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CENTERING EDUCATORS' EXPERTISE:
Learning About Innovative Approaches to Social-Emotional Learning from School Partners in the Boston Charter Research Collaborative

transforming education

Center for Education Policy Research
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

A WORKING PAPER BY

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TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

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The Boston Charter Research Collaborative Working Paper Series

Transforming Education has issued a series of working papers that are meant to distill information of value to educators, policymakers, and others in the field of social-emotional (SE) learning and whole child development in a form that can be readily updated as knowledge continues to emerge and be refined. Our working papers summarize the current state of knowledge and evidence about which SE competencies matter for success in school, college, career, and life; what best practices support students' development of those competencies; and how to measure students' social-emotional development.

This paper is the fifth and final in a series of papers about the lessons we have learned from our Boston Charter Research Collaborative (BCRC). We invite you to explore our previous papers to learn more about the work of this Collaborative.

Launching a Multi-Year Research-Practice Collaborative: Lessons Learned from Year One - In this inaugural paper, we describe the structure of the BCRC and make recommendations for others who seek to establish strong research-practice partnerships (RPPs).

Patterns in Student Self-Report and Teacher Report Measures of Social-Emotional Mindsets, Skills, and Habits: Initial findings from the Boston Charter Research Collaborative - Our second paper investigates issues related to the development and measurement of students' SE competencies that are of particular interest to school practitioners. Findings emerging from this RPP indicate that the student SE competency surveys used provide reliable reports of student mindsets, skills, and habits (including self-management, self-efficacy, growth mindset, social awareness, grit, and mindful awareness). Further, student scores from SE competency surveys are predictive of both academic and behavioral outcomes, suggesting that SE competencies are important contributors to students' academic success.

Insights From The Field: Facilitating Dialogue And Learning Within A Research-Practice Partnership On Social-Emotional Learning - In this paper, we share our lessons learned about conducting data inquiry sessions with school and research partners and about hosting convenings in which educators share promising practices with one another to support students' social-emotional development.

Mindfulness in the Classroom: Learning from a School-based Mindfulness Intervention through the Boston Charter Research Collaborative - This paper focuses on results from a mindfulness training intervention study conducted at a BCRC partner school. The study found that students who participated in a mindfulness intervention showed a reduction in perceived stress and modest but statistically significant improvements in their ability to sustain attention in a commonly used performance task. Brain imaging also indicated a reduction in activity in the amygdala - an area of the brain associated with the stress response. The paper includes recommendations and classroom-ready practices for educators interested in bringing mindfulness into their classrooms.

We hope these working papers will support the ongoing and future work of other educators and researchers. If you have feedback or want to share your own approach to integrating research and practice to support whole child development, please e-mail info@transformingeducation.org.

Centering Educators' Expertise: Learning About Innovative Approaches to Social-Emotional Learning from School Partners in the Boston Charter Research Collaborative

The Boston Charter Research Collaborative (BCRC) is a multi-year research-practice partnership (RPP) among six high-performing charter management organizations; researchers at Harvard University's Center for Education Policy Research and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Transforming Education. Over the past five years, these organizations have combined their expertise to conduct research and improve practice to support the development of students' cognitive and social-emotional (SE) competencies.

This partnership has aimed to deepen educators' and researchers' understanding of social-emotional learning and its implications in the classroom through a collaborative approach and a shared investment in positive student outcomes. To this end, one of the central activities of the partnership has been convening school leaders and other educators annually to share the SE learning practices and initiatives that are ongoing in their schools. The goal of these convenings has been to create space and time for educators to exchange ideas, engage in conversations about promising practices and lessons learned, and discuss questions they are grappling with as they seek to foster students' SE learning.

We initially grounded our convenings with our school partners in data exploration and hypothesis generation based on results from a common SE competency survey administered to students in grades 5-12 in each charter management organization. Since our initial convening, we have gradually shifted to a more practitioner-centric approach, focused on practitioners' perspectives regarding how to develop and foster SE learning. In doing so, we have created a structure that addresses a common imbalance in research-practice partnerships, which are often centered around the needs and expertise of researchers, with less attention paid to the needs of participating schools and the expertise of their educators.

The Aspen Commission's _Nation at Hope_ report calls for closer connections to be forged between researchers and educators in RPPs. This seminal report recommends building "new structures—and new support—for researchers and educators to work collaboratively and bi-directionally around pressing local problems".[1] We believe our efforts in facilitating the BCRC educator convenings both align with these

recommendations and yield important insights about novel approaches, resources, and uses of data related to students' social-emotional development. By elevating educators' voices, we have begun to shift the dynamics in how we understand and value existing expertise across our school partners. This has paved the way for us to learn about SE learning efforts that our school partners have found instrumental toward producing promising outcomes for their students.

In this paper, we share recommendations for other researchers and organizational partners interested in facilitating educator-focused convenings with the goal of learning more about educators' on-the-ground work. These include:

- Celebrating educators' work by recognizing the commitment and expertise of teachers and support staff in fostering students' social-emotional development;

- Creating effective support structures to guide the convenings, including holding brainstorming calls and sharing guiding questions, that set up presenters for success;

- Inviting educators to share with or demonstrate to the greater group artifacts and resources from their work that are related to a particular SE learning priority or practice;

- Encouraging school leaders to invite the educators who are closest to the implementation of the SE learning practice or initiative in order to provide specific reflections on lessons learned and future directions; and

- Using educator-centered agenda structures that prioritize learning with and from educators, while situating researchers and other guests as learners rather than experts.

True to the spirit of our educator convenings, we celebrate our school partners' work in this paper by highlighting key takeaways from our most recent convening, including lessons learned and a selection of shared resources. While the practices that educators shared have not been rigorously tested for effectiveness, we are encouraged by initial evidence and believe these promising practices warrant further exploration by educators and researchers alike.

We conclude with recommendations for ensuring balanced and mutually-beneficial partnerships between researchers and educators. We believe that by finding ways to continually check for alignment; providing ongoing, meaningful support to school partners; and encouraging school leaders to integrate the perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders, we can advance our goal of working collaboratively to improve social-emotional learning outcomes for youth.

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Introduction

The Boston Charter Research Collaborative (BCRC, the Collaborative) is a multi-year research-practice partnership (RPP) among six high-performing charter management organizations (CMOs);[2] researchers at Harvard University's Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); and Transforming Education (TransformEd). These organizations combine their expertise to conduct research and improve practice to support the development of students' cognitive and social-emotional (SE) competencies.

Over the past five years, this partnership has aimed to deepen educators' and researchers' understanding of social-emotional learning and its implications in the classroom through an interdisciplinary collaboration and a shared investment in positive student outcomes. The first two years of the partnership focused primarily on research activities, including meetings with each CMO, known as "data deep dives," to review trends in schools' SE competencies data. Since the third year of the partnership, however, we have also facilitated annual meetings, known as "knowledge sharing convenings," to discuss promising practices and CMOs' progress to date in supporting students' SE learning. We have shared our learnings from both types of meetings in prior BCRC white papers.[3,4]

Through our work with the BCRC, we've recognized the need to shift the way our knowledge sharing covenings are conducted to better recognize practitioners as experts in fostering SE learning and to provide insight into promising practices that other schools could more easily adopt. During the first knowledge sharing convening, we asked participants to focus primarily on the data from the common SE competency survey that all BCRC schools administer, in order to share hypotheses about what promising practices might explain the "bright spots" in their data. For the second convening, we shifted our focus by inviting CMO leaders to reflect more broadly on their SE learning priorities and to share a promising practice alongside any data they were using to track their progress, which may or may not have been from the BCRC-wide SE competency survey.[5] For the most recent convening, we took this a step further by encouraging school leaders to invite the educators who were closest to those promising practices to present to their colleagues across the BCRC. We also invited these school partners to bring artifacts and give concrete examples of what their promising practices look like in action.

We believe this gradual shift towards more practitioner-centered convenings is aligned with the spirit of mutualism that makes RPPs effective.[6] It has also yielded valuable insight about novel approaches, resources, and uses of data that school leaders had not previously shared with the group. This paper presents the lessons we learned from engaging in the process of shifting to more practitioner-centered convenings, as well as the promising practices that educators in our Collaborative have taken to foster students' social-emotional development in their schools.

Getting "under the hood"

Each year in the spring, we conducted "data deep dives" with schools to help them explore their data based on a common SE competency survey. During these annual data discussion meetings, we have focused on looking at patterns in the SE competency survey data and trying to understand differences across grades, campuses, and CMOs, as well as changes over time. In our most recent year of these meetings, we were able to present and discuss data patterns specific to grade level teams.

When their schools have experienced positive levels of growth in SE competencies at particular grade levels, we've asked school leaders to hypothesize what specific practices the teachers in those grade level teams might be implementing. For example, if, in a particular school, students in grade 4 were reporting above-average growth mindset scores relative to other schools in the Collaborative, we asked school leaders to think about whether there had been any differences across teaching teams in how educators were encouraging students to learn from their mistakes. School leaders tended to experience difficulty mapping positive outcomes on the SE competency survey to specific practices occurring in that grade level and often attributed the positive student outcomes to the unique drive, dedication, or passion of a particular teacher or to the stability of the grade level team as a whole.

We were eager to understand whether those teachers might be using specific practices to drive the positive outcomes and how those promising practices could be adopted or adapted by teachers in other classrooms and schools. As a Collaborative, we recognized the important opportunity for all of us to gain a deeper understanding about how educators on the ground were identifying and engaging practices to foster students' social-emotional development. This prompted school leaders to engage in conversations with their teachers and other instructional staff to provide more detailed insights about promising practices in the classroom. Given this shared motivation to get "under the hood" of what was working in BCRC schools, TransformEd began preparing for a convening during which educators could share their emerging insights.

Designing an educator-focused convening

Guided by our core question—**What is happening in classrooms that may be supporting students' social-emotional learning?**—we adapted the process of preparing for and engaging in our annual knowledge sharing convening. This year, in addition to inviting school leadership teams to share about SE learning initiatives or practices they felt were having an impact, we asked them to engage teachers or other school-based SE learning/culture influencers in presenting, and to bring artifacts from their practice that others would find useful. We encouraged schools to use their common SE competency survey data as a starting point only, used to identify which teaching teams to highlight. We also invited school leaders

to reflect more broadly on their SE learning priorities and to share a promising practice along with the data they were using to track their progress, which may or may not have been from the BCRC-wide SE competency survey.

Furthermore, in an effort to recognize and celebrate the efforts, expertise, and innovation of the individual educators attending the meeting, we reframed our annual knowledge sharing convening as a formal convening titled "Educators Symposium on Promising Practices in Social-Emotional Learning". We followed a meeting structure that put the educators front and center, with researchers and organizational partners serving as engaged observers. **(Please find our recommendations for hosting such a meeting in the special section below).** Using this meeting design proved to be a valuable approach for learning about the innovative ways that schools were supporting students' social-emotional development.

The following section offers an overview of some approaches, practices, and lessons that our school partners shared with one another at the meeting. While the practices that educators shared have not been rigorously tested for effectiveness, we are encouraged by initial evidence and believe these promising practices warrant further exploration by both educators and researchers.

Recommendations for Hosting an Educator-Focused Social-Emotional Learning Convening

For those interested in hosting an educator-focused celebration of promising practices in SEL, we recommend incorporating the following elements, which welcome diverse voices and can provide insight into the various approaches that schools are taking to foster students' social-emotional development:

1 **Celebrate the great work that educators are already doing.** What became evident in our conversations with school leaders was their schools' and teachers' commitment to supporting students' social-emotional development. We wanted to learn more about their work, while also celebrating teachers' efforts and expertise. To this end, we reframed our annual knowledge sharing convening as an "Educators Symposium on Promising Practices in Social-Emotional Learning."

We recommend using a meeting title that prioritizes educators as the primary stakeholders and invites them to engage with one another as leaders. Additionally, offering a clear, descriptive convening title enables the participating educators to list their presentation formally on a résumé or professional networking profile.

2

Create structures of support to prepare presenters for success. To help educators prepare for their presentations, we offered guiding questions intended to elicit practical recommendations for their fellow educators at the meeting. **(The full set of guiding questions can be found in Appendix A.)** Prior to the convening, we also connected with presenters through individual preparatory calls to support their efforts in identifying and discussing relevant practices, artifacts, and other information necessary for them to feel prepared. School leaders used this time to think through a range of possible practices to highlight or to reflect on the guiding question in real-time.

We recommend offering a similar structure when preparing educators for a convening. Offering guiding questions clarifies what attendees should expect to discuss and learn at the meeting. Providing these questions well in advance offers participants the opportunity to brainstorm with their teams about what practice they might present, engage the help of various team members to better describe the practice, identify who to involve, and plan for any logistical aspects of attending the convening (e.g., by securing a substitute teacher). Additionally, conducting a preparatory call can help educators carve out dedicated time to talk through the questions and create a plan for their presentation.

3

Invite educators to share artifacts or demonstrations related to an SE learning initiative or practice. We invited presenters to include artifacts of their practices or work (e.g., a script for a discussion, a video clip of a practice in action) in their presentations. For example, at a recent convening, one of our school partners led participants through a Circles meeting—a practice for facilitating student gatherings developed by Valor Collegiate Academies.[7] Another educator shared a video of a teacher implementing a goal-setting practice at their school. These practice artifacts can bring concepts or procedures to life in a way that not only engages other meeting attendees, but also provides them with a resource to explore in their own schools.

We recommend offering a list of suggestions (e.g., video clips, interactive sessions, student-created artifacts) for schools to consider how they want to share their practice in action, as well as providing the space and technology for them to do so. Creating a shared drive where presenters can upload their artifacts or resources can also help schools reference them more easily in the future. Facilitating resource sharing across school partners in a Collaborative or other type of network can be a valuable benefit for all members. Additionally, it can help build a sense of community among educators united by a shared mission of learning about various promising approaches to doing this work.

4 **Invite the educators who are closest to the practice or initiative to present the work.** We intentionally asked school leaders to nominate a member of the teaching or student support teams who had personal experience implementing the relevant practice. By inviting those closest to the practice, we were able to hear more detailed information on the background, successes, and challenges than we might have captured from second-hand accounts.

We recommend providing language to school leaders that helps them extend the invitation directly to specific team members, as well as language that communicates the purpose and benefits of attending the meeting. Since teachers and other instructional or student support staff are taking time out of school, it is important that they feel this time will be well spent.

5 **Use an educator-centered meeting structure.** In keeping practitioners at the center of this convening, we structured the agenda to ensure that the majority of our three and a half-hour meeting was devoted to the educators' presentations and questions. We intentionally kept the hosts' opening and closing remarks brief. We also invited a guest researcher to join but scheduled her talk for the end of the meeting instead of the beginning. We believe that this honored the expertise of practitioners and situated the researchers as learners.

We recommend structuring agendas that put educators at the center of the meeting goals. This might include an opportunity for educators to connect with one another at the beginning of the meeting (to learn names and roles), ensuring that educators have the floor for the majority of the meeting, and being mindful of when and how much non-educators present during the meeting.

BCRC Schools' Approaches to Fostering Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Building Capacity through SE Learning-Focused Coaching at Roxbury Prep

School leaders at Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (Roxbury Prep) have been seeking ways to prioritize SE learning and connect it to academics. Guided by this vision, they engaged with a coach from The PEAR Institute, a joint initiative of McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School, which partners with school districts, out-of-school time programs, and youth-serving organizations to promote positive youth development.[8] The CMO described PEAR's focus as, "promoting social-emotional development in the service of student engagement, academic achievement, and life success". PEAR administers student assessments to generate a "social-emotional portrait" of the strengths and challenges of each student. The data allow the team to identify individual students, groups of students, and classes that require more targeted support. The PEAR data are shared with Roxbury Prep's Student Support Team (SST) through a dashboard and are further discussed in a series of coaching conversations.

Approach: The PEAR coaching process at Roxbury Prep involved seven sessions with the SST over the course of the year and two all-staff professional development sessions tailored to the CMO's unique needs. The coaching sessions focused on exploring results from the PEAR student SE learning assessment, using the data to identify priorities, and creating and implementing action plans for those priorities. Using PEAR's coaching model allowed the Roxbury Prep team to engage in a collaboration that felt both flexible and targeted; while PEAR suggested evidence-based practices aligned to Roxbury Prep's data, the CMO team made the decisions about which practices were most feasible in their setting.

Sample Strategy: When Roxbury Prep first began working with PEAR, students were reporting unfavorable peer relationship scores. As such, the CMO team named intentional relationship-building as an area of focus. More specifically, students were offered a set of "Get to Know You" questions to use during arrival, breakfast, and advisory periods to encourage relationship-building conversations with their peers. **These questions (an artifact shared by Roxbury Prep) are included in Appendix B.**

Outcomes: Roxbury Prep shared that a key component to the success of this approach was working within their existing system. Embedding initiatives within their current routines helped their teaching staff implement the relationship building initiative and other similar efforts. At the end of the year, the SST observed an increase in students' self-reported social-emotional strengths (including relationships) and a decrease in their self-reported challenges, based on the PEAR assessment.

Building an Interdisciplinary Student Support Team at Match

School leaders at Match Middle School identified a need to redefine their existing discipline system in a way that reflected their SST motto, "On Purpose, With Purpose, For a Purpose." Their guiding purpose was to address the question, *How do we shift from specialized support to support for all; from reactive to proactive; from no excuses to lesson first, then consequence?*

To address this question, Match Middle School built an interdisciplinary SST that included the following roles and functions:

- The Director of Student Support and the Deans worked on teaching students how to track their own behavioral goals and check for progress;
- The Social Workers focused on forming support groups for students (e.g., social skills group) and on being available for students during less structured times, such as arrival and breakfast;
- The Social Work Intern was invited to offer a different perspective from those of the more veteran team members;
- The Dean of Students continued to handle all disciplinary issues, but was able to use all the strengths of the SST to offer guidance on providing support for students.

To help facilitate conversations among the team and foster this collaboration, the team used a standard monthly and weekly agenda. **Match's SST meeting agenda templates are included in Appendix C.**

Approach: The SST worked together to create a support model that prioritized the following elements:

- Encouraging proactive, positive behaviors, as opposed to responding primarily to behavioral challenges;
- Focusing their conversations with students on the lessons to be learned from challenging experiences; and
- Teaching students specific skills needed to navigate similar challenges in the future.

Sample Strategies: The SST focused on several strategies. First, they built positive community culture by planning trips with students and partaking in celebrations during Black History Month. This helped the SST cultivate relationships with students outside the context of behavioral interventions. The SST then developed alternative discipline practices and explained disciplinary norms and expectations more explicitly to students.

The team held trainings for classroom teachers on using personal check-ins with students to build stronger relationships and offer support. In addition, they continued using a check-in / check-out (CICO) system based on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model.[9] In this system, students check in with a CICO coordinator (or their trusted staff or faculty member) in the morning. The students that participate in the CICO program carry a point card that is based on school-wide expectations and receive frequent and regular feedback on their behavior from adults throughout the day. At the end of the day, they review their goals with the CICO coordinator (or their trusted staff or faculty member) and take their point card home for parent signature and positive feedback.

Further, the SST replaced Saturday detention with Saturday behavioral support. Students processed their unexpected behaviors, explored alternative behaviors that exhibit Match core values. During Saturday behavioral support, students also had an opportunity to participate in community service and recreational activities, such as basketball and arts and crafts. The SST also collaborated with families to ensure continuity and reinforcement of consequences in the home (e.g., by confiscating video game systems from the home until students exhibited expected behaviors in both environments).

Outcomes: After making these changes, Match observed a dramatic decrease in suspensions (about 85%) and expulsions in the 2017-18 school year. They also observed a more successful use of the CICO system, with students checking in with Deans more consistently throughout the day.

Looking ahead, Match is focused on including additional support staff, such as school nurses and an RTI coordinator, in the SST. They also plan to build teacher capacity through training on effective tools for both daily interactions with students and for more targeted behavioral interventions.

Supporting Students as Goal-Setters at KIPP

KIPP Massachusetts has sought to develop student skills around goal setting. School leaders presented two initiatives that help students make decisions about their own learning and post-secondary goals. Both initiatives engage students as active participants in conversations with their teachers and peers about standards, data, growth, and mastery.

Approaches to Promoting Goal Setting at KIPP:

Promoting Goal-Setting Aligned to Academic Standards: Teachers at KIPP realized that students frequently heard adults talking about standards, so they asked *"why not invite students into the conversation?"*

Over the past few years, the 6th grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher has fine-tuned her approach to talking openly and honestly with students about standards by using the language of the standard and code. She links every lesson and exit ticket to a standard and allows students to track their collective and individual growth. She leverages sharing this level of detail to empower students and make tests manageable, not intimidating.

Sample Strategy: Engage students in conversation about learning standards by:

- Sharing the language of standards with students and defining the purpose of the academic work;
- Having students use individual standards trackers to chart their own progress (e.g., a chart kept in their binder);
- Making assessments more meaningful by explicitly explaining the connection between scores on current formative assessments (e.g., MAP) to long-term goals and achievement (e.g., acceptance to college); and
- Providing consistent feedback: name when you observe growth, be transparent about areas that require further growth, and set goals together.

Find examples of helpful visual tools to facilitate standard mastery conversations and tracking in Appendix D.

Outcomes: Students in the 6th and 7th grade reported above-average levels and growth in self-efficacy in ELA. The team at the school believes these results were due to the teacher's approach of talking openly and honestly with students about standards.

Promoting Post-Secondary Goal Setting: Research suggests that students from marginalized communities have less access to college education.[10] KIPP teachers are hoping to address this disparity through a Junior Seminar program that helps students develop their career ambitions and chart a path towards their postsecondary and career goals.

> **Sample Strategy:** The Junior Seminar is a year long course which meets for 90 minutes twice per week and 45 minutes once per week. It is centered on KIPP's College Persistence Strategy Framework and targets the following skills:
>
> - Plan and execute the essential skills for success in higher education, careers, and life beyond KIPP;
> - Prepare for college entrance examinations and college-level writing; and
> - Build college and career skills, including research and effective teamwork and communication.
>
> **Find KIPP's College Persistence Strategy Framework and essential questions for Junior Seminar in Appendix E.**
>
> **Outcomes:** In the BCRC-wide SE competency survey, KIPP's 11th grade students reported above-average levels and growth in self-efficacy inEnglish Language Arts. Teachers believe that the work students completed as part of the Junior Seminar contributed to their sense of self-efficacy as reflected in the data.

Feedback from students on the Junior Seminar suggests a need to focus on career readiness (in addition to college readiness) to better meet the needs of non-college matriculating students. KIPP plans to make these refinements and to add a focus on selecting colleges based on one's desired career path. In future years, the course will also integrate information about the types of services available on college campuses (e.g., writing tutoring and study habits coaching) to support students' success.

Engaging Students in Restorative Circles at Boston Collegiate

School leaders at Boston Collegiate Charter School (BCCS) discussed their ongoing efforts in building students' capacity for communication across lines of difference. The students' strong relationships and cohort mentality has been reflected in their SE survey data through consistently above-average growth in and levels of social awareness (relative to the data of students at other schools in the Collaborative).

Recently, BCCS built upon this strength by using restorative circles to help students work through a crisis situation that alarmed students and their families. In restorative circles, students gather to build relationships and other skills they need to support each other and to discuss challenges they are facing.[11] This process engaged students as thought partners in identifying solutions to navigate the situation.

> **Approach:** After addressing the immediate safety concerns related to the situation, teachers facilitated restorative circles as an opt-in opportunity for students and other school community members to process and navigate the situation.
>
> **Sample Strategy:** After creating a safe and normed space for honest conversation, educators engaged students in discussing three prompts related to the crisis:

- Round 1: How have you been affected?
- Round 2: What can be done to move the situation forward?
- Round 3: What are you willing to do to move forward?

Find BCCS' Restorative circles protocol in Appendix F.

Outcomes: From this experience, BCCS teachers reaffirmed their belief that students need to feel safe and experience a sense of belonging in order to learn. The restorative circles were well-received by students, who requested to use the practice more often after this initial engagement. Since this series of events, restorative circles have also become a regular practice at BCCS' middle school and are primarily used to support students in proactively building relationships with one another. The BCRC-wide SE competency survey shows above-average growth in students' social awareness at BCCS since the school began using restorative circles.

Lessons Learned

Our BCRC school partners have shared many promising approaches to fostering students' SE development and are committed to continuing to build teacher and student capacity in doing so. Teachers and student support staff in these schools are connecting SE learning to student engagement, college readiness, students' sense of belonging, relationship building, and disciplinary practices. Furthermore, schools in these CMOs are using systems-level approaches to foster SE learning and move towards integrating SE learning initiatives into existing school structures and activities to make these efforts more sustainable. They are doing this by creating interdisciplinary teams, offering embedded training and resources, and exploring how to scale promising practices to other campuses.

Additionally, the BCRC schools are using various sources of data to reflect on their progress. While some rely on SE learning-specific data, both aggregated (e.g., BCRC's common SE competency survey) and individual and group level (e.g., the PEAR assessment), others are using administrative data to track improvements in student skills and behaviors (e.g. number of behavioral incidents). Each of these approaches is useful in different ways and for different purposes. For example, SE learning-specific data are more targeted, but collecting any new data can be an added burden on schools. On the other hand, when using existing behavioral data to indicate changes in social-emotional skills and related behaviors, schools can miss out on an opportunity to highlight students' strengths. Ultimately, it is most important for schools to identify data sources that will help them reflect on their goals and progress in meaningful and sustainable ways.

As collaborators in the BCRC over the past five years, we have worked to build upon school leaders' existing understanding of SE learning. We established a common language around social-emotional competencies, as well as a common set of measures. More recently, we helped school leaders unpack theories about their data to identify promising practices that might be contributing to their positive student outcomes. Through our knowledge sharing convenings, we have learned about a range of approaches that schools have undertaken to support their students' learning and social-emotional development. Although

the results cited in this paper only provide suggestive evidence (as opposed to more conclusive, randomized controlled trials), we believe these promising practices warrant further exploration by educators and researchers alike.

Future Directions & Recommendations

The Aspen Commission's *Nation at Hope* report calls for closer connections to be forged between researchers and educators in RPPs. The seminal report recommends building "new structures—and new support—for researchers and educators to work collaboratively and bi-directionally around pressing local problems".[12] Critical components of this recommendation involve engaging the expertise of a diverse range of stakeholders in this process and developing strategic plans for dissemination of knowledge and effective strategies to others. Based upon the Commission's suggestions and our lessons learned, we recommend the following:

- **RPPs need to continually revisit the goal of maintaining mutualism.** In other words, both researchers and educators bring important expertise to the table. Find ways to continuously check for alignment, share reflections, and exchange lessons learned in both directions so that the ongoing research is aligned with schools' most pressing areas of interest. For example, are all partners still using the same language and approach to understand the topic of interest? This supports mutual investment and forges a path for both schools and researchers to continue to find value engaging in the partnership. By checking in more regularly with partners about their present thoughts on the work, research and organizational partners can gain insight into innovations that are underway in schools.

- **Provide meaningful support to school partners by scaffolding their reflections and sense-making of data and school practices.** For example, our school partners shared that our data conversations, guiding questions, and preparing for and participating in this convening prompted school leaders to think about which members of their teaching teams they should speak to, and which questions to ask, to learn more about their practices. These supports can also prove beneficial to school leaders simply by providing time for reflection, which can help build more awareness of promising initiatives from other staff and raise additional questions to explore (e.g., what to scale and when).

- **Encourage school leaders to make decisions to involve other stakeholders as part of their participation in RPP activities.** Doing so can help create access to a diverse range of perspectives and invite multidisciplinary approaches to investigating central questions.

Appendix A: Guiding prompts and questions for presenters to discuss their SE learning practices

You are invited to prepare a 15-minute talk. The presentation should center around the following topic: classroom practices that support my students' development of growth mindset, social awareness, self-efficacy, and/or self-management. Your talk might include the following elements:

- A presentation of an artifact or practice (i.e., strategy or 'teacher move') that you believe supports your students' SE learning (e.g., a script for a discussion, a tool, a book, a video clip of the practice in action).

- The story behind your practice, including answers to the following questions: Why did you choose your practice? How did you adapt it to fit your classroom culture? What did you think would happen?

- Reflections on your students' experiences: How did students respond to the practice?

- Reflections on your own work: In which formal/informal ways did you check for progress? What lessons did you learn?

- A discussion about the related BCRC data point of interest: What does the data suggest about your students' reports on their social-emotional skills?

- Questions for other SE learning leaders in the room: What questions related to supporting your students' SE learning are you still grappling with? What feedback/input would be useful from your colleagues in the room?

Appendix B: Roxbury Prep's "Get to Know You" Question Bank

A selection of questions from: "200 Questions to Get to Know Someone"[13]

The questions on this page are perfect for getting to know someone you just met or someone you don't know well. They are casual, yet interesting.

- If you didn't have to sleep, what would you do with the extra time?
- What's your favorite piece of clothing you own / owned?
- What hobby would you get into if time and money weren't an issue?
- What would your perfect room look like?
- How often do you play sports?
- What fictional place would you most like to go?
- What job would you be terrible at?
- When was the last time you climbed a tree?
- If you could turn any activity into an Olympic sport, what would you have a good chance at winning a medal for?
- What is the most annoying habit that other people have?
- What job do you think you'd be really good at?
- What skill would you like to master?
- What would be the most amazing adventure to go on?
- If you had unlimited funds to build a house that you would live in for the rest of your life, what would the finished house be like?
- What's your favorite drink?
- What state or country do you never want to go back to?
- What songs have you completely memorized?
- What game or movie universe would you most like to live in?
- What do you consider to be your best find?
- Are you usually early or late?
- What pets did you have while you were growing up?
- When people come to you for help, what do they usually want help with?
- What takes up too much of your time?
- What do you wish you knew more about?
- What would be your first question after waking up from being cryogenically frozen for 100 years?
- What are some small things that make your day better?
- Who's your go to band or artist when you can't decide on something to listen to?
- What's the best way to start the day?
- What shows are you into?
- What TV channel doesn't exist but really should?
- Who has impressed you most with what they've accomplished?

Appendix C: Match Charter Public School's Student Support Team Meeting Agendas

Match SST Monthly Agenda

Norms (proposed): • Be fully present • Start and end on time • Speak from a place of hope • Assume the best about each other, teachers, families, and students	
Roles • Facilitator • Note Taker • Time Keeper	
Quick Check-In	
Review Action Steps	
Case Reviews	
Check-In/Check-Out Data Review	
Teacher/Cluster Consultation (one cluster per week)	
Review New Action Steps	
Norms Check-In	

Match SST Weekly Agenda

Norms (proposed):

- Be fully present
- Start and end on time
- Speak from a place of hope
- Assume the best about each other, teachers, families, and students

Roles

- Facilitator
- Note Taker
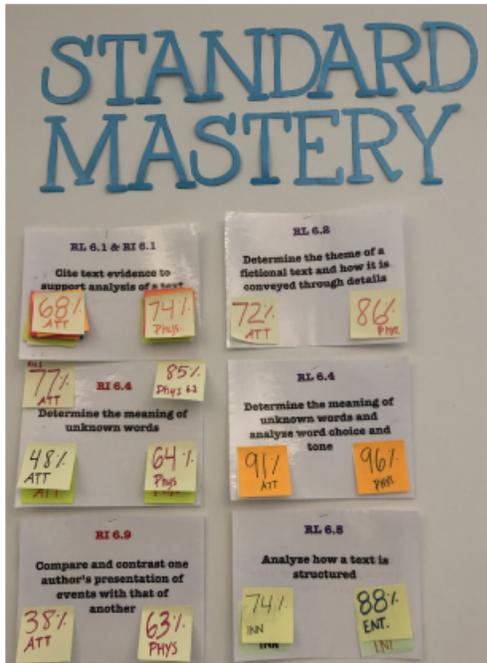- Time Keeper

Quick Check-In

Review Action Steps

Students of Concern

School-wide Issues

Review New Action Steps

Norms Check-In

Appendix D: KIPP Massachusetts' Tools for Standard Mastery Conversations
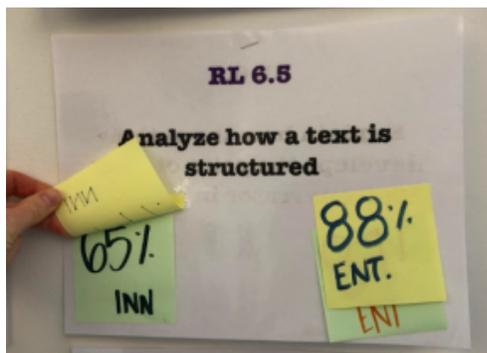

Kids hear teachers talk about standards, why not invite them into the conversation?
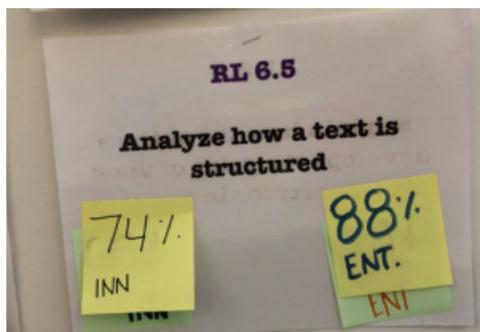
Name the standard
Narrate growth
Define connections to what matters:
- Today's Work
- Long-Term Goals
- Assessments

Define It, Narrate Win, Connect

Example: "Today, we're going to be working on RL 6.5, analyzing text structure. We're currently at 74% mastery, and the time before that, we were at 65%. So, this is one of our strongest standards. But, we know this is definitely be on MCAS and it's a standard that Ms. G is going to use a lot in 7th grade. So let's set a goal and see if we can beat 85% mastery today…
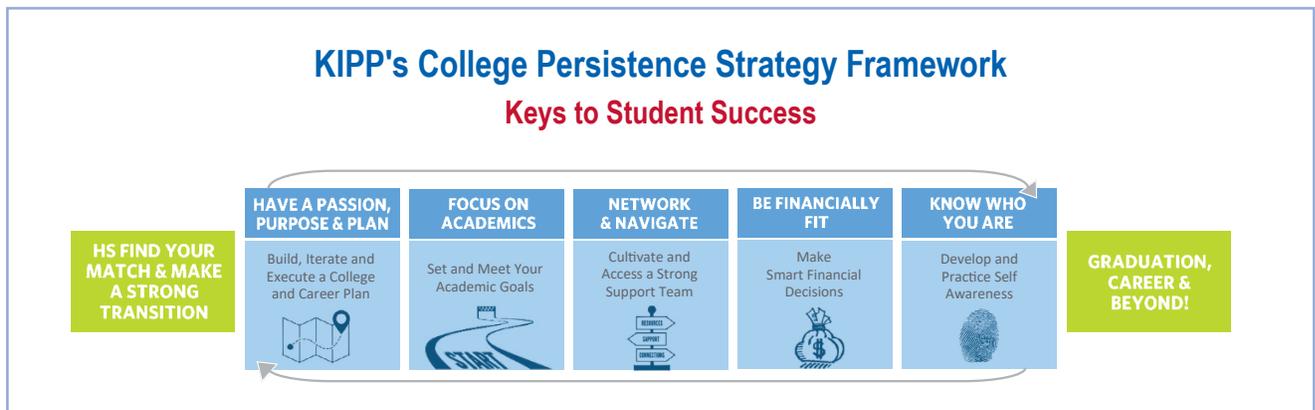
Individual Growth and Success

" I like the standard tracker because you can go back to it and see what you learned this module.

You can also go back to it and see how you grew.

Then, in the next one, you get to learn other standards. "

Appendix E: KIPP's Junior Seminar for Post-Secondary Goal Setting

KIPP's College Persistence Strategy Framework
Keys to Student Success

HS FIND YOUR MATCH & MAKE A STRONG TRANSITION

HAVE A PASSION, PURPOSE & PLAN	FOCUS ON ACADEMICS	NETWORK & NAVIGATE	BE FINANCIALLY FIT	KNOW WHO YOU ARE
Build, Iterate and Execute a College and Career Plan	Set and Meet Your Academic Goals	Cultivate and Access a Strong Support Team	Make Smart Financial Decisions	Develop and Practice Self Awareness

GRADUATION, CAREER & BEYOND!

Junior Seminar - Essential Questions

- Who am I?
- What motivates me?
- What are my passions?
- What are my values?
- What is my personal story? How do I tell it?
- What are my options and opportunities after high school?
- What does it mean to lead a meaningful and productive life?

Appendix F: Boston Collegiate's Restorative Circles Protocol

Using Restorative Circles to Empower Students to Reflect Upon Conflicts and Work Together to Form Solutions

Background Information

Restorative circles come from indigenous practices and can help participants collaboratively build empathy and respect for one another. At our school, we use circles to respond to issues within the community and to strengthen relationships among students and staff. When responding to an offense in the community, those who were impacted sit in a circle to discuss what happened in order to repair the harm and facilitate healing. When building community, we use circles to share stories about our lives in order to form connections and curiosities about each other. Whether the circle is responsive or community-themed, the most fundamental part of sitting in circles is to create a space where power dynamics between students and teachers shift so that each person shares in the responsibility for the circle's functioning and for the greater good of the community.

Sample Plan

1. **Create the space:** chairs in a circle; talking piece selected; In Lak'ech and circle guidelines written on the board.

2. **Opening:** whole group recitation of "In Lak'ech" by Luis Valdez ("you are my other me/ If I do harm to you/ I do harm to myself/ If I love and respect you/ I love and respect myself").

3. **Share rules:** Respect the talking piece (story of the talking piece); Listen from the heart; Speak from the heart; Respect confidentiality; Whatever is said in the circle stays in the circle.

4. **Check in:** one word whip around to express current feelings.

5. **Explain purpose:** build off the mood of the group based off the whip around/check in. Explain how restorative practices provide ways to build and maintain community. We consider the circle to the be the heart of restorative practices. The circle process comes from Native American traditions and used to build community and to repair harm in the tribes. We use it to build community and to repair harm, too.

   The purpose of this circle is to express our fears, to listen to one another, and to not pass judgements. We are here to better understand one another and gain perspective on the situation. We are here to move forward.

6. **Ask the questions in rounds:** 1) How have you been affected? 3) What can be done to move the situation forward? 3) What are you willing to do to move the situation forward?

   Circle keeper may interrupt at any point to say, "I hear you making a judgment..." and/or ask clarifying questions to prevent students from making accusatory statements and to help them gain perspective on the situation.

7. **Debrief:** circle keeper sums up what the plan of action/agreed upon tasks are and then asks: What did you notice about yourself and others? Quick whip around to share a word to express current feeling.

8. **Closing:** "In Lak'ech".

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About Transforming Education

Transforming Education (TransformEd) partners with schools and school systems to support educators in fostering the development of the whole child so that all students, particularly those from underserved populations, can thrive. At TransformEd, we envision a future in which all students become thriving adults, able and empowered to lead personally meaningful lives and to contribute to their communities.

Over the past six years, TransformEd has partnered with schools and districts serving over one million students in twenty-four US states to support practitioners in their efforts to identify, integrate, and sustain evidence-based and research-informed practices that create positive learning environments and support students' social-emotional development. We have pursued this work in our roles as partner to NewSchools Venture Fund and their portfolio of innovative schools; as the lead strategic advisor to the CORE Districts; as the facilitator of the Boston Charter Research Collaborative; as a partner, along with the RAND Corporation and CCSSO, in the National Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, led by WestEd; and as a partner with the Education Development Center for the SEL/Mental Health Academy in Massachusetts.

Learn more about our work on our website, Twitter, and blog, and subscribe to our biweekly newsletter to receive the latest information, best practices, and research about whole child development.

For further information about TransformEd's work, contact us at info@transformingeducation.org.