

POWER *of* PLACE

LEARNING COMMUNITIES



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is often said that children are our future, but recently I have been reminded of how very much children are also our present. On Wednesday, I traveled to Buffalo for a **Big Picture Learning Network** convening of New York-based high school teachers and leaders. Big Picture is a global network of more than 275 schools whose motto is “leaving to learn.” Their model is highly personalized, and designed for students who have not found success in mainstream schools. Instead, working with their teacher “advisors,” Big Picture students engage in internships that interest them, and inspire them to thrive. Throughout the two day convening we visited internship sites ranging from museums, to a metal fabrication company, to a trail that promotes Lake Erie, to a T-shirt company. At each we talked with students who shared how Big Picture pulled them out of their comfort zones; students who barely spoke when they first arrived at the school were leading panel discussions with poise and comfort. They were highly motivated and engaged.

One could easily attribute Big Picture’s success to the internships alone. What struck me as equally powerful, however, was the focus on community-building. “They treat us like humans,” the students repeatedly said of their advisors. Students also talked about how much they valued their connections with one another and the imperative to get along with everyone. In other words, *the internships are embedded in a strong network of relationships.*

The power of relationships was a central theme of an unrelated gathering another gathering this past weekend, when a small group of adults and young people met at the **Lynn Youth Street Outreach Advocacy (LYSOA)**, an organization whose mission is

to empower the highest-risk youth in the city and beyond.

All year, as part of ECLC's partnership with **Community Catalyst**, a national non-profit organization focused on health equity, we have met with young people experiencing mental health and substance use crises and are advocating for changes in school discipline policies in Essex County. It's been remarkable to watch our connections solidify and our conversations deepen since last August. In addition to learning about advocacy and embarking on an advocacy campaign, these young people are teaching us, and informing our work to create aligned learning experiences for school-based adults in the coming school year. Look for new offerings focused on building a stronger wellness infrastructure for youth in Essex County in our 2024-25 Learning Agenda.

Both groups of young people - those at Big Picture Learning schools and the LYSOA youth - have found a sense of belonging in these alternative spaces because relationships have been front and center. I am so grateful to have had time to meet with them all over the past several days, and to be reminded once again just how much our young people have to teach us.

You can learn more about our LYSOA work at our upcoming **Showcase of Learning** on May 8, where some of the participating educators will be among the exhibitors sharing their experiences. I hope you can join us for this extraordinary event celebrating another outstanding year of adult learning, and looking ahead to all that we can do next together as a community. Register **here**.

In community,
Jane

Don't miss out on our Showcase of Learning

Register Today!

LEARN MORE &
REGISTER

ESSEX COUNTY LEARNING COMMUNITY'S

2023-24 Spring Showcase of Learning

FEATURING

Essex County Educators

PEABODY ESSEX MUSEUM, SALEM, MA

MAY 8, 2024 • 4:30 - 7:30 PM




PoP Happenings



CRISIS RESPONSE

*Does your school/program have a protocol for when a student is in crisis?
What's the crisis response plan?*



- How do you de-escalate a situation?
- How do you engage/communicate with parents and guardians?
- Where does the student physically go and who is there?
- What is the in-house communication protocol?
- Use the village: who else needs to come on board?

Virtual Paraprofessional Training Completed

More than 40 paraprofessionals from the Lynnfield and Hamilton-Wenham schools participated in a 6-hour workshop series to help shift practices and build systems that prioritize social-emotional development in students. “Developing Resilience: Supporting Youth Mental Health” is being conducted by the Partnerships in Education and Resiliency (PEAR), and participants will receive a Certificate in Student Mental Health and Wellness. PEAR coaches are also working separately to support school or program leaders and staff.



Reimagining Middle School in Beverly

Educators from five districts across Essex County gathered at Beverly Middle School earlier this month for the final site visit in our Reimagining Middle School series, co-led by our partners at the WPS Institute. Together we toured the new school building and visited an ELA and a STEM classroom. The group discussed common challenges facing middle schools today, including vaping, school culture, the use of technology in classrooms, and strategies to keep middle school students engaged in their learning. Stay tuned in the coming months for news of how we will continue this critical conversation during the 2024-25 school year.

Save the Date

ECLC Summer Institute
Finding Your Flow
Thursday, August 8
Beverly, MA

ECLC 2024 Fall Gathering
Election Day, Tuesday, November 5
Essex North Shore Agricultural and
Technical School | Hathorne, MA



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Follow us for photos, links to resources, upcoming opportunities, and more.



Access the updated 2023-2024 Learning Agenda here.

Resources & Upcoming Opportunities



Youth Literacy Grants

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is seeking applicants from schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations who help K-12 students who are reading below grade level or having trouble reading. Grant funding is provided to assist in the following areas:

- Implementing new or expanding existing literacy programs
- Purchasing new technology or equipment to support literacy initiatives
- Purchasing books, materials or software for literacy programs

Learn more and apply [here](#).

THINK **BIGGER** DO **GOOD**
POLICY SERIES

Investing in School Mental Health: Strategies to Wisely Spend Federal and State Funding

Think Bigger Do Good presents their eighth webinar featuring authors Sharon Hoover, Ph.D. of the University of Maryland and Joe Pyle, M.A. of the Scattergood Foundation. They will discuss how resources could be best allocated to facilitate the delivery of effective and comprehensive supports and services to children and adolescents in schools. An impending federal funding cliff necessitates an examination of how to wisely invest now to achieve the greatest positive future impact on youth mental health.

Register for the webinar [here](#).



Are the Kids Alright? Successfully Implementing SEL

Post-pandemic, we all know that attending to social-emotional wellbeing is a top priority. But what are the best ways to do that? In this virtual community conversation, the team at Transcend will dive deep into the 5 key steps that will empower you to effectively implement SEL models. Whether you're considering implementing an SEL program or have encountered mixed results along the way, this event will help. Featured speakers include Jabali Sawicki from nXu and Keptah Saint Julien from Whole Child Model.

Register for the webinar [here](#).

THE HECHINGER REPORT

What Happens When Suspensions Get Suspended?

In 2013, the Los Angeles Unified School District **banned suspensions** for willfully defiant behavior, as part of a multi-year effort to move away from punitive discipline. The California legislature took note. Lawmakers argued that suspensions for relatively minor infractions, like talking back to a teacher, harmed kids, including by feeding the school-to-prison pipeline. Others noted that this ground for suspension was a subjective catch-all disproportionately applied to Black and Hispanic students. This study from the Hechinger Report investigates the outcome of suspending suspensions.

Read the full report [here](#),

Food for Thought

From our friends at The Core Collaborative, watch first graders give peer feedback



*Do you have something to share with your fellow educators?
Send it to us at info@powerofplacelc.org.*

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