

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019



**Engaging**  
SCHOOLS  
Connect • Collaborate • Learn

Formerly known as  
Educators for Social Responsibility

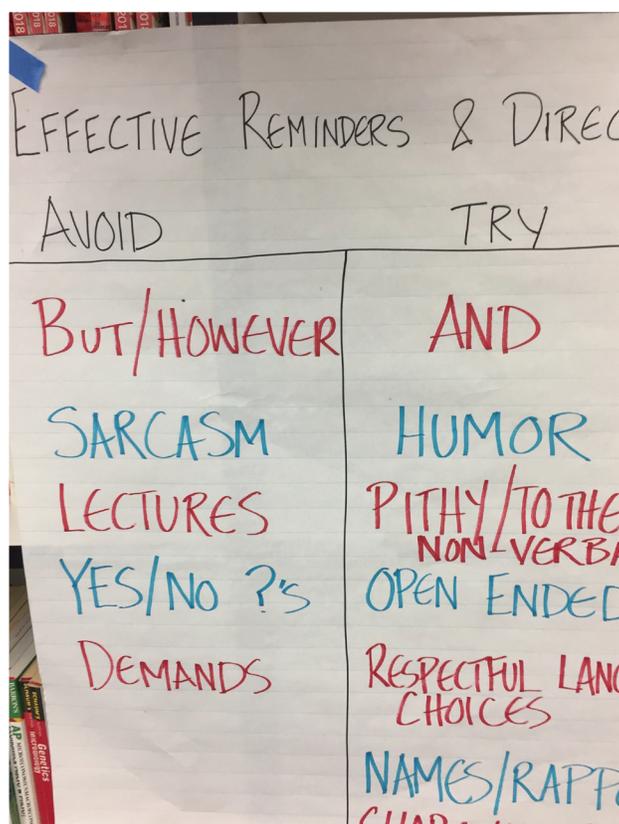
# Mission Statement

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.

## A Year in Numbers

Last year Engaging Schools worked directly in 97 schools nationwide, providing a wide range of services within our three core program areas: Engaged Classrooms, Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support, and Advisory Plus. We also worked comprehensively with seven districts in four states to support the revision and/or implementation of their codes of character, conduct, and support, which will ultimately impact 233 schools. We delivered institutes to leaders of over 80 districts through our partnerships with the departments of education in both Massachusetts and Minnesota, supporting them in their efforts to improve systems of schoolwide discipline and student support. Lastly, we deepened awareness among many hundreds of school and district leaders about how to embed the development of social and emotional competencies in high school classrooms through our participation in regional

and national conferences and ongoing distribution of our white paper, *Embedding Social and Emotional Learning in High School Classrooms*.



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# Message from the Executive Director

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Dear Friend,

As I write this column, we're going to press with our newest publication, *Engaged Classrooms: The Art and Craft of Reaching and Teaching All Learners*. What are the teaching practices and strategies that support academic, social and emotional learning and development, and school success for each and every middle and high school student? That is the question that *Engaged Classrooms* answers. It follows in a long Engaging Schools tradition of producing resources for teachers that are highly practical, while at the same time rooted in theory and research about what works.

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research says that "engaging students in learning is an educator's most critical task...It is essential that all students fully participate in learning to reach goals around equity" and to experience school success in the fullest sense of the word.

Engaging Schools holds a deep commitment to equity. Our *Engaged Classrooms* approach supports teachers to provide an equitable education in several important ways. It supports every student to experience a safe, caring, inclusive, engaging, and challenging learning environment. It directly engages teachers in practices that support developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive teaching.

*Engaged Classrooms* also helps all students gain understandings and learn behaviors that enhance their capacity to succeed in school, career, and life. Finally, the approach incorporates a restorative and accountable approach to discipline, which is the alternative to a punitive and exclusionary approach that disproportionately impacts various sub-groups nationally, especially African-American students and special education students.

*Engaged Classrooms: The Art and Craft of Reaching and Teaching All Learners* is the core resource for our approach and provides the tools for integrating academic, social, and emotional learning and development in the moment-to-moment and day-to-day life of classrooms. In the words of one educator who reviewed the book, "If all schools used this approach, the world would be a different place; graduating students would be well-prepared for college or career, eager to participate as caring members of their communities and looking forward to a happy, fulfilling life."

Each year, Engaging Schools disseminates thousands of educational resources like this one. We also provide professional services to hundreds of schools among dozens of districts, along with several state departments of education. Schools, teachers, and instructional leaders are primary partners. So, too, are the many individuals, foundations, and others who support our efforts. I am grateful to you and to all who join us in this essential work.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lanny Diering". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

# Engaged Classrooms – New Strategies for Deeper Impact

In concert with the development of our new book last year, we refined our Engaged Classrooms approach to include the latest and best strategies for creating developmentally informed and culturally responsive

school teachers to reflect on their current practice and learn ways to increase student engagement, build high performing communities, improve academic achievement, and foster social and emotional competencies

essential to students living a successful and productive life during and after high school. Teachers, teacher-leaders, instructional leaders, and coaches learn a strategic approach to integrating research-based strategies into classrooms, and a framework for increasing students' good will, interest, effort, attention, participation, and commitment. Our Engaged Classrooms program includes additional professional learning in schools following the institute, and capacity-building among school leaders.

We presented our Engaged Classrooms approach through institutes and other professional learning in locations last year such as in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley (AK), Toledo (OH), New York City, Block Island (RI), and Oakland (CA).



classrooms where students feel safe, cared for, engaged, and challenged.

Our four-day Engaged Classrooms Institute provides a rich opportunity for middle and high

*"I participated in the Engaged Classrooms professional learning in Worcester (MA) last April. I teach 8th grade science. I just thought I would let you know that thanks to the plan that I developed for the class, I learned all 106 names of my students in the first four days of school. I included many of the team-building and anchor experiences (and some new ones that I came up with) and have accomplished a lot of community-building. Thank you for your practical ideas and examples of implementation."*

– Susan Stewart, Arlington (MA)



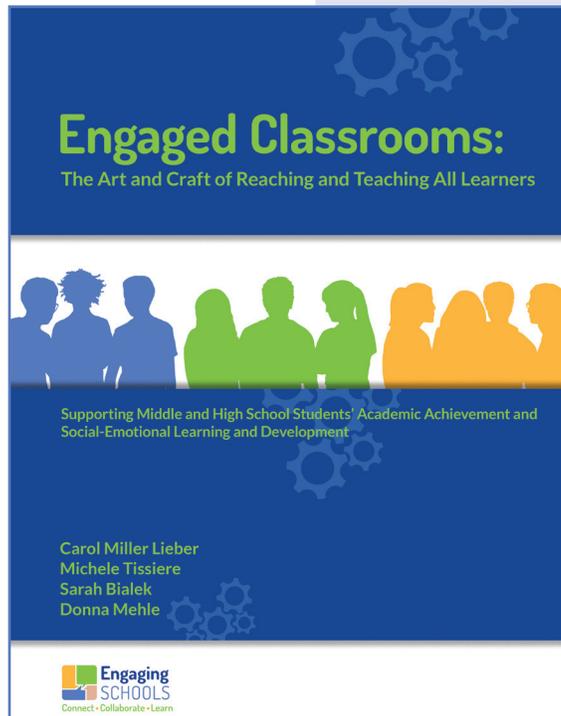
# A New Core Resource for Our Engaged Classrooms Approach

The fields of social and emotional learning and academic engagement have gained tremendous momentum over the past few years and one of the greatest needs for making these a reality in schools – especially middle and high schools – is tools for teachers. Engaging Schools has captured the best thinking of our most experienced practitioners and completed a powerful new resource called *Engaged Classrooms: The Art and Craft of Reaching and Teaching All Learners*.

In the words of the authors, *Engaged Classrooms* supports “teachers’ authenticity, respect for young people, an unwavering commitment to know and care for individual students, rigorous yet supportive expectations, a passion to make what matters interesting and relevant, and a call for excellence and students’ ownership of their learning, creativity, and sense of fun.”

*“I wish Engaged Classrooms had been around when I walked into my first teaching job some 50 years ago. It would have saved me countless hours of frustration, indecision, even heartache. Fortunately for new teachers today – and even for seasoned veterans – it is a gold mine of insights and strategies that they will come back to again and again.”*

– Sonia Nieto, Professor Emerita of Language, Literacy, and Culture at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst



*“Yet another great book by Engaging Schools. Engaged Classrooms is filled with strategies to reach all of today’s learners, including our most disengaged youth. It’s a guide to everyday instruction from how to begin your year to how to support students with complex social, emotional, and learning needs. This is a must-read for all educators.”*

– Keira Soler, Middle School Instructional Coach, Consolidated School District of New Britain (CT)

The book is focused on equity-centered classrooms that are culturally responsive and developmentally informed, affirming students’ multiple identities, their cultural experiences, and the range of their developmental needs and interests.

We are very grateful to the Lippincott Foundation, the NoVo Foundation, and an anonymous donor for their support of this project.

# Partnership with the National Education Association: Enhancing a Restorative Culture at Fuller Middle School

We completed a three-year initiative at Fuller Middle School in Framingham (MA). Fuller has 550 students, of whom 46% are from economically disadvantaged families, and 76% are designated as high-need. The initiative – to implement SEL strategies and practices and create a restorative culture throughout the school – was funded largely by a grant from the National Education Association (NEA). At a site visit to the school in the spring of 2019, after seeing some of Engaging Schools’ practices in action and meeting with staff, the NEA grants administrator categorized the project as *Exemplary* and recommended expansion to two other schools in the district.

Brendan Keenan, Student Success Coach at Fuller, said, “*The partnership between Engaging Schools and Fuller Middle School has been transformational for the adults and students. We now have restorative practices woven into the fabric of the school to address typical adolescent behavior as well as more serious concerns. Our school culture has been bolstered as a result, and both adults and students experience increased voice, choice, and flexibility to bring their whole selves to their work.*”

## Engaging a National Audience

Engaging Schools’ staff reached educational leaders across the country through several presentations on our approach to embedding the development of social and emotional competencies and skills into middle and high schools.

- We led a webinar sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and presented a session at their national conference. One participant commented, “I appreciate receiving a copy of your slides, as I would like to reflect more on your workshop and bring some of your talking points to the first day of professional development for my teachers this year to get them thinking more about embedding social and emotional learning into their everyday classrooms.”

- We facilitated a session at the national Learning Forward conference attended by district and school leaders and policy makers from across the US. Learning Forward focuses on effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.
- We made regional presentations at the New England Secondary Schools Consortium’s School Redesign in Action annual conference and the Massachusetts Teachers Association’s Safe Schools Summit.

At each of these, we distributed or shared links to our white paper, *Embedding Social and Emotional Learning in High School Classrooms*. As of this summer, over 3,000 copies have been printed or downloaded.

# Expanding Our Reach through State Departments of Education

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This past year, we began a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to support districts to deepen their understanding of our approach to Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support that is accountable, restorative, respectful, fair, and viable. This approach also aims to reduce the disproportional discipline that affects certain groups of students, such as students of color and special education students.

The MDE's concern arose when, two years ago, 43 districts and schools were identified as using exclusionary discipline to address unwanted behavior resulting in far too many students being referred out of class or suspended.

We developed a series of seven convenings for district leaders to re-examine their beliefs and assumptions about learning and discipline, and to engage them in professional learning about the environments and practices that promote prevention, and strengthen skills for staff and students. The convenings began last spring and are continuing in the 2019-2020 school year.

After the first convening in March, more than 90 percent of participants said that they walked away with a deeper understanding of root causes of disciplinary disparities and ways to recalibrate their codes of character, conduct, and support to further the academic, social, and emotional development of students. One district leader said that she used to think this kind of change was "unimaginable," but at the end of the session, thought "we can do this!" Another shared that he thought his



district was "never going to change," but walked away with "the tools to improve our district."

Our work in Minnesota builds on the partnership that we began with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2017 to help advance its Rethinking Discipline Initiative, also aimed at providing support to districts and schools with high levels of exclusionary and disproportional discipline. Last year, we provided institutes for leaders from 40 districts and 44 schools; about a dozen districts decided to continue working with Engaging Schools for deeper support to develop and/or implement plans for change. The Connecticut State Department of Education was the impetus behind our deep involvement with the Consolidated School District of New Britain, and connected us to other districts in the state. Working at the state level helps us reach many districts and schools. It has become a primary way for us to increase our reach and impact.

# New Program Consultants

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Over the summer we welcomed three new program consultants to our staff. Anthony, Adam, and Barry bring expertise, energy, and good humor to our team and expand the deep, wide, and varied experience of our talented group of consultants. They began by meeting with our program directors (see photo) for two days of intensive learning, followed by observing other consultants in action in New Britain (CT), Pittsfield (MA), and other locations.

(L-R) Sarah Bialek, Anthony Pope, Adam Stumacher, Barry Ehrlich, Donna Mehle, and Michele Tisiere.

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*"These last three days with the Engaging Schools consultant were fantastic. Great conversations among the crew, artfully facilitated."*

– Damon Pearce (Principal,  
New Britain High School)

*"This has been one of the strongest openings of the school year that I can remember. The staff are feeling really positive about how the hallways feel and look. There is a lot of adult presence and interaction with students. Hall scans are running like a Swiss watch, and students are getting to where they need to be – in class."*

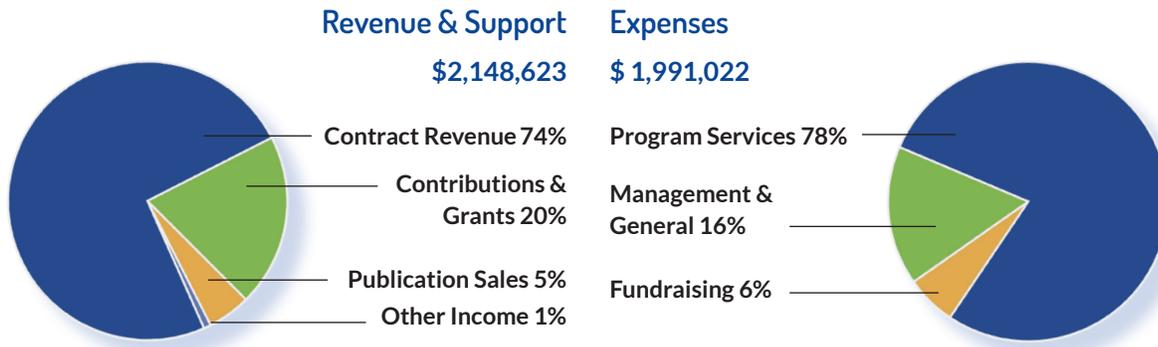
– Kerri-Lynn Major (Associate Principal,  
New Britain High School)

*"Engaging Schools consultants helped us reflect on our district priorities to make the most of our teacher professional learning time. They created and supplied high quality materials steeped in an understanding of adolescent development. Teacher feedback was overwhelmingly positive in large part due to our partnership with Engaging Schools."*

– Lara Bohlke, District Coordinator of Curriculum for Grades 6-12, Consolidated School District of New Britain

# Financial Summary

July 2018 – June 2019



Net Assets	6/30/19	6/30/18
Unrestricted	\$ 1,805,635	\$ 1,648,034
Temporarily Restricted	490,381	658,796
Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 2,296,016	\$ 2,306,830

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

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