

# A Commitment to District-Wide Well-Being

**Goldendale School  
District 2020-2021**

Report by Goldendale School District and  
The Learner First

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*Empowering through Education*



*Goldendale School District*

 **THE LEARNER FIRST™**



## Goldendale School District & The Learner First 2020-2021 Report

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### ABSTRACT

Prepared by Goldendale School District (GSD) and The Learner First (TLF), this report details the process implemented, actions taken, and specific outcomes measured during the 2020-21 academic year across GSD, along with priorities and next steps for the 2021-22 academic year, in alignment with the Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan developed by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

## INTRODUCTION

Goldendale School District (GSD) began its partnership with The Learner First (TLF) in August 2019 under the leadership of GSD Superintendent Ellen Perconti and TLF Founder and CEO Joanne McEachen. Beginning with single-day events and workshops throughout the 2019-20 academic year, the partnership expanded in spring and summer 2020 through a ten-part professional learning program designed to address both staff and student well-being needs (1) as schools transitioned to remote and/or hybrid learning models and (2) in preparation for reopening schools at the start of the 2020-21 academic year.



The program was followed by one-and-a-half days of strategic planning, during which GSD and TLF leadership teams identified priorities for the 2020-21 academic year and developed a reopening plan based on the key themes included in the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) "Reopening Washington Schools 2020: District Planning Guide." GSD recognized the strategic planning process as an opportunity to not only consider the reopening of schools, but to rethink and repurpose education across the district in ways that would improve the overall educational experience for students, parents, staff members, and the community.

Continuing the implementation process already begun with TLF, GSD was well positioned to lead with students' and staff's social and emotional needs while also maintaining essential standards, teaching the curriculum in ways that develop social and emotional learning goals and promote holistic well-being for all. To lead the work, GSD formed a district-wide "Change Team" comprised of a range of stakeholders including the district superintendent, principals, teachers, counselors, school board members, and other school staff. The team focused strategic improvement efforts across three interconnected areas:

### **(1) Cultural Conditions**

The district capabilities and environmental conditions that enable academic and social and emotional learning (SEL) and promote district-wide well-being.  
*Primary Responsibility:* GSD Change Team.

### **(2) Learning Design**

Maximizing student learning through enhanced pedagogical practice, more meaningful lesson design, and deeper student-teacher relationships.  
*Primary Responsibility:* Teachers (supported by the GSD Change Team).

### **(3) District Outcomes**

Learning, belonging, and well-being for all through a district-wide focus on the holistic academic and SEL outcomes of self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency.  
*Primary Responsibility:* Students, parents/families, GSD staff, and the Goldendale community.

Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, despite significant challenges posed by the March COVID-19 shutdown and the pandemic's post-reopening impact on teaching and learning, GSD evidenced exemplary shifts in these three core areas stemming from strong leadership practice and an unwavering commitment to putting learners first in all actions and decision making. By working to embed the district culture and conditions that would enable positive decision making and quality teaching and learning, GSD has experienced measured, positive outcomes relating to the learning and well-being of both students and staff.

The Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan developed by OSPI to guide districts into the 2021-22 academic year identifies the key themes of student well-being, student and family voice, professional learning, recovery and acceleration, diagnostic assessment tools, and community partnerships. This report details the process, practices, and outcomes of the GSD and TLF partnership through the 2020-21 academic year, along with plans for continuing the work in alignment with OSPI's key themes for 2021-22. Given the partnership's measured successes in enabling well-being and student and family voice, and in delivering targeted professional learning driven by a range of applicable implementation tools, GSD will continue to develop its district-wide strategy for improving the academic and social-emotional learning outcomes of all students, and the health and well-being of the whole-school community.

## CULTURAL CONDITIONS: A CHANGE TEAM APPROACH

Goldendale School District (GSD) is a district of three schools—Goldendale Primary School, Goldendale Middle School, and Goldendale High School—and 800 students. Led by Superintendent Ellen Perconti, the district partnered with The Learner First (TLF) beginning in 2019 to support its vision of meeting the academic and social and emotional learning needs of **all students** through an implementation framework rooted in three core areas: (1) cultural conditions, (2) learning design, and (3) teaching and learning outcomes. (See [Appendix A](#) for a timeline created by GSD to describe its learning journey.)

To lead the implementation of the TLF process, GSD formed a district-wide “Change Team” comprised of the district superintendent, the principals of each of its three schools, teachers of a variety of year levels and subjects, school counselors, one member of the district school board, and a range of other school staff. The work of the Change Team was designed to:

- action equitable and inclusive decision making to support teaching, learning, and well-being across curricula, contexts, and settings,
- develop the cultural conditions and district capabilities that enhance teaching and learning and lead to district-wide improvement,
- identify and support the shared and individual goals and priorities of the district, its schools, and its students and their families, and
- enable positive decision making and holistic, curricular learning design across settings and learning environments to improve academic and SEL outcomes for all.



## The Change Team Process

Beginning on September 8, 2020, the Change Team met every two weeks (via Zoom video conferencing) for a 90-minute session facilitated by TLF Founder and CEO Joanne McEachen. Much of the Change Team's work was driven by TLF's **District Capability Rubrics**, which support the discussion, development, and measurement of five key capabilities that strengthen teaching and learning outcomes across school districts. (A complete list of TLF tools and their descriptions is included in [Appendix B](#).)

### Five District Capabilities

<b>Understanding Your District</b>
•Developing a deeper, evidence-based understanding of your district, its learners, and the capabilities and conditions that foster valued outcomes.
<b>Engaging Learners, Parents, and Communities as Real Partners</b>
•Connecting with students, parents and families, staff, and communities around who learners are and how they can contribute.
<b>Identifying and Measuring What's Important</b>
•Setting up a system of measurement rooted in authentic, mixed-method assessment and reliable, evidence-based practice.
<b>Leading for Deep and Sustainable Change</b>
•Achieving real and sustainable outcomes with an unrelenting focus on learners and their needs and commitment to collective leadership and change.
<b>Creating a Culture of Learning, Belonging, and High Expectations for All</b>
•Fostering an environment in which everyone is learning and every learner is genuinely known, celebrated, and expected to succeed.

The Capability Rubrics describe each of these capabilities at five levels of progression. As a group, Change Team members engaged in professional conversations about these capabilities which resulted in evidence-based decisions about where GSD was currently positioned on the rubrics' five-point scale. The baseline ratings of their district capabilities then served as a jumping-off point from which to determine goals, priorities, and next steps.

#### TLF TOOLS

- District Capability Rubrics**  
Discussion-based rubrics that support school districts' growth in five key capability areas.



**Figure 1:** The District Change Team Process.

## Definition of Success in GSD

One of the early goals identified through the Change Team’s examination of the Identifying and Measuring What’s Important capability was to establish clarity around what it means to succeed as a student in GSD. In the past, district definitions of success had centered on development of the academic learning outcomes that would support students in their careers or future studies. GSD hoped to broaden and deepen their definition of success in a way that would also capture their individual learners’ identities, goals and aspirations, well-being, and unique ways of contributing to and finding success in the world, both within and outside of an academic setting.

“As a system, how we define success impacts how students feel about themselves, how they are perceived by the adults in the system, and, ultimately, the trajectory of their lives.

The Change Team dialogue opened a window to the need for more broadly defining what we mean by success.”

—Ellen Perconti, Superintendent, Goldendale School District

GSD recognized that under their current definition of academic success, there were students in their school system who were succeeding academically without feeling successful as a person. Alternatively, there were students who struggled academically but were able to find success in other, equally important areas of their lives, achieving other goals and aspirations consistent with their understandings of success. This was unfair to both sets of learners. Therefore, GSD sought to interweave the concepts of **academic learning**—the process through which learners develop the curricular knowledge required to perform tasks, find solutions, and interact with others in their academic, professional, and personal lives—and **social and emotional learning (SEL)**—the process through which people develop the self-understanding, connections, and competencies that help us manage emotions, maintain mental health and positive relationships, and succeed academically and beyond. At the intersection of these concepts is **well-being**—the state of mental, physical, and emotional health and fulfillment cultivated by our self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and by the contributions we make to others’ lives and to the world. With the goal of learning and well-being for all, GSD’s definition of success expanded to include the holistic range of outcomes consistent with academic and lifelong success.

### Learning Outcomes for Well-Being

#### Self-Understanding

Understanding...

- who you are (personal and collective identities, languages, cultures, feelings)
- how you fit into the world (place, time, family, land)
- your potential for progress and success (capacity, intuition, bravery, belief)
- how you can contribute (purpose, pursuits, goals, contributions)

### Connection

Connecting with...

- your family, friends, peers, and others you interact with
- your land and environments (natural and physical)
- your learnings (in and outside of school)
- the universal whole (humanity and the world)

### Knowledge

Developing the factual and conceptual understanding that helps us...

- interact, connect, and relate with others
- make decisions and find solutions
- work toward our goals and aspirations

### Competency

Developing...

- commitment, collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking
- any other key skills needed to learn and meet goals

Together, self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and the localized language and components they comprise, help people contribute to others' lives and the world in ways that are consistent with their goals and aspirations. They lead students and adults to well-being, meaning, and fulfillment.

## Local Language

The language used in learning environments says a lot about the experiences of those within them. How people talk about learning, about students, and about one another makes a marked difference not only in the sense of welcome and belonging experienced by the individuals in the settings, but also in the outcomes they achieve.

The GSD Change Team reflected on the language used across the district and in individual schools and classrooms. At the district level, they considered:

- How do we (teachers, school leaders, and other district staff) talk about our students?
- How do we talk about other teachers, leaders, and staff members?
- How do we talk about parents and families?
- How do we talk about learning and expectations?
- How do we talk about success?
- How do we talk to our students? How do they talk to us?
- How do our students talk to one another?
- How do students' families talk about GSD and its schools?

With regard to the language they hear across GSD, Change Team members reflected on what was positive, where there was room for improvement, and how they might (personally and collectively) alter their language to improve students', families', and staff members' experiences.

Along with the Capability Rubrics, GSD leveraged TLF's **Learning Progression** tools to help rethink the learning language used throughout the district. A Learning Progression is a description of learning at varying stages of development. Learning Progressions help to facilitate conversation, and to develop a shared language and understanding of the SEL outcomes (self-understanding, connection, and competency) that are critical for well-being. They paint a picture of what it means to, for example, progress from a low level of self-understanding to a fully formed understanding of who you are, how you fit into the world, and your unique goals and aspirations.

#### TLF TOOLS

##### •Learning Progressions

Descriptions of the dimensions of self-understanding, connection, and competency at five levels of progression to support cultural conditions, language development, and the measurement of current learning levels.

In addition to members of the Change Team, teachers and students also used the Learning Progressions to develop an understanding of current learning levels, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and embed SEL and well-being language in their learning environments.

## Cultural Well-Being

Students learn best in positive learning environments that nurture their identities, languages, and cultures and their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Learners do better when they feel cared for and are encouraged to be themselves.

The well-being of a district, school, individual classroom, or similar learning environment speaks to how well the cultural makeup of the environment supports the well-being of those within it. Since human well-being stems from self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, an environment's well-being stems from the same. In the settings and environments with the greatest cultural well-being, students and educators focus equally on:

- Understanding who they are as individuals, how they fit into the world, and how they can contribute.
- Connecting with the people around them, the environments they live in, and the wholeness of humanity.
- Developing the practical knowledge they need to progress toward academic and personal goals.
- Developing the competencies they need to access new learning and to put it to use.



The journey to cultural well-being in learning environments begins with the adults. In order to most effectively carry out well-being work with its students, the GSD Change Team examined district culture using TLF's **Cultural Well-Being Rubric**, which describes what it means to create a culture that is equally committed to academic and SEL outcomes.

#### TLF TOOLS

##### •Cultural Well-Being Rubric

Descriptions of positive cultures of well-being at five levels of progression to support and strengthen learning cultures at district, school, and classroom levels.

As a baseline across their three schools, GSD Change Team members rated their cultural commitment to self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency mainly in the first two levels of progression on the rubric's five-point scale. As explained by one of the Change Team members, one of the areas most in need of improvement was the district's treatment of academic knowledge.

"It has to do with the second paragraph [within the Knowledge dimension of the Cultural Well-Being Rubric]: 'We trudge through the curriculum because we have to, not with meaning, purpose, or intention.' And that's a carry-over of making sure kids get their credits, graduate, without emphasis on why we're doing it. [Currently,] we're doing it to meet state requirements. It's about knowing that knowledge is a means, not an end—that's the next step up."

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

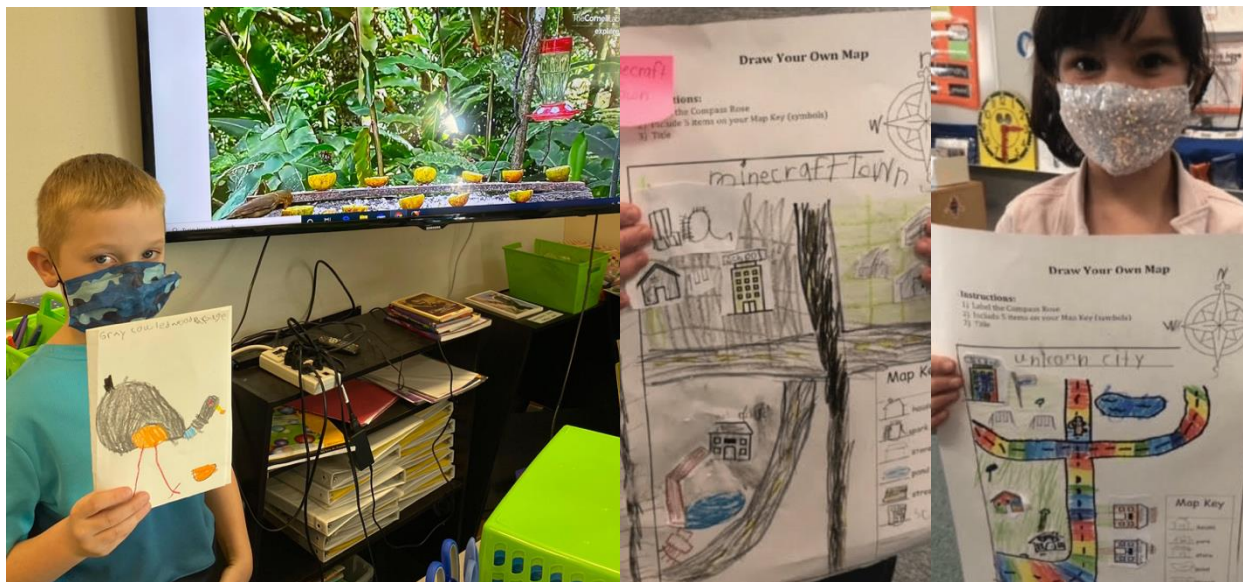
As part of a ten-part professional learning program delivered in the spring of 2020, participating GSD teachers engaged in a Cultural Well-Being module designed to strengthen their remote and, post-COVID, classroom learning environments. The following are example questions and activities that teachers reflected on and implemented as a result of their engagement in the professional learning module, which have to do with embedding self-understanding in an academic environment.

#### Self-Understanding: Questions to Spark Your Thinking

- Do your learners feel valued for who they are in your learning environment? Do they feel belonging?
- Do your learners feel like they can be themselves in your learning environment? Are they themselves?
- Does your physical environment (arrangement, furniture, decorations, displays, etc.) recognize and celebrate your learners' languages, identities, cultures, and aspirations? In what ways?
- Do you make connections between curricular learning content and learners' self-understanding? How often?
- Is self-understanding as integral to your everyday learning as curricular content?
- Are you and your learners learning about yourselves every day? How do you help ensure that you are?
- Do learners feel a true sense of purpose in your learning environment? Are they learning to succeed in the ways that they want to?
- Do your learners understand who they are, how they fit into the world, and how they can contribute?

## Self-Understanding: Culture-Building Activities

- Have a conversation with your learners about the physical environment. Ask them to share what they like about it and why. What about it helps them learn and explore? What about it reflects who they are? Invite their parents and family into the conversation as well, and ask them to share what changes or additions would contribute to their children's learning or make them feel more at home. Consider having learners "lend" something to the learning environment that reflects who they are.
- Set up a structured way for your learners to regularly share about their activities, interests, achievements, and goals. You might set aside time each day or week for learners to openly share about what's new, what's happening, or what's important to them at that moment in time. Or, learners might share a written weekly or monthly "update" that fills you in on what's been happening in their lives, inside and outside your learning environment. Try to get your learners thinking about who they are, and to make sure they feel valued.
- Daily, or as often as you can, ask your learners what they learned about themselves that day. It could be related to the curricular learning or other activities you worked on that day, to an experience with a fellow learner, with a teacher, or with a family member, or to anything else. Try to help learners feel that they're at school to learn about themselves, too.



**Figure 2:** Examples of learning experiences in Goldendale Primary School.

## The Contribution Kit

The 10 modules in the TLF Contribution Kit have helped GSD teachers embed the pedagogical practices best suited to well-being. It proved to be an ideal entry point to the work for teachers, who used the example activities, tools, and step-by-step processes to learn about the nature of the work and introduce it to their students, diving deeper and deeper into the process as desired.

### Modules 1-4: Learning Outcomes

1. Self-Understanding
2. Connection
3. Knowledge
4. Competency

### Modules 5-9: Pedagogical Practice

5. Cultural Well-Being
6. Teacher Capabilities
7. Contributive Inquiry
8. Collaborative Moderation
9. Forming a Change Team

### Module 10: Synthesis

10. Meaning & Fulfillment



The GSD Change Team's work in the areas of improving district conditions and capabilities, developing clarity of language and success, embedding cultural well-being, and more were all focused on improving teaching and learning outcomes in schools. When a priority or area for improvement was identified using the District Capability Rubrics or another tool, the Change Team created action plans to support their progress in the identified area, keeping an eye on the direct benefit of those actions for teachers and learners. **Figure 3** shows a partial action plan developed by the Change Team to target two dimensions of the Understanding Your District Capability Rubric.

**Figure 3:** Example of a partial Action Plan developed by the GSD Change Team.

#### Capability/Dimension: Understanding Your District

**Dimension 1:** Create an equitable, standards-based system that includes multiple, mixed-method assessments that go over and above academic, attendance, and behavior for all students (establishing clarity around the real causes of underachievement).

**Dimension 2:** Developing a systematic professional learning strategy that addresses the real causes of underachievement.

#### Description of desired outcome:

**Dimension 1:** Use of standards-based systems so that we know exactly where our learners are—who is struggling most and what teachers and learners need in order to be successful.

**Dimension 2:** Develop a system of PD that is differentiated and addresses real interventions with examples and strategies.

Description of action/s	<p><b>Dimension 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come to true agreement on the standards of each content area for each school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Well-being focus &amp; High school departments publish essential standards</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vertical alignment of Essential Standards and assessments that match.</li> <li>• Changing reporting that focuses on proficiency of the standard (level 1 through 4).</li> <li>• Developing the alignment with progressions for 1-4.</li> <li>• Plan for time to finish—who, what, when.</li> <li>• Research/hunt for progressions / standard levels from published sources.</li> <li>• Help all staff members understand the “Why” around what we are doing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dimension 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs survey with staff – What are the district-wide needs for PD concerning interventions (both academic and behavioral) and SEL (Contribution Kit)?</li> <li>• Offer beginning of the school year – Getting to know your students / planning a school-wide event. Design and use of SEL portfolios for each student.</li> <li>• Using needs survey, determine categories of needs and then look for experts within our system.</li> <li>• Offer a set time (at least once per month) for a district wide PD buffet for staff to participate in. (Rotate buildings)</li> </ul>
What evidence will you use to measure progress and success?	<p><b>Dimension 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a calendar for staff to meet, think, and produce the documents we need.</li> <li>• Clear on who will be responsible for each piece.</li> <li>• Essential Standards published.</li> <li>• Assessments developed that match the Standards.</li> <li>• Progressions written and published for each of the 4 levels.</li> <li>• Well-being standards/progressions associated with each content area.</li> <li>• Individual achievement known and recorded.</li> </ul> <p><b>Dimension 2</b></p> <p>Collect data points from both students and staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using Contribution Kit progressions – District wide, students’ self-assessment data is gathered per building and then entered into district-wide Google document.</li> <li>• Chose two Progressions that will be the focus of the year. (Maybe Self-Understanding and Contributive Inquiry)</li> <li>• Every student has a SEL portfolio that teachers and students contribute to, portfolio moves forward with the student each year.</li> <li>• Intervention strategies are used in classrooms. (Gathered per building)</li> <li>• Students’ levels increase using diagnostic assessments.</li> <li>• District Intervention Google Folder – teachers are given time at least monthly to add the strategies they have tried and reflection on outcomes.</li> </ul>

One of the most impactful action items decided on by the Change Team concerned the enhancement of lesson design across the district. To facilitate the conversation, schools used TLF’s **Teacher Capabilities Self-Assessment** to survey their teachers about their current capabilities. The tool includes five capabilities, each with four respective dimensions, that speak to what’s needed to enable well-being learning in an academic setting.

### Teacher Capabilities

**KNOW** and believe in each one of your learners.  
**NURTURE** a culture of learning and well-being.  
**PARTNER** in teaching, leading, and learning.  
**DESIGN** and deliver meaningful learning experiences.  
**DEVELOP** your pedagogical practice and well-being.

#### TLF TOOLS

##### •Teacher Capabilities Self-Assessment

A tool to support teachers to develop the capabilities that lead to learning and well-being for all.



The purpose of the survey wasn't to hold teachers accountable, but rather to give them the chance for honest self-reflection that would then influence district decisions about what supports were most needed. Through an analysis of survey results, school principals and other Change Team members were able to identify key opportunities for moving forward.

“One of the lower areas in terms of teacher capability was looking at student agency, students as partners. And I think that kind of illustrates some of the issues we've had. We've enabled students to sit back and wait for what teachers tell them to do. And as administrators we've often told teachers what to do... When it comes to turning the ship, we're going to really need to focus on students being our partners.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

“I gave each teacher the opportunity to self-assess and be honest with themselves and reflect... [They] really wanted to look at how we are providing experiences that are engaging and exciting for students, where they have agency, where they have a chance to develop contributive outcomes, and how those are embedded within our instruction. So that's our building focus to move forward.

The [learning] design... I think that's exactly what my teachers need. We need to move out from this team to the building.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

To support teachers to design curricular learning that simultaneously developed desired academic (standards-based) and SEL outcomes, and that engaged students as true partners in the learning process, the Change Team invited teachers from Goldendale Primary School, Middle School, and High School to participate in a series of professional learning modules centered on designing **contributive learning**—learning that develops self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and so helps students learn how to contribute (find meaning and success) in their own unique ways.



Figure 4: Sports and music in Goldendale School District.



## LEARNING DESIGN: ENHANCING LEARNING AND PRACTICE

The learning design work that stemmed from the GSD Change Team's discussions with one another and their teachers was purposefully developed to address identified areas of need, including: (1) linking curricular and SEL goals, (2) engaging students as partners in meaningful, relevant learning experiences, and (3) getting to know learners for who they are and what they want to achieve. GSD's teachers wanted to be supported with **how** to design curricular learning that's not only aimed at academic goals, but also at the simultaneous development of the other learning outcomes that complete a full picture of success and well-being.

The learning design program engaged a total of fourteen teachers across GSD's three schools. School teams met individually with TLF's Joanne McEachen (via Zoom video conferencing) for a six-part professional learning experience organized into the following modules:

### Learning Design Modules

**Module 1:** Learning to Design Learning Differently

**Module 2:** Connecting SEL + Curricula to Enhance Your Current Lessons

**Module 3:** Assessment and New Learning Design

**Module 4:** Designing for Contributive Inquiry

**Module 5:** Implementation and Action

**Module 6:** Assessment, Evaluation, and Moving Forward

Within the Change Team, members emphasized that a lot of what was happening within their schools was already positive. Rather than starting again from the beginning, or treating the work as an “add-on” to existing processes, the learning design work represented an opportunity to **enhance** the teaching and learning that was already present in schools and making a difference for students. Teachers were encouraged by the understanding that the work was about small changes to behaviors that can go a long way for learners.

“As a team, we settled on the word ‘enhance...’ This year's been a tough year for ‘change,’ so we decided we'd say ‘enhance.’ We have talent in our building... and so we don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, but to actually use what we know and enhance that in a way that brings real engagement and brings in the contributive part.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

Another significant aspect of enhancing instructional practice involved teachers' confidence in their abilities to try something new.

“What I heard specifically was, ‘We want to do it, but we aren’t... sure how to do that. How can I make something engaging or have kids contribute to that? I’ve never done that before, and I’m not sure if I know how. But I’m willing to try.’”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

GSD recognized that teachers wanted to try new approaches with their students, but that they needed to feel supported, both at the school and district levels, in order to have the confidence to make it happen. The professional learning centered on lesson design was a direct response from the district to encourage teachers’ confidence and help further develop their capabilities.

### The Learning Design Process

The process teachers carried out with students as part of their engagement in the learning design program was as follows:

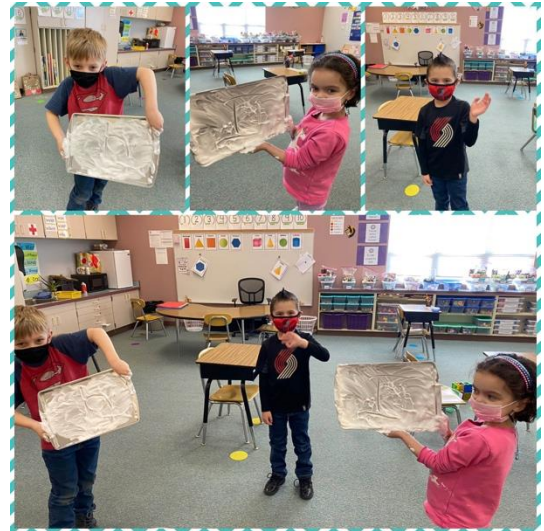


Figure 5: A kindergarten learning experience.

- (1) Teachers selected one-two of their “least-served” learners—those learners who are underserved by traditional teaching and learning styles, and who would most benefit from adjustments or enhancements in teacher practice. Often, these students are disengaged and disconnected from the learning experience.
- (2) Teachers sat down with the selected student(s) for a one-on-one “interview” or conversation to learn more about the student, show that they care about and value the student, and to develop a stronger connection.
- (3) Based on what was discovered in the one-on-one interview, teachers reflected on what changes or enhancements might better serve the individual student’s needs.
- (4) Teachers designed learning experiences and made shifts in practice that were intentionally designed to engage the student in ways that would improve their academic and SEL outcomes and well-being.
- (5) Teachers shared their stories with the rest of their learning design teams and reflected on how to continue the work moving forward.

Teachers engaged in this process over the course of twelve weeks. The professional learning sessions were designed to support them through the process with accompanying tools, strategies, and discussion along the way.

Teachers began by examining the culture and makeup of their classes (i.e., their classrooms or other remote or in-person learning environments) using the Cultural Well-Being Rubric that the GSD Change Team had previously used to examine the culture of the district. They identified specific growth areas for making their learning environments more conducive to contributive learning through intentional focuses on both academic and SEL outcomes.

Moving into lesson design, teachers engaged with TLF's **Contributive Curriculum** to begin to form links between the content or standards students needed to achieve and the SEL outcomes that are equally important to their success and well-being. For the SEL outcomes of self-understanding, connection, and competency, the Contributive Curriculum describes what students will know, understand, and be able to do as indicators of success in those areas. For example, within the identity dimension of self-understanding, as a result of their learning students will:

- Understand and celebrate their cultural identity and the identity of their family.
- Identify their interests and hobbies.
- Discover their values and beliefs, what is important to them, and what they are passionate about.
- Describe their personalities, identifying traits and characteristics they value as well as those they would change or hope to develop.
- Identify and describe different feelings and emotions, along with their causes and effects.
- Understand their abilities and relative strengths and challenges, including areas they would most like to improve.
- Understand who they are as a learner—what they find meaningful, interesting, or stimulating, and the ways they learn best.

Using the Contributive Curriculum, teachers formed links between their content- or standards-based goals and select goals for self-understanding, connection, or competency. In this way, they developed their ability to enhance the experiences already taking place in their learning environments, along with their confidence to, on a daily basis, design new lessons and activities that seamlessly integrate SEL. Across GSD, the goal is to get to the point where teachers are consistently thinking about ways to link wider well-being goals into curricular learning.

#### TLF TOOLS

##### •Contributive Curriculum

An SEL curriculum that describes what students will know, understand, and be able to do within the dimensions of self-understanding, connection, and competency. The curriculum supports the design of learning that simultaneously develops academic and SEL outcomes.

### Contributive Inquiry

To guide the design of learning experiences, teachers engaged in the **contributive inquiry process**. The process has three phases:

- (1) **Ask.** Frame a question.
- (2) **Investigate.** Find an answer.
- (3) **Reflect.** Reflect on progress.

Through this process, teachers and their learners (1) came up with a driving question, (2) designed ways of answering that question (i.e., assessments), and (3) made meaningful decisions about teaching and learning as a result of whatever was discovered through the process, watching the impact unfold as they progressed.

After drawing from the state standards and the learning goals in the Contributive Curriculum to determine the driving question(s) for the learning experience to come, teachers began the investigation phase by considering the following:

### Learning Design Questions

<b>How will we learn?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Leveraging student voice, agency, and identity.</li></ul>
<b>Where will we learn?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Determining the physical space or environment best suited to the learning goals.</li></ul>
<b>Whom will we learn with?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Engaging other students, teachers, parents, or community members who can help meet the learning goals.</li></ul>
<b>What tools will we learn with?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Incorporating digital or other tools that directly enable, enhance, accelerate, or connect students with learning.</li></ul>
<b>What opportunities are there to contribute?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Empowering students to contribute to others' lives and the world through the process of learning.</li></ul>

After thinking through these pre-design elements, teachers consider: **What assessments will we use?** Whenever a learning goal is set, teachers use **assessments** to (1) help students meet that goal and (2) determine whether or to what extent students are meeting that goal.

At the district level, the GSD Change Team collaboratively evaluated the range of formal assessments currently used by the district to assess student learning, which included state-mandated tests and local surveys, diagnostics, inventories, and similar. Through that process of examination, they were able to consider which assessments benefited their students, which assessments could potentially be eliminated, and where there were assessment gaps. At the class level, an assessment could be anything from a conversation or observation to a worksheet, project, movie, photograph, quiz, report, test, reflection, and more. Through the process of authentic mixed-method assessment (AMMA), teachers utilize a range of assessments to develop a complete understanding of learners' levels of academic and social-emotional learning.

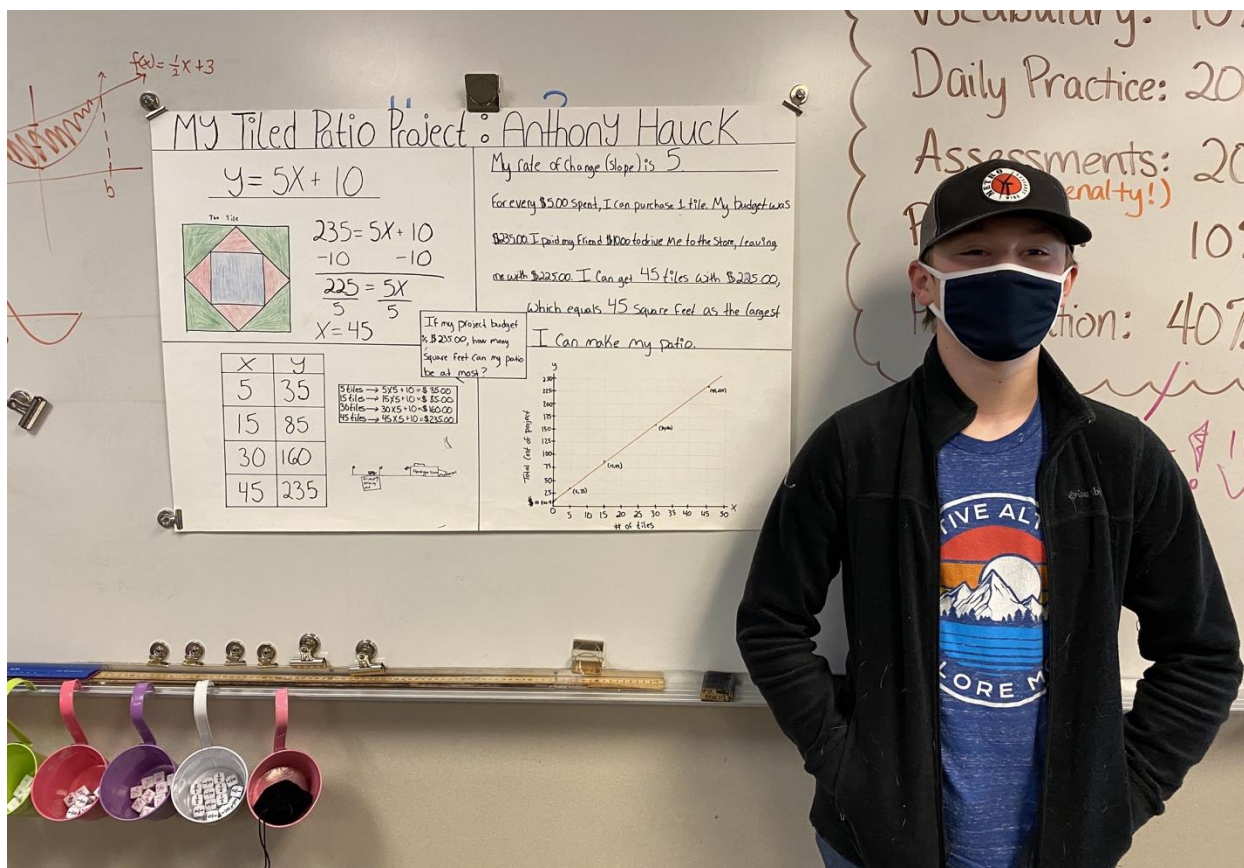


Figure 6: An eighth-grade science project at Goldendale Middle School.

## Pedagogical Practice

As noted, GSD's learning design sessions were intended to develop teachers' confidence and ability to design assessments that helped students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. As a part of that process, teachers explored the pedagogical practices and mindsets consistent with improved teaching and learning outcomes.

The practices were organized into three overarching categories, which cover some of the main priorities identified at the Change Team level:

1. **Partnerships** – Forming relationships for learning.
2. **Environments** – Utilizing learning spaces and strengthening culture.
3. **Tools** – Embedding technological and other learning tools.

Examples of practices and mindsets within these categories include:



### Partnerships

- Engaging parents and families as real partners in their children's education.
- Forming partnerships between classes and grade levels.
- Viewing yourself as a "learner" alongside your students.
- Supporting students to partner in teaching, including in the design and implementation of learning.
- Developing community partnerships locally and globally.
- Taking time up front to get to know one another and develop trust and connections within the learning environment.
- Supporting student self-assessment on academic and social-emotional learning outcomes.
- Treating learning as a partnership between and among students, teachers, leaders, and parents.

### Environments

- Putting learners first and at the center of all decisions and activities.
- Establishing the mindset that it's okay for anyone to fail, as long as they learn and grow from it.
- Celebrating students' individual identities, and letting them be who they are in your learning environment.
- Having high expectations for every student.
- Learning in varied physical and virtual learning environments.
- Thinking about learning environments as partners in learning—how do they directly contribute to learning?
- Supporting student agency, voice, and choice both in where to take their learning and how to evidence their success.
- Responding in real time to student needs and wonderings.
- Linking learning to the interests, goals, and aspirations of your students.
- Engaging in cross-curricular learning, and linking past learning with what's being learned now.
- Promoting regular reflection on learning to influence learning direction.
- Using learning to contribute to others' lives and the world.

### Tools

- Intentionally using tools to enable, enhance, and accelerate learning.
- Engaging in learning that would not be possible without, or that is directly enhanced by, the use of technological tools.
- Thinking about learning first and plugging in tools second—given the learning goals, what tools can help you reach them?
- Using technological tools to form partnerships locally and globally.
- Using technological tools to share or communicate learning with a range of local and global audiences.
- Developing technological and other tools through the process of learning.
- Using graphic/visual thinking prompts and aids.

One of the most important pedagogical practices teachers explored in GSD throughout the 2020-21 academic year was getting to know who their learners truly are—not just as students, but as unique individuals.

## Knowing Learners

The single most foundational practice for enabling academic learning, SEL, and well-being is understanding and valuing learners' individual identities, interests, passions, cultures, goals, and paths to achieving success in their lives. By designing learning to develop self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, teachers in GSD had opportunities to learn more about their learners through the regular, daily learning process. Then, with their new knowledge and understanding, teachers made a range of relevant changes to ensure that learning was increasingly relevant and meaningful to learners.

“Looking at what [students] know a lot about and are passionate about, and having teachers develop lessons around that, that seems to me the step that we need to take... Making sure not just our navigation advisors know deeply about students, but that our teachers [do] too, in all their classes. So, making sure teachers have the chance to work on this themselves, and then giving students the chance to say this is what I'm passionate about.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

One example of a lesson designed to support students' self-understanding comes from Goldendale Primary School. As a way for her and her students to learn more about themselves and one another, one first-grade teacher designed a social-emotional lesson that supported her students to share what was on their minds (see [Figure 7](#)).

“As we learned more about ourselves, we then wrote about what we love, what inspires us, our hopes, dreams, and maybe even worries that we have. Students shared their project with me one-on-one so that they felt comfortable sharing as much or as little as they wanted to, and [they] can choose to share with the whole class... if they would like to.”

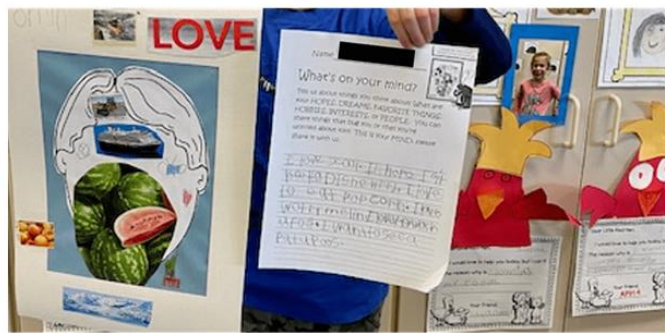
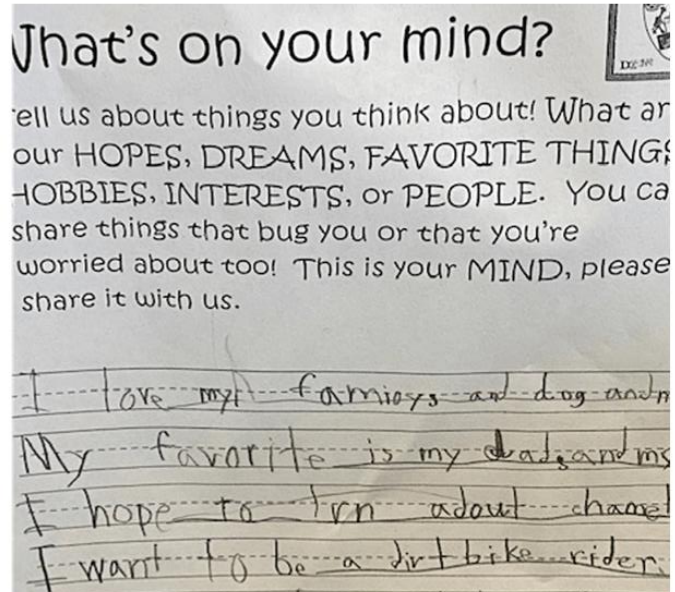
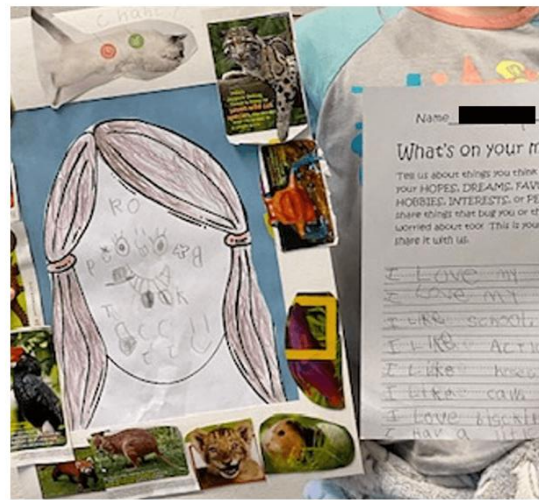
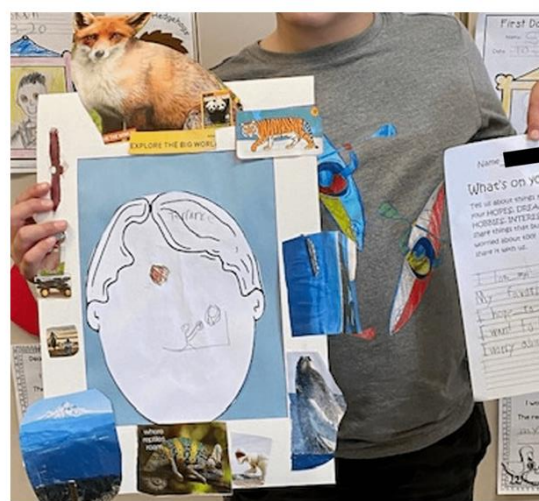
—Teacher, Goldendale Primary School

Developing a depth of understanding about their students can be daunting for teachers at first. To give teachers a sense of where to start, and of the power of caring relationships in enabling learning and well-being, GSD's teachers participating in the learning design program took the opportunity to “start small” by focusing on getting to know an individual learner, and then making adjustments from there. By starting with the needs of a student who has been underserved by traditional teaching and learning styles, teachers can then make enhancements to practice that have a positive impact on their class as a whole. Rather than treating the contributive learning process as a major overhaul, GSD recognized the importance of instead making regular, small-scale shifts in understanding and practice that each make a positive difference in the lives of students.

“If we start small, people are more willing to take on new ideas. When we try to profile every student, the message seems to get muddled in the task. By staff getting to know one student, learning something about them, and doing something positive with that information, we are gaining momentum for change.”

—Ellen Perconti, Superintendent, Goldendale School District

**Figure 7:** Examples of student work from a first-grade learning experience at Goldendale Primary School.



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## Individual Interviews

After selecting one-two of their least-served learners, teachers invited them for a one-on-one conversation in which learners shared about their identities, interests, goals, and learning styles. In GSD, these one-to-one interviews between a student and teacher (guided by the TLF **Interview Guide** tool) have proven incredibly effective in building trusting relationships. Learners have deeply valued the chance to get to share about who they are, along with the fact that their teachers set aside time just for them. It's a way for teachers to show their students that they care about them as individuals, and to lay the foundation for the progress to come. The interview process also made a significant impact on teachers. Speaking about one of her students and the TLF process, one Goldendale Primary School teacher commented, "I would not have felt like I had the time or the permission to get that relationship with him if it hadn't been for all of this." And at Goldendale High School, one teacher commented:

"During the interview, it opened the door that I can have these conversations with these kids and kind of get to know them better. And it kind of helped them understand that I did care about who they were as a person. And that was great... Now I realize I should try to [have] deeper conversations with each student as I go throughout the week."

—Teacher, Goldendale High School

“I have one student in particular... that for all intents and purposes might as well have been, you know, hiding in her hood, melting into the carpet. [Now,] she occasionally will actually speak up in class. Huge changes, which I just don't think would have ever happened had we not done that student interview and kind of took that time... I never would have been to the place that I am with her had we not sat down like that.”

—Teacher, Goldendale Middle School

As a result of the interview process, and all throughout their learning journey together, teachers used the **Individual Profile** and **Individual Action Plan** tools to first record valuable information gathered during the interview, and then to build out an action plan detailing (1) desired shifts in learning outcomes and (2) the actions taken to make them happen. Ultimately, the student interview process isn't only about getting to know students as individuals, but about using what's discovered to inform changes in practice.

#### TLF TOOLS

- **Interview Guide**

Example questions for teachers for conducting one-on-one interviews with learners to better understand learners' identities, cultures, aspirations, and goals.

- **Individual Profile**

A tool for building out profiles of individual learners based on information gathered throughout the learning process.

- **Individual Action Plan**

A template for an action plan centered on who learners are as individuals, their unique goals and aspirations, and what they need to be successful.

As a final step in the six-part learning design program, teachers reflected on their and their students' journeys and shared their stories with the rest of their teams. As documented in the following section of this report, the experience made a significant impact on both students and teachers alike, who can now carry that momentum into the 2021-22 academic year in the pursuit of even deeper learning relationships and improved outcomes for all.

The implementation of the learning design program represents a tremendous success of the GSD Change Team, which identified an area of need for the district's teachers and responded with a purposeful professional learning opportunity; of the teachers engaged, who demonstrated the confidence to try a new approach and the capability to make enhancements to professional practice; and of the students as well, who, despite the difficulties presented by COVID-19, partnered with their teachers to improve not only their own experience, but the experiences of all of the students in their classes.

## DISTRICT OUTCOMES: SHIFTS IN LEARNING, TEACHING, AND LEADING

The outcomes achieved in GSD during the 2019-21 academic years reflect the collective, cohesive efforts of groups at all levels of the district. Beginning with the District Change Team, under Superintendent Ellen Perconti's leadership, leaders from across the district and



its schools worked to develop a shared vision of equitable learning and well-being both for staff and students district wide. With guidance from OSPI and TLF, GSD committed to putting well-being first while also maintaining high standards and expectations for every student, believing that all learners could be successful academically, socially, and emotionally and making significant strides within an uncertain year.

## Teaching and Learning

Achieved outcomes in teaching and learning were experienced and shared throughout the year, and in large part as a result of the learning design program enacted by the District Change Team in the spring of 2021. At the end of the professional learning experience, fourteen teachers—six from Goldendale Primary School, four from Goldendale Middle School, and four from Goldendale High School—reflected on the following questions in light of their experiences with students over the course of the six sessions:

- Why did you choose to focus on the student(s) you selected?
- What did you learn when you connected with them during the one-on-one interview?
- How did you redesign the learning experience based on what you learned?
- What changed, for you and/or your student(s), as a result of changes to your teaching practice?
- What assessments did you and your students engage in throughout the learning design process?

In the last of the six sessions, teachers shared their stories with the rest of their learning design teams. Stories from Goldendale Primary, Middle, and High Schools are included below, and all fourteen stories are included in full in [Appendix C](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Learning Design Stories

### Goldendale Primary School

Madison, a fourth-grade teacher, identified Jalen as a student who was quietly slipping through the cracks of the classroom. He was always respectful, but he was so shy and quiet that Madison had a hard time connecting with him, and she noticed he wasn't connecting with his classmates either. He didn't particularly like school, and he was lacking ambitions and goals for the future. Madison observed that although Jalen was a very bright student, he struggled to see the purpose of learning and to value his abilities. During their one-on-one interview, Madison discovered that Jalen had a love for building and creating, and for learning about the world through nature and science. She also learned that Jalen had a strong connection with and passion for his native culture and traditions. As a result of the interview, Madison redesigned her lessons to include more hands-on building activities that would engage Jalen in the learning. For one learning experience, students built their own leprechaun traps that included simple machines, and that brought to life the theories of kinetic and potential energy (see [Figure 8](#)). It was the first project in which Jalen really excelled, allowing Jalen (and his classmates) to see himself in a different light. Because of Jalen's love of nature, Madison also created a unit on biomes that put students in charge of

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<sup>1</sup> The names used in these stories have been altered to maintain anonymity.

their learning and encouraged them to become experts on their chosen biomes. Lastly, Madison engaged her students in the history of their local native tribes, asking Jalen to be the class's spokesperson and expert all throughout the learning experience. His classmates came to him with questions about the learning, and his confidence and self-worth skyrocketed. By the end of the year, Jalen was participating more, interacting more with his classmates, and starting to recognize the value of his knowledge and skills. Madison's new approach has encouraged other learners as well, who are eager to share their expertise with the class, and who value the opportunity to direct their own learning.

"[Jalen] was engaged and even passionate about the topics we studied. That I never saw before. He seemed excited and invested in his learning. I also saw a change in myself. While I still have a long way to go, I am learning to step back and let the students be in control of their learning. Instead of doing the 'teaching,' I let students explore and gather the information to then teach each other."

—Madison, Teacher, Goldendale Primary School

### **Goldendale Middle School**

In Caroline's seventh-grade science class, Alex came across as guarded and disengaged. He was newer to the district, and he hadn't started to mix yet with the other students. Caroline sat down with Alex for a one-on-one interview, through which she learned a great deal about his interests, goals, history, relationships, and family dynamics. She discovered that Alex was eager to share, telling her more than she asked and deeply valuing the opportunity. He made it clear through their conversation that he cared about learning and really wanted to engage, but that he was lonely and was having a hard time finding friends and fitting in. Two of Alex's identified interests were art and watching game shows with his family at home. So, for the first assessment in their unit, rather than having her students complete a test or a one-pager, Caroline engaged her learners in an art project that gave them the opportunity to draw and color a killdeer, and then to watercolor paint components of the bird's ecosystem in the background, identifying them as biotic or abiotic (see [Figure 9](#)). With partners, learners also acted out different behaviors of the killdeer in front of the class. For their final assessment, Caroline incorporated Alex's interest in game shows. A killdeer was nesting at the public pool parking lot, and pairs of students were tasked with developing a solution. Rather than simply presenting their solutions to the class, learners presented a sales pitch in the format of the *Shark Tank* TV show—complete with the show's theme music and a "judge" from the community. Throughout the unit, Caroline made a point to partner Alex with personable, outgoing students who had similar interests to his. Along with becoming more engaged in the classroom, Alex opened up in ways beyond academics. He started going out of his way to tell Caroline hello, no longer wearing a hood on his head, and talking with other students and spending time with them after school. Every learner was engaged by the creative approach, valuing the opportunity to present real solutions. And at the end of the unit, in a class post-assessment, Alex and every other student in the class correctly identified key components and interactions within an ecosystem—developing connections and contributing to their community in the process.



**Figure 8:** A fourth-grade science project at Goldendale Middle School.



**Figure 9:** A seventh-grade science project at Goldendale Middle School.

### **Goldendale High School**

In Sophie's Anatomy and Physiology class, Lisa was terrified about making mistakes. She was so afraid of being wrong that she constantly second guessed herself, and she didn't have the trust to speak up with her answers, even when her answers were completely spot on. In a one-on-one interview, Sophie learned about Lisa's family and how they had just recently moved to a farm in the area. Lisa was incredibly caring toward her parents and four sisters, and she didn't mind doing her chores on the farm, which set her apart from a lot of her peers. When Sophie asked her what she wanted to do after school, Lisa said that she wanted to be a train engineer. When Sophie asked what interested Lisa about that career, Lisa said she wasn't sure, and that it was one of her parent's friend's jobs. Then she said another career she might be interested in is nursing, because that's what her mom wanted her to do. In Lisa's responses, Sophie observed the same lack of confidence, trust, and self-understanding that was visible in class. She was determined to help Lisa learn about herself, and to develop more confidence in making mistakes and learning from the process. To help develop Lisa's confidence, Sophie designed a learning experience in which students had two minutes to digitally drag and drop bone labels onto a skeleton. Then, as a class, they worked through where students got it right and wrong. Sophie helped her learners treat wrong answers not negatively, but positively—they grew more comfortable with being wrong, and with building from mistakes to develop their learning. That experience worked remarkably well to help Lisa come out of her shell, and since the students have come back for in-person learning, Lisa has been more willing to ask questions, and less wired to shy away from mistakes.

The success of the learning design process throughout GSD cannot be overstated. In the sharing of their stories, teachers described similar outcomes from their experiences with students, including:

- strengthened connections with learners,
- positive decision making,
- more creative and intentional learning design,
- improved academic and SEL outcomes, not just for individual students but for classes as a whole,
- increased student choice, voice, and agency, and
- a more open and enjoyable teaching experience.

“That’s been a change for the students, knowing that they have those choices. Less pressure on them to feel like they have to fit in this little box. But then also, it’s been less pressure on me in the end, because I’m meeting their needs in a better way.”

#### —Teacher, Goldendale Primary School

“I feel like I have a better understanding of the social-emotional needs of my students and how important it is to do things like interview them or talk to them on a personal level to get them to [know] you care...”

I’m constantly thinking now... I’m trying to be a lot more intentional about how I design lessons. I want to make sure that they’re purposeful, that they are engaging. I am trying a lot harder to be intentional and purposeful about why I’m doing the lessons I’m doing.”

#### —Teacher, Goldendale Middle School

“I love getting to know the students. And it’s... really helped me open up. I was like, okay, maybe when I do have a struggling student, I need to pull them aside, have a talk with them first and see what we need to do, and then teach the math through their eyes to make that connection.”

#### —Teacher, Goldendale High School

“I’m super proud of everybody... I think that [teachers are] starting to look carefully and closely... at students, and I have just tried to reinforce that in conversations with all teachers of, you know, what piece of which student can I see in this lesson, then how is it specifically designed for that student and why?”

#### —District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

One significant outcome of the TLF process and the district’s focus on SEL and well-being is teachers’ ability to articulate not only positive changes in students’ learning, but also the specific actions they took to effect those changes in partnership with their students.

Teachers now talk openly about their challenges and successes, celebrating their progress with joy and excitement.

“There’s a parallel. So, at the beginning of [teachers’] stories, many of our students were described as disconnected. And I think that connection with the teacher, and the joy that it’s bringing to the teacher, feeds back over to the student. That’s an interesting piece. We’re offering the students more choice based on who they are as human beings, but I also heard the teachers talking about their creativity in how they were assessing and how they were designing that lesson, the options that they were providing kids. So, same things on either side with the teachers and the students.”

**—Ellen Perconti, Superintendent, Goldendale School District**

“Teacher conversations and allowing them to learn from each other has really helped. You can see their eyes just light up... Just having them share those stories of their kids, their faces change, their voices change.”

**—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District**

“We have a lot more discourse and dialogue about being intentional and considering the needs of students.”

**—Teacher, Goldendale Middle School**

The individual learners (often those who were least served by traditional learning styles) told GSD’s teachers a lot about what might have been missing, or about what might be changed to not only improve those students’ individual experiences, but the experiences of the others in the learning environment as well. Getting to know even one student on a deeper, individual level opened the door for powerful shifts in the way learning was designed and delivered at all levels of schooling across GSD.

As the district looks to expand the reach of its learning design process to additional teachers and students, the experiences and insights gained during the 2020-21 academic year will serve as a valuable jumping-off point for spreading practices that will continue to make a difference for the district’s staff and students.

## **School Shifts**

The teaching and learning outcomes achieved throughout GSD can be attributed in no small part to changes in practice among school and district leaders, whose efforts have shifted the cultures of their schools. In the penultimate GSD Change Team meeting in May 2021, principals and other school-level members of the team were invited to share their thoughts and reflections from the year. Members used the following prompts as a guide:



- (1) What changes have you made in your leadership practice because of this work?
- (2) What changes or outcomes have you seen in your school that you think stem from this work?
- (3) What priorities do you have, and what do you hope to see for your school next year?

One of the biggest shifts in leadership practice noted throughout GSD at all levels of the district concerns the conversations taking place between leaders and their staff. Leading by example, school principals and district leadership shifted the focus of these conversations away from standards and students' academic performance and onto the learners' themselves—their individual identities, needs, and well-being. Through these conversations, leaders showed their teachers and other staff that they were fully supportive of them and their students, which took the pressure away from trying a new approach. One middle school teacher, who was hesitant to engage in the contributive learning process at first, ended up regularly using the Self-Understanding Learning Progression with her students, measuring students' progress on the Identity dimension of the Learning Progression at three separate points in the year. In her final evaluation, she commented, "I didn't want to do this. And now I'm so glad that I did." She said it was the first year she can remember when nobody was on her case about her position in relation to the standards, since the questions she did receive were instead about students, how they were doing and their response to her lessons.

"My questions are not around, 'Okay, so have you taught fractions?' My questions have been more about asking teachers... to go back and reflect, not just about the standards that they've taught, but the interaction, the relationships, the connections, how they've integrated... contributive learning and [in] what kinds of ways."

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

"Our conversations really have started, from the beginning on, what do you know about this kiddo that you know is going to engage him in this lesson, or what part of this lesson is going to meet the needs of this specific child, and to have the teacher constantly reflecting on the parts of their lesson that individually meet the needs of an individual student."

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

Contributive learning has also supported school leaders to be more intentional with their staff about their expectations around learning and well-being. Guided by TLF language and processes, leaders were able to clearly explain to their teachers what was expected of them and why, while emphasizing the moral purpose behind their new approach to teaching and learning. Leaders noted that this intentionality was a direct result of the fact that TLF was being implemented district wide.

“I've been a lot more intentional with my expectations for teachers to dive into this specific work, because number one, it was not just a new initiative that we came up with this year at [our] school—this was an initiative throughout the district. And I think that's important. I think that that cross-work between buildings is going to pay dividends, especially as students come to us in the future.”

**—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District**

Similarly, because of the district-wide partnership with TLF, leaders were able to offer more, and more targeted, professional learning opportunities to staff. As one school leader commented, “Too many times, we're doing kind of a potluck or smorgasbord of different initiative dabbling. This year was much more focused, focused with Learner First.”

With these changes to leadership practice across GSD, schools experienced and evidenced significant outcomes directly linked to their collective focus on contributive learning. Noted school-wide outcomes include:

- a shift from a content-centered to a student-centered approach,
- improved attitudes toward learning among both students and staff,
- a new urgency around well-being,
- higher student interest and engagement levels,
- strengthened knowledge of and relationships with students and their parents,
- a common, learner-first language among staff, and
- improved lesson design and assessment practice.

Possibly the most important cultural shift in GSD's schools was the shift to a student-centered approach that prioritized learners over academic content. It was a catalytic shift in that it opened the door for other important changes in practice and outcomes.

“A much higher percentage of our teachers did make a subtle shift away from making the content their first priority... [This] work has placed a high priority on knowing students well and becoming intentionally learner focused.”

**—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District**

As a result, student and staff attitudes toward learning have shifted dramatically. With an integrated focus on SEL driven by curricular links to self-understanding, connection, and competency, students are becoming more engaged in their academic learning, and teachers' experiences with their students are changing. Describing her experience observing math classes in school, one Change Team member talked about the negative attitude toward math she had always seen in students during years in the past. This year, she says, she's noticed a major difference in learners' attitudes, a difference the students have also articulated. One math teacher attributes these changes to reflection and SEL.

“The biggest change that I've seen in my own teaching so far, as a result of all of this, has been in the area of reflection. I don't think I ever really thought before about asking my students to reflect a lot on their learning as much as just get their learning done. But now, over this past year, it really has developed a lot into... reflecting on their own about self-understanding, social-emotional learning, that kind of stuff.”

—Teacher, Goldendale Middle School

Leaders also noted an interesting convergence between the COVID-19 pandemic and the focuses they've implemented through TLF. The pandemic created a new sense of urgency around getting to know students and their needs. TLF provided the tools and processes, and helped facilitate the behavior and mindset shifts, that supported schools to identify, prioritize, and respond to learning and well-being needs.

At the high school level, this year marked the first time that staff sat down with students and parents at the beginning of the year to ask questions, form connections, and help develop learner profiles that could inform teachers' approaches with their students. Additionally, leaders point to the development of a common language among staff, a language that's rooted in holistic learning. One Change Team member noted that it leads to progression: “The staff now has common language and common expectations on connecting with students and building those learner profiles, and what to focus on to have the students move up in a progressive way.”

Leaders have seen significant changes to lesson design throughout their buildings as a result of school- and district-wide focuses on student interests and engagement. They shared about how teachers' lessons are changing based on knowledge of students and their interests, and about how changes tailored even to individual students are benefitting teachers' classes as a whole.

“[Teachers] see that, ‘Well, I did this for this kiddo, but everybody really liked it...’ I've just seen a whole lot more of the individual student, all throughout the day—in the lesson planning, in the recess interaction, in the assessment, in the interest level.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

One school leader shared about a learning experience implemented in a science class, in which students were invited to demonstrate their understanding of photosynthesis in whatever way best suited them. One student loved to draw, so she chose to create a cartoon depicting a day in the life of a chloroplast, creatively describing the process of photosynthesis in a way that not only allowed her teacher to assess her understanding, but that also reflected her unique interests and abilities (see [Figure 10](#)).

“It's taking what that student's interest was, and reshaping how the assessment of that learning was going to go. And I think that's a great shift for all of us to consider... We don't have to give a multiple-choice test at the end of the unit. There are lots of

better ways to know what a student has discovered and what students know and are able to do.”

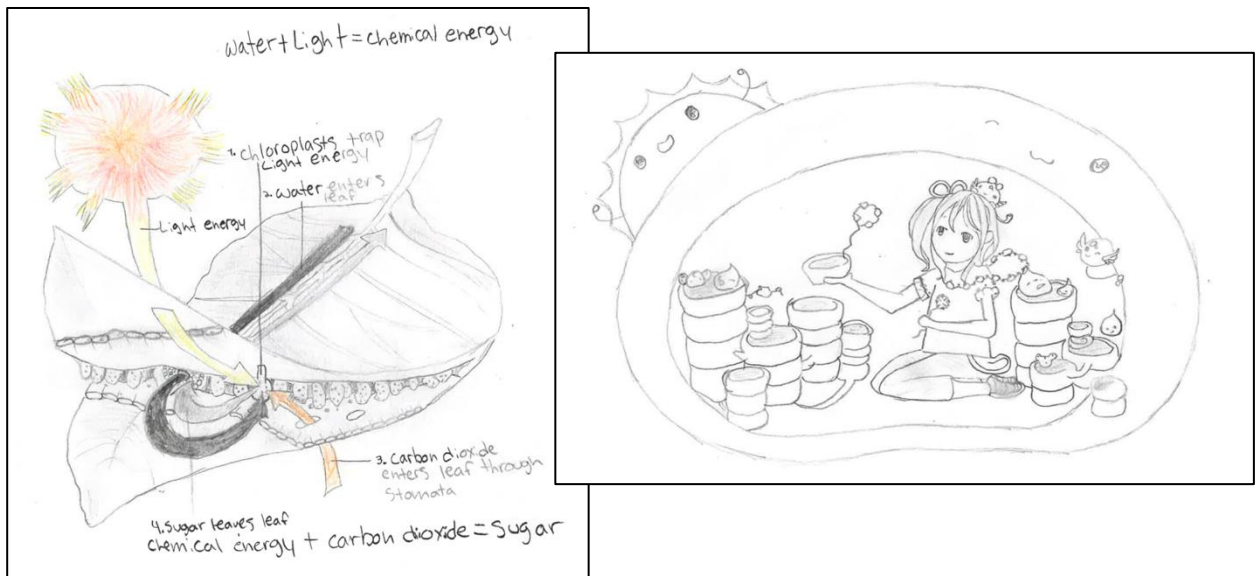
—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District

Discussing their schools’ priorities for the 2021-22 academic year, leaders all commented on their desire to continue the work and to reach even more of their students and staff. The hope is to expand outward with contributive learning tools and processes, to introduce new ways for teachers and others involved in the work to share their stories and experiences to learn from and motivate one another, and to keep up the professional, student-centered conversations that have made such an impact on the GSD experience.

“The priorities that I would like to see... would be to continue integrating at a high level and [to] start to move outwards... And then as we continue to grow, to help teachers, give them the tools, so that they really do have the tools and the expectation that that's who we are here at Goldendale School District.”

—District Change Team Member, Goldendale School District





**Figure 10:** Images from a cartoon created by a high school student to demonstrate her understanding of photosynthesis.

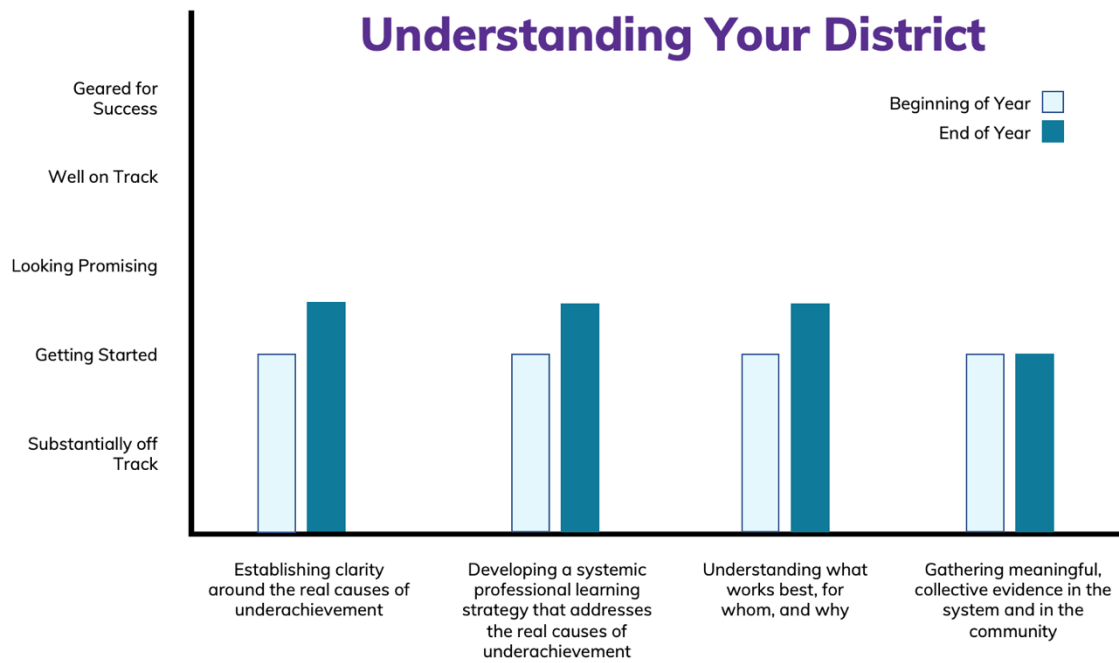
## District Capability

At the district level, one of the major successes of the Change Team was creating cohesion, alignment, and a solid structure of support for GSD's schools. The district was clear in its communication that the well-being of students and staff was the top priority both during and after the COVID-19 shutdown. Building off guidance from OSPI, it gave teachers permission to lead with students' social-emotional needs, and then leveraged the TLF process to ensure a dual focus on academics (standards) and SEL for those teachers engaged in the early implementation process.

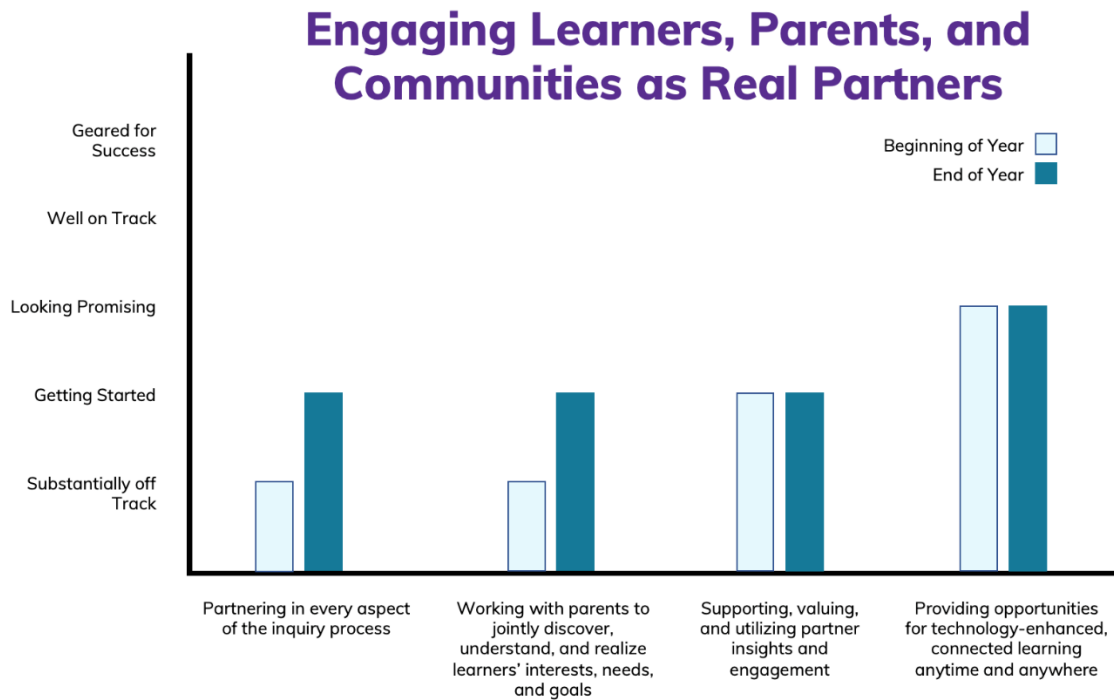
The leadership of Superintendent Ellen Perconti and the GSD Change Team was incredibly effective in (1) engaging stakeholders in professional discussions about the district, its staff and students, and their needs, (2) identifying goals, priorities, and actions consistent with GSD's vision of improving learning and well-being for all, and (3) making positive decisions and implementing targeted supports based on the identified needs of its students and staff. By forming a dedicated team that included the district superintendent, each school principal, a member of the school board, and a wide range of other district staff, GSD made a clear statement about its commitment to academic and SEL outcomes district wide.

At the end of the 2020-21 academic year, the GSD Change Team is again using the Capability Rubrics to measure progress against the baseline ratings they determined in fall 2020. Currently, the Change Team has completed end-of-year measurements using the Understanding Your District, Engaging Learners, Parents, and Communities as Real Partners, Identifying and Measuring What's Important, and Creating a Culture of Learning, Belonging, and High Expectations for All Capability Rubrics, which each include a range of individual dimensions. Figures 11-14 compare beginning-of-year and end-of-year ratings for the dimensions of those Capability Rubrics.

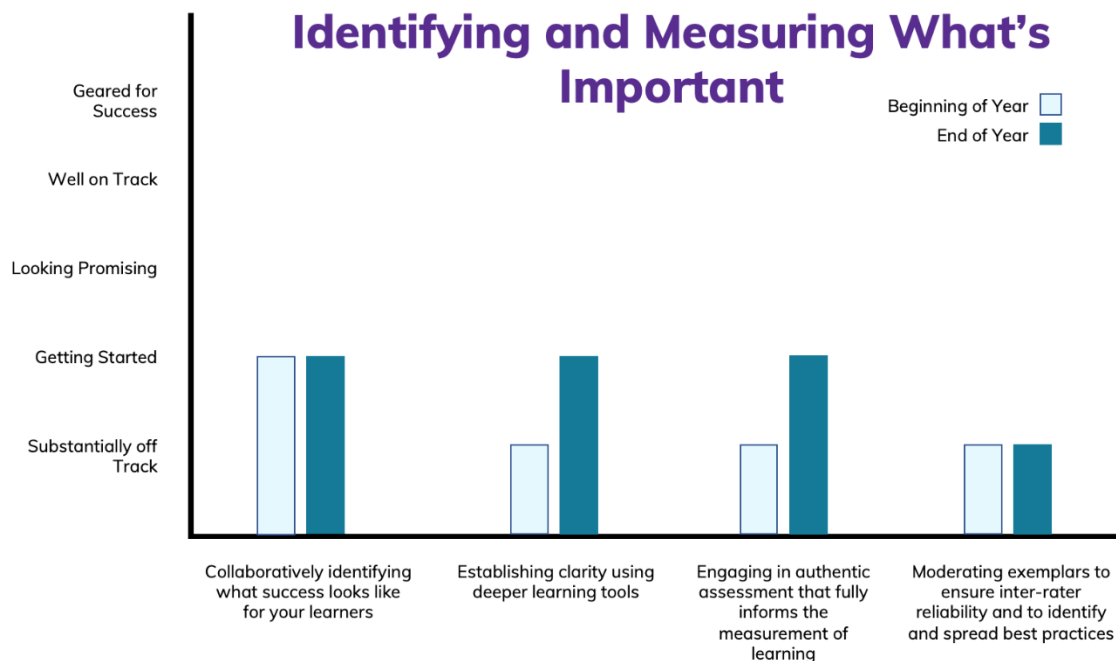




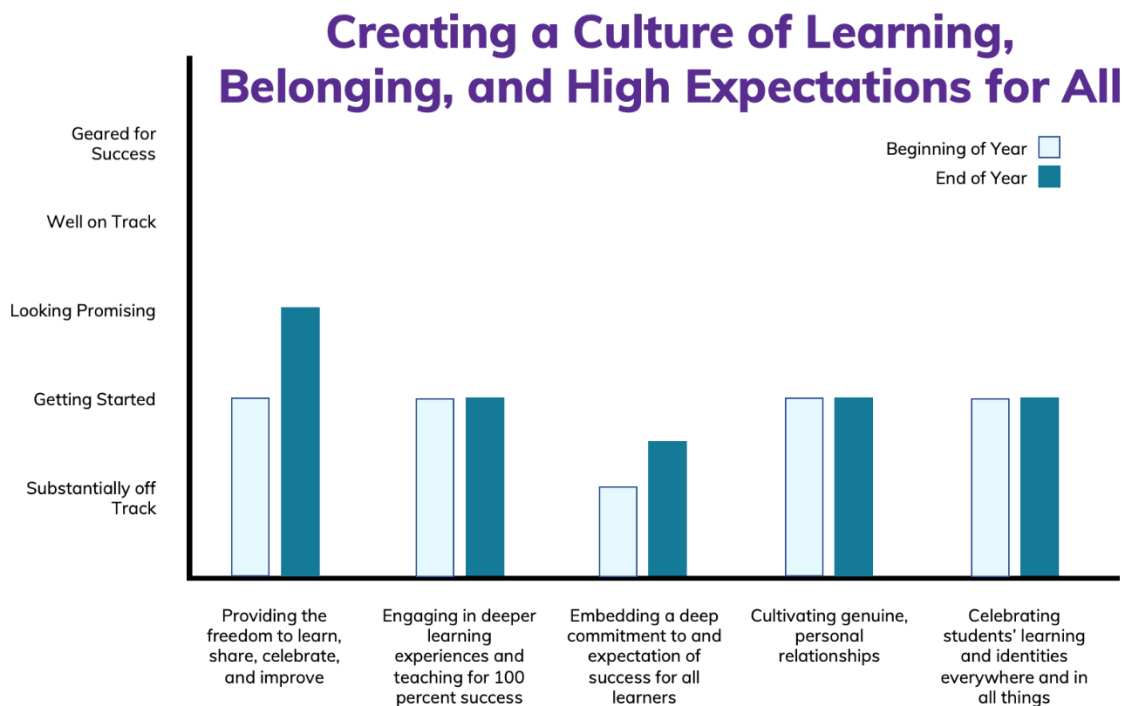
**Figure 11:** Comparison of beginning-of-year and end-of-year ratings for the dimensions of the Understanding Your District Capability Rubric.



**Figure 12:** Comparison of beginning-of-year and end-of-year ratings for the dimensions of the Engaging Learners, Parents, and Communities as Real Partners Capability Rubric.



**Figure 13:** Comparison of beginning-of-year and end-of-year ratings for the dimensions of the Identifying and Measuring What's Important Capability Rubric.



**Figure 14:** Comparison of beginning-of-year and end-of-year ratings for the dimensions of the Creating a Culture of Learning, Belonging, and High Expectations for All Capability Rubric.

To determine their end-of-year ratings, Change Team members engaged in rubric-guided discussions in which they identified specific evidence and indicators of the district's current levels of progression. The Understanding Your District Capability Rubric has four dimensions: (1) establishing clarity around the real causes of underachievement; (2) developing a systemic professional learning strategy that addresses the real causes of underachievement; (3) understanding what works best, for whom, and why; and (4) gathering meaningful, collective evidence in the system and in the community. On the rubric's five-point scale, the Change Team's end-of-year ratings show growth in the first three dimensions (see [Figure 11](#)). Evidence for their progression includes developing more meaningful pictures of individual learners and their needs, a mindset shift away from "What's wrong with these students?" to "What can I do to meet their needs?," and pockets of teachers identifying and acting on what works best for their learners. To progress moving forward, the Change Team will look to further spread best practices throughout the district, and to collect more meaningful data that tells them what they really need to know about students' learning and well-being.

With regard to engaging partners, GSD has experienced growth both in their engagement of learners in the inquiry and lesson design processes, and in their engagement of parents as valuable partners in their children's education. Change Team members noted the impact of teachers meeting with parents at the beginning of the school year to learn more about them and their kids, and that parents are beginning to feel more comfortable and confident to share their voices. The district plans to work to improve their processes for utilizing parents' input when shared, and to build off successes with technology-enhanced learning that were precipitated by the remote and hybrid learning models implemented in response to COVID-19.

GSD has placed a strong emphasis on identifying and measuring what's actually important for learners, as evidenced by their use of the Learning Progressions to measure students' SEL outcomes alongside academics. The Change Team engaged in continuous conversations about finding ways to make students successful, and the district understands that standardized assessment indicators don't provide the full picture of who their students really are. The lesson design training has helped teachers begin to consider different types of assessments, and also a range of assessments in addition to traditional standardized or formal testing. GSD does not yet have an established moderation process, which they will look to implement in the 2021-22 academic year (see the discussion of collaborative moderation in the following section of this report).

The positive cultural shifts achieved throughout GSD reflect the freedom leadership has provided to try new approaches and learn from mistakes. As evidenced by teachers' stories, many are beginning to form genuine, personal relationships with learners that are changing outcomes for students and teachers. Throughout GSD, despite a developing shift in mindset that all students can be successful, certain teacher behaviors and student academic data still indicate a willingness to accept that some students in the district will fail. Moving forward, the Change Team will continue to lead efforts to ensure that everyone in the district has high expectations—an expectation of success—for every individual learner.

At this stage in GSD’s contributive learning journey, district capability ratings reflect the newness and unfamiliarity of the capabilities and approaches consistent with contributive learning, which mark a departure from traditional methods of teaching, learning, and leading. The dimensions of TLF’s Capability Rubrics cover uncommon ground for school systems. By taking on these new focuses and approaches, GSD has committed to new ways of doing, and to a process that will continue to develop over years. These ratings also reflect that early implementation efforts have been focused in pockets. While tremendous successes have already been experienced, GSD’s district-wide ratings acknowledge that, to progress further, the work must reach even more students and teachers, which is a leading priority for 2021-22.

## NEXT STEPS: PLANS FOR THE 2021-22 ACADEMIC YEAR

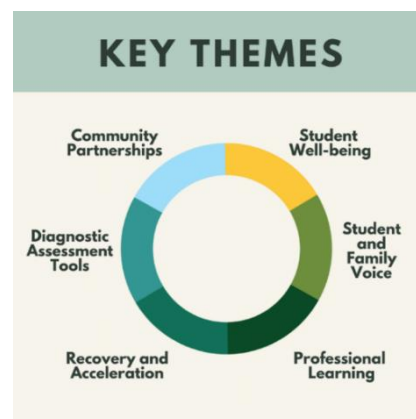
“We are going to continue with this next year, aren't we? I can see so much growth, and I don't want it to slip away.”

—School Board Member, Goldendale School District

The OSPI “Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan: Planning Guide 2021” states: “Learning cannot take place unless we attend to students’ overall well-being. Learning is social, emotional, and academic and is enhanced by relationships, social interaction, rich learning environments, and access to rigorous learning opportunities.”<sup>2</sup> The plan outlines six key themes leading into the 2021-22 academic year:

1. Student Well-Being
2. Student and Family Voice
3. Professional Learning
4. Recovery and Acceleration
5. Diagnostic Assessments
6. Community Partnerships

Through its partnership with TLF and its exemplary focuses throughout the 2020-21 academic year, GSD is well positioned to continue and accelerate its work within each of the themes identified above. The district’s recovery and acceleration plan will continue to emphasize students’ SEL and well-being needs first, while maintaining its commitment to achieving state and local standards. The professional learning and range of diagnostic assessment tools provided through its work with TLF will continue to expand to support GSD’s students and staff, and the district will look to reach additional teachers and students with its contributive



**Figure 15:** Six key themes identified by OSPI for the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

<sup>2</sup> “Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan: Planning Guide 2021.” OSPI. Pg. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/2021docs/OSPI-Academic-and-Student-Well-Being-Recovery-Plan-Planning-Guide.pdf>

learning focus in 2021-22. Through its learning design work, GSD experienced new levels of student voice, choice, and agency. Family and community voices were heard and utilized through a range of learning experiences, and GSD will continue to emphasize increased parent and community engagement in the coming year.

For 2021-22, OSPI has indicated that districts will need to (1) provide reporting on students' well-being and (2) emphasize inclusionary practices. GSD has already begun to assess and measure students' well-being through intentional learning design and the use of TLF's Learning Progression tools, and has taken strides to ensure district-wide reporting on SEL outcomes in 2021-22. By focusing on its least-served learners both at the district and individual school levels, GSD is implementing and strengthening its inclusionary practices by shaping a district in which teaching and learning work for **all** students, not only those students best served by the traditional academic system.

GSD's work with TLF is equity work—it supports each individual learner, regardless of race, culture, identity, gender, orientation, and the like, to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in the ways that reflect their individual interests and goals. Moving forward into 2021-22, the partnership will continue to expand in the ways best suited to identified district goals and priorities. GSD is planning to continue the work of the District Change Team, while also implementing individual School Change Teams in Goldendale Primary, Middle, and High Schools. Teams at the district and school levels will work together and in alignment to support one another in achieving academic, SEL, and well-being goals.

Using the TLF Learning Progression tools, the district has already begun to measure the SEL outcomes of self-understanding, connection, and competency alongside students' academic outcomes. GSD is planning to more widely incorporate these and other tools as well-being measures in 2021-22, ensuring that more students' well-being needs will be identified and then met through the process of learning.

Continuing its learning design work, GSD will also introduce a heavier focus on the collaborative moderation of teaching and learning. TLF's collaborative moderation process engages teachers and other staff in professional learning centered on (1) the academic and social-emotional learning that occurred through the learning process and (2) why that learning occurred (i.e., the assessments and pedagogical practices that resulted in desired learning outcomes). The process is intended to:

- develop a shared language and understanding around learning and well-being,
- identify and spread best practices among teachers,
- determine strengths and areas for collective improvement, and
- facilitate professional discussion among teachers and other district staff.

Overall, the 2021-22 academic year is an opportunity for GSD to become even more purposeful and intentional in its combined work with academic and social-emotional learning. GSD's early successes demonstrate the powerful effects of strong leadership and a shared moral purpose across a district of schools. Now, with the experiences from the 2019-



21 academic years, GSD is positioned to progress even further as it reaches more teachers, students, and families.

## CONCLUSION

While GSD had already committed to SEL and well-being before the COVID-19 shutdown, OSPI's response to the teaching and learning difficulties created by the pandemic gave the district permission to place an even stronger emphasis on its top priorities in partnership with TLF. Leading with students' social-emotional needs (i.e., putting well-being first) led to the creation of a district-wide Change Team that could engage in open, professional dialogue and make positive, student-centered decisions. The Change Team measured and monitored GSD's district capabilities and cultural commitment to well-being, and implemented actions and strategies targeted at the needs uncovered by staff, school board, student, parent, and community voices.

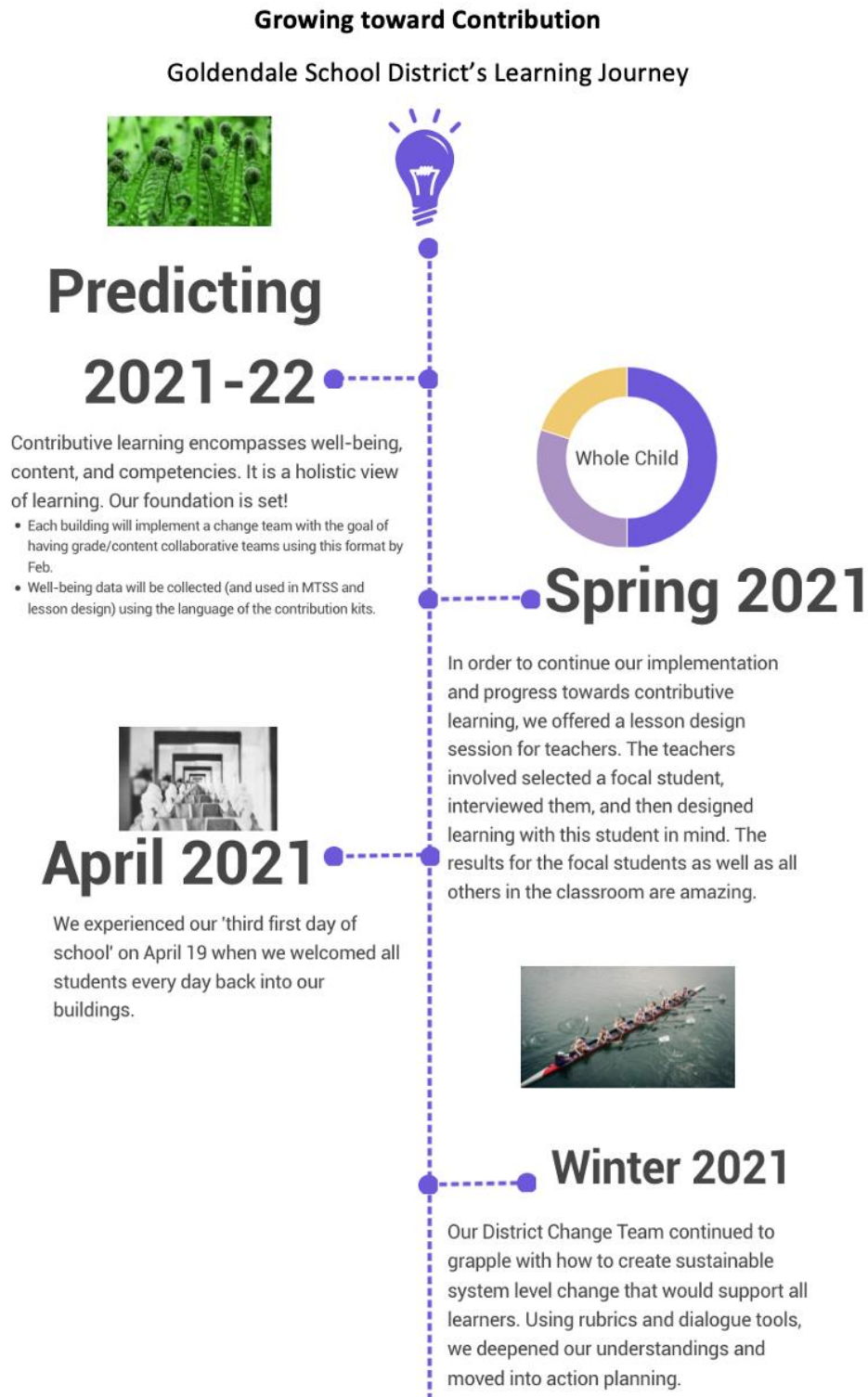
One of those implemented actions was a six-part professional learning program intended to enhance learning design in the district's three schools. Through the experience, teachers at all grade levels engaged in the process of (1) getting to know their learners as individuals with unique identities, interests, and goals, (2) making adjustments to their practice that reflected their new knowledge and understandings, and (3) sharing their experiences with other teachers and staff in ways that will spread best practices and build momentum for learning leading into the 2021-22 academic year. The learning design process represents a tremendous success of the GSD Change Team in identifying a growth opportunity aligned across state, district, and school priorities and designing a solution best suited to its needs.

The class-, school-, and district-level outcomes achieved at this early stage of implementation reflect strong district and school leadership. Leaders gave staff the permission and confidence to try new approaches and learn from them, and then to share honestly and openly about successes and challenges. Teachers engaged in the TLF process measured positive shifts in students' academic and SEL outcomes, and also reported positive shifts in their own practice and levels of well-being, largely stemming from strengthened connections with learners and more creative and intentional learning design. The stories shared by GSD's teachers and principals are inspiring and uplifting, and they speak to a promising 2021-22 academic year as their well-being and equity work continue to expand.

The key themes identified in the OSPI Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan for 2021 are fully aligned with the collective work of GSD and TLF. Having already identified specific next steps and ways forward for the start of 2021 in the areas of well-being; student, family, and community voice and engagement; and professional learning guided by tailored diagnostics and tools, GSD is ideally positioned to accelerate its journey toward learning and well-being for all.

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A:** Infographic created by Goldendale School District to describe their journey to contributive learning.





## Sept-Oct. 2020

We started the year in a remote model. Our teachers met with each student and family member. Part of this conversation was the development of a student well-being profile, used to inform development of an inclusive culture and content learning.

In October, we moved to an A/B hybrid model. We continued support of the use of well-being tools. The smaller groupings of students as well as these tools created an opportunity to know our students and design lessons based on this knowledge.



## March 2020

On March 13, 2020 Gov. Inslee closed all WA schools to in-person learning. During the spring closure our teachers connected with students, implemented learning design that focused on deeper learning, and engaged in professional learning that extended past the competencies described in deep learning towards contribution.



## Fall 2020

Even as we navigated the unknowns of the pandemic, we kept a focus on student well-being and learning. GSD did this through deep dialogue at the Change Team level, professional learning focused on well-being, contributive learning, and a culture of belonging.

## 2019

Connection: Choose one

We started with a staff well-being workshop, a way of honoring that we can't give what we don't have. Our first days together focused on trauma-informed practices. We supported this work through iterative sessions and coaching. A leadership team called Change Team was formed. This team, along with access to deeper learning sessions began to broaden our understanding of success.

## Appendix B: The Learner First Tools.

Tool	Description
<b>District Capability Rubrics (x5)</b>	Discussion-based rubrics that support school districts' growth in five key capability areas.
<b>Self-Understanding Learning Progression (x2)</b>	Descriptions of the dimensions of self-understanding—identity, place, purpose, and capacity—at five levels of progression to support cultural conditions, language development, and the measurement of current learning levels.
<b>Connection Learning Progression (x2)</b>	Descriptions of the dimensions of connection—interpersonal, environmental, conceptual, and universal—at five levels of progression to support cultural conditions, language development, and the measurement of current learning levels.
<b>Competency Learning Progression (x2)</b>	Descriptions of the contributive competencies—commitment, collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking—at five levels of progression to support cultural conditions, language development, and the measurement of current learning levels.
<b>Cultural Well-Being Rubric</b>	Descriptions of positive cultures of well-being at five levels of progression to support and strengthen learning cultures at district, school, and classroom levels.
<b>Teacher Capabilities Self-Assessment</b>	A tool to support teachers to develop the capabilities that lead to learning and well-being for all.
<b>Contributive Curriculum</b>	An SEL curriculum that describes what students will know, understand, and be able to do within the dimensions of self-understanding, connection, and competency. The curriculum supports the design of learning that simultaneously develops academic and SEL outcomes.
<b>Interview Guide</b>	Example questions for teachers for conducting one-on-one interviews with learners to better understand learners' identities, cultures, aspirations, and goals.
<b>Individual Profile</b>	A tool for building out profiles of individual learners based on information gathered throughout the learning process.
<b>Individual Action Plan</b>	A template for an action plan centered on who learners are as individuals, their unique goals and aspirations, and what they need to be successful.
<b>Pedagogical Practice Plan</b>	An action plan that supports teachers to develop their pedagogical practice.
<b>Learning Design Guide</b>	Supports the design of assessments, learning experiences, units, etc. to help teachers and students meet the complete range of curricular and wider well-being goals.
<b>Personal Well-Being Action Plan</b>	Supports teachers in the development of their personal wellbeing.
<b>Collaborative Moderation Tools</b>	A set of tools to support teachers through the collaborative moderation of assessment and practice.



# Mini-Cases

February – May  
2021

## Contributive Learning Design in Goldendale School District

### Self-Understanding

Understand who you are,  
how you fit into the world,  
your potential for success,  
and how you can  
contribute.

### Connection

Connect with others, your  
environments, your  
learning, and the world.

### Knowledge

Gain the knowledge you  
need to find meaning and  
fulfillment.

### Competency

Develop character,  
collaboration,  
communication, creativity,  
and critical thinking.



## Goldendale Primary School

**“That’s been a change for the students, knowing that they have those choices. Less pressure on them to feel like they have to fit in this little box. But then also, it’s been less pressure on me in the end, because I’m meeting their needs in a better way.”**  
- Teacher, Goldendale Primary School

To support teachers to design curricular learning that simultaneously developed desired academic (standards-based) and SEL outcomes, and that engaged students as true partners in the learning process, the GSD Change Team invited teachers from Goldendale Primary School, Middle School, and High School to participate in a 12 week series of professional learning modules centered on designing contributive learning—learning that develops self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and so helps students learn how to contribute (find meaning and success) in their own unique ways. **These are some of the impact stories from Goldendale Primary School throughout this series that demonstrate what Contributive Learning looks like in Goldendale School District.**



## The beat in his body.



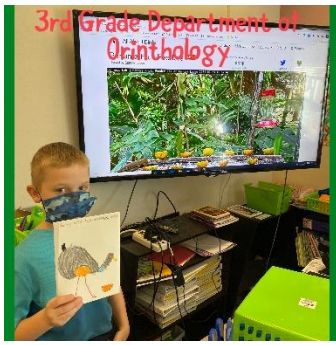
### Mini-Case #1

As his kindergarten teacher, Emily, described it, Mason was a learner with “the beat in his body.” Try as he might, Mason couldn’t ever seem to keep still and stop moving. Emily recognized his movement as a beautiful quality, and the last thing she wanted was to discourage it entirely. Instead, she wanted to focus Mason’s energy in ways that might better support his learning. In the past, academics had been challenging for Mason, and he struggled to retain learning from one day to the next. Add that and a challenging home life to an inability to sit still in class, and school had the potential to be a difficult environment. But Emily was determined to make sure he felt loved and safe, and that he could be successful in the classroom. When she sat down with Mason for a one-on-one interview, Mason shared his passions for gymnastics and dance, and showed her by performing some round offs outside. During the interview, Emily also noticed that Mason was highly empathetic. He recognized and was concerned when his family was struggling, or even when there were challenges out in his community. Emily’s idea was to design a learning experience that would take Mason outside the classroom environment and help him contribute to the community in a hands-on way. As a class, they went to the greenhouse at Goldendale Middle School and planted sunflower seeds, receiving photographs from the agriculture teacher as their plants grew and drawing pictures of their plants in class. Along with his constant movement, Mason spent a lot of time beatboxing in the classroom. While at one time she might have viewed the beatboxing as a distraction, Emily decided that she would embrace it. Performing for their principal, Emily and her students recited a song, and Mason provided the beat with his mouth, lighting up at the chance to perform a lead role. Through the unit, Mason’s retention of the concepts improved, and he had the opportunity to put his talents to use. And it all stemmed from Emily’s original decision to embrace—not inhibit—the person he was.

## Breaking out of her shell.

### Mini-Case #2

Maddy was very shy. She had a soft voice and a difficult time communicating with classmates, and she struggled with a lot of the academic language used in class. Her second-grade teacher, Olivia, decided to connect with her for a one-on-one conversation to learn more about Maddy and develop their relationship. During the interview, Olivia discovered that Maddy was really proud of her family. She loved talking about her mom, little sister, and grandma, and about how she helps them at home in whatever ways she can. Based on their conversation, Olivia was determined to design learning experiences that would help Maddy come out of her shell and have more of a voice in their classroom. Olivia looked for learning experience prompts that were centered on Maddy’s interests, which would help her develop an emotional connection to the learning. For example, Olivia drew connections to Maddy’s home life, and encouraged her to share about her family through the learning experience. When placing students in groups, Olivia made a point to group Maddy with classmates who wouldn’t overpower her, and whose listening skills would benefit Maddy’s learning and sharing. Olivia also began working with Maddy one-on-one twice a week after school, and then walking her home at the end of the sessions, getting to know Maddy’s grandma as well through the process. While Maddy is still quiet, Olivia has noticed that she’s started keeping to herself less and less while at school, instead playing with others on the playground and even smiling a bit more in the classroom, and it links back in no small part to the personal connection that Olivia has developed with Maddy and her family.



## Creating a culture of belonging.

### Mini-Case #3

Returning to school after the COVID-19 shutdown, first-grade teacher Eleanor noticed that the social-emotional needs of her students were more pressing and visible than ever before. Through GSD's focus on The Learner First process in schools, Eleanor felt that she had the permission to prioritize students' social-emotional learning and to respond to those needs that were present in the classroom. She took the time to work one-on-one with Noah, a learner who struggled with low self-esteem and with negative feelings about himself and his family. These feelings led to negative classroom behaviors and to situations where he was getting himself into trouble, which only intensified his feelings of shame and the low opinion he had of himself. Eleanor started checking in with Noah regularly, focusing a lot of their work together on relationships and on how to respond when something doesn't go right. She helped him understand that it's okay to make mistakes, that he can bounce back even better, and that he's cared about and valued and has a place in the classroom. Eleanor has learned that it's okay to slow down, take a breath, and take the time to build relationships with her students. It benefits learners socially, emotionally, and even academically.

### Mini-Case #4

Madison, a fourth-grade teacher, identified Jalen as a student who was quietly slipping through the cracks of the classroom. He was always respectful, but he was so shy and quiet that Madison had a hard time connecting with him, and she noticed he wasn't connecting with his classmates either. He didn't particularly like school, and he was lacking ambitions and goals for the future. Madison observed that although Jalen was a very bright student, he struggled to see the purpose of learning and to value his abilities. During their one-on-one interview, Madison discovered that Jalen had a love for building and creating, and for learning about the world through nature and science. She also learned that Jalen had a strong connection with and passion for his native culture and traditions. As a result of the interview, Madison redesigned her lessons to include more hands-on building activities that would engage Jalen in the learning. For one learning experience, students built their own leprechaun traps that included simple machines, and that brought to life the theories of kinetic and potential energy. It was the first project in which Jalen really excelled, allowing Jalen (and his classmates) to see himself in a different light. Because of Jalen's love of nature, Madison also created a unit on biomes that put students in charge of their learning and encouraged them to become experts on their chosen biomes. Lastly, Madison engaged her students in the history of their local native tribes, asking Jalen to be the class's spokesperson and expert all throughout the learning experience. His classmates came to him with questions about the learning, and his confidence and self-worth skyrocketed. By the end of the year, Jalen was participating more, interacting more with his classmates, and starting to recognize the value of his knowledge and skills. Madison's new approach has encouraged other learners as well, who are eager to share their expertise with the class, and who value the opportunity to direct their own learning.

**Teacher, Goldendale  
Primary School**

"It's been nice to be able to really be given the, you know, the go ahead to focus on the social-emotional, and, you know, because it, it is so, you know, right in our faces as teachers on a daily basis, and we all want to connect and help and help them to grow. We were given the option to do that. And so that has helped. It's still been hard, but it has helped with our decision making and our relationships with these kiddos.

It's going to make us all able to learn better when we're, when we're bonded in that way."



## Agency and choice.

### Mini-Case #5

Sasha was a learner who did just enough in the classroom to keep her second-grade teacher, Natalie, unconcerned. For the most part, Sasha quietly completed her work, and it would have been easy to overlook her. But Natalie noticed that, often, Sasha would make rude or inappropriate comments under her breath that were directed at others in the class. To Natalie, it seemed that the comments were less an intentional way of being rude to her peers, and more an involuntary response to feeling disconnected and isolated from the rest of her classmates. With her class, Natalie started asking more questions about who her learners were and what they were interested in, helping to establish common ground and a deeper understanding among her students. She learned that Sasha really enjoyed art activities and the chance to be creative in the classroom. So, when working through assessments, Natalie started giving her learners more choice as to how they presented their learning. Rather than giving them different assessments entirely, she presented three or four different ways that learners might show what they learned, and it made a significant impact on Sasha. She valued the sense of control over her choices, and she built confidence by communicating her learning her way. In time, the rude comments started going away—the class was connected, and Sasha's panic disappeared. For Natalie, the change in approach wasn't easy. It was hard to give up that control to her learners, and to move away from a more step-by-step way of delivering and assessing learning. But in the end, she says, it was well worth the change.

## Beyond the classroom.

### Mini-Case #6

Naomi, a third-grade teacher, was having a difficult time connecting with Ingrid. She wasn't engaged in class or an active participant in their learning experiences, and whenever Naomi called on her, she never said much in reply. Naomi decided that a one-on-one interview might be a helpful way for Ingrid to open up and share a little more about herself and her interests. During their conversation, Ingrid mentioned that she really liked looking under rocks. Naomi ran with the discovery. She shared learning and materials with her class about Jane Goodall and other female scientists and, given Ingrid's love of nature, wove an overarching bird theme through the class's learning during the course of the year. The bird theme was woven into art lessons and leveraged to support students' graphing and writing skills, and the class regularly examined an online bird cam that they could use to keep up with birds remotely. The theme engaged parents in their kids' learning, and it helped bond Naomi's learners together in the classroom. At one point in their learning journey, Ingrid was found to have stolen some items from the classroom, which was a setback on the progress she'd been making in class. But later, when another student helped her clean out her desk, Ingrid gave her tickets that the students could use to buy classroom supplies, as a thanks for her help. Ingrid might still be a little conflicted, but her goals for the future are becoming clearer, as is the person she'd like to become. When she's older, she told Naomi, she wants to contribute by helping out people who don't have enough. Through GSD's focus on contributive learning, Ingrid will have the opportunity to develop her passion for improving others' lives—for giving, not taking—in the years still to come in her journey at school.



# Mini-Cases

February – May  
2021

## Contributive Learning Design in Goldendale School District

### Self-Understanding

Understand who you are,  
how you fit into the world,  
your potential for success,  
and how you can  
contribute.

### Connection

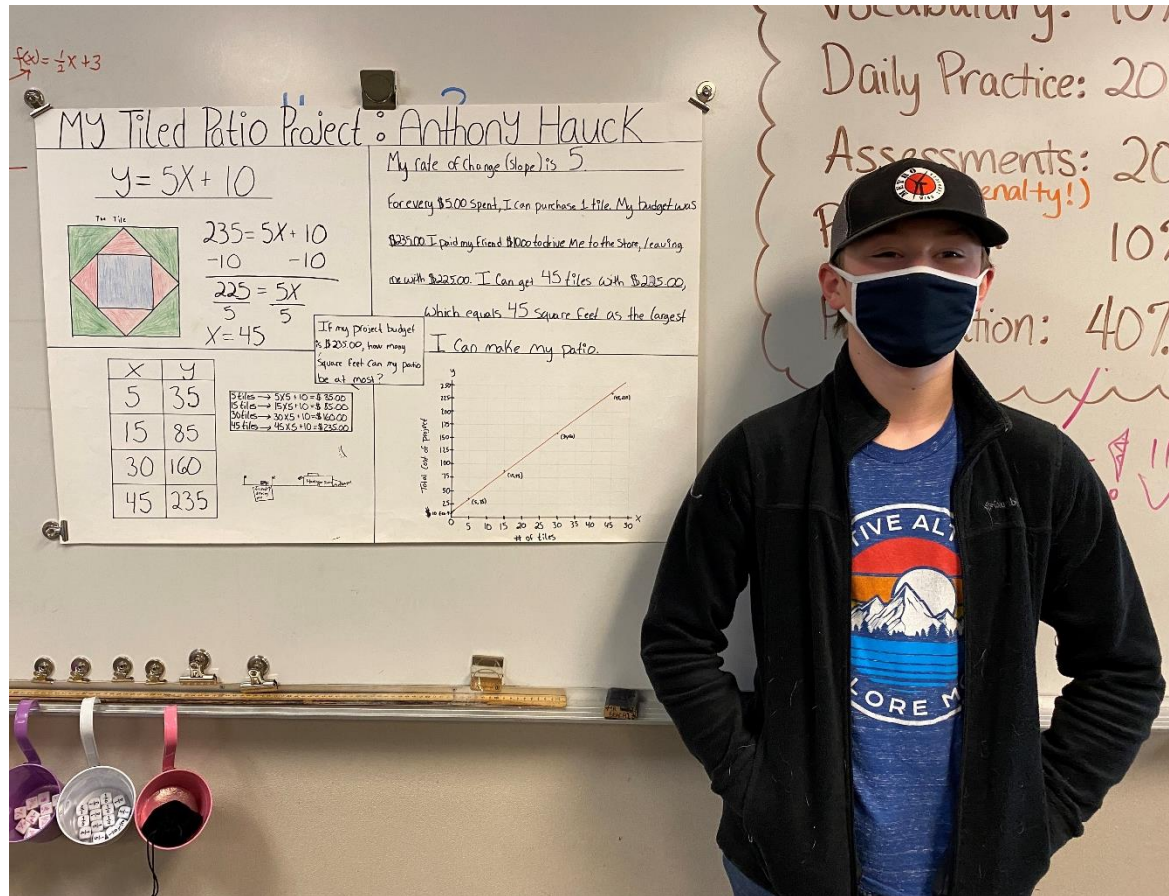
Connect with others, your  
environments, your  
learning, and the world.

### Knowledge

Gain the knowledge you  
need to find meaning and  
fulfillment.

### Competency

Develop character,  
collaboration,  
communication, creativity,  
and critical thinking.



## Goldendale Middle School

"I'm constantly thinking now... I'm trying to be a lot more intentional about how I design lessons. I want to make sure that they're purposeful, that they are engaging. I am trying a lot harder to be intentional and purposeful about why I'm doing the lessons I'm doing." - Teacher, Goldendale Middle School

To support teachers to design curricular learning that simultaneously developed desired academic (standards-based) and SEL outcomes, and that engaged students as true partners in the learning process, the GSD Change Team invited teachers from Goldendale Primary School, Middle School, and High School to participate in a 12 week series of professional learning modules centered on designing contributive learning—learning that develops self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and so helps students learn how to contribute (find meaning and success) in their own unique ways. **These are some of the impact stories from Goldendale Middle School throughout this series that demonstrate what Contributive Learning looks like in Goldendale School District.**

## Mini-Case #1

Coming back from the COVID-19 shutdown, Hailey, a sixth-grade Math teacher, needed to move into the standard of division of fractions. But given everything surrounding the past year of schooling, with being in and out of school and with fragmented learning, coupled with general differences in understanding that are present leading into any unit, Hailey wanted to get a sense of where her students were at before they started. She put together a “Tell Me What You Know” pre-assessment, which included guided, open-ended questions and prompts to gauge learners’ existing knowledge and understandings. Looking over her students’ responses, Hailey saw a giant chasm between current levels of understanding. Some students couldn’t even begin to diagram basic fractions, or to explain what was meant by “three fourths,” for example. For other students, it was completely the opposite. They provided real-life examples of fractions and their uses, elaborating extensively and using intentional vocabulary. Hailey was blown away by the disparity. She decided that when it was time to begin the unit, there was no way she could give all her students the same lesson—in one way or another, it wouldn’t be fair. So, for the learners who needed a refresher on the more foundational fraction concepts, Hailey took the time to review and reteach them those lessons as needed. Meanwhile, for the students who didn’t need the refresher, Hailey designed an independent project with basic instructions, and sent them off on their own. The prompt involved jewelry that needed to be fit within boxes and shipped, but it withheld one important piece of information: the size of the shipping boxes. She left it to the learners to eventually discover they were missing information, to come back and retrieve it, and to keep running with the problem from there. For Hailey, it was one of the first times she had seen them thoroughly challenged in Math that year, and an absolute pleasure to watch it unfold. By taking the time to assess learning up front, every learner was given what they needed—when they needed it.

**Not all students  
need the same.**

## Mini-Case #2

**Small steps  
forward.**

Naomi, a third-grade teacher, was having a difficult time connecting with Ingrid. She wasn’t engaged in class or an active participant in their learning experiences, and whenever Naomi called on her, she never said much in reply. Naomi decided that a one-on-one interview might be a helpful way for Ingrid to open up and share a little more about herself and her interests. During their conversation, Ingrid mentioned that she

really liked looking under rocks. Naomi ran with the discovery. She shared learning and materials with her class about Jane Goodall and other female scientists and, given Ingrid’s love of nature, wove an overarching bird theme through the class’s learning during the course of the year. The bird theme was woven into art lessons and leveraged to support students’ graphing and writing skills, and the class regularly examined an online bird cam that they could use to keep up with birds remotely. The theme engaged parents in their kids’ learning, and it helped bond Naomi’s learners together in the classroom. At one point in their learning journey, Ingrid was found to have stolen some items from the classroom, which was a setback on the progress she’d been making in class. But later, when another student helped her clean out her desk, Ingrid gave her tickets that the students could use to buy classroom supplies, as a thanks for her help. Ingrid might still be a little conflicted, but her goals for the future are becoming clearer, as is the person she’d like to become. When she’s older, she told Naomi, she wants to contribute by helping out people who don’t have enough. Through GSD’s focus on contributive learning, Ingrid will have the opportunity to develop her passion for improving others’ lives—for giving, not taking—in the years still to come in her journey at school.



### Mini-Case #3

In her sixth-grade English class, Anna developed an engaging unit around the illustrated children's book *The Lost Thing* by Shaun Tan. On their first time through, students read the story without seeing any of the illustrations, making inferences about the "lost thing" and what it might have been. The next day, learners read through the story again, trying to pull out the plot of the story and making additional inferences about the book's meaning. Then, the students read the story with its illustrations, and even watched an animated short film that was adapted from the book. The students discussed the book's themes and symbolism, and they were able to discuss utopia and dystopia as they related to the story. One of Anna's former students was a graduate of architecture school. Anna sent him *The Lost Thing*, and then interviewed him online both about the book and his architecture career. Anna shared the recording with her class, in which the former student talked about the brutalist architecture featured in the book and showed the types of projects he had worked on. The students were blown away by his work and the buildings he showed them, and by the fact that someone who had gone to their school, who had sat in the same seats as them, was working in a field as wonderful as architecture.

Jonathan, one of Anna's current students, was a learner who didn't like wasting his time. If he didn't see the point to a lesson or assignment, often he just wouldn't do it. Anna expressed her concern to Jonathan and his mom, explaining that she was worried that he wasn't very happy in the classroom. That very simple act—showing Jonathan she cared—completely transformed their relationship. Immediately, Jonathan started opening up, sharing about his feelings and what was happening in his life. Their relationship had an impact on his academics as well. Writing about what he learned from *The Lost Thing*, Jonathan said, "We shouldn't take things for granted. We need to realize and be thankful for what you have. And instead of wanting and wanting, you should open your eyes and be thankful for what you have, because you might wake up one day and not have it anymore." By the end of the term, Jonathan was going above and beyond in his classes, even completing additional work to receive extra credit. A well-designed unit—and a deeper relationship—completely reshaped his experience at school.

#### Teacher, Goldendale Middle School

"This is the same kid who was doing minimal, who wouldn't talk to me, who seemed so sad... And now he's talking about his feelings. And he's going above and beyond. And I'm just so happy."

## Connecting to curriculum.

### Mini-Case #4

Joel was a perfectionist. He wanted every single letter to be perfect, and it was slowing him down and discouraging him in class because he always got frustrated when he couldn't keep up. His fifth grade teacher, Autumn, saw his challenge as an opportunity to take a deep breath, slow down their lessons, and design meaningful learning experiences built around students' interests and needs. The experiences that came out of Autumn's planning were engaging and easy for her learners to get behind. One was a project about the thirteen colonies, in which students took ownership of their learning and selected a colony, and then created a brochure to share about the colony with others. Because of her learners' interest in space, Autumn also incorporated NASA into their learning, regularly visiting its website with her students and engaging in "web quests" about black holes and other space-related concepts. It was the perfect time to work in a story about space, so the students read *Zathura* by Chris Van Allsburg, and instead of simply writing out their inferences about the book, Autumn gave them the opportunity to draw their interpretation of the story, supporting them to choose the type of assessment that best suited their learning style. These powerful, cross-curricular learning experiences engaged learners around relevant topics, while also offering choice in how they demonstrated their learning.

# Mini-Cases

February – May  
2021

## Contributive Learning Design in Goldendale School District

### Self-Understanding

Understand who you are,  
how you fit into the world,  
your potential for success,  
and how you can  
contribute.

### Connection

Connect with others, your  
environments, your  
learning, and the world.

### Knowledge

Gain the knowledge you  
need to find meaning and  
fulfillment.

### Competency

Develop character,  
collaboration,  
communication, creativity,  
and critical thinking.



## Goldendale High School

**“At the beginning of the stories, many of our students were described as disconnected. And I think that connection with the teacher, and the joy that it's bringing to the teacher, feeds back over to the student. We're offering the students more choice based on who they are as human beings, but I also heard the teachers talking about their creativity in how they were assessing and how they were designing that lesson, the options that they were providing kids.”**  
– Change Team Member – Goldendale School District

To support teachers to design curricular learning that simultaneously developed desired academic (standards-based) and SEL outcomes, and that engaged students as true partners in the learning process, the GSD Change Team invited teachers from Goldendale Primary School, Middle School, and High School to participate in a 12 week series of professional learning modules centered on designing contributive learning—learning that develops self-understanding, connection, knowledge, and competency, and so helps students learn how to contribute (find meaning and success) in their own unique ways. **These are some of the impact stories from Goldendale High School throughout this series that demonstrate what Contributive Learning looks like in Goldendale School District.**

## Mini-Case #1

Harry, a high school Physical Education teacher, identified Michael as a learner who was isolated and disconnected from his peers and his learning. Michael felt that the written work he had to do in PE class was a waste of time, because it was taking away from the time he could have been spending improving himself physically. After learning more about Michael in a one-on-one interview, Harry decided to adjust his assessment of Michael's learning to make it more suited to his personal learning style. Instead of having Michael complete written work, Harry started having conversations with him every day in which Michael could communicate his conceptual knowledge and understandings and discuss them with his teacher in a more formative way. This led to deeper, one-on-one conversations through which Harry and Michael could develop a connection. Another learner, Naomi, didn't enjoy the physical aspect of PE, and didn't see the value in working on her health. Through an interview, Harry learned about her home life and her range of responsibilities, and that her grades were preventing her from playing basketball for the high school. Harry made a point to motivate her by incorporating basketball and more of her interests into the lessons, and it's resulted in higher attendance and a greater willingness to complete work. For Harry, the next step is reaching even more of his learners.

### Teacher, Goldendale High School

"The interviews were great—that was the best part. During the interview, it opened the door that I can have these conversations with these kids and kind of get to know them better. And it kind of helped them understand that I did care about who they were as a person. And that was great... Now I realize I should try to [have] deeper conversations with each student as I go throughout the week."

**Small actions have a big impact.**

## Mini-Case #2

Riley observed that Kyle was having trouble with motivation in her English class. He didn't participate and slept most of the time in class, and he wasn't turning in any of his assignments. But Riley also noticed that at times, when the class was talking about topics unrelated to school, he was animated and heavily involved in the conversation. She felt that if there were ever assignments that truly interested him, he might be more willing to engage. When they met for a one-on-one interview, Kyle was honest about why he wasn't doing the work, saying that, for example, he felt reading was boring, or he didn't like history, or he just didn't want to take the time to do schoolwork. Later, Riley realized that a lot of the assignments Kyle was turning in were projects that he could do on paper. Riley put the pieces together and, eventually, Kyle told her that it would help if she could print out all the assignments on paper, so that he didn't have to submit them online. Riley changed her approach and started printing assignments for Kyle, and he started turning in more work as a result. In addition, Riley made changes to her lesson design, looking for opportunities to come up with creative projects that provided students with chances to engage in hands-on, more active learning. Kyle stopped sleeping in class and started participating more actively during lessons. And his classmates benefited from the changes, too. While in the past nobody had spoken up about wanting their assignments printed, once Riley started doing it for Kyle, and printing out extras in case others needed them, other learners started taking her up on it, too, engaging more fully in accessible learning.



### Mini-Case #3



**Connection  
is critical.**

Sophie identified two learners across her science classes who were being underserved by current teaching and learning styles. One of her biology students, James, was having a hard time finding any purpose in his learning while learning remotely during COVID-19. Without the connection to his classmates and teacher, or the physical connection to the classroom and school, he no longer bothered completing his work and was disengaged from the remote form of learning. He only showed up in online class occasionally and never turned his camera on, so Sophie hadn't had the opportunity to meet him. Many of James's previous teachers had told Sophie how bright and capable he was. And when Sophie talked with him one-on-one, she finally got the chance to see it. She learned that James likes when things can be fit neatly into boxes, exactly where they're supposed to be—like, for example, with math. Dealing with reading, emotions, and other “less neat” aspects of school didn't appeal to him. But math, sometimes science, and video games did, and James hoped to someday be a video game developer. One of the standards in biology was to be able to build a model of photosynthesis and to explain it in words. To try to capture James's interest, Sophie gave her students the opportunity to choose and be creative about how to build their model, hoping James might create a storyboard for a video game about photosynthesis. While James wasn't able to engage with the experience, others of Sophie's learners ran with the opportunity, designing comic books, flipbooks, and all sorts of creations to demonstrate their learning in a fun, creative way. After James returned to in-person learning, he engaged a lot more, seeking out Sophie to talk before class and communicating in ways that they hadn't before, thanks to the connection they were able to form.

In Sophie's Anatomy and Physiology class, Lisa was terrified about making mistakes. She was so afraid of being wrong that she constantly second guessed herself, and she didn't have the trust to speak up with her answers, even when her answers were completely spot on. In a one-on-one interview, Sophie learned about Lisa's family and how they had just recently moved to a farm in the area. Lisa was incredibly caring toward her parents and four sisters, and she didn't mind doing her chores on the farm, which set her apart from a lot of her peers. When Sophie asked her what she wanted to do after school, Lisa said that she wanted to be a train engineer. When Sophie asked what interested Lisa about that career, Lisa said she wasn't sure, and that it was one of her parents' friend's jobs. Then she said another career she might be interested in is nursing, because that's what her mom wanted her to do. In Lisa's responses, Sophie observed the same lack of confidence, trust, and self-understanding that was visible in class. She was determined to help Lisa learn about herself, and to develop more confidence in making mistakes and learning from the process. To help develop Lisa's confidence, Sophie designed a learning experience in which students had two minutes to digitally drag and drop bone labels onto a skeleton. Then, as a class, they worked through where students got it right and wrong. Sophie helped her learners treat wrong answers not negatively, but positively—they grew more comfortable with being wrong, and with building from mistakes to develop their learning. That experience worked remarkably well to help Lisa come out of her shell, and since the students have come back for in-person learning, Lisa has been more willing to ask questions, and less wired to shy away from mistakes.

## Mini-Case #4

Jake was a bright student who wasn't completing any work in Math class. His teacher, Kim, noticed that he was withdrawn, and she hoped to develop a connection and learn more about him through a one-on-one interview. During their conversation, she discovered that Jake loved history, and that, like most freshman, he wasn't enrolled in a history class that year. When Kim asked what he might do with his passion for history, Jake told her he wanted to make video games, saying that he was tired of playing games with incorrect historical facts. He wanted to make video games that get the facts right. After their conversation, Kim designed a learning experience through which students picked a career of interest and connected it to the math they would need for that career. And although Jake didn't complete the assignment, he did have a long conversation with Kim about the math that would be required for designing video games, telling her that he would need to be able to code and also to solve systems of equations, which was the unit they were about to move into. Since the one-on-one interview, Kim and Jake have had regular conversations that have helped them develop a positive, trusting relationship. Jake started asking questions and working closely with Kim, who's confident that they're headed in the direction of his goals.

With Angela, Kim developed a bond built around a shared love of animals. Through their interview, she learned that Angela was interested in becoming a vet or a vet tech. She told Kim that she didn't enjoy school very much, so, after their conversation, Kim worked to continue to develop their relationship and to help Angela develop more positive feelings about school. As a result, Angela started talking with Kim all the time, and even began attending her after-school math group. She now tells Kim that she's her favorite teacher, and that while, before, she didn't look forward to anything at school, now she looks forward to coming to Math class.

**Making  
learning  
real.**

**Teacher, Goldendale  
High School**

"I love getting to know the students. It's really helped me open up. I was like, okay, maybe when I do have a struggling student, I need to pull them aside, have a talk with them first and see what we need to do, and then teach the math through their eyes to make that connection. That's probably my biggest takeaway that I've used from this."