

# K-12 Curriculum, SEL & Instructional Tools Guide

2020 Edition

**Everything You Need to Know.  
Everyone You Need to Reach.**

- Emerging classroom trends
- How to let students drive their learning
- Balancing assessment and digital learning
- Using SEL to combat stress in students
- The right way to choose digital resources
- Discover how movement helps reinforce learning
- Identifying the best curriculum resources for you
- Helping students build life-long SEL skills

# Contents

## Curriculum and Instruction Trending News

8 emerging K-12 classroom trends .....3

3 digital strategies to help with assessment .....4

Why I use student-driven ideas in my curriculum .....6

The 4 tech skills all middle schoolers should develop .....7

6 steps to choose digital resources wisely .....8

How to find the right teaching resources– without being overwhelmed ...10

Digital teaching and learning in the smartphone era .....11

Using title funds for STEM curriculum .....12

## K-12 SEL Trending News

Movement and learning combine to spark student success .....13

Using SEL to combat digital stressors .....14

Getting the most out of your SEL platform .....16

7 strategies to boost SEL skills in students .....17

Here’s why this principal started a school turnaround with SEL .....18

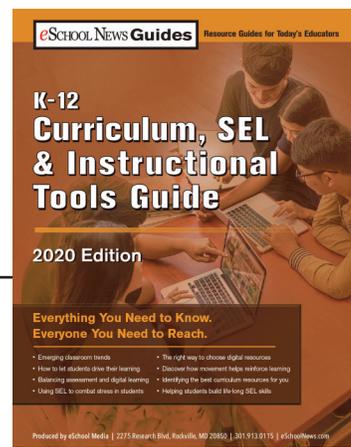
Using SEL to inspire data-driven instruction .....20

How we used SEL to transform discipline .....21

## Company Profiles .....22

## About eSchool News .....24

## Monthly Guide Editorial Calendar .....24



# 8 emerging K-12 classroom trends

Education is at a crossroads—and these classroom trends offer a glimpse of where learning must go to best serve students

**BY LAURA ASCIONE**  
Managing Editor, Content Services

Today's educators are preparing students for jobs of the future—jobs that don't necessarily exist today—and a new [Google Education report](#) takes a look at the K-12 classroom trends driving learning.

More and more educators and parents recognize that curriculum must evolve in order to help students develop the skills they'll need to be successful in future careers and in a global workforce.

Those skills aren't limited to technology skills. More than ever, students need what many are now calling "employability" skills—critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration skills, to name just a few.

To better understand these changes, Google for Education partnered with a global team of researchers and analysts to examine evidence-based classroom trends and shifts in education.

The report identifies eight emerging trends in classrooms:

**Digital responsibility:** Parents and guardians want schools to help students develop healthy relationships with technology and be safe, confident explorers of the digital world.

Part of what drives this is the fact that children are online at much younger ages—research notes that people under 18 account for roughly 1 in 3 internet users across the world, and in the U.S., more than 39 percent of young people had a social media account by age 12.

**Life skills & workforce preparation:** To prepare for future careers, students need a holistic education that includes practical vocational skills, communication strategies, and leadership development.

More value is placed on employability skills—often called soft skills, but the name belies their importance. Academic success is no longer the only way to prepare students for future success. Emotional intelligence, practical voca-



tional skills, and skills such as critical thinking and the ability to collaborate with others from different backgrounds are becoming equally important.

**Computational thinking:** Curriculum focused on problem-solving, coding, and STEM subjects helps prepare students to address future challenges.

Ninety-two percent of the world's future jobs will require digital skills, and 45 percent of future jobs will require workers who are able to work confidently with digital systems and technology.

**Student-led learning:** Education leaders want students to have more agency over their education, from what they learn to how the classroom operates.

Students will need to be able to transition from school to the outside world, and student-led learning is one path that helps strengthen students.

**Collaborative classrooms:** As schools focus on openness, flexibility, and collaboration, they're redesigning classrooms to match.

Classroom design can have a major impact on student learning—some research suggests it can impact academic progress by up to 25 percent. What's more, students learning in open, innovative environments can pick up new ways to think, learn, and collaborate.

**Connecting guardians & schools:** Parents and guardians want to be more

involved in their children's education, and technology is being used as a tool to connect them with educators.

Parents want to connect with their children's teachers, but when adults are working outside of the home, connection becomes a bit more challenging. In the U.S., 76 percent of teachers and administrators say technology is important in engaging with parents about their child's school performance.

**Innovating pedagogy:** Motivated teachers have more engaged classes, and streamlining administrative tasks can help them focus more time on teaching.

Technology is a great tool to streamline tasks, help with grading, and enable pedagogical innovation—important steps to help alleviate some of the stress teachers feel each day.

**Emerging technologies:** Schools are incorporating emerging technologies into the classroom to enable more innovative and engaging teaching methods and learning experiences.

AI, VR, and AR are much more common in our everyday lives. Ninety-one percent of children ages 4-11 have access to a smart assistant. As people recognize how technology can create engaging experiences in the classroom, educators are working to incorporate these technologies effectively in a way that augments high-quality instruction.

# 3 digital strategies to help with assessment

Assessing students over time using digital tools also helps save teachers' time

## BY ROBERT LOW

Educators can make their instruction more effective and provide practice linked directly to progress monitoring and formative assessment results using a number of free digital tools. Teachers can also take advantage of time-saving features such as automatic grading and the computerized compilation of points awarded for correct answers so that test administration takes less time and there is more time teaching.

While many educators have used progress monitoring and formative

bers of the Microsoft Education team. These benefits include being able to accommodate the needs of diverse learners by developing more personalized learning pathways, so that every student can reach a level of success.

## Creating quick quizzes linked to personalized practice

Jon Kay, a Microsoft senior program manager based in Beijing, China, explained how Microsoft Forms for Education can be used to develop quizzes and other assessments quickly

that can suggest related questions, which can be used to create worksheets related to the questions for students who need additional practice.

The assessments and practice activities can quickly be personalized using Microsoft's Immersive Reader, which enables educators to change the text size, translate questions, or have them spoken aloud, in order to make them accessible to students who are English Learners or have special needs. Students can also upload files containing their answers to a folder where only the teacher can see their responses.

## Documenting progress and integrating the process

Ann Kozma, an education innovation lead, explained how students can use a digital app called Flipgrid to document their learning and demonstrate their progress in unique ways. Flipgrid divides a screen into a series of rectangles, each of which can contain different topics or show a sequential progression. And each of the rectangles can contain different media, such as videos, text, or drawings.

Using this tool, students can respond to prompts in their own ways and in a variety of ways. They can document their individual learning pathways independently. As Kozma and Etheredge pointed out, this type of documentation can be especially helpful for students who may be reluctant to participate in class discussions due to shyness, limited English proficiency, or special needs, but who may feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and knowledge in a safe environment via a digital format.

The creation of assessments and their implementation can all be integrated through the use of Microsoft Teams. Tosin Bosede, head of Teams for Education marketing, explained how the digital hub can integrate conversations, content, and assessments.



assessment results to guide their instruction and provide related practice, they now can create their own adaptive assessment and practice loops, with a correct answer automatically leading to the next question, while a wrong answer takes students directly to a practice activity that helps them master the content or skill being assessed

During a recent [edWebinar](#), Kelli Etheredge, a director of teaching and learning resources in Mobile, AL, identified key benefits of formative assessment technologies presented by mem-

and easily, while incorporating features that enable students to make continued progress, and also saving teachers time needed to evaluate and utilize assessment results.

Using Forms, educators can create their own questions, identify the correct answers, assign point values for each answer, and customize the next step for students based on their answers. An easy-to-use navigation system lets educators choose different types of questions, such as multiple choice or text. There's also a Math Intelligence feature

Educators can use this tool to organize and implement their participation in multiple teams, with one team being a classroom of students, for example, and another being the educator team that creates and evaluates assessments.

For assessment purposes, Teams can be used to document students' participation in online collaborative conversations, or to access online notebooks in which students may be demonstrating

class OneNote notebooks, and digitized devices) modeled after her classroom. She now supports teachers in their technology integration and teaches design thinking classes that work with local non-profits to solve community challenges. Additionally, preK-9th grade students visit her Innovation Lab to explore real-world challenges connected to their core curriculum and examine solutions by going through the design

years dedicated to empowering others and transforming teaching and learning as a classroom teacher, an innovation and instructional support teacher on special assignment, and as an Educator Innovation Lead on Team Flipgrid at Microsoft. Ann loves to explore, share, and contribute to the greater EdTech community and presents at local, national, and international events. She believes that "Play is our brain's

*Using this tool, students can respond to prompts in their own ways and in a variety of ways. They can document their individual learning pathways independently. As Kozma and Etheredge pointed out, this type of documentation can be especially helpful for students who may be reluctant to participate in class discussions due to shyness, limited English proficiency, or special needs, but who may feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and knowledge in a safe environment via a digital format.*

their understanding of a topic even if they don't participate in classroom discussions. Teams can also be used to develop rubrics with other educators or with the students themselves so that the students "know what success looks like" early in the learning and assessment process.

Bosede pointed out that digital tools like Teams are now used in many workplaces, so building a familiarity with these types of tools will help students prepare for 21st century careers, as will their ability to respond effectively to online assessments and use a variety of formats to communicate.

### About the presenters

Kelli Etheredge is the Director of Teaching and Learning Resources at St. Paul's Episcopal School in Mobile, Alabama. She supports preK-12 teachers in effective integration of technology and innovative lesson design. She taught high school English for 14 years and has been teaching in a 1:1 environment since 2000. For a few years, she transitioned out of the classroom to focus on supporting the 1:1 learning initiative in grades 5-12 (no textbooks,

thinking process. Her work with students has been featured on Copy/Paste, TeachTech, Microsoft in Education, OneNote, and Daily Edventures blogs.

Tosin Bosede is the head of Teams for Education marketing. She loves to connect with educators and school leaders to understand how technology can improve learning and innovation. With a decade of technology experience, Tosin is focused on ways innovation transforms everyday life. She holds a B.A. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.B.A from MIT Sloan School of Management.

Jon Kay is a Senior Program Manager on the Microsoft Forms team in Beijing, China, primarily focusing on service backend fundamentals and EDU. His previous Microsoft work spans Windows 7/8 Printing & Scanning, Windows 10 Geolocation & Compatibility, Bing News Search, and PowerPoint Online. He spends his free time traveling the world, browsing Reddit, and listening to podcasts.

### About the host

Ann Kozma loves to explore, share, and contribute and has spent the past 18

favorite way to learn." and is a member of the Apple Distinguished Educator Class of 2015, Leading Edge Certified as a Professional Learning Leader, and is a CUE Inc. Lead Learner. You can connect with her on Twitter at [@annkozma723](https://twitter.com/annkozma723).

### Join the community

[Assessment for Learning](#) is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net where educators can learn from top experts to improve assessment practices, explore new tools and personalize teaching so every child can meet and exceed state and district standards.

This broadcast was sponsored by [Microsoft Education](#). The recording of the edWebinar can be viewed by anyone [here](#).

*Robert Low has worked in educational publishing for more than 30 years. His experience ranges from editing and product management to online advertising and content development. He also works with edWeb.net to write articles on their professional learning edWebinars.*

# Why I use student-driven ideas in my curriculum

A high school teacher shares an innovative way to keep students on task

**BY DIANNE PAPPAFOTOPOULOS**

You might think that teaching a high school programming course in which students are asked to code simple games and interactive websites would be motivating and exciting, but there are unforeseen elements of dealing with the teenage brain and the influences on their lives that seem to creep into the most well-designed plans. Students come to class with various types of anxiety, fears, and coping issues from daily stresses. They are also distracted with social media and the availability of instant information at their fingertips. As teachers, how do we keep them engaged and focused on their learning with the overwhelming amount of social and emotional distractions in their lives?

## Student-driven ideas: the key to keeping students engaged

Keeping students on task is a constant challenge, so when I observed some students playing an online game when they were supposed to be working on an assignment, my first reaction was to ask them to close the program. Then I began to wonder why they were so fixated on playing this particular game. I wasn't dealing with the typical Fortnite addiction; this was an escape-room game. (If you are not familiar with an escape-room game, Wikipedia defines it as a "physical adventure game in which players solve a series of puzzles and riddles using clues, hints, and strategies to complete the objectives at hand." I asked these students why they liked this game and they eagerly gave me their reasons, which revolved around conquering a personal challenge.

I realized that students didn't seem thrilled about the work I asked them to do. Instead, they decided to switch to

something different that caught their attention and motivated them to challenge themselves. My lesson had some important elements of coding included so I didn't want to toss it out completely, but I wondered if I could use the "escape room" idea to spark a new level of interest in my plans. Should I let my student's interest and/or distraction drive my curriculum?

## Why this lesson worked

I created a new project in [Google Classroom](#) that included escape-room concepts asked students to work collaboratively to design and code their own game using HTML and JavaScript. Initially, students seemed enthused and shared ideas, but I sensed that there was still little effort by some to actually begin. The majority of students were working on the task, creating flowcharts and following the rubric, while others couldn't seem to get past the idea stage.

As in all project-based learning, students still needed guidance with specific benchmarks to get immersed in their idea. They could be creative, collaborate, and think critically, but had to work on their focus and time management to keep engaged in the process. It was time to shut the door and lock all of their daily stresses and distractions outside!

## The importance of flowcharts

Once they had their idea, students began with a flowchart. Flowcharting—similar to mind mapping, graphic organizing, and brainstorming—offers several benefits to student learning. Usually identified with business projects and programming tasks, flowchart-



ing allows students to organize their thoughts in a graphical display while applying a logical sequence. This practice can be applied to any discipline where students are asked to make a decision, solve a problem, or identify the cause and effect of a particular situation. Creating a flowchart helped my students follow a defined path that made their code come to life. It was the catalyst to get them started.

### Project details for students:

1. Students collaborate on their idea and document it on a shared Google Doc to show project ownership.
2. Students create and submit a flowchart using [Lucidcharts](#). (If some students were more comfortable drawing their charts on paper, I accepted that format as well.)
3. Students design a rubric based on their perception as to how they think the escape room should be evaluated.
4. Students code their game. (Note: In other subject areas, students replace the coding with [Google Sites](#) to create a webpage and [Google Forms](#) to provide an avenue for user input when unlocking codes. There can also be physical challenges using objects in their classroom with hidden clues to unlock codes.)
5. Students reflect on the experience through a student-created screencast or [Flipgrid](#) to discuss project and highlight challenges.

### Project details for teachers:

1. Create project criteria, collaborate

on a student-designed rubric, and add video examples of escape rooms within Google Classroom.

2. Monitor, assist, and encourage students to try different clues, puzzles/challenges while troubleshooting code.
3. Assign outside faculty to judge final games based on class rubric.
4. Assess student work offering feedback based on class rubric and group participation.

### The outcome

Using student-driven ideas in my curriculum proved to be beneficial to

learning. Students were engaged, focused, excited about coding, and—for a short period of time—free from the stresses and distractions around them.

This experience taught me to worry less about trying to create the perfect lesson on my own and to simply watch what my students were doing to distract themselves to generate interest. By stealing their means to escape from stress and distractions and adding student-driven ideas to my lessons, I happily brought them into my room and into the world.

*Dianne Pappafotopoulos is a certified instructional technology specialist/teacher and certified Google Educator at Dover Sherborn (MA) Public Schools, where she teaches technology courses and assists faculty and staff to integrate technology into the curriculum. With a masters in education and a combination of teaching, business, and technology experience, Pappafotopoulos is well versed in the types of resources and pedagogy that work well in the classroom to engage students and enable teachers to feel confident with technology-rich lessons.*

---

## The 4 tech skills all middle schoolers should develop

A principal and a computer teacher detail the tech skills their students need to become digitally savvy in a connected economy

### BY REBECCA STECK & JENNIFER VESPUCCI

Saint Patrick's is a small, pre-K–8 Catholic school in Yorktown Heights, New York. Last year, we received a grant to revamp our computer lab into what we call a STREAM lab, which stands for science, technology, religion, engineering, art, and math.

The grant allowed us to invest in 30 new MacBook Airs to supplement our existing iPads and Chromebooks. Before we spent a cent, though, we made certain to connect every purchase with our two important goals: improving each individual child's academic and career prospects, and improving our students' scores on state assessments, which are critical to whether we're succeeding or failing as a school.

To that end, here are four essential tech skills that we strive to teach all of our students by the time they finish middle school.

#### 1. Robotics and coding

Like many schools, we've expanded our robotics and coding programs. For

the past year, we've been using the [Sphero SPRK+](#) and [Dash and Dot](#) to introduce robotics and support inquiry-based learning. This year, students will also be using [Ozobot's](#) Bit and Evo robots, as well as [LEGO WeDo](#) and Mindstorms robotic kits. Robots encourage kids to collaborate and to drive lessons with their creativity. They decide as a team what they're going to accomplish, and they go from there.

When it comes to coding, our K–8 students start with the visual block programming platform [Blockly](#). In addition, our 8th-graders use [CodeMonkey](#), an online platform that teaches them text-based coding in a language called Coffee Script. Students take on the character of a monkey, and each lesson is part of their monkey's quest to earn bananas. The goal is to make coding fun, and to prepare our students to program using other text-based languages like Python and JavaScript.

#### 2. Keyboarding

Today's students need keyboarding skills for coding, but also for their

assessments, which are now being delivered online. Here in New York, students can be required to type paragraphs on an assessment as early as 3rd grade, and our state standards require keyboarding skills as well.

To help all of our students learn how to type or to hone their keyboarding and tech skills, we use online typing games from [TypeTastic](#). Our kindergarteners start by using the mouse first to get familiar with the keyboard, then move on to actually finding the letters on the keyboard.

For our younger students, typing is one unit covered throughout the year and is taught as a full-period lesson during their weekly computer class. Keyboarding is embedded in the curriculum for K–3 students so that, as they move from grade to grade, it becomes second nature to them.

For 4th- through 8th-graders, typing is more often a 10-minute warmup at the start of computer class. Each child works at their own pace within their assigned units. In addition, some students have the opportunity to continue

their lessons on Chromebooks during their weekly library period (once they finish their library work). They love that the keyboarding skills they're learning are presented as a game.

### 3. Making

Ultimately, we want our students to be producing things that are valuable to other people. For example, we do a lot of 3D design in [TinkerCad](#). Some of the grades use a program called [Book Creator](#) to help kids write and illustrate their own stories. With an art program like [Kid Pix 3D](#), students can draw, paint, and create animated artwork or slideshows. As much as they're creating, though, they also need to be able to explain their finished product and the

process they followed to achieve their goal. This is another reason keyboarding is so important to our program.

### 4. Communication via multiple devices

Verbal expression is important, of course, but today's students need to be able to use different forms of technology to produce rather than just consume media. Our middle school is 1:1 on iPads, so devices are part of their blended learning experience in every class, whether they have an attached keyboard or are using the touchscreen.

For the younger grades, we have 50 iPads and about 25 Chromebooks that can be shared among the K-5 students. This means that from an early age they

become comfortable with both the touch screen and traditional keyboard. They independently locate apps as well as websites, and are able to connect with their teachers and peers using whatever device is at hand.

At Saint Patrick's, we're excited about expanding our use of the technology that we were able to purchase with our grant and within our school budget. We're using those tools not just as part of students' day-to-day work, but to give them the best possible chance at success in high school, college, and their careers.

*Rebecca Steck is the principal and Jennifer Vespucci is the computer teacher at Saint Patrick's School in Yorktown Heights, New York.*

## 6 steps to choose digital resources wisely

A principal and a computer teacher detail the tech skills their students need to become digitally savvy in a connected economy

### BY TAMMI SISK

Teachers understand how important it is to use high-quality educational tools and digital resources in the classroom, and they know it's important to help students select books that match their needs and interests.

However, students today are learning from an expanded array of digital content, both at home and at school. This means teachers and parents have shared responsibility for teaching students a new set of skills for selecting media.

The six steps below will help teachers and parents discover high-quality media and learn what to look for and discuss with their students. Teachers should follow their local software approval process, but can reinforce the skills and ideas below.

**Step 1:** Make a list of the specific digital resources your children use or would like to use.

**Step 2:** Use reviews to learn about the digital resources your child wants to use. The following two sites provide information about what's in a game, app, movie, or online service. This helps parents make informed decisions about the media used by their children:

- [Common Sense Media Reviews](#) provide help with finding age-appropriate apps, games, movies, music and TV shows. They also provide information parents need to know.
- [Entertainment Software Ratings Board Reviews](#) provide a rating and what's in the game or app.

**Step 3:** Consider the following questions to inform your decision and what you need to talk about with your children.

**What is the educational value of the app, media, game, or service?** Talk with children about...

- where they can go to find age-appropriate apps, games, movies, etc.

**Can your child communicate with people they don't know while using the app, game, or service?** Talk with children about...

- what personal information is OK to share and with whom?
- whether it's OK to share photos/videos and when does a photo or video cross the line into inappropriate?
- what they can do if they receive communications that make them feel uncomfortable or scared.
- your expectations for how to treat people when communicating online.
- what to do if someone they are communicating with is in trouble or needs help

**Is the app, game, media, or service age appropriate and is there questionable content?** Talk with children about...

- why using content or online services that are not age appropriate may be unhealthy or unsafe.

- real life vs. dramatization.
- adult content vs. kid content.

**Does the tool or service use location services?** Talk with children about...

- whether you expect location services to be on or off and why.
- the benefits and potential dangers of leaving location services turned on. Some services make it visible for others to see where they are.

**Can your child buy additional features, also known as in-app purchases?** Talk with children about...

- whether they can purchase additional features and if so, what process you expect them to follow.
- whether they should ask permission before making a purchase?
- whether you will preload money into the accounts for them to use?
- how to keep track of how much money they are spending. Make it visible so they learn money management.
- how companies use what the buy and click on to advertise to them.

**Can they publish text, photos, or videos publicly?** Talk with children about...

- the value of their digital footprint and how to cultivate a positive one that will help their current and future opportunities.
- who looks at digital footprints (colleges, future employers, friends, family, community members)?
- what is helpful to publish and what might be harmful to publish.

**Is there live streaming?** Talk with children about...

- the importance of self-regulation. Explain why it is important to consider immediate and future consequences of live streaming their experiences.
- your family's values and when/where and what content is ok to live stream or whether you permit it at all.



**What information is collected about your child and who can they share it with?** This information is usually found in the Terms of Service and Privacy Policies. Talk with children about...

- the information the app, game, or service is collecting about them and why it matters
- when to say not to an app, game or service that collects or shares too much information.

**Who owns the content your child posts or shares?** Talk with children about...

- copyright and their rights and responsibilities as consumers and creators of online content.
- Creative Commons licensing and how they can decide how their original works can be used by others.

**Does the app, game, media, or service reflect your family's values?** Talk with children about...

- why the app, game, media or online services is or isn't in alignment with your family's values.

**Step 4:** Ok, you've done your research! Next, decide if the app, game, or media is right for your family or your classroom. Does your child have the maturity, judgment, and self-control to use it in a safe, responsible and ethical manner?

**Step 5:** Establish expectations and consequences for not following the agreed-upon rules. Parents should be transparent about any parental controls you are using and why. Be consistent in upholding the expectations and consequences for not using digital resources appropriately. Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia provides [guidance and resources for establishing expectations](#).

**Step 6:** Enjoy media and digital resources together. Look for teachable moments to help children develop a safe and healthy relationship with their media and devices.

*Tammi Sisk is an educational specialist for instructional technology integration at Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia.*

# How to find the right teaching resources—without being overwhelmed

Learn how this teacher avoids an avalanche of online information and locates the right high-quality teaching resources for her students

## BY ELIZABETH VOGEL

As a fifth grade teacher, I used to spend hours hunting for math materials and exercises. If I had to teach my math class a standard skill, like adding fractions with different denominators, I would flip through thick binders of exercises, maybe printing up a few. Then I'd search online, where I'd inevitably find an avalanche of teaching resources, including loads of useless resources. It took hours to winnow the mathematical wheat from the chaff.

Like most elementary teachers I know, I'm responsible for teaching all subject areas. That means more lesson prep work to prepare for each class. The work to prepare high-quality lessons day-in and day-out for all classes has only grown more challenging in recent years, particularly in English (ELA) and math. Most teachers nationwide now teach to Common Core standards.

In Connecticut, where I teach in a public grade school, we've had Common Core since 2011. This gives teachers a daunting to-do list for their math classes. For each standard, whether forming algebraic expressions or classifying two-dimensional shapes, we must find reliable teaching resources. To check out each offering, and vet its viability, a teacher often goes through the search results one by one. It's a painstaking process, especially for a single subject that takes only one period of the crowded day.

That's why I have been hunting for online tools that can do the heavy lifting for me of finding reliable, high-quality teaching resources. I know a lot of teachers could use them. According to a Rand Corp. study, 95 percent of elemen-

tary teachers hunt online for teaching resources and lesson plans. This drags down learning, because the more time teachers spend scrounging for resources, the less time they have to dedicate to teaching—and to each of their students.

In many ways, these new online services are curators: They organize the teaching resources so that I can quickly find reliable exercises and quizzes. One of the most useful is IBM's free [Teacher Advisor With Watson](#). It uses machine learning to find relevant teaching resources for each math concept. These resources add focus to my math classes—and now that I'm not clicking through page after page of Google results, I have more prep time for all the other subjects to be covered in the school day.

[Newsela](#), an instructional content platform founded in 2013, is also great for relevant ELA resources.

The pre-assessment tools on these educational platforms help a teacher measure the skills a student has mastered, and see where their holes are. It's vital to generate this intelligence, the sooner the better. After all, a student's A+ last quarter is ancient history if there's a basic concept she's missing now.

Once we have pre-assessment results, it's easier to organize the students into workgroups. Teacher Advisor is especially helpful at quickly suggesting pre-requisite resources to pull into my 5th grade math classes based on the gaps in knowledge they might have. If five students need to brush up on a skill that is crucial for success on the unit we're about to start, they can work on

pre-requisite content from Teacher Advisor together, while other groups tackle different challenges.

Another common issue with math education in particular is back-sliding. By fall, kids have forgotten some of what they learned the previous spring. With new tools, you can trace the education backwards, find the skills they've lost, or never had, and quickly find material they need to review.

Other online services curate material for other subjects. [ReadWorks](#), for example, provides resources to support standards-based language arts curriculum. Another site to try is Common Core Sheets which has math, language arts, social studies, and science resources.

I've spread the word around my school, and my colleagues are adapting more online tools, some faster than others.

Different teachers, naturally, have different approaches and needs. But for those who spend hours every school night hunting on search engines for math exercises, assessments, and quizzes, there's help online—provided you know where to look.

---

*Elizabeth Vogel teaches fifth grade in Orange, CT, where her classroom is self-contained and her responsibilities include teaching all subjects. She holds a B.S. degree in Elementary Education from the University of Vermont and an M.B.A. from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Previously she was employed by IBM as a Human Factors Engineer, studying how end users learn computer applications and designing ways to improve usability.*

# Digital teaching and learning in the smartphone era

Navigating classroom technology doesn't have to be daunting--all it takes is the ability to understand the relationship today's students have with technology

## BY RICK SELBY

For much of the past two decades, educators have commonly referred to millennials as “digital natives.” Given that they are the first generation to grow up with access to personal computers, the descriptor seemed apt at the time. But today’s students—the emerging Generation Z—are demonstrating what it really means to be a true digital native.

Not only are these students growing up with widespread access to computers and the internet, they are surrounded by smartphones and other mobile devices with impressive computing power.

As a history teacher for nearly three decades, I have seen this transformation firsthand. As an AVID staff developer who provides professional learning to other teachers, I have learned that the way we teach students must change with their evolving expectations. Teachers must be prepared to embrace technology in the classroom, not as a shortcut, but as a way of fostering deeper learning among their students through methods that better reflect the world they live in today.

They must incorporate into their lessons the sorts of digital tools that students will be expected to have mastered when they enter the workforce. To do so, of course, teachers must first understand these tools themselves—and without ever losing sight of their original educational goals.

I have been fortunate to work as a staff developer with AVID since 1999. AVID is a national nonprofit focused on college and career readiness. It provides professional development and training opportunities to teachers in a variety of subjects, or “training strands.” Today, those training strands have evolved to



include digital teaching and learning.

Using education technology is not about simply learning how to incorporate specific tools into a classroom that can help make a teacher’s job easier. It is about becoming proficient in digital teaching and learning, creating an environment that meets students where they are and deepens their learning. It requires more than learning how to operate a specific piece of technology; it requires a shift in mindset. AVID’s digital teaching and learning training aims to help educators make this shift, keeping the focus on learning, not the tools.

Instead of just showing teachers how to use a new technology, professional development must demonstrate how to meaningfully integrate technology into a classroom in ways that increase rigor and bring their teaching into the 21st century. Gone are the days of having to memorize large amounts of information. Most answers a student needs are now just a Google search away. A teacher proficient in digital teaching and learning knows not to discourage students from using the tools around them, and instead encourages them to use

those tools as a springboard for further learning.

Good note-taking, for example, is no longer limited to highlighting the most important pieces of information with a yellow highlighter. Students can now easily organize and revise their notes with the click of a mouse, and they can hyperlink specific passages to informative websites, videos, or podcasts, furthering their knowledge and connecting what they are learning to the vast world around them.

This is just a small example of what can be accomplished when teachers rethink the role technology can play in their classroom. [Digital teaching and learning](#) is not about shortcuts, or about impressing students with the newest piece of tech. It’s about weaving technology into a classroom in ways that deepen—not distract from—learning.

And it’s about helping students learn in an environment that better reflects the world they know—and the world of work they will one day enter.

---

*Rick Selby is a history teacher in San Diego, CA.*

# Using title funds for STEM curriculum

STEM initiatives can be part of title fund applications, opening the door for increased funding and new learning opportunities

## BY CHRISTINE MCDONNELL

Education initiatives are continually adapting to new trends, policies, and opportunities. Yet, funding is a consistent roadblock when teachers and administrators attempt to expand the resources—especially the STEM resources—available in the classroom.

When applying for special grants, the amount of money awarded, application requirements, and time during the school year are all demands placed on educators.

School districts, however, already maintain detailed title fund budgets. Educators can offer new, innovative curriculum by integrating [STEM initiatives](#) into their title fund applications.

## What are title funds?

Title funds are federal monies intended for supplementing, not replacing, existing state funding with education. With this additional funding, schools can enhance their student's experiences by spending on programs and materials.

There are [five main types of title funds](#) that can be used to support specific types of programs:

- Title I – These funds are used for helping low-income students meet the academic state standards through programming initiatives.
- Title II – These funds are used to support educators and administrators in professional development.
- Title III – These funds go towards programs and materials for English language learners (ELL).
- Title IV – This funding is used for academic enrichment with a special focus on STEM education.
- IDEA – These funds support programs or materials for students with special needs or Individualized Education Programs.

In addition to budgeting for specific student groups, educators are creating

holistic [strategies for STEM education](#). Teachers and administrators need to not only stay on top of new standards, but also oversee the execution of STEM initiatives. This is admittedly easier said than done, but title funding can help streamline the process.

## Supporting STEM curriculum

Title funds can be optimized for supplemental learning, like leadership programming, [social emotional learning curriculum](#), and STEM materials. Depending on your school type and demographic, multiple title funds can be used to support STEM curriculum.

Many schools use Title I funds to purchase STEM materials. The U.S. Department of Education conducted a study that outlined different use cases of Title I funds for STEM programs. Some examples include purchasing STEM education materials for school-wide initiatives, providing school loaned devices, and offering after school STEM clubs.

Another more straightforward way of using title funds for STEM is with Title IV. Title IV specifically emphasizes STEM education. This can include, but is not limited to, academic enrichment, STEM curriculum, and integrating technology into the classroom.

Indiana's [Pike Township](#) used Title IV funds to purchase [a full computer science curriculum](#) for their summer programming initiatives. With this course, students can engage with STEM learning, career readiness, and technology. Erin Naylor, STEM Support Specialist for Pike Township, says, "The summer enrichment program is our most popular one, it fills up the quickest and we have waitlists for students to attend." Funding initiatives like Pike Township's show the need for STEM curriculum proliferation.

Title funding is not limited to only

student initiatives—Title II funds are used to educate teachers and contribute to professional development. These monies can be put toward STEM conferences or learning opportunities for educators. Not all teachers consider themselves to be tech-savvy, let alone knowledgeable of advanced computer science skills. Some teachers of STEM curriculum find themselves learning alongside their students. Title II funds help educators learn these STEM competencies and prepare them to teach curriculum in the classroom.

Overall, title funding provides many opportunities for educators to implement STEM curriculum. Whether you are a district looking to provide teachers with training, building a comprehensive STEM curriculum for students, or looking to upgrade the STEM equipment available in schools, title funding provides a variety of opportunities to help maximize the impact of your program.

---

*Christine McDonnell is the CEO and Co-Founder of Codelicious, a provider of full-year computer science curriculum. Christine graduated Magna Cum Laude from Vanderbilt University with Bachelor's degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and earned her MBA in Corporate Strategy and Marketing from the University of Michigan. Prior to Codelicious, Christine led her own consulting practice, McDonnell & Associates, which focused on counseling high-growth technology ventures. She also held leadership positions at McKinsey & Company and DuPont and is a member of Women in High Tech. Christine is passionate about creating access and removing barriers to teaching and learning computer science in schools. You can connect with Christine on [LinkedIn](#) or [Codelicious.com](#).*

# Movement and learning combine to spark student success

Students are better able to focus when they have time for movement and learning—and these strategies can be used at home while schools are closed

## BY NANCY FLATLEY

Teachers never have enough hours in the day. So when we find learning tools that engage students and also serve multiple purposes, it's a huge bonus. That's just what I discovered when I began using an interactive video series that gets students up and moving while

around throughout the day.

However, time is a precious commodity in today's classrooms. With all the content we're expected to cover, we have to be very efficient with our instructional time. Having a resource that gets students moving at the same time they're learning important content

our classroom runs the gamut.

Jennifer and I teach side by side all day, either in small groups or by pulling students out for one-on-one instruction, depending on their needs. We try to use as many engaging resources as possible. We're always looking for additional resources to help us teach science and social studies in particular. We started using on-demand video curriculum from [Adventure 2 Learning](#) two years ago, and our students were engaged from the start.

While the service includes several different types of videos covering a wide range of topics, the Adventure to Fitness videos really capture students' attention while combining movement and learning in healthy and productive ways. In these videos, students learn about social studies, geography, science and other topics as they embark on adventures with their guide, Mr. Marc. Students run, jump and swing their arms right along with Mr. Marc as he travels through ancient China, journeys to the Himalayas, or tracks wildlife in Tasmania.

## Why do students need to move?

Research links physical activity to academic performance and achievement. For instance, Dr. John J. Ratey, an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has [investigated at length](#) the relationship between movement and learning.

Students' brains tend to go on autopilot if they sit still for more than 20 minutes, but moving around boosts blood flow to the brain. This stimulates cognitive activity, helping students focus, learn and retain information, and tap into their creative abilities, according to



*Students' brains tend to go on autopilot if they sit still for more than 20 minutes, but moving around boosts blood flow to the brain. This stimulates cognitive activity, helping students focus, learn and retain information, and tap into their creative abilities.*

they're learning core content.

The link between movement and learning is clear: When students do some sort of physical activity, their brains are stimulated as well — and they're able to focus and learn more effectively. This is why teachers in a growing number of classrooms are building in learning breaks for their students to get up, stretch, and move

is a key way to be more efficient.

I teach third grade in an inclusive classroom at James H. Vernon School in East Norwich, N.Y., along with my co-teacher, special education instructor Jennifer Spelatis. We have 22 students, all of whom have varying academic needs. Some read below grade level while others excel. Some have IEPs, and some have behavioral challenges —

Ratey's research. And these benefits last well after students have stopped exercising.

Our students come back from lunch at 12 p.m. and go straight through until 2:40 p.m. During that time, we're expected to cover three different subjects. We use Adventure to Fitness videos to get our students up and moving and help their brains prepare for more learning.

We've found that students are more focused and are better able to learn and absorb information when they have a chance to move around. Some of our students struggle with attention, and this gives them the extra focus they need. It

helps them clear their heads and center their minds for the afternoon subjects ahead.

This extra movement also gives students exercise or activity they might not get at home — especially today when, unfortunately, many children are on screens for most of the day.

### Saving precious time while students learn

One of the biggest benefits we see from these videos is that students are exercising at the same time they're learning. This physical movement helps drive home the concepts we're covering in class.

What's more, we're saving valuable time because we're able to teach content while students are up and moving. We really appreciate having a resource that allows students to learn and be active at the same time.

Students love the chance to get up and move as Mr. Marc travels the globe, even if it's just for 20 minutes — and they always learn something exciting. To hear them declare that they had a fun day at school is just what we, as teachers, want from our students.

*Nancy Flatley teaches third grade at James H. Vernon School in East Norwich, N.Y.*

## Using SEL to combat digital stressors

Students deal with a lot, but digital stressors can be managed with specific interventions, including a focus on SEL

### BY STACEY PUSEY

Today's 24/7 access to technology has brought many benefits, from online collaboration to improved parent-teacher communication. But that 24/7 environment has also brought increased stress to students' lives as issues they encounter at school, especially on social media, follow them home. In the edWebinar "[How Digital Stressors Impact Student Learning](#)," Jamie Nunez, Bay Area regional manager at Common Sense Media, explained what digital stressors are and how social-emotional learning (SEL) can be used to combat them.

Typically, technology doesn't start out as a stressor. Instead, said Nunez, students approach most tech devices with curiosity, and even excitement. They become digital stressors, though, because of how students navigate the digital space.

First, 24/7 presence means students never have a break, or they may feel anxiety when they're not online. Moreover, most children often use technology late at night, which means



they're often handling whatever they find on their own.

In order to help students deal with digital stressors, educators must first understand the main issues:

- Receiving mean and personal attacks
- Being impersonated or hacked
- Being outed, shamed, or humiliated
- Feeling smothered by someone's dig-

ital communications

- Breaking into someone's account or phone, which also includes the pressure to remember login information and to remember to log out
- Feeling pressure to comply with intimate photos—or intimacy in general—in the online space

The answer, though, isn't to just tell

students to ignore digital communications. As part of their SEL curriculum, teachers should practice skills that offer solutions to digital dilemmas:

- Create a safe space for students to share issues. For instance, some schools have a text message service; at another school librarians collect anonymous student notes; then the librarians lead a Q&A with students.
- Allow students to voice and name digital stressors instead of pretending they don't exist. Use visual guides with young children; for older students, educators may need to name stressors they have faced to help normalize them.
- Foster digital curiosity in school instead of banning it. Even schools that don't allow general phone use during the day can have a 15-minute period each day where the teachers give kids specific tasks to complete on their phones.
- Highlight students who model digital resiliency or digital empathy skills. Nunez says many schools recognize exemplary digital citizens.
- Integrate technology and social media into lessons where appropriate to model good citizenship.

Finally, Nunez's top recommendation is to integrate SEL into the school's pedagogy and make digital skills a regular part of the lessons. Using an SEL curriculum, teachers can introduce a digital dilemma and model solutions

with kids. Then, the skills teachers want students to learn for in-person interactions become the same skills that students feel confident using online.

### About the presenter

Jamie Nunez is the Bay Area regional manager at Common Sense Education and supports school districts in their efforts to implement digital wellness initiatives. For the past 17 years, Jamie has redefined education practices by designing creative learning networks for educators and families. As a former high school teacher, school administrator, and after school director, Jamie has facilitated hundreds of professional development workshops on student engagement in digital spaces. The common threads across his career are the beliefs that learning is most powerful when it's founded on a child's experience outside of the classroom and engagement is most impactful when it fosters their digital identity. Jamie holds a doctorate in international comparative education from Stanford. When not working, Jamie can be found in public places teaching his 4-year-old daughter how to give compliments to strangers.

### About the host

Jennifer Eehalt is the Pittsburgh regional manager at Common Sense Education. She is responsible for helping school districts build a culture of digital citizenship among educators,

students, and their families. She designs and delivers professional development for preK-12 educators that focuses on the implementation of Common Sense's K-12 digital citizenship resources along with how to integrate technology into the classroom. Through her work, she has had the opportunity to share best practices by presenting at ISTE, ASCD, PETE & C, TRETTC, ICE IDEAcon and GAETC.

### Join the community

[Digital Learning & Leadership](#) is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net where you can share, learn, and discuss ideas and best practices to enhance teaching with technology.

This edWeb broadcast was hosted [Common Sense Education](#) and sponsored by [Symantec](#). The recording of the edWebinar can be viewed by anyone [here](#).

---

*Stacey Pusey is an education communications consultant and writer. She assists education organizations with content strategy and teaches writing at the college level. Stacey has worked in the preK-12 education world for 20 years, spending time on school management and working for education associations including the AAP PreK-12 Learning Group. Stacey is working with edWeb.net as a marketing communications adviser and writer.*

*Typically, technology doesn't start out as a stressor. Instead, said Nunez, students approach most tech devices with curiosity, and even excitement. They become digital stressors, though, because of how students navigate the digital space.*

# Getting the most out of your SEL platform

An often-neglected aspect of the speech language field, social skills aren't easy to teach to young students. Here's how we're using technology to change that

BY KATHRYN MCCALL

Social skills are an area that has been so neglected in the speech language field, and something that I incorporate with all of my students—even those who don't have a social or emotional goal.

Our high-poverty, rural district serves 9,600 students across 13 schools. I work with students in pre-K through high school, including those in alternative school placements and those with emotional behavior disorders. It's never easy finding social skills materials for these students.

After learning about [Everyday Speech](#), I started using the social emotional learning (SEL) platform with my students diagnosed with a social skills delay or disorder. I quickly realized how beneficial it could be for all of my students. I also saw how useful it could be not only for speech-language pathologists but also for general education teachers.

Here's how we get the most out of the platform:

**Reinforce concepts with individual students.** I recently worked with a student who liked to own the conversation and didn't give others much of a chance to speak. As he'd interact with other kids, they'd drift away, and he didn't understand why. We talked about the videos on conversation skills and how to keep other people engaged, and we reviewed these skills with the worksheet activities. As he continued to practice these skills, I saw a change. He began allowing other people to talk and he began asking questions that drew his peers into the conversation.

**Taking the guesswork out of teaching SEL skills.** The platform includes premade lesson bundles that walk teachers through a skill from beginning to end. They provide the backbone and the tutorials provide additional guidance. A collection of interactive online



games provides additional opportunities for students to master the social skills shown in the video lessons. Games can be used for cooperative or team-based play, or for individualized learning. They can also be used as a review activity to provide an engaging way to work on targeted skills while practicing real-world social interaction.

**Foster carryover and generalization of skills to different contexts.** I often see students trying to use the skills we talk about while using the SEL platform. They check their emotional status before they start talking to peers. They can carry on conversations and interact appropriately with each other. I even see them using terms from the curriculum, like the Relationship Ruler. They really latched onto that idea and they spontaneously use it when interacting with their peers.

**Incorporate an often-neglected learning objective.** I wish I had the social learning platform way back when. It's definitely something anyone can benefit from. If you're going to be around other people, you've got to develop social skills, and this is a fun

way to do it. This program offers total support, whether you have five minutes, an hour, or any amount of time in between to invest. There's no way I can explain everything the platform does. I like to tell people to just try it.

**Apply it to "real life" school situations.** A friend of one of my students (a high-functioning child with a moderate intellectual disability) got into a physical fight on campus. We made it into a topic of discussion and used the platform as a basis of that discussion. My student's comments at the beginning of the session were in total agreement with how the two fighting students behaved. By the time we had talked about the size of the problem, how to communicate effectively about the problem, and the potential solutions to the problem, my student had come up with some different solutions on his own. This is yet another example of how we, as instructors, can leverage technology to enhance the social emotional learning component.

---

*Kathryn McCall is a Speech-Language Pathologist with Colquitt County Schools in Georgia.*

# 7 strategies to boost SEL skills in students

If you're teaching students to be employable, they better have strong SEL skills

BY LINDSEY DIXON

The world may describe what we do as teaching employability skills. I call it social-emotional learning (SEL). Having social-emotional skills – skills such as self-management, forming positive relationships, and responsible decision-making – are critical to becoming “career-ready.”

When you look at the [top 10 skills](#) required in any sector, at least 7 out of 10 have to do with these types of skills. Employers use the term “employability skills” and some in education and policy use “soft skills.”



Regardless of what sector a person is going into, skills such as getting along with peers and handling conflict, or managing emotions when under a stressful deadline, are what employers say they want in a potential employee. An essential part of being college and career ready means understanding and being able to demonstrate these skills in addition to the technical skills required to do the job.

How do K-12 schools help their students learn these SEL skills before they graduate? By adding it to their curriculum and giving students authentic opportunities for practice.

I'm the Director of Career Readiness at the [Urban Assembly](#), a network of

23 career-themed public middle and high schools in New York City. My department creates external partnerships and internships – programs that can be delivered during the course of the day, to give students experience working with real companies and on real-world projects. We've also enhanced the existing curriculum in collaboration with our schools and industry partners to include more practical life and career navigation skills.

For example, we don't want students to graduate understanding math formulas, but not their credit score. Or being

able to write a five-paragraph essay about Shakespeare, but struggling to write a cover letter. Our career readiness team redesigns the existing courses and curriculum to make sure these skills are addressed. We might develop a unit on financial literacy to add to an economics class. Or add digital literacy to a technology class. Or add business communications to an English class. We help teachers develop the course or find something out in the market that helps teach an in-demand skill.

I also spend a lot of time working with industry partners to get feedback about what kinds of skills they are looking for in new graduates and they repeatedly say they want SEL skills. So

we incorporate those lessons into our curriculum to teach students how to problem-solve, how to manage their emotions, and how to work on diverse teams, among other skills.

Our goal is to set students up to be competitive and successful after they graduate by going beyond the minimum requirements for a high school diploma or even a high-stakes test that often doesn't match the demands of the real world.

Here are some ways to get started in incorporating SEL into your high school or CTE program.

**1. Find people and groups that can help you.** Start with a talent analysis. Look around for internal talent in teachers and parents to teach workshops. For instance, there might be a drama teacher who could help students act out conflicts or other real-world scenarios, or a parent who could lead workshops on banking and financial literacy with attention to the key SEL skill of responsible decision-making.

**2. Start small.** Start with one class. Train one teacher. Take one grade level and have them complete the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) – an evidence-based SEL assessment. Just start. Don't wait for all the perfect conditions. Start by measuring students' current SEL skills and career competencies. Once you have the data, you can plan accordingly.

**3. Create a team.** Find out who in your school also cares about promoting SEL and career readiness for students. It could be the principal or a passionate team member or a guidance counselor. Create a team that can spearhead the work. When you're trying to match and prepare students for the best postsecondary opportunity for them, it's impossible if you're not doing it as a team.

**4. Find good partners.** There are many people who will be able to give advice and join your advisory board. Lean on businesses and local organizations that

are interested in improving the future workforce for advice and suggestions.

**5. Revise your curriculum.** Adopt or create a curriculum that includes teaching social-emotional and career development skills. For us, we either find one or we build it ourselves—sometimes with the help of outside partners.

**6. Use data.** Every program needs accountability. That’s how you determine if the program is working. Our SEL Team uses the [DESSA](#) to measure students’ social-emotional competence. That data can help determine if our programs are working. The skills measured in the DESSA very closely match those measured in the national exams that stu-

dents in CTE programs take before they graduate, so the DESSA is an incredibly insightful tool to rate the implementation of an SEL program and how students are doing.

**7. Offer real-world projects.** Having students engage in projects that address real-world problems is a great way for them to practice SEL skills in an authentic context. For example, one of our high schools recently worked with Facebook on a project involving the product development lifecycle. We built curriculum that teaches specifically to those skills most in-demand for product developers and technology teams. In addition to technical skills and

content knowledge, students learned skills such as how to manage their emotions when dealing with tight deadlines and how to make collaborative decisions at a critical moment.

Teaching SEL skills is a huge win-win. It supports students’ academics and prepares them for future jobs and careers, meaning that companies can tap into the talent pipelines they need and communities can benefit from increased economic opportunity. It’s one of the best things schools can do to help set their students up for success.

*Lindsey Dixon is the Director of Career Readiness for the Urban Assembly.*

## Here’s why this principal started a school turnaround with SEL

### BY BELINDA VASQUEZ

I worked in juvenile probation for eight years before becoming a teacher, so I’ve seen the potentially devastating effect of the emotional issues that kids deal with. Before I took over as principal at Bluebonnet Elementary, I was an assistant principal at the middle school, where many of our discipline issues stemmed from students not being able to problem-solve or maintain healthy relationships.

When I became principal, talking to my staff, my teachers, the families, and the community was an eye-opener for me. They pointed out areas of dire academic need, but underlying all of them was a lack of community.

So rather than focus on, for example, increasing test scores in math, my leadership team and I decided to start by integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into not just our curriculum but our entire community.

### SEL for students, teachers, and ‘parent partners’

In those early conversations, I found that many of our students didn’t feel a part

of something big. They needed a foundation of confidence in themselves and in their school as a community, and they needed to understand why teachers were trying to build relationships with them.

On the other hand, my teachers told me that, as a result of high principal turnover, there had been a lack of consistency, leading to distrust of the administration. My immediate promise to them was: “I’m in this with you. Trust me.”

Clearly, our teachers needed SEL themselves. Whether they’re in the classroom teaching or in the hallway talking to another team member, students hear the language they use and see the way they behave. I needed my teachers to build relationships among themselves so that, even if they had disagreements, they could do it in a healthy way.

To establish a common set of goals for the whole school, we put together a team of teachers. I helped them develop a vision, but they were the ones who presented it to the staff. Our performance objectives were attendance, discipline, and building relationships. Our thought was once we were on a better

trajectory with those three things, we would start seeing improvement in academics. My own children had learned the [7 Mindsets](#), such as “everything is possible” and “100 percent accountable,” at the school they were attending, so we used that curriculum as our foundation.

We wanted students to be using the same language at home as they were at school, so we also engaged our “parent partners.” We call them parent partners because we see them as an indispensable part of our community. We got them involved by hosting a family event in the fall where we taught everyone what the 7 Mindsets are, why applying them in their homes would help their kids, and how we’re helping their kids learn them at school.

### Student-led assemblies

Our assemblies are pretty much 100 percent student-led and mindset-focused. We identify grade levels, then give them a mindset and tell them when they’re going to present and the highlights they need to hit. We have meetings far in advance so they know we’re

supporting them in the planning process, but what the assembly looks like is totally up to the students.

It has been amazing. Some kids are very willing to go on stage and take over, but we've also seen kids who usually wouldn't be so vocal come out of their shells and present in whatever way they feel comfortable. They might recite a beautiful poem, but they'll do it behind a curtain, in a disguise, or in a video. They make those choices, but we always make sure that the end result is students recognizing students.

### Developing student leaders

Like many schools, we develop leaders through our student council and National Elementary Honor Society. We also have passion projects that tie into our 7 Mindsets. Every student has to participate, but how they participate can be different. For example, some students develop "passion posters" that we place around the school to display what they're passionate about.

We foster connections among different grades by having our 4th- and 5th-graders serve as reading mentors to our kindergarten and 1st-grade students. Once a week, the older students go read to the younger ones and help them develop their literacy skills.

To further build a sense of community, we have student ambassadors who help with morning drop-offs. They open every door, they say "good morning" to kids and families, and tell them to have a nice day. At our bus drop-off, they high-five or fist-bump every kid, then wave goodbye to our bus drivers and tell them to have a great day, too.

### Improving attendance to build community

Making school a place that students want to be has greatly impacted our attendance. When I started, we were at just over 95 percent for the year. Our goal has been 97 percent for the past two years. Last year we were at 96.76 percent, so we didn't quite get there, but we're improving.

We're also using attendance to rein-

force our sense of community. Every week we communicate attendance to family members, and we celebrate the highest attendance for grade levels by awarding "Attendance Champion" banners that they display in their classrooms. We celebrate individual attendance for kids who have been at school every day for a week or a month. So we're offering a number of incentives to get that data where we want it.

### Using discipline data to strengthen relationships

Discipline referrals at Bluebonnet were high for an elementary school when I got here. We wanted to use a better metric, so our referral data for this year has been based on the number of admin-assisted calls.



We're logging the frequency of our admin calls and the frequency of what each call is for. This year, we've been responding to these calls by going to classrooms and not just finding out what's going on, but taking that teacher's class so they can walk out and have a conversation with that student. We believe that the best way to improve discipline is to build relationships between teachers and students. From the start of the school year to November 1, 2018, we had 33 referrals. This year, as of November 1, we'd had just eight.

### Connecting SEL and academics

Our academic performance has significantly increased, especially when it comes to reading. Our district's goal is for each student to show 1.5 years' growth in reading and math per academic year. At this time last year, 49 percent of our students were reaching 1.5 years; this year it's 67 percent.

We use student/teacher conferences to reinforce SEL concepts. When a teacher shares positive academic data, she'll say, "You see, everything is possible." Our students are hearing the social-emotional component in every meeting, across all subjects, and they're achieving at higher levels because they feel confident.

We talk the talk, and we walk the walk—literally. Our administrators do at least 10 walkthroughs a day. During our daily announcements, we let kids know, "We're going to come see all the wonderful things you're doing in class. We know that you're 100 percent accountable. We know that you're going to do great things."

*Belinda Vasquez is the principal of Bluebonnet Elementary in Lockhart, Texas. She can be reached at [belinda.vasquez@lockhart.txed.net](mailto:belinda.vasquez@lockhart.txed.net).*

# Using SEL to inspire data-driven instruction

BY JENNY ANGELO

Beaumont ISD is a district of more than 18,000 students, with 80 percent of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Our diverse student population has a high mobility rate based on family financial and employment situations, so a number of our students move from school to school during the year. This presents a variety of challenges to the fidelity and cohesiveness of instruction.

Like all districts in Texas, our accountability ratings are based on how our students perform on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests. We align our assessments with the rigor of that state test, but as I always tell my teachers in training, if you just have one piece of data, you only have one corner of a picture.

To get the complete picture, we must look at—and act on—multiple valid, reliable sources of data. Our solution is a combination of strong data-driven instruction and social-emotional learning (SEL) to build strong relationships between teachers and students.

## Gathering, discussing, and acting on data

To gather the data to support this approach, we began using [Renaissance Star Assessments](#) districtwide in the 2015–2016 school year. We screen all K–8 grade students in reading, math, or early literacy at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. We also progress-monitor Tier III students at checkpoints throughout the year to track growth.

We use the information from screening to provide our students the most appropriate placements for their needs, to design targeted tutorials based on their domain scores, and to appropriately differentiate instruction in the classroom.

In the past couple of years, we have also implemented a scripted data-driven instruction (DDI) protocol to guide conversations that we hold in our professional learning communities (PLCs). For

example, a campus administrator or an instructional leader will bring together fourth-grade math teachers, pull up students' data, and discuss it together. Where did the kids go right? Where did they go wrong? Why did they have gaps in learning or misunderstand the concept?

When we see a weakness in those DDI conversations, we script out what we're going to do to rectify these gaps in the PLC. A deep dive into the “why” and the “how” with the teachers and instructional staff determines the approaches, probing questions, and instructional delivery we will use to ensure student mastery of the missed concept. We lay out what resources we will use and exactly when we can expect it to be done. All stakeholders leave with a plan in place.

Beaumont also requires our teachers to have one-on-one goal-setting conferences with every second- through eighth-grade student at least once every grading period. To help students prepare for these conferences by tracking their own data, we produce data folders where students graph their work in reading, math, and writing at least once every two weeks.

Even with our youngest students, teachers work on setting SMART goals—meaning that they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. Setting those goals and holding themselves accountable for the goals is so much more powerful than having someone else set the goals for them. When students then track what they have accomplished on a form they put their hands on, they're much more likely to see areas where they need to improve, and to develop a growth mindset.

## Building relationships through SEL

Closing the achievement gaps in our district takes more than evaluating and acting on academic data. It's also essential that we build relationships with our students. Forging those personal con-

nections gives students the emotional stability they need to focus on learning and having a strong relationship with their teachers makes them more much more open to that instruction.

In a high-poverty district like Beaumont, some of our students come with little or no family structure. We have young students who are responsible for the care of their younger siblings. We see students come to us from homes of abuse and neglect. As a result, we have attendance issues. We have struggles with parent involvement. We have trouble with kids rectifying their own behaviors so they are appropriately able to grasp the learning. To bring SEL in to impact these issues, we implemented the [Sanford Harmony](#) program in every K–5 classroom in the district.

Each day, they have SEL time to model practices and have conversations that tie back to the goals they have set for themselves. Our teachers create a nonthreatening atmosphere that inspires reflection through these discussions. They encourage students to ask themselves questions such as: “What can I do better? What did I miss? What missteps did I make that led to me not achieving, and how can I rectify that in the future?” The Sanford Harmony activities also foster strong, positive student-student and student-teacher relationships.

The combination of SEL and DDI tools allows us to be very precise with targeting the instruction and support that our students need to improve their current situations. My leadership team and I strive to provide every opportunity we can to help students and parents break the cycle of poverty.

---

*Jenny Angelo is the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Beaumont ISD. Not only has she spent decades in service of the district as a classroom teacher and coach, but she was also born and raised in the community. She can be reached via email at [jan-gelo@bmtisd.com](mailto:jan-gelo@bmtisd.com).*

# How we used SEL to transform discipline

BY AFTON SCHLEIFF

## Demographics

Springdale School District serves more than 23,000 students across 31 schools. Southwest Junior High School serves 640 students in both 8th and 9th grades.

## Biggest Challenge

We are a high poverty school (over 70 percent), and many of our students have been exposed to significant trauma. Because we didn't have tools to navigate the behaviors and emotions that can result from trauma, such as aggression and defiance, students and teachers alike were left feeling overwhelmed. Both students and teachers needed more composure. We needed a way to teach students personal responsibility for their behavior, a goal that we were not achieving with traditional discipline.

## Solutions

Myself and a small group of our school's teachers attended a two-day workshop about [Conscious Discipline](#), a trauma-informed social and emotional learning (SEL) program that addresses school climate, discipline, and teaching SEL skills through daily interactions. It provides adults with "powers" and "skills" to remain calm in moments of conflict and see behavior differently, so that we can choose an effective response.

After attending, I asked my principal to buy the Conscious Discipline book for our entire faculty and volunteered to lead the book study for interested staff. Since then, we've continued print and online studies, had seven teachers attend a weeklong Conscious Discipline training event and incorporated SEL-specific professional development.

We've changed our approach to discipline, aiming to teach missing skills instead of solely using traditional discipline. Teachers are focusing on managing their behaviors to diffuse situations,

and are using SEL methods to effectively address behavior. Our goal is for every student to have a person who cares about them, someone they feel connected to and comfortable speaking with. Our school has set aside time most mornings to conduct SEL activities with students.

Teachers have seen a positive difference in students' behavior and are motivated to continue learning and using SEL strategies. We've seen academic gains and, most importantly, students taking SEL skills out of the classroom, such as using breathing exercises at home with siblings.

This year, I'm revamping our in-school suspension (ISS) room to be SEL-friendly by hanging visual routines and agreements, incorporating time for students to be of service to the school, and providing opportunities for students to work together and connect with the ISS teacher. ISS students also participate in self-regulation games with the children in our school's Pre-K classroom.

I've developed a questionnaire for students to take when they are assigned ISS which identifies their executive skills strengths and weaknesses, and then share the results with the student and their teachers. The student and teachers are provided with a list of activities and supports for helping the student work on executive skills weaknesses. I meet with a few students individually each week to check in on their progress. Teachers and peers are also able to send notes of encouragement to the student in ISS – we are a school family, and we want everyone to know that they are valued.

We've seen less of our "frequent flyers" this year. Administrators note that students are articulating their feelings and practicing self-regulation to calm down in the office. They've also seen more students take ownership of their actions and feelings and problem-solve for how they will handle similar situations differently in the future.

## Lessons Learned

- Teachers and students should focus on growth, not just scores. We look for opportunities to celebrate positive progress.
- Confidence affects effort. It increases academic risk-taking in the classroom. Students become more focused on the learning and less worried about what their peers will think of them if they make a mistake.
- SEL encourages and fosters high student engagement and builds a school family.
- Conscious Discipline opens the door for students to be kind to one another, to be assertive, and to encourage one another.
- Connections also lead to increased risk-taking for students academically and allow them to open up and treat others in the school family with respect and care.
- Conscious Discipline empowers students to develop lifelong skills to manage trauma, emotions, conflicts, and setbacks so that they can navigate anything that comes their way-academically, personally, or socially.

## Next Steps

- Continue to develop behavior intervention.
- Continue to refine our Advisory time period for students to learn about the Conscious Discipline powers, skills, and executive skills.
- Students and I are creating a website that will role-play common situations between teens and other teens and teens and parents, providing a Conscious Discipline model for responding.
- I am working with five other secondary schools in my district to share SWJH's experiences practicing Conscious Discipline.

---

*Afton Schleiff is the Instructional Facilitator in the Springdale School District.*

# Company Profiles

**7 Mindsets**[www.7mindsets.com](http://www.7mindsets.com)**Aperture Education**[www.apertureed.com](http://www.apertureed.com)**Aver Information, Inc.**[www.averusa.com/education](http://www.averusa.com/education)**BenQ America**[www.BenQ.com](http://www.BenQ.com)**Biblionasium**[www.biblionasium.com](http://www.biblionasium.com)**Boxlight**[www.mimio.boxlight.com](http://www.mimio.boxlight.com)**Bytes of Learning, Inc.**[www.bytesoflearning.com](http://www.bytesoflearning.com)**CDI Technologies**[www.cdicomputers.com/education](http://www.cdicomputers.com/education)**CenterPoint Education Solutions**[www.centerpointeducation.org](http://www.centerpointeducation.org)**CodeMonkey Studios**[www.codemonkey.com](http://www.codemonkey.com)**CoderZ**[www.gocoderz.com](http://www.gocoderz.com)**Complete Teacher Academy, LLC**[www.CompleteTeacher.com](http://www.CompleteTeacher.com)**Conscious Discipline**[www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com)**Copernicus Educational Products**[www.copernicused.com](http://www.copernicused.com)**Curriculum Associates**[www.curriculumassociates.com](http://www.curriculumassociates.com)**Digitalis Education Solutions, Inc.**[www.digitaliseducation.com](http://www.digitaliseducation.com)**DreamBox Learning, Inc.**[www.dreambox.com](http://www.dreambox.com)**Dremel DigiLab**[www.digilab.dremel.com](http://www.digilab.dremel.com)**d'Vinci Interactive**[www.dvinci.com](http://www.dvinci.com)**EdGate Correlation Services**[www.correlation.edgate.com](http://www.correlation.edgate.com)**Edthena**[www.edthena.com](http://www.edthena.com)**Education Elements**[www.edelements.com](http://www.edelements.com)**Empow Studios**[www.empow.me/virtual](http://www.empow.me/virtual)**Empowering Writers, LLC**[www.empoweringwriters.com](http://www.empoweringwriters.com)**enCode Create**[www.encodecreate.com](http://www.encodecreate.com)**EVERFI K-12**[www.everfi.com/k-12](http://www.everfi.com/k-12)**Everyday Speech**[www.everydayspeech.com](http://www.everydayspeech.com)**FireFly Computers**[www.fireflycomputers.com](http://www.fireflycomputers.com)**GoGuardian**[www.goguardian.com](http://www.goguardian.com)**Gravic, Inc. - Remark Software**[www.remarksoftware.com/products/test-grading](http://www.remarksoftware.com/products/test-grading)**hand2mind**[www.hand2mind.com](http://www.hand2mind.com)**Hooked on Phonics**[www.hookedonphonics.com](http://www.hookedonphonics.com)**HoverCam**[www.hovercam.com](http://www.hovercam.com)**Illuminate Education**

6531 Irvine Center Drive, Suite 100  
Irvine, CA 92618  
(949) 656-3133

[www.illuminateed.com](http://www.illuminateed.com)

Illuminate Education is the leading provider of integrated K-12 technology systems. Illuminate's innovative tools bridge the gap between instruction, assessment, and data analytics for both academics and social-emotional, transforming the potential of teaching and learning.

**Leslie Bade**

Manager, Business Development  
(845) 380-1581

[lbade@illuminateed.net](mailto:lbade@illuminateed.net)**InferCabulary**[www.infercabulary.com](http://www.infercabulary.com)**InScribe**[www.inscribeapp.com](http://www.inscribeapp.com)**KinderLab Robotics, Inc.**[www.kinderlabrobotics.com](http://www.kinderlabrobotics.com)**KneoWorld**[www.KneoWorld.com](http://www.KneoWorld.com)**LanSchool**[www.lanschool.com](http://www.lanschool.com)

**Learning A-Z**[www.learninga-z.com](http://www.learninga-z.com)**Learning Sciences International**[www.learningsciences.com/books](http://www.learningsciences.com/books)**Learning.com**[www.learning.com](http://www.learning.com)**Lexia Learning**[www.lexialearning.com](http://www.lexialearning.com)**Mackin**[www.mackin.com](http://www.mackin.com)**Mentoring Minds**[www.mentoringminds.com](http://www.mentoringminds.com)**Merit Software**[www.meritsoftware.com](http://www.meritsoftware.com)**MindAntix**[www.mindantix.com](http://www.mindantix.com)**MindPlay, Inc.**[www.mindplay.com](http://www.mindplay.com)**mindSpark Learning**[www.mymindsparklearning.org](http://www.mymindsparklearning.org)**Mobile Edge**[www.mobileedge.com](http://www.mobileedge.com)**MyVocabulary**[www.myvocabulary.com](http://www.myvocabulary.com)**NetRef**[www.Net-Ref.com](http://www.Net-Ref.com)**NetSupport, Inc.**[www.netsupport-inc.com](http://www.netsupport-inc.com)**New Dimension Media**[www.cccstreaming.com](http://www.cccstreaming.com)**OverDrive Education**[www.overdrive.com/schools](http://www.overdrive.com/schools)**PBLWorks**[www.pblworks.org](http://www.pblworks.org)**Pitsco Education**[www.pitsco.com](http://www.pitsco.com)**Quillsoft, Ltd.**[www.quillsoft.ca](http://www.quillsoft.ca)**Renaissance**[www.renlearn.com](http://www.renlearn.com)**Ringbeller**[www.ringbeller.com](http://www.ringbeller.com)**Riverside Insights**[www.riverside-assessments.com](http://www.riverside-assessments.com)**Sayin' It Sam**[www.sayinitsam.com](http://www.sayinitsam.com)**Scantron Technology Solutions**[www.scantron.com/assessment-solutions/educational-assessment/k-12](http://www.scantron.com/assessment-solutions/educational-assessment/k-12)**Scholastic, Inc.**[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)**Sony KOOV: Coding and Robotics Kit**[www.am.sony.com](http://www.am.sony.com)**Sora**[www.overdrive.com/schools](http://www.overdrive.com/schools)**Streamable Learning**[www.streamablelearning.com](http://www.streamablelearning.com)**StudySync**[www.studysync.com](http://www.studysync.com)**Super Duper Publications**[www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com)**Terrapin**[www.terrapinlogo.com](http://www.terrapinlogo.com)**Texthelp**[www.text.help/eSchool](http://www.text.help/eSchool)**The Connections Model**[www.teachemotionalregulation.com](http://www.teachemotionalregulation.com)**The Graide Network**[www.thegraidenetwork.com](http://www.thegraidenetwork.com)**The Marvel Group**[www.marvelgroup.com](http://www.marvelgroup.com)**The Social Express**[www.socialexpress.com](http://www.socialexpress.com)**TMP Architecture**[www.tmp-architecture.com](http://www.tmp-architecture.com)**Tools for Schools**[www.bookcreator.com](http://www.bookcreator.com)**TutorOcean**[www.tutorocean.com](http://www.tutorocean.com)**Typing Agent**[www.mariebouk12.com](http://www.mariebouk12.com)**Tyto Online**[www.tytoonline.com](http://www.tytoonline.com)**Varitronics, LLC**[www.variquest.com](http://www.variquest.com)**Vernier Software & Technology**[www.vernier.com](http://www.vernier.com)**ViewSonic**[www.viewsonic.com](http://www.viewsonic.com)**VS America**[www.vsamerica.com](http://www.vsamerica.com)**Vutec Projector Screens**[www.vutec.com](http://www.vutec.com)**WGU Academy**[www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu)**Wize Computing Academy**[www.wizeacademy.com](http://www.wizeacademy.com)**XYZ Printing, Inc.**[www.us.xyzprinting.com](http://www.us.xyzprinting.com)

# About eSchool News

## History

**eSchool News** covers education technology in all its aspects—from legislation and litigation, to best practices, to lessons learned and new products. First published in March of 1998, **eSchool News** is a monthly print and digital newspaper providing the news and information necessary to help K-20 decision-makers successfully use technology and the internet to transform North America’s schools and colleges and achieve their educational goals. The newspaper is read by more than 300,000 school leaders, and a companion web site—**eSchool News Online**—is visited by more than 500,000 unique visitors each month, including over 280,000 registered members.

**eSchool News** is a marketing solutions company serving the education technology industry. Throughout our 25-year history, we have created the most comprehensive portfolio of products and services in the industry. We offer access to the broadest reach and deepest range of education technology professionals worldwide across the entire technology spectrum: the creators, sellers, and buyers of technology around the world.

Every day, our editorial, sales, and marketing professionals share their content expertise to help our customers grow their businesses. We leverage the immediacy of online, the networking of face-to-face opportunities, the expert interaction of web seminars, and the breadth and depth of print to create compelling, focused media that delivers measurable results.

## Mission

**eSchool News** — helping educators succeed by:

- Providing the latest news, resources and reports on the applications of technology to improve learning
- Providing resources and tools to evaluate the funding, purchasing and the evaluation of technology in the education systems
- Assisting educators in forming collaborative alliances and providing a valuable resource bank for the exchange of information, ideas and best practices.

In order to fulfill our mission, we pledge the following:

- We will treat each member as though the success of our organization depends on that individual alone
- We will continue to increase the value and benefits of our services, programs and products
- We will deliver what we promise
- We will conduct our business in a manner which commands the respect of the public for our industry and for the goals toward which we strive

2020-2021 MONTHLY GUIDE EDITORIAL CALENDAR	
June 2020	Library & Media Technology
July 2020	Esports
August 2020	Data Management & Storage
September 2020	Communication Technology
October 2020	Robotics
November 2020	Digital & Mobile Learning
December 2020	School Safety
January 2021	Multimedia Presentation Systems
February 2021	STEM, STEAM, & Makerspaces
March 2021	IT Solutions: Hardware & Management
April 2021	Online and Blended Learning
May 2021	Curriculum, SEL & Instructional Tools

**eSchool News** covers the intersection of technology and innovation in education. We focus on how technology can help educators improve learning and deliver instruction more effectively, enhance the student experience, and transform their schools.

<b>CEO</b> Rob Morrow rmorrow@eschoolmedia.com	<b>Director of IT</b> Vincent Carlson vcarlson@eschoolmedia.com	
<b>Vice President, Online Products &amp; Services</b> Nancy David ndavid@eschoolmedia.com	<b>Web Communications Manager</b> Jeffrey Festa jresta@eschoolmedia.com	
<b>Managing Editor, Content Services</b> Laura Ascione lascione@eschoolmedia.com		
<b>Creative Director</b> Chris Hopson chopson@eschoolmedia.com		
<b>National Director of Sales and Business Development</b> Stephanie Ciotola sciotola@eschoolmedia.com Callann Mitoulis cmitoulis@eschoolmedia.com		
<b>Director, Client Services</b> Denise Crowe dcrowe@eschoolmedia.com		
<b>Accounting &amp; Vendor Data Director</b> Lee Calloway lcalloway@eschoolmedia.com		

**eSchool News**  
2275 Research Blvd. Suite 500 • Rockville, MD 20850  
(301) 913-0115

All rights reserved; reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of eSchool News or eSchool Media Inc. ©2018 by eSchool News.

**For reprint permission contact: ndavid@eSchoolMedia.com**

**Co-Founder Larry Siegelman** 1954–2002