

# Climate, Culture & Connectedness

## A Social-Emotional Learning Newsletter

### Leverage Emotions for Deep Learning

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang is an affective neuroscientist at the University of Southern California and in her book, *Emotions, Learning and the Brain*, she shares interesting research to support the idea that “in order for school-based learning to have a hope of motivating students, of producing deep understanding, or of transferring into real-world skills...we need to find ways to leverage the emotional aspects of learning.”

If you’ve ever learned something that you really cared about, from someone you cared about, you know how exciting that feeling of learning can be.

You may not realize, however, just how important your *emotions* were to the process of learning. It turns out that the “learning center” of the brain (the Limbic System, to be more precise) is made of up

interdependent structures that allow people to control their emotions, attention and behavior, and to learn and remember information. When these structures work together effectively, they help you adapt to the environment you are in to accomplish your goals - for a student, that would be engaging in learning in a classroom ([Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer and Rose, 2018](#)).

In her book, Dr. Immordino-Yang (2016) explains that emotions are the “rudder that steers thinking” and she poses the question: why would a high schooler, for example, solve a math problem? The reasons might range from true interest in the material, to the desire to get a good grade or avoid punishment, to the desire to get into college or to please the teacher. Immordino-Yang explains that all of these reasons have a “powerful emotional component” and “relate both to pleasurable sensations and to survival within our culture.”

The point here is that emotions and feelings affect students’ performance and learning just as much as whether or not a student has eaten or gotten enough sleep. Or as Immordino-Yang would say, “we feel, therefore we learn.”



Students at Folsom High School’s College Fair, 2019

85%

Eighty-five percent of 5th grade students reported feeling that **adults on campus really cared about them.**

More than  
81%

Eighty-one percent of 9th grade & eighty-three percent of 11th grade students report high levels of **empathy** for their peers’ feelings and experiences.

\* Statistics based on 2019-20 California Healthy Kids Survey

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ **Did You Know?:**  
MTSS can help schools respond to student needs
- ▶ **Strategy Spotlight:**  
Peace Corners - helping students to become self-aware.

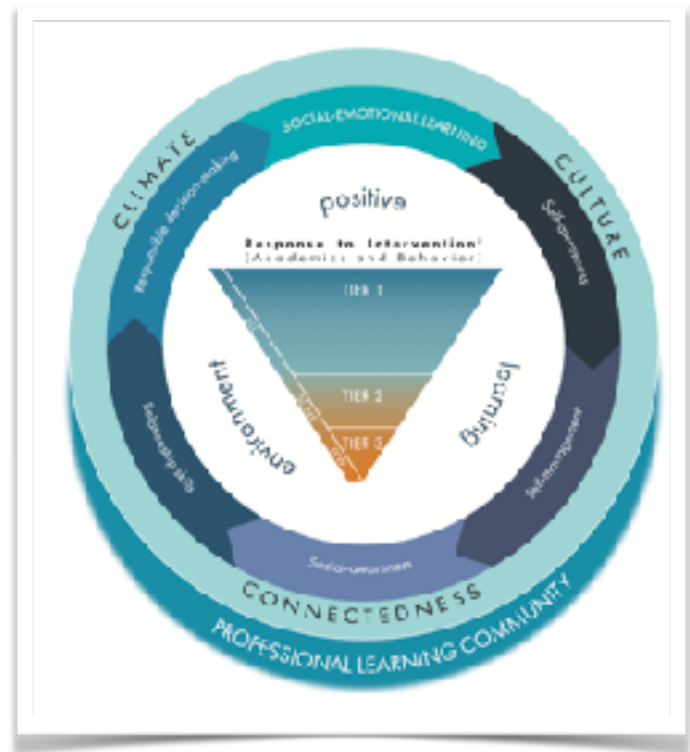
## What is MTSS and why does it matter?

A Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is a framework that connects academic, social-emotional, and behavioral learning in a systematic way to ensure that schools respond to student needs quickly and appropriately.

MTSS is built on the premise that universal support must be provided for all students while recognizing that some students may need supplemental support at various times and a few students may require more intensified support some of the time to be successful in the most inclusive and equitable learning environment of their grade level peers.

In FCUSD, we believe that through the intentional alignment and braiding of numerous initiatives and resources, coupled with a collaborative and student-centered focus, we can achieve a systematic and sustainable system of support that meets the needs of our students and community. [Our MTSS Framework](#) is a working visual representation of the interconnectedness between various initiatives, practices, and beliefs.

The MTSS framework should challenge school staff to change the way in which they have traditionally worked in school settings; that is, student *needs*, regardless of their origin or type, should drive decisions made within the classroom, school, and district as a whole. Visit the [CDE website](#) for more on California's MTSS vision.



## STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: PEACE CORNERS

We know how important emotions are for learning and we also know how distracting negative (and sometimes extremely positive!) emotions can be when you are trying to learn something new. Students experience a range of emotions throughout the school day as they navigate sharing with others on the playground or managing disappointment when a grade isn't as good as they were expecting or being elated about an upcoming field trip.

Sometimes also referred to as Calm Corners or Zen Zones, the "peace corner" offers students an opportunity to practice self-awareness, learn emotional regulation, and identify strategies to use when feeling upset, frustrated, or distracted (e.g., fidgets, journal reflections, coloring, reading, etc.).

At the end of last school year the SEL Department outfitted more than 40 classrooms across the district with the materials and resources to implement peace corners: This practice allows students to stay in the classroom and learn to pay attention to and attend to their emotional well-being. To see the strategy in action, check out this [Edutopia video!](#)

