

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE UPDATES



ALASKA SITE VISIT

Cierra, Education Anew Fellow, Zakiyah Ansari (Alliance for Quality Education), and Ginna Brelsford (GSA Network) traveled to Juneau and Nome, Alaska to build with the **Association of Alaska School Boards** and learn about their cultural safety model. AASB is working with school districts to prioritize: language restoration, place-based curriculum, community dialogues to rebuild trust with schools, and providing encouragement, resources, and support for more Alaska Native people to become teachers. **Cultural safety**, in many communities, looks and feels like being able to learn and sustain the indigenous languages and practices of the community, wearing traditional wear for graduation, intentionality around racial equity in equity frameworks, and climate justice education.

CALIFORNIA SITE VISIT

25+ partner groups convened in Long Beach, California to learn about Californians for Justice's **Relationship-Centered Schools** model. The model focuses on 1) investing in staff 2) valuing student voice and 3) creating space for relationship-building. On the first day, partners discussed topics such as: strategizing around creating conditions for systems accountability for being racially and culturally responsive and engaging key stakeholders (like educators/unions) in relationship-building work. We engaged in deep conversation about anti-Blackness in the movement, as well as strategies to dismantle it. On the second day, we conducted a site visit to Lakewood High School, where we heard from students, administrators, and teachers about how CFJ's work helped them to incorporate professional development where educators and administrators learn directly from students. At the end of the two days, partners came up with a collective definition for culturally-affirming SEL, which problematizes and extends the CASEL definition to center organizer and community demands.



LISTENINGWORKS



Thena, Cierra, and partners from Alliance for Quality Education, SouthWest Organizing Project, SOUL Sisters, Freedom Inc, and Southern Echo traveled to Massachusetts to learn from Youth on Board's ListeningWorks, a national healing project aimed at strengthening organizational and movement culture through SEL. We learned about how **listening partnerships** can be used as a tool for wholehearted listening to encourage comfortable space for a partner say whatever is on their mind without offering feedback or advice -- a strategy for deep relationship-building. As much of SEL is focused on relationship-building, ListeningWorks offers a powerful model for how to not only build deep relationships, but sustain them through authentic listening, radical vulnerability, and love.



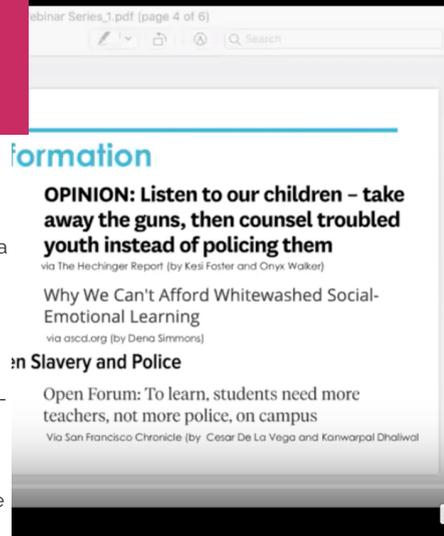
SEL IN ACTION

Amanda Gallegos (Southwest Organizing Project), Andrea Colon (Rockaway Youth Taskforce), and Cierra facilitated a conversation at the fall 2019 SEL in Action convening about centering food, water, and land justice in culturally-affirming SEL practices, policies, and curricula. Amanda and Andrea created collective definition for the terms: community organizing, food justice, food desert/food apartheid, and land sovereignty. In addition, they each talked about the similarities and the differences in their work, as they both fight for access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for their communities, while also navigating and fighting for education justice, climate justice, and environmental justice.

In April, Geoffrey Winder (GSA Network), Lisa Padilla (Southwest Organizing Project), Jaime, and Cierra will travel to the 2020 spring SEL in Action convening to present at their pre-conference on centering LGBTQ+ students in transformative SEL practices and pedagogy. Zakiyah Ansari (AQE) will give the keynote speech at the convening, alongside Channa Cook-Harvey. Many thanks to Education First and NoVo Foundation for their invitation and thought partnership.

SEL WEBINAR SERIES

This webinar opened the Communities for Just Schools Fund's SEL Webinar Series by situating **culturally-affirming SEL alongside more holistic definitions of safety**. A national network of organizers, educators, funders, researchers, and other stakeholders joined the CJSF team and our community partners, Carlos Rojas (Youth on Board) and Najla Gomez Rodriguez (Californians for Justice), for a conversation on what culturally-affirming SEL looks and feels like in their work. We learned together and connected around how to ensure SEL is not co-opted, but rather centered in community voice and demands. Some of the key takeaways included: embedding SEL in schools means drawing from student culture and lived experience to develop learning. SEL shouldn't be seen as an additional practice, but rather a core component of schooling where students co-design curriculum and give input about what they want and need in school, 2) investing in SEL for adults is equally as important as it is for youth, and 3) **The true promise of SEL is that SEL can help us build better relationships by confronting and dismantling power and privilege together**. Future webinars are tentatively scheduled for April and June on restorative justice and turning SEL theory to practice.



THE FUTURE

We are in the process of dreaming and strategizing around in-person and virtual convenings, a roadmap toolkit that centers organizers and communities in SEL practices, policy, and pedagogy, as well as opportunities to engage with external stakeholders. We welcome your collective thoughts and brainstorming around who needs to hear about this work and what possible next steps could be for this learning, as we aim to reshift the narrative around safety to instead center culturally-affirming social emotional learning.