



## CASE STUDY

### Lincoln Elementary: From Surviving to Thriving with Mindfulness and Self-Reflection

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#### What is your Design Challenge?

Some of our students can identify their deficits but struggle to recognize their assets. Others can identify their strengths but have difficulty leveraging them to create effective action plans for reaching their goals. When students understand their strengths and how to utilize them, they can achieve their goals, whether academic, social, emotional, or behavioral. What if we encourage students to identify a goal and outline action steps to attain it, incorporating checkpoints along the way to make necessary revisions?

#### What did you do?

Students were introduced to the Portrait of Lincoln Learner, a framework that outlines key college and career readiness skills, including resilience and self-advocacy. To foster understanding, a whole group class discussion was held to explain each competency. The teacher then modeled how to select a skill and implement it into her teaching practices.

As a reflective practice, students were encouraged to create vision boards as visual reminders. This helped facilitate their ongoing reflection. Additionally, students created an action plan stating their goal, action steps, and a success criteria statement for each goal. This process emphasized the importance of resilience in overcoming obstacles and self-advocacy in seeking resources and support.

To further support these competencies, students were provided with a document containing guiding questions to aid in their weekly goal-setting and reflection. They recorded their reflections to track their

progress and deepen their understanding of the identified goals. This structured approach helped students develop resilience by learning to persist through challenges and self-advocacy by articulating their needs and advocating for themselves in the pursuit of their goals.

## **What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation?**

### **What was the impact?**

The biggest surprise in implementation might have been the level of engagement and ownership the students took in their learning process. Often, when introducing new frameworks or initiatives, there can be resistance or disinterest from students. However, in this case, students seemed to embrace the Pilot of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and the goal-setting process with enthusiasm. The impact of this surprise has been a noticeable shift in classroom dynamics, with students taking more initiative and responsibility for their learning and an overall academic growth and a growth mindset.

## **What was the greatest success? How did this success impact young people or how might it impact young people on your campus? What are their perceptions?**

The greatest success of this project was the evidence of growth and progress that students experienced through their goal-setting and reflection process. By creating vision boards, action plans, and recording reflections, students not only had a clear roadmap for their personal development but also had a concrete way to track their achievements over time. This success would have reinforced the importance of self-reflection and goal-setting in the minds of the students, further motivating them to continue striving for improvement. This process has also strengthened the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness and their relationship skills with their peers and teachers.

The impact of this initiative has been significant in fostering college and career readiness skills among our students. By actively engaging in goal-setting, reflection, and the implementation of these skills into their daily lives, students likely developed a deeper understanding of what it takes to succeed in both academic and professional settings. This could have a positive ripple effect, empowering students to take charge of their own learning and prepare themselves more effectively for their future.

They may develop a stronger sense of agency and self-efficacy, knowing that they have the tools and strategies to set and achieve their goals. Additionally, they may view their education as more than just a series of tasks to complete but as a journey of personal growth and development. This shift in perception could lead to increased confidence, resilience, and a more positive attitude towards learning and future challenges.

[Artifact/s #4](#)

## **What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?**

As adult learners, there are several shifts in mindset regarding empowering young people with voice, agency, and influence in the classroom.

Adults often shift from a traditional authoritative role to that of a facilitator. Instead of being the sole authority figure dictating classroom activities and decisions, there's a recognition of the importance of creating space for students to express their opinions, make choices, and take ownership of their learning processes. There's a shift from maintaining strict control over classroom dynamics to fostering collaboration. Empowering students with voice, agency, and influence involves actively seeking their input, involving them in decision-making processes, and co-creating learning experiences together. There's a move towards a more student-centered approach where the needs, interests, and perspectives of students drive the learning process. This means designing curriculum and activities that resonate with students' experiences and allowing them to shape the direction and focus of their learning. Adults recognize the importance of viewing students not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active participants in their own education. Educators may shift from viewing roles within the classroom as fixed (e.g., teacher as the expert, students as learners) to embracing fluid roles where everyone is encouraged to take on different roles based on their strengths and interests. This flexibility allows for a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students feel empowered to lead discussions, collaborate with peers, and contribute to collective learning outcomes.

Assessment in education needs to evolve to encompass a broader set of outcomes beyond traditional academic achievement to include holistic assessment that should measure not only academic knowledge but also social-emotional skills, critical thinking abilities, creativity, and other competencies that are crucial for lifelong success. Moving away from purely standardized tests, authentic assessment methods such as projects, portfolios, presentations, and performance tasks are valued for their ability to assess students' real-world application of knowledge and skills. Local assessments may need to explicitly include measures of social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy. This shift acknowledges the importance of preparing students for future challenges beyond academic content mastery.

Policy makers and education leaders play a critical role in shaping assessment policies that support a balanced approach to accountability, promoting both academic rigor and the development of essential 21st century skills. This may involve revisiting policies related to standardized testing, graduation requirements, and school accountability framework.

## Research + Resources that inspired and informed our thinking

Our team was inspired by the research on equity and culturally responsive teaching. When we value and leverage diverse student assets and strengths, asset-based learning builds upon what students already know, can do, and bring to the learning environment. We were also inspired by the research on mindfulness and social emotional learning. Strengthening the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building skills and responsible decision making increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, according to a meta analysis published by CASEL.