Welcoming & Affirming Community Toolkit

Welcome

After what we know has been an incredibly challenging year for students, families and educators, the time has finally arrived! SEAL is excited to offer this Welcoming & Affirming Community (WAC) Toolkit as you begin to welcome students back to in-person learning.

All research and policy guidelines for returning to school emphasize the importance of ***prioritizing the nurturing of students' and educators' social emotional well-being to support academic progress***. It is always important to enter a new school year with a focus and commitment to attending to relationships, first and foremost. Feeling seen, developing a sense of belonging, and connecting with each other are all essential elements of a vibrant learning environment, this year more so than ever. To that end, we have revisited our previously shared "Return To School Virtual Toolkits" with the goal of centering relationships and providing engaging and relevant content, while continuing to centralize the needs of Multilingual learners.

We recognize the thought and care you have already invested into the start of this school year, and we are so very glad to support your site with purposeful, rich and meaningful units, resources, and guides. We have similarly worked to provide you with timely, useful, and relevant materials, meant primarily for in-person instruction, although we have included some virtual considerations. In particular, the strategies provided within the units support and scaffold the learning of English Learners, as it is clear that despite best efforts, equity gaps exist in distance learning practices. As always, we encourage you to adapt the units and resources to your needs and contexts.

It's important to underscore that these Toolkits (and instructional units) are meant to set the tone for welcoming, affirming and inclusive schools and classrooms, where students' socio-emotional needs are prioritized and their unique identities are valued and respected. The units are based on the Learning for Justice Standards, the History/Social Science Standards & Frameworks, the ELA/ELD Standards & Frameworks, the Health & Education Standards, as well as the ISTE (Tech) Standards. In addition, this work is aimed toward achieving the SEAL Mission: *To prepare all English Learners in California to learn, thrive and lead.*

What is Included?

The WAC Toolkit is organized in three major categories:
1. Socio and Emotional Learning (SEL)
2. Family Partnerships
3. Welcoming & Affirming Community Units

Within **SEL and Family Partnerships**, you will find resources, readings, student activities, and staff activities designed to meet the needs of your students, their families, and your staff as we return to school after this unprecedented year. Continuing to build on the partnerships that were established with families last year will deeply support the student's ability to learn and thrive. The WAC Units are the heart and soul of our Toolkit and are meant to launch the new year with compassion, thoughtfulness, and a focus on our collective community.

The Toolkit is organized by theme rather than role (i.e., Coach, Administrator, Teacher), because we hope that all will explore and find useful each area. As usual, our units are English Learner centered through the integration of language development in and through all learning activities and content.

Teachers: *Check This Out!*

- To understand how we organized and planned the units, find the Thematic Planners and Pacing Guides in each grade level unit folder:
  - [TK-1st grade](#)
  - [2nd-3rd grade](#)
  - [4th-6th grade](#)

  In addition, planning resources within each strategy folder will provide guidance in implementing the strategies.
- Be sure to look for the [Thematic Library](#) in Teacher Resources!
- We hope you utilize the [Family Interviews](#) and [Family Goal Setting](#), found in the Family Partnerships folder.
- As a reminder, we always want your feedback and these units are no exception. Keep your eyes open for requests for your feedback in the future.

Administrators & Coaches: *Check This Out!*

- The [Print List](#) is the full set of paper items for the WAC Units that should be printed to support teachers with implementation.
- The [SEL Staff Meeting](#) is a fully prepped, ready-to-go staff meeting session, focused on SEL, for you to lead.
- Please remember that your teachers will need sufficient time to review the material and prepare to implement the WAC Units. We recommend that at least one day be dedicated as a [Unit Development Day](#) so that teachers, coaches, and principals are well-informed and prepared to teach for the first month of school.