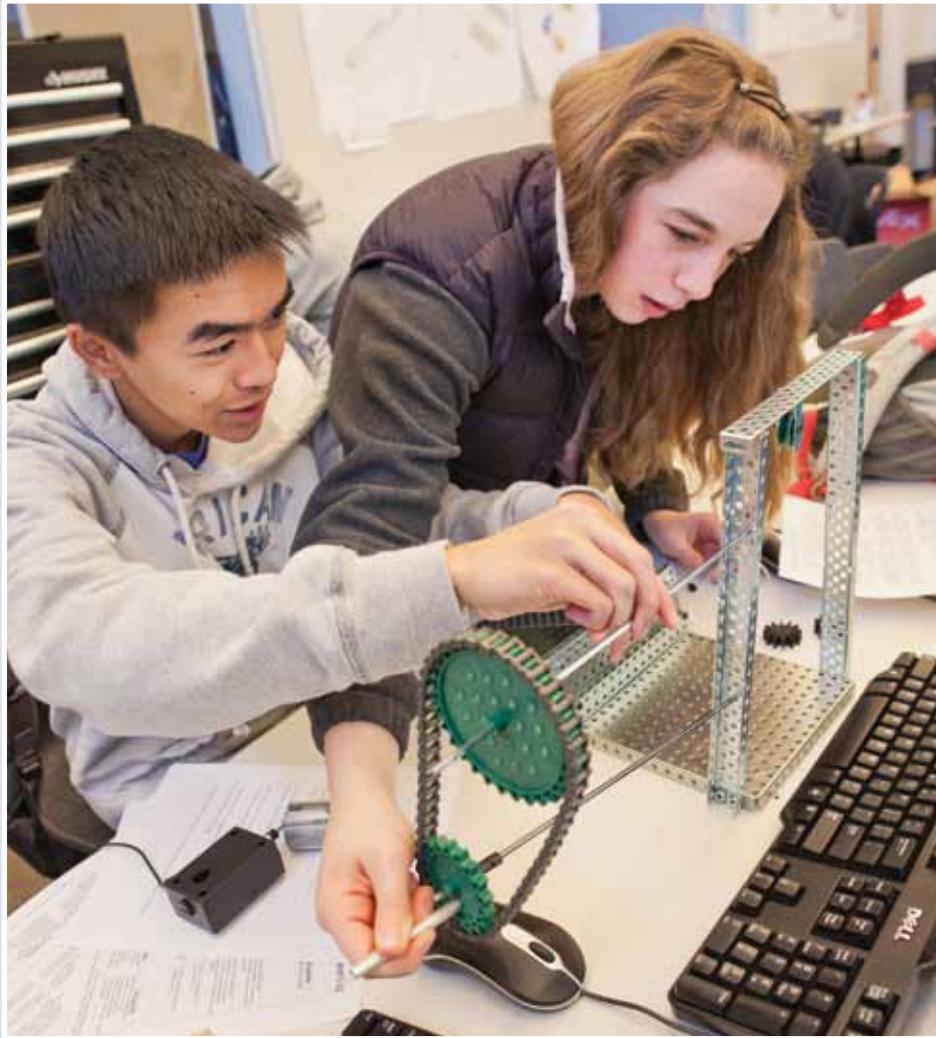


ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



 **Engaging**
SCHOOLS

Connect • Collaborate • Learn

Formerly known as
Educators for Social Responsibility

esr

Mission Statement

Engaging Schools collaborates with educators to create school communities where each and every student develops the skills and mindsets needed to succeed and make positive contributions in school, work, and life.

The Year in Review

- Our cadre of 15 veteran program staff members provided direct training and support for 7,000 teachers from 183 schools in one or more of our core program areas: Engaged Classrooms, Advisory Plus, and Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support. These teachers serve a diverse group of 112,000 young people in a wide variety of districts such as New York City; Denver; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Anchorage; Syracuse; Fall River, MA; Joplin, MO; Mission, SD; Aliseo Viejo, CA; and Springfield, OR.
- We also trained, coached, and consulted with principals from 210 additional schools. These leaders hail from Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Milwaukee, and eight other school districts. We provided leadership development in building a positive climate and culture, implementing schoolwide systems for discipline and student support, and creating a cohesive social and emotional learning environment. When these leaders brought this experience back to their schools, they shared it with over 16,000 teachers who in turn serve over 150,000 young people.
- Engaging Schools' publications department had a busy year disseminating over 8,000 of our highly-acclaimed resources. These included *Getting Classroom Management Right*, *Activators: Classroom Strategies for Engaging Middle and High School Students*, and *The Advisory Guide*. Many of these how-to books were used by teachers in our trainings. In addition, approximately 2,500 copies were sent to teachers in schools far and wide, including Guam, St. Thomas, and Chile.



Deborah Childs-Bowen, Chair of Engaging Schools' Board of Directors, and Denise Wolk, Director of Publications and Marketing, at the ASCD conference in Houston in March 2015



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Message From the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

The saying “it takes a whole village to raise a child” also rings true in education – every adult in the school community has a role to play in supporting its young people. Engaging Schools is broadly communicating this vision and working with many schools and districts to bring it about.

This is especially true when it comes to creating positive climates and cultures in schools as we work to solve one of today’s most pressing educational issues, the crisis in school discipline. The use, overuse, and disproportional use of punitive and exclusionary discipline is harming young people, especially students of color and special education students. Millions of students are losing opportunities to learn, and placed at greater risk of school failure and ending up in the juvenile justice system.

Many school districts are implementing some restorative practices and reducing the number of suspensions for minor offenses. These are important steps toward the broader goal of achieving educational equity and maximizing supports and opportunities for every young person. To achieve this broader goal, changes need to be made to school policies, systems, structures, and a wide range of practices. And, this holistic approach must involve all of the adults in the building.

One of the things that differentiates Engaging Schools is that we foster this holistic approach and we provide professional development for everyone, from administrators, student support staff, and

teachers to school safety officers, cafeteria workers, and aides. We help all staff learn new strategies for making connections and establishing more personalized relationships with students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds to build a foundation of mutual trust and respect. Positive relationships are linked with student outcomes such as greater engagement, self-efficacy, and social awareness.

We also help staff strengthen skills for inviting cooperation and for defusing anger and de-escalating conflict when more serious issues arise. And we look for multiple ways to help young people develop the habits and social and emotional skills that help them become more self-managing, self-disciplined, and responsible members of their school communities.

I appreciate the commitment of educators we collaborate with around the country to provide the best possible support and education for each and every student. I am also grateful to the many donors and foundations who partner with us to put caring, engagement, and equity at the heart of education.

Thank you!



Stories from the Field

A New York Middle School on the Rise

Maiysha Etienne, principal of Intermediate School 217 in New York City, asked Engaging Schools to work with her staff after a colleague gave her some of our materials. IS217 is a Bronx middle school (grades 6-8) with a performing arts focus. It was one of two mid-sized schools created when another large, struggling middle school closed over ten years ago.

Despite progress by IS217 in previous years, Principal Etienne felt that more needed to be done, saying: “Our teachers were frustrated. We felt we were not adequately addressing the needs in our school. We were not able to motivate the students as well as we would like. And we were trying to move away from a punitive approach to discipline with our students—but we still had a large number of interpersonal conflicts and outbursts, and needed to find a way to address this. We were not having the desired impact.”

Last year a team of Engaging Schools program consultants focused with IS217 staff to develop and improve systems for a restorative approach



Photo courtesy of Syracuse City School District

Principal Etienne observed that even though IS217 has challenges to overcome, “we are forty students over our planned enrollment. Parents are choosing us. They are trusting us to educate their children.”

to schoolwide discipline and student support. “We wanted to set a consistent tone and culture throughout the school,” said Principal Etienne. This year, teachers are seeing firsthand the benefits of restorative practices and approaches, and are sharing these practices with colleagues. “We have seen a significant decrease in the number of students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons and suspended.”

The school is building on that foundation to help teachers continue to create classrooms that promote students’ self-discipline as well as academic engagement. Principal Etienne comments, “Teachers are more comfortable facilitating discussion and using activators (an engagement technique taught by Engaging Schools) to inspire critical thinking in our students. Before, you would walk down the hall and hear teachers’ voices. Now, you hear students’ voices. Staff members were somewhat resistant at first, but then they experienced activators, observation, and coaching. And these techniques really helped.”

“Our staff are staying—we have very little attrition now. Teachers are getting the support they need and are committed to our school. They collaborate. They say ‘I like it, I believe in the mission and vision and core beliefs.’ Our teachers came in over the summer on their own time. This is a testament to Engaging Schools’ commitment to the teachers and the teachers’ commitment to our school.”

Stories from the Field

Engaging Schools Fosters Communities of Learners

Often Engaging Schools provides professional services to teachers and others right within their schools. Another way we reach educators is through workshops, institutes, and conferences where educators gather from across their districts, regions, and sometimes the country. Learning with peers who are tackling challenges similar to ones own, but from different perspectives, can lead to new understanding and positive shifts in thinking about how to create positive school climates and cultures, and engage every student in learning.

We reached hundreds of educators in this way during the 2014-15 school year as they came together for training in our Engaged Classrooms program. In December, we facilitated a large session at the Learning Forward national conference in Nashville, TN. In April, we held workshops for two groups representing 11 Colorado schools. In June, we provided a four-day institute for teachers from across the sprawling Anchorage School District. And just after schools closed for the summer, we gathered educators from five states for



an intensive institute at Lesley University near our Cambridge offices. Participants learned through interactive, immersive experiences to develop and facilitate classroom communities that support healthy relationships, inspire students to invest in their own learning and that of their peers, and help them tackle complex academic content and social experiences.



Engaging Schools presented "Creating the Engaged Classroom in Secondary Schools" at the Learning Forward annual conference in December 2014.

"Processing my first year of teaching, especially the moments where I was not the person or teacher I want to be, has been hard. This institute has helped me acknowledge mistakes, as well as strengths, and begin to look forward to my long teaching career ahead. Thank you so much!"

- Cambridge institute participant, July 2015

"This training will be incredibly useful in my work. I feel better prepared for my classroom after the last four days than I did after my entire teacher prep."

"I have so many tools to use immediately in my classroom! I will be more intentional with my methods and process in aligning class content with social-emotional learning goals."

- Participants in the Anchorage School District institute, June 2015

Advancing a Holistic Approach to

“Teachers and students deserve school environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to teaching and learning. Creating a supportive school climate—and decreasing suspensions and expulsions—requires close attention to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students.”

This is the opening sentence on a new website launched by the US Department of Education for its “Rethinking Discipline” campaign and it captures what Engaging Schools and its allies have been advocating for years. In fact, one highlight of our work last year was our presence in Washington, D.C., raising awareness among policymakers and Departments of Education and Justice staff members about why this problem must be addressed and what it takes to address it effectively.

On March 3, Engaging Schools co-sponsored a standing-room-only Congressional briefing called “From the Principal’s Office to the Police Precinct.” Engaging Schools Executive Director Larry Dieringer moderated a panel of high-powered speakers that included Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), ranking member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and Dr. Sharon Contreras, superintendent of the Syracuse City School District. Dr. Contreras spoke about the difference Engaging Schools

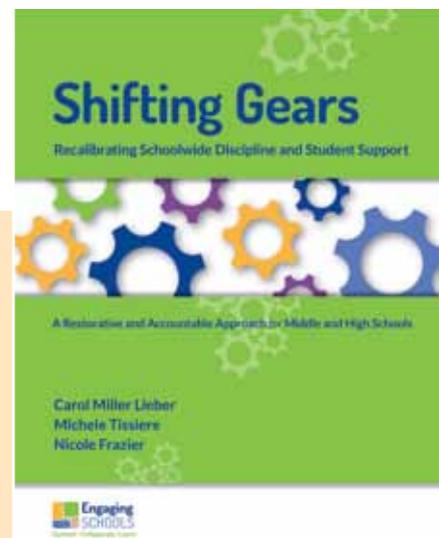
has already made in her district by helping to develop their new Code of Conduct, Character, and Support, and supporting their schools to make the systemic changes they need to implement it. During the briefing Dr. Contreras said: “This has been difficult work, but we’re already seeing a dramatic decrease in suspensions and it is very promising for our students.”

Thousands of schools across the country rely on ineffective disciplinary policies and practices that result in the use, overuse, and disproportional use of punitive exclusionary sanctions that adversely impact real students:

- Of the 49 million students enrolled in public schools in 2011-2012, 3.45 million were suspended out-of-school, adding to 18 million days of lost instructional time.
- Students with disabilities and students of color are generally suspended and expelled at higher rates than their peers for the same disciplinary referral, especially for minor offenses.

Shifting Gears: Recalibrating Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support

With the support of The California Endowment, the Lippincott Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and an anonymous donor, Engaging Schools announces this powerful new tool. *Shifting Gears* presents a comprehensive approach to schoolwide discipline and examines the “gears” that work together to create an effective system: school vision, the right data, essential teams, classroom practices, interventions and case management, schoolwide initiatives, parent and adult allies as partners, and a code of conduct. Written primarily for school and district leaders, it is another practical Engaging Schools how-to resource informed by the latest research and our 33 years of experience helping to transform schools.



Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support

Suspensions are associated with lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, failures to graduate on time, and decreased academic engagement. And students who are suspended or expelled for a discretionary action are nearly three times more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system. It is no surprise that this is one of the major civil rights issues of our time.

Engaging Schools is addressing this travesty in multiple ways. We have launched a campaign to help educational leaders move beyond the short-term steps of reducing suspensions and implementing a few restorative practices toward embracing a broader goal of addressing discipline challenges in a way that maximizes supports and opportunities for each and every student. Part of this plan includes publishing articles and stories in leading educational journals about what it takes to transform schools. Another is the broad dissemination of a



Students in Syracuse, NY where Engaging Schools is supporting district-wide implementation of their ground-breaking Code of Conduct, Character, and Support

conversation between Larry Dieringer and Dan Losen, director of UCLA's Center for Civil Rights Remedies. Dan and Larry discussed the role of racism and implicit bias in the overuse of harsh punishment in schools, and offered solutions to the problem (please see next page).

Engaging Schools conducted an institute for leadership teams from eight districts in central California, presented at two national Schoolwide Discipline conferences, and began working with school and district leaders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC, and Milwaukee. We provided many more services in Syracuse, including training 900 teachers in how to create positive classrooms. We conducted our classroom management training for teachers directly in their schools and through open enrollment institutes. Lastly, we made great progress toward completing a powerful new tool for schools called *Shifting Gears* to help create discipline models that are respectful, fair, accountable, restorative, and viable.

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Advancing a Holistic Approach to Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support

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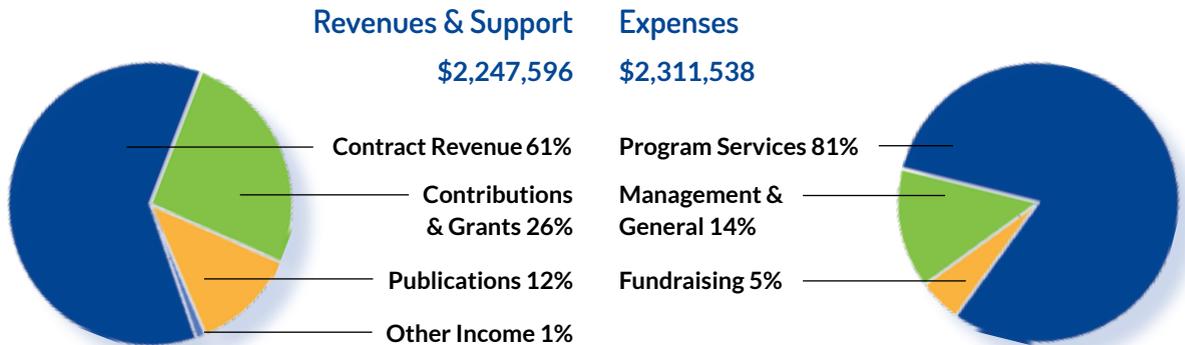


“There is an incredible amount that can be done when we stop suspending kids for violating the dress codes or other minor offenses. Preparing teachers and school leaders for improving student engagement and ensuring success with a diverse student body is one of the most important things we can do. It’s also about accountability for healthy school environments. Every year we should evaluate schools not just on their test scores and graduation rates, but also on school climate, including suspension rates so parents and policymakers have complete information to drive reform initiatives.”

- Dan Losen, director of UCLA's Center for Civil Rights Remedies

Financial Summary

July 2014 – June 2015



Net Assets	6/30/15	6/30/14
Unrestricted	\$ 1,241,659	\$ 1,305,602
Temporarily Restricted	325,744	574,050
Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 1,568,403	\$ 1,879,652

These figures are derived from Engaging Schools' audited statements, full copies of which are available upon request.

Financial Support

Bequests & Planned Gifts

Engaging Schools is deeply grateful to everyone who has made our work a part of their legacy by including us in their estate plans. This year we received a generous bequest from the R. D. "Del" Anderson Trust. Del was a California businessman who began supporting us in 1987 and continued until he passed away at the age of 102. Motivated by his faith, Del was involved in many issues of social justice. He founded an organization in 1996 to provide grants to families in developing countries to start small businesses. Del regularly ordered our materials to share with others and promoted our work in his newsletter. When Del notified us of his bequest, he said, "It is a privilege to serve this planet together."



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