

***Put Your Oxygen Mask On First: SEL Strategies
for Educators and Students in Troubling Times***

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Theme

You are powerful! If you choose to use your power in ways that can help students, you can become the Turnaround Educator that many students desperately need.

Effective Strategies

1. Make sure that your "Education Laundry" is clean.

Your "Education Laundry" consists of mindsets and beliefs that determine how you view and treat African American, low-income, and other students from "Vulnerable Groups," and their parents/guardians.

Dirty "Education Laundry" and Consequences

Mindset/Belief

Af. Am. and low-income students:

- aren't smart
- are bad
- are loud
- don't want to learn

Behavior/Consequence

low expectations
racial profiling & abuses of power
unfair discipline practices
low expectations
& unfair discipline practices

Clean "Education Laundry" and Consequences

Mindset/Belief

Af. Am. and low-income students:

- want to learn
- aren't bad
- have different personalities
- want to learn
- Af. Am and low-income parents care about their children's education.

Behavior/Consequence

quality instruction & support
fair discipline practices &
relationship building
no racial profiling
quality instruction & support
respectful interactions

How to Clean Your “Education Laundry”

- Identify and address detrimental beliefs.
- Identify and address destructive and unfair behaviors.
- Adopt the correct beliefs and behaviors.
- Hold yourself accountable.
- Look for patterns/themes in your interactions with students and parents/guardians, and learn the related life lessons.
- Read, commit to, and sign “An Equity Affirmation for Educators/School Leaders/Office Staff.”
- Educate yourself and staff about microaggressions, and the effects of unconscious biases.
- Hold yourself accountable for using this information to improve the way that you treat students and parents/guardians.

Related Resources

- **YouTube Podcast: Inspirations by Gail**
 - Episode 2 “Don’t Believe That Lie”
 - Episode 3 “Do I Look Like a Criminal to You?”
 - Episode 7: “Your Big Picture: Starting at the End, Instead of the Beginning”
 - Episode 11: “You Can’t Be Big, If Little Got You”
 - Episode 13: “The Spirit of Fear”
- **Why I Chose Not to Become a Racist**, an article by Dr. Gail L. Thompson
- **Equity Talk Newsletter**

Recommended Videos, Podcasts, and Articles From Other Experts (Google)

- “Microaggressions in the Classroom”
- “Microaggressions in Everyday Life”
- “Recognizing and Addressing Microaggressions”
- “Implicit Bias and Microaggressions: the Macro Impact of Small Acts”
- “Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence”
- “How Unintentional But Insidious Bias Can Be the Most Harmful”
- “How Does Oppression (Microaggressions) Affect Perpetrators?”
- “The Ultimate White Privilege”

2. Create a “Culture of Empathy” in your classroom by holding yourself accountable for:”

- Building positive relationships with students
- Knowing and understanding students well enough to detect when something is wrong before they begin acting out
- Greeting students when they arrive with a smile and a kind word and/or positive greeting. (Refer to Equity Talk Newsletter)
- Remembering that students didn’t choose to be in your class, but you can leave at will.
- Asking questions and listening carefully:
 - Is something wrong? --What’s going on/ What happened?--How can I help?
- Putting yourself in “student’s shoes,” by remembering how you felt when you were having a bad day during your childhood

- Remembering that no child is perfect, and you weren't a perfect child (or adult) either
- Learning to pronounce students' and parents' names correctly
- Giving the gift of your smile throughout the day
- Giving compliments
- Providing encouragement
- Reminding students of the short- and long-term benefits of good behavior and doing their best on schoolwork
- Trying not to overreact
- When in doubt, practicing "The Golden Rule"

3. Put your "Oxygen Mask" on first by using calming and self-care strategies throughout the day to reduce your stress load.

- deep breathing,
- proper nutrition, (lots of green leafy veggies, Vitamin B-12, Iron, etc.)
- getting enough rest at night,
- taking power naps during lunch-time when needed,
- exercising and taking "soul strolls,"
- listening to uplifting music,
- trying not to "sweat the small stuff,"
- reminding yourself of your "Big Picture,"
- asking for help from parents, teachers, other leaders, friends, and family,
- reading Dr. Jenny Grant Rankin's *First Aid for Teacher Burnout*,
- reading the strategies and "Confidence Boosters," in *Yes, You Can! Advice for Teachers Who Want a Great Start and a Great Finish With Their Students of Color*,
- prioritizing self-care, and self-protection, etc. (*The Art of Extreme Self-Care*),
- Aromatherapy,
- therapeutic massages,

4. Use SEL Strategies with students.

- Use Esme Coddell's "Trouble Basket."
- Have soft music playing as students enter the classroom.
- Begin the class session with a calming warm-up activity, such as writing (their goals/plans to have a successful school day; reviewing what they learned from the previous class session; describing a problem/issue that is on their mind; letter that won't be mailed to someone, etc.) or drawing/coloring = Art Therapy.
- Teach students how to calm themselves with therapeutic deep breathing.
- Give students ample opportunities to discuss classroom, school, neighborhood, etc. issues that can block their affective filters, and give them opportunities to explore solutions.
- Have students brainstorm and discuss options for handling stressful situations.
- Use Art Therapy as often as possible in your lesson plans.

5. Share PBIS strategies with students.

- Explain why specific words and behaviors will cause them to get into trouble.
- Share as many Stress-management strategies as possible.

- Teach Conflict-resolution strategies through storytelling, literature, role playing, brainstorming alternatives, “What Would You Do?” and “How Would You Feel?” discussions, posters, videos, etc.
- Share Anger-management strategies through the curriculum and individualized meetings.
- Use pre-existing online resources.

PBIS Strategies for Adults

- Examine and address any of the following personal issues:

Passive/aggressiveness

Conflict avoidance

Negative Core Beliefs (Dirty Education Laundry)

Hidden fears

Insecurity

Jealousy

Elitism

- When in doubt, practice the “Golden Rule.”

Extended Professional Development “The 21 Day Challenge”

*from Up Where We Belong: Helping African American
and Latino Students Rise in School and in Life*
by Dr. Gail L. Thompson

1. Write the names of 5 African American, low-income or students from other “Vulnerable Groups” with whom you have had problems in the past.
2. Select one of the students as the focus of your first “Relationship-Building Venture.”
 - For 21 consecutive school days, force yourself to view and treat this student as if he or she were the most intelligent, most positive, and most delightful student whom you have ever met.
 - Compliment this student often.
 - Document what you did, how you felt, how the student reacted, and what you learned from this assignment.
 - Repeat the process with the other students on your list.
 - Share what you learned about yourself and the students with your colleagues, and school leaders.
 - Determine your “Next Steps.”