

Live Well. Teach Well.

A Behavioral Health, Wellness & (P)SEL Newsletter

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Message from Dr. Jared Scherz, CEO



District leaders are making life and death decisions every day with the weight of consequences always on their minds. Classroom teachers are navigating tenuous relationships with students they are afraid to push too hard or be too complacent with. The importance of morals, values, and ethics are instrumental in guiding us through these difficult times however there are insufficient training opportunities or checks and balances in place.

(P)SEL is an invaluable and now-unavoidable tool in providing a safe and effective space to deliver proper and well-vetted training to all educators, as well as students and parents. While TeacherCoach was born out of great need I saw lacking in the education space, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown has only further validated that the concept and platform that we created is needed now more than ever. Moving forward it will be important to consider our judgment in the context of internal and external influences. Promoting values for our community is most effective when it's a process of considering alternative views and negotiating differences. To prepare students to heal or promote a sense of unity, we need to consider how systemic health is an ongoing responsibility of all members, beginning with courageous conversations about what matters to us.

Stress & Educator Ethics; How SEL Can Support Your Community

By Cecily Woodard, High School Mathematics Teacher at Springfield, MO Public Schools (L), and Sarah Freyer, Teacher at Friendship Public Charter School, Upper Marlboro, MD (R)



Cecily Woodard Sarah Freyer

While the subject of ethics has more recently become a point of focus in the educational community, in light of the recent pandemic and change in the educational landscape, it has now taken center stage amongst educators, students and the community at large. Requirements and expectations from students have been altered and teachers have had to adjust their methods and student demands in many cases. “I believe that educators across the nation are doing the absolute best that they can in circumstances that are completely different from ones that we have ever experienced. No one could have predicted the many changes that educators, students, and parents have endured this year,” says Cicely Woodard, Mathematics Teacher, Kickapoo High School, Springfield, Missouri Public Schools. “I am sure that there are various reasons for different behaviors, and stress could be one of them. Yet, I am also encouraged by so many teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and parents, who show up everyday for students believing that they can be successful regardless of circumstances.”

Educators are finding themselves in unprecedented situations with students, administrators and parents that can create challenging decision making opportunities. Add to that a social divisiveness and high level of stress and anxiety in this country that hasn't been seen in decades, and undoubtedly ethics may on occasion be called into question. But overall, educators have shown strength, resolve and commitment to their tasks and doing their best to handle situations with the utmost professionalism. “Teaching can be stressful at times so it's important that educators take care of their mental and physical health so they can be the best version of themselves,” explains Sarah Freyer, xxxx

Very often, stress can stem from both internal and external sources creating dilemmas and stressful decision making situations for teachers. “I think that, now more than ever, educators, parents, and students need tools to help them to manage stress and emotions. Once people have the tools that they need, then they can make decisions that will help them to manage stressful situations,” explains Woodard.

One of those invaluable tools that educators have at their disposal is SEL. Having a high quality, innovative platform that gives educators, students and parents access to SEL engagements which addresses stress management, self care and ethics is now more important than ever to every school district in the country. “Social-emotional learning is a tool that can help students and teachers maintain ethical behavior.

Daily SEL lessons will help students and teachers deal with different emotions in a positive way that will ensure ethical behavior,” says Freyer.

At the heart of SEL is building community and utilizing tools and training to ensure that we support those members of our community as well as making sure self-care is a priority. Woodard adds, “I believe that students and educators need to feel connected to the school community and to each other. That has been extremely difficult for virtual and hybrid environments. Even in my in-person high school math classroom, I have made conscious efforts to make sure that students feel connected to me and to each other. We start each class with circle time. I ask the students questions that have nothing to do with math at the beginning of class. They share what is going on in their lives. It helps them to realize similarities and to appreciate differences. They learn about each other, and they learn about me. During circle time at the beginning of the semester, one student shared that she was from out-of-state and new to our school. Another student in class asked to change her assigned lunch seat so that she could sit next to the new student in the cafeteria. Connection builds empathy and helps people to make decisions that improve learning and working environments.”

At the end of the day, educators are constantly faced with challenges even when there isn't a pandemic. In extreme times, they must continue what they have always done as one of the most influential professions in our society. “Educators have an ethical responsibility to be honest, patient, respectful and teach high-quality lessons that meet all students' needs. They are role models so it is important that they model ethical behavior at all times,” says Freyer.