Budgeting for Educational Equity

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PODCAST SERIES
Episode 4

MEETING THE MOMENT

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Budgeting for Educational Equity *is a podcast series that explores how education resources can be allocated to better meet the needs of all students. This brief is designed to provide opportunities for the listener to engage in tangible, practical application of the lessons derived from each podcast episode. The brief can serve as a launching point for cultivating discussions about equity within communities and school district administrative offices. Episodes can be found on the* Budgeting for Educational Equity Podcast Series *webpage*.

INTRODUCTION: UNPRECEDENTED CIRCUMSTANCES

Thus far in the podcast series and associated briefs, we have been laying the groundwork for establishing an equity-focused process for developing and implementing budgets that can be completed in accordance with a school district's fiscal calendar. However, due to the unparalleled effects of COVID-19, many administrators find themselves in a space in which opportunities for planning have never been shorter, yet the need for critical decisions that will have major implications for their fiscal systems has never been more urgent.

Within these constraints, as we seek to identify and actualize opportunities for advancing equity through strategic uses of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) I & II as well as American Rescue Plan ESSER funds, we use this brief to shift from planning for equity through budget development to making decisions about how to target investments for the new school year. To help us along the way, today we are accessing the wisdom of Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn, renowned consultants on systems change and founders of New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, to help understand how to make the most of the moment.

A FOUNDATIONAL FOCUS ON WELL-BEING AND LEARNING

In podcast episode #4, Joanne Quinn shared the following about the need to focus on students' well-being:

"In a practical sense, it has become abundantly clear that well-being has risen to the top as a priority in our schools.[1] Historically, this has not been the first item on everybody's list when it came to intended outcomes for students. But over the past year, we have collectively begun to realize that kids have suffered from a lack of relationships, inequitable access to learning, and isolation due to COVID-related restrictions.[2] Taking this into account, as children are returning to face-to-face learning, the first priority for districts should be building a sense of trust and belonging within classrooms. Moving beyond simply emphasizing academic achievement and proficiency, it is critical to create classroom norms that ensure kids feel comfortable and safe."

HOW DO WE GET THERE? SOCIAL–EMOTIONAL LEARNING AS THE GROUNDWORK FOR PROGRESS

Fundamentally, we must shift the main purpose of learning away from merely academic achievement and begin to also emphasize a child's well-being and social–emotional learning (SEL). Instruction rooted in SEL is based in the theory that students can achieve their greatest potential in K–16 education, career, and life when they are educated in safe, equitable learning environments and receive integrated academic, social, and emotional supports that meet their individual needs.[3] Research has shown that, when put into practice, the principles of SEL lead to tangibly positive gains for students in the areas of social skills and academic performance.[4]

To begin the shift from achievement-based pedagogy to wellness-based pedagogy, Fullan and Quinn recommend starting with developing students' intrinsic motivation to learn in a dynamically complex world. Central to this approach is what Fullan and Quinn refer to as the constellation of purpose, meaning, belongingness, connectedness, and contribution to the world.

Practitioners must also engage students in "deep learning," which is the process of developing, understanding, and using the 6 Cs, also called the "global competencies":

Character
Citizenship
Collaboration
Communication
Creativity
Critical Thinking

Focusing on the 6 Cs of deep learning and integrating them into pedagogical practices can help to prioritize well-being and learning in a way that will involve **all** students but will have an especially strong impact on students who generally feel disconnected from school. Practitioners can also partner with organizations that are committed to explicitly addressing historical and ongoing systems of prejudice and oppression at work within schools and society at large. The ensuing social and emotional breakthroughs that ideally occur in schools and classrooms focused on SEL will benefit students, their families, and the world.[5]

REAL-TIME APPLICATION OF SEL: POSITIVE INPUTS TO PROMOTE SEL IN YOUR DISTRICT

To support strategic planning and implementation of SEL practices, below are several resources that practitioners can utilize and adapt to their context.

Leveraging ARP Funds to Build Equitable Learning Environments

The Building Equitable Learning Environments Network published this guide for leveraging American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to support SEL through seven essential actions. While each action provides multiple strategies for use of funds, the first action illustrates tangible steps that can be taken to redesign teaching and learning to transform students' daily experience in particular. Uses of funds include investing in the following:

- more culturally affirming curricula, textbooks/materials, and related professional development

- project-based curricula, professional development, and enrichment resources to shift to pedagogical approaches that support inquiry and problem-based learning around rich, relevant tasks that are culturally connected and collaboratively pursued

- additional teachers, mentors, counselors, student success coaches, high-dosage tutoring, and staff-based supports to accelerate recovery by increasing people power in ways that provide for new relationship-centered staffing

- professional development and other needed capacities to shift to "discipline" policies that are restorative, empathic, student-centered, and developmental and that eliminate harmful practices such as the surveillance, policing, and exclusion of students from their school community[6]

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning Throughout the School System

The National Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd published this compendium of resources for district leaders to support the application of SEL strategies within districts. In addition, the Center also provides a hub for COVID-19 related resources that is updated regularly.

Everyone Needs SEL Support in the Virtual Environment

In fall 2020, as part of CASBO's WorkWise Webinar Series, Sandra Rodriguez, EdD, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, and Colleen Williams, Director of Student Wellness and Support Services, led this deeply informative discussion about the value of SEL systems for education leaders.

The Right Drivers for Whole System Success

If you are interested in learning more about Michael Fullan's research, this paper has information on the 6 Cs and other concepts explored in this brief.

Ultimately, through the application of the principles of SEL, practitioners can seize the moment and tread a new path on the road to equity, one that holistically serves the needs of the whole child.

1   Research increasingly shows that childhood trauma and mental health issues have a direct impact on academic achievement. See, for example, Larson, S., Chapman, S., Spetz, J., & Brindis, C. D. (2017). Chronic childhood trauma, mental health, academic achievement, and school-based health center mental health services. *Journal of School Health, 87*(9), 675–686. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6th2r852

2   In a 2021 survey conducted by McKinsey & Company, parents of students in K–12 settings reported increases in clinical mental health conditions among their children since the onset of the pandemic. The survey results revealed a five-percentage-point increase in anxiety and a six-percentage-point increase in depression compared to pre-pandemic levels. See https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning

3   Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. (2019). *Needs-driven areas of focus.* WestEd. https://selcenter.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/12/SEL-Center-Needs-Focused.pdf

4   Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432. https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/meta-analysis-child-development-1.pdf

5   Fullan, M. (2021). *The right drivers for whole system success* (CSE Leading Education Series). Centre for Strategic Education.

6   Building Equitable Learning Environments Network. (2021). Research and Practices: Leveraging ARP Funds to Build Equitable Learning Environments. Retrieved from: https://belenetwork.org/funding-guidelines/