In this newsletter:

Social-Emotional Learning During a Pandemic

By Diane James, SREB

Corinne Allen, Oregon Charter Academy

Schools throughout the country are beginning the school year with teachers and students needing a little extra TLC. COVID-19, hurricanes and wildfires are taking their toll. And these are just the extraordinary events that impact our lives and upend our sense of normalcy. Everyday challenges like money problems, stress and anxiety chip away at our emotional well-being, too, even in non-COVID times.

Students can't be successful in school if they are overwhelmed with emotional issues. That's why schools are increasingly making social-emotional learning a priority. Social-emotional learning is the process by which individuals acquire the skills and knowledge to understand and manage their emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships, feel and show empathy, and make responsible decisions. These skills are crucial for success in school, work and life.

Some schools and districts are calling on social workers and other mental health professionals to help. But the frontline supporters for students are often teachers and counselors. Corinne Allen, a school social worker for Oregon Charter Academy, trains teachers to integrate social-emotional learning into their classrooms and to recognize the signs of students experiencing mental health struggles.

Supporting Students Emotionally

"Since COVID-19, I've seen an increase in students talking about depression and anxiety," says Allen. She notes students are dealing with illnesses, family job losses and isolation due to being confined to home for remote learning. "They're hungry for connections … not just with their peers, but also with supportive adults," maintains Allen.

Teachers can use various tools to help students connect during remote learning. One is a daily check-in in which teachers get an indication of how students are feeling. One way to do this is through a Blob Tree, says Allen. The Blob Tree is a tool created by behavioral psychologist Pip Wilson to help students express what they're feeling. In a picture of a tree full of numbered blob figures,
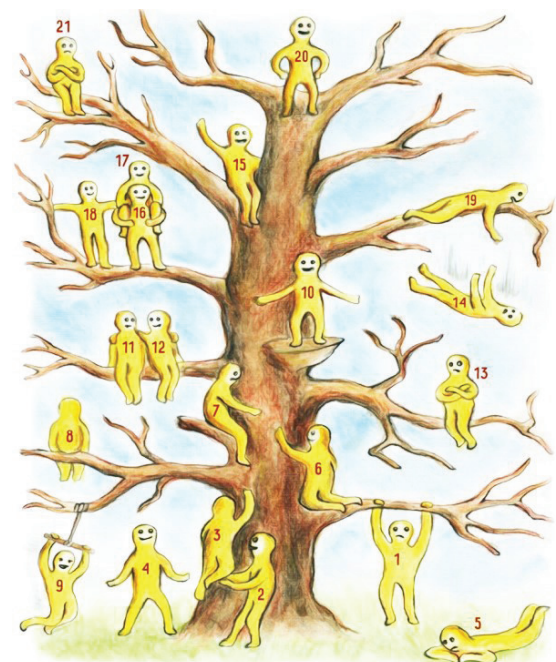
each figure represents a different mood. Students are asked to select which figure resembles their mood the most.

If a student selects Blob Figure 5, for example, it means the student is often weary and feels weak — little energy for life. On the other hand, if Blob Figure 9 is selected, the student feels merry and fun-loving.

Teachers may use the results to reach out to students and see if they are open to talking with them or seeking support from the school counselor or school social worker.

"It can be really powerful when somebody actually pays attention to you as a human being and understands what you need and helps you with that in the moment," says Allen.

To connect with other students, Allen suggests that teachers devise activities in class lessons that help students learn more about each other — or form online groups that students may join.

Blob-tree test, Glennlimthots.wordpress.com

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

Social-emotional learning is about more than just developing connections; it's about cultivating the whole individual. Oregon Charter Academy uses the CASEL Framework, a widely used model that highlights five competencies — teachable skills that can be integrated into the curriculum.

Self-awareness — knowing your strengths and limitations

Self-management — being able to stay in control and persevere through challenges

Social awareness — understanding and empathizing with others

Relationship skills — being able to work in teams and resolve conflicts

Responsible decision-making — making ethical and safe choices

Benefits and Implications of Social-Emotional Learning

"You can't engage in school if your basic social-emotional needs are not being met," insists Allen. When schools prioritize social-emotional interventions, it improves students' attitudes toward school, attendance, grades and graduation rates. Students also have fewer behavior referrals and get along better with their peers, teachers and parents.

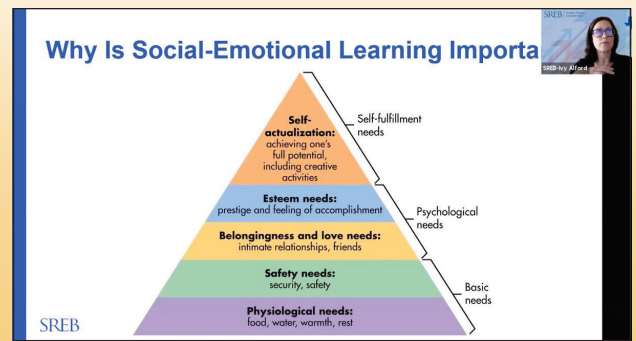**Contact:** Corinne Allen, coallen@oregoncharter.org

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SREB's SEL Workshops

More than 900 registrants signed up for SREB's free workshop, *Providing Social-Emotional Supports in a Virtual Setting*, held on Sept. 3. During the session, SREB's Shelly Flygare and Ivy Alford shared other meaningful ways teachers can connect with students remotely:

- Respond to journal entries digitally.
- Make online interactions positive.
- Get families involved in learning.
- Be flexible in how learning will look and how students demonstrate their learning.
- Provide opportunities for learners to show their passion.
- Have students ask questions every single day and find those answers.

Session leaders also shared a few resources for building healthy relationships:

- Google Mood Check-in Form
- Video Games Used to Build Learner Profiles (shared by a workshop participant)
- Family Check-in (shared by a workshop participant)
- Getting to Know You
- Padlet Scavenger Hunt
- Padlet Version of Two Truths and One Lie

SREB held a virtual Social-Emotional Learning Workshop in September.

Need More SEL Strategies? Register now for our intensive, three-session workshop on SEL strategies starting Oct. 23: Providing Social-Emotional Supports in a Virtual Setting. Join us online and network with a national community of practice!

Equity in Education: Practical Applications of Research

By Rebecca Purser and Quinton Granville, SREB

Watch the Equity in Schools Webinar

At SREB, we often hear from teachers and school leaders that they don't know where to start or what to do to eliminate inequities and ensure their classrooms and schools cultivate a culture of learning in which each child knows their educational achievement and future are valued.

As we shared in a Sept. 15 webinar — Ensuring Equity in Schools in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond, a critical step is using data to identify the root sources of inequity. In a recent study, we used student survey data to pinpoint factors that had the greatest impact on students' perceptions of the quality of learning opportunities, support and encouragement at school.

We found schools can influence key factors that impact whether students have positive experiences, such as:

- setting high expectations for every student
- personalizing instruction
- ensuring each student takes engaging, challenging courses
- helping students and parents explore career and college goals
- promoting positive relationships between families and schools
- creating communities that celebrate every child's achievement

Watch the webinar to learn how we worked together to bridge research with real-world examples of inequities that have been amplified due to COVID-19 and explore practical tips for tackling inequity in your classroom or school.

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Diversity and Discipline: Black Girls in Crisis

By Diane James, SREB

Mona Elleithee, Renewed Harmony

"Black girls are being robbed of their childhood," says Mona Elleithee, school equity strategist and founder of Renewed Harmony. She was appalled last September after seeing video footage of police handcuffing a crying 6-year-old Black Florida girl, walking her out of school and putting her into the back of a police cruiser. The child was arrested after she reportedly threw a tantrum and struck staff.

Elleithee conducts training sessions to raise awareness of the "adultification" of Black girls. Her work was influenced by research from the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality entitled *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*. The 2017 study found that adults view Black girls as less innocent and more like adults than their white counterparts, especially girls between the ages of 5 to 14.

Study data showed adults thought that Black girls:

- Need less nurturing
- Need less protection
- Need to be supported less
- Need to be comforted less
- Are more independent
- Know more about adult topics
- Know more about sex

As a former teacher and behavior interventionist in Columbia, South Carolina, Elleithee worked with Black girls who frequently got into fights at school and had a lot of discipline referrals. "I thought, if we could get ahead of it by supporting them socially and emotionally, we wouldn't be so reactive on the side of discipline."

That experience was the catalyst for Elleithee's consulting work. The mission of Renewed Harmony is to build more just and equitable schools by cultivating authentic leaders, strengthening adult social-emotional learning and nurturing culturally responsive practices.

Elleithee trains faculty and administrators to recognize and decrease their biases, have more compassion and empathy, and make discipline less punitive and more restorative for students who are Black, indigenous or people of color.

Discipline and Bias

Elleithee says teachers need to communicate more with Black girls and realize that what they are going through in their personal lives may impact their behaviors in school. "I've been working to strengthen the adults' social-emotional skill set so they don't feel they can 'punish the behavior out of a child.'"

Elleithee maintains that many teachers have an implicit bias — grounded in their own upbringing — toward believing punishment is the best method for correcting or deterring bad behavior. Quite the contrary, Elleithee says, restorative conversations, interventions, mediation and giving students a chance to reflect on their own behavior solves problems. She insists good behavioral management is more about "empowering a person with the tools they need to change their own behavior than about attempts to fix or coerce someone."

"We have to honor [Black girls'] innocence by offering them the same nurturing, protection, support, comfort and interdependence that all of our children need, "insists Elleithee.

Dire Implications

If we don't face our biases and be more supportive of Black girls, the results can be dreadful. In 2013-14, Georgetown Law's research showed Black girls made up 8% of K-12 enrollment, but 13% of all students who were suspended.

Disproportionate rates of punitive treatment may lead to a rise in high school dropout rates and an increased number of Black girls in juvenile justice systems. As for the 6-year-old Florida girl, she was released without charges, and the arresting officer was fired for violating the police department's arrest policy.

Contact: Mona Elleithee, mona@renewedharmony.com or @renewedharmony on Twitter

Hands-On Learning… at a Distance: Adapting CTE to Hybrid Settings

By Kirsten Sundell, SREB

Career and technical education teachers are resourceful.

When COVID-19 struck this spring, CTE teachers sprang into action to support their communities. As a blog by Linda Floyd, director of SREB's Technology Centers That Work, noted, students and teachers designed and made masks and face shields using 3D printers. Certified medical instructors conducted health screenings. Centers provided meals to area families. Students researched local resources and collaborated to ration and donate medical supplies from their classroom to area health care providers.

CTE teachers are now applying that resourcefulness to the challenge of offering CTE instruction in in-person, virtual and hybrid settings as schools and centers reopened this fall.

Forming a Virtual CTE PLC

SREB's new national CTE workshop is modeling how educators can adapt their CTE curricula to maximize the in-person time they have with students while keeping virtual learning engaging. Designed as a virtual professional learning community, the three-session workshop met for the first time on Sept. 11 with a cohort of 32 teachers and center directors representing 11 states and nearly every Career Cluster.

"We've learned a lot over the last six months, and we're still learning," said Debbie Anderson, director of SREB's Teaching to Lead CTE teacher prep program. "It's important to come together to learn new ways of delivering what we teach, because our content is rich and involves students getting personal, hands-on experiences. Best practice solutions to problems are best discovered when we share with each other."

Workshop participants have had to learn many new edtech tools — and help their students master those tools as well.

Tiffany Middlebrooks, a health science teacher at Ridge Spring-Monetta High School in Monetta, South Carolina, said: "Although we think of our students as 'digital natives,' they're not familiar with the new platforms we're using — we have to teach them."

"It's hard but doable," agreed Rebecca Murphy, an educator preparation provider specialist for Rutherford County Schools in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. "Logistical pre-planning cannot be stressed highly enough: How will students navigate from one platform to another, how will they interact, etc."

CTE teachers have also had to find new ways to connect with students in a virtual environment. Finding missing students and encouraging them to participate online was tough this spring.

Successes, Struggles and Solutions

Students love CTE because nearly every assignment involves real-world relevance and hands-on learning.

Programming a 3D printer, running medical tests, caring for animals, executing a double-welded lap joint, analyzing water quality, preparing meals in a school restaurant — activities like these ceased when schools and centers closed for in-person instruction. Teachers and students no longer had access to the tools and equipment they needed to complete projects and practice technical skills.

Participants found creative ways to solve these challenges. In a breakout activity using Google Slides, CTE teachers shared how they used tech tools like Classkick, Nearpod, Zoom and Mentimeter* to connect and engage with their students at a distance and promote teacher collaboration.

Teachers can also use resources like SREB's list of online labs, simulations and tools for CTE and STEM to support distance learning.

2. Business/IT Team		
Successes	**Struggles**	**Solutions (Resources)**
• SEL in addition to content • Students and teachers learned & became competent w/new technology platforms • Use of breakout rooms for peer feedback • The power of yet... • New & inventive curriculum • Training for teachers • Finding new ways to assess students, new virtual formative assessment through projects	• Getting students online & participating both virtually & face-to-face • Transient students, lack of parental support • Consistency (lack thereof) of participation • Technology access, know-how • Students using pandemic as a cop out • Lack of time for preparation	• LMS • Communication programs like Zoom or Teams • Collaboration w/ other teachers to share resources • Code.org • CROC • Mentimeter, PollEverywhere • Remind, emails • Nearpod, Classkick

Business and IT teachers shared lessons learned this spring during a workshop breakout.

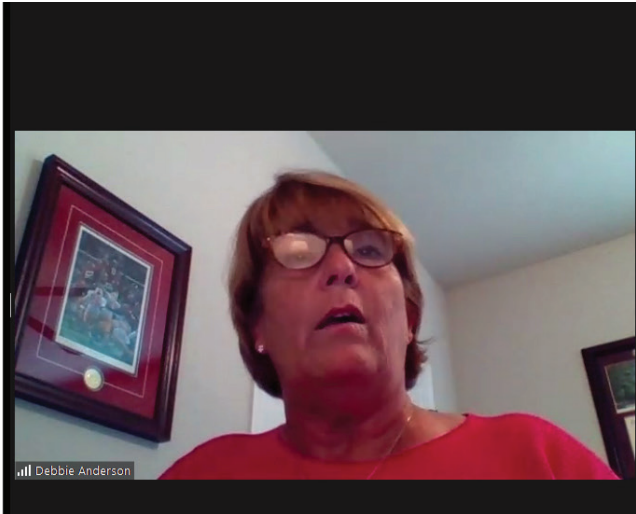# Synchronous or Asynchronous—THAT is the Question…

Synchronous- Same Time Instruction	Asynchronous- Any Time Instruction
Video conferencing, chat discussions, streamed videos, group work, focused live demonstrations	Screencasts, Flipgrid videos, blogs, Nearpod, Edpuzzle. research, note-taking, independent practice

SREB's Debbie Anderson describes tools and tips that work well for synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

Mapping the Year Ahead

When classes meet in person, CTE teachers can walk around the classroom, lab or shop, observe students' progress and give feedback and extra help. When teaching takes place online — and especially when it takes place asynchronously — it is harder to see when students are struggling or disengaged.
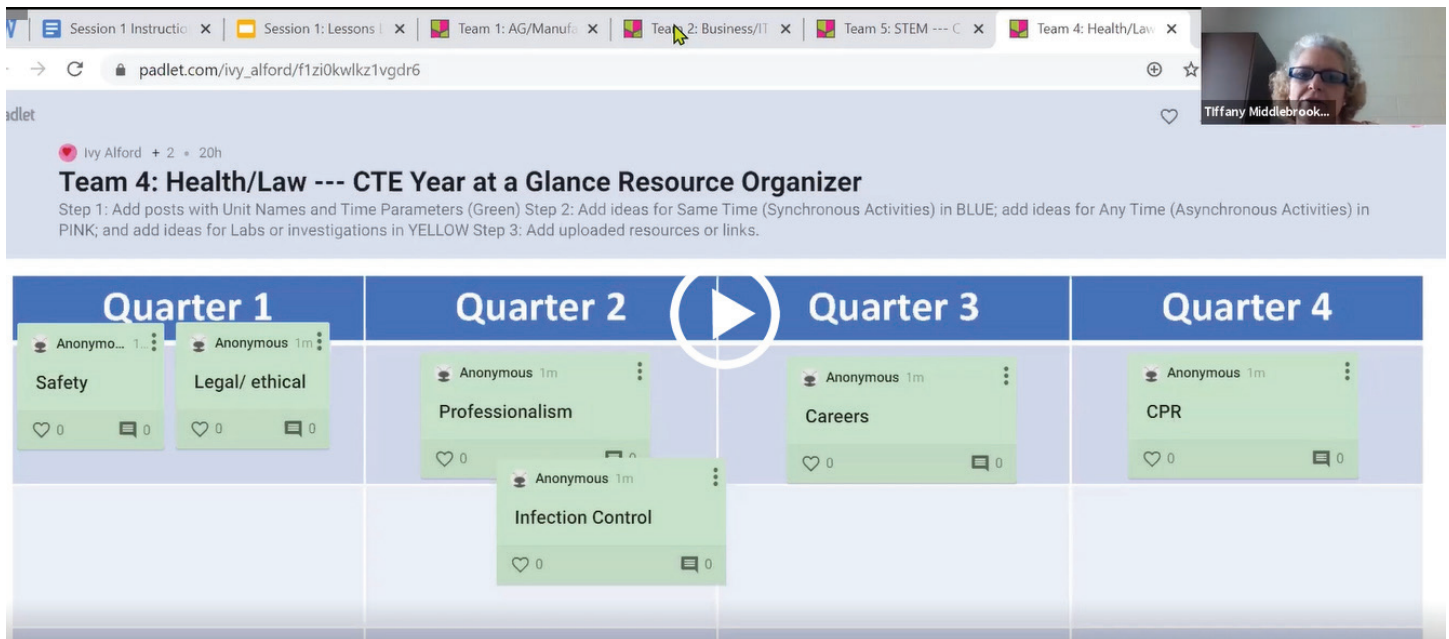
Scope and sequence guides and curricular roadmaps can help CTE teachers reorganize their curriculum so they can teach foundational concepts online and save face-to-face time for hands-on instruction.

Workshop participants used Padlet* to map out a year's worth of lessons, activities and labs that can be taught in real time (synchronous) or anytime (asynchronous) and in in-person versus virtual settings.

In the video clip below, Tiffany Middlebrooks explained how she could pace units on health care professionalism — which can be taught online — and career experience, which she prefers to offer as in-person job shadows. "You can't get into a nursing home or a hospital right now," said Middlebrooks.

"Good quality instruction is good quality instruction whether it takes place in person or online," said SREB's Anderson. That's the message participants heard in the second CTE workshop as they explored best practices from high-functioning workplaces that help create high-performance classroom cultures.

* *SREB does not endorse specific educational technology tools or vendors.*

Tiffany Middlebrooks explains how she could adapt her curriculum to front-end units that can be taught online.

It's Time — Send Us Your Proposals to Present!

Share your strategies, struggles and stories with us in Nashville. The October 30th deadline to submit proposals for the 2021 Making Schools Work Conference is quickly approaching. The conference will take place at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center, July 6-9.

New content areas this year include offering online and blended instruction and supporting students and families in an era of COVID-19 and social unrest. Join us and gain the tools and confidence you need to impact teaching and learning in any setting.

Visit our website to explore our guidance for presenters, download our submission guide and get ready to submit a successful proposal.

Featured Speaker Spotlight — Principal Kafele: Social Justice Education

Nationally renowned speaker Baruti Kafele, affectionately known as Principal Kafele, is a featured speaker at the 2021 Making Schools Work Conference. Kafele has traveled the country speaking at conferences and delivering professional development. His transformational messages about school leadership, classroom management, school climate and motivating at-risk students to succeed are legendary.

In Nashville, his presentation couldn't be more timely. Principal Kafele will speak about social justice education and the importance of making it a key part of every classroom. Here's a sneak peek.

2020 Pacesetter School Award Winner in the Spotlight

Penta Career Center

By Jahana Martin, SREB

Penta Career Center in Perrysburg, Ohio, is the winner of a 2020 Gene Bottoms Pacesetter School Award from the Southern Regional Educational Board. This award marks the second time the center has received the award.

Pacesetter School Awards recognize schools that are implementing one of SREB's Making Schools Work school improvement frameworks and are achieving success in meeting bold goals related to increases in student graduation rates, readiness for college and careers, and credential attainment.

Penta Career Center faculty are honored on stage at the 2019 Making Schools Work Conference in Baltimore, MD.

Penta Career Center implements Technology Centers That Work, SREB's school improvement design for technology centers. Penta is currently in its fifth year of a schoolwide literacy initiative designed to improve the quality of its CTE programs. In the first two years of the initiative, Penta provided professional development centered around determining Depth of Knowledge levels of course standards and aligning instruction, student learning and assessments with the levels and standards.
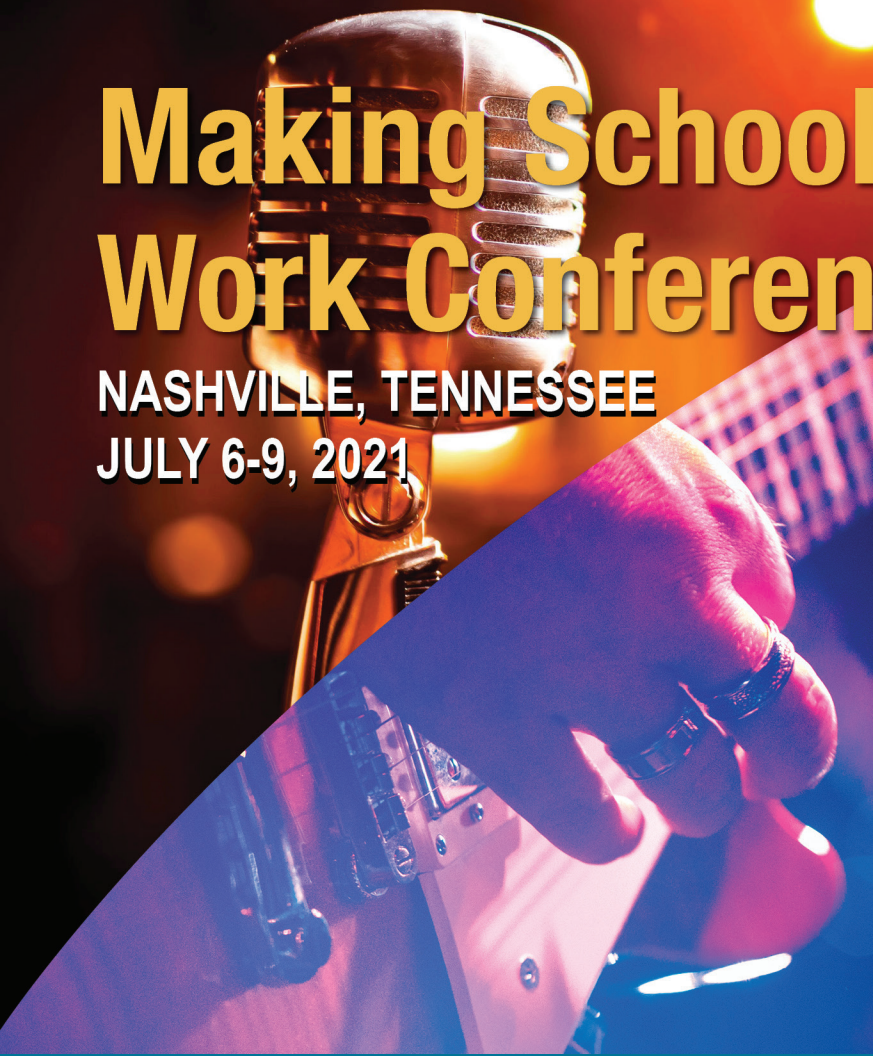
In the third and fourth years of the initiative, Penta implemented, evaluated and refined rigorous assessment items and implemented a structure for individual and whole-class student data tracking. These efforts and others resulted in a 28% annual increase in compliant CTE pathways between the 2015-16 to 2018-19 school years, as shown by Quality Program Review Compliance Data reported by the Ohio Department of Education. The percentage of concentrators from each of Penta's CTE programs who passed technical skills assessments increased from 62.3% in Year 1 to 86.7% in Year 4, with an average growth of nearly 12% each year.

This year, Penta Career Center leaders and teachers are engaged in creating and implementing a comprehensive Success Plan for continuous improvement that will enhance teacher instruction, student performance and program effectiveness.

Penta will be honored on July 6, 2021, at SREB's Making Schools Work Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, due to the cancellation of the 2020 conference in New Orleans.

Making Schools Work Conference

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
JULY 6-9, 2021