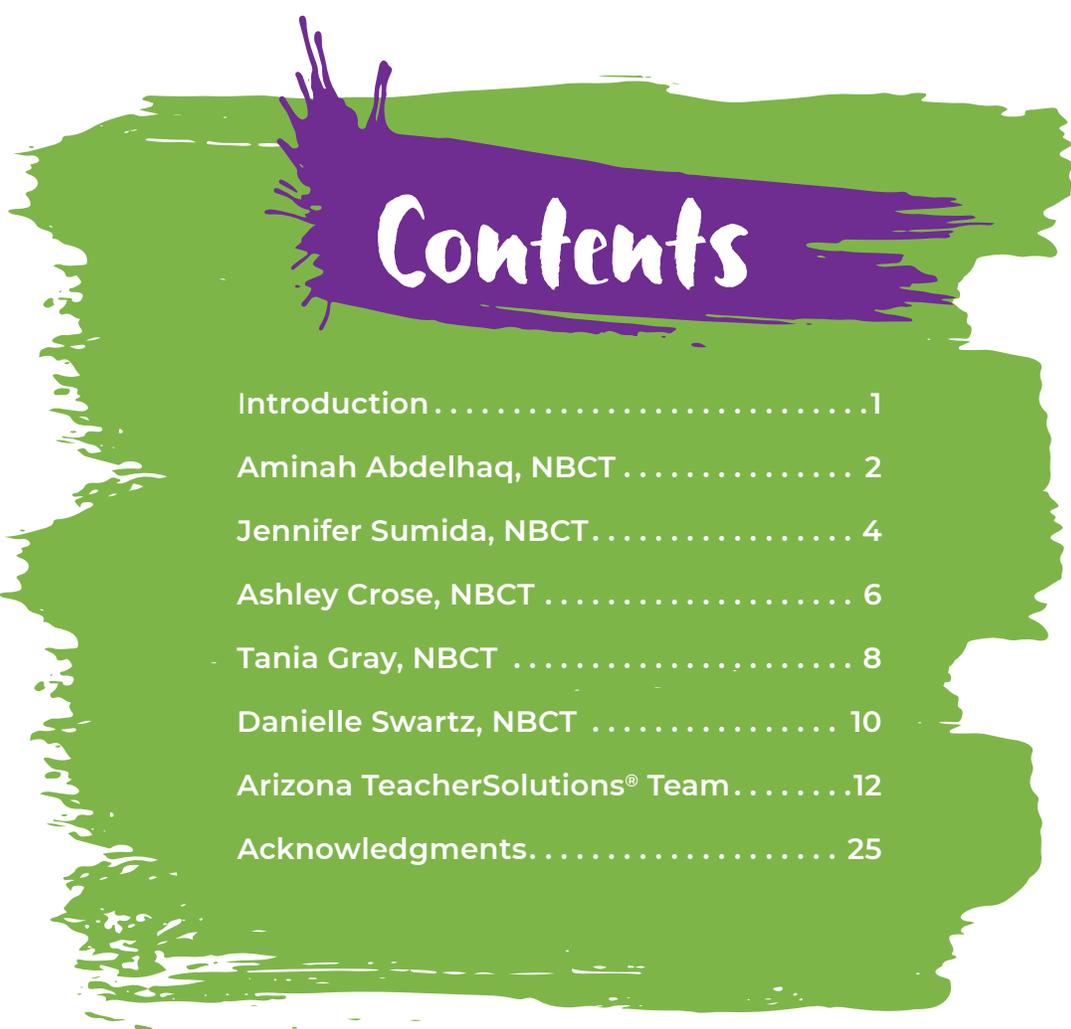


New Possibilities

Through Connections and Experiences



2022 Teacher
Leadership Report



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Introduction

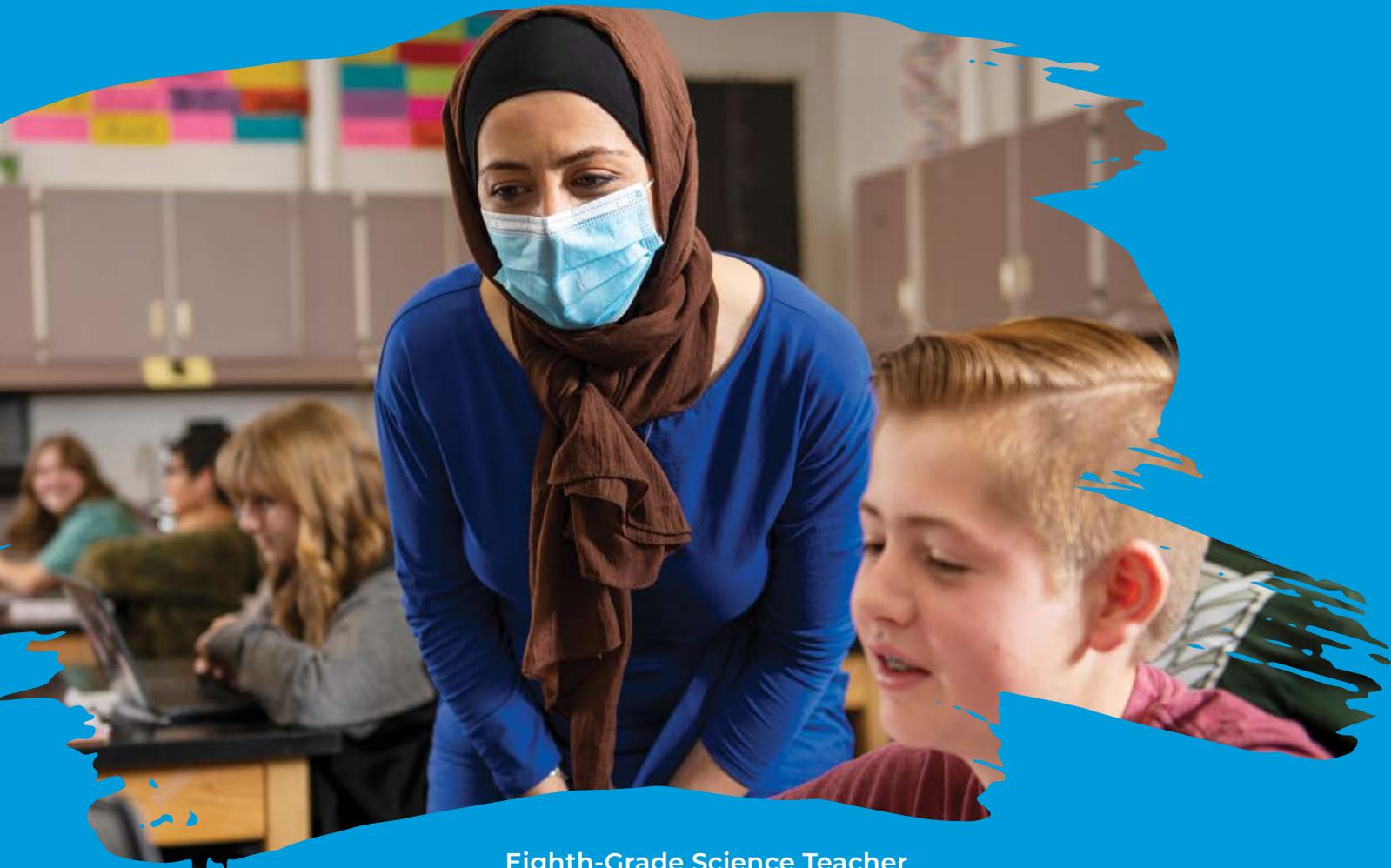
One of our strongest human needs is that of **connection**. The power of connection can be found in a range of experiences, from collectively solving a problem to individually reading a text. Intentional pedagogical decisions ensure that Arizona students engage in **experiences** that create a connection with, to, and for their peers, their school, and their community.

Arizona teacher leaders are awakening **possibilities** for students across the state to connect and experience unifying themes of courage, vulnerability, perseverance, and compassion.

The Arizona K12 Center is humbled to lift up the work of five Arizona teacher leaders' unwavering commitment for each student to reach and exceed their unique potential. The craft of each teacher spotlighted, while different, shares a commonality: the humanity found in becoming scholars of our K-12 academic areas through opportunities to try, learn, try again, and learn more. Our humanity is necessary in both becoming scholars in our content areas and in teaching others. Students see our productive struggle and how we embrace the opportunity to engage in learning. They sense our confidence in our identities and feel our care for them as individuals with their own experiences and connections. How will we support each student in seeing the possibilities?

We acknowledge the past two years' experiences have tested boundaries of resiliency and hope. As you read through the *2022 Teacher Leadership Report*, may the stories serve as a reminder of the passion and expertise of our profession committed to Arizona's students.

Aminah Abdelhaq, NBCT



Eighth-Grade Science Teacher
Franklin Junior High School
Mesa Public Schools

In Aminah Abdelhaq's classes, students not only learn scientific concepts but about themselves.

"If they know themselves, they understand what they want, what they need, and are able to articulate those needs," she explains. "That's the first step."

This work in self-awareness and relationship building starts as soon as Abdelhaq meets her students. Near the beginning of the school year, she takes students through team-building exercises but also through activities that help them better know themselves, like a simple personality quiz that identifies different personalities as colors. Each year, that exercise leads to energetic discussions between students.

They recognize how some of them need more structure to get work done, 'a gold,' for example, while others are more attuned to emotions, 'a blue.'

"I think that something as simple as this color test, a little survey, then allows them to uncover the complexity of human behavior and relationships," she says. She notes how her classroom is a place for students to safely learn to know themselves. "This is a necessary space for my students. They need a place to exercise their voices. What that looks like for me is a student who feels comfortable enough to be in my room and articulate their needs and feels comfortable enough to disagree with someone else."



If I value you for what you can bring to the table and you do the same for me, then we can change the world together.



Abdelhaq models continually learning to know herself and how to value others. She also shares about her own experiences and growth, like how she began as a social studies teacher but found herself hired to teach science.

Creating this kind of classroom environment “looks like slowing down enough to look at the whole student and knowing that their cultural wealth and their experiences are valued,” she says. “If I value you for what you can bring to the table and you do the same for me, then we can change the world together.”

For the past 13 years, Abdelhaq has taught science at Franklin Junior High School, where she ties her background in social studies into her science curriculum.

“There is so much we can do in science,” she says. “We could be studying a scientific concept but apply it to how it affects people or organisms around the world today. It is looking at science implications and how they affect all facets of our lives, whether that be economic implications, political, ethical, social, or environmental. So, I can take that broad humanities piece from social studies and apply it to scientific content to make it more relatable.”

Along with being the eighth-grade science teacher at Franklin, Abdelhaq is also the yearbook advisor, a service learning coach, and is working toward a master’s degree in educational leadership with a cohort from Mesa Public Schools. In 2017, she became a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in early adolescence science. She earned her Maintenance of Certification in December 2021.

“I wanted more for myself and more for my students,” she says about becoming an NBCT. “National Board really helped me take a look at how I teach and why I’m teaching. It’s given me a framework that I can follow by getting to know my students, which is really the piece I love the most ... building those relationships.”

Abdelhaq’s own experiences shape how she values her students’ experiences and approaches social-emotional learning concepts. She spent her early

childhood in Orlando, Florida, but moved with her family to the West Bank when she was 11 years old. She attended a middle school and high school in Jerusalem for Palestinian-American students who did not have Arabic as their first language. At 18, she returned to the U.S. for college, experiencing culture shock. At times, she says, she has felt in limbo between these cultures she has been a part of.

“I talk about my experiences with my students sometimes and it’s allowed many of them who feel the same to have a platform to share their own experiences with identity. This is the driving force behind my focus on self-awareness and identity,” she explains. “I’m learning alongside my students. When we know ourselves, we can connect with others and build authentic partnerships. The relationships that we build with others will ultimately allow us to eliminate the inequities that exist in our world.”

- 1. How does Abdelhaq use connections and experiences to strengthen her classroom’s community and learning?

- 2. How do you help your students learn to know themselves while also learning class content?

- 3. How do you model your own journey of learning to know yourself for your students?

Jennifer Sumida, NBCT



Third-Grade Teacher

ASU Preparatory Polytechnic STEM Academy

The students in Jennifer Sumida's classroom aren't just young learners but young leaders.

"I provide students with a lot of opportunities to lead in the classroom," Sumida explains. "For example, we have classroom jobs and, throughout my teaching, students are right there assisting me. If I make a mistake, I am okay with students correcting me and I will acknowledge that I made a mistake."

Sumida has taught for three years at ASU Preparatory Polytechnic STEM Academy after teaching for 12 years at Lowell Elementary School in the Phoenix Elementary School District, where she also went to school as a child.

Sumida supports her students in developing both a growth mindset and an innovator's mindset.

"I want my students to be independent," she says. "I want them to transfer whatever we're learning in the classroom to outside of my four walls. I always tell them I'm not always going to be there."

Sumida is "a firm believer in student choice," she says. She gathers their input before creating seating arrangements and offers a variety of options for reading and writing topics. She empowers students to think about the questions they have about a particular topic, and, as a class, determine a driving question that frames their research. While learning

about outer space, for example, they wanted to explore if Pluto is a planet or not and why.

Creating a classroom where students can engage with inquiry and experience productive struggle, though, requires students to be mentally ready to take on that kind of reflection and investigation.

“Without social-emotional learning, it is impossible to meet students’ academic and behavioral needs,” Sumida explains.

This past year, she especially focused on the ‘Zones of Regulation’ with her students. This color-coded approach to self-regulation grew out of cognitive-behavioral therapy and helps students recognize and respond to their emotional state. Paired with reading Marc Brackett’s *Permission to Feel* as a part of the Arizona TeacherSolutions® Team, Sumida has especially embraced the power of social-emotional learning.

“I would love for my students to someday say ‘You know what? Mrs. Sumida gave us the opportunity to get in touch with our feelings, our emotions. But she also gave us a toolbox full of different resources and strategies on what we can do to help change us from the red zone to the yellow zone,’” she explains.

Each school day, Sumida’s students have a morning meeting that includes a class greeting and a check-in about how they are feeling. Sumida also learns more about each student as they learn more about each other. Developing those peer relationships is another important part of setting the groundwork for learning in her classroom.

Through it all, Sumida reminds her students that she is still learning alongside them. She is growing her leadership skills along with her students too. In 2016,

Sumida became a National Board Certified Teacher in early and middle childhood literacy, reading, and language arts. She is now also working toward a second master’s degree in educational leadership through Arizona State University and envisioning how she may expand her leadership to the state level.

Sumida has internalized the growth mindset she instills with her students and is confident that her potential for impact as a leader is endless.

1. How does Sumida use connections and experiences to strengthen her classroom’s community and learning?

2. How do you use social-emotional learning to ensure your students are prepared to learn?

3. How do you develop leadership in your learners?



**I want my students to be independent.
I want them to transfer whatever we’re
learning in the classroom to outside of
my four walls.**



Ashley Crose, NBCT



Social Studies Teacher
Saguaro High School
Scottsdale Unified School District

On a Monday in January, Ashley Crose's Advanced Placement World History students were reading through an account of the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion in India.

"Who wrote this piece?" "How can you tell?" "So, is this a primary or a secondary source?" "How can you tell?" "Why is that important?" Crose asked students through the lesson.

Crose has taught social studies at Saguaro High School in Scottsdale for 19 years. Over time, he has come to intentionally design his classes to create learning experiences.

"I'm not a teacher who will lecture for 52 minutes. I used to be," he says. He credits the National Board process for invigorating his teaching. "That's one of those big changes that I've made. I've seen that if they are doing history instead of me telling them what to know, they enjoy it so much more. And with that inquiry, that kind of questioning, we go so much further."

This past year, he also introduced an elective class focused on the Holocaust and other genocides. Crose has long been passionate about civil and human rights and is a teacher fellow with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



**Learning is messy.
Sometimes I don't have the
answer and I'm learning
along with them. I like when
they ask questions and I
don't know the answer—and
we discover the learning
together.**



"It teaches the kids so much: empathy, caring, and equity, and that we're all human beings," he says. "There's not another class on campus that I can think of that goes to that degree of teaching the kids about the human situation."

Students spend the first half of this class learning about the Holocaust. In the second half, they explore genocides across the globe and ranging from 200 years ago to the present. They talk about genocide in North America (including the history of Indigenous boarding schools, like the one on Indian School Road in Phoenix, and assimilation); South America (Argentina and El Salvador); Africa (Rwanda and Darfur); and Asia (Cambodia, and what is happening with the Uyghurs now in China).

"We're doing a lot of unlearning to learn," he explains. "I think it's a really, really important class as an elective."

Cröse knows how crucial it is for him to build a safe and trusting environment for students to be able to learn and engage with the content of this, or any, of his classes.

"I want my students to feel safe and, if they are willing, able to ask questions and not feel embarrassed. I try to build an equitable learning environment and strive to learn more and be better every day. I want my students to learn empathy, to care for each other, and know people are a lot more alike than most think we are. I want them to embrace and learn from each other's differences."

Cröse emphasizes icebreakers and activities at the start of his classes that help create a safe community. He especially looks to experts like author and teacher Ricky Robertson and others with social-emotional learning and trauma-informed education expertise to guide his own learning.

"Equity in education and trauma-informed care are important to me because it is who I am as an educator," he says. "It's important to be able to have tough conversations about race, gender, human rights, and issues in the community."

He knows his learning and growth need to continue alongside the learning and growth of his students.

"Learning is messy," Cröse explains. "Sometimes I don't have the answer and I'm learning along with them. I like when they ask questions and I don't know the answer—and we discover the learning together."

1. How does Cröse use connections and experiences to strengthen his classroom's community and learning?

2. How do you create trusting spaces in your classroom for potentially difficult conversations?

3. Where do you seek out resources or experts to support your understanding of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching?

Tania Gray, NBCT



English Teacher

Lake Havasu High School
Lake Havasu Unified School District

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* might have been written more than 400 years ago, but teenagers still relate to getting mad at their parents, Tania Gray says with a laugh, referencing Prince Hamlet's anger at his mother in the classic play.

"English is a way to explore our lives, a lens to explore our lives," she explains.

Gray has been helping students at Lake Havasu High School explore their lives through English for the past 23 years. While she brings an easygoing demeanor to class, Gray is very intentional about creating lesson plans that are both thoughtful and engaging, and an atmosphere of comfort and care.

"When students walk into my room, I want them to know we will be getting work done, but they should feel comfortable in my space and confident they will walk away with the skills to be successful on any assessment I assign," she says. "I use authentic humor, and love laughing with my students while including activities that get them thinking and talking about real-world connections to what we are reading."

She also connects writing practice to real-life scenarios. On Writing Workshop Fridays, for example, Gray has students reflect and write about what they would do in a particular situation, like seeing a father who is also a coach yelling and calling his son a loser after their team



My students often comment that I am always in a good mood. While that may not technically be true, I understand they appreciate me as a consistent adult in their lives who is always doing her best to be in the moment.



loses a Little League game, or underage girls asking you to purchase e-cigarettes for them. They then watch news segments and find out how some people did respond to that real-life situation.

Gray knows that the writing and critical thinking skills her students develop in her classroom will serve them wherever life takes them. She’s also had former students share about how the annotation skills she taught them have built their persistence and prepared them to break down larger ideas and difficult texts in college, earning compliments from professors.

To help students further connect high school experiences to life beyond and to help address the teacher shortage, Gray began a two-year education professions course in Lake Havasu High School’s career and technical education department. In the first year, students take courses similar to college introductory-level education classes where they learn education philosophy, classroom management, and other education foundations. In the second year, they have a pretty significant field experience, spending nine weeks with an elementary or middle school teacher, and sometimes leading a full class under their supervising teacher.

Gray started the program six years ago; two students from that first cohort are now college graduates and are in their first year of teaching in the district.

Along with supporting others, Gray has also been intentional about her own learning, whether through reading, attending events, or getting tips through TikTok videos. In 2019, she earned her National Board Certification.

“Being encouraged to try so many new things, especially being mid-career, and just really focusing in on what is best for my students, was really good,” she says of her certification journey. “Being given that opportunity to really think about the question: why am I doing that and how does it benefit my students.

That part of it came naturally but that doesn’t mean I was always doing it.”

The process also helped her feel more confident in her teaching and further sparked her desire to mentor others.

Whether working with other teachers or the students in her English classes, Gray does so with a cool and calm disposition.

“My students often comment that I am always in a good mood,” she notes. “While that may not technically be true, I understand they appreciate me as a consistent adult in their lives who is always doing her best to be in the moment.”

1. How does Gray use connections and experiences to strengthen her classroom’s community and learning?

2. How do you prepare to bring your authentic self to your work each day?

3. How do you connect content to your students’ lives?

Danielle Swartz, NBCT



First-Grade Teacher
Innovation Academy
Amphitheater Public Schools



I want them to feel confident about the growth that they've made, and just be kind humans that make a difference in the world.



Each morning, the first-grade students in Danielle Swartz' classroom say their class mantra together: "My heart is kind. My words are kind. My actions are kind. I am amazing! I make mistakes, and that's OK. My brain is growing each and every day! My feelings are big, but I have control! I practice mindful breathing and meet my goals!"

"Seeing my class do our mantra every morning is easily one of my favorite parts of the day!" Swartz says.

Following the mantra, students have the opportunity to share personal news with the class and have their classmates listen and respond. This builds

community within the class but is also “a critical time of the day when I pick up on things going on in my students’ lives that contribute to their social-emotional health and can follow up or support as needed,” Swartz explains.

This morning routine sets the stage each day for Swartz’ students to feel both safe and empowered to learn. Swartz has been teaching at Innovation Academy, a STEM-focused school in Oro Valley, since it opened five years ago. While she integrates STEM and project-based learning, social-emotional learning is the foundation for her classroom’s routines and procedures.

“Most of all, I want them to feel confident about the growth that they’ve made, and just be kind humans that make a difference in the world,” Swartz says.

Students in Swartz’ class are familiar with the idea of problem-solving, not only with class content but with situations they run into every day. The classroom’s ‘problem-solving space’ provides a corner for students to work together to solve kid-sized problems like disagreements that might have happened during recess, for example.

“After some explicit practice,” Swartz says, “students are amazing at sharing their feelings and finding appropriate solutions that work for all parties.”

Swartz extends the tenets of her classroom to the clubs she leads for the school’s younger students. She rotates through which clubs she leads each year at Innovation Academy and specifically offers them to those in kindergarten, first, or second grade. She’s led a yoga club (the Stretchy Scorpions), a chemistry club, and a kindness club that made posters saying thank you to staff on campus, wrote letters to the elderly in retirement homes, and did cleanup in the community, among other activities.

“I think offering those opportunities early, when they’re 6, 7, 8 years old, helps them realize talents they didn’t know they had or interests they didn’t know they had. It also helps them build confidence outside of the classroom,” she explains. “So, a kid who is maybe not quite on benchmark in reading may feel incredibly confident in chemistry club or yoga club.”

The clubs also provide students a place to try new things and interact in a space that isn’t the classroom but also isn’t completely a non-school setting. Swartz notes, “It’s kind of a fun middle ground: we’re still safe and we’re kind and we’re good humans to each other, but we don’t have the same structures as during the school day.”

Already possessing a deep understanding of STEM through her school and activities like being a part of The STEMAZing Project, Swartz decided to pursue National Board Certification in the area of elementary literacy, reading, and language arts. She certified in 2020.

Swartz is also a Tucson Regional Educator Collaborative Teacher Leader, which has allowed her to advance her leadership skills. Through that group, she began leading a book club on Elena Aguilar’s *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* with first-year teachers from the University of Arizona this year. That has been a great experience, she says. It has helped build her resiliency and she helped build those new teachers’ resiliency as well.

Swartz hopes to continue supporting other teachers throughout her career, all to help students experience “a community where brains grow, hearts stretch, mistakes are celebrated, friendships are fostered, wonders are shared, creativity is acknowledged, questions are tested, and individual strengths are recognized.”

1. How does Swartz use connections and experiences to strengthen her classroom’s community and learning?

2. How do you connect social-emotional learning to the routines and procedures in your classroom?

3. How do you help build students’ confidence, both in and out of your classroom?

Arizona TeacherSolutions® Team

“Who is your village
with whom you will build the courage
and vision to do this work?”
—Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan in *Street Data*

We are the 2021–2022 Arizona TeacherSolutions Team! Explore the goals we set for ourselves, how we put those goals into action, and what we’ve learned—all in the following pages. We hope our experiences pique your interest and help you consider how you might apply what you’re learning and experiencing at the Teacher Leadership Institute into your own practice.

Interested in hearing more about our goal projects and the other learning we’ve done? Join us during our breakout sessions and feel free to connect with us during breaks and meals this week at Teacher Leadership Institute. We’d love to chat with you.

About the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team

In 2011, the Arizona K12 Center launched the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team in partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality. Solutions-oriented teacher leaders from across Arizona push themselves to think outside of what is and begin looking toward what could be for Arizona’s students. The Arizona teacher leaders who make up the team represent the diversity of our state and the contexts in which we all work. These teachers lead by example while seeking solutions to some of the most complex problems facing our schools.

Every year, Arizona TeacherSolutions Team members engage in an inquiry goal-setting project. They each develop a goal that matters to them, seek change, and learn from working toward their desired outcomes. In this section of the report, you will find an overview of each 2021–2022 TeacherSolutions Team member’s goal project related to this year’s theme of finding new possibilities through connections and experiences.

Join the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team

Interested in becoming a member of our team?

The Arizona TeacherSolutions Team consists of teacher leaders from throughout the state. As we navigate the future of teaching and learning in Arizona, we continue to seek educators who desire to advance their leadership skills through unique opportunities.

Discover the leader inside yourself and apply to be a part of our team. Members serve for three years, and new members are announced each spring.

Please visit bit.ly/TST23-24 to find the application for the 2023–2024 school year.

“This is a great opportunity to grow as not just a teacher leader but an equity leader. I’ve learned SO much through this experience—read books I wouldn’t otherwise have known about, learned from experts, and collaborated to develop really cool professional development.”
—Randi Fielding, Florence Unified School District



Aminah Abdelhaq, NBCT

Mesa Public Schools



Maria Barker, NBCT

Mesa Public Schools

Goal

Build meaningful social-emotional learning (SEL) practices within my school

Why It Matters

Teachers and students need SEL support to navigate the uncertainty of this time.

Activities

- Studied these books with others: *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know* by Adam Grant, *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan, and *Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive* by Marc Brackett
- Attended professional development events
- Took on educational leadership assignments

Learning

I have become newly aware of the role that attention, focus, and memory play in learning; all are controlled by emotion, not cognition. Emotional intelligence enhances student learning, and it can be taught.

What's Next?

- Invite parents/guardians to join us in learning how to be 'emotion scientists' so families can benefit from the shared language and experience

Goal

Build upon school-wide family engagement practices and community partnerships

Why It Matters

Strong family engagement is key to promoting children's healthy development and wellbeing in all areas, including socio-emotional and behavioral wellness and academic achievement.

Activities

- Attended Community and Resilience in Education trainings in partnership with Arizona State University
- Read research articles from doctoral work, including the works of Dr. Melanie Bertrand and Dr. Jill Koyama
- Participated in family and community listening sessions

Learning

Using a strength-based approach and a belief in community cultural wealth, I invite families to connect with educators as partners. This, in turn, works in a proactive way to develop preventative measures to address home life stressors or trauma that can greatly impact a student's educational experience and lifelong success.

What's Next?

- Create a community center on campus to support the diverse needs of families
- Build staff awareness of resources and strategies to extend invitations to families



Kristin Barnett, NBCT

Dysart Unified School District



Erika Chapman, NBCT

Nadaburg Unified School District

Goal

Increase professional learning community (PLC) efficacy to equitably improve student outcomes

Why It Matters

PLCs need to focus on teaching practices, not on what students can't do.

Activities

- Attended Corwin's PLC+ trainings
- Implemented PLC in self-contained, multiage special education classrooms
- Created a hierarchy of essential skills for literacy and math

Learning

I realized just how much functioning PLCs lead to higher student achievement.

What's Next?

- Continue work with PLC+ training and implementation
- Create a PLC where students and instruction are the focus

Goal

Provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to support ways they can love those students in need of more support

Why It Matters

Ensuring every student is seen, heard, and loved creates a caring environment where all students can learn and grow.

Activities

- Studied *Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding* by William R. Miller

Learning

Teachers who have a team of people who will support them as they learn how to love the most difficult students ensures every child receives a quality education that is meaningful. It builds teacher efficacy while also giving them the tools to support students in their classrooms.

What's Next?

- Provide school- and district-wide professional development events that support empathic listening to encourage all teachers to give EVERY student a chance at loving school



Gabby Choi, NBCT

Tucson Unified School District



Leah Clark, NBCT

Glendale Union High School District

Goal

Differentiate and address my students' needs and strengths, better connecting with their families as a primary source of information.

Why It Matters

It creates an environment of respect and empathy for others and an appreciation of diversity in my classroom community, school, and district.

Activities

- Read *Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom* by Matthew R. Kay
- Sent surveys home, asking my parents/guardians for important details about their children
- Attended equity-focused professional development to obtain more ideas and strategies to better serve my students

Learning

I now work more efficiently and effectively when addressing the cultural background of my students and their families. I became more cognizant of the proper use of 'funds of knowledge' and how I can apply them in my classroom.

What's Next?

- Develop a list of strategies and resources from my book readings (*Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson, *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* by Gholdy Muhammad, and *Not Light, but Fire: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* by Matthew R. Kay) and implement them continuously in my teaching practice

Goal

Build meaningful and impactful peer relationships through collaborative learning teams

Why It Matters

After students spent months learning virtually, the opportunity to connect and collaborate with their peers has become more important than ever before.

Activities

- Attended professional development workshops on team-building opportunities in the classroom
- Strategically created collaborative learning teams
- Provided daily opportunities for both non-content and content-related team-centered activities that allow for communication, connection, and collaboration

Learning

I found that my students thrive when they can discuss and share their thinking and learning with their peers. This can't happen if they don't know and trust their teammates; therefore, collaborative learning teams must be a part of my daily practice to positively impact student learning.

What's Next?

- Share this learning with my colleagues to cultivate and grow a school culture that values collaborative learning teams



Ben Collinsworth

Flowing Wells Unified School District



Ashley Crose, NBCT

Scottsdale Unified School District

Goal

Bring equity to the forefront of my and my colleagues' instructional practices

Why It Matters

Equity is often treated as a component of instruction or something added to a design after the fact, but, instead, it should be the basis of the design itself.

Activities

- Studied *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan with other TeacherSolutions Team members to discover systems and methods built around people instead of numbers
- Interviewed student family members to determine the highest equity needs in early childhood classrooms
- Collaborated with colleagues on a mock-curriculum

Learning

Even in prekindergarten settings, it is difficult to filter academics out of learning goals. Bringing equity forward in the instructional design process requires an overhauled vision of education as human-centered rather than information-oriented.

What's Next?

- Continue to edit the mock-curriculum I designed with my colleagues
- Present the mock-curriculum to administration in the hopes of incorporating our findings in future instructional designs

Goal

Integrate inquiry and equity for educational practice in classrooms for my colleagues and students

Why It Matters

Building curiosity and equity into the educational space is important to increase engagement, thus bringing deeper learning not only for the scholars, but also for the educator.

Activities

- Read *Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom* by Matthew R. Kay to build more skills on equity in education
- Attended an equity-focused conference to gain more understanding
- Attended last year's Teacher Leadership Institute, which featured Trevor MacKenzie, to further understand inquiry

Learning

I have found that building curiosity through inquiry is an integral part of the educational process and that being able to have those tough conversations about race in the classroom is an important part of making sure all students feel a connection to learning and are able to better understand their peers and society.

What's Next?

- Never stop learning, and build more understanding not only in myself but also to help my students learn and grow in society as individuals



Erica Davis, NBCT

Chandler Unified School District



Randi Fielding, NBCT

Florence Unified School District

Goal

Provide more constructive and productive feedback to students to promote both growth and accurate self-perception of strengths

Why It Matters

This matters for both myself to take some burden off of the grading process, and for students to be more active, independent learners.

Activities

- Work with my vertical team on Robert J. Marzano's High Yield Instructional Strategies, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies, *Point-less: An English Teacher's Guide to More Meaningful Grading* by Sarah Zerwin, and Advanced Placement scoring for English

Learning

Students have struggled with remaining open to feedback because of insecurities, but all the more so because they are used to doing the work for the points and not for the learning. Students are able to be analytical and critical regarding their own writing when given the chance, but are often overly critical and have a harder time giving themselves compliments.

What's Next?

- Build structures leading to more frequent opportunities to provide feedback to peers on low-risk writing practice and celebrate the successes and find joy in the process

Goal

Support the social-emotional well-being of staff and students

Why It Matters

The pandemic has caused harm to the students we serve, so the demands of our profession are greater than ever. In order to continue providing high-quality education to our students, we must first meet their social-emotional needs. To do that, we must care just as much for the social-emotional needs of our staff.

Activities

- Did extensive research on the impact of trauma
- Turned theory into practice through responsive interventions
- Provided engaging professional development to school staff

Learning

Self-care practices and resilience go hand-in-hand. When staff members take care of their own social-emotional needs, they are better able to respond with care to their students' needs.

What's Next?

- Expand the scope of my work to include staff throughout the school district as well as the families in our community



Hannah Jones, NBCT

Madison Elementary School District



James King

Glendale Union High School District

Goal

Humanize data by providing the stories that matter behind the data

Why It Matters

Data in education is more than just quantitative; students' stories provide a much more granular level of data than we will ever get by simply looking at quantitative evidence.

Activities

- Read *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan
- Brought the term 'street data' to my team and department
- Modeled using more fine-grain data in addition to traditional data learned by observing and asking questions
- Led conversations about data based upon student strengths

Learning

Behind every number is a student's sweet face. Educators often forget this when looking at data. By humanizing the data and including 'street data'-level evidence, students' strengths often shine. Teachers are able to make better-formed instructional (academic and social-emotional) decisions when considering the whole student.

What's Next?

- Develop a system to effectively document and capture street-level data alongside quantitative data in a way that is useful, usable, and used by teachers and other stakeholders

Goal

Develop lasting partnerships with students that build successful pursuits in academia

Why It Matters

Students can go adrift in the abyss of secondary education ... heads down, hoping to avoid the future. They need partnerships and guidance to propel them to success and to have a home base where they find that support.

Activities

- Maintained accommodating office hours of support
- Engaged with students about real-life tasks such as job, scholarship, and college applications
- Sponsored and welcomed students into after-school activities

Learning

Students may reserve their efforts and energy for tasks outside my curriculum. The tasks that make them shine may very well be things I do not access in my classroom; this approach allows me to see and develop students regardless of their interest in literature and grammar.

What's Next?

- Continue to keep in contact with students, where I stand to gain as much from my students as they may from me



Kimberly May

Florence Unified School District



Christina Musselman, NBCT

Lake Havasu Unified School District

Goal

Build sustainable relationships with my students' families despite having a 'closed campus' due to COVID-19

Why It Matters

It is important to build sustainable relationships with families to increase student academic achievement and emotional well-being, and build good work habits and social skills.

Activities

- Studied *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Surveyed my students' families to obtain feedback regarding their interest in meeting as a group via Google Meet to build their academic knowledge base
- Consistently updated objectives, tutorials, and special announcements via pictures and videos to our Class Story stream

Learning

Although COVID-19 has brought about many challenges, it has created an avenue of accessibility through technology for families that may never step foot into a school or a classroom. I have learned how important it is to provide several opportunities for them to be engaged and not to solely depend on what has been the norm.

What's Next?

- Share with administrators about the strengths and challenges of Google Meet to consider broadening the reach of school-wide video chats to better support families

Goal

Teach my learners how to advocate for their own learning by communicating their needs and seeking feedback through questioning

Why It Matters

It's important for all learners to understand how they learn best and when to seek feedback to move their learning forward.

Activities

- Integrated Daily 5 literacy framework practices in my classroom to support independent learning routines
- Observed closely in my classroom to determine how students learn best
- Used small-group instruction practices to support all learners
- Gathered feedback through questioning and student self-assessment

Learning

All learners in this year's first-grade classroom are really having to discover themselves and how to navigate how they learn best through their own experiences. My students and their families are craving the knowledge of how to best support learning at home and in the classroom. Our Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data shows some great growth, but there is so much that these students still need to learn about how to ask for help and advocate for themselves to learn best in the classroom.

What's Next?

- Provide workshops throughout the school year that teach families questioning strategies they can use at home to help their learners establish good routines



Jan Ogino, NBCT

Peoria Unified School District



Staci Oliver, NBCT

Maricopa Unified School District

Goal

Grow academic learning through play and student agency using inquiry-based learning

Why It Matters

School needs to be a place students want to be, not merely where they need to be.

Activities

- Worked on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' committee, creating a standard for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Studied *Not Light, But Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom* by Matthew R. Kay with other TeacherSolutions Team members to increase my skill level in student-teacher and student-to-student communication
- Read and utilized Trevor MacKenzie's *Inquiry Mindset: Nurturing the Dreams, Wonders, and Curiosities of Our Youngest Learners*

Learning

Through my work with the National Board standards committee, I learned that meaningful communication requires a relationship, which requires empathy, skillful listening, self-reflection and words that promote encouragement, healing, positive actions, and deep, critical thought.

What's Next?

- Attempt to maintain my National Board Certification to either continue in the classroom or retire, and work in education in another capacity

Goal

Elevate student voice in the classroom—a step in helping students see themselves within the curriculum

Why It Matters

It is important for every student to be seen and heard in their learning. This promotes the engagement of learners.

Activities

- Learned of new books and other media to use in my classroom through connecting via social media with teachers and authors of multicultural and diverse books
- Listened to various podcasts that focused on creating a culturally responsive classroom in order to gain knowledge and learn techniques that would elevate student voice and allow them to feel safe and seen throughout our classroom and curriculum

Learning

By intentionally including books that reflected the different cultures in my classroom and throughout the school, my students gained a better understanding of the rich cultures of their classmates. This encouraged organic conversations between students, allowed them to make connections of shared experiences with each other, and increased student engagement.

What's Next?

- Continue to read books representing diverse characters and stories to my students as well as supplement the district-mandated curriculum with multicultural literature



Patricia Perez, NBCT

Tucson Unified School District



Justin Powell

Sunnyside Unified School District

Goal

Learn new SEL strategies to support students and families

Why It Matters

It is important to use SEL strategies to create a more inclusive, safe, and equitable classroom environment.

Activities

- Studied *Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive* by Marc Brackett with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Applied learning from *Shift Challenging Moments into Skill-Building Opportunities* webinar by Ellen Galinsky of Mind in the Making
- Attended equity-focused conference in November 2021

Learning

After reading *Permission to Feel*, I have learned how SEL is the foundation for all areas of development. The lack of SEL supports may have long-term negative impacts on social, emotional, and academic growth.

What's Next?

- Support my students with these new strategies and share this information with their families

Goal

Grade more equitably

Why It Matters

Traditional methods of grading often demotivate and disempower students.

Activities

- Studied *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Studied *Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms* by Joe Feldman
- Engaged in a classroom inquiry cycle about grading, where I gathered student perceptions of grades in my classroom both before and after interventions

Learning

I have found that small adjustments to my grading practices can help foster student growth mindsets and help me refocus on student learning and build strong relationships with my students.

What's Next?

- Implementation of rubrics as a move toward standards-based grading



Eriann Roberts

Chandler Unified School District



Kristin Roberts, NBCT

Phoenix Union High School District

Goal

Increase students' questioning, choice, and SEL

Why It Matters

We need to lead students in understanding HOW to think, not WHAT to think.

Activities

- Focused on using questioning to guide my students in their thinking process
- Used Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats process to help my students analyze and process information from different lenses
- Moved from starting a lesson with an explicit explanation on how to do something to now providing my students with tasks, articles, and practices that allow them to work through a problem or topic on their own first. They shape their own solutions, inferences, and questions, then bring them back to the class as a whole.

Learning

Through this work, I have found that the growth and understanding I see in my students have drastically improved. They can critically analyze their own misconceptions, and even apply that to future learning. They can now problem-solve both academically and socially as new challenges arise.

What's Next?

- Continue to learn and implement new strategies for guiding my students in how to think, and share these strategies with other educators

Goal

Learn and implement best practices for co-teaching in the inclusion model

Why It Matters

Exceptional students have many strengths and assets, but, too often, their needs are not being met.

Activities

- Conversated with and observed other pairs of co-teachers
- Studied *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Studied and tried different co-teaching models
- Developed strong communication habits with my co-teacher

Learning

By far, my most significant learning is the importance of reflecting on and leaning into my values while making space for my co-teacher to do the same. We can all try different models of co-teaching and interventions, but the heart of this work is building on our shared beliefs about our students.

What's Next?

- Explore further the role that our values play in teacher-to-teacher collaboration



Kaitlyn Secor

Agua Fria Union High School District



Jennifer Sumida, NBCT

ASU Preparatory Academy

Goal

Advocate for equitable practices within my school and district

Why It Matters

The needs of all students and families within my school community can be met by making more equitable choices.

Activities

- Advocated for translation services at each campus
- Conversed with district leadership about late vs. early start schools
- Conversed with site-level administration about teacher sorting

Learning

I now see how various ethnicities and student groups go without proper translation services in Arizona public schools. We can do more at a site/department/professional learning community level to promote equity when it comes to teacher quality/experience.

What's Next?

- Invite parents/guardians to join us in learning how to continue to support school- and district-level equity initiatives, including a transition to a late start schedule and improvements to teacher sorting

Goal

Integrate SEL into the classroom

Why It Matters

Social and emotional learning helps students navigate their emotions and behavior throughout the school day. It's an important life skill learners need to develop in order to build a foundation for a positive and safe learning experience.

Activities

- Read and studied *Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive* by Marc Brackett with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Collaborated with my grade-level team on how to incorporate SEL into weekly class meetings
- Participated in Empowering Education workshops
- Created a calming center in the classroom

Learning

SEL is the foundation to help students be successful in the classroom and their everyday lives. I learned the importance of creating a safe space for students to start their school day with a check-in and end their day with a check-out.

What's Next?

- My next steps are to continue to support my students as they develop different SEL skills and to effectively integrate SEL throughout the different content areas



Holli Taylor, NBCT

Nadaburg Unified School District

Goal

Engage young learners in perspective-taking opportunities that lead to positive communication of wonderings in our world

Why It Matters

Learning needs to be supported by purposeful, connected, and extended opportunities that build wisdom over time!

Activities

- Studied *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan with other TeacherSolutions Team members
- Read *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* by Gholdy Muhammad
- Participated in The STEMAZing Project through the Pima County School Superintendent's Office

Learning

Authentic learning happens when knowledge is transformed from abstract ideas to concrete, tangible moments in the world and is connected to content in exploratory ways.

What's Next?

- Continue to develop critical, real-world context with multiple dimensions
- Cultivate opportunities for active experimentation that expand SEL

"Equity work is first and foremost pedagogical... Such a pedagogy says, 'I see you. I believe in you. You are safe to grow and thrive here. I want to hear your voice.'"

—Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan
in *Street Data*

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the teacher leaders featured in this report who allowed us to share their stories and helped us shape this year's Teacher Leadership Institute. They welcomed us into their lives, their schools, and their practice during a school year that brought its share of challenges and interruptions.

We hope reading and learning about how these teacher leaders connect their experiences with their passion, vulnerability, and knowledge in the classroom inspires you to do the same. We dedicate this publication to all of Arizona's educators. We salute how you set a foundation of care for your students' social and emotional selves so that they can pursue the inquiry and innovation that leads to learning. You are cultivating a spirit of hope for the future of Arizona and for our nation. Thank you!

When teachers learn,
kids learn;
when teachers lead,
kids lead; and
when teachers are inspired,
kids are inspired.

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