

“Just Keep Swimming!”

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Cahn Fellow Cohort Year 2018-2019

ABSTRACT

Just Keep Swimming!!-Developing School-Wide, Trauma-Informed Practices to support student learning

When trying to reach that student that seems unreachable, you know what you've got to do!
"Just keep swimming, just keep swimming..." Dory, Finding Nemo

At Marie L. Greenwood Academy in the Denver Public Schools, we are committed to building relationships with our students. Creating consistent school-wide trauma-informed practices— such as designing a peace corner in each classroom, ensuring that all students have access to a full-time mental health team member, and implementing a more trauma-informed approach to discipline— we are creating an environment that is conducive for **ALL** students to get the support they need to be successful. Dive into the deep along with us as we show you how to "Just Keep Swimming" when creating school-wide trauma-informed practices.

INTRODUCTION

Rachel Payne has served as the principal of Marie L. Greenwood Academy in Denver, Colorado for the past 7 years. Marie L. Greenwood Academy is a K-8 school serving over 600 students in the far northeast part of Denver, Colorado. Our Elementary is a neighborhood TNLI (transitional native language instruction) school and our middle school is a magnet ESL Resource school.

Our school is a diverse, safe, creative and dynamic community of learners. Our highly effective teachers and staff, in partnership with our community, provide students with opportunities to engage in the arts, character education, science and technology. Our greatest hope is that we come to fully live out our vision to empower all Greenwood students to own their learning, shape their dreams, and create a better world.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marie L. Greenwood Academy is a K-8 school in the Far North East part of Denver. Over the last 7 years our trajectory of academic achievement has continued to rise. Our state and district report card are listed as “Meets Expectations”. Our major improvement strategies have been focused on data, progress monitoring and supporting our English learners in English Language Development.

For the last three years at Greenwood, we have noted a considerable increase of students who are coming to school daily having experienced some type of trauma. Despite our focus on academic achievement, we still have large gaps with our students of color in relation to their white counterparts. After examining our teacher perception surveys and whole child survey we have become keenly aware that we need to support many of our students in the area of social and emotional health. Our students who have trauma or challenges in the area of social/emotion have increasingly had difficulty remaining focused and engaged in their classrooms. Intern, other students in classrooms have been impacted as a result of the behavior of students of trauma.

We believe creating a school environment that is supportive of social/emotional needs will have the greatest potential in increasing academic achievement and closing the gaps that exist at Greenwood. We will measure student growth using a variety of assessments. We will use survey data, teacher perception data, whole child measures as well as summative assessments in the areas of math and literacy.

One of the hopes we have as leaders is to help provide tools for our teachers so that they feel supported and prepared to serve the needs of the students in their classrooms. We also hope to grow as leaders in this process of making change to support our school vision. Our greatest hope is that we come to fully live out our vision to empower ALL Greenwood students to own their learning, shape their dreams and to create a better world.

We are one of four K-8's in the neighborhood. Most of our students come from the surrounding neighborhood and we typically keep majority of our students from year to year. We experience a slight rate of mobility among our students when moving from elementary to the secondary level based on space availability. The elementary school is a neighborhood school, while the middle school students have to choice-in. We have an enrollment of 636 students. For the 2018-2019 year, we reopened a kindergarten program in our school. We have not had a kindergarten for seven years.

Our 2018-2019 demographics include:

- ELs 79.7 %
- Students of color 98.7 %
- FRL 93.2%
- Sped 9.9%

Our School Culture

Our school is a diverse, safe, creative and dynamic community of learners. Our highly effective teachers and staff, in partnership with our community, provide students with opportunities to engage in the arts, character education, science and technology.

Greenwood's Mission & Vision

To empower ALL Greenwood students to own their learning, shape their dreams, and create a better world.

Organizational Systems and Structures:

The organizational structure is designed around meeting the instructional needs of elementary and secondary teachers and students. There is a principal with an elementary teaching and administrative background and an assistant principal with elementary experience. We currently staff two deans, whose primary function are to support the professional learning of teachers, grounded in data analysis and high impact instructional moves. Our Instructional Leadership team consists of 5 senior team leads, our deans and the school principal and assistant principal.

Curriculum and Assessments:

As a school we are currently using curriculum embedded assessments. The primary purpose of these assessments is for instructional adjustment. We will use the following assessments through Illuminate:

- Bridges K-5
- Benchmark K-5 (only 3-5)
- Spanish version of Bridges K-5
- Spanish version of Benchmark (Benchmark Adelante) K-5 (only 3-5)
- EL assessments 6-8
- CMP3 6-8 (not in Illuminate)

Special Accomplishments:

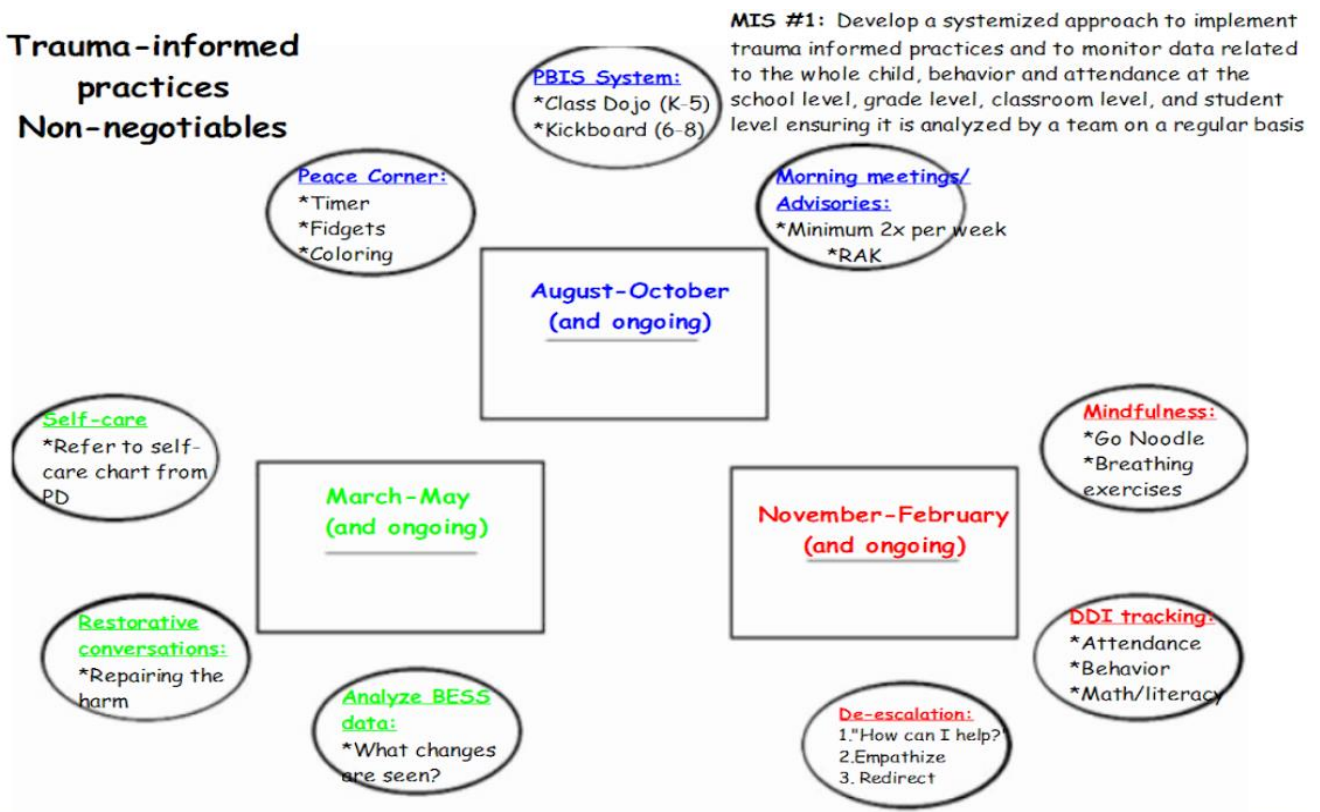
We have moved from approaching to meets expectations. Our state and district report card are listed as "Meets Expectations".

METHODS

In order to engage our faculty and staff in our work around trauma-informed practices, we first had to start with the “why”. During our professional development days at the beginning of the school year, we provided our teachers and staff with the rationale for this being our school-wide focus. We hired a Dean of Student Services, who worked in the Office of Social and Emotional Learning for our school district. With her support, we were able to provide a Behavior and Emotional Screener System (BESS) that was given to each student in grades 3-8. What we found was that the grades most impacted by students of trauma were fourth and fifth (see page 8). This did not come as a surprise to us because these are the grade levels in which we are seeing the most needs behaviorally.

Since we know that this is such a need within our building, this is one of our Major Improvement Strategies (MIS) in our school’s Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). Our first MIS is ***Implement trauma-informed practices: Develop a systemized approach to implement trauma informed practices and to monitor data related to the whole child, behavior and attendance at the school level, grade level, classroom level, and student level ensuring it is analyzed by a team on a regular basis.***-- In order to do this, we created a timeline of trauma-informed practices we would like to see from each classroom, as well as a list of leader/teacher/student actions. We have started tracking data on each student who is at an elevated or high risk of trauma. As an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), we discussed tracking the number of minutes spent out of the classroom and behavior referrals to the office, as well as correlating that data to academic data in reading and math.

Trauma-informed practices Non-negotiables



We also took the time to interview all of our students who were new to Greenwood at the beginning of the school year in order to find out ways to best support them. We administered questionnaires to each new student to see how they best learn, what their challenges are, and what they need from us as leaders and staff.

- *Kinds of books, journal articles, online resources used:*

Start with the Why- by Simon Sneck

Fostering Resilient Learners for creating a Trauma Sensitive Classroom-by Peter Hall

“What’s SHARING POWER Got to Do with Trauma-Informed Practice” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

- *Visits to other schools, consultations with expert practitioners, Cahn study sessions*

We are part of a district cohort monthly meeting that is focused on Trauma informed practices. This professional development is facilitated by district consultants with expertise in the areas of social and emotional supports, trauma informed practices, and behavior.

As a part of Kimberly’s principal induction, she visits schools throughout the district to look at

practices which include trauma informed practices. On November 26, 2018, our school hosted one of the cohort meetings focusing on trauma-informed look-fors. A small group of assistant principals visited fourth and fifth grade classrooms to look for evidence of trauma-informed practices, such as peace corners, mindfulness strategies, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems.

- *Collecting information in your own school by talking with others, observing activities, looking at student work products, examining data, or administering surveys or questionnaires?* During Data Driven Instruction (DDI), teachers are tracking data for students who are specifically identified as having an elevated risk or high risk of trauma. Since our fourth and fifth grade students had the most risk of trauma (as measured by the BESS data), those are the grade levels who are tracking data related to the high-needs students. Teachers are tracking the absences/number of minutes spent outside of the classroom, number of behavior referrals to the office and iStation data (monthly reading and math assessments). This is done in a Google spreadsheet so that all teachers have access to the data and can add new data monthly.

Please answer the following questions in this section:

- *Were you able to develop a deeper understanding of your situation?*

As a result of the BESS data we were able to narrow down a group of students in every grade level and classroom. We noticed a trend of elevated BESS scores in 4th and 5th grade. These students have been highly impacted by traumatic experiences. We are triangulating the data to see if the academic data is positively impacted by the strategies we are using with the students we identified in each classroom. We are also tracking other data to determine if the results of intensive supports for students have made a difference. We have different findings of the impact of trauma informed practices depending on the student and classroom.

- *What did you learn while presenting the characteristics and underlying factors related to your question?*

We learned that our question was in alignment with our school data and school performance framework. We have also learned that the underlying factors/root causes of poor academic performance for some students have been as a result traumatic experiences. We have observed manifestations of trauma in a variety of ways from a variety of students and their teachers.

- *What specific details and “big ideas” did you glean from your efforts?*

We are learning about the impact of traumatic experiences on the brain. We have learned that most of our students when escalated, are operating in the stem and cannot de-escalate when they are living in that space.

We have also that each student is different and what strategy works for one may not work for

others. We have learned that knowing the students well and their triggers can help us choose the strategies that work best when working with them.

- *How did your “lessons learned” influence the action plan you developed?*

Since we know that most students of trauma who are triggered tend to act from their brain stem, we brought in a trauma expert from the district to facilitate a professional development on de-escalation.

- *Did you have any “aha” moments that impacted your work?*

One of our “aha” moments was the vicarious trauma that teachers experience when working with students that have challenging behaviors or social/emotional challenges. Teachers are learning how to identify their own triggers and strategies to use to support them working successfully with their students.

- *Describe how you have sought to address your situation in the short-term and longer-term. This portion of the action inquiry cycle focuses on taking specific actions, followed by a review of the outcomes and making further adjustments to the plan, followed by another round of action.*

We have created a look-fors document that shares with teachers and staff the progression of implementing strategies in their classrooms and what each of those would look like in a classroom (see appendix).

- *What specific steps have you taken this year to address your project?*

See chart of action steps below:

- *Please provide a bulleted list, timeline, and/or charts, showing the progression of action steps and who did what.*

| Action Step | Start Date | End Date | Frequency | Key Personnel |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mental Health PD (Introduce team and resources available) | August 2018 | May 2019 | Monthly | Mental Health Team (Social Worker, Admin, School Psych, Counselor, Dean of student services) |
| Self-Care PD (Supports with Strategies for teachers) | October 2018 | May 2018 | Monthly | Mental Health Team (Social Worker, Admin, School Psych, Counselor, Dean of student services) |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Weekly Mental Health Team Meetings | August 2018 | May 2019 | Weekly | Mental Health Team (Social Worker, Admin, School Psych, Counselor, Dean of student services) |
| Classroom Look-fors Document (When walking into the classroom what do we want to see being implemented and what are our expectations for trauma informed practices) | October 2018 | May 2018 | Monthly Walkthroughs | Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers |
| Mindfulness Strategies PD (support teachers in learning mindfulness strategies that can be taught to their students) | September 2018 | May 2019 | Weekly strategies shared in staff bulletin Monthly PD utilizing strategies | Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers |
| Middle School Advisory | August 2018 | May 2019 | Monday Friday | Middle School Teachers |
| Elementary Morning Meeting | August 2018 | May 2019 | Monday Friday | Elementary Teachers |
| Weekly Trauma Informed Practices Newsletter | August 2018 | May 2019 | Fridays | Dean of Student Services |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Restorative Practices Professional Development | September 2018 | September 2018 | Monday in September | District restorative Coordinator |
| Parent Support Meetings (Looking at data, teaching strategies to support students to their families) | October 2018 | May 2018 | Monthly | Community Liaison Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers |
| Data Dig (Whole Child Data) | August 2018 | August 2018 | Initial staff meetings | Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers Mental Health Team |
| Data Dig (Student Perception Survey) | August 2018 | August 2018 | Initial staff meetings | Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers Mental Health Team |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Data Dig- DDI | September 2018 | May 2019 | Weekly | Classroom teachers Teacher Leaders Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers Mental Health Team |
| BESS Survey | September 2018 | May 2019 | Monthly | Students Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers Mental Health Team |
| Trauma informed practices cohort principal meetings | September 2018 | May 2019 | Monthly | District-Trauma informed practices coordinators Network Principals |
| Interviewing new students | September 2018 | May 2019 | September and when new students arrive | |
| De-escalation training | November 2018 | November 2018 | Daily as needed | Classroom teachers Teacher Leaders |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | Principal Assistant Principal Deans Classroom Teachers Mental Health |
| Home Visits | Ongoing | Ongoing | | |
| Books and Resources | Ongoing | Ongoing | | |
| Google Drive Resources | August 2018 | May 2019 | Resources added to the drive daily | |
| ARTIC Survey- | January 2019 | May 2019 | Pre/post test | All staff/teachers |
| | | | | |

Narrative Section #5. Challenges and Growth

- Describe the challenges you encountered and how you handled them. Reflect on your own growth at this stage in the inquiry process.

Our challenges have been to examine our own growth in the area of trauma informed care and the growth our teachers and staff.

We have been able to formally and informally observe many of the strategies and practices of Trauma informed care in the classrooms. However, as a leadership team we wanted to think about our growth and attitudes of trauma informed care at the midpoint of the school year and whether or not we have made any progress.

RESULTS

- What were the outcomes of your actions on you as a leader?

The outcomes we focused on in the last two months as leaders were to monitor our progress as a leadership team and to monitor the progress of both our teachers and staff in the implementation trauma informed practices and care. We then wanted to analyze any data we received and plan out our next steps.

Our dean of student services helped us to research a way to measure our attitudes as an entire school in the area of trauma informed care at this point of the year. We used the ARTIC (Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care) scale that came out of Tulane University. The ARTIC scale is a way to measure our school professionals and paraprofessionals attitude toward trauma informed care. Our dean of services was able to get the scale for us to use and then we were able to analyze the results as a leadership team and to move towards next steps.

- Did your actions have an impact on the school, the teachers, the students, etc.? Were these the expected outcomes?

Our leadership team met to discuss teachers current attitude and behavior when it comes to trauma informed care. We gave the ARTIC scale (attitudes related to trauma informed care) to our entire staff.

We knew that the results could give us information on the current attitudes of teachers and staff that could be directly correlated with their behavior day to day with students in the area of trauma informed practices. The results led us to think about our progress as a trauma informed care in our school. We also used those results to think about our ideas for the rest of the school year.

The outcomes were in alignment with our initial thoughts as leaders in were we are as a school in the area of trauma informed care.

- What evidence can you provide to document and demonstrate the impact?

Our results of the ARTIC scale are below. Each teacher/staff member was given a survey of roughly 100 questions.

N = 41

91% response rate

Underlying Causes of Problem Behavior and Symptoms – 5.0

This subscale is measuring perceptions on whether behavior is adaptable/malleable and changeable vs. intentional and fixed. Growth mindset falls into this subscale somewhat; however, several individuals had a strong perception that students do not want to change their behavior or learn and the majority of their behavioral problems are rooted in a specific mental health condition.

Responses to Problem Behavior and Symptoms – 5.2

This subscale emphasizes the importance of relationships, flexibility, kindness and safety as the agent of change vs. rules, consequences and accountability. Zero tolerance and punitive discipline practices fall into this vs. restorative practices fall into this subscale.

On the Job Behavior – 5.4

Empathy focused staff behavior vs. control focused staff behavior. Emphasizes the need for adults to remain in control at all times vs. being able to be empathetic and sympathetic to student's emotions and their resulting behaviors.

Self-Efficacy at Work – 5.5

Staff feeling able to meet the demands of working with a traumatized population and having the tools needed to be able to work effectively with them.

Reactions to the Work – 5.3

Endorses appreciating the effects of secondary trauma/vicarious traumatization and coping by seeking support and taking care of yourself vs. minimizing or ignoring/hiding the impact

Personal Support of Trauma-Informed Care – 5.4

Personal support of and confidence about being able to implement a trauma sensitive environment in one's own classroom

System-Wide Support of Trauma-Informed Care – 4.9

Perceptions of system-wide support for TIC vs. NOT feeling supported by colleagues, supervisors and the administration

Average total score is **5.28**

We also completed an individual item analysis. The average score was above the mean for the following questions: The students were raised this way, so they don't yet know how to do what I'm asking them to do; When I make mistakes with students, it is best to own up to my mistakes; I have to take care of myself personally in order to take care of my students.

This tells us that teachers as a whole are trying to engage in self-care, understand the importance of teaching them social/emotional learning and behavioral expectations and the importance of being humble and human when in front of their students

The average score was below the mean for the following questions: It reflects badly on me if my students are very upset; Students need to be held accountable for their actions (although, I don't like how this question is worded and I'm not sure it's a good item); Students do the right thing one day but not the next. This shows that they could control their behavior if they really want to; If I don't control students' behavior, other students will get hurt; When I feel myself "taking my work home," it's best to keep it to myself.

This tells us that the staff has a fear of being out of control and a misunderstanding of the timeline needed to change habits and behavior, as well as a possible misunderstanding of students being in control of their own personal behavior. We may need to provide some more work with brain science and the properties of being in your brain stem.

With regards to systems level support – the following items were high: The trauma-informed care approach saves time in the long run; Students react positively to the trauma-informed care approach; The trauma informed care approach is effective.

This tells us that the staff has a shared vision and believes that this is a good universal approach.

The following items were low: I do not have enough support to implement trauma informed care.

This tells us that the staff would like more support (possibly from their coaches, possibly from the MH staff, possibly from the administration, possibly from a combination of all of the above) as it pertains to trauma informed practices and the practical application of TIP. We wonder if this question would be a good one to explore in a staff meeting?

- What plans do you have to continue the work? What will you do as a leader to ensure that this work continues? How will you know? Who will you need? Again, provide bulleted lists, timelines, and charts showing actions, intended outcomes and responsibilities.

We have been able to analyze the results as a leadership team but we have yet to analyze the results with our entire staff. We hope to gather our entire staff together in the next couple of weeks to discuss the results as well as to brainstorm next steps together.

Rachel will be moving on to become an Operational Superintendent for the 2019-2020 school year. Although she will no longer be the principal of Greenwood, Kimberly will still be the Assistant Principal and plans to work with the new leader to determine next steps. Some ideas we will present to our new principal in order to continue this work are:

- Our district offers a full module course on Trauma-informed practices that we will take advantage of. This also includes a character study, which just so happens to be Nemo from Finding Nemo. (The theme of our presentation)
 - All must attend
- Community engagement on trauma-informed topics for parents, such as:
 - Social media, mindfulness, parent nights for mental health
- 6 Pillar Gallery Walk to start the year- Professional Development days at the beginning of the school year
- Consultation support- team can visit an MTSS meeting
- Champions who can teach other people how to do some of these things- observations, pairing up new teachers with a mentor who is strong with trauma-informed practices
- Book study or cohort learning
- Kyle Schwartz- DPS teacher and author- I Wish My Teacher Knew (idea for book study)
- Radical Self Care- Freneta Ware
- Community building circles- Restorative Practices, open conversations
- Team Building, spaces for people to talk
- Mindfulness room
- Circle up for celebrations, open conversations

REFLECTIONS

Reflections- Rachel Payne, Fellow

- *What impact did your participation in the Cahn Fellows Program have on you and your work this year?*

This year we have developed the following goal:

Develop a systematic approach to implement trauma informed practices and to monitor data related to the whole child, behavior and attendance at the school level, grade level, classroom level, and student level ensuring it is analyzed by a team on a regular basis. -

The challenges have been to intentionally start small and to ensure that we are moving slow to go fast. We are including small changes monthly so that teachers have the supports they need and are able to utilize the strategies in their classrooms to support their students.

We are also trying to address time in class for students with the most severe emotional challenges. We have found that these students are missing instruction at a greater rate due to emotional outbursts and challenges.

We have made several adjustments to our plans mainly because of the data that we have received from our best survey. We have been able to make adjustments to what students need and to what grade levels are in need of most support. We have taken the data that comes from student referrals to the office, to the mental team and referrals for support from parents and have made some adjustments. As a result of our monthly data we hope to show a correlation of use of trauma informed practices to support our students in the classroom to an increased academic progress trajectory as a result of students increase of time in class.

- *Please describe in what ways your work was impacted by your participation in the program What specific areas of study impacted your work? (i.e., Ways of Knowing, concept mapping, Action Learning Conversations, NBI, OCI, Social-emotional leadership)*

There are many lessons that I have learned that have made an impact on my leadership as a result of being a Cahn fellow. The first lessons that I have been able to apply came from our work in Gettysburg. I walked away from that experience thinking about how I see myself as a leader and how others might perceive me. I was inspired by the lessons of leadership from several of the battle of Gettysburg commanders, generals and colonels. I reflected upon how each decision that was made had a profound impact on the battle. I also thought deeply about

Joshua Chamberlin and his ability to inspire others in the face of adversity. In thinking about how I might inspire my staff and other leaders, I have gone back to the speech he made to the detainees and also the way he was able to secure Little Round Top that ultimately was the key to winning the battle.

During our summer institute, I feel I was able to grow in my leadership from what I learned from Dr. Carolyn Riehl. I was able to wrap my head around the process and cycle of inquiry as well as identifying a focus for the work this year. Although my initial questions that my Ally and I came up with have been tweaked multiple times, I feel the inquiry work has helped us both with our focus.

The work presented on adult learning with Dr. Ellie Drago-Severson was highly impactful on the work I do every day as school with other school leaders and with all of the staff at my school. I have practiced giving feedback that is cognizant of the ways of knowing of each of the staff and leaders I work with. With this knowledge I believe my feedback has been more impactful.

Frank Trainer, our sponsor, made a fabulous presentation to help with our presentation, I will be able to apply what I learned to my presentation.

Our high point/low point reflections helped me to think and reflect on different points of the school year last year and how I have grown from them. I was able to identify that I have made peace with my mistakes and are able to move forward and let go of the past. This was connected to what Barbara presented on emotional leadership. I have learned what does not serve me as a leader and how to move forward from those feelings and decisions through looking at my emotional agility insights.

Our discussions with Ron Woo around ethics was also insightful. I found it very helpful to think about what decisions I would make as a result of the scenarios we examined. It was really interesting to hear the responses of my fellow Cahn leaders. I think it confirmed that I am making decisions that are ethical however there are often grey areas in which I can reach out to my fellow Cahn leaders to get support.

After Lily Woo's presentation on organizational culture, I felt so heavy hearted. What she encountered during 9/11 was so astonishing. I realized the importance of having relationships with my staff and other leaders. I have learned that it would serve me in times of crisis.

Learning about my communication style was also supportive of how I communicate with others. The role play was not only fun but it was also helpful to receive feedback about communication from the role play. Something that also has really impacted my practice with my Ally was the NBI results. I was extremely thankful that I had the opportunity to learn about Kimberly's preferences in the way that she works. I have found that we have some preferences that are the same and some that are not. This will serve us both well in learning more about each other.

As a leader I have felt as though I have grown in my own knowledge of best practices.

- *Describe the ways your leadership has changed as a result of your Cahn Fellowship, including all of the learning experiences, interactions and relationships with mentors, Ally, and peers, as well as actual experience with the project.*

I am meeting with my Ally weekly. We are both working to support teachers and students with our improvement goal. She has spent quite a bit of time with some of our students who are in need of social/emotional supports the most and has gotten to know them well. She works closely with the mental health team and with the teachers to support them in meeting the needs of our students. I want to continue to work with her more closely to support her in any way she needs. She has shown a great deal of initiative in implementing ideas to support the needs of all of our students including our students with social/emotional needs. I hope to increase the time I have weekly to check-in with each my Ally. We have a scheduled time to meet weekly however, I feel like I need to work to be more thoughtful in ensuring that we reschedule if something comes up. Working at a school can be challenging in the area of scheduling. I also want to work on giving her more formal feedback to continue her growth.

I am planning to be at Greenwood for at a while, however, I would love for Kimberly to be prepared to succeed me. I would like to work with her to share all that I can so that she feels prepared to take over if she should get the position. She is so supportive of the needs of the students and she is always reflective and willing to learn. We are fortunate to have her.

Reflections- Kimberly Ahern, Ally

- *What impact did your participation in the Cahn Fellows Program have on you and your work this year?*

The impact this program has had on my growth is around developing ways to support teachers. As a former classroom teacher myself, I know it is one of the hardest jobs and I am trying to make sure that our teachers feel supported in working with students of trauma. This project has also helped me to think about ways to track data that may not be academic. I created a tracker to monitor attendance/hours spent out of class, office referrals, as well as academic data in order to show if the strategies we are using are helping. This has helped me to learn that I am a very linear thinker and I am incredibly organized. I like data because it allows me to see growth.

- *Please describe in what ways your work was impacted by your participation in the program*

What specific areas of study impacted your work? (i.e., Ways of Knowing, concept mapping, Action Learning Conversations, NBI, OCI, Social-emotional leadership).

The Ways of Knowing was the most impactful area of study for me this year. At the beginning of the year, I gave the article to each person on my caseload. We read the article together and determined how each of us prefer to receive feedback. This was very helpful throughout the year because I was able to understand which teachers wanted me to tell them direct feedback and which teachers preferred to come up with ideas themselves.

• Describe the ways your leadership has changed as a result of your Cahn Fellowship, including all of the learning experiences, interactions and relationships with mentors, Ally, and peers, as well as actual experience with the project.

This project helped me to see that students must feel safe and cared for in order to progress academically. Admittedly, in my first few years of teaching, I did not understand how trauma can affect the brain and how that manifests itself in certain behaviors. I used to become frustrated with students when they were defiant or disruptive in class. As I went through my teaching career and became more aware of trauma-informed practices, I was able to understand the correlation between a trauma-informed brain and behaviors. Now that I am in a leadership position, I am able to help teachers recognize the correlation as well.

I also valued the time spent with my Fellow in this program. I have had the pleasure of working with Rachel for many years, most of which I was a teacher and Senior Team Lead. It has been great to learn from Rachel in my first year as an assistant principal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the work of our incredible mental health team at Greenwood. Without their help, this project would not have been possible.

APPENDIX