

REFLECTIONS ON RESILIENT, EQUITY CENTERED LEADERSHIP: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL STUDENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT



PRINCIPLES OF RESILIENT LEADERSHIP

Put Humans at the Foundation
Set Your Compass
Transform Ambiguity Into Clarity
Create New Agile Ways of Working Together
Pull Up and Place Your Bets

The Challenge Facing You

In the rush to implement whole new learning solutions, it is easy to miss some of the key realities the COVID-19 situation has created:

- Students are more isolated than ever. Their sense of connection and belonging is deeply impacted by physical separation. Kids are feeling unmoored, and miss their teachers and friends. They may be feeling anxious about the health and financial impacts of COVID-19 on their family.
- Inequities in access to resources, support networks, and families' capacity to support remote learning are glaringly apparent and may widen existing opportunity gaps.
- Asynchronous learning, in particular, relies on a level of self-management and personal tenacity that may not have been scaffolded in more adult-driven models.
- Teachers are feeling anxious themselves and often disconnected from the support of friends and family. They may find it difficult to be a calm, connected presence in their students' lives.
- Remote learning and check-ins are giving teachers new windows into the lives of their students - at a time when stress at home in all demographics is escalating. Whether observing the anticipated rise in [abuse at home](#), parental stress, exposure to illness, or the effect of poverty, teachers may feel ill-equipped to accurately assess and support.

**"Relationships are the fuel for human development;
they foster trust and belief, and are a buffer against stress."**

Turnaround for Children, [Building Blocks for Learning](#)

Connection, then, is the foundational remedy for stress and adversity - and the precursor to learning. For school systems with social emotional needs at the core of their model like Valor Collegiate Academies, this means ensuring existing [Compass](#) supports are creatively adapted to the online environment. For others, it means intentional efforts to quickly identify ways in which human connection and community are centered even in the rush to gear up instructional solutions.

Reflections for Social and Emotional Wellness Leaders

Wherever you are in your implementation process, here are four suggestions:

- **Bring diverse voices in** to bring empathy to the needs of your scholars, their families and your own team. Envision the human experience you want to provide them.
- **Take steps to paint the picture** for teachers on what a safe, productive and affirming learning environment looks like.
- **Focus on how you renew and resource your teachers** with the inspiration and connection they need to be on the front lines.
- **Put in simple, living solutions** that meet the needs of each of your communities for connection. For example:
 - For scholars, virtual advisory sessions may re-create a sense of belonging and stability in this time

of isolation and loneliness.

- Teacher check-ins with Individuals or small-groups provide much-needed connection to a critical adult figure in their lives.
- For parents, even a grade or classroom-level Zoom call or phone call puts a human voice to the communication and a place to ask questions.
- For staff, consider spaces for fun like Wednesday morning Coffee at the Computers.
- Don't forget the primacy of the manager / staff relationship. Reinforce the expectation for 1:1 check-ins, and provide managers resources for social emotional care and supports.

This guidance is designed to be implemented in companionship with your remote learning plan. One leader may be the architect of both parts of this plan, or delegate components to principals or others to own. Whatever the case, embed social emotional connection in the fabric of your rhythms so that it isn't an afterthought.

Ensuring Equity at the Center



As you undertake this work, this is a moment of great care and sensitivity on issues of DEI. Never has the partnership with families been more clearly felt than in our current efforts. Bring diverse identities into your decision-making teams, and invite input from families as part of the process. Help teachers and leaders understand unconscious biases they might bring to family and staff interactions. Embrace the upsides of this greater partnership. You can build special bonds in your community that can last for years to come.