

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, January, 2020

To inspire and prepare lifelong learners to follow their passion, engage in their communities, and positively impact our global society.

Above is the vision of Plainville Community Schools. To ensure that students are able to actualize this vision, PCS is dedicated to having an education system that is responsive to the needs and experiences of students and to support young people to fulfill their potential. Building upon the work of previous years through the Equity Task Force, we have begun to think even more deeply about root causes of inequity and ways in which we can develop systems of support to address the needs of all students.

Our school community is working to develop practices, tools, and policies, designed to build equitable learning environments with the ultimate goal of improving learning and education outcomes for all students. To accomplish these goals, in addition to focusing on students' academic performance, we are exploring ways to support their social and emotional development as well.

Social-emotional learning is a “lever for increasing educational equity and it rests on the capacity of educators to understand that all learning is social and emotional and all learning is mediated by relationships...” (National Equity Project). Here in Plainville, we recognize the importance of building strong relationships with students to better support their learning and well-being. During the fall of 2019, over 25 PCS educators and administrators attended RULER training at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER, which stands for recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate, is an evidence-based approach for integrating social and emotional learning into schools. Through this training, attendees learned important strategies for building relationships, creating supportive learning environments, and teaching adults and students how to assess situations and regulate their emotions accordingly.

The educators who attended the training at YALE then provided professional development for colleagues within their own school in November and beyond. During these learning sessions, administrators, teachers, and support staff worked together to develop a building-based “charter” to outline how they would like to feel at work and how they can collaborate to create such an environment. Educators from each of the schools also discussed plans for supporting staff throughout the school year and will soon plan for how to roll out RULER concepts with students, family, and members of the school community.

For more information about Yale’s RULER Program, visit <http://ei.yale.edu/ruler/ruler-overview/>.