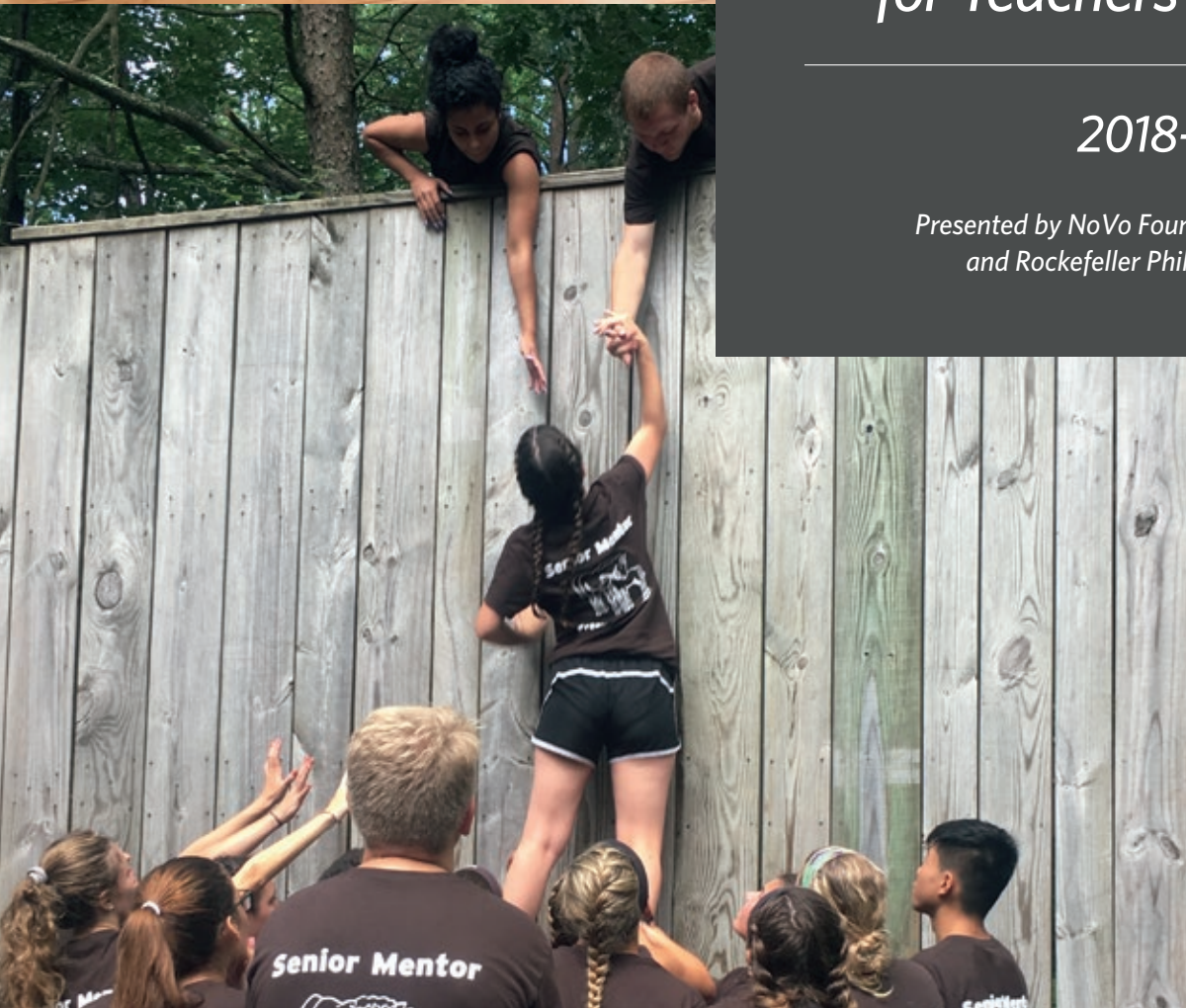




***SEL in Action:
Social and Emotional Learning
Innovation Awards
for Teachers and Districts***

2018-2019

*Presented by NoVo Foundation, Education First
and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors*



SEL in Action: Social and Emotional Learning Innovation Awards
for Teachers and Districts 2018–2019



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

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**NoVo
Foundation**



education**first**

ROCKEFELLER
Philanthropy
Advisors

Introduction

A LETTER FROM JENNIFER BUFFETT

Safe. Seen. Celebrated.

This is what every child deserves to be in every aspect of their lives, including — and especially — in school.

By creating healthy school communities that prioritize relationships, empathy, love and greater human understanding, we can rediscover our ability to live together on this planet as healthy and whole people.

That is why we are working to catalyze a new critical mass of schools and districts that can demonstrate the case for prioritizing the whole child in positive, caring school environments. The result is not only changing schools, but the paradigm for education itself.

In an era of “intelligent machines,” it turns out that it’s the things that make us uniquely and beautifully human that we cannot stifle — and that we need to promote — if our kids are to make it in the 21st Century.

A more just and balanced world depends fundamentally on our ability to foster kids’ curiosity and drives, their creativity, their feelings and emotions, their ability to create beauty, to care for one another and to work together.

In the following pages, these remarkable teachers and district leaders show us how.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Buffett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Jennifer Buffett

Co-president, NoVo Foundation

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to nurture the unique social, emotional and academic development of every student? How does it look in classrooms across the country? How might we celebrate educators who are leading the way? Since 2016, we’ve sought to answer that question with the Social and Emotional Learning Innovation Fund, which celebrates educators who practice innovative ways to support and center students’ social, emotional and academic needs, and who strive to overcome systemic barriers for those farthest from opportunity. Teachers blew us away with the creativity, passion and energy they put into their work with students. With \$5,000 awards for classroom projects, they taught us that social and emotional learning (SEL) takes many forms: building community by honoring families of military personnel, creating belonging among dual language learners through peer-to-peer mentoring and developing identity and social awareness through student-designed artifacts. A year later, we heard from you that visionary SEL work happens at the systems level, too, and we expanded the Innovation Fund to include school district grants.

In this second edition of SEL in Action: Social and Emotional Learning Awards for Teachers and Districts, we highlight 2018–19 teacher and district SEL Innovation Fund awardees. These projects prioritized student social, emotional and academic outcomes, contained an orientation and analysis of racial, gender and/or social and justice and created restorative

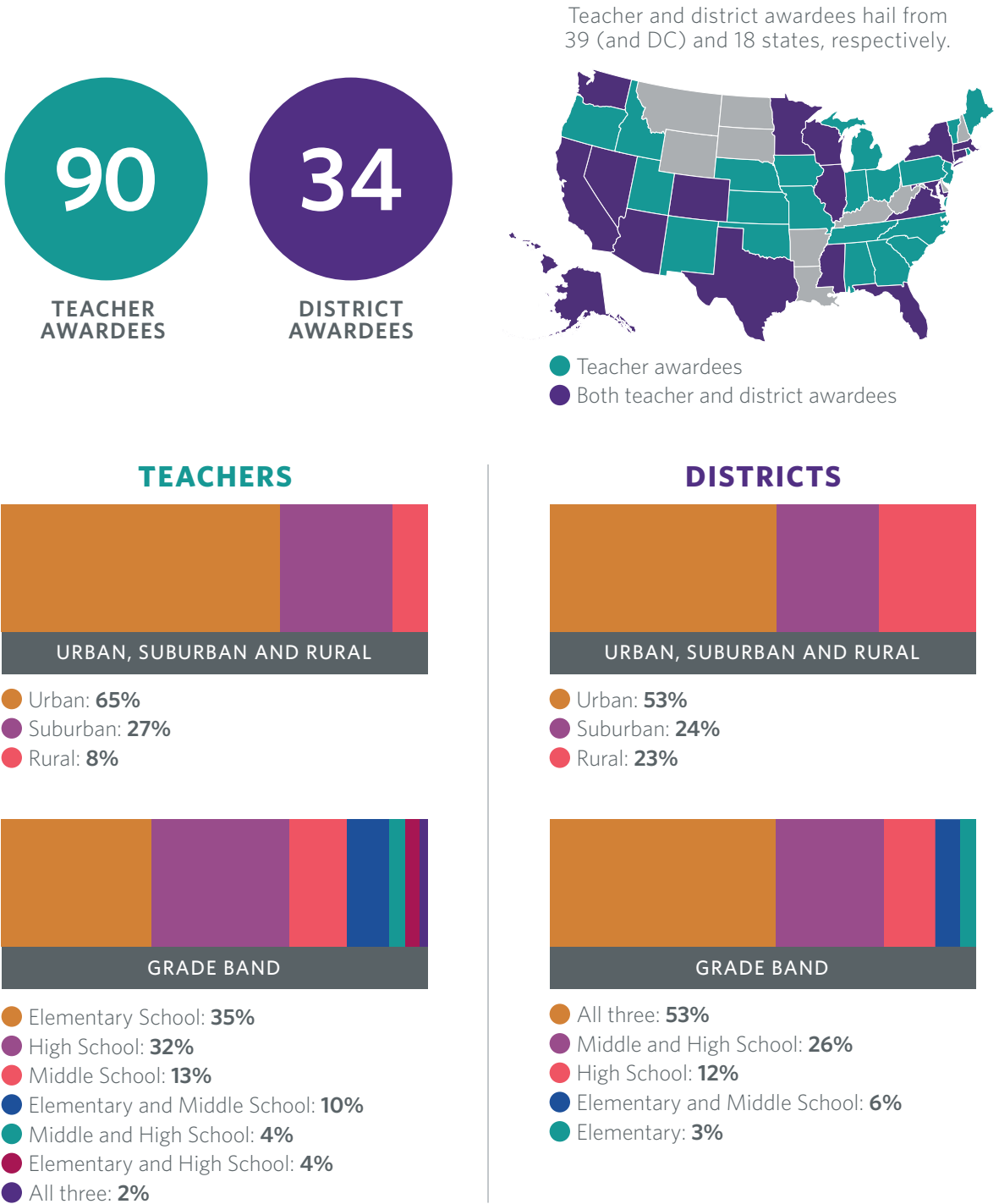
approaches to conflict. Similar to last year’s book, you will find inspiring educators practicing new ways to support their students. But you will also discover how districts use \$25,000 awards to create more socially and emotionally rich cultures in schools. Their stories captivate us. Their optimism gives us hope. Now more than ever, we look to educators to create places, environments and practices that foster the values we cherish: belonging, well-being, tolerance, compassion, listening, non-violence, inclusiveness, working productively together, and restoring relationships and repairing harm. This publication is our gift to them — and to all educators and leaders like them — as an acknowledgement and celebration of all they do for students.

The book is organized by the main focus of each awardee’s project. These include: **Art & Literature, Community Service & Engagement, Mentoring, Mindfulness, Racial, Gender & Social Justice, Restorative Practices, SEL Integration** and **Student Leadership & Voice**. In their own words, awardees share the highlights and challenges of their work, along with tips, tricks and resources for other educators to try in their own communities.

These projects demonstrate what’s possible for students when we support teachers. We welcome you to join in the celebration.

Descriptions of all awarded projects can be found at: <https://selforteachers.org/innovation-awards/>

2018–2019 TEACHER AND DISTRICT INNOVATION AWARDEES AT A GLANCE



TOTAL AWARDS FOR ALL GRANTEES: \$1,204,400



What is social and emotional learning? Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process of developing fundamental skills for life success within supportive, participatory learning environments. Attained through both curricula and instructional practices, SEL skills include recognizing and managing emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships and making responsible decisions. These crucial capacities can be taught by classroom teachers to students of every background.

NoVo Foundation’s Strategic Approach We have spent 10 years working to build the field, develop environments and support the implementation of practices that enable all children to build the fundamental skills associated with healthy relationships to self and others. We seek to include a focus on racial and gender justice, and bring an interest in creative alternatives that deepen approaches to SEL and beyond. We believe positive student outcomes depend on improving classrooms and schools, which in turn depends on improving districtwide capacities and conditions. We believe in supporting our most vulnerable student populations through these practices towards overcoming systemic barriers for those farthest from opportunity.

For more information, visit novofoundation.org.

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Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

Art & Literature

Social and Emotional Learning Through Creative Writing in the ESL Classroom

Teacher Awardee

Nicole Tabolt Da Silva

Boston International High School
Boston Public Schools
Boston, MA

HIGHLIGHTS

In May 2019, my students led a write-in at the Boston Public Schools headquarters where they presented their literary magazine and taught short creative writing lessons to Boston Public Schools directors. They were the first students in Boston to meet the incoming superintendent.

CHALLENGES

One challenge of this work was finding culturally responsive SEL strategies as my students are from more than 20 different countries.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Open Mics: Every month, my students choose their favorite writing from their journals to read at our class open mic. This has built community, reading fluency and pride in student writing.



"I learned that sometimes choosing what you love and what makes you feel free is the best choice."
—Student



Mobilizing SEL Learning and Mindfulness to Create Enduring Works of Art

Teacher Awardee

Nancy Holter
Dennis Sykes

Patterson High School
Baltimore City Public Schools
Baltimore, MD

HIGHLIGHTS

Building Arts and Minds, Inc. (BAAM!) ARTS engaged more than 100 Patterson High School students, from 20 countries of origin, in the creation of a large mosaic sign, measuring five feet by 21 feet. Students decorated the sign with letters spelling out “Patterson,” bordered by tiles representing flags of our students’ countries of origin. As the most diverse high school in Maryland, it was not uncommon that we had students from Cameroon, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria and Iran working together with a common purpose during our in-class and after-school art, mindfulness and community service (BAAM!) ARTS activities.

CHALLENGES

In December, we discovered that the clay we purchased, molded, glazed and fired as flags in the mosaic was not a durable external clay. This led to the repurchase, remolding, re-glazing, re-firing and replacement of these tiles. Ultimately, this brought our team of students closer together and they recreated the flag tiles very quickly.

Also, inclement winter weather caused a number of school snow delays, cancellations and early dismissals, requiring us to reschedule different weekday sessions.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Creating mandalas can be a very healing process for students. Create a class mandala to use in restorative circles. Cut a large circle out of canvas or heavy cotton muslin. Break the circle into four to six pie shapes. Break students into teams for each group to create their section of

the mandala. Use acrylic paint or sharpies to color in. Sew the mandala together on a machine or have students sew it together by hand.

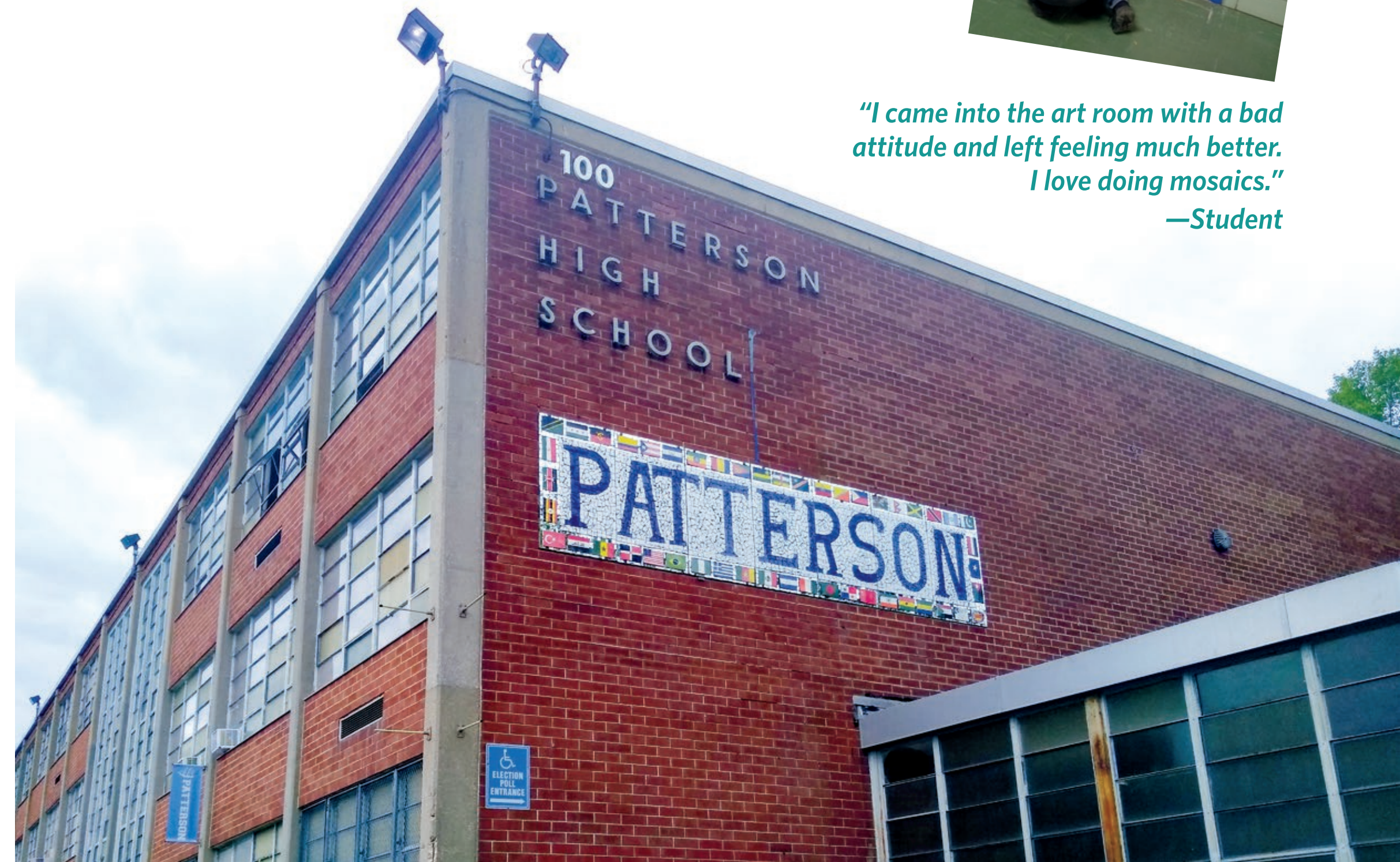
Also, DO integrate SEL and mindfulness kernels into everyday classes, sessions and projects and keep them short!



“I came into the art room with a bad attitude and left feeling much better. I love doing mosaics.”
—Student



“In my classroom, I want students to experience the healing effects of mindfulness and art to help them cope with the many stressors in their urban adolescent lives...”
—Teacher



English Learners Develop Language and Social and Emotional Skills in An Extended-Day Program

Teacher Awardee

Irma Patton

North Marion Primary School
North Marion School District
Aurora, OR

HIGHLIGHTS

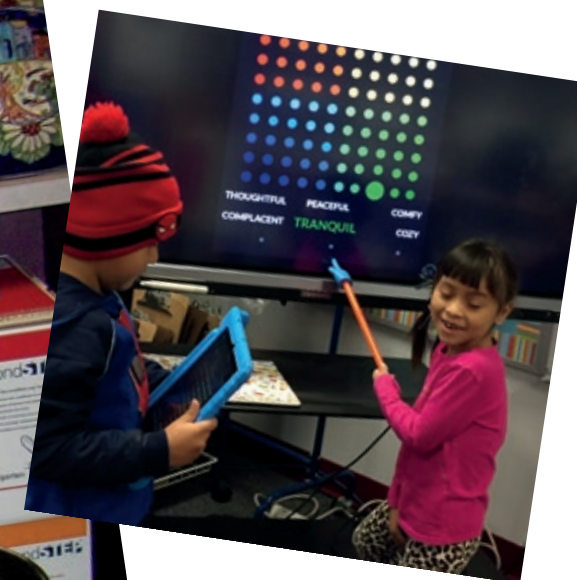
We supported students emotionally and academically to be their “best selves.” Our students demonstrated great success in both areas, achieving one to two levels of gains in English language proficiency. High school mentors inspired younger students, developed positive relationships with others, saw themselves as teachers and received credits towards high school graduation. Parents recognized how successful their children were in the extended-day class, and we supported their participation in their child’s learning by providing volunteer opportunities and supplemental books/materials at home.

CHALLENGES

A challenge of the project was giving all parents/guardians rewarding opportunities for family involvement that best fit and worked for them. My goal for the class was to have every family participate in the teaching and learning and in the promotion of family heritage and culture.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

In order to make the classroom a space to validate students and their families, have students paint wooden picture frames and invite families to send a four-by-six family photo to be placed in the painted frame. Share the photos of each family as students bring them in by displaying them on a document camera. Give each student an opportunity to describe who is in the photo, where the photo was taken and what is happening in the photo. Keep the frames above each student’s cubby or other area in the classroom, so your families can always be near.



“I wish the program had existed when I was younger because I struggled a lot during school. Speaking Spanish my whole life and going to an English-speaking school was very tough.”

—High School Mentor

Using SEL and Bibliotherapy in Our Diverse School Population to Develop Skills for Life Effectiveness

Teacher Awardee

Lisa J. Vasquez

Aimee Vasquez

Ruidoso High School
Ruidoso Municipal Schools
Ruidoso, NM

HIGHLIGHTS

At RHS we want our students to graduate and successfully pursue their college and/or career goals. Through the use of SEL techniques, many of our students showed improved social awareness and relationship skills through the development of employability skills, such as teamwork, collaboration and effective communication. We feel that they are better prepared to face their futures. Many of our students were able to attend a Leadership Conference at a major New Mexico university attended by other high school students from across the state. We had more students applying to college or technical schools than in the past.

CHALLENGES

We realize that we cannot achieve all of our goals in one school year. We expect students participating in our PHHS classes to demonstrate increased social and emotional skills and decreased emotional distress as we teach and implement the SEL strategies. We also understand that an increase in academic achievement will be ongoing based on the success of

the other skills. After evaluating the growth in our students' SEL skills and progress in college and career planning, our team was disappointed in the overall attendance rate of the students. This is an area we expect to improve with increased student participation.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Selecting books for bibliotherapy requires much research. First of all, it is very important that you know your students. Providing anonymous surveys helps students share information that they may not feel comfortable sharing otherwise. Giving your students choice in what they want to read is essential.



Introducing Stories from the Classroom

In addition to project highlights and challenges, we asked awardees to share stories of the engagement, growth and leadership in their school communities. Some wrote about the changes they saw in their students, others described how they were personally impacted by the SEL Innovation Fund. The spotlights you'll find in each section provide a little extra insight into what happens when educators and students work to meet their social and emotional needs. We hope you are as inspired by them as we are.

Brittany is an eight-year-old student from the Dominican Republic. She developed a high degree of self-esteem and confidence this year. Prior to our SEL lessons, she hadn't seen herself as unique. She had developed a fixed mindset about herself and felt incapable of achieving social and academic success. She has learned to be accepting of herself and understands that differences can be an advantage. We now see a young lady who has not only achieved academic and social prominence, but who also has ambitions, self-esteem and the courage to challenge those who she believes are wrong.

Alicia Lorenzo
Hanover Elementary School
Teacher Awardee

"One student wrote in his end-of-year survey on the grant that 'I consider myself a writer now. I have never written and read as much as this year.'"

— **Nicole Tabolt Da Silva**, Boston International High School, Teacher Awardee

One of my first grade English learners was at a beginning level of English proficiency last year and non-verbal. She anxiously attended school and made minimal growth academically and socially in kindergarten. She was invited to participate the Extended-day Program in fall of 2018. She progressed to an early intermediate level of English proficiency by the end of the year, growing one language level and now speaking at school. She's also raising her hand to answer questions in class and attended her first school field trip ever. Her parents and teacher attribute her success to her participation in the project.

Irma Patton
North Marion Primary School
Teacher Awardee

"Vishal is an academically gifted student — top 10-percent of his class — wishing to pursue a career in engineering. His family immigrated to the U.S. when he was a sophomore. Being a transfer student and new to the community, he felt like a stranger and socially-inhibited. He first attended BAAM! ARTS in late September and demonstrated high artistic interest and skill. Since then, he has become more social with peers and has recruited two friends, with all three now being regular contributors."

— **Nancy Holter**, Patterson High School, Teacher Awardee

Project LIT Community — Empowering Students As Readers, Writers and Leaders

Teacher Awardee

Dr. Jarred Amato

Maplewood High School student leaders

Maplewood High School

Metro Nashville Public Schools

Nashville, TN

HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past three years, our incredible students have turned a classroom project into a national literacy movement — one step, one book, one conversation at a time.

CHALLENGES

The short answer — adults! Adults in power who push policies and practices that prevent our students from becoming passionate, proficient readers.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We'd love for you to follow us on social media and our website to learn more about our grassroots movement. To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Dr. Jarred Amato.



"I believe all students deserve ongoing opportunities to read, discuss and celebrate books that matter in a safe and welcoming environment."
— Dr. Jarred Amato



Building An Awareness of Inclusivity and Developing a Sense of Belonging to the School Community

Teacher Awardee

Mary Haddad

Disney II Magnet Elementary School
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago, IL

HIGHLIGHTS

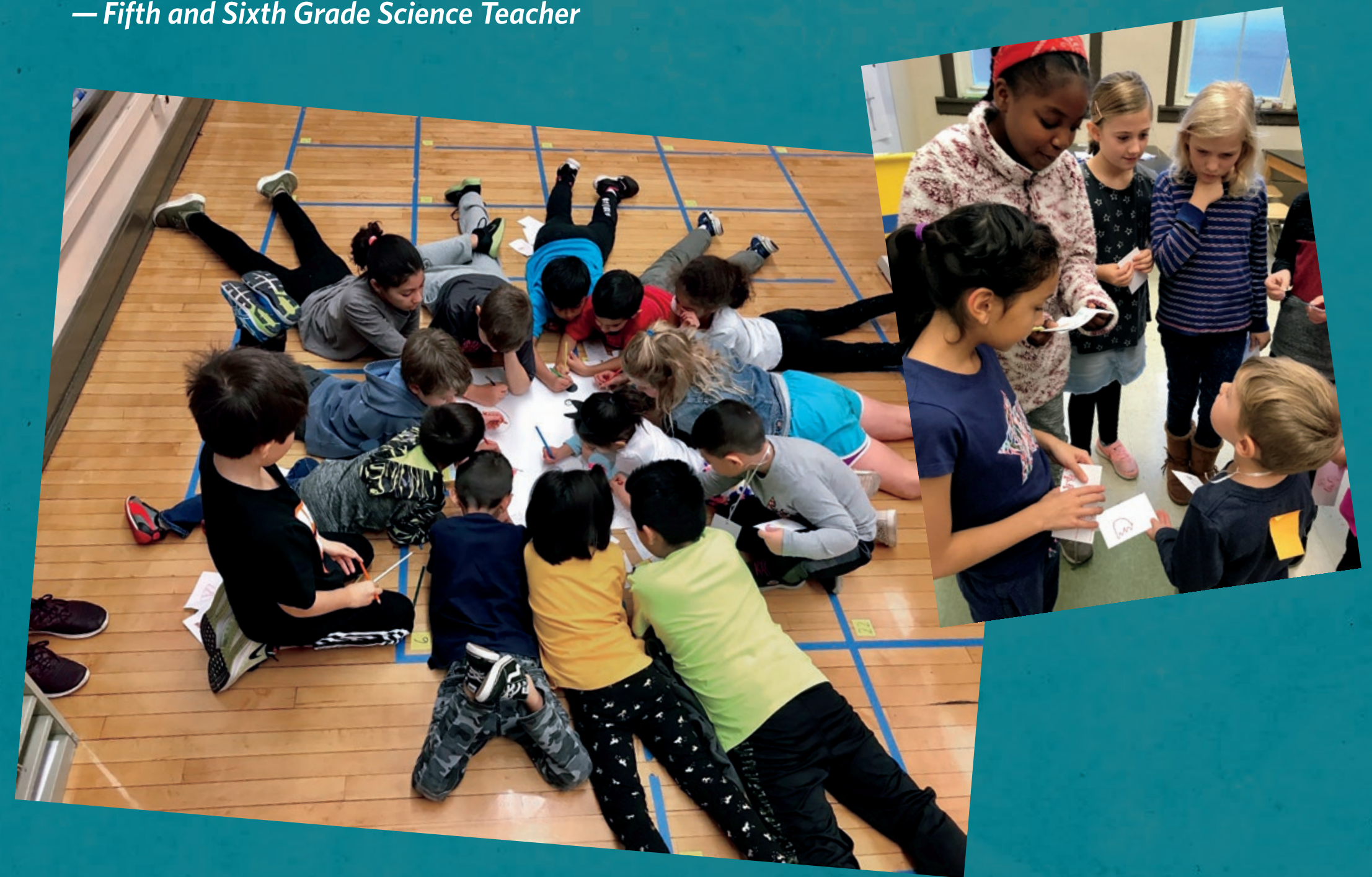
The school community participated in “Mystery Madness” to deepen self-awareness and social awareness competencies, develop a more purposeful and intentional self-identification, and foster a sense of belonging to the school community. During “Mystery Madness” we grouped students into houses. The houses rotated through exhibits of artifacts that identified different members of the school community (students, teachers, custodial workers, lunchroom personnel). Then student houses worked together to uncover the mysteries of the identifying characteristics of the exhibits using clues, schema and inferencing. They also identified themes and topics to synthesize the information, culminating in a whole school activity.

CHALLENGES

Frontloading the necessary content for students to master skills and strategies to have conversations about who they are and ponder the identity of their school community members was rigorous and laborious. Not all the learning was fun, and the skill-building was hard work.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

To view Agents of Change school community work online, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Mary Haddad.



“Mystery Madness was such a joy to watch our students engage and connect with one another in such meaningful ways. Watching preschoolers and kindergartners be so thoughtful and curious about their peers and then being so excited that they share a common interest or experience. This activity was one of the best ways I’ve seen our students connect and engage with each other! It was so positive and engaging.”
— Fifth and Sixth Grade Science Teacher

SEL Through Literature and Museum Visit: Students Gain Self-Confidence That Integrates Personal Growth and Academic Tenacity

28

Teacher Awardee

Alicia Lorenzo

Hanover Elementary School
Meriden School District
Meriden, CT

HIGHLIGHTS

Our students enhanced their social and academic understanding of what creativity can be. Through the museum's art, students were exposed to original ideas and artistic works that engaged them to think about the emotions, perceptions and consciousness of creative individuals. They were able to view and interpret works of art not only through the artist's perception but through their own.

CHALLENGES

It was challenging to implement social and emotional learning because we had to implement the lessons in an order that would be most effective and comprehensible for the students.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Send a literature book home and have a few families respond to a growth mindset question. The answers can be reviewed during your morning meeting.

"That's great, you made a mistake! Now you can grow your brain after you figure it out."
—Student



Community Service & Engagement

Community Health and Well-Being Relies On the Ideas and Voices of the Members of the Community

Teacher Awardee

Erica Pastor
Suzie McGlone

Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School
Boston Public Schools
Roxbury, MA

HIGHLIGHTS

Parents, students, teachers and community members rallied around the most urgent issue impacting the health of our community: drug needles being left on our school grounds, including our playgrounds. Through the work we have accomplished together around this issue, we have started to build a strong community foundation of people who are most interested in the social and emotional health of the children and families at Orchard Gardens. Together we continue to meet, share ideas, discuss issues and create action steps to further build community and tackle the myriad challenges that our community faces.

CHALLENGES

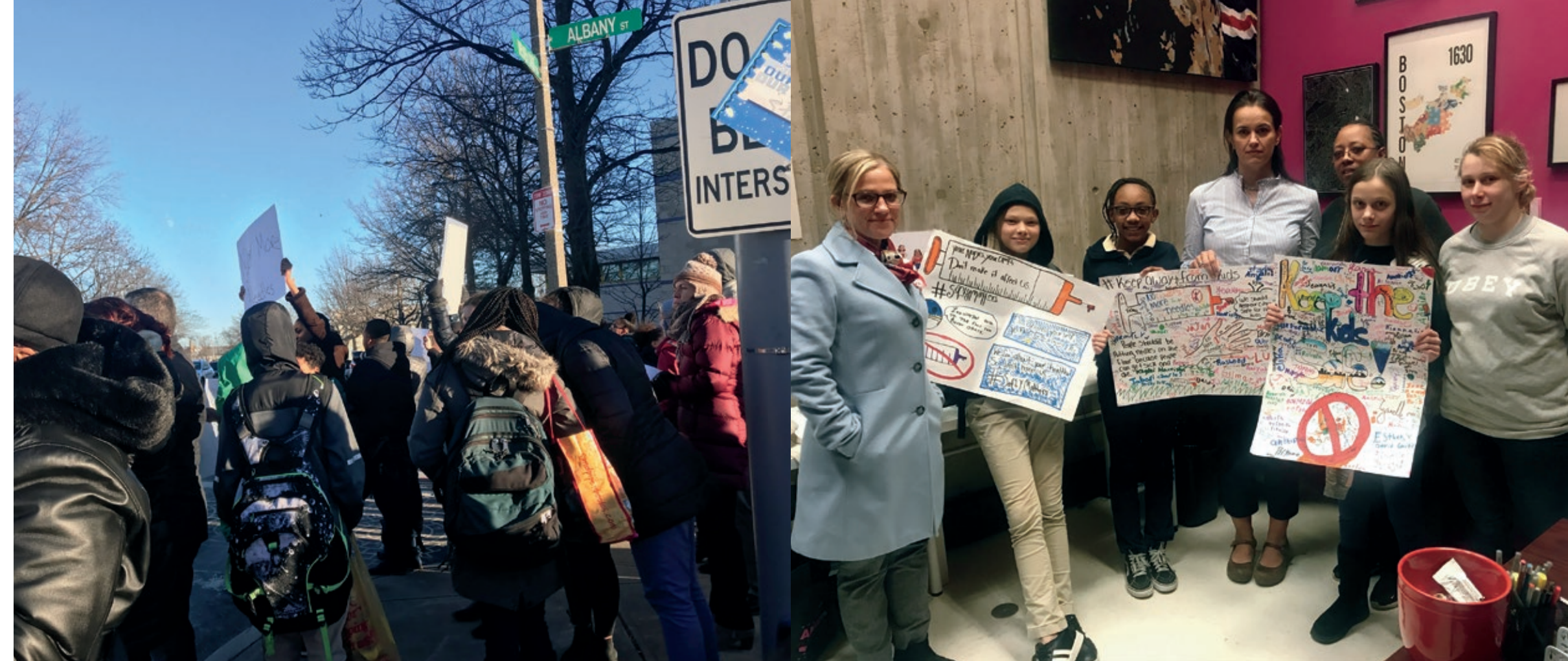
Almost 1,000 children attend Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School. Yet the same ten to twelve parents (or fewer) attend Parent Council and Orchard Gardens United meetings. Our biggest challenge remains getting families to attend meetings where we discuss important issues that affect our school community.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Invite your families to a dinner at your school. Ask them what they think. What do they want their school to be like for their children? What is the school doing well? What improvements can be made? What would make it easier for them to become actively engaged in the school? Listen to what your families have to say, and together, you can create action steps to move forward.



“Only when we have stable social and emotional health will we be able to help students realize their full academic potential.”
—Erica Pastor



Project team:
Dee Ann Thomas

Forty percent of our district's students are military-connected, and through this project our elementary and intermediate campuses completed eleven service projects. Projects included 35 elementary students spending a morning at Soldiers' Angels, a military support organization, to put together care packages for troops overseas, creating activity bags for children staying at San Antonio's Fischer House (a residence for military families with a family member in the hospital) and creating welcome school supply boxes with personalized notes for incoming military-connected students.

Our first challenge was understanding the knowledge and skills needed to develop a student-led service project that goes beyond simple “food drives” or the like. Another challenge was implementing professional development specifically for service learning, due to the timeline of funding and district guidelines for grant expenditures.

It is easy to welcome new students at the beginning of a school year, however, we find it is critical to make all students feel welcomed any time during the school year. Additionally, it is just as vital to give as much emphasis as possible on students leaving or moving. Focusing on activities that give closure can promote a positive emotional outcome for all students, those who are leaving and those who are staying.



A group of students are participating in a food packing activity. In the foreground, a girl with blonde hair, wearing a blue t-shirt with a 'W. SERVE' logo, is placing a jar of jam into a cardboard box. To her left, a girl with long dark hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, is also working on the box. In the background, other students in blue and purple shirts are visible, along with more cardboard boxes. The boxes are labeled 'Priority Mail' and 'First Class'. The scene is set in a room with a grey floor and a white wall.

"Students have bonded and shared experiences with others that they discovered were going through some of the same things. These students feel that they have a special community just for them."

—Counselor



Achieving Acceptance Through Generosity

Teacher Awardee

Edna Lynn Roberts

Southern Choctaw High School
Choctaw County School District
Gilbertown, AL

HIGHLIGHTS

Our class includes all students and staff in a loving and giving setting. They share their love and acceptance by working to grow vegetables for others and serving treats for the staff from our Coffee Cart. Everyone can help or hang out with us.

CHALLENGES

One of our biggest challenges was getting the account for our funds set up for use before the summer break. Our equipment is arriving in time for a fall garden. The in-ground garden will be started during the break by volunteers.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Make self-watering containers from plastic bottles and jugs to keep the plants nourished through the weekend and holidays. YouTube has some great how to tips and videos that are helpful.

"I would like to see our model used throughout the county in high schools and elementary schools. It helps to feed those in need, show compassion, teach job skills and allow people to accept differences through a loving and caring environment."

—Teacher



Hug High School Freshmen Families' Brunch Bunch SELebration!

Teacher Awardee

Stephan Molder
Janna Moyer
Bridgette Tierney

Procter Hug High School
Washoe County School District
Reno, NV

HIGHLIGHTS

Our SEL in Action goal was to increase ninth grade family engagement via a series of events centered around good food, great conversation and SEL-explicit instruction. Part of our SEL Innovation Award funded our first event, titled “Hug High School Freshman Families’ Brunch SELebration.” The event centered on a catered Saturday brunch for ninth grade students and their families to increase family attendance. The first half of the event took place in the school’s cafeteria where tables were set up with family-themed games for everyone to play while they were enjoying brunch. Prior to the event, SEL students came together to paint positive messages on rocks because “SEL rocks” of course! We then placed these rocks on tables as centerpieces and also scattered around the various event locations. Students helped by making signs for the event and setting up a “Future Hug Graduate Photo Booth.” Our purpose was to build better family and school partnerships. We wanted families to spark up conversations about their family traditions. We wanted people to put their phones away and practice positive relationship-building. We wanted families to practice SEL skills while playing games so we printed laminated posters with SEL strategies like collaborating effectively and active listening. The second half of the event was in the theater where we offered SEL-explicit instruction and gave out raffle prizes. We also had families

share their traditions at home. We had excellent turnout, and we received very positive feedback from all who attended.

CHALLENGES

We had numerous challenges in planning for such a large event. Coordinating all the personnel, activities, food, securing a date with no conflicts of building use and getting the word out to the community was a big undertaking! Perseverance, grit, a growth mindset and teamwork helped us finish this act of love for our school and community. Our students caught the vision of themselves of being an important part of their own education and school community and parents were impressed.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

- Have conversations at home centered around family traditions and then really celebrate those traditions!
- Network with family and school partnerships.
- Tune into others. Disconnect from technology to connect with family.
- Play board games that focus on SEL skill sets like active listening, collaborating effectively and disagreeing without being disagreeable, just to name a few.
- Laugh together, play together and love each other.



“Ms. J-D, a fifth grade teacher, became the biggest proponent of Improv to Improve after she took our Teacher Improvisation class. After just two classes, she went from saying, ‘This is good for kindergarten, but not the upper grades,’ to, ‘My kids NEED this. There is so much pressure from testing and these games help them relax.’”

— Lisa Harris, North Grade Elementary School, Teacher Awardee

One woman who has been the most dedicated to our work is a grandmother of two students at our school. She has felt empowered to become more involved at Orchard Gardens because we have listened to her stories and her voice has been valued at our community meetings. She has started volunteering in the school library. She has become active on the school’s Parent Council and plans to join the School Board next year.

Erica Pastor
Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School
Teacher Awardee

“Our students are now more emotionally intelligent than ever before. Our teachers realize that they can grow these skills also. SEL starts with adults.”

— Stephan Molder, Procter Hug High School,
Teacher Awardee

From kindergarten through the beginning of fifth grade, “G” struggled socially and emotionally in school, with frequent and sometimes violent outbursts. Things began to change for him in fifth grade when he received a reaction of empathy and support rather than anger and punishment. Within a supportive learning community, “G” was able to express his emotions in a variety of different ways. He was able to engage in reflective conversations and identify when and how he needed to self regulate. “G” and his teacher were able to develop a deeper understanding of the roots of his emotions and create a community in which he felt safe and supported. This year, “G” is happy and prepared to come to school every day.

Heron Russell
George H. Conley Elementary School
Teacher Awardee

“Our district’s new focus on SEL is especially important for military-connected students who move an average of six to nine times throughout their academic careers. We are happy that our district has this new awareness regarding SEL for every child, but our hope is that this grows from awareness to necessity. Our NoVo Foundation grant helped highlight how fundamental SEL is for children, especially our military-connected children.”

— Valleri Merrill, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District,
District Awardee

Improv to Improve: Play. Have Fun. Feel Joy. Connect.

Teacher Awardee

Lisa Harris

North Grade Elementary School
School District of Palm Beach County
Lake Worth, FL

HIGHLIGHTS

We created teacher improvisation classes after school hours to train the teachers in coaching Improv to Improve games. These classes proved to be just what the teachers needed to enthusiastically use the games in their classes. They also made new friendships with colleagues!

CHALLENGES

Initially, it was challenging to get teachers to incorporate a new program in their classes. Teachers thought that playing games would be okay in the primary grades, but not for the older kids.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

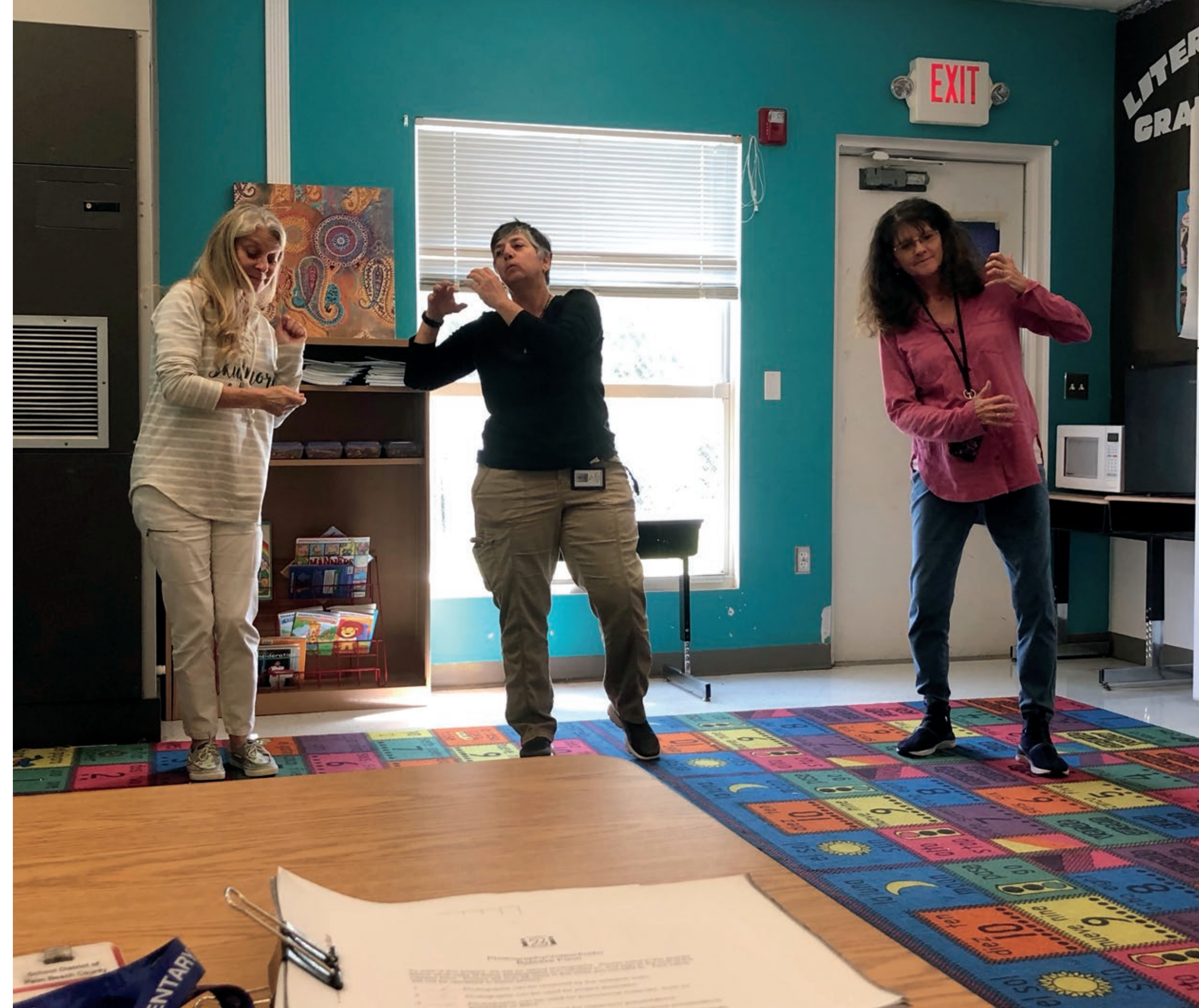
Machine:

- First player begins with a single repeatable motion and a single repeatable sound.
- Second player, when motivated, attaches to the first player with an original repeatable motion and sound.
- Third player, when motivated, attaches to the other players with an original repeatable motion and sound.
- Each student joins with a new sound and movement until all students have created the machine together.



“Initially I was nervous but by the end of the session I felt completely comfortable and found that it eased my stress level.”

—Student



All Learning is Social and Emotional: Building the Communities Our Students Need to Learn and Thrive

Teacher Awardee

Conley School Responsive Classroom Team

George H. Conley Elementary School
Boston Public Schools
Boston, MA

HIGHLIGHTS

While many of our affluent neighboring districts implement holistic social and emotional approaches such as Responsive Classroom, we observed that our school followed a common trend among urban schools in focusing on teaching and rewarding normative behaviors. We found this approach to be deficit-oriented and sought an alternative that would focus on building strong communities that welcome, celebrate and support all learners. Through the implementation of Responsive Classroom, we sought to adopt an asset-oriented approach and close a crucial opportunity gap.

CHALLENGES

Responsive Classroom required us to shift our mindset as a school and as individual teachers. Before implementing Responsive Classroom, our drive to close gaps on standardized tests

manifested in a sense of urgency to spend as much “time on task” as possible. With Responsive Classroom, we recognize that the best learning will arise from the quality of the time we spend, grounded in the strength of our relationships and enabled by a strong learning community. Watching our students grow this year, we have seen that we are not “giving up” academic time, but strengthening our learning by grounding it in community.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

One of the most powerful experiences we have had in our Responsive Classroom morning meetings is in sharing, allowing that sharing to lead us to deeper learning. Student sharing about their lived experiences often prompts questions in other students. By facilitating honest inquiry, our classes have experienced many deep and reflective conversations around identity, family, community, race, gender and social justice. These conversations build empathy and allow students to see multiple perspectives and develop critical thinking skills. Students have often been sparked to go do their own research, talk to family members and return with deeper perspectives and renewed curiosity. These conversations have become the lifeblood of our learning community!



Feeding Minds and Feeding Families

Teacher Awardee

Kristin Pasculle
Crystal Ballinger
Elise Willhight

International High School at Largo
Prince Georges County Public Schools
Upper Marlboro, MD

HIGHLIGHTS

The main highlight of this work is that even though our timeline was thrown off, we are looking forward to our pantry opening by the first of the 2019-2020 school year.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge to this work was cutting through the red tape involved with the allocation of funds. It took longer than expected to purchase the required items and we were not able to implement the full project during the current school year.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Build partnerships with a local food pantry. It will enable your school to purchase food at deeply discounted prices; many of the food items at our local bank are free to partners. This will help keep the pantry in your school stocked. Consider planting a vegetable garden. Have canned food drives at school.



Mentoring

Helping English Learners Feel Connected!

Teacher Awardee

Tina Vasquez
Kara Menfi
 Charlottesville High School
 Charlottesville City Schools
 Charlottesville, VA

HIGHLIGHTS

Multilingual mentors give newcomer students opportunities to voice their needs! Through interviews in home languages, beginning English learners expressed a desire to learn about clubs and activities at our school. This became a primary goal for the year. Our lead mentor compiled a list of extracurricular activities with brief descriptions, which mentors explained in small groups.

Students filled out a check box interest survey, while asking questions in their home languages. We held a mini club fair and mentors took students to meet club sponsors. Then mentors took their mentees to their first club meetings and stayed with them to make sure they were comfortable. After-school activity participation went up!

CHALLENGES

Chemistry is key in successful mentoring relationships. We had some challenges this year with mentees feeling uncomfortable sharing with students from their same cultural group. Because these families know each other well in the community, students were afraid that concerns they expressed would not be kept confidential and could bring shame to themselves or their families. This had a negative impact on cohesion and motivation.

The success of these groups depended on the personality and skills of the group mentor. Some mentors were able to build enough trust, while a few others really struggled. The feedback from these challenges inspired us to try out a new model next year! Mentors will help with questions and concerns in short individual check-ins, while team building will bring all the mentors and mentees together.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Getting involved can be tough for new students! What clubs are out there? Where and when do they meet? Who is the sponsor? How is the atmosphere? What do they actually do? Try compiling a list of clubs and having your mentors find matching interests of their mentees. Group new students based on interests and have mentors take them on a “scavenger hunt” to meet the sponsors and find out logistical information. Finally, our mentors accompany new students to an activity for three sessions. Mentors and mentees earn a prize. Students may also decide to stick with the club. That’s the biggest prize!



Peer-to-Peer Mentor Program: Students Learning Social and Independence Skills in the Classroom From Their Peers

Teacher Awardee

Amy Posey

Goodrich High School
Goodrich Area Schools
Goodrich, MI

HIGHLIGHTS

Our amazing teen mentors established friendships with their mentees while building their independence and social skills in the classroom, but the connection did not end there. We had mentors who ate lunch with their mentee every day, tutored them after school, met them at football games and even visited them in the hospital after surgery.

CHALLENGES

This year my program faced one major challenge: grading the Peer-to-Peer mentors in their elective class. The mentors did an amazing job in the classroom and learned a lot through their online assignments, but I found it very difficult to assign an appropriate, objective letter grade to that work.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Honoring the mentors for the difficult work they were doing was a vital part of the program. We asked teens to reach outside of their comfort zone. The effort it takes to do that must be acknowledged and appreciated. I provided homemade treats during each monthly case conference, and t-shirts and parties for each major holiday. The highlights of the year were the all-day field trips where the mentors and mentees could socialize in a natural and fun teenage environment. Finally, we partnered with a local pizza place to choose a Mentor of the Week who earned free pizza and was showcased in the school halls.



"It has been truly amazing what the mentors have been able to accomplish with the (special needs) students in my classroom. They made more social skill gains in three weeks with their mentor than the previous three months of school."

—Teacher

Toolbox Leadership Helpers Use SEL Strategies to Help Mentor Students and Train Parents to Self-Regulate

Teacher Awardee

Sergio Hernandez

Dawn Recchio

Sarah Schas

Katherine Smith Elementary School
Evergreen School District
San Jose, CA

HIGHLIGHTS

During this project, we empowered our students to implement the skills and strategies they had learned through mentoring younger students in our Toolbox Leadership Helpers program. We developed restorative mentors for conflict resolution and leaders to promote the use of self-regulation strategies. Second, we equipped parents with the same skills and strategies so that students and their families can be successful in maintaining and developing their social and emotional well-being. We know that strengthening the home-to-school bridge of SEL practices will support the overall mental health of our students.

CHALLENGES

Throughout the program, we faced some challenges, but the challenges did not stop us from reflecting and finding solutions.

Challenge: Staff buy-in and managing Toolbox Leadership Helpers for our school-wide reflection process.

Solution: We integrated the program into an already used school-wide buddy system program and assigned students in the leadership group to a primary buddy class to help problem-solve when needed in class.

Challenge: Students needing more opportunities to practice presenting to an audience.

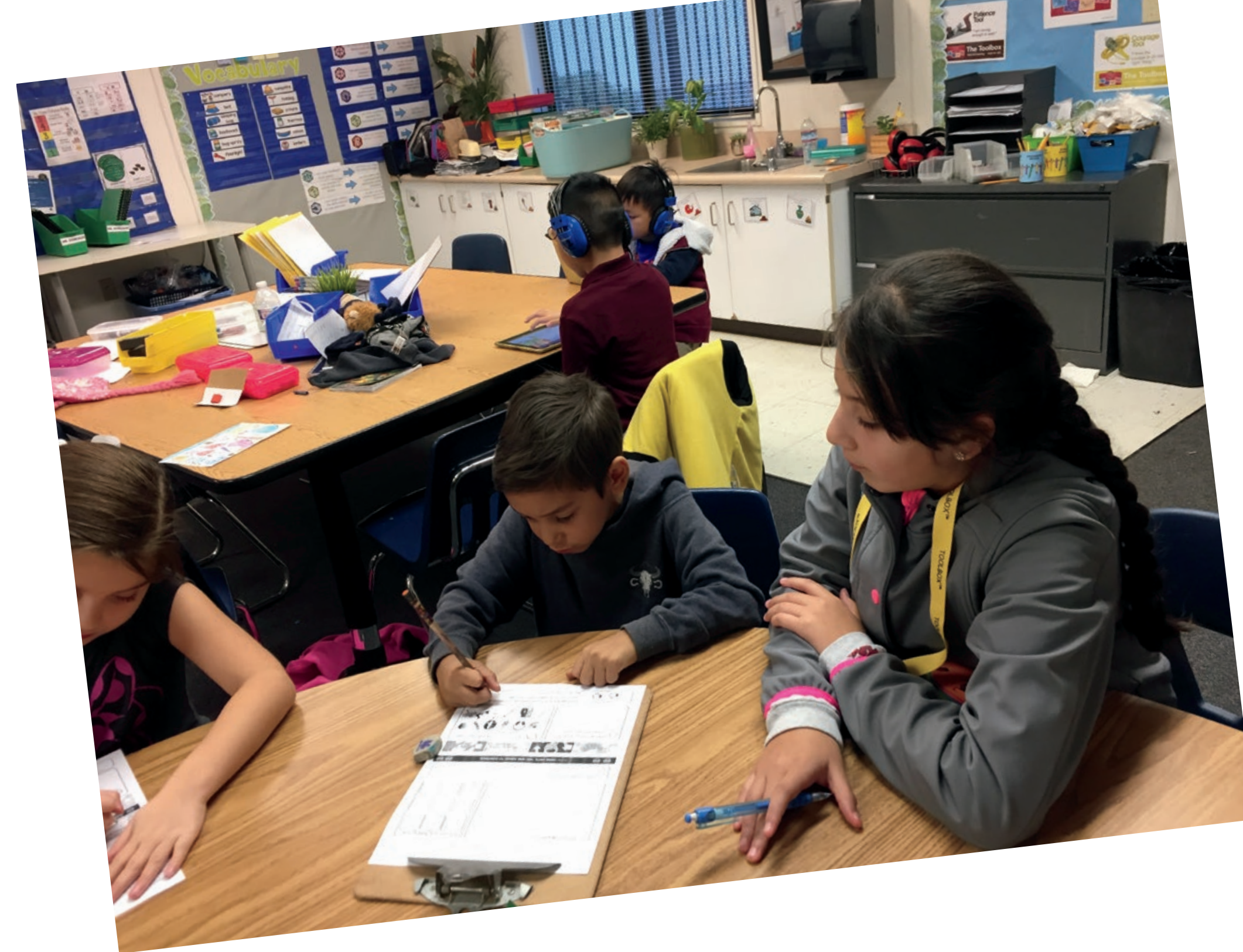
Solution: Students took turns presenting to parents during our Wednesday's Parent Pride Meetings before they did their final presentation to their parents.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We highly recommend using the following resources school-wide:

- Toolbox Leadership Helpers program information
- Restorative practice information
- Katherine Smith Reflection Forms
- Toolbox Leadership Helpers Application

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Sergio Hernandez.



“Helping the kids makes us know that our school will be a better place. They need to know how to handle their frustrations and we help with that.”

—Teacher

“Our lead mentor is a refugee from Iraq. He was already a star student and a mentor. When he heard his friend had been killed, he realized that he wanted to give service to others to make his life more meaningful. Multilingual Mentoring provided him a way to use his strengths and skills to give back to the community of English learners at our school, making their daily lives better. He poured his heart and soul into making this program successful. We couldn’t have done this without the SEL Innovation fund!”

— Tina Vasquez, Charlottesville High School, Teacher Awardee

“Helping the kids makes us know that our school will be a better place. They need to know how to handle their frustrations and we help with that.”
— Sixth Grade Students

One young man was placed in Peer-to-Peer because he needed to fill a free period. He was struggling in math and had recently been suspended for a senior prank. I nervously placed him in our middle school to mentor two young students. To my amazement, by the end of the year, he was encouraging his mentees to work hard. He read to them upside down in order to keep them engaged. Tomorrow, he will graduate having improved his GPA from a 2.0 to a 3.0 and no other behavioral incidences.

Amy Posey
Goodrich High School
Teacher Awardee

One of our Senior Mentors recently described how supporting freshman students through their transition to high school changed her: “I began to use my voice to teach, to show others the way... At first I asked myself, ‘Am I really allowed to do this? I can actually use my voice in this way?’ Honestly, it felt like the first time I was really using my voice, because if I used it right, something good would come of it, rather than it just being another useless voice in the crowd.”

Jaime MacEwen
Cumberland Regional High School
Teacher Awardee

“It was great getting support from our Toolbox Leadership Helpers to mentor my students who needed to reflect on their choices. The mentors took a big brother/big sister role when talking to them.”
— Second Grade Teacher

“I used to be shy about getting on the computer to chat with students around the nation, but after one session, I became more outspoken and I learned that I have great things to share with students in other schools across the country. I really enjoy speaking with and learning from students from Hawaii, New Jersey and all of the places in between.”

— Student Mentor, South Anchorage High School

Using Technology to Increase Our Student Mentorship Footprint

Teacher Awardee

Jessica Williams

Amy Habberstad

South Anchorage High School

Anchorage School District

Anchorage, AK

HIGHLIGHTS

We hosted several virtual sessions with students in mentorship groups across the United States through a partnership with Sevenzo.

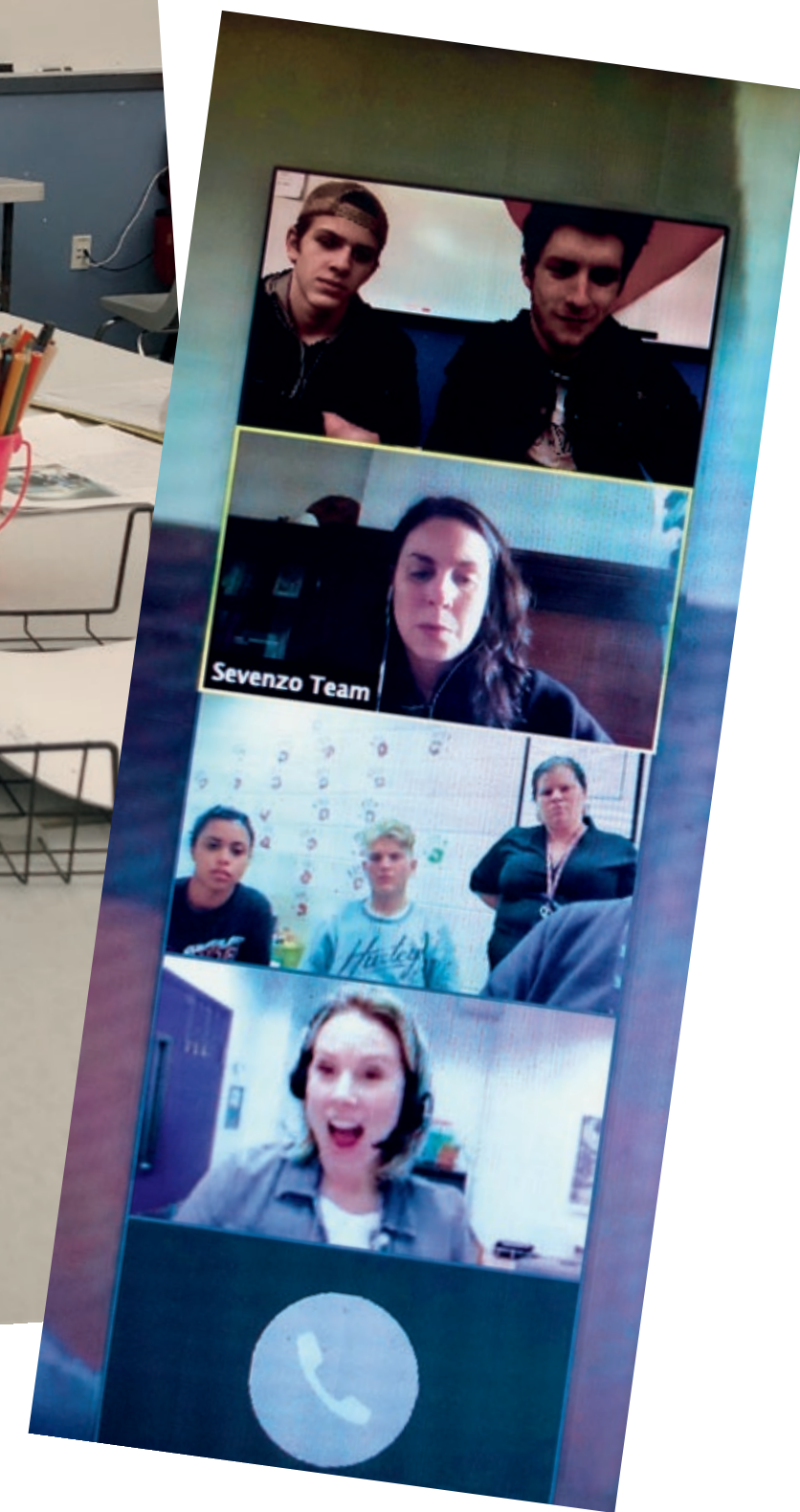
We gathered three peer mentorship programs across three schools in Anchorage for a spring training and conference. Our students partnered with other awardees' students as well.

CHALLENGES

Our biggest challenge was setting a time for students to meet, virtually, across five time zones.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We partnered with Sevenzo to create a Virtual Student Chat Toolkit for educators to use with their own programs. We also created a South Anchorage High School Student Mentorship Website and Mentorship Handbook. To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Jessica Williams.



"This is now my third year of work with the Innovation Award Fund and I have witnessed a profound impact on our mentorship program, on our school and on SEL in our district. Through all this I have seen that creative thinking, taking a chance on 'maybes,' saying yes to opportunities and setting up a system of structure where students can lead is a powerful and impactful formula!"

—Jessica Williams

Senior Mentors Support Freshmen in Their Transition to High School

Teacher Awardee

Jaime MacEwen
Matt Lawrence-Evans
Terence Johnson
Lauren Taniguchi

Cumberland Regional High School
Cumberland Regional School District
Bridgeton, NJ

HIGHLIGHTS

One highlight of the program was a team-building day at the beginning of the year, featuring ropes course challenges, bringing freshmen and Senior Mentors together in an ice-breaking, orientation event that emphasizes problem solving and peer partnership. Another highlight of the program was Family Night. Families join their freshmen students, Senior Mentors and staff for dinner and a guided painting experience. The goal was to encourage family bonding and to reinforce program efforts at home.

CHALLENGES

One challenge we’ve had is with continuing our work and reaching our freshmen during the second semester of our school year and beyond. Because our students only take the Freshman

Seminar course in the fall semester, it’s difficult to keep the positive momentum going when they no longer have the daily interaction with the Senior Mentors. Although there is no formal obligation for the Senior Mentors to do so, they often continue their relationship with the freshmen on their own time.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The culmination of the Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentoring program is an event we call Role Model Day. Students write a letter to a significant role model in their life. The role models are invited to the school on Role Model Day. Each student reads their letter to their selected role model in attendance. Role Model Day is a meaningful and valuable experience for everyone involved! This is an event that any school or group can make their own.



“Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have.”
—Jim Rohn



Coping, Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills to Improve Interpersonal Relationships: A Group Intervention

Teacher Awardee

Joanna Wood
Mark Sanchez

North High School
Denver Public Schools
Denver, CO

HIGHLIGHTS

We used physical activity and guest speakers to keep our students across grade levels and peer groups engaged. In an early group session, we focused on unpredictability through a short group storytelling activity and a game of wiffle ball. Each activity and guest speaker offered opportunities for students to practice coping skills, communicate about solutions and engage in conflict resolution. In post surveys, a key theme emerged: many students reported that their favorite part was that “everyone participated.”

CHALLENGES

Consistent group participation was a challenge. We worked to create an environment through our interactive programming and providing snacks. In our first weeks, we noticed a trend of low participation and had each student identify a friend/classmate to invite to the group. We invited the identified students and found that overall participation and attendance improved.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

North High School utilizes restorative approaches in lieu of traditional discipline practices. To view this resource, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Joanna Wood.

Look for collaboration beyond your team (department, office, school, etc.) and create an interdisciplinary approach to address challenges faced by your students.



“Following a session on healthy masculinity and gendered stereotypes a student shared that he learned: ‘You could release your emotions.’ Several other students broke a stereotype about men and crying by simply writing, ‘it is ok to cry.’”

—Teacher



Mindfulness

Infusing SEL With All Stakeholders

District Awardee

Northern Cass School District

Hunter, ND

Project team:

Cory Steiner
Ashley Krinke
Keira Oscarson

HIGHLIGHTS

We implemented acts of gratitude in our district that have had a positive impact on our learners and educators. Every learner and educator was recognized by another adult in the building. Not only did this build relationships, it also demonstrated how easy it is to acknowledge the greatness of others. I hope all educators in our district become proficient at infusing SEL in their classroom.

CHALLENGES

Our family therapy on site was difficult to maintain. We did have some interest, but follow-through at our remote site proved not to be

manageable. Another challenge was engaging more of our stakeholders that are often still disconnected with the school.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The acts of gratitude were fantastic. You can print every learner and educator's picture and write on the gratitude which impacted them. It was a small cost with a huge impact.



"I have seen multiple educators rethink when they recognize others. It is no longer about 'earning' the recognition, but now it is about the impact it has on both them and the learner."

—Cory Steiner



Jump Around, Calm It Down and Soothe With Compassion!

Teacher Awardee

Upāsikā tree turtle
Gabriel Pickus

Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore City Public Schools
Baltimore, MD

HIGHLIGHTS

Can SEL-aligned mindfulness and restorative practices (RP) be fun while embodying the work of classroom management, behavioral modification, conflict transformation and trauma-informed care? YES! Imagine if a multi-racial, multi-gender team trained in clinical counseling, RP, performing arts and insight meditation descended upon a beloved yet under-resourced school challenged by violence and dysfunction. Circles and conferences to transform conflicts. Meditations to enhance impulse control. Mindful movement to heighten scholastic focus. Role-playing to practice anger management. These were a few of our compassionate interventions.

CHALLENGES

Implementing evidence-based restorative practices and mindfulness to enhance behavioral health and scholastic achievement in under-resourced public schools is still a new endeavor. Advocates like us have urged an end to excessive suspensions and expulsions, as well as a moratorium on corporal punishment and calling the police. Some teachers affirmed our holistic interventions. But others resisted healing arts and decried what they felt were growing

behavioral problems in the absence of harsh discipline. Or administrators failed to mandate a robust teacher training program in practices that emphasized rehabilitative school-wide holistic cultural transformations. These were our biggest challenges.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

One question that we are continually asked is what kind of “Mindful Movement” we deploy in our work as holistic educators in schools? We are fortunate that a remarkable teacher named Martha Eddy has written a book that provides a thorough overview of the many traditions that comprise Mindful Movement. Her book is entitled *Mindful Movement: The Evolution of the Somatic Arts and Conscious Action* and it’s available at most online book retailers.



“We hope that those we engage feel empowered, affirmed, inspired and encouraged as they join with us to amplify compassion and contemplation in their learning life.”
—Upāsikā tree turtle

Korean Parent Community SEL Project

Teacher Awardee

Jane Raphael
Wonderland Avenue School
Los Angeles Unifed School District
Los Angeles, CA

HIGHLIGHTS

The parent and student response was one of the main highlights of our project. During one of our Saturday Family Councils we had over 100 participants show up on a rainy day. The family community emphasized how special that day was. Teachers also really built meaningful connections with the parents. Also, students responded well to the mindfulness activities and council work from the SEL lessons we developed.

CHALLENGES

We did not really experience any challenges, but teachers asked if we would be able to continue this type of experience with family and curriculum. So we will need to do a lot of fine tuning to the lessons we developed.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Today we are going to start a reflective practice. Think of what were some areas of growth, success and challenge. It is a time to look at where you started and how far you’ve come.

- Speed Round 1: Go around the circle and name a challenge from this (year, unit, project group work, reporting period, etc.)
- Speed Round 2: Go around the circle and name an area of growth for you this (year, unit, project group work, reporting period, etc.)
- Speed Round 3: Go around the circle and name a success for you this (year, unit, project group work, reporting period, etc.). Also name an accomplishment or goal that was met (personal or academic).



“Survival of humanity depends on educating the hearts of children.”
—His Holiness the Dalai Lama



"We had a freshman female student who was experiencing difficulty transitioning into her first year of high school. She often presented as dysregulated, demonstrated low frustration tolerance and she was struggling to remain in class. When we first introduced the VR headset to her, she was immediately intrigued. She began using the VR headset with greater frequency as a means to regulate her emotions and de-stress. We have noticed increased time in class and reduced emotional dysregulation as a result."

— Katharine Hinkle, Innovation Academy Charter School, Teacher Awardee

I led a council with our fourth grade students

where students reflected on the weight of the stress they were caring that day. Then I took them through a breathing exercise and a guided meditation.

Afterwards students shared what was meaningful for them and it was amazing to see how much students were craving this kind of work. A couple of students cried with the burden of stress they carry as they share stories of death of family member, divorce, etc.

Jane Raphael
Wonderland Avenue School
Teacher Awardee

"I have seen multiple educators rethink when they recognize others. It is no longer about 'earning' the recognition, but now it is about the impact it has on both them and the learner."

— Cory Steiner, Northern Cass School District.
District Awardee

One little girl confessed that she was afraid

to meditate and she felt a similar fear when trying to focus during her math exercises. "It's okay to feel fear," we told her, and after some encouraging questions, we discovered that she was afraid to go inward because she didn't want to think of her mother who had recently died. "It's okay to think of your mom," we advised her, "because that's how you tell yourself you still love her." Then we guided the girl in a form of mettā bhāvanā (or loving-kindness) meditation in which she visualized good moments with her mother so that whenever her thoughts shifted to her mom, she felt tenderness. Finally, we taught her another meditation technique (called body scanning, visual waving or progressive relaxation) so she learned to get back on track scholastically with her thoughts.

Upāsikā tree turtle
Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School
Teacher Awardee

"I returned home from the convening excited to put in practice what I learned, and held a weekly council with a fifth grade class. The kids LOVED it!! It was not long before the other fifth grade class wanted in, and we also began meeting weekly. Students enjoyed the unique structure, being seen, being given space to share and listening to others in their class speak. We will continue councils next year, and bring the practice into other grade levels."

— Sharon Denny, Desert Cove Elementary School, Teacher Awardee

Virtual Reality Provides Students An Experiential Opportunity to Distract Themselves From Stressors and Embrace Calm

Teacher Awardee

Katharine Hinkle
Debi Rogers

Innovation Academy Charter School
Tyngsboro, MA

HIGHLIGHTS

Students consistently reported relief after using the VR headset. They shared that it offered them a reprieve from the daily stresses of high school, that it alleviated their anxiety and/or made them feel more relaxed. Additionally, two students used the 360 cameras to generate their own content for the head sets.

CHALLENGES

One of our primary challenges was finding ways to reach additional students and create opportunities for them to try out a variety of the apps that were on the VR headset. Additionally, while we encouraged students to use the relaxation apps specifically, it was difficult to regulate what content students were accessing on the VR during use.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We used the Oculus headset (~\$200 each) and the Samsung 360 camera (~\$80 each). Educators could also use Google cardboard headsets which are on the order of \$15 and can be used with any smart phone. The most successful apps were Healium (tryhealium.com) and Gala Relax.

“Ideally, social and emotional learning would be fully integrated into classrooms and curriculum. We hope that students feel equipped to better face the challenges of high school and beyond, that they learn how to be good and whole humans.”
—Katharine Hinkle



“I actually feel way more relaxed.”
—Student

“I love our school.”
—Student

Investing in Students By Investing in Teachers!

Teacher Awardee

Sharon Denny
Stacey Orest
Karyn Rabe
Desert Cove Elementary School
Paradise Valley Unified School District
Phoenix, AZ

HIGHLIGHTS

This year we focused on strengthening and taking care of our staff so that they would be better equipped to meet the needs of our students. We provided training on compassion fatigue, burnout prevention, self care and mindfulness, and focused on caring for and celebrating each other and building staff relationships.

CHALLENGES

Finding time is always the greatest challenge!

TRY THIS AT HOME!

MIndful Schools (mindfulschools.org) has online classes in mindfulness, starting with building your own practice, then a Mindfulness Educator’s class that teaches you how to implement mindfulness in the classroom (curriculum included). The classes are self-paced and are great! Here’s the tip: They apply a 50 percent discount if five or more sign up for any class. This discount extends to anyone in your group who takes a class down the road. Instead of signing up as a school, we signed up as a district, so now all district employees can take classes at a discounted rate!



“It is my hope that as a school and district, we will understand more about the dynamics and importance of emotional regulation and the critical role it plays for all of us in teaching, learning and in our relationships.”
—Sharon Denny

“Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to take the Mindful Schools class. The class helped me to understand and experience the benefits of mindfulness, and has helped me learn how to be present in the moment. I am truly grateful.”
—Teacher



Teachers Suffering From Toxic Stress Receive Support From Local Psychologist and Motivational Coach

Teacher Awardee

- Robin Sizemore
- Tim Sieman
- Mary Rykiel
- Heather Plinovich
- Jennifer Connelly

Morton Elementary School
School City of Hammond
Hammond, IN

HIGHLIGHTS

We have committed staff members suffering from what we thought was “compassion fatigue” but through surveys with our local psychologist turned out to be toxic stress. Through professional development meetings twice a month, our staff explored our own negative thought patterns. We also did a book study of *Lost at School* by Ross Greene led by the psychologists. In addition, we each were offered an individual, private, one-hour session monthly with a motivational coach. This occurred January through May. These conversations were varied and helped the participants immensely with thinking in a different way about difficult situations. Finally, each month we had yoga sessions after school that included ideas to use in class, trauma-informed discussions and the gift of being able to fully relax after a long school day.

CHALLENGES

Our only challenge was discomfort for some staff members with the psychologists’ presentations. Discussions regarding trauma can be sensitive. Our administration was extremely understanding of this situation and adjusted the training schedule for those who needed to opt out.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Definitely offer yoga to any interested parties, and the relaxation kind for sure. This changed our mood in such an amazing, wonderful way that I believe it added years to our lives. If other schools can offer parent or teacher meetings with a local psychologist with the focus on self-compassion, that particular subject was well-received. We all have negative self-talk and that does not help us to accomplish great things. Motivational coaching was a blessing; it is a bit costly, but that was definitely worth the investment. I learned a lot about myself, and the experience of having someone listen to my goals and dreams and help me to create a path to achieve them was a wonderful gift.



Racial, Gender & Social Justice

Enhancing Student SEL Through Equity, Community Engagement and the Integration of Local Cultures

District Awardee

Mt. Adams School District

White Swan, WA

Project team:

Hayley Strom

Julie Schillreff

Stew Carey

HIGHLIGHTS

Our team was able to involve parents, students, teachers and community members in ongoing equity work aimed at developing an understanding of local culture and history.

CHALLENGES

A primary challenge was gaining teacher buy-in and commitment for equity and community work outside their regularly-scheduled school day.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The key to the success of our initiative was ensuring all activities were shaped by our unique student body. Both local and national trainings were specifically designed to address the unique needs and experiences of the Mt. Adams student population.



"I greatly appreciated the opportunity to hear about the experiences and culture of the local elders in the community, and about how Indigenous rituals and practices are connected with the culture, and with a vision for the education and future for the youth in the Indigenous community."

—School employee

Moving Towards Culturally Responsive SEL Together: Practices to Build Collective Capacity

District Awardee

Austin Independent School District

Austin, TX

Project team:

Alonzo Blankenship

Theresa Garcia

Aleza Sitarz

Sarah Stone

HIGHLIGHTS

There is no one-size-fits-all approach of what it means to move towards culturally responsive SEL, but there are questions, relationships, articles and systems that can intentionally guide how we build our capacity to grow and move together.

As noted in the Aspen Institute's "Pursuing SEL Development Through a Racial Equity Lens," this approach takes time, energy and resources. Many of the teachers involved in this project have spoken about the importance of having time to dive deeper into the needs and strengths of their campuses, learn together and plan together.

CHALLENGES

One of the guiding questions for our collective work was to explore what youth voice practices will help us gauge the relevance of our SEL implementation. A few of our smaller Title 1 campuses endeavored to leverage youth voice through providing opportunities for student feedback, however many student leaders on campus are also leaders in multiple other programs. Although scheduling to meet together posed a challenge, it was also an opportunity for students to problem-solve together and come up with creative solutions.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

- Use an annotated agenda.
- Use the SEL three signature practices every time meeting with adults: welcoming rituals, engaging pedagogy, optimistic closing.
- Have a student panel at every planning event with teachers.

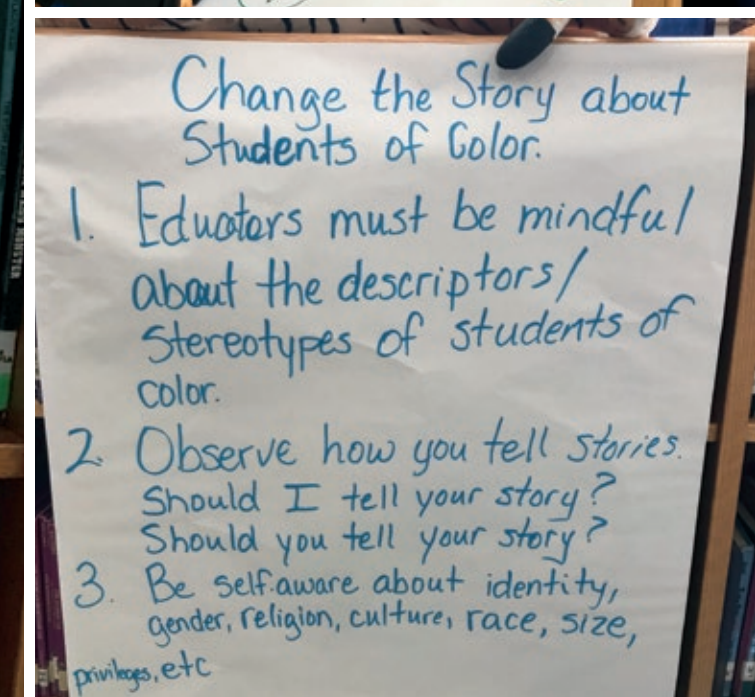
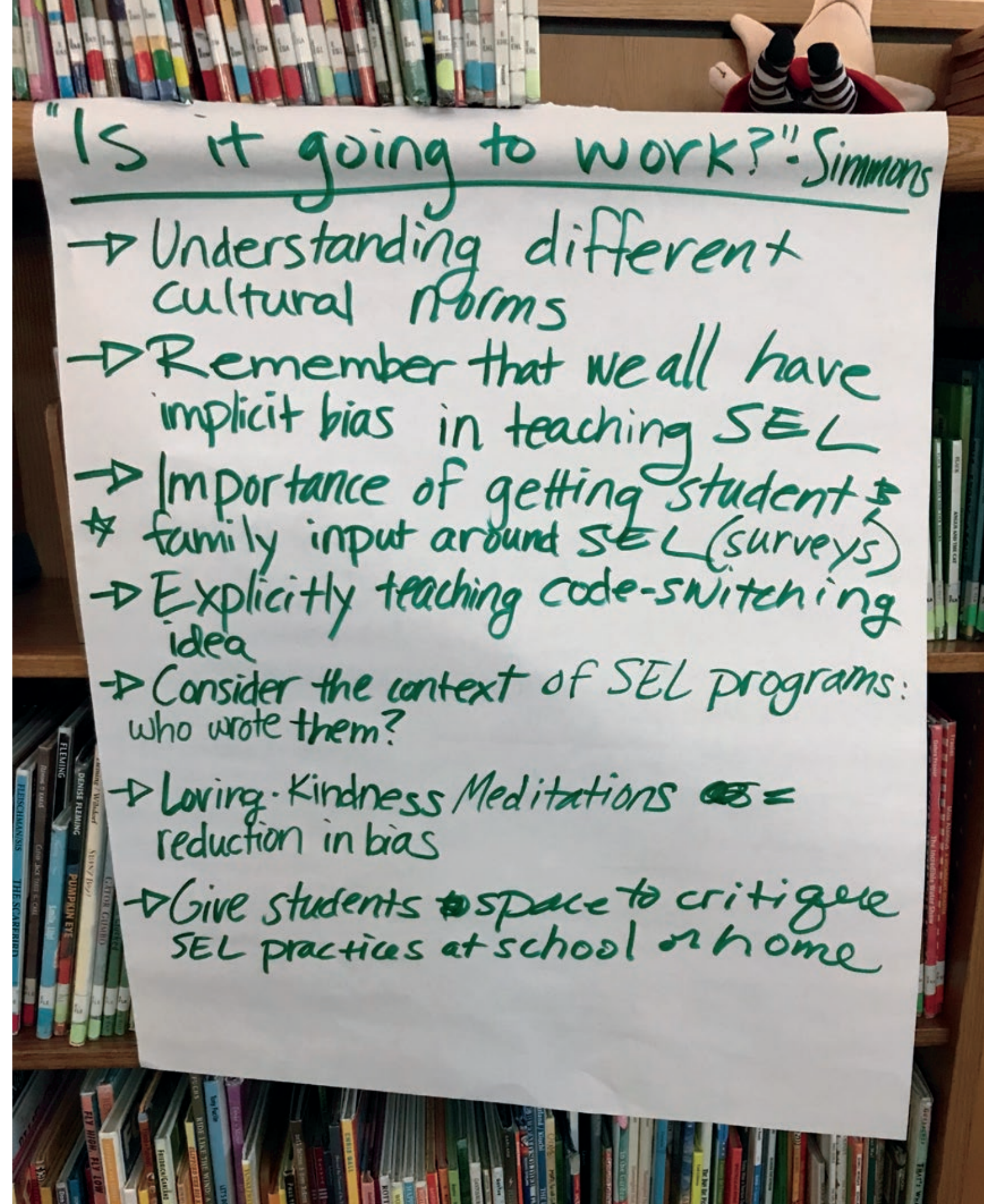
Resources to consider:

- *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond
- Educational Equity Definition from the National Equity Project: "Educational equity means that each child receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential."
- Morningside Center for Social Responsibility
- Karen Mapp article (see link below)
- Dr. Dena Simmons SEL articles (see link below)
- Dr. Monique Morris's work (see link below)

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Austin Independent School District.

"Whatever the problem, [teachers] will help you with it and won't leave you by yourself."

—Student



Effective Practices for Serving Gender Expansive and Transgender Students

District Awardee

Cambridge Public School District

Cambridge, MA

Project team:

Candyce Dostert

HIGHLIGHTS

About 40 teachers, administrators and other school staff participated in a research-informed 10-hour course designed to expand their understanding of the particular concerns and needs of gender expansive and transgender students so that they can provide strong support for these students and their families in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

CHALLENGES

One challenge of our design was that by offering a district-wide choice course we were not able to guarantee that every school in the district had someone trained (because required attendance is not part of our choice course model). A second potential challenge was that people may feel that because they have completed a course, they know all there is to know about gender identities.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We heard from educators that they didn't know where to start when trying to make their schools more welcoming to people of all genders. To help get people started we developed a space audit that can be used to assess how welcoming a school is for people with gender expansive and non-binary identities.

"This course exceeded my expectations. I learned so much about terminology, perspectives, about my colleagues and especially about the diverse continuum of gender expression and identity. I truly feel that I am now thinking about these ideas constantly. I looked forward to coming to class every week."

—Teacher



Ethnic Studies in the Boston Public Schools: BPS Aims to Provide Culturally Rich and Relevant Ethnic Studies Courses for Its Students

District Awardee

Boston Public Schools

Boston, MA

Project team:

Josue Sakata

HIGHLIGHTS

Culture is a deep driver of whether a student wants to learn. The Ethnic Studies program has been teacher-driven work that looks to honor and use the experiences of Greater Boston’s communities of color and student voice to create a rich, culturally and linguistically sustaining course that honors the places our students come from, celebrates them and provides a healing and transformation space to deal with injustice. We hope these courses will instill a sense of pride and consciousness to effect change in Boston.

CHALLENGES

Creating a course from scratch, working with different individuals and getting student leadership to participate has been one of the biggest challenges.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Visioning your work is important. One thing we did is we broke down what Ethnic Studies is to each of us to come with a group definition. We used a Google Slide that has two documents to help us around our visioning of Ethnic Studies. The first slide is “What is Ethnic Studies?” Participants make a copy of the slide and fill what is ethnic studies and what it is not. With the second slide, “What are the Building Blocks of a ‘built to last’ Ethnic Studies initiative?” participants fill out what they see as vital for an ethnic studies program. We used these documents to discuss and come up with a definition of ethnic studies. To view this resource, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Boston Public Schools.

“I am very committed to the idea we need to know other stories and ways of living not based on capitalism and empire.”
—Teacher

High School Students Bring Unconditional Support and Trust to Their Community

Teacher Awardee

Union High School LGBTQIA+ Support Team

Union High School
Nampa School District
Nampa, ID

HIGHLIGHTS

Student-led LGBTQIA+ groups led to cultural change at school. Staff and students worked towards creating lasting equality and change at school.

CHALLENGES

There is still work to be done! Idaho, historically, does not provide specific supports for LGBTQIA+ students. We need to continue our work and show that social and emotional learning works.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Make the project student-led. Our project was effective because students led the charge. Students created goals. Teachers, social workers and outside agencies supported students by providing guidance, mentorship and acquiring needed resources for group.

“This program is innovative due to the fact it was a pioneering effort in the state of Idaho. We set a precedent that other schools can look to as a positive example.”
—Jon Munn

“Several students who participated in the workshop have felt empowered to move from ‘marginalized’ students to school leaders. They created a mentor program that positively impacts some of our struggling ninth grade students. By creating this mentor program, these new student leaders are not only building positive relationships in our school community, they have begun to recognize themselves as valued members of the community as well.”

— Danielle Dunn, Hammond High School, Teacher Awardee

One of our students came to us at age 15, illiterate and severely traumatized after having witnessed his parent’s murder in Central America. At our English as a New Language family celebration dinner that marked the end of the journaling project, he stood up and read a piece he had written on what it means to “seguir adelante” or “move forward” in life. He has so embraced this project — he fills page after page, and actually needed a second journal. He now reports feeling happy and optimistic for the first time since his parent’s murder and cites his writing as the most powerful form of unburdening. Not only did he grow academically and as a writer, but he found a safe way to heal.

Stephanie Carnes
Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES
Career and Technical Education
Teacher Awardee

Due to the information and influence of our psychologists, a handful of teachers opted to start counseling for themselves and/or their personal children. One participant’s child had just started college and was living away from home. Beyond the typical homesickness, she suffered from panic attacks and negative thinking. She was able to have online Zoom sessions with the psychologist. One question she was asked was, “what do you like about yourself?” After 10 minutes she hadn’t been able to answer that question. Through the course of the year with additional support this student finished her first year of college strong, not only grade-wise but mentally. This would not have happened without the grant. Her mother attended all the trainings at our school and was able to pinpoint some problems for herself and her daughter and get a referral. This is but one success story. We have teachers who are foster parents and their lives and the lives of their now adopted children will be forever changed by the influence of psychology and motivational counseling.

Robin Sizemore
Morton Elementary School
Teacher Awardee

“One of our students, who is a leader in the LGBTQIA+ group, decided to develop a support group for parents in the community. The student is working with community organizations and national agencies to develop supports for parents of LGBTQIA+ students. This idea was born directly from the group we started at school.”

— Jon Munn, Union High School, Teacher Awardee

“I have learned how to be a better observer, which allowed me to have better management and problem solving skills with students.”

— Teacher

Cooking Classes Taught By Refugee and Immigrant Families Create a Social and Emotional Cultural Bridge

District Awardee

Albemarle County Public Schools

Charlottesville, VA

Project team:

Renata Germino
Shannon Smith
Anthony Smith

HIGHLIGHTS

Our work has created a cross-cultural and cross-generational event that brings together, in an authentic environment, immigrant families, teachers, community members and school board members. Refugee and immigrant families from diverse cultures including Afghanistan, China, Egypt, Honduras, India, Nepal, Syria and Venezuela have developed strong bonds and friendships. Some presenters are so skillful, they are akin to celebrities within our growing community.

CHALLENGES

One challenge is expanding our community partnerships. We foresee a future challenge: identifying the best way to honor our families in a culminating celebratory event.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Find a large kitchen, possibly one of your district’s culinary arts classrooms, where families can share their culture and cook meals for teachers and community members. We would love to help you replicate our project. To check out a podcast Renata did with Ellevation Education, visit selfforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Albemarle County Public Schools.



“I am very thankful to the teachers for thinking about my son and my family. I’m happy to be learning how to cook foods from other countries as well and share in others’ cultures.”
—Parent



The Use of Journaling as a Powerful Tool for Trauma Treatment

Teacher Awardee

Stephanie Carnes

Ellen Sugrue-Dolan

Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES
Career and Technical Education
Yorktown Heights, NY

HIGHLIGHTS

The journaling project allowed students who had been exposed to trauma to “unburden,” and begin the process of healing in a way that was both non-threatening and empowering. They developed an enhanced sense of personal voice as well as a greater appreciation for their own resilience, both as individuals and as a learning community. Ninety-three percent of students who participated reported enjoying the project, and many commented that it helped them develop a new, effective coping skill. The family celebration that marked the completion of the project was the first time our English language learners had the opportunity to come together as a community, enjoy a meal and celebrate their resilience through writing.

CHALLENGES

This was both a highlight and a challenge: we saw an increase in trauma disclosures and emotional reactions during the project — and a corresponding dip in attendance, which often

meant we had to put academic work on the back burner. We also had some difficulty having enough time for the project since we had a terrible winter with many snow days. This made it challenging at times to maintain momentum.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Journaling is an incredibly cost-effective and replicable intervention, especially for students who have had trauma. Some of our favorite journaling prompts were: “To really know me, you have to understand that...”; “The moment that changed everything in my life was...”; “I am most proud of...” It’s important to always give students the option to “opt out” of any and all journaling prompts so that disclosures aren’t forced, and it helps to have a school mental health professional involved to help manage emotions related to disclosures.



“Our students said that journaling allowed them to get rid of the pain and sadness that they had accumulated inside and move forward in a healthier way.”

—Stephanie Carnes



Cultural Proficiency Workshop: Building Community and Leveraging Student Voice

Teacher Awardee

Danielle Dunn
David McNeal
Razia Kosi
Hammond High School
Howard County Public School System
Columbia, MD

HIGHLIGHTS

Our project consisted of two main elements. First, Hammond High School led a 3-day Cultural Proficiency professional learning workshop where students, staff and parents worked to build relationships and empathy for/of diverse experiences in our community. By the end of the workshop, students had built confidence as well as an enhanced capacity to embrace our school’s diverse cultures.

After the workshop, the students developed a mentor program for ninth graders because this grade has the high majority of discipline referrals in our school. The students planned and ran the mentor program, making certain that ninth graders formed connections with their 11th grade mentors to ensure success.

CHALLENGES

Challenge One: We made the choice to run the workshop during three school days in order to be able to include students who found it difficult to attend after school or weekends due to transportation or obligations outside of school hours. This created its own problem as missing three days of school is challenging for any high school student.

Challenge Two: Hosting the workshop during the school day also meant that I needed to find a way to provide substitutes for the teachers who were participating.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Bring as many diverse voices together as you are able and create a space where titles (and the power that comes with them) are left at the door.

Start off with activities that help form bonds between all of the participants in order to build trust that allows participants to have honest and critical conversations around diverse experiences.

As a facilitator, it is important to recognize that you are learning from all of the participants as well.



“I learned that in this world of craziness, a good conversation with someone you never thought you would talk to could change someone’s mindset completely. All it takes is a conversation.”
—Student

Restorative Practices

Grammar in the Greenhouse: Shining In and Out of the Classroom

Teacher Awardee

English Language Development Department

Amphitheater High School
Amphitheater Public Schools
Tucson, AZ

HIGHLIGHTS

Each student discovered an aspect of work close to their heart, be it planting herbs, digging the soil, pulling weeds, putting up shading cloth, picking up crops, sharing produce with the community, mentoring younger children, installing irrigation, or maintaining a hydroponics structure.

CHALLENGES

Our two main challenges were incorporating urban gardening into the language curricula effectively, as required by the school administration, and maintaining the fish in the hydroponics structure without additional help from the science department.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

When taking a class to the greenhouse, write down each person's assignment on an index card to keep the students organized and efficient. Upon completion, have students write brief reports. For example, students might suggest starting a blog instead of a paper and pencil journal. Our class hopes to implement it next year.



“Working in the garden helps relieve and heal the past tragic experiences as students work with soil, tools and plants, and see the results of their labor grow in front of their eyes.”
—Teacher



Becoming Trauma-Informed is a Journey and Educators Can Make a Difference

District Awardee

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Soldotna, AK

Project team:
Melissa Linton
Tim Vlasak
Clayton Holland
John O’Brien

HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming trauma-informed is only the first step to meeting the needs of our children. Our adverse childhood experiences training with Dr. Linda Chamberlain provided a space for educators to analyze and discuss the research but also to shift their thinking about how they build relationships with students who have severe trauma in their lives. There is a new sense of understanding and a focus on examining teaching practices that foster growth mind-sets, self-regulation and care.

CHALLENGES

This work uncovered that we are only at the very beginning stage of becoming trauma-informed. We are reflecting on our practice and trying to create learning environments that promote social and emotional skills and academics. Teachers want strategies they can incorporate

into their daily routines. They want to share “what works” with others and learn more about how they can support students. KPBSD has a new focus on building relationships with students, families and community partners. We know becoming trauma-informed and responsive needs to be a comprehensive approach, not just during the school day.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The self-regulation strategies we learned have helped us become more centered and take the time to check in with each other — as adults. If we don’t practice what we teach, we have a harder time understanding and practicing the skills. It really has made a difference with how we do business in and out of school. We are realizing the need for self-care as well as caring for our students.



“Without a strong positive school culture and climate, learning cannot happen to the degree we would expect or want for our students.”
—Melissa Linton

How Do Trauma-Informed and Restorative Practices Look in Our Culturally, Economically and Socially Diverse Borderlands Community?

District Awardee

Ajo Schools Restorative Practices Team
Ajo Elementary and High Schools
Ajo Unified School District
Ajo, AZ

HIGHLIGHTS

This year we have implemented 1:1 restorative coaching with teachers and recently introduced the Peace Path restorative conflict resolution tool to K-5. Our High School Peer Mentors and dedicated restorative coordinator together with staff have allowed for more frequent and meaningful peace-building circles.

CHALLENGES

A big challenge for us has been fine-tuning communication systems between teachers, administration and parents to address students’ needs across settings. Our community has experienced much intergenerational trauma and poverty, and we observed this year that a divisive political climate, changing immigration policies and border issues strain our families and community as a whole.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We have learned that it is critical to create follow-up so students continue using the tools of SEL assembly Challenge Day. We have discovered that Peace Path fits our community well and provides a concrete strategy for elementary classrooms to apply restorative tools. We have learned that patience, practice and repetition pays off and teachers are growing more comfortable with restorative and trauma-informed tools. We see the beginning of a school culture shift — teachers and staff are asking about root causes of behavior and absorbing new tools with curiosity and courage.



Developing Growth Mindsets and Promoting Healing From Trauma in the English Learners Mathematics Classroom

Teacher Awardee

Devahi Balachandran
Jon Lansa
Jan Wallace

Amphitheater Public Schools
 Amphitheater High School
 Tucson, AZ

HIGHLIGHTS

We took our English language learners (EL) / refugee students to the local art museum for an art appreciation/therapy activity, created student-led multilingual mathematics dictionaries to support English learners, continued investment in the visual-based ST Math program, and created engaging classroom activities that included movement and real-world learning.

CHALLENGES

The high turnover in our population due to housing and employment for families living in poverty, as well as students arriving late in the year, made it challenging for students to adjust emotionally. However, the activities we were able to undertake helped students and their families to feel celebrated during their time with us.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The completely visual-based math program we use for SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) has been life-changing for us and our students.

The supplies and manipulatives we use for our students have helped them truly understand what they are doing and transfer their invented strategies into their mainstream classes.

There are many ways to provide language support to ELs. To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on the name Devahi Balachandran.



"If someone does bad things to you, you can forgive him. You teach me to be kind and to respect others. Even if I don't do very well, it's okay, I can try again."
—Student



Discernment, Agency and Empathy — Tools for An Unknown Future

District Awardee

Thrive Public Schools
San Diego, CA

Project team:
Sherre Vernon
Shelli Kurth
Carmina Osuna

HIGHLIGHTS

We use Responsive Classroom in our elementary classrooms, have advisory programs in middle school and high school utilizing Second Step and run Council TK-Staff. Our belief is that a strong community is the foundation for SEL learning and restorative practices. We equip students to talk through their struggles and we use the Devereux Students Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to assess student need and target SEL instruction and interventions.

CHALLENGES

We grew from 45 to 1,000 students in four years, and each year we have had to “start over” in addition to building on the work we’ve been doing. Also, current state accountability measures don’t take this work into account.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Council! This is the single most effective practice we’ve found for building community and increasing student agency and empathy. To view this resource, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Thrive Public Schools.



“If the choice is between leading with love or leading from fear, choose love.”
—Shelli Kurth



Peer Conference: Strengthening Student Capacity to Resolve Conflict and Problem-Solve Through Restorative Justice Practices

Teacher Awardee

David Jablonsky
Ryan Williams

Multicultural Arts High School
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago, IL

HIGHLIGHTS

Last year, MAS, a small, neighborhood high school on Chicago's southwest side, established a peer conference team of 26 students and five staff members who met with 20 students referred by administration for remediation. The team seeks to use a restorative approach focusing on helping referred students to identify and repair harm.

Evaluating our impact through exit surveys, the data has demonstrated that the vast majority of students undergoing peer conferencing report that the experience was both positive and beneficial in helping them to recognize and solve problems.

CHALLENGES

We regularly struggle with coordination in our small school. MAS has 225 students, which makes for a small administrative team (a principal with no assistant or dean). Teachers are largely responsible for discipline, and our staff fulfills a great deal of time-consuming leadership positions. Coordinating conferences between students is difficult for teachers, and students bear many responsibilities like locating students for conferences and tracking agreements afterwards.

A second challenge is maximizing the impact of our work. At an urban school on Chicago's southwest side, we see students with a host of issues stemming from trauma. We want to build our peer conference student leaders' awareness of the impact of trauma through additional training. We aim to equip students with the language and sensitivity necessary to assist their peers while we remain realistic about the sorts of issues beyond the scope of peer conference, which may require more substantial interventions.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We have a host of resources and templates available that have helped students take on the role of peer conference leaders: referral forms that help students learn about the referred student's issue ahead of time, open-ended guiding questions that help students get to the root cause of the issue without assigning blame, and specific roles for student leaders to have during peer conferences that assist with smooth facilitation.

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on David Jablonsky.

“Not only has Peer Council improved our school community, but it has benefited us as individuals. We have spoken up to address student behavior to transform our school into one we are all happy attending.”

—MAS Peer Counselor



“The program ‘A Seat at the Table’ helped my students find their voice. When I am conducting ‘Circle’ in my class, I notice that the students who shield themselves in the beginning have come out and are not afraid to share their stories and experiences. I have developed a closer relationship with my families that participated in the workshops, fewer behavior problems and more peer exception from the students. The ability to hear other people’s stories and knowing that they are not alone has helped them with real life issues.”

— Laronda Williams-Catching,
92nd Street STEAM Elementary School,
Teacher Awardee

By creating safe spaces, students who refused to speak at the start of the year were giving presentations in front of the class by the end of the year. Three of our students, who came as refugees a few years ago with interrupted formal education, inspired us with their hard work and dedication. They graduated this year and are headed to the University of Arizona!

Devahi Balachandran
Amphitheater Public Schools
Teacher Awardee

“A student who has learned to love and trust restorative circles over the last two years exclaimed, ‘We need to get them all together and sit them down in a really good circle and talk it out!’”

— Ajo Schools Restorative Practices Team
Ajo Unified School District, District Awardee

“First I was so confused in my mind, but I was so happy to know some new things. I will never give up. I have to try my best.”

— Student

We have seen our students develop and implement coping strategies that they have learned during drama time. For example, one student who frequently has tantrums and aggressive behaviors has learned the verbiage to identify what he is feeling and how his body is responding. Because of his self-realization he is able to implement some of the mediation strategies that we taught during drama time to help him refocus his behaviors.

David Jablonsky
Chicago Public Schools
Teacher Awardee

“A teacher who attended our training wrote to me that they have a new understanding and patience for students who have severe behavior patterns. Exploring why students behave or react to situations from a scientific standpoint, instead of feeling the student is behaving inappropriately because they don’t like the teacher. We learned from our training that the brains of students who experience trauma have physically been altered — this is a research fact — there is nothing personal about it.”

— Melissa Linton, The Kenai Peninsula
Borough School District, District Awardee

NICE Program’s After School Circles Thrive in a Spring Valley, NY School District

District Awardee

East Ramapo Central School District
Spring Valley, NY

Project team:
Nurturing Inclusive Community
Environment (NICE) Program

HIGHLIGHTS

With new students from Central America and Haiti registering for school every day in East Ramapo, the Nurturing Inclusive Community Environment (NICE) program worked to ease the transition to a new country with the after-school Multicultural Club. Students joined together to celebrate their cultural uniqueness while forming new bonds and making new friendships. The after-school Girls Circle was also a success. Young women flocked to the weekly sessions to discuss topics relevant to their lives. The young women adored being part of the sacred community established by the NICE staff members and cooperating teachers.

CHALLENGES

Our challenge is funding to continue the beautiful work that the NICE team accomplishes in the two East Ramapo high schools. With four full-time staff members in each school, we support students during the school day as well as after school through community-building circles, one-to-one support and mediations.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Our team follows the Kay Pranis circle-keeping method. For Girls Circle, our staff were trained by the One Circle Foundation and have purchased their curriculum to supplement our after-school sessions.



“Girls Circle has helped improve my relationship with my mother and sister. We now have a better relationship because of this group.”
—Student

The Three D's: Dancing, Drawing and “Dramaing” Your Way to SEL

Teacher Awardee

Dee Hebert
Nancy Kirby

James Otis World Language Academy
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago, IL

HIGHLIGHTS

Through this grant we have been able to provide teaching artists to come into our classroom weekly to teach social and emotional learning through drama, dancing and art.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges we faced was communicating the SEL learning to the parents and families. Initially, we tried to share the information through individual formal and informal conferences. The excitement and buy-in from the students could not be properly

conveyed in this format. So we decided to invite the parents in to participate in drama time and the SEL learning that was occurring.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Gather your students in a circle and have them roll the dice! As each child rolls the dice, have all of the students demonstrate a facial expression. Keep a mirror handy so they see themselves and students can begin a discussion about what makes them feel that way. To view a resource, visit selfforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Chicago Public Schools.



*“I’m mad at you but I still want to be your friend.”
— Student, to another student*

Building Resiliency Through The Big 3: Treat Others Right, Maximize Your Potential and Make Smart Decisions

Teacher Awardee

Dana Davis
Sandy Shoemaker

Akron Public Schools
Glover Community Learning Center
Akron, OH



HIGHLIGHTS

This project provided staff with monthly one-on-one training and observation with a trauma specialist. Ongoing professional development addressed the key aspects of traumatic stress, emphasizing strategies for staff to implement to help students build resilience and coping skills to deal with stressors in healthy, productive ways. SEL became embedded throughout the entire school day and support was provided to all students because staff strengthened their own SEL knowledge and skills through this intensive training. Additionally, students improved core SEL competencies along with problem-solving skills, memory skills, relationship-building skills and academic achievement through the weekly after-school Chess Club.

CHALLENGES

A challenge we experienced in phase two of The Big 3 was time and class coverage during professional development. After successfully overcoming our initial challenge of staff buy-in during the first year of implementation, staff was provided with intensive, monthly one-on-one training with a trauma specialist. The trauma specialist observed staff-student interactions and relationships and offered immediate feedback.

This would usually take about one hour for each staff member. Finding more time and class coverage for this individualized training is a major challenge as staff desires to continue this ongoing, intensive monthly professional development.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Contact your local children’s hospital for free resources. The trauma specialist that works with our school is the Community Education Programs Coordinator at Akron Children’s Hospital. She provides SEL for students grades K-12 including professional development in restorative practices and psychological trauma.

Our weekly after-school Chess Club is coordinated and run by teacher volunteers with assistance of middle and high school students. When organizing a Chess Club at the elementary level, invite local middle and/or high school students to volunteer. These students love to help, and it will also provide them with valuable volunteer service hours.



Giving Students, Parents and Staff Effective Communication Tools

Teacher Awardee

Laronda Williams-Catching

92nd Street STEAM Elementary School
Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Angeles, CA

HIGHLIGHTS

The SEL grant provided me the needed resources to help with the students that have communication issues based on their daily living situation. I was able to plan and conduct different events and invite the learning community to come and share with “breaking bread and breaking barriers.” We conducted a Mommy and Daughter Tea Party with communication being our top priority. Parents were encouraged to talk with their groups about changes taking place emotionally and physically with their children. We wanted to know how social media has affected these changes. This event gave the students a safe space to open up to their parents. It also provided a “me too” area where the girls realized that they were not by themselves. Giving the families the tools to effectively communicate without judgement was important. We discovered that a lot of the students just wanted someone to listen to them and for their voices to truly be heard.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges dealing with the grant was the processing of the funds with the district. We had to follow a number of steps in order to purchase and order materials to use the grant funding. Another challenge was time. Being able to plan the events around other activities that are planned for the students during the school year (testing, field trips, parent workshops, etc.).

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Be sure to work hand-in-hand with your administrative staff. It is important for scheduling and planning. Also get support from your staff. When the entire learning community is on board for positive change, it affects everyone.



Restorative Practice Works for All Students in All Areas of Instruction

Teacher Awardee

Amanda Adcock
Whites Creek High School
Metro Nashville Public Schools
Nashville, TN

HIGHLIGHTS

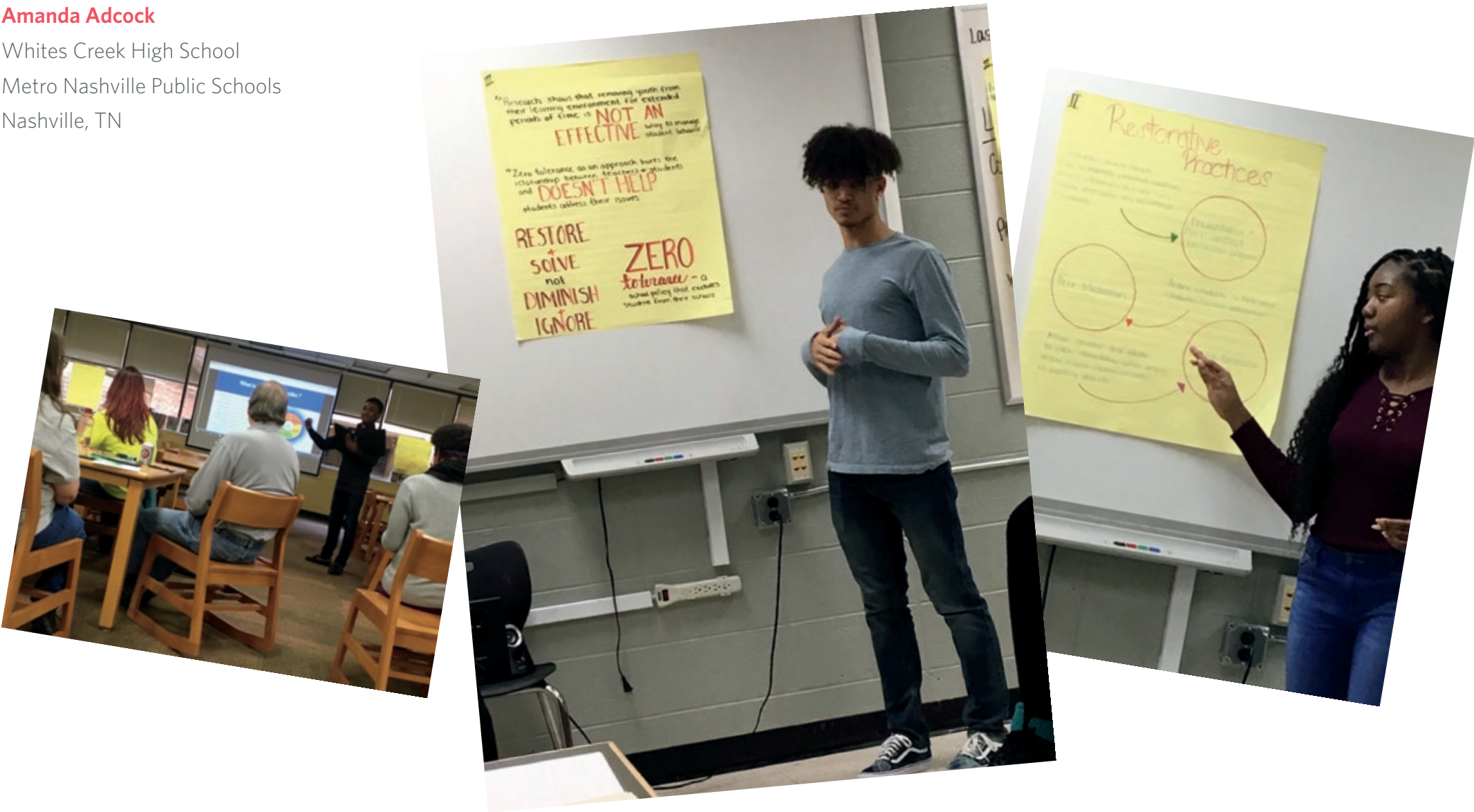
Education, Law and the Arts create a combination for all students to learn in a manner that is not only individualized for each student but also relevant in the modern day world we live in.

CHALLENGES

Time was the challenge. We wanted to incorporate so much into the learning but had only so many hours with which to work.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

The biggest tip I can give is to really research restorative practices for yourself. I critically evaluated where I was with where I thought I was and realized I was not practicing in the best manner for my students. Once I owned the methodologies, I saw a drastic change with my classroom.



Biloxi Upper Beautification: Students Come Together to Beautify Their Campus While Renewing, Reusing and Recycling

Teacher Awardee

Dixie Mohler
Biloxi Upper Elementary
Biloxi Public Schools
Biloxi, MS

HIGHLIGHTS

Students used our new outdoor classroom to study, learn and grow as individuals while bettering and beautifying our school. We started recycling projects and created individual projects using some of the gathered supplies. Students formed new friendships and bonds with others through their work.

CHALLENGES

During our time working on these projects, the area in which we originally planned to create outdoor classroom went under construction and a new area had to be found.



Self-Regulation and Restorative Circles: Helping Students Learn to Self-Regulate

Teacher Awardee

Molly Suarez
Peggy Greiner
Seiberling CLC
Akron Public Schools
Akron, OH

HIGHLIGHTS

Through this grant we were able to have Elec Simon, a nationally known inspirational speaker, come to present at our school. He spoke to our students about bullying and being the best they can be. Our school was able to purchase *Zones of Regulation* for the entire staff and implement the program school-wide. Restorative circles are a growing strategy that help the students grow individually, as a class and as a school.

CHALLENGES

One challenge that we faced was getting everyone on board to change. There were individuals that were slower to come around to restorative circles and the Zones of Regulation, but baby steps were welcome as long as we were moving forward for the students. Time was another challenge because it was hard to find time to fit everything in normally and now we've added in restorative circles and Zones of Regulation activities.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Explore the *Zones of Regulation* and also check out Elec Simon. Mr. Simon works with any age group but has developed special programs for middle/high schools. Also, we will try to include more restorative circles in our classes next year. Restorative circles are emotionally beneficial to the students both individually and as a class.



SEL Integration

SEL Integration

Innovation for ELs: English Learners Share Their Journeys Through Multimedia Digital Story Videos

Teacher Awardee

Christi Cartwright
International High School
Lawrence Public Schools
Lawrence, MA

HIGHLIGHTS

With the Chromebooks provided by the SEL Innovation Fund, my students created multimedia projects from videos and brochures to essays and presentations. The highlight this year was the Digital Story videos that all students created, even those at the lowest level English proficiency with limited or interrupted education in their native language. They told their immigration journey by writing personal narratives of their experiences arriving in Lawrence. Later, they recorded their voices and added images, text and music. The highlight was when they shared their videos with their peers, family, friends and community members at our Project Learning Fair.

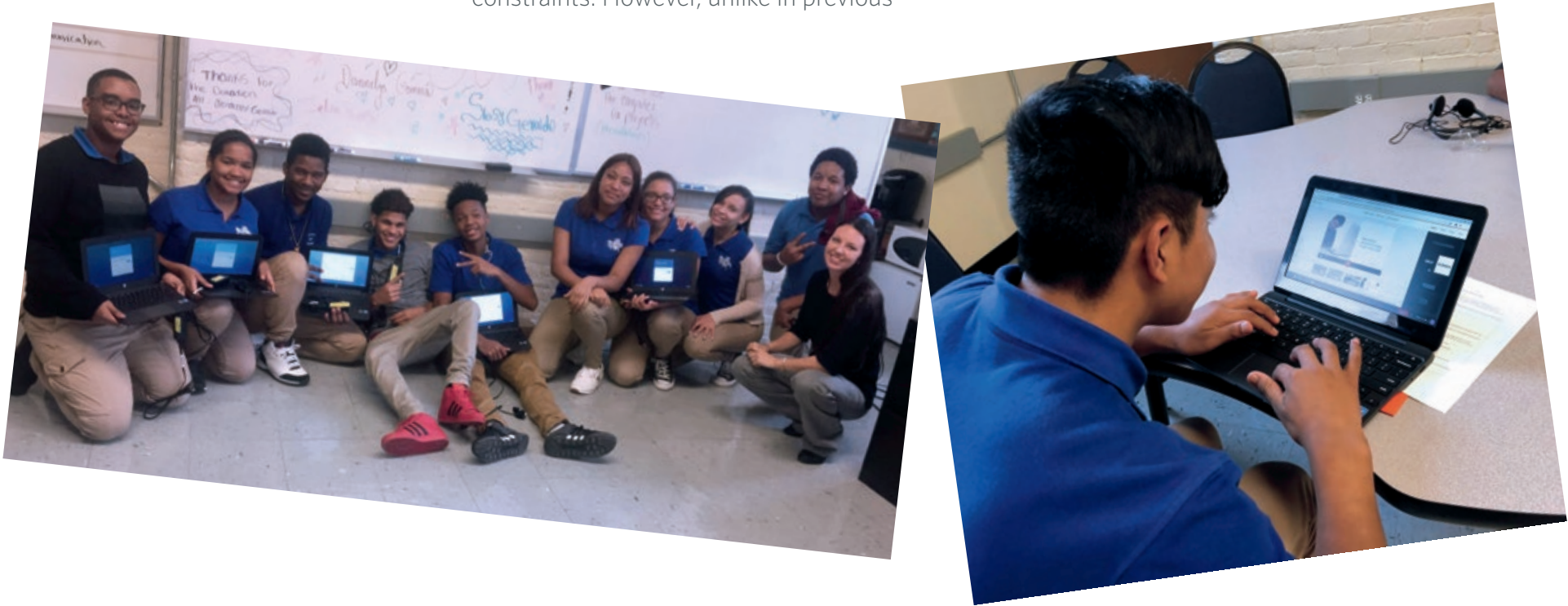
CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge from this work was rolling out our SEL-infused ESL curriculum despite ongoing interruptions due to standardized testing, common assessments and other constraints. However, unlike in previous

years, my students were able to borrow the Chromebooks after school in order to continue their projects. Their engagement in the Digital Story videos and other multimedia projects this year solidified for me that not only can social and emotional learning help prepare students for college and career readiness, it is also a key ingredient in student engagement.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

I would highly recommend this project for any educator who wants to give their students a voice and a means of sharing their stories using Digital Story Projects. I recommend using the website Spark Adobe to create the videos as they are easy to create and visually pleasing. I also recommend organizing a space for students to share these videos with their loved ones and community members, as we did at our Project Learning Fair.



Movers and Makers — Promoting SEL Through Play

Teacher Awardee

Veronica Sydlowski

Susan Evans

LeAnne Kenny

Natalie Steckel

Phillipsburg Primary School

Phillipsburg School District

Phillipsburg, NJ

HIGHLIGHTS

We had a few projects that the kids really loved. The first was making mosaic stepping stones for our newly-created courtyard garden. The kids worked in teams to make the design and took pride in creating something that would beautify the school. The kids LOVED making kindness rocks. Each rock said “Your Kindness Rocks” and the kids decorated them. We made one for each classroom and teachers and students used the rock to recognize acts of kindness. The kids also enjoyed “game days” where we played different board and card games that they could then share with their classmates on indoor recess days.

CHALLENGES

Two of our biggest obstacles were transportation (we weren’t able to provide busing for students) and having a space to do activities. We weren’t able to do as many gross motor games as we would have liked due to a lack of space.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Kids love games and it works on so many great social skills! Board games and card games were fun as well as just basic “get to know you games.” Game boards can be found online and all you need are pieces and dice. Spray painting rocks and then decorating them with pictures and encouraging messages is a great way for kids to create and then beautify an outdoor area.



“My class loves the kindness rock. Each day they look forward to ‘being caught’ being kind. Great idea!”

—Teacher

Behavior Isn't An Other: Supporting the Whole Child Through a Systems Approach

District Awardee

Mashpee Public Schools
Mashpee, MA

Project team:
Mashpee Public Schools SEL Team

HIGHLIGHTS

The most powerful highlight from this year’s work was the presentation provided to all district staff on trauma-informed practices from the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) from Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. Joel Ristuccia from TLPI presented on the prevalence of trauma and ways in which schools can support all students, but particularly those who have experienced trauma. This presentation was followed by each department working together to implement some of the recommended adjustments.

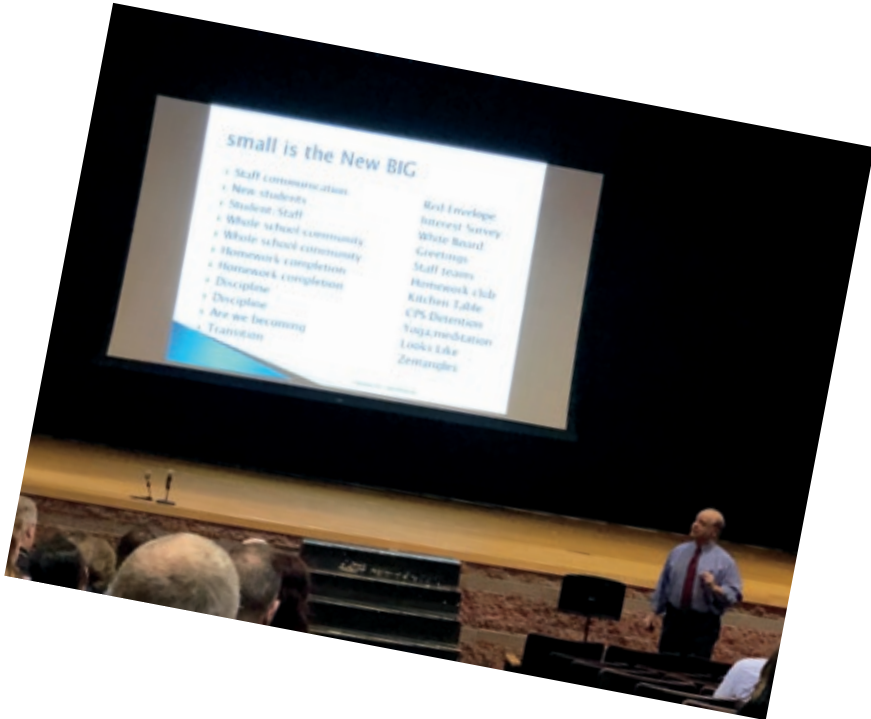
CHALLENGES

Shifting the mindsets of educators to recognize that all behavior is communication, rather than willful choices made by students, has been a challenge. Training in the Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) model from Think:Kids supported that

shift, with their mantra being “skill, not will.” This training began some strong conversations within the district, but we continue to struggle to have all MPS staff members come from the perspective of skill deficits, rather than from a place of emotion and frustration, when faced with challenging behaviors.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We recommend collaboration with TLPI and Think:Kids. The professional development provided by both programs was powerful and resulted in immediate change for students.



“I find that working through issues with a class helps create community within the classroom. Students feel empowered because their voices are heard.”
—High School Teacher

An SEL-blended Content Curriculum

Teacher Awardee

Nisha Sensharma
Patricia Hunt
Deneen Snow
Kirsten Swami
Michael Grill

Arlington Public Schools
Wakefield High School
Arlington, VA

HIGHLIGHTS

Teachers in our team incorporated five SEL standards that we developed using the CASEL framework. These included: future visioning and growth mindsets, wellness basics, heartfulness for self and others, stress management, and learning skills and habits of self-regulation. Our program included regular mindfulness practice, journaling, monitoring of student feelings and behaviors and SEL lessons linked to the standards.

SEL-blended content projects were well received by students. One project blended wellness basics related to nutrition with the US&VA content unit on political processes. Students created nutrition plans for themselves, read position papers on school lunches by different interest groups, and wrote a position paper representing a student interest group. They gained insight on their own eating habits and learned about the politics of school lunches.

CHALLENGES

In trying to improve attendance, we found that our students with frequent absences missed many of the SEL lessons that would have helped them develop more adaptive behaviors. It is often difficult to address factors outside of the classroom that impact student behavior.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Find links to the content to create a curriculum that seamlessly weaves SEL lessons into the content. This can address the issue of limited time in the high school classroom.

Think about the structure of your classroom (e.g., regular routines and grading policies) to make it compatible with the SEL skills you are trying to develop in students.



“I try to come early to do the mindful minute. I love it. I like it a lot because after a lot of practice I really can relax my body when I’m nervous, anxious, etc.”
—Student

Total Integration Project

District Awardee

Silverton School District No. 1

Silverton, CO

Project team:

Silverton School SEL Team

HIGHLIGHTS

As a small, rural district we knew that SEL integration meant shifting mindsets, creating spaces, structures and embedding SEL into every part of our students' days. This grant enabled us to hire a SEL coordinator and provide teacher-led research and socially construct what SEL is to our district through in-depth study involving building background knowledge, fieldwork, experts and designing our own framework for making SEL a foundation of our school culture.

CHALLENGES

Transformation is a slow process. Shifting mindsets of teachers, students and parents takes time. This project is really a five year project!

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Help your school community own the SEL work by creating your own SEL wheel based on the CASEL's wheel. <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>



“We hear all the time from students and parents about how safe and supportive the schools are, especially for students who felt unsupported or bullied elsewhere. For example, one parent said: ‘Teachers and staff at City Language Immersion Charter (CLIC)... are so thoughtful and so loving with my child’s unique social and emotional needs, that they’ve managed to shepherd her through challenges and she’s thriving.’”

— Valerie Braimah, City Charter Schools, District Awardee

“Our SEL Innovation Award has helped our school community find ways to improve ourselves, and realize that once we are self-aware and socially aware we have the ability to make the world a better place.”

— Silverton School SEL Team, District Awardee

Although there are many, one student who benefited greatly from the Chromebooks purchased from the SEL Innovation Fund is a 17-year-old student from Guatemala who does not have a computer at home and did not know how to use one until this year. She created a digital story video of her difficult journey to the U.S. It took courage to present her story to her peers, friends, community members and to her sister who accompanied her to Lawrence, MA.

Christi Cartwright
International High School
Teacher Awardee

A high school teacher had been struggling with a particular student and his behavior all year and wasn’t making any headway. The student refused to complete work, would sit with his head down, and wouldn’t engage with her. Because of the training, she now recognized that the student did not feel safe participating in class, for whatever reason, and instead of focusing on the reason, she began to work with the student to determine what might make him feel more comfortable. Over time, the teacher and student developed a plan that allowed the student to feel safe, but also allowed him to demonstrate his knowledge in the class.

Dr. Hope Hanscom
Mashpee Public Schools
District Awardee

“We implemented classroom peace out corners this school year. Parents have shared that their children are creating these calming spaces for themselves in their homes. Staff have shared that this year’s work with compassion resilience has given them insight into how to prevent burnout and recognize the importance of taking care of their own social and emotional needs in order to be the best they can for their students.”

— Tammy Cooley, Potosi School District, District Awardee

Strengthening Connections Between Student Social and Emotional Development Practices and Their Socio-Cultural Context

HIGHLIGHTS

Our goal is to make the links between SEL and cultural competence explicit in our work and to invest everyone in the need for systemic implementation of key practices. We have developed a vertically-aligned K-8 SEL Outcomes Matrix that addresses wellness and identity, personal growth and social impact, creating inclusive communities, and cultural competence.

We are now developing professional development and classroom toolkits to support implementation.

CHALLENGES

Our biggest challenge is on-boarding new teachers to our approach and continuously refreshing and refocusing everyone in the building on our approach and philosophy. The work is never done, and without constant calibration, discussion and resource development, focus can get lost or diffused.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

To check out our K-8 matrix of outcomes, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on City Charter Schools.

District Awardee

City Charter Schools

Los Angeles, CA

Project team:

Valerie Braimah, ED
Raul Alarcon
Candice McCray
Hugo Carrillo
Sarah Williams
Esther Gutierrez
Amanda Cermak
Ed Gray



***“We love love LOVE this school. The teachers and leadership are caring and engaged. My child has NEVER had such a complete school experience.”
—Parent***



SEL Integration: Changing Mindsets and Helping Students

District Awardee

Potosi School District

Potosi, WI

Project team:

Tammy Cooley

HIGHLIGHTS

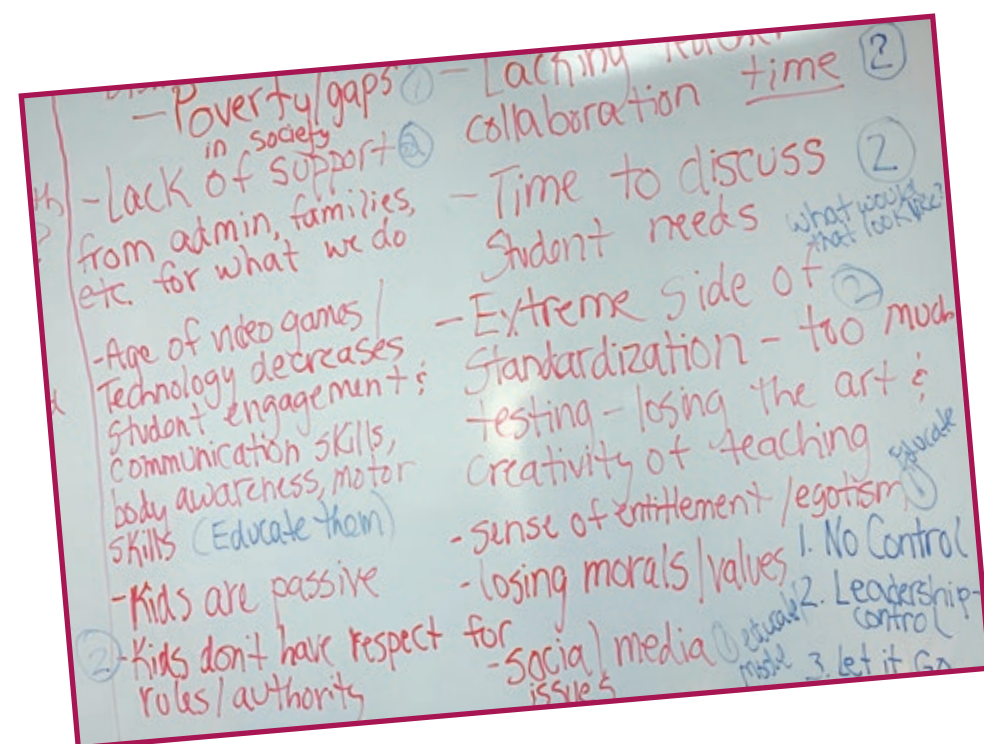
One highlight is the importance of teacher self-care to promote social and emotional learning in classrooms. Without socially and emotionally competent teachers, integrating SEL into classrooms is difficult. A second highlight is that students are hungry for strategies and tools to manage their emotions and when we make a concerted effort to integrate this into daily routines, kids benefit. From our work with this grant, our district is fully committed to integrating SEL and we have hired a full-time SEL coach for the fall of 2019.

CHALLENGES

Two challenges we faced were ensuring consistent times for SEL collaboration and changing mindsets that SEL is not something in addition to what we do, it is a part of what we do. All learning is SEL.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We encourage educators to check out the Compassion Resilience Toolkit. This is an excellent resource to utilize when working to integrate SEL and helps teachers understand the importance of compassion resilience in schools. To view this resource, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Potosi School District.



"We envision our students leaving our district as socially, emotionally and academically capable who are ready to contribute to society in a positive and productive way."

—Tammy Cooley



Putting the “S” in SEL Through Social Dance

Teacher Awardee

Samantha Woodburn
Michael Schieber
Zuha Mutan

Bodine High School for International Affairs
Philadelphia School District
Philadelphia, PA

HIGHLIGHTS

We began our work with Social Dance for this year’s freshmen around the middle of September. Students have already begun to reap the benefits of this 10 week course. We are about halfway through, and they have become more friendly with one another and more comfortable dancing with their peers. Some reluctant dancers have turned into social dance aficionados, even teaching their PE teachers the proper moves.

CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge with this project is student buy-in at the beginning. Though there are usually a few students who are excited to get started, there will always be a few who do not want to dance, prefer not to touch their peers (handholding, etc.) or just do not want to do any type of physical activity. Together with the teacher from the Take the Lead Dance Project, we work the students through their fears and are happy to report almost all of our students are now participating willingly!

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Take the Lead Dance Project is based out of Philadelphia, however similar programs exist in other cities. For example, the founder of this organization expressed that she did similar work in the NYC are before moving to Philadelphia. To view a resource, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Samantha Woodburn.



Student Leadership & Voice

Hawaii SEL Weaves Diversity, Social Justice, Indigenous, Global Issues and Youth Leadership for Lifelong Learning

District Awardee

Honolulu School District

Honolulu, HI

Project team:

Ivee Cruz

Betty Skiles

Shelly Andrews

Marie Hedrick

Geneva Costales

Gabe Nehl

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights from the Hawaii SEL project include connections between students and place and new relationships between students. For example, two of the high schools that are part of the project have historically been known to be rival schools. Thus, through this project, students have built bridges and forged relationships. Dynamics of island culture is complicated. Where you are from on the island typically reflects certain stereotypes; such as if you are from “town” (urban) or more “country” (rural) parts of the island. A highlight is students coming together and learning from one another, despite “regional” aspects of culture.

CHALLENGES

One challenge was that one of the project team members and a lead teacher for a partner high school had to relocate. There have since been two substitutes in the position, one for part of Fall and one for Spring semester. This unfortunately has made it challenging to continue the project with one of the project schools. Another lead team member is on maternity leave for Spring semester and thus required bringing another substitute on board. It was also a logistical challenge to bring students together from across the island due to students missing school, transportation and culture clashes.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Culture: In Hawaii, culture is central aspect of island life. Hawaii DOE developed an initiative called Nā Hopena A’o (“HĀ”) that incorporates the importance of culture and place in education. The focus of the framework is “a sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total-well-being and Hawaii (‘BREATH’) in ourselves, students and others.”

Leadership: The Global Leadership program’s emphasis is student-centered and student-led; students make connections between real world issues and the local community. Students coordinate social action projects, present on topics and facilitate workshops leading to more student engagement.

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Honolulu School District.



Regional School District No. 7 Students Choose to Put Kindness in Motion

District Awardee

Regional School District No. 7
Winsted, CT

Project team:
Judith A. Palmer
Francis Amara
Kenneth Chichester
Gary Franklin

HIGHLIGHTS

Hundreds of students led projects that spread kindness to those in need across the globe. One project was to support Guiding Light Orphans in Uganda. Our ceramics students fired heart shaped bowls and our culinary students prepared soup to sell in the bowls. The AP Anatomy students created backpacks filled with medical supplies to women and children suffering from AIDS and epilepsy in Uganda. Others created a mobile grocery delivery service for senior citizens. Students apply a wide range of SEL skills in all Kindness in Motion projects.

CHALLENGES

I would suggest kicking off Kindness in Motion in the fall instead of the spring. Students can use more time to accomplish their goals.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We kickoff Kindness in Motion with a video message shown in ELA classes. Students are challenged to fill out a \$100 mini-grant application with an idea to spread kindness. Many students get their ideas from what they are learning in class. For example, our middle school students are learning about civil rights and they raised money to bring in Dr. Terrence Roberts of the Little Rock Nine and Mary Beth Tinker from Tinker v. Des Moines to our schools. The idea behind this work is to learn from the mistakes of our past in order to create a better future.

“This work has led to happier, more fulfilled lives for everyone involved, not just the recipients of these kind acts, but especially our students.”
—Judith A. Palmer



Refugee & Immigrant Student Empowerment (RISE): English Learner Students Uncover Their Strengths in Project-Based SEL

District Awardee
Baltimore City Public Schools
Baltimore, MD

Project team:
Eric Haber
Carey Haberman
Emma O’Grady

HIGHLIGHTS

In Baltimore, Maryland, immigrant and refugee students have been engaged in SEL groups using our RISE approach, in which project-based learning is a vehicle for student empowerment. Over 150 students participated in 19 different SEL groups, and an additional 20 parents joined our pilot SEL parent workshop, supporting our students and their families to discover strength and resilience in their immigration experiences. In one school, reflections on goals and obstacles became the inspiration for a community mural; while in another group, students compiled their wisdom into a guide for newly-arrived immigrant students. Meanwhile across three separate high schools, a multilingual cohort of students explored their changing identities and expressed their diverse voices through a student-produced Zine.

CHALLENGES

Our immigrant and refugee students are part of a highly traumatized population. In fact, before launching RISE, most of our group work was focused on offering trauma therapy. As social workers, we were drawn to SEL as a framework for expanding the conversation with our students beyond trauma, to help our students broadly explore the strengths developed through their immigration experiences. However the trauma is no less present in their lives, and it can be a challenge to remain focused on SEL while some students also need a more

therapeutic approach. We have become mindful that despite a strengths-based approach, SEL conversations can trigger student trauma.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Project-based learning is such a powerful vehicle for SEL! It gives the students an avenue to demonstrate their learning, to think concretely about how SEL competencies can be applied across a variety of contexts, to work as a team or to be self-reflective and find their own authentic voice. Students feel free to be creative, taking ownership of the group experience, and therefore of their own growth as well. We encourage educators to explore how a project can make an effective complement to any SEL lesson or unit.



MPS Ogitchidaa Oyate Youth Council: Giving Engaging Native Youth Voices Through Leadership

District Awardee
Clark County School District
Las Vegas, NV

Project team:
Anna Ross

HIGHLIGHTS

We celebrated national UNITY conference attendees as youth council representatives of the Midwest region. We also taught grant writing. Youth council wrote their own grant, which was 100 percent youth-led, and was awarded for a homelessness project.

CHALLENGES

We experienced challenges with funding and support while implementing this project.



TRY THIS AT HOME!
Develop your program to give youth real voice and make them stakeholders in programming.

*“Let us put our minds together to see what future we can create for our children.”
—Sitting Bull*

Immigrant Voices: Arts-Integrated Journeys Through SEL

District Awardee

Clark County School District

Las Vegas, NV

Project team:

Nancy Flores

Quiza Weber

HIGHLIGHTS

Students new to a country face many challenges as they try to adjust to new cultural norms, navigate new school rules and expectations, and learn a new language. Often, through the process of acculturation, immigrant students are in a position where their sense of self is challenged by the difficulties they face trying to “fit in.” Through arts-integrated projects, students will engage in rich discussions and a self-exploration process that will help them develop their voice and strengthen their sense of identities as they find legitimacy and belonging in their new community.

CHALLENGES

Trusting the process is the biggest challenge of using the arts as a platform for social and emotional learning. This is because students and teachers do not and should not control the outcome, as it will naturally occur through the artistic process. All we can control are the conditions that will promote feelings of safety and trust, and these are keys to a successful experience. As students let their creativity and feelings guide them through self-exploration, who knows what they will discover? In the journey itself, not the destination, lies the essence of SEL.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

- Article: “My Life, My Stories”: Reading, Writing and Belonging in the ESL Classroom
- Free Flow — Advice from Lisa Davis, Resident Artist
- The Moth “Teacher’s Resources” including storytelling tips and tricks and a teacher’s guide for All These Wonders, which has very useful information on guiding story writing and sharing as well as links to videos of high school students telling their stories.

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Clark County School District.



“I like the connection and being able to express and let out feelings/emotions and see that people can relate is a feeling of comfort.”
—Student

Rise Up! Youth Voice Leads to Emotionally Intelligent Action On School, Community and World Issues

District Awardee

Broward County Public Schools
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Project team:
Angela Brown
Christopher Gates

HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the SEL Fellowship, elementary, middle and high school student and teacher fellows were able to discuss and co-create action plans, leading to roundtable discussions with school leadership and elected officials. These discussions focused on school, community and world issues. Fellows united in initiatives that included engaging with elder and aging communities through an intergenerational project, increasing efforts in school safety and policing by adding an additional officer to their campus, and amplified opportunities with career professionals for real-world connections between social and emotional learning and workforce preparedness. After completing the full-year fellowship program, fellows were inducted as SEL Ambassadors to mentor and address issues and challenges in struggling communities.



CHALLENGES

Challenges arose in procurement of project deliverables and implementation with varied state testing windows. Although the challenges were differentiated, student and teacher fellows pursued and implemented with fidelity.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

- SEL Fellowship Resources
- Intergenerational Project Resources
www.lives-well-lived.com

To view these resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Broward County Public Schools.



“Being a part of this fellowship program impacted and changed my life because it inspired me that even though I’m a kid, I still have a voice, and I can make a difference.”
—Student

Through Use of SEL Framework, African American Female Students Decreased Rates of Relational Aggression

District Awardee

YES Prep Public Schools
Houston, TX

Project team:
Kawana Coulon
Kara Biggs

HIGHLIGHTS

Both White Oak and Eisenhower cohorts boast an average daily attendance rate of 96 percent and grade average of ‘B’ in core subjects of Math, English, Science and Social Studies. There were zero incidences of relational aggression amongst the White Oak cohort this academic year and an 82 percent decrease in incidences of relational aggression amongst the Eisenhower cohort. All members of both cohorts maintained enrollment at YES Prep throughout the academic year.

CHALLENGES

We are still working to increase teacher knowledge and skills in social and emotional learning. While developing students is critical, having a holistic district plan and approach will create even greater impact. Barriers to district-wide teacher education and practice include limited time for trainings and a strict academic focus.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

First, it has been beneficial to leverage community partnerships for curriculum/session delivery. Identifying agencies with a SEL mission affords the district an opportunity to strengthen partnerships while offering agencies a unique cohort of students (and families) who could utilize the wrap-around services they provide. Second, seek chances to integrate SEL learnings creatively. We have approached SEL tenets through the cohort’s reading of Michelle Obama’s *Becoming* autobiography, viewing *The Hate U Give* film and planning a cohort-led session at our district-wide Black girls Sisterhood Summit. Finally, consider how students can display their knowledge through visual and media arts on campus.



“I have become more respectful by leading others instead of following them.”
—Student

Using Student Mentors and Leadership Skills to Promote Emotional Growth and Development

Teacher Awardee

Justin Ladas
Ray Baker

Transition Center — Bridge Program
Hinsdale High School District 86
Hinsdale, IL

HIGHLIGHTS

Our program has developed a course we teach for our dually enrolled students at our local community college. The course is College Stress Management, aimed to help students identify, understand and better connect their emotions to all the stresses of young adult and college life. Additionally, we have identified student leaders and partnered with an agency to further develop their peer leadership skills through outdoor recreation and community-based service learning projects. The goal of this is to help develop more peer-to-peer mentorship for the students within our program.

CHALLENGES

We found all the logistics of the program to be most challenging.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Utilization of local stakeholders. Partner with agencies that are doing similar work, look at what other local resources are available to your students and look to see who else might want to collaborate to support. There are a number of different stakeholders looking to support students with achieving their desired outcomes.



"I would not have been able to successfully transition from high school to college without these supports."

—Student



“One SOAR participant initially struggled with the desire to come to school, health issues and several other barriers that could have prevented her from graduating. Over the past two years, she transformed and made tremendous progress because of this program.

She improved her attendance by coming to every group session and actively participating after months of isolation and failure to communicate with other participants. She began demonstrating skills taught in session outside of group, joined the chorus group and has made future plans to become a health care professional.”

— Kawana Coulon, YES Prep Public Schools, District Awardee

One young lady, a senior, stands out as she has participated in this program over the last two years. When we first met, she was seemingly outgoing until she was asked to lead a group conversation or present during an assembly. As a student leader, her voice has become more present, she has participated in panels of teachers and administrators who want to bring similar programs to their schools. Not only does she share openly but helps to encourage other students to speak their mind!

Melissa Gentile
Central High School
Teacher Awardee

“Some kids have great ideas that can ultimately impact the world for the greater good and some adults won’t listen, but this program makes them listen and realize that kids really are the future.”

— Student

This year, a teacher identified a student

— with clear leadership potential—who was in conflict with teachers at school. Almost immediately after being invited to the conference, this student began to make positive behavioral changes in their day-to-day life at school. The student strengthened their positive behaviors after attending the conference. The teachers, the principal and the parents have all reached out to us with gratitude and with testimony of the impact that the Empower Youth Leadership Conference (EYLC) makes in the lives of students.

Mary Muroski
Charlotte Central School
Teacher Awardee

“One of the highlights of our work was to see students find the courage and the words to proudly stand up for who they really are and the assets they bring. The work our students engaged in through theatrical arts, storytelling and music led to culminating activities in which our students displayed pride, self-confidence and bravery, as they shared their stories and talents with their community.”

— Ouiza Weber, Clark County School District, District Awardee

Student-Led Animations and Storytelling to Promote SEL

Teacher Awardee

Sofia Dueñas

Para Los Niños
Gratts Primary Center
Los Angeles, CA

HIGHLIGHTS

Students used their understanding of storytelling and the writing process to plan, script and make video animations about topics related to social and emotional learning. Students made one video about managing frustration and emotions and another about growth mindset. They presented their videos to families and peers. Additionally, they taught parents how to make calm jars, as well as write a book using PowerPoint.

Students received a unique opportunity to work with technology to demonstrate their learning, and moreover, share this learning with their families and community. Additionally, they shared with their peers how to use these skills.

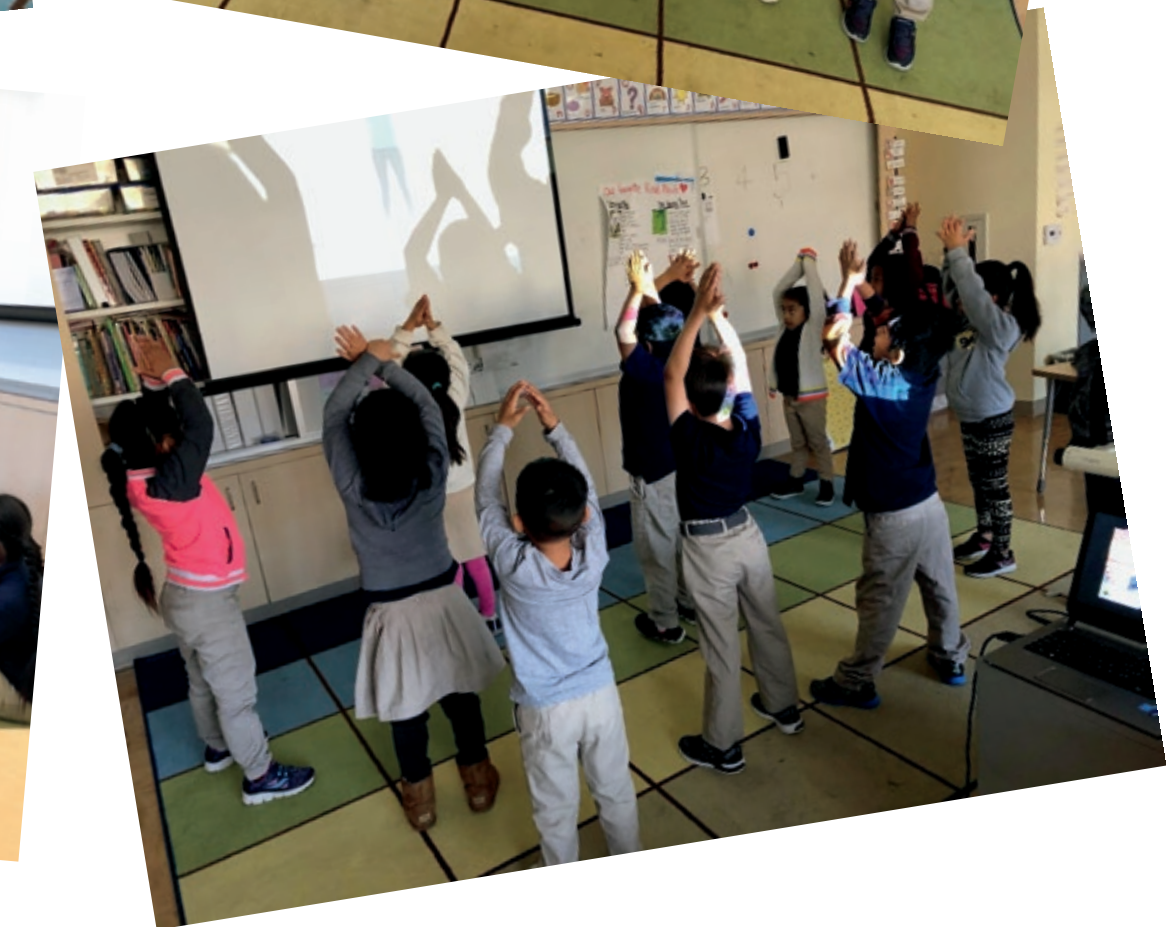
CHALLENGES

A significant challenge to this work was the learning curve in utilizing the technology. Many of our students simultaneously learned how to type and click using a mousepad while learning how to use the animation software. Because

it took an extensive amount of time to get comfortable utilizing the technology, we weren't able to produce as many videos as we would've liked. Additionally, because this was new technology to our site, we did not have all of the infrastructure ideal for full use of our technology.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

To try this at your school, I encourage you to focus on the situations in which students apply the social and emotional skills you teach. Using their writing skills, encourage them to sketch and write a realistic fiction storyline, where someone would apply this. Lastly, utilize whatever technology you have at your disposal, whether you make a skit and have students act it out, put on a play or invest in animation software. Any way you can challenge your students to show off their learning and creation would be amazing!



“When I see people on the playground instead of ignoring them or making them more mad, I can help them and give them advice, like to breathe or count or walk away.”

—Student

Cultivating Student Leadership and Voice Through the SEL Ambassador and Peer Mentor Program: Empowering Student Leaders Using SEL and Restorative Practices

158

Teacher Awardee

Melissa Gentile
Central High School
Bridgeport Board of Education
Bridgeport, CT

HIGHLIGHTS

The Ambassador and Peer Mentoring Program at Central High School has helped to empower 35 Ambassadors and 25 Mentors to model and teach SEL and restorative practices. Partnered with Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, participants in these programs are trained to use RULER Anchor tools to create a common language with their peers, teachers and parents. This year we hosted an anti-bullying assembly for the whole school, ran circles in classrooms to help build relationships between teachers and students, participated in multiple service projects and piloted a Mindful Moment Room.

CHALLENGES

Our biggest struggle this school year has been scheduling time to meet during the school day as co-advisors to allow us to plan the upcoming events or to meet with the Ambassadors and Mentors without pulling them from the same classes. The majority of our activities must take place during school hours to allow students to participate that have responsibilities outside of school or due to inconsistent after-school transportation.

Our meetings are much more productive with more student participation and it helps to build a sense of community amongst the students involved. While many of the staff know about our program, we are working on better branding ourselves to students as well as staff.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Allow your student leaders to come up with activities to do with their mentees or let them plan an event coming up! Our Ambassadors and Mentors helped plan our anti-bullying assembly which helped the students in the school to relate to them and stay engaged! When presenting, the Ambassadors and Mentors were more comfortable on stage because it was something they helped create and cared about.



“I love having my mentor at school. I see her in the hallway, it makes me feel like I have a friend and she cares about me.”
—Ninth grade mentee



Creating Space, Providing Resources and Opportunities for SEL in Student Leadership

Teacher Awardee

Carrie Snyder-Renfro
Stephanie J. Schutt

Oklahoma Centennial Mid-High School
Oklahoma City Public Schools
Oklahoma City, OK

HIGHLIGHTS

Our project helped develop leadership capacity of student organization leaders from GSA, FCCLA and Student Council. We used student surveys to identify careers of interest to plan lunch and learn sessions. Students learned about how employees manage stress, emotions, relationships and balancing family and work. Students created journals of writing and art. They developed entrepreneurial and business skills with the implementation of comfort corners and service learning projects.

CHALLENGES

After the school year started we found out that most likely our school would be closed at the end of the year and it has since been. This news caused nearly everyone in the building to be angry and/or fearful of the future.

There are a lot of misconceptions about the purpose of SEL. Developing the capacity of teachers to use the comfort corners for student SEL wellness was challenging. Teachers and administrators are used to reward and punishment, not SEL development.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

Create your own comfort corner at home, school or office located in a low traffic area. Include a bean bag and exercise ball, swivel chair or mini stair stepper. You will need a storage container or cart for resources to write or draw with and fidget distraction “toys.” Let this be a safe place for anyone to go at any time that signifies “I need some space to process.”



“I feel myself becoming a better person on the inside because of the service learning projects I have done.”
—Student

“This is the first year I have not been bullied and was accepted for who I am.”
—GSA students



Expansion of SEL Student Leadership: A Diverse Group of Student Leaders Gather Together to Build SEL Strategies

Teacher Awardee

Katie Raymond
Anderson High School
Austin ISD
Austin, TX

HIGHLIGHTS

Student leaders from diverse areas of our school collaborated to address strategies, struggles and successes regarding being a student leader. Students recognized commonalities between each other in order to build a more solidified community with a common SEL approach to leadership.

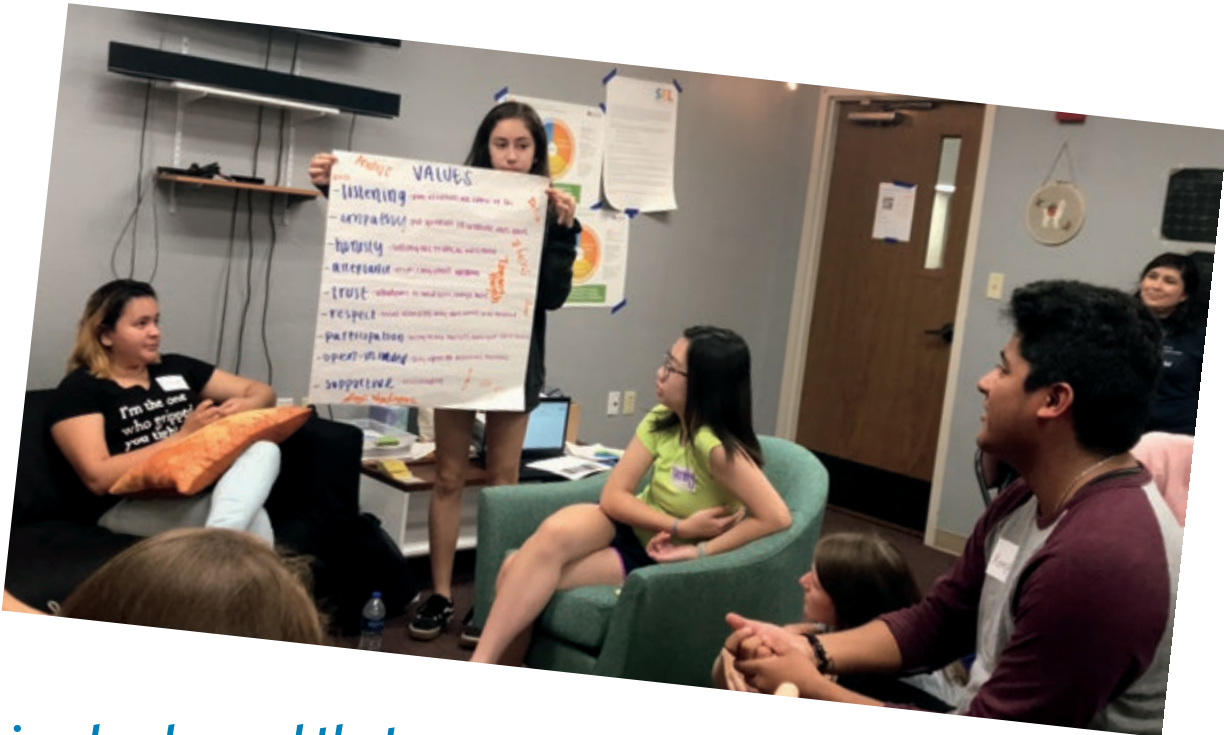
CHALLENGES

Time constraints and ways to continue the conversation proved to be a challenge for us this year. While student leaders were able to connect

and learn from one another, we look forward to addressing specific campus issues in the future and creating common solutions.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

To view resources, visit selforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Katie Raymond.



“I realized that everyone is a leader and that we can make a difference by changing the way we act and feel.”
—Student Leader



Strategic. Silly. Sustainable. Keeping the Learning Drive Alive After the Social and Emotional Breakthrough

Teacher Awardee

Stacy Jones
Carla Wardyga
W. M. Davies Career and Technical High School
Lincoln, RI

HIGHLIGHTS

Our advocacy areas of interest: building up students and building the capacity of staff. There has been progress on both fronts.

Students: Part of our project was to implement looping; the practice of keeping a teacher with the same cohort of students from one year to the next. Benefits to-date include: a majority of students beginning the school year with

increased confidence in their academic abilities. Students also acknowledged that they carry responsibility for their social/emotional/ academic success, which depends on various partnerships.

Staff: Our redesigned tenth-grade curriculum launched. It incorporates culturally relevant readings, discussion modules and strategies/ activities that support English learners.

CHALLENGES

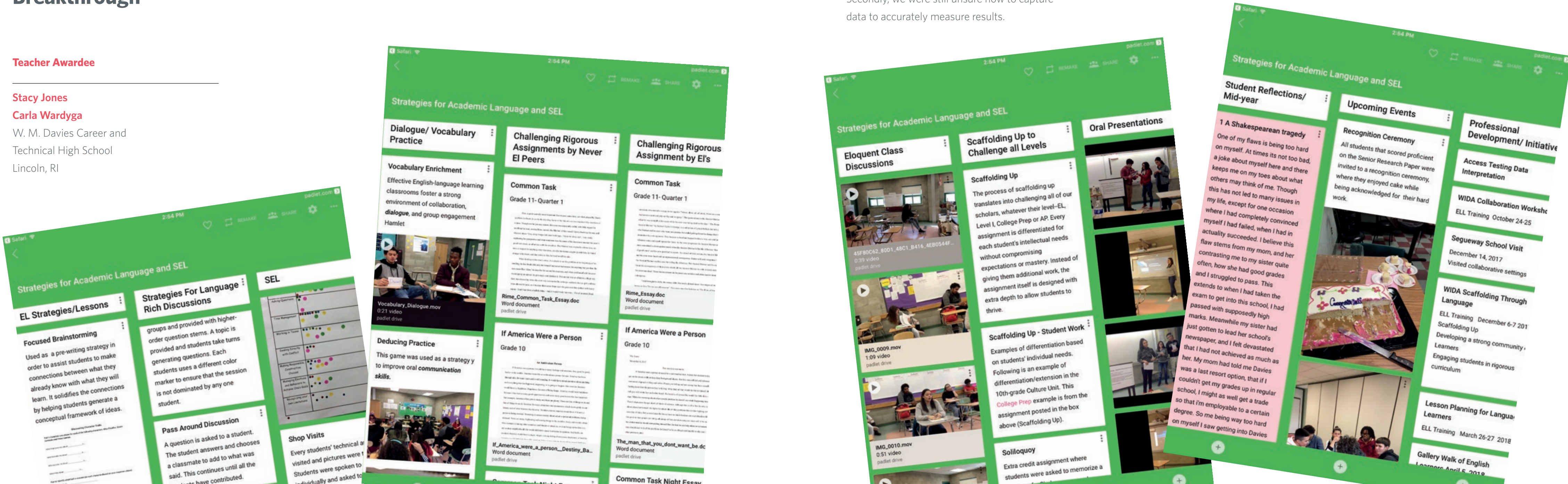
We faced two major challenges. The first struggle was moving students beyond simply accepting responsibility (usually for setbacks) to taking more complete ownership of their potential, such as establishing and planning for more positive outcomes. Students accepted that they played a vital role in failures, but failed to see that they possessed the power for success. Secondly, we were still unsure how to capture data to accurately measure results.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

We found an online resource that continues to be helpful in building SEL awareness and staff instructional capacity to create digital workshops. This online workshop, created in [Padlet.com](https://padlet.com), contains lesson plans, classroom strategies and activities (including specific

supports for English learners), student work and real-time instructional modeling, such as videos of student-led classroom discussions and student presentations.

To view this resource, visit selfforteachers.org/2018-resources and click on Stacy Jones.



Full Day Conferences That Celebrate Today's Youth and Help Them Develop Leadership Skills for Tomorrow

Teacher Awardee

Mary Muroski
Kathy Batty

Charlotte Central School
Hinesburg Community School
Champlain Valley School District
Shelburne, VT

HIGHLIGHTS

The “Empower Youth Leadership Conference” brings together adolescents with diverse backgrounds to develop social, emotional and leadership skills in a supportive, community-based setting. We offer full-day conferences three times during the school year to students across the state. We focus on building the SEL skills of fragile learners while also recognizing and celebrating peer leaders within the group. Our collaboration with the Children’s Legacy Partnership Foundation (a non-profit organization that aims to provide comprehensive education to students in Uganda) via Skype sessions helps students gain global perspective as they compare their world views with those of Ugandan students.

CHALLENGES

Our biggest challenge was meeting the demand of the growing number of students who want to attend the conferences. Many more students have requested to attend than we have been able to accommodate. Each conference is limited to 50 students in order for kids to connect with each other and fully experience the activities. We are working on providing a way for students to continue the connections and positive impact



from their day together. Our student leaders are working on creating Empower Youth Leadership Clubs at the local middle schools.

TRY THIS AT HOME!

You can host a conference at your own school or district! Our first conference was held with 16 middle school students in our classrooms, which we transformed into activity spaces and a “cafe” decorated for lunch. Our efforts were well worth it based on the feedback from the students. Alternatively, you can choose one SEL activity to complete in your classroom. For example, teach students about “Money Smarts.” We introduce students to John Hope Bryant’s idea that “your power comes from economic independence, which is also what protects you against social injustice, economic manipulation and profiling on all levels. Nobody is going to give you that power. You must gain it for yourself.”

“It has been very rewarding because I am able to be a leader and mentor my younger peers and have a really fun time while I am at it.”
—Student



Conclusion

CONCLUSION

This book offers dozens of ways to bring social and emotional learning to classrooms, pioneered by teachers who are leading the way for more equitable, compassionate and creative environments.

A library of practical classroom resources is available at www.selforteachers.org with detailed activities and ideas for SEL implementation. You'll also find a digital copy of this book and additional resources provided from the teachers highlighted within these pages.

We also have many other helpful resources for teachers, parents, school administrators and district leaders looking to integrate SEL into their work with students. You can learn more about SEL implementation on the Education First website, including publications, blog posts and personal stories from teachers and districts: <https://education-first.com/topic/social-and-emotional-learning>.

Together, we can create the environments in which all students thrive. Onward!

ABOUT THE PUBLISHERS

THE EDUCATION FIRST AND NOVO FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP

Social and emotional learning refers broadly to the practices, processes and strategies through which students, and adults, gain crucial skills such as responsible decision-making, self-awareness, understanding and management of emotions, and empathy. Many teachers have long known that SEL skills are absolutely critical to students’ ability to master academic content — and to their futures as healthy, productive adults.

The NoVo Foundation and Education First are proud to be in deep partnership with a national movement for social and emotional learning. We seek to build momentum for high-quality SEL practices through education, technical assistance and networks. Here are some of the efforts we have supported:

- Together and with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), we support and coach the Collaborating Districts Initiative. The CDI consists of 10 districts, reaching a million students, supported by our organizations to implement and share the sustainable and systemic changes that will help students grow critical social and emotional skills.
- In 2016, the NoVo Foundation and Education first launched the SEL Innovation Fund to support teachers with fresh ideas and creative strategies to incorporate social and emotional learning into their classrooms and schools. Through the Innovation Fund, NoVo and Education First awarded over \$1 million in grants to teachers and districts to support their efforts to address student trauma, build adult SEL skills, celebrate cultural diversity and other goals.
- In 2017, in partnership with the NoVo Foundation, Education First released the publication Social and Emotional Learning: Why Students Need It. What Districts are Doing About It. The publication focused on what the implementation of social and emotional learning looks like at the school district level. The publication identified six key areas for successful implementation of SEL at the district level and highlighted SEL practices in Anchorage School District in Alaska, Bridgeport Public Schools in Connecticut and Sacramento City Unified School District in California.
- The SEL in Action convenings lift up, celebrate and learn from educators. SEL in Action brings together Innovation Awardees as well as other educators, district leaders, funders and additional partners to share and learn about current promising practices in the field of social and emotional learning. Visit https://mediazilla.com/bpivgsyh1 for video highlights from the 2018 SEL in Action convening for teachers.

Now, we aim to illustrate great SEL practices, to inspire and support teachers and leaders in all kinds of different contexts. And to elevate excellence in schools, this book seeks to show, rather than just tell.

NOVO FOUNDATION

NoVo Foundation is dedicated to building a more just and balanced world. Created in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, NoVo seeks to foster a transformation from a world of domination and exploitation to one of collaboration and partnership. The Foundation partners with movement leaders working to advance adolescent girls’ rights, end violence against girls and women, promote social and emotional learning, support Indigenous communities and advance local living communities. Across all of its work, NoVo supports the development of capacities in people—individually and collectively—to help create a caring and balanced world. **For more information, visit** www.novofoundation.org

EDUCATION FIRST

Education First is a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with unique and deep expertise in education improvement. Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, experience-based solutions and results so all students—and particularly low-income students and students of color—are prepared for success in college, career and life. We work closely with policymakers, practitioners, funders and advocates to design and accelerate policies and plans that support strong systems, outstanding educators, engaged students and effective investments.

Since 2013, Education First has partnered with NoVo Foundation, RPA and CASEL to provide strategic guidance and support to the CDI districts and others aiming to begin or strengthen their SEL implementation. **For more information, visit** www.education-first.com

ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) is a nonprofit organization that partners with individuals, families, corporations and major foundations to help make philanthropy more thoughtful and effective. Continuing in the Rockefeller family’s legacy, RPA remains at the forefront of philanthropic growth and innovation, with a diverse team led by experienced grantmakers with significant depth of knowledge across the spectrum of issue areas. Founded in 2002, and having facilitated more than \$3 billion in grantmaking to over 60 countries, RPA has grown into one of the world’s largest and most trusted philanthropic service organizations.

RPA has partnered with NoVo Foundation, Education First and CASEL to manage grant funding and technical assistance support to the CDI Districts since 2013 through its fiscally sponsored project Social and Emotional Learning Fund. **For more information, visit** www.rockpa.org

I anticipated the students were going to make new connections and learn about the members of the school community, but I didn't expect the connections that I made. I learned so much about people that I work with every day. Small things about who they are, how they identify themselves and what is important to them. It created a connection that made us all more human.

— **Teacher, Disney II Magnet Elementary School**

“I like how we talk out problems in circles and reach a decision together. Each person has a chance to talk.”

— **Student**

Knowing that all learning is social and emotional, and that dismantling injustice requires deep learning and deep healing, we hope that our school will become one in which all children can grow in community and through community, and one where children develop the social, emotional and intellectual skills to change the world.

— **Heron Russell, George H. Conley Elementary School, Teacher Awardee**

“Not only has Peer Council improved our school community, but it has benefited us as individuals. We have spoken up to address student behavior to transform our school into one we are all happy attending.”

— **Student Peer Counselor**

I am reminded that giving students opportunities to work through an issue is important and can yield excellent results to relationship-building and academic learning. I find that working through issues with a class helps create community within the classroom. Students feel empowered because their voices are heard.

— **High School Teacher, Mashpee Public Schools**

“As a result of the SEL Innovation Award, several students who participated in the workshop have felt empowered to move from ‘marginalized’ students to school leaders.”

— **Danielle Dunn, Hammond High School, Teacher Awardee**

“Most people just need to be heard and understood. This grant gave others in the learning community the opportunity to see that they were not alone with the struggle of life. The disadvantages of the community do not have to define who they are and how they work for greatness in their life.”

— **Laronda Williams-Catching, 92nd Street STEAM Elementary School, Teacher Awardee**

The SEL Innovation Award has changed me as a person and educator. I am more confident and courageous to design, lead, plan and implement innovative SEL curriculum for my entire school community that is impactful, necessary and meaningful.

— **Mary Haddad, Disney II Magnet Elementary School, Teacher Awardee**

“My daughter doesn't like speaking up, but she tells everyone she can that she made a video. She talks more and she writes more and tells people more about what she learns.”

— **Parent of a student**

I realized that everyone is a leader and that we can make a difference by changing the way we act and feel.

— **Student, Anderson High School**

“I feel myself becoming a better person on the inside because of the service learning projects I have done.”

— **Consensus of a group of students**

Without a single doubt, Kindness in Motion has united our five communities with a common purpose to promote kindness. Our students' work showcases our belief that while demonstrating empathy, compassion and understanding for others we become our “best selves.” This work has led to happier, more fulfilled lives for everyone involved, not just the recipients of these kind acts, but especially our students. It has also united our students, teachers, administrators, families and community members around meaningful projects to make our world a better place. The impact of this student-led work has been astounding and has surpassed our expectations.

— **Judith A. Palmer, Regional School District No. 7, District Awardee**





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