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Trauma Responsive Educator

Strengthening the capacity of educators to meet the needs of students coping with trauma



Engage
Accelerate
& Care

TREPEducator.org/magazine

Project Director's Note

As the pressure to make up lost learning intensifies, now more than ever, we encourage educators to ***engage, accelerate, and care, all at the same time.*** Investing in engagement strategies to lure students back into a culture of learning, accelerating students' access to grade level content by teaching just-in-time remedial lessons, and caring for students in ways that integrate social and emotional learning into all classes.

These three strategies are designed to work together: engagement gives students the intrinsic motivation needed to do the hard work, and the seemingly competing aims of accelerating learning while attending to student wellbeing can be achieved by integrating social and emotional learning into the teaching of core curriculum content. The only way to go is forward!

Micere Keels

30 Days of Mental Health

Given the state of child and youth wellbeing, mental health promotion must be integrated into the daily work of schools. Join the 30 Days of Mental Health campaign to obtain no-cost, easy-to-use lessons to help you talk with children and youth about mental health and mental illness.

30DaysOfMentalHealth.org

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By Micere Keels, Emilia Wenzel, & Ana Vasan

No educator needs to be convinced that learning loss is real, you see it every day as you struggle to fill students' gaps in foundational knowledge that must be learned before they can access and retain grade level content. Everyone wants to believe that the pandemic is over, but educators are reminded of it every time one or many students miss classes due to contracting the virus. This revolving door of absentee students is devastating for teachers' abilities to progress through planned lessons because of repeatedly pausing and slowing to catch up students who missed critical content.



Educators also know that racial and ethnic minority students, the students most likely to be in high-poverty schools, were hardest hit by pandemic learning loss. High-poverty schools spent many more weeks remote than mid- or low-poverty schools, and when they were remote students were much more likely to not show up for online classes. Surveys show that the disengagement was not about valuing school. Students in high-poverty schools were significantly less likely to have a workspace and internet at home, less likely to have adult support at home, and older students were forced to become caregivers and get jobs.



The persistent rise in behavior challenges also gives educators a daily reminder of the fact that students fell behind on much more than academic content. They also missed learning critical social and emotional skills that enable them to function effectively in the classroom community.

School districts have invested in numerous interventions to catch students up. This includes summer learning, tutoring, after-school programs, and extended school-day and year. However, many vulnerable students won't receive those interventions and therefore the best outcomes will occur when classroom teachers are able to engage, accelerate, and demonstrate care all at the same time.

Engage!

As much as we may wish otherwise, students are often disengaged from academic learning. Engagement is integral to classroom management because disengaged students tend to pursue off-task behavior that impedes their learning and disrupts peers. When thinking about re-engaging students, educators must look beneath the surface to address the root of off-task classroom behaviors.

Only by understanding the root cause of behavior can you design a strategy to bring the student back to the learning environment.



The immediate response to disengagement is often to use strategies aimed directly at stopping off-task behavior. This may look like asking the student to pick their head up off their desk, or calling the student out in front of the whole class. These responses are based on the misguided assumption that stopping the behavior will re-engage the student in instruction. Although these strategies can temporarily suppress off-task behaviors, sustained re-engagement in classroom learning is unlikely as long as the factors that led to initial disengagement are left unaddressed.

Four Root Causes of Disengagement

- The student is not understanding the content or directions
- The student's focus on class material is disrupted by something unrelated to school
- The student and teacher do not have a foundational relationship of trust and respect
- The student does not understand the relevance of the material to life outside of school

Proactively Preventing Disengagement

Planning your lessons with these ideas in mind will be especially helpful if you are experiencing frequent classroom disruption due to student disengagement. To keep students engaged in academic learning, **plan your lessons and assignments to:**

Maximize feelings of competence, self-determination, and connection to others. This includes making school and the classroom feel welcoming, caring, safe, fair, and just.

Example: Create opportunities and set aside time for students and adults to learn about each other's hobbies, likes and dislikes.

Provide opportunities for meaningful practice in ways that are relevant to students' lives and cultures.

Example: Create more opportunities for project-based learning in concept application.

Provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight growth and accomplishments.

Example: Instead of "You got a high score on this test," say "I notice you are really making sure to apply that math strategy we learned yesterday."

Provide opportunities for application, generalization, and autonomy so students can pursue self-directed learning.

Example: Create low, moderate, and advanced skill options for assignments so all students can experience challenge and mastery.



Student Choice and Autonomy are Key Levers in Engagement

When people are asked to spend their time doing things that they are interested in, care about, and feel important to them, they are more likely to commit and follow through.

This means giving students the opportunity to make decisions among a limited number of valued and feasible options. When developing strategies to engage (and re-engage) students in the classroom, be intentional about leaving room for students to make meaningful choices.

Accelerate!

Why Accelerate vs Remediate?

Traditional strategies for bringing students up to grade level often involve remediation, or dedicating class time to teaching full lessons about core content that students missed. Today, with the COVID-19 pandemic having interrupted the learning trajectories of so many of our students, the race to remediate before moving into grade-level content is top of mind for a lot of educators. The challenge with remediation is that this would mean that in some schools, or whole districts, students would be permanently behind their grade-level peers in other schools, or school districts, that did not lose as much time to the pandemic. Thankfully, there is another alternative: Acceleration.

What is Acceleration?

Recent research on how educators are responding to unfinished learning from the pandemic suggests that acceleration is the best option. This involves integrating key missed concepts from previous years into the lesson plans for grade-level content, rather than teaching entire lessons about the content and skills that were missed.

The most important aspect of acceleration is that it allows educators to teach key lessons from prior grades or units, just in time for the lesson on the new concept, in the context of learning the new concept. By using acceleration, educators spend less instructional time teaching old concepts, and therefore have a much better chance of getting to and getting through current grade level content.

Put these ideas into action with this [learning acceleration toolkit](#).

REMEDIATION	ACCELERATION
Spending significant time in below-grade level content before moving into new learning	Connecting unfinished learning into the context of new learning
... covering many objectives or standards from prior grades/units (usually extending for a month or more of instruction)	... integrating a few lessons from prior grades/units
... isolated from grade-appropriate learning	... just-in-time to grade-appropriate learning (whether in core or extended time)
... usually with greater than 50% of time on procedural fluency	... uses an appropriate balance of fluency, conceptual understanding, and application work

Table adapted from [TNTP, 2021](#)



Acceleration Advances Educational Equity

Policies that promote acceleration can lead to greater equity in student learning because there is substantial inequity in who received remediation versus acceleration. Recent research shows that nearly 1 out of 6 students in schools with majority Black, Latinx, or Indigenous students received remedial instruction in 2020-2021, regardless of how much success with grade-level content they had earlier in the year. In schools with high levels of student poverty, students were more than twice as likely to receive remediation.

One study that compared remediation with acceleration found that students in accelerated classrooms struggled less than those receiving remediation and completed 27% more grade-level lessons. Additionally, classes with learning acceleration regained most of their pre-pandemic levels of success.

By choosing acceleration over remediation, each educator can intentionally push back against racial and ethnic biases in expectations for student success.

The educational success of vulnerable students is maximized when educators search to identify the underlying causes of disENGAGEMENT, use strategies that enable them to ACCELERATE the catch up of lost learning, and integrate CARE for the whole child into the curriculum.

Applying Acceleration to your Lesson Planning

It is abundantly clear that remote learning left many students with gaps in their foundational knowledge. In order to incorporate lacking and lagging foundational knowledge and skills into grade-level learning, it is helpful to map how standards and skills in prior grade-levels connect with skills in current grade levels. A helpful tool to map the connections between grade level standards in math is the [coherence map](#).

As you plan each lesson, create things like anchor charts or a brief review of the most important foundational skills and incorporate it into the lesson.

Accelerate teaching example:

If your second graders are struggling with the first grade skill of mentally adding and subtracting by ten, it might feel challenging to start teaching the second grade skill of adding and subtracting larger numbers. However, instead of remediating the first grade skill, you can accelerate learning by covering both skills and incorporating aspects of mentally adding and subtracting by tens into your lesson on adding and subtracting large numbers.

Skills

- First grade skill: Mentally find ten more and ten less than a number (Common Core Standards).
- Second grade skill: Fluently add and subtract within 100 (Common Core Standards).

To incorporate the skills, this teacher models the four problems below using a strategy of using tens and ones. The teacher asks for help from students for skills the students know, like counting up the total or what is left over. After modeling the four problems, the teacher asks what students notice about problem A and problem C. Students notice that when you add ten more or ten less the ones place stays the same and the tens place changes.

A

$$56 + 10 = 66$$

B

$$56 + 13 = 69$$

C

$$56 - 10 = 46$$

D

$$56 - 14 = 42$$

A lesson like this, that folds in skills from the previous grade, will scaffold all students so that they can access grade level content.

Care!

Pedagogical care is the most sustainable and efficient way to build a community of learners by demonstrating care through the ways that you teach. This framework is based on the understanding that **EVERY** interaction that students have throughout the day, with you, with peers, and all the other adults in the building, is an opportunity to build their social and emotional skills. By conceptualizing SEL as everyday activities that occur in every classroom **and all other spaces throughout the school**, educators experience the following benefits:

- ✓ The unnecessary tension between teaching SEL and teaching academics is removed.
- ✓ Off-task behaviors and interpersonal behavioral errors become natural opportunities to promote SEL.
- ✓ Students and staff become increasingly aware of the link between social and emotional wellness and academic mastery.

Research indicates that the consistent integration of SEL schoolwide- such that students have repeated and connected opportunities to develop their social and emotional competencies, throughout each day of the academic year- yields the greatest gains. SEL can be relevant to all subjects and content areas. For example:

1. SEL can be integrated into math classes through word problems that cause them to also think about the emotional aspects of the situation depicted in the problem
2. Students can work collaboratively to complete problem sets
3. Teachers can facilitate class-wide discussions about problems that can be completed using more than one method.



Trauma and interpersonal trauma in particular, can lead to low levels of trust, difficulty reading and responding to social cues, and a heightened likelihood of responding aggressively to stressful interpersonal interactions. These students benefit greatly from being taught the social and emotional competencies needed to benefit from the many interpersonal and collective learning opportunities that occur in the classroom.

Teaching students how to share ideas respectfully, have empathy for academically diverse peers, push through challenges to meet academic goals, and control impulses is just as important as teaching them to read fluently, multiply fractions, and write a well-constructed essay.

Educators' primary concern about making time for SEL is in regard to the loss of instructional time. However, research clearly shows that investing time in SEL pays off in classroom management, positive learning environments, and academic achievement gains. One review of 213 studies of SEL programs found that high quality SEL curriculum reduced the likelihood of off-task student behaviors and emotional distress, and contributed to an 11% increase in test scores.



Classroom structures, routines, and instructional strategies that attend to issues of SEL can provide students with integrated and frequent practice of social and emotional competencies in the classroom. Integrating SEL into the classroom includes:

- Establishing a positive social environment that facilitates learning
- Creating, a classroom context that enables students to build healthy and meaningful relationships with their peers and with you

Clearly communicating what is expected of them as members of their classroom and school community, AND ensuring that they have the skills to meet those expectations



Integrating SEL in Your Classroom

	WHAT IS IT?	HOW CAN I INCORPORATE SEL?
CLASSROOM STRUCTURES	<p>The strategies that organize interactions between teachers and students. They are reinforced through routines, which are established through clear expectations, feedback, and practice.</p>	<p>Assess teacher-student and peer interactions in your classroom. Make adjustments to ensure that every student has the opportunity to feel safe and supported. Put procedures in place to foster respectful communication and freedom of appropriate expression. Demonstrate how to help one another through conflict and tension. Make sure feedback to students is specific and that students are noticed for their effort and growth, rather than their correctness on schoolwork.</p>
CLASSROOM ROUTINES	<p>Procedures for behaving in the classroom, such as how to enter and exit, share a comment, handle conflict, etc.</p>	<p>Ensure that your routines are experienced as calming, caring, and inviting for all students and are well understood by all. To do this, expectations must always be clear. Routines minimize conflict and chaos. If routines are breaking down, take time to practice and remind students of routines.</p>
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	<p>Once structures and routines are in place, facilitate learning by providing the appropriate scaffolds to help students grow their skills and knowledge. Use strategies that account for students' mental capacities, previous knowledge, and student's emotional and psychological states.</p>	<p>Promote emotional awareness and decision-making strategies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• addressing the students' or character's feelings,• encouraging or having the students encourage one another,• highlighting ways to have productive interactions or manage conflict,• having students keep a keen eye open for ways that they or others are making responsible and ethical decisions, or• showing students how to persist through difficult academic challenges and barriers they may face during an assignment. Develop a student ritual in your class for celebrating persistence and lessons learned through errors.

Integrate Self Care Into Your Work Day

Self-care asks that you respect your emotional, financial, spiritual, and physical needs, nurture relationships in work and non-work areas of your life, and maintain balance and boundaries between work and personal life. Self-care is most sustainable when it is integrated into your workday, rather than being something that only occurs during your personal time.

Our [workplace self-care guide](#) enables you to **do more than just survive the academic year!**



The [Trauma Responsive Educational Practices \(TREP\) Project](#) is a research-practice translation project that works to connect research on the science of trauma with the realities of school and classroom management. We aim to create schools and classrooms that can meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students coping with toxic levels of stress and trauma.