

## Introduction

# Rachel's Challenge

Returning to teaching this fall will present unique challenges. Whatever the format, the need to reconnect and reboot school culture is more important than ever. Creating a school climate less susceptible to isolation, bullying, suicide, and violence is possible and must be prioritized.

Now is the time to stress the importance of unity, hope, and connection with your students in a live or virtual world. Our resources can help.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

[Full Article](#)

*AESA has partnered with national non-profit, Rachel's Challenge, to bring their life-saving programs, professional development and resources to school leaders across the country.*

Covid-19 changed the game for all of us in 2020, but particularly in education. Teachers, parents, and students were forced to alter their way of thinking overnight to accept an atmosphere of virtual learning. Along with this abrupt shift in educational strategy arose issues that weighed on the minds of both teachers and students.

Teachers became concerned about the effectiveness and quality of instruction, gaps in learning, and student engagement. Students longed for the structure and security of school, as well as, collaboration and interaction with peers/teachers. Students struggled with

isolation and anxiety while teachers struggled with the social and emotional impact this has had on their students in our “new abnormal.”

In all of this uncertainty and chaos, Rachel’s Challenge presents a program that will assist teachers and students in transition and reconnection, whether they are together in person or together online. Let us introduce our *180 Connections* program.



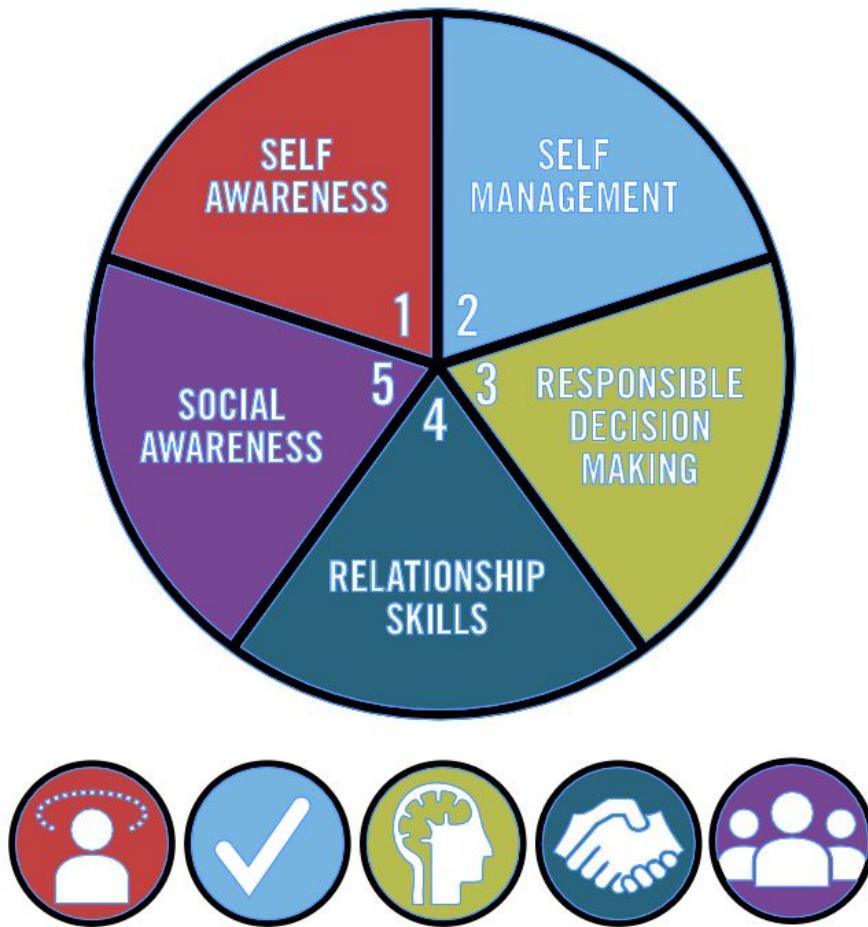
*180 Connections* provides a structured system to promote a sense of belonging and community for students with their teacher and with each other. It establishes connections that naturally form meaningful relationships and trust within the classroom community, live and virtually.

There are 3 simple steps to implement 180 Connections:

1. Information: Teachers share details about themselves to build connections with students.
2. Illustration: Teachers share a concrete example of the topic.
3. Interaction: Students share and engage in exercises that build connections with each other.

These activities are designed to build a bridge of connection between teachers and students as well as students with each other. This is a huge opportunity to create a safe learning environment in which the power of connection can increase academic achievement, communication, and interaction. There are approximately 180 active days in the school year, so we have aligned the daily activities with the same.

In order to meet the standards of social emotional learning, each activity is aligned with the Social & Emotional (SEL) Core Competencies, created by CASEL.



To catch **180 Connections** in action from a virtual classroom, click [here](#)

The time is now for students to become immersed in feelings of safety, connection, empathy, and hope. *180 Connections* provides the framework for all of the above and will assist educators in creating deep, long lasting connections with students as we venture into the next school year.

"It's the little conversations that build relationships and make an impact on each student." - Robert John Meehan

"Great teachers focus not on compliance, but on connections and relationships." - PJ Caposey in Education Week Teacher

Educators can access a free download of 180 connections here.

[www.rachelschallenge.org/180](http://www.rachelschallenge.org/180)

*180 Connections* is one of the many resources Rachel's Challenge offers to help schools create a safer school environment. To learn more, please contact Andrew Strait ([AndrewS@rachelschallenge.org](mailto:AndrewS@rachelschallenge.org)) or visit our [website](#) for more information.