

**PROJECT SMART PARTICIPANT TEAM REPORTS FOR FALL & SPRING SEMESTERS
WESTSIDE ACADEMY AT BLODGETT WITH IHE ANNEKE MCEVOY
EDU 525 CREATING COLLABORATIVE SPACES FOR LEARNING**

Participant's Name:

Elisabeth Swenson

ACTION: Describe specifically how the Creating Collaborative Spaces for Learning themes are incorporated into your project to cultivate and support student learning.

Through this course I hope to create a more trauma sensitive environment and give students tools to self-regulate through strategies such as meditative breathing in order to assist students in participating more fully with our school community and improving engaged time in class.

By collecting data as I introduce mindful strategies to students, I will be able to share with colleagues the efficacy of the strategies I implement.

RATIONALE: Fully state your **rationale** for the project. Why is this work important?

Many students at WSA are subjected to trauma on a daily basis.

By exploring research and observing students to understand their physical, emotional, and cognitive responses to trauma, I hope to provide them with strategies for self-regulation that can be generalized across all school environment.

RESPONSIBILITIES/TIMELINE: Identify a series of **action steps** you will take to complete your project. Next to each step, identify person(s) **responsible** for carrying out that task. For each step also identify your **timeline** (during what month(s) you plan to complete each step).

1. Read texts related to trauma, mindfulness and social-emotional learning (Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May)
2. Identify self-regulation strategies to use with students (Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May)
3. Implement mindfulness strategies with students (Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May)
4. Monitor student responses (Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May)

EVALUATION: What **data** will you collect that shows the impact of your project on teacher and student learning? How will you document student learning? Teacher learning?

- Track the time needed for the strategy to de-escalate students
- Share strategy with teacher in classroom where behaviors occur and timeliness of de-escalation informally during professional development in collaboration with Peaceful Schools
- At the end of the year, teaching staff will complete a survey (Microsoft Forms)

RESOURCES: What resources will you need for this project? What costs, if any, will be incurred? What are possible sources of funding for needed resources?

Texts:

- I am here now
- Trauma-Sensitive Schools Learning Communities Transforming Children's Lives, K-5
- The Body Keeps the Score
- The Mindful Education Workbook

UPDATE: Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan.

I developed my action plan understanding that I would simultaneously implement di-escalation/mindfulness strategies with students while working with Peaceful Schools staff and Professor McEvoy to increase learning about brain research around trauma and share my learning with instructional staff. Text and research-based discussions with Prof. McEvoy were supported by restorative practice professional development from Jamie Cook, Peaceful Schools.

While “checking in” with students, I implemented strategies used to help students regulate their own emotional responses in order to share with classroom teachers in as possible classroom management strategies. This was carried out as planned, and I was able to model some of the strategies used with students during professional learning time.

ANALYSIS OF DATA ON TEACHER LEARNING:

At the beginning of the school year, I was aware that there was a great need for me and instructional staff to understand trauma’s effects on students and to understand the potential of using restorative practices to address academic and social/emotional learning needs. We have a staff of generally new, untenured teachers working in a school whose students are challenged by concentrated poverty, many of whom are immigrants or refugees.

I worked regularly with two young male students on the 6th grade team. These two 6th graders met with me to reset when their behaviors were impacting the learning of others. When “resetting” these students I worked with them to regulate breathing, and we spent some time “walking and talking”. It seemed to help these students to discuss their feelings without having to make eye contact. While I understood that strategy would not work with their content area teachers who did not have the freedom to walk and talk, I shared strategies to regulate breathing in order to become calm enough to discuss their feelings. Staff did not seem open to learning about breathing strategies to incorporate in their classrooms.

I began to look at how formative assessment, a known strategy, could be used to address the emotional needs of students when completing academic work. In Trauma Sensitive Schools, formative assessment was presented as a way to close the communication gap and build connections with students. How does taking the temperature of students pave the way to pushing students to take academic risks?

We also became a Personalized Learnings school this year. Informed by me reading and exploration of trauma sensitive practices, I am now considering how the mechanics of PL align to those strategies and skills that support students with trauma. These strategies include having choice and completing tasks at individual pace. Ongoing, formative assessment is another trauma sensitive strategy at the core of Personalized Learning.

I learned that the teachers I work with are most comfortable with clear, concise instructional strategies to address students behavioral and academic needs. These “relatable” strategies” allow them to create a safer environment by removing the “unknown” for students in a way that felt professional to them.

Anecdotally, teachers have shared student reactions to some of the community building activities modeled during the restorative practices PD with Peaceful Schools. Students enjoyed completing the activities and sharing their feelings during debrief sessions. They were able to articulate how the activities supported their work in groups during academic instruction.

Looking ahead I will develop further means to support faculty in instructional practices that address students’ social-emotional needs, while continuing to develop my own tool kit to model with staff and help students.

ANALYSIS OF DATA ON STUDENT LEARNING:

Both students became comfortable with requesting resets with me. When working with either student, specifically implementing breathing and visualization strategies, I found they were resistant, but complied. The result was that the students did calm as a result of the practices and both were then able to calmly talk about their feelings afterward. Further, both were able to return to their classrooms without incident after employing practices to self-regulate.

In both cases I shared my finding with teachers, as stated above, but the teachers were not willing to put the strategies into practice.

Unfortunately, neither student currently attends WSA. One was moved to the CORE program in April. The other moved out of state.