



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

**Laboratory
Schools**

THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

*Crescat scientia;
vita excolatur*

Let knowledge grow from
more to more; and so be
human life enriched

—University of Chicago motto

The most important attitude
that can be formed is that of
desire to go on learning

—Lab founder John Dewey

EDUCATION AT THE LABORATORY SCHOOLS

Lab empowers and educates all children to ask questions, develop paths of inquiry, and challenge conventional thinking in pursuit of original ideas. To be successful, Lab must support all aspects of a young person's development—academic and cognitive, social and emotional.

At Lab there is an enthusiasm for big questions that could only happen in a school that is part of the University of Chicago. Because we are part of the University of Chicago, Lab people are passionate about inquiry and ideas, creative thinking, and constructive discourse.

For nearly 125 years, the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools have sought to embody the ideals for education espoused by founders Alice and John Dewey. University President William Rainey Harper recruited John Dewey to the University of Chicago in 1894 not only to head the two-year old university's Department of Philosophy, but because Harper was interested in building bridges between scholarship and the professions. Dewey's philosophies and practices set the stage for a transformation in education around the world—and it started here, at the University of Chicago and at Lab.

The Lab approach to teaching and inspiring children has always hinged upon the belief that to live is to learn. Importantly, the child is at the center of the educational experience and the children are to be taken seriously—as thinkers and as contributors in a community of learners. Adults at Lab never underestimate the knowledge that each child brings to class. That mutual respect cultivates a confidence in the learner that allows them to question, challenge, and create.

Like the rest of the University, in Lab classrooms inquiry is at the heart of what we do. Our children, in partnership with one another and their teachers, ask not just *why?* But *what if?* and *how come?* and pursue those lines of inquiry—and resulting answers—down any number of paths.

What's in a question you ask?
Everything.

—Lab founder John Dewey

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO: CONTEXT THAT DEFINES THE LAB EXPERIENCE

Because the Laboratory Schools are part of the world-renowned University of Chicago, the importance of intellectual life—of thought and exploration—infuses everything we do across all aspects of our curriculum. Foundational to the work we do at Lab are the University's identity and values:

The University of Chicago is an urban research university that has driven new ways of thinking since 1890. Our commitment to free and open inquiry draws inspired scholars to our global campuses, where ideas are born that challenge and change the world.

At the University of Chicago, we empower individuals to challenge conventional thinking in pursuit of original ideas. Students in the College develop critical, analytical, and writing skills in our rigorous, interdisciplinary core curriculum. Through graduate programs, students test their ideas with UChicago scholars, and become the next generation of leaders in academia, industry, nonprofits, and government.

Source: www.uchicago.edu/about

Consistent with this vision, but in age appropriate ways, the Laboratory Schools teach children to be critical thinkers, analytical problem-solvers, and, as John Dewey had hoped, “contributing members of a democratic society.” To do that, we must nurture our children to have the social-emotional skills, the confidence, and the openness to be full participants in their world now, in college, and beyond.

Everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and factions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life.

—Lab founder John Dewey

At Lab we create and nurture the hallmark habits of critical thinking and complex problem-solving. Our work is grounded in some core beliefs and concepts:

Questioning comes naturally to all children, and Lab encourages each child to seek paths of inquiry and interest.

Open-mindedness is a tool that allows students to be flexible when solving problems and to accept differing points of view as viable solutions.

A respect for evidence is foundational, whether in the physics lab or a humanities class. Students learn to shape their own opinions and then fully leverage evidence to reshape their ideas.

Agency and voice in their world empowers Lab students from the very start. They grow to have confidence, respectfully query others, and express their own ideas.

Diversity and inclusion are essential to academic excellence. Lab seeks to assemble a community that reflects the many differences and viewpoints that shape our world—a major reason many families choose Lab.

The ideas of founder John Dewey, which shaped education around the world, still underpin the Lab experience.

John Dewey on learning:

- Learning is a constructive not passive process that lasts a lifetime
- People learn best as a community of learners
- A diverse community creates for all a new and broader environment and contributes to a stimulating culture of inquiry
- Schools should empower students with the tools of self-direction
- Education starts with the child, who helps direct their intellectual journey
- Student and teacher learn from each other—Lab teachers never underestimate the knowledge a child, no matter how young, brings to class
- Authenticity, in the form of hands-on, real-world experience, is critical

John Dewey on citizenship:

- At its best, school prepares students to be meaningful members of a democratic society
- A school community should foster a spirit of service

THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION: WHY A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK. WHY NOW

As the Laboratory Schools head toward our 2021 quasiquintennial (125th) anniversary, we are focused on delivering the most outstanding education to our students, and doing it in a manner that instantiates the core values of the University of Chicago.

This framework:

Outlines the aims we have for Lab in terms of educational excellence—excellence that meets the needs of the whole child in the tradition of progressive education. (appendix 3)

Places great value on the systems, structures, and resources needed to help a large, complex institution work more efficiently and effectively with the goal of balancing autonomy, accountability, and coherence—certainly in our pedagogy, but also in our organizational design.

Provides the direction to best support an outstanding educational program and sustain a thriving collaborative school community.

Now is the time to look strategically and intentionally to the future of our school.

Lab has grown +46%, to 2,188 students in 2019 from 1,500 students in 1990. Much of that growth has occurred over the past eight years (+29% increase) and many new faculty and staff have been hired to support these students. The past eight years have also seen a near total transformation of Lab's physical plant, through a significant investment in new construction and the Historic Campus renovation. Additionally, after the retirement of a longstanding director, a short tenure for his replacement, and then an interim director, the University recruited a new director in 2017. In 2018 the school initiated a strategic planning process—the first in at least 15 years.

The planning process was designed to bring together a community to collaborate across divisions and constituencies.

In partnership with the All Schools Council, the Lab Board, and University leadership, Lab engaged Dialogos, a strategic consulting and leadership firm. The planning process was designed to bring as many voices and perspectives into play as possible—to create a dialogue about who we are, what we do, what we value, and what we hope to be and do in the future.

We engaged hundreds of Lab faculty, staff, parents, alumni, students, board members, and University of Chicago leaders in one-on-one and small group conversations. A quantitative survey engaged thousands more by inviting the entire community of Lab employees, parents, students, and alumni to contribute ideas and share priorities. Underpinning this inclusive work was a scan of all existing data: Lab’s ISACS accreditation self-assessment and final reports; the student health and wellness survey; and data from multiple quantitative parent and employee surveys.

This strategic framework outlines our priorities and will focus our energy and work. We believe this work will guide our community to a place of trust, stability, and cohesion focused on shared purpose. An operational plan will be developed to detail the work activities of the entire school, including daily operations, necessary to achieve the framework priorities.

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THE LABORATORY SCHOOLS MISSION

The Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest members of the University of Chicago's academic community. We ignite and nurture an enduring spirit of scholarship, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We value learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity.

About Lab's Mission Statement

In 2013, the Lab community worked extensively and collaboratively to simplify and focus the Schools' mission statement. Every faculty and staff member had a chance to participate, as did many parents, alumni, and students—even some of our youngest. The many constituents reflected upon what makes Lab a wonderful place to teach and to learn? What about Lab should be preserved at all cost?

Ours is a community of independent thinkers with varied points of view. The school community valued that and, with enthusiasm and despite the potential complexity of the task, agreed upon these 38 words. The many participants felt that Lab stayed true to the central ideas that have anchored this institution for more than 100 years.

Aligning Lab's Mission with the University of Chicago's Values

Lab is unique among the nation's leading independent schools because it is part of the University of Chicago, and as such is guided by the core values that are foundational to the University including academic excellence and rigor, free and open discourse, and a passion for big ideas. In serving the academic community of the University, Lab provides a venue for University faculty to build new relationships, in the context of their children's education, that strengthen the University community of scholars.

VISION FOR THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE CONSISTENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Arriving at one goal is the
starting point to another.

—Lab founder John Dewey

The goals and actions identified as part of this strategic framework can be aligned under four overarching themes:

- I. Building a model of progressive education for the 21st century**
- II. Ensuring a healthy and inclusive community**
- III. Improving leadership, governance, and decision-making**
- IV. Securing Lab's fiscal soundness and an appropriately-resourced future**

THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

BUILDING A MODEL OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Taking into account the whole child, we will deliver an educational experience that reflects the highest level of academic excellence, one that shapes and defines the field of progressive education.

If we teach today's students
as we taught yesterday's,
we rob them of tomorrow.

—Lab founder John Dewey

1. **GOAL**

Define a vision of the Lab experience that combines the University's values of academic excellence, rigor, and open inquiry with Lab's model of progressive education in an environment that promotes the overall health, development, and wellness of the child.

1.1 Reaffirm, by clearly articulating in partnership with University of Chicago leadership, how Lab reflects and aligns with University mission and values.

1.2 Define a portrait of a Lab graduate. This would include identifying essential Lab experiences, at each developmental stage, and inform a school vision statement.

1.3 Create space for community dialogue around the balance between rigor and wellness.

2. GOAL

Advance/lead the practice of progressive education.

2.1 Review what is being taught at Lab and how—define the arc of education grades N-12, and identify gaps and opportunities using the Progressive Education Network’s definition (appendix 3) of progressive education as a starting point.

2.2 Reestablish Lab as a convener of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to help advance the field of pre-collegiate education.

2.3 Clarify how progressive education principles, including but not limited to interdisciplinary practices, should inform Lab’s educational program.

2.4 Expand the methods and practices that 1) allow technology to inform and help shape the learning experience and 2) develop students’ digital literacy.

2.5 Educate parents and community about what progressive education looks like at Lab.

2.6 Explore whether a shared theme or topic can inspire and enhance interdisciplinary teaching practices.

3. GOAL

Cultivate and support Lab's connection to the University of Chicago, and Chicago institutions and organizations, and create opportunities for learning, service, and engagement with the South Side, local, and global community.

3.1 Inventory existing connections and partnerships with the University and outside organizations.

3.2 Explore additional systemic approaches to structure internships, experiences, research engagement for all high school students who want an experience and ensure that the students' goals are central.

3.3 Establish systems and/or roles that allow UChicago and other collaborations and opportunities to be managed more strategically and holistically.

3.4 Leverage UChicago international centers to benefit the Lab experience for both students and teachers.

THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

ENSURING A HEALTHY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Programmatic excellence can only exist if all our members are safe, healthy, and well in the most foundational ways. We believe that excellence—and the overall health of our school—requires that our community be diverse and inclusive.

The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action.

—Lab founder John Dewey

4. **GOAL**

Elevate health and wellness to be a central feature of the Lab experience as we prepare and model for our students ways to succeed in a changing world and be contributing members of a democratic society.

4.1 Establish Wellness Councils to promote wellness for all members of the Lab community (students, employees, and families) and ensure that collaboration across the schools around social-emotional health and wellness is ongoing and consistent.

4.2 Address the issues that the Lab community has identified as the root causes of stress: homework load, schedules and start times, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) integration in the classrooms, parent outreach.

4.3 Develop/establish a system to monitor the implementation of, and assess the effectiveness of, Lab's SEL programs.

4.4 Increase the Lab community's capacity for collaboration and cohesion, build resilience in navigating difficult conversations, and establish expectations for kindness and thoughtful communication among all stakeholders.

- 4.5 Embrace** the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning framework (appendix 4) school-wide and apply the ideals of the Challenge Success program.
- 4.6 Educate** parents and prospective families about the social-emotional learning and health and wellness programs being implemented in the school.

5. GOAL

Ensure that the Lab program is diverse and inclusive—consistent with University of Chicago values

5.1 Partner with University of Chicago leadership to better articulate how the University’s vision around diversity and inclusion should be realized in an N-12 school environment.

5.2 Strengthen efforts to build and support a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, knowing this is a hallmark of educational excellence.

5.3 Raise financial aid resources to expand access, affordability, and inclusion. Establish systems to support and measure progress.

5.4 Execute a fundraising campaign that ensures Lab can fully meet the demonstrated financial aid needs of families, taking into account wraparound services, extended day, Summer Lab.

5.5 Elevate the capacity of all community members to engage across lines of difference and diversity of thought, and develop a truly inclusive school.

THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

IMPROVING LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND DECISION-MAKING

Lab will devote attention to making foundational improvements at the operational, cultural, and physical plant levels to ensure that people are able to do their work effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively.

Communication is the process
of creating participation,
of making common what had
been isolated and singular.

—Lab founder John Dewey

6. GOAL

Improve the school governance/leadership/management structure to make it more efficient, transparent, and reflective of the Lab community.

6.1 Strengthen policies, procedures, and decision-making practices.

6.2 Build systems, structures, and skills to work together (for all stakeholders) in clear and transparent ways, and communicate these systems and structures.

6.3 Leverage the All Schools Council as a representative body that gives feedback and input into school-wide decisions.

6.4 Ensure appropriate stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to offer input to inform decision-making.

7. GOAL

Invest in and steward human resources, physical plant, and natural environment so that they support our mission.

7.1 Assess and recommend scheduling that supports pedagogy and school-wide programming, including flexible time for collaboration and student engagement.

7.2 Grow the organization's capacity to use technology to advance our mission and organizational effectiveness.

7.3 Inventory all spaces, comparing current use to long-term programmatic need. Identify long-term physical plant needs (i.e., swimming pool, wellness spaces, use of Lillie or Wilder Houses, green spaces.)

7.4 Create time and opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in professional development activities and innovative/interdisciplinary program planning.

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THE 2019 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

SECURING LAB'S FISCAL SOUNDNESS AND AN APPROPRIATELY-RESOURCED FUTURE

We will steward our financial resources in ways that support our mission and this framework, and do so with the greatest care and sense of fiscal responsibility. This will entail making strategic choices to be more efficient in our operations, invest in fundraising, and implement new financial controls.

Set your sights not just on
the next few weeks ... set your
sights on the years ahead—
because our vision will look
that far ahead.

—William Rainey Harper,
first president of the University of Chicago

8. GOAL

Lab will maintain sound fiscal management and ensure an appropriately financed and endowed future for our program and students.

8.1 Commit to financial policies and guidelines that promote efficient and transparent operations.

8.2 Ensure fundraising supports annual budget needs unmet by tuition, and also supports the long-term health of the school.

8.3 Continue to support a strong institutional advancement program, and to grow and strengthen the philanthropic culture of the school community, to facilitate annual and long-term capital giving for the endowment.

8.4 Launch a multiyear capital campaign to secure the financial resources required to implement some of the strategic and operational initiatives outlined in this strategic framework.

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MOVING FORWARD

By the turn of the century, John Dewey's experiment in education had captured the attention of teachers at every level of the teaching system. Its radically new teaching practices represented a turning point, not only for formal education but also for larger views of childhood learning.

—The University of Chicago Faculty: A Centennial View

The Laboratory Schools are at an important juncture. With outstanding facilities, new and newly established leadership, and a deep commitment from the University, Lab has the opportunity to become a distinctive leader in education for the next century, a school that integrates the University of Chicago's values of rigor and excellence with Lab's model of child-centered progressive education. This strategic framework guides our efforts to achieve this goal and embodies Lab's dedication to its students and families.

APPENDIX 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SPRING 2018

- Selected a strategic partner. Under the aegis of the All Schools Council (ASC), Lab identified, interviewed, and made requests for proposals from a variety of potential strategic thinking partners
- May 23: Dialogos engaged as strategic planning partner
- Throughout the spring: Scan of all existing data: ISACS reports; student health and wellness survey; historic quantitative parent and employee surveys

JUNE 2018

- Throughout June: Dialogos conducts one-on-one conversations with Leadership Team
- June 8: Idea Cafe. All employees, parents, and Board invited to participate
- June 13-14: Full day session with ASC and Leadership Team; Full day with Leadership Team
- June 19-20: Onsite with Dialogos in Boston

JULY 2018

- July 11: Dialogos discussion with Graham-Pelton and C. Abelmann
- July 16-17: "Discovery Days". Dialogos conducts:
 - Individual meetings with R.J. Zimmer, D. Diermeier, D. Fithian
 - Parent session (60 people). All parents invited
 - Staff sessions (two @ 25 people). All staff invited
 - Faculty Association leadership session

AUGUST 2018

- August 9: Dialogos Zoom session with “Faculty Container”—chairs from each division and FA leadership
- August 16: Sponsor group Zoom call
- August 22: Dialogos Zoom work session with “Faculty Container” (chairs from each division and FA leadership)
- August 30: Dialogos sessions with 1) Leadership Team and 2) Faculty Container
- Throughout August: various sessions to help director prep for new employee and start of school year meetings

SEPTEMBER 2018

- Throughout September: Conference calls with faculty chairs and principals of each division to prepare for independent work to be done during Faculty Meetings
- Throughout September: Faculty Meetings devoted to strategic planning
- Throughout September: Dialogos/Lab work on quantitative survey design

OCTOBER 2018

- October 2: All parents invited to attend parent dialogue session; N-2 faculty session, all invited; Board session
- October 3: Dialogues with student council leaders to discuss student involvement; Leadership Team session; MS session; LS session
- October 4: HS session; Academic Leadership Team session
- October 18: Zoom dialogue with 25 students
- October 20: Small group invited to test survey and offer feedback (faculty, staff, parents, alumni)
- Throughout October: Dialogos/Lab work on quantitative survey design. Survey programming

NOVEMBER 2018

- November 6: Dialogos call with FA leadership
- November 6: Survey feedback from ASC. Entire group invited to test
- November 9: Dialogos onsite at Lab to share highlights from Reflection/Mirror Document with entire faculty/ staff. Significant time devoted to allowing people to share feelings and speak
- November 16: Quantitative survey invite goes out to all audiences. Survey remains open through December 2
- November 26: DesignShop sponsor group Zoom call
- Throughout November: Mirror document drafted with input from Leadership and UChicago administration; DesignShop planned and 63 attendees (employees, parents, students, board, alumni, UC leadership) identified and recruited

DECEMBER 2018

- December 12: Mirror Document shared with all employees
- December 17: Dialogos onsite to discuss Mirror Document. All employees invited
- December 18: Mirror Document shared with all families. List of January DesignShop participants shared

JANUARY 2019

- January 7: DesignShop Sponsor Group conference call
- Jan 14: DesignShop Sponsor Group prep meeting
- January 15–17: DesignShop conducted. Sponsor Group meets twice daily
- January 18: An update discussing DesignShop and sharing executive summary of the quantitative survey is sent to all employees, parents, Middle and High School students, board, and alumni
- Throughout January: DesignShop working groups meet to follow up and further develop ideas

FEBRUARY 2019

- Throughout February: Sponsor group and Dialogos shape initial framework pillars and drafts

MARCH 2019

- Throughout March: Sponsor group and Dialogos shape initial framework pillars and drafts
- March 18: Special Session Lab Board Meeting to validate pillars and offer input/course corrections; prioritize
- Throughout March: pillars revised to reflect community input

APRIL 2019

- April 12: Professional Development Day: nearly 300 employees participate in generative sessions around the strategic framework. All invited to participate
- Throughout April: pillars revised to reflect community input
- April 22: Dialogos and Lab sponsor work session

MAY 2019

- May 10: Dialogos and Lab sponsor Zoom work session
- May 14: Dialogos and Lab sponsor Zoom work session
- May 15: Dialogos and Lab sponsor Zoom work session
- May 20: Community engagement groups. All employees, parents and HS students invited
- May 23: Lab Board meeting, feedback invited; Leadership team feedback invited

JUNE 2019

- June 27: First round input from Provost Daniel Diermeier and Vice Provost Daniel Abebe

SEPTEMBER 2019

- September 23: Share framework at All Schools Council Meeting

OCTOBER 2019

- October 16: Share framework with the Lab Board
- October 17: Share framework with broader Lab community

APPENDIX 2: DESIGNSHOP ATTENDEES

DESIGN SPONSOR GROUP

Charlie Abelmann, director
Catherine Braendel, '81, former parent, strategic advisor, dir. comm.

Angela Cobb, parent,
MS council

Carla Ellis, parent,
asst. director

Carl Farrington, parent,
LS teacher

David Fithian,
Sr. VP UChicago

Kiel Gray, exec. asst.
to the director

Sharon Housinger, parent, HS teacher, VP Faculty Association

Lena Jessen, parent,
board member

Mark Krewatch, parent,
HS teacher

Carla Young, former parent,
N-2 principal

PARTICIPANTS

Sylvie Anglin, parent,
LS principal

Zainab Baig, parent,
HS council

Sandy Bixby, MS principal

Brad Brickner, LS, MS,
HS teacher

Amanda Brown, parent,
HR staff

Otto Brown, student

Ana Campos, parent,
HS dean

Damon Cates, exec. dir., alumni relations & development

Peri Chickering, Dialogos

Rebecca Chmielewski, assoc. dir., family life programs

Aden Chon, student

Louis Coronel, N-2 tech coordinator

Colleen Coyle, parent, dir., family life programs

Tony Del Campo, parent,
MS teacher

Joe Drogos, MS teacher

Susan Farmer, parent,
MS council

Christy Gerst, HS teacher

Skip Griffin, Dialogos

Eve Grobman, student

Brian Hewlett, dir., innovation & tech

Monica Hughson, parent,
MS council

Rickey Harris, N-2 dean

Sharon Harrison, HS teacher

Bill Isaacs, Dialogos

Mark Krewatch, parent,
HS teacher

Michael Lach, parent

Brent LaRowe, parent,
registrar

David Light, '80, parent

Sushma Lohitsa, LS teacher

Elizabeth Luna, former parent,
N-2 teacher

Jean-Franklin Magrou, parent,
LS, MS, HS teacher

Philip Matsikas, LS teacher

Erin McCarthy, parent,
LS teacher

Rosa McCullagh, former parent,
HS teacher

Christopher McGowan, parent,
board member

Shiva Menta, student

Samantha Morales, parent,
ESH council

Maureen Movrich, parent,
N-2 teacher

Nicole Neal, dir. student
services

Michael O'Connor, parent

Uzma Panjwani, LS assis.
principal

Noah Rachlin, HS dean

Irene Reed, '92, parent, exec.
dir. admissions and fin. aid

Abundio Rodriguez, parent,
LS council

Priyanka Rupani, '06, dir.
diversity, equity & inclusion

Jeremy Schwartz, parent,
MS teacher

Smita Shah, '92, alumni assoc.
executive board

Zach Sharp, student

Kristin Plaut Smith,
N-2 teacher

Shea Soucie, parent

Kate Surmeier, parent,
N-2 counselor

Kristen Szewczyk, parent,
lead nurse

Andrea Wishom, parent,
board member

Sheila Woods, coordinator

APPENDIX 3: THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION NETWORK'S EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The purpose of school expands beyond prevailing education policy and practice. Progressive educators support their students' deep intellectual development and healthy identity formation—as developing individuals, as active learners within a school community, and as engaged citizens in the broader world.

Education must...

- amplify students' voice, agency, conscience, and intellect to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world.
- encourage the active participation of students in their learning, in their communities, and in the world.
- respond to the developmental needs of students, and focus on their social, emotional, intellectual, cognitive, cultural, and physical development.
- honor and nurture students' natural curiosity and innate desire to learn, fostering internal motivation and the discovery of passion and purpose.
- emerge from the interests, experiences, goals, and needs of diverse constituents, fostering empathy, communication and collaboration across difference.
- foster respectfully collaborative and critical relationships between students, educators, parents/guardians, and the community.

Source: progressiveeducationnetwork.org/mission

APPENDIX 4: THE COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL) FRAMEWORK

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

CASEL identifies five core competencies:

1. Self-awareness

The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

2. Self-management

The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

3. Social awareness

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

4. Relationship skills

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

5. Responsible decision-making

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.





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