



Greetings Dear Collingswood & Oaklyn Families,

We'd like to thank our school community for their continued patience and grace as we work together to keep schools safe and keep them open. The pandemic has contributed to additional challenges, but that does not prevent us from aligning our efforts to achieve our core mission of **accelerating all learners**.

Developing and implementing a learning acceleration strategy requires several critical decisions right now—and a high degree of **sustained focus over the next several years** on a clear set of goals and priorities for students. Here are the steps we're taking to accelerate our progress this year:

Shifting from Remediation to Acceleration: In order to empower students by putting them in the fast lane for the 2021-22 school year, we have shifted our focus to learning acceleration, not remediation. Remediation is based on the misconception that students must master everything they missed in the past in order to learn new information. Remediation focuses on presenting concepts or units not covered during the previous year and delaying access to new grade-level material. Learning acceleration demands that we ask the question, "**how can we help students with gaps from the past succeed today?**" Please refer to the chart below to understand the differences between acceleration and remediation. (Fig. 1.1)

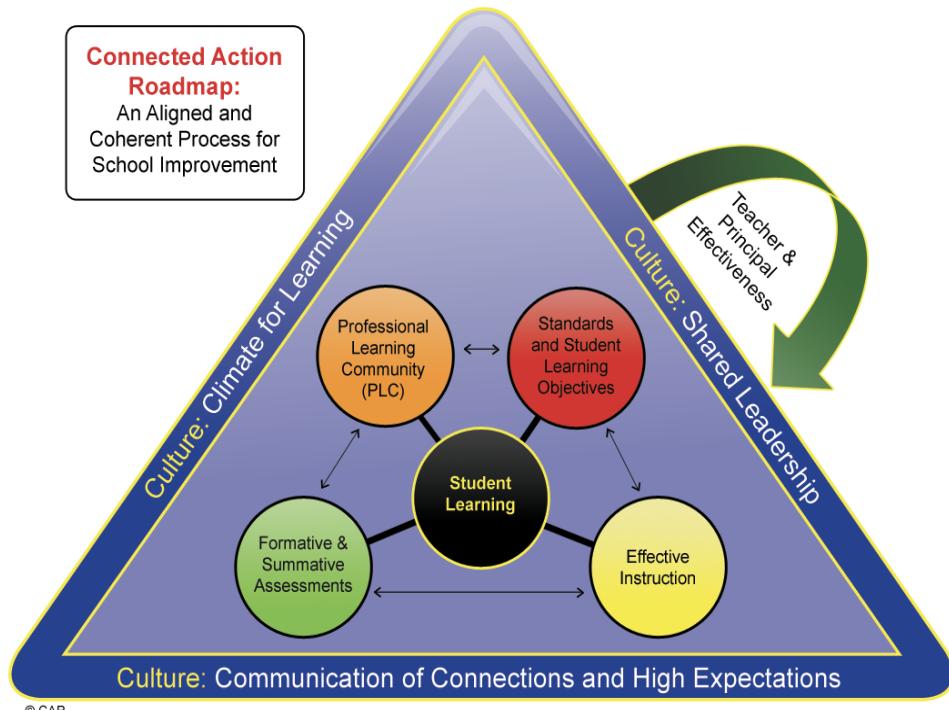
Acceleration and Remediation: A Comparison		
	Acceleration	Remediation
Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-confidence and engagement increase.• Academic progress is evident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students perceive they're in the "slow class," and self-confidence and engagement decrease.• Backward movement leads to a sense of futility and lack of progress.
Basic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills are hand-picked just in time for new concepts.• Students apply skills immediately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instruction attempts to reteach every missing skill.• Skills are taught in isolation and not applied to current learning.
Prior knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key prior knowledge is provided ahead of time, enabling students to connect to new information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically does not introduce prior knowledge that connects to new learning.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treats relevance as critical component to student motivation and memory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevance is not seen as a priority.
Connection to core class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instruction is connected to core class; ongoing collaboration is emphasized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instruction is typically isolated from core class.
Pacing and direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active, fast-paced, hands-on.• Forward movement; goal is for students to learn on time with peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passive, with focus on worksheets or basic software programs.• Backward movement; goal is for students to "catch up" to peers.

Ensuring that we actually accelerate learning for all students requires that we move beyond general principles and broad recommendations. Instead, **we will focus on specific aspects of interventions, approaches, and strategies** that have the potential to accelerate student learning beyond a year's worth of growth. Thankfully, we can build upon the foundation previously established and refer to the [Visible Learning®](#) research to make informed decisions about what students still need to learn and how best to impact learning.

Educator Support Through Focus: All schools have worked collaboratively with their instructional teams to develop comprehensive site-based learning acceleration plans to meet the needs of their students. Each school has identified specific student learning strategies aligned to their performance data. Schools have requested additional resources and materials to reinforce key concepts. School leaders have allocated time to provide frequent classroom feedback to ensure efforts are aligned and progress is achieved. Our collective goal is to develop assessment-capable visible learners. (See graphic below)



Elevating Professional Learning Communities: Accelerating student growth and achievement within the context of post-COVID teaching and learning demands that we leverage our expertise as educators to make decisions each day about what content, ideas, and skills we want our students to know, understand, and be able to complete. We make decisions about how much time to spend on specific topics and how frequently to engage learners in that topic. We are leveraging previous training provided through the NJ-developed [Connected Action Roadmap](#) (CAR).



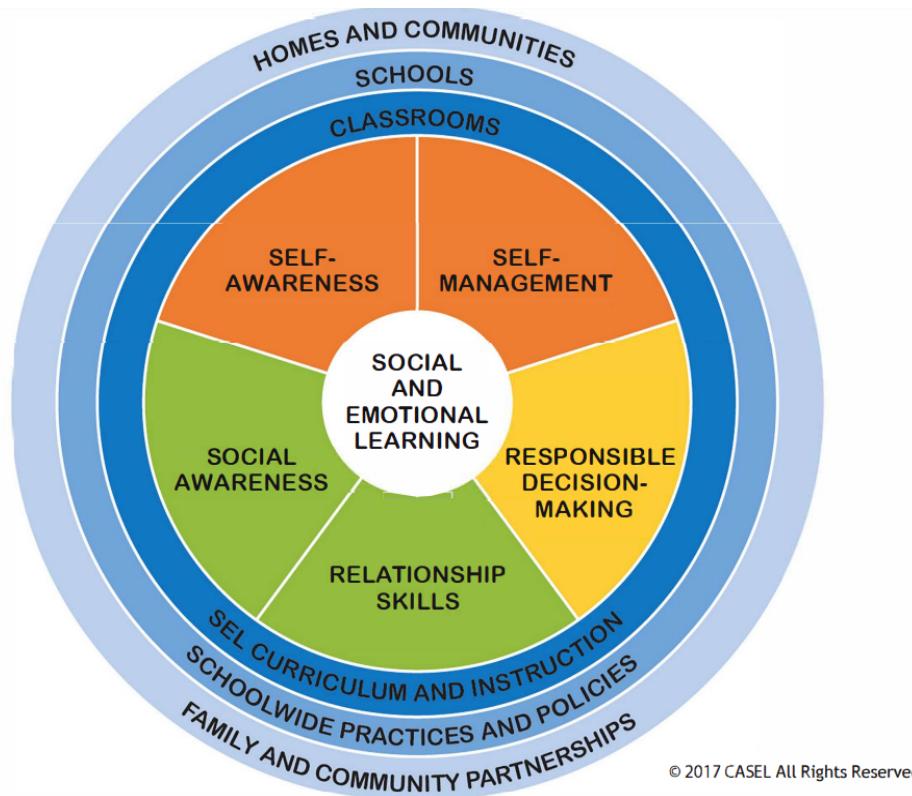
CAR is a process of school improvement that brings coherence to the work of educators by connecting standards, student learning, assessment, professional learning, educator effectiveness, and school climate and culture to the work of professional learning communities. To further support this important work, we are removing structural barriers that contribute to educator isolation and have allowed time during the school day to facilitate professional learning communities (PLC). We've also identified and trained highly-qualified staff to serve as PLC Leaders to help support our educators as they make better instructional decisions. We believe that better decisions in the classroom will lead to greater impact.

Leveraging Data to Make Better Decisions: In October 2021, the district administered NJ Start Strong assessments in literacy, math, and science. Start Strong was established to determine students' prior knowledge from last year. The data received is helping our schools to focus on instructional strategies that lead to accelerated growth. Areas of focus this school year includes:

- Literacy
 - Students need additional support on using the text(s) to answer questions.
 - Students need additional support to find evidence to support the writer's analysis.
 - Grade K-5 students need support citing specific information from the text.
 - Grade 6-12 students need support understanding how an author's point of view impacts the main idea.
- Math
 - Fractions emerged as the top math concept in need of strong support.
 - Measurement emerged as an area in need of strong support in the elementary grades.
 - Linear Equations and Geometry are the areas where older students need additional support.
- Science
 - Grade 6-9 students need additional support citing specific information from the text.
 - Grade 12 students need additional support in the creation and use of models.

Schools also continue to look at a range of school-generated literacy and mathematics benchmark assessment data. This important information is used to help check students' understanding of academic content taught daily.

Reinforcing Social Emotional Learning: Investments have been made to support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for all students. Social-emotional learning is an important part of our academic program. Social-emotional learning touches on several concepts that can help students grow into independent thinkers, with strong problem-solving skills, and a deep respect for the world around them. It is especially important to have balanced, daily social-emotional lessons during a time when so much is uncertain and ever-changing. This type of teaching can help keep students resilient, engaged, and hopeful.

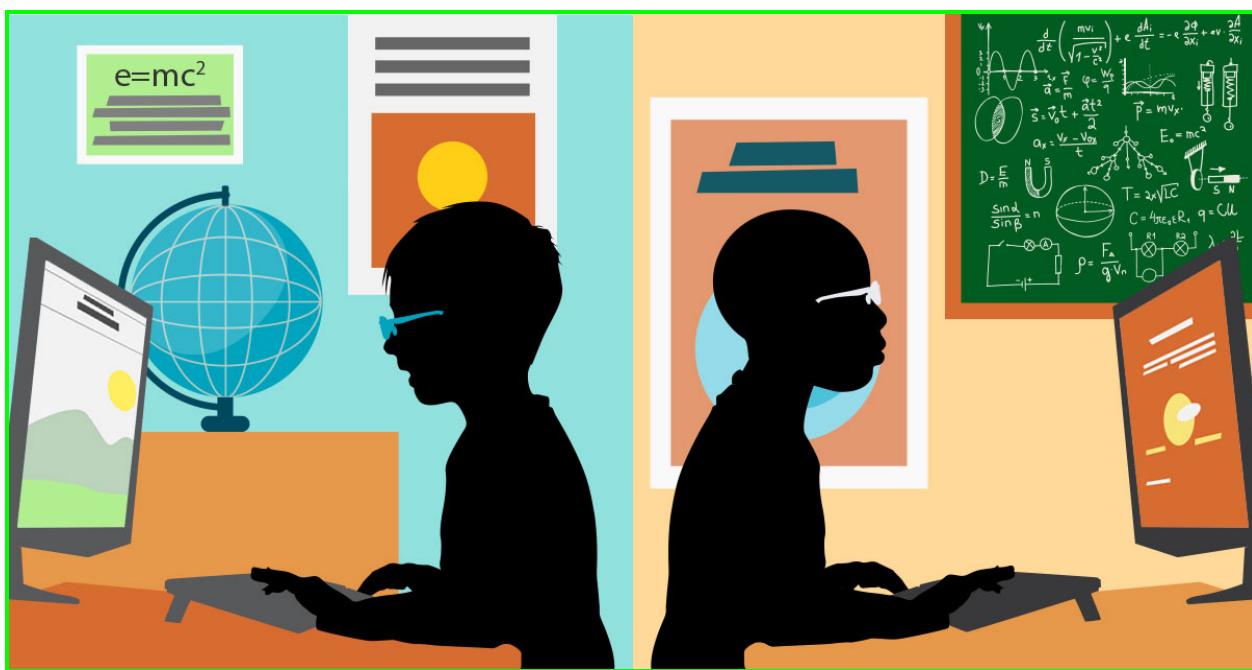


At the elementary level, our SEL curriculum is implemented within the classroom. This includes a daily check-in with students to ensure individualized support is provided as needed. The Elementary Counseling Team also supports the Multi-Tiered System of Support process in the district by consulting with classroom teachers and other school staff regarding targeted student interventions. The district has also continued its partnership with Jefferson Health this year to provide wraparound counseling services to students and families.

Support for elementary families is available through consultation with the District Counseling Coordinator Kristin O'Lexy is also available. To schedule an appointment, please visit the District Counseling Program's [Google Classroom](#) Code: b7mmgpb

At the secondary level, the SEL Curriculum Team worked hard this past summer to write and provide training to support SEL lessons at the middle and high school. Additionally, funding has been set aside for a Mental Health Staff Coordinator and wraparound counseling services for students and families at the secondary level; similar to what Jefferson Health provides for our elementary age students. This district is currently working to secure a vendor for these services.

Finally, the secondary team of school counselors is always available to provide needed social and emotional support for students and families. For more information, please contact the guidance office at the middle school or high school to make an appointment.



Providing Access to Digital Tools: Families and students can access a number of resources to provide enrichment opportunities beyond the school day. Below are a few resources in the areas of Literacy, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and Arts and Humanities that your family may wish to explore. For additional resources, please reach out to your child's teacher.

- [Epic Books](#)
- [Tumblebooks](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [Hour of Code](#)
- [National PTA STEM Initiative](#)
- [Vooks](#)
- [National Geographic for Kids](#)
- [NewsELA](#)
- [TweenTribune](#)
- [Pulitzer Center](#)
- [CommonLit](#)

Remote Instructional Support for Quarantined Students: We're adjusting our supports for students who need to quarantine and/or isolate.

The instructional model for preschool through grade 2 will now consist of a one-hour morning session where our Remote Instructional Support Teachers will engage students in learning activities that promote their growth in the areas of social-emotional learning, literacy, math, and interdisciplinary skills. The morning one-hour session will consist of breaks to be cognizant of screentime. Students will then be directed to their teacher's Google Classroom to work independently (outside the Zoom session) on the assignments designated by their teacher. In the afternoon, kindergarten - 2nd grade students will have a 30-minute window to work directly with our Remote Instructional Support Teachers to address any specific needs related to Google Classroom assignments.

The instructional model for grades 3-5 will generally remain the same. Students will have access to a tutoring-like experience for one hour in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon. The Remote Instructional Support Teachers will offer assistance with the assignments set forth by the classroom teacher's Google Classroom. An adjustment to our current structure includes afternoon sessions (30 minutes) by designated grade levels to provide more targeted support with students from the same grade level rather than a mixed-grade approach.



Providing Extracurricular Learning Experiences: In Collingwood and Oaklyn, we are leveraging time during the school day and beyond to accelerate student learning by creating additional enrichment opportunities. Our dedicated educators will design engaging cross-curricular and social emotional learning programs that support the priorities of our schools' Accelerated Learning Plans. Examples of these opportunities include but are not limited to: hands-on engineering and building challenges, robotics, astronomy, active story-telling, arts Integration, eSports, math olympics, and creative writing. Applications are under review and program details will be released in February.

Our Summer Learning Acceleration plans include preschool, kindergarten, and middle school transition programs as well as opportunities for all students to experience fun-filled STEAM and literacy-based activities. All Summer Learning Acceleration programs will be aligned to the NJ Learning Standards and led by highly effective educators and support staff. In addition to Extended School Year (ESY) services, our inclusive Summer Programs will provide accommodations and modifications necessary for the participation of students with disabilities and English language learners. Community Coordinators and Lead Teachers will work to bring in knowledgeable instructors, artists, writers, and other professionals to help build meaningful connections with students. Details to follow.

Demonstrating Patience & Grace, Promoting Acts of Kindness

We'd like to thank our school community again for their active participation in helping to keep schools safe and keep them open. This pandemic has brought considerable challenges to schools, and employment for caring, compassionate, and competent educators is hard to find in today's world. Despite this once-in-a-generation global crisis, our phenomenal educators show up every day to love, care for, and support our students.



Our theme this year has been patience and grace, but we must take it a step further by adding in kindness. The spirit of kindness existed in our district long before the pandemic and we need to remind ourselves of who we are despite the pandemic. We are asking for acknowledgement that the whole world is short-staffed, and we are doing our best to meet the evolving needs of our students during an unprecedented period of stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. We're also asking for everyone to think about the impact they can make in our school community by being kind.

We are all experiencing the effects of COVID-19; especially during this period of very high transmission. We also acknowledge the frustration and the burden that quarantine and isolation pose to families. Please be assured that we are continually adjusting our practices and protocols to meet the demands of the virus as well as the learning needs of our diverse school community.

Should you have additional questions about site-specific resources or programs, please reach out to your child's school.