

CORE CONNECTIONS:

EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS

CORE CONNECTIONS

EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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Table of contents

4	Welcome Welcome messages from the Core Advocate Network Advisory Board and Pascale Joseph
6	Introducing the Core Advocate Advisory Board What is the work of the Core Advocate Advisory Board?
9	Resources on Achieve the Core Key resources for Back-to-School
10	Critical Content Collections New curated content collections for accelerating reading in K-2 and fractions learning in 3-5
11	Career Opportunities The latest job opportunities for educators
12	New Partner Resources Resources, guidance, and professional learning pertinent to this school year
17	Fall Virtual Learning Courses Self-paced, six-week courses starting October 6, 2020
18	Core Advocate Perspective Meet Ashley Cerón
19	What We're Reading The best articles, books, blog posts, and more
20	Coffee and Conversations Learn about past and upcoming Coffee and Conversations bringing together speakers on anti-racist, equitable teaching
22	Core Advocate Spotlights Meet Janice Mak and Lisa Britten
26	Core Advocate Webinars Upcoming and on-demand webinar schedule
28	Sharing the Control Creating space for student voice during distance learning
31	Aligned Blog Updates The latest educator-authored posts on <i>Aligned</i>
33	Why Teaching Justice Through Reading and Writing Cannot Wait How teachers can enact change and combat racism through purposeful discussions and literacy curricula
37	Math Task Challenge Solve and share this math task for a chance to win a prize
38	Teacher Nominees for innovative Practices to Support Early Literacy in Remote Learning Teachers nominated by peers for outstanding work in K-2 literacy
40	Quarterly Question Insights from educators and a chance to win prizes
42	Digital Teaching with Seesaw Innovative ways to use this free platform for interactive, remote instruction
46	Distance Learning and Crisis Management Hard work meets heart work
50	Getting to Know Your Students with Bitmojis A creative way to build relationships virtually
52	Recommendations for Someone New to Your Role Educator recommendations to new teachers and leaders





Welcome

CORE ADVOCATE NETWORK
ADVISORY BOARD

Welcome to the September edition of Core Connections magazine! With the busyness of the back-to-school season, educators, students, and families are facing an unprecedented health pandemic, a reckoning with systemic racism and injustice in our country, and the effects of economic and climate crises. While the challenges we face seem overwhelming, we know that there is hope in the voices and actions of educators. Regardless of whether we greet our students on a computer screen or in person, our classrooms are places of refuge, connection, relationships, motivation, inspiration, growth, and progress for all of our students. We have seen our colleagues rise to the challenge and open their virtual or actual doors to kids, to welcome them back, acknowledge their identities and experiences, and invite them into the class.

As we kick off this unusual school year, we hope you can find time and space to dig into the great content in this edition of the Core Connections magazine to find your own pieces of connection, motivation, and inspiration. This edition of the magazine offers advice, tips, and opportunities related to distance learning, virtual professional learning, addressing SEL and relationships in a digital classroom, and much more.

We are particularly excited to introduce ourselves to the Core Advocate Network! We are the newly selected members of the inaugural Core Advocate Network Advisory Board. You can read more about the Advisory Board and each of us in the magazine. We know that raising up and listening to the voices of educators is more important now than ever. We commit to be a voice for educators as we work with Student Achievement Partners this year to design new ways to engage with the Core Advocate Network around content and topics that matter most right now.

Thank you for reading the magazine!

Core Advocate Network Advisory Board Members

Welcome

PASCALE JOSEPH
PROJECT COORDINATOR
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS



Welcome to the Fall edition of Core Connections!

My summer has been nothing short of chaotic. For me, this time has been discouraging and terrifying. And I am sure I am not alone. The concept of “the unknown” has always been daunting, but it is even more so now than before, and the scale is global. Amid a pandemic, the world continues to struggle with the inequities that mar our social, economic, and natural environments. Here at Student Achievement Partners, we do not have all the answers; however, we do have hope and courage.

The amorphous nature of education this year will be a challenge that requires wholehearted consideration of the identities of students and their families. I call on all of us to put the humanity of others before all else and use this as the basis for how we plan to overcome the challenges we currently face. Everyone will be returning to the classroom (digitally and/or in -person) from different places and having had very different experiences these last few months – some will bring with them heavy hearts – and education as we previously defined it will need serious overhaul. Overhaul in the cultures that are represented in our curriculum and overhaul in how we meet the needs of our students and their families. It is our hope that what you read within will provide guidance on where to start and how to build.

Nothing is definite, and we will be called to adapt continuously and creatively. With any action that we take, we must continue to do so with a mindset embedded in social justice and empowerment of and belief in our students, their families, the communities we work in, and ourselves. We must hold on strongly to the conviction that we have the power to dismantle barriers caused by prejudice and inequity because these barriers are a threat to the success, joy, and livelihood of our students and our communities.

Challenge yourselves. Challenge each other. Challenge oppressive systems that have left many students and families in a nebulous state of immobility and injustice.

With steadfast courage and hope, take action, disrupt, and continue to inspire.

Pascale Joseph
Project Coordinator, Student Achievement Partners

core advocates

INTRODUCING

THE CORE ADVOCATE ADVISORY BOARD

What is the Advisory Board and what will they do?

We at Student Achievement Partners are excited to announce a new group of educator-leaders within our organization, the Core Advocate Network Advisory Board.

If you've been part of the Core Advocate Network for a few years now, you've probably noticed a shift in the way we engage with educators in the field, a movement from in-person convenings to virtual learning and engagement opportunities such as mini-courses, Twitter Chats, and Coffee and Conversations. You may have also more recently noticed a change in the content we are focused on, from solely math and ELA/literacy content to other topics like instructional equity, SEL, culturally responsive teaching, and addressing systemic racism in classrooms and schools.

"The Advisory Board members will co-design the next iteration of the Core Advocate Network with our team at Student Achievement Partners."

Over the years, the Core Advocate Network has shifted to bring in more educators and address more of the real challenges educators face. In an effort to continue widening the network to include diverse educators from all corners of the country and to do real work together to address oppressive barriers students face such as racism and poverty, we have launched the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board members will co-design the next iteration of the Core Advocate Network with our team at Student Achievement Partners.

We are excited to have these energetic, thoughtful, dedicated educators sit side-by-side with us as we reimagine the Core Advocate Network of the future: an educator network that is inclusive, focused on important anti-racist/anti-biased work, and is available for everyone as a space of collaboration, conversation, and learning.

Stay tuned to future articles in Core Connections and email announcements for updates on the redesign of the Network.

Who are the Advisory Board members?

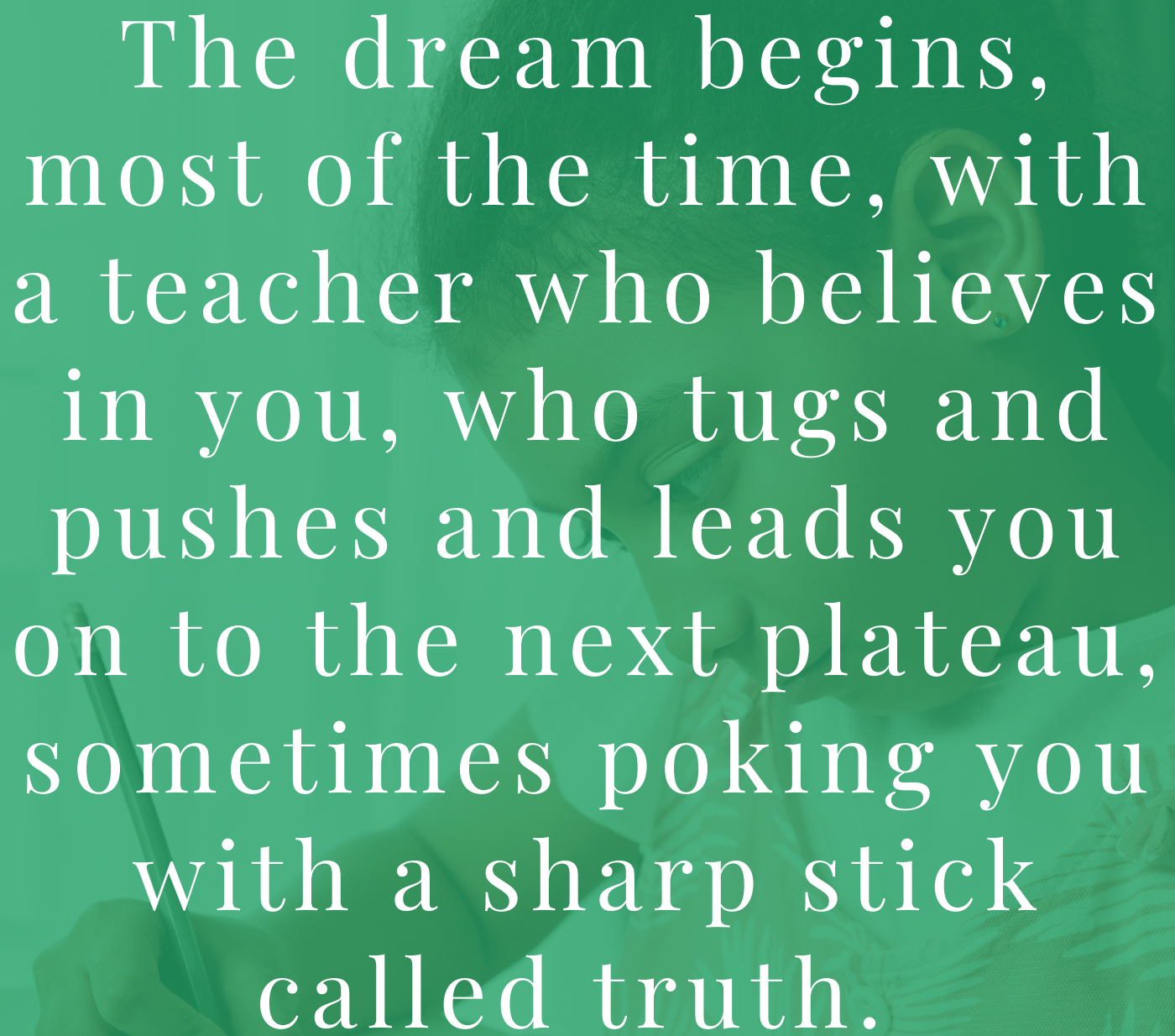
The Advisory Board is made up of 12 educators from across the country. Some are likely familiar to Core Advocates because they've been active in the Network for a long time, and some Board members are brand new to the Core Advocate Network. They serve in a variety of professional roles, although most are classroom teachers, and they have various expertise including different subject area and grade-level experience.

Over the next year, we will feature the Advisory Board members in the Core Advocate Spotlight articles in the magazine. We hope you will read the Spotlight articles to learn more about these dynamic educators. In this edition, you can read about Lisa, Janice, and Ashley.

You can also read brief biographies of each Advisory Board member in the [About Us section](#) of Achieve the Core, under the "Our Team" dropdown menu. Or click on the Board members' photos to the right to view each of their bios.



“We are excited to have these energetic, thoughtful, dedicated educators sit side-by-side with us as we reimagine the Core Advocate Network of the future”



The dream begins,
most of the time, with
a teacher who believes
in you, who tugs and
pushes and leads you
on to the next plateau,
sometimes poking you
with a sharp stick
called truth.

DAN RATHER



Resources on Achieve the Core

➞ 2020–21 Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics

This newly created resource names the instructional content priorities in mathematics (K–8, high school) and ELA/literacy (K–12) for the 2020–21 academic year. By leveraging the structure and emphases of college- and career-ready mathematics and ELA/literacy standards, these documents provide guidance for the field about the content priorities curriculum developers, instructional coaches, and educators should be aware of as they head into the 2020–21 school year.

➞ Take Action to Improve Professional Learning Guidance Documents

Whatever your role, there are ways to take action to improve the quality and content of professional learning. These role-specific Principles into Practice lists provide options ranging from changes you can make tomorrow, to long-term changes to implement over weeks or months. These ideas were developed in collaboration with current practitioners with the focus on changes that have proven effective in schools and districts across the country.

➞ The Coherence Map

The Coherence Map shows the connections between Common Core State Standards for Mathematics for grade K–12. It's designed to help educators build student understanding by linking together concepts within and across grades, as well as identify gaps in a student's knowledge by tracing a standard back through its logical prerequisites.

Critical Content Collections

Explore two new collections on Achieve the Core: [Fractions \(grades 3-5\)](#) and [Early Reading Accelerators \(K-2\)](#). These specially curated sets of multi-media resources are designed to respond to some of the most frequent questions and concerns educators have been naming. Both high-leverage topics are essential for future learning and student success and can be used to start building strong foundations for all your students today!

In addition to professional learning materials, tasks and classroom activities, and role-specific guidance, these collections offer recommendations for instruction specifically designed to support learning in the 2020-21 school year, including support for remote, synchronous, and asynchronous teaching.

These collections are a work in progress! We'll be adding and revising in response to your evolving needs, so after you take a look please consider sharing your thoughts in this [brief survey](#).

ly Reading Accelerators

dance for 2020-21

[Resources for Remote Learning](#)

upporting English Learners

arning from Each Other

Virtual Lesson Video Examples

• [Virtual Foundational Skills Teaching Hub \(University of Florida\)](#)

MODEL VIDEOS ↗

• [Asynchronous Foundational Skills Lesson \(Detroit Public Schools\)](#)

VIDEO ↗

• [Virtual Phonological Awareness \(Heggerty\)](#)

MODEL VIDEOS ↗

SHOW 5 MORE



Fractions

Why Fractions?

Fractions as Numbers

Grade 3 Tasks

Grade 4 Tasks

Grade 5 Tasks

Guidance for 2020-21

Resources for Remote Learning

[Coaches & Instructional Leaders](#)

Resources to Support All Learners

• [Math Language Routines](#)

RESOURCE ↗

• [Designing Shifts-Aligned Interventions in the Math Classroom](#)

BLOG POST ↗

• [Recommendations for Targeted Math Support and Interventions](#)

BLOG POST ↗

SHOW 1 MORE

Resources to Support Adult Learning

• [Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning](#)

PRINCIPLES ↗

• [Integrating Curriculum and Assessment: An Example from Grade 3 Fractions](#)

WEBINAR ↗

• [K-12 Instructional Practice Guide for Coaching](#)

GUIDE ↗

SHOW 3 MORE

Resources to Support Equitable Instruction

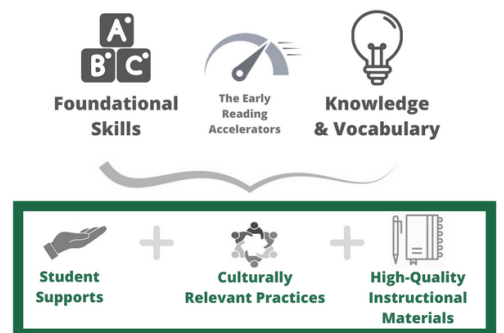
• [AWAKE to WOKE to WORK: Building a Race Equity Culture \(Equity in the Center\)](#)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ↗

• [The Movement to Prioritize Antiracist Mathematics: Planning](#)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ↗

Many students need support with reading, but students of color, students from families experiencing poverty, and English learners are less likely to have access to resources that support reading success, including: [effective instructional practices](#), [appropriate individualized supports](#), or [teachers and materials](#) that reflect their identities. To implement the Early Reading Accelerators equitably, we must consider **student supports**, **culturally relevant content and practices**, and **high-quality instructional materials**. This means that we have a deep knowledge of the Accelerators' content and instruct in ways that value all students' backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.



Fractions

Why Fractions?

Fractions as Numbers

[Grade 3 Tasks](#)

Grade 4 Tasks

Grade 5 Tasks

Guidance for 2020-21

Resources for Remote Learning

[Coaches & Instructional Leaders](#)

Grade 3 Tasks



How would you describe the length of the segment shown?

answering the question, "Why do we need numbers other than whole numbers, anyway?"

In grade 3, the focus is on **fractions as numbers** and **expanding student thinking on the number line to include fractions as well as whole numbers**.



Grade 3 Fraction Tasks. This resource uses examples of problems to highlight the big ideas in fractions for grade 3. There are student work samples - sometimes written and sometimes in video, additional resources for instructional support, and questions to promote student identity, agency, and belonging as learners and doers of mathematics.

Grade 4 Tasks

This entry task shows the uptick from the work of



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

ANet

Senior Associate, Anti-Racism and Culture Operations
Part-Time Temporary Assessment Assistant (Spanish fluency required)

Instruction Partners

Math Lead - Flexible
ELA Lead - Flexible

Leading Educators

Director of Content - Math
Instructional Leadership Coach - Math

EdReports

Director, Mathematics

Teaching Labs

State-Level ELA Content Manager (part-time)
Math Content Manager

New Resources from Partners

ANET NEWSROOM



Visit the ANet Newsroom to learn about the organization's most recent work, find case studies from schools and districts, and discover new, free resources for educators.

DISTANCE LEARNING COMMUNITY: SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



This resource hub features a variety of educator resources including professional learning opportunities, distance learning resources, mental health/trauma-informed practice resources, and guidance on supporting special populations during the 2020-21 back-to-school period.

REENTRY FRAMEWORK AND TOOLKIT



This framework offers leaders suggested actions for planning and leading effective instruction, culture, and operations during the three phases of reentry. Toolkits provide concrete tools and resources to help school leaders prepare to effectively support learning for all students under a range of reentry scenarios, organized around a phased framework.

"REAL-TIME CONNECT: COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS"



Learn how to provide live, secure video feedback, guidance, and instruction using the new Real-Time Connect feature of Edcite.com. This feature is free for teachers! Discover how you can design, upload, and share an assignment with students, then watch their progress in real-time, providing one-to-one support as needed.



LEARNING FORWARD UPCOMING WEBINARS



Learning Forward webinars feature leaders in the field discussing the key topics affecting today's educators. Gain insight from authors, researchers, and practitioners on topics including data-driven professional learning, implementing change, assessing the impact of professional learning, and much more.

RETHINKING INTERVENTION SERIES



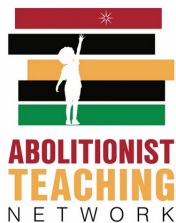
Instruction Partners is conducting a series of interviews with content experts, researchers, and leading practitioners to consider the question: What do we know about what works and what does not work to intervene effectively and accelerate student learning? You can follow along [here](#).

DISTANCE AND BLENDED LEARNING ASSESSMENT TOOLS



Creating digital assignments for use during remote learning this semester? Explore how the 60+ tech-enhanced item types, 200k+ ready-to-use items, and easy-to-use Edcite platform allow you to assign creative tasks and assessments to students this semester.

RESOURCES FOR AGITATORS



This collection of resources (including articles, videos, and podcasts) will help you build your knowledge as an educator around topics such as abolitionist teaching, anti-racist social and emotional learning, and the Black Lives Matter movement.



"FOSTERING ACADEMIC DISCUSSION ONLINE"



This article on the Match Fishtank blog provides concrete, actionable steps you can take to design rich academic discussions virtually. The blog goes into ideas for synchronous and asynchronous conversations, structuring lines of questioning, maximizing engagement, and designing discussions for includes of English Learners (ELs) and students with IEPs.

"DO'S & DON'TS OF REMOTE ELA INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS"



This quick-reference resource from the English Learners Success Forum provides a series of do's and don'ts when it comes to designing virtual ELA/literacy instruction with ELs in mind. This research-backed set of instructions will help you improve access to grade-level content for your ELs and answer many questions you may have about adjusting instruction during a period of remote learning.

"DO'S & DON'TS OF REMOTE MATH INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS"



This quick-reference resource from the English Learners Success Forum provides a series of do's and don'ts when it comes to designing virtual mathematics instruction with ELs in mind. The recommendations focus on keeping cognitive demand and expectations high (rather than simplifying content or making assumptions about things like ELs' ability to pursue independent work). A must-read for any mathematics educator with English Learners in their class.

ANET INSTRUCTIONAL RECOVERY PAGE



There are new considerations as educators return to school (whether in-person or virtually) this year. Here you'll find guidance based on ANet's on-the-ground work with districts across the country.

- Four Dimensions of Instructional Materials that Put Students First
- Head and Heart: An Expanded Approach to Meeting Students' Needs as Schools Reopen
- Three Principles for Assessments During Instructional Recovery and Beyond



"ASSESS AND ADDRESS GAPS IN STUDENT LEARNING"



This set of role-specific recommendations for teaching, coaching, school leadership, and district and state leadership provides ideas for how education professionals can take steps to support students who may have unfinished learning from last year.

"3 WAYS EDUCATORS CAN EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR ALIGNED, COHERENT CURRICULA"



This blog post, from Outreach Specialist Melody Arabo, outlines three concrete ways educators can influence decisions about curriculum adoption.

TEACH AND TRANSFORM RESOURCE COLLECTION

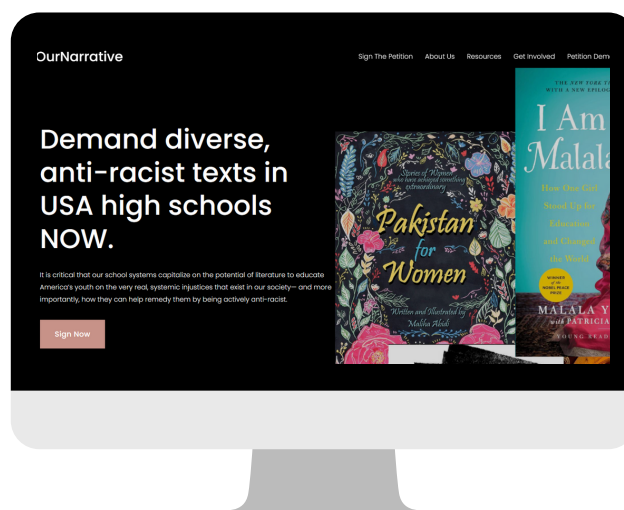


Curated by educator Liz Kleinrock, this collection of free resources, lesson ideas, and reading lists is a great place to start in diversifying your classroom practice and content.

#DiversifyOurNarrative

#DiversifyOurNarrative

Sign the petition, contribute curriculum ideas, or download action guides to help advocate for diverse texts in schools.



LIT C.I.R.C.L.E. CURRICULUM GUIDES AND LESSONS

Lit C.I.R.C.L.E.

Lit C.I.R.C.L.E's mission is to:

- Diversify the literary canon by co-creating curriculum resources for literature by and about people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalized groups.
- Cultivate a community of educators dedicated to centering the identities and experiences of marginalized communities in the classroom.
- Shift the narrative about which literature is considered valuable in literacy education by promoting a counter-canon of works by BIPOC, women, and LGBTQIA+ writers.

Explore their collection of free lesson ideas, perfect for remote implementation that feature creative ways to engage students such as analyzing a film on Netflix or engaging with song lyrics as texts.

"PRIORITIZE CONTENT WHEN EVALUATING DIGITAL MATERIALS"



With many districts considering digital curricular materials compatible with their remote learning strategies this fall, it's important to determine what features and criteria to prioritize when making a selection. This blog post provides a helpful decision-making frame.

MATCH FISHTANK BLOG



This blog produced by the developers of the free, standards-aligned ELA and math curriculum Match Fishtank, features topical articles on everything from remediation to text selection to remote learning. It's a great source of new, teacher-tested ideas and strategies.

BACK TO SCHOOL 2020



As we head back to school and to a new normal this fall, join the Share My Lesson community where you can find and share resources and ideas on topics such as safely reopening schools, hybrid and distance learning, social emotional support, anti-racism education, and more.





Fall Courses

Registration Coming Soon!

Self-paced, six week courses!

Starting October 6th

[Click here
to learn
more!](#)

Free

- Foundational Skills 101 (Grades K-2)
- Building Educator Content Knowledge: Dig into Important Fraction Concepts to Increase Student Achievement (Grades 3-6)

\$20 enrollment fee

- Tackling the Text: Techniques to Help All Students Grow (Grades 3-12)
- Purposeful Planning: Ways to Engage All Students in the Math Classroom (Grades K-12)





ASHLEY CERÓN

State: Washington DC

Role: 4th Grade Lead Teacher,
KIPP DC

Core Advocate Network Advisory Board Member

What is a recent professional, work related success you've had?

Recently, I became the Grade-Level Chair of the fourth grade team.

Describe the work you're doing in school(s) to advance equity in education.

I work hard to build relationships with my students and hold high expectations for them to reach. I try to provide them with rigorous instruction in order for them to make over 1 year's worth of growth. I know that academic growth can only happen with trust and building relationships; therefore, I believe that is one way to advance equity.

"I know that
academic growth can
only happen with
trust and building
relationships"

Describe a teacher/educator leadership opportunity or group/organization you've been a part of, and how it has impacted you and your work.

Alongside some coworkers, I was able to lead a culturally responsive teaching professional development session. To prepare for this, I myself had to learn and reflect on my own practices. This impacts my work because, while preparing for remote learning, I am conscious of how I am going to validate and affirm my students' culture and experiences through a computer screen.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with friends and traveling up north to visit my family.



What We're Reading

Let us know what you're currently reading [here!](#)

01

Reopening Classrooms With 'Equity by Design': How One NYC School Network Partnered With Architects and Designers on a Pandemic Plan That Prioritizes the Most Vulnerable Students

-- Tim Newcomb, *The 74*

02

'No One Else Is Going to Step Up': In a Time of Racial Reckoning, Teachers of Color Feel the Pressure

-- Madeline Will, *Education Week*

03

Why Black Girls Can't Wait For Police-Free Schools

-- Jamelia N. Harris, *Blavity*

04

If You Really Want to Make a Difference in Black Lives, Change How You Teach White Kids

-- Nahliah Webber, *Education Post*

05

Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard

-- The NYU Metro Center

COFFEE AND CONVERSATIONS



Join Us!

Coffee and Conversations is the newest Core Advocates monthly event! This fall, we are bringing speakers on anti-racist, equitable teaching into conversation with Student Achievement Partners and our work. These events bring insights, provide an opportunity for Core Advocates to connect with each other in real time, and provide tangible resources you can take back to your school community to provide all students with a rigorous, culturally responsive, and sustaining education.

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events take place at 7 p.m. ET

- 9/16: Meaningful BIPOC Inclusion in Your Curriculum
- 10/14: Supporting Undocumented Students and Families
- 10/21: Students Want a Say in the Anti-Racist Teaching Conversation
- 11/4: Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

[Register Here!](#)

Select Your
Favorite
Webinar

COFFEE AND CONVERSATIONS



The Education Trust

In May, we recorded a powerful session with Nancy Duchesneau of The Education Trust that focused on Social Emotional Academic Development (SEAD) and its intersection with racial equity. This resource feels ever more relevant as we move into a new school year. You are invited to take 20 minutes to [watch the session](#) and review the EdTrust resource--the information shared is rich and right on time! Over the next few months, we have a number of exciting guest speakers joining us. To register, sign up to “follow” our Eventbrite page (<https://CoreAdvocates.eventbrite.com>), and you will be notified as registration opens for each of these events.



UPCOMING EVENTS

All events take place at 7 p.m ET

- 9/16: Meaningful BIPOC Inclusion in Your Curriculum
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- 10/21: Students Want a Say in the Anti-Racist Teaching Conversation
- 11/4: Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

[Register Here!](#)



JANICE MAK

State: Arizona

Role: K-12 Teacher-on-Assignment, Paradise Valley Schools

Core Advocate Network Advisory Board Member

What is a recent professional, work-related success you've had?

I've had the opportunity to work with a team in my district to launch the 2020–21 school year by supporting teachers: creating Google Classrooms complete with curriculum and resources and equipping teachers with best practices in remote teaching and learning with virtual professional learning days.

What is a great professional book, article, website, resource, tool, etc. you would recommend, and why?

5 Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions by Margaret Smith and Mary Kay Stein. This book is a practical guide to align what actually happens in classrooms to instructional goals. It is a way to look “under the hood” to help educators understand how to open up opportunities for learning for every student as their thinking is made transparent.

Describe the work you're doing in school(s) to advance equity in education.

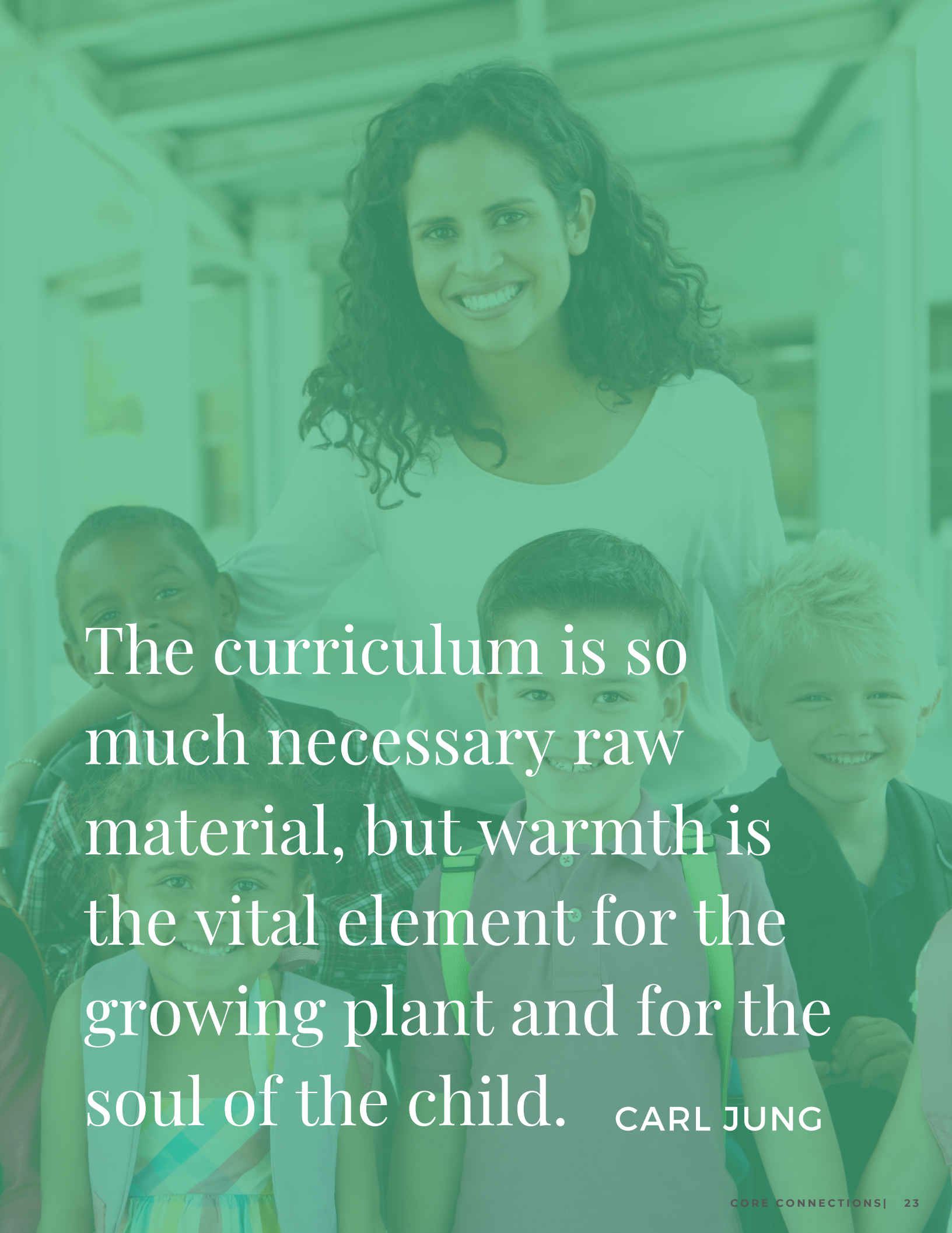
I am working to advance equity in education by ensuring that teachers are equipped to lead classrooms where every student is empowered to share their voice and thinking.

Describe a teacher/educator leadership opportunity or group/organization you've been a part of, and how it has impacted you and your work.

In participating in the initial review and evaluation phase of launching Open Up's middle school mathematics curriculum, I learned and saw firsthand how powerful it is when curriculum creation goes through the process of being written by instructional experts, piloted by teachers, evaluated by panels of trained peer reviewers, and sent back to the writers for revision. The result is a curriculum that takes into account pacing concerns and practical implementation without compromising on the content that aligns fully to the depth and rigor the standards.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy hiking and day trips, exploring new parts of Arizona.



The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child. CARL JUNG



LISA BRITTEN

@lbritten

State: Michigan

Role: 6-12 Reading Specialist,

Godfrey-Lee Public Schools

Core Advocate Network Advisory Board Member

What is a recent professional, work-related success you've had?

Our district recently changed its mascot from the "Lee Rebels" to the "Lee Legends." As with other mascot changes across the country, the debate around our school's identity rubbed salt in old wounds and also opened some fresh ones. However, in the end, due to strong advocacy and leadership from students, staff, and community members, our school board voted to move ahead with approving the new name and has also recently come out with a strong statement citing equity as a central goal in teaching and learning. I could not be more proud to be part of the "Legends" staff at this moment in school history.

What is a great professional book, article, website, resource, tool, etc. you would recommend, and why?

I've just finished reading Dr. Gholdy Muhammad's book, *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. As a result of learning from her work, I better understand the historic tradition of literary excellence among Black communities in the United States. Her book also challenged me to reflect on how I structure my classes and my curriculum, and inspired me to rethink my planning and practice so that I can be a much more culturally responsive literacy teacher for my students who are BIPOC.

Describe the work you're doing in school(s) to advance equity in education.

Our ELA department is currently evaluating our curriculum and the texts that we read with our 6–12 students. We want to provide our students with a content-rich, culturally responsive literacy experience that centers and honors the identities of BIPOC and other marginalized communities, and this includes taking a critical look at the traditional ELA "canon."

"We want to provide our students with a content-rich, culturally responsive literacy experience that centers and honors the identities of BIPOC and other marginalized communities"

Describe a teacher/educator leadership opportunity or group/organization you've been a part of, and how it has impacted you and your work.

The most valuable education organization I have been honored to learn from recently is Leading Educators. In the West Michigan region, Leading Educators has fostered a community of education professionals who value equity and advocacy in both the classroom and in everyday life. I can honestly say that my Leading Educators experience has helped me grow, not only as a teacher, but as a human being.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and birding. I also volunteer with the National Weather Service as part of their SKYWARN program. If I'm stuck indoors, you'll find me curled up with a lengthy fantasy or science fiction book or playing video games. I love my husband, my family, and my cats.



Submit a Core Advocate Perspective Article!

Do you have an idea for a magazine article topic? We are looking for Core Advocates to submit article ideas they would like to write about to be featured in an upcoming edition of the Core Connections magazine! Articles should reflect the magazine's theme of Excellence and Equity in the Classroom.

Email your idea for a Core Advocate Perspective article to Jennie Beltramini at **jbeltramini@studentsachieve.net**

CORE ADVOCATE WEBINARS

★ Webinar Spotlight

Structuring Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning in the 2020–21 School Year Strategies for Inclusive Engagement

This school year, educators across the country will be facing unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended routines and prompted new thinking around what's needed in the classroom to ensure student success. Many teachers will likely be called upon to employ both synchronous and asynchronous methods to continue education for students. As many teachers are preparing for limited face-to-face time with students, this popular webinar covers how to make the most of instructional time in a variety of settings, including both remote and in-person scenarios.



These resources also deserve your attention:

Priority Instructional Content: Leveraging the Structure of College- and Career-Ready Mathematics and ELA/Literacy standards.

Learn about the Priority Instructional Content, which is intended to provide guidance to curriculum designers, coaches, and publishers as a means to meet the needs of schools and districts, as they implement new methods for teaching.

You can **learn more about our webinars** by reading [Growing Your Craft, Virtually!](#), a blog post from Aligned that details how one teacher used Achieve the Core webinars to facilitate professional development during distance learning.

On-Demand Webinar: Supporting Students: Remote Observation, Just-in-Time Instruction, and Edcite's Real Time Connect

Available On-Demand Today!

This school year poses many questions for teachers looking to connect with students in either a hybrid or remote learning model. How do you support students one-to-one? How can you tell if they're completing work? If they're engaged? If they're learning? In this webinar, you'll hear practical ideas for understanding where students are academically at the beginning of the school year (without spending time assessing skills from the previous year before diving into grade-level content).

You'll hear best practices for monitoring student progress and understanding, building trusting relationships, and providing just-in-time instruction based on observation of grade-level work. You'll be introduced to Edcite's new, free tool Real-Time Connect—a platform that allows you to assign work virtually, provide whole-class support in real time, and connect one-on-one with students to provide “over-the-shoulder” guidance and intervention as students complete assignments.



Webinar Certificates

Did you know that we now have professional learning **certificates available for 24 of our 36 webinars**? Access the “on-demand” version of these webinars to leverage this new opportunity. Upon completion of the one-hour webinar, you'll receive an email with a certificate showing one hour of professional learning.

Professional Development
Access Monthly Webinars
The Core Advocate network hosts monthly webinars on a variety of issues related to the Common Core and College and Career Ready Standards.

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Sharing the Control

Creating space for student voice during distance learning

By Lisa Britten

Summer usually brings the opportunity for educators to reflect on their choices and practices in the previous year, to resume the pursuit of their professional growth through reading and study, and -- yes -- to refresh themselves emotionally and spiritually. However, the past three months of the summer of 2020 have often left me more exhausted than inspired, and more frustrated than determined. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage our nation, and this ongoing health crisis -- combined with social and political unrest - - has left students, families, and colleagues traumatized. Many feel trapped by difficult choices with unknown consequences for the future. This is the emotional environment that we will still be navigating as we begin the 2020–21 school year.

I'm a person who finds mental and emotional comfort in structure and planning. Anyone who knows me on a professional level soon learns about my obsession with office supplies and pens, and my daily devotion to recording my "to dos" in my paper planner. This habit of

"As I reflect on the newness of teaching virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, I understand that my role in the classroom is partially to help set the tone and to manage norms."

organizing and planning aligns with my mantra for dealing with difficult life situations, honed after many years of more easily dealing with family health crises: "Control what you can control." Over the course of this uncertain summer, sometimes even the simple act of preparing a grocery list for myself has allowed me to rest a little

As we enter into the 2020–21 school year and the prospect of teaching virtually for extended periods of time becomes ever more likely, my mind returns to this idea of control. Educational research and brain science tells us that "Structure and routine are good for all young people, including youth who have experienced trauma" ([Nance, 2017](#)). Lately, the Internet has been flooded with ideas for how to structure and "set norms" for virtual classroom spaces. Educators seem obsessed with whether cameras should be off or on, whether students should be allowed to eat or drink during their remote learning meetings, how students should "raise their hands" virtually to ask questions, and even what kind of clothing students should be allowed to wear on-screen. While some of the suggestions seem inequitable at worst and laughable at best, I also empathize with my fellow educators who are grappling with the idea of managing a

classroom in a virtual space. Faced with the uncertainty of teaching in an unfamiliar environment, they are reaching for the same strategy that has brought me so much comfort in the past: control.

As I reflect on the newness of teaching virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, I understand that my role in the classroom is partially to help set the tone and to manage norms. This helps students feel safe because they understand what to expect. At the same time, however, I want to live out my belief that my students are innately excellent, thoughtful human beings whose experiences and ideas have value. In addition, I understand that if I'm the only person in the classroom community who has a voice in establishing the structure and the routines in our virtual environment, that limits the opportunity for students to feel the comfort of control over their own circumstances -- the same comfort that adults feel when they have opportunities to take control.

In his 2018 [blog post on classroom culture](#), Gary Stroud asserts, "Equity is all about fair outcomes for every student, but teachers can't know their students unless they listen first...If teachers and school leaders really want equity, they build student voice

“As an educator who believes in the inherent value of every one of my students and their voices, I need to ask myself, *How am I making space for student voice and for listening as I am facilitating the development of our virtual classroom norms?*”



from the ground up. Sincere engagement with students helps them to establish trust and relationship with adults in their schools, and gives them a sense of belonging." As an educator who believes in the inherent value of every one of my students and their voices, I need to ask myself, *How am I making space for student voice and for listening as I am facilitating the development of our virtual classroom norms?*

Dear colleagues, the road ahead of us this school year often seems confusing, complicated, and deeply concerning. For many of us, our comfort zones are already stretched to the limit, and despite that, we are being asked to serve and to grow in ways we may have never before imagined. In the face of this daily uncertainty, I believe that sharing the control by reaching out authentically to our students and inviting them to co-create ways of being and working together is one of the most impactful things we can do.

Here are some resources that I am exploring as I consider this further and make plans for the first day of school:

- [Remote Learning Resource: Setting Norms](#) - OpenSciEd
- [Creating Norms when Nothing is Normal](#) - Jen Cort, AMLE
- [Creating and Using Norms](#) - EL Education
- [Helping Students Find Their Voice](#) - Discovery Education

"I believe that sharing the control by reaching out authentically to our students and inviting them to co-create ways of being and working together is one of the most impactful things we can do."



Written by
Core Advocate
Lisa Britten
[@lbritten](#)

ALIGNED BLOG

Do you read Achieve the Core's blog, [Aligned](#)? Many of the articles are authored by Core Advocates and are filled with practical advice, new resources, and honest reflections. Here are just a few! Feel free to reach out to these Core Advocate authors if you have questions or want to learn more about their work.



YOU HAVE A LIST OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE TEXTS. NOW WHAT?

Guidance on facilitating classroom lessons and discussions that push student thinking

By Keenan W. Lee, M. Ed,
[@LearningwithKL](#)

HOW HONESTLY WILLING ARE WE TO CREATE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES FOR ALL STUDENTS?

Transforming education by leading teachers to empower students

By Carrie Rosebrock
[@CarrieRosebrock](#)



PLANNING FOR MATH REMEDIATION

Just-In-Case or Just-In-Time?

By: Sarah Britton &
Jami Therrien Wells

ALIGNED BLOG (CONTINUED)



IMMERSING IN VOCABULARY

How to develop vocabulary in an effective and meaningful way
By Zachary Chan

GROWING YOUR CRAFT, VIRTUALLY!

Achieve the Core's webinars can help your K--12 staff grow and reflect!

By Tika Epstein

@tikaee



AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICES DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

Using asynchronous tools to create a math share-out for the kindergarten classroom

By Bethany Lockhart

Why Teaching Justice Through Reading & Writing Cannot Wait

How teachers can enact change and combat racism through purposeful discussions and literary curricula

WRITTEN BY
YVONNE THOMPSON



Early in my education career, I taught U.S. Government and was invited by the Director of the Center for Civic Education to attend a Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama. Once labeled “Bombingham” because of the explosive, racist attacks on black people, this city also was home to the historic 16th Street Baptist Church. Targeted by the KKK for being a command center for the Civil Rights Movement, this church is where four young black girls lost their lives getting ready for Sunday School when a bomb detonated on September 15, 1963. Forty-four years later, in September 2007, I was on an airplane going to meet the foot soldiers of the Children’s March and the parents of Denise McNair – one of the little girls who tragically lost her life in that church bombing. The white man in his late 40s sitting next to me on the plane asked why I was traveling to Birmingham. I briefly explained, and he said, “The bombing was the turning point for my parents.” He was a little boy sitting in an all-white Sunday School classroom of his own across the city in an all-white neighborhood that morning. He said, “It rocked the city so hard we thought it was an earthquake.” The bombing and deaths of those four girls also rattled the moral conscience of his parents, who had previously believed segregation was not their issue to fight. He said many non-racist white people disagreed with segregation, but they trusted others to figure it out over time.

George Floyd's horrific death this past month blasted my memory back to that plane ride. Pondering the number of black people who've lost their lives to police brutality, I've wondered, "How many white people think police brutality is wrong, but not their issue to fight?" I've flashed back to standing in the same hallowed spot of that church basement where Denise McNair and her three friends lost their lives to bigotry and hatred. The stained-glass face of Christ symbolically shattered in the sanctuary that morning, and many throughout the nation grieved. Denise's parents believed their daughter brought a city and nation to its knees in repentance over the injustice of her death. Today I wonder how many more people of color must still die at the hands of racial brutality before we're shattered enough to correct the sin of racial injustice forever?

1963 was a pivotal year for the Civil Rights Movement. It was the year of the Birmingham Children's March, where thousands of children were arrested and imprisoned and some put in hog pens at the fairgrounds when the jail cells overflowed. It was 100 years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the year Martin Luther King, Jr., led the March on Washington and declared the time for waiting for full citizenship rights was over. It was the same year he referenced Henry David Thoreau's Civil Disobedience when he wrote the following in Letter from Birmingham Jail, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." When one person loses his or her life at the hands of racist brutality, and we think someone else will fix it, no American is safe.

**"NOW IS THE
TIME..."**

To quote Reverend King, "Now is the time" for those of us who must educate colleagues, students, and communities that racial injustice is not a black or white or brown problem – it is a moral atrocity of mass destruction. We must shake and rattle the conscience of the education community to teach tolerance and the value of human dignity. How can we do this? Here are some ideas:

- Infuse texts by authors of different ethnicities and perspectives into both fiction and nonfiction curriculum. Have students journal about the feelings and experiences of the author and note parallels and differences in their own lives. Creating graphic organizers comparing and contrasting the author's life and experiences to the student's is an effective, visual way for even elementary kids to internalize what they read.
- Host guest speakers. As a social studies teacher, I invited a Holocaust survivor and a black man who experienced racism and segregation working for the Birmingham police department in the 1960s to speak to my classes. I also had a German WWII veteran, who came and spoke about how Hitler had manipulated the German people through propaganda and fear. When I taught English, my students helped me organize and host a Social Justice in American Literature night. Guest panelists spoke on poverty, religious persecution, bullying, and racism. There was no agenda – simply an awareness night with expert panelists and lots of Q & A. Students then wrote about their experiences and what they learned. All we had to do was reach out to local organizations with an invitation, and the speakers graciously attended. If a live event is not possible, consider using Google Meets or prerecord and upload for your students.

- Teach students that human dignity is timeless. Find literature where the themes are similar, and give historical context for each before diving into complex text. Beyond text analysis, plan how you can guide your students into the life lesson application of what they read. One of my favorite activities as an ELA teacher was having my high school juniors compare and contrast Letter from Birmingham Jail to Civil Disobedience. That was predicated by digging into “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration of Independence and when – if ever – it is okay to rebel against your government. Thoreau and King then helped kids refine their understanding of “just” and “moral” laws and how rebellion sometimes comes with a price in order to prove how unjust government can be.
- Model and guide purposeful civil discourse. Discussions help students process and synthesize others’ beliefs and their own. Whether it’s Fishbowl or passing a talking piece, there should be structured and agreed-upon ground rules as a class. An example is when my students debated whether or not Colin Kaepernick’s Take-A-Knee Movement was unpatriotic. Students on each side were given clear parameters and time limits with no personal attacks on anyone. Students of color afraid of white police officers were able to express their feelings, and students with family members in law enforcement described how hurtful it was for their relatives to be stereotyped as people who would abuse their power. Those who knew people in the armed forces shared their perspectives, some cited 1st Amendment freedoms, and others referenced non-violent peaceful protests. As students shared and wrote, they realized that we may agree to disagree, but we all want the same civil liberties for all. These conversations can be done live in a classroom or through Google, Canvas, and other remote discussion tools.
- Assign students an opposing view to prove. For example, ask students if they support amnesty for young adults who were brought to the U.S. as undocumented children by their parents. Those who say yes go to one side of the room, and those who say no go to the other. Then tell students they will argue for the side they’re against. Instruct them to collectively develop their arguments within a specified time frame and they can use devices to research if applicable. When done, pair each with a partner on the other side and have them share their answers with a chart of Yes & No Reasons. They can then write a reflection on whether or not they still hold to their original view based on the activity as they cite reasons for and against. This is good for teaching claims and counterclaims and preparing students for simulated mock hearings.
- Encourage transparency and authenticity. Tell students you have had your own biases and stereotyped people in the past. Share a story about how you misjudged one of your own teachers as a kid or wrongly thought poorly of someone because of what your friends had said about the person. Ask kids to think about how they develop opinions and biases and what influences their perspectives. Not all students will want to engage in open dialogue within a classroom or a virtual discussion. They will fear judgement from others or have to acknowledge their own prejudices and views are being challenged and changed. Establish “no judgment spaces” and encourage kids if they are uncomfortable to talk to you or write a reflection on why they are struggling.



- Preemptively communicate the objective. When pushing students to think critically about their own values and social responsibilities, kids and parents might get uncomfortable. Make it clear to students and parents you have no agenda other than to encourage critical thinking about life issues through literature and writing. If you think discussions, activities, or text will create potential conflicts, give parents and school leaders a preview of what you are doing and how it connects to academic standards and the character principles in your school's mission and vision. Make yourself available to answer questions and concerns.
- Utilize excellent resources. Some of Brown University's Choices curriculum, Courageous Conversations About Race by Glenn Singleton, the Center for Civic Education, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and Teaching Tolerance through the Southern Poverty Law Center are good places to start. Talk to your administrators and colleagues about what you can do in your school.

If you are already purposeful in integrating opportunities to combat racism and stereotypes in your classroom, continue the good work. If you are looking for ways to improve, reflect on the barriers holding you back. Now is past time – this is our turning point, and our classrooms are still safe.

About the Author

Yvonne Thompson is a writer, speaker, and educational leader with experience in public, charter, and private schools. She has contributed to state and national curriculum projects, and her articles have appeared in several publications, including SEVENTEEN Magazine and The Indianapolis Star. She is currently a proud Falcon Master Teacher at Perry Meridian H.S. in Indianapolis.



MATH TASK CHALLENGE



A rich, interesting math task is a great way to engage students in virtual math learning this year! Modeling Tasks and [information about modeling](#) are available on the expanded [Coherence Map](#). The Math Task Challenge for this issue is one of the tasks available on the Coherence Map: [College Characteristics](#). You can do part of the task or the entire project. The task can be found [here](#) and the data spreadsheet you'll need can be found [here](#).

We hope you will do the math task yourself, try it with colleagues, or even do the task along with your students. We'd love to see your modeling! Snap a photo of your work on the math task and share it on Twitter.

Use #CoreAdvocates and #mathtask on Twitter to share your solution and be entered into a raffle for a \$25 gift card!

College Characteristics

1. Here are the characteristics of colleges that we have data about: Choose two that might be related. What do you predict the relationship between them is?

- college ownership: public, private non-profit, or private for-profit
- average SAT score of admitted students
- acceptance rate
- number of enrolled students
- average cost of attendance per year
- median earnings 10 years after graduation
- highest degree awarded
- completion rate
- percent of students who self-identify as white
- median ACT score of admitted students

We are thrilled to highlight the following teachers who were nominated for their innovative practices to support early literacy work in remote learning.

Lindsay Arnold, Kindergarten Teacher
Baltimore City Public Schools/Liberty Elementary School, MD

Adrian Austin, 2nd Grade Teacher/EIT 3
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools/Winget Park Elementary, NC

Krystle Barnes, 2nd Grade Humanities Master Teacher
CICS Lloyd Bond, IL

Zachary Chan, 3rd Grade Teacher
San Antonio ISD/Irving Dual Language Academy, TX

Susan Connick, K-5 Instructional Facilitator
Hynes Charter School, LA

MJ D'Amelio, 1st Grade Teacher
Anacortes School District, WA

Kelsie Davis, Math Specialist
Charlottesville Schools, VA

Lisa Debo, 1st Grade Teacher
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools/McAlpine Elementary School, NC

Elisa Espinal, Kindergarten Educator
CSD 7/Concourse Village Elementary School, NY

Amy Frink, Lead 1st Grade Teacher, Team Chair, MTSS Member, PBIS Member
Brunswick County/Bolivia Elementary, NC

Shannon Gillikin, Elementary Teacher
Charlottesville Schools, VA

Melanie Johnson, Gifted Resource Teacher
Charlottesville Schools, VA

Liz Jones, Reading Specialist
Charlottesville Schools, VA

Lara Knowles, Kindergarten Teacher
Anacortes School District, WA

Carolyn Pugh, Kindergarten Teacher
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools/Lake
Wylie Elementary, NC

Julie Riccardi, Kindergarten Teacher
Anacortes School District, WA

Kalie Schmitt, 2nd Grade Teacher
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Schools/McAlpine Elementary, NC

Cindy Shannon, 1st Grade Teacher
Atwater Elementary School District/
Mitchell K-6 Elementary, CA

Amber Wesson, 2nd Grade
Teacher/Chairperson
Stonewall Tell ES, GA

Ebony White, 1st Grade Self-Contained
Classroom Teacher
Fulton County, GA



*Click here to
share your
celebrations!*

We want to celebrate YOU!

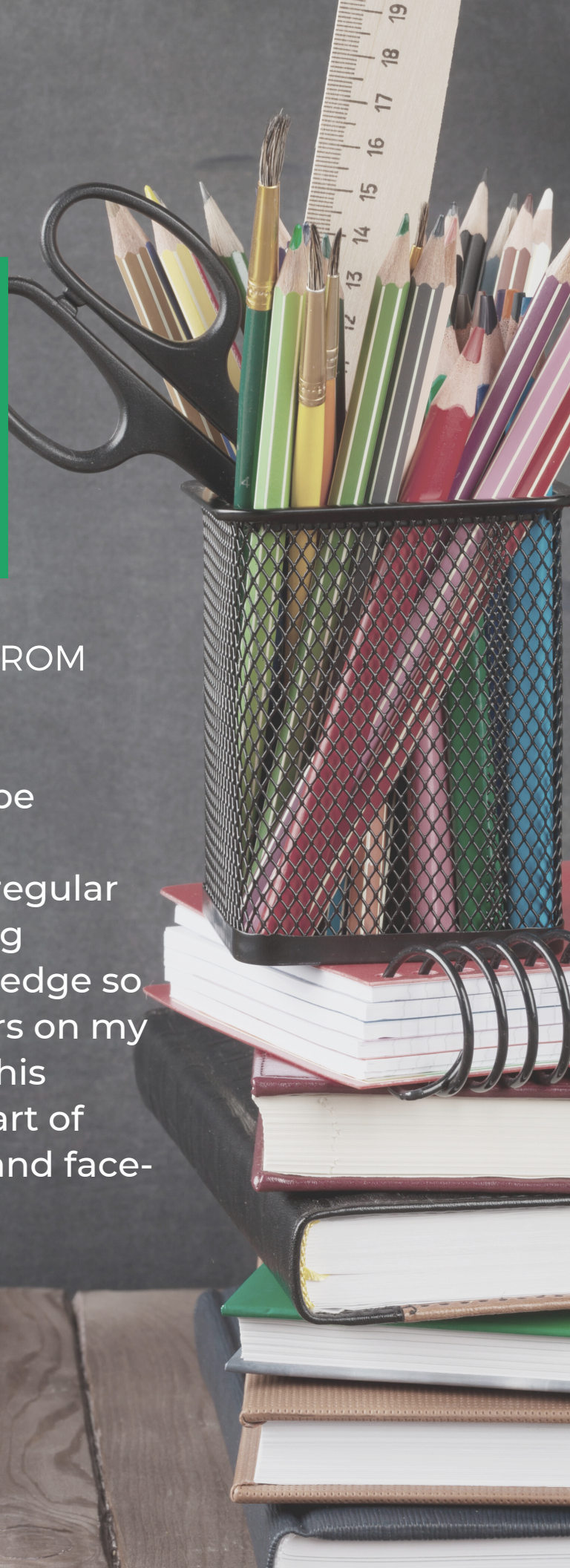
This is an opportunity to share with the network any work-related achievements you've accomplished this year! Did you win teacher of the year? Tell us about it! Did you finish a new degree? Earn an add-on certificate? Tell us about it! Did you win a special grant for your classroom? We want to hear all about it, AND we want to share it with the Core Advocate Network in our *Core Connections* magazine!

QUARTERLY QUESTION

Last issue we asked: What will you be focusing on this summer to prepare for next year?

THE WINNING REPLY CAME FROM
KRISTIN ASA

My focus over the summer will be working on PD for teachers to incorporate Number Talks as a regular part of their routine. I am looking forward to increasing my knowledge so that I can work with the teachers on my site become comfortable with this routine and make it a regular part of their instruction, both digitally and face-to-face.





QUARTERLY QUESTION

For those of you who are teaching asynchronously this fall, how are you planning on cultivating relationships with students this year?

**Submit your
answer for a
chance to win
a \$25 gift card!
(click here)**



DIGITAL TEACHING WITH SEESAW

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Due to Covid-19, the 2020-21 school year has left many educators temporarily leaving the comfort of the four walls of their classrooms in exchange for a safer, yet unknown virtual classroom. Though change like this is never easy, these challenges present a unique learning opportunity for educators to expand their craft. The following teachers shared how they are using the free digital platform [Seesaw](#) to successfully engage with their students.

If you're unfamiliar with Seesaw, you can find an entire section dedicated to free [training for teachers](#). In addition, there is also a dedicated area with resources for [remote learning](#).

Continue reading at next page>

My district used Seesaw as the learning platform for our K-3 students. I envisioned and created a decodable reading routine for all our kindergarten teachers to provide a powerful phonics in-context practice that supported a common practice across our district. First, I took each decodable reader and put the pages digitally into a Seesaw activity.

For Monday, I used the audio feature to introduce and read the page with fluency to students. I used the pen tool to make a dot under each word as I read to encourage tracking and engagement.

On Tuesday, I created a new activity of the same book by creating a copy, but instead used the audio feature to instruct students to follow along and echo read with me. With the pen tool, one color was used to dot on my turn to read. Then I chose a different color pen to dot the words on their turn to read.

On Wednesday, the same process occurred in creating a new Seesaw activity, but this time my audio instruction was a flashcard warm up of trick (high-frequency) words in the reader. I did this by adding movable text boxes with the words on the first page of activity and using the audio tool to guide the practice. Then the book was reread, as a choral read using the pen tool as previously described, but a second copy of the page was made in the Seesaw activity for students to use the highlighter tool to go on a "trick word" hunt in their reader.

On Thursday, the students were asked to reread the decodable book and show off their reading. Students used the audio tool to read on their own. This day gave all of the K teachers the formative assessment information to track how their students were doing in their in-context reading practice, which could inform

our feedback to families and our teaching. In addition, it gave families and students a routine of consistent practice, which supports students emotionally and helps them to not only become independent in their decodable reading but also in computer skills (which is helpful to families of early learning).

The K teachers on my team remarked on the success that this routine had on their spring distance learning class. Teachers shared that some of their students were reading more fluently on the final read than they had in their classrooms. In addition, we discussed continuing this routine for the next school year, whether that be in person or in remote learning, to guide student practice to independence in their decodable reading!

I feel like this type of collaborative work in a distance learning environment is key to our success collectively. It supports the adults and students' social-emotional needs of connection and unity, with powerful peer-to-peer learning, and creates a spirit of being in this for ALL our students and families together.

--JULIE RICCARDI, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER





Students show learning

Students use built-in annotation tools to capture what they know in Seesaw's digital portfolio



Teachers gain insights

Teachers deeply understand student thinking and progress — enabling them to teach better



Families connect

Families gain a window into their student's learning and engage with school happenings


My district used Seesaw to deliver asynchronous lessons and practice opportunities. I videoed my reading foundational skills lessons using Zoom and then uploaded them onto Seesaw. I continued following the scope and sequence of my phonics curriculum. I made my lessons interactive just as I would in class and communicated to families to please interact and practice along as they watched the videos. I continued the same routines and practice activities that I did in the classroom but used Seesaw to deliver them. I know the importance of a systematic phonics program, and I made sure this instruction continued. I provided activities that included students reading to me daily (real words, nonsense words, high-frequency words, and decodable passages) on Seesaw, and I gave lots of feedback and praise.

Relationships are so important! I believe it is the relationships with my students that kept them engaged during the closure. Finding ways to connect, laugh, and share made the learning possible from a distance. We had one synchronous meeting per week and we used it for show-n-tell, jokes, stories, and chatting. I tried to keep their friendships connected, too.

I also used the [Decodable Reader Protocol](#). On Monday, I uploaded a decodable reader onto Seesaw and read it to my students. I encouraged them to read along with me at home. I asked parents or siblings to act as reading partners on Tuesday and Wednesday along with independent practice and then on Thursday, each child recorded themselves reading the decodable passage. I was able to assess and see who needed more practice and on what spelling pattern or fluency. I gave feedback and planned lessons accordingly. I would add practice to my lessons based on what I heard. I emailed and called families that needed support or encouragement. This year, I will add to these routines by having small, synchronous groups for focused practice.

I found that relationships and systematic phonics instruction with lots of practice and fun made learning from a distance more engaging and meaningful.

-MJ D'AMELIO, 1ST GRADE TEACHER

 **teresa** @teresa_teaches

Thank you @achievethecore This was some of my self care this summer. Very happy I was able to experience this with some of my teachers. Looking forward to next year as we try to meet the needs for all students. #coreadvocates #UniversalLiteracyNYCDOE #EdEquity



achievethecore.org @achievethecore · Aug 23

Thank you to everyone who has participated in our recent surveys! We appreciate each of you for your participation by sharing your perspectives and your expertise! So without further ado, join us in thanking our recent raffle winners! #coreadvocates



How Has Being a Core Advocate Impacted You?

 **Tika Epstein** @tikaee · Sep 1

I am honored to be mentioned by @achievethecore! #Choiceboards have been a purposeful part of #distancelearning. #studentvoice #instructionalcoaches #blendedlearning #coreadvocates

achievethecore.org @achievethecore · Sep 1

Classroom teacher @tikaee shares how she uses choice boards to meet the needs of all her students in this FAQ-style blog post: bit.ly/2NAi5Fj #coreadvocates #edcoach #teachervoice



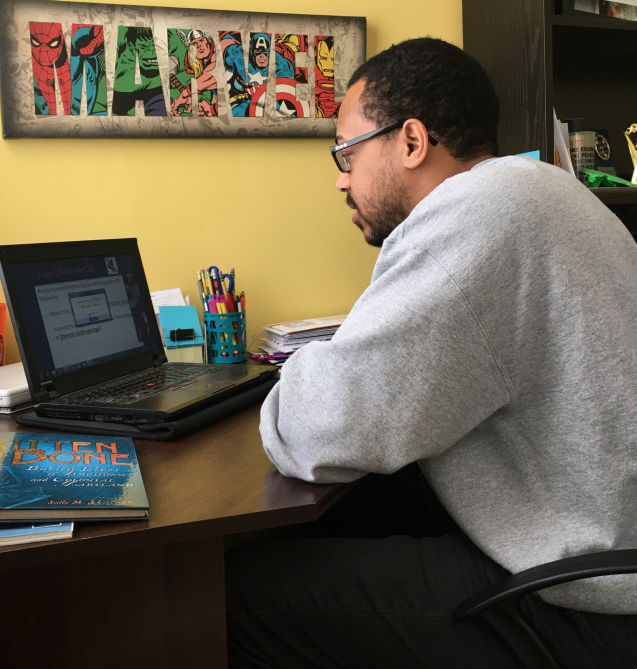
"I always keep the "end goal" in mind when I choose to create a choice board for my students. I look at the cluster of standards I am teaching and decide what I want my students to accomplish as they complete the assignments on the board. Choice boards can be as small as three choices and as large as 12 choices depending on the purpose.

All students should have access to complex problems, rigorous tasks, and quality text."

-TIKA EPSTEIN

We asked, and you answered! Take a look at what being a Core Advocate means to these educators. Do you have a story to tell? We'd love for you to share it with us via Twitter! Use #coreadvocates and make sure to tag @achievethecore! Or submit via this [form](#).

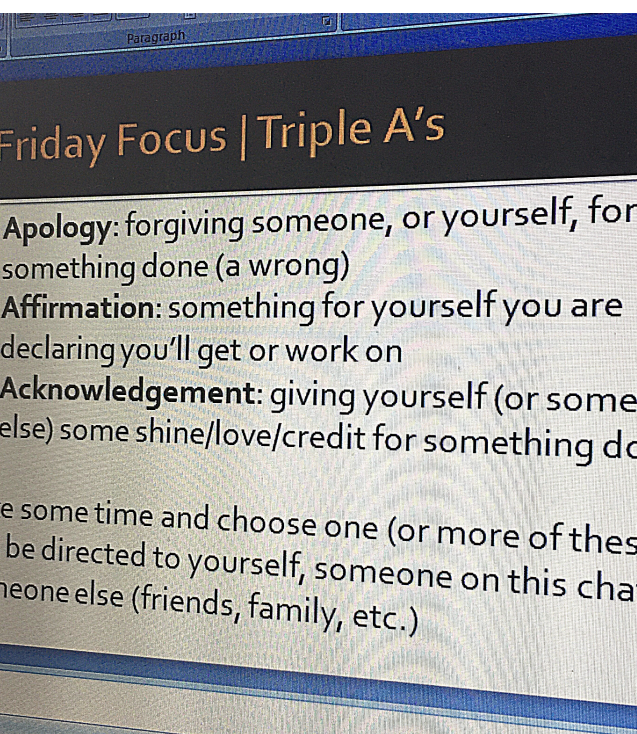




HARD WORK MEETS HEART
WORK:

DISTANCE LEARNING & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

By Kyair Butts (Mr. K)
@KyairB

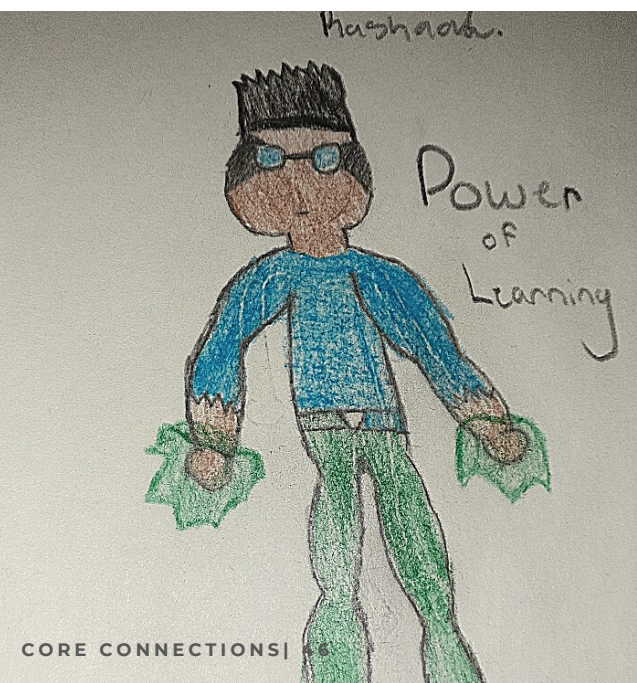


March 2020 was a month unlike any other in all my years teaching. Specifically, I remember Thursday, March 12, 2020. I had a great lesson with my students. The energy was infectious, and it was one of those moments that you just wanted to last a little longer because love, joy, and learning met in one space: our classroom. I dismissed my students with the familiar, "I like the work you did today, and I love the person that showed up to do it." I prepared for conferences that evening while laughing with families in between discussing progress, grades, and next steps as we finished out the third quarter and prepared for the fourth quarter. Then, like many of us, I received the news that we weren't going back to school for at least two weeks. As we all know, those two weeks covered a period of time from mid-March

until the end of June. Creating a virtual classroom environment with high expectations for myself meant that we collectively had to manage a crisis while switching to an entirely new way of learning and engaging with education. In a truly visceral way, the hard work was omnipresent, and the heart work was seeped into every bit of understanding a teacher could muster.

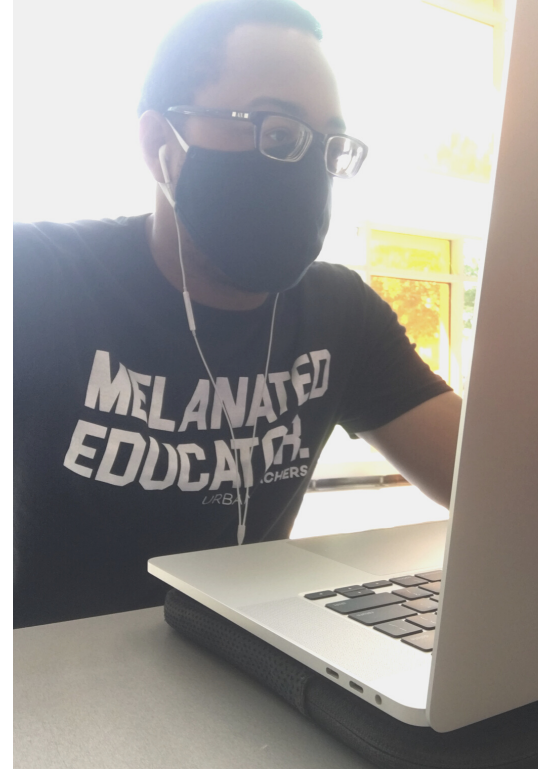
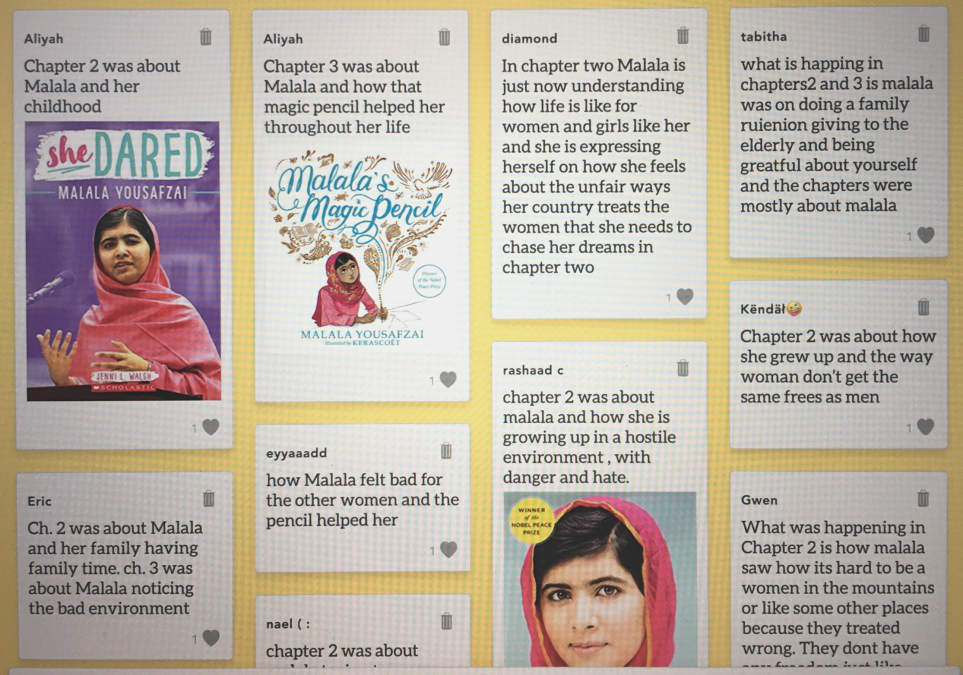
Call to Action

The harsh realities of a global pandemic played out in my virtual classroom: there were students missing time because of COVID-19 related deaths, constant fears that we, too, were getting sick and suspicious of every sneeze and cough. Despite these fears and oftentimes paralyzing thoughts that could



What was happening in Chapters 2 & 3?

Use your notes from this lesson to explain what happened in this chapter?
Who was the 2 chapters about and why they're important.



hinder a day of learning, I realized that this was a tragedy-wrapped gift for the world (or business) of education. Here we had the opportunity to rethink public education knowing full well that it has left behind many students, failed families at times, and pulled the rug of hope out from under black and brown students. The system was halted, stuck, frozen in time in our ghost-town classrooms. What follows is as much a call to action as it is tips for engaging in meaningful online instruction this fall.

We (educators) must start to see ourselves as equity agents capable of changing the trajectory of families and long-term life outcomes. This is our moment: on the corner of destiny and possibility awaits a new beginning. Are we willing to do what it takes to cross the threshold and see what's on the other side? I see you. I hear you. What I know is that you are enough...we are enough, and together we can make education work for every student, especially our black and brown youth.

Lessons Learned

The spring offered many lessons to reflect on and consider for this fall. One of the biggest was around assumptions. Teachers, myself included, couldn't assume that technology will always work or that students could, at the drop of a hat, join synchronous lessons. I learned early and often that when I went live for our lessons, my 6th graders were often working with siblings, taking care of family members and, in some cases,

mourning the loss of a relative due to the pandemic. At that point, how important was that lesson for that day? I learned to focus on the heart work and to be present for students and families in their time of need. Access to reliable technology and quiet places to learn were also difficult in some cases. Students and families needed to be extended some grace in these instances as we all worked together to troubleshoot and make reasonable accommodations. One final lesson learned was being a master at my craft. It was imperative that all the work I did over the summer and put into place in the fall helped me endure the spring. Teachers need to be immersed in their content and/or curriculum to continually ask themselves, "How does this material translate to the virtual environment?" Questions like that can only effectively be answered when we know our content/curriculum so well that we can envision material being posted to our virtual classrooms or being presented virtually live to students. I would spend weekends and weeknights tweaking lessons and revisiting the curriculum to ensure that any material posted was accessible and easily translated to online instruction. In this sense, I learned a lesson that I continue to be grateful for: embody and maintain the status of master craft teaching. I need this and students deserve it.

Where We Go from Here

These are trying times, and we have to try our hardest during these times. Many of us are taking those hard-learned and hard-earned lessons with us from the spring into the fall. We should also focus on creating lasting professional learning communities/networks (PLCs/PLNs) to create systemic and lasting change within education. I don't want to sound tone-deaf – the loss of life due to the global COVID-19 pandemic is devastatingly painful and an emotional wound that will take time to heal. However, in this time of crisis, we have also been afforded a time of creation: What should education look like going forward? Folks talk about a return to normal, and what is amiss from “return to normal” is the inherent yet seldom-discussed fact that Black and Brown kids are performing at lower rates than their white peers. While variances are understood, so, too, is the fact that the tentacles of systemic racism have their grip even on education and educational outcomes for our children...our Black and Brown children.

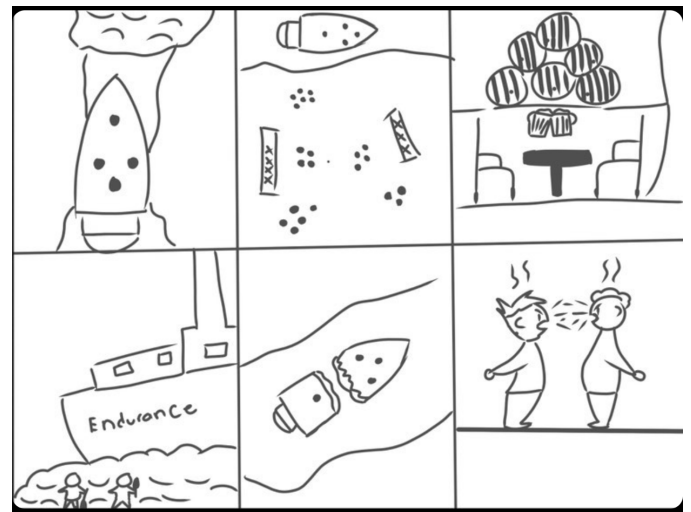
This is a moment that should be a movement. We can be better than we were in the spring, and we should want to be better than we were in the spring. We should take advantage of professional development opportunities to continue on the road to mastery for our content areas. We should continue to refine relationships with colleagues in terms of co-planning, co-teaching to strengthen the team. We should continue to work with families, give them grace, and ultimately see ourselves as ammates whose goal is to get our children/students across the educational finish line

Getting to Work

There's the old adage that we want to work smarter, not harder. I think we can work hard – that's the nature of this work. We do, however, want to work efficiently and smartly as we get students logged online, savvy with their devices and applications, and mastering their learning by showing progress throughout the year. If you are using multiple applications, consider cutting down to one and sticking with that platform through the duration of virtual learning. For

example, if your district has approved Zoom, students should use a recurring link (the same link and same password) for the duration of your virtual learning class. Please make sure that you have a waiting room and tell both students and parents that they will need to log-in using their school credentials (school-provided email address and school-provided usernames). These methods ensure security for the students and teacher(s). Google Classroom is another Learning Management System (LMS) that teachers and districts are using. Teachers might consider only using one single classroom for multiple teachers. For example, I am on a team that consists of three total teachers. We are using a single Google Classroom as the one hub for students. The math teacher, science/social studies teacher, and literacy teacher (me!) are using the one Google Classroom; however, we have organized the “Classwork” section into three folders (one for each teacher). We are also creating tutorials and fun videos that welcome students to the culture of our school and set the expectations for learning for this new school year.

One last main area of consideration for live learning is: How will you engage students? The idea is that we don't want daily dry PowerPoints, muted students, blank screens. That just isn't good teaching, nor is it a good best practice for virtual learning. There are plenty of platforms and applications out there that engage students,



capture data, and are fun! I use Nearpod (it's free for teachers with paid upgrades that are reasonably priced). I love this website/app because it's engaging, students love it, it's compatible in terms of uploading the slides from multiple platforms, and there are ready-made lessons already! Oh, and did I mention it collects student data when they respond, and you can see some of their work in real time? Yeah...you're welcome.

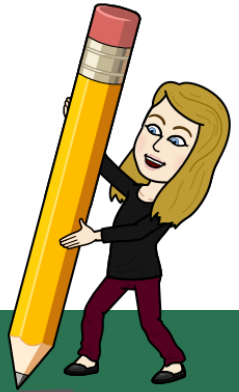
I'll end by saying that we understand that, from all fronts, 2020 has been a year to either remember or forget. Let us forget the bickering and division that seems to define the state of our dialogue. Let us forget the hate and negativity that sometimes finds its way like water into our way of thinking. Let us forget who we are not. We can choose a new path forward in education. Let us remember that teachers create every profession and every person for that job. Let us remember that we console, we teach, we educate, and we do it all while being us-- with our heartache, our personal struggles, and our desire to be the teachers our students need and deserve. Let us remember that this work chose us, or that we chose this work. Let us remember that this work is hard, and this work is heart. I see you. I hear you. You are enough. You don't need luck to have a great school year, so instead I'll leave you by saying this: create a great school year because you are truly amazing. This is different and so are we, but the core of who we are and what we do has remained the same.

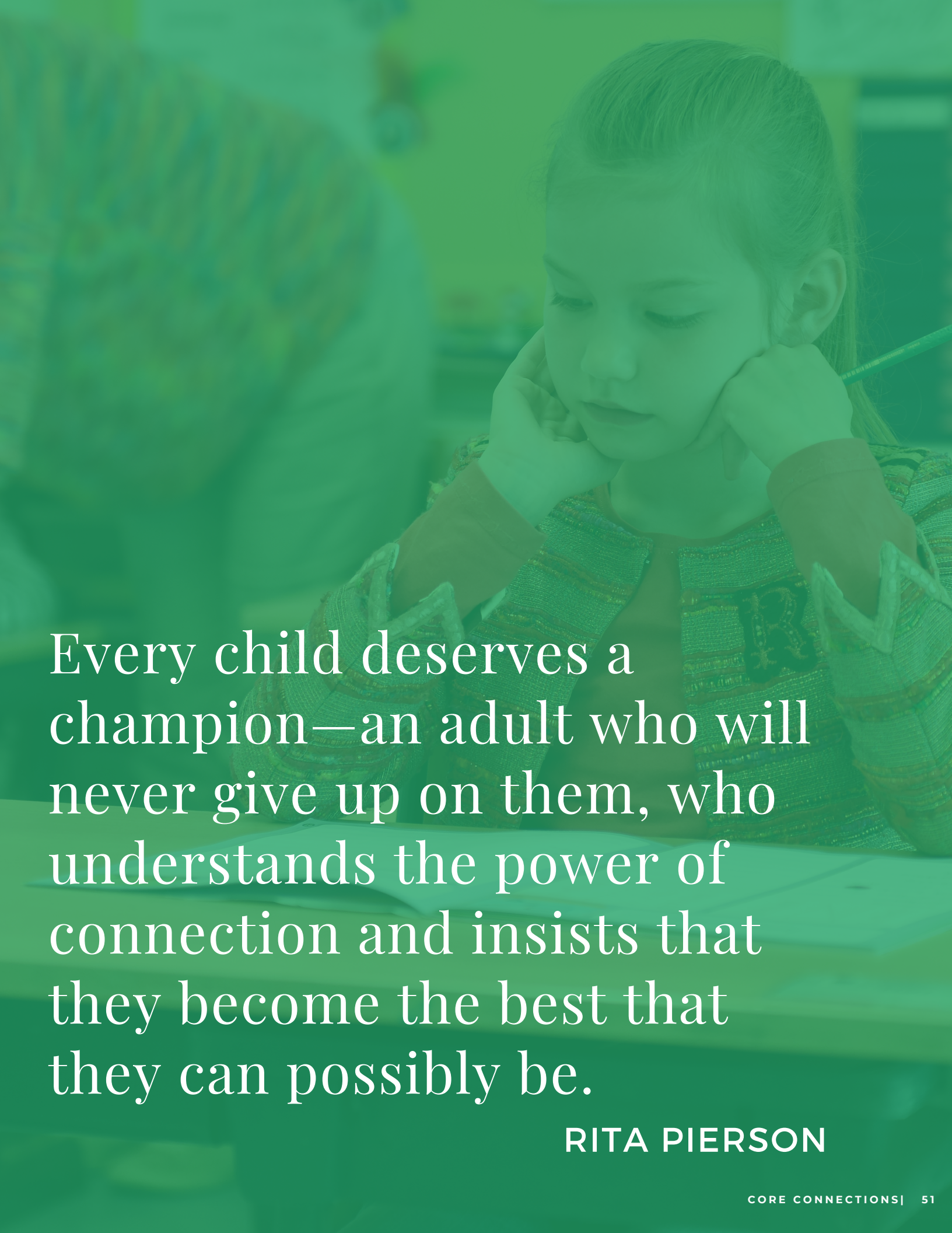


Get to Know Your Students with Bitmojis

Building relationships with students is one of the first steps to kicking off a successful new school year! However, this is a school year like no other, with many classrooms going from in-person to virtual. To ensure they are still able to find ways to foster these all-important relationships with students, educators across the country have gotten creative by seeking new and fun ways to get to know one another in a virtual environment. Enter the Bitmoji! If you've never heard of a Bitmoji, this free resource allows you to create a digitized version of yourself. Bitmojis first took the education world by storm with the notion of #BookSnaps. We hosted a webinar and a blog post on how to incorporate these into the classroom back in 2018. So when we noticed the emergence of Bitmojis this summer as a way to engage students virtually, we took notice! We saw teachers using Bitmojis to create a virtual classroom, virtual lockers, and even virtual bulletin boards. In fact, there's now an entire hashtag devoted to this on Twitter: the #BitmojiClassroom.

If you are using Bitmojis or another creative way to virtually engage and build relationships with your students this fall, share it and tag us on Twitter (@achievethecore) so we can follow along! Here are a couple of examples that caught our eye!



A young girl with her hands clasped, looking down thoughtfully, with a green overlay.

Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.

RITA PIERSON

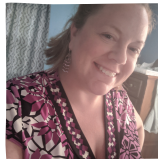


RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOMEONE NEW TO YOUR ROLE

We asked experienced educators to share advice to new teachers, coaches and school leaders. Here's what they said...

FOR TEACHERS...

CATHERINE KOPKA
[@MRSCKOPKA](#)



"There are so many remote learning platforms now. Flipgrid, Nearpod, CommonLit, Seesaw, NewsELA. I really got involved with Google and all of its features like Peardeck. The best way to really use them, is just to start messing around with the features..."

FOR TEACHERS...

DIANA RAMIREZ



"...An instructional coach is useful in providing you direction and pointing out effective strategies you can use. Even if you don't know what you need, start to build a relationship with your instructional coach and don't be afraid to let them watch you teach. This is a great way to become the exceptional teacher you desire to be."

FOR ADMINS...

TAMARA ROSE
[@TAMARAJROSE1](#)



"As an administrator, there may be a temptation to share EVERY new resource, strategy, or tool with your teachers. Especially during Distance Learning. Don't do that! Invest your time into an authentic needs analysis by listening to your teachers. What are they trying to accomplish? How? Now identify their barriers and their struggles. Meet those needs, but keep it simple and share only one to two strategies/resources that might meet those needs. Next, give them time. Lots and lots of time to get settled in to shifting and growing their instruction. I have three protocols that I suggest for this work (choose one): 1) The Principle and Practice Protocol, or 2) The Problem of Practice Protocol, or 3) The Design Thinking Protocol. Each of these protocols empowers teachers and gives them autonomy to shift their practice while being guided by evidence-based instructional strategies."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOMEONE NEW TO YOUR ROLE

FOR TEACHERS...

TIFFANY TAYLOR



"You can have scholars create [eBinders](#) to stay organized (remote or in-person). Use Google Sites to create a copy of eBinder templates and adjust it to your course and learners' needs.

Allow scholars to use [Padlet](#) to complete quick writes (as a scaffold include sentence starters) and to collaborate with their peers."

FOR ADMINIS...

MICHELLE PAPA
[MPAPAEDU](#)



"As a new administrator, it is critical that you start by listening. Resist the urge to change things right away. Instead, build relationships with students, staff, and parents so that you have meaningful connections with all members of the school community. If this is your first year in administration, know that it won't always be this challenging. Good luck!"

FOR TEACHERS...

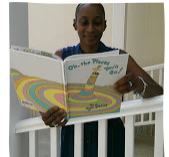
KIM MORGAN



"Start every class the same. Middle Schoolers need and do best with routine. They like to know what to expect when they walk in your room. Also, spend time getting to know them. This is so important...it takes time and effort and it feels like you won't have time for your curriculum but it is beyond worth it and will make teaching and learning so much better the rest of the year. You will get through the curriculum and your students will feel safe and seen in your room."

FOR TEACHERS...

VICKI BULLOCK
[@AWESOMETEACHAH1](#)



"<https://whiteboard.fi/> is an online whiteboard for you and your students! You can push out YOUR whiteboard with problems or prompts or whatever you choose. You can see all students' work in real time. Students cannot see each other's work. You also have the ability to save their whiteboard work for future reference, portfolios, share-outs, etc

<https://toytheater.com/category/teacher-tools/virtual-manipulatives/> is a source of endless virtual math manipulatives!!!! You can even link them to your bitmoji classroom!"

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOMEONE NEW TO YOUR ROLE

FOR TEACHERS...

DENISE WEINTRAUT
@SMILINGTEACH



"Take the time to get to know your students and work to build community in the first weeks of school. Engagement, especially online, depends on the connections you make...Have them write in responses to a reflective question that allows them to share a bit of themselves with you, perhaps including a statement like "What I wish my teacher knew about me." The more you know about your students, their cultures, and their lives, the better you'll be able to plan your instruction!"

FOR TEACHERS...

DIANE BARNETT



"As soon as possible I learn students names and make notes on how to pronounce them correctly. I feel that it shows that you value them to take the time to learn something that is important to them. I also try to learn something about their interests or hobbies so I can have conversations about something other than academics. I think it's important that students know that you care about them as a person. Earning that trust will buy a lot in the way of having them listen and respect as you provide instruction."

FOR TEACHERS...

FLO FALATKO
@FLOFALATKO



"Whether you start your classroom in person or virtually, the most important part of effective instruction is making connections. It is important to understand where your students are coming from, their views about themselves as learners, and what drives them or is their passion. This can be done with mini-conferences whether you are in person or virtual."

FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

AMBER KIRK



"My advice moving into a leadership role, my biggest strategy is to create "big picture" systems that support your ultimate goals. In my first year in this role, Director of Instruction, I would very reactive to creating systems needed for academic success. This year, I made sure to create systems and ensure that 100% of the team are on board. I am implementing distributive leadership, and ensuring that I am not owning 100% of the responsibility. This allows me the capacity to progress monitor the systems, and make adjustments as needed."

FOR MATH TEACHERS...

CARRIE STARK
@CARRIESTARK7



"[Making Sense of Mathematics for Teaching the Small Group \(Small-Group Instruction Strategies to Differentiate Math Lessons in Elementary Classrooms\)](#) has been a great new resource for helping me teach Title 1 Math. It addresses effective small group math instruction."



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