

## Year #2: Areas of Inquiry

In 2016/2017 four schools continued to build on their efforts from the prior year with additional professional development and planning around a specific strategy.

**Davis Elementary:** How can we continue to strengthen the relationship between families, students and teachers by connecting with them around resilience at conferences?

**Glenfair Elementary:** How can we articulate our school's focus on trauma sensitive and culturally responsive practices in a philosophy statement? How and where could this philosophy statement be used?

**Sweetbriar Elementary:** Can we gain confidence and skill in implementing brain break activities and community circles for students by modeling and practicing them as staff during our professional development sessions?

**HB Lee Middle:** Given a trauma sensitive lens, how does a restorative justice practitioner prepare for and implement a community circle?

After each team identified a strategy area, they defined a vision of what it looked like as educators grew and improved in implementing that strategy using the following four areas:

I am learning

I am starting to practice

My understanding is fully observable in my practice

I could teach or coach this at my school

# Resilience Conferences

**Davis Elementary School:** How can we continue to strengthen the relationship between families, students and teachers by connecting with them about resilience at conferences?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Staff participated in two professional development sessions. One was held just after the Fall 2016 conferences to debrief staff experiences with using a questionnaire designed to identify resiliency factors. A second session was held just before spring 2017 conferences to provide staff with strategies and question prompts that could be used to respond to difficult or stressful situations with caregivers in the conference setting.</li><li>Staff are interested in other strategies that can better welcome and positively engage with families new to the school community, such as post cards.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Staff feedback from the fall conferences was that they wanted a venue where families could access resources during conferences. A small planning group, led by the school counselor and behavior interventionist, planned and organized a spring resource fair.</li><li>A parallel planning process was underway to support the implementation of the MindUp curriculum. There was interest in better connecting families and caregivers with the Mind Up content and practices.</li></ul>
<b>Mindset</b>	<b>Planning</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Action</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There was 85% family participation at spring conferences.</li><li>A teacher survey is recommended for the 2017/2018 school year. Potential measures could include: <i>I feel confident addressing concerns brought to me from families. I know how I can help. I can direct a family to a helpful resource. I have some language or script I use to ask an open-ended question that will help me determine what I can do to support a family.</i></li><li>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) or Harvest Share were needed at the resource fair for 17/18.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Goal statement:</b> Davis educators and families regularly connect around resiliency and healing for students, and increase and strengthen connection to students and families.</p>	
<b>Tool: Resiliency questions and script used in conferences</b>	

# What does it look like as Davis educators build skill in implementing a Resilience Conference?

The planning team provided feedback to inform this perspective on skill building:

I am learning	I am starting to practice	My understanding is fully observable in my practice	I could teach or coach this at my school
I am learning how the automatic assumptions and biases that we all hold can get in the way of building a connection with and unconditional positive regard for my students and families. I realize I will not have the 'right' answer all the time when talking to families, and that I am not a therapist.	I am starting to practice cultural humility and inquiry that involves inventorying and checking my own biases and assumptions. I am starting to ask, with an open mind: <i>What can I do to more fully include and recognize you, your child, and his/her strengths in my classroom?</i>	I am confident in asking families about the strengths of their students and the resiliency in their lives. When a topic comes up in a conference that is stressful or traumatic, I have a couple of 'go to' open-ended questions or responses that can help identify strengths or resiliency present in that situation.	Families contact me regularly to problem solve and I contact families regularly around positive accomplishment and celebration of their child. When there is an unmet need or stressful situation for the child or family, I am regularly able to ask open-ended questions that unearth a solution that works for student, the family and me.

# Trauma and Resiliency Philosophy Statement

**Glenfair Elementary School:** How can we articulate our school's focus on trauma sensitive and culturally responsive practices into a philosophy statement? How and where could this philosophy statement be used?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A shelter for families navigating homelessness opened two years ago within the school's attendance area, and this significantly impacted the school community. There is a high student mobility rate, and attendance has swelled as students remain at Glenfair even after their family has transitioned to more stable housing.</li><li>• Teachers observe an increase in challenging student behaviors. The school has struggled to welcome and orient families sufficiently and place students appropriately in classrooms.</li><li>• New staff at the school this year participated in training in trauma sensitive practices, and all staff received an additional session on responding to acute trauma after two students at the school were killed in April.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2017/2018 the school convened a leadership team to plan and apply for a School Improvement Grant (SIG).</li><li>• There were opportunities in staff meetings and through surveys for building staff to provide feedback on the grant's strategies and priorities.</li><li>• Leadership at the school identified the need to draft a "philosophy statement" to center trauma sensitive and culturally responsive practices.</li><li>• Planning for a 'Welcome Center' was completed. It will provide academic assessments, information about school wide behavioral expectations and support an enhanced class placement process. The Center will also reach out to the students' prior school to try to expedite delivery of the student record/cumulative file.</li></ul>
<h3>Mindset</h3>	<h3>Planning</h3>
<h3>Evaluation</h3> <p>The team identified three outcomes for their Welcome Center. They will be working with the Chalkboard Project to receive support around measuring implementation success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better placement for students in classrooms, as measured by fewer requests from teachers and parents for transfers.</li><li>• Take the workload burden off classroom educators for initial assessments of students, as measured by a satisfaction survey at the end of 2017/2018.</li><li>• Better experience of parents and families as they are engaging in the registration process, as measured by family interviews.</li></ul>	<h3>Action</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This school year, administrators re-allocated an office space to be used as a room where families new the school could complete registration paperwork in a quiet, private area.</li><li>• The SIG was awarded for 2017/2018 and beyond.</li><li>• The leadership team drafted and revised, with staff feedback, a philosophy statement to describe the grounding of the Welcome Center in trauma sensitive and culturally responsive practices. This philosophy or mission statement will be used to orient staff and family members to the outcome of the Welcome Center.</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal statement:</b> The transition for students and families new to Glenfair feels safe, transparent, empowering and hopeful.</p>	
<p><b>Tool used:</b> Philosophy statement</p>	

# What does it look like as Glenfair educators to interact with new students?

The planning team provided feedback to inform this perspective on skill building:

I am learning	I am starting to practice	My understanding is fully observable in my practice	I could teach or coach this at my school
I am learning that times of transition, like joining a new school community, are when students and families can become very stressed and need the most routine, ritual and consistency. I have read and understand the school's Welcome Center philosophy statement and am learning how trauma sensitive practices can support this transition.	I understand my school's procedure for welcoming new students. I have engaged with the Welcome Center 'new student procedure.' The new student, their family, and I were aware of all the steps of that transition and who to contact in case more support was needed.	I have successfully welcomed several new students to my classroom. I received information about the new student and family that helped me more quickly include that student in my classroom community and recognize their strengths. I feel less stressed when I hear a new student may be joining my classroom.	I consult with other educators to help them navigate the transition of new students into their classrooms. I am an advocate for the work of the Welcome Center and help them problem solve to continue to improve their procedure and practice.

# Parallel Process for Community Circles and Brain Breaks

**Sweetbriar Elementary School:** Can we gain confidence and skill in implementing brain break activities and community circles in classrooms for students by modeling and practicing them as staff during our staff meetings?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Some teachers found success with using brain breaks or community circles to support the transition into the classroom in the morning ("soft landings") or back from lunch. Other teachers didn't have sufficient comfort or skill level to implement community circles and/or brain breaks, or struggled with ways to make them grade-level or age appropriate.</li><li>All staff received one professional development session on the 'Regulate, Relate, Reason' framework in December as a refresh on the basic tenants of trauma sensitive practice. New staff received additional content on trauma sensitive practices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This school year, the Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team focused on Tier I strategies that included restorative practices, including community circles, and brain breaks.</li><li>There were teacher leaders with expertise in implementing both brain breaks and restorative practices who were able to lead and model these activities during staff meetings.</li><li>There is a plan to establish a Wellness Committee, which will focus on strategies to reduce educator stress.</li></ul>
<p><b>Mindset</b></p>	<p><b>Planning</b></p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The planning team identified two outcomes: 1. An increase in participation in circle activities at staff meeting, as measured by less 'passing' when responding to questions. 2. Increased use of community circles and brain break activities with students in classrooms. These could be measured by self-report out at staff meetings or by observation.</li><li>The Principal would like to see reflection questions used regularly after staff circles times to extend the learning to the classroom setting. These could include: <i>How could this be modified to be age appropriate for your students? How would you respond if this hypothetical situation arose in your classroom during this circle?</i></li></ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Community circles for staff were implemented regularly for several months in winter/spring 2017. The Principal facilitated circles to start the Monday morning professional development session and the Restorative Justice team facilitated a circle every other Thursday afternoon.</li><li>The circles ranged from basic community circles (one question), to problem solving circles that generated solutions for issues, such as recess safety concerns.</li><li>In addition, two teachers regularly led staff in 'brain break' activities, which facilitate centering, grounding or develop mindful practice in students and staff.</li></ul>
<p><b>Goal statement:</b> Teachers regularly use community circles and brain break activities with students in the classroom to support transition times.</p>	

# What does it look like as Sweetbriar educators build skill in implementing community circles and brain breaks?

The planning team provided feedback to inform this perspective on skill building:

I am learning	I am starting to practice	My understanding is fully observable in my practice	I could teach or coach this at my school
I am learning about the importance of regulating activities, like brain breaks, and connection activities, like community circles, in supporting my students with transition times into my classroom.	I have started practicing brain breaks and community circles during professional development sessions. I have identified two or three activities or community circle prompts that I really like and have tried in my own classroom with my students.	I consistently participate in brain breaks and community circles during professional development sessions and am also consistently and regularly practicing these strategies and circle activities in my own classroom with my students. Because of these activities I feel less stressed during transition times.	I have a broad array of brain break activities and community circle prompts that I use with my students in the classrooms. I find myself consulting with other educators about how to implement these strategies in their specific settings.

# Trauma Sensitive Community Circles

**HB Lee Middle School:** Given a trauma sensitive lens, how does a restorative justice practitioner prepare for and implement a community circle?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One staff session was facilitated on the intersections of race, trauma, equity and resiliency. There was still a need to better articulate these intersections at the practice level, though. New staff attended two sessions on trauma sensitive practices.</li><li>Leadership perceives an ongoing need for engagement and dialogue that can bust mindset barriers to change including: 1. Care for and attention to the present day influences of trauma and resiliency in educator's own childhood, 2. Additional content on what community circles can <i>and cannot</i> involve such as any student coercion 3. Underscore that adults are responsible for relationships with students. 4. Alleviate fears that 'traumatized kids can't do circles'.</li><li>Success stories from this school year need to be celebrated: 1. Several teachers are experienced and effective RJ practitioners and serve as teacher-leaders. 2. School Resource Officer is skilled in facilitating circles and often uses them to support student dialogue, 3. Several teachers advocated for a student at a district expulsion hearing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There are currently several small planning groups working on related issues including the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), Restorative Justice and Trauma Sensitive Practices teams. There is a need to merge these teams into a school climate team, with subcommittees. In that way, the separate work of each group would be more closely linked.</li><li>HB Lee is an AVID school, and the plan for 2017/2018 school year focuses on Socratic circles, which are very similar to curricular circles. This is an opportunity to better define and focus on the different opportunities to circle up for both academic and social emotional reasons.</li><li>The Principal laid out school wide expectations that circles are to be implemented in 2016/2017 during the advisory period, which is 20 minutes at the beginning of the school day, 4 x per week.</li></ul>
<b>Mindset</b>	<b>Planning</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>Goal statement:</b> All educators at HB Lee can articulate the trauma sensitive elements of a community circle designed to build connection between students and staff and build resiliency for all.</p>	
<p><b>Tools in the appendix:</b> Circles as resiliency builders tip sheet.</p>	

# What does it look like for HB Lee educators to build skill in implementing trauma sensitive community circles?

The planning team provided feedback to inform this perspective on skill building:

I am learning	I am starting to practice	My understanding is fully observable in my practice	I could teach or coach this at my school
I am learning that using a community circle may re-traumatize a student, rather than repairing harm. I am learning that students are often verbally 'off line' when they are very stressed and that I need to be attentive to this when facilitating restorative circles or dialogue.	I have tried a two or three strategies to make sure that students feel safe and calm before we start a restorative circle or dialogue <i>and during</i> the circle, as needed. Sometimes, I still feel stressed during circles but am trying a few things to keep myself calm, too.	I use a wide variety of strategies to ensure that students are not triggered during circle time. Sometimes it happens anyway, and I have found that I have some 'in my back pocket' strategies that I found helpful in deescalating myself and students.	I consistently and regularly use community circles, problem solving or curricular circles in my classroom room and they are a source of safety, consistency, and routine and ritual for my students and myself. I consult with other educators on how to replicate these strategies.

# Centering Resilience in Family Conferences

An example of centering healing and resilience when interacting with family and caregivers

## Conference Positive Questionnaire

- What do you want us to know about your child?
- Tell us about your family?\*\*
- How does your family spend time together?
- What is your hope for your child's education at Davis?\*\*
- What do you see as your child's greatest strengths and skills?
- What hopes do you have about how the school/community will support you?\*\*
- What are ways we can recognize your family values within our school? \*\*
- What is the best way to communicate with you?

## Cuestionario positivo para las conferencias

- ¿Qué quiere usted que sepamos sobre su hijo?
- ¿Díganos sobre su familia?
- ¿Como pasa su familia tiempo juntos?
- ¿Que espera de la educación de su hijo en Davis?
- ¿Cuales cree usted que son las cualidades y habilidades de sus hijos?
- ¿Que esperanzas tiene sobre cómo la escuela/la comunidad le pueden ayudar a usted?
- ¿De que formas podemos reconocer los valores de su familia dentro de nuestra escuela?
- ¿Cuál es la mejor forma para que nosotros nos comuniquemos con usted?

## Additional questions to consider:

- When communication from the school worked really well for your family, what did that look like?
- When your child faced this challenge before, what helped you and your child get through it?
- Where in this school do you feel the safest? Where have you felt recognized?
- If this were taken care of tomorrow, what would that look like?
- What is the one thing your family needs most right now?
- Who is one person you always reach out to when things get tough around this?

## Ideas for staff engagement and professional development around these questions:

- Have educators rewrite 2-3 of these questions in their own words or problem solve culturally responsive alternatives.
- Develop scenarios that commonly arise in conferences and practice responses in pair/share or small groups (*A family member expresses concern about their undocumented family member. A family member is very upset that her child is being bullied and the school is 'doing nothing about it. A student is chronically late to school and absent. The teacher mentions this in the conference and the family member doesn't say much besides 'we just can't get out of the house' in the morning.*)
- Have educators answer these questions for themselves (their personal lives, or their classrooms, or the school community, in general) and developed collective vision of resilience.

# Circles as resilience builders

## Connecting trauma sensitive perspectives and restorative practices.

**Why?** We do community circles because they are intentional relationship building vehicles that promote connectedness, empathy and social emotional learning skills. Circles help restore equity, empowerment, student voice, choice and help students show up better able to learn. Restorative Dialogues can also heal relationships after a harm. We know that many of the students at our school are impacted by trauma, so we infuse trauma sensitive approaches. *Both trauma sensitive and restorative approaches center on the power of relationships to heal.*

**What?** When implemented well, community circles - and similar techniques such as restorative dialogues – help meet the relationship building needs of students, including those impacted by trauma. A restorative principle is ‘do no further harm’; using trauma sensitive approaches to circles helps ensure restorative practices align with this value and prevent re traumatization.

Students impacted by trauma...	Community circles can be powerful sources of resiliency IF....
Have had power suddenly and unexpectedly taken away from them in a way that feels frightening.	They can reestablish safety by being practiced consistently and predictably during neutral times.
Often express their trauma or fear with behaviors that show up in school as aggression and rage. This behavior often keeps them safe in other settings.	RJ practitioners work to be consistently inquisitive and open minded about a student’s internal emotional state. ( <i>Is it anger? Or could it be fear?</i> )
Are often misunderstood and labeled by school staff as ‘attention seekers’ or as ‘power struggles.’	RJ practitioners focus on repairing the harm and honor and elevating the perspectives of students.
Can have a difficult time calming their behaviors and emotions.	RJ practitioners model emotional regulation and calming by embodying awareness and reflection about their <i>own</i> emotional and physical state and working to stay calm. ( <i>Am I calm right now? Or do I need to take a moment to de escalate myself?</i> )
When actively having a trauma response, we all lack most verbal reasoning and other forms of higher order thinking (cause and effect, forward thinking, etc)	They are preceded by a non-verbal regulation activities, like movement or music, that allows students to become calm, thus bringing their verbal capacity back ‘on line’
Need the most support from adults at school during times of transition.	They build routine and ritual into difficult daily or monthly transitions (i.e. beginning of the day, after lunch or before Winter break).
Often have difficulty making and keeping positive friendships.	RJ practitioners are caring, supportive and unconditional. Circles are places that nurture friendship, positive social interaction and broaden an array of social connections.

## Other practical tips for facilitating resiliency-building circles:

Participation is voluntary, however, every effort should be made to prepare students struggling with anxiety or other mental health issues prior to a circle to help them prepare for it. Let them know the prompt (s) and help them brainstorm a response. As a last resort, if it is too much for a student to participate offer them the option of sitting elsewhere in the room to observe or for passing the talking piece in the circle without having to say something. Check in with them after circle to see how they can feel ready to participate in the next one.

If the circle is focused on a traumatic event, it is helpful that the group has prior experience. If not, it will be important to have a skilled facilitator who can process with folks individually to prepare for the circle and then help facilitate and do necessary follow up.

Always review or establish group agreements for circle at the beginning and allow for a centering, relationship building or icebreaker activity first.

If you are worried about the possibility of a circle topic bringing up negative emotions, talk to students prior, let them know what the topic will be, and ask them what will help them feel ready to participate. Agree on clues or reminders you can give during the circle if they feel overwhelmed.

Incorporate ritual and predictable routine. Having the same centerpiece and talking piece and check in can offer this.

If a triggering event occurs during circle: acknowledge and normalize it. Allow a moment to “shake it off.”

Limit the sharing of extremely traumatic stories. It is okay to interrupt somebody, thank them for their courage and honesty in sharing and give them options for checking in more about it later and let them know who to talk to individually later if more support is needed around what was brought up.

Observe body language. Check in and redirect if the circle seems to have a traumatic impact on individuals.

If people become abusive – stop the circle. Check in with individuals who may have been impacted.

Announce transitions such as people leaving. Offer opportunities to process that. Ideally have the person leaving present and have circle respond to things they appreciate or have learned for that person and hopes for their future. This can be done without the person present too.

Be mindful of the clock so not to run out of time before there is a closing round. Be sure to end on a hopeful closing question (*What hopeful possibilities do you see going forward? What support do you need? How can we support each other?...*), especially if the circle was heavy.

## [RESOLUTIONS] NORTHWEST

