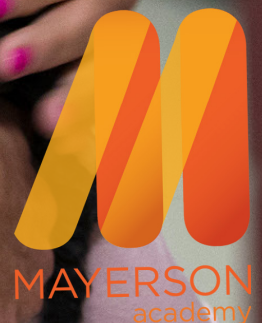


THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES EVALUATION REPORT

A summary of evaluation data from the Thriving Learning Communities™ program in 41 urban schools.

“
If we can acknowledge our top strengths, we can mobilize to achieve great things, reach happiness and work better together. Expanding the program moves us toward a deeper community.

– Shelly Stein, Principal,
Cincinnati Public Schools



THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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We would like to acknowledge the support of Cincinnati Public Schools' Department of Performance and Accountability, Connie Solano, Director.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Introduction

In 2014, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) launched a visionary strategy for system transformation. Entitled My Tomorrow*ed, the driving force of this strategy is preparing students for productive lives after graduation. Two of the guiding principles identified for student success include heightened engagement in school and enhanced social and emotional learning. Thriving Learning Communities (TLC) embeds these principles throughout the program's curriculum, classroom materials, professional development sessions, and modeling and feedback around implementation.

The TLC curriculum is grounded in recent literature that highlights the potential for integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) and character education to enhance student well-being, a model that has been called social-emotional-character development (Elias & Berkowitz, 2016; Elias et al., 2007). Specifically, TLC focuses on the five core competencies associated with social and emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2005). It addresses these competencies through the discussion of character strengths drawn from the VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), which is the most extensively researched model of character strengths currently available. This integration is achieved by introducing concepts and strengths from the VIA Classification in a series of expertly designed modules with accompanying character strengths resources that focus on each of the core SEL competencies.

In the 2016-17 school year, components of TLC were woven throughout Advisory lessons taught in 5th and 6th grades at 41 schools in the Cincinnati Public School District (CPS), with plans to expand to grades 3 and 4 in 2017-18. Rather than adopting the full TLC program in these schools, strengths language, social and emotional competencies, and community building strategies are embedded throughout the Advisory Manuals. This is a result of the collaborative design efforts of Mayerson Academy (MA) and CPS experts. TLC materials, writing prompts for TLC Strengths Journals, and visual resources for engaging students are included in a majority of Advisory lessons. Specific activities from the TLC Curriculum Guide are used, either whole or in part, in 12 individual lessons over the course of the year. In addition to providing curricular materials, teachers have access to professional development, classroom observations, team meetings, and coaching/modeling. The program was introduced to CPS educators through a train-the-trainer model, creating champions in each school.

The TLC program is designed to increase engagement, improve performance (attendance and discipline), and learning (grades and test scores). It seeks to reverse the widely-documented, nationwide trend of increased absences and disciplinary events across the school year, especially as students approach middle school (Gion, McIntosh, & Horner, 2014; Traill & Brohawn, 2014). Program evaluation results reported in this document and in other Mayerson Academy studies clearly indicate the program delivers on its intended outcomes when TLC is implemented with high fidelity and sustained over time.



THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Critical Outcomes

To understand the impact of TLC in CPS, five major outcome variables were evaluated. The first four represent learning and performance outcomes: number of absences, number of disciplinary events, grade point average (GPA), and test scores. The fifth outcome measures student engagement. Data for each of these variables were available for each quarter under study. In addition to examining changes in these variables over the course of the school year, we also examined whether the schools and Advisory teachers identified as exemplars (bright spots) of the program would be associated with greater impact as compared to other schools and teachers.

Learning and Performance Outcomes

The means for each of the four academic outcomes for each school for each year of the program were compared to the aggregate mean for all schools for that year. Table 1 provides the mean values for each school. For example, in 2015-16, students at all 41 schools were absent an average of 0.50 days more each quarter than in the previous quarter, while in 2015-16, students at John P. Parker School were absent only 0.17 days more each quarter than in the previous quarter. Likewise, in 2016-17, students at John P. Parker were absent .53 more each quarter as compared with the total school average of .63. The relatively positive pattern was evidenced by other schools that implemented TLC with fidelity.



Advisory teachers were identified as “bright spots” if they (a) attended all professional development (PD) sessions offered, (b) agreed to co-facilitate PD sessions as needed, (c) exhibited a keen understanding of a strengths-based perspective, (d) used strengths-based language on a regular basis in their Advisory classes, and (e) demonstrated a commitment to implementing the program as written. A sample of thirteen teachers were identified as bright spots, and 267 (7.86%) participating students attended Advisory sections with these teachers. Student change over the course of the year was compared between those students of bright spot teachers and all other teachers (aggregated score) for the four outcome variables. Because some unidentified bright spot teachers may have been included in this aggregated score, the difference between the two groups may have been diluted.

A sample of eight schools were identified as “high fidelity.” Schools were identified as high fidelity if (a) the principal or administrator supported TLC implementation in Advisory, (b) at least one teacher was a strong supporter, advocate, and “user” of the TLC philosophy (strengths based language to support community building and SEL competencies), and (c) a team coordinated efforts to share the message of Advisory and was eager to incorporate the TLC program more fully into the Advisory program.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS ON ACADEMIC OUTCOMES.

Fid	School	2015-2016				2016-2017			
		Abs	Disc	GPA	NGA	Abs	Disc	GPA	NGA
	Overall	0.50	0.04	-0.01	693	0.63	0.06	0.00	695
	Academy of Multilingual Immersion ^a	0.45	0.01	0.13	672	0.55	0.00	-0.03	680
	Academy of World Languages ^a	0.40	0.04	0.06	664	0.40	0.05	0.02	673
	Bond Hill Academy	0.61	-0.07	0.11	656	1.07	0.19	0.37	671
	Carson School	1.07	0.00	-0.04	678	0.91	0.00	-0.04	681
	Chase	0.57	0.01	-0.09	681	0.56	-0.03	-0.21	686
	Cheviot	0.47	0.06	-0.03	692	0.57	0.09	0.06	696
*	College Hill ^a	0.36	0.03	0.02	695	0.49	0.05	-0.04	693
	Covedale	0.52	0.05	-0.02	713	0.47	0.13	-0.01	715

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS ON ACADEMIC OUTCOMES (CONT.)

Fid	School	2015-2016				2016-2017			
		Abs	Disc	GPA	NGA	Abs	Disc	GPA	NGA
	Dater Montessori ^a	0.20	-0.01	0.05	727	0.19	0.02	-0.05	727
*	Ethel M. Taylor Academy	0.65	0.01	-0.38	666	0.40	0.07	-0.04	684
	Evanston Academy ^a	0.51	-0.02	0.16	685	0.75	0.04	0.21	714
	Fairview ^a	0.06	0.03	-0.11	738	0.22	0.06	-0.03	731
	Frederick Douglass	1.35	-0.03	0.05	663	1.25	-0.02	-0.04	661
	Hartwell	0.55	0.02	-0.03	686	0.56	0.05	-0.12	686
	Hays-Porter School	0.31	0.05	-0.05	662	1.05	0.00	-0.14	673
*	Hyde Park School ^a	0.33	0.00	0.08	767	0.27	0.00	0.03	752
*	John P. Parker ^a	0.17	-0.03	0.05	672	0.53	-0.05	0.28	708
	Kilgour ^a	0.18	-0.01	0.05	738	0.14	0.03	0.00	747
	Midway ^a	0.44	0.11	0.04	675	0.33	0.04	0.04	678
*	Mt. Airy ^a	0.41	0.02	-0.01	674	0.56	0.04	0.00	680
	Mt. Washington ^a	0.28	0.11	-0.06	703	0.44	0.15	-0.05	704
	North Avondale Montessori ^a	0.24	0.17	-0.08	716	0.30	0.12	-0.07	715
	Oyler	1.14	-0.01	0.14	674	1.41	-0.01	-0.02	674
	Parker Woods Montessori School	0.40	0.07	-0.13	683	0.40	0.10	-0.01	
	Pleasant Hill Academy	0.68	0.03	0.01	680	0.63	0.06	0.18	679
	Pleasant Ridge Montessori School ^a	0.63	0.02	0.02	693	0.42	0.11	-0.05	700
*	Rees E. Price	1.18	0.14	-0.02	682	1.40	0.06	-0.06	683
	Riverview East Academy	0.77	0.04	0.05	677	0.69	0.00	-0.08	689
*	Roberts Academy	0.58	0.10	0.12	673	0.73	0.01	0.17	677
	Rockdale Academy	-0.56	-0.03	0.02	683	1.07	0.06	-0.11	694
	Roll Hill Academy	0.53	0.14	-0.13	678	0.01	0.22	-0.06	675
	Roselawn Condon School ^a	0.31	0.02	-0.16	677	0.87	0.00	0.04	669
	Rothenberg Preparatory Academy	0.92	0.08	-0.11	661	1.30	0.04	-0.12	668
	Sands Montessori ^a	0.21	0.03	0.00	728	0.11	0.09	-0.03	727
	Sayler Park	0.98	0.07	-0.01	701	1.34	0.18	0.01	700
	Silverton	0.61	0.14	-0.10	684	0.88	0.05	-0.04	691
	South Avondale	0.85	-0.04	0.03	674	1.56	0.04	-0.01	670
	Taft Elementary	0.51	0.04	-0.17	668	0.98	-0.03	-0.05	680
*	Westwood	0.72	0.06	-0.01	682	0.66	0.05	0.05	674
	Winton Hills Academy	0.54	0.01	-0.06	685	0.69	-0.02	-0.06	695
	Woodford Paideia	0.23	0.08	-0.13	681	0.47	0.11	0.07	682

^a: A school that exceeded the mean on at least two of four academic outcomes for two consecutive years

*: A school considered high-fidelity both years of the program

Abs: Mean absence slope (lower is better)

Disc: Mean slope for disciplinary events (lower is better)

GPA: Mean slope for grade point average (higher is better)

NGA: Mean score on standardized tests (higher is better)

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

As depicted in Figure 1, out of four comparisons (attendance, discipline, GPA, test scores), three favored teachers identified in the bright spot sample, with attendance rising to statistical significance. In other words, the thirteen teachers implementing TLC with fidelity realized positive comparative outcomes in attendance, GPA, and test scores. It is possible that some bright spot teachers were included in the comparative teacher group, thus leading to a dilution of the difference in the means of the two groups.

FIGURE 1. MEANS FOR ACADEMIC AND PERFORMANCE VARIABLES FOR TEACHERS

A ✓ indicates an outcome favoring bright spot teachers. An ✗ indicates an outcome favoring other teachers.



THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Figure 2 reflects the comparison of the identified high-fidelity schools with all other schools. Of the four variables under study (attendance, discipline, GPA, test scores), three favored high-fidelity schools, indicating that strong implementation led to improved outcomes. It is possible that some high-fidelity schools were included in the “typical school” category, thus leading to a dilution of the difference in the means of the two groups.

FIGURE 2. MEANS FOR ACADEMIC AND PERFORMANCE VARIABLES FOR SCHOOLS

A ✓ indicates an outcome favoring high-fidelity schools. An ✗ indicates an outcome favoring other schools.



Strong implementation leads to improved outcomes.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

In looking at both the bright spot teachers' and high-fidelity schools' samples, the direction of the effects was overwhelmingly positive. The consistency with which the samples outperformed other schools and teachers is encouraging.

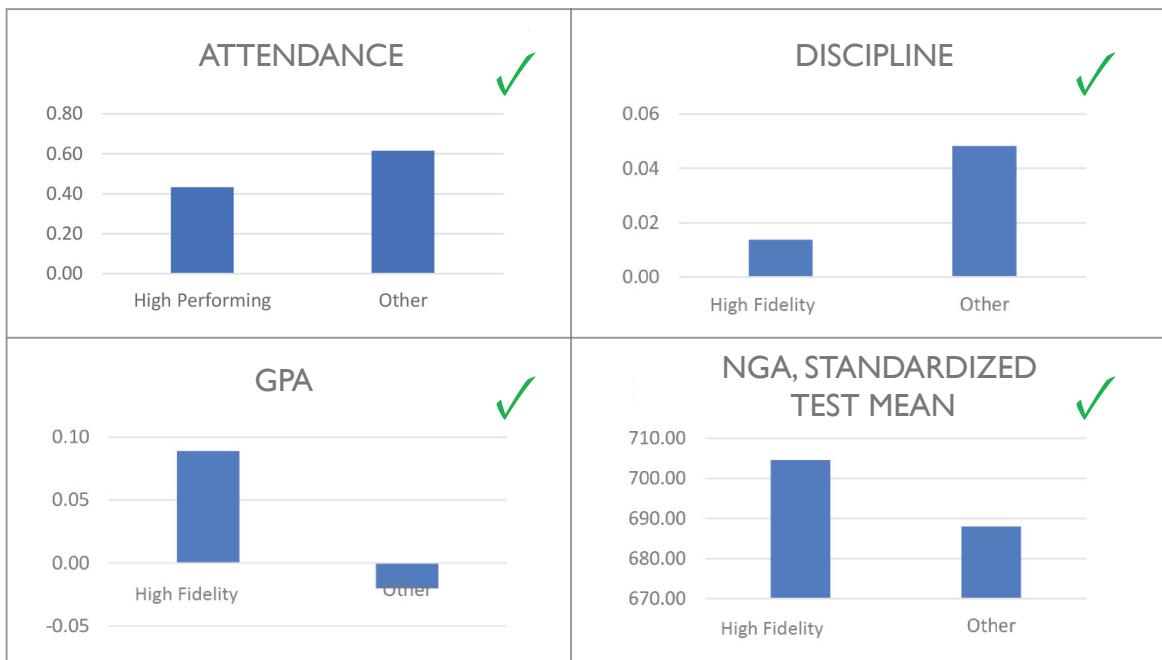
In a recent meta-analysis of the long-term impact of SEL programs, Taylor et al (2017) suggest that acquisition of social and emotional skills and improved attitudes about self, others, and school are typically achieved first, during the early stages of program implementation. Indicators of learning, performance, and well-being emerge later, as students learn to consistently enact their new skills and attitudes.

The TLC impact data validates the program's theory of change and evidences positive impact on all variables in a much shorter time-frame than might typically be expected.

As evidenced in Figure 3, previously reported positive impacts increase with a second year of high-fidelity implementation. The TLC program increased positive outcomes in all measured academic and performance variables when the program was sustained over two years.

FIGURE 3. MEANS FOR HIGH-FIDELITY SCHOOLS ON FOUR ACADEMIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES OVER TWO YEARS

Lower values are better for attendance and discipline. Higher values are better for GPA and standardized test scores.



Student Engagement Outcomes

In addition to investigating the program's impact on absences, disciplinary events, GPA, and test scores, student engagement was studied as an outcome variable. To obtain this data, teachers evaluated 4-6 classes over the course of a single day on four items (listed in Table 2; full survey can be found in Appendix A).

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

TABLE 2. ENGAGEMENT SURVEY ITEMS

- Students show on-task attention and concentration, effort, and persistence. (Behavioral engagement)
- Students show positive emotions (Emotional engagement)
- Students offer suggestions, ask questions, and express interests, preferences, and likes and dislikes. (Cognitive engagement)
- Students use strengths language. (Behavioral engagement)

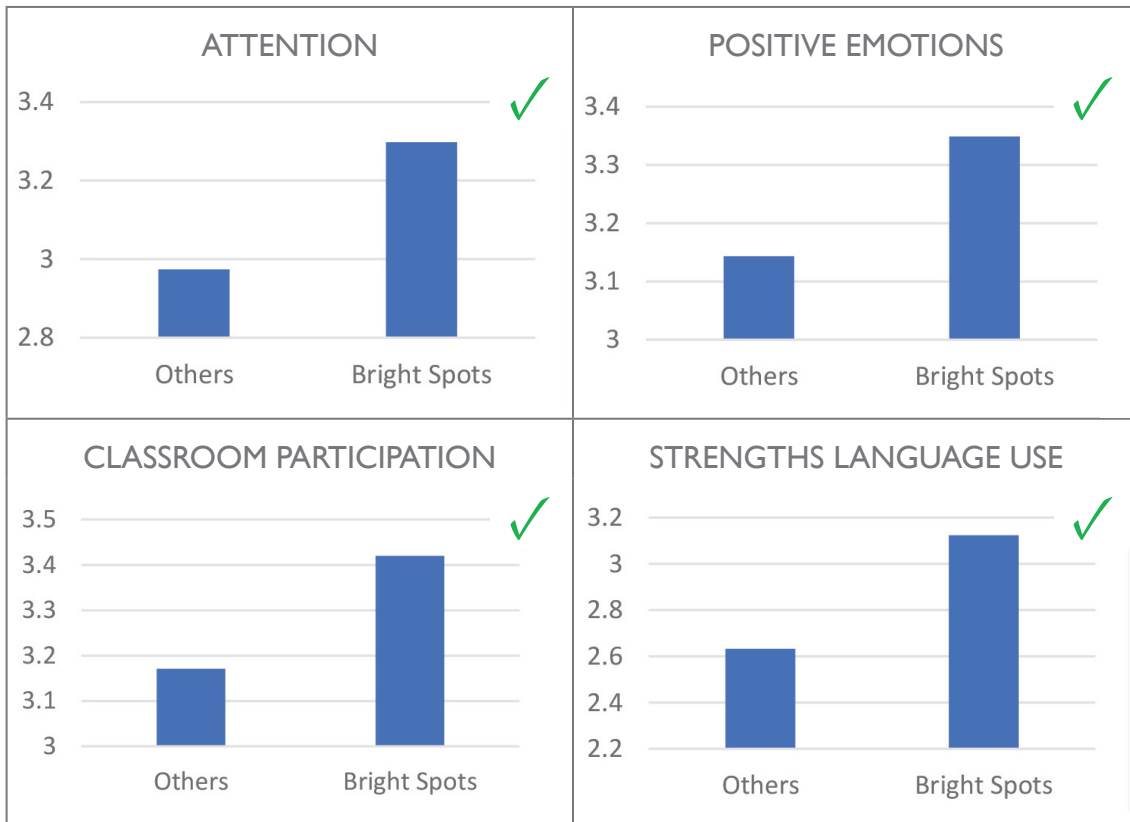
Engagement data revealed a trend toward significant improvement on three of the four engagement items. Specifically, students' on-task attention, use of strengths language, and classroom participation increased over the course of the school year.

Analyses were also conducted comparing engagement during Advisory courses to engagement during content courses. For three of the four aspects of engagement, there was a trend towards significantly higher engagement in Advisory courses as compared to other courses, suggesting that the lessons provided in Advisory tend to support greater engagement of students in the classroom.

For every aspect of engagement, bright spot teachers were associated with higher mean engagement ratings than other teachers (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. MEANS FOR ENGAGEMENT VARIABLES

In all cases, higher scores are better. In comparing teachers at high-fidelity schools, a ✓ indicates an outcome favoring bright spot teachers as compared to other teachers in the same schools.



High Fidelity Schools Up Close

Taking a closer look at two schools, Hyde Park and John P. Parker, provides critical insights into successful implementation and high impact. As two of the high fidelity implementers, they emerged as especially strong examples of the modified TLC program. Classrooms in these identified schools reflected a positive culture which included use of strengths-based language and embedded behavioral practices that led to increased engagement and overall social-emotional competencies of students and staff.



Hyde Park and John P. Parker both demonstrated increases in GPA during both years of the program. John P. Parker demonstrated a decrease in disciplinary events in each year of the program while Hyde Park, showed relatively no change in discipline due to the low beginning baseline. In addition, students in these schools, on average, showed a smaller increase of absences over the year when compared to the overall average.

The success of these schools may be related to their high-fidelity implementation of Advisory with TLC and related strategies to build SEL and engagement. The examples below exemplify their success strategies and are largely supported in the existing research literature in strengths-based education.

1. Principals in both schools were highly invested in enhancing SEL throughout their schools, and expanded the use of strengths language beyond the 5th/6th grade Advisory lessons. For example, at Hyde Park, the principal turned her office into a “mindfulness resting spot” for students who were struggling to maintain calm in the classroom. John P. Parker’s principal held school-wide assemblies at the beginning of each week that focused on a “strength of the week,” selecting one of the 24 character strengths.



2. Principals supported their teachers’ unique styles in facilitating lessons and embedding the work throughout their days.

Research has indicated that strong leader involvement and support are factors leading to positive outcomes in character education programs (Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley, 2016).

3. Champions actively engaged in professional development sessions by attending all four sessions offered and co-facilitating at least one session. In addition, teams of Advisory teachers at these schools engaged actively with their Champion* and with each other, forming Advisory “teams.” They readily invited

coaches to observe and discuss strategies for effective implementation.

Research has indicated that teachers invested in professional development and teaching one another leads to stronger outcomes in character education programs (Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley, 2016).

*The Champion model is a cost-effective strategy for providing training for strong early-adopters, or advocates of the TLC model, and supporting them in taking their learning back to their school teams. The model is founded in the belief that teachers learn best from their peers who understand the particular struggles encountered within each unique school environment.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

4. John P. Parker had a “full-school buy-in” with all teachers and classes participating in weekly assemblies, sharing lessons on different character strengths.

Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley (2016) listed this full-school buy in as yet another factor leading to positive outcomes.

5. Both Hyde Park and John P. Parker had numerous strategies for visually displaying the work that evolved from TLC’s strengths-based curriculum. These included bulletin boards displaying students’ strengths, posters reflecting strengths language, acknowledgments among students of observed strengths, and, at John P. Parker, large strengths flags at the entrance to the school.

Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley (2016) indicated that these school displays about character strengths and student awards for character were strategies utilized by the most effective character education programs.



6. John P. Parker was very actively involved in their community through Madisonville Strong¹. Through the Madisonville Strong initiative, their PTA president developed a program to create flags for each of the 24 strengths to line the pathway leading to the school entrance. School staff members and leadership were involved in many of the community strength-based projects.

As summarized in the Berkowitz, Bier, & McCauley, (2016) article, intentional, active involvement of both parents and the entire community in using strengths language was more likely to lead to positive outcomes.

¹Madisonville Strong is a Cincinnati-neighborhood initiative that brings Madisonville residents together to foster strong, connected communities through the activation of strengths within individuals, organizations, and neighborhoods.



TLC sends a message to students that recognizing one’s strengths while acquiring the skills of social and emotional learning are important underpinnings of success.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Discussion

Data from the previous two years of Advisory with TLC in CPS demonstrate clear results, favoring those teachers and schools with superior understanding and implementation of the model. To build on these successes, continued focus on achieving best practices throughout all schools is required. Supporting teachers through professional development and supportive coaching, while providing innovative instructional materials, is essential to this iterative process. Positive trends in outcomes from the TLC data support the vital impact that this program can have on student engagement and academic progress. Positive growth was demonstrated in each year that TLC was implemented in Advisory, with evidence that progress over time was greatest for those teachers and schools most fully invested in the program. Data from the 2015-17 school years in CPS suggest several areas for future growth and progress.



Principal Commitment

We have consistently witnessed the dramatic positive impact that principal engagement has on the fidelity of implementation of Advisory and TLC. When principals encourage and support their teachers to initiate innovative strategies that support the development of a strengths-based language and social and emotional learning competencies, teachers and their students thrive.

Finding effective means for engaging principals in meaningful dialogue and instruction about strengths and SEL has been a challenge in terms of time and venue. Principals need a three-hour block of time to learn about social and emotional learning, character strengths, and best practices for implementation of strategies in their schools.

Professional Learning Design and Delivery

Actively engaging educators in professional learning that is grounded in research, strong pedagogical principles, and teacher-led instruction leads to a broader and deeper adoption of the strengths-based model in Advisory as well as core content courses. Further, we know that when educators are enthusiastic about the program, they are more likely to implement with the highest fidelity, leading to a positive impact on student attendance, grades, and test scores.



A key area for growth is continued identification and coaching of teachers who are eager to take this work forward. Providing timely professional learning, observation, and modeling strategies for an expanded select group of teachers can lead to a positive impact on their professional practice, subsequently impacting student progress. An ever-growing circle of “bright spot” teachers can lead to district-wide success.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Parent and Community Inclusion

When the school community at large, and parents in particular, start using the language and strategies that support character development, it sends a message to students that recognizing one's strengths while acquiring the skills of social and emotional learning are important underpinnings of success. We have seen that schools, central to the vibrancy of a community, can both lead and follow in supporting an active partnership around these messages.

Implementation and Benchmarks

Thriving Learning Communities™ has developed benchmarks for success (see Appendix B), which offer clear rubrics guiding effective implementation of the program. The six benchmarks are Leadership, Professional Development and Growth, Program Implementation, School-wide Integration, Parent and Community Involvement, and Program Evaluation. The rubrics provide ready goals for planning, support assessment and tracking of implementation, and motivate school teams to move toward effective, and even exemplary program implementation.

It is essential to continue to uncover strategies to turn every teacher and every school into examples of implementation with high fidelity. Feedback about implementation based on these rubrics can serve as road maps for ongoing refinements of each benchmarked area.

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THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

APPENDIX A

School _____ Date _____

Teacher Name _____ Teacher ID _____

Student Engagement

Using the rating scale below, rate your students as a class in up to 5 of your content classes. If you offer a separate class time to focus on the Advisory/TLC curriculum, please rate that class where noted below.

Evidence	Advisory/ TLC	CLASS #2 Subject: Time of day:	CLASS #3 Subject: Time of day:	CLASS #4 Subject: Time of day:	CLASS #5 Subject: Time of day:
Students show on-task attention and concentration.					
Students show positive emotions (interest, joy, curiosity).					
Students offer suggestions, ask questions, and express interest.					
Students use strengths language.					

- 1: Minimal evidence noted (students exhibit the following behaviors 0 - 25% of the time: are attentive, concentrating; show positive emotions; ask questions and express interests; students use strengths language)
- 2: Emerging evidence (students exhibit the following behaviors 25 – 50% of the time: are attentive/concentrating; show positive emotions; ask questions and express interests; use strengths language)
- 3: Developing evidence (students exhibit the following behaviors 50 – 75% of the time: are attentive/concentrating; show positive emotions; ask questions and express interests; use strengths language)
- 4: Optimal (students exhibit the following behaviors more than 75% of the time: are attentive/concentrating; show positive emotions; ask questions and express interests; use strengths language)

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

APPENDIX B

TLC Benchmarks and Rubrics

There are 6 benchmarks for the Thriving Learning Communities (TLC) program. They are:

- I. Leadership
- II. Professional Development and Growth
- III. Program Implementation
- IV. School-wide Integration
- V. Parent and Community Involvement
- VI. Program Evaluation

Within each benchmark, certain criteria are designated as indicators of success. We have created a rubric for each criterion with four distinct levels of implementation – Beginning, Developing, Effective and Exemplary. For each criterion, some examples of observable actions and evidence are listed. These are not exhaustive lists, but are meant to provide some noticeable characteristics that might be seen in a successful school TLC program.

The purpose of these benchmark rubrics is to:

- Provide ready goals for planning;
- Enable participants to assess their implementation status at any given point in time and track their progress across time;
- Motivate participants to move toward effective or exemplary program implementation; and
- Allow benchmarking with others using the program (teacher-to-teacher; school-to-school).

DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION LEVELS

Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
Not evident; OR attempted, but without follow through; OR efforts made which actually hinder progress or direction of program	Some progress – Part of criterion may be missing or inconsistently displayed; may be perception of accomplishment, but without substantial evidence	Criteria is met effectively.	Initiatives taken to propel Advisory program to the next level; Consistent practices throughout building, and valuable results are evident.

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

I. Leadership

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. Leaders set expectations for staff and students, and monitor to see that those expectations are met.</p> <p>2. Leaders are advocates for the TLC program, incorporating and modeling strengths and SEL practices in their own routines and in interactions with colleagues, students and parents.</p> <p>3. Leaders provide a support system for professional learning within the school and/or district.</p> <p>4. Leaders communicate regularly with staff and external coaches about the TLC program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders address Advisory program with staff during faculty and/or team meeting at the start of school year. • Leaders clearly state expectations for time spent in classroom on direct teaching of Advisory lessons and integration of character strengths in content areas. • Leaders are aware of Advisory teaching schedules and do classroom visits during this time. • Leaders periodically look at student work, artifacts, TLC journals, etc. • Leaders check in with students occasionally to ask them about Advisory learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders speak positively of benefits of the Advisory program with various audiences. • Leaders use strengths language when dealing with student issues. • Leaders take VIA strengths survey, model strengths-spotting with staff and students; acknowledge strengths of the school. • Leaders increase own knowledge of social-emotional needs and character strengths. • Leaders network with other leaders of SEL and strengths-based programs. • Leaders regularly use character strengths charts and other TLC materials and resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders designate and facilitate adequate time for professional development. • Leaders attend and/or follow up on professional development with staff. • Leaders tap Champions for Advisory to help facilitate team conversations and projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders periodically check in with teachers and counselors regarding lessons and content integration and visit team meetings when Advisory is on agenda. • Leaders send out tips, quotes, and reminders for teaching Advisory objectives. • Leaders build Advisory into agendas for faculty and team meetings. 				

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

I I. Professional Development and Growth

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. Professional Development (PD) activities increase educator motivation, engagement, and performance through the transfer and application of professional learning.</p> <p>2. Ongoing positive impact in the classroom is sustained through provision of materials, resources, and coaching support.</p> <p>3. Staff is involved in ongoing professional communication about TLC within a professional learning community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers learn specific strategies and classroom applications through professional development. • Teachers are observed applying professional learning in the classroom. • Teaching reflects deeper understanding of content knowledge and strategies. • When asked, teachers say that PD motivated them in their planning and teaching of Advisory curriculum. • PD is varied in content and delivery (Content - best practices, program modifications, additional resources. Delivery - whole group sessions, team meetings, one-on-one coaching, online posts, links and articles). • There is consistent use of best practices among staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teachers have necessary materials and resources to teach the TLC curriculum. • Teachers and students are observed using resource materials in ways that enhance learning. • Regular and meaningful interactions are observed between teachers and TLC coach. • When asked, teachers and leaders state that TLC coach has provided valuable support. • Teachers are involved in professional book studies relating to social-emotional needs of students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory is discussed during team meetings. • Teachers have informal conversations about the SEL lessons, student work and student needs. • Teachers collaboratively plan and/or debrief Advisory lessons and discuss embedding strengths in content units and student projects. • Principal, counselor and teachers interact regarding students' social-emotional needs, using the TLC curriculum and strengths as a common reference for discussion. • Teachers have opportunities to observe each other teaching Advisory lessons. 				

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

III. Program Implementation

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. Students meet the learning goals of the Advisory curriculum.</p> <p>2. A community of support is created within the schools and classrooms through listening, speaking, writing, and commenting as students and teachers share thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>3. Students incorporate intentional actions into their daily routines that help develop their character strengths and SEL skills.</p> <p>4. Students take personal ownership of their strengths and SEL skills, and are able to write articulate reflections about them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a designated time within the school day for explicit teaching of curriculum. • Teachers share a common lesson schedule and collaborate in planning, delivery and debriefing. • Teachers make unit goals and lesson objectives known to students during lessons, visually and orally. • When asked, students can state what they are learning and why it is important. • Individuals demonstrate mastery of lesson goals through discussions, journals and artifacts. • Students appear to be cognitively engaged in lessons and activities. • Teachers continually make explicit connections between student activities and the broader goals and objectives of the curriculum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked, students respond that they feel like a part of a supportive school community. • Teachers and students willingly share personal stories and examples with each other. • Teachers and students use strength-spotting as a means of providing positive support. • Student dialogue and small group interactions are a typical part of lessons. • Students use effective communication and teamwork skills with each other during activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to give authentic examples of how they use strengths in their daily lives • Students can identify ways they have intentionally changed their actions because of SEL knowledge. • When asked, school staff, parents and peers say they notice a positive change in student behaviors. • Students take the SEL and character strengths work seriously as evidenced in the “Plans” they write and in their authentic reflections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students have taken the VIA strengths survey, and when asked can name their top strengths and elaborate on those qualities. • Students’ journal entries and reflections are substantive and reflect a growing depth of awareness and insight about themselves. 				

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

IV. Schoolwide Integration

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. There is an observable positive school culture, with a common strengths-based language and embedded behavioral practices which reflect attention to character strengths and social-emotional needs of students.</p> <p>2. Character strengths and social-emotional skills are integrated into content lessons in all areas.</p> <p>3. Students and staff are constantly reminded of the value of a strength-based culture through visual displays, announcements, routines, special events, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked, students will say that their school is a positive and supportive place to be. • Rules, routines and procedures in the school are explained and upheld based on character strengths and respect for the community (e.g. fairness, self-control, kindness, prudence). • Discipline and student behavior issues involve discussion of student strengths as well as needs. • There is an atmosphere of kindness, respect and hope within the school. • Staff and students alike greet and speak to others with friendliness and respect. • There is regular school-wide recognition of student character strengths in action. • Social-emotional needs of students are a standing agenda item for a school culture committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson plans for core content areas include references to character strengths. • Music, Art, PE, and other “non-core” areas incorporate character strengths and SEL objectives into lessons and projects. • Teachers use teachable moments to remind students of strengths and Advisory program objectives. • Students are involved in projects across different subject areas which require the application of knowledge about certain character strengths. (e.g. how to use teamwork and leadership effectively in groups; introducing projects about how character strengths have impacted decisions in science and history). • Mindfulness activities are used throughout the day including before presentations, tests, competitions, etc. • Department teams select a strength of the week and build it into lessons in all content areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special school-wide events are held to focus on character strengths or social-emotional needs. (e.g. Pay it Forward Day, Random Acts of Kindness, Mix-it-Up-at Lunch Day, End-of-Year Field Days) • School website features character strengths. • Staff updates contain reminders and tips for teaching Advisory objectives. • Guest speakers are asked to incorporate their own signature strengths in their presentations. 				

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

V. Parent and Community Involvement

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. Parents are aware of the TLC program, and articulate and show support for it.</p> <p>2. Community groups are aware of the TLC program and find ways to support and align their work involving students and parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the Advisory program is sent to parents (e.g. parent letters, school newsletters, teacher communications) and parents indicate they have read the information. • Information and references to SEL and character strengths are made on teachers' web pages. • Students are asked to share Advisory work with parents and when asked, students say they have talked about their strengths at home. • The Advisory program and individual student strengths are mentioned during parent conferences. • Parent programs, coffees, and/or informational sessions are held about character strengths and SEL. • Teachers regularly use "Beyond the Classroom" tips in TLC curriculum units. • Parents report incorporating a strengths-based approach to parenting at home. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to and information about Advisory is included on school and/or district web page. • Information about the Advisory program is provided to various community social agencies, business partners, religious groups or other interested stakeholders. • School and community personnel find ways to align events and efforts, connecting character strengths and social-emotional skills to new or ongoing community programs and resources. • Community flyers, posters, and other materials feature various students and grads, highlighting character strengths. 				

THRIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Rubrics for TLC Benchmarks

VI. Program Evaluation

Criteria	Examples of Actions and Evidence	Beginning	Developing	Effective	Exemplary
<p>1. A variety of evaluation evidence (e.g. hard data, anecdotal, artifacts) accurately and objectively reflects the Advisory program as it was implemented.</p> <p>2. Findings of evaluation are used to impact future program decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to evaluate effectiveness of Advisory program are decided upon in advance. • Relevant and accurate data is collected and is used in a formative way to make real-time adjustments to the program. • Program evaluation includes surveys, interviews and anecdotal examples collected from leaders, staff, and students. • Data collected is representative of all aspects of the program, and “rings true” to participants. • Differences between causation and correlation are recognized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program evaluation data is analyzed and interpreted as collected. • Program decisions are based on summative analysis and interpretation of both hard and soft data. 				

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