

Connecticut Education Association

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACADEMY



## YOUR DISTRICT RESOURCE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CEA's Professional Learning Academy offers a wealth of professional development opportunities for teachers, aligned with Connecticut's professional learning standards. Benefits:

- Developed by educators with extensive teaching and administration experience and experts in law and special education
- Delivered on-site—no costly conference attendance
- Designed to provide practical tools and build immediately useful skills
- Customizable to your local needs, groups, environment, and circumstances
- Continually updated to include new strategies and address evolving needs

For more information or to schedule a professional development workshop, contact CEA's Professional Learning Academy at 860-725-6340 or [myprofession@cea.org](mailto:myprofession@cea.org), or visit [cea.org/pla](http://cea.org/pla).

**CEA is a Connecticut State Department of Education designated professional development provider.**

CEA workshops address seven professional learning tracks

- LDR** = Leadership and Collaboration
- TEV** = Teacher Evaluation, Support, and Growth
- IPE** = Instructional and Professional Enhancement
- LAW** = Education Law and Legal Considerations
- SJE** = Social Justice and Equity
- HWB** = Health and Well-Being
- SEL** = Social Emotional Learning

Workshops are 1½ hours long unless otherwise noted but can be customized upon request.



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## Workshop Descriptions

### Active Listening Skills: Strategies for All Grade Levels

As a society, we tend to talk more than we listen. Listening, despite being an essential life skill, is often not explicitly taught. While communication skills are often taught in school, the focus tends to be on classroom participation or effective public speaking. Strong listening skills are needed now more than ever and can be systematically taught and measured. Listening to others not only helps students master content, it also promotes understanding of different perspectives, fosters civility and respect, helps students make friends, reduces conflicts, and improves collaboration. This workshop provides tips and strategies to foster effective listening skills at all grade levels. **SEL IPE**

### AI in the Classroom: Friend or Foe?

This interactive workshop is designed to provide educators with an opportunity to explore their experiences and concerns regarding the role of AI in their classrooms. The session will cover ethical considerations, such as data privacy, intellectual property protection, and bias, as well as identify policy needs to balance concerns with effective, responsible use. The workshop will conclude with an exploration of practical strategies teachers can use to maximize their time, including AI tools for lesson planning, differentiated learning, and administrative tasks. **IPE**

**LDR**

### Art of Giving and Receiving Feedback

This workshop is designed for evaluators, peer coaches, department chairs, TEAM mentors, and anyone who wants to improve on giving and receiving feedback in any context. Constructive feedback encourages reflection and creates reciprocal pathways to ongoing growth and development. This workshop provides educators with specific, practical strategies to build trust and foster collegiality, as well as encourage self-reflection, helping enrich educator practice and enhance student growth and well-being. This session will be highly interactive, and participants will practice giving and receiving feedback with several different partners. **IPE TEV LDR**

**IPE**

**TEV**

**LDR**



### Beyond Bloom: HOT Questioning Techniques That Promote Total Class Participation

This interactive workshop is appropriate for teachers of all subjects and grade levels and is designed to foster higher-order thinking and total participation from all students. It offers practical tools and strategies to encourage students of all abilities and temperaments to think deeply about a topic and feel confident making contributions that enrich class discussions. Tools include Bloom's Taxonomy, Depth of Knowledge charts, Socratic questioning, and dialogic methods, all of which are designed to promote imagination, wonder, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving. Participants will roleplay to practice strategies with their peers and will leave the workshop with practical tools they can begin to use immediately to elevate class discussions. **IPE**

**IPE**



### Building a Culture of Empathy

Appropriate for teachers of all grade levels and subjects, this workshop focuses on systematically building empathy for others. Included are practical techniques and strategies that can be easily integrated into existing lesson plans that encourage students to listen to others, appreciate different perspectives, and be sensitive to the feelings of others. **IPE SEL**

**IPE**

**SEL**

### Classroom Management Strategies

There are so many things educators need to know and be able to do, but perhaps the most important is how to manage a classroom. This interactive workshop explores the importance of building strong relationships with students as the foundation of classroom management. Participants will be provided practical strategies to implement consistent routines and smooth transitions as well as tips and tools to minimize off-task behaviors. Customizable for all grade levels. **IPE TEV SJE**

**IPE**

**TEV**

**SJE**

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## Developing Meaningful SEL Goals for Teacher Evaluation and Student Growth

Concerns about student mental health and emotional well-being have deepened in recent years, making social-emotional learning a top priority for educators across the country. Many districts are encouraging educators to adopt SEL goals rather than purely academic ones. Learn how to set SEL goals that are meaningful to students and teachers and embedded within the curriculum. SEL is inherently difficult to measure, and this workshop will provide practical, holistic strategies to help make SEL progress visible to students, educators, and parents/guardians.

**TEV SEL**

## Difficult Conversations Made Easy

In this interactive session, participants will learn to recognize when it is time to have a difficult conversation and will learn simple strategies to take the fear out of initiating one. The workshop will cover how to manage strong feelings that arise during difficult conversations, as well as how and when to follow up afterward. The workshop includes several opportunities for participants to practice initiating difficult conversations with tact and openheartedness. This workshop is designed to help members address problems proactively, settle differences amicably, promote trust, and contribute to a healthy school climate.

**TEV LDR HWB**

## Dispute Resolution Strategies for Teacher Evaluation

This highly interactive workshop is designed to provide teachers with practical strategies and structures to defuse and resolve disputes in an impartial, healthy, transparent way. Useful for department chairs, PDEC representatives, dispute resolution committee members, and classroom teachers, these strategies can be applied to a variety of situations and contexts. Disputes resolved openly and fairly help foster trust and collegiality and promote a positive school culture. This workshop will involve roleplay, and participants will practice resolving common disputes.

**TEV LDR**



## Cultivating a Sense of Belonging in School

One of the most common words children choose to describe their emotional state is "lonely." This workshop provides classroom activities and instructional strategies teachers around the state are using to combat student isolation, cultivate community in the classroom, and foster a sense of belonging.

**SEL HWB**

## Culturally Responsive Instructional Strategies

Cultural responsiveness involves awareness and understanding about cultural diversity in the classroom, school building, and community. The information and learning tasks in this workshop are designed to help you enhance your lesson plans and instructional practices through systematic exploration of racial and cultural bias and incorporation of culturally sensitive activities, literature, and questioning strategies. Also included are strategies to help students and families feel welcome and part of the school community.

**SJE IPE**

## Developing Executive Functions in Students of All Ages

Executive functions are a set of mental processes that allow us to connect past experiences to present and future action. Executive functions also help us plan, organize, strategize, focus, remember, manage time and space, and regulate emotions and impulses. Students with strong executive functioning perform better in school, have better attendance and behavior, and are more likely to achieve long-term goals they set for themselves. This workshop provides tools and strategies to help teachers systematically improve students' executive functioning skills at all grade levels.

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groups. Participants will have time to collaborate and begin brainstorming their own escape room challenge, tailored to their subject area and grade level. By the end of the workshop, you'll leave with practical ideas and strategies for implementing escape rooms in your classroom, engaging students in learning through excitement, problem-solving, and teamwork. **IPE**

### Exploring the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility

All teachers, especially preservice teachers and those going through TEAM, must demonstrate knowledge of the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility. This highly interactive workshop delves into relevant competencies and themes, including building relationships and fostering student well-being and community engagement. Public school teachers are vested with the public's trust, their responsibilities to their students extending to the community as a whole. Maintaining the highest ideals of professionalism, as outlined in the code, reinforces the professional status of teaching and serves as a building block to success in the classroom. **IPE** **TEV**

### Gender Achievement Gap: Why Boys Are Falling Behind and What Can Be Done About It

Boys are falling behind girls academically at every level, from kindergarten through graduate school. Girls dramatically outperform boys on every standardized measure of reading and writing achievement and have reached rough parity with males in math and science, except at the very top of the performance curve. Boys are also more likely to get into trouble at school, experiment with drugs, and drop out of school. Nearly 60 percent of students graduating from college are now female, and for the first time in history we see more women than men getting advanced degrees. Left unaddressed, the gender achievement gap in education could have significant destabilizing economic and social impacts. Learn why males may be falling behind and what schools can do to support them academically and emotionally and begin to close the growing gender achievement gap. **IPE**

### I Do, We Do, You Do: Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework to Empower Students

Learn how to foster student agency and independence using the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) framework in this hands-on workshop. Designed for teachers looking to increase student motivation and ownership of learning, this session explores how to systematically transition from teacher-led instruction to more student-centered work. Participants will dive into the four stages of GRR—modeling, guided practice,

### Educating with Pride

In recent years, LGBTQ+ issues have become a cultural lightning rod in education. The goal of this workshop is to educate LGBTQ+ educators and their allies on their rights in and out of the classroom and discuss how best to support themselves, their colleagues, and students. We will be discussing the current state of LGBTQ+ issues in education, real-world cases and examples, and what rights you have when navigating complex issues. We will show you how to start becoming the best ally you can be!

**SJE** **IPE** **LAW**

### Emotional Regulation: Practical Strategies for Students of All Ages

This workshop provides an overview of emotional regulation and offers an array of simple, research-based strategies teachers can use to help students manage strong feelings in healthy, productive ways. The workshop is designed for the elementary grades but may be customized for middle school or high school. **SEL**

### Equity, Anti-Bias, and Diversity Practices for Educators

This workshop provides tools and strategies to help students, educators, and families learn from and about one another and explore ways to address bias and prejudice through awareness, intervention, and personal action. Participants will discuss ways to foster positive relationships and an inclusive, welcoming environment for all members of the school community. **SJE**

### Escape Room Challenge: Playful Learning in the Upper Grades

Discover how to harness the power of play in learning by creating an educational escape room for your students. This interactive workshop invites teachers to experience an escape room firsthand, demonstrating how game-based learning can make lessons more engaging and memorable at all grade levels. The session emphasizes the importance of play in fostering deep learning across all age

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collaborative learning, and independent application—while sharing practical strategies for each phase. Through specific examples and interactive, playful activities, teachers will explore how to empower students to take control of their learning journey, develop critical thinking skills, and build confidence. **IPE**

### **Implicit Bias and Structural Racism: Its Powerful Impact on Education**

Social psychologists and scientists have found that all of us, regardless of race, have cognitive biases that influence how we perceive and make decisions about other people. Implicit attitudes regarding race, stereotyping, and prejudice are a few of the many factors that can prevent Black, Latinx, and EL students from achieving in school at the same level as their white counterparts. This workshop will raise participants' awareness of unconscious bias and its powerful effect on student learning and educator performance while explaining how unintended thoughts can contradict our beliefs and how acting according to our values can require more than good intentions. **SJE** **IPE**

### **Introduction to Student Trauma: Developing a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom**

Nearly 7 out of 10 children experience trauma, and many experience multiple traumatic experiences. The impact of trauma on children and adolescents is pervasive and presents challenges in every school and community in the state. We are collectively learning more about the challenges trauma presents to classroom teachers and how to help those who experience trauma overcome its effects. Participants will learn how to identify the signs of trauma and better understand its impact on students and the school community. Participants will also learn practical skills and strategies that can help address student trauma in their classrooms. **HWB**

### **Knowledge Is the Best Protection: Understanding Your Rights With Challenging Student Behavior**

As the demands to address all of a student's academic and emotional needs have increased, it is vitally important that all teachers are informed of their legal rights and duties related to challenging student behavior.

In this timely workshop, you will learn:

- What procedures you should follow in the event you are threatened or injured by a student
- Why it's important to report any injuries or threats of harm to your principal and what reporting options are available to you
- How the new challenging behavior law may help address behavior issues

- What your association can do to help you take whatever steps are appropriate to protect your rights as an employee, including measures to provide a safer workplace for everyone in the building
- What safety provisions can be negotiated in your collective bargaining agreement related to challenging student behavior **LAW** **HWB**

### **Let Go of Your Stress**

While the work is rewarding, educators face high levels of occupational stress and burnout. Addressing the root cause—typically a challenging work environment—is key. At the same time, hitting an internal reset button can help you manage your stress and focus on the things within your control. Recapture your inner peace using tools such as meditation, mindfulness, tai chi, and yoga—techniques that have existed for thousands of years. **HWB**



### **Making the Most of Home-Teacher Communication**

Home-teacher communication can be difficult. This session provides tips to help you develop and promote a working partnership with families prior to parent-teacher conferences, review different types of conferences, assist you with strategies to use during the conference itself, and provide ideas for sustained family contact and engagement throughout the year. You will also learn valuable approaches to handling conferences where student misbehavior or challenging parents are a factor, with lots of time built in for discussion and perhaps even some roleplaying. **IPE** **TEV**

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## Managing Conflict in Healthy Ways

Teaching is stressful enough, but when conflicts arise at work, that stress can become toxic. Learn to identify the underlying causes of conflict, distinguish between types of conflict, and practice selecting and employing appropriate strategies to manage conflicts effectively. Through roleplay and sample scenarios, participants will practice using conflict resolution strategies to manage difficult situations with confidence and grace. **LDR**

## Mental Health First Aid

Most of us would know how to help if we saw someone having a heart attack—call 9-1-1; start CPR. Too few of us, however, know how to respond to someone having a panic attack or what to do if a friend or colleague is showing signs of alcohol use disorder. Mental Health First Aid takes the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health and substance abuse. This training helps us identify potential problems, improves our understanding of what others may be going through, and provides a clear action plan for responding safely and responsibly. When more people are equipped to start a dialogue, more people can get the help they need. Mental Health First Aiders can even save lives. **SEL HWB**

- Mental Health Crisis Response: Just the Basics (2 hours)
- Mental Health First Aid Full Training for Adults (full day—6 hours—certificate provided)



## Mind the Moment: Practical Mindfulness Activities for Students and Teachers

Mindfulness is receiving much-needed attention right now, in part due to the pressures of living in an increasingly complex world. Smartphones, busy schedules, and a 24-hour news cycle can be distracting for even the most focused individual. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter connect us with strangers around the world but also threaten to isolate us from those closest to us. You may find yourself spending more time worrying about the future or dwelling on something that happened in the past rather than fully experiencing the present moment. This is also true

of our students, many of whom struggle to concentrate in class and have difficulty learning as a result. Learn how to integrate mindfulness activities into your existing classroom routines without losing instructional time or sacrificing the curriculum. Mindfulness activities can enhance the quality of life for young and old, improve mental focus and classroom behavior, and enhance learning outcomes. **IPE HWB**

## Mini Workshops (limited to 20 participants)

CEA offers a series of brief, 30-minute informal workshops that provide practical strategies teachers can use to manage stress or enhance their teaching practice. These quick workshops are designed to provide a few moments of fun and a short respite for teachers after a long day. Each mini workshop includes a gift bag for each participant at no cost. Mini workshops can be arranged for teachers during a PD day, in lieu of a department meeting, during an association meeting, or as a special event. **HWB IPE**

### Mini workshop options:

- **Coffee Break.** Have a cup of coffee and a sweet treat and discuss simple strategies to engage learners, build a positive classroom community, and promote total class participation.
- **Stress Reduction and Personal Wellness.** Practice several simple exercises to help you reclaim power over your nervous system's response to stress. Includes a wellness gift bag with practical stress-reducing tools and activities.
- **Let's Play!** Learn different games to play in the classroom that will engage students and make learning fun and durable.

## Mythbusters: Understanding Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities in the Special Education Process

This workshop focuses on the laws regarding special education, with a particular emphasis on regular and special education teachers' rights and responsibilities when participating in the special education process. Participants will learn what the law requires of them as well as what they can and cannot do in such areas as PPT meetings, drafting IEPs, and accommodating students in the regular education environment. The impact of special education laws on teachers' working conditions will be integrated throughout the workshop. **LAW IPE**

## PDEC Tune-up

This workshop can be customized to meet the unique needs of your district's professional development and evaluation committee (PDEC). It provides a refresher on PDEC roles, responsibilities, and operating procedures and offers

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an opportunity to build greater trust and a partnership between administration and teachers. It includes an overview of state statutes on leader and educator evaluation guidelines and professional development requirements, a mutual agreement protocol, sample norms, templates, and sample surveys useful in planning professional development and guiding possible revisions to the district's evaluation plan. The workshop includes an overview of innovative practices around the state. **TEV**

**LDR**



### **Play-Based Learning: Integrating Purposeful Play into the Early Grades**

Young children learn about themselves, others, and the world around them primarily through play. Play is essential for healthy physical, cognitive, and social emotional development. Despite its critical importance, opportunities for children to learn through play have dwindled due to testing demands and the misconception that play takes time away from "real learning." Fortunately, the Connecticut legislature recognized the essential role play has in children's learning and social emotional development and passed Public Act 23-101, requiring the integration of play-based learning in the early grades. This interactive workshop provides an overview of the many benefits of learning through play, discusses ways to integrate more playful learning into the school day, provides practical strategies and activities, and invites participants to engage in purposeful play together. *Elementary school* **SEL** **IPE**

### **Playful Pathways to the Science of Reading: Play-Based Strategies for Educators and Administrators**

Unlock the transformative power of play in early literacy education! This dynamic presentation is designed for educators and administrators who wish to explore the intersection of play and the science of reading. Participants will delve into research-based strategies that highlight the

critical role of play in developing foundational reading skills. Educators will learn how to create engaging, play-centered learning environments that foster literacy development. Topics will include:

- The principles of the science of reading and its implications for early childhood education.
- Practical play-based strategies that enhance phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Techniques for integrating play into structured literacy instruction.
- Assessment methods that value play as a legitimate form of learning.

By the end of this presentation, participants will leave with a toolkit of playful strategies to implement in their classrooms and schools, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to thrive as readers. Join us in this exciting journey to reimagine literacy education through the lens of play! **IPE**

### **Preventing Burnout and Compassion Fatigue**

Teacher burnout is a serious problem. Left unaddressed, it can contribute to mental health issues, high teacher turnover, absenteeism, negative impacts on student learning, and high financial costs to districts. While there are strategies to support teacher self-care and stress management, the underlying conditions that contribute to high levels of stress are too often ignored or not addressed systemically. Teacher wellness requires ongoing commitments and long-term strategies that address structural change. This workshop explores the system and school conditions that contribute to educator stress, provides a forum for educators to provide suggestions that could alleviate their stress, and includes research demonstrating which strategies to consider (as well as those to avoid) in advocating for support. **HWB** **LDR**

### **Promoting Student Autonomy in the Classroom**

This workshop is designed for teachers of all levels and focuses on encouraging students to gradually take ownership of their learning goals and a more active role in achieving them. Practical classroom tools include total class participation strategies, student-generated performance rubrics, student-led parent conferences, and more. **IPE**

### **Reworking Homework: Maximize Student Achievement and Minimize Stress on Students and Families**

Homework is a hot topic. When relevant, carefully designed, and given in moderation, homework has been shown to increase student achievement (at the high school level). It can also, however, contribute to high levels of stress, anxiety, and family discord. This workshop provides an overview of the extensive research into the subject of

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homework and offers practical tips for minimizing the harmful impact while maximizing the positive outcomes. Designed for middle and high school teachers, this workshop can be customized for any grade level. **IPE**



### Section 504: An Emerging Issue for Educators

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is receiving increased attention in schools as more teachers than ever are working with 504 students on a daily basis. This workshop will provide an overview of this civil rights law, including the 2008 changes, its procedural requirements (with an emphasis on the eligibility process) and relationship to the IDEA, and its applicability to such timely issues as AD(H)D, field trips, and allergies. **LAW**

### Setting Yourself Up For Financial Success

There are many things specific to educators that can make mastering your finances difficult. Obscure contract provisions, your salary schedule, managing student debt—the list goes on. Come learn the basics of how to own your finances, not the other way around. You can't afford not to learn how to set yourself up for financial success! **HWB**

### Strategies to Help New Teachers Survive and Thrive

This workshop is designed for new teachers, mentors, cooperating teachers, instructional coaches, and others who want to learn how to better support and strengthen the practice of early-career educators. Included are useful teacher evaluation tips for new teachers, mentoring strategies, and classroom structures and routines to help new teachers maximize instructional time. **IPE**

### Student Engagement and Participation Strategies

This interactive workshop focuses on improving student engagement and participation in a highly distracted era. Different types of engagement will be explored, opportunities to share and learn from each other will be provided, and a list of easily implementable engagement and total participation strategies will be shared with participants. Time will also be provided throughout the workshop to practice selected strategies in small groups. **SEL IPE**

### Surviving Teaching in the Age of Social Media

Social media is everywhere in our lives and seems unavoidable. What pitfalls are out there for educators in this fast-changing technological world? This workshop provides tips and strategies for protecting yourself from the downside of social media that can derail teaching careers. **LAW TEV**

### Teach Whole: Strategies to Manage Stress, Build Resiliency, and Elevate Ourselves and Our Profession

Teaching isn't easy; it never was—but it's become far more difficult in recent years because of misguided educational policies, challenging student behavior, and the lack of civility that permeates public discourse. Teachers are under the weight of impossible expectations, which has contributed to unprecedented levels of burnout and teacher turnover. This workshop will provide practical strategies to manage stress, improve your effectiveness, and enhance your natural resiliency. Based in part on the books *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*, by Elena Aguilar, and *Permission to Feel*, by Marc Brackett, this workshop will also help you reinvigorate your teaching practice, energize yourself and colleagues, and elevate the profession. The Teach Whole workshop was developed by teachers for teachers and is facilitated by CEA members who serve on the Commission for the Improvement of Instruction and Professional Development. **HWB**



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## Teachers and the Law

This presentation examines the rights and responsibilities of educators regarding a variety of legal issues, including DCF and state mandatory reporting laws, DCF investigations, Weingarten meetings, physical assaults on teachers, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and other related matters. **LAW**

## True Colors: Harnessing the Power of Personality to Build Effective Teams and Enhance Teaching and Learning

Understanding the learning, work, and personality styles of coworkers can improve collaboration and even help teachers connect more effectively with students. This interactive workshop is designed to promote collaboration and improve interpersonal communication through the use of the "True Colors" Framework designed to help individuals better understand the foundational beliefs and values that motivate them and others. Participants will explore the complexities of personalities with the goal of promoting mutual respect, greater collegiality, improved collaboration, and enhanced teaching and learning. **LDR** **IPE**

**HWB**



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