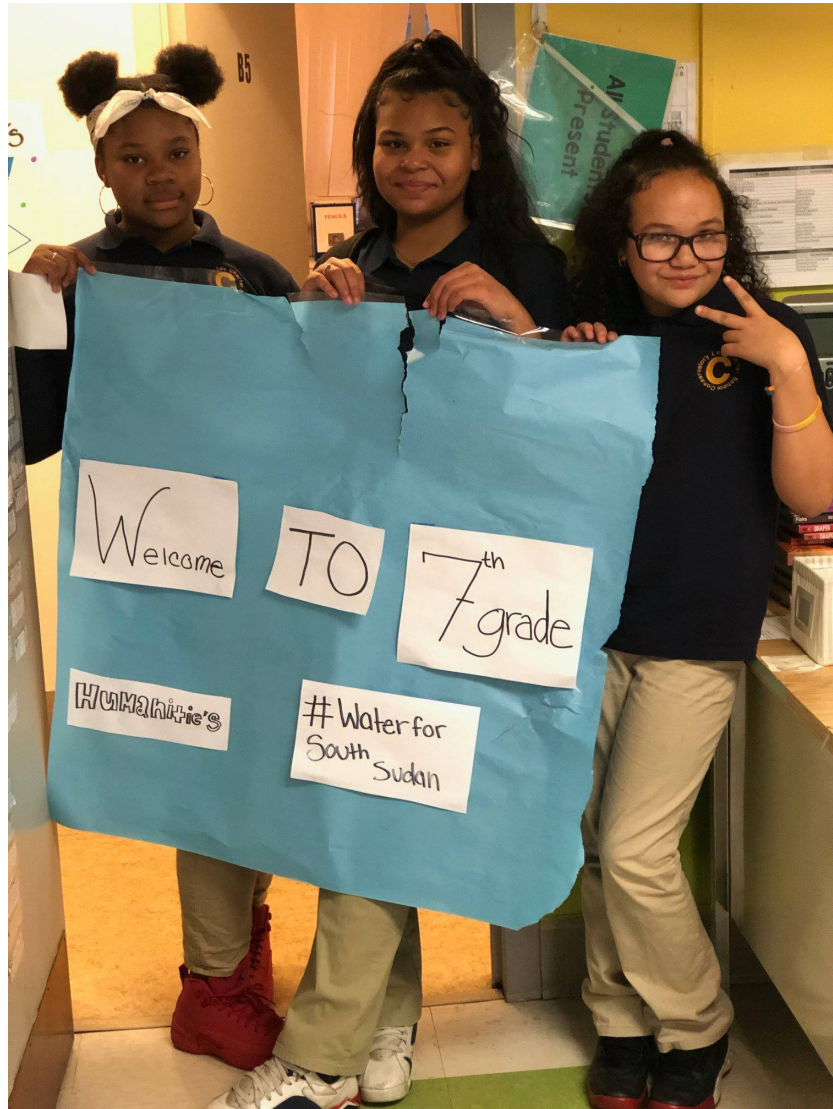


Social-Emotional Learning at Conservatory Lab Charter School



Created for Conservatory Lab Charter School by the Center for Artistry and Scholarship



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On the cover: Seventh grade students spreading the word about their Water for Sudan service learning project.

Introduction

During the 2018-2019 school year, Conservatory Lab Charter School created a task force to look at its approach to middle school. Among other activities, the Middle School Task Force convened a focus group of seventh and eighth graders. Students shared their experiences of learning at Conservatory Lab, highlighting opportunities to learn musical performance and composition as well as their academic studies, which included learning expeditions that took them out of their classrooms. Students' most powerful experiences stemmed from their relationships with each other and their teachers. "Everyone is social here," one student noted, with strong agreement from others. Students talked at length about ways that they collaborate and helped each other, and all agreed that their school felt warm and welcoming. "We can be ourselves here. We get each other, and we like each other," another student offered. A third shared, "We can try new things at this school. We can take some risks, and we know that we are safe and that we get help from our teachers and also from our friends." With a remarkable degree of social confidence and contentment, these middle schoolers demonstrate what's possible when a school places primary emphasis on systematic, schoolwide social-emotional learning.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines **social-emotional learning** (SEL) as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."¹ Understanding that these competencies are essential to success in school and life, Conservatory Lab Charter School is committed to supporting students to learn, practice, and master SEL skills, and has designed its curriculum, instruction, and other structures accordingly. This is consistent with CASEL's guidance, which states, "Successful SEL is not a standalone program or an add-on. It is central to how schools, communities, and families value and support the social, emotional, and academic development of their children."²

¹ What Is SEL?, retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>.

² SEL in Action, retrieved from <https://casel.org/in-action/>.

This publication shares Conservatory Lab’s work to support a healthy, positive school culture and climate through a focus on SEL for all students. During the past three years, Conservatory Lab has strengthened its approach to SEL with an increased focus on schoolwide systems, structures, and interventions that respond to the changing needs of its students and contribute to a positive school climate for all members of the school community. We hope that this overview will help inform other schools’ efforts.

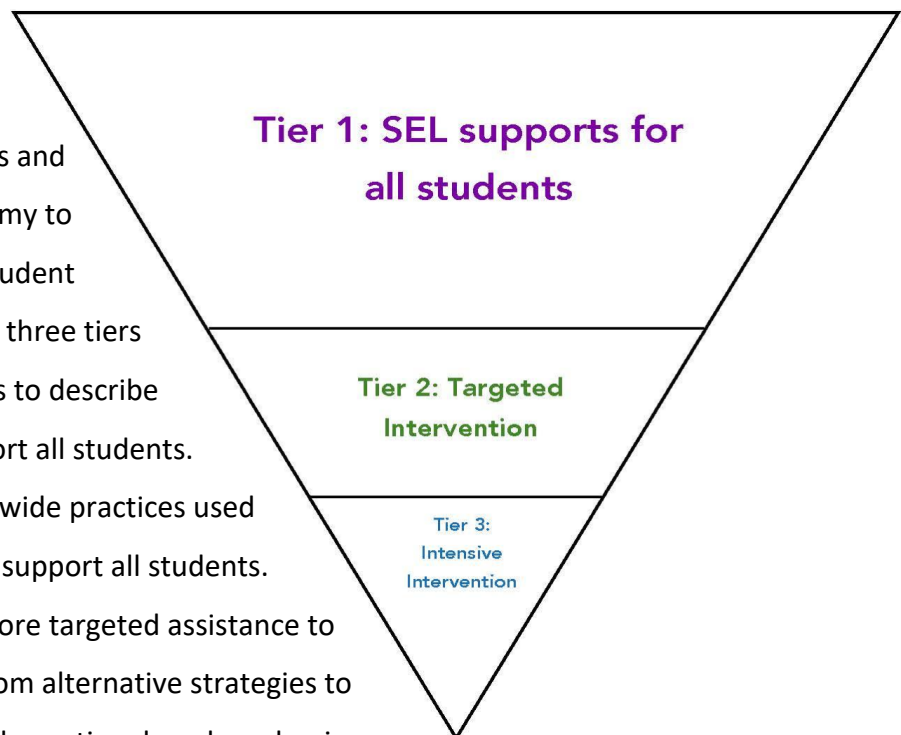
A Note about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Terminology

As is the case in many schools, Conservatory Lab uses the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports³ (PBIS) tiered taxonomy to describe the ways it focuses student support and SEL efforts. These three tiers have become well known ways to describe proactive approaches to support all students.

Tier 1 interventions are schoolwide practices used by all school staff members to support all students.

Tier 2 interventions provide more targeted assistance to fewer students who benefit from alternative strategies to support their behavioral, social-emotional, and academic success.

Tier 3 interventions are individualized, student-specific, and applicable to a small number of students deeply impacted by trauma or crisis and in need of intensive support. The focus of this report are schoolwide Tier 1 practices aimed at supporting SEL and producing a healthy school culture and climate from which all students benefit.



³ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, retrieved from <https://www.pbis.org/>.

About Conservatory Lab Charter School

Founded in 1999, Conservatory Lab empowers a diverse range of children as scholars, artists, and leaders through unique and rigorous fusion of music education and project-based learning. The school enriches the larger community through performance, service, and collaboration, and it develops and disseminates innovative educational approaches that will positively impact children in other schools and programs. Conservatory Lab serves approximately 450 students in grade K1 (four-year old pre-kindergarten) through grade eight at two locations in Dorchester, a neighborhood of Boston. K1 through second grade students attend the Lower School location, and the Upper School location serves third through eighth grades.

Conservatory Lab's community believes in the power of music, learning, and social-emotional development to transform the lives of the students and their families. The school's pioneering curriculum is a hybrid of EL Education and El Sistema, both of which emphasize four key learning opportunities for individuals and as a collaborative community:

- Creating habits of perseverance
- Breaking through barriers in the pursuit of excellence
- Participating in a school culture that supports the pursuit of excellent and beautiful work
- Engaging in authentic artistic and academic learning experiences

El Sistema, EL Education, and a comprehensive focus on SEL come together to motivate and nurture its students to become dedicated scholars, compassionate leaders, and skilled musicians.

For more on the ways that El Sistema is integrated into and serves as an inspiration for Conservatory Lab's music program, please see the publication "[The Journey of El Sistema at Conservatory Lab Charter School](#)," a guide for interested schools and educators that includes information on the Conservatory Lab model including professional development, grade-by-grade instrument instruction, operational considerations, and pedagogical advice. "The Journey of El Sistema at Conservatory Lab Charter School" codifies the tools that the school has found

useful in building its own professional learning community in support of music learning and student growth.

For more on Conservatory Lab's commitment to the EL Education model, please see "[Building Ownership and Authentic Learning at Conservatory Lab Charter School through Projects and Learning Expeditions](#)," a publication that shares the ways the Conservatory Lab model creates schoolwide access to authentic learning experiences that lead to student engagement and ownership, high quality work, and equitable high achievement. This guide shares the ways Conservatory Lab has partnered with EL Education and offers insight into professional development and school culture. Five case studies demonstrate the ways that learning expeditions and other student projects structure, inspire, and demonstrate student learning.

About the Center for Artistry and Scholarship

The Center for Artistry and Scholarship (CAS) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Conservatory Lab Charter School, a K-8 school in Boston, Massachusetts. CAS's mission is to develop and support innovative and tenacious leaders in education to build more equitable, collaborative, and creative communities. CAS works in three areas. 1.) We offer expertise in whole-school improvement, CAS staff members have worked with the leaders of Conservatory Lab Charter School as they have dramatically improved student outcomes through a project-based, music-infused curriculum. CAS partners with other schools to support leadership coaching, board development and stewardship, community partnership development, dissemination, and more. 2.) CAS supports school leadership and design through the Perrone-Sizer Institute for Creative Leadership, a year-long program that develops creative, innovative, and adaptive leaders who integrate educational, artistic, and community resources to transform the lives of youth and families, and through the Innovative School Design Incubator. 3.) CAS helps and celebrates schools that use the arts and creativity as levers for change. As an international thought leader, CAS supports creative, arts-immersed schools that use creativity and the arts to bring math, science, and language arts to life for educational equity and joy.

Through our outreach and publications, CAS strengthens the national conversation about the essential role of the arts in education and civic life.

Why Conservatory Lab Focuses on SEL

In order to establish baseline data on the status of students' emotional health, Conservatory Lab established a partnership with Boston Children's Hospital to work with a team of teachers to create a multi-tiered level of support and benchmark assessments for identifying students at risk. The school also partnered with the PEAR Institute to implement the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) to provide a social-emotional "portrait" of the strengths and challenges of each student. Administered to third through eighth graders, HSA data provides a baseline necessary to assess the impact of SEL, school culture and climate, and student support efforts.

More than half of the Upper School students took the HSA. Their results indicated that 45 percent were in need of Tier 2 support. This means that their sense of self was such that a preventative approach was warranted. Approximately 35 percent of Conservatory Lab students indicated that they were in Tier 1 status, and about 20 percent responded in ways that indicated that they were likely in emotional crisis or trauma and in need of significant individualized intervention.

These data supported school leaders' understanding of students' circumstances. Conservatory Lab principal Nicole Mack observes, "More families are dealing with housing crises or are involved with family services. School staff interface with home support teams, and this shifts the nature of the work. Student needs always come first in order to get to academics, and right now those needs are more intensive." A substantial number of students come to school dealing with the effects of trauma, triggered by experiences of racism, poverty, and violence. The effects of this trauma "can impair school readiness, academic achievement, and both physical and mental health."⁴ Research tells student populations that share the circumstances that

⁴ Center on the Developing Child (2013). Early Childhood Mental Health (InBrief), retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

some of Conservatory Lab's students face demonstrate "continuing problems in self-regulation, emotional adaptability, relating to others, and self-understanding."⁵

Conservatory Lab's leadership team has shifted resources in response to these acute needs. The Lower School has a full-time staff member in charge of overseeing climate and culture, and the Upper School has two staff members who focus on student support. Each campus has a full-time school counselor, with additional counseling support for the Upper School. School administrators also spend time offering individualized support students who, for a variety of reasons, face challenges regulating their behavior in the classroom and elsewhere.

Establishing and refining a system for providing Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports has been essential to meeting students' needs. Without systematic schoolwide SEL supports, these more specific interventions would be less effective, and without a comprehensive focus on SEL, the majority of students won't get what they need to thrive as community members and owners of their learning. Through support from EL Education and consistent, evolving planning by teachers and administrators, Conservatory Lab has developed and is refining structures and systems to support all students' social-emotional learning. These SEL strategies fall into three broad categories: **explicit SEL instruction, schoolwide systems and practices, and curriculum and learning experiences.**

Explicit SEL Instruction

From K1 through eighth grade, Conservatory Lab relies on Crew to offer explicit SEL instruction. This means "providing consistent opportunities for students to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive."⁶ The concept of Crew comes from EL Education Founder Kurt Hahn, who said, "We are crew, not passengers, strengthened by acts of consequential service to others." One of the hallmarks of EL Education, Crew refers to ideas about school culture as well as

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL, retrieved from <https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-3/classroom/explicit-sel-instruction/>.

structures within a school to support that culture. Conservatory Lab uses a list of habits, described as Crew Qualities, that describe a successful Conservatory Lab community member. These Crew Qualities—**reflection, empathy, cooperation, perseverance, and responsibility**—form the basis of a shared understanding of how students can understand themselves and relate to others and are woven throughout all aspects of school climate, culture, and classrooms.

Conservatory Lab Charter School Crew Qualities

Reflection I think about my work and actions. What did I learn? What skills did I practice or improve? What am I proud of? What will change about my work or actions next time? What will I seek help in for improvement? Who will I ask for feedback?

Empathy I approach people with curiosity and optimism. Do I show acceptance and consideration for others? Have I been an active listener? Have I been respectful to others? How have I helped others?

Cooperation I contribute to group discussions and activities. Do my individual efforts help accomplish group goals? Do I collaborate with others? Do I demonstrate what it means to be a supportive and dependable Crew member?

Perseverance I stick to the task even when it is challenging. When is my work due? What do I need to complete my task? What models, tools or strategies will help me complete my work? Who will I work with?

Responsibility I understand and follow directions. How have I accepted responsibility for my own learning? Have I completed tasks to the best of my ability and in a timely manner? Do I take pride in my work and presentations? Do I seek assistance when needed?

This report focuses on Crew as a regular gathering of students in small groups led by teachers, resident artists, and school staff members. Ideally, all students meet daily in Crew and are guided by academic and El Sistema staff members. Crew is a time for explicit SEL instruction, team-building, goal-setting, and reflection. Though the purpose, structure, and activities of Crew differ according to grade, Crew at all grade levels includes explicit SEL instruction. Crew is a time for other sorts of planning as well, including preparation for Student-Led Conferences, which the next section explores in more depth.

In the early childhood years (K1-2nd grade), Crew takes the form of a whole-class morning meeting, usually for the first half-hour of the day, during which students come together to build social skills and work habits, and to strengthen their commitment to a healthy school culture. Classrooms also come together at the end of the day for closing Crew time, though the consistency of this varies. Each grade level develops Crew curriculum, which teachers adjust depending on students' needs, events of the day, and other factors.



During the Lower School Literacy Fest, second grade students reinforced reading and modeled SEL skills as embodied by the Crew Qualities as they read to pre-kindergartners.

Second grade teacher Kaylie Carrico described a typical example of morning Crew in the Lower School's early childhood classrooms. "We start with a greeting and a morning message.

Sometimes we're limited for time, especially if buses are late, but when we can, we do a share out, where every student responds to a question or thought. Then we do a lesson focused on building SEL skills. For example, we talk about making friends and being a good friend. We read books and think together about how to be a good listener and how to advocate for yourself without being mean."

In third and fourth grade Crew time, teachers focus on supporting students as they transition to Conservatory Lab's Upper School. Third grade teacher Emily Bitchell planned Crew with daily 25-minute morning meetings and one hour-long Crew time per week to dive more deeply into specific topics. The third grade's guiding question for the 2018-2019 academic year was: "How can I be a positive and active member of the third grade community and the Upper School?" Students and teachers explored this question through a curriculum structured by weekly themes and topics.

3rd Grade Crew Plans, 2018-2019

Guiding Question: How can I be a positive and active member of the third grade community and the Upper School?

August/ September	<u>Community</u> Crew Qualities (1 per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection, Empathy, Cooperation, Perseverance, Responsibility
October	<u>Identity</u> (1 theme per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural Background, Self-Love, Respecting Differences, Identity Online (Social Media & internet Responsibility)
November	<u>Trust & Communication</u> (1 theme per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Honesty, Dishonesty & Integrity, How to Build Trust & Who Do You Trust and Why?, How to Communicate Positively (vocally & body language)
December	<u>Friendship & Problem Solving</u> (1 theme per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What Makes a Good Friend?, Inclusivity and Exclusivity, What is an Apology & What Is Its Purpose?, Independent Problem Solving
January	<u>New Year, New You</u> (1 theme per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection of Goals & Setting New Goals, Taking Responsibility for Actions, Learning & Self, Healthy Habits (2 weeks)
February	<u>Leaders of Change</u> (1 theme per week) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is a Leader? What is a Leader of Change? Research & Present Leaders of Change
March	<u>Self- Love & Confidence</u> (4 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What Makes Me Special?, There is No One Better to Be than Me, Growth Mindset (2 weeks)
April	<u>Communicating with Peers</u> (3 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using Kind Words with Others, Words Leave Wrinkles, Choosing Your Words Wisely
May	<u>Social Problem Solving</u> (5 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is a Healthy Friendship?, Conflict Problem Solving, Being an Upstander Lessons 1 & 2, Using Bystander & Conflict Problem Solving In School
June	<u>Year Reflections</u> (3 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3rd Grade Reflections, Setting Goals for 4th Grade

Fifth and sixth grade Crew follows a similar structure, with a focus on supporting the school's youngest middle school students. Fifth and sixth grade teachers created more intentional time for teaching and practicing the Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs), which are aligned to Crew Qualities; we discuss HOWLs in more depth in the next section. Crew time for fifth and sixth graders also incorporates additional community- and relationship-building activities and tasks and uses time for flexible Crew groupings (e.g. boys- and girls-only). Fifth grade teacher Amber Walsh, who ran her Crew with Resident Artist/El Sistema music teacher Peter Handy last year, values the opportunities Crew provided for her students to practice speaking and listening skills. "We do a community check-in, which really can be any question: something you're looking forward to over the weekend is a great one," Ms. Walsh said. "Another one is: describe your mood as a type of weather. Kids go around in a circle to share. As we went on, we started doing an open community check-in, which meant that kids could talk in any order. At first, it was hard to get them to listen to each other, so we used ways to signify whose turn it was, like a ball, talking stick, or a fake microphone. Now, they like it, and their skills of cooperation, empathy, and self-expression have really improved."

In seventh and eighth grades, Crew functions in a few different ways. Primarily, teachers use Crew time to foster a sense of connection, to teach and reinforce SEL skills, and to focus on executive function skills especially needed for success in middle school and beyond. Jessica Shank, an Upper School Learning Specialist, led seventh and eighth grade Crew planning, which included role plays related to Crew Qualities, activities related to bullying prevention and cyberbullying, a focus on physical and emotional health, and digital literacy. Eighth graders also used Crew time to plan their transition to high school.

Schoolwide Systems and Practices

In addition to the explicit SEL instruction that happens in Crew, Conservatory Lab has built schoolwide systems and practices to support students in classrooms and other settings. In this section, we'll take a look at two examples: **Habits of Work and Learning** (called HOWLs) and **Student-Led Conferences**.

Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) are the foundation of teaching and learning at Conservatory Lab. HOWLs—a cornerstone of EL Education—can be thought of as manifestations and applications of Crew Qualities in classrooms, student learning, and behavior. One can think of HOWLs as extensions of the five Crew Qualities in academic and music classes, with clear descriptions of what each quality looks like in action as students gain mastery. For more detail, please see “2018-2019 Conservatory Lab Habits of Work and Learning Rubric” in the appendix.

Conservatory Lab faculty took ownership of the HOWLs during summer professional development, and during common planning time throughout the year, they continued to refine and evolve ways that they could incorporate HOWLs into their classrooms. Students’ progress toward manifesting HOWLs in their academic performance and conduct are tracked via Kickboard, Conservatory Lab’s digital grading platform. Kickboard also a tool that teachers and administrators use to reinforce positive behavior choices in real time and promotes schoolwide consistency in expectations. A powerful function of Kickboard is that it acts as a portal for communication between Conservatory Lab educators and families. All families have access to Kickboard and are able to keep up to date on how their children are doing in school. Students earn “stars” for demonstrating excellence, such as being a leader or doing a great job of working with a peer. They earn “stairs” for engaging in behaviors or actions that are disruptive to the learning of themselves or their peers. Every week, all students aim to earn their way into a Fun Friday club of their choice. Fun Friday options include arts and crafts, ultimate frisbee, tea-making, student newspaper, sound production, and more. Students who find themselves with more stairs than stars take this time to reflect and plan for future success.

Teachers reported that assessing HOWLs made them feel more tangible for students. As fifth grade teacher Amber Walsh noted, “The predominant way kids see HOWLs come to life is through the Kickboard stars and stairs. Young kids make the connection and are able to see empathy, for example, in action. We’ve experimented with the best ways to track the HOWLs, and the fifth and sixth grade team has implemented HOWLs of the week. So, for example, if the

HOWL of the week is responsibility, we talk explicitly about how can we show it. I'll start class with a 'do now' that asks students for five ways to be responsible, and then at the end of class, they will do an exit ticket that asks them, "How did you show responsibility? How did you see others do show responsibility?"

To see how this appears to students, here are the guidelines for the Perseverance HOWL for third and fourth graders. During Crew, students discussed Perseverance to create these guidelines in their own words, as well as corresponding posters for the other HOWLs.

PERSEVERANCE

STAR

- Advocating for others
- Encouraging others with positive self-talk
- Trying your best even when you feel stuck
- Encouraging others to use resources and strategies

EXPECTED

- Self-advocacy
- Positive self-talk
- Using resources and strategies (3 before me)

STAIR

- Not being active in student's learning
- Negative self-talk
- Annoying the teacher/whining

The concepts and language of HOWLs are sprinkled throughout classes and experiences through the day. In early childhood education classrooms, much of the work is about how to get along and interact with each other. K1 through second grade teachers provide guiding language and scaffolds. First grade teacher Colette Hamlin notes that the HOWLs are always front and center in her classroom. "HOWLs are what we want to instill in students. Any time students are having a hard time, we ask ourselves, 'What crew qualities can we use to get through this?' I regularly stop class and talk about collaboration and cooperation. I did this

before I came to Conservatory Lab, too. Even though we may not call it HOWLs, when we talk with kids it works because this is what we do as teachers.”

Ms. Hamlin added, “My students are working toward being persevering and empathetic learners. These are our biggest focuses for first grade. First graders have bits and pieces of those things, but when things get tough, perseverance and empathy are easy to give up. When we are talking about goal setting, kids praise each other for making progress. I hear them say, ‘You’re becoming more perseverant,’ and ‘I do believe you know how I feel.’ I love hearing them express these ideas in their own words.”

Student Led Conferences (SLCs) are another hallmark of EL Education that Conservatory Lab has incorporated. EL Education offers a useful overview of SLCs, describing them as “meetings between a student and his/her parent(s) about the student’s learning and growth. Students show their family their work (e.g. tests, writing samples, art work)—always accompanied by rubrics/scoring guides and sometimes accompanied by student reflections—and discuss what they have learned and where there is room for growth. Parents ask questions, make observations, and help students set goals.”⁷ At Conservatory Lab, SLCs have replaced traditional parent-teacher conferences. SLCs are an intensive effort; twice a year, over the course of a week, teachers spend a day engaged in SLCs, meeting with families during specific slots for which they sign up in advance. In grades K1 through four, classroom teachers guide SLCs. In fifth through eighth grades, where teams of teachers work with students, SLCs are supported by students’ Crew leader.

Before their SLC—often during Crew—students prepare by identifying specific work that they have done that is meaningful to them in terms of their growth and learning. During the SLC, students share their learning, along with an overview of their progress, with their parents or other family members. Students discuss their work with an understanding of associated

⁷ Student Led Conferences Overview, retrieved from <https://eleducation.org/resources/student-led-conferences-overview>

learning targets, which helps them and their family understand how the work fits into grade-level standards and expectations (for more about how learning targets operate as part of Conservatory Lab’s learning expedition-driven curriculum, please see “[Building Ownership and Authentic Learning at Conservatory Lab Charter School through Projects and Learning Expeditions](#)”). There’s a seasonal flow to SLCs. In the fall, students set personal and learning goals for themselves that they will revisit in the spring, when they reflect on their overall progress and consider ways to improve for the remainder of the year.

Because SLCs are usually a new experience for parents, the school provides support for them as well, including a guide to how to interact, “Student Led Conferences: Questions to Ask Your Child,” which is reproduced below.

Student Led Conferences: Questions to Ask Your Child

Student led conferences are an opportunity to build ownership for learning and reflect on opportunities for growth. Today, your child will lead a conference showcasing his/her growth towards meeting personal and grade level expectations. Your child will show work that demonstrates pride in building skills, as well as areas for further improvement.

Questions:

1. What are you most proud of?
2. What would you like to learn more about?
3. What are you hoping to work on next year?
4. Can you tell me more about...?
5. What did you find challenging this year?
6. Did you reach your goals? Why/why not?
7. How can become a better learner?

Comments:

1. It makes me proud to see that...
2. I’d like to see you...

Curriculum and Learning Experiences

Consistent with the EL Education approach, Conservatory Lab’s faculty structure their curriculum through several learning expeditions each year. Learning expeditions are in-depth studies of engaging topics and are the structure through which curriculum, instruction, and assessment are organized in EL Education schools. Fully articulated, in-depth learning expeditions take time, often more than a month, and are opportunities for students to practice and refine their SEL skills as measured by HOWLs.

Such learning expeditions include service learning, which is a more explicit reinforcement of SEL skills and values. According to EL Education’s literature, “Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection. The integration of service enriches students’ learning experiences, teaches them civic responsibility, and strengthens their communities. Beyond charitable acts, service learning extends to rigorous academic products that provide a service for the community.”⁸ Service learning is an essential component of a complete and successful learning expedition, and is the clearest example of SEL in action through a curricular lens.



Second graders created a pollinators garden, a science-focused learning expedition that reinforced all of Conservatory Lab’s Crew Qualities and brought the joy of learning into the spring sunshine.

⁸ <https://eleducation.org/resources/topic/service-learning>

Conservatory Lab faculty have pushed themselves and their students to incorporate service learning into the curriculum, and a notably effective example from the past school year was the seventh grade's Water for Sudan project. After reading Linda Sue Park's *A Long Walk to Water* with seventh grade humanities teacher Melissa Psallidas, students designed a creative service learning response. *A Long Walk to Water* is a novel about life in Sudan based on the childhood of Salva Dut, who, as an adult, founded the nonprofit organization Water for South Sudan. Deeply moved by the challenge of finding safe water that is central to the story, students felt compelled to take action. They set a collective goal of raising \$1,000 for Water for South Sudan to drill boreholes and water pipes in remote villages like the one in which Mr. Dut grew up. Students decided to use their musical skills to make their fundraising goal a reality, and reached out to their families and the Conservatory Lab community to offer music lessons in exchange for donations to Water for South Sudan.

On one day in December 2018, seventh graders offered private 20-minute introductory music lessons on string, percussion, and wind instruments for a \$10 minimum donation. People of all ages and levels of music experience were welcome. Students created a marketing campaign with a flyer and video inviting staff, family, and community members, and they set up an online donation page to accept contributions. The video campaign is online at <https://youtu.be/vzRNmD1sNGc> and here's their flier:

CONSERVATORY LAB CHARTER SCHOOL

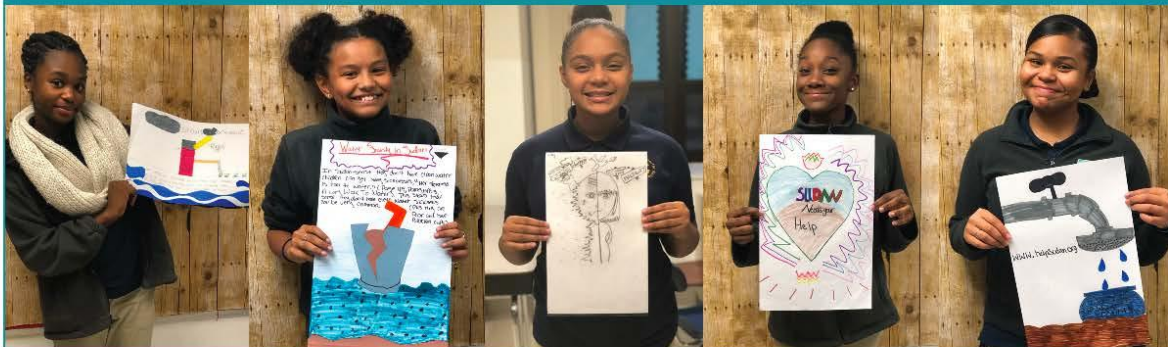
HELP 7TH GRADE STUDENTS RAISE MONEY FOR WATER FOR SOUTH SUDAN!

Come and get a 20 minute private music lesson from a student for a \$10 minimum donation

**Conservatory Lab
Charter School**
2120 Dorchester Ave

Friday, December 14
Come by anytime, from
10:20^{AM} – 2:20^{PM}

*If you are unable to attend but would like to donate,
check out our fundraising page at
www.classy.org/team/191814*



The Water for Sudan project exceeded its financial goal and was a powerful service learning experience that supported students to use the full range of Crew Qualities (reflection, empathy, cooperation, perseverance, and responsibility) to think, plan, collaborate, and work through challenges. Some students had to manage their emotions to persevere through anxiety about teaching adults; others had to dig deep to find empathy for beginning musicians. Ms. Psallidas noted that students responded powerfully to the book with a fusion of empathy and responsibility. “My students really needed to do something to make a real impact,” Ms. Psallidas recalled. “The music lessons felt like such a meaningful and authentic response to them, and I was thrilled by how engaged they were with every step of the process, from figuring out the logistics of the lessons to learning how to make a video.”

Conservatory Lab’s El Sistema program also provides powerful reinforcement for SEL skills and additional opportunities to learn and practice them. El Sistema’s focus on orchestral and other forms of collaboration harmonizes with the “crew not passengers” philosophy. In their daily El Sistema classes, students are constantly challenged to persevere through challenges, listen to and empathize with their peers, and take responsibility for their musical and other contributions.

As Resident Artist and strings teacher Kat Jara notes, one of the most powerful competencies that students gain as they learn to play their instruments and compose their own music is a deeper and more complete understanding of themselves. “The act of creation is in and of itself empowering, whether put to civic action or not. It denotes a sense of love and respect for self, a personal sense of value. While our students might impact the perceptions or beliefs of some audiences in basic ways, their simple act of belief in self as they create works of art in public is the most radical effect they have and will continue to have on the culture surrounding them. They are interacting directly with society; they’ve talked about the social issues relevant to their own times and applied those thoughts to their musical performance. They’ve composed their own pieces, opening their insights, feelings, and emotions up to the public and trusting their companions in the ensemble to represent them accurately. They’ve put themselves out in front

of whoever might come through the door to hear them, and not run in fear. Instead, they've performed bravely, even brazenly, and that is the greatest impact they might have in their public performance. That impact is not always just on the audience, or on the community around them. It most deeply affects them, and reinforces their capacities to be brave, thoughtful, articulate leaders, not afraid to stand up in front of others and state their minds as young leaders who possess a capacity to use the arts to communicate.”



*Chief Operations Officer John Chistolini learns bass basics
from a Conservatory Lab seventh grader during the Water for Sudan learning expedition*

Professional Development

Adult learning and growth are essential to student success, and professional development at Conservatory Lab includes a significant focus on teaching and reinforcing SEL skills, improving school culture and climate, and developing effective student supports. Conservatory Lab

devotes 10 days of full-staff professional learning in August. In 2018-2019, this included engaging in grade-level Crew planning. During the academic year, this work continued during weekly common planning time and periodic planning retreats, with teacher leaders for all grades and departments (including resident artists and learning specialists) guiding team meetings. Throughout, staff members focused on developing a common vocabulary, informed by the HOWLs, to create consistency for students, as well as tools, rubrics, and strategies to reinforce expectations among students. Upper School learning specialist Jessica Shank attributed her sense of success to the Conservatory Lab professional learning community, noting, “Teacher collaboration has made a big difference. We have the freedom to develop curriculum, or to take the curriculum and put our own spin on it. This allows us to be creative and still stay with the standards. We like our jobs better and that creates a more positive climate in the school.”



Conservatory Lab faculty (and an appreciative student) at a teacher celebration breakfast.

Because it's also critical that Conservatory Lab be an emotionally safe and supportive place for adults to work, the school has integrated a range of ways to acknowledge staff contributions, brighten people's days, and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for staff. "I love the adult culture here," said second grade teacher Missy Kinch. "Everyone supports each other. Our admins are caring, supportive, loving figureheads of the school—not only for the students, but also for those of us who are teaching and growing our professional skills."

Regular supportive practices make a significant difference to school culture as experienced by adults. For example, in Conservatory Lab's daily email bulletin, administrators "shout out" great work. Examples from the June 13, 2018 Daily Bulletin typify these shout-outs:

- Shout out to Resident Artists for preparing students for such a beautiful end of year concert. It was an incredible display of musical and creative work.
- Shout out to Irvin, Luis, Jara, Jessie, Amber and Liam for holding it down and roller skating with joy and smiles during the Chez Vous trip!
- Shout out to Sean S. for always being so on top of coverage and supporting students.
- Shout out to Melissa for the beautiful work she has done to build a culture of reading at our school, and in particular for the bookstore she hosted in her classroom!

Staff members also note their colleagues' large and small contributions in the Daily Bulletin, creating ways for everyone to highlight examples of collegiality, professionalism, and friendship.

The Road Ahead

During 2019-2020 academic year, the Center for Artistry and Scholarship has developed professional development for Conservatory Lab faculty that will explore the neuroscience of trauma and its impact on students' ability to learn, engage, and be successful in school, looking at the experiences that students bring to Conservatory Lab and the ways trauma stands between them and their learning. As part of this professional learning experience, staff members will envision technical and adaptive ways to make changes in their practice to mitigate trauma and support students' belonging, agency, learning, and success.

Reflecting at the end of the 2018-2019 school year, Conservatory Lab principal Nicole Mack observed that as teachers and staff members reinforced SEL skills—and improved their own competencies—school culture became more stable and joyful. “Things were in a good place at the end of the year,” Ms. Mack commented. “Kids were in control and happy, and this was due to a more consistent layer of expectations that led to a calmer and safer school climate. I noticed a shift in the things that staff members were concerned about, such as worrying that kids weren’t wearing their uniforms during the last few days of school. That’s a really good thing to be worried about compared with some of the challenges that we’ve navigated.”

Building on staff members’ collectively improving skills in the area of SEL support and instruction, Conservatory Lab leadership is moving away from top-down, administratively-led implementation and has created a positive behavioral support team of teachers and staff to guide the work. This is possible because Conservatory Lab is retaining increased numbers of staff members—and that is a result of careful attention to school climate and culture. Staff feedback indicates that fewer are leaving for other opportunities because the school is a calm and joyful place to teach in creative ways. Ms. Mack notes, “That’s some of the shift. Now that our staff is staying, teachers are gaining more experience, moving up, and becoming part of the collaborative process.”

Resources

For more on the Center for Artistry and Scholarship: <https://www.artistryandscholarship.org/>

For more on Conservatory Lab Charter School: <https://www.conservatorylab.org/>

For more on EL Education: <https://eleducation.org/>

For more on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, <https://www.pbis.org>.

For more on Social-Emotional Learning: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), <https://casel.org/>

Appendix

Conservatory Lab Charter School Habits of Work and Learning 2018-2019

	Mastered Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Beginning Standard
P E R S E V E R A N C E	<p>Classwork: The student always stays engaged and focused during class and helps others get their work done. They always persevere, even after failure, and push themselves to be accountable. They also use tools, resources and support when needed, and actively seek out opportunities that allow them to reach beyond their supposed limitations, explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes.</p> <p>Mindsets: Student always displays a belief in their future success by diligently reaching beyond their current levels by producing high-quality work and artifacts.</p>	<p>Classwork: The student consistently stays engaged and focused during class and helps others get their work done. They consistently persevere, even after failure, and push themselves to be accountable. They also use tools, resources and support when needed, and actively seek out opportunities that allow them to reach beyond their supposed limitations, explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes.</p> <p>Mindsets: Student consistently display a belief in their future success by diligently reaching beyond their current levels by producing high-quality work and artifacts.</p>	<p>Classwork: The student sometimes stays engaged and focused during class and helps others get their work done. They sometimes persevere, even after failure, and push themselves to be accountable. They sometimes use tools, resources and support when needed, and actively seek out opportunities that allow them to reach beyond their supposed limitations. Mindsets: Student sometimes displays a belief in their future success by diligently reaching beyond their current levels by producing high-quality work and artifacts.</p>	<p>Classwork: The student rarely stays engaged and focused during class or helps others get their work done. They have difficulty persevering after failure, and pushing themselves to be accountable. They rarely use tools, resources and support when needed, or actively seek out opportunities that allow them to reach beyond their supposed limitations.</p> <p>Mindsets: Student rarely displays a belief in their future success by diligently reaching beyond their current levels by producing high-quality work and artifacts.</p>

<p>C O O P E R A T I O N</p>	<p>Working with Others: The student always works cooperatively with group members, takes on a variety of roles and responsibilities, helps motivate others, and works independently to contribute highest quality work to reach goals. Honesty: The student is always honest and encourages others to make the best decisions. They take responsibility for their own work and give credit to others' ideas.</p>	<p>Working with Others: The student usually works cooperatively with group members, takes on a variety of roles and responsibilities, helps motivate others, and works independently to contribute the highest quality work to reach goals. Honesty: The student is usually honest and encourages others to make the best decisions. They usually take responsibility for their own work and give credit to others' ideas.</p>	<p>Working with Others: The student has difficulty working with others, and is not able to take on a variety of roles and inconsistently contributes to the group. Honesty: The student is sometimes honest while making good decisions. They inconsistently give credit for others work.</p>	<p>Working with Others: The student disrupts others from completing group work, and rarely works well with peers. Honesty: The student rarely takes responsibility for their actions and sometimes takes credit for others work.</p>
<p>R E F L E C T I O N</p>	<p>Self-monitor Progress: Student always strives to create works that convey an idea, feeling or personal meaning, while taking into account others' observations and feedback without prompting. The student is also able to monitor their own progress towards learning targets by documenting areas of challenge and creating a plan for improvement. Feedback and Critique: Student is able to connect learning across content areas, revise work integrating feedback, articulate use in the future and offering valuable critique to peers.</p>	<p>Self-monitor Progress: Student usually strives to create works that convey an idea, feeling or personal meaning, while taking into account others' observations and feedback without prompting. The student is usually able to monitor their own progress towards learning targets by documenting areas of challenge and creating a plan for improvement. Feedback and Critique: Student is usually able to connect learning across content areas, integrate feedback, and articulate use in the future and offering valuable critique to peers.</p>	<p>Self Monitor Progress: Student inconsistently strives to create works that convey an idea, feeling or personal meaning, while taking into account others' observations and feedback without prompting. The student can, but does not usually, monitor their own progress towards learning targets by documenting areas of challenge and creating a plan for improvement. Feedback and Critique: Student inconsistently connects learning across content areas, while integrating feedback, articulate use in the future and offering valuable critique to peers.</p>	<p>Self Monitor Progress: Student does not strive to create works that convey an idea, feeling or personal meaning, while taking into account others' observations and feedback without prompting. The student is not able to monitor their own progress towards learning targets by documenting areas of challenge and creating a plan for improvement. Feedback and Critique: Student does not connect learning across content areas, while integrating feedback, articulate use in the future and offering valuable critique to peers.</p>

<p>E M P A T H Y</p>	<p>Active listening: Students always demonstrates that they are listening to their peers and/or teachers using such strategies as: attentive body language, taking notes or jotting down questions, remaining quiet, snapping/brain matching, etc.... Students are able to explain what is happening in their brain during active listening. Students are able to model active listening skills and remind others to use them. Question asking: Students ask questions of their peers and teachers with the purpose of more deeply understanding what was said. Students use questions as a way of deepening or potentially changing their opinion or perspective, and as a way of trying to learn about and from the experience of another person.</p>	<p>Active listening: With prompting or reminders from teachers or peers, students consistently demonstrates that they are listening to their peers and/or teachers using such strategies as: attentive body language, taking notes or jotting down questions, remaining quiet, snapping/brain matching, etc.... Question asking: With prompting or reminders from teachers or peers, students ask questions of their peers and teachers with the purpose of more deeply understanding what was said. Students use questions as a way of deepening or potentially changing their opinion or perspective, and as a way of trying to learn about and from the experience of another person.</p>	<p>Active listening: Student inconsistently demonstrates that they are listening to their peers and/or teachers using such strategies as: attentive body language, taking notes or jotting down questions, remaining quiet, snapping/brain matching, etc.... Question asking: Students inconsistently asks questions of their peers and teachers with the purpose of more deeply understanding what was said. Students use questions as a way of deepening or potentially changing their opinion or perspective, and as a way of trying to learn about and from the experience of another person.</p>	<p>Active listening: Student rarely demonstrates that they are listening to their peers and/or teachers using such strategies as: attentive body language, taking notes or jotting down questions, remaining quiet, snapping/brain matching, etc.... Question asking: Students inconsistently asks questions of their peers and teachers with the purpose of more deeply understanding what was said. Students use questions as a way of deepening or potentially changing their opinion or perspective, and as a way of trying to learn about and from the experience of another person.</p>
<p>R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y</p>	<p>Work completion and Independent Thought: The student independently completes all aspects of assignments without prompting, manages time to complete work and projects and went beyond what was needed. Student strives for highest craftsmanship in every assignment. Student always</p>	<p>Work completion and Independent Thought: The student usually completes all aspects of assignments without prompting, manages time to complete work and projects and went beyond what was needed. Student strives for highest craftsmanship in every assignment. Student also consistently demonstrates ability and</p>	<p>Work Completion: Students inconsistently has materials needed for class. The student's materials were sometimes messy and disorganized. The student completed the assignment, but lacked craftsmanship Organization: Student inconsistently maintains organized materials, is inconsistently prepared, takes ownership and pride</p>	<p>Work Completion: Students often does not have materials needed for class. The student's materials were often messy and disorganized. The student often does complete the assignment, and lacks craftsmanship Organization: Student rarely maintains organized materials, is rarely prepared, takes ownership and pride for personal and</p>

demonstrates ability and willingness to learn to use the tools, materials and practices of art forms to develop an independent voice through their studies. Organization: Student consistently maintains organized materials, is always prepared, takes ownership and pride for personal and school materials.	willingness to learn to use the tools, materials and practices of art forms to develop an independent voice through their studies. Organization: Student usually maintains organized materials, is usually prepared, takes ownership and pride for personal and school materials.	for personal and school materials. Student occasionally demonstrate an ability to learn to use the tools, materials and practices of art forms (envisioning what cannot be directly observed, heard or written; using imagination to find next steps, etc.) to develop a personal voice through their studies.	school materials. Student does not demonstrate ability to learn to use the tools, materials and practices of art forms (envisioning what cannot be directly observed, heard or written; using imagination to find next steps, etc.); student struggles to comprehend the concept of "personal voice" in their studies.
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