

Managing Mental Health Issues

Destigmatizing mental health & supporting our
post-pandemic resilience

Joy Winchester

Alabama Department of Early
Childhood Education

Director, Office of Early Childhood
Development and Professional
Support

Assist with challenging behaviors and
professional development in
neuroscience and brain
development to understand
behaviors of adults and children

Work with 0-5, k-12, college systems,
families, and state level agencies to
support challenging behaviors and
building strong brain connections.

Email:
joy.Winchester@ece.alabama.gov



Question to Answer in the Chat:

- When you hear “mental health” what does it mean to you?
- Why should mental health be a focus for educators?

(Please use the Chat Box for your responses. Check the dropdown box and select “All panelists & attendees” so everyone can see your responses.)



Our “New Normal”: Why is this tough?

Simple Brain Facts

- The brain is pattern-seeking
- The brain is survival oriented
- The brain is a social organ
 - The brain needs connections to grow
 - Eye contact, touch, playful, engagement
 - Technology does not provide the same connection

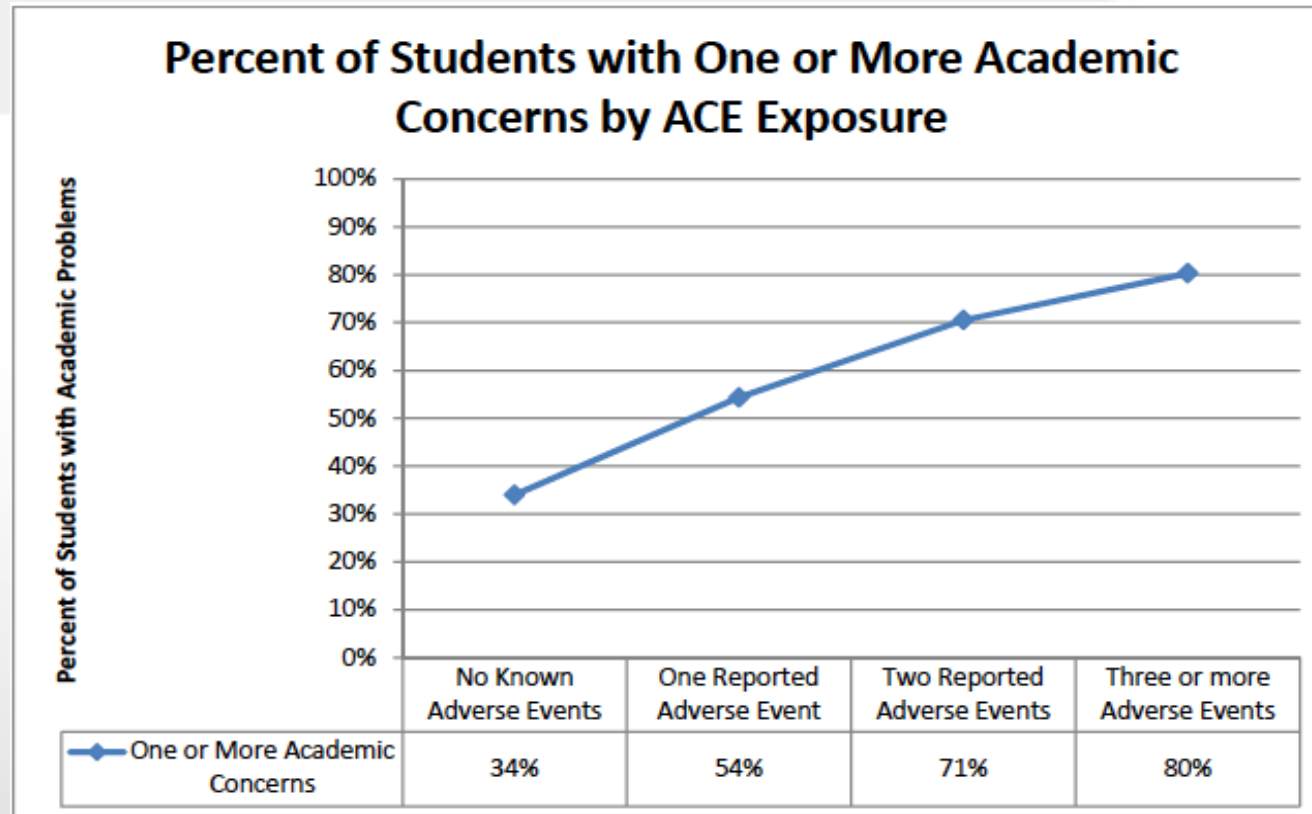
Impact from COVID-19

- This is a new situation, new world- some can't find patterns; some make new patterns (resilience)
- When stressed the higher thinking areas shut down, people react instead of respond.
- Social distancing is asking us to do the opposite of what the brain needs for growth

Hidden Epidemic- Stress and Trauma

- What if we knew the cause of most chronic disease, most mental illness, and most violence in America?
- Research indicates that traumatic stress in childhood is the leading cause of morbidity, mortality and disability in the United States.
- ACEs- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- 64% of adults report Adverse Childhood Experiences (trauma); 87% have more than one ACE.
- What is an ACE?
 - Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
 - Physical and emotional neglect
 - Witnessing a mother be abused
 - Living with a family member with a mental illness, incarcerated, or addicted
 - Losing a parent to separation, divorce or other reason

ACES and Academics



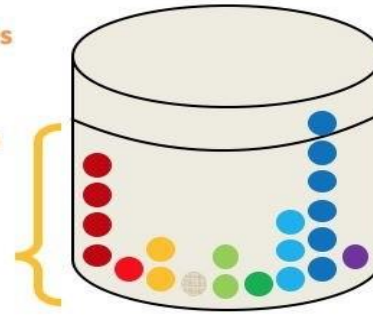
Neurodiversity 101:
Wrong coloured balls!

Do-IT>

Wrong Colored Balls: Children Fall Through the Cracks

You can picture someone's challenges as like different coloured and different sized balls in a bucket:

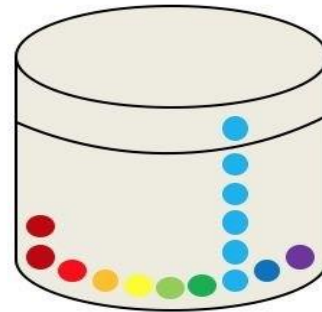
Number of balls indicates the severity of the challenge in that area. Some are easier to see!



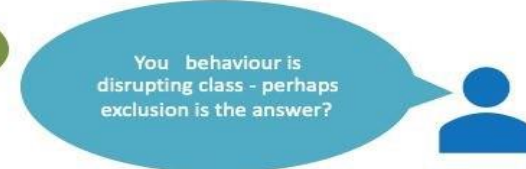
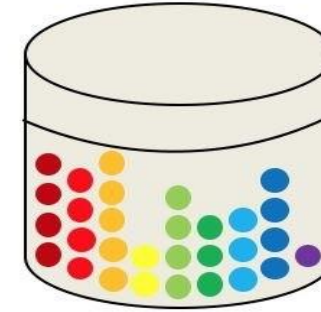
Have to meet a certain level to 'count' and get a diagnosis for challenges or meet the criteria for services

Different colours indicate different types of challenge, e.g. reading, attention, social, motor, home life, behaviours

This system works well for people with a single colour ball = one area of challenge

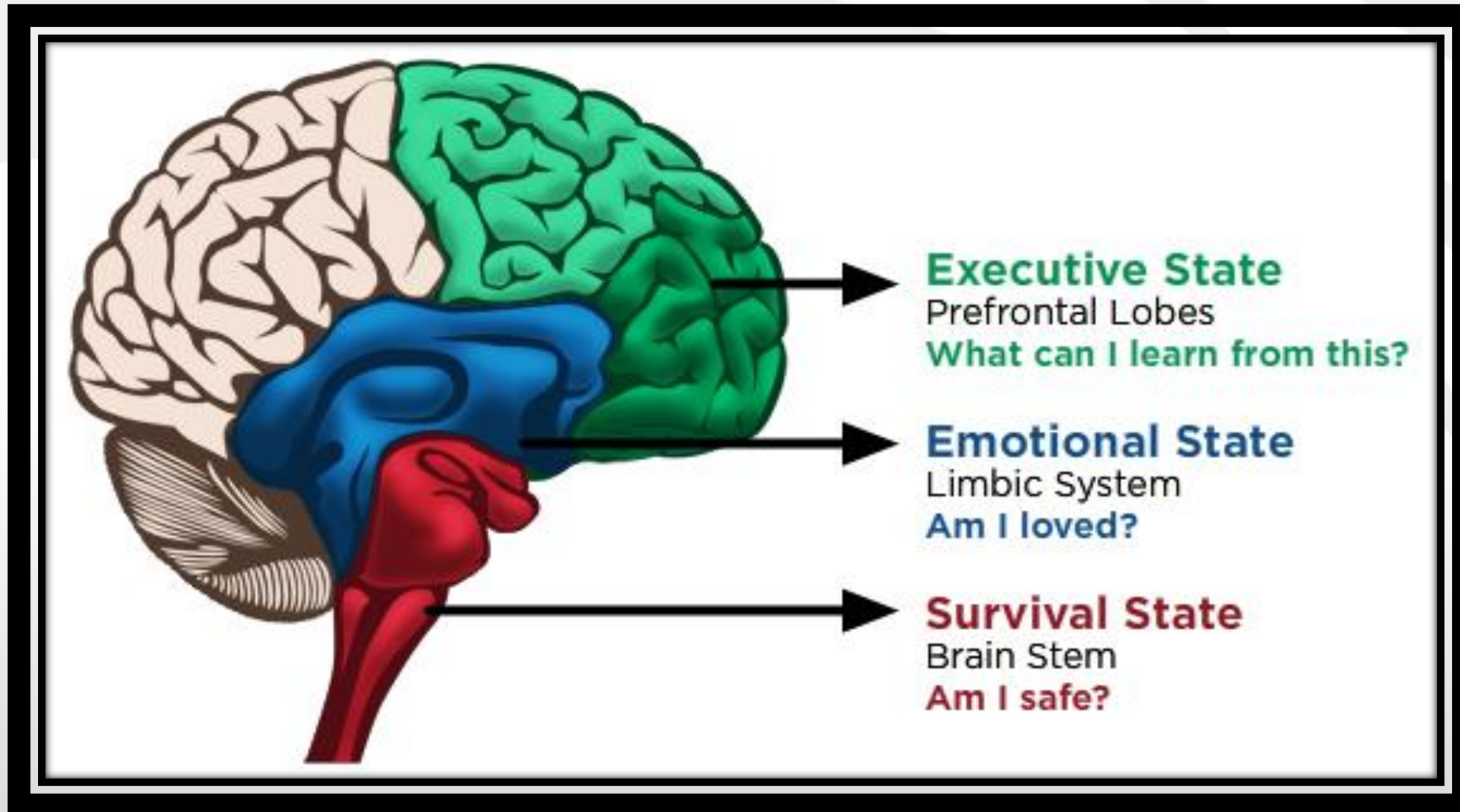


Fails people with multiple needs or less well identified needs who don't quite meet a criteria = greater support needs

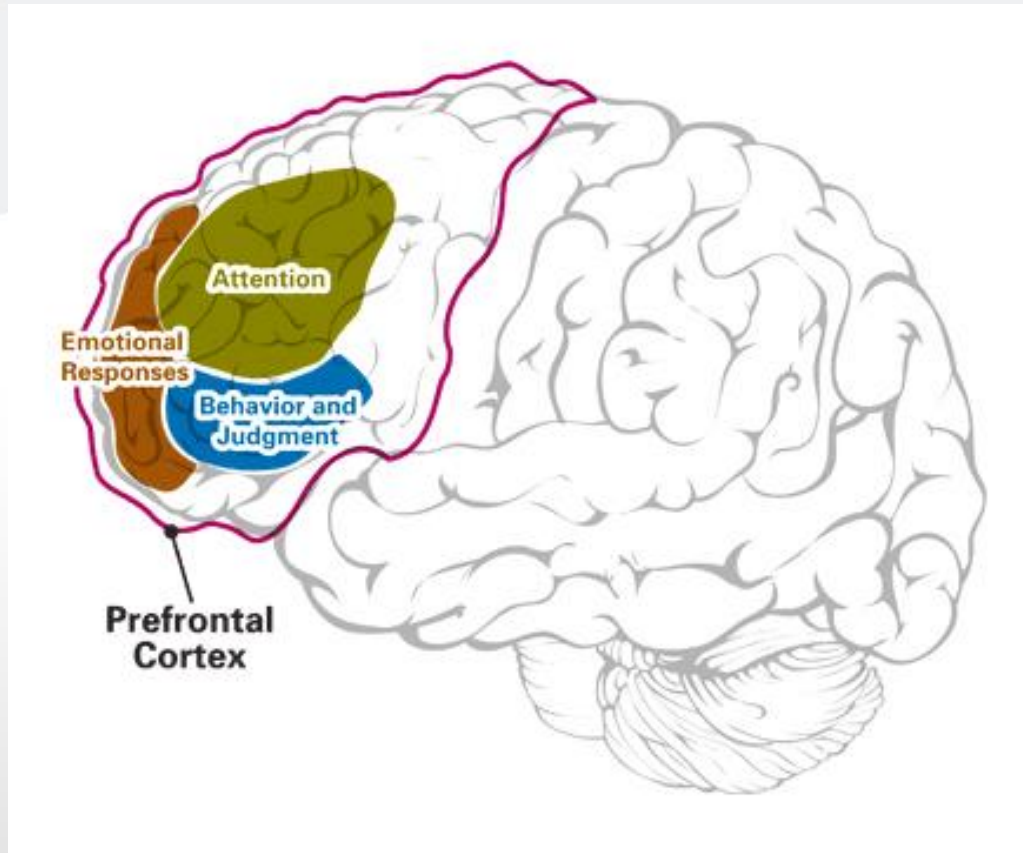


Are we failing those with cumulative adversity that impact longer term on their lives?

The Brain State Model: Conscious Discipline



What Are Executive Skills?



- These skills empower us to:
 - Set and achieve goals despite distractions
 - Regulate our emotions and inhibit impulsive behaviors
 - Self monitor and reflect
 - Develop empathy and problem solve.
- Emerge during preschool years and don't fully mature until early adulthood.
- More indicative of school success than IQ (predicts math and reading scores throughout the school years)
- Executive skills are critical to independent living; exist only as potential (newborns have none), they require up to 24 years to fully develop
- Prefrontal cortex guides behaviors, thoughts and feelings use representational knowledge.

A TOP WIFE Makes Good Tea (or Tacos)!

- **A**ttention
 - **T**ime Management
 - **O**rganization
 - **P**rioritization
 - **W**orking Memory
 - **I**mpulse Control
 - **F**lexibility
 - **E**mpathy & **E**motional Control
- **M**etacognition
 - **G**oal Achievement
 - **T**ask Initiation

Stress Blocks Access...Sound Familiar?

- Attention: “Wait, what did you say again?”
- Time Management- “Oh my! Where did the morning go?”
- Organization: “Where are my keys?”
- Prioritization: “I am so overwhelmed, I don’t know where to start”
- Working Memory: “Why did I walk into this room?”
- Impulse Control: “Don’t say what mommy just said, it was a bad word”
- Flexibility: “We always go to Olive Garden on Sundays, why are we changing it this weekend!?!?!?”
- Empathy: “No one ever listens to me!”
- Metacognition: “Don’t make me turn this car around!”
- Goal Achievement: “I worked so hard today, and literally got nothing done!”
- Task Initiation: “Ohh look Pinterest has how to paint mason jars to look like flower pots....(6 hours later) ohhh look how to make jewelry from paper towels”

What is Conscious Discipline?

- Conscious Discipline is an evidenced-based, trauma-informed approach.
- It is recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).
- It is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates school-wide discipline, school climate and social-emotional learning.
- Its goal is to provide systematic changes in schools by fostering the emotional intelligence of **teachers first** and children second.

Jen Thomas

Principal of Olive B. Loss
Elementary School in Delaware's
Appoquinimink School District

- Served as an administrator for 12 years, leading 3 different buildings across 2 states
- Like all educators, I wear many hats throughout the day... for 2 students, I'm also mom!



Points to Ponder in the Chat



- What are 2 things you're doing well to support your emotional, psychological & social well-being?
- What is 1 thing you deserve to be doing well?

(Please use the Chat Box for your responses. Check the dropdown box and select "All panelists & attendees" so everyone can see your responses.)

Who's Really Coming to School These Days?

| Students | | | Teachers | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Students learning a 2 nd language | Students with learning challenges | Students from low-income background | Teachers caring for aging parents | Teachers in unhappy marriages or divorce | Teachers with financial hardships |
| Advanced learners | Students who are homeless | Students with emotional challenges | Teachers who are also students | Teachers who under-trained or ill-equipped | Teachers with personal health concerns |
| Students from non-majority races or cultures | Students whose families move often | Students for whom home is unhealthy | Teachers raising their own children | Teachers working multiple jobs | Teachers for whom home is unhealthy |

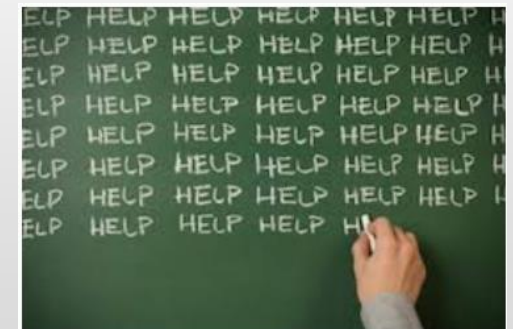
The Impact of Trauma & Toxic Stress

On Learning

- Adversely affect attention, memory & cognition
- Reduced ability to focus, organize & process information
- Interfere with effective problem solving & planning
- Result in overwhelming feelings of frustration & anxiety

On Teaching

- Increased irritability & impatience
- Difficulty planning lessons & activities
- Decreased concentration
- Feeling numb, detached, or helpless



Responding vs. Reacting

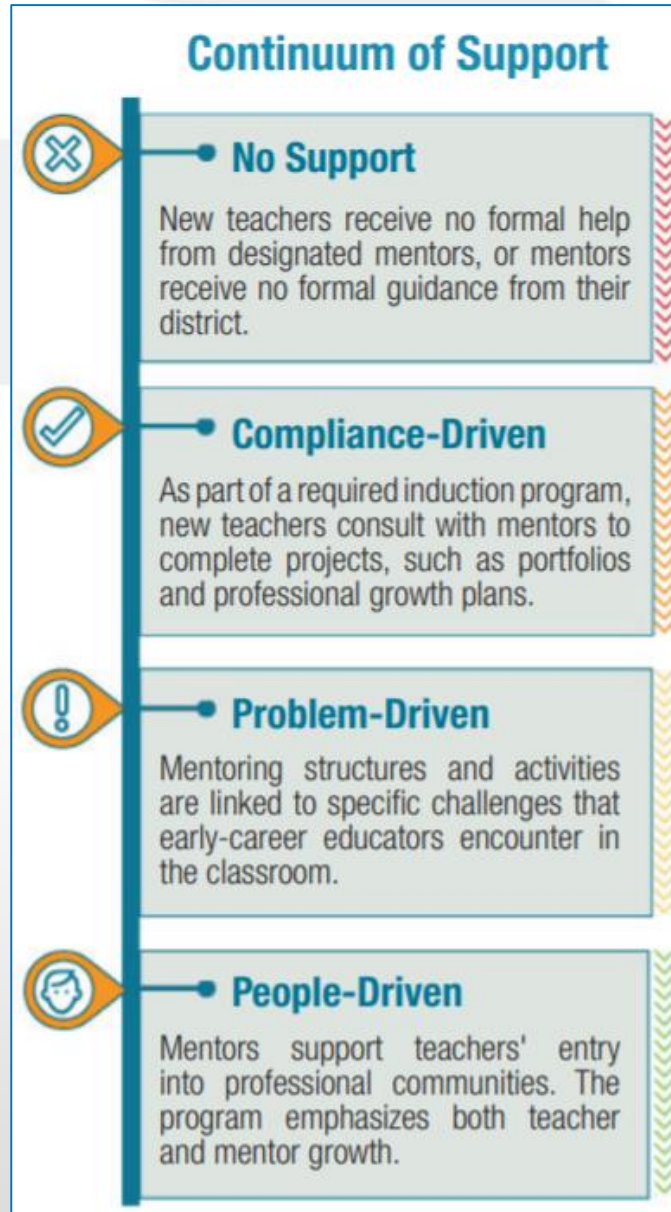


| | |
|---|--|
|  Deliberate |  Impulsive |
| Delayed | Immediate |
| Aware | Unaware |
| Use Reason and Emotion | Full of Emotion |
| You Are In Control of the Situation | The Situation is in Control of You |

Mentoring

According to a 2015 federal study, [92% of first-year teachers](#) assigned a mentor returned to their classroom, compared to 71% without mentors.

Nationwide, teacher turnover costs districts [\\$7.3 billion a year](#), according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) Training.



Mindfulness

- Mindful Mantra
- Setting Intentions
- Morning Meeting
- Quiet Time
- Breathing
- Gratitude
- Laughter

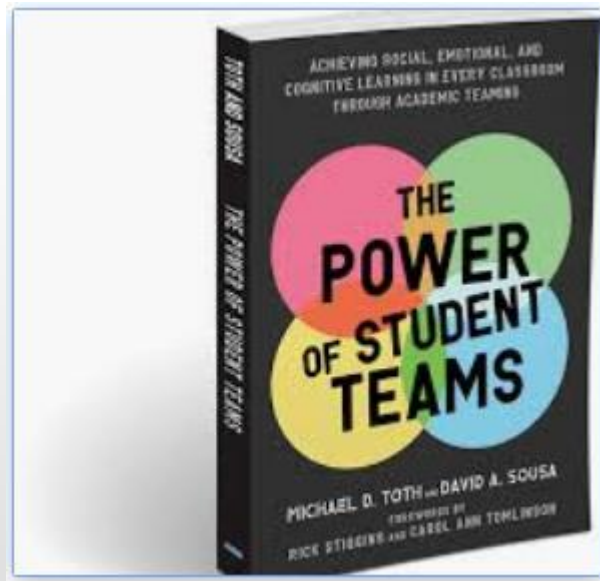


SEL Programs

CASEL

Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning

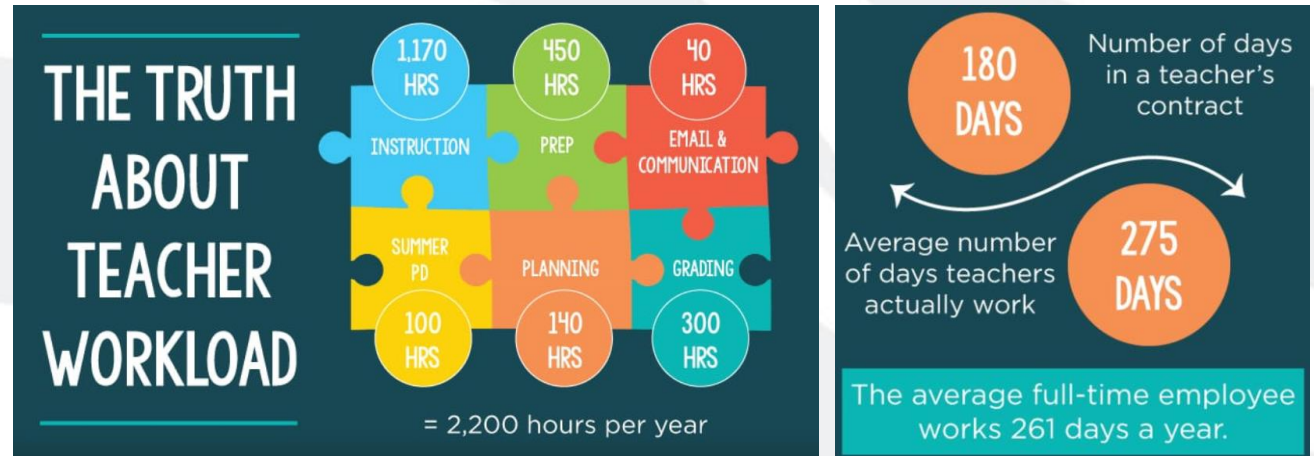
<https://casel.org/>



Team-centered instruction produces SECL outcomes
teacher input + student process = learning outcomes

Balance

- Work vs Home
- Give vs Take
- Self-interest vs Sacrifice
- Teacher Sacrifice vs Sacrificing Teachers



Post-Pandemic

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” ~ *John Dewey*



