

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



# Message from the Executive Director

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Dear Friend,

As we progress through a third school year impacted by the challenges of this pandemic, I continue to be amazed and inspired by the teachers, administrators, and young people across the country making their way into schools and classrooms each day to teach and learn. I'm also honored to lead an organization that's providing them with much-needed support.

2020-2021 was a challenging year for Engaging Schools as we shifted our professional learning services to a virtual environment and tailored them to meet unprecedented needs. Yet, over the course of the year, we deepened our partnerships with school districts that, together, serve over 103,000 students in 175 schools.

All of these districts are in various stages of working on Codes of Character, Conduct, and Support. In fact, a key learning for Engaging Schools last year was just how powerful a strategy this is. Recalibrated Codes become road maps for reducing the use of harsh and exclusionary punishments (office referrals and suspensions) and the disproportional use of these punishments with students of color and students with disabilities. These responses to student behaviors lead to lost learning time and many other negative consequences.

Recalibrated Codes incorporate a new vision for how to deal with unskillful student behavior by shifting to supportive and restorative practices that hold students accountable but also help them learn new skills and remain in—or get back into—the classroom. And for students facing bigger challenges, these Codes map out

appropriate interventions carried out with student support staff to get them the help they need to get back on track.

During the implementation phase of Codes of Character, Conduct, and Support, teachers are equipped with promotion and prevention strategies that foster engagement and social and emotional learning and development. For many districts, this means using our Engaged Classrooms approach. And, as a districtwide strategy, Engaging Schools focuses on a train-the-trainer model which enables us to build the capacity of local leaders and to reach all of the schools in a district.

To give you a sense of the impact of our work, please read the testimonials that follow from six of our partners who shared their experiences working with Engaging Schools last year. I am deeply grateful to our program staff who worked tirelessly with all our partners on behalf of young people. And I greatly appreciate each and every individual, family, and foundation that provided the financial support to get us through the “school year like no other.” Onward!



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



# Engaging Schools Making a Difference

## Partner Perspectives

Engaging Schools receives regular feedback from partners in the field about the quality of our support and the impact of our programs and strategies. We're working districtwide, schoolwide, and in classrooms to foster safe and welcoming climates and create equity-centered classrooms that integrate academic, social, and emotional learning and development into daily practice.

Here are the voices of six educators partnering with Engaging Schools in creating and implementing Codes of Character, Conduct, and Support and carrying out Engaged Classrooms strategies and practices.



**I could talk on and on about what our partnership with Engaging Schools has meant to our district.** We could not have revised our Code of Conduct into a Community Code of Character, Conduct, and Support without Engaging Schools. You helped our district not only envision a new way of addressing discipline, but also gave us an opportunity to lift up the voices of students, teachers, parents, staff, and members of the larger community.

The work we did together to improve our Code also helped leverage the importance of social-emotional learning in our work to advance equity, emphasizing that whenever we're educating our students, we have to be attentive to their developmental needs as well as their cultural identity.

— Dr. Carlos Banks, Chief of School Support & Wellness,  
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools,  
North Carolina



# Engaging Schools Making a Difference

## Partner Perspectives



**I've been an educator for 28 years and have had many other trainings and programs that come and go like the wind. I really feel that Engaging Schools is committed to us.**

When I saw all of the domains of the Engaged Classroom and learned that we'd be starting with only two, I was disappointed and thought "We need all of them!" I love that what we're learning is actually doable, that Engaging Schools provides all the resources, and is training my leadership team to train our teachers.

The social-emotional piece of the professional learning we're getting from Engaging Schools is huge for our school and district, especially now coming back from the pandemic. I love how everybody's greeting each other, including in other languages. It's such a nice way to walk into a room and it sets the tone for the rest of the day.

— Lynelle Francis, Principal,  
Bellevue Elementary School,  
Syracuse, New York



**support both the program and the practices because they actually impact student learning.** The fact that Engaging Schools is training me as our school's instructional coach and that I, in turn, train the teachers has been very effective.

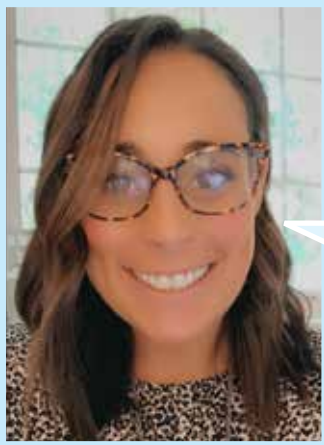
The art of teaching is not prescriptive. Engaging Schools promotes its techniques and stays true to them, but also recognizes that schools need to tailor for themselves. **The teachers in our school know and trust Engaging Schools because of the work that has been done over the years.**

We realized we can't expect students to be accountable for their own learning and be invested in it if we aren't providing supports to make that happen. This is where Engaging Schools came in. The Five-Minute Assessment tool in the Engaged Classrooms approach is one of those supports that really makes a difference.

— Karen Earl, Cross-Discipline Literacy Coach,  
Ed Smith PreK-8 School, Syracuse, NY

# Engaging Schools Making a Difference

## Partner Perspectives



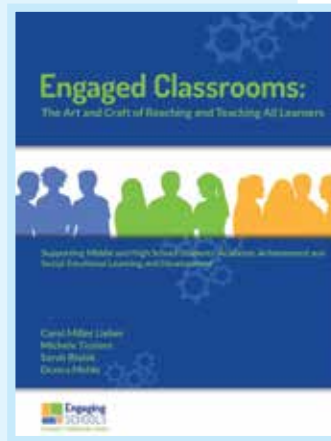
The professional learning that we've had this year with Engaging Schools around RISE & Reset rooms [supportive alternatives to in-school suspensions] has been really helpful because it's given us a focus and a goal and a ton of resources to use.

The biggest and best piece for us is that we have moved our school to a more restorative place. We've been able to really drive home that just giving kids in-school suspensions or detentions does not work, and that the **restorative practices really do work.**

**I love the Engaged Classrooms book. I'm always flipping through it and use it all the time when working with teachers.**

As just one example, our staff has done really well with the concept of de-personalization [not taking a lot of normal adolescent behavior personally], a skill that's so necessary in education and life. We've seen major improvements and it's a climate shift.

— Alison Shepard, Vice Principal,  
Pittsfield High School, Pittsfield, MA



The Code recalibration process with Engaging Schools has been really awesome. **I appreciate the open ears that Engaging Schools staff brought as we described what our experience in the district has been and what our schools specifically need.**

The process placed a big focus on a culture shift –not just the nitty gritty rules—as well as on how skillful behaviors can be learned and practiced. I'm hopeful this belief and language will become common among students, staff, and families and that our new Code will change the culture of discipline to a restorative one, moving us as a school to a more positive climate.

— Michele McGahan, Cornerstone Director and Teacher,  
Framingham High School, Framingham, MA



# Engaging Schools Making a Difference

## Partner Perspectives



When I first started in this school, I went into the library for a team meeting and there was a kid swinging from the ceiling! There were kids constantly running the hallways, no order, and no structure. You'd go to a district meeting and say you teach at Dr. Weeks and the whole rest of the district would go "Ooh..." because they had heard how bad it was. Then **Engaging**

**Schools began working with us; we could not believe the change in the building in just a couple of years. We had no idea it could be like that.**

My classroom environment is also good because I've created a sense of community which I would not have without Engaging Schools and all the techniques that I've learned throughout the years. **The kids feel like we're listening to them, that we're stopping and taking the time.** We're using Engaging Schools' Activator activities to give them breaks and all of this helps. We actually get more learning time.

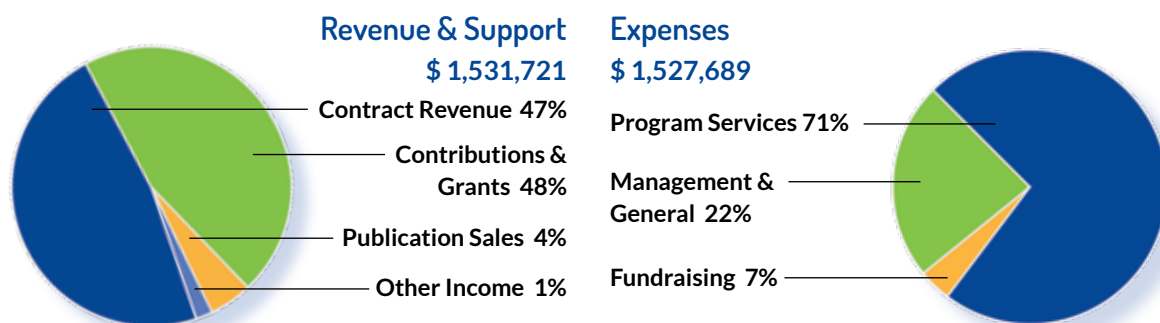
Now different schools are coming into our building to see what we're doing.

— Morgan Chylinski, Teacher,  
Dr. Weeks Elementary  
School, Syracuse, NY



# Financial Summary

July 2020 – June 2021



Net Assets	6/30/21	6/30/20
Unrestricted	\$ 1,774,370	\$ 1,770,338
Temporarily Restricted	35,765	252,501
Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 1,810,135	\$ 2,022,839

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

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