EDUCATING ALL LEARNERS

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The Educating All Learners Alliance
SAN DIEGO SCHOOL STUDY TOURS
January 2023

BUNDLE

EALA School Study Tours

About EALA School Study Tours

EALA developed the EALA School Study Tours initiative to translate knowledge into practice and build more equitable learning environments and student experiences.

As a part of this initiative, in January 2023, EALA alongside Learner Centered Collaborative, selected 3 schools to host tours that focused on centering promising practices for students with disabilities and learning differences.

8 Visiting School Teams toured schools, collaborated and learned with key school and community members, and witnessed implementation whether it be in a classroom or behind the scenes. After all tours, the group attended a Reflection Summit to put their thoughts and reflections into an action plan to bring home. The tour experience centered on reflection and opportunity to bring aspects or strategies back to attendees' home school or district.

About the Bundle

This Resource Bundle is a compilation of resources developed as a part of this initiative intended to support school teams both on, and outside of, these tours. When prompted (see the red arrows), click the images to access the full content items.

San Diego School Study Tours

Click to
Play Video

EALA PROMISING PRACTICES

INSTRUCTION

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

When there are evidence based practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment that show promise for students with disabilities, then their use will contribute to improved outcomes for all.

Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Teaching

When learning incorporates culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices, all students find a sense of belonging and relevancy in classroom instruction.

FRAMEWORK

Learner Centered Models

When there are practices that schools can implement at both a schoolwide and individual level that can improve student engagement—especially attendance and discipline outcomes—for students with disabilities and learning differences, then their use will improve outcomes for all students.

COLLABORATION

Family Engagement

When all school staff can communicate and work with families through the special education process, then families feel more included and engaged, contributing to improved school experience and transition.

Community Engagement

When schools can lean on communities and organizations for support, more resources are made available and all students have further opportunities for local or community engagement and belonging.

OPERATIONS

Transition Planning

When there are practices in place that schools can implement to support transition plans to effectively prepare students with disabilities for post-secondary credential, then their use will improve transition for all students.

Data Use

When schools collect, analyze, and respond to data on student achievement, attendance, and discipline, they can use cycles of continuous improvement and can calibrate instruction to craft individualized learning experiences for each student, especially students with individual education plans (IEPs) or learning differences.

Scheduling

When students with individual education plans (IEPs) or learning differences are prioritized in the master schedule, then those students are paired with the right teachers and classes and there is proactive service planning for better collaboration between teacher and service provider.

Compliance Management

When there is effective compliance management, then teachers can dedicate more time to instruction and behavior/transition outcomes to benefit all students.

LEADERSHIP

Leader Commitment

When leaders and teachers have mindsets of shared ownership and the belief that all students can achieve, then outcomes for students with disabilities and learning differences can improve. (For example, mindset impacts instructional choices and allows for better collaboration among adults.)

Innovative Structures of Support

When schools establish multiple means of staffing and innovative structures of support, students receive more personalized instruction and scaffolded support. When staff across specialties have space to collaborate, all students benefit.

Educator Development

When teachers have access to effective pre-service and in-service development, then they are better able to support students with disabilities and learning differences.

# School Study Tours: Collaborative Reflection

EALA Created the Reflection Guide to support visiting educators on the tours. This guide can be used in print or digital* versions.

1 **DURING:** Reflect during the tours...
  - Use the Reflection Pattern within the guide as a start (see guide below)
  - Capture thinking within the team highlights page (Post School Reflection Pages)

2 **AFTER THE TOURS:** Reflection Summit (see slides below)
  - Reflect in cross-collaborative groups and in school team groups
  - Create a plan of action with your school team

3 **ONCE BACK IN YOUR OWN CLASSROOM:** Use your reflections to implement Promising Practices in ways that work best for you and your students; use the Resources Page at the end of the guide for extended reading

Click the image to access the digital
San Diego Reflection Guide

Click the image to access the digital
San Diego Reflection Summit slides

EALA School Study Tours
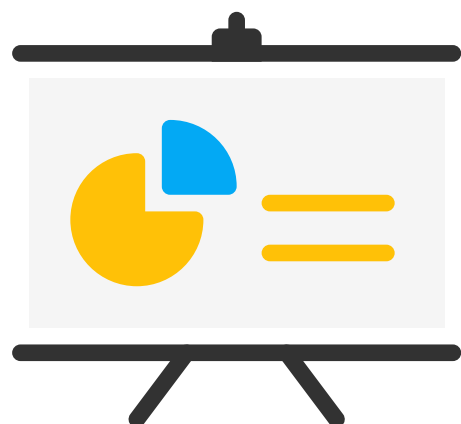
In Mathematical Thinking Classrooms, Everyone's a 'Math Person'

In this case study, we discover how one middle school teacher uses the strategy of mathematical thinking to make math instruction engaging and approachable for all students.

Click the image to access the case study

Redefining success in mathematics

By middle school, many students — especially those with disabilities and learning differences — develop the belief that they're 'not a math person'.

This belief can be [unintentionally reinforced](#) by tracking, where students are assigned to a 'traditional' or 'advanced' math course track based on standardized test scores and teacher recommendations.

But Edric Uy, a sixth-grade math teacher and leadership coordinator at [Calavera Hills Middle School](#) in Carlsbad, California, believes that anyone can be a math person — and he's making that belief a reality for kids in his classroom through a strategy called mathematical thinking.

Mathematical thinking: Going beyond computation

Mathematical thinking refers to the cognitive processes and skills involved in solving math problems. According to Edric, mathematical thinking goes beyond mere computation and focuses on developing problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity within the context of mathematics.

"Especially in elementary school, a lot of students think math is just about computational fluency. So they build an image of themselves as a mathematician that's solely based on their ability to compute. That's such a shame, because that's not really what defines a strong mathematician," explains Edric.

> *"My goal with mathematical thinking is to get them to reevaluate their perception of what it means to be a mathematician and understand that success in mathematics isn't just tied into their computational fluency — that their ability to think outside the box allows them to be just as successful as someone who can spit out their math facts in under a minute."*

This is especially important for students with disabilities and learning differences, who may come into the classroom believing they are not good at math. By engaging students in a way that focuses on their strengths, mathematical thinking creates a positive learning environment where all students can thrive and see themselves as capable mathematicians. This, in turn, leads to increased engagement and participation in math instruction.

Fostering mathematical thinking

From the minute the bell rings, it's clear that Edric's classroom is different. Instead of starting class by having students solve problems on the board from the previous day's lesson, Edric prefers to open with a warm-up activity that develops the "soft skills" necessary to be a successful mathematician.

These soft skills include problem-solving, attention to detail, creative thinking, and justifying reasoning. By starting with these skills, the aim is to create positive momentum and lower students' defenses, allowing them to confidently approach the rest of the lesson.

During a unit on adding and subtracting fractions, for instance, Edric might choose a warmup that asks students to pay attention to details — a skill that will come in handy later when converting fractions or determining the lowest common denominator.

From there, Edric provides students with hands-on, real-world projects that promote inquiry, critical thinking, and collaboration. A perfect example of this is the "life project," where students learn to budget for a month of life while practicing concepts like working with fractions and decimals.

Along the way, Edric leverages tech tools to personalize instruction and address individual needs. For instance, he might record a short YouTube video of a lesson and assign it to students as homework the day before. This gives him more time to circulate and help individual students instead of standing in front of the classroom delivering instruction.

Or, he might use PearDeck to check for understanding without randomly calling on students — a practice that can add to the stress many students already feel about math.

> *"Specifically for those students that have accommodations or modifications in their IEPs, this approach levels the playing field and allows them to feel like they aren't being taught in a different way. I still provide those supports and accommodations, but they're usually just best practices for my entire class."*

Nurturing engagement & empowering students

Thanks to mathematical thinking, Edric has witnessed increased student motivation, engagement, and active participation in learning.

"I have students complete a self-assessment at the beginning and end of the year on their attitude toward math. Some kids who started the year saying they hated math now say it's their favorite class."

This has also translated into improvements in test scores, mainly from low-performing students. "From a data perspective, I see the most significant growth from the lower 50%," says Edric.

But the most important outcome of the mathematical thinking approach has nothing to do with test scores — it's the soft skills that students take with them to high school and beyond.

> *"No one's going to ask you what your eighth-grade math score was, but they will want to know if you're a team player, or know how to communicate well during a project, or can meet deadlines," says Uy. "I want students to be able to say that it wasn't just a math class, but a vehicle for them to grow as individuals."*

REFLECTIONS

Big Takewaway

Edric's approach to mathematical thinking can be applied to any subject. "Engagement is half the battle in every single class. The most meaningful learning happens when students feel like they are a part of it, and that they figured things out along the way with their teacher's support."

What I would tell other educators/leaders

Edric believes that if teachers want their students to be brave learners, they must be brave as well. "We need more risk-takers pushing the envelope of what education looks like and feels like, who are willing to be brave and try out new approaches. The beautiful thing about teaching is that if it doesn't work, there's always another day."

What we are still figuring out

"There's a lot of pressure for teachers in terms of how your kids perform on that end of the year test. You can't ignore that, and sometimes you feel obligated to teach to the test. The challenge for teachers is to be brave and trust that the test scores will come if students understand the concepts."

Resources

[Calavera Hills Middle School](#)   [In Mathematical Thinking Classrooms, Everyone's a 'Math Person'](#)

About the Author

Edric Uy is currently a middle school math teacher and student leadership coordinator at Calavera Hills Middle School in Carlsbad, California. His educational passions reside in making math instruction both engaging and approachable for all. Prior to Carlsbad, he spent 5 years as a High School Math teacher and Link Crew Coordinator at Buena Park High School as well as a Behavioral Interventionist for multiple agencies who provided support to children with special needs both in and out of the classroom. He holds a B.S. in Pure Mathematics from California Polytechnic University Pomona and a M.Ed specializing in Best Practices from National University.

EALA School Study Tours

Unlocking Teacher Strengths: Fostering a Collaborative Culture of Learning

In this case study, we'll give readers an inside look at how one elementary is leveraging the strategy of teacher strength assessments to drive a collaborative culture of learning.

Click the image to access the case study

Supporting English learners and economically disadvantaged students

Casita Center for Technology, Science & Math is a K-5 Magnet school in the Vista Unified School District. Casita's focus on helping students learn and grow as individuals has attracted diverse learners from various cultural backgrounds. As a result, nine percent of Casita's students are English learners, and 45 percent are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

To support these diverse learning needs, Casita's leadership team recognized the importance of cultivating and leveraging every staff member's strengths. That's where the strategy of teacher strength assessments comes in.

Identifying teacher strengths

Casita began by identifying each teacher's strengths using the Gallup StrengthsFinder test. The Gallup StrengthsFinder is an online test that measures individual strengths in 34 different areas. Teachers receive a report outlining their top five strengths, such as Focus, Communication, and Adaptability. The report helps teachers understand the ways to maximize their potential, as well as potential blind spots to watch out for.

Strengths are classified into one of four domains — Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking — which helps teachers understand how they contribute when joining or leading a team.

"Understanding yourself is really important in education, and so is learning how to work with others. Collaboration is key to ensuring that we don't do more, but we do it smarter," says Principal Jenny Chien.

Embracing a strengths-based approach

After taking the StrengthsFinder assessment, teachers were given the opportunity to share their strengths and weaknesses with their teammates during an activity called 'Balconies and Basements'.

Teachers also worked with their grade-level teams to identify the academic, social, and emotional needs of students on their teams and how they could best serve each student through their combined strengths.

"Each of our learners has different needs in order to thrive in their learning environment. For example, some students might need a lot of structure while others need more flexibility," Jenny explains. "We have a lot of talent and expertise on our staff, so we're able to lean into each other when supporting each child."

This culture of collaboration also extends to Casita's transdisciplinary approach to teaching.

"You're not just closing the door and teaching in isolation, but we are all coming together weekly and sharing our ideas, successes, and challenges," says Liz Weiser, Casita's International Baccalaureate coordinator.

Naturally, it can take some time for new teachers to accept and embrace this approach — especially if they come from a school where they're used to working alone.

To help them make the mindset shift, Casita has developed a 'fishbowl culture' where teachers are open to allowing other teachers to come into their classrooms. This allows new teachers to observe and learn from other teachers in action.

Empowering teachers, engaging diverse learners

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Empowering teachers, engaging diverse learners

Casita's strengths-based approach has created a collaborative learning culture where teachers and students thrive.

By recognizing and tapping into each other's strengths, Casita teachers are able to support one another in serving the diverse needs of their students. This approach also extends to student learning, ensuring that individual needs and strengths are considered.
"Students are able to leverage their own strengths to access learning. That has been key in our growth as a school and to the kids' success," says Liz.

For students with disabilities and English learners (EL) especially, the strengths-based approach has helped to develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging in the classroom.

> *"We don't have 'silent English learners' at our school because there's so much to talk about, and they're so invested in what they're learning," says Liz, who was previously an EL resource teacher for the district. "For me, our students' confidence and engagement is the most exciting thing to see come out of this program."*

REFLECTIONS

Big Takeaway

"You don't want everybody on one team to be highly analytical. You need people who are going to balance that with being futuristic or being empathetic," says Liz. "Then when we collaborate, we're able to leverage everyone's strengths and come up with ideas that are personalized for our students."

What I Would Tell Other Leaders

First and foremost, Jenny says leaders need to recognize that the journey to transforming school culture is messy. "It's not a canned slide deck that you're going to be using. We're going into classrooms and talking to teachers and students and seeing what we need to do to continue to grow. Being responsive in that way is difficult, because it doesn't allow you to be very structured in the way that most admin programs teach you to be."

What We are Still Figuring Out

Creating a collaborative school culture where teachers can share their successes and failures doesn't happen overnight. "You have to be very vulnerable to engage in these authentic discussions, and it takes time to cultivate that. Just talking about it or telling people that's what we do isn't enough — teachers have to experience it and they have to want to do it."

Resources

[Casita Center for Technology, Science & Math](#) Website

[Unlocking Teacher Strengths: Fostering a Collaborative Culture of Learning](#)

About the School

Casita Center for Technology, Science & Math is a K-5 Magnet school in the Vista Unified School District. Casita's focus on helping students learn and grow as individuals has attracted diverse learners from various cultural backgrounds. As a result, nine percent of Casita's students are English learners, and 45 percent are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

EALA School Study Tours

CASE STUDY

Music for All: Fostering Inclusion in the Arts Through Adapted Professional Development

In this case study, we explore how one middle school brought together music teachers and special education professionals to ensure full access and inclusion of all students within the arts.

Click the image to access the case study

Meeting diverse learning needs

Creative, Performing and Media Arts (CPMA) Middle School is an arts-focused magnet school in the San Diego Unified School District. CPMA believes that the arts provide opportunities for students to feel they belong, to grow and to express themselves, and to practice compassion and learn from one another. CPMA is a unique school in that it serves students from across the San Diego Unified School District. Within that population, CPMA has a large number of special education students with diverse learning needs.

Christine Rudy-Reed, who is responsible for coordinating professional learning and curriculum development for CPMA through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant Amplifying the Arts in the San Diego Unified School District, was looking for a way to grow and adapt the school's existing arts programs to include new arts partners in order to increase arts equity, access, and opportunity for all learners.

To support this goal, Christine recognized the need for music educators, music integration specialists, and special education professionals to come together and share their knowledge. Thus, adapted professional development (PD) was born.

CASE STUDY

Setting the stage for collaboration

Adapted PD is a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to educator learning aimed at meeting the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those whose disabilities have traditionally presented barriers to inclusion in arts education in the past. It involves connecting educators from different disciplines, providing training on adaptive techniques and tools, and developing shared strategies to ensure full access to arts education for students with specialized learning needs.

CPMA is committed to cultivating a welcoming, safe, collaborative culture for all, and CPMA's MSAP grant goals are focused on developing interdisciplinary, arts-integrated and inclusive learning experiences for all students. Thus, developing a professional learning experience that brings together educators from various backgrounds, disciplines, and expertise to grow together cross-departmentally, engaging educators in deep collaborative and active learning, and providing time together for co-planning, is critical to aligning the school's mission while advancing arts education for all educators and their students.

The first challenge of implementing adapted PD at CPMA was simply coordinating schedules so that teachers could have time to collaborate. Teachers were given a sub and released from their classroom for a one-day workshop. Related service providers like paraprofessionals and occupational, speech, and physical therapists were also included in the training.

For the first time, music educators and special education professionals had an opportunity to be together in the same space and build connections.

Bridging music and special education

In the morning, teachers focused on developing a mutual understanding of one another's disciplines and teaching practices, and on defining shared student learning objectives for the adapted music program. CPMA also brought in [Guitars and Ukes in the Classroom (GITC)](), a nonprofit organization that trains and equips teachers to adapt and integrate music into the classroom experience. The full team worked together to delve into the underlying questions and possibilities of collaboratively creating an inclusive music program.

EALA School Study Tours

CASE STUDY

continued

Then in the afternoon, they participated in hands-on training with GITC to develop the capacity to adapt and lead music for inclusion of students with specific abilities and challenges.

According to GITC's founder and executive director, Jessica Baron, one of the biggest challenges is getting non-music educators comfortable with music.

> *"When a program like this is put in place, there will be teachers who are early adopters, and they will embrace it fully. Others may be more hesitant because making music is not yet in their comfort zone. The path to helping them develop musical skills and comfort level is providing free, ongoing training for those who wish to try."*

To overcome these obstacles, teachers and support staff were given time to play instruments, including percussion, ukuleles, and kazoos, while learning different adaptive strategies. GITC also provides ongoing free virtual and in-person training PD workshops and courses for interested educators and support staff.

After the workshop was over, GITC's teaching artist Sharon DuBois went into a variety of classrooms serving Special Education students for 8-13 weeks to facilitate instruction in adapted music and music integration, and to provide ongoing support.

> *"It takes time to build trust with not only the students but also with the instructors and aides as well,"* Sharon explains.

Harmonizing inclusion

Thanks to adapted PD and the partnership with Guitars in the Classroom, CPMA has built a collaborative, inclusive environment for both students and staff. Educators have grown in their own practice and now have the confidence to lead even in Sharon's absence.

A major win was seeing teachers and support staff utilizing strategies like visual schedules, kinesthetic and tactile cueing, and hand-over-hand support.

> *"When we went into classrooms [before the adapted PD], some of the parapros were standing back. They wanted to help, but the instruments were foreign objects," recalls Jessica. "Now, they are taking it upon themselves to successfully engage the students in playing the instruments with a combination of strategies."*

Sharon and Jessica also guided CPMA on the best way to spend their grant funds to purchase adapted music equipment like Makala Waterman ukuleles made of an indestructible and easily sanitized colorful polymer, non-slip mats to keep instruments in place for wheelchair users, adaptive finger picks for students who struggle with grip, different types of mallets and drumsticks, and a variety of repertoire choices that cater to students' strengths and needs.

This has not only improved access to music education, but also increased integration of music into the special education classrooms. Students now use music for self-soothing, classroom transitions, and even ask for instruments during choice time. The end result? Authentic, dignified participation in music instruction for all.

> *"I was just in one of our adapted music classrooms the other day and saw 100% of students engaging in their own way," says Christine. "They're not all using the same instruments at the same time or in the same way, but they're all making music while making progress toward learning goals, and they're all contributing meaningfully to the classroom environment."*

REFLECTIONS

Big Takeaway

Christine emphasizes the importance of ensuring that teachers and service providers continue to foster inclusive environments even when external support is not present. "Our goal was to create inclusive opportunities and access to the arts for all in a way that's sustainable. So what happens in the classroom after the teaching artist is no longer there? Making sure our PD is responsive and relevant to the needs of the staff so that they feel confident in their ability to lead or facilitate instruction is key."

What I Would Tell Other Educators/Leaders

Everyone who works with a child matters and needs to be included in training, says Jessica, "Para-pros and classified staff sometimes get 'othered'. They don't get trained. But if we give our para-pros and support staff the training they deserve, they can be making music much more accessible for kids who need extra support."

What We are Still Figuring Out

To keep this work going, Christine knows that they must continue to prioritize collaborative learning opportunities. "One thing we're working on now is continuing to make time in our schedules for teachers to meet, to visit one another's classrooms, and to learn from each other in a supportive and non-threatening way. We are also planning to continue this collaboration over the summer, so that teachers can work together to define student learning outcomes and identify what those supports might look like along the way."

Resources

[The Creative, Performing and Media Arts (CPMA) website](#)

[Music for All: Fostering Inclusion in the Arts Through Adapted Professional Development](#)

About the Authors
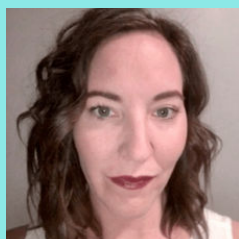
Christine Rudy-Reed is an educator, dance artist, and advocate dedicated to equity and inclusion in arts education.

Sharon DuBois is a musician, composer, performing and recording artist who brings her skills into the classroom to share with students.

EALA School Study Tours

Building Empathy & Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences Through STEM Education

In this case study, we highlight how one teacher uses an inquiry-based approach to foster critical thinking, problem solving skills, and a deeper understanding of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts.

Click the image to access the case study

Learning with a purpose

STEM education teaches students so much more than math and science — it equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle real-life problems and create a positive impact on the world.

At Calavera Hills Middle School in Carlsbad, California, students in Aaron's Sottile's STEM course spent a semester learning about the design process and put their skills to the test by building assistive devices for individuals with disabilities.

Igniting curiosity

To engage and motivate learners, Aaron uses an inquiry-based approach to STEM education. Each unit starts with a problem or task for students to investigate. Students acquire skills by pursuing solutions to these problems, fostering a deep understanding of STEM topics.

In one unit, for instance, students are tasked with designing an orthotic for an individual with cerebral palsy (CP) using a variety of simple modeling materials like cardboard, duct tape and foam. Throughout the design challenge, students learn about CP and work with a physical therapist to improve their designs for real-world end users. Building understanding and empathy for those with mobility challenges is not only an important life lesson, but the key to completing the assignment successfully.

Nurturing inquiry and supporting student success

Unsurprisingly, this inquiry-based approach involves a lot of prep work behind the scenes. "Half of what we do as teachers is thinking through ahead of time what materials are going to be needed and how we are going to allow students to have access to those things, how we keep them in stock, and so on," says Aaron.

The course also uses 3D printing extensively, so Aaron trains an alumni from the course as a teacher's assistant to help manage the print queue and workflow.

Planning and developing a semester's worth of inquiry-based lessons from scratch takes a massive amount of work, so Aaron taps into existing resources like the [Project Lead The Way (PLTW)](#) curriculum — a project-based learning program that incorporates science, technology, engineering, and math. He also partners with organizations like [Makers Making Change](#) and [Printlab](#) that provide lesson plans, tutorials, and 3D printer blueprints for assistive devices for individuals with disabilities.

Over the course of the semester, students work in groups to complete a number of design challenges. Aaron sees his role as a facilitator and coach, fostering collaboration between students and providing support as they navigate the inquiry process.

> *"During design challenges, we start class with a morning meeting where each group shares their intentions, what phase of the build they're working on, and what they're struggling with,"* explains Aaron. *"The beautiful moments are when one group shares what they're stuck on, and another group chimes in with a possible solution. I get to step back and watch them support one another."*

While STEM classes naturally support students with disabilities and learning differences, Aaron also uses supports like visuals and backup instructional videos to scaffold instruction. Students are provided with rubrics and exemplars of success, and are encouraged to self-reflect on their performance. They are also given the opportunity to retake assessments until they achieve a 100% score, encouraging them to persist and work towards mastery and competency development.

CASE STUDY

"I've got one student that is not afraid to resubmit things two or three times until she gets it right. And as much as I don't love grading things multiple times, if it helps the student gain that skill and move forward with confidence, it's worth it."

Nurturing inquiry and supporting student success

As their capstone project, students participated in the <u>Make:Able Challenge</u> — an international contest to design and 3D print an assistive technology device that improves the life of someone with a disability. For instance, one group developed a key turner to help someone with dexterity issues open doors. Another built a switch-operated toy car for a child with limited mobility.

The hands-on nature of these projects and the connection to authentic end-users have had a significant impact on student engagement. Students are active participants in the learning process, driving their own education and developing skills they will take with them into college and their careers.

"Every classroom has a reluctant learner, even if they signed up for the project or the class. But sometimes they discover things about themselves that surprise themselves," says Aaron.

In the end, Aaron hopes that anchoring learning experiences in empathy and real-world problem solving will help his students become better 'problem finders'.

"If we can become better problem finders, we start creating better solutions. Our world needs people who can look around and not necessarily accept the world for how it is, but try to make it better."

REFLECTIONS

Big Takeaway

"It's powerful to see that there are groups of kids that want to make a positive impact on their world, and they're just looking for a place to put their energy."

What I Would Tell Other Educators/Leaders

Aaron stresses the importance of teachers partnering with professionals in other disciplines and organizations like Makers Making Change. "There's a million different ways to systematize this approach. The design elective is just one way to do it. It's about finding those people and getting them together and brainstorming how a project like this or an elective course like this can happen. Good things happen when you get good people together."

What We are Still Figuring Out

Grouping students for projects — especially those that require outside-of-class collaboration — can be a challenge. "Sometimes I let students self-select groups. Other times I use a program called Flippity to randomly assign groups. For the final project, I had them pick roles they were interested in fulfilling and put them in groups based on what I knew about the kids and who I thought would work well together."

Resources

[Calavera Hills Middle School website](#)

[Building Empathy & Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences Through STEM Education](#)

About the Author

Aaron Sottile is a science and STEM teacher at Calavera Hills Middle School in Carlsbad, CA. He has taught a variety of STEM courses for 22 years in both the Santa Barbara and Carlsbad Unified School Districts. He earned his undergraduate degrees in Molecular Biology and Science Education at California Polytechnic University, Humboldt and holds a Masters in Education in Teaching and Learning from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

EALA School Study Tours
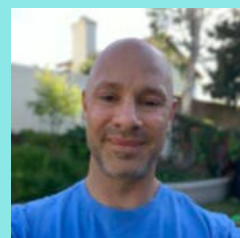
PODCAST ▶

Systems for Positive Learning Culture

In this podcast episode, EALA is joined by Jenny Chien, and Elizabeth Weiser from Casita Elementary School in Vista, California. In this episode, Casita's administrative team sheds light on one of the School Study Tour participants' favorite takeaways by discussing how to leverage strengths to develop systems of high quality teaching and learning with a positive spin.

Click the image to access the podcast episode

Access the full podcast transcript at bit.ly/SystemsForPositiveLearningCulture

EALA School Study Tours

Honing the Teaching Craft

In this podcast episode, EALA is joined by Devin Vodicka, CEO of Learner Centered Collaborative. Discover the transformative power of learner-centered education and the importance of listening to students to create meaningful learning experiences that cater to individual strengths, leading to higher levels of engagement and achievement for all learners.

Click the image to access
the podcast episode
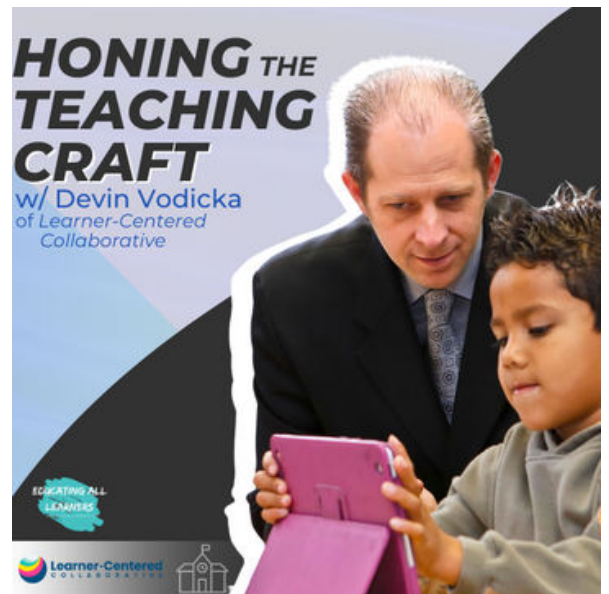
To learn more about Learner Centered Collaborative, visit their website at learnercentered.org. Access the full podcast transcript at bit.ly/HoningTheTeachingCraft.