

From Risk to Promise

A School Leader's Guide to Professional Learning in Prosperity-Based Education

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CURRICULUM

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"We need to invite the souls of the young people that we work with, and once they're able to refine--identify their grit, resilience and character that they've already developed--their academic performance will improve."

- Dr. Victor Rios

This book is dedicated to teachers and administrators who commit themselves to improving the lives of marginalized students. Thank you for transforming lives and making this world a better place, one student at a time.



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Training Resources

This guide was created with various companion resources. To ensure the highest-quality, most comprehensive professional learning experience, please visit www.scholarsystem.org to purchase the companion materials.

Companion resources include:

- Slide decks for all sessions (a sample is provided on the next page)
- Participant handbook
- Support materials for small group activities
- Video segments by Dr. Victor Rios

Scholar System offers train-the-trainer sessions for administrators, teacher leaders, and staff developers to ensure a complete understanding and practice of the design and philosophy behind this work. These full-day sessions:

- Provide an overview of the program.
- Highlight critical activities.
- Address possible challenges in delivering the material.
- Support your individual school site's planning needs.
- Coach you through the presentation and delivery process
- Leave you feeling prepared and confident to present to your staff!

Please visit www.scholarsystem.org for more information.



Objectives

In this full year of professional learning, educators will explore the pivotal role they play in supporting student success and well-being by changing day-to-day practices, shifting school culture, and developing Ecosystems of *Cariño*.

Participants will:

- Understand the impact adult actions, beliefs, and behaviors have on student achievement.
- Examine their own core beliefs and practices.
- Understand how actions and intentions impact students, classrooms, and school systems.
- Internalize the components of an At-Promise, Prosperity-Based Classroom and continually make shifts in practice to demonstrate this belief system to all students.
- Link current research with classroom best practices and receive practical teaching strategies to implement immediately.
- Agree on actions and make collaborative commitments to changing classroom and school culture.



Glossary

This Scholar System Professional Learning Guide provides various concepts and frameworks that support educators in developing the language, policies, procedures, and practices to implement individual, cultural and institutional transformation. Below is a glossary of the various theories, concepts, and frameworks we have developed to support educational uplift.

Educator Projected-Self Actualization: The day-to-day practice of positive affirmation towards students. Projecting a future that students have not even begun to imagine is a critical step in helping them develop a sense of self-efficacy: the belief that they can achieve positive life outcomes in the future. Students that have managed to overcome dire adversity recount how their educators helped them visualize and plan for a better, brighter future. In describing how his teacher, Ms. Russ, saved his life, Dr. Rios states, “My teacher believed in me so much, she tricked me into believing in myself.” As such, educators must embrace a day-to-day practice of affirming and demonstrating successful educational, life, and career pathways for their students.

Ecosystems of *Cariño*: In Spanish, the word *Cariño* translates directly to “care,” but it also means affection, endearment, embrace, and when describing a space as *Cariño* or *Cariñoso*, it also means a place where one feels safe, at home, cared for, and happy. An Ecosystem of *Cariño* is a space where students,

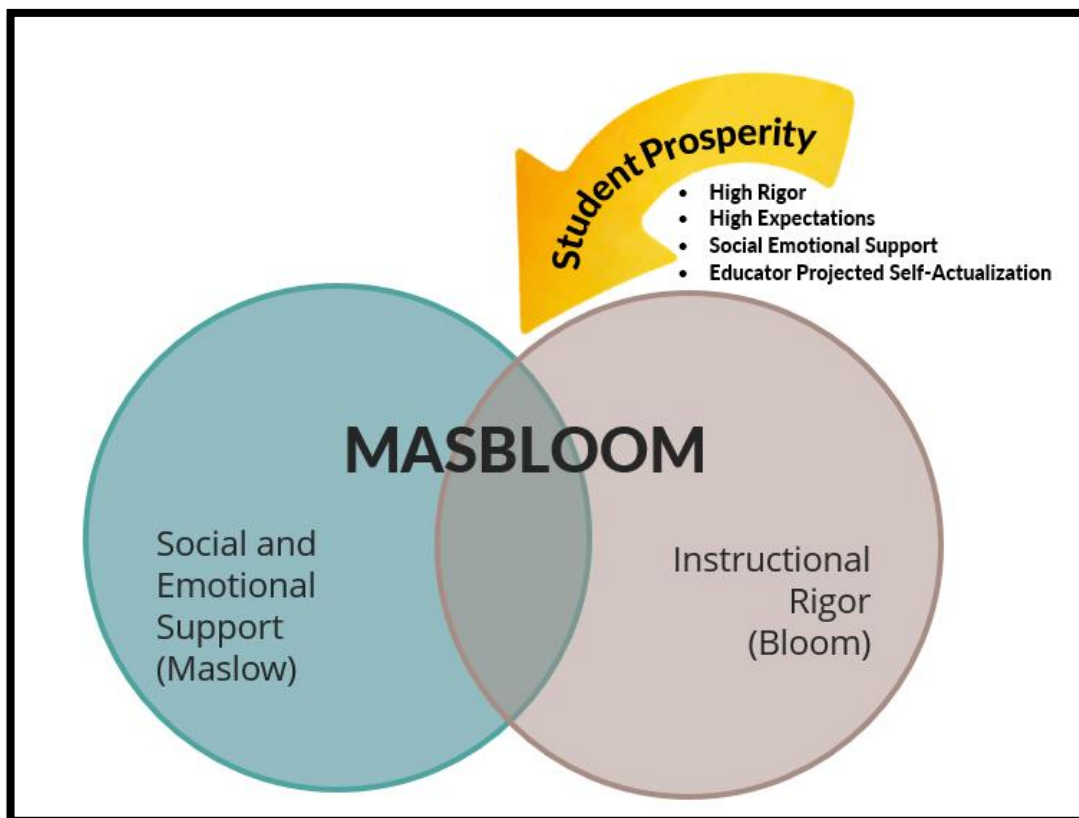
educators, and families feel safe, cared for, embraced, and happy, and a school with such an Ecosystem is defined by a strong sense of belonging that students feel when they enter the space, across classrooms, offices and hallways. Ecosystems of *Cariño* are measured by asking (via interviews and surveys) students, educators, and families how they feel in various school spaces. Examples of a strong Ecosystem of *Cariño* are consistently warm and cordial interactions between educators and students, welcoming classrooms and school spaces (replete with symbols of informational and emotional support), and disciplinary practices that label the behavior (not the child), allowing students to learn from their mistakes in a reintegrative manner.

At-Promise: “At-promise” students are those who have traditionally been labeled “at-risk.” These are students that may be described by their schools as “difficult,” “challenging,” or “troubled.” An issue with labeling young people as “risks” is that this may exacerbate the adversities they already face¹. How you label a student determines how you will treat them. If you label a student as a risk, you may end up treating them as a risk. Therefore, creating an asset-based label for our students allows us to develop asset-based solutions to the challenges they face.

Prosperity-Based Education: The educational process by which at-promise students are no longer treated with pity by their teachers, and instead are provided the same opportunities as privileged students. Rather than solely demanding that at-promise students exhibit resilience and grit (and other personal responsibility ideals) educators provide equitable resources for them to thrive rather than just survive. The difference between survivors and thrivers is that survivors live day-by-day, attempting to overcome the obstacles of their environment. Whereas thrivers have planned for a better future and have developed a pragmatic agenda to accomplish educational, life, and career success. It is not enough to provide at-promise students with emotional support;

educators must also provide them with high rigor/high expectations in order for them to gain a sense of prosperity.

Masbloom: Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs to address the social-emotional needs of humans. When used in education, the emphasis in this approach is in providing students with basic human needs such as proper meals and proper healthcare, alongside strong emotional support. The assumption is that these social-emotional supports will help students reach academic success and self-actualization. Educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom developed a taxonomy of learning that emphasizes the cognitive, affective,



and sensory domains. In the cognitive domain of his taxonomy, Bloom focused on academic-based outcomes such as remembering, understanding, applying, and analyzing. These are arenas that high rigor/high demand teachers may be comfortable with.

Masbloom is the fusing together of the Maslow and Bloom paradigms in everyday teaching practices. The social-emotional domain is instrumental in opening up avenues for learning while the Bloom domain is fundamental in academic achievement. When educators bring these two worlds together, students of all backgrounds are provided opportunities for feeling a sense of belonging, safe, and cared for, while also feeling the self-efficacy to master academic material. Masbloom empowers educators to implement high social-emotional support, combined with high rigor/high expectations to achieve prosperity for all students.

¹ Rios 2011, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, NYU Press






Our Philosophy

We believe high-quality professional learning is the most critical component to improving academic and social-emotional outcomes for all learners. Scholar System believes in the power of passionate educators and strives to provide tools and strategies for all schools to become Prosperity-Based Environments.

All our professional learning sessions follow the Scholar System Professional Learning Framework™. Sessions align to research-based best practices for adult learners and support participants to understand the philosophy and pedagogical research behind their beliefs, actions, and classroom practices. From start to finish, each session models how instruction should look in the classroom and provides educators with practical strategies to use tomorrow.

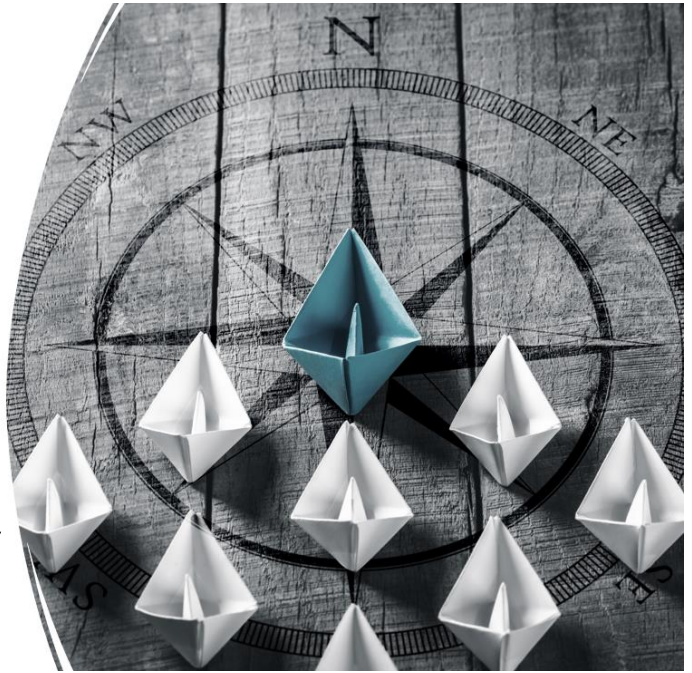
At Scholar System, we know nothing will change systemically until classroom practice changes. Through each session, participants identify their own core beliefs and consider how these beliefs translate into action in the classroom. Educators are guided to analyze how every action impacts individual students, the classroom, and the community.

The Scholar System Professional Learning Framework

	 park	Why change? Why know? Why is it important?
	 heck Yourself	What are your core beliefs and why? How do our beliefs become behaviors?
	 umanize	What is the impact on students? How does this increase student well-being and success?
	 vercome	What are the challenges to change? What obstacles are in place? How can we disrupt these barriers?
	 earn & Link	What does the research say? How can we connect best practices with actual practice?
	 pply & Act	How can you make a 10 ° shift to push your own practice? What do you commit to changing?
	 eflect	What impact did your shift have on students? What's next?

Introduction for
Administrators

Leading for Prosperity



This toolkit is a roadmap for leaders to develop and sustain a Prosperity-Based educational culture. We have provided you with a comprehensive set of resources for this transformation, yet the most critical piece is your courageous and determined leadership. This synthesis will prepare school leaders for the path ahead, enabling you to guide and support your staff with confidence.

Introduction: Leading for Prosperity

The Case for Professional Learning

When one of the authors, Audrey Lee, began her administrative career in curriculum and instruction, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were just taking flight.

And right on the heels of PLCs came common formative assessments, student data walls, and then instructional rounds. A few years later Audrey and her colleagues ushered in the Common Core State Standards simultaneously with blended learning and 1:1 mobile computing. Shortly thereafter, Audrey felt like she had lost a few years off her life as a result of running records, Multi-tiered Systems of Support, and the textbook adoption for middle school science.

Audrey experienced her share of eyes rolling, complaining about the “flavor of the month,” and pleading not to add *one more thing*. (Admittedly, sometimes those pleas were coming from her.) Even so, designing and delivering professional learning through two decades of initiatives in public education solidified her belief in the power of professional learning.

The most critical lesson Audrey learned was that nothing will change in our schools until practice changes in individual classrooms. And the most significant

**“I am so
excited for
Professional
Development
today!”**

~ No Teacher Ever

Introduction: Leading for Prosperity

way to change practice is through high-quality, engaging professional learning that infuses theory into direct, practical application.

Authors Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios and Dr. Victor Rios have been conducting research and training teachers on equity, emotional support, and school culture transformation for over twenty years. One lesson they have learned by engaging with thousands of teachers, staff, and administrators is that educators want to improve their craft, they want to level the playing field for all students, and they want to change lives. If we provide educators the right environment and the right tools, they will do the right thing. This is what this Prosperity-Based Guide provides: practical tools for educators to make their desire to transform lives while improving education, a reality.

The twelve sessions in this book comprehensively address the necessary steps to achieve this transformation. Yet as you evolve towards a Prosperity-Based future, keep in mind the leadership strategies outlined below. You will be a learner alongside your staff on this journey and will need to approach this work with a Masbloom mindset as well: by holding high expectations for your teachers while providing support and empathy.

Teachers want practical strategies, not binders: It's unfortunate no educator entered the profession for the money, as we would have been better served buying stock in binders. Our garages are still full of dusty binders from trainings past, brimming with Power Point printouts and *Two Truths and a Lie*. But, like us, teachers don't need another binder.



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Teachers believe rigor is important, they believe we should be teaching science based in phenomena and inquiry. But they also want to see what it looks like. Teachers want something to take away and use tomorrow with students. This guide is designed specifically for that purpose: each session models research-based best practices and provides ready-to-go classroom activities. Your job is to highlight these strategies, discuss how they can be modified for students, and (most importantly) celebrate and reinforce when you see those changes occur in the classroom.

Teachers need support and empathy: We all became educators to change student lives. However, change is difficult. No one likes to feel like a novice in their chosen profession, especially one they've dedicated their hearts (and pocketbooks) to. When transitioning to the CCSS, Audrey often showed a picture of Frankenstein to administrators as a reminder that we—the educational system—created our own monster. As a system, we spent fifteen years in the black hole of No Child Left Behind, holding our teachers and their pay hostage for test scores. It was no wonder that subsequent transition to an era of critical thinking and problem solving was an adjustment for all educators. As you progress through this year, remember to be a source of positivity for your colleagues, to demonstrate a projection of success just as we are asking them to demonstrate for their students. Transformation is hard work, and it can only be accomplished with your support and leadership.



Introduction: Leading for Prosperity

Make Instructional Leadership a Priority

Teachers also crave instructional leadership. Between the angry parents, the broken (for the tenth time this month) copier, and the unexpected Fire Drill, it's no wonder a site administrator's role leaves but a few minutes a year to think about instructional leadership. But you didn't become an administrator to be the best manager of Lunch Duty in the state, you chose this path because you wanted to impact the lives of students. You wanted to make positive changes.

The Masbloom framework necessitates a continual balance between high expectations and social and emotional well-being. Similarly, a school leader must be a systems manager in tandem with strong instructional leadership. Schools can continue to function, even if management is insufficient to prevent general disorder and chaos. But to thrive, schools need not only effective system management, they need instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership must surpass the rubrics and check-off lists of the traditional teacher evaluation process, which is at best bureaucratic and at worst impedes teacher efficacy. We consistently remind our educators not to work as hard as the students. In the case of instructional leadership, the opposite is true.

“You didn’t become an administrator to be the best manager of Lunch Duty in the state, you chose this path because you wanted to impact the lives of students.”

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Ours is the business of teaching and learning, so it follows that competent instructional leaders must be grounded in solid pedagogical theory. For this year of professional learning to be a success, you will need to confidently become an expert in the Masbloom framework—a key component of Prosperity-Based Education—and its pedagogical underpinnings. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to this understanding, and we encourage you to take the time to read carefully, digest, and assess your own core beliefs prior to beginning this work.

Beyond Buzzwords: Understanding Masbloom

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010 left behind (pun intended) the “Just Choose C” mindset and placed an increased—if often unnuanced—emphasis on instructional rigor. Less than a decade later, educators began to realize this focus came at the expense of student health and well-being, and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) gained massive popularity.

Unfortunately as with most paradigms in education, Rigor and SEL became victims of overuse, their fundamental meaning culled and cherry-picked for quick fixes: for educators, *rigor* quickly became synonymous with more work, and *SEL* translated into coddling students.

In order to lead your staff in the transformation to a Prosperity-Based system, clarity around Rigor and SEL, the foundation of the Masbloom framework, is critical.

As defined in the Glossary, Masbloom is the fusing together of the Maslow and Bloom paradigms into everyday teaching practices. The social-emotional domain is instrumental in opening up avenues for learning, while the Bloom domain is

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fundamental in academic achievement. With Masbloom, *all* students are empowered with a sense of care, safety, and belonging, while also developing the self-efficacy to master rigorous academic material.

Understanding Instructional Rigor

MYTHS VS FACTS

For some students, the push for increased rigor has translated into more of everything: more work, more homework, more assessments, more software programs, more curriculum. Simultaneously, the misconception that rigor is reserved for the “high kids,” has only served

to widen the access gap to complex, engaging material for our at-promise populations.

The ultimate goal of rigorous instruction is to foster resilient, independent thinkers. This is accomplished by designing tasks, crafting questions, and structuring the learning environment to nurture problem solving, creativity, and analysis of information for *all* students. For teachers, rigor requires them to be relentlessly intentional about lesson planning, formative assessment, differentiation, and scaffolding.

When you walk into a classroom, you won’t be able to observe rigor by the learning objective posted on the board or the worksheet on the desk. Rigor is not the standard covered, nor is it found in Chapter 7 of the textbook. Instead, listen to the types of questions being asked. Look for how students are being supported

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to productively struggle. Analyze the **thinking processes** students are engaging in, and how they are asked to demonstrate learning. Check that all students are provided opportunities to critically think, problem solve, and construct meaning.

Unpacking SEL

The pushback against SEL in schools has been the mirror argument to instructional rigor. SEL has been seen as the teaching of “soft skills,” and thought of as only for students with challenging behaviors or poor academic achievement. Others have suggested students eventually “pick up” these skills, without instruction, as they grow, and that SEL instruction is beyond the purview of the classroom.

The actual definition of SEL is: “is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”¹

Preparing young people to thrive in society has always been a responsibility of educators, and the need is even more of a priority today. If anything, the

“Analyze the thinking processes students are engaging in, and how they are asked to demonstrate learning. Check that all students are provided opportunities to critically think, problem solve, and construct meaning.”

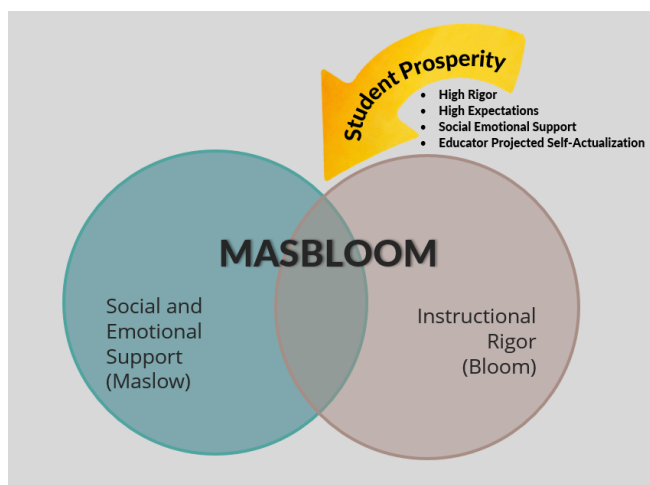
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pandemic only exacerbated the urgency for us to understand and address the varying levels of trauma our youth experience. Yet even beyond the crises of our times, SEL instruction has a larger role to play in schooling. From *Unpacking SEL* (Session 7), April Brown explains the systemic gains to be found in SEL instruction:

“...Schools that prioritize and integrate social and emotional learning into their daily practices find greater increases in reading and math scores, teachers who feel more effective and positive about their teaching, students who feel more connected to their peers and teachers, decreased fear in the school setting, more high-quality instruction and increased formal collaboration among educators.² SEL benefits are also long term and global, including a positive correlation between strong emotional assets and higher levels of well-being and effectiveness across cultural contexts.³”

Fusing Two Paradigms: Masbloom to the Rescue

In order to build and sustain a Prosperity-Based learning environment, instructional rigor and social-emotional learning cannot continue to remain mutually exclusive. Our students need to be held to high academic expectations without sacrificing their emotional health and well-being in the process. The Masbloom framework blends these two



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paradigms, resulting in a learning environment that allows students, staff, and community to prosper.

The leadership tools in the following sessions will guide you and your staff through key components of the Masbloom framework: from repairing the damage of deficit thinking, to demonstrating unwavering, unconditional belief in all students, to challenging actions and reactions around classroom behavior and classroom management.

Success implementing the Masbloom framework necessitates a crucial shift in mindset for teachers, but also for leadership. It starts with the belief that **all** students have the potential to achieve at high levels regardless of their disabilities, language levels, or life circumstances.

“We must internalize that it isn’t the student’s job to conform to our style, rather we must ensure our system of instruction conforms to their needs.”

But there’s an even more difficult shift in understanding, and it’s our own role as educators. We must internalize that it isn’t the student’s job to conform to our style, rather we must ensure our system of instruction conforms to their needs.

We at Scholar System thank you for your dedication to this work, and your decision to impact so many at-promise lives. We wish you every success on your journey.

Introduction: Leading for Prosperity

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- 1 *What is the Casel Framework?* CASEL. (2021, October 11). Retrieved November 5, 2021, from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.
 - 2 Rimm-Kaufman, Sara E. (2006). Social and Academic Learning Study on the Contribution of the *Responsive Classroom®* Approach. *Curry School of Education and Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning*, University of Virginia, 1-18
 - 3 *What Does the Research Say?* CASEL. (2021, October 11). Retrieved November 5, 2021, from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/>.

Session 1

Empowering Educators to Transform Lives



In this session, participants will consider and internalize the profound impact adults have on student lives. This session centers around Dr. Rios's TED Talk: *Help for Kids the Education System Ignores*. Participants are asked to analyze and reflect upon its core messages: educating beyond deficits, valuing student stories, and providing critical resources to support our at-promise youth.

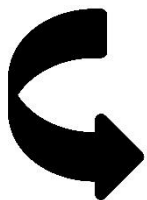
Session 1: Empowering Educators to Transform Lives

Your Role as a Leader

This session will establish the tone for the year, so it is critical to start off strong. For some participants it may be an adjustment, depending on prior experience with faculty meetings and professional learning. Be mindful that how you approach and present this work will serve as a guide for your staff. So, be positive, embrace the challenge, and support your colleagues in their commitment to growth.

Ensuring Success

The tips below are especially important to the first session, but should be applied to all sessions:



- **Be Prepared:** Read through the materials carefully. Review the companion slide deck and make your own notes as needed. Check the technology ahead of time to ensure sound and videos are accessible.
- **Be Organized:** In many sessions there are multiple activities which flow together. Ensure you have enough copies of the handouts and companion materials for all participants. TIP: Label each set of materials with a sticky note indicating the name of the activity to move through efficiently.
- **Time Management:** Each activity notes the approximate time needed, but this will always vary with each group. Be responsive when staff clearly needs additional processing time—which will happen when discussions are especially rich—but keep things moving. Though we would not do

Session 1: Empowering Educators to Transform Lives

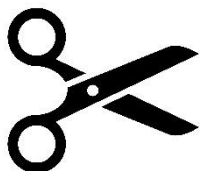
this in the classroom, it will occasionally be necessary for groups to move on with some activities incomplete. Process and understanding take priority over the finished product.

- **Be Human:** Collaborate as a *partner* in this journey with your colleagues. We all have room to improve as we learn how to better serve students. Your ability to demonstrate compassion, fallibility, and a willingness to take risks will give your staff a safe environment to do the same.
- **Always Return to Impact:** Because of the content in these sessions, it can be a common reaction for educators to devolve into indignance and blame. Continually return the focus to the impact on students: *What is the impact on kids? How would a student feel hearing those words? What is within our control to change for our kids?*
- **Don't Skip the Debrief:** As in a classroom with new content, closure is critical. Specifically calling attention to the teaching practices within each session closes the theory-practice loop for educators and identifies how each activity can be used in classrooms. Light that spark for your teachers each session.
- **Follow Through:** A surefire way to derail your efforts is when participants feel their feedback isn't being heard. Read the Exit Tickets, reflect on the feedback, and respond as needed. Follow up with individual staff members and provide any requested support.



REMEMBER YOUR
Purpose
AND IT WILL HELP YOU
Transform
Lives

Session 1: Empowering Educators to Transform Lives



Prep

- Administer a Staff Survey (Page 24).
- HEADS UP! You will want to give yourself ample time to receive the results and create your Staff Quiz in time for Session 5.

Companion Resources

These ready-made resources are available at www.scholarsystem.org. Alternatively, you can choose to create your own.

- Slide Deck for Session 1 (Video is embedded)
- Exit Tickets (Participants can also write their responses on large index cards.)



Additional Materials

- Index Cards



Thank You

While your work towards at-promise schools will always continue, don't forget to celebrate the dedication of your educators to this process. Take the time to appreciate and honor the changes in your school climate and culture since the start of the year and appreciate colleagues on your commitment to this work.

About the Authors

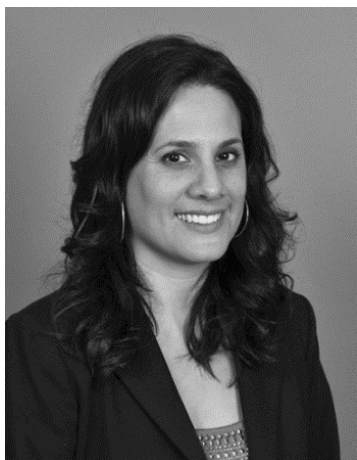
Dr. Victor Rios is Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley in 2005.

Professor Rios has worked with local school districts to develop programs and curricula aimed at improving the quality of interactions between authority figures and youths. Using his personal experience of living on the streets, dropping out of school, and being incarcerated as a juvenile—along with his research findings—he has developed interventions for marginalized students aimed at promoting personal transformation and civic engagement. These programs have been implemented in Los Angeles, California (Watts), juvenile detention facilities, and alternative high schools.



He is the author of six books, including: *My Teacher Believes in Me: The Educator's Guide to At-Promise Students* (2019), *Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.* (2011), *Buscando Vida, Encontrando Exito: La Fuerza de La Cultura Latina en la Educacion* (2016), and *Human Targets: Schools, Police, and the Criminalization of Latino Youth* (2017).

Dr. Rios has been featured in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, TED Talks, the Oprah Winfrey Network, Primer Impacto, and National Public Radio. He has had the honor of meeting President Obama and advising his administration on gun violence and policing. His TED Talk, “Help for kids the education system ignores,” has garnered over 1.4 Million views. He is also the subject of the documentary film *The Pushouts*.



Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios Rebeca Mireles-Rios is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education at UC Santa Barbara. She specializes in child and adolescent development. She received her K-8 Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and MA from UC Berkeley. Prior to receiving her Ph.D., Dr. Mireles-Rios was a middle school teacher in Berkeley Unified School District for numerous years. Dr. Mireles-Rios’ research examines the educational expectations of Latina/o

students and the connection to parent and teacher support. She studies Latina/o adolescents’ perceptions of teacher support; the role of maternal expectations on education communication; and student trajectories into higher education. She looks at the inequalities in educational outcomes to understand the processes that can potentially increase Latina/o high school student college enrollment and retention rates. Dr. Mireles-Rios also studies teacher well-being and the role of administrators in developing teacher self-efficacy.

Audrey Lee is an expert in curriculum development and design, professional learning, and educational technology. She holds an MA from the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Education and taught public school for seven years before serving as the Director of Curriculum and Educational Technology for a TK-12 Bay Area (California) School District for twelve years. Ms. Lee has created, designed and facilitated a successful, district-wide Professional Development model bridging the Common Core State Standards with blended learning for teachers, administration, classified staff, and parents. She has consulted with multiple school districts and the County Offices of Education on delivering that curriculum. Ms. Lee has also held senior executive positions at private education companies in the Bay Area. Her established expertise includes curriculum development, professional learning around standards-based instruction, rigor, leadership, educational technology, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), state testing, and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP).



Audrey and Rebeca first met in the Developmental Teacher Education graduate program at the University of California, Berkeley where they learned, practiced, and questioned what it meant to be an effective educator. Throughout their careers as teachers, administrators, and researchers, they never stopped their journeys in pursuit of social and racial equity and justice. Rebeca and Audrey dreamed about working towards an education system that prioritized improving the lives of students who had been left. Over two decades later they continue to collaborate on education reform.

When Rebeca was a student teacher at an inner-city middle school, she met Victor, a then gang-prevention counselor, who was on his own journey working with at-risk youth and developing groundbreaking theories only to be nationally recognized and awarded for them decades later. Victor met Audrey through Rebeca and began brainstorming with them best practices in supporting marginalized students.

END OF SAMPLE CURRICULUM

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