



**WISCONSIN RAPIDS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Board of Education Office
510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
715-424-6701

SENT VIA EMAIL TO: foia@centralwisconsinnews.com

March 31, 2026

Jessa Delima
Central Wisconsin News

RE: Public Records Request

Dear Jessa Delima:

This letter is written in response to your public records request received via email March 25, 2026, in which you requested emails sent or received by district employees, officials, or agents from January 1, 2026, through the present that contain:

- American School Counselor Association
- Lean In Girls
- Lean in Girls program
- Learning for Justice

Enclosed are the responsive records. No charges will be applied for this request since reproduction expense was minimal.

Feel free to contact me at 715-424-6701 or via email at Ronald.rasmussen@wrps.net if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ronald A. Rasmussen'.

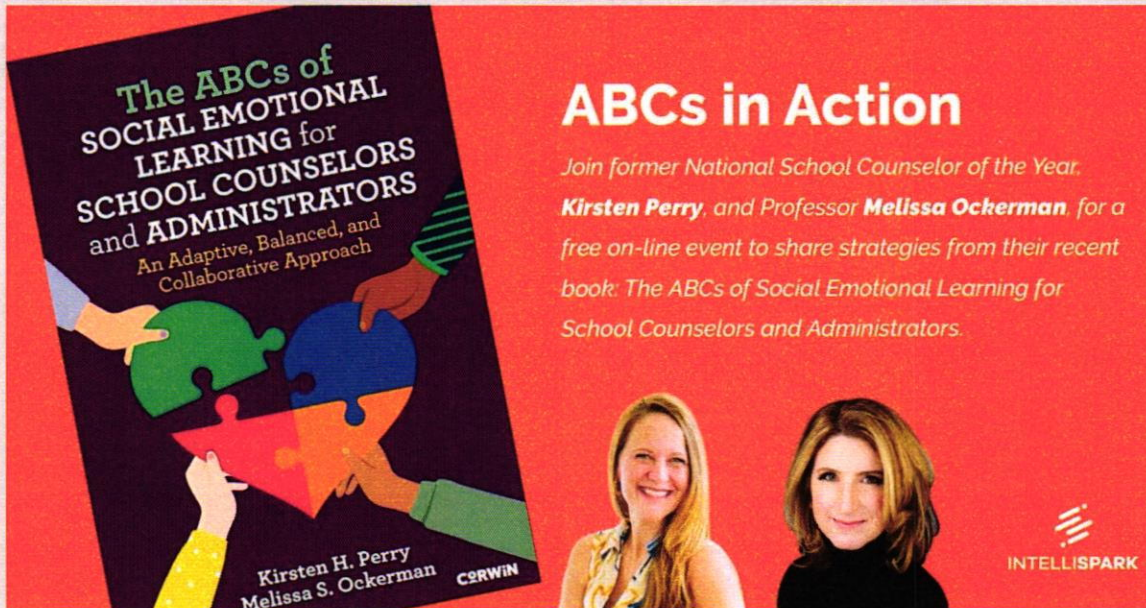
Ronald A. Rasmussen
Superintendent

Enclosure

Webinar: The ABCs of SEL with Kirsten Perry and Melissa Ockerman

outreach@intellispark.com Intellispark
To: outreach@intellispark.com
To: elizabeth.vanberkel@wrps.net

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at 6:30:49AM Central Standard Time



FREE WEBINAR

ABCs in Action

Advancing Student Success Through Advocacy for SEL

FEBRUARY 3, 2026 at 2pm ET

Elizabeth,

Don't miss National School Counselor of the Year (2018) Kirsten Perry and Professor Melissa Ockerman who will share the "why" behind their new book, *The ABCs of Social Emotional Learning for School*

Counselors and Administrators, as well as practical ABC strategies readers can use to strengthen their SEL programs.

The session will highlight the role of school counselors within broader SEL frameworks and how to work with administrators and school-based teams in building a school-wide approach that advances student success while also preventing educator burnout!

Kirsten Perry currently serves as a middle school counselor at Singapore American School. Prior to this, she served as a district leader in Chicago Public Schools. She served as both a social-emotional learning specialist coaching 27 schools and as a school counseling specialist coaching over 700 school counselors. Kirsten Perry was awarded the National School Counselor of the Year Award by the American School Counselor Association in 2018 and was honored by Michelle Obama for her work at Lawndale Community Academy in Chicago.

Dr. Melissa Ockerman is a Professor of Counseling at DePaul University. She has written about and presented extensively both nationally and internationally on topics such as trauma-informed counseling, integrating Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) into school counseling programs, and cultivating systemic change in schools. Dr. Ockerman participated in an expert panel at the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference Anti-Bullying Braintrust where she advocated for bi-partisan school safety strategies. She was also selected to participate in White House convenings regarding the advancement of underserved populations in post-secondary settings.

[Register](#)

Intellispark, 228 Park Ave S, Ste 50238, New York, NY 10003, USA, +1 332.248.2100

[Manage preferences](#)

Start the new year strong: FAFSA, scheduling, and ACT tools for students!

noreply@email.act.org ACT
To: noreply@email.act.org
To: david.buck@wrps.net

Monday, January 5, 2026 at 9:05:43AM Central Standard Time



⚡ January Action Items ⚡

🎯 Kick off spring college and career planning

Encourage juniors to set semester goals, revisit their postsecondary plans, and start building a balanced college list with reach, match, and likely options. For practical steps and a helpful checklist, check out [the ACT Four-Year High School Checklist...And More!](#)

🎓 Senior check-in: midyear tasks

Remind seniors to request midyear transcripts, complete the [FAFSA](#) early (since some aid is limited), review scholarship deadlines, and stay on top of college communications.

📅 Support students with planning for next year

Guide students as they choose courses that support their goals and review their transcripts and graduation progress. Make sure they know the scheduling timeline and required steps. The [2026–2027 ACT National Test Dates](#) are now available to help students plan their testing strategy for next year.

🏆 Highlight scholarships with January–March deadlines

Share local and national scholarships with upcoming due dates, especially those

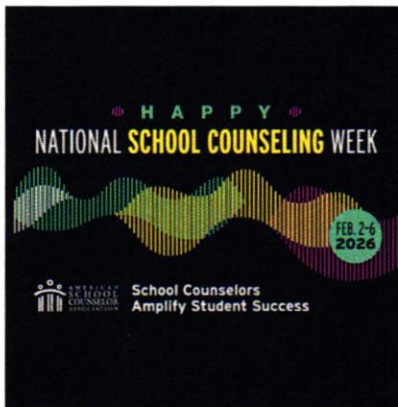
requiring essays, recommendations, or ACT scores. [Learn more here.](#)

17 **Registration is now open for the 2026 ACT National Summit!** Encourage your team to review upcoming [ACT events and webinars](#) and make plans to attend sessions that support your spring goals.

The next available ACT is February 14.

On-time registration deadline closes January 9.

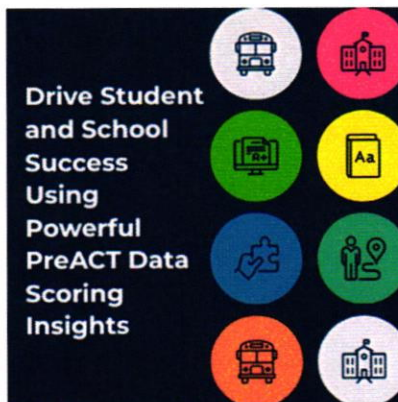
Students can [register here.](#)



National School Counseling Week is almost here!

Mark your calendars — National School Counseling Week 2026 is Feb. 2 to Feb. 6! It's the perfect time to celebrate your impact, spotlight the work you do every day, and boost awareness of the support counselors bring to students and families. Grab celebration materials and resources from the American School Counselor Association and make it a week to remember!

Order by January 15



Webinar: Using PreACT Data for Spring Planning

Did your school administer PreACT this fall or winter? Join Dr. Bryan Williams for a free session on how to interpret PreACT 8/9 and PreACT score reports, access and customize data in the ACT Online Reporting System, and turn those insights into clear steps for supporting student readiness and school improvement.

[Register for an upcoming session.](#)



Webinar: Building a College and Career Readiness Day

Join ACT on January 14 for a free online event exploring how schools can build a strong culture of college and career readiness. You'll hear from leaders in Oklahoma and Georgia who have hosted successful Readiness Day events and learn practical ways to design your own using the four "C"s to guide planning and impact.

[Register for the session](#)

Was this email forwarded to you?

[Sign up for ACT's Counselor Newsletter and elevate your impact!](#)

[Looking for the K12 Administrator Newsletter? Sign up here!](#)

January 9 is the deadline for the February 14 test date.

[Register Now or Get a Reminder](#)

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ACT, 500 ACT Drive, Iowa City, Iowa 52243

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Join us Jan 27: Teaching Kindness as a Skill

program@weteachkindness.org Teach Kindness
 To: program@weteachkindness.org
 To: brian.mccusker@wrps.net Brian McCusker

Friday, January 16, 2026 at 12:34:49 PM Central Standard Time




WEBINAR

Can You Actually Teach Kindness?



Jill Cook
Executive Director
American School Counselor Association



Jennifer Mangayao
Principal, Palmer Elementary
Chicago Public Schools



Steven Sawalich
Producer
"Case for Kindness" Documentary



Brandi Watts
Director
Teach Kindness



Kara Arundel
Senior Reporter
K-12 Dive


Jan. 27, 2026

2pm ET | 11am PT

[Register: bit.ly/teachkindnesswebinar](https://bit.ly/teachkindnesswebinar)

Hi Brian,

You already know how powerful kindness can be in a classroom and how much care and consistency it takes to create a culture of kindness.

That's why we're inviting you to join us for a conversation about what it looks like to teach kindness as a skill, not just a value students pick up along the way.

On **Tuesday, January 27, at 2:00 PM ET / 11:00 AM PT**, we're hosting a webinar about the impact of bringing kindness to life in our schools and communities, featuring a panel of educators and leaders:

- Jill Cook, Executive Director, American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Jennifer Mangayao, Principal, Palmer Elementary, Chicago Public Schools
- Brandi Watts, Director, Teach Kindness (and former classroom educator)
- Steven Sawalich, Producer & Director, *Case for Kindness*
- Moderated by Kara Arundel, Senior Reporter, *K-12 Dive*

In this webinar, you'll hear practical, inspiring ideas for:

- Building a day-to-day culture of kindness that lasts
- Creating shared empathy across classrooms, families, and communities
- Seeing how kindness shapes student success — both in school and beyond

👉 Register for the webinar here: bit.ly/teachkindnesswebinar

We're excited to connect with you!

Warmly,



Brandi Watts
Teach Kindness Director



Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for educational success and social progress, to create a brighter future for us all.

Teach Kindness
A program of Stand for Children
2121 SW Broadway, Ste 130
Portland, OR 97201
United States

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Webinar: Teaching the Skills of Kindness

program@weteachkindness.org Teach Kindness
 To: program@weteachkindness.org
 To: kayla.mclean@wrps.net Kayla McLean

Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 10:47:53AM Central Standard Time



WEBINAR

Can You Actually Teach Kindness?



Jill Cook
Executive Director
American School Counselor Association



Jennifer Mangayao
Principal, Palmer Elementary
Chicago Public Schools



Steven Sawalich
Producer
"Case for Kindness" Documentary



Brandi Watts
Director
Teach Kindness



Kara Arundel
Senior Reporter
K-12 Dive

Jan. 27, 2026 2pm ET | 11am PT

Register: bit.ly/teachkindnesswebinar

Hi Kayla,

Every day, educators are helping students learn more than academics. They're teaching and modeling communication, empathy, and collaboration: the foundations of a kind and connected school culture.

On **Tuesday, January 27, at 2:00 PM ET / 11:00 AM PT**, we're hosting a webinar about the impact that teaching the skills of kindness can have on our schools and communities, featuring a panel of educators and leaders:

- Jill Cook, Executive Director, American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Jennifer Mangayao, Principal, Palmer Elementary, Chicago Public Schools
- Brandi Watts, Director, Teach Kindness (and former classroom educator)
- Steven Sawalich, Producer & Director, *Case for Kindness*
- Moderated by Kara Arundel, Senior Reporter, *K-12 Dive*

In this webinar, you'll hear practical, inspiring ideas for:

- Building a day-to-day culture of kindness that lasts
- Creating shared empathy across classrooms, families, and communities
- Seeing how kindness shapes student success — both in school and beyond

👉 Register for the webinar here: bit.ly/teachkindnesswebinar

We're excited to be in the room with you!

Warmly,



Brandi Watts
Teach Kindness Director



Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for educational success and social progress, to create a brighter future for us all.

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Your counselor can't do it alone

pammcnall693126@substack.com Pam McNall

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 5:54:29AM Central Standard Time

To: reply+32n8ty&6tlsa9&&cebf63d8a90eee2395e56c63c8fb495ce097c8cee9b9a7f4b4b1b4ee3557166e@mg1.substack.com

Pam McNall

To: kirsten.johnson@wrps.net

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Your counselor can't do it alone

We Have a Counselor. So Why Would We Need SEL Curriculum?

PAM MCNALL

JAN 28



READ IN APP ↗

We Have a Counselor. So Why Would We Need SEL Curriculum?

I hear this question all the time.

A principal will say something like, "Our school counselor is writing her own lesson plans. Why would we spend money on SEL curriculum when we have someone whose job is social-emotional support?"

It's a fair question. And honestly? I'm glad when administrators ask it because it means they're thinking carefully about how they spend limited dollars.

But here's what I've learned after working with schools for the past 13 years: *your counselor isn't the reason you don't need SEL curriculum. Your counselor is the reason you do.*

The Math That Keeps Counselors Up at Night

The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250 students per counselor. The national average? Closer to 400. In some states, it's over 500.

Think about that for a moment. One person. Five hundred students. And that's before you factor in 504 plans, crisis response, college applications, parent meetings, and the student who just showed up at their door in tears.

One counselor told me in late December that a bunch of educators pooled money to give her a thank you gift because she's always showing up right on time and making a difference. It's those moments that make the mayhem manageable.

Let's not forget, school counselors are trained professionals doing essential work. But they can't be everywhere. They can't reach every student who's struggling before that struggle turns into a crisis.

A red rounded rectangular button with the word "Share" in white text.

Prevention vs. Intervention

Here's how I think about it: counselors do intervention. They respond when students are already struggling, already dysregulated, already in the office.

SEL curriculum does prevention. It gives every student (not just the ones in crisis) the language, skills, and practice they need to regulate their emotions, navigate conflict, and ask for help before things escalate. These coping skills are vital!

When you have strong prevention in place, your counselor can actually do what they're trained to do: deep work with the students who need it most. Instead of putting out fires all day, they can focus on the students who need Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.

One counselor I work with put it this way: "Before we had curriculum in the classrooms, I spent 80% of my time on behavior. Now I spend 80% of my time on actual counseling."

A red rounded rectangular button with the word "Share" in white text.

What This Looks Like in Practice

In schools using trauma-informed SEL curriculum consistently, I've seen counselor referrals drop significantly. Sometimes by 40% in the first year. That's not because students stopped struggling. It's because they had tools to manage challenges before those challenges became crises.

One high school in Utah was a tough nut to crack. The counselor knew Respectful Ways was needed Tier 1/schoolwide but the educators weren't sold on it. Until they were! Their student surveys showed happy kids liking what they learned. Now when I go in our dashboard to look to see if they're logging in, it makes me smile to see how much they're using us.

Teachers (and students) start using common language. Students can name what they're feeling. The counselor isn't starting from scratch every time a student walks through their door.

It's Not Either/Or

The question isn't "counselor or curriculum?" It's "how do we support our counselor so they can do their best work?"

SEL curriculum isn't a replacement for your counselor. It's a force multiplier. It extends their reach into every classroom, every day, even when they're not in the room.

If your counselor is overwhelmed, the answer isn't to expect more from them. It's to build systems that support them. 10 minutes of SEL time in the mornings during homeroom or community time is sometimes all it takes.

I'd love to hear from you:

*How is your school supporting your counselor right now? What's working?
Hit reply, I read every response.*

[Pledge your support](#)

Want to see what trauma-informed SEL looks like in practice?

Take a look at what we're doing at [Respectful Ways](#). I'm always happy to talk through what might work for your building.

Pam McNall, Respectful Ways is free today. But if you enjoyed this post, you can tell Pam McNall, Respectful Ways that their writing is valuable by pledging a future subscription. You won't be charged unless they enable payments.

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January updates from Common App

no-reply@connect.commonapp.org Common App

Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 9:01:27 AM Central Standard Time

To: reply-2XZGI2C4VYBU7PISIATVXRDAYA.130020@connect.commonapp.org Common App

To: deanna.klumb@wrps.net

[View in browser](#)



January 2026

News and announcements



Supporting your work in 2026

As we step into 2026, we want to thank the school counseling and advising community for everything you do to guide and support students on their college journeys. The Common App team is grateful for your partnership and remains committed to providing the tools and resources you need, while continuing our work to expand access and close equity gaps. We look forward to another impactful year together.

Our Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report is here!

Common App has released its [FY25 Annual Report](#), highlighting key milestones, insights, and progress from the past year as we continue working to expand access, equity, and integrity in the college admissions process. The report features updates on applicant trends, platform enhancements, partnerships, and our financial health, along with a look ahead at priorities for the year to come. We invite counselors to explore the report and see how this work continues

to support students and the counseling community.

FY 2025 Annual Report

Counselor conversations with Common App: Spring edition

Our monthly [ask-me-anything series](#) for counselors returns this spring, offering a space to dig into your most frequently asked questions with the Common App team. Each session is now 45 minutes long, with more time dedicated to live Q&A.

[Join us](#) on **Tuesday, February 24, from 11:00-11:45 am ET**, for our next conversation focused on supporting international students with the college application process. Join Meredith Lombardi and Michaela Alcorn from Common App's Education & Training team, along with guest Wilson Lee, College Counselor at Singapore American School, for a discussion on the international student experience and resources available for the counselors and advisors who support them.

Come with your questions, and register even if you can't attend live. The session will be recorded and shared with all registrants.

[Register for the international student supporter conversation](#)

Student Advisory Committee applications are now open!

Common App invites interested students to [apply to our Student Advisory Committee](#), a group dedicated to elevating the student voice in the college admission process by providing meaningful feedback on the Common App experience and initiatives. Open to rising high school juniors and seniors, two-year college students, first-year students at four-year institutions, and adult/ independent students, the committee welcomes participants regardless of whether they use or plan to use Common App. Selected students will apply and interview, then receive a monthly stipend for participating in monthly meetings where they help shape real improvements to the application process.

The deadline to [apply](#) is **March 2, 2026**. For more information about the application process or committee service, visit our [webpage](#) or email us at studentadvisory@commonapp.org.

[Share the application](#)

Looking ahead



Financial aid resources

As college and state financial aid deadlines approach, we've compiled resources to help you guide students through the financial aid process and address their questions about college affordability.

- **Paying for College**: This Common App resource helps students navigate the financial aid process step-by-step. It includes information on how they can find personalized scholarship opportunities using [Common App scholarship matching](#).
- **NCAN FAFSA resource center**: Find student-facing resources, training tools for your staff, and dashboards to monitor completion trends in your state.
- **UAspire webinar series**: UAspire offers a free webinar series for students and families, including a FAFSA overview in Spanish on February 3.

National School Counseling Week is almost here!

National School Counseling Week, presented by the [American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\)](#), will be celebrated February 2-6. This annual observance recognizes the vital role school counselors play in supporting students and strengthening school communities. We're grateful for all you do to help students succeed.

The 2026 theme is **School Counselors Amplify Student Success**. To celebrate the week, explore ASCA's free National School Counseling Week resources, including a [promotional toolkit](#). You can also participate in the social media photo and video challenge by downloading [signs](#) or using the [customizable Canva version](#). Make sure to follow #NSCW26 to see how school counselors across the country are celebrating and sharing their impact.

2026 NACAC college fairs

Mark your calendars for the [National Association for College Admission Counseling \(NACAC\)](#) upcoming spring events. NACAC hosts both [virtual and in-person college fairs](#) that allow students and families to connect with college representatives, learn more about the admissions process, and explore financial aid and scholarship options. These events are a great resource for all students, including seniors who are still considering their next steps.

In case you missed it



January deadline update

Common App's [January Deadline Update](#) highlights continued growth in college application activity for the 2025–26 cycle. Through January 1, the number of distinct first-year applicants increased by 4%, while total application volume rose 7% compared to this time last year. On average, students are also applying to more colleges.

Growth remains strongest among first-generation students, students from low- and middle-income communities, and rural applicants. Among racial and ethnic groups, Black or African American students and students identifying as Two or More Races are experiencing the fastest growth. Domestic applicant growth continues to outpace international applicants, with particularly strong increases in the Southwest.

Explore the [full report](#) for a deeper look at the trends and applicant data shaping this admissions season.

First-year application trends through January 1

Support for those supporting students

As the spring semester picks up, we're resurfacing a few timely reminders and resources designed to make it easier to support your students throughout the application process.

Mid-year reports. Mid-year reports should be submitted as soon as first-semester or trimester grades are available. These reports provide colleges with students' most recent transcripts and academic information. While students are responsible for tracking the Mid-year report requirement and coordinating submission, counselors can refer to the [requirements grid](#) to confirm which colleges require the form. Counselors using the recommender system can use the 'Update' button in the Profile to update dates for all Mid-year reports before completing individual students' forms.

Requirements grid. Our [requirements grid](#) offers a clear view of Common App member colleges that includes deadlines, application fees (if applicable), school form requirements, and other key details. Counselors and advisors can access the grid in our [FAQ](#) as well as in the recommender system.

Recommender system overview. Need a refresher on the Common App recommender system? Explore our [overview](#), [step-by-step getting started guide](#), and short [video resource](#) to

help you navigate the first-year recommender system with confidence.

Advisor resources. Check out our [Counselors and recommenders webpage](#) for guides, videos, and tools created specifically for counselors and recommenders.

Need help? Our [Solutions Center](#) team is available 24/7/365 to help answer any questions you might have throughout the semester.

Stay connected on social

We're also sharing helpful resources and timely updates across our social channels. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [TikTok](#) for content you can save, share, and pass along to students and families.

Recent highlights include:

- A then-and-now look at Common App in [2016 vs. 2026](#)
- A behind-the-scenes introduction to our social media team, [meet Cindy](#)
- A fun, informative [Animal Crossing-themed explainer](#) for checking school and state FAFSA deadlines
- Our [2026 vision board](#), featuring a Common App checklist to help students plan their next steps and a reminder that over 1,000 colleges are still accepting applications for Fall 2026

What we're reading



Forbes

[**New Common App Report Shows Solid Rise In College Applicants For 2026**](#)

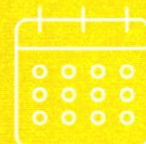
Inside Higher Ed

[**High-Stakes Policy Talks Shed Light on ED's Playbook**](#)

The Evollution

[**Colleges Can No Longer Pretend Today's Students Are Just Students**](#)

Connect with Common App



[**National Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs \(GEAR UP\) Academy**](#)

February 2-5
Virtual

Counselor conversations with Common App: International student supporters

February 24
Virtual

Connect with #commonapp



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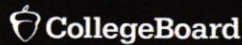
Celebrating the Work of School Counselors During National School Counseling Week 2026

collegeboard@e.collegeboard.org College Board

Monday, February 2, 2026 at 1:01:28 PM Central Standard Time

To: reply-6TNC2SORMVDEHHPEACNAYZB3DI.100218@e.collegeboard.org College Board

To: ann.felker@wrps.net



National School Counseling Week 2026

February 2–6
#NSCW26

Dear Colleague,

This week, we join schools across the country in celebrating the [American School Counselor Association's](#) (ASCA) National School Counseling Week—a time to recognize the vital role school counselors play in supporting students and strengthening school communities.

This year's theme, *School Counselors Amplify Student Success*, reflects the key role that you play in helping students define and achieve their goals. On behalf of College Board, thank you for the care, guidance, and advocacy you provide to help students thrive and navigate their options beyond high school.

ASCA has shared a [National School Counseling Week promotional kit](#) (.pdf/933 KB) with daily themes and resources you may find helpful as you recognize this week within your school or district.

As a former school counselor, I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to continue working alongside so many of you in shaping College Board programs that support students and educators. As a sign of our commitment to supporting your work, we'll continue to provide you with free [professional development opportunities](#) throughout 2026. In 2025, 98% of attendees told us they had a positive experience at our events. We hope you'll join us soon.

I look forward to our collaboration in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Hastings

Vice President, Counselor Community Engagement
College Board

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225 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10281

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Celebrating you: Happy National School Counseling Week from Rider! 🎉🎉

admissions@rider.edu Rider University
To: ann.felker@wrps.org

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 6:06:43AM Central Standard Time

[View as Web Page](#)

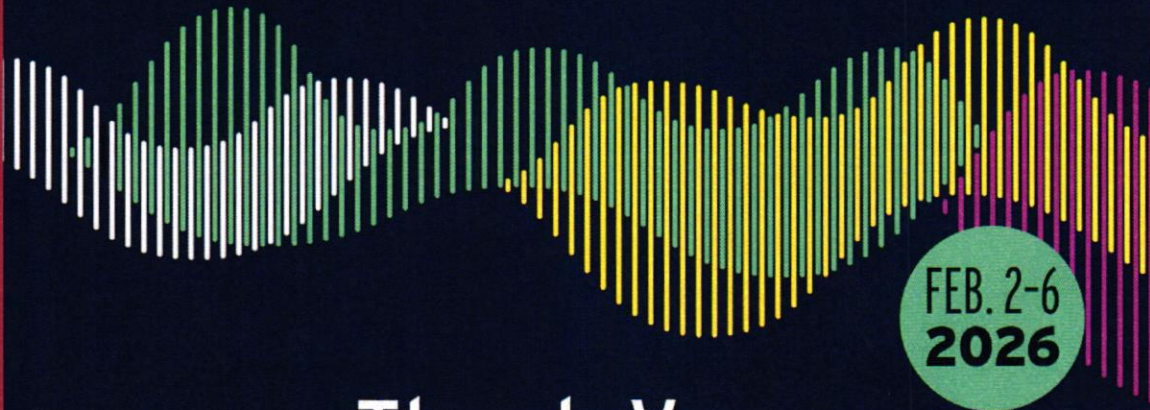


Happy National School Counseling Week!

Rider University expresses its sincerest appreciation for your integral role in amplifying student success. Your commitment, support, and advocacy in helping students navigate the college search process have a lasting impact. The Office of Admission is grateful for the partnership we share with the counseling community in developing future generations of Rider Broncs.



NATIONAL **SCHOOL COUNSELING** WEEK
School Counselors Amplify Student Success



FEB. 2-6
2026

Thank You,
SCHOOL COUNSELORS

How we're helping amplify student success:

- Presidential Hope Fund raises more than \$2 million for Rider students
- Rider alumna named to Forbes 30 Under 30
- Career readiness that drives successful outcomes
- Rider student radio station earns 8 national award nominations


Visit ibelieveinrider.com for real stories and testimonials about the experiences that define Rider University. Hear directly from students, alumni, faculty and staff about why Rider is a place worth believing in.

Calling all Rider alumni! Are you an alum or do you work with alumni in your office or school district? Share this form with our Bronc alumni, and we'll send them some swag!

Rider Bronc Alumni




Upcoming Events

Multiple Dates 

Admitted Student Days

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

Sunday, April 26 

Open House

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

[Learn more](#)

Multiple Dates 

Campus Tours

[Learn more](#)

Students entering Rider in fall 2026 who attend an eligible Open House or Admitted Student Day, submit their FAFSA and deposit by May 1, 2026 can qualify for the Bronc Visit Award - a \$1,000 annually renewable grant.

[Learn more](#)

Next Steps

- **School Counselor Resources**
- **Entrance Requirements**
- **Admitted Student Guide**

APPLY

VISIT



2083 Lawrenceville Road • Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

609-896-5042 • 800-257-9026



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Therapy dogs help students gain reading confidence

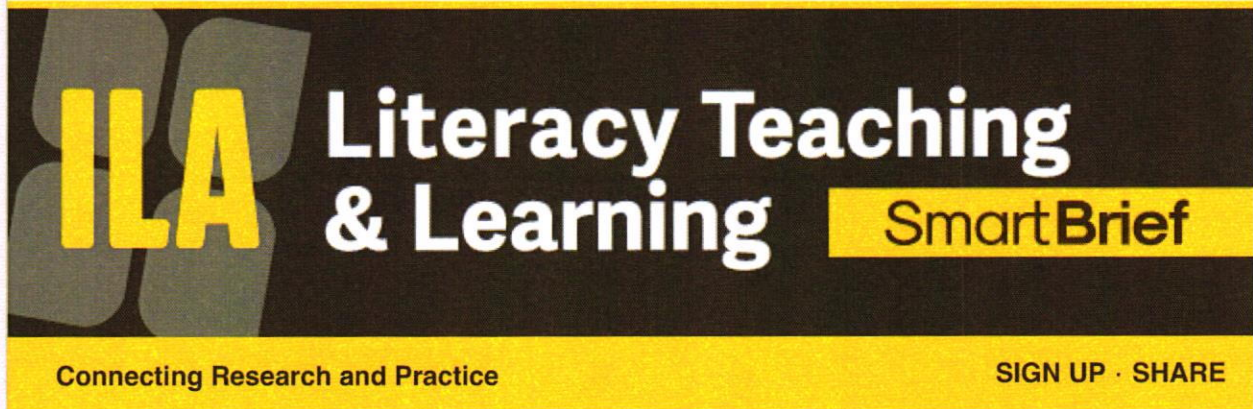
ila@smartbrief.com ILA Literacy Teaching & Learning
SmartBrief
To: jennifer.wilhorn@wrps.net

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 11:02:09AM Central Standard Time

Created for jennifer.wilhorn@wrps.net | [Web Version](#)

February 24, 2026


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In the News

Study finds parents trust grades over test scores



(Michaelquirk/Getty Images)

A draft paper from researchers at the University of Chicago and Oregon State University finds that parents often trust report card grades more than standardized test scores, potentially underestimating their children's need for academic support. This reliance on grades, which have been rising even as test scores fall, may lead to underinvestment in children's education, particularly in low-income communities, researchers suggest.

Full Story: [The Hechinger Report](#) (2/23)

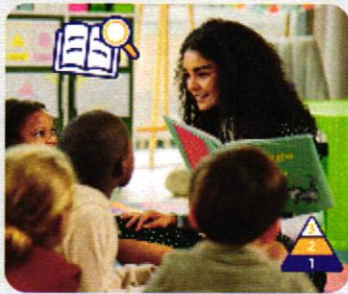
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Survey: COVID-19 cohort needs more support in literacy

Educators are observing unique challenges among kindergarteners born during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a Lexia survey. Teachers report that nearly three-quarters of children born during the COVID-19 pandemic are entering school with deficits in early literacy skills. The most notable gap is in phonemic awareness, with many students struggling to hear and manipulate sounds, recognize letters or write their own names. Educators emphasize that these literacy challenges reflect the disruptions and isolation of the pandemic era, and advocate for increased family engagement and personalized instruction to bridge these gaps.

Full Story: [The 74](#) (2/17)

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Use MTSS for prevention-first literacy

Learn how a prevention-first MTSS approach is helping schools support literacy before the gaps widen, including strong Tier 1 instruction, early screening, and aligned interventions.



Professional Learning and Development

ETS test assesses teachers' AI skills in classroom use



(Ismagilov/Getty Images)

While about 80% of teachers are using AI, most say they've learned about it on their own, so ETS, which produces the Praxis tests for teachers, has developed a three-module test to gauge a teacher's understanding of different types of AI, ethical use, tool evaluation and classroom application. The test is not intended for licensure purposes but offers insight that can inform future training or certification requirements, says Vince Dean, who

heads ETS' Praxis program.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/19)

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Study considers effect of school context on teacher success

A re-examination of the Talent Transfer Initiative, which paid effective teachers to work in low-performing schools, shows that the teachers' performance declined in their new environments. The study by Brown University professor Matthew Kraft highlights the importance of school

context in teacher effectiveness, as teachers in higher poverty schools often face more challenges such as lower student motivation and fewer resources.

Full Story: [Chalkbeat](#) (2/17)

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Literacy Leadership

Teachers say memoir study builds student voice



(MoMo Productions/Getty Images)

best when students focus on listening, reflection and narrative craft.

Teaching memoir reading and writing helps students better understand others' experiences and develop their own storytelling skills, if educators balance creative freedom with clear boundaries, according to English teachers. Teachers Rex Ovalle of Oak Park River Forest High School and Jon Mundorf of P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School said the genre works

Full Story: [K-12 Dive](#) (2/18)

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- **Visual thinking activities boost student writing skills**

[Edutopia](#) (2/20)

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Around the Globe

Therapy dogs help students gain reading confidence

A therapy dog reading program at Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library in Ontario, Canada, in partnership with St. John Ambulance, invites local therapy dogs and their handlers to support children's literacy. The presence of the dogs is aimed at helping to reduce anxiety and fear associated with reading aloud, particularly for shy or struggling readers, helping them to engage with books and build confidence.

Full Story: [CollingwoodToday](#) (2/22)

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Policy and Advocacy

Data: National student-counselor ratio improves

The national student-to-counselor ratio improved to 372-to-1 for the 2024-25 academic year, reflecting a 1% improvement from the previous year, data from the American School Counselor Association shows. This progress resulted in approximately 529,000 more students having access to school counselors compared to the prior year.

Full Story: [K-12 Dive](#) (2/23)

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- **Program pairs students as reading coaches in Ariz.**
[KNXV-TV \(Phoenix\)](#) (2/19)
- **Strategies to boost student writing quality, quantity**
[Edutopia](#) (2/18)
- **Sweden sees improvement after return to traditional learning**
[BBC](#) (2/16)

ILA Updates

Strengthen classroom talk this spring

Ready for a mid-year refresh? Register for a live webinar on March 10 at 5:00 p.m. ET to explore practical strategies that



strengthen classroom discourse, boost student engagement, and create purposeful talk routines that support literacy growth. Walk away with tools you can use right away.

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Ohio district revives spelling bee after decades

middleweb@smartbrief.com Middle Grades SmartBrief Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 1:48:29 PM Central Standard Time
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Teaching in the Middle

A focus on improving student literacy has an Ohio district bringing back its spelling bee after a decades-long hiatus, according to a story featured in today's edition.

Also in the issue, data shows improvement in the nationwide ratio of students to school counselors, and a newly introduced test can evaluate teachers' proficiency in using AI in education.

Ohio district revives spelling bee after decades

Akron Public Schools in Ohio has revived its spelling bee after a 30-year hiatus, with 10 middle-school students competing for the district title. The return is part of a broader district initiative to



(Pixabay)

improve literacy, with Superintendent Mary Outley emphasizing the event's value in buliding vocabulary, reading comprehension and student confidence.

Full Story: [Signal Akron \(Ohio\)](#) (2/24)

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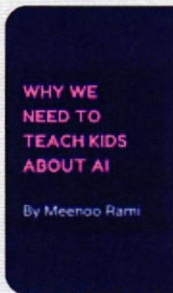
MiddleWeb: Vocab and context clues across the curriculum

Teacher: Why I wouldn't let AI grade diagnostic tests

Human grading of carefully designed diagnostic tests can provide nuanced, empathetic feedback and adapt assessments to the individual needs of their students -- capabilities AI tools currently lack, writes former middle-school language arts teacher Masheika Allgood, who also notes some other concerns with edtech programs. She says her hands-on approach supported deeper student learning by fostering motivation, building trust and ensuring equitable evaluation.

Full Story: [EdSurge](#) (2/24)

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Why We Need to Teach Students About AI

Students don't need to just learn how to use AI; they need to learn *about* AI. Help students to understand what AI is, how it works, who it benefits, who it hurts, how it can be helpful, and its limitations. [Read the blog.](#)



Tweens & Young Teens

Data: National student-counselor ratio improves

The national student-to-counselor ratio improved to 372-to-1 for the 2024-25 academic year, reflecting a 1% improvement from the previous year, data from the American School Counselor Association shows. This progress resulted in approximately 529,000 more students having access to school counselors compared to the prior year.

Full Story: [K-12 Dive](#) (2/23)

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What is the Decoding Threshold?

What is the decoding threshold and why does it matter?

Learn how to identify students below or above this critical milestone, understand its impact on fluency and comprehension, and tailor instruction with practical strategies that drive real reading growth.

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Classroom Innovation

Educators leverage Olympics to teach resilience, teamwork



(Sarah Stier/Getty Images)

The 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Italy have provided lessons for educators and students, emphasizing resilience, teamwork, and coping with disappointment. Teachers have used the Olympics to teach subjects such as history, geography and math, as well as to reinforce the importance of coaching and self-improvement.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/20)

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- **Ind. charter middle school expanding to add high-school grades**

[Chalkbeat/Indiana](#) (2/19)

MiddleWeb: Working to build a multicultural classroom



Download free comprehension resources

Make reading comprehension straightforward with Amplify's new Comprehension 101 bundle. It's full of free resources to help your students become skilled readers and ensure none of them go without access to all the doors reading opens. **Download now**

Technology & Connected Learning

ETS test assesses teachers' AI skills in classroom use



(Ismagilov/Getty Images)

While about 80% of teachers are using AI, most say they've learned about it on their own, so ETS, which produces the Praxis tests for teachers, has developed a three-module test to gauge a teacher's understanding of different types of AI, ethical use, tool evaluation and classroom application. The test is not intended for licensure purposes but offers insight that can inform future training or certification requirements, says Vince Dean, who

heads ETS' Praxis program.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/19)

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Student art sharing platform prioritizes privacy, compliance

Artsonia is a free digital platform that allows K-12 students to store, showcase, and manage their artwork in online portfolios. Teachers can easily upload and moderate student artwork, while families can view and purchase keepsakes featuring the art. Artsonia is compliant with the US Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, ensuring student data privacy.

Full Story: [Tech & Learning](#) (2/18)

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Middle Grades Leadership

Ala. district anchors progress in its strategic plan



(EtiAmmos/Getty Images)

Tuscaloosa City Schools, under Superintendent Mike Daria, has centered its progress on a strategic plan that guides all decisions and budgeting. This plan acts as a safeguard against distractions from new initiatives and ensures leadership focuses on proven strategies for improving student outcomes, Daria says, noting that the district's commitment to this approach has helped broaden its definition of success.

Full Story: [District Administration](#) (2/19)

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[SmartBrief/Education](#) (2/19)
- **Why to teach the existence, analysis of digital misinformation**
[Education Week](#) (2/17)
- **Academic stress at 15 raises long-term mental health risks**
[HealthDay News](#) (2/18)

MiddleWeb Recommends

Would you let a robot do that for you?

As AI becomes omnipresent, it can be tricky to say exactly what "doing your own work" means or why you might prefer to do it yourself. Laurie Hornik shares the day she led her 7th graders in thinking about what they'd be willing to turn over to AI. Cue the robot basketball players. [Read more.](#)

Classroom strategies that help consolidate learning

Megan Kelly finds it pretty amazing that we can make small adjustments to our lessons and help our students' brains focus and work more efficiently. In recent years she's added a range of consolidation strategies to her classes to do just that. Here are four of her favorites. [Read on.](#)

- [Can teachers measure student engagement?](#)

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Teams are more innovative when humble leaders trust them

ascdleaders@smartbrief.com ISTE+ASCD K-12 Leadership SmartBrief
To: candace.bubolz@wrps.net

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 1:00:46 PM Central Standard Time

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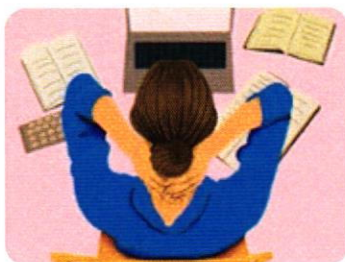
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Management & Leadership

Preventing toxic sacrifice in educational leadership



(Amr Bo Shanab/Getty Images)

Quintin Shepherd, a veteran superintendent, explores the concept of "toxic sacrifice" in educational leadership, emphasizing the importance of recognizing personal limits. Shepherd uses the analogy of the Plimsoll line on ships to illustrate how leaders can become overloaded without realizing it, advocating for a shift from seeking balance to achieving harmony.

Full Story: [District Administration](#) (2/24)

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Teams are more innovative when humble leaders trust them

New research highlights the impact of leader humility on fostering innovative behavior among employees. The study, conducted by Deb Biswas and Sengupta, reveals that when leaders acknowledge their limitations and value team input, employees feel a greater sense of responsibility for constructive change and find more meaning in their work. They advise leaders to invite team members to take ownership by asking insightful questions and recognizing their contributions to link daily tasks to broader organizational goals.

Full Story: [Psychology Today](#) (2/19)

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Align Your Investments with Your Goals in 2026

Get practical tools to help your team strengthen core instruction, review edtech effectiveness, and ensure investments are delivering strong student outcomes this year.

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Career & Recruiting

Ideas on adapting hospital huddles for teacher prep

Heather Bailie Schock, an assistant professor at the University of Tampa, has introduced a practice from health care to her teacher preparation courses: the medical huddle. The huddle, a 15-minute reflection session, allows students to identify and discuss the strategies seen in class, voice concerns and celebrate successes, Schock explains.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/23)

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- **Special education caseloads central to Calif. teacher talks**

[EdSource](#) (2/24)



Sal Khan & Superintendent Fireside Chat

Hear from Sal and IN Superintendent Dr. Phil Misecko about balancing innovative intervention with the practical reality of running a district. [Save your spot now](#)

Technology & Tools

Using live global feeds to enhance observation skills

Kendra Cameron-Jarvis, senior literacy specialist with the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, recommends live global webcams as a way for teachers to help students slow down and observe the world more closely. The webcams can be incorporated into routines such as bell ringers and comparative observations to foster curiosity and global awareness, Cameron-Jarvis writes.

Full Story: [MiddleWeb](#) (2/23)

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ETS test assesses teachers' AI skills in classroom use



(Ismagilov/Getty Images)

While about 80% of teachers are using AI, most say they've learned about it on their own, so ETS, which produces the Praxis tests for teachers, has developed a three-module test to gauge a teacher's understanding of different types of AI, ethical use, tool evaluation and classroom application. The test is not intended for licensure purposes but offers insight that can inform future training or certification requirements, says Vince Dean, who

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Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/19)

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What Your Colleagues Are Reading This Week

- **Ala. district anchors progress in its strategic plan**
[District Administration](#) (2/19)
- **Go slow and explain yourself when acting on team feedback**
[Harvard Business Review \(tiered subscription model\)](#) (2/20)
- **Principals must model, cultivate a culture of mattering for staff**
[Edutopia](#) (2/23)

Policy & Research

Data: National student-counselor ratio improves

The national student-to-counselor ratio improved to 372-to-1 for the 2024-25 academic year, reflecting a 1% improvement from the previous year, data from the American School Counselor Association shows. This progress resulted in approximately 529,000 more students having access to school counselors compared to the prior year.

Full Story: [K-12 Dive](#) (2/23)

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- **Appeals court allows La. Ten Commandments law in schools**
[The Associated Press](#) (2/20)

New from ISTE+ASCD

Disrupting the cycle of disengagement

In the February issue of Educational Leadership, superintendent and columnist Teresa Hill examines how to turn students' anxiety and avoidance into excitement and curiosity.

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Variety is the spice of learning

Are your students struggling to engage? Brent Warner shares ways to use tech -- with intention - - to re-engage them. Check out his latest edtech column in the February issue of EL magazine.

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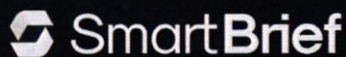
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Sometimes I think we forget that we're meant to pick up and go when the well runs dry.

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PLAYWRIGHT, TWO-TIME RECIPIENT OF THE PULITZER PRIZE FOR DRAMA

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Teachers share tips for checking student understanding

nbpts@smartbrief.com Accomplished Teacher by SmartBrief
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Top Story

83 Ky. teachers earn National Board Certification



(Cagkansayin/Getty Images)

Kentucky has recognized 83 teachers who have achieved National Board Certification. Additionally, 104 educators renewed their certification this year, bringing the state's total to 4,584. Commissioner of Education Robbie Fletcher and Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman praised the teachers' dedication and impact on students.

Full Story: [Kentucky Teacher](#) (2/27)

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■ Jasper City Schools expands roster of Board Certified teachers

[Daily Mountain Eagle \(Jasper, Ala.\)](#) (3/3)



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Focus On Practice

Teachers share tips for checking student understanding



(Jacob Wackerhausen/Getty Images)

Educators share effective strategies for checking student understanding in classrooms, emphasizing the importance of making student thinking visible. Techniques include asking probing questions, using low-stakes demonstrations of learning, sampling widely and incorporating entrance and exit tickets. Other methods include student annotation, group feedback and proficiency scales.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/26)



Building belonging in schools linked to student success

Building a sense of belonging in schools can address challenges such as absenteeism, declining engagement and staff retention, says Nick Yoder of Harmony Academy. Schools that foster belonging see improved attendance, engagement and resilience among students, as well as better morale and retention among staff, Yoder says.

Full Story: [SmartBrief/Education](#) (2/25)



- **School administrator discusses ways to handle difficult parents**

[Edutopia](#) (2/25)

Schools Today

Study finds parents trust grades over test scores

A draft paper from researchers at the University of Chicago and Oregon State University finds that parents often trust report card grades more than standardized test scores, potentially underestimating their children's need for academic support. This reliance on grades, which have been rising even as test scores fall, may lead to underinvestment in children's education, particularly in low-income communities, researchers suggest.

Full Story: [The Hechinger Report](#) (2/23)



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Full Story: [K-12 Dive](#) (2/23)



- **Philadelphia educators host marathon Black history lesson**

[CBS News](#) (2/27)

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Developing Leaders

A principal's perspective on finding joy in education



(DGLimages/Getty Images)

S. Kamar Khoshaba, principal of a Virginia high school, discusses in this opinion piece how educators can regain joy in their work by shifting from a mindset of obligation to one of privilege. Khoshaba describes his own experience of feeling exhausted and dreading the return to school after winter break, but recalls the excitement he felt when he first became a principal, sharing strategies for maintaining a positive outlook, such as focusing on meaningful aspects of the job and supporting colleagues.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (2/24)



Policy News

Cursive writing returns to schools as states pass laws

Cursive handwriting is experiencing a resurgence in US schools as states such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania legislate its instruction. More than half of states now require or encourage cursive, compared to just 14 a decade ago. The push comes as educators and legislators recognize the benefits of cursive, including improved fine motor skills and reading fluency, although some lawmakers express concerns about new mandates on schools.

Full Story: [USA Today](#) (2/28)



National Board Update

Texas tries to retain teachers through national certification

The 2025 Texas Teacher of the Year, Chris Milhealsick, NBCT, shares her experience as a Board Certified teacher, and its impact on her teaching and professional growth! [Watch here!](#)

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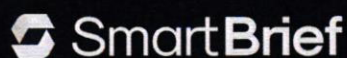
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OCMH Research News in Children's Mental Health - March 2026

wiocmh@public.govdelivery.com Office of Children's Mental Health

Friday, March 6, 2026 at 6:47:36AM Central Standard Time

To: amanda.zwetz@wrps.net



Research News in Youth Mental Health - March 2026

OCMH Senior Research Analyst Amy Marsman spotlights recent articles, resources, and research findings impacting youth mental health.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Childhood Lead Exposure Associated with Increased Depressive Symptoms in Adolescence

While lead exposure in children has been associated with cognitive and behavioral problems, few studies have examined later psychiatric symptoms. A [new analysis](#) led by researchers at Brown University's School of Public Health found that increased concentrations of lead in the blood during childhood were associated with increased depressive symptoms in adolescence, with larger increases when exposure occurred later in childhood. No associations were observed with anxiety symptoms. The [research](#), which was funded by federal grants from the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences and published in JAMA Network Open, underscores the long-term behavioral outcomes associated with early environmental exposures, the researchers said. Exposure levels at age 8 seemed to be particularly significant.

AI, Technology, and Telehealth

Teens Use and Views of AI

According to [Pew Research](#), a majority of U.S. teens say they use AI chatbots, including about three-in-10 who do so daily. Teens turn to chatbots like ChatGPT, Copilot and Character.ai for a variety of things – but information seeking (57%) and schoolwork (54%) top the list. About half use AI for fun or entertainment (47%), and lots of teens (42%) use AI to summarize an article, book, or video. Far fewer are using AI for emotional support or advice

(12%). The research includes details on [demographic differences](#) found in the survey as well as [parent perceptions](#), which underestimate the amount of teens using AI chatbots.

Children with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs

Data Brief: Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN)

This [data brief](#) from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau provides 2022–2023 updates on the experiences of CYSHCN from the National Survey of Children's Health. The brief features data on the prevalence of special health care needs, child and caregiver well-being, family impacts, and health care access and quality.

Medicaid and Variability in Insurance Adequacy

Children with special health care needs who have inadequate health insurance coverage experience difficulty getting needed care, more preventable hospitalizations, and have poorer health. This [Research Letter](#) in *JAMA Health Forum* investigated inadequate health insurance coverage among children with special health care needs (CSHCN). Medicaid is the primary insurer for nearly half of CSHCN (and the secondary insurer for some children with disabilities), however there is substantial variability in the quality and continuity of coverage across states. Quantifying state-to-state variation and predictors of Medicaid insurance continuity and adequacy among CSHCN can inform states considering changes to their Medicaid programs – those hoping to improve health care utilization and health outcomes.

College Mental Health

Majority of College Students are Lonely, with Social Media Linked to Loneliness

A study from the University of Cincinnati [reveals](#) that the majority (54%) of college students experience loneliness, with heavy social media users experiencing notably higher risk of loneliness. The research, based on survey data from nearly 65,000 students ages 18 to 24 across more than 120 colleges, found that spending just 16 hours per week on social media – roughly two hours daily – correlates with higher loneliness rates. The more hours students use social media, the greater the likelihood of loneliness. The heaviest users are 38% more likely to feel isolated.

The [study](#) also identified notable disparities: female and Black students reported higher loneliness rates regardless of social media use, while students living at home experienced greater isolation than those on campus.

Crisis and Suicide

Most Children Enrolled in Medicaid Did Not Receive Timely Suicide-Related Follow-up Care

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children in the U.S. In 2023, nearly 225,000 children aged 10–17 who were enrolled in Medicaid were hospitalized or visited the

emergency department (ED) for suicidal thoughts or behaviors. Providing timely follow-up care after children experience suicidal thoughts or behaviors is critical to decreasing the likelihood of re-hospitalization and preventing suicide. Federal officials with the Office of Inspector General (OIG) interviewed experts who said a follow-up visit should occur anywhere from 24 hours to one week after a child's discharge from the hospital or ED. OIG found in half of cases (i.e., hospitalizations or ED visits for suicidal thoughts or behaviors), children did not receive a follow-up visit in the week after their discharge—a critical time for intervention. The [OIG released](#) a full report and report highlights.

Universal Suicide Screening Strategies for Students of Color

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young people ages 10 to 24 in the U.S. Black youth are overrepresented in the overall makeup of suicides: while Black children comprise roughly 15% of the total youth population, they account for 37% of all youth suicides in the U.S. Additionally, suicide among Hispanic youth, specifically young Hispanic females, is increasing. The aims of this [pilot study](#) were to determine relevant and appropriate school-based suicide risk screening practices and interventions for Black and Hispanic students in an urban school district setting.

The researchers found that culturally-informed universal screening for suicide risk in the school setting, as compared with need-based screening, identified students who were not already known by school staff to be experiencing mental health challenges or at risk for suicide, and particularly students of color. This study highlights the importance of culturally informed universal suicide risk screening in schools, particularly for minoritized students such as Black and Hispanic youth. Since mental health is stigmatized within racialized communities, which can inhibit help-seeking, the authors cite universal suicide screening as an important step in identifying at-risk students who may not be detected through existing need-based processes, potentially enabling timely intervention and support to suicidal youth.

Early Childhood

New Dashboard Shows 3-Year-Olds' Readiness and Development

For the first time, national data offer a holistic view of 3-year-olds' developmental well-being. The Healthy and Ready to Learn (HRTL) measure, developed for use in the National Survey of Children's Health, captures development across five key domains—early learning skills, social-emotional development, self-regulation, physical health, and motor skills—that, combined, indicate whether young children are developmentally “on track.” Child Trends' [new dashboard](#) presents the latest HRTL data, highlighting the developmental well-being of 3-year-olds at both the national and state levels. The overall HRTL score for Wisconsin (71.7%) outpaces the nation (64.1%).

Gun Violence

Evolution of Firearm Mortality as the Leading Cause of Death in the U.S. Pediatric Population

For decades, motor vehicle collisions (MVCs) represented the leading cause of death among the U.S. pediatric population. Recently, however, firearms surpassed MVCs as the leading cause of death in individuals aged 1 to 24 years. That flip in leading cause of death was subsequently documented in a younger population (aged 1-19 years) after 2019. At the state level, however, there remains significant variability in the leading cause of death. This [study](#) describes the evolution of firearm mortality, in four-year intervals, in the U.S. population aged 1 to 19 years at the state and national levels since 2004. The research shows that firearms became the leading cause of death for children in Wisconsin between 2019 and 2023 when more states than not reached the same threshold.

K-12 Schools and Mental Health

Large Majority of Parents and Teens Support School Cellphone Bans

The [Brookings Institute](#) found there is strong support for cellphone restrictions in school among both teens and adults. This [survey](#) found that 76% of teens expressed a preference for some form of restrictions on phone use during the school day and 93% of adults supported restrictions. (Related research from [Pew Research](#) found lower levels of support among teens.)

Despite this support, nearly half (47%) of teens thought restrictions will have a negative impact on their happiness, and a third (35%) of parents also thought phone limits will negatively impact student happiness. More than half of teens say phone restrictions will have no impact on their ability to make friends (67%), bullying/fighting (65%), sense of community (54%), and relationships with teachers (53%). The researchers suggest further surveying at the end of the school year will potentially add insight into these somewhat contradictory findings.

Half a Million More Students Have Access to School Counselors

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) [announced](#) the student-to-school-counselor ratio continues to narrow, reaching its lowest margin since ASCA began tracking ratios in 1986. Smaller student-counselor ratios are linked with better attendance, academic performance, graduation rates, and fewer disciplinary incidents. Learn more about ASCA, counselor roles, and ratios [here](#).

The updated ratios were calculated using data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. These data indicate that for the first time the high school range of 195 to 224 students per counselor meets the recommended ratio (250:1). The updated ratio means that about 529,000 more students had access to a school counselor last school year than in the previous year. Elementary and middle schools still do not meet the recommended student-counselor ratios. While the national ratio improved, [Wisconsin's ratio](#) remained the same: 362 students for every one counselor.

School Loneliness and Belonging Among Immigrant Students

First- and second-generation immigrant youth had lower levels of mental health symptoms than nonimmigrant youth. The [study](#) also found that levels of mental health symptoms were lower among immigrant youth when school immigrant concentration was high. A sense of belonging in such cases may explain the reduced loneliness.

Maternal Mental Health

Increase in Postpartum Depression Among Low-Income Moms post-Dobbs

This [cohort study](#) examined whether state abortion bans enacted after the *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision were associated with increased rates of postpartum depression (PPD) among Medicaid enrollees, based on socioeconomic status (SES). The research included 102,597 individuals pre-*Dobbs* and 61,113 individuals post-*Dobbs*. They found that women with low SES who lived in states with abortion bans experienced a significant increase in postpartum depression after *Dobbs* compared to those in states without bans. As such, abortion bans were disproportionately associated with an increased risk of postpartum depression. Since the research focused on those in low-SES communities, the authors point out that the increased rates of depression amplify existing health disparities.

New State Paid Leave Policies Grant Parents Access to Critical Prenatal Care

Timely and regular prenatal care provides an opportunity to identify and manage potential complications for both pregnant people and fetuses during pregnancy, including infection, gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, mental health concerns, substance use, and genetic conditions or other fetal abnormalities. Prenatal care visits also provide an opportunity to screen patients for risk factors like stress, unstable housing, and intimate partner violence, and to provide referrals for resources and education on topics related to pregnancy and neonatal health.

Despite this importance, Child Trends [analysis](#) found, in 2023, 7% of women who gave birth in the U.S. received late (beginning in the third trimester) or no prenatal care, according to data from the National Vital Statistics System. This is slightly higher than the previous year (6.8%) and the highest percentage reported in the years for which we have national data on this topic. New York State and Washington, DC have responded with new policies.

Patient Privacy and Adolescent Confidentiality

AAP Updates Policy Statement on Adolescent Confidentiality

Adolescent confidentiality is one of the most complex aspects of pediatric care. This complexity is driven by both state and federal laws. State laws determine what types of health care an adolescent has the right to be kept confidential, such as sexual or reproductive health, mental health, or substance use data. Electronic charts, patient portals, and health apps make it even more difficult to navigate.

Federal laws mandate that electronic health data be freely and easily accessible to patients at all times. Confounding this is that parents and guardians usually have access to their children's health records as proxies on their patient portal.

In [updated guidance](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the organization asserts that protecting adolescent confidentiality is not only a legal obligation, but essential to ensure adolescents seek the care they need. Without knowing that their provider is committed to protecting their confidentiality, adolescents may forgo vital care, potentially leading to negative outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, worsened mental health, and substance use.

The [policy](#), updated from 2012, focuses on health information technologies and addresses a range of sensitive data. Topics include gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as disparities in confidentiality protections that affect young adults with limited capacity to make health care decisions, children in foster care, and others at higher risk of privacy violations.

Power of Play

State of Play Report

The Aspen Institute has [found](#) that three-quarters of parent respondents reported that their children's mental health, physical fitness, emotional control, and social well-being increases or increases greatly when they are regularly engaged in sport. The [2025 State of Play](#) report found participation rates are up, with 55% of kids ages 6-17 playing sports as of 2023. At the same time, the costs of youth sports continues to grow – up 46% since 2019, according to Aspen Institute Project Play research. Significant access gaps remain among youth from upper- and lower-income homes. Related survey work describes how [youth with disabilities need sports more but play less](#) and how [parents spend 3+ hours](#) every day on child's sports.

Social Connectedness and Loneliness

Young Adults in Transition, Lonely and Connected

This [study](#) examined individuals' age in relation to social well-being (i.e., connection, companionship, friendship support, and number of friends) and social ill-being (i.e., loneliness, disconnection).

Utilizing a large, representative sample of Americans (N = 4,812), with participants ranging from the ages of 18-95 (mean age of 43.7), the results demonstrate that although social ill-being is higher for young adults (emerging adults), social well-being is high for both younger and older adults. Further analysis found those with high well-being and moderate ill-being were more likely to be young, educated females who had gone through many life changes in the past year. Participants in the cluster with high well-being and lowest ill-being were more likely to be older adults, facing fewer life changes.

The findings suggests that loneliness among young adults is not bereft of connection, companionship, and friendship, but instead is characteristic of rapid life changes and a lack of relational permanence and routine.

Connected, Lonely and Major Depression

In this [cohort study](#) from Hong Kong, young people who had a new onset of a major depressive episode (MDE) were also found to have higher levels of loneliness but were not socially isolated. In other words, lonely but socially connected youth were most likely to have a MDE begin. The research explores whether and to what extent loneliness versus social isolation plays a role in onset of MDE.

Social Determinants of Health

How the DSM Can Incorporate Socioeconomic, Cultural, and Environmental Determinants

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (known as the DSM) is widely used in throughout the world for diagnosing mental disorders. In 2024, a committee developed strategies to incorporate new knowledge into DSM as the field advances, including how to integrate the social determinants of health (SDOH) into the future DSM. In this [commentary](#) the authors provide definitions; discuss how DSM and other manuals and frameworks use and/or integrate socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental determinants of health and intersectionality; highlight the deliberations in determining how to identify and integrate methods to assess and quantify SDOH and their implications for diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders in diverse contexts and cultures; and describe primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention.

Therapy and Treatment

Brief: State Medicaid Coverage of Behavioral Health Therapy for Children and Youth

Medicaid is the primary payer for behavioral health services for children and youth, yet access to and coverage of behavioral health resources vary by state. To understand these variations, the National Academy for State Health Policy analyzed Medicaid behavioral health therapy coverage in all 50 states and D.C. Their [brief](#) highlights key findings on diagnostic criteria, billing approaches, and limits that affect children and youth's access to behavioral health therapies.

Youth Justice

Children with Mental Health Diagnoses often Incarcerated Instead of Getting Treatment

NPR [covered](#) a new report from Congress that has raised the alarm about children with mental health conditions being held in juvenile detention rather than getting treatment. The report, [Prolonged Incarceration of Children Due to Mental Health Care Shortages](#), released by the staff of Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff and Republican Rep. Jen Kiggans, is based on a survey sent to administrators of public juvenile detention facilities around the country. According to the survey, 75 juvenile detention centers in 25 states reported holding youths for days or even months until space became available at a long-term psychiatric residential treatment facility. About half of those who responded to the survey reported they had, at some point, kept children incarcerated when they could have been released into offsite mental health care – due to a shortage of mental health services.

OCMH Research and Data Resources

Key Facts in Youth Mental Health:

<https://children.wi.gov/Pages/ResearchData/KeyFacts.aspx>

Fact Sheets:

<https://children.wi.gov/Pages/ResearchData/FactSheets.aspx>

Data Sources:

<https://children.wi.gov/Pages/Resources/DataSources.aspx>

Research News in Youth Mental Health:

<https://children.wi.gov/Pages/OCMHNewsletters.aspx>

Youth Mental Health Initiatives:

<https://children.wi.gov/Pages/Resources/ChildrensInitiatives.aspx>

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Screen Time Vicious Cycle, Sports for SEL & Counselor Ratios Improve | ISI Vol. 86

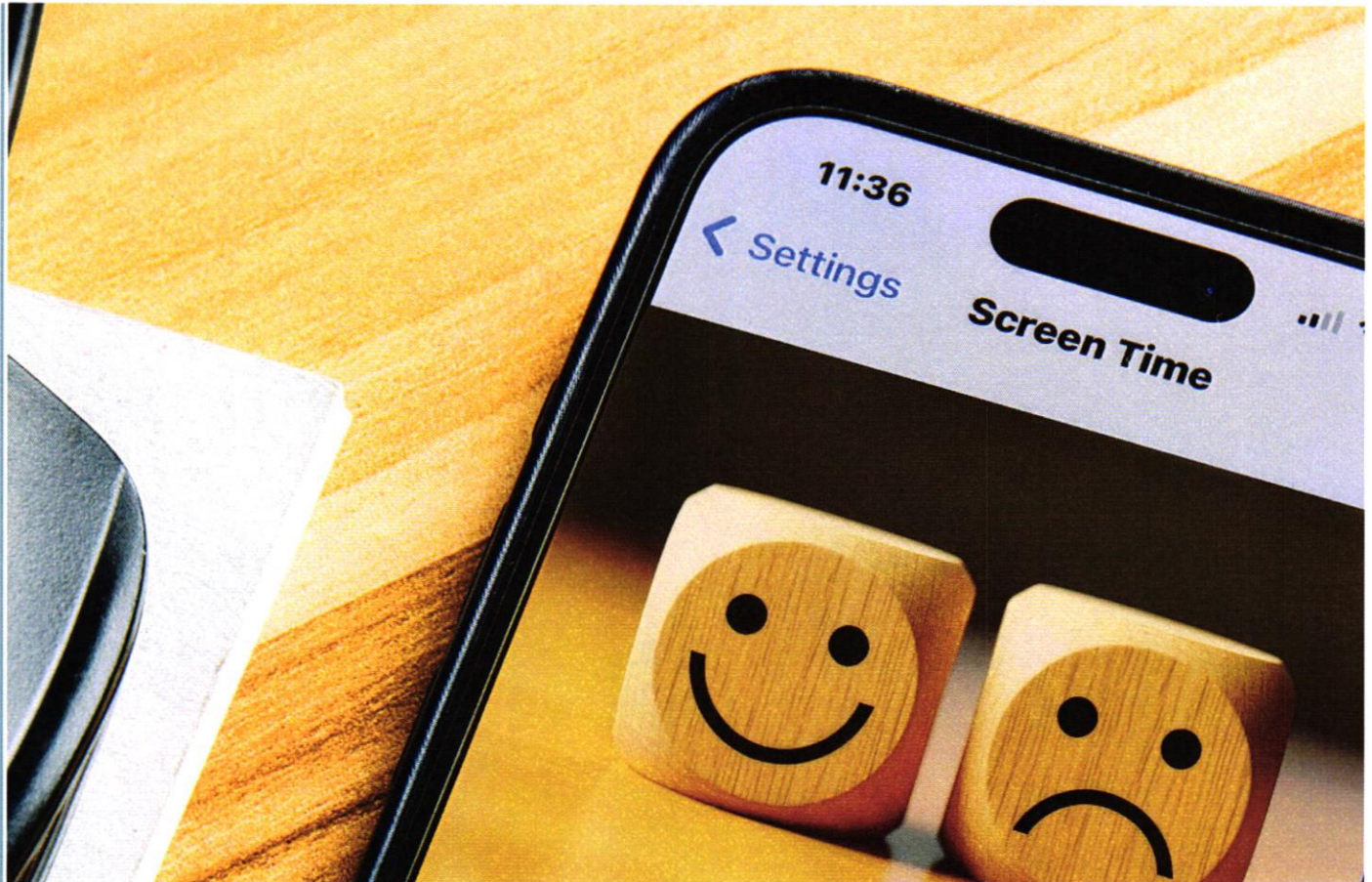
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In this issue:

Screen Time Can Lead to Emotional Problems and Even More Screen Use - How to Build Parent Power: Developing Leaders and Advocates in Schools - How Sports Classroom - Educators Look to Congress for Guidance and Guardrails for AI

Screen Time Can Lead to Emotional Problems and Even More Screen Use



Emotional and behavioral problems in children can be caused by spending too much time on screens, and those problems can lead to even more screen use, according to research published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. The study revealed that the more children engaged with electronic screens, the more likely they were to develop socioemotional problems, including anxiety, depression, aggression and hyperactivity. Several factors may moderate the relationship. Older children ages 6 to 10 were found more likely to develop socioemotional problems with greater screen use compared with younger children. Gaming was associated with higher risks compared with educational or recreational screen use. Parents might be cautious about what screens they allow and use parental controls to manage screen time. Understanding that heavy screen use can lead to socioemotional problems and, in turn, those problems can trigger more screen use allows parents, educators, and policymakers to better support children.

How to Build Parent Power: Developing Leaders and Advocates in Schools



Parents are extremely interested in shaping the educational experiences of their children and those in their communities, according to The 74. The pandemic heightened the role of parents in schools. Parent power is a core pillar of Rocketship Public Schools, a national network of charter schools. Organizing committees of 10 to 15 parent volunteers each lead advocacy work at each of their schools. Key strategies include creating a strong family engagement culture. Rocketship asks parents to complete parent partner hours, keeping a log of activities such as hosting school staff for home visits. Prioritize parent leadership and advocacy across the organization. Principals connect with families and encourage parents to participate in organizing initiatives. Network or district leaders all meet the needs of the local community. Parents need the opportunity to learn about local concerns, and education organizers need to be familiar with cultural traditions and the local political landscape.

How Sports Can Build Better SEL Skills



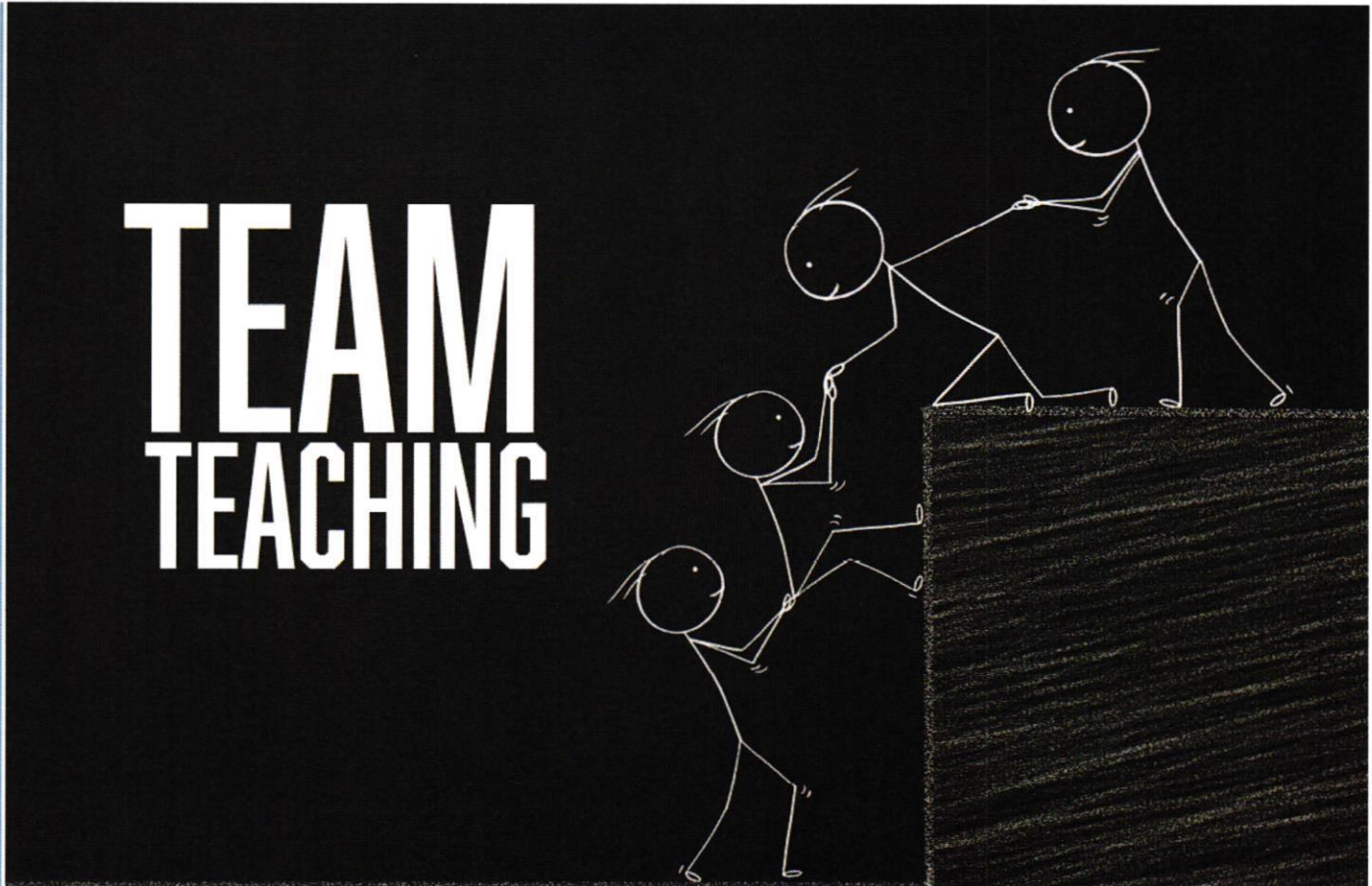
Teachers say today students struggle more with in-person social interactions and regulating their emotions compared with previous eras, according to Education Week. In response, many schools have turned to youth sports, when intentionally designed to facilitate positive youth development, can improve young people social-emotional skills, such as goal-setting, empathy, self-control, self-efficacy, and teamwork. Sports help social-emotional development by combining three essentials: The presence of adults and peers makes students feel safe. When students move their bodies it has a positive impact on their mood. The La Mesa-Spring Valley school district in California created a sports league where students learn how to play a sport and how social-emotional skills can help them become better teammates. Many kids enter the program not knowing how to handle losses, and they end up blaming teammates and having meltdowns. Through the program they can better handle losses and encourage their teammates.

More Students Have Access to the Benefits of School Counselors



For the first time, the high school range of 195 to 224 students per counselor meets the American School Counselor Association recommendation, according to K-12 Dive. Research has pointed to benefits of smaller student-counselor ratios, including better standardized test performance, attendance, GPAs and graduation rates. Lower ratios also are linked to . The ASCA report indicates that about 529,000 more students had access to a school counselor last school year than in the previous year. The high school student-counselor range for the first Elementary and middle schools still do not meet the recommended student-counselor ratios, however, with a range of 571 to 694 students for every counselor. More than 132,270 counselors Ensuring that every student has access to a school counselor remains essential to their well-being and long-term success, says Jill Cook, ASCA executive director. School counselors play a

Pennsylvania Proposal Pivots away from One Teacher Leading the Classroom



The rate of educator attrition in Pennsylvania is rising, turnover is disproportionately impacting urban and rural districts, and teachers report feeling burnt out, overworked, and underprepared. New research from PA Needs Teachers recommends radically restructuring what it means to teach in Pennsylvania schools. The report authors propose pivoting from the traditional one-teacher model to team teaching. Small groups of educators and support staff work together to schedule, plan lessons, give constructive feedback on their teaching, and help each other grow. A group of 100 students may share a teacher. Key highlights: New teachers would receive mentorship and guidance. Experienced teachers would be compensated and recognized in their schools. Paraprofessionals and tutors would be paid. We do not lose new teachers because they can not do the job. We lose them because we do not help them learn how and set them up for success, says report co-author Jill Weller-Reilly. Te

Educators Look to Congress for Guidance and Guardrails for AI



The absence of federal laws and regulations governing use of artificial intelligence in the classroom is forcing teachers to rely on assorted advice from states, professional organizations, tech Teachers want federal guidance and guardrails on AI, experts told a Congressional committee. More than 60 percent of K-12 teachers used AI in their classrooms in 2025, according to the E The future of learning will require a blending of technology and human expertise, with teachers leading and guiding, and technology supporting, says Aneesh Sohoni, chief executive officer o Three of the largest AI developers, Anthropic, Microsoft, and OpenAI, have pledged 23 million dollars to the American Federation of Teachers union to develop a National Academy for AI Inst It is hard to imagine another education technology that holds so much potential to make teachers jobs easier, says Rep. Kevin Kiley. But this potential also comes with challenges such as pr



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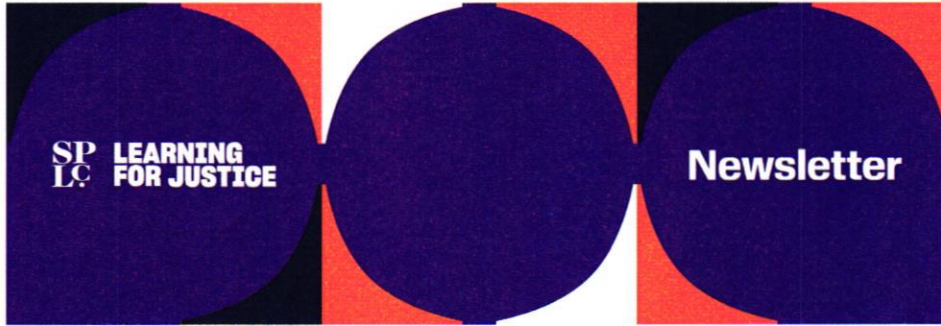


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March 2026

Introduction to Civics for Democracy

A New Course for Civics Through a Human Rights and Social Justice Lens



How do we build an inclusive, multiracial democracy for the 21st century and beyond?

To become active civic participants in a democracy, we must understand the foundations of democracy, our rights and responsibilities and the levers for change. This new course offers an introduction to democracy and government in the United States and our civic responsibilities.

Course Modules

Modules 1 and 2 are available now, with additional modules added monthly.

1. The Values of Democracy

In the United States, the ideals of democracy are at the core of our shared values and identity. But what are democratic values? How are human rights foundational to democracy? And how do these values help us understand our politics, government and country today?

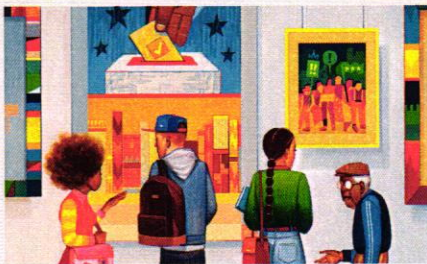
2. Belonging, Citizenship and Democracy

The tension between exclusion and inclusion is built into the nation's foundation. How do we build a democracy that includes rather than excludes? How can historical models and freedom struggles guide us in understanding citizenship and belonging? And why must we understand our past to contextualize current events today?

3. Dialogue and Critical Conversations

To actively participate in an inclusive, multiracial democracy, we must learn not only how to think critically but also how to engage in conversation with one another. Learn and teach essential skills for dialogue with this module.

Featured Articles



Dialogue Across Difference

Written by Brandon J. Haas, Ph.D.

Dialogue skills can develop foundational capacity for civic engagement and collective action to strengthen our democracy. The heart of dialogue is not in speaking to convince but rather in active listening and questioning to understand one another.

Why Civics Needs Social Justice Education

Written by Lee Anne Bell, Ed.D.

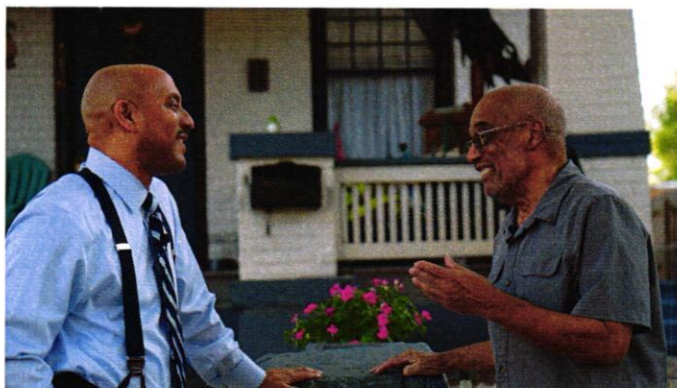
Social justice-oriented civics education is crucial for developing the civic



knowledge, skills and dispositions people need to fulfill the potential of a multiracial and inclusive democracy.

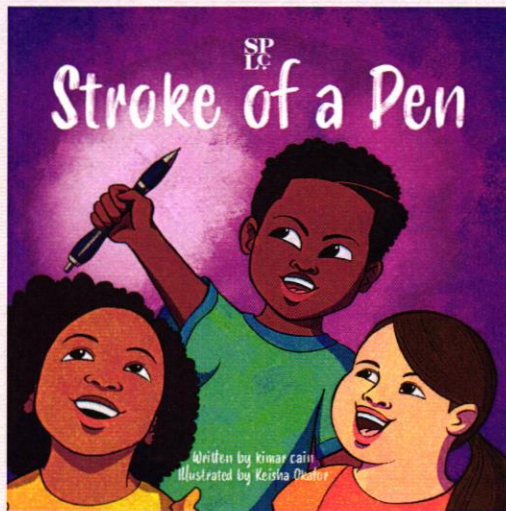
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Coming Soon! The Ella Baker Conversation Series



In April, LFJ will publish “Education for Liberation” with history professor Hasan Kwame Jeffries and civil rights veteran Charles E. Cobb — launching the new Ella Baker Conversation Series! This first conversation includes the full video and a discussion guide for use in community education and classrooms.

LFJ also recently hosted the second conversation of this series at Clafflin University with Dr. Jeffries and Ahmad Ward, executive director of Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, which examined the Reconstruction era as a model that propelled political, economic and social justice — a critical history for contextualizing the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Stay tuned for the video recording of this insightful conversation!



New Children's Book: *Stroke of a Pen*

Written by Kimar Cain

Illustrated by Keisha Okafor

Stroke of a Pen centers the idea that one signature changed millions of lives, allowing Black Americans to participate in democracy via the ballot. While Lyndon B. Johnson was the president who signed the Voting Rights Act, people in communities across the South and the nation worked tirelessly to pressure Johnson so his pen became their own. Children today deserve to understand that voting isn't merely about politics but about belonging. Voting is about representation and identity. It is about our children being able to shift and shape the world they are inheriting.



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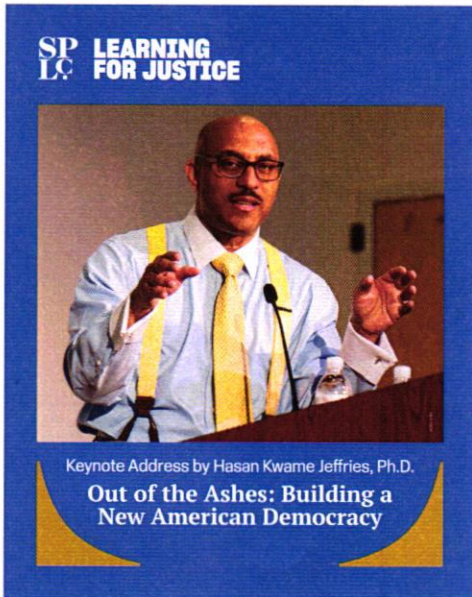
Highlighting three new articles on democracy and education

These articles are part of the first volume of the new *Learning for Justice Anthology*, which examines the foundations and future of democracy in the United States and education's crucial role in building a more inclusive multiracial society that expands opportunities for civic and political participation.

“Every voice must count, and barriers to civic engagement — whether structural, legal or economic — must be dismantled. Power must be transparent and answerable, grounded in public trust rather than private gain. And systems of governance must reflect the full diversity of the nation so every community is represented, and none marginalized.”

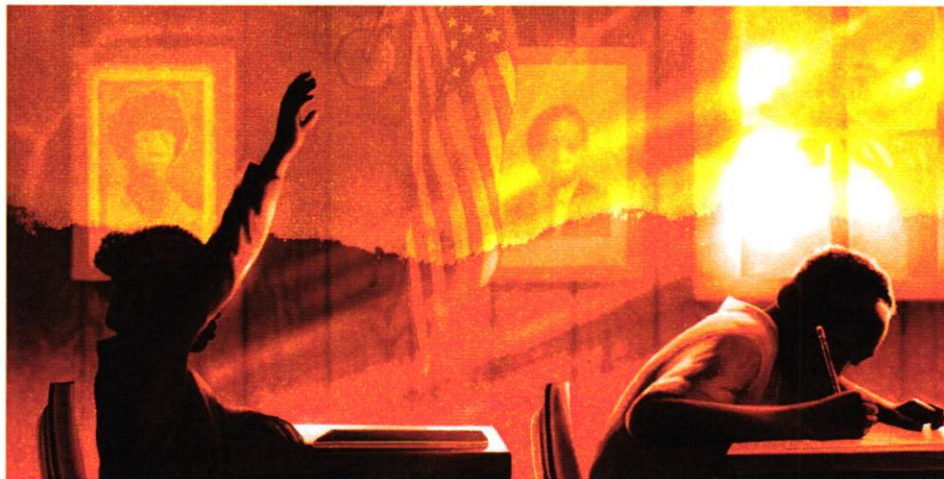
— Hasan Kwame Jeffries, “Out of the Ashes”

Out of the Ashes: Building a New American Democracy



The erosion of institutions to safeguard democracy is an invitation to imagine a new democracy resilient enough to resist authoritarianism and inclusive enough to serve all.

Watch the video: **Out of the Ashes**, Dr. Jeffries' keynote address at the Morehouse College Human Rights Film Festival (MCHRFF), sponsored by Learning for Justice.



How We Got Here and How We Move Forward (With Our Heads Held High)

"If it took decades for those in power who have an endless stream of money, influence and will to advance their destructive agenda of weakening democracy in the U.S. through dismantling public education, it will take just as much will, money, organizing, protesting and long-term goal-setting not only to reset the pendulum of justice so it swings toward the sun again, but to build what comes next. We must be bold, imaginative, relentless in our pursuit of the truth, and resolute about ending harm and demanding justice."

— Bettina L. Love



Permission To Learn: Cultivating Lifelong Curiosity

"When we successfully cultivate a disposition toward learning, the benefits extend far beyond individual academic success. Students who develop genuine curiosity and critical-thinking skills become agents of change in their communities. They question unjust systems, seek innovative solutions to persistent problems, and maintain optimism in the face of challenge. ... When learners develop strong learning dispositions, they can bridge gaps between their communities and academic institutions."

— Nina Gilbert

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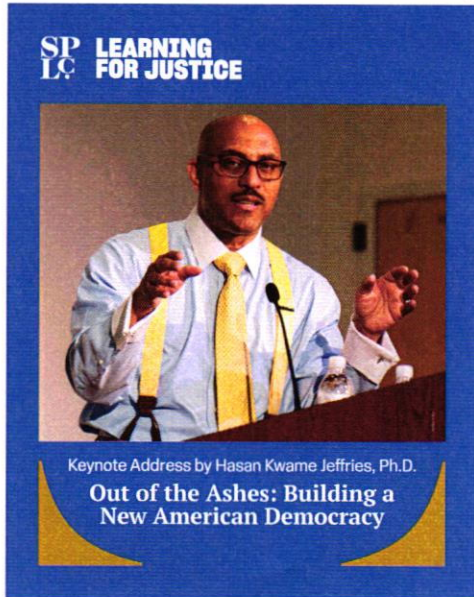
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Introducing ... *Learning for Justice Anthology Volume 1* **Democracy for the 21st Century**



Our nation's 250th anniversary challenges us to imagine and build a more inclusive and resilient democracy for the next generation and beyond.

This first volume of the new *Learning for Justice Anthology* examines the foundations and future of democracy in the United States and education’s crucial role in building a more inclusive multiracial society that expands opportunities for civic and political participation. The volume offers articles to frame the conversation, an introductory civics and democracy course and additional resources for learning and teaching.

Explore the first three articles, a new video and the first two course modules of the Anthology, below.

Access the Learning for Justice Anthology

Anthology Articles



**Out of the Ashes:
Building a New
American
Democracy**

**Author: Hasan
Kwame Jeffries**
The erosion of
institutions to
safeguard democracy
is an invitation to

**How We Got Here
and How We Move
Forward (With Our
Heads Held High)**

**Author: Bettina L.
Love**
Bold action and
transformative
interventions are
necessary to reimagine
and create an
education system that

**Permission To
Learn: Cultivating
Lifelong Curiosity**

Author: Nina Gilbert
Reimagining education
to cultivate curiosity,
questioning, dialogue
and critical thinking can
develop students’
lifelong learning
disposition and

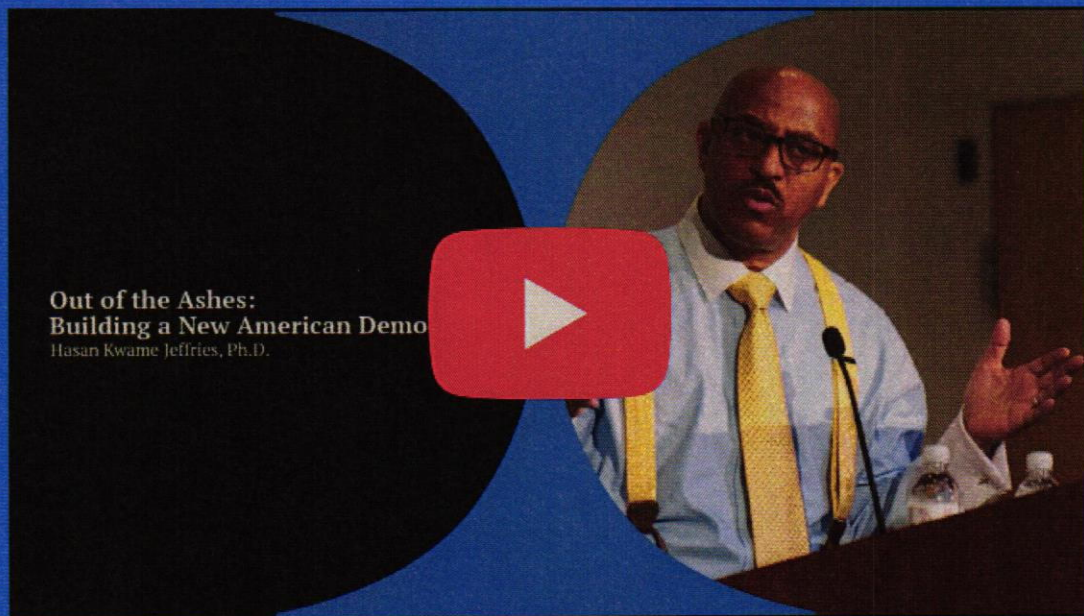
imagine a new
democracy resilient
enough to resist
authoritarianism and
inclusive enough to
serve all.

ends harm and
advances justice and
racial equity.

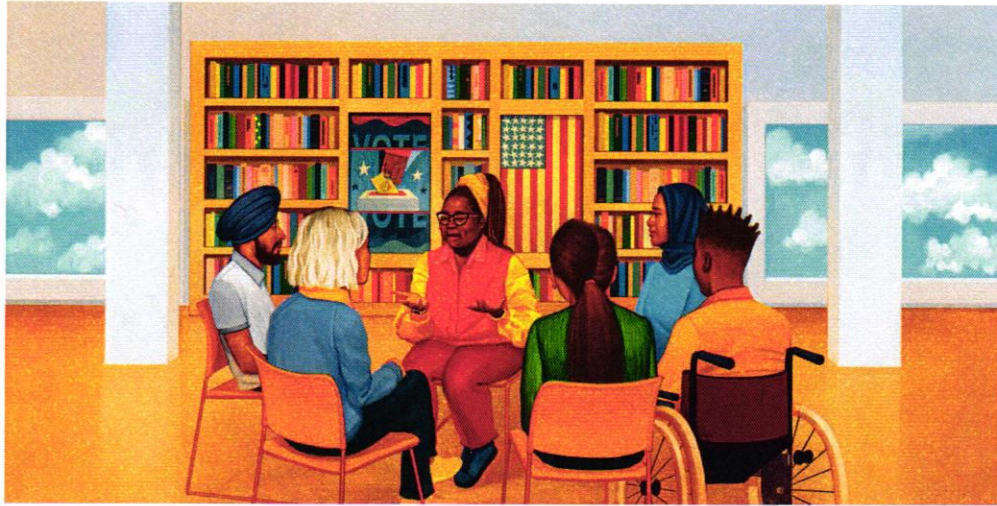
capacity for meaningful
participation in a
democratic society.

Video: Out of the Ashes Keynote

In this keynote address delivered on Sept. 22, 2025, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Ph.D., speaks at the Seventh Annual Morehouse College Human Rights Film Festival in partnership with Learning for Justice. This presentation on building a democracy for the 21st century and beyond outlines three essential and non-negotiable principles: inclusive partnership, institutional accountability, and equitable representation.



Course: Introduction to Civics for Democracy



How do we build an inclusive, multiracial democracy for the 21st century and beyond?

This course offers an introduction to understanding democracy and government in the United States and our civic responsibilities so we can engage in collective civic action in our communities and across our nation.

Module 1: The Values of Democracy

This module introduces shared democratic values, connects our civic identity and values to democratic values, and fosters developing community connections for civic action.

Module 2: Belonging, Citizenship and Democracy

This module explores ideas of belonging and citizenship in building an inclusive democracy, and examines how historical models and freedom struggles can guide us in contextualizing current events.

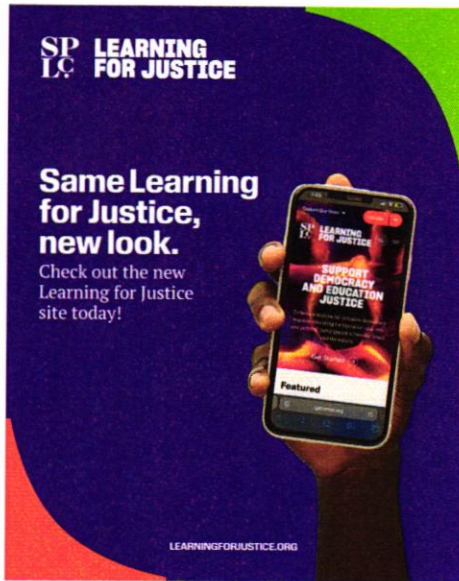
More Updates

Learning for Justice has a new website!

You can find us at:

splcenter.org/learning-for-justice.

Explore our resources for learning in communities and schools for both adult and youth education.

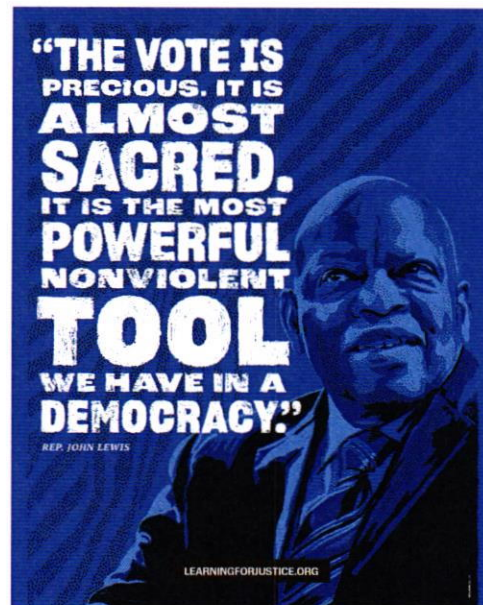


Please note that articles published prior to 2018 and some previously published classroom-specific resources will remain in the LFJ archive site. These include previously published teaching strategies, student tasks and lessons.

To build a multiracial inclusive democracy requires educating for liberation and civic and political participation across the South and the nation.



Stay connected with LFJ on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn — and we're now on Threads! Follow us for the latest updates using the buttons below.



Download and share LFJ's new One World poster! This edition features John Lewis and his unwavering commitment to voting rights and democracy.

New Article: Reimagining Presidents Day

Presidents Day offers an opportunity to consider how U.S. presidents have used



power — for good or harm — and what that means for us.



**SP
LJ** **LEARNING
FOR JUSTICE**

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LearningForJustice.org

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Lean in Girls Curriculum

kelly.bluell@wrps.net Kelly Bluell
To: roxanne.filtz@wrps.net Roxanne Filtz

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 7:46:21 AM Central Standard Time

Have you see [this](#) before? It came up a few times in my GT meeting yesterday with bigger cities and their work to grow leadership with girls in their schools. Possibly something for different clubs to check out. They have free curriculum to use too. We can touch base on it when we figure out a time to meet.

Thanks!



roxanne.filtz@wrps.net Roxanne Filtz
To: kelly.bluell@wrps.net Kelly Bluell

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 10:42:26AM Central Standard Time

This looks interesting. I wonder if this is something that WRAMS would consider as a part of their RpT work? We can discuss further when we meet!

Roxy

Roxanne



Roxanne Filtz

Director of Teaching and Learning, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools

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Phone 715-424-6721 Ext. 1053 **Email** roxanne.filtz@wrps.net

Website www.wrps.org

"One book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world." — Malala Yousafzai

On Fri, Feb 27, 2026 at 7:46AM Kelly Bluell <kelly.bluell@wrps.net> wrote:

Have you see [this](#) before? It came up a few times in my GT meeting yesterday with bigger cities and their work to grow leadership with girls in their schools. Possibly something for different clubs to check out. They have free curriculum to use too. We can touch base on it when we figure out a time to meet.

Thanks!

--

3/30/26, 8:43 AM

Google Vault - Lean in Girls Curriculum



Canceled event with note: GT Updates Roxy & Kelly @ Wed Mar 11, 2026 2pm - 3pm (CDT) (Roxanne Filtz)

kelly.bluell@wrps.net Kelly Bluell
To: kelly.bluell@wrps.net Kelly Bluell
To: roxanne.filtz@wrps.net Roxanne Filtz

Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 10:12:26AM Central Daylight Time

This event has been canceled and removed from your calendar with a note:
"cancelling my calendar too"

GT Nagc Link Program Eval
GATES Plan
Lean in Girls
GT Grant 26-27
EduClimber Info for GT
Math 24 6th Grade interest (port, pittsville)
Elem GT DEU

When

Wednesday Mar 11, 2026 · 2pm – 3pm (Central Time - Chicago)

Guests

Kelly Bluell - organizer
Roxanne Filtz

Invitation from [Google Calendar](#)

You are receiving this email because you are subscribed to calendar notifications. To stop receiving these emails, go to [Calendar settings](#), select this calendar, and change "Other notifications".

Forwarding this invitation could allow any recipient to send a response to the organizer, be added to the guest list, invite others regardless of their own invitation status, or modify your RSVP. [Learn more](#)

Attachments:

- invite.ics** 914
- invite.ics** 914