



ROOM TO
BREATHE
PROJECT

INSIGHTS + OPPORTUNITIES

Research from Jan-Apr 2019

How might we use our
resources to create the
biggest impact on the **social**
and emotional well-being of
our youth?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

- **S/E**= social and emotional
- **SED**= social emotional development
- **SEWB**= social emotional well-being
- **WB**= well-being
- **“teacher”**= the classroom educator or the parent/caregiver who is the “teacher” at home

What do we mean by SEWB?

SEWB spectrum:

mitigate the bad ↓
+

GROW the GOOD ↑

THRIVING



Proactive

BUOYANCY POINT

reactive



SURVIVING

Our process...

INTER VIEWS:

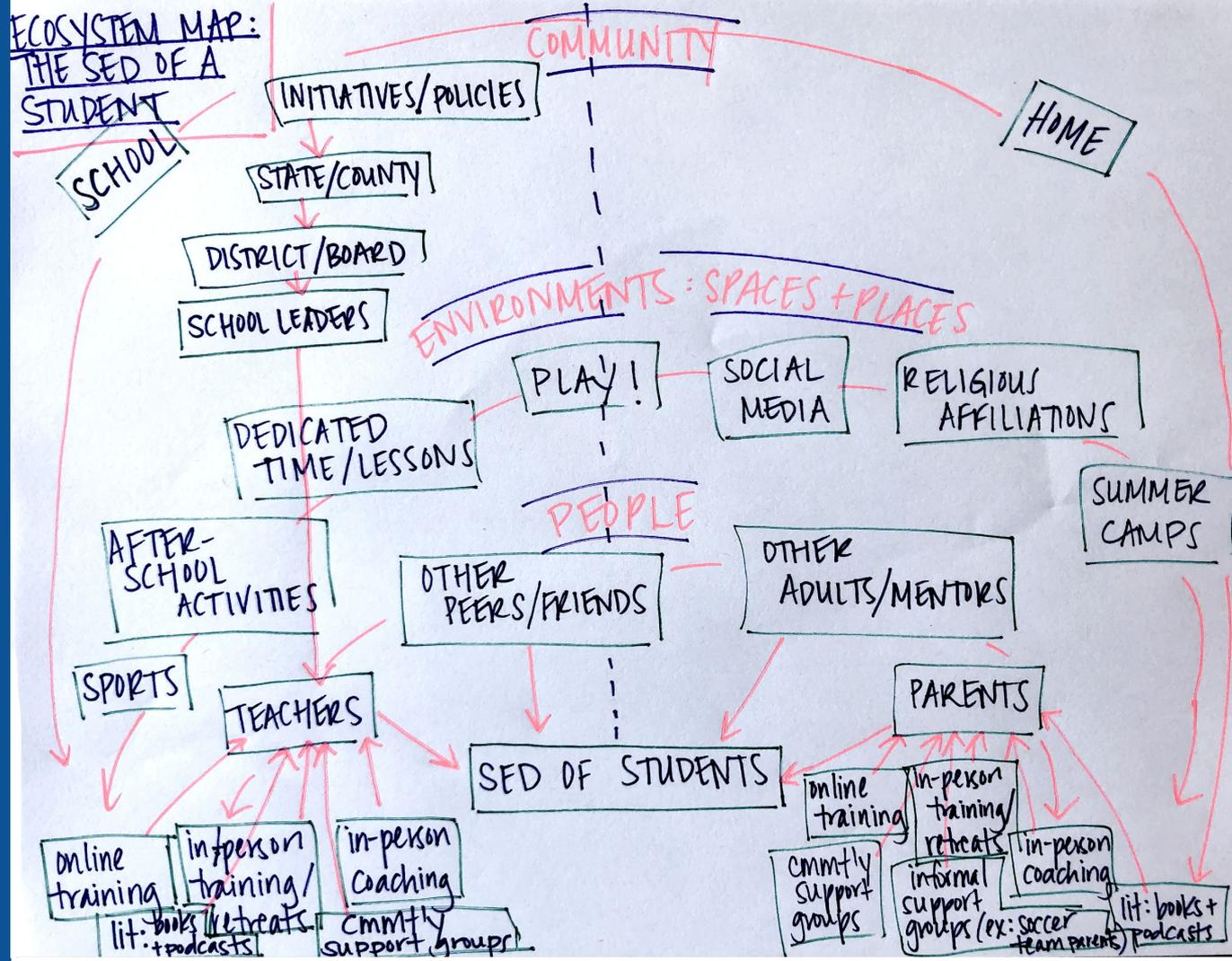
We conducted 13 interviews
over a period of 3 months.

- Schools
 - 1) [Primary School](#) (East Palo Alto, CA)
 - 2) [Valor Academy](#) (Nashville, TN)
 - 3) [Children's Day School](#) (Mission District, SF)
- The Tipping Point Community
 - 4) [Education Portfolio](#)
 - 5) [Early Childhood Development Portfolio](#)
 - 6) **Mental Health Initiative**
- Research Orgs
 - 7) [Transcend](#)
 - 8) [Character Lab](#)
- Mental Health Orgs
 - 9) [SafeSpace](#)
 - 10) [BetterHelp](#)
 - 11) [Mindful Schools](#)
- Teacher Support
 - 12) [Alder School of Education](#)
 - 13) [Burn-in Mindset](#)
- We also referenced:
 - [Millennium School](#) (Mission District, SF)
 - [CASEL](#)
 - [Summit Public Schools](#) (Bay Area and WA state)

**From which we
created an...**

ECO-SYSTEM MAP

ECOSYSTEM MAP:
THE SED OF A
STUDENT



And...

**Which led us
to these 7...**

INSIGHTS:

#1) The environment matters.

#2) The “teacher” matters.

#3) Humans need authentic connections in order to effectively pursue well-being.

#4) SED is a practice, not just a program (and it begins with the “teacher” first).

#5) Positive experiences lead to mindset shifts.

#6) The debate over whole-school VS. teacher choice needs to shift to a conversation about how to balance BOTH.

#7) SED is hard to measure, but growth and transfer are indicators of impact.

#1) The environment matters.

“

In a school that's chaotic it's very difficult for kids to develop their habits because adults lose their temper more and children are able to fluctuate too much... Lack of consistent expectations actually stunts the S/E growth of a child. We need sufficient structure and predictability.”

- Julia Pool, Founder of Burn-In Mindset

“

Data shows that talking in a ‘safe space’ helps, doesn’t harm.”

- Lesley Martin, Executive Director of SafeSpace

“

*We need space for teachers to have
down time- a cushy room, food.”*

- Luisa Pinto, Teacher at Children Day's School

INSIGHT 1: THE ENVIRONMENT MATTERS.

Certain environmental factors in schools best lay the groundwork for SED.

- Aligned Vision
- Consistent Language
 - Everyone using the same terms for habits
- Structure & Predictability
 - i.e. breaks for teachers, discipline systems for students
- Core of experienced high-performing teachers
 - Year 5 teacher has promise! (see insight #2)
- “Space”
 - Physical- teacher’s lounge
 - Emotional- safe space to talk for students and teachers

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Audit the environment first before entering a school
- Prioritize working with the year 5+ teacher
- Create physical space where teachers and/or students can check in with themselves
- Provide teachers breaks throughout the day- like less duties, lunch provided

**#2) The “teacher”
matters.**

“

CASEL's recent report for advancing SEL recommends that in order to improve the S/E skills of students, much more attention needs to be paid to the expertise of teachers.”

- Jeff Snipes, Co-Founder of Millennium School in reference to CASEL's [“From A Nation At Risk To A Nation At Hope”](#)

“

Biggest impact on SED of teachers is the year 5 teacher because they are teachers of teachers...[Yes], students mirror strong adults, but teachers mirror strong teachers too.”

- Julia Pool, Founder of Burn-In Mindset

“

Adjusting parental stress is most important to early childhood outcomes.”

- Will Alexander, Manager of Capacity Building, Tipping Point Community

INSIGHT 2: THE “TEACHER” MATTERS.

All “teachers” need support in maintaining well-being, but the SED of some “teachers” can be most impactful to the well-being of all.

- The “teacher” is parent/caregiver from year 0-5 and then primarily it’s the classroom educator after that.
- For caregivers: Mitigating stress (i.e. childcare, financial upward mobility) helps the SED of not only the parent, but the child.
- For classroom teachers: Year 5 of a teacher’s teaching career is an important year because fundamental skills are in place, but will can start to wane if WB (i.e. work/life balance) is not taken into consideration.
 - Teacher WB is helpful for retention too!
- There’s more unraveling to do when we talk about adults than when we talk about kids.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Target/work with the year 5 teacher to develop their own WB skillset first
- Target/work with the caregiver (usually mom) from pre-natal to year 5
- Identify the characteristics that make a “teacher” proficient at teaching S/E skills
- Consider how curriculum that builds S/E skills would look and feel different for an adult than it would for a child (i.e., more time, more 1:1 support)

#3) Humans need authentic connections to effectively pursue well-being.

“

Kids need to feel connected to learn.”

- Courtney Garcia, CEO of Primary School

“

There were two objectives at our summer staff retreat: 1) Am I safe? and 2) Am I loved?” I was like... I came to the right place.”

- Courtney Garcia, CEO of Primary School

“

The things that were indicating ok-ness [in school] were not necessarily predicting success [in life]. There's a disconnect between school and lifetime success.”

- Megan Foran, Senior Schools Partnership Manager, Character Lab

“

What about getting teachers to talk about life- about real human connection? That's where we can absorb and be our best.”

- Luisa Pinto, Teacher at Children's Day School

“

[People] want to be part of a community; they want the support of people like them and they want to support other people...We're getting the most impact with our year-long program where we go on a retreat together at the beginning and end, and then meet regularly throughout.”

- Robert Thomas, Executive Director at Mindful Schools

“

In Middle School, it's mostly other peers who have the most impact on kids.”

- Lesley Martin, Executive Director at SafeSpace

INSIGHT 3: HUMANS NEED AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY PURSUE WELL-BEING.

There are many habits that contribute to one's WB, but human connection stands out as a strong need and an impactful entry point into habits development.

- Connection can mean connection to **self** (self awareness), connection to **others** (relationships), or connection to **world** (communities).
- Learning happens through relationships. For 0-12, the most important relationship is the parent/caregiver(s). At the beginning of adolescence, this changes to peers.
- Human connection works best in person (i.e. Circles, retreats). It also might happen within online communities.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Focus on authentic connection as the habit to build
- Leverage appropriate spheres of influence depending on age (i.e. peers for middle school age)
- Consider how online vs. offline communities differ in terms of the capacity they have to build relationships

**#4) SED is a practice,
not just a program,
(and it begins with the
“teacher” first).**

“

It's been crazy to see that even one yoga class can have an effect.”

- Will Alexander, Manager of Capacity Building, Tipping Point Community

“

Teachers implicitly model and teach through their own examples. The key is to practice in your personal life first.”

- Julia Pool, Founder of Burn-In Mindset

“

A program is successful if [teachers] are empowered; if there is transfer and authenticity.”

- Katie Goddard, Teacher and Researcher, Adler School of Education

“

We now support an educator's journey as a mindfulness practitioner. We have the potential to have a lifetime relationship with them.”

- Robert Thomas, Executive Director at Mindful Schools

INSIGHT 4: SED IS A PRACTICE, NOT JUST A PROGRAM (AND IT BEGINS WITH THE “TEACHER” FIRST).

Guiding “teachers” toward a personal and sustained practice first, sets the stage for a successful and long-term adoption of a program.

- Micro Moves: Little things go a long way.
 - Ex: Instead of saying “I can’t do this” say “I haven’t figured it out yet.”
- Adults model and teach through their own examples.
- In a school setting, teacher choice is helpful to motivate teachers to develop habits/skills.
- Ultimately, developing WB in “teachers” (teachers/parents/caregivers) first helps students because students mirror adults.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Target adults integrating the practice into their personal life first
- Create experiences where “teachers” develop their own schema for habits
- Train for micro moves
- Study the SED of adults

**#5) Positive
experiences lead to
mindset shifts.**

“

Curriculum is not the most important thing. Experiential process is.”

- Daren Dickson, Chief Culture Officer at Valor Academy

“

Valor is hard to replicate. [So we] design experiences that introduce [people] to important mindset shifts, so that they ask for more.”

- Daren Dickson, Chief Culture Officer at Valor Academy

“

If the environment you go back to is so different than the retreat experience you just had, you could end up feeling helpless instead of empowered.”

- Katie Goddard, Teacher and Researcher at Alder School of Education

INSIGHT 5: POSITIVE EXPERIENCES LEAD TO MINDSET SHIFTS.

A positive experience can be the impetus to a mindset shift that can motivate an educator to develop habits, which in turn can lead to a practice.

- Fredrickson’s “Broaden and Build Theory”: Positive emotions broaden and open up the mind to novel experiences, thoughts, ideas, which in turn build up one’s psychological resources over time.
- Sometimes a mindset shift comes from one catalyzing experience, and sometimes from a series of smaller multiple experiences.
- Stages matter: For new teachers they might need a big experience. For experienced teachers, they may need more fine-tuning.
- Environment matters: The “experience” needs to fall somewhere between novel enough (so positive emotions are felt) and familiar enough (so it doesn’t feel overwhelmingly different than home).

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Create joy for teachers
- Study the necessary mindset shifts for teacher WB and student WB
- Teacher retreats with a way to take part of the experience back home (so it doesn’t feel so different)
- Online communities that can account for diverse needs and perspectives

#6) The debate over whole school VS. teacher choice needs to shift to a conversation about how to balance BOTH.

“

You can't force teachers to do things they don't feel comfortable with, but [at the same time] a school needs to have an aligned vision.”

- Luisa Pinto, Teacher at Children's Day School

“

[We started with teachers. Then,] teachers wanted to move beyond the classroom and affect change in the climate of the entire school.”

- Robert Thomas, Executive Director at Mindful Schools

“

The difference between teacher choice and schoolwide approach? You could go wrong both ways. There has not been a study that has studied this.”

- Megan Foran, Senior School Partnerships Manager at Character Lab

INSIGHT 6: THE DEBATE OVER WHOLE SCHOOL VS. TEACHER CHOICE NEEDS TO SHIFT TO A CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW TO BALANCE BOTH.

Integrated whole-school approaches help create sustainability and support; teacher choice helps create motivation and empowerment. Both are needed for success.

- It's important to take a look at what already exists in the environment- the strengths and the gaps.
- We're not yet sure which comes first- aligning on a vision or giving choice to teachers- but at some point, both should happen.
 - If you start with a schoolwide approach that not everyone is aligned with, then you could run into teacher resentment and de-motivation.
 - If you start with all teacher choice and no schoolwide approach, it's hard to figure out what is working and students may not actually develop any habits.
- Different teachers will have different SEWB needs at different times and so differentiation and choice is important. This is true for students too.
- A movement cannot take off if not everyone is aligned on the vision.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Support aligned vision-setting
- Teacher choice in WB professional/personal development
- Study how to balance whole-school and teacher choice (i.e. which should come first)

#7) SED is hard to measure, but growth and transfer are indicators of impact.

“

Folks feel unhappy with test scores as the only measure. [There's] no consensus for other way to do it.”

- Lillian Dunn, Consultant for Transcend and Valor

“

**Assessing SED is more
QUALITATIVE than
QUANTITATIVE. You need
more information than at one
point in time.”**

- Lillian Dunn, Consultant for Transcend and Valor

“

Stories and anecdotes are better measures for mental health. [For example,] we [at SafeSpace] know this has saved lives.”

- Lesley Martin, Executive Director at SafeSpace

INSIGHT 7: SED IS HARD TO MEASURE, BUT GROWTH AND TRANSFER ARE INDICATORS OF IMPACT.

There's no true consensus on how to measure SED, but we know growth over time and transfer of skill to another context (as evidenced through qualitative research) are indicators of impact.

- The SEAD Commission (from CASEL) is currently working on creating SED standards.
- There are equity issues. The SED data shows low-income communities are disadvantaged again.
- Mental health surveys are tricky to conduct.
- BIG DATA is a challenge- as there are only 20-30 kids in one classroom.
- Quality review includes: school culture, schedule, attendance, observing teacher meetings, interviews, tour of the school.
- Self assessment can work if student can also provide evidence to back it up.
- 360 assessments are promising.
 - Ex: Student reaches out to 5 people in their life to ask how they have demonstrated kindness this week.
- Age matters. The bar has to shift as we move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Test out new measurement tools (like self-assessments and 360s)
- Support organizations in their qualitative research
- Study and incorporate human development into measurement tools
- Enable organizations to define what impact means them

OPPORTUNITIES:

- #1) Look for environments that are conducive to SEWB.**
- #2) Prioritize working with the Year 5 teacher.**
- #3) Focus on building authentic connections.**
- #4) Start with developing a practice for the adult first.**
- #5) Design positive experiences that can spark mindset shifts for the teacher.**
- #6) Balance whole-school approach and teacher choice.**
- #7) Design new measurement tools to track growth and transfer.**

IDEAS (so far) ■

- Teacher retreats (with scholarship oppty's) for their own personal SED
- List of Teacher PD programs aligned with SED with an oppt'y to apply for a grant to bring the SED concept back to the classroom
- Pay it Forward Method- one teacher goes on the retreat/program and then nominates and offers to pay \$ toward another teacher attending
- For Measurement: Nominating “kindness spotters” in schools to look for evidence of kindness transferred
- Local Hero Concept: find people in cmnty's who are already doing this work and then support them in their efforts and measurement