Ready – Renew – Reconnect!

Proven Strategies for Re-engaging Students Who Need You the Most

2022

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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization.

Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA provides teacher training, principal coaching, policy analysis, program evaluation, education research and data science work, family and community engagement, and student leadership development.

When schools closed due to COVID-19, IDRA immediately responded to educators and families so students could continue learning.

https://idra.news/LearningGoesOn

Equitable & excellent education for all students

Research • Policy • Educational Practice • Family & Community Engagement

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Free Webinar

Ready – Reopen – Reconnect!
Proven Strategies for Re-engaging Students Who Need You the Most

https://idra.news/ReconnectWebinar

This eBook by Hector Bojorquez, IDRA Director of Operations and Educational Practice, is a companion to IDRA's webinar: **Ready – Reopen – Reconnect! Proven Strategies for Re-engaging Students Who Need You the Most**. To view the webinar recording, go to https://idra.news/ReconnectWebinar or visit IDRA's YouTube channel https://idra.news/YouTube.

Our National Context

Data across the country show that students have disengaged at an alarmingly high rate. Daily **student absence rates have nearly doubled** from an average of 6% prior to the pandemic to 10% this fall, teachers, principals and district leaders report (Kurtz, 2020).

Teen disengagement is on the rise in school and in the labor market during the summer (Bauer, et al., 2020).

Student motivation and morale is lower than before the pandemic (Toth, 2021).


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Student self-Report on motivation
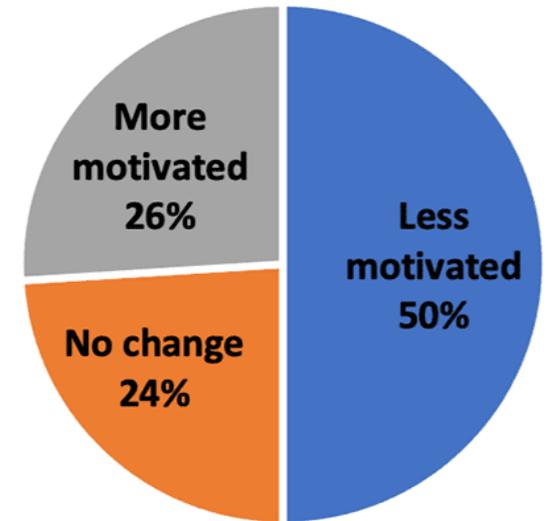
Student self-report on morale
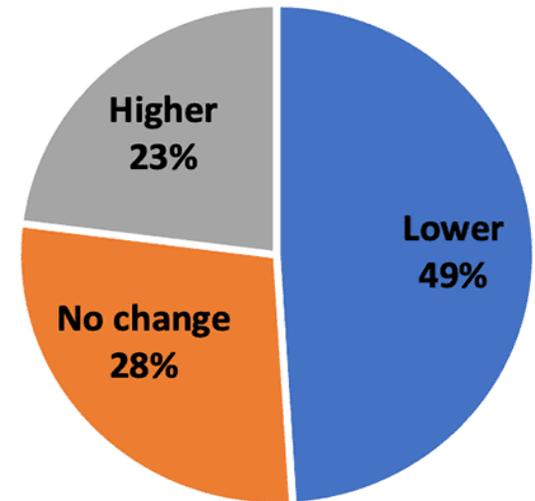
87% of teachers report that students are less motivated than before the pandemic.

82% report that student morale is lower.

In the post-COVID-19 world, we must provide all students with highly-engaging educational experiences, regardless of achievement levels or "learning losses" (aka, "instruction disruptions"). This is especially important for students who are experiencing equity gaps due to COVID-19-related disengagement, attendance issues and/or trauma. These students need highly-engaging activities that recognize they are capable of leadership and academic success, regardless of achievement data.

If schools embark on highly sequential or prescriptive pedagogies, these students are more likely to disengage further. When students feel they are overwhelmingly behind and in a constant state of needing to catch-up, they can lose hope in school and in themselves. This kind of pedagogy was highly detrimental to our most vulnerable students. Providing, "learning-loss" pedagogies that do not create highly-engaging, meaningful opportunities will set our nation back for years and harm students.

Student Social and Emotional Needs

Social emotional learning refers to an array of knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for students' academic and overall success. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines *social emotional learning* "in terms of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness (Hanover Research, 2017).

The skills cover a broad range to include analysis, emotional awareness, problem-solving, conflict resolution, cooperation and decision-making (Oliver, 2018). These are skills necessary for emotional growth and success in life, but they also can be difficult to measure and have traditionally not been a part of purely academic assessments.

In practice, social emotional learning should not be relegated to specific lessons. Social emotional learning principles and strategies should be used across the board to underscore student learning, especially because effective teaching strategies already line up with social emotional learning skills (Hanover Research, 2017; Oliver, 2018; Snyder, 2017; Snyder & Gouveia, 2018). Additionally, students who struggle with behavioral or emotional issues greatly benefit from social emotional learning supports (Levenson, 2018).

Social and Emotional Learning Process

Inputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Universal, school-based SEL programming	Positive attitudes toward self and others	Positive behavior, academic success, mental wellness

Mahoney, Durlak & Weissberg, 2019

Over time, social emotional learning has become a focus of necessary and equitable education. When President Obama signed the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, it contained several elements that supported social and emotional learning and flexibility for states and local districts to assess student success. The act included an emphasis on programs that provide safe, healthy, supportive environments and build skills to prevent bullying and harassment (Hanover Research, 2017; Oliver, 2018).

Research shows the academic benefits of social emotional learning (Hanover Research, 2017; Mahoney, Durlak & Weissberg, 2019; Schlund & Weissberg, 2020). A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies involving over 270,000 students indicated that campuses that participated in evidence-based social emotional learning saw an 11-point gain in academic achievement for students compared to schools that did not participate in social emotional learning programs. Meta-analyses of social emotional learning programs found significant short-term benefits for students, but social emotional learning is most effective when it is implemented in planned, systemic ways from preschool through high school and support whole-child development and success (Mahoney, Durlak & Weissberg, 2019).

Use of social emotional skills and practices can result in improvements in the following (Hanover Research, 2017; Oliver, 2018; Blum, nd):

- **Attitudes**: Better sense of community, higher academic motivation, better understanding of consequences, improved coping skills, increased attitude toward school and learning.
- **Behaviors**: More class participation, improved attention, stronger pro-social skills, improved attendance, reduction in discipline referrals, on track to graduate.
- **Emotional Skills**: Improved recognition and understanding of emotions in both the student and his/her peers, increased emotion and behavior regulation, increased empathy and perspective-taking.
- **School Performance**: Improved math, literacy, and social studies skills, higher achievement test scores, higher grades, improved metacognition skills, improved problem-solving skills, improved planning, use of higher-level reasoning skills, improvement in reading comprehension, better memory.

Schools can facilitate social emotional growth in students by intentionally teaching these skills, implementing data-driven strategies for emotional growth and wellness, practicing culturally-responsive classroom management, and approaching the work of educating students with a growth, asset-focused mindset (Oliver, 2018).

In addition to the benefits provided to students and academic performance, social emotional learning skills and practices are associated with improved outcomes for teachers, to include lower job-related anxiety and depression, improved student-teacher interactions, enhanced teacher engagement and increased perception of job control (Oliver, 2018).

Ready-Renew-Reconnect

❖ Purposeful Experiences in Classrooms

❖ Recognizing Student Strengths and Contributions

❖ Positive Relationships Between Teachers and Students

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Purposeful Experiences in Classrooms

1. Thematic Instruction

2. Project-based Learning

3. Cross-age Tutoring – Valued Youth Partnership

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Thematic Instruction

Bringing coherent thematic units, a week at time, can **bind concepts together across all subjects**. This is a first step in having understanding how to tie skills and objectives across the curriculum under one concept. Thematic instruction has long been part of educator tools. It periodically falls out of favor because themes are often narrow in scope and make it difficult for teachers to create multi-disciplinary activities.

Thematic instruction addresses a basic sense of purpose by **showing students how concepts learned in reading, math, science and social studies are relevant to shared experiences.** Edutopia has examples of how thematic units, such as Chef Week or Veterinarian Week, can be used in an elementary setting (Blanchet, 2020).

Must-Haves for Activities

To create meaningful experiences in thematic learning, we suggest that your thematic activities include the following:

- Students should have some choices in reading and type of activity.
- Student activities should tie to something that is relevant or something that has direct impact on their lives.
- Student identity, self-worth and personal history must be part of the theme.
- Family involvement must be a part of activities.

This is a fundamental way that we can bring asset-based practices into our classrooms.

Choices	Relevant and direct impact
Identity, self-worth or personal history	Family engagement
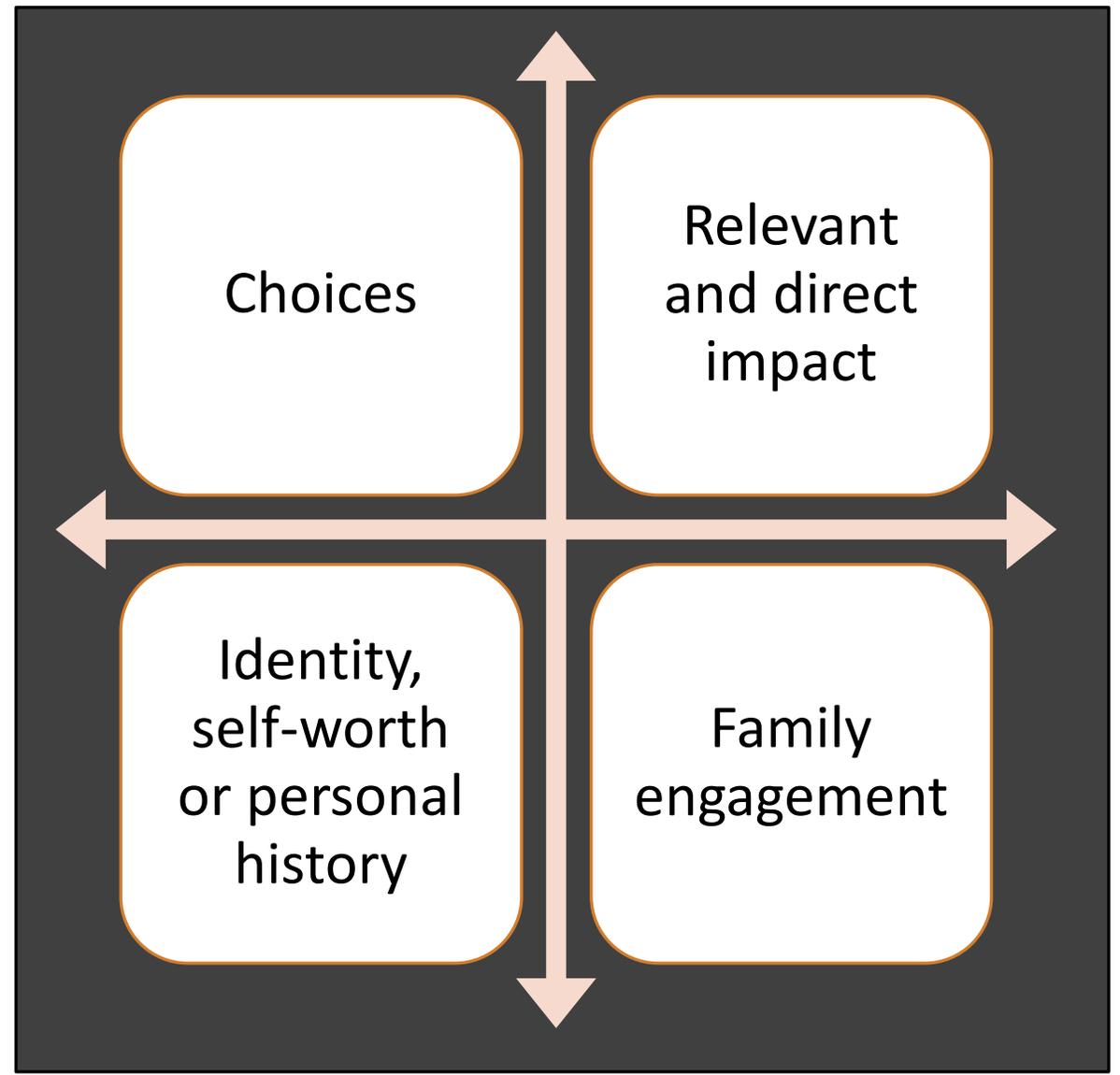
What are asset-based practices?

Asset-based educational practices…

• Recognize that all students and families bring innate talents and positive experiences;

• Assume that all students, given equitable and excellent supports, can succeed at all academic endeavors;

• Set high standards, given equitable and excellent supports, for all students; and

• Provide leadership opportunities for students in at-risk situations.

In practical terms, this means that as educators we must reorient our expectations of our students in at-risk situations. We must provide our underrepresented, and too often undereducated, students the same opportunities, supports and expectations that are afforded the highest academic performers in our schools. In the classroom, this means creating high level educational opportunities for all students.

Weather Week

Elementary Example

• Literacy

Find multiple short, fiction and non-fiction books concerning the weather. Have students choose their own book for the week. Students can report on the books each day, in their journals, using brief prompts.

Students can create grade-level-appropriate products that summarize the nightly weather report.

Families can create a journal about memories they have about their favorite seasons.

• Math & Science

Students can create charts concerning daily temperature, precipitation or humidity.

Students can look up what the weather was like on their birthdate and write a brief narrative about exactly how hotter, wetter, colder, it was when they were born.
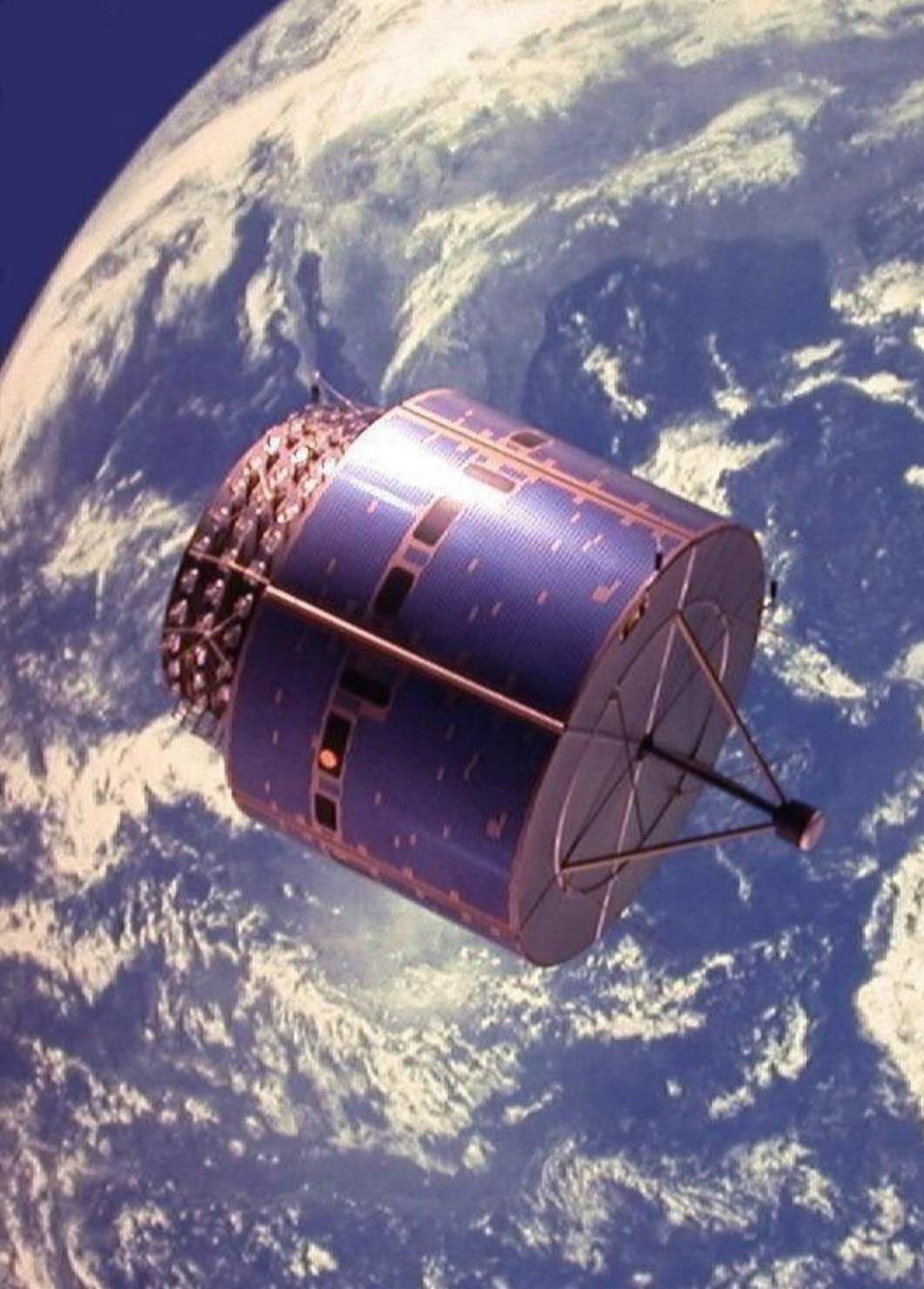
• Social Studies

Connect the math birthdate activity to geography. For example, have students who were born in another town or part of the world, talk about what the weather was like that day in that place.

For immigrant students, have them create a timeline of their families' birthdays and have them illustrate the weather.

Have students interview members of their family about their birth country's weather. (Be sensitive to any refugee situations.)

Project-Based Learning

"Project based learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem or challenge." (PBLWorks, 2021)

https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl

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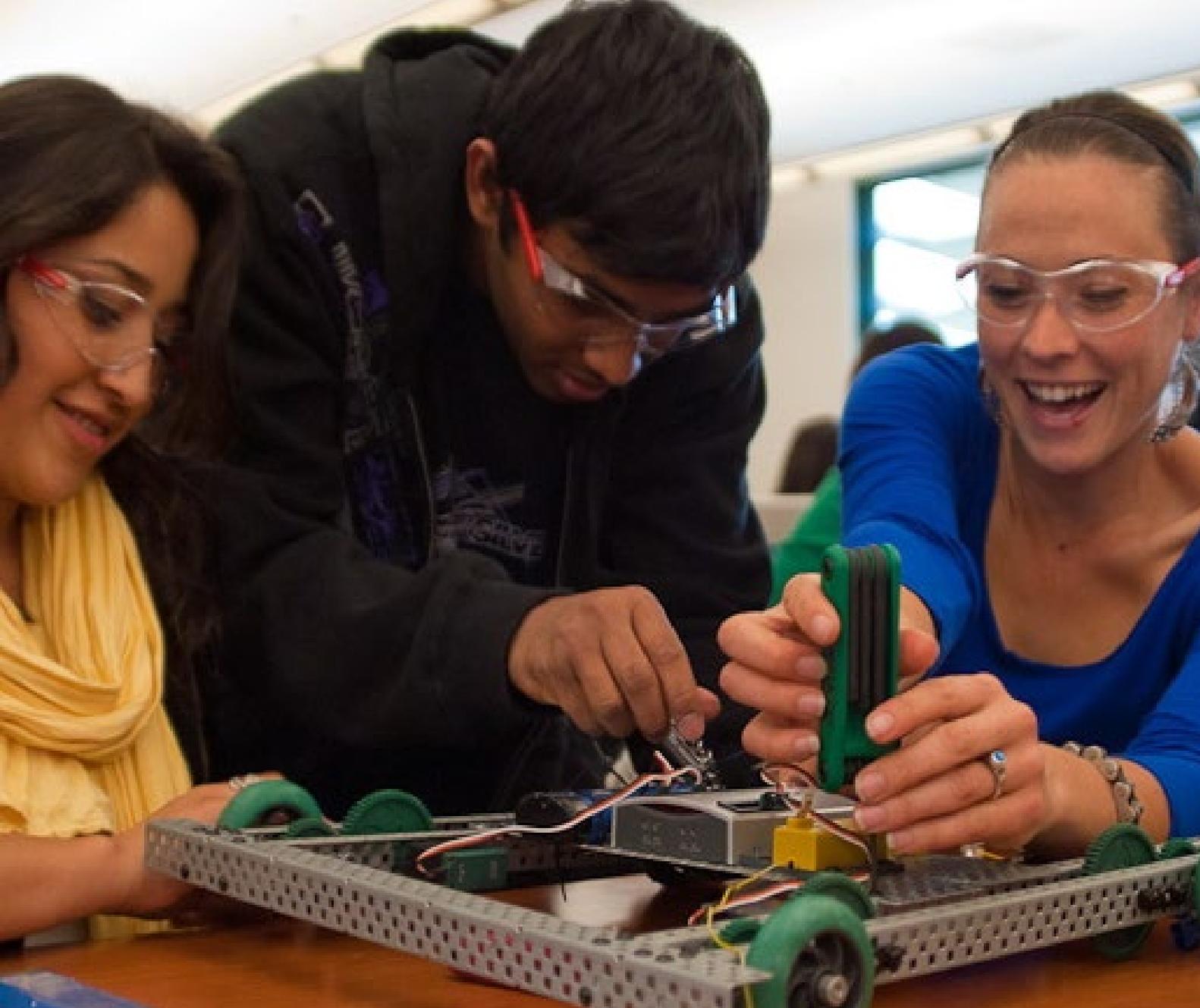
Speaking about project-based learning...

"I love PBL; it was hard when we first started, it didn't make sense. But now, it's a great way to really engage my students and boost their thinking skills and creativity."

– ESL middle school teacher

"PBL is perfect for math. It lets students see the numbers in real life."

– Sixth-grade math teacher

"I want to do this again. It was a lot of work; I had to really think."

– Seventh grade student

Avilés & Al-Gasem, 2016

Why project-based learning

Project-based learning assumes that students can and will rise to education challenges when placed in a leadership position.

Student agency is the central driver.

When done correctly, PBL increases student engagement through high interest, rigorous projects.

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8 Elements of PBL Lessons
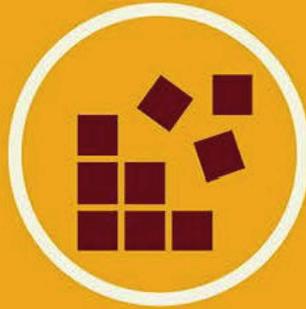
Key knowledge, understanding & success skills

The PBL lesson is driven by very specific student goals tied to the state standards that need to be taught to be prepared for a standardized examination.

Challenging Problem or Question

The PBL lesson has a driving question that is meaningful and challenging to students.

Sustained Inquiry

The PBL lesson lasts several days or even weeks because students need to be in a constant state of asking questions and applying knowledge.

Authenticity

The PBL lesson is built around a real-world authentic problem that relates to students' interests or personal concerns.

See this full infographic: https://idra.news/PBLelements

8 Elements of PBL Lessons

Student Voice & Choice

The PBL lesson gives students the opportunity to make decisions about their final product and how they collaborate within the group.
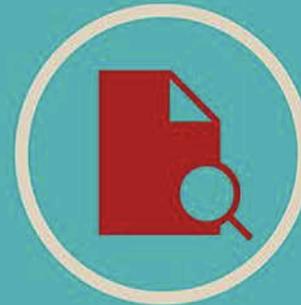
Reflection

The PBL lesson provides time for students and teachers to reflect on their learning, the quality of the PBL product & lesson, and any obstacles or concerns.

Critique & Revision

The PBL lesson includes time and space for students to get feedback from teachers and other students to improve their final product.

Public Product

The PBL lesson has students present their final products to the public, including parents, teachers and community professionals.

See this full infographic: https://idra.news/PBLelements

First Steps in Project-Based Learning – Webinar recording:
https://idra.news/FSPBL

PBL at Home & Across the Curriculum – Webinar recording:
https://idra.news/PBLH

8 Elements of PBL Lessons – Infographic:
https://idra.news/8PBLig

Project Based Learning – Changing Learning Paradigms One Lesson at a Time (article): https://idra.news/nlSep16g

Taking Project Based Learning Schoolwide – Podcast 171:
https://idra.news/Pod171

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Cross-age Tutoring

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership is a research-based, internationally-recognized dropout prevention program that has kept 98% of its tutors in school.

The Valued Youth Partnership, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized, cross-age tutoring program with an unusual twist. This dropout prevention program works by identifying junior high and high school students in at-risk situations and enlisting them as tutors for elementary school youngsters who are also struggling in school. Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the Valued Youth tutors learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem. Schools shift to the philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at-risk.

Results show that tutors stay in school, improve academic performance, improve their school attendance and advance to higher education.

Cross-Age Tutoring: Valued Youth Partnership

This program works by identifying junior high and high school students in at-risk situations and enlisting them as tutors for elementary school youngsters who are also struggling in school.

Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the Valued Youth tutors learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem. Schools shift to the philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at-risk.

98% stay in school

Higher attendance rates

Lower discipline rates

Stronger academic skills

Higher self-esteem

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Valued Youth Partnership

"You can see the excitement in the students' faces when their tutee spells a word right or gets a math problem right; that's a different type of success and fulfillment, because it shows them, 'I helped someone else achieve success.'"

– Lee Hernández, high school principal

O = PARTNERSHIPS splits

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Five Instructional Strategies

Cross-age Tutoring
Tutors tutor a minimum of four hours a week for one class period a day.

Classes for Tutors
Tutors meet with their secondary school teacher coordinator once a week.

Educational Field Trips
Tutors go on at least two to three trips to explore career, economic and cultural opportunities.

Mentors and Role-Models
Adults who are considered successful in their fields and who represent students' ethnic background are invited to participate.

Student Recognition
Students are acknowledged for the efforts and contributions they make as tutors.

Five Support Strategies

Curriculum
Focused on self-concept, tutoring skills and literacy skills.

Coordination
For program monitoring, communication & support.

Staff Enrichment
Provided by IDRA based on campus staff needs.

Parent Involvement
Values the families' contributions.

Evaluation
Analysis to inform program implementation.

IDRA Valued Youth Partnership

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Recognizing Student Strengths and Contributions

Students are unlikely to thrive when schools focus on student deficits or falsely consider certain characteristics (like their race-ethnicity, family income status, language proficiency, etc.) to be deficits.

Thankfully, there is a better way!

1. District-wide College for All

2. District-wide Support Systems

3. Powerful Student Leadership

Example 1
• District-wide College for All

After seeing dropout data, leaders in the Pharr-San Juan Alamo school district in south Texas established new "college for all" policies with distinctive strategies to ensure all students graduate from high school and college.

This transformation resulted in the district doubling the number of high school graduates, cutting dropout rates in half, and increasing college-going rates in just a few years. In fact, half of the district's students earned college credit while still in high school.

IDRA examined data and conducted interviews with then -Superintendent Dr. Daniel King, school principals, teachers, counselors and students to explore how PSJA has achieved the kind of success that it has. IDRA saw that PSJA's vision and actions, clearly and independently, aligned with IDRA's own vision for change: the Quality Schools Action Framework™. This change theory helps communities and educators assess a school's conditions and outcomes and identify leverage points for improvement and informing action.

College Bound and Determined

This IDRA report profiles what happened when a school district raised expectations for students instead of lowering expectations, by Hector Bojorquez: https://idra.news/CollegeBoundw
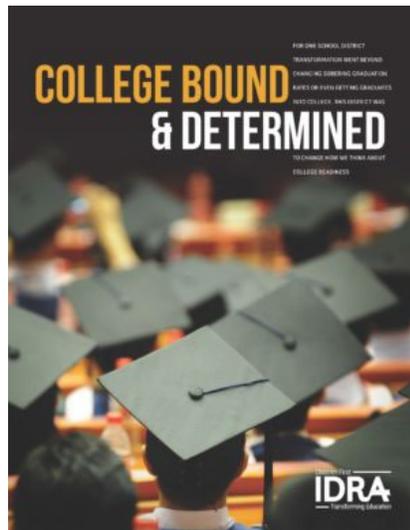
More info →

Connecting Every Student to a Meaningful Future – A podcast interview with Dr. Daniel P. King, Superintendent of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo School District: https://idra.news/Pod85

Superintendent Dr. Daniel King Describes How Strong Family Leadership Leads to School Innovation (article): https://idra.news/nlSep19a

Beyond the College T-shirt Days – Transition Counseling to Ensure College Success (article): https://idra.news/nlMar16g

College Students Describe What a School's College-Going Culture Really Means (article): https://idra.news/nlND15g

A Principal on Setting Expectations for College – First in a three-part set of podcast interviews with a PSJA principal: https://idra.news/Podcast126

Example 2
• District-wide Support Systems

Roscoe Collegiate ISD has been innovating for a decade to meet its goal of having all students be career- and college-ready. The district's blended model of early college high school and STEM academy, its schoolwide AVID program, its partnerships with colleges in the area, and its teacher support systems identify and support students in all grades when they are struggling.

How a Rural School District Makes its All-Students Attitude Real (podcast interview): https://idra.news/Pod207
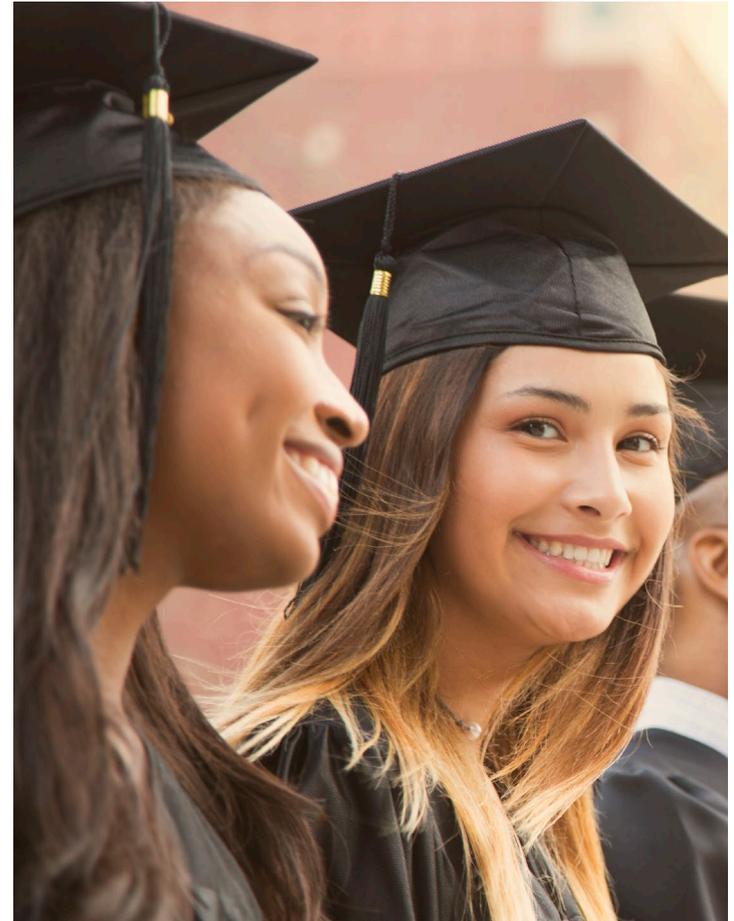
Example 3
• Powerful Student Leadership

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership has demonstrated tremendous success helping students focus on their education and increasing the school's holding power by focusing on students with the highest need of support. Over the past 35 years, the VYP has kept 35,000 students in school and positively impacted the lives of 750,000 children, families and educators!

Teacher Perspectives of the Valued Youth Program (podcast interview): https://idra.news/Pod98

Student Voices on Being Valued (podcast interview): https://idra.news/Pod54

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Valued Youth Partnership
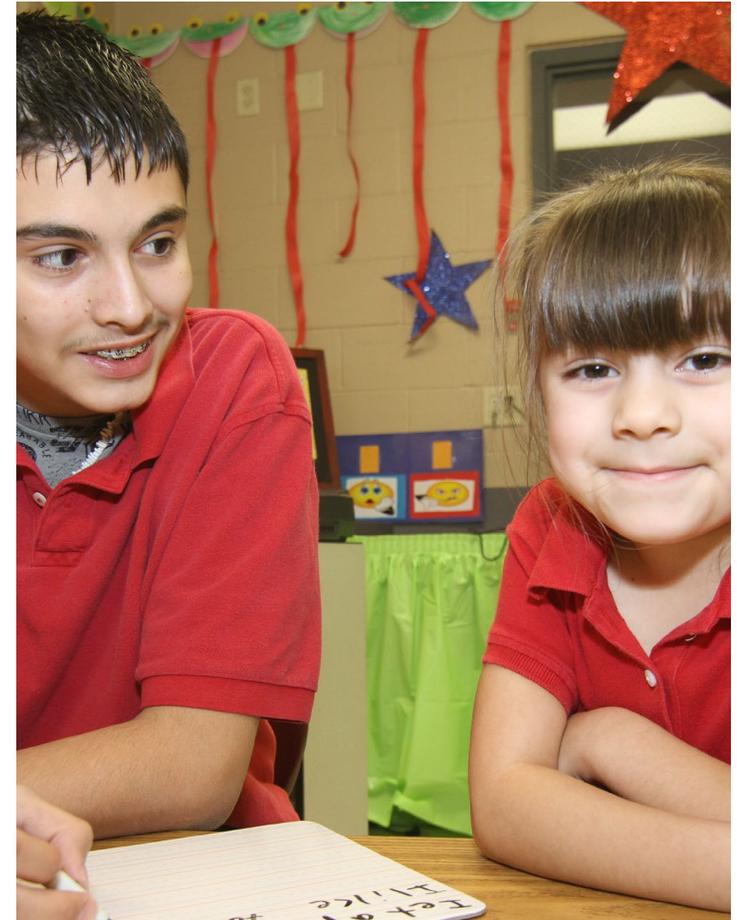
"I was losing interest in school because of my grades being low. VYP has given me reasons that I should come to school every day. I know [my tutees] enjoy me being there, and I wouldn't want to miss a day of seeing their smiling faces. I now feel good about seeing my report cards!... All those good grades have made my attendance much better."

– Melanie Esparza, tutor

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Valued Youth Partnership Video

View video on YouTube: https://idra.news/VYPvideo (2:00 minutes)

Positive Relationships Between Teachers and Students

1. Professional Learning Communities Using Asset-based Practices

2. Teacher Mentoring

3. IDRA Valued Youth Partnership – Building Student Socio-emotional Learning

In 2018, **"Who You Know: Unlocking Innovations That Expand Students' Networks"** by Freeland Fisher (2018) provided evidence that students in at-risk situations flourished when they had at least one positive relationship with a teacher. The book provides compelling evidence that time spent with vulnerable students pays off in increased achievement, attendance and graduation. In this book you will find stories of students in extremely difficult situations, that are not viewed as possible college students, that often feel ignored by other teachers. Yet, when one adult at the school takes the time to build relationships with these students, they thrive.

Several of IDRA's projects have put this same idea into practice. Thirty years of IDRA's research shows that all students must have at least one caring adult in their lives at school.
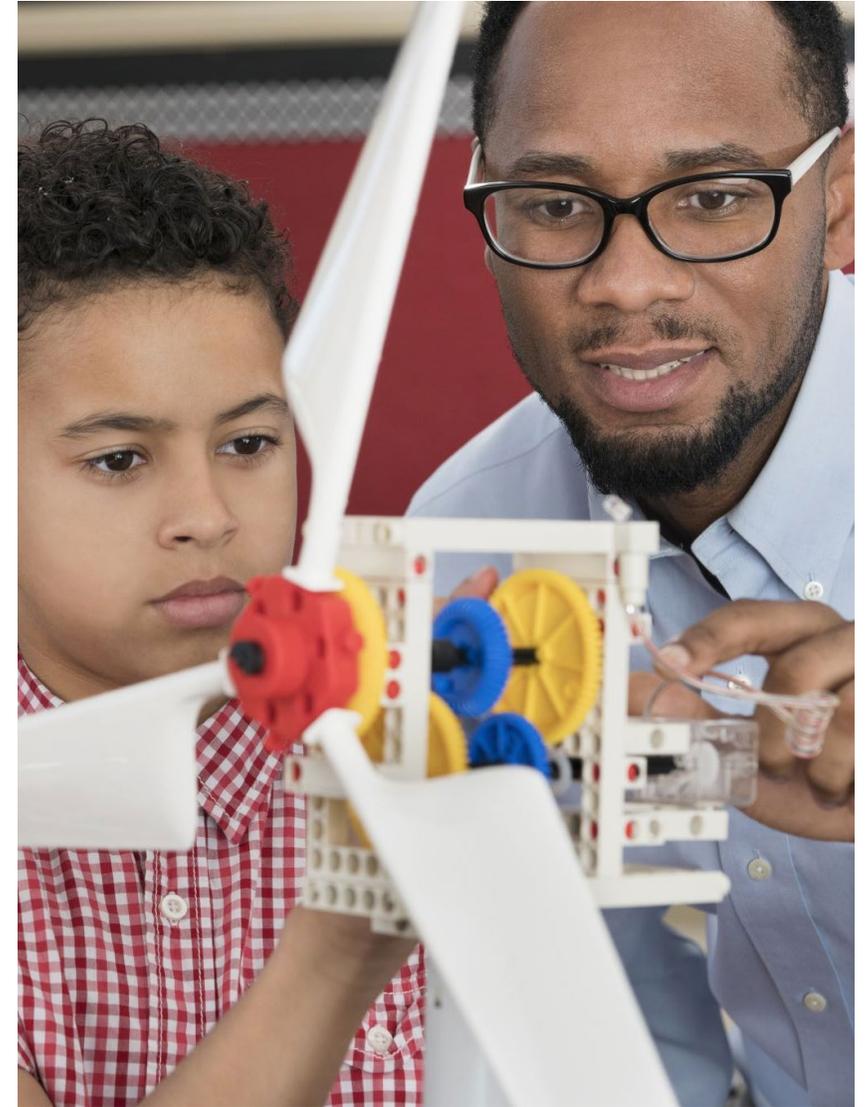
Professional Learning Communities Using Asset-based Practices

Professional learning communities work best when participants are involved in learning how to implement a PLC, practice or pedagogy. In this case, educators need to understand asset-based practices.

We recommend you bring your educators together to read Dr. Paul Gorski's **"Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty"** (2013). This book clearly outlines how underrepresented students in at-risk situations benefit from educators who believe in their potential and recognize their assets rather than concentrating on "fixing" their academic underachievement, socio-economic background or equity gaps. It is a powerful book that asks educator to reorient their ideas on how students experiencing poverty and deep equity gaps can succeed. The ideas in this book ask us to understand the totality of our student's lives.

Furthermore, asset-based practices force us not to view students as the labels we use in our data-driven systems. When we see "at-risk" students as groups on a spreadsheet, we quickly turn to impersonal back-to-basics pedagogies that further disengage students. This is the opposite of the personal relationships that are often reserved for the academically gifted. Students know and understand when they are viewed as less than others. Asking teachers to question their assumptions about students through the kinds of reflections found in Dr. Gorski's book is a powerful exercise that can open the door to better relationships with all of your students.

Teacher Mentoring

During a two-year period IDRA piloted a mentoring project in a high minority, high poverty school district in an economically distressed rural area. During this pilot, a group of teachers from their middle school campuses mentored students who were in at-risk situations. These teachers participated in professional learning communities focused on asset-based practices and shared their experiences as they mentored students throughout the year. Each teacher mentored three students. The teachers became the supportive adults in students' academic lives. They learned about students' gifts, innate strengths and how they persist and overcome challenges in ways that teachers never knew about.

Preliminary results showed that none of students dropped out of school, 81% increased their reading scores, and 44% improved their math scores. As a result, we learned (1) a cadre of mentors experienced how students considered at-risk flourished; (2) through a participation in a PLC, the mentors increased their knowledge of asset-based practices; and (3) as a result of the mentoring and PLC, mentors changed their own practices when working with all their students.

IDRA Valued Youth Partnership
– Building Student Socio-emotional Learning

Interventions that address socio-emotional factors through experiences rather than a prescribed curriculum have far-reaching impacts. While it is important that students understand concepts like leadership, responsibility and self-regulation, it is far more powerful for students to experience success and believe in their own talents and abilities.

Socio-emotional pioneers, like Carol Dweck and her colleagues, found that interventions that help instill a growth mindset in students and give students a sense that they belong and are valued in school result in higher student achievement, including improved test scores in reading and math and higher-grade point averages (Dweck, et al., 2014).

The Valued Youth Partnership has a long record of transforming student socio-emotional learning and building positive relationships with school.

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IDRA Valued Youth Partnership

For over 35 years, the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership has worked with students who are at-risk of academic disengagement by providing meaningful leadership experiences. The outcomes have positively affected student's confidence and self-worth, attendance and academic achievement.

Valued Youth Program website:
https://idra.news/VYP

VYP flier on SEL impact:
https://idra.news/VYPimpact

The Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness & evaluation data show:

- ✔ **61% of VYP tutors improved sense of self oriented toward the future**
- ✔ **59% of VYP tutors improved their sense of involvement in & caring for their families**
- ✔ **54% of VYP tutors improved their sense of being productive at their school work, enjoying school more & feeling successful at school**
- ✔ **66% of VYP tutors improved reading test scores**
- ✔ **57% of VYP tutors improved math scores**

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High School Principal on the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership

View video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/wOS9LRko6Kg (2:16 minutes)

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What others say about the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership program

"The VYP made me open my eyes and has given me reasons that I should come to school every day, and that's exactly what I'm doing for my Pre-K tutees."

– high school tutor

"I'm the youngest of four kids, and I will be the first to graduate from high school. I would not be graduating if I wasn't a tutor."

– middle school tutor

"I thought that I wasn't good because I had many problems. I thought I was a nobody, but when I started talking to my tutees and working with them, I felt different. Now I know that I can be somebody, and I can help others to do the same."

– middle school tutor

More Strategies for Building Socio-emotional Learning

When social emotional learning practices are embedded within the school climate, it facilitates strong relationships between students, parents, teachers and administrators. In turn, this enables social emotional learning to facilitate a positive school climate (Olivier, 2018).

Following are strategies to improve students' connectedness to school gleaned from the research literature.

Strategies to improve students' connectedness to school

- **School Communities:** As they suit student needs, create "school-within-a-school" programs, such as small learning communities, magnet schools, or career academies (Blum, nd).

- **Streamline Meetings:** Principals and administrative staff should streamline and reduce the number of mandatory meetings teachers must attend to maximize their time in the classroom and with students (Levenson, 2018).

- **Multidisciplinary Team Teaching**: This strategy can help groups of teachers to get to know every student, and the team can confer about students to target areas where they may need more support (Levenson, 2018; Blum, nd).

- **Smaller Student-to-Adult Ratio**: Make use of volunteers, paraprofessionals, teachers' aides, and family and community volunteers to provide individual students more attention, especially when they are having a difficult time academically or emotionally (Blum, nd). Mentorship programs also enable students to connect personally with adults in their communities or who share their interests.

- **Student Contact**: Ensure that there is at least one trusted adult each student connects with for check-ins (Blum, nd).

- **Consult Behavior Experts**: Counselors and behavioral management specialists should be available to consult with teachers on how to craft strategies that promote student emotional and behavioral health (Levenson, 2018). This requires that schools be provided the funds to hire these specialists or partner with college, universities and community partners.

- **Preventative Discipline Strategies**: Targeting problem behavior should be about addressing the root of the problem. Exclusionary discipline should be reduced or eliminated in the interest of student engagement and academic achievement (Grayson & Johnson, 2018; Levenson, 2018).

- **Nurturing Climate**: Ensure that the school climate is nurturing for all students. This is an ongoing process that ranges from simple strategies, such as putting up posters and setting classroom rules, to everyday emotional support and practices that let all students know they are safe and welcome in the learning environment (Snyder, 2017).

- **Mutual Respect**: Ensure that respect is a primary aspect of social emotional learning. Respect is vital for achieving equity and to ensure that all students are engaged and receive a quality education. Mutual respect in the classroom is built upon the consideration of personal beliefs, values and action. It is shown through care, assistance and concern for others. In the school setting, this encompasses respect for one's self, among students, between students and staff, between parents and staff, and between staff members (Snyder, 2017).

Strategies to improve and encourage social emotional learning in the classroom

- **Clear Social Emotional Learning Commitment**: A committee of primary stakeholders should convene and agree on a philosophy and specific plan for social emotional learning (Hanover Research, 2017). Definitions of social emotional learning can vary, so schools should stick to a clear, agreed-upon definition and follow evidenced-based programs for social emotional learning (Hanover Research, 2017).

- **Noise Levels**: Ensure that shared spaces are not too loud to allow for students to concentrate on their tasks or smaller conversations during group work (Blum, nd). Additionally, schools should provide quiet spots or rooms for student use.

- **Quick Response**: Problems should be immediately addressed. This extends to the school environment itself – graffiti or trash should be immediately cleaned (Blum, nd).

- **Curriculum Opportunities**: Ensure that lessons promote social emotional learning skills and provide opportunities for students to discuss their feelings of physical and emotional safety with trusted adults (Blum, nd). Whenever possible, integrate social emotional learning strategies into instruction. Social emotional learning shouldn't be a single lesson or activity, but the curriculum and instruction strategies should include elements of SEL so that it is a robust part of every lesson. Strategies for instruction, perseverance, decision-making and behavior management are easily streamlined with social emotional learning education (Snyder, 2017).

- **Social Emotional Learning Modeling**: Staff and teachers should model social emotional learning competencies in their daily interactions with students (Hanover Research, 2017). Teachers should be given training on social emotional learning to incorporate in their teaching practices and the district should employ social emotional learning strategies when communicating with families and the community (Hanover Research, 2017).

- **Social Emotional Learning Evaluation**: Educators can gather and provide feedback on student social emotional learning competencies using tools such as narratives, checklists and surveys. Regardless of the method of providing feedback, students should be given continued support for social emotional learning (Hanover Research, 2017).

- **Social Emotional Learning Expertise**: School districts should be in contact with or have already trained educators, counselors and professionals well-versed in social emotional learning techniques who can provide professional development to educators who have questions about how to integrate social emotional learning strategies into their lessons and help them plan on how to do so in an online setting (Schlund & Weissberg, 2020).

Strategies to improve and encourage social emotional learning in the classroom

- **Explicit Social Emotional Learning Instruction**: Provide explicit social emotional learning skill guidance. While adults are more cognizant of mental and emotional strategies and processes, students are still learning and will need extra support. Specifically (Snyder, 2017):
  - **Provide a Rationale**: Explain necessity of social emotional learning education and offer one or two real world examples of its benefits.
  - **Define the Skill**: Use clear, decisive language to define the skill. Provide examples and check in with students to ensure they understand.
  - **Model the Skill**: Offer students examples of how the skill can be used in different contexts and ask-students to help role-play and come up with scenarios of their own where the skill would be helpful.
  - **Present Opportunities for Use**: Class activities or games provide ample opportunities for students to try and master social emotional learning skills. The more opportunities, the better.
  - **Revisit**: Using social emotional learning skills should not be relegated to one subject or lesson. Check in on student progress and remind them throughout the year that the social emotional learning skills they learned can be used in numerous, different scenarios.
- **Reflection**: Reflect on how social and cultural contexts are built into social emotional learning. Experts in child psychology have found that social and emotional strategies might work well for some children and not for others. To address this, reflection should include social and cultural aspects. Teachers and students should reflect on how their cultural knowledge and expectations influence their behaviors and work to create an environment where students can learn together regardless of cultural differences (Snyder, 2017).
- **Regular Communication**: Exchange ideas about social emotional learning instruction with all stakeholders, early and often. Educators should fully invest in social emotional learning and be able to articulate their own vision for how it looks in the classroom. Ongoing professional development is key to ensure that teachers are properly supported in finding their own social emotional learning strategies, teach them to their students and positively communicate them to their families (Snyder, 2017).
- **Student-Led Social Emotional Learning** : Ensure that students are equipped to take charge of their own social and emotional learning. This means letting go of total control over the agenda in the classroom and allowing students to participate in lessons based on their own strengths and interests to have opportunities to practice social emotional learning skills (Snyder, 2017).

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1. Purposeful experiences in our classrooms

2. Recognizing student strengths and contributions

3. Positive relationships between teachers and students

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