at school?

Can you tell about a time that you were helped at school (By kids/adults?)

Do you feel student voices are heard in your school?

Do you feel supported at school?

Do you feel like you belong in our school community?

What do you like to tell an adult about your day?

Do you see people like you in the books/lessons you read in class?

Challenge - how young they are + how we ask questions

Do you feel seen & heard?

How could you use this person or what you're looking for in a trusted adult when you move onto middle school?

What does community mean to me? How would you describe the community @ our school? @

What qualities make this person your trusted adult?

When or why would you seek out your trusted adult?

How about coming into school? Do you have one staff member that you are connected to?

What are some of positive things that you have taken away from your experience. They have in educational spaces Reflection

What would make you want to come to school?

What can the school do to help you ease into the day?

What makes you feel successful in school?

What do you hope/wish/dream for your future?

Use groups that are already created to be the focus group

Has a teacher or staff member ever contacted a support person / a family member about a concern you experienced?

Do you feel like you belong to the school community?

Do you feel connected to any adults in the building?

Do you feel like you are treated fairly?

Amplify/Sunset/Create

Amplify
admin presence
in student
groups

Amplify
budgets for
more student
voice ideas

What do you
want more or less
of? (provide
specific context)

Challenges —
adults question
many kids
on SC.

- challenges
- funding
- time on
learning
- legality

Regular
feedback

Poll students
using this strategy
throughout
The Year. Create
Slide deck to share
it w/ all stakeholders

Involvement in decision-making

Lunch
Bunch
Student
groups

Have students
meet on a
monthly basis
with staff

Surveys for
students on
what they
want to be
+ make bank

- include
students in
decisions about
scheduling

include
students in
planning all
School meeting

to think beyond
more gym, recess,
choice time

Challenge

Reinstate a
Student Council

Use our
leadership
program in
a more
student-
decision
focus

What do you
want to change
at school... what
ideas do you
have?

Offer different
ways to respond
to the questions
(pictures, drawing, etc)

Student
School
Committee

what do you
think would
help make
our school
a better place?

What makes
you excited
to come to
school?

Engage students
in problem-solving
& ideas to improve
School climate
(How do we measure
success?)

Ask for
feedback + ideas
leading up to
projects - what
formats do they
prefer

Collaborative meetings
with students
from all tiers.

Match the
type students
to the team
(looking at rules being
in students w/ higher
white ops)

Share
data w/
all stakeholders

Adults go
to student org
meetings
- student council
- other
(listen)

Students on
our board
Staff on our
board
Parents on our
board

Students writing
letters to
DESE about
their issue
and needs

Have Different
Student
Committees

Have A Student
Panel At A
Faculty
Meeting.

Students meeting
with admin
to discuss school
problems.

Start of class
meeting for
2-3 minutes
to receive/give
feedback.

School being
held accountable
by students

Search
what students
might say

Trusting
students to be
responsible



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Systems and Strategies for Adult Wellbeing

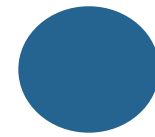


SEB ACADEMY
SPRING CONVENING

May 15, 2024

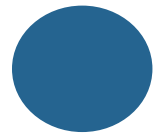


Today's Presenters



Tiffany Howard

Trauma-Informed Specialist



Bonnie Lipton

SEB Academy Coach/Technical Assistance Provider



Erik Maki

Licensed Psychologist/ PBIS Clinical Consultant

Agenda

1. Agenda, Agreements & Objectives
2. Guided Meditation
3. Research on Educator Burnout
4. Adult Well-being Activity
5. Experiential Activity

Agreements

- ✓ Use “I” statements to speak from your own experience; we do not expect others to speak for anyone but themselves.
- ✓ Consider *impact* of your words over what you *intended* to say.
- ✓ Practice confidentiality - share learning, keep the names and personal stories you receive.
- ✓ Expect and accept non-closure.
- ✓ Engage actively in a way that works for you.



OBJECTIVES



Explain the impact systemic school stressors have on educator well-being



Define the socio-ecological model to promoting teacher wellness



Share relational and systemic strategies from the social-ecological model that can improve educator well-being



Feel Amazing!
guided meditation

Research on Educator Burnout and Importance of Adult Wellness



Teacher Turnover

- **12% of new teachers leave within the first 2 years** (Kaiser & National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011)
- **Nearly half of new teachers in the U.S. leave teaching within 5 years** of teaching (*DeAngelis & Pressley, 2011; US DOE, 2011*)
- Massachusetts loses about **10% of teachers each year** (Mass DOE, n.d.)
 - This does not include those who leave one district to move to another.
 - They are still considered as “retained”.



Sources: Kaiser & National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011, DeAngelis & Pressley, 2011; US DOE, 2011

Teacher Stress, Burnout, & Turnover

*“Among our sample [of 527 teachers] surveyed in Dec 2020, who had left the field], **stress was the most commonly reported reason for leaving the profession** among those who left before and those who left during the pandemic”.*

—Diliberti, Schwartz, & Grant, 2021

- **48% of those who left pre-pandemic** indicated stress as the primary reason
- **36% of those who left during the pandemic** indicated stress as the primary reason

Contributors to Teacher Stress and Burnout

Job Demands

- Time Pressures,
- Workload,
- Role Ambiguity,
- Student Misbehavior

Personal Demands

- Personal Demographics (esp. younger, female, & non-tenured)
- Personality Traits (esp. perfectionism, prone to distress)
- General Life Stresses

Brady, McDaniel, & Choi, 2021

Wellness & Teacher/Student Outcomes

Staff Wellness is Associated with:

- More **optimal performance in the workplace**
- Increased **staff empathy, compassion, and ability to create positive environments**
- Improved **school climate, work satisfaction, & lower rates of absenteeism**
- Improved **student wellness**
- Improved **academic achievement**

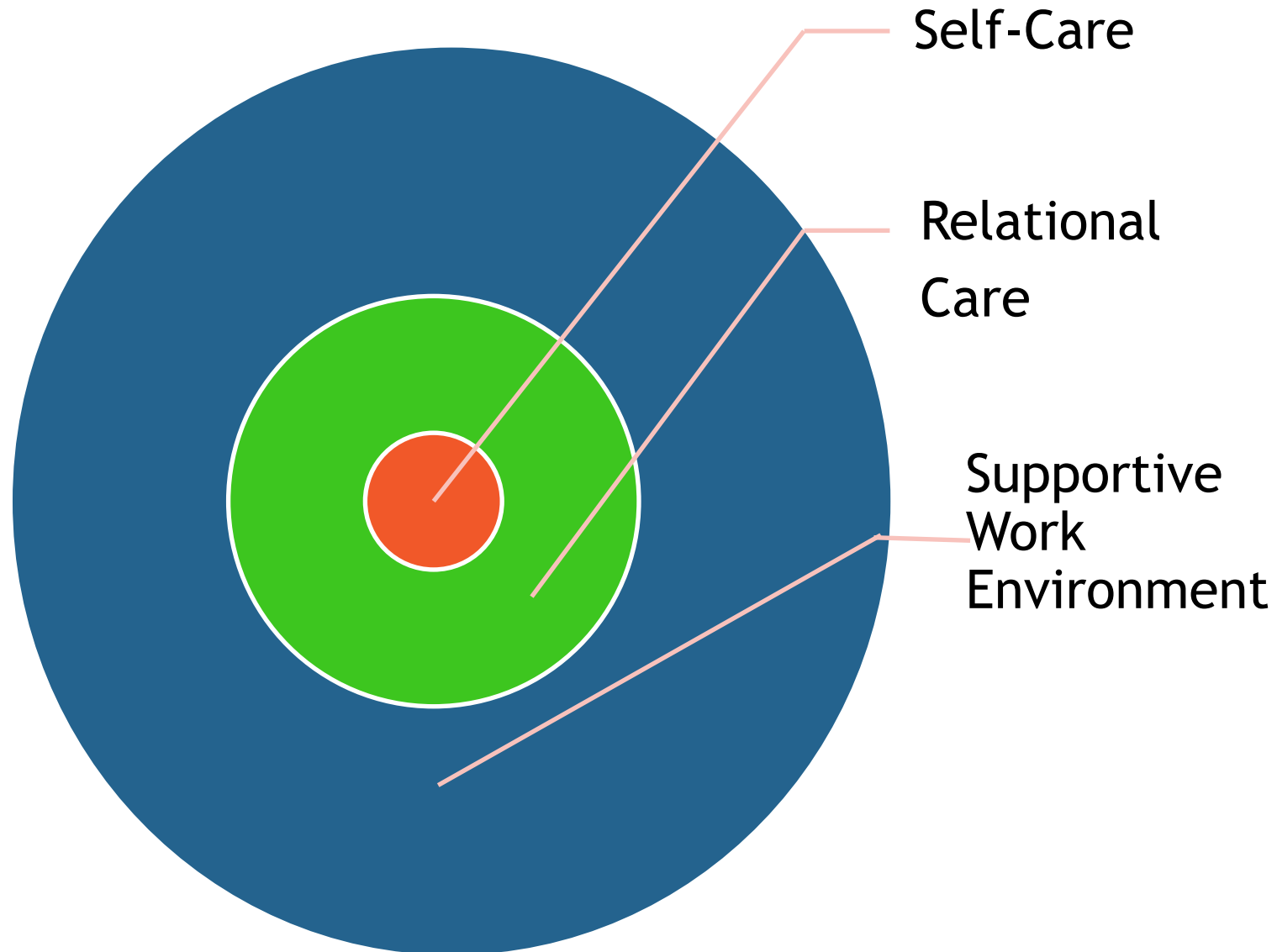


Sources: CDC, 2022; Lever et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2019; Beck et al., 2016

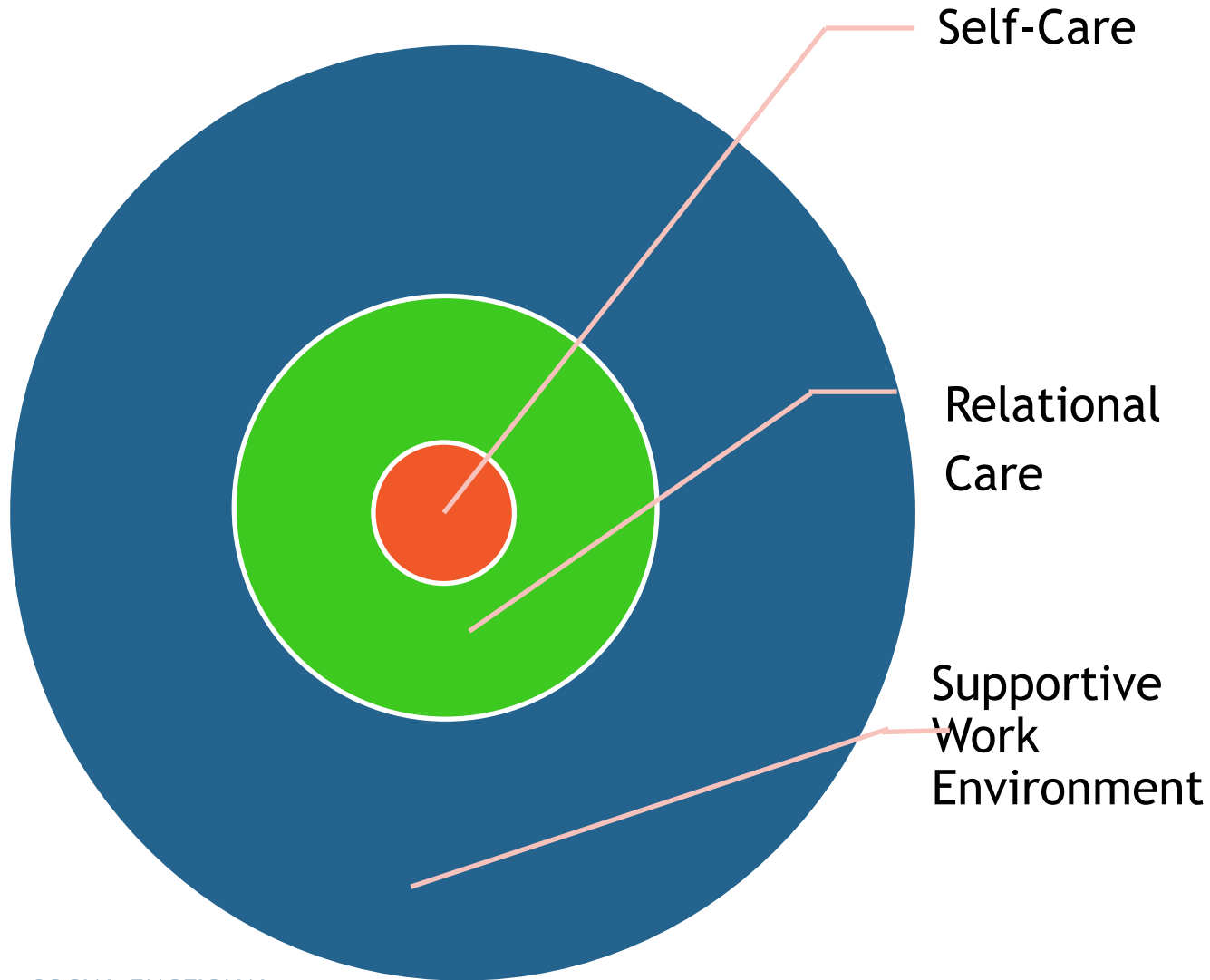
Socio-Ecological Model to Promoting Wellness



A Socio-Ecological Approach to Promoting Wellness



A Socio-Ecological Approach to Promoting Wellness



- What are some specific **new** steps you can take to support ***your own wellbeing***?
- What are steps you can take to encourage ***your colleagues*** to support their wellbeing?

- What are some specific new steps you can take to care for ***your colleagues***?
- What are steps you can take to encourage ***your colleagues*** to care for each other?

- What are some specific new steps you can take to create a ***more supportive work environment***?
- How can you ***advocate for changes*** in the workplace?

Self-Care

- Studies show that practicing self-care can improve teachers' occupational, physical, emotional, and psychological well-being
- Mindfulness skills are related to lower levels of burnout stress, and depression/anxiety symptoms
- Teachers in mindfulness-based intervention programs show:
 - Improvements in mindfulness skills, occupational self-compassion and well-being (e.g., self-efficacy, lower burnout)
 - Lower levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and burnout



Sources: (Abenavoli et al., 2013; Benson, 2018; Braun et al., 2019; Fowler, 2015; Hydon et al., 2015; Jennings et al., 2013; Lever et al., 2017; Molnar et al., 2017; Osher et al., 2008; Roeser et al., 2013; Sprang et al., 2018; Turgoose & Maddox, 2017)

Relational Care

Positive relationships between **school leaders and staff** are related to:

- an environment conducive to academic & social-emotional growth
- effective modeling of positive relationship skills
- lower teacher turnover

Relationships among **teachers and principals** are seen as indicators of readiness to engage in/sustain reform

Teachers who cite positive **relationships with colleagues** say their coworkers:

- are friendly and care about them
- respect and trust each other
- are accepting and encouraging, as well as collaborative and supportive of each other's success and
- communicate openly and they can go to them for help if needed.

Source: Positive Staff Relationships, Greater Good in Education <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/school-relationships/positive-staff-relationships/>

Supportive Environments

- Consistent and constructive communication
- Opportunities for professional growth
- Appreciation and celebration of success
- Focus on equity: everyone belongs
- Culture of collaboration rather than competition
- Provide and encourage use of mental health supports



Source: Brewster, C. & Railsback, J. (2003). *Building trusting relationships for school improvement: implications for principals and teachers.* Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Experiential Activity



Planning

Choose five strategies you learned about today that would like to implement (*any mix of self-care, relational, and supportive work environment*)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Choose **one** strategy of the five on the left you would like to implement, and list three action steps for implementation

Strategy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Adult Wellbeing Resources

- **Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self-Care: Self Assessment and Planning Tool**, *American Institutes for Research*
<https://go.edc.org/Educatorcare>
- **How to Grow Teacher Wellbeing in Your Schools**, *REL Pacific*
<https://go.edc.org/Teacherwellbeing>
- **Positive Staff Relationships**, *Greater Good in Education*
<https://go.edc.org/Posstaff>
- **Strengthen Adult SEL**, *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* <https://go.edc.org/AdultSEL>
- **A Toolkit for School Systems to Advance Comprehensive School Employee Wellness**, *Childtrends* <https://go.edc.org/Toolkitschools>



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➤ Thank You





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