CORE CONNECTIONS:

EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS

CORE CONNECTIONS
EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN THE CLASSROOM

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS

Jennie Beltramini — Mathematics Specialist
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Welcome

DR. JODY GUARINO
@JODY_GUARINO
MATHEMATICS COORDINATOR
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Welcome Core Advocates!

I'm excited to welcome you to *Core Connections* and an issue that focuses on a topic that is central to student learning: the learning of educators. Over the last decade and a half, I have worked in teacher education with preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and administrators. Since the release of college- and career-ready standards in 2010, understanding and implementing the standards has been a big part of this work. The Student Achievement Partners team members, along with the tools and resources they've developed, continue to be invaluable to me, in addition to the many opportunities I've had to learn alongside in development and implementation.

Being a Core Advocate for many years, I appreciate the professional learning work of Student Achievement Partners. Professional learning that supports content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of student thinking is crucial to student learning, and is an equity move. I am excited to see how the new Professional Learning Principles are taken up within the Core Advocate community and beyond.

Whether you are a teacher, leader, or education partner, I invite you to join me in reading the February issue of *Core Connections* and taking action to improve professional learning! The students we collectively serve deserve it!

Happy Reading!
Jody

Welcome

THE EDITORS OF CORE CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the third edition of Core Connections! Our goal as editors of this magazine is to find ways to elevate the voices of educators across the nation. The work of educators never ends and often goes unrecognized by those around them. Our intent is to highlight the work you are doing as teachers, instructional coaches, and educational leaders and find ways to connect you with other like-minded professionals. Where possible, we've included the Twitter handles of those who have written pieces for this quarterly issue. We encourage you to follow one another if you're on LinkedIn or Twitter. Use this magazine not only as a way to read what others are doing in their classrooms and school systems, but also as a way to continually grow your own professional learning network.

Within these pages you'll find educators who have written blog posts for Aligned over the past three months, shared their favorite resources and tech tools, and even ways they've used resources from AchievetheCore.org to supplement professional learning. This issue also features several pieces about the topic of professional learning. With summer right around the corner, we know that many of you are beginning the process of planning and deciding what summer professional learning you may attend or even create. We encourage you to keep our newly released Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning in mind as you begin that planning. You can read more about these Principles on page 6. Finally, you'll notice lots of opportunities included throughout the magazine for you to share with us your own ideas, thoughts, celebrations, etc.! Please take the time to participate, and you might see your replies in our next quarterly issue!

Below, we wanted to share some of our favorite things about the magazine so far!

Claire Rivero -- I enjoy seeing the huge variety of ways we can engage with one another virtually! Though many of us may never get the chance to meet face-to-face, the magazine represents how, with a little creativity, we can be a really strong family of educators. Whether it's celebrating the awards and accomplishments of our colleagues across the country, deciding to join a virtual learning opportunity, or discovering something new from another teacher's article or reflection, there is so much we can give and receive from one another!

Jennie Beltramini-- I love everything about the Core Advocate magazine, but I am most inspired by the focus on equity, including articles and ideas from educators about how to create more equitable classrooms for all students. I'm encouraged by the educators who are talking about how to address barriers of racism and poverty that students face and working toward equitable outcomes for students. We have so many educators in the network with expertise; I love that the magazine is a place they can share their knowledge, experiences, and passions.

Susan Hitt -- Before joining the team at Student Achievement Partners, I was a high school English teacher and Core Advocate. As a lifelong learner, I valued this network of educators because it provided a way for me to learn from and engage with others all across the nation! I am very excited about our Core Connections magazine because it provides yet another way to highlight the amazing work of educators like you who are doing amazing things for students and their colleagues!

Tara Martinez -- The most rewarding thing about working on this magazine is seeing the tremendous amount of commitment and love educators across the nation put into their work. Though I'm not an educator myself, I can imagine that it's very easy to be discouraged by the day-to-day challenges educators come up against in the classroom. To have a small part in sharing the stories of educators who persist through those challenges and re-dedicate themselves to their students is truly inspiring. That you all trust us to share your stories and bridge connections between them is even more so.

PRINCIPLES FOR HIGH-QUALITY, STANDARDS-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Too often, teachers report disliking professional learning. It isn't focused on what they teach; it doesn't focus on needs they and their students actually have; it doesn't include a plan for how to take action--the list goes on and on.This graphic provides examples of responses given by educators in a focus group when they were asked about the experience of professional learning:

COLLABORATION: CURRENT VS. IDEAL

Focus group question: Which images represent your current experience and the ideal state of collaborative professional development?

	Lack of engagement	Poor use of time	Poorly planned/executed
CURRENT EXPERIENCE	• "Feels like I'm being held hostage" • "I would rather be somewhere else"	• "Not another meeting" • "Not one more thing I have to do" • "Don't read PowerPoint presentations to me"	• "People might have good knowledge but the pieces don't fit together" • "Need an agenda and rules ... otherwise it's a social hour"
	Energizing	**Supportive**	**Hands-on/scenario-based**
IDEAL STATE	• "Makes me feel fired up" • "Energized to go back to my classroom"	• "Makes me feel supported" • "Feel accountable to show up to help each other" • "Bounce ideas off of each other"	• "Specific activities to do" • "Brainstorm solutions for a specific teacher" • "Gives me what I need in bite-sized pieces"

Source: *Teacher focus groups, March 2014*

From: Boston Consulting Group. (2014). Teachers know best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation..

So what can we do to make better use of professional learning time, to change it from a dreaded obligation to something teachers actually look forward to?There isn't one "perfect" professional learning session. Seminar-style professional learning looks different than a PLC, which looks different than one-on-one coaching. That's intentional! Similarly, there isn't a magic-bullet activity that everyone should be doing in order to learn. One week you might analyze student work and the next, discuss strategies for engaging with complex text. Bottom line: when you walk into a professional learning, it can and should look different. But there are certain things that must be true, no matter the model or activity, in order for it to be effective. Student Achievement Partners set out to determine what those characteristics are.

First, we surveyed a variety of literature about effective professional learning, including quantitative, qualitative, peer-reviewed, and non-peer-reviewed research. Studies and articles were curated by conducting an internal research identification process and evaluating recommendations from partners and advisors. To distill the list of over 200 studies and articles, Student Achievement Partners first selected papers that utilized rigorous research methods (peer-reviewed, involved treatment conditions and control groups, and larger sample sizes) and included results regarding measurable student achievement. Essential features of effective professional learning associated with improved student achievement were identified.

Simultaneously, Student Achievement Partners conducted more than 50 empathy interviews with teachers, instructional coaches, school leaders, system leaders, professors, and researchers. These were the perspectives of people closest to the work--the people designing, delivering, and receiving professional learning. They shared key insights on what's worked and what hasn't.

Student Achievement Partners engaged with partners and advisors who served as collaborators, lending their expertise and experience to provide valuable feedback at various stages to strengthen the evidence base and message of the Principles.

From this collaboration of expertise, inputs, and perspectives, we identified a set of three "non-negotiable" characteristics of professional learning:

Principle 1: Professional learning must be content-focused. Professional learning builds teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge necessary to teach the concepts of their discipline.

Principle 2: Professional learning must be teacher- and student-centered. Professional learning promotes collective responsibility for students' learning and cultivates a dynamic culture for adult learning.

Principle 3: Professional learning must be instructionally relevant and actionable. Professional learning is anchored in the instructional priorities of teachers' daily work and is sustained in a coherent system of collaborative planning, classroom practice, observation, feedback, and continuous cycles of inquiry grounded in evidence of student learning.

Each of these Principles is supported by a set of descriptors to bridge theory and practice and make the Principles more actionable. Together, they became the Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning

Examples of Content-Focused Descriptors

> 1a. Focus on specific instructional strategies and content knowledge in literacy and mathematics that helps teachers teach the standards for their grade and the underlying concepts of the discipline.

> 1c. Equip teachers with strategies for equitable instruction that provide all students with access to grade-level content and tasks (for example, appropriate scaffolds to access grade-level text, access prior mathematical knowledge in the context of grade-level work).

> 1d. Ground learning in research about how students best acquire specific knowledge and skills.

Examples of Teacher- and Student-Centered Descriptors

> 2a. Contribute to a trusting and motivating adult culture where curiosity and improvement are valued, and educators feel safe taking risks and learning from mistakes.

> 2c. Require and support teachers to design and deliver instruction that is responsive to and respects the value of all students' backgrounds, languages, cultures, points of view, knowledge, and skills.

> 2f. Build educators' capacity to sustain discipline-specific professional learning through development of school and/or school district content expertise in mathematics and literacy.

Examples of Instructionally Relevant and Actionable Descriptors

> 3b. Organize learning experiences with teachers and teams who share the same content focus (for example, grouping by subject and grade level) so teachers can target specific, shared learning goals.

> 3d. Provide teachers with sustained follow-up, structured feedback, and opportunities to reflect as they transfer what they've learned to the classroom (for example, through observation with a content-specific observation rubric such as the Instructional Practice Guide or other content-specific observation rubrics).

> 3e. Align with the school and/or school district's vision of discipline-specific instructional improvements, and be monitored by analyzing replicable evidence of teacher and student learning.

So what's next? Currently, these are just words on a page until we translate them into action--but they are a critical step toward a widespread, shared understanding of what teachers need and deserve during time spent in professional learning. Armed with these Principles, decision makers can begin wielding more power, whether as consumers or designers of professional learning. If you're ready to take the first step toward improving professional learning, check out our Principles into Practice role-based action guides. They're filled with ideas for actions big and small that you can take to create change.

PRINCIPLES FOR HIGH-QUALITY, STANDARDS-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

CONTENT-FOCUSED

TEACHER- AND STUDENT-CENTERED

INSTRUCTIONALLY RELEVANT AND ACTIONABLE

Digital Coaching Menus Bring the Professional Learning Principles To Life

Kenny McKee

When one looks through the lens of the Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning, instructional coaching is an incredibly impactful method for high-quality professional learning. Coaching can support educators with personalized and small-group learning cycles that frame instructional growth as an iterative process of refining practices and knowledge over time. Teachers can reflect on the needs of their students and their toolbox of practices to set a few focused goals as their logical next steps.

Organizing coaching in this way is far less effective, however, if coaches do not have information about teachers' needs. One excellent tool for organizing individual coaching cycles is a digital coaching menu (this one is for coaches supporting literacy across subjects). With such a menu, teachers are able to self-assess their students' needs and their preferred professional learning modalities. They then can communicate these reflections to an instructional coach before they ever have a first meeting together. The coach is able to frame the first coaching

conversation around the teacher's assessment in order for both to more quickly come to a consensus on professional learning goals and methods. In addition, teachers can share their feelings of urgency to begin the coaching process, which also helps coaches prioritize their schedule to meet the needs of their colleague teachers.

You may be wondering, "How do I create a digital coaching menu that reflects the Professional Learning Principles?" We'll look at each principle individually to explore this question.

CONTENT-FOCUSED

Coaching that focuses on using specific content, and even more specifically, the curriculum or program in use, is more effective than coaching that simply focuses on general learning strategies. For example, a science teacher who attends a workshop where multiple general reading strategies are presented, but not in the context of science readings or scientific thinking, will likely make no changes in his or her practice. Content really matters. Coaches who support teachers of multiple disciplines, grade bands, and curricula must study which instructional practices support each discipline's demands as well as what thinking is valued in each discipline; in addition, they must collaborate with teachers in planning with their specific content. The digital coaching menu can especially help newer coaches know what each teacher's content is, so they can brush up a bit before they work together. And of course, coaches should always expect to learn in the collaboration process from experts in other content areas.

TEACHER- AND STUDENT-CENTERED

Too often, professional learning doesn't take into account the needs of teachers and students. Teachers simply aren't asked what support they need and how they want to prioritize their time in professional learning to best address challenges and opportunities in their classrooms. Through a digital coaching menu, teachers can make choices for coaching, focusing on areas where they are curious or they see room for improvement. Teachers' feedback and input are valued from the very first coaching meeting, when the digital coaching menus provide them with choices. Both the teacher and the coach can discuss the needs of students, including their previous instruction, interests, and social and academic needs. These conversations can help the teacher and coach plan better student-centered instruction. They can also determine new ways to assess student learning that help guide future instruction.

INSTRUCTIONALLY RELEVANT AND ACTIONABLE

The third principle, making professional learning instructionally relevant and actionable, is where instructional coaching receives high marks. The digital coaching menu invites teachers to participate in collaborative planning, co-teaching, observation of coaches and colleagues, feedback from coaches and colleagues, and other important forms of embedded professional learning. With the support of a coach, teachers can clarify their learning goals for students, and reflect on formative information to determine how students are learning. Thus, coaches can work with individual teachers or teams in order to iteratively improve student learning on an ongoing basis.

The new Professional Learning Principles can help schools and districts to see how coaching can become even more impactful in a system of professional learning. For individual coaches who want to embrace the principles, using (or remixing) this digital coaching menu can be an excellent start. Make a copy of it today to begin.

Kenny McKee is a high school literacy coach for Buncombe County Schools in Asheville, NC. Kenny works as a social media consultant for Student Achievement Partners. He is an ASCD Emerging Leader, a member of the National Paideia Faculty, and a National Board Certified Teacher.

> "With such a menu, teachers are able to self-assess their students' needs and their preferred professional learning modalities"

New Resources on Achieve the Core

Read Aloud Project Lessons

The Read Aloud Project offers lessons for K–2 read-aloud books that have been adapted to meet the expectations of college- and career-ready standards. These lessons, which include *Miss Maple's Seeds*, *Chrysanthemum*, and *Hello Ocean*, emphasize key aspects of college- and career-ready standards, including high-quality sequenced text-dependent questions, improved speaking, listening and writing tasks, and a focus on academic vocabulary.

Comparing Reading Research to Program Design: An Examination of Teachers College Units of Study

This report examines a program widely used in schools: *Units of Study* from the Teachers College Reading & Writing Project. Seven literacy experts conducted independent reviews of the program focused on their individual areas of expertise: phonics and fluency, text complexity, building knowledge and vocabulary, and English learner supports.
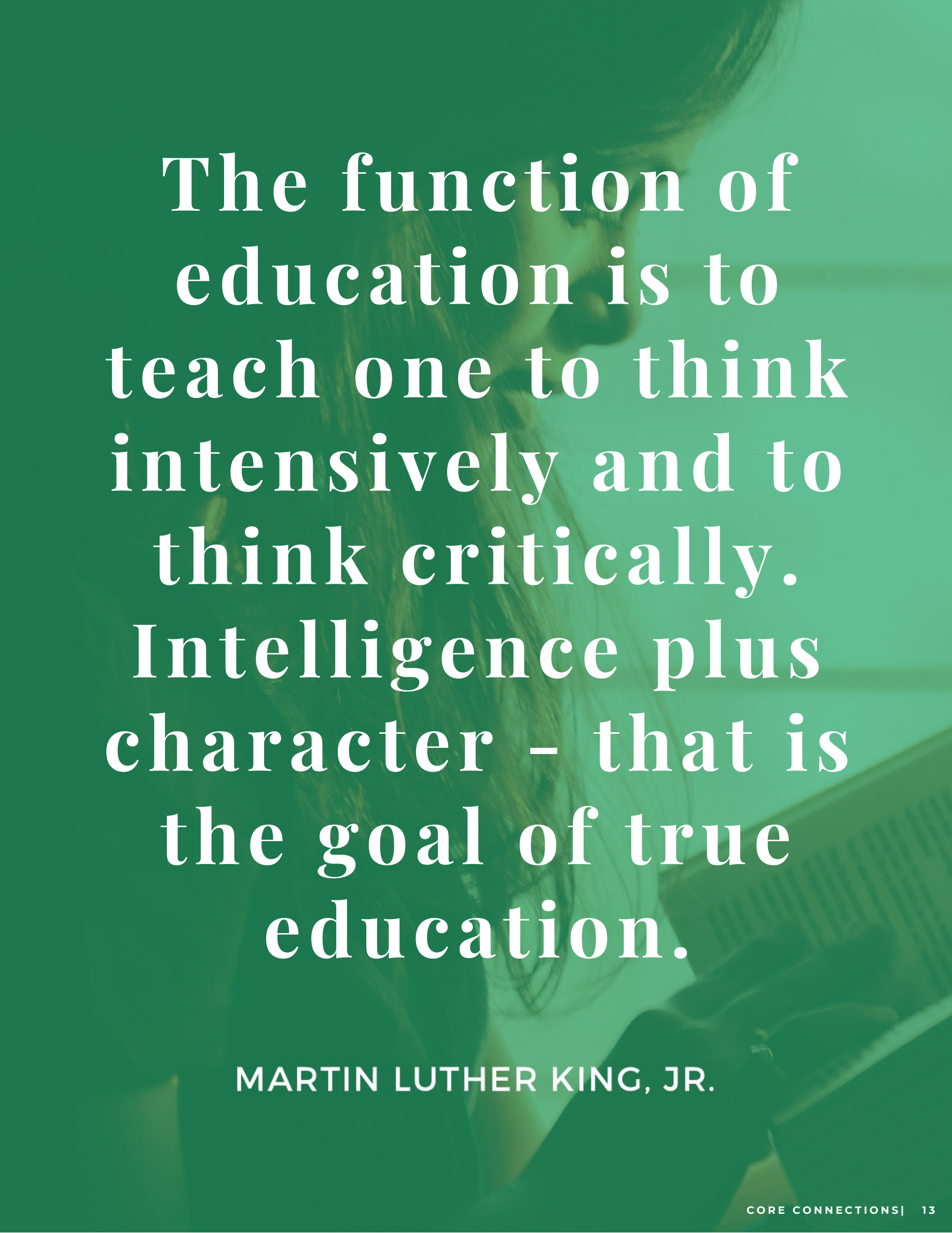
Lesson Planning and Reflection: Quick-Reference Question Guide

Derived from the Lesson Planning Tool, this resource consists of questions aligned to college- and career-ready expectations. It supports planning for standards-aligned instruction and is ideal for lesson planning, reflection on a lesson, peer-to-peer or coaching discussions, and PLCs or other professional learning settings.

Increasing Reading Fluency for Middle and High School Students

This seven-step protocol outlines how to perform small group interventions for middle school and high school students reading below grade level. This research-backed approach includes recommendations for assessing student fluency, building fluency skills, and creating student buy-in for fluency practice.

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

RICHARD BOBINCHUCK

@RBobinchuck

State: Florida
Role: Staff Developer for
Broward County Public Schools

How has being a Core Advocate helped you in your job?

As a Core Advocate, I have been given the opportunity to collaborate with some amazing like-minded professionals with the same goal of providing high-quality learning experiences for all our scholars. Through rich conversations with fellow Core Advocates, I have learned a deeper understanding of the Common Core Standards and the Shifts. This has empowered me with the knowledge needed to create standards- and Shifts-aligned resources such as lessons, tasks, and assessments, as well as the means to use this knowledge to provide highly effective professional learning to all stakeholders around standards, Shifts, and the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG).

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

A recent professional success for me would be the completion of the first semester of a master's degree program in educational leadership. I am a passionate leader with a personal purpose in life to inspire, motivate, and empower others to be the change they wish to see in this world. I currently have my first master's in mathematics and as a lifelong learner, I want to be formally educated in educational leadership. Helping others find success and reach their maximum potential is something that I am passionate about.

> Helping others find success and reach their maximum potential is something that I am passionate about.

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

A few of my go-to professional resources would have to be NCTM's Principles to Actions, TNTP's The Opportunity Myth, and Stanford University's Mathematical Language Routines.

"Principles to Actions includes eight research-based essential Mathematics Teaching Practices. These research-based teaching practices are essential for high-quality mathematics education for all our scholars and are combined with core principles to build a successful mathematics program at all levels. This book offers guidance to teachers, mathematics coaches, administrators, parents, and policymakers."

"The Opportunity Myth aims to expose what it labels the "opportunity myth" in American education. While a school's purpose is to prepare our scholars well, many don't deliver. We can make significant learning gains if our scholars experienced grade-level content, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations. The lack of access that many scholars experience isn't random – it's the result of the choices adults make at every level of our educational system. This report asks for all adults whose choices affect our scholars' experiences to commit to unraveling the opportunity myth."

"Mathematical Language Routines offer a framework for organizing strategies and special considerations to support our scholars in learning mathematics practices, content, and language. This framework is intended to help teachers address the specialized academic language demands in math when planning and delivering lessons, including the demands of reading, writing, speaking, listening, conversing, and representing in math. Therefore, while the framework can and should be used to support all scholars learning mathematics, it is particularly well suited to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse scholars who are simultaneously learning mathematics while acquiring English."

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time in my garden. Living in South Florida means I can take advantage of the extended growing season. I have the additional goal of educating my community about the benefits of putting self-grown produce on their plates. Without access to fresh, healthy food, many families in my community end up surviving on heavily processed foods. Kids who experience growing food are inspired to eat more vegetables and pass these healthy habits on to others in their community and eventually to their own kids. There's nothing quite like bringing your community together around food. Food connects people, and growing food together is one of the best ways to connect. I would love to see more gardens in our communities. My neighborhood is starved for nature, and community gardens will bring it back in a big way.

What experiences or opportunities have you had as a result of being a Core Advocate?

As a Core Advocate, I have been given the opportunity to create high-quality resources in the form of Modeling Tasks. I have a passion for creating culturally responsive tasks that provide our scholars with a rich learning experience that speaks to the issues they face in their world. I enjoy creating tasks that maximize the learning for all our scholars. The tasks need to be designed with differentiation considerations that meet the needs of our diverse learners. We must use tasks and instructional materials that meet the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles. We need to understand the cultural and social differences of our scholars in order to provide the appropriate tasks, instructional materials, and strategies to promote academic success for all. Our scholars have different cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs; the task, lessons, and instructional materials we use need to reflect this diversity.

Describe how the work you're doing in schools advances equity in education.

> Our instructional leaders receive high-quality, culturally relevant, standards-driven, and job-embedded professional learning focused on our lesson plans and on implementing equitable practices.

I lead a turnaround schools initiative for Broward County Public Schools, which provides a "Champion for Equity in Education" framework. This framework supports instructional leaders in building an equity mindset and knowledge of standards-aligned planning and instruction in order to ensure a schoolwide culture of excellence while decreasing provision gaps. We are able to set high expectations and ensure all students have access to a high-quality curriculum through the implementation of lesson plans written by instructional leaders who attended extensive professional learning around the Shifts, the standards, and standards-based lesson planning. Our instructional leaders receive high-quality, culturally relevant, standards-driven, and job-embedded professional learning focused on our lesson plans and on implementing equitable practices. This results in an increase of teacher efficacy and student achievement.

6 Word Memoirs

This fall we asked educators on Twitter to share with us using only 6 words what they were thankful for or appreciative of when it comes to teaching. We had over 50 submissions! Keeping with the theme of six, we wanted to share our favorite six with you!

"Equity drives powerful student learning experiences."
@dunnshhs

"Everyone deserves a fresh start today."
@tikaee

"The opportunity to leave lasting footprints."
@fllady369

"Inspiring students to be lifelong learners!"
@kjenn5

"Open minds will create great change."
@lyndsayteaches

"Lightbulb moments are magical to witness!"
@dcrescitelli

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

ANet

Manager, Financial Planning & Analysis - Boston

Senior Software Engineer - Boston preferred

Software Engineer - Boston preferred

User Experience (UX) Research Lead - Boston preferred

Director of School Support - Location Flexible

Director of School Support - Nevada

Managing Director, HR & People Operations - Location Flexible

Vice President, Talent - Boston, D.C. or NYC

EdReports

Director of Field Services

Illustrative Mathematics

Customer Success Specialist, 6-12 - Remote

Customer Success Specialist, K-5 - Remote

Director, Customer Success - Remote

Instruction Partners

Director of Instructional Support - Indianapolis

Director, District Engagement - Remote

Managing Director, Research and Evaluation - Remote

Just Equations

Math Education Equity Fellow - Remote

UnboundED

Standards Institute ELA Facilitator Application - Remote

Standards Institute Math Facilitator Application - Remote

Standards Institute Leadership Facilitator Application - Remote

JOYCE HARRISON

State: Tennessee
Role: Literacy Instructional Advisor,
Shelby County Schools

How has being a Core Advocate helped you in your job?

As a result of being a Core Advocate, I have had an opportunity to support others both in my district and beyond. I was able to engage with staff members of Student Achievement Partners and other observer districts in the Balanced Literacy Pilot that took place in another district in my state. During this yearlong process that included observation and feedback, I had an opportunity to collaborate with key literacy leaders and fine-tune my understanding of best practices regarding instructional moves related to foundational skills.

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

A professional work-related experience that I have had the privilege to be a part of involves the intentional early literacy efforts implemented in Shelby County Schools. My district has made it a priority to strengthen early literacy by implementing a number of initiatives. One example that I have collaborated on involves the designating and training of Foundational Literacy Laureates in our elementary schools. The Laureate serves as a building-level resource to support K-2 teachers' foundational literacy instruction.

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

I recently read a chapter from *About the Author* by Katie Wood Ray and Lisa Cleaveland. This book focuses on writing development in K-2. It reminds us that, by reading and analyzing students' writing, we can assess what students are learning. We can gain insights regarding their understanding of print concepts, phonics, grammar, and other important early literacy skills.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy spending time with my family, especially my nieces and nephews. They keep me young in spirit, if not in other ways.

What experiences or opportunities have you had as a result of being a Core Advocate?

Being a Core Advocate has helped me to make connections with other Core Advocates and those passionate about literacy instruction across the nation. I had an opportunity to use and offer feedback on Achieve the Core's Foundational Skills Observation Tool as it was being developed and initially launched. Additionally, I had an opportunity to discuss my experiences with the Tool via a webinar viewed by educators across the nation.

Describe how the work you're doing in schools advances equity in education.

My department (Curriculum and Instruction) specifically focuses on ensuring that all our schools have access to high-quality curriculum and curriculum materials. We also engage with other teams from across departments in something we call Equity Walks. Essentially, these are observations of implementation designed to provide a holistic view of what is happening inside our schools. In this way, we can provide consistent district expectations regarding instructional practices and curriculum implementation.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us for the Core Advocate spotlight?

I am excited by the numerous initiatives my district has launched to support early literacy. I am eager to see the results of our efforts manifested in our students as they move along their education continuum.

> *As a result of being a Core Advocate, I have had an opportunity to support others both in my district and beyond.*

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.

I SEE ME

Building a diverse classroom library with the help of First Book Marketplace

By Tamika Peters
@TamikaPeters112

TIDYING UP

Instructional Routines for Whole-Class Reading and Writing

By: Jon Gustafson
@MrGmpls

MY EXPERIENCE WITH TEACHERS COLLEGE UNITS OF STUDY

A veteran teacher explains the strengths and weakness of the program based on her experience

By MJ D'Amelio
@MJD1stgrade

2019 Blog Competition Finalists

In December 2019, we invited educators to submit a blog post answering the question: "What's one action educators can take to create more equitable and inclusive classrooms that foster a culture of high academic expectations for all students?"

Below are the three finalists! The grand prize winner will be determined by which post receives the most visits by February 29, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.

Creating a Culture of Shared Norms and High Expectations in Your Classroom
How to create a culture that facilitates powerful learning for ALL learners
By: Matthew Shea

Finding the Courage to Teach Texts Outside Your Comfort Zone
Teaching texts that honor difference and inspire challenging conversations
By: Rhiannon Hartman Dunn

Say "Author"
Strategies for including all learners in discussions about complex text
By: Shannon Hahne

CORE ADVOCATE WEBINARS

4 March

Professional Learning: Actionable Steps to Improve Quality and Content

During this webinar, you'll learn the practical and research-based non-negotiables set forth in the new Principles for High-Quality, Standards-Aligned Professional Learning resource from Student Achievement Partners, and you'll be introduced to some of the specific action steps educators in any role can take starting as soon as tomorrow.

1 April

### Comparing Reading Research to Program Design

In this webinar, participants will hear from four literacy experts as they discuss what it means to apply "the science of reading" to an actual reading program. In January 2020, seven researchers reviewed Teachers College Units of Study to understand how the content and practices within the program align with the latest research.

Webinar Certifcates

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.

Share Your Favorites

We're launching a new social media campaign where we're highlighting our audience's favorite webinars. We'd love to feature your voice! Simply select a webinar and share why that particular one is your favorite. Are you a newer Core Advocate and unfamiliar with our webinars? Access our archive here!

Select Your Favorite Webinar
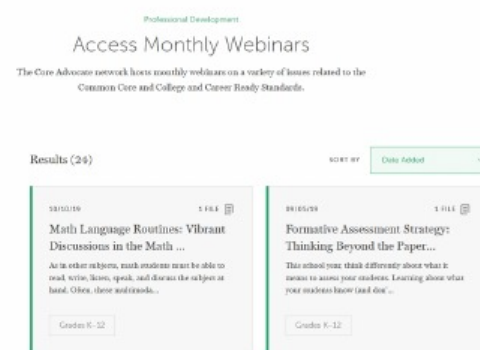
Opportunity for New Teachers!

Are you a new educator in your first or second year of teaching? Do you know a new teacher? The team at Student Achievement Partners would like to hear about their experiences!

If you or someone you know is willing to complete a survey or talk with us about your experiences as a new teacher, please complete this brief form!

Click here!

> I am a new teacher!
> I know a new teacher!

Designing for Equity

Helping folks who *care* about equity do equity.

By Christine Ortiz --Equity Meets Design

Many of us are familiar with this scenario: Our school's leadership decides that equity is a priority, and we move to action. We read books, listen to podcasts, watch documentaries, and bring in consultants to facilitate us through difficult conversations, create a definition for equity, and talk about race. We are becoming more aware than ever of the ways society and our own institution perpetuate racism and inequity. There is a strong and wide commitment to equity, but most folks are left asking the question-- But what can I do in my classroom tomorrow?

At Equity Meets Design (ExD), we believe the way that we can do equity on a day-to-day basis is to think of ourselves as designers as well as educators, think of our work as design work as well as teaching, and to make sure we're using an equity design approach as we address challenges, make decisions, and plan instruction for our classrooms.

At the core of ExD's work is the belief that racism and inequity are products of design, meaning they are the result of (design) decisions that people (designers) made when they created things. These things can be as seemingly small as forms we have students and parents fill out to as big as decisions

about tracking policies in a district. The good news is that, since those things were designed, they can be redesigned, and the next time we can do it better.

But designing in this way is hard work, so we've been working to create a set of tools, frameworks, and processes that can support folks in being equity designers. (You can read an overview of our process here.)

While we firmly believe equity work requires working from the inside out, we believe personal work must be done in the context of your daily work, school/district-wide objectives, and the realities of your classrooms. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to equitable schools. Locally, each of our teams must decide how we identify who will be a part of the decision-making team for a project, how we define and frame the problems we're working on, with whom and how we develop potential solutions, and how we roll those out. One part of the process we've seen be super helpful for folks as they transition to thinking about themselves as equity designers is the work they do (often not enough of) in identifying, articulating, and framing the problems they will tackle with their work.

Problems

Human errors manifest in the way we identify problems and create solutions. We often misidentify the problems we are trying to solve. We may even do a great job of solving the wrong problem. Sometimes we build things that don't solve problems at all or make the problem worse.

The way we go about defining (or not) the problems we are working on is an opportunity for an intentionally equity-centered approach. We have distilled what we believe are powerful insights about the common ways the process of defining problems and the definitions themselves can amplify oppression (problematic problem-definition ☺)--what we call the 6 **Problems with Problems**. They are as follows:

1. The problem that you articulated is simply the absence of the thing you want to do or build or of the outcome you want to be true.
2. The problem is articulated without referencing any people--those experiencing it or those creating or perpetuating it.
3. The problem explicitly or implicitly blames those experiencing the issue for its existence, usually by framing the problem as deficiencies or flaws in a group of people.
4. The problem that has been identified is just a symptom but is treated as a root cause.
5. The problem is described at the level of individuals, absent institutional, systemic, or ideological factors that are also at play.
6. The problem is described absent the history of how it came to be.

Let's try an example. Imagine (or maybe you don't have to) that one of your students consistently disrupts your whole-class math instruction by joking around, attempting to distract classmates, and even physically leaving her desk during the lesson. Our initial problem statement might be "I have a student with behavioral problems. I need to stop her from disrupting class and impeding the learning of her classmates." This is a totally natural way to frame this challenge, but let's see how the 6 Problems with Problems might help us think more productively about how to address this opportunity.

1. The problem that you articulated is simply the absence of the thing you want to do or build or of the outcome you want to be true. *This is true of our original problem statement. We've jumped to identifying a solution and ideal outcome without investigating the articulation of the problem itself. Our solution may not be solving the root-cause problem.*
2. The problem is articulated without referencing any people-- those experiencing it or those creating or perpetuating it. *We referenced one person, the student herself, and what we perceive to be the impact of her action on others, but who else is involved or affected? As the teacher, have we played a role in creating the situation? Would other students actually benefit from this student's voice if used differently?*
3. The problem explicitly or implicity blames those experiencing the issue for its existence, usually by framing the problem as deficiencies or flaws in a group of people. *Our problem statement implies the student is purely to blame, and we need to address the problems*

inherent in her behavior. How else could your frame your problem so blame isn't solely placed on the student?

4. The problem that has been identified is just a symptom but is treated as a root cause. *We've identified the problem (and solution) as a behavioral issue, but what are the root causes of that "symptom?" If we want everyone to be focused on grade-level math content, what could we do to achieve that vision? Is it addressing unfinished learning so students have better access to content? Reducing "teacher talk time" to include more time for student discussion and engagement?*

5. The problem is described at the level of individuals, absent institutional, systemic, or ideological factors that are also at play. *Again, our problem statement focuses at the individual level of the student, but we haven't discussed or considered other factors that could be at play. For instance, has this student persistently been overlooked and ignored in class so that she feels this is her only way to engage? Have our own biases led us to assume that the student's actions are normally disruptive rather than productive?*

6. The problem is described absent the history of how it came to be. *The student's actions in the classroom aren't a random occurrence, and they don't occur in a vacuum. What is the history that has led us to the current challenge?*

This rubric (also on the next page) was created to help us evaluate our current problem articulation and push us to a deeper, more historically nuanced understanding, all in service of making sure we have the best shot of actually solving the super complex issues we're working on.

We encourage you to use the rubric to help refine a problem you're currently working to define and/or solve.

For a deeper dive into the ExD process check out our online courses at courses.equitymeetsdesign.com.
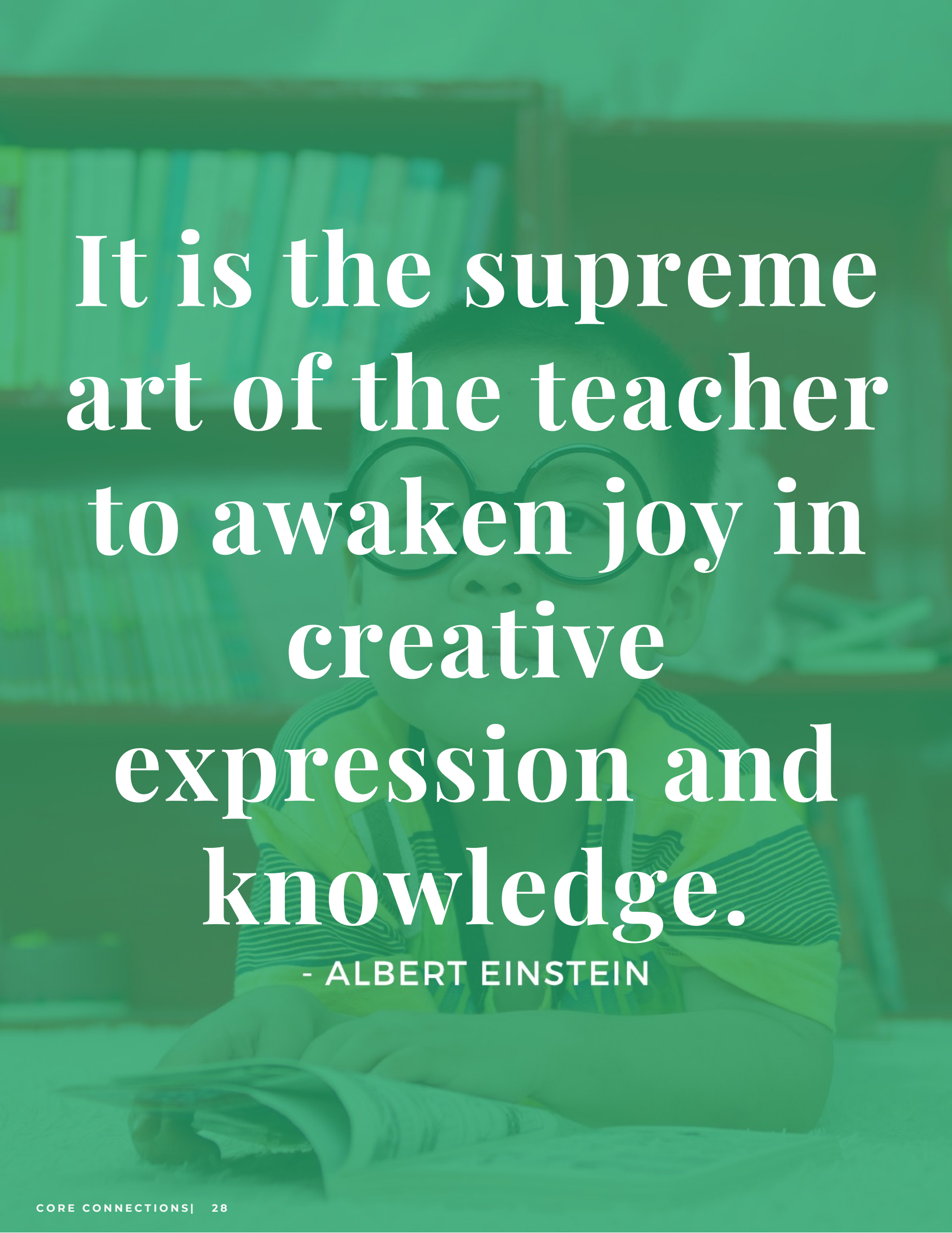
PROBLEM WITH PROBLEMS RUBRIC

#	Question	Close to the goal	Getting there	Needs Work	How hard will it be to fix this problem with your problem?
1	Is your problem stated as the absence of a solution you wish to implement? (ie "The problem is that there aren't enough teachers of color in our school system)	There is no solution embedded in your problem. This means when you read this problem statement, it is not clear what the next steps to take are.	The problem definition doesn't specify a specific solution but does indicate a general approach.	There is definitely a solution in our problem statement	Hard · Medium · Easy
2	Is your problem statement missing specific references to people? (ie "Health care is too expensive")	Multiple specific sub-groups of individuals are named in the articulation of the problem statement, including both those affected by the problem and those causing or complicit in perpetuating it. When people are described, both visible and invisible identity markers are recognized, specifically race, gender and class. As a designer (individually and organizationally), my relationship to the problem is also named.	The problem statement includes people but is incomplete. Includes some but not all of the following groups: · Those experiencing the problem · Those with the most marginalized identities who experience the problem · Those causing or perpetuating the problem · Us as individual and organizational actors	There are no people included in our problem articulation.	Hard · Medium · Easy
3	Does your problem implicitly or explicitly blame those experiencing the problem as having caused or being responsible for it? (ie "Poor student's families don't show up because they don't value education")	The problem statement is free from judgemental language describing those experiencing the problem.	There is no explicit blame but the language of the problem statement is from a deficit, dominant perspective. Dominant culture values, norms and behaviors are used as the baseline.	The problem statement blames those closest to the problem for some part of the cause or existence of the problem.	Hard · Medium · Easy
4	Does your problem treat a symptom as a root cause (unintentionally)?	The problem statement names the root cause of this problem, and only references symptoms in relationship to the root problem, if at all. If the problem statement is about a symptom, it was a deliberate decision and the relationship to the root cause is clear.	It is unclear if the problem statement describes a symptom or a root cause. It may describe both without clear articulation of the relationship between them or the team may not have yet interrogated the problem enough to know what aspects are symptoms vs root causes.	The problem articulation is all about symptoms when we really care about addressing the root cause.	Hard · Medium · Easy
5	Does your problem focus on the problem at the individual or interpersonal level and miss the institutional, systemic or ideological aspects?	It is clear how the problem manifests at all 5 levels and how those manifestations are related to each other. The impact of how Racism, Sexism and Classism intersect is clearly described.	Some of the 5 levels are addressed in the problem articulation or the levels are addressed but the relationship between them is not clear. May be missing: Internalized · Interpersonal Institutional · Systemic · Ideological	The problem is written from the point of view of an individual's experience and is missing the larger aspects.	Hard · Medium · Easy
6	Does your problem statement forget to acknowledge the historical context of the issue?	The appropriate historical context of the problem is embedded in the problem articulation.	There are hints that there is history that informs this problem articulation but it is not clear from the problem statement. The history that included is sanitized, unsubstantiated, or from a dominant perspective.	There is no historical context embedded in the problem statement.	Hard · Medium · Easy

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

We want to celebrate YOU!

Click here to share your celebrations!

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!

Did you know we have an entire section on our website filled with ready-to-use presentations and facilitator materials? Whether you host an entire workshop using one of our PD modules or just reference one of our many resources during a PLC session, we'd love to know about it. Each month, we raffle off an Amazon gift card to a lucky winner who has submitted a reply during that month Share with us what you've presented and be entered to win:

Click to explore!

Click here to share your work and enter our raffle!

January Winner: Denver Huffstutler, @DenverJHuffy1

"During collaborative planning with each grade (K-5), Achieve the Core was presented and demonstrated as a complete tool for planning and learning."

February Winner: Devin D Dunkin, @DevDen07

"When working with teachers on unpacking standards, we started having discussions about prerequisite skills and how we can know what to expect from students. We learned how to use the Coherence Map and Focus By Grade Level documents to show major clusters and what students need to leave each grade level with."

Wondering what people have been presenting on? Submissions ranged from content focused on Mini-assessments, the Coherence Map, the Lesson Planning Tool, the Academic Word Finder, the IPG, Fluency Resources, Foundational Skills, blog posts from Aligned, and more!

Thanks for your input!!

We have ongoing opportunities to provide feedback on our website, new products, and your needs as educators. Sharing your perspective helps us improve our work and participants are eligible for raffles and even guaranteed compensation.

Below are some of our most recent raffle winners. Congratulations!

Supporting Students With Unfinished Learning Survey (Raffle Winner)-- Angela Short

Supporting Students With Unfinished Learning Survey (Raffle Winner) -- Tina Peck

Supporting Students With Unfinished Learning Survey (Raffle Winner)-- Nicole Bloom

Supporting Students With Unfinished Learning Survey (Raffle Winner)-- Myra Deister

Foundational Skill Practice Strategies Document Review (Raffle Winner) -- Jackie Philhower

Want to make sure you never miss an opportunity?
Sign up to be an Achieve the Core Content Reviewer.

QUARTERLY QUESTION

Last issue we asked: What are your go-to resources/strategies for meeting the needs of diverse learners in your classroom?

THE WINNING REPLY CAME FROM AMANDA AUSTIN (@DR_AMANDAAUSTIN)

My go- to resource for meeting the needs of diverse learners in the classroom is the use of differentiation menus. From Laura Westphal's Differentiation Menus in multiple grade levels and subject areas to choice boards, this alternate form of assessment allows students a voice in the types of assignments and projects they can choose to demonstrate their understanding of content. These menus can fit almost any subject area and offer a variety of options that can fit your students' learning styles and needs.
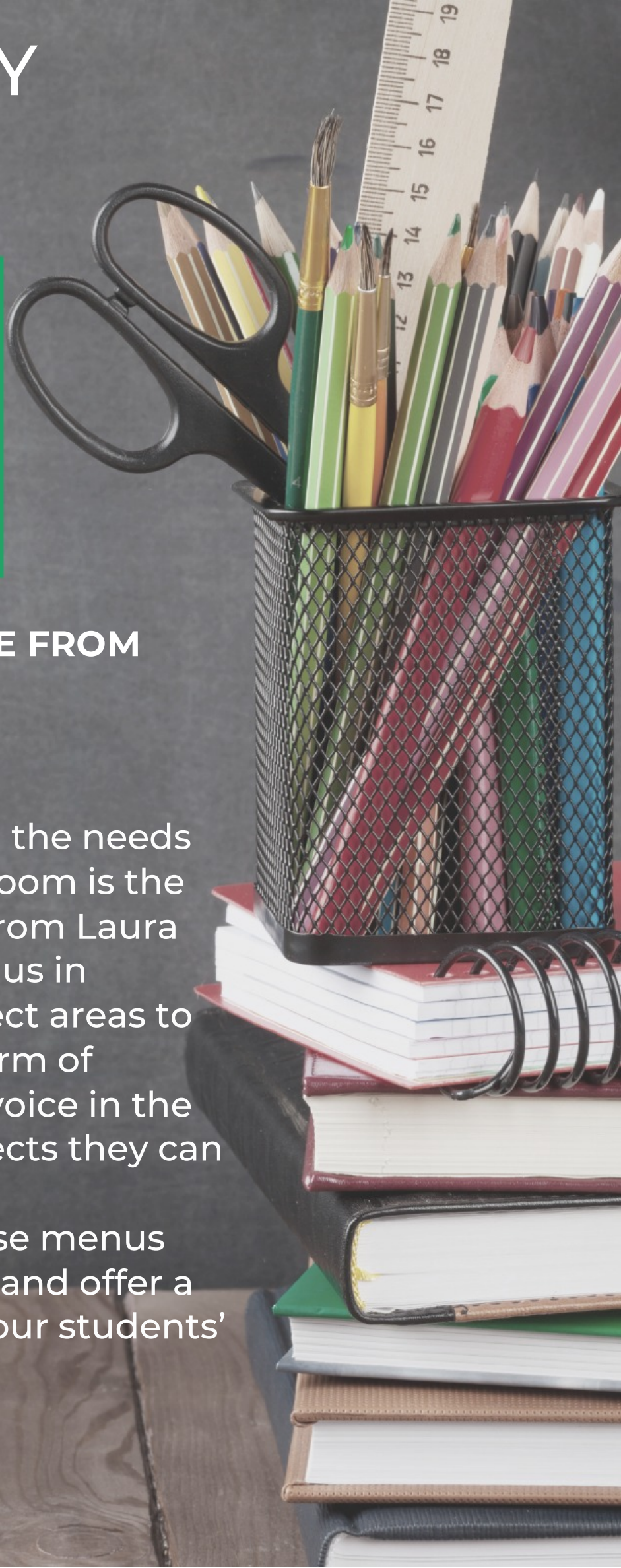
QUARTERLY QUESTION

What is your go-to Achieve the Core tool or resource and how do you use it?

Submit your answer here for a chance to win an Amazon gift card!

Increase Equity in your Classroom by Promoting Literacy with Black and Latino Boys

Three practical ways to ensure you aren't unintentionally fueling the school-to-prison pipeline
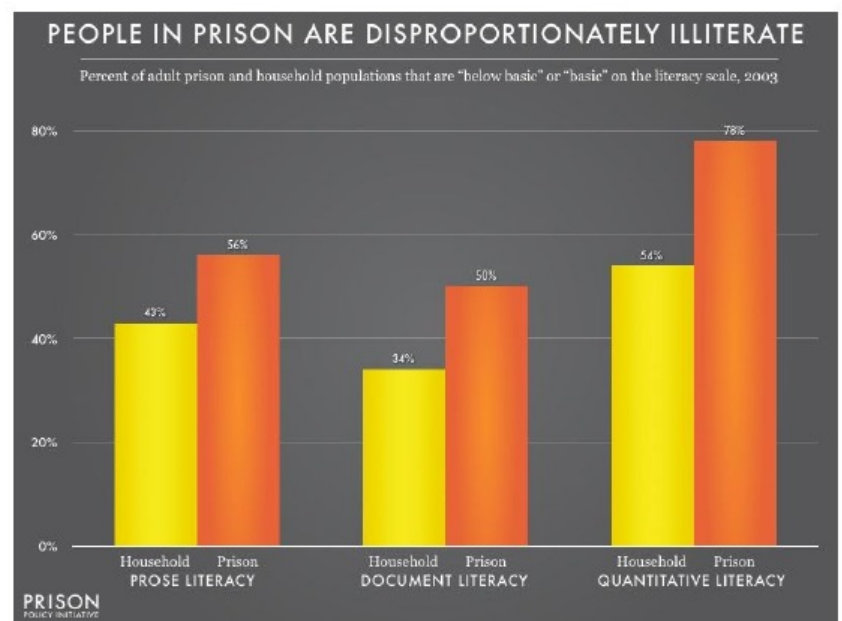
By Claudine Miles

So how does reading relate to the school-to-prison pipeline? In more ways than we'd like to imagine. Literacy rates are one of the highest predictors of lifelong outcomes and opportunities. Essentially, the more you read, the more you know, and the more likely you are able to use that knowledge as leverage to attain success

However, we know that literacy rates tend to be incredibly low in many underserved schools, and the students filling many of these schools are students of color. This is a reality many educators face daily as they grapple with equity issues that are abundant, from a lack of funding to a lack of quality curriculum. Teachers face a unique challenge when it comes to reaching all the students in their classrooms, many of whom enter with different levels of prior knowledge and different levels of current proficiency with grade-level content.

But failing to find suitable ways to reach all

learners creates incredibly bleak life outcomes, particularly for Black and Latino boys. When boys of color leave school without sound literacy skills and the ability to read confidently, they are more likely to be suspended, drop out, and/or enter the juvenile justice system as a direct result of not having these essential life skills.

PEOPLE IN PRISON ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY ILLITERATE

Percent of adult prison and household populations that are "below basic" or "basic" on the literacy scale, 2003

PROSE LITERACY — Household 43%, Prison 56%
DOCUMENT LITERACY — Household 34%, Prison 50%
QUANTITATIVE LITERACY — Household 54%, Prison 78%

PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2016/04/01/literacy/

The US Department of Education conducted the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) Survey to dig into the literacy rates of incarcerated adults versus non-imprisoned Americans. What they found was quite revealing about our education system. These data shows an alarming reality: the people most vulnerable to imprisonment are those who are left behind in our education system and, as a result, don't have access to higher paying jobs. Essentially, the adage is true: your ZIP code is still a high predictor of your life's outcomes, because the reality is our education system is still inequitable. If you live in a disadvantaged, underserved neighborhood, the barriers to your success are increased; however, if you live in a more affluent neighborhood, the opportunities are abundant. Poverty, a lack of quality education, and a scarce job climate add up to a perfect recipe for higher prison populations.

So what are teachers to do when they receive 25-plus kids in one space and are expected to make gains with each and every one? I want to share some practical answers to that question that are small actions every teacher can take on a daily basis that will fight back against inequity. By being intentional about how we teach literacy to boys of color, we can work to resist the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is a national trend where students of color, particularly Black boys, are suspended at a rate of 3 ½ times more than their white peers. Our goal is

to outline some concrete things you can do to keep students in your classroom learning and ultimately garnering skills that are going to propel their life outcomes, not lessen them.

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE
School disciplinary policies disproportionately affect Black students.

Zero-tolerance discipline has resulted in Black students facing disproportionately harsher punishment than white students in public schools.[1]

White
Black

51%
42%
31%
16%

Public School Enrollment
Multiple Suspensions

Black students represent 31% of school-related arrests[2]

Black students are suspended and expelled 3x more than white students.[3]

Students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are nearly three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.[4]

BROWN AT 60: STILL SEPARATE. STILL UNEQUAL.

ACLU
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

1. Say and show them you believe in their abilities daily!

See your students as people, not statistics with narrow narratives. Ask them questions, get to know them, learn about their parents/families, find out what they love to do. Make sure your language with them is equity driven. For example, rather than saying, "I got my degree. You need yours,," tell them, "I care about you;, I know what it takes to get to college, and I'm here to help you accomplish your goals and get there, too." It lands better and gets desired results faster.

2. Hold your boys of color to high expectations & call out others when they don't!

With data like these, wavering in your commitment to excellence isn't an option. We must show our boys of color where they are but, more importantly, where they can go. That means utilizing data and goal-setting in the classroom and checking in frequently. Your boys should know where they are in relation to high standards at all times, and they should have have clear weekly goals about their reading that align to their big goals for the end of year. You help absolutely no one by lowering the bar of academic rigor because you think it's best for their future. Too many teachers "underestimate the potential of black children more than that of whites," so avoid that. Truth moment: a study found that "the effort and academic motivation put forth by African American students was as high or higher than that of White students." The real question is how you will use your skills to tap into their motivation. This is the responsibility of every educator regardless of race; remember you joined an ongoing intense fight for equity. Therefore, we don't have time to get our bearings and then act, because that lack of urgency to address wrongdoing by colleagues leads to more inequity for those same boys. We need to join the right side of history and call out the problem when we see it--immediately, professionally, and with grace.

3. Celebrate their victories and frame setbacks as learning experiences!

Celebrate them every time they grow. Make a big deal by including their village of loved ones. Send a text letting their parents know their progress, and then tell the kiddo you did it. We must show them the joy that comes when we meet our academic goals, and that JOY is initially transferred from us to them. We must take the helm and be the coach we wish we had on the sideline for ourselves, rooting them on, giving them feedback to help them adjust when necessary, and proclaiming our pride as they overcome each hurdle. In addition, when they have setbacks, as they will, we must remind them that these are valuable learning experiences and help them to discern the lesson to be learned.

As mentioned previously, these aren't cutting-edge practices; however, they're research based, deliberate, and consistently needed. At times, our own biases can impact how consistently we apply these three practices. It is critical that we build up males of color because, unfortunately, we live in a world that is constantly sending them contradictory messages. In one breath, they are told to dream, but in another, they are witnessing dreams being snatched away daily from people who look like them. So what does that mean? It means the cheerleader needs to be louder than the noise. I challenge each and every one of the educators reading this piece to be, for the Black and Latino boys you have the privilege of teaching, the cheerleader you wish you had.

Written by
Claudine Miles, M. Ed.
CEO & Co-Founder of
Restore More
cmiles@werestoremore.com

Restore More

Submit a Core Advocate Perspective Article!

You could be a magazine author!

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

ARPI LAJINIAN

State: New Jersey
Roles: High School Mathematics Teacher, Math Team Advisor, and Instructional Coach

How has being a Core Advocate helped you in your job?

As a core advocate, I've had the privilege of learning with and getting to know educators from across the US. I believe core advocacy is educational leadership driven by a strong belief in every student's right to high-quality education. I also had multiple opportunities to dive into the progressions documents and deepen my understanding of the mathematics standards. These experiences validated many of my beliefs about education and grounded my work with students and teachers. Every day, my goal is to peel back the layers of complexity often associated with mathematics to reveal connections, coherence, and meaning in what my students study. It is very rewarding when students reach milestones; last week, one of them said: "How I study for math now is so different than what it was in the beginning of the year."

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

Lately, I have been immersed in mathematical modeling. I am one of three core advocates who created "Super Fill," a high school modeling task on Achieve the Core, and I participated in the SIAM/Math for America Workshop for High School Teachers in Mathematical Modeling. I shared and illustrated the hallmarks of mathematical modeling during the December Core Advocate live webinar on "Modeling in High School."

I was also a state finalist for the 2019 Princeton Prize for Distinguished Secondary School Teaching. This process was an opportunity to reflect on my teaching and brought together former and current students, colleagues, and administrators.

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

Jo Boaler's *Limitless Mind: Learn, Lead, and Live without Barriers* is a must-read for every parent and educator. She frames her ideas around six "learning keys," and she builds on neuroplasticity to make the case for the idea that everyone can learn and appreciate mathematics deeply. I highly recommend it because it can help change some damaging beliefs that prevent our students from experiencing the joy of mathematics.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

For the past five years, I have enjoyed the challenges of writing the questions and coordinating the annual high school mathematics contest for the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey.

When I was very young, my grandmother used to knit very intricate patterns, and when I asked her how she did it without any instructions, she said, "The pattern is in my head, and I recreate it by counting." She has inspired me, and I enjoy knitting, crocheting, and creative needlework. My parents instilled in me an appreciation for natural beauty: I love finding patterns, and I enjoy hiking and being in nature. (This list can get very long…)

What experiences or opportunities have you had as a result of being a Core Advocate?

I am grateful to Student Achievement Partners for the learning and leadership opportunities it has granted me. Learning from Core Advocate leaders from Kentucky, Florida, California, North Carolina, Connecticut, and New York has been a privilege. More than anything else, as a Core Advocate, I have found my voice and met like-minded educators with whom I share purpose and passion.

Describe how the work you're doing in schools advances equity in education.

My most significant contribution to promoting equity in education was ECET2Metro in February of last year. This was a full day professional development event that I helped lead and plan. It brought together a diverse group of 108 educators from New Jersey and some from New York. The theme was Student Choice and Student Voice. Our keynote speakers highlighted successful strategies that empowered their students from all backgrounds. These strategies were grounded in the shared belief that student choice, voice, authenticity, and high expectations are key to student success.

How Has Being a Core Advocate Impacted Your Career?

Char Shryock
@edtechgirl

Being a part of #coreadvocates has allowed me to center all of my work in the standards and shifts - and connect to a #PLN and high quality resources to help me do that work @achievethecore

John Prince
@princejohn31415

Replying to @achievethecore

My learning/work as a Core Advocate solidified my understanding of the shifts and is the foundation for my shoulder-to-shoulder work with our district and school partners to improve math instruction for EVERY child. @achievethecore @InstructUP

Dr. Bryan R. Drost
@DrBDrost

Replying to @beske3 @AmySalgo and 14 others

It's helped me clearly define standards and grade level expectations; write better assessments and meet wonderful people that I can talk to about just anything!

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.

Tika Epstein @tikaee

Serving as a Core Advocate has given me the opportunity to dig deeper into the standards, to learn from experts in each subject area, & to share my ideas via blogs and #coreadvocates in order to create purposeful, engaging, and reflective lessons for my students. @achievethecore

Laura @Laura11_24

Replying to @achievethecore

Being a CA provided the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of educational equity. SAP provids free resources,webinars,& conferences that shows how to improve S achievement for ALL. In turn, I was able to support/build capacity w Ts by sharing the high quality materials.

Amanda Austin, @dr_amandaaustin

Being a #coreadvocate has opened a new PLC of educators from all over the country who are implementing best practices in their classrooms and schools. From principals to teachers, a wealth of valuable resources have been made available to me. Even though we don't know each other and may never meet in person, @achievethecore has created an environment of sharing, counseling, and mentoring. As a first year principal, I am learning so much from my peers.

DeniseRawding, @DeniseRawding

When I joined Core Advocates, I became part of a group of educators who understand the importance of standards and excellent teaching. They stretched my thinking and encouraged me to dig deeper into elementary math to build my own understanding of it. Now I spend every day coaching teachers, so they too can understand the math they teach. The more teachers understand the math, the better able they are to help their students build understanding rather than relying on tricks.

Note: All the tweets are hyperlinked so you can easily follow them and expand your virtual PLC!

What We're Reading

01 **How to be an antiracist**
-- Ibram X. Kendi
(Submitted by Amanda Austin)

02 **Getting a read on low literacy scores**
-- Carrie Spector, *Stanford Graduate School of Education*

03 **Reading between the lines: What states can do about America's literacy challenge**

-- Joanne Weiss, *The Fordham Institute*

04 **What is the best way to provide professional learning to teachers when they lack key content knowledge in mathematics?**
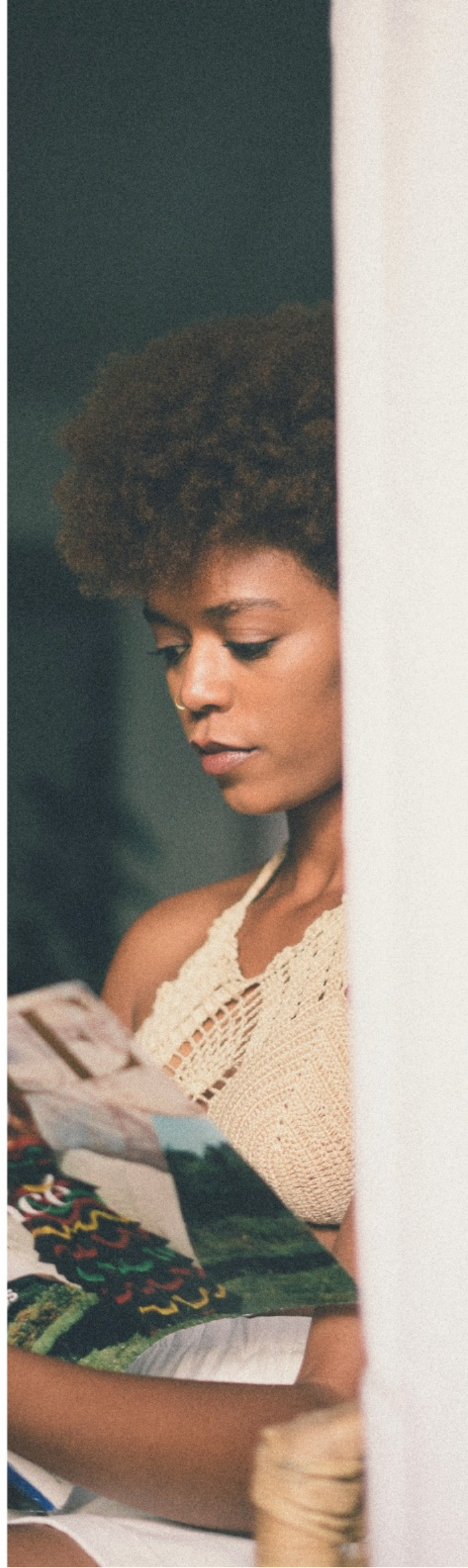
-- Heather Hill, *The Answer Lab at USC Rossier*

05 **K-5 Curriculum design features that support equity and inclusion**

--Dionne Aminata, *Illustrative Mathematics*

Let us know what you're currently reading
here!

MATH TASK CHALLENGE

Thank you to those who participated in our math task challenge in the last issue! The winner of the Amazon gift card for the pizza task from November 2019 is Jessica Hunter. Congratulations Jessica!

The Math Task Challenge for this issue is one of the Modeling Tasks available on the expanded Coherence Map. We hope you will do the long jump math task yourself, complete it with colleagues, or even do the task along with your class! We'd love to see your solutions! 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!
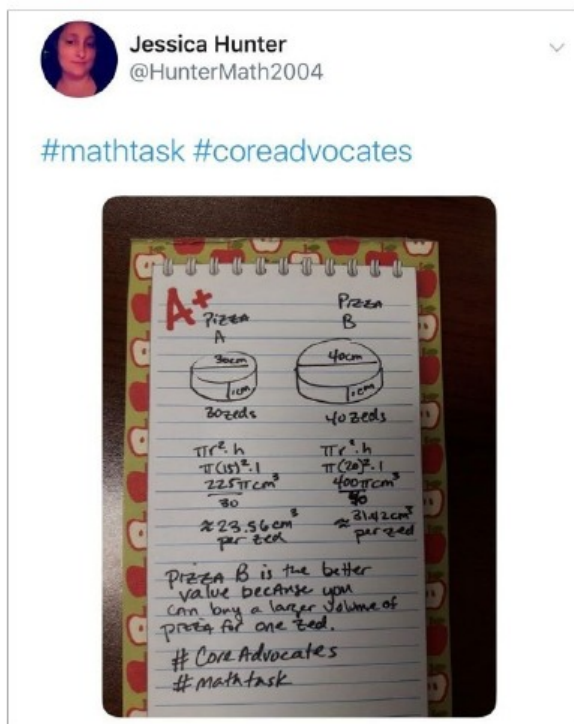
Our school has to select a girl for the long jump at the regional championship. Three girls are in contention. We have a school jump-off. Their results, in meters, are given in the accompanying table.

Elsa	Miki	Aisha
3.25	3.55	3.67
3.95	3.88	3.78
4.28	3.61	3.92
2.95	3.97	3.62
3.66	3.75	3.85
3.81	3.59	3.73

Hans says, "Aisha has the longest average. She should go to the championship." Do you think Hans is right? Explain your reasoning.

Check out this modeling task and others on the Coherence Map!

LANDFILL MATH MODELING TASK REFLECTION

In the summer of 2019, Student Achievement Partners put out a call for Core Advocates to submit a modeling task to be highlighted on the Modeling Task page of the Coherence Map. The author of the winning submission would receive a $200 Amazon gift card and be spotlighted in this magazine.

Congratulations to Richard Bobinchuck on the winning submission – Super Fill.

Richard and Core Advocates Arpi Lajinian and Vanessa Cerrahoglu spent the fall collaborating on revising and improving the task to get it ready for high school math teachers across the country to use. They describe below their experience designing and revising the problem:

Describe your process for designing this task. What inspired you? What did you want students to come away with?

Richard: Living in South Florida, I spend a lot of time taking advantage of our oceans and waterways. There has been a major concern with the trash that we create as humans that finds its way to our oceans. The amount of trash we create seems to be growing at an alarming rate and is beginning to cause major damage to our ecosystems. This makes me wonder… Where does all the trash we create go? Will we eventually run out of space to dispose of this waste? What can we do? I wanted students to ask these questions as well. This problem attempts to make the problem concrete.

The amount of trash we create seems to be growing at an alarming rate and is beginning to cause major damage to our ecosystems. This makes me wonder… Where does all the trash we create go? Will we eventually run out of space to dispose of this waste?

How did you revise the task? How was it strengthened through the collaboration?

Richard: When revising the task, we had to consider if the data we were using was the most accurate and credible. Having the ability to collaborate with other like-minded professionals really made the revisions of the task an enjoyable experience. We all came to the table with different experiences and understandings of how waste management works in our regions. This allowed for rich conversations that helped the task evolve.

Arpi: The context of the landfill task captured my curiosity right away. Through virtual meetings, Richard, Vanessa, and I first identified the purpose for the task and articulated mathematical learning goals. Students would find volume, make sense of units, use recent and reliable data, interpret charts, create a mathematical model, use it to make a prediction, and reflect on their results. Then, we researched landfill-related literature, learned about different landfills, and agreed on the reliable resources we would include in the task. We generated solutions to different versions of the task before we finalized the revisions.

Richard, Vanessa, and I brought to the experience different and complementary perspectives that enriched the collaboration. We strived to create a task that was accessible to students and reasonably realistic. We believe it will make our students not only use the mathematics they study in a real context but also recognize the enormous challenge of waste management, and we hope that they take action to reduce the amount of trash they produce.

Being part of this process made me appreciate the thoughtful work that goes into all aspects of creating a task: word choice, sentence structure, clarity, and conciseness were on my mind at all times during the evolution of this task.

Vanessa: As we examined this task, we saw an opportunity to amplify the aspect of modeling where students reflect on the accuracy of the model. You'll notice we invited students to make visible the assumptions they made as well as to reflect on the impact those assumptions may have had on their predictions and conclusions. We appreciate that mathematical modeling can be a daunting task, and we wanted to find a way to honor the mathematics that students will bring to the table, as well as to create a space for them to stretch and grow their modeling prowess. Finding the "just right" structure to the task was perhaps our greatest struggle, since each one of us brought to the table our personal strengths, insights, and interests. Through the ebb and flow of our conversations, we found our focus and crafted a prompt that would provide teachers and students structured freedom to dive into the world of mathematical modeling.

Why is modeling so important for math students to practice?

Richard: Modeling is important for student engagement. It allows for true student autonomy when solving problems. Students need to make sense of the context of the task and formulate more than one model in a task. They need to correctly compute based on the models they create and consider assumptions they made to interpret their answers in context of the task. Students will be given the chance to

validate their results by comparing their answers with those of students who used an approach that differs from theirs. Finally, they can report their findings and make recommendations based on their solutions.

Arpi: Modeling tasks offer students the opportunity to see the relevance of skills they have learned. It also engages students, creating an opportunity for teachers to extend the learning. Most importantly, when students engage with a modeling task, they try to make sense of a problem, identify variables, make assumptions, look for patterns or structure, reason abstractly, share their insights, communicate with their peers, persevere through the problem, attend to precision, and make decisions about tools they might use. When executed purposefully, these are habits of mind that cultivate productive mathematical thinkers.

Vanessa: Mathematical modeling is intrinsically motivating. From the minute Richard posed this problem to us, I couldn't help but picture the trash bins that line my neighborhood street every Thursday night. I was curious to know how many of those would it take to fill up Super Fill, which then led me to reflect on how many of those I am personally responsible for.

Mathematical modeling is the invitation to use what you know to explore an idea, an idea that you get to shape. I recall a third grader named Aaron, who upon learning that the lifespan of a fly is about a month long, dove into a year-long investigation: "How long does a day feel to the fly? Does it feel like a year to them? What about an hour?"

Aaron, like many of our students who get opportunities to explore phenomena using the math they know, developed a sense that math is more than a set of algorithms. Math is a tool to make sense of the world around us. And every one of us has the power to create a model to help us make sense of these things. I see mathematical modeling as an avenue for empowering students to examine their context and offer a path to be the change they want to see in the world.

> "MATHEMATICAL MODELING IS INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATING. FROM THE MINUTE RICHARD POSED THIS PROBLEM TO US, I COULDN'T HELP BUT PICTURE THE TRASH BINS THAT LINE MY NEIGHBORHOOD STREET EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT."
>
> Vanessa Cerrahoglu

This issue's **Featured Tech Tool** focuses on the free platform, Remind! Digital Ambassador Annie Smith shares why this is her go-to education tech tool! Are you on Twitter? Follow #edutech and #edtechtools to stay abreast of the latest tech tools and how teachers are using them in the classroom!

Annie Smith @anniesmith821

State: Connecticut
Role: Math Instructional Coach

remind

Wish there were a free tool to streamline communication with families? One that allows you to send messages, files, documents, audio snippets, links to resources, and photos instantly? Remind allows you to send and receive messages through text without ever exchanging phone numbers, and the enrollment process is as simple as an opt-in text message. It makes communication easy as can be!

Families are often our best untapped resource; while we are the experts in teaching, they are the experts in their child. Of course, it is nice to be able to quickly send a permission slip or conference reminder, but at its best, Remind is so much more than that: it's a platform for learning.

My favorite thing about this application is that it empowers caregivers. Being able to pick up my phone and share pictures of anchor charts we just created in class encourages a common vocabulary and shared understanding of success criteria from school to home. At Open House, many families shared that they were intimidated by the "new math" and didn't know how to help their children. Using Remind, I was able to text pictures of students

building models to represent their thinking accompanied by a quick explanation of the learning objective and follow–up questions for families to use at home. Perhaps most powerful was the ability to share audio of students talking about the math concepts and me modeling the types of questions that would promote student understanding. Links to online resources like Achieve and Math Learning Center can also be sent to the entire group, subsets, or individuals who are enrolled.

A newsletter is wonderful, but Remind allows for bite-size chunks of information sent right to phones in real time. Leveraging parents as partners improves academic performance and creates positive attitudes around school. Give it a try today!

Learn More!

Just the essentials:

The Remind Plan
An overview of the Remind plan for schools and districts
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How Remind protects personal information and data
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Remind's commitment to accessibility
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What effective engagement looks like across a district community
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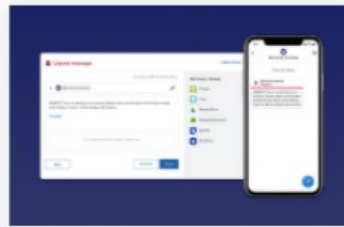Download

Family Engagement
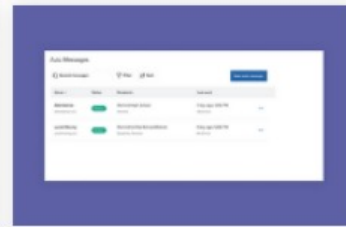Teacher insights on family engagement and communication
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Urgent Messaging
Reach your entire community in emergency situations
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Advanced Messaging
Improve key outcomes with timely, customized messaging
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Simple to use
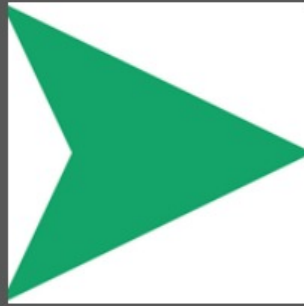If your community can text, they can use Remind.

Two-way messaging
A direct line between the people who matter most to student success.

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Making communication easier for educators—not more complicated.

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