



# The Heart of Learning

Issue 5

May 13, 2020

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Dear WS/FCS Staff,

We first want to thank all of you who attended the SEAL + Panorama webinar, Part I: *Sense of Belonging at a Distance*, last Friday. The rate of attendance exceeded our expectations and the feedback showed WS/FCS staff as a whole wants to engage more with the SEAL Team. We hear you and are working diligently on a summer webinar series!

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**. We are dedicating this issue to providing links and resources to support SEL and mental health well-being for adults and students. There are many ways to support your classroom mental health, even from a distance. Encourage and model healthy communication with and among your students. Conduct emotion and stress check-ins as well as integrate stress reduction strategies such as mindfulness in your interactions with students. Remember, to take care of yourself because you “can not pour from an empty cup.” Thank you teachers and staff for continuing to show up for our students. YOU ARE AMAZING!



Warm Regards,  
Amanda Walker and Kathy FitzJefferies

Visit our [website](#) for archived newsletters and more information about SEAL.

## Self-Care Ideas

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

- Join the WS/FCS SEAL Team’s *Mindful Moments* webinar series
- Lean on your support system
- Set a short-term goal and strive to accomplish that goal
- Establish healthy boundaries
- Create a functional work-life balance

What are some other self-care ideas?

Your SEAL Team is here to support YOU!

**Amanda M. Walker**

amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

**Kathy FitzJefferies**

kefitzjefferies@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

## 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>

**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, "Thank-You Note Shout Out" is based on the CASEL competency of social awareness. Being socially aware is an individual's ability to notice, relate, and demonstrate empathy towards the feelings of others. Students will be encouraged to deepen their social awareness by thinking of someone to whom they would like to say, "thank you" by creating either a paper or digital thank you note. Showing gratitude via a letter of thanks can be a very simple, yet effective, method to help develop social awareness skills in young children. The great news is social awareness packs a "double punch" of goodness as it not only helps to build empathy, but it also can improve the overall mood in students who are extending gratitude. Talk about an added **bonus!** During these unique times, being socially aware, along with its secondary benefits, is good for all!

**Video Link:**

[Grab-N-Go Activity](#)

**Google Doc:**

[Thank You Note Shout Out](#)

**Questions:**

JAValentine-Turner@wsfcs.k12.nc.us

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

[Mental Health America](#) has resources to assist with mental health awareness. You can search for specific topics of interest such as supporting children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[The National Council for Behavioral Health](#) has related resources.

[Emotional ABCs](#) is a SEL/mental health wellness research-based curriculum offering lessons and activities for **free** to families and teachers.



## Finishing Strong.

### Parent and Teacher Check-In

By: Shanta Reddick, Parent Involvement Coordinator

We are quickly approaching the end of the school year and for some, the “end-of-year-itis” is slowly but surely taking over. It is the perfect time for an educational recharge to finish strong. An educational recharge is the key to ending the year on a successful note for families and teachers. This recharge process will look different for families and teachers, but the result will be the same “foundation for the new year.”

**For teachers** –This is an opportunity to give everyone a fresh slate for the last few weeks of school. A fresh slate regarding communication, feedback, and building the bridge for summer learning. Take a look from a different angle at how you have been communicating, create a new plan for communication, create a checklist according to each students’ needs, set a goal for completion, and make sure you are using two-way communication. Often, we rely heavily on one-way communication as we are recharging and finishing out the year, but two-way communications gives us the opportunity to end the year with strong relationship-building. Remember, we are pioneers creating the blueprint for stronger family engagement and success during eLearning.

**For families**- Your educational recharge needs to start with you asking yourself three questions:

1. Have I contacted my child’s teacher at least 6 times since March 13th?
2. Has my student been engaged the entire time since March 13th?
3. Do I understand where my child is academically (i.e. what are the strengths and weaknesses)?

If as a parent, if you answered **no** to any of those questions, it is not too late to finish the year strong. If you were able to answer **yes** to all three questions, a recharge will still be beneficial as you create success for your student. Parents take a composition notebook, a tablet, or even notes in your phone and label as your “**recharge**”. Create a plan of communication with your child’s teacher which includes dates, times, and a completion date. Establish a set of questions and your expectations for each time that you communicate. The number of times you need to communicate will be based on where you are in the communication process with your child’s teacher.

Teachers and Parents, I challenge you to ask yourself, “What is my educational physical examination saying about me? Then, I encourage you to use your personal diagnosis to “**recharge**” and finish the 2019-2020 school year **STRONGER THAN EVER**.



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## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: WS/FCS STAFF, SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!

- **Participate in a I wear green... for... (or because...) Video Montage:** click on green ribbon icon below for details on how to submit a video clip by May 15th
- **Light it up green, wear green shirts on Mondays:** take a picture and post on social media **#notalone** and **#wsfcstogether**
- **Find Weekly Reflections:** Facts/Tips ([bit.ly/MH-facts](http://bit.ly/MH-facts)) and Guest Blogger (<http://schoolpsychws.blogspot.com>)
- **Post Spotlight on what Educators, Parents, and Students are doing in support of student and adult mental/social-emotional well-being** **#notalone** and **#wsfcstogether**
  - **May 11-15: Spotlight on Educators:** post what our educators do to support students' and/or their own social and emotional well-being (i.e. morning check-ins; virtual talent shows; reading books, etc.).
  - **May 18-22 Spotlight on Parents:** post what our parents are doing to support students' and/or their own social and emotional well-being (i.e. check-in at dinner time; virtual field trips; bedtime stories, family games, etc.).
  - **May 25-29 Spotlight on Students:** post what our students are doing to support their own and their peers social and emotional well-being (i.e. words of kindness; posting on social media messages to be drug-free; journal writing; connecting with teachers, etc.)

Please share this information with your colleagues. If you have any questions or need additional information contact Kathy FitzJefferies ([kefitzJefferies@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:kefitzJefferies@wsfcs.k12.nc.us)).

**CLICK ON THE GREEN RIBBON FOR  
VIDEO SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS.**





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## Suggested Resources from Caitlin Fernandez, EC Resource Teacher:

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

[Teacher to-do list example](#)

[Parent Resource](#)

[Trello link](#)

[Setting up Trello Board Video](#)

## SEL & Mental Health Resource:

Students can feel complex emotions especially during stressful times such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Help facilitate emotion check-ins with your students with this simple resource I created.

[Click here](#) for the resource.

Enjoy,

Amanda M. Walker

E-mail me @ [amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us) with any questions on how to use on various virtual platforms.

## Webinar: Belonging at a Distance, Part II

All staff in WS/FCS are welcome to join a 75 minute webinar Belonging at a Distance, Part II led by Panorama and our SEAL department (all can participate even if you did not attend Part I).

During this time we will:

- 1) Model and practice how Panorama Survey data can support tiered supports for students
- 2) Build in time for connecting with peers through the use of breakout groups

**WHEN:** May 22, 2020 @ 10:00-11:15 am & 1:30-2:45 pm.

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

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

Need additional resources or lesson ideas?  
Contact Amanda M. Walker at [amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us)



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## ASK AMANDA:

### Advice on SEL and Mental Health Integration

#### **How can I incorporate mental health wellness into my distance learning teaching plans?**

One way is to encourage a healthy and communicative virtual classroom environment. For instance, when students are engaging in a daily emotion check-in, you are increasing their emotional vocabulary, promoting self awareness, and also counteracting stigma about emotions and feelings. In addition, creating ways to practice stress reduction and mindfulness techniques before beginning your virtual class session teaches self-management as well as how to reduce stress level and anxiety. After virtually practicing these strategies as a whole class, encourage students to continue stress reduction and mindfulness techniques at home. Some examples of stress reduction practices include: deep breathing, muscle relaxation exercises, and visual imagery. And, in the spirit of adult SEL, all of the techniques you teach your students will be good for you as well. Part of self-care is taking care of your mental health needs, too.

**Send your questions to [amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:amwalker3@wsfcs.k12.nc.us) and Amanda Walker, SEAL Program Specialist, will answer them in the upcoming newsletter.**

## Mindful Moments: SEAL's New 3-Part Webinar Series

The WS/FCS SEAL Team recognizes that mindfulness is essential during this challenging time of distance learning. We are here to offer a new webinar series, *Mindful Moments*, to all WS/FCS staff. During this webinar, we will practice guided mindfulness activities together before working with other colleagues in breakout sessions where you will engage in a virtual activity. You will not want to miss this opportunity to distress and re-center!

**\*\*You do not need to register for this event. For CEUs and DL credits, you will need to attend all three sessions.**

### **Mindful Moments Schedule:**

**May 15, 2020:** 10:00-10:45 a.m.

**May 29, 2020:** 10:00-10:45 a.m.

**June 12, 2020:** 10:00-10:45 a.m. (*last student day celebration*)

[Recurring Zoom Meeting Link](#)



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## YOU ARE **NOT ALONE**

**By: Angela Cowell, Mental Health Clinical School Social Worker**

I wear green, not just to gain the luck of my Irish ancestor, but because it's mental health awareness month. During these unprecedented times, our mental health needs are ever changing and growing. Focusing on our mental health is just as vital as tending to your physical health, but we often lack giving it the priority it deserves. Did you know mental health concerns are common? Approximately half (46.4 %) of all adults will experience a mental illness during their lifetime. Additionally, half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14. It is also important to recognize that adults and youth experience mental health challenges differently.

Sometimes stigmas surrounding mental health disorders can make us feel as though we are to blame for our condition which could prevent or delay us seeking the treatment we need. What can you do to help reduce mental health stigmas? 1) Get treatment to reduce symptoms and increase your quality of life. 2) Do not let stigmas create shame. 3) Do not isolate yourself. Reach out to people you trust to get the support and compassion you deserve. 4) Use person centered language to help recognize a person is not their illness. For example, "I have bipolar disorder" versus "I'm bipolar." Stigmas are often created from a lack of understanding, so let's educate those around us with the facts.

Mental health and substance abuse disorders can present in many forms from depression, anxiety, addiction, psychosis; and, the list goes on. Symptoms of a mental health condition can affect a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior. It can disrupt one's ability to work, attend school, carry out daily activities or engage in satisfying relationships. Warning signs in a virtual setting are similar to every day warning signs, which can include: change in behavior such as excessive worrying, confused thinking, change in appetite, sleep patterns, communication with family members, change in work and study habits, increased irritability, mood swings, friendship issues, strained family relationships, a general sense of hopelessness or helplessness, and/or thoughts of suicide.

Human beings are resilient and have survived unbelievable circumstances. However, as our challenges become greater, our typical coping skills can become less effective. Our strategies to address our mental health needs should continue to evolve along with our circumstances. Protective factors include healthy practices such as good sleep and eating habits, good problem solving skills, caretaker/ familial support, and feelings of closeness with at least one adult. When someone presents to you with a possible mental health condition, you can help by combating stigmas, expressing concern in nonjudgmental ways, listening without criticizing, refrain from taking their symptoms personal, maintain clear and consistent expectations, share your hope, and refer students and families for help from and consult with the student services staff members at your school (School Counselors, School Social Workers, and School Psychologists).

**See the next page for some helpful links and resources...**



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## HELPFUL RESOURCES

By: Angela Cowell, Mental Health Clinical School Social Worker

**WSFCS Student Services hotline for students and families can be contacted Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 2p.m. by calling 336-661-3128.**

**WSFCS Student Services Health and Wellness link: Support for parents and educators**

<https://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/115500>

### **Helpful Info graphs on Mental Health statistics:**

<https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI-You-Are-Not-Alone-FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI-Mental-Health-Care-Matters-FINAL.pdf>

### **Crisis resources:**

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

**Useful smartphone apps: Many are totally free to access during this time.**

<https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>

<https://www.tenpercent.com/>

<https://my.life/>

<https://www.calm.com/>

<https://www.changetochill.org/>

<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>

<https://www.downdogapp.com/>

<https://theselclassrooms.wordpress.com/>

*\*Information for the article gathered from the following resources: Youth-Mental Health First Aid, NAMI, Indiana state Univ. Counseling Center, NC School Psychology Association, National Association of Social Workers, and American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health America.*



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## A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO INTERNET SAFETY

By: Kathy FitzJefferies, SAFDS Program Manager

During this period of social distancing and distance learning, the internet provides an avenue for connection and learning. Although there are many benefits (such as instantaneous information and connection with family, friends, and teachers), we need to be aware the internet can also be a source of inappropriate materials and connections for our children. As students spend more time on the internet with their daily learning, it is critical for educators and parent/guardians to take a proactive stance on internet safety.

One important line of defense is the use of parental blocks to filter out inappropriate websites. That being said, adults need to be aware children may accidentally or intentionally find their way around these filters. It is important to monitor the sites your children visit, as well as, know who they are interacting with online.

We also need to teach children the basics about internet safety such as:

- Do not give out personal information online.
- Beware of chat rooms; not all people are who they claim to be.
- Never arrange in-person meetings with people you have met online.
- Do not post anything that could hurt others or create a negative impact, including inappropriate pictures of themselves.
- Protect passwords (not to be shared even with their best friend)

Additionally, we need to educate our children about cyberbullying (mean, hurtful, or intimidating messages usually anonymously sent or posted). We need to teach children proper internet etiquette so they 1) do not bully others, and 2) know how they can be a friend, not a bystander if they witness hurtful attacks on others. If a student is experiencing cyberbullying:

- Don't retaliate
- Save the evidence
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Block the bully
- Be Civil
- Report to the police (if there is a threat to safety)

Parent/Guardians, alert the school of any cyberbullying situations. Reports about bullying can be made anonymously through the district Bully Patrol/Tip Line located in the quick links section of each school's and district's home webpage (<https://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/113312> ). For more information and resources contact [kefitzjefferies@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:kefitzjefferies@wsfcs.k12.nc.us) and/or visit <https://www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/115579> .