



**Center for Educational Improvement**  
Heart Centered 21st Century Learning



# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Best Practices in  
Student Mental Health

DECEMBER 2019

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Message to our Board of Trustees*



**Christine Mason, Ph.D.**  
CEI Founder and  
Executive Director

**Greetings from the Center for Educational Improvement (CEI)!** It is my pleasure to update you on our 2019 activities and accomplishments and the strategic initiatives we have planned for 2020.

Our mission and work have been enhanced through a number of important partnerships, including our work with the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health (PRCH) and the New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (New England MHTTC). Through this grant-funded initiative, CEI has been able to launch the Childhood-Trauma Learning Collaborative (C-TLC)—which has become a pivotal part of our school-based mental health initiatives.

The C-TLC has also increased our capacity around the use of our School Compassionate Culture Analytical Tool for Educators (S-CCATE) and our efforts to extend our Heart Centered Learning® model. Our goal is to ensure the adoption and implementation of practices that support compassionate school communities that better support children, parents, teachers, and school leaders. Our work in New England has provided us with key data and indicators on how to expand this work nationally.

Indeed, CEI has had an exciting and productive year with much activity on many fronts, including increased exposure via authorships and publicity as a part of national presentations and promotional efforts. Our e-Report is designed to highlight key activities and provide you with a glimpse of our plans in the new year.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the Center for Educational Improvement. I hope that you remain an active and engaged member of our Board of Trustees and that you continue to support our broader efforts to advance 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning and leadership.



*My prediction is that mindfulness and heart centered learning are not simply trending practices, but that they will be around for decades to come. These practices take pressure off students and teachers, advance well-being, and set the state for increasing academic achievement."*

~Paul Liabenow  
President, CEI Board of Trustees



# 2019 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Research and Services

**Our work with PRCH and the New England MHTTC, the partnership that launched the C-TLC, began in November 2018 and will continue through August 2020.** CEI received approximately \$200,000 to support the work. Our funding increased in August, to approximately \$300,000, because of the extent of our involvement in collaborative efforts with school leaders, educators, mental health professionals, and partners of the New England MHTTC. The C-TLC is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through a subcontract with PRCH and there is the possibility of continued funding beyond August 2020.

The School Mental Health Initiative, which includes collaborations with Harvard University and C4 Innovations, is designed to strengthen school-based mental health services in the six states that comprise the New England region. CEI's role is to manage the C-TLC, specifically designed to address the needs of children who have experienced/are at risk of experiencing significant trauma.

## CEI Publications

**CEI penned foundational publications in 2019.** *Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities where Students Focus and Flourish*, has sold over 1,000 copies. The publication, co-authored by Dr. Mason, Dr. Michele Rivers Murphy, and Dr. Yvette Jackson, with its cutting-edge information on mindfulness, is a bestseller with Solution Tree Press, the book's publisher. The book boasts a 5 star rating on Amazon as well. Two related books, planned for release in February 2020, will extend our mindfulness and school visioning series:

- *Mindful School Communities: The Five Cs of Nurturing Heart Centered Learning* (Mason, Rivers Murphy, & Jackson)  
Solution Tree Press
- *Visioning Onward: A Guide for All Schools* (Mason, Liabenow, & Patschke)  
Corwin Press

“The goal of PRCH is to transform behavioral health programs, agencies, and systems to be culturally responsive and re-oriented to facilitating the recovery and social inclusion of the individuals, families, and communities they serve. We are pleased to expand our work to include a school-based initiative designed to enhance the culture of compassion in school communities.”

~Larry Davidson, Ph.D.  
PRCH Director





## Measuring Compassionate School Factors

CEI unveiled the national version of the School Compassionate Culture Analytical Tool for Educators (S-CCATE) in November 2019. The tool, a brief, validated assessment to be completed by teachers and other school personnel, is uniquely designed to guide teams of educators and whole school communities through the process of transformational change. The S-CCATE, and its related supplementary assessment, are packaged solutions that use current research on the factors that improve well-being, executive functioning, and neuroplasticity among children and youth—all of which help students gain resiliency, alleviate trauma, and overcome barriers to learning and decision making. This tool allows schools and districts to measure progress, compare results to a national data set and celebrate growth.

## Growth and Development of S-CCATE

The S-CCATE approach was developed by CEI, over a six year period, with input from school leaders. The tool is an outgrowth of CEI's signature approach to social emotional learning and mindfulness—Heart Centered Learning (HCL).

HCL focuses on five Cs—consciousness (awareness), compassion, confidence, courage, and community—to equip educators to develop compassionate schools where students acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, resolve conflicts nonviolently, think creatively, and overcome obstacles to succeed in the classroom and in life.

***Bringing the S-CCATE Assessments to market is the culmination of a long term organizational goal and represents a significant growth point in CEI's history and foundational work.***

## Adoption and Use of S-CCATE (New England (HHS, Region One))

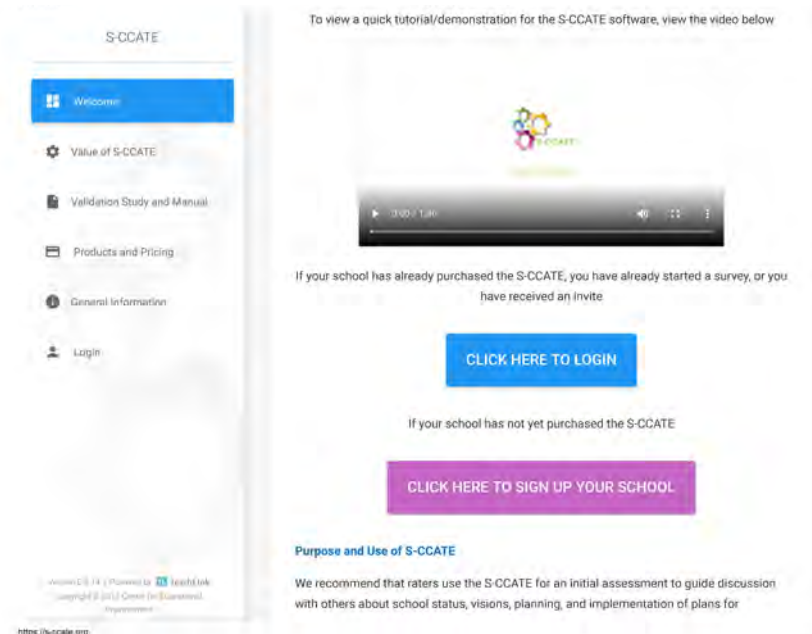
S-CCATE was introduced to schools in New England, which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recognizes as Region One, as part of the C-TLC.

- There are currently 109 unique districts/schools in New England using S-CCATE.
- More than 1,000 responses from districts/schools in the New England area have been recorded and analyzed using S-CCATE.

In 2019-2020, registered New England schools will be granted permission to use the S-CCATE as part of the C-TLC. Schools with seven (7) or more respondents gain full reports, including results, comparison to the national data, and recommendations for improving compassion and alleviating trauma and stress.

## S-CCATE Technology

The S-CCATE technology platform is powered by TeachLink and Benda Engineering—a leading software and engineering design partnership that develops innovative solutions for schools and educators. With this writing, we are pleased to recognize the commitment, dedicated service and professionalism of TeachLink and Benda Engineering's principals, Nels Benda and Zach Erkkila.



The S-CCATE Assessments are uniquely designed for schools to guide teams of educators and whole school communities through the process of transformational change.

View our online platform at <https://s-ccate.org/>

View our quick tutorial at <https://s-ccate.org/static/media/tutorial.40300e8e.mp4>

**The S-CCATE Assessments provide educators with an efficient way to vision, plan, and monitor progress toward the implementation of compassionate, trauma-informed practices in classrooms.**



*S-CCATE guides schools as they infuse mindfulness and social emotional competencies to advance student well-being and achievement. A powerful measurement tool, S-CCATE propels teachers to create heartfelt paths for sustainable, positive school change."*

~ Michele Rivers Murphy, Ed.D.  
CEI Associate Director of HeartCentered Learning



New England (HHS Region 1)

**MHTTC**

**Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network**  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



## **School Mental Health Initiative Childhood-Trauma Learning Collaborative (C-TLC) Mental Health Resources for New England Educators**

PRCH, in partnership with CEI, designed the C-TLC to strengthen mental health supports that address the needs of children who have experienced/are at risk of experiencing significant trauma. The C-TLC provides training and technical assistance to school-based mental health professionals in the six states that are a part of the Region One grouping for activities: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Our aim is to enhance school culture and prepare school personnel to improve the mental health of school-aged children in the New England region.

### **The C-TLC has three goals:**

- Foster alliances to address the needs of children and youth who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing significant trauma.
- Provide publicly available, free training, and technical assistance to elementary and secondary teachers, principals, school psychologists, and other school staff.
- Accelerate adoption and implementation of mental health evidence-based practices.

Through the C-TLC, we work to help our 24 Fellows from each of the six New England states—teachers, administrators, school psychologists, and other school staff—vision, plan, and monitor implementation of compassionate practices that ameliorate the effects of trauma, amplify protective factors, and increase the availability of educated and nurturing adults and teachers within schools who can meet the mental health needs of students.

*“The C-TLC provides the New England MHTTC with the opportunity to implement school-based mental health initiatives that support inclusive schools that work for all children and their families.”*

~ Maria E. Restrepo-Toro, BNS, MS  
Manager, New England MHTTC

The New England MHTTC, led by Larry Davidson, Ph.D., is part of the broader Mental Health Technology Network, which includes 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian and Alaskan Native Center, a National Hispanic and Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office. The CEI Management Team reports to and supports the New England MHTTC's Manager, Maria Restrepo-Toro. PRCH School Mental Health Project Manager Martha Staeheli, Ph.D. guides the C-TLC's outreach, technical writing, and implementation.



New England (HHS Region 1)

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

## Working Together to Address Trauma

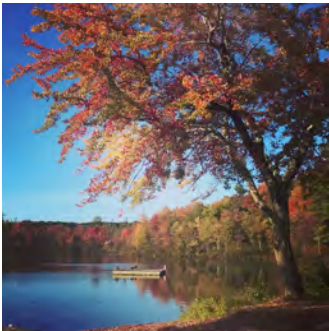
Through the C-TLC, public and private Pre-K-12 schools in New England gain access to evidence-based mental health resources to enhance their awareness of childhood trauma and related neurobiological implications. These training and technical assistance supports focus on the benefits of mindfulness practices for youth, as well as ways to strengthen, value, and increase social emotional competence, accelerate learning, and develop a sense of well-being for students, teachers, and the wider school community.

C-TLC resources include webinars, book study opportunities, and curated articles and learning resources, as well as a special community of practice where members connect across organizations, districts, and states to share knowledge and experience. Since program inception, the C-TLC has provided technical assistance and support to 101 districts/schools in New England; this includes the districts/schools of the 24 Fellows, who serve as local program ambassadors, their home schools, and schools that independently join the C-TLC.



### Key C-TLC collaborations, include:

- Partnerships with school psychologists, social workers, principals, and other administrators from districts/schools within the six New England states
- SAMHSA's School Mental Health Supplement Team
  - National School Mental Health Curriculum Supplement Review Panel
  - School Mental Health Needs Assessment Work Group



### CEI recognizes the contributions of sponsors supporting our Meeting of C-TLC Fellows:

C4 Innovations, DIVA Team Productions, Solution Tree, South Madison Community Foundation, Teach Link, and individual donor Mary Woods

## In-Person Meeting of C-TLC Fellows

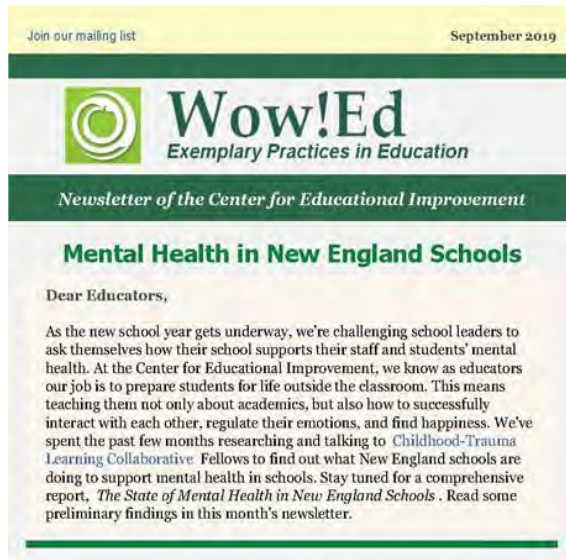
For a second year, CEI managed a special convening of the New England MHTTC. This event, "*Reflections: The State of School Mental Health—Courageous Conversations and Healing Practices*," featured an agenda where Fellows engaged with CEI and PRCH staff.

- In the morning, C-TLC Fellows presented the innovative work they are doing to address the impact of trauma and stress on school culture in New England. Collaborators and state officials met with Fellows in the afternoon to share their significant work in responding to mental health needs in schools.
- PRCH leaders Maria Restrepo-Toro and Dr. Martha Staeheli presented a keynote address, "Healing, Inclusivity, and Resilience—Courageous Conversations in School Mental Health."

This year's convening included a special forum, open to the public, "Best Practices in School Mental Health." This forum helped to broaden conversations with government officials and nonprofit leaders interested in supporting mental health in schools through funding and collaboration. Featured speakers were **Jeffrey Hill**, Manager of the RI Department of Health; **Lisa Lambert**, Executive Director, Parent Professional Advocacy League; **Olga Lopez**, Latino Outreach Information Specialist, Federation for Children with Special Needs, and **Tim Marshall**, LCSW, Director of Community-Based Mental Health Services, CT Department of Children and Families.



## Products and Resources



CEI's online e-Newsletter, *WOW! Ed*, is now circulated to more than 10,000 educators nationally. Issues are archived on CEI's website and include research-based articles on topics such as compassion, school leadership, mental health, and mindfulness.

Beginning in December, we will publish *WOW! Ed* bimonthly. In the intervening months, we will publish materials, such as toolkits and information briefs, on children's mental health in schools. With this writing, CEI recognizes the talent, time, and commitment of the writers, proofreaders, and editors who support the development of our products and resources, including:

- Dana Asby, M.A., M. Ed., Copy Editor
- Lauren Hamilton, Layout Editor
- Kaela Farisse, Social Media Manager



Home About ▾ Services ▾ Research Areas ▾ Products ▾ Childhood-Trauma Learning Collaborative ▾ Library ▾ Blog



CEI's website is being updated to better support the organization's expanded national presence. While you may see new features on our website, like our C-TLC, News, and Events areas, we will soon be launching more interactive and intuitive areas. Features will connect our web visitors with a national events calendar, increased social media interactivity, and enhanced search functions. CEI's revamped website will provide its web visitors with an improved user experience. Our goal is to build a unique resource repository on trauma-informed practices available to educators, school personnel, and mental health professionals.

# Training and Technical Assistance



**CEI's virtual and in-person training and technical assistance activities offer facilitated discussions, polling activities, and practice of trauma-informed strategies, such as mindfulness techniques.**

Participants also receive instructional materials and resources to enhance their knowledge, skills, and practices within their school communities.

CEI has developed a more robust training and technical assistance platform to improve the organization's ability to disseminate core learning resources. With an emphasis on publicly available, free training and technical assistance, CEI's schedule of virtual and in-person engagements in 2019 featured:

1. **Virtual Webinars, Online Discussions:** Addressing specialized topics, like the neuroscience of trauma and stress, equity in education, and other topics pivotal to HCL practices. C-TLC webinars and engagements with partners, including Dr. Hilary Hodgdon, The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute; Dr. Kimberly Noble, Teachers College; and Dr. Yvette Jackson, Teachers College/National Urban Alliance
2. **Group Book Study Activities:** Supporting a "deeper dive" into trauma-informed practices
3. **In-Person Meetings:** Facilitating C-TLC engagements with Fellows and key educational leaders in the New England region, S-CCATE trainings and STE(A)M workshops in the northeast region, including Washington, DC; Philadelphia, PA; and New York, NY markets.



**As a part of the C-TLC, we have also developed a go-to hub for Fellows, educators, school staff, and mental health professionals in New England, using the web-based project management tool, Basecamp. Our Basecamp hub features curated, evidence-based resources on school mental health and school culture.**

- Basecamp supports our information dissemination efforts, provides a forum for peer networking and sharing, and allows us to respond to questions about childhood trauma, youth mental health, and building compassionate school communities. CEI's consultants readily ensure responses to posting in 48 hours or less.
- Our Basecamp platform also promotes relevant events where C-TLC members can access virtual and in-person learning and networking opportunities.



*I so appreciate the opportunities being a C-TLC Fellow has given me. While I came into this fellowship feeling confident in my understanding of the neuroscience of the brain, I have really benefited from the self-regulation learning I have had from this experience and all the literature shared that I pass on to my staff and other schools as well.*

~ Erica McLaughlin, C-TLC Fellow  
Randolph, VT

# Organizational Management

## Publicity and Promotions

CEI has ramped up its communication and marketing efforts to extend the organization's resources to a broader national audience. Following, are highlights of key activities:

- CEI's delivered national presentations on the C-TLC, S-CCATE Assessments, and trauma-informed school practices and HLC. Notable engagements included:
  - Delaware Valley Consortia Conference on Equity and Excellence (Philadelphia, PA)
  - National School Mental Health Curriculum Supplement Review Panel (Baltimore, MD)
  - School Mental Health Needs Assessment Work Group (Baltimore, MD)
  - 2019 Annual Learning Forward Conference (St. Louis, MO)
  - 2019 Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health (Austin, TX)

In addition to the national presentations, CEI Consultants Dana Asby and Dr. Michele Rivers Murphy supported training and technical assistance in New England localities as a part of the C-TLC.

- CEI promoted 14 virtual events (including ongoing sessions of its Mindfulness Practices Book Study) saturating the market across multiple communication platforms - e.g., social media channels, YouTube, Eventbrite, and postings on the websites of collaborating partners. As of this writing, CEI has engaged more than 300 individual participants in virtual events.
- CEI issued a media advisory announcing the release of the national S-CCATE platform in November. To date, the media advisory has been viewed by 344 media outlets worldwide, with 144 reprints. Follow up promotions highlighting trial-based subscriptions, at no cost, for New England educators are planned. Broader promotions will feature S-CCATE subscription opportunities, which are available at cost, for educators nationally.
- Solution Tree published a blog (December 2019) on compassion and schools written by Dr. Michele Rivers Murphy and Dr. Christine Mason.

## CEI Staffing Model

Our virtual organizational management structure is a consultant-based workforce that provides CEI with the capability to manage day-to-day tasks, initiate activities, and respond to needs from the field. CEI's Founder and Executive Director is chiefly supported by a management team that includes:

- Dana Asby, M.A., M.Ed., Director of Innovation and Research Support
- Ingrid Padgett, Director of Communications and Development
- Michele Rivers Murphy, Ed.D., Associate Director of Heart Centered Learning



CEI also maintains a cadre of administrative, educational, finance, and graphic design and web development consultants to support operations, product development, research, and training and technical assistance, on an ad hoc basis. Additionally, CEI's Director of Innovation and Research Support manages the organization's internship program. Through this effort, CEI engages recent college graduates, graduate students, retired professionals/ professionals seeking a career change—interested in becoming more involved in educational policy, research, or administration—as researchers and writers.

# 2020 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## C-TLC Management

**CEI's work with PRCH and the New England MHTTC will continue in 2020.** Vj g" f gxgmr o gp'qh' r roductu."uqrk f h lpi "collaborations, and the continued adoption and implementation of S-CCATE and HCL strategies in New England"ctg"y j g'E/VNE)u'r t k t k g u. Planned activities include:

- Ongoing management of the C-TLC Fellowship Program and the broader C-TLC initiative.
- Hosted Virtual Events, including a special webinar with PRCH Manager Maria Restrepo-Toro that will serve as an extension of our "Courageous Conversations" series, and a mindfulness in schools training session with Jeff Donald, Mindfulness Coordinator, Montgomery County, MD schools.
- In-person Meetings—including the New England Advisory Team Meeting.
- Scholarly submissions on the S-CCATE and the C-TLC, for example our January 2020 submission to the *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*.
- Development of publication resources, toolkits, information briefs, training videos, and branded e-Newsletters, in collaboration with the New England MHTTC.
- Distribution of competitive HCL stipends to schools to support the implementation of trauma-informed practices in New England localities.
- Connections with the New England MHTTC's Childhood Mental Health Initiative and regional school-based mental health entities and practitioners within children's system of care.

## CEI Products and Resources

**CEI will continue to identify, share, and apply 21<sup>st</sup> Century innovations in learning to guide school leaders, educators, and school staff as they improve their schools.** In support of these efforts, CEI's 2020 activities will hqewu"qp" wug"cpf "r tqo qvqp"qh'v j g" national S-CCATE platform, our professional development supports around STE(A)M-based instruction, and publication development. Planned activities include:

- Ongoing presentations, promotions, and training and technical assistance around our S-CCATE tool and HCL. Notable engagements in 2020 include a presentation at the Creating Trauma Sensitive Schools Conference in Atlanta, GA (February) and the National Association for Elementary School Principals Conference in Louisville, KY (June)—an opportunity that will include CEI Board President Paul Liabenow, and Dr. Missie Patschke, co-authors of *Visioning Onward*, along with CEI's Founder and Executive Director Dr. Christine Mason.
- Enhanced Early Childhood STE(A)M offerings for schools, districts, and early childhood providers. This work, led by CEI Trainer Orinthia Harris, will focus on the delivery of CEI's customized workshops. Key to this work will be the development of collaborations with districts, schools, nonprofit entities, and individual educators, seeking professional development training activities.
- Ongoing publication development, including the January 2020 "Q&A" feature on CEI's work in Solution Tree's publications catalog, and a yoga manual with Y.O.G.A. for Youth Founder and President Krishna Kaur that is currently in production. CEI will also be providing a chapter in an upcoming publication related to the affects of racial bias and the need for equity in education.



# CONCLUSION



Imagine schools where students and educators achieve a greater balance between a concentration on academic standards and mandates and social-emotional health and well-being. Most importantly, imagine that compassion, love, and heart are at the center, the core of everything we do and become in school communities."

*Mindful School Communities: The Five Cs of Nurturing Heart Centered Learning*  
(In Press)

Mason, Rivers Murphy, & Jackson, p. 1

*Mindful School Communities*, our second book on mindfulness and heart centered learning, asks readers to open their hearts and minds to the possibilities of schools as transformational conduits to compassion. We close the book by asking readers to:

"...take heart ...have heart ...follow your heart...  
listen to you heart."

*Mindful School Communities: The Five Cs of  
Heart Centered Learning*  
(In Press)

Mason, Rivers Murphy, & Jackson, p. 171

CEI's publications are designed to provide a healthy dose of theory and practical exercises that propel the use of compassionate practices in schools. In 2020, we trust that you, too, will join us on our journey to advance education, kindness, and heart centered leadership.

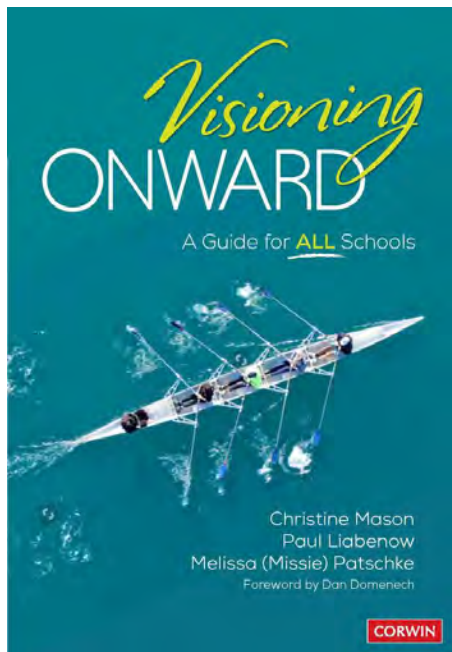
As we look forward to 2020, we are reminded that one individual, one school, one district can do so much for so many. We ask you to remain steadfastly committed to advancing 21<sup>st</sup> Century heart centered practices in schools and districts.



# ATTACHMENTS

## Attachment A

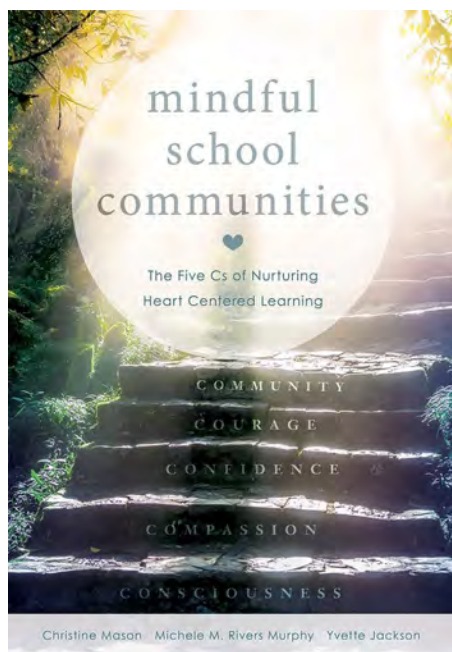
### CEI Publications: 2019-2020 Releases



*"Whether you're a superintendent, a principal, lead teacher, or any other kind of school administrator, there is no greater joy than creating a positive school culture. A dynamic learning community is bound to be the end result. It begins with a successful vision. That's what 21<sup>st</sup> Century leadership is all about. Here's to **Visioning Onward!**"*

~ Daniel A. Domenech  
Executive Director  
AASA

The School Superintendents Association



*"The message of heart centered learning in **Mindful School Communities** could not be more timely and vital. At a time when many would-be school reformers push for testing, policy prescriptions, and other failed remedies, Mason, Murphy, and Jackson rightly focus on a much more humane and holistic approach. They recognize that the heart of teaching lies in the hearts of teachers and their students."*

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal  
Authors, *Leading with Soul* (2011)

## Attachment B

### Images from our Year Two In-Person Meeting of C-TLC Fellows





## Images from our Year Two In-Person Meeting of C-TLC Fellows







New England (HHS Region 1)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

## Attachment C

### Sample C-TLC Resources



Center for Educational Improvement  
Heart Centered 21st Century Learning



Basecamp™  
Project Collaboration

#### Featured Fellow: Erica McLaughlin

Erica McLaughlin is an elementary school principal and also a Vermont Principals Association Executive Council Board Member.

Erica McLaughlin, principal of Randolph Elementary School in Vermont, has been on a journey to lead her staff in bringing mindfulness to her school. She emphasizes that while she is the principal, this is a journey that the entire school is on together. With some trial and error, she and her team discovered how to successfully introduce mindfulness to her whole school community. Their approach to a school mindfulness practice from the top down and bottom up can inspire other school leaders to do the same.

[Read more.](#)





**Center for Educational Improvement**  
Heart Centered 21st Century Learning

## Contact Us:

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