



WE START WITH STRENGTHS

Transform the way you support your students through the easiest, fastest, most reliable strength-based social and emotional learning (SEL) assessment system.

Home to the DESSA, leading SEL assessment for K-12



APERTURE EDUCATION

About Aperture

Aperture Education is the only SEL assessment company to feature an assessment technology suite that:



Is CASEL™-derived

Few SEL assessment providers can say they based their research and product on the original 5 CASEL competencies, which are well-established skills need for success in school and life.



Is Entirely Strength-based

The DESSA is one of the only SEL assessment suites to focus solely on student assets, not their deficits.



Meets the Gold Standard for SEL Screening

The DESSA-mini is the only screener to meet standards put forth by the World Health Organization and The Council of Chief State School Officers. And it only takes 1 minute per student.



Is Committed to Psychometric Excellence

The DESSA assessments meet or exceed standards put forth by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (AERA, 2014), meaning you can be confident that DESSA data is guiding you and your team to make good decisions on behalf of your students.



Provides Immediate, Real-time Data

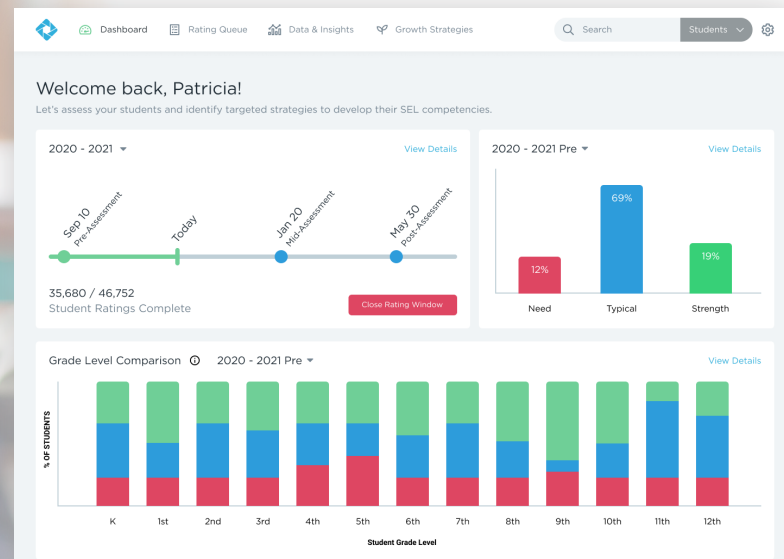
With Aperture, you can access your SEL data and rating period progress the moment the data is entered by your educators and students. There is no waiting for third-party data entry and results.

Learn more about our K-12 solutions on the pages that follow.

K-8 SEL

Increase instruction time, reduce behavior infractions, and improve academic outcomes for your students with SEL. How it works:

- Screen all students with the DESSA-mini 1-minute screener
- Educators complete the full DESSA for students who fall into “need for instruction”
- Educators, counselors, and administrators can use the data from the DESSA to support Tier 1-3 interventions for individuals, small groups, classrooms, and entire schools
- Progress monitor with the DESSA-mini throughout the year



I'm grateful for this program and all of these different strategies that help us develop SEL skills and give us the data to back it up. Over the course of two years, our SEL pilot schools reported that referrals had been cut in half and out-of-school suspension assignments had been reduced by 76%.

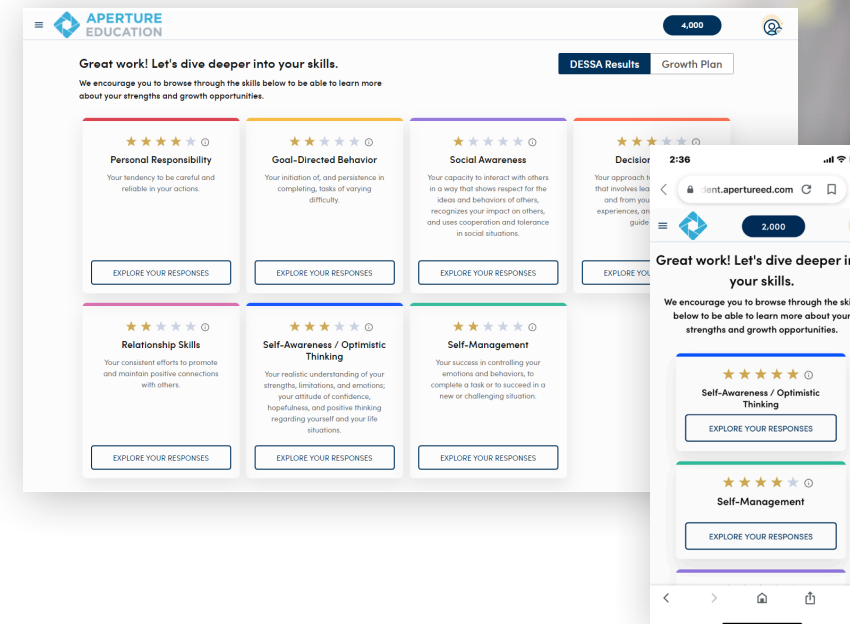
- Humble ISD
Humble, Texas



9-12 SEL

Engage students in their own social and emotional growth to prepare them for life beyond high school through our student and educator SEL assessment. How it works:

- Through the Student Portal, students can take the DESSA-Student Self-Report, receive immediate feedback on their results, and take action through SEL challenges and personal SMART goal-setting.
- The DESSA-High School Edition (HSE) mini and DESSA-HSE provide an educator perspective
- Educators, counselors, and administrators can use the data to inform intervention and spark meaningful, data-driven conversation with students and parents



Aperture is helping us connect a lot of pieces, including, but not limited to the ability to teach kids a lifelong skill that is going to make them career and college ready. We can all benefit from knowing our strengths and how to set goals.

- Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District
Oak Creek, Wisconsin

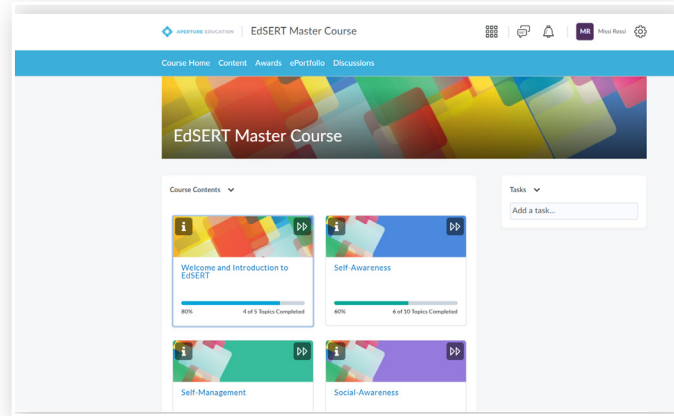


EdSERT

Supporting the social and emotional knowledge, skill sets, and well-being of your K-12 educators and staff is vital for them and for their students. How it works:

- Educators work through eight learning modules based upon the DESSA competencies together or at their own pace
- Each module contains short, reflective social and emotional surveys to provide educators with an understanding of their own strengths
- Educator results are confidential to encourage candid responses. Managers can track progress through the modules.
- Modules also include strategies to strengthen personal social and emotional development and teaching practices for the classroom

EdSERT is available in print and a digital learning management system.



“ EdSERT provides a common [language and] knowledge for the leaders and teachers in our school district. Together, we are building our competence through a time of learning, self-reflection, and application.

- Greene County Schools
Greene County, North Carolina



Who We Serve



450+
programs



3,000+
schools



42,000+
educators



1,000,000+
students

Our Partners



And more!

To learn more about Aperture Education products and services, visit www.ApertureEd.com or email us at Sales@ApertureEd.com.



APERTURE PARTNER CASE STUDY:

Sandra Mossman Elementary School

League City, TX

Negotiating Funding, Engaging Educators, and Effectively Using Quantitative Data to Drive Social and Emotional Change... Amid Pandemic-Related Challenges

Sandra Mossman Elementary is built upon the foundation of an innovative and caring community and is driven by visionary leaders who inspire and build students' highest cognitive and ethical potential. The school serves approximately 800 students in grades K-5 in League City, Texas, just outside Houston. Mossman educators believe in student self-direction, shared responsibility, and persistent risk-taking through a novel approach to learning.

The Challenge

Studies have shown that in Texas, less than 50% of kindergarten students are entering school with limited school readiness skills, many of which align with social-emotional competencies. With this knowledge in mind, school counselor Mike

Ammons cast a vision to school administrators and educators about improving social-emotional behavior and growth from the beginning of a child's educational experience. "I realized that early intervention for social-emotional deficits was crucial, just like reading or math deficits. But even though these are skills that can be taught, social-emotional learning isn't always taken seriously. I wanted to make sure we had sufficient quantitative data on our students' social-emotional competencies so we could chart a course to change behavior predicated on more than just our feelings," said Ammons.

The Solution

Two years later, Ammons has used quantitative data from the DESSA Comprehensive SEL System by Aperture Education to build the foundation for a unique, community-funded social-emotional learning program that has the buy-in of educators, administrators, community members, and even local high school students.

Keep reading to learn how Mike Ammons of Mossman Elementary:

Found funding to pay for the assessment and teacher tools

Obtained administrator buy-in to support his SEL initiatives

Engaged educators in completing the assessment and implementing SEL strategies

Implemented in phases using the DESSA-mini 60-second universal screener

Used the DESSA assessment data at the individual and classroom levels

Measured success of their implementation

Is preparing for the future of social-emotional learning now

Finding Funding

Many schools and districts struggle to find funding to support social-emotional learning programs, and Mossman is no exception. League City, Texas, has a community-funded education foundation that supported full funding for social-emotional programming for the 2019-2020 school year after Ammons submitted a thorough application outlining the importance of SEL.

To fund the program in the second year, amid the challenges of the pandemic, Ammons used Aperture to pull data from the prior year's DESSA results to show baseline and growth data in social-emotional skills. He then partnered with his principal for approval to share this information in a five-minute presentation to the foundation board. "The board ended up being really interested in the data and having a lot of questions. By the time we wrapped up, they had decided on the spot to provide the funding immediately. The check was written that day," said Ammons. Not only did Ammons seek funding for the DESSA System, he also asked for an extra \$500 for each grade level so educators could equip their classrooms with SEL resources.



Getting Administrators On-board

Ammons took a two-pronged approach to getting buy-in from administrators and teachers. Administration was keen on data-based decision-making. "Being able to make decisions for students, classrooms, and the school predicated on data rather than feelings was something that appealed to my principals and administrators quite a bit." The data from the first year of using the DESSA System by Aperture Education became crucial to administrators' decisions around individual student support plans and classroom placements for the second year.

Engaging Educators

Ammons took a different approach with educators. "Teachers already have a lot on their plates, but this is data that can directly support their needs," he said. "I spoke with them about removing stress from the classrooms so we could relate to the students in a really positive way. I talked about how the DESSA did a really good job of identifying areas that students needed to improve on. But I also made sure to let them know that it was an efficient tool. Not something where they were going to have to chart out behaviors for months or have notebooks full of prose . . . it was just a 60-second screener."

Additionally, when Ammons sought funding for SEL programming from the education foundation, his request included money that would go directly into the hands of educators. “We asked for \$500 in additional funding for each grade level so teachers could equip their classrooms with tools, like creating a calming corner where students can go to de-escalate, take deep breaths, or just have a few moments to themselves.” Teachers received additional support and tools from another unlikely source: high school students. Ammons invited students at the nearby high school who were interested in becoming teachers and counselors to learn about social-emotional learning and develop tools and activities to build social-emotional skills, under his coaching.

Last, Ammons wanted to make sure that teachers felt prepared to deliver social-emotional instruction in their classrooms, and to recognize teachers who engage in best practices and had measurable outcomes with their students. Ammons set up a “SEL Lab” in his classroom, where teachers would convene for monthly professional development on specific topics and skills. He ran the first few sessions and then began asking teachers to contribute with topics that they were having success with. Even teachers who aren’t tasked with DESSA ratings had the

opportunity to get involved. The school’s physical education teacher, for example, regularly embeds social-emotional skills into his teaching, and he led one of the sessions to demonstrate to staff how he engages all students in a class.

Implementing in Phases

“For the first year, we wanted the campus to get used to using the DESSA-mini screener. We started just with kindergarten because we know that more broadly across the state, many students are entering the school system without the necessary social-emotional skills,” said Ammons. The DESSA-mini is a universal screener that takes less than 60 seconds per student for a teacher to finish. It was completed at the beginning of the school year, and again in the middle of the year. Even though the 2019–2020 school year was cut short due to the pandemic, Ammons still had quantitative data to show administrators, educators, and the foundation a measurable change in student behavior, and for administrators to make classroom assignment decisions for the following fall.

Now in the second year, the DESSA is being used for grades K–5. Every kindergarten student was assessed by their teacher through the 60-second DESSA-mini at the beginning of the year. If a student fell into the “Needs Improvement”



category based on the screener results, teachers then administered the full DESSA for that student. Owing to pandemic-related challenges, teachers for grades 1–5 have the choice to administer the DESSA-mini and, if needed, the full DESSA. “It’s not perfect, but given the challenges [of this year], it’s a start,” said Ammons. The plan is to implement school-wide screening at a future date. The collected data is being used on both the individual student and classroom levels.

Individual Interventions

For individual students who received the full DESSA, a Student Success Team (SST) is in place. In addition to Mike, the SST is composed of educators and administrators who look at the data and create a game plan for each student. “The interactive charts are super helpful on the fly. Whoever is running the SST meeting can pull up the report, project it, and that can guide a meaningful discussion. When you have the data, you can’t ignore it. You have to use it. Teachers were really responsive to this program.”

Classroom Connections

While individual interventions were determined by the full DESSA, the DESSA-mini was an effective tool in understanding classroom-wide trends and deciding where to focus SEL during the school day. “We have morning meetings, which are a classroom time for relationship building and social-emotional learning. Based on the classroom reports and the needs assessment, teachers can

personalize their morning meeting time. It targets our most vulnerable students but serves all of our students in a meaningful way,” said Ammons.

“The other thing I like is that it contextualizes vocabulary and use of relevant words like ‘relationship skills’ and ‘social awareness,’” said Ammons. “We’re able to consistently use those terms, so students can hear that same verbiage and have a more complete understanding of what our expectations are. And teacher expectations and clarity are extremely important for kids.”

Measuring Change

“Data is important and is an approach that is sort of new to the world of counseling and social-emotional learning,” said Ammons. “I’ve been told by my principal that I think about things a little differently than other counselors because of my bias toward having quantitative rather than qualitative data. But it’s valuable information not only as we chart a course for our students. It’s a really good tool to identify which teachers are being really successful with students. If we can identify those teachers whose students are seeing measurable change between first and second semester, we can approach them to learn what they are doing and mine out the best practices for our specific population. We can give credit to those teachers who are doing great work and also help out classrooms that might not be as successful. The way the data influences campus decision making and practices is really where it becomes extremely valuable for our students and school community.”

Preparing for the Future

While assessing social-emotional skills in a quantitative way might feel new and different, it’s also becoming more accepted and expected, even at the state level. Texas, among other states, has recently required districts to include social-emotional learning within the K–12 curriculum; the list for approved assessment instruments includes the DESSA-mini. “I think in the next five to ten years, screeners like this will be standard. And what we’re doing right now is setting the standard and defining the future.”





APERTURE PARTNER CASE STUDY:

Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District

Oak Creek, WI

High School SEL: Building a Foundation for Student Voice, Goals, and Growth

With a mission to engage, challenge, and inspire every student every day, Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District in Wisconsin works toward its vision of successful futures for all students. Oak Creek-Franklin educators and staff strive toward the goal of ensuring that each of their 2000+ high school students graduate prepared to excel at their school or career of choice. This entails preparing students with academic, communication, collaboration, and digital skills that will make students capable of participating safely, ethically, and productively in a profoundly different future.

The Challenge

Like many counselors, psychologists, and student services staff across the country, school psychologist Emilie Tregellas has been challenged

with how to approach social and emotional learning in the high school space. “When I first started, we recognized a need to get more fluid with academic and SEL interventions. The assessments were happening, but we weren’t using the data as effectively as we could. Now K-8 teachers and staff meet to identify students in need and plan interventions. We’re getting really good at the elementary level,” said Tregellas. While elementary teachers are growing in their skills to actively incorporate social and emotional skills into their classroom lessons throughout the day, teachers at the high school level are trained to focus more heavily on subject-specific content and curriculum. Additionally, given the nature of high school schedules, it can be difficult to assign teachers to assess students on social-emotional competency, as they may not spend enough quality time together to gauge student skills and know which students may be in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports.

The Solution

In order to establish more SEL at the high school level and to get a baseline understanding of the social and emotional competency of high school students in the Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District, Emilie Tregellas and her team partnered with Aperture Education. “For teachers, we wanted them to have a deeper understanding of social-emotional competencies and what it means to be proficient for themselves and for students.” EdSERT, Aperture’s SEL system for teachers and school staff, empowers teachers to learn about SEL at their own pace. “For the high school students, we felt it would be best if we could just get the data straight from the kids,” said Tregellas. Through Aperture Education’s Early Adopter Program, Tregellas and her team were able to test-drive education’s first strengths-based DESSA self-report for high school students.

Keep reading to learn how Emilie Tregellas of Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District:

Created an implementation plan to launch new SEL technology to over 2,000 students

Collaborated with teachers and staff to get the word out about the importance of SEL and accurate assessment

Shared her results with school administrators and stakeholders

Is preparing for the next school year using the Aperture High School Student Portal, powered by the DESSA student self-report

Intentional Implementation

“We have Advisory, so we decided to have the students take the assessment during that time,” said Tregellas. The class period is short, so we divided the plan into three lessons. In the first lesson, students created their account and got acclimated to the system. In the second lesson, students took the assessment and briefly reviewed their immediate results. In the third, students reviewed their results and set goals within the Aperture High School Student Portal to give them a vehicle for their own voice and a

chance to work toward their growth opportunities in a way that speaks to them.

Collaboration and Communication

Educators have a lot on their plates, and Tregellas wanted to be sensitive to that as she implemented a new program with new technology. “We did a lot of work communicating and educating teachers beforehand to help them understand how important it was to have the students take this seriously,” she said. Before launch, Tregellas, Courtney Curry, school social worker, and Laura Westcott, Ninth Grade Center principal, created a professional development plan for teachers. They shared the lessons with the teachers, walked them through what the process would be for the students, clearly communicated the expectations around when they would be expected to execute each step, and noted whom to reach out to if they needed support. “One of my goals was to be super responsive to teachers during this process, because I wanted them to have a good experience and to be champions of the platform,” said Tregellas.





Sharing with Stakeholders

Tregellas cites strong relationship building with district leadership as a key to success. Like many districts, attention to academic success is a priority for leadership, but shifts are starting to happen. “We’re at a pivotal point where people are realizing that if kids can’t access learning (through a key social-emotional skill like self-management, for example), then they can’t learn their academic curriculum. And people in our district are really dialed into that. We have good champions. Our job now is to continue to communicate what we’re doing to keep the momentum going,” said Tregellas. “Our school social worker and I attend principal meetings to get feedback on their challenges and what is working, and to empower them to lead SEL initiatives in their schools.”

Preparing for What’s Next

“When we initially saw the results of the DESSA Student Self-Report, teachers worried because the overall scores seemed lower than expected. We realized it was likely because many students lost a lot of protective factors this year with the pandemic. It’s good for us to know this type of information because now we can act on it,” said Tregellas. DESSA Student Self-Report data illustrated that a majority of Oak Creek-Franklin students were struggling with the SEL competencies of Self-Awareness and Optimistic Thinking. In response to these findings, a small team came together to create advisory lessons based on the identified SEL competencies. “For next year, we’ll use the DESSA Student Self-Report for screening. Students who fall into the Needs category after screening will have a report filled out by a teacher so we can compare the results and create an action plan.” Tregellas is also excited about continuing to use the goal-setting functionality in the Aperture Student Portal. “Executive functioning skills is a passion of mine. Your platform helps kids access goal setting in a way that might be challenging but can help them follow through. We work with our students on goal-setting, and I could also see teachers feeling like goal-setting is more approachable and doable because we now have a consistent, easy way to set and track those goals.”

With tools that make social and emotional learning practical and approachable for the high school space, Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District is able to continue to build a solid foundation of SEL across the entire district to follow its mission to prepare students with academic, communication, collaboration, and digital skills that will make students capable of participating safely, ethically, and productively in a profoundly different future. “This program is helping us connect a lot of pieces including but not limited to the ability to teach kids a lifelong skill that is going to make them career and college ready. We can all benefit from knowing our strengths and how to set goals.”



APERTURE PARTNER CASE STUDY: SEL in the Memphis Teacher Residency Program

Using Adult SEL to Promote Equitable Opportunities for Educators and Students

“What can I practically do tomorrow with teachers? That’s a question I am left with after professional development, but that’s not a feeling I’m left with at all with EdSERT. It’s practical, research-based, and I can implement the resources from the modules immediately with the teachers I’m coaching.”

– Danielle Ringold, instructional coach and licensing manager, Memphis Teacher Residency

Equitable education means ensuring all students have access to and receive the resources they need to be successful. While many systemic inequities exist within education, the Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR) program is actively working to change that. MTR uses a coaching model for residents and graduates — recent college graduates and young professionals —

who enter its teacher preparation program. During their resident year, program participants receive support from a mentor while they train and teach in a classroom within one of the 13 partner schools affiliated with MTR. At the end of their residency, they receive a master’s in urban education through Union University. Residents then commit the next three years of their career to working at a school within the program.

Larissa Gregory, social and emotional learning (SEL) department chair, said this is done strategically so that students have access to educators who return year-after-year and are invested in them.

“The hope is that students will have access to the same faces over and over again trained by the same program, so they have access to instruction similar to other educational institutions that aren’t accessible to them,” said Larissa.

The Challenge

Preservice teacher education programs currently offer few SEL-specific learning initiatives. Within the pre-existing structure of MTR, Larissa hoped to build out an SEL program with two pillars: one that is student-facing and one that is adult-facing, to better equip educators in the classroom.

“I was really seeking an experience for residents and graduates that could be based on their own learning and something they could then tailor and apply to their classrooms,” said Larissa.

Courtney Humphreys, department chair director, said balancing students’ SEL needs and academic needs, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic, has been a real pressure point for teachers.

Danielle Ringold, instructional coach and licensing manager, agreed. As a seventh-year coach she said the need for SEL has always existed, but that need has grown even greater over the past year.

“Specifically in our work, there are limited resources and development opportunities for our teachers to strengthen their skillset to be able to address SEL needs of students,” said Danielle.



“The request for these tools has increased more and more each year.”

Courtney continued, “Another kind of challenge we’re always addressing is how to merge theory and practice. Our residents learn all about pedagogy and content-based practices in their coursework. They’re working at a number of different school sites with a different number of mentors so they certainly aren’t going to have the same experience, but we want to provide opportunities for all of them that will set them up well for their graduate years.”

Larissa’s next steps were to investigate what resources already existed to expand SEL. Something she quickly found was that there was a lot of content that already existed, but it was scattered all over in various spaces across various products.

The Solution

Larissa and Courtney hoped to find a central repository that combined all those valuable resources in one place. Then they found the Educator Social-Emotional Reflection and Training (EdSERT) program. EdSERT is a professional development program designed for use by school-based teachers and out-of-school time program staff working with children and youth in grades K-12.

EdSERT has two main goals: to improve the efficacy of SEL instruction and ultimately student outcomes by enhancing the social and emotional knowledge and skill sets of teachers, and to enhance teacher well-being through the development of social and emotional practices that increase coping skills, well-being, and resilience.

“We love how robust the EdSERT program is and that there are really specific strategies and resources that honored the teacher’s perspective. It also stood out because all the information was grounded in the CASEL competency framework,” said Courtney.

MTR piloted the print edition of the EdSERT program last year and Larissa explained there was a great response from graduates who participated.



“I saw changes in classroom practices because teachers saw and understood what SEL looked like for them and what it could look like when they applied the practices from EdSERT into their classroom approaches,” said Larissa.

She most heard that teachers hadn’t realized until EdSERT that SEL was for them, too, not just their students.

“There were several times while doing the workbook where teachers had ah-ha moments. They realized they were provoking things within the classroom rather than just being a part of the solution,” said Larissa. “We think about professional development where we sit down to review fluency or a skill for math, learn how to differentiate it, break it down, make it make sense, and then going to teach it, but we don’t do the same with SEL or the emotional intelligence side of things. I really liked having time for educators to sit down, see how these strategies applied to them personally, and then be able to bring them back to their classrooms.”

Keep reading to learn how Larissa Gregory and Courtney Humphreys of Memphis Teacher Residency:

Encouraged educators to rethink how they integrated SEL in class.

Re-established joy during the pandemic through EdSERT.

Promoted collaboration between educators.

Are preparing for continued use of EdSERT this fall.

SEL Integration

MTR is encouraging teachers to think about SEL as practices that don’t exist separately from academics but are intertwined throughout.

“I teach an elementary math methods class. It’s interesting because I’ve been reading a good bit of research about humanizing mathematical spaces,” shared Courtney. “Historically, math has been taught in a way that’s very scary and really



based on the memorization of procedures instead of sense making. I think there's a tight connection between what we teach our teachers about how to create a humanizing math space that emphasizes both sense-making and procedures and SEL. I'm proud of the way our teachers are learning to create those spaces in mathematics and other content areas."

Re-establishing Joy

It has been a hard year for many educators to feel joy. There was the disconnectedness through virtual learning, changes in routine, and additional stressors in educators' personal lives as they balanced a new normal. Many educators saw the benefit of taking the time to dig deeper into the strategies suggested by EdSERT.

"It was a really powerful experience for teachers to reflect on themselves, that's just key to SEL. You can't teach something or share something you haven't worked on for yourself. By creating space for that we saw really positive outcomes. One of the graduates I was coaching used the 'teach boldly' resource [which asks educators to examine biases and celebrate and promote diversity]. She reflected on how that helped her reestablish joy by examining her personal values, biases, and beliefs to reframe her interactions with students. She realized, and I think a lot of us are realizing, that SEL isn't just a priority for students, but a focus for teachers, too," said Danielle.

Creating a Community

In time with the switch to virtual learning came the EdSERT digital product, the twin to the print edition of the EdSERT program MTR piloted their

first semester. After the pilot they were able to expand the number of educators that participated in the EdSERT program. This aligned with a goal Larissa had to strengthen the relationship between coaches and residents.

"We grew our coaching team's SEL language which gave them tools to help coach their teachers. We also worked to strengthen the residents' SEL vocabulary so they could engage in a more meaningful way with their coaches. EdSERT gave us a jumping off point for developing a shared vocabulary and shared toolkit for development," said Larissa.

They adapted their in-person meetings that they held with the paper EdSERT to a virtual setting with the virtual product during the pandemic, too. She shared it was a great opportunity for those who did drop in to discuss what worked for people who had already used specific strategies, brainstorm ideas, and keep the community they had built in person connected.

Next Steps

MTR looks forward to continuing their relationship with Aperture going into the upcoming school year.

"Aperture has brought structure and vision to what MTR has been reaching for in terms of SEL supports. The structure, the self-paced guide, those things were helpful, and teachers were excited to be a part of it. Anything teachers are excited about I plan on getting excited about alongside them," said Larissa.

"With SEL being newer to the world and to the organization, MTR has seen how important it is for teachers to be supported and teachers have seen how important it is for their kids to be supported with SEL. Coming back after the pandemic it will only be a more integral part of the day-to-day as teachers and students are seeking to be together again and seeking belonging, I'm hopeful for the future of MTR because of our solid foundation with EdSERT."



**APERTURE
EDUCATION**

Aperture Education empowers over 3,000 schools and out-of-school-time programs across North America to measure, strengthen, and support social and emotional competence in K-12 youth and educators. This system enables education leaders can make strategic, data-based decisions about SEL within their organizations. The Aperture system includes the DESSA suite of strength-based assessments, CASEL-informed intervention strategies, and robust reporting, all in one easy-to-use digital platform. Aperture has supported over one million students in their social and emotional growth and continues to develop innovative solutions to bring the whole child into focus. To learn more, visit www.ApertureEd.com.