



The Heart of Learning

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Dear WS/FCS Staff,

With the extended school closure during this unprecedented time, distance teaching and learning continues. There are certainly challenges with working remotely, but YOU are doing your best. Staying positive as we all figure out the best ways to connect with students and each other is essential. Remember, we are in this TOGETHER!

This week's newsletter has articles that gives ideas of how to practice mindfulness for students and adults. In addition, we have our first podcast episode featuring Monica Reaves, a parent who shares her tips for establishing a home environment where children are able to thrive.

Warm regards,
Amanda Walker and Kathy FitzJefferies

Visit our website for more information: <https://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/112572>

Self-Care Ideas

Remember, SEL is not just for the kids.
Be sure to care for yourself so you may care
for your students.

- Cook a new recipe
- Join a virtual book club
- Have an at-home spa day
- Give yourself grace
- Color in a mandala coloring book
- Treat yourself to online shopping
- Relax outside
- Virtually celebrate one highlight of your week with your colleagues

What are some other ideas for self-care?

Free SEL Webinars

Panorama Ed FREE webinars:

- *Mindfulness Strategies for Adult and Student Wellness*
- *Building Connectedness and Belonging for Students While School Buildings are Closed*
- *Virtual Panel: Strategies for Top MTSS/RTI Challenges*

Click here to access the webinars:

<https://www.panoramaed.com/webinars>

Your SEAL Team is here to support YOU!

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CASEL SEL Resources during COVID19:

<https://casel.org/covid-resources/>



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GRAB-N-GO SEL CORNER

By: Jenna Valentine-Turner, SEL Coordinator

Hi colleagues!

Each week, I will provide an elementary SEL resource that will be simple and easy to add to your Power School learning pages or integrate into other e-learning activities for your students. This week's activity is based on the CASEL Competency of self-awareness. Practicing mindfulness, the act of being still, intentional and connected with our thoughts and actions, is a great way for both children and adults to become more self-aware. Research indicates that mindfulness is so powerful that it positively impacts all other SEL Competencies as well. For example, an individual who is confident in mindfulness practices (self-awareness) can often times think before acting (self-management & responsible decision making). Mindful individuals are much more likely to be able read the feelings of other via empathy (social awareness & relationship skills). As effective as mindfulness activities are, they often require the person to be very still and quiet which can be difficult for young children to do. This week's activity combines mindfulness with the young child's developmental need to be active and engaged. Students and families can link to simple online activities that promote self awareness through the *PBS Kids* website. Students will enjoy a menu of activities that encourage thoughtful planning, drawing, designing and coloring! For adults seeking to learn about more mindfulness practices, [click here](#).

Click on the links below to access the video where I explain this week's activity, as well as the Google Doc that can be copied/pasted to your PowerSchool Learning Pages/Google Classroom.

Video Link:

[Grab-N-Go Activity](#)

Google Doc:

[Mindful Moments](#)

Questions:

JAValentine-Turner@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

HIGH SCHOOL RESOURCE: SEL & ELA

Marie DiPresso-Long, high school ELA teacher, shares a lesson created to integrate SEL into her anticipation guide assignment for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[Click Here for the lesson template](#)



Family Engagement 101

By: Shanta Reddick, Parent Involvement Coordinator

Greetings Colleagues and Families of WS/FC Schools,

Welcome to *Family Engagement 101*. Each week, I will be sharing resources, links to YouTube, and ideas for teachers and families to make engagement strong during this time. This is a great opportunity to be pioneers and strengthen what family engagement looks like in our homes and community. Communication is the most important factor and link to success, achievement, and lasting relationships. Our communication changed on March 13, 2020 when our students began e-learning. The main source of our communication was no longer a viable option. Our students have been the main vehicle of communication in education as the transporter of information from school to home and from home to school. They linked parents, teachers, and administrators daily to make sure information was shared and comprehended.

Moving forward in our pioneering efforts to increase communication amongst educators, parents, families, and administrators; we are the *new* main source which requires acceptance, consistency, and a growth mindset on our part.

Acceptance -There is a new vehicle that needs to be used for communication.

Consistency -As educators, parents, families, and administrators we will communicate daily or weekly according to the needs of the student and family dynamic.

Growth mindset- To see that there is a "new normal" ahead of us and know that we can all learn new things and develop new skills.

You might be asking yourself where do I start or how do I become the main source of communication to my students and for my students? Devise a communication plan until it becomes a habit- a plan that holds you accountable to have weekly contact. We are in the era of some amazing online resources, emails, and apps such as Class Dojo or Remind, but nothing can compare to an actual phone call or live virtual communication. The conversation that takes place in real-time fosters and builds the relationship with families.

Communication pioneers in the WS/FC School district will lay the foundation moving forward to increase the success of our students, the growth of family partnerships, and sustainable relationships. Here are two links for more ideas and suggestions to grow communication:

[Building Teacher Student Relationships](#)

[Family Engagement](#)



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Supporting the Heroes with a Digital Postcard

By: Sean Gaillard, Principal

When I was younger, my dream was to aspire to become superheroes like Batman or The Six Million Dollar Man. Attempting a bionic jump from the plum tree in my backyard which resulted in my six-year old scraped knee and served as a reminder of my humanity. I had the epiphany that if I could not be the hero, then I could surely help the hero. I thought that if Batman had Robin, then I could do the same.

The same approach has carried me through my tenure as principal. I learned very early in my career that my role as principal is to support our teachers. I am the Robin to a whole team of Caped Crusaders and Wonder Women. In this time of closure, our roles as educators have dramatically shifted into uncharted territory of eLearning and Quarantine Life. Even though the educational landscape is being transformed minute-by-minute, the core of establishing relationships remains the same. In fact, the need to establish supportive relationships has intensified due to social distancing. The building may be closed to students, teachers, and families but the mission and vision to establish a core of support is relevant now more than ever.

As we made fast preparations for eLearning, I stood in awe at the creativity, positivity, and collaboration our Moore Faculty Heroes demonstrated. I probably looked like a goofy version of Robin: open-mouthed excitement and awe as Batman cracked a difficult code to solve the mystery in just the nick of time.

I wanted to express my support and love for the faculty heroes I serve. Unfortunately, I couldn't do it in person. I decided I would use technology to bridge the social distancing divide. Using Flipgrid, a video response tech tool, I reached out to friends and colleagues in my Professional Learning Network. I simply asked them to share a quick video response expressing encouragement for their heroic and noble work. The response was truly overwhelming-106 individual responses ranging from teachers, principals, speakers, and authors! All shared such sincere responses in their respective videos. Flipgrid is not only a teaching tool for eLearning, but it became a digital postcard of love and support for the heroes I get to serve.

At Moore Magnet, we celebrate Mondays. It's our way to welcome our kids back from the weekend and a way to shift them away from a fixed negative mindset. I wanted to do the same for our teachers with the Flipgrid, so I surprised them by sharing the digital postcard on a Monday. The response from our teachers was truly moving and I am honored to have helped them during our eLearning adventure.

I felt a lot like Robin helping Batman save Gotham City. As a principal, I am honored to be the sidekick to the heroes of Moore Magnet. Click to see [Moore's Flipgrid for #CelebrateMonday](#).



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AIDING YOUR STUDENTS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING WHILE AT HOME

By: Caitlin Fernandez, EC Resource Teacher

Now more than ever, we see the impact of social-emotional learning on student success. As teachers and parents, we are realizing the vital role of relationships, self-management, and goal setting for, not only our students' success, but our own success. The self-management skills of families, teachers, and students alike are being put to the fire during COVID-19. By fire, I mean it constantly feels like "little fires everywhere". We're putting out one fire while another one ignites.

It is hard enough juggling life, family, and work under normal circumstances, but now you have been tasked with juggling not only your workload but managing your student's workload as well, 24/7. Self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills have never been more coveted qualities. However, instead of a seamless self-management system, you may find yourself in the all too familiar never-ending nightmare of the he-said, she-said game. Student to Parent: "Oh, I finished that, the teacher just hasn't graded it." Teacher to Parent: "I'm calling to check in on your students' progress, they haven't turned anything in." Parent to student: "I thought you said you turned that in!" and so the cycle goes.

So, how do you assist your students with their self-management skills while also managing your own? These are some simple resources I am personally using and loving during COVID-19:

Teachers, create a clear and concise weekly to-do list or checklist on your E-Learning platform (e.g. PowerSchool Learning, Google Classroom, etc.) This helps your parents and students to see exactly what needs to get done that week without having to endlessly scroll and click to see what needs to be completed.

Parents, help your students set-up a daily checklist or to-do list, and build in small rewards when they have completed small goals. A great online resource for this is Trello. Trello allows you to set up a to-do, doing, done system that can be shared between you and your student. This helps you and your student name what needs to be done while giving your student the autonomy to self-manage. It also gives you a way to do quality control without having to go back through the teacher's learning platform. Or, if you prefer something more grab-and-go I will link a to-do list you can print or use via google slides.

See links to resources on the next page.



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Suggested Resources from Caitlin Fernandez:

[Teacher weekly to-do list example](#)

[Teacher to-do list example](#)

[Parent Resource](#)

[Trello link](#)

[Setting up Trello Board Video](#)

Weekly SEL Resource:

I know many of you miss having face-to-face interactions with students in your classroom. I created these digital kindness notes you can utilize to encourage your students during this time of distance learning. [Click here](#) for the resource.

Description: Belonging at a Distance

All staff in WSFCS are welcome to join a 75 minute webinar led by Panorama and our SEAL department on *Belonging at a Distance*.

During this time we will:

- Model and share strategies you can use to maintain student belonging virtually
- Align our work on sense of belonging in particular and SEL in general to our Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- Build in time for connecting with peers through the use of breakout groups

WHEN: May 8, 2020 @ 10:00-11:15 am & 1:30-2:45 pm.

10:00 - 11:15 AM Live Webinar: [Click here to join.](#)

1:30 - 2:45 PM Live Webinar: [Click here to join.](#)

Need additional resources or lesson ideas?
Contact Amanda M. Walker at amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us



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ASK AMANDA:

Advice on SEL Implementation and Distance Learning

How can I incorporate SEL into my distance learning without taking too much away from academic time?

I get this question often and it is a valid question. There are many ways to teach SEL: explicit teaching, teachable moments (on-the-spot), and integrated lessons. Just as there are essential questions around academic material, I would incorporate an essential question for SEL. Focus the questions around the five CASEL competency areas. Then, have students work towards individual goals which can serve as data for you. Guess what? You still have time for academics while integrating SEL into your daily practices!

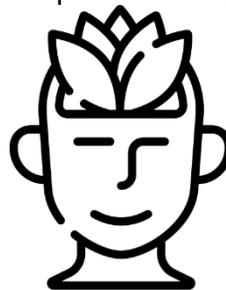
Example Essential Question: Why is it important to set goals?

Send your questions to amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us and Amanda Walker, SEAL Program Specialist, will answer them in the upcoming newsletter.

Mindfulness: Relieving Fear & Anxiety

By: Taneisha Sanders, SEL Specialist

This year I have had the opportunity to teach a class on social and emotional learning. In my research of how students could best benefit from this experience, I have found mindfulness for kids to be a topic worth introducing to students, parents and teachers. Mindfulness is defined as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily reaction, used as a calming and soothing technique. Mindfulness begins by bringing awareness to one's current experience, observing and attending to the changing field of thoughts, feelings and sensations from moment to moment, by regulating the focus of attention (Bishop, 2004). Ultimately, this awareness can lead a student to become plugged into what they are feeling in the here and now. It is often described as a feeling of being fully present and alive in the moment (Bishop, 2004). Mindfulness encompasses two elements: (1) self-regulation of attention, and (2) relating to one's own experience.



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When mindfulness is utilized, research shows that it:

- Helps students to increase attentiveness, focus and concentration
- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Increase their ability to organize tasks, manage time, and make decisions/problem solve
- Become more compassionate with themselves and others
- Reduce impulsivity
- Increase self-awareness
- Strengthen social emotional and academic learning

There is an abundance of tasks, demands, feelings, thoughts, behaviors and actions for our students to process at this time. During this time of eLearning, our students must have moments where they can have self-regulation and are able to relate to their own experiences. For students, mindfulness can relieve feelings of anxiety and fear that they may be experiencing. Utilizing a mindfulness technique can help a student as well as parents to self-regulate during these times of uncertainty, when fear and anxiety are raging in their world. Practicing mindfulness can happen in everyday activities such as walking, riding a bike, breathing, eating, playing video games, sitting and talking. It is simply about being aware of the things that we are doing. More importantly, mindfulness can happen anywhere. When we encourage students to become aware of themselves within everyday interactions and situations we equip them with the tools to handle themselves when they need it the most.

Yoga-based mindful movement, breathing techniques, visualization, 10-15 minutes of meditation and reading books about centering practices can help students get plugged into mindfulness. Here are some simple mindfulness techniques that students as well as parents, family members and caregivers can do to practice mindfulness.

[Be the Pond](https://youtu.be/wf5K3pP2IUQ)(<https://youtu.be/wf5K3pP2IUQ>)

[Melting - Flow | Go Noodle](https://youtu.be/fTzXFPh6CPI)(<https://youtu.be/fTzXFPh6CPI>)

[Square Breathing](https://youtu.be/YFdZXwE6fRE) (<https://youtu.be/YFdZXwE6fRE>)

[Peace Out for Kids | Climbing Up](#)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXmq5idN23E&t=351s>)

[Enzo the Bee Yoga](https://youtu.be/uyj5LooYWyg) (<https://youtu.be/uyj5LooYWyg>)

PODCAST:

featuring Monica Reaves



Click above to listen

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- Grab-N-Go SEL Corner
- Parent Podcast with Syreeta Smith-Carter
- FREE Resource: digital kindness notes for staff

...and MORE!