

**5** Teaching Techniques to Cultivate SEL,  
Civic Engagement, and a Healthy Democracy

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# STUDENTS TAKING ACTION TOGETHER

5 TEACHING TECHNIQUES TO CULTIVATE SEL,  
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# Introduction: Democracy, Schools, and the Classroom

It's not an exaggeration to say that we are at an inflection point in our democracy. The teaching practices we use today—especially in social studies, but not limited to that area—will define our society tomorrow. Therefore, as educators we must adjust our practices to prepare students for their role as adults in a democracy. We need to adapt instruction to promote collaborative problem solving and youth leadership to address issues of race, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES), as well as the inclusion of individuals with varied abilities and heritages.

We are at a similar inflection point in education. Research and brain science have spoken: social, emotional, and academic development and accomplishment are inextricably interrelated. This means that we must imagine and create classrooms where students learn to build their muscles and skills for civility along with their social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies in service of a democratic society.

Both John Dewey and Martin Luther King Jr. insisted that democracy demands students acquire citizenship skills by *experiencing* them, not just by learning about them secondhand from historical and civics texts (Dewey, 2018; Goodloe, 2021). Their call has been picked up by advocates of whole child education, positive youth development, and moral and character education, as well as by other adherents to the importance of social-emotional learning (Elias & Yuan, 2020). Indeed, developing students' SEL competencies is now a focus both across the United States and internationally (see the Social Emotional

Learning Alliance for the United States [[www.SEL4US.org](http://www.SEL4US.org)] and the European Network for Social and Emotional Competence [[www.enseceurope.com](http://www.enseceurope.com)]).

It is deceptively simple to say to students, “Please understand that living in a democracy means you don’t always get your way; when you don’t, you work to gain support and make changes through the democratic process.” The truth is, carrying out that advice relies on a number of SEL-related skills that education has not systematically attended to, despite general agreement on their extraordinary importance. Indeed, here is what we know:

- All aspects of academic and civic life require taking others’ perspectives, both intellectually and emotionally.
- Everyone must master emotional regulation skills that enable them to deal with their own discomfort and resist temptations to act impulsively.
- SEL skills are necessary for the next stage of college and career access: graduation and job advancement.
- The workplaces of the present and future will be increasingly collaborative.
- Managing the complex and ongoing challenges of civic life in a multicultural democracy requires the same degree of competency in social-emotional learning as we demand in reading and other traditional academic areas.
- Advancing the cause of equity in all classrooms and schools, and dismantling the underlying maintainers of racism and other forms of discrimination, require a strong mastery of emotional awareness, empathy, compassion, perspective-taking, problem solving, and communication skills (among other SEL abilities) as well as a sense of positive purpose and an optimistic future-mindedness (among other character virtues).

## **Public Education’s Moral Purpose: Fostering a Democratic Society**

We are witnessing positive trends to which the work in this book is a powerful contributor. National events and student activism on key issues like gun safety and climate change have rejuvenated a focus on civics education. Over the past few years, state departments of education—including those in Tennessee, Massachusetts, Michigan, Florida, Washington, New York, Indiana,

and California—have been leading a return to civics education by reconceptualizing or piloting revisions to state social studies learning standards. These revisions blend into the curriculum the active civics practice of appreciating diverse perspectives, the roles and responsibilities of citizenship, and methods of social action. In a promising sign for renewed interest in civics education at the federal level, the 116th Congress saw the introduction of the Civics Learning Act of 2019 (H.R. 849), which aimed to expand grant funding to innovate civics teaching and learning during and after the school day (Library of Congress, 2019), and the Educating for Democracy Act of 2020 (H.R. 8295), which *Education Week* described as having “a broad range of support from social studies and civics organizations and [eyeing] a much larger role for the feds in this neglected content area. It would authorize \$1 billion in all toward the two subjects [social studies and civics]” (Sawchuk, 2020, para. 3). Both these bills acknowledged the responsibility of public schools to help students learn, engage in, and rehearse essential civics skills so they can effectively participate in the democratic processes as citizens in their communities, and the latter was reintroduced in the 117th Congress as the Civics Secures Democracy Act (H.R. 1814).

However, civics education efforts continue to be sporadic. They often fail to focus on all students, and, instead, take the form of an elective course offered at the secondary level, an extracurricular activity, or an offering from an out-of-school organization open to only a small subset of the student population. This book reflects an alternative perspective. Social justice and student voice and activism must be defining features of every classroom and school; they are inherent parts of the definition of a positive learning environment in the 21st century. Progress toward dismantling the hidden curriculum requires that *all* students learn how to speak about the unspeakable—power, privilege, patriarchy, and passivity—without fear and with discernment and humility.

Among many sobering calls to step back and reflect on the purpose of public education in a democracy, Neil Postman’s book, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (1996), has stood the test of time:

The question is not, does or doesn’t public schooling create a public? The question is, what kind of public does it create? A conglomerate of self-indulgent consumers? Angry, soulless, directionless masses? Indifferent, confused citizens? Or a public imbued with confidence, a sense of purpose, a respect for learning, and tolerance? The answer to this question has nothing whatever to do with computers, with testing, with teacher accountability, with class size, and with the

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other details of managing schools. The right answer depends on two things, and two things alone: the existence of shared narratives and the capacity of such narratives to provide an inspired reason for schooling. (p. 18)

Postman’s perspective has received an important recent addendum from Pedro Noguera (2019):

Anyone who works in public schools knows that students arrive with different needs. Some have experienced trauma, others are learning English for the first time, and others may be reading below grade level. It follows that our students will need different things in order to thrive and meet their full potential. Addressing the needs of all students is not easy, but that is the goal of equity in education: to treat our students the way we would want our own children to be treated. This is the true meaning of equity—acknowledging students’ differences and giving them what they need to be successful. (para. 3)

This book reflects our deeper understanding of what all children need to be successful, as well as what our democracy needs from its citizens to be equitable and thrive. Our children and future citizens need to be able to do the following:

- Acknowledge emotions in themselves and in others.
- Manage and appropriately express strong emotions (not contain, suppress, or defuse them).
- Take the perspective of diverse others and experience empathy and compassion.
- Engage in the critical thinking, listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills needed for informed citizenship.
- Collectively solve problems and use their collaboration skills.
- See themselves as leaders in the change process and as social change agents in their classrooms, schools, communities, and the wider world.

### **The Challenge . . . and Our Solution**

The key question is this: How can teachers promote deeper engagement with content, promote civil discourse, and exercise students’ SEL muscles in the

context of preparing students for their roles in improving classroom, school, and community life *without* adding more to their already full plate?

What's needed is an integrative, accessible, authentic approach that courageously addresses both easy and hard issues confronting our society. And this approach must apply to *all* students across such areas as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability. By doing so, we respect both students and educators and their capacity to embrace complexity.

The answer we offer is the Students Taking Action Together (STAT) program, a set of five instructional strategies designed to integrate SEL skills and civil discourse into existing curriculum content in grades 5–12. Although the strategies are intended to be used individually, they build on one another in an evidence-based way to foster students' competence and confidence in the areas of perspective-taking, empathy, problem solving, communication, emotion regulation, and civic engagement.

As you proceed through the chapters of this book, you will encounter detailed descriptions of the five instructional strategies, suggestions for how to use them, vignettes drawn from educators' applications of the strategies, teaching tips for implementing them in a variety of instructional contexts, and lesson plans to support you as you embark on your STAT journey. The STAT strategies will empower your students to become engaged citizens and change agents in solving real-world problems—including problems within our schools.

In addition, we complement the book's contents by directing you to additional materials on Rutgers University's Social-Emotional Character Development (SECD) Lab website ([www.secdLab.org/STAT](http://www.secdLab.org/STAT)) and to professional development and networking opportunities through the university's Academy for SEL in Schools ([SELinSchools.org/STAT](http://SELinSchools.org/STAT)).

To get you started, we will briefly describe each chapter so you can best determine how to navigate the book. But before you begin, please keep the following in mind:

- Although each strategy is standalone, we encourage you to read the chapters in order and implement the strategies in the sequence in which we present them.
- We have designed the lessons and materials so you can easily adapt them to meet the needs of your individual students.
- Take your time and feel free to read and reread sections to best address your instructional needs. If you like, write and draw on the

pages of this book and highlight sections as you begin to plan and implement the strategies with your students.

- Engaging teachers who share a grade level or discipline in a book study of this book is definitely recommended. This is best followed up by a professional learning community focus on developing and delivering lesson plans that incorporate STAT strategies.

## **A Walk Through the Chapters**

**Chapter 1. Introducing the Five STAT Strategies.** This foundational chapter provides an overview of the five STAT teaching techniques: Norms, Yes-No-Maybe, Respectful Debate, Audience-Focused Communication, and PLAN. It describes how each is grounded in research and how all integrate the five competencies of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). You will learn how the STAT strategies can empower your students to discuss tragic and contentious events and equip them with the skills they need to become active citizens in our democracy.

**Chapter 2. Norms: Creating the Climate for Civil Conversation.** This chapter focuses on the first STAT strategy, Norms. It highlights the importance of taking the time to establish a relationship-centered learning environment in which your students feel like valued participants and are comfortable taking risks. We walk you through four steps for cocreating norms with your students and provide you with sample activities to use. Throughout the chapter, we highlight the iterative process of developing norms to ensure equitable learning spaces as you encourage your students to embrace new habits of mind and heart.

**Chapter 3. Yes-No-Maybe: Building Skills for Social Awareness and Peer Listening.** Here we describe how the second STAT strategy, Yes-No-Maybe, provides a structure for peer opinion sharing. Here and in the three chapters that follow, we introduce the strategy, describe the steps involved in planning and implementation, consider how to address obstacles you may encounter, suggest how to scale up your practice once you have developed confidence, and provide tools for formatively assessing your students' progress. We use an exemplar lesson on gangs to bring our discussion to life.

**Chapter 4. Respectful Debate: Developing Empathy and Perspective-Taking.** Here you will see how teachers can steward debates that promote understanding rather than competitive discord. We describe how the third STAT strategy, Respectful Debate, deviates from the typical classroom debate by having students engage in perspective-taking as they assume both pro and con

stances. They will learn how to carefully listen to others' points of view, instead of just focusing on how to present their own arguments. Guided by empathy, students will deconstruct the dominant narratives that sustain social inequality to redefine truth for a more just society. Step-by-step, we walk you through how to select a topic and craft controversial statements, choose appropriate background sources, arrange students into groups and assign roles, and adapt a Respectful Debate lesson to the digital learning environment. We provide tools for formative assessment and use an exemplar lesson on racial equality to enliven our discussion.

**Chapter 5. *Audience-Focused Communication: Creating Effective Presentations.*** This chapter focuses on helping teachers navigate one of the most important civic and career readiness skills—presentation skills. Using the fourth STAT strategy, Audience-Focused Communication, we coach you through a series of steps in a lesson on presenting a project or book report in view of helping students build critical skills in presentation design, planning, rehearsal, and delivery. Students learn to tailor their language and speech to have the greatest effect on their audience (which includes their teachers!). During and at the end of the lesson, students reflect on their efforts to sharpen their presentation skills. Tools for formative assessment are included.

**Chapter 6. *PLAN: A Problem-Solving Strategy for Historical Understanding and Social Action.*** This chapter tackles the last of the STAT strategies, PLAN, which stands for Problem description, List of options, Action plan, and Notice successes. We guide you through the process of implementing this approach and describe in detail each of the three levels of the strategy: PLAN Basic, PLAN Comprehensive, and PLAN Integrative. We provide an exemplar lesson for each level: the Barking Dog Lesson (PLAN Basic); Women's Suffrage Lesson (PLAN Comprehensive); and Women's Rights Extension Lesson (PLAN Integrative). And, once again, we provide tools to help you formatively assess student progress.


**Chapter 7. *STAT Integration Across the Curriculum.*** Here we shed light on the versatility and transdisciplinary nature of the STAT strategies by showing their application in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); English language arts (ELA); and the visual and performing arts (VPA) classrooms. We demonstrate how STAT can enrich the lived curriculum of your students and support the critical skills needed to help students reach their fullest potential. We show how STAT strategies support the STEM, ELA, and VPA standards and curricula, as well as provide examples of STAT in action in each instructional environment.

**Chapter 8. STAT in the Inclusion Classroom.** Chapter 8 details the adaptations required for seamless use of STAT to meet a range of student needs. Here, we encourage you to look beyond students' labels and perceive your students from a strengths-based approach. We underscore that cultivating an inclusive environment is an ongoing process that requires continuous change, support, and respect to remove barriers to learning for students with challenged abilities and offer them the best learning situations. Using tenets of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and tiered assignments, we walk you through the steps of planning and executing an inclusive STAT lesson, as well as indicate technical and human support resources that may be of help along the way.

**Chapter 9. Scaling up STAT.** In this closing chapter, we provide a road-map for school leaders and teacher leaders to scale up STAT in your school using a thoughtful approach to implementation that honors the hearts and minds of your educators. We end with a series of examples of educators, from Idaho, United States, to Johannesburg, South Africa, who have applied STAT to empower their students to take action in their community.

## Resources to Guide You Along the Way

 **Teaching Tips.** In addition to a comprehensive list of teaching tips included in Appendix C, we have embedded tips in each chapter to support you as you implement the STAT strategies. We crafted the tips on the basis of our own experiences integrating the strategies into our instruction, as well as from the feedback we received from grade 5–12 educators in diverse settings across the globe.

 **SEL Competency Connections.** As you make your way through each of the instructional strategy chapters, we indicate the explicit connections embedded in the lessons to the five CASEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making). We highlight the strategies' intentional focus on SEL skills and point out the focal SEL skill or skills embedded in a specific strategy.

**Appendices.** We have included a host of resources in five appendices. In Appendix A, we offer essential questions and statements for historical and

current events for students in grades 5–8 and 9–12. Appendix B provides four sample STAT lessons, Appendix C includes a comprehensive list of teaching tips, and Appendix D provides lists of resources by topic for further reading. Finally, Appendix E includes elevator pitches for communicating to key stakeholders—teachers, parents, special services/school mental health professionals, and administrators—and shows you how to use STAT to strengthen the purpose of public school by turning schools into laboratories that forge connections among knowledge, social-emotional competence, and democracy.

**Companion website.** At the book’s companion website (<https://www.secclab.org/stat/book/>), we provide lesson plans for middle and high school students that emphasize the application of STAT strategies to issues of inequality related to race and ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. They illustrate how you can apply STAT to historical and social issues that are difficult to discuss and how to plan lessons around these topics. Also included are several handouts and graphic organizers that will support you in your implementation of the instructional strategies.

## For the Greater Good

We are confident that you will find this book to be a helpful and active resource as you begin to implement the STAT strategies. This will be a transformational professional journey for you as you empower your students and perhaps your school to shift away from the traditional hidden curriculum that all too often defines the culture of learning and schools. Because persistence is the key to social action and because privilege and power do not yield easily, in our lesson plans we share the stories of people who persisted in the face of obstacles to collaborate in the service of the ideas and ideals they believed in—such as Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Malala Yousafzai, and Alicia Garza. These leaders teach us that even when the fight seems won, it’s not over forever and that vigilance in the service of one’s goals is necessary. With the STAT model in hand, you will equip students to be active and powerful participants in a healthy democracy for the greater good of society.

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# The Five STAT Strategies

*As history teacher Christine Chu drove to school, she realized that her lesson plan on the Great Depression was now going to compete with the breaking news of a school shooting that had just taken place the day before at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. She anticipated that her 9th grade students would be angry and sad and would have strong views on the topic. Just thinking about the day ahead of her made her palms sweat. She hoped to connect with her department colleagues concerning how they planned to adjust their lessons to address the tragic news. She wondered if her students would feel safe. Her thinking teetered back and forth on how to navigate the conversation with the students, and her worries escalated. Then she bumped into four colleagues in the copy room—Julius, Sarah, Raul, and Keesha—and the following discussion transpired:*

**Julius:** *I'm just going to teach and implement my planned lesson. You know how sensitive these parents are anytime you get into controversial topics. They call the principal immediately to complain.*

**Sarah:** *I feel like we should discuss this with students, but I'm worried that the discussion will descend into an argument and that feelings will be hurt. I don't know if some students can handle this topic. It's too controversial.*

**Raul:** *I agree with Sarah that we should talk about this with students. I plan to lead a small-group counseling session today with sophomores who I know have been recently affected by trauma. I'm going to comb through my counseling books to see if I can find a discussion protocol.*

*Keesha: I don't know where you grew up, but I grew up in a community where we discussed politics all the time. We have to foster these discussions or students will never be ready. I just don't know how to begin the conversation, especially with an audience of students who get their political news from their social media news feeds.*

*Christine: I agree with Julius, but I also agree with Keesha. I feel as though we have no guidance on fostering the district's goal of 21st century citizenship, yet I'm the civics teacher! It gets me so frustrated. I'm at a loss.*

Scenarios like this one are all too familiar for teachers. Politically contentious events that convulse our national imaginations can derail a lesson plan and catch teachers off guard. Many teachers don't feel confident to address traumatic school events or hot-button issues with their students or believe they don't have adequate time to do so. Consequently, teachers and schools often keep potentially divisive current events out of their classrooms in an effort to maintain order.

According to researcher Katrin Kello (2016), teachers feel underprepared and fearful about bringing sensitive and controversial issues into their classrooms because of their uncertainty about responding to their students' emotional reactions, pressures from the administration or community, and the ambivalent and conflicting feelings that may arise from their own beliefs and values. However, when we dismiss opportunities to discuss the nuances of such issues in our classrooms, we deprive students of the chance—indeed, the responsibility—to examine current and historically embedded narratives, especially those that sustain social inequality, and arrive at informed opinions about what they're seeing and hearing in the world around them.

In James Baldwin's 1962 *New York Times* article, "As Much Truth as One Can Bear," the novelist, poet, activist, and playwright wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced" (p. 38). As educators, we have a moral obligation to provide spaces in our public schools for students to process and discuss current events that affect them or that they experience in their lives and to integrate these discussions in classroom learning. Only this will prepare them to create the future they desire to see.

Moreover, depriving students of opportunities to process their emotions and thoughts can lead to unhealthy consequences and trauma. Students today

are subject to a barrage of distressing images and live footage of tragic events; such media coverage is nearly inescapable. According to the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma (2005), people who are indirectly exposed to tragedy through media coverage can develop symptoms akin to those associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

So, although we can't control students' exposure to such media coverage, we must not underestimate our power to provide them with the space to process these shared experiences. This book, with its five Students Taking Action Together (STAT) strategies, will serve as a guide. The strategies will help teachers and students develop the skills to process and respond to tragic events in safe and secure learning environments. Students will learn the power of developing shared norms, expressing their opinions, listening respectfully and appreciating the perspectives of others, and generating plans for constructive social action, all while honing their public speaking skills. And teachers will learn how to prepare their students for life in a democracy by intentionally rehearsing democratic behaviors in their classrooms.

## Social-Emotional Learning and Civil Discourse

The canvas of democracy is filled with emotion-laden discussion, debate, disagreement, and dissent. Naturally, these expressions are necessary for civil discourse and social justice work. Because emotions play such a large role in such interactions, effective civil discourse demands the development of effective social-emotional learning (SEL) skills. That's why the five research-based STAT strategies integrate the five competencies put forward by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which are *self-awareness*, *self-regulation*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision making*.

Emotions are the fuel for youth action. Placing emotions in the forefront of instructional planning values what many scholars, historians, and business leaders have noted—that the single most significant factor in transformational leadership is emotional intelligence (Goleman et al., 2002). Psychological theorists John Mayer and Peter Salovey (Mayer et al., 2004)—who influenced Daniel Goleman's 1994 bestseller, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*—define emotional intelligence as one's ability to

- Reason about emotions to enhance thinking.
- Accurately perceive and read emotions.
- Access and generate emotions to assist thinking.

- Understand emotions and emotional knowledge.
- Regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

At this moment in education, teachers are eager to integrate social-emotional learning into their instruction without it being just another add-on intervention. To support such integration, as well as teacher awareness, vocabulary building, and knowledge construction in social-emotional learning, each STAT strategy lesson in this book features SEL Competency Connection boxes that show how a given competency can unleash deeper and more meaningful learning and prosocial behavior.

In her 1994 book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, author and activist bell hooks writes, “The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12). The more engaged students are in classroom discussions of oppression, justice, power, and equity, the greater the potential to raise student consciousness of how these constructs limit the rights, freedom, opportunities, and access of others in society. STAT strategies channel the enduring spirit of bell hooks and Paulo Freire’s (1968) liberation pedagogy by empowering students to be cocreators of their learning and to interrogate power in the classroom.

According to the National Council for Social Studies (n.d.) in their *Guide to Civil Discourse for Students*, civil discourse is

a conversation in which there is a mutual airing of views. It is not a contest; rather, it is intended to promote mutual understanding. Civil discourse follows general rules of polite behavior. This does not mean that you have to behave like Mr. or Ms. Manners, but it does mean that there are certain behaviors that make everyone uncomfortable and that indicate that a conversation has turned hostile and unproductive. (p. 1)

All too often, adolescents learn from the modeling of the adults around them to avoid sensitive conversations because they can boil over into conflicts. The STAT strategies can help normalize dissent, disagreement, and the discomfort associated with such challenging conversations while keeping the dialogue focused on the issues. They can help students engage with the content and facts rather than focus on personalities and who is “winning” in the discussion.

STAT strategies serve as the antidote for the vacuum of models that students are exposed to. “As a classroom community,” bell hooks (1994) writes, “our

capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (p. 8). Her point here reminds us that participating in social learning experiences and building connections with others generates a natural energy. To achieve hooks's vision, we need strategies that foster open and honest civil discourse.

Participating in STAT strategies-based learning gives students opportunities to

- Listen to opposing and diverse views.
- Wrestle with conflicting views, contradictions, and paradoxes.
- Come to understand that two things can be true but not match ethically.
- Learn to appreciate views they disagree with.
- Learn to express disagreement while respecting others' points of view.
- Come to appreciate their successes and also grasp what they might need to do differently in the future.

Everyone gains from experiencing productive struggle, dealing with the discomfort of uncertainty, and holding conflicting views in the mind. The journey through this social-emotional soup is a nonnegotiable path to nurture the muscles for civil discourse and civic engagement.

## **STAT and Social Justice Learning**

On March 1, 2020, just months before his death, Congressman John Lewis spoke in front of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the scene of the 1964 Selma March for voting rights, urging listeners to “get in trouble, good trouble and help redeem the soul of America” (Rashawn, 2020). Lewis's remark reminds us that a democracy demands responsible citizens, and it harks back to a warning from one of the Founding Fathers. In 1787, when Benjamin Franklin was asked what type of government the United States has, a republic or a monarchy, he replied, “a republic—if we can keep it” (Beeman, n.d.). A democratic republic requires a citizen's conscious choice to serve as an active agent of change in the ongoing struggle for human rights and justice for all. Thus, the spirit of active social justice—or, as Lewis put it, “good trouble”—is built into the foundation of the United States and is upheld in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

STAT strategies provide rich academic social issues content and a pathway that give students the opportunity to practice social justice learning in the classroom rather than having to learn it by default when compelled to take action. In addition, STAT levels the traditional power dynamics of the classroom community from what Brené Brown (2020), in a recent conversation on leadership with then-presidential candidate Joe Biden, called “power over” to a more transformational learning space of “power with” that our democracy rests on.

For the purposes of this book, when we refer to social justice learning, it’s helpful to consider Heather Hackman’s (2005) five essential components of social justice learning (see Figure 1.1). Although we didn’t develop our STAT lesson plans around Hackman’s five components, we do see some natural alignment that can enhance your understanding.

### FIGURE 1.1

#### Heather Hackman’s Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education

1. Content mastery/factual information
2. Tools for critical analysis (systems of oppression)
3. Tools for action and social change
4. Tools for personal reflection
5. An awareness of multicultural group dynamics

Source: Hackman, 2005.

As you can see in Figure 1.2, we have structured our lesson plans to incorporate Hackman’s five components of social justice learning. The lessons have a common structural approach to help you navigate your implementation of the strategies to support social justice learning.

In addition to featuring a focal social-emotional competency, each lesson harnesses social studies and English language arts academic standards. In the absence of national social studies standards, many states like Pennsylvania and New Jersey have recently revamped their standards, and this is getting teachers excited. In a *Washington Post* article, Shannon Salter, a high school social studies teacher and curriculum director in Allentown, Pennsylvania, shares that her state’s new social studies standards help students learn “how to raise your voice in your community and advocate for your needs. [Students are] learning to collaborate to solve problems and challenge the way things are so that the country

**FIGURE 1.2****The Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education in STAT Lesson Plans**

<b>Component</b>	<b>STAT Lesson Plan Feature</b>
Content mastery/factual information	An inquiry-based problem-solving approach that drives deeper learning with topically relevant sources
Tools for critical analysis (systems of oppression)	Approaches to an analysis and evaluation of content sources that critique power systems and pursue the truth
Tools for action and social change	Strategy-driven activities that advance leadership and advocacy work to effect change for the common good
Tools for personal reflection	Thoughtful, reflective learning experiences at the end of each lesson
An awareness of multicultural group dynamics	Teacher supports that promote effective group processes for inclusive learning

continues to become that more perfect union that we envision," (Heim, 2021, para. 18).

The STAT lessons focus on three compelling and relevant topics: gender bias, racial injustice, and socioeconomic inequality. The lessons also explore transdisciplinary applications, such as inclusivity and equity focusing on neuro-abilities, as well as on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) identities, topics that students are currently questioning, exploring, and experiencing in their communities. (For more on social justice resources, see Appendix D).

## **Promoting Active Citizenship for Social Change**

By exploring historical and current issues, students will see how groups organize to bring about change in a democratic society. They will come to understand that fighting for human rights and against oppression is a long arc that often intersects with other groups' struggles and that these struggles are shared across generations.

Further, they will learn that change is not a linear and an immediate process, that many initial attempts are unsuccessful and incomplete. They will see that leaders pass the baton of inspiration to the next generation to continue

the struggle—and that success depends on social-emotional awareness and persistence.

STAT lessons will help you deliver on the promise of active civics learning. With **Norms**, students develop working agreements for the good of the classroom. This social contract will foster safe and inclusive spaces for open expression and critical engagement of the issues. **Yes-No-Maybe** lessons will help students get comfortable with public speaking and active listening as they offer and consider differing opinions on an essential topic. In **Respectful Debate**, students will foster mutual understanding by drawing on multiple sources to debate public issues without diminishing opposing perspectives.

**Audience-Focused Communication** ensures that students are sensitive to the position and backgrounds of their intended audiences (which of course includes racial, socioeconomic, gender, disability status, and other factors) and the context in which the communication will take place. Finally, **PLAN** helps students transform their thinking into social action. Students will examine a problem from many sides, consider potential solutions, and draw up an action plan to redress the problem and then evaluate its effectiveness against actual historical examples. As small groups come together to problem solve, they engage with the structures of power to advocate for change.

Reflection is a core component of our approach. At the end of each lesson (Chapters 2–8), we include questions that provide opportunities for students to think about what they’ve learned. Instead of only building factual knowledge, students will reflect on the process and the skills needed for change. With the tools of STAT in hand, they are less likely to see themselves as passive and powerless in the experience of their learning; instead, they become active agents to direct, decide, and act on their learning for the common good.

## **Implementing the Five STAT Strategies**

How do teachers implement academic lessons rich in social-emotional learning while, at the same time, cultivating civility and supporting their students’ efforts to bring about social change? The five STAT strategies help answer this question in a manner that will blend with your unique approach to teaching. Instead of being an add-on to content-area curricula, they serve as a vehicle for teaching standards-driven content. For example, a 5th grade math teacher striving to teach her students about various methods to divide with fractions could engage her students in a Yes-No-Maybe about the efficacy of each method, whereas an

11th grade language arts teacher could facilitate a Respectful Debate about John Irving's portrayal of Owen Meany as a deity in *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. Teachers can use STAT strategies in limitless ways to support the academic curriculum.

We suggest that you teach the strategies in the order presented because we have designed them to build on one another in a spiraling fashion. For example, by teaching the Yes-No-Maybe strategy before Respectful Debate, your students will be competent in the areas of peer opinion sharing and taking a stand on an issue, both of which are necessary for their success with Respectful Debate. However, the progression is not linear by any means; we encourage teachers to revisit previously introduced strategies to provide students with opportunities for practice.

Further, some strategies lend themselves better than others to certain topics or content material. For example, if you are a biology teacher who wants your students to analyze the misconceptions surrounding race and genetics, a Yes-No-Maybe activity, with its focus on differing opinions, would be a better option than PLAN, which focuses more on social action. However, if you are a 6th grade social studies teacher instructing your students about the key events and outcomes of the American Revolutionary War, you might present a PLAN comprehensive lesson to analyze how the British and Colonial leaders dealt with the issues of the war to determine if there were more effective action plans each side might have taken. Beginning with the end in mind, consider the SEL skills and competencies you want to teach and practice with your students and then choose the STAT strategy that best aligns with them. Of course, because you, too, are a learner, you should feel free to experiment and find your own comfort level with each of the strategies and how they best apply to the instructional situations you find yourself in.

Let's now look at each of the STAT strategies in more depth (see Figure 1.3).

## Norms

Unlike classroom rules, which the teacher generally establishes to create an efficient and a safe environment, students cocreate the norms to make for a relationship-centered learning community in which they can openly communicate with one another. Through a discussion that the teacher facilitates, students decide on desirable and undesirable classroom behaviors. Ultimately, they develop a list of affirmatively stated norms and discuss the rationale behind each and its effect on students' well-being. Students also collectively determine ways to handle norm-breaking. Norms lay the foundation for a successful

**FIGURE 1.3****The Five STAT Strategies**

The five STAT strategies allow teachers to plan instruction that promotes civil discourse, civic engagement, and social-emotional learning skills within the framework of existing curricula.

**Norms** engage students in developing ethical standards that lay the groundwork for a relationship-centered classroom community.

**Yes-No-Maybe (YNM)** offers students opportunities for peer opinion sharing in which they reflect on their views on an issue to take a stand and actively listen to the diverse perspectives of their classmates.

**Respectful Debate (RD)** encourages students to practice the skill of perspective-taking by analyzing all sides of an issue to gain an appreciation for diverse viewpoints, and it promotes a level of comfort for revising one's original thinking.

**Audience-Focused Communication (AFC)** gives students opportunities to tailor their language and style of presentation and the essential parts of their message to a specific audience or presentation context.

**PLAN** involves students in action planning to change policies and practices for the greater good of society, implementation of STAT lessons by cultivating a climate that promotes respectful listening, peer opinion sharing, empathic debate, and collaborative problem solving.

implementation of STAT lessons by cultivating a climate that promotes respectful listening, peer opinion sharing, empathic debate, and collaborative problem solving.

**Yes-No-Maybe**

Building off the work accomplished in developing norms, in which students establish a climate that fosters trust, participation, and equitable expectations, the Yes-No-Maybe strategy facilitates peer opinion sharing. It's a deceptively simple entry-level strategy that is easy to implement and that supports students in building the skills of perspective-taking and respectful listening. After presenting a thought-provoking essential question that frames the controversial topic on which the lesson is focused, students reflect on several neutral statements related to the historical or current event and take a stance on each. They then practice respectful listening by discussing their opinions in small groups. Students can change their stance on an issue after hearing the diverse viewpoints of their peers. The instructor facilitates these conversations but does not seek to arrive at a consensus or firm conclusion.

## **Respectful Debate**

With the skills of perspective-taking and respectful listening in place, Respectful Debate introduces students to the more complex skill of establishing and defending an informed position on a topic while empathically listening to opposing views. Respectful Debates provide ample opportunities for students to practice their emotional regulation skills. Students are assigned pro or con stances and must work in small groups. Using background sources, students collect evidence for their assigned stance. However, unlike traditional classroom debates, students must argue both sides of an issue, which enables them to analyze the question more objectively and broaden their perspectives. Yes, this does pose a challenge when students strongly disagree with one side of an issue; they must find ways to temper any strong emotions they're feeling in order to execute the task. At the same time, this presents instructional openings for teachers to teach emotional regulation techniques, such as deep breathing and positive self-talk.

## **Audience-Focused Communication**

Teachers can use Audience-Focused Communication (AFC) as a stand-alone strategy when students present on smaller-scale classroom and school issues, such as making a report to classmates or at an assembly on how to respond to peer pressure. It can also serve as a natural extension of PLAN in that it provides students with detailed guidance on how to best present the solutions and action plans they've developed. The essence of AFC is that students identify their audience and the circumstances surrounding their presentation opportunity, determine the format of their presentation (be it a photo essay, video, song, commercial, etc.), and take into consideration their audience's views and prior knowledge in order to convey the information most effectively. AFC requires that students tap into skills from all five CASEL competencies, which the four other STAT strategies have helped to develop.

## **PLAN**

The fifth and final strategy, PLAN, shifts the focus to social problem solving and prepares students to take civic action. PLAN stands for Problem definition, Listing options, Action plan, and Notice successes. Here, students work in small groups to collaboratively examine a historical or current problem that has no obvious solution, or perhaps they revisit a past situation to better understand

how different decisions might have led to different actions and outcomes. They consider the options to address the problem and weigh the pros and cons of each.

Students then work together to develop a SMART goal and an action plan to solve the problem. They also engage in perspective-taking to consider the effect of their action plan on the various stakeholders involved, and they look to implement that plan when feasible, hence the program's (and this book's) title: *Students Taking Action Together*. The process culminates with a reflection, in which students notice successes with their plan and consider possible revisions to their thinking that might make them more successful the next time around. (See Chapter 6 for additional details about the three levels of PLAN.)

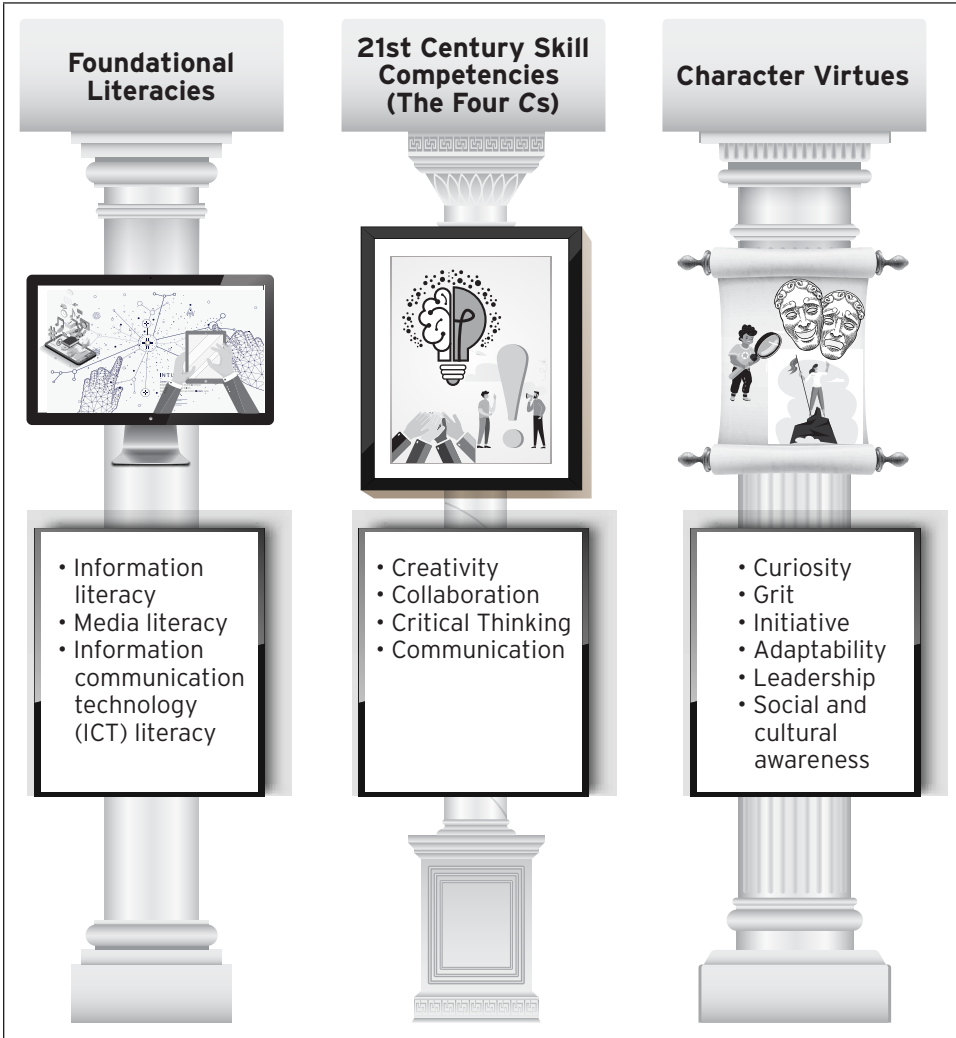
The five STAT strategies build on one another and share a common lesson design and structure, allowing for ease of implementation. Please see this book's companion website (<https://www.secdlab.org/stat/book>) for sample lesson plans.

## **STAT and 21st Century Skills**

More than 20 years into the 21st century, our world is a place in which change is constant and the ability to adapt is of paramount importance. Just consider the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020. Within a year, students were faced with a global pandemic that forced them into virtual learning environments, grappled with navigating intense conversations about the resurgence of race-based ideologies and actions, and were confronted with radically opposing views on divisive political issues. Rapid advances in technology and media add another layer of adaptive complexity, as students must learn entirely new sets of skills to be successful.

Fortunately, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) has developed a framework to define the skills and knowledge students need to be successful in careers, in relationships, and as active citizens (Batelle for Kids, 2019). To ensure 21st century readiness, states and school districts have used this framework when developing standards and curricula. As you can see in Figure 1.4, the framework is based on the foundational literacy skills needed to fulfill everyday tasks; on the four competencies students need to address complex challenges; and on the character virtues that will empower young people to adapt to their changing environment (EdSurge, 2016).

Let's now examine the relationship between STAT strategies and 21st century skills by taking a deeper look at each of these areas.

**FIGURE 1.4****The Components of 21st Century Skills**

Source: EdSurge, 2016.

**How STAT Supports Foundational Literacies**

Our students live in an information society in which an overabundance of information is available at their fingertips; however, given the ease of publishing on the internet, much of that information is inaccurate or false (Burke, 2010). For full participation in our society, students must be able to access and critically evaluate factual information that presents all sides of an issue. This *information*

*literacy* transcends all content areas and requires students not only to read and comprehend texts and articles, but also to analyze information presented in a variety of formats.

The STAT strategies of Yes-No-Maybe, Respectful Debate, and PLAN engage students in a critical reading of such background sources as podcasts, articles, speeches, and book excerpts. Students examine data presented in charts and tables, as well as artwork. If provided with multiple background sources, students must make meaning of what they have read or seen through synthesis. Finally, they decide how to use the information they've acquired in an ethical way by weighing any relevant social or economic issues (Emmons et al., 2009).

In addition, through the critical analysis of sources, students build their *media literacy*, which is the ability to access, evaluate, and create media for a given purpose.

STAT lessons ask students to analyze different types of media and to consider the message that a given source conveys and how it shapes an understanding of the world. For example, in a PLAN lesson on systemic racism, students review the guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement to consider the author's purpose in developing them. They consider the intended audience, examine the techniques used to convince that audience, and note details that were included or omitted, as well as the effect that piece of media has on the reader. In building these skills of *information communication technology (ICT) literacy*—the ability to use digital technology and communication tools purposefully and ethically—students not only develop a greater level of discernment in their consumption of media, but also a greater awareness of how, in our pluralistic society, media can significantly influence our views of different groups of individuals.

## **How STAT Supports the Standards—And the Four Cs of 21st Century Skills**

All STAT lessons we explore in the implementation chapters are grounded in social studies standards; they also address one or more of the 10 thematic strands established by the National Council for the Social Studies (n.d.). Strands cover such topics as global connections; time, continuity, and change; and power, authority, and governance, to name a few.

Similarly, because all lessons build students' reading, listening, speaking, writing, and presentation skills, the English language arts standards drive the literacy elements of each lesson. The social studies and language arts standards

blend together to support the four 21st century competencies (the Four Cs) of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, which are, in essence, the expression of college and career readiness skills. Figure 1.5 shows how STAT lessons can offer students rich opportunities to practice skills that advance the aims of the Four Cs.

**FIGURE 1.5**

**How STAT Strategies Support the Four Cs of 21st Century Learning**

<b>Creativity</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Communication</b>
<p>In <b>PLAN</b> lessons, students engage in divergent thinking to brainstorm solutions to problems of inequality and human rights.</p> <p>With <b>Audience-Focused Communication</b>, students decide on the best type of presentation (e.g., a video collage, slideshow, song, or commercial) to deliver to a given audience.</p>	<p>With <b>all strategies</b>, students objectively analyze information and evaluate how to integrate it with other, possibly conflicting information.</p> <p>With <b>Respectful Debate</b>, students practice open-mindedness and perspective-taking by analyzing an issue from all sides.</p>	<p>Students begin establishing ground rules for collaboration with <b>Norms</b>.</p> <p>In <b>Yes-No-Maybe</b>, students meet in informal groups after taking a stance on a statement to discuss their views with others.</p> <p>In <b>Respectful Debate</b> and <b>PLAN</b>, students are arranged into formal groupings and with assigned roles to ensure equity.</p>	<p>With <b>all STAT strategies</b>, students engage in active listening, argumentative reasoning, deliberation, constructive disagreement, analysis, and learning to make decisions in and as a group.</p>

**How STAT Supports Character Development**

One of the three main areas of the framework created by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning focuses on career and life skills, such as perseverance, leadership, and curiosity. Operating from a strengths-based approach, STAT strategies capitalize on the strengths of each student, as well as on other positive aspects, such as effort and the ability to work toward goals (Lopez & Louis, 2009). Each STAT strategy provides opportunities for students to develop character virtues. For example, the small-group structure enables students to

practice *leadership* by summarizing and reporting on the group's work. Students exercise *curiosity* as they look to understand the perspectives of different groups and individuals involved in historical or current events. They need *perseverance* in the face of negative or discouraging feedback about their social action plans. And they learn to become more *adaptable* because they have agreed to abide by norms they might not fully accept.

More generally, students come to understand themselves better through reflective exercises that build their self-awareness; they learn to identify their strengths and how to tap into them to achieve specific goals. Through this collaborative experience, students come to see that the strengths of each individual contribute to the overall success of the group.

STAT lessons support students in developing nascent character virtues through explicit skill building. Consider a PLAN lesson designed to cultivate the character trait of initiative; here, students practice the skill of goal setting. The teacher might begin by explaining the relevance of goal setting, that it helps people effectively manage their time, stay focused, and gain confidence. The teacher might then model how to execute goal setting in terms of the issue in question using the SMART goal graphic organizer. Finally, students work in their groups to practice applying the skill and setting SMART goals of their own.

Further, implementing STAT strategies promotes another character trait that is essential for our times and in the decades to come—social and cultural awareness and responsiveness. As you will see, the lessons in this book focus on human rights, power, and injustice. We look at leaders who face ethical dilemmas framed around the topics of race, class, gender, and ability. These stories honor the array of human experiences in the struggle for advancing human rights and convey to students that all humans have dignity, despite perceived difference.

Nearly every lesson encourages students to deconstruct the dominant narratives that engender social inequality by

- Acknowledging any social or cultural biases of their own that may influence their views and decisions.
- Identifying social or cultural differences that characterize a given historical or current event (for example, the decision-making processes at work or the cultural norms or traditions prevalent at the time).
- Interpreting how the content of a historical or current event affects a specific group of people within a culture or society.

- Evaluating the effect of globalization on a specific cultural or social group.

## A Better Approach

Let's now look at how the teachers we met at the beginning of this chapter might have used the STAT strategies to address the Parkland shooting with their students. What if Christine, Julius, Raul, Keesha, and Sarah had had the support of, and the experience working with, STAT strategies? Here's how that morning conversation in the copy room might have gone:

*Julius: I'm going to conduct a Norms lesson with my students and then communicate to the parents that we'll be engaging in a Yes-No-Maybe lesson about the Marjory Stoneman Douglas school shooting. I'm being mindful of how sensitive the parents are anytime you get into controversial topics. My hope is that this will head off any concerns that parents may have and provide students a safe space to share their opinions on the event.*

*Sarah: I do worry that the discussion will descend into an argument and into outbursts of feelings, but I'm going to try a Respectful Debate to show how we can still have impassioned discussions without hurting others' feelings. With this strategy, I think that both my students and I can handle a safe and an inclusive conversation.*

*Raul: Like Julius, I'm going to draft a few neutral statements to use in a Yes-No-Maybe in my small-group counseling session today with sophomores who experienced trauma. I think this will help me surface their feelings in a safe group setting.*

*Keesha: I'm excited to launch a miniproject after our recent unit presentation. I'd like students to create a short TED Talk presentation on school safety using Audience-Focused Communication and tailor their speech to the school board.*

*Christine: I'm throwing out my lesson plan on the Great Depression to have students engage in a PLAN lesson for the next week on whether or not schools should have armed police officers in schools. I'm confident*

*that my students have learned civil discourse skills from using Norms, Yes-No-Maybe, and Respectful Debate and that they can work in groups to wrestle with this question.*

Students need the space and opportunity to discuss their fears and experiences. Likewise, teachers need instructional strategies to meet their students where they are at any moment in time. The STAT strategies can make this revised scenario a reality.

## **More Than a Hope**

As we close our introduction to the STAT strategies, let's review the purpose of STAT. The five STAT strategies deliver a research-based instructional model to integrate social-emotional learning, civil discourse, and social justice while meeting academic standards. Envision a democratic classroom where students have the skills to engage in civil discourse learning about relevant historical and current issues and to effect change through social problem solving. Given the complexities and dynamics of public education, this is often an unfulfilled hope for student learning.

Now take a step back and imagine that you have the support you need, that you're equipped with the instructional skills and guidance to facilitate students as they engage in discussion, debate, and social problem solving with civility. STAT can make this hope a reality for both you and your students.

# Appendix E: STAT Elevator Pitches to Key Stakeholders

All key stakeholders in education—teachers, parents, special services/school mental health professionals, and administrators—are concerned with students becoming cynical about their schools, communities, and democracy. Too often, the national narrative of public education is shaped by forces beyond public education that claim that education is broken. That narrative says that educational stakeholders don't hold shared interests and that we are more divided than united when we discuss the desired outcomes for student learning.

We began this book by countering this narrative. Stakeholders have powerful common interests and hopes for students to exercise their voice and become agents of social action and social justice. And that's exactly what Students Taking Action Together (STAT) accomplishes. Stakeholders can use STAT to strengthen the purpose of public schools so they become laboratories for connecting knowledge, social-emotional competence, and democracy.

## **Talking about STAT to a Teacher**

Given the unexpected demands that many educators are facing these days, you may feel overwhelmed about the prospect of meeting all your students' needs. You may wonder how you can teach all necessary content and, at the same time, attend to your students' social-emotional needs. The answer is Students Taking Action Together (STAT)—five teaching strategies that you can integrate in existing academic curricula and use to address school-based issues while meeting national and state instructional standards, particularly in social studies. The time you invest in STAT will be invaluable because it helps students

develop the skills of critically examining issues from multiple perspectives, empathizing with people of diverse backgrounds, and collaboratively solving problems that affect their school, their community, and the wider world.

Now more than ever, students need to have the skills for civility and democratic action. STAT enables students to address unexpected events that happen in society—from an assault on the U.S. Capitol building, to a global pandemic, to racial unrest—and dig deep to analyze the underlying issues of power, privilege, and patriarchy that sustain social injustice. STAT provides teachers of all disciplines with the tools to empower students to become agents of social change; students learn how to reflect on their own beliefs, courageously stand up for them, and develop action plans to make those beliefs a reality.

### **Talking about STAT to a Parent**

The question of what we want for our children in the future is ever-present in the minds of parents and educators. Together, we want students to possess the skills and character needed for success in school and life. You and your children’s schools are partners in the process of empowering students to have a voice in their classroom, their school, and their community.

Students Taking Action Together (STAT) gives youth opportunities to reach their fullest potential, to become better humans to serve the common good. In the classroom, educators help students look at multiple sides of an issue, arrive at solutions to problems, and collaborate with others to put those solutions into action. Acquiring knowledge is not enough in the dynamics of the 21st century global economy and in a democratic society. STAT enables students to rehearse the skills they need for active civic engagement and constructive social change.

### **Talking about STAT to Special Services/School-Based Mental Health Personnel**

School-based mental health personnel serve the important role of supporting teachers and students in acquiring social-emotional skills and developing character. It can be quite the balancing act to provide the necessary in-class and out-of-class support within an already jam-packed school day. That’s where Students Taking Action Together (STAT) comes into play. STAT is a set of intuitive teaching strategies that give students opportunities to build the skills of emotional regulation, respectful listening, empathy, perspective-taking, and social problem-solving in non-stigmatizing and supportive contexts.

School counselors have seen the benefits of STAT in the classroom, as well as in individual sessions. You will find that students start to grasp the concept of perspective-taking; they come to understand other points of view even if they don't agree with them, and they show mutual respect. The STAT strategies provide opportunities for consistent language and skill-building across school settings, which enable students to gain mastery in these social-emotional skills and character virtues. The strategies empower students to successfully resolve conflicts, stay calm during stressful situations, and collaborate with a range of different personalities with confidence. STAT helps you, as a mental health professional, meet your goals in positive and enhancing ways.

### **Talking about STAT to an Administrator**

As a school leader, you can't transform the culture of your school on your own. Supporting faculty to integrate transformational learning experiences is an all-hands-on-deck team effort. At the heart of school leadership is love, justice, equality, and a desire to help your school become a leader in student voice and engagement—not for some students or special students, but for *all* students.

What if you could put your school on the map as a center of constructive social action in the community by making it a place of student voice? What if it were possible to bring social-emotional learning (SEL) to your classrooms in a way that fully integrates it with academics, particularly social studies; English language arts; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); and the visual and performing arts (VPA)? Students Taking Action Together (STAT) can transform your school into a school of social-emotional competence, civic engagement, and character—and have it formally recognized as such. Social-emotional learning is essential to achieve all valued learning outcomes in schools, and STAT builds this learning within the existing curriculum.

Nelson Mandela once stated that “an educated, informed, and enlightened populace is the surest way to ensure a healthy democracy.” Indeed, our democracy needs to be nurtured by guided civil discourse and social justice learning in our public schools. With STAT, schools can provide a forum for teaching students the skills to critically examine issues from multiple perspectives, empathize with people of diverse backgrounds, and effectively solve the problems that plague their communities and the wider world. STAT's five instructional strategies satisfy these hopes, desires, and needs for active meaningful student learning. Ready-to-go lesson plans incorporating Norms, Yes-No-Maybe, Respectful Debate, PLAN, and Audience-Focused Communication offer a feasible and

integrative path forward. STAT works with existing academic content related to history, social studies, and current events, and can also be employed to address issues and problems specific to schools. When you bring STAT into your school, you will see it's not an add-on, but rather an engine of synergy that will turn your "better" into "best."

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**Laura F. Bond, MEd**, is an educational leader in central New Jersey and has taught secondary social studies for 19 years. She has served as a high school and an elementary school assistant principal and, recently, as a K–5 curriculum supervisor. She is passionate about whole child education and disrupting the hidden curriculum in schools and classrooms through equity-driven social-emotional learning and inclusivity measures. She is a member of the executive board of New Jersey ASCD and sits on the board of Mercer Street Friends in Trenton, New Jersey. She has served on a PK–6 public school board as the curriculum chairperson and as the head clerk of a Quaker school committee. Laura resides in Central New Jersey with her educator husband and two children. She enjoys hiking, biking, and spending time exploring and discussing the possibilities of our shared humanity and the world with her family.



**Crystal N. Molyneaux, PsyD**, is a New Jersey–Certified School Psychologist and graduate of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University. Crystal works in Maurice Elias’s SECD Lab on the Students Taking Action Together (STAT) project, which has developed materials embodying social action pedagogy and social-emotional character development for integration into middle and high schools throughout New Jersey. Crystal is passionate about social-emotional learning (SEL), restorative justice (RJ), empowering women and girls, decreasing systemic racism and oppression, amplifying student voice, and creating and maintaining student support systems while also using evidenced-based methods to build confidence. Her ultimate goal is for the work done with students and staff within the school to have a positive impact on families and communities as a whole. Crystal works with students in group and individual settings to assist in self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management in hostile or adverse situations. In an effort to keep youth who are disproportionately represented in juvenile justice systems out of the school-to-prison pipeline, Crystal helps youth of minority backgrounds to discover new and more adaptive ways to cope and express themselves. Outside of her work, you can find Crystal with her family, attending basketball games, hosting movie night, and attending concerts and the theater.



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At the time of publication, the following resources were available (ASCD stock numbers in parentheses):

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*Literacy Is Liberation: Working Toward Justice Through Culturally Relevant Teaching* by Kimberly N. Parker (#122024)

*Making Curriculum Matter: How to Build SEL, Equity, and Other Priorities into Daily Instruction* by Angela Di Michele Lalor (#122007)

*Media Literacy in Every Classroom (Quick Reference Guide)* by Faith Rogow and Cyndy Scheibe (#QRG117107)

*The Power of Place: Authentic Learning Through Place-Based Education* by Tom Vander Ark, Emily Liebttag, and Nate McClennen (#120017)

*The Power of Voice in Schools: Listening, Learning, and Leading Together* by Russ Quaglia, Kristine Fox, Lisa Lande, and Deborah Young (#120021)

*Project Based Teaching: How to Create Rigorous and Engaging Learning Experiences* by Suzie Boss and John Larmer (#118047)

*Questioning for Classroom Discussion: Purposeful Speaking, Engaged Listening, Deep Thinking* by Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes (#115012)

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