



SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2020 • ISSUE 1 • VOLUME 3



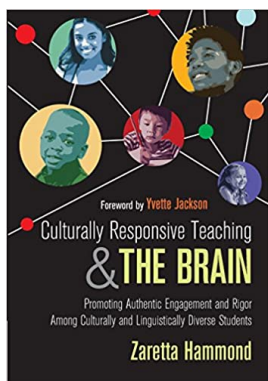
IN THIS ISSUE

Promoting a positive school climate during COVID-19

Social emotional learning: apps and resources

Virtual restorative practices: an opportunity for building community and connection

WHAT WE'RE READING



Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

by Zaretta Hammond

In this book, readers will explore culturally-responsive teaching through a brain-based approach that places high importance on learning partnerships and safe, supportive environments where all learners thrive.

"Restorative circles, online wellness rooms and grief training: How schools are preparing for the COVID mental health crisis"

(Hechinger Report)

"Going Beyond 'How Are You Feeling?'"

(Edutopia)



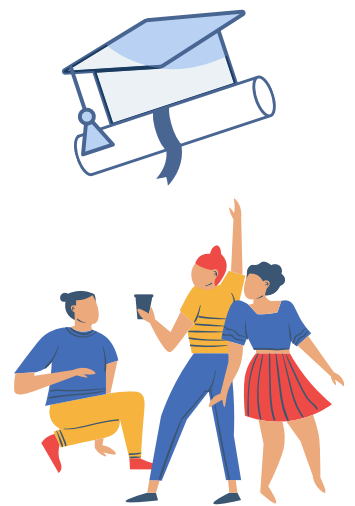
BRIDGING THE GAP: PRIORITIZING SCHOOL CLIMATE DURING REOPENING 2020

COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation that impacts the physical and mental health of our communities. Our challenge is to modify the environment to safely provide a range of services (e.g. education, health, nutrition, transportation, vocational, etc.) in this context. Amidst many competing priorities, why focus on school climate?



When students feel more connected to school, they are more likely to experience positive health and academic outcomes.

Research shows classroom climate had positive associations with social competence and academic achievement. Improved perceptions of school climate are also associated with decreases in school violence. COVID-19 impacted our sense of safety and connectedness, which are integral to teaching and learning. Although this change is jarring, practices that promote a positive school climate can bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to go.



Now more than ever, connection, sense of belonging, and community support are vital.



Our best practices in school climate improvement are centered around relationships and community. We take a trauma-informed approach, which is crucial to mitigate the effects of isolation and fear due to COVID-19. Studies suggest promoting a positive school climate can impact student self-concept, substance use and abuse, student absenteeism, and motivation to learn. At this critical time, a focus on school climate can be integrated with mental health to create a community of support for staff, students, and families.



3

School climate data can be used to promote equity for all students.

Surveys and focus groups can be conducted to learn more about perceptions of safety and belonging held by students, staff, and families. Do **all** students feel safe and supported? Disaggregated data can show differences among certain groups (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, grade level).

4

To grow as a community, we begin by looking inward to the self. Here, we find common ground on which to form empathy for others.

When we promote a positive school climate, we facilitate the development of social-emotional skills in adults and children. It's widely known these competencies impact adult life. Prosocial skills predict outcomes such as graduation, post-secondary education, and employment. Now, they serve an even greater purpose. At this crucial point in our nation's history, school professionals serve a key role in dismantling systemic racism and addressing educational and health inequities that harm marginalized groups. Transformative SEL, a form of SEL at the intersect of citizenship, social justice, and SEL competencies, is integral to this work. To create safe and supportive environments, we must cultivate awareness and value of cultural diversity, as well as develop systems and practices that promote equity and inclusion.

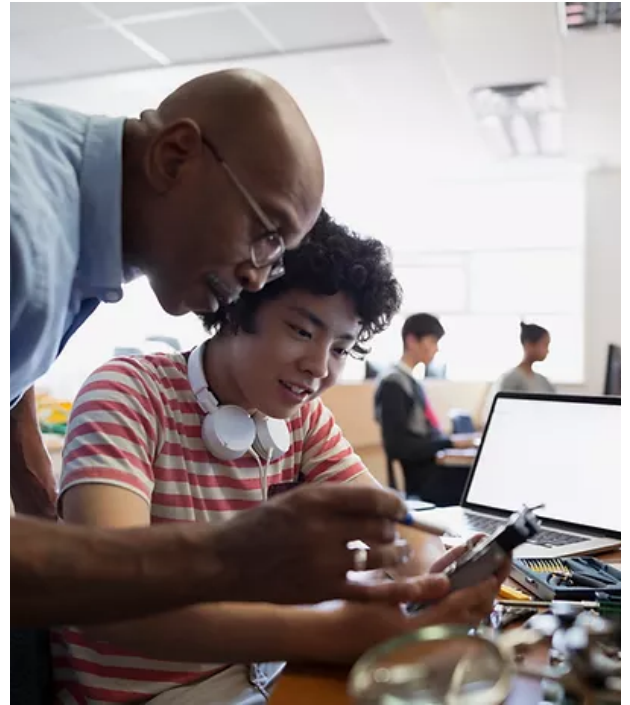


Want to learn more?
Visit our website at **www.nys-ssstac.org**.

DIGITAL TOOLS FOR SEL

This upcoming school year, schools have been charged with the difficult task of toggling between in-person, virtual, and hybrid forms of instruction. The use of online programs and applications have become paramount to supporting students academic and social-emotional development.

Below, we highlight online resources specifically for for mental health, social-emotional learning, and engagement.



Check out the [**School Mental Health Resource and Training Center**](#) resources, like this list of apps that can be used for mental health in schools.



[**6 Minute SEL**](#) provides an array of video resources on topics related to social-emotional learning. There's over 50 videos to explore! Examples include: self-awareness, resilience, how to help a friend, and managing stress.



The [**Center for Supportive Schools**](#) site provides resources for schools and communities affected by COVID-19. Virtual check-in activities are included in the format of Google Slides, which are offered in English and Spanish languages.



A Trauma-Informed Educator Toolkit is available from [**Transforming Education**](#). It includes a PowerPoint presentation, overview, and facilitator's guide.



Calming Room

Virtual Calming Room Click on the image below to launch your virtual calming room experience.

 SFI launchpad

SEL Launchpad has put a new spin on a familiar practice. Many schools have spaces or classrooms where students can deescalate, regulate their emotions, and reflect on a situation or conflict. This can be seem difficult to achieve in a virtual model. Check out what one teacher created: a virtual calming room, where items are links to outside activities for mindfulness, social emotional skills, or mental health and wellness.

Second Step, a social emotional learning program, has released resources for teachers and families for reopening during COVID-19. Resources span in-person, hybrid, and virtual models. In addition to free resources, consider exploring the many programs and training opportunities offered on the site.



Ways to Cope in Trying Times

We've compiled a list of educational resources you can use to help young people learn the social-emotional skills they need to get through COVID-19



Resources for Social and Emotional Learning

Learn more about character strengths like empathy, find actionable activities and edtech tools for the classroom, and discover ways to

Common Sense Education has curated resources for classrooms on social emotional learning, based on a variety of character strengths: empathy and compassion, integrity and self control, courage and perseverance, gratitude and humility, teamwork and communication, and curiosity. Also on the site are resources to support students to be responsible digital citizens, as we continue to navigate an increasingly virtual world.



MindUP Lessons



MindUp has shared online lessons for using mindfulness in the classroom. Topics range from exploring how our brains work, to the use of the senses, optimism, gratitude, and more. Lessons are in video format, making them a quick and easy way to learn and share information with families and students. If you're interested in this program for your school, the site includes information on training for leadership and staff.

Headspace is a free application that guides mindfulness activities (e.g. breathing exercises and meditation). The activities are customized based on age group, so this is applicable for elementary and secondary settings, for children and adults. The site also includes background information on the science of mindfulness and meditation.



Meditation for Kids

We want kids to be healthy and happy, not just now but for the rest of their lives. Teaching them about meditation early would help them do just that.



SEL Resources

The SEL Providers Council is committed to providing free resources and curriculum to support e-learning efforts across the country. Follow the links below to

[SEL Providers Council](#) / Nova Rina / Aug 7

SEL Providers Council (via CASEL) aims to increase awareness of the benefits of SEL, strengthen implementation of SEL programs in schools, and continually explore the evidence base for SEL practices. The Council has curated resources for remote learning during COVID-19. This site is a directory of lessons, activities, programs and tools for SEL in schools. Results can be filtered by grade level, type of resource, and SEL competency area. Additional links to CASELCares events and resources can also found on the site.



TAKING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES VIRTUAL

We begin each year by coming together as a school community. Sometimes this means getting to know each other for the first time; others it means catching up. Whether returning to brick-and-mortar, virtual, or hybrid models for schooling, what are your plans for connecting staff and students this Fall?

If you're planning on using virtual methods to connect with students, consider using **virtual restorative circles**. Restorative practices are widely implemented in schools as an alternative to traditional exclusionary discipline. Circle practice can be used in schools to build community, strengthen relationships, and mediate conflict.

Still, how do we take an activity that is meant to be in-person, and modify it for our needs? Here are some tips for hosting virtual circles:

- Develop norms for communication: talking piece, when to (un)mute, thumbs up/down
- Put privacy/safety protocols in place and honor confidentiality in the virtual space
- Use multiple modalities and digital tools (e.g. image, video, song, writing, etc.)
- Model and provide opportunities for practice in how to use the technology

Want to learn more about hosting virtual circles? Watch our webinar [**Learning to Host Virtual Circles**](#) to help get you started.

Coming Soon: Resources on using restorative circle practice to address health, safety, and mask wearing.