Teaching Presence

In October, Rachael Kessler presented a keynote on the Teaching Presence at the “Holistic Education International Conference”, near Toronto. This moving talk was the last public presentation Rachael gave before her death in 2010. Rachael discussed the four dimensions of teaching presence and also shared poignant stories about her journey with cancer.

“We want our classrooms to be places that are safe enough for feeling and the expression of feeling. Any kind of learning—whether its cognitive learning or whether it’s the learning that allows us to grow our hearts and wisdom—involves confusion and uncertainty. Uncertainty is my daily diet right now, and I think it's a critical part of learning. And to be able to tolerate and hold the tension of those experiences and to keep going and learning we need to feel safe, we need to feel held in some way.”

“Fear has become a central part of our American experience. The terrorist attacks, the crash of the global economy, the vulnerability of our environment, has created a fear of the future in so many of our students. Therefore, fear is an emotion that we as teachers must make friends with. Otherwise, our students will have no tools to do this for themselves, no way of expressing their fears in a constructive way.”

Cover: David Brand, Rachael Kessler, and Teacher and Students from West High School

This report was written and produced by PassageWorks staff.

Photography Credits: Jonathan Castner, East Prairie School District, Think College Now, Carrie Simpson, Jerry Clayton, Rick Ney, Kirsten Boyer, and Mark Wilding.

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The PassageWorks Approach

Based on brain research, learning and developmental theory, our approach offers educators innovative classroom tools and strategies and the 'teaching presence' framework to support the ongoing development of their teaching practice. This integration of theory, tools and practice assists educators to foster both human and academic development in students.

"By "Inner Life", we refer to that essential aspect of human nature that yearns for deep connection, grapples with questions about meaning, and seeks a sense of purpose, authenticity and genuine self-expression."
Letter from the Executive Director

As we look back and reflect on the passing of our founder, Rachael Kessler, we are saddened by this loss and deeply grateful for her passion, brilliance, dedication and contributions to the field of education. You will see this sentiment echoed by many on the following pages.

Over the past years, Rachael Kessler worked closely with our staff and board to develop a comprehensive plan for a Living Legacy for PassageWorks. Our vision for the evolution of the Institute has included broadening our leadership team, developing a strong, competent faculty, and collaborating with organizational partners also dedicated to transforming education from the inside out. PassageWorks continues to include partners and colleagues in the development, refinement, and implementation of our model, so that this body of work will be informed by a dedicated community of practitioners. Our model for supporting the inner lives of students and teachers has now been translated into six curricula for the K-12 transition years of childhood, dozens of articles, a framework of core practices and principles for classrooms, and a series of courses and presentations. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this body of work over the years and are inspired by the collaborative opportunities to transform education that are now emerging.

We would like to extend our thanks to Rachael’s family and friends, our faculty, board, advisors, volunteers, interns, school partners, and benefactors for their unwavering support in 2009. We could not have navigated this difficult transition without the help that we received from so many.

We are proud of what we all accomplished in 2009. Rachael completed the Kindergarten curriculum with Carrie Simpson, and gave a powerful keynote on the ‘Teaching Presence’ in Toronto. We offered numerous courses, published articles, and continued our work at West High School in Denver and many other schools around the U.S. We hope you find the following report informative and a fitting tribute to the life and work of Rachael.

Yours in service,

Mark D. Wilding
Executive Director

“Over the past years, Rachael Kessler worked closely with our staff and board to develop a comprehensive plan for a Living Legacy for PassageWorks.”
“PassageWorks has really helped me be more open and open my heart more. Now, at times it's tough because I love all my students, so then when I see them in those places where it's really hard, it hurts more. But as a teacher, it feels good to do that because the students are getting more out of school this way. I think that they're really connecting to adults in PassageWorks, and they are finding more security and safety in the adults. There is more of a sense that: You can come to me for things that you need. I can help you or I can point you on the right direction. Don't keep it to yourself, because there's help.” — West High School Teacher

West High School 9th Grade Student

PassageWorks Core Classroom Practices

- **Focusing Activities:** Active and reflective focusing activities that awaken the mind, revitalize and settle the body, increase the capacity for attention, and build community.

- **Silence, Solitude and Reflection:** The integration of periods of silence, solitude and reflection in the classroom cultivates awareness, concentration, intellectual integration and personal resiliency, giving students and teachers a much needed pause in their day.

- **Symbolic and Creative Expression:** Symbolic and creative expression gives students opportunities to know themselves and each other through a “third thing”-a symbol, metaphor, image, or piece of art that expresses something they are feeling or thinking in the moment. The use of a “third thing” allows students to indirectly express feelings and thoughts that might be difficult to speak about in a more direct way and develops critical thinking skills.

- **Deep Listening & Authentic Speaking:** These practices provide students opportunities to speak and listen to each other in new ways. In these practices the speaker shares on a theme without interruption and the listener listens without offering questions, prompts or challenges to the speaker. These practices augment and support other communication practices, such as active listening, non-violent communication and Socratic dialogues.

- **Council and Sharing Circles:** Council and Sharing Circles offer students a powerful format to engage in respectful communication, story-telling, and personal sharing around relevant themes. Students are invited to speak one at a time while sitting in a circle and are given the option of “passing” or adding their silence if they do not feel moved to speak.

- **The Incorporation of Relevant, Developmental Themes:** Integrating themes that relate to the developmental stages of young people supports them to feel the relevance of their school experience. Such themes address the transitions students are going through and offer them the opportunity to reflect on their own values, identity, visions, and goals.
Rachael Kessler

Rachael Kessler, founder of the PassageWorks Institute, passed away peacefully on January 27, 2010 surrounded by family and friends.

Remembering Rachael

Throughout her life and career, Rachael invited each of us to see and acknowledge our own power, fragility, grace, joy, sadness, light, shadow, and beauty. She encouraged all those she encountered to honor vulnerability as well as strength, to see “adversity as ally”, and to engage in profound dialogue with their own hearts. She was driven by an intense passion to transform education and dedicated herself to creating schools and learning environments where human development and academic development are acknowledged as interconnected parts of a whole. Her dedication and vision illuminated uncharted territory, and for all that she has offered, we are eternally grateful.

Recognized by Daniel Goleman as a “leader in a new movement for emotional literacy,” Rachael Kessler developed a unique and accessible language and framework for supporting the inner lives of students and teachers in schools. Her groundbreaking book, The Soul of Education: Helping Students find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School (ASCD 2000), was distributed to over 110,000 educators worldwide and was endorsed by educators across the spectrum of religious and political belief. After the publication of The Soul of Education, Rachael and colleagues founded the PassageWorks Institute in 2001 to offer this unique approach to social and emotional learning to schools across the country. From 2001-2010, Rachael directed the Institute, co-developed curricula for the transitions years, consulted with teachers and administrators, offered a variety of keynotes, and taught PassageWorks courses and school-based trainings.

Whether addressing administrators in Beijing or San Bernardino, coaching teachers and leading transition groups for students in Boulder, or working with political or
Rachael and Her Work

“Kessler's examination of the quest for meaning among today's adolescents is both daring and needed.”—Howard Gardner

“Rachael compelled students to ask big questions, in meaningful ways. Questions like—What does it mean to accept that this is my life and I have responsibility for it? How do I know I am normal? What is normal? What is our purpose in life? Why do some people tire of life? And, it was within these, and other questions, that teens were able to discover themselves, and uncover meaning in their lives.”—Derek Peterson

“Forever, the handprint of Rachael will be on my teaching and my interaction with my students. I am indebted to her for opening my heart to what teaching can be and to the teacher I can be. My students have benefited from the gift of Rachael's wisdom, and that influence will be passed on to others as these young people go out into the world and make their own marks. Rachael's goodness and insight will be sent out like ripples across the surface of a lake.”—Colleen Conrad

“As a classroom teacher, I found Rachael's book to speak the unspeakable in education. For the last 30 years I have worked in public education—in a system that seemed to be consumed by curriculum and programs and test scores. Rachael reminded us to look deeper, into the eyes and the soul of each child. She reminded me why I went into education so many years before.”—Linda Wallace

civic leaders including the U.S. Congress, Rachael fostered the safety and taught the skills that invited people to communicate from their depths and nurture meaningful connections. Rachael was a committed collaborator—she consistently involved others, inviting a diversity of voices into the development and refinement of the PassageWorks model. Rachael's strong penchant for fostering community has ensured that this body of work lives in the hearts of thousands around the world. As a colleague recently said, “Rachael lit a fire, and we are all ‘fire tenders’ now.” Rachael engaged her cancer journey with courage, honesty, humor, grace, and tenderness—and was a teacher in her death as well as her life. Rachael was an avid gardener, a lover of long walks, a gracious friend, a wise mentor, a devoted mother and partner, a fierce advocate, a compassionate teacher, and a soulful and beloved woman. Rachael is deeply missed.

“Rachael is a rare jewel in the field of education. Her work goes beyond what is usually thought of as “education” and really is a beacon for all those who seek to bring meaning back into the lives of our young people. Rachael's work with young people and the groundbreaking work of PassageWorks managed to break through the barriers in public education in ways that no other programs have succeeded in doing.”—Barbara Cushing

Professional Highlights

- 1964-66 University of Michigan, major in Chinese language/Asian studies
- 1966-69 Wayne State University, B.A. American Studies
- 1969-70 Yale University, M.A. American Studies
- 1980-1983 Health and Teen Parent Education
- 1985-1991 Chair, Department of Human Development—Crossroads School, CA
- 1991-1997 Independent Consultant, Mysteries Program Outreach Project
- 1997 Publication: Promoting Social and Emotional Learning, (Kessler co-author)
- 2000 Publication: The Soul of Education ASCD, sent to 110,000 educators
- 2001 Founding of PassageWorks Institute by Kessler and colleagues
- 2009 Kessler and colleagues complete six Transitions Curricula
Research and Evaluation

A new study reveals that students who participate in school-based programs focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) profit in multiple ways...

Research on Social and Emotional Learning

Research News from CASEL—Highlights from a Major New Report

“A new study reveals that students who participate in school-based programs focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) profit in multiple ways. These positive results do not come at the expense of performance in core academic skills, but rather enhance academic achievement. (See chart on the right)

These are the results of a meta-analysis of 213 studies of SEL programs involving a broadly representative group of 270,034 students from urban, suburban, and rural elementary and secondary schools. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the findings are the result of research that was carried out by Roger P. Weissberg at UIC and Joseph A. Durlak of Loyola University Chicago, with the assistance of graduate students Allison Dymnicki, Rebecca Taylor, and Kriston Schellinger. The meta-analysis project, spearheaded by the UIC Social and Emotional Learning Research Group and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a not-for-profit research organization, is the first meta-analysis of outcome research on social and emotional learning programs that take place during the school day.”

Results of a meta-analysis of 213 studies of SEL programs

Compared to students who do not experience SEL programming, they improve significantly with respect to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>% Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional skills</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive social behavior</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct problems</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional distress</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic performance</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Evaluation of Poudre High School Project

Impact on Students: The report stated that the PWI-PHS project helped young people
• “develop a sense of belonging, meaning and respect for others, thus creating an enhanced context for learning and school culture”.
Impact on Teachers: The report also stated that teachers experienced
• Growth within their advisory groups
• The capacity to maintain an open heart in a way that allowed them to extend care for students outside of classroom time
• An appreciation for the opportunity to develop relationships with students,
• Classroom community building and individual student growth.

Evaluation of West High School Project

Impact on Students:
• The report stated: “...students showed improvement on two subscales—the Caring Adult and Future Efficacy subscales—indicating that, on average, students believed they had an adult who was concerned about them at school and were looking forward to future success.”
• “More than 60% of student respondents agreed they had grown in a positive way (64%); would recommend this Advisory class to incoming 9th graders (66%); the Advisory class improved my relationship with peers (66%), and that Advisory class helped me understand how other people feel (70%).”
• “The most frequently cited positive aspects of Advisory by students included the opportunity to hear and learn about the feelings and perspectives of others, as well as having the opportunity to speak their minds or share their concerns.”
• 9th grade promotion to 10th grade improved from 64% to 80% from prior year.

In fall 2009, PWI produced a PassageWorks-West High School Project Outcomes DVD, which includes the voices of students and teachers involved in this project.
School Projects

PassageWorks offers educators tools, practices and theoretical frameworks that augment the existing intelligence and wisdom in schools.

Alexander Dawson School

In the 2009-2010 school year the Alexander Dawson School in Lafayette, CO continued their 6th grade Transition Program with great success. In addition, the school launched a 10th grade program using the PassageWorks Journey Into High School curriculum. Seven Dawson faculty members and 80 students were involved in this project. The advisory class met once a month and will be expanded in 2010-2011 to a 70 minute class, once per week. In 2009, PWI also provided leadership training to 20 juniors and seniors who served as peer leaders at Dawson. Additionally, Dawson faculty members attended both the Foundation Course and the Teaching Presence courses in 2009.

Think College Now Kindergarten

In spring 2009, PWI completed a successful Kindergarten pilot year with Think College Now (TCN) in Oakland, CA—a public school dedicated to “closing the achievement gap and giving all students an equal opportunity to attend college and pursue their dreams.” The TCN student population is 73% Latino, 20% African-American, and 7% Asian-American. 68% of the students are English Language Learners and 91% of students receive subsidized or reduced-price lunches. TCN Kindergarten teachers utilized the first semester of our Kindergarten First Steps Into Elementary School curriculum to support the transition of their 50 kindergarten families. Faculty member, Kindergarten curriculum author and consultant Carrie Simpson provided TCN kindergarten teachers with ongoing consulting and a winter site visit. Initial project results were very positive and led to a commitment in 2010 and 2011 to continue and expand the program to a full year.

Teachers Training at Alexander Dawson School

“The instruction was top-notch and inspiring.”
Faculty Member, Alexander Dawson School;
—Foundation Course Participant, June 2009

Kindergarten Student Outcomes (noted by teachers):

- Became more self-reflective
- Named and shared feelings and better managed intense emotions when they arose
- Noticed and celebrated connections, similarities and differences
- Experienced routines that built safety in the community
- Increased tolerance for and enjoyment of silence and stillness
- Built memory, listening and expressive language skills
- Increased abilities to focus and concentrate
- Received dedicated support from adults and peers during a significant transition
West High School Transition Program

In May 2009, PWI completed a pilot year with West High School (WHS) in Denver, under the leadership of Principal Pat Sanchez. West High School has a student population that is 90% Latino, 5% African-American and 5% Asian-American and Anglo. 86% of students participate in the free and reduced lunch program. As part of the West High School 9th grade academy, PassageWorks provided a customized curriculum that cultivated the development of emotional intelligence, social competence, and personal resilience and supported students with the high-risk transitions between grades 9-10. The program was intended to help students:

- Develop a sense of identity,
- Establish close relationships with teachers,
- Establish meaningful relations with peers,
- Strengthen interpersonal and intrapersonal skills,
- Constructively navigate life transitions, and
- Promote a school and classroom culture of kindness, caring and respect.

Throughout 2008-2009, PassageWorks offered ongoing consulting and professional development to support a positive and trusting faculty culture and to provide direct assistance with the implementation of the program.

Students commented on what they appreciated most about the PassageWorks Advisory program:

- “That I got to know new people and the different ideas they had.”
- “It has helped me be more open and less shy around others.”
- “I really appreciated the respect that came from fellow classmates to teachers. It was like we were all ‘one.’”
- “Being able to talk about our feelings and opinions (in a group) with other people.”
- “We have all learned to open up a little more.”
- “It helps me with stuff at school.”
- “I appreciate the teacher's participation.”
- “People listen to what you have to say.”
Martin Elementary & RA Doyle Elementary

In 2006, the full faculties from Martin Elementary School and RA Doyle Elementary School in East Prairie, Missouri participated in a school-based Foundation Course. For the past three years, both elementary schools have been integrating the PassageWorks model into their school day and implementing our 5th grade and Kindergarten curricula. In July 2009, Batya Greenwald partnered with elementary school principals Mellisa Heath and Donna Turnbo-Smith to offer follow-up trainings with their respective faculties. During this visit, Batya also offered a two-hour introductory workshop and presentation for local elementary school principals. Martin and Doyle have continued to be highly enthusiastic about the results of the PassageWorks programs.

Sacramento Waldorf School

Over the last few years, Sacramento Waldorf School in California has consistently sent teachers to our Foundation Course trainings in preparation for bringing our programs into their K-12 school. In fall 2009, Sacramento Waldorf School began implementing our Journey into High School and Service Learning curricula and began planning for an all-faculty training in 2010 (completed in August 2010). We continue to have a productive partnership with SWS.

Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies

In 2009, BCSIS continued to integrate PassageWorks principles and practices with their other social, emotional and academic goals and to regularly send teachers to our Foundation Course and Teaching Presence Course. The school implemented the PassageWorks First Steps into Elementary School and Fifth Grade Healthy Transitions programs that included a parent-child Sharing Circle as one of the culminating events at the end of the year. Parents have consistently reported how moving and essential these Sharing Circles are to the process of honoring the growth and change in their children during these transition years.

Congratulations to BCSIS on their 2008-2009 School Climate Survey results!

“PWI has opened a door into the students’ lives. Without (this curriculum) I would not have been able to hear certain students share deeply.”—Kindergarten Teacher, East Prairie Elementary School, East Prairie, MO

BCSIS 2008-2009 School Climate Survey

Improvement has been observed at BCSIS in two major areas: 1) children felt genuinely cared for by teachers in the building and 2) students’ experience of bullying at the school was greatly reduced. Teachers at BCSIS commented that utilizing the PassageWorks model played a considerable role in these gains.

“When I first started in PassageWorks I found that the most powerful piece was not only establishing those places where kids can go into that depth of themselves, but to also allow myself to access that depth as a teacher. For me, the training was a process of looking at myself and looking with greater depth at my teaching practices. So it was nice to know that the training wasn’t just for the kids—it’s for me too.”—Elementary Teacher, BSCSIS Boulder, CO

“At first kids can be a little resistant to community building. But what I really, really appreciate is that by about midway through the PassageWorks curriculum, the kids who had resisted it before have begun to crave it. They now sink into the class and just love it.”—Elementary Teacher, BCS, Boulder, CO
In 2009, Friends School continued to offer Kindergarten and Fifth Grade Transition Programs. Five teachers attended our October Foundation Course and one teacher attended our June Teaching Presence Course. Additionally, a number of Friends School teachers agreed to participate in a series of interviews that are part of our 10th anniversary celebration of the Soul of Education (completed in 2010).

What Friend's School Kindergartners love about PassageWorks:

- My heart gets bigger when it starts to know more about people.
- Golden Moment... it kind of slows your brain down.
- It helps you treat yourself and your friends better.
- I like it because we sing.
- It helps you make new friends.
- I just think it's really calming and fun.
- You get to learn about what your friends do when they're happy and sad.
- It calms your body down.

“Prior to PassageWorks, classroom control was harder because I didn't really know the kids that well, and I didn't feel as connected to them. Now, I feel like kids are more motivated. I can really talk to them about the struggles they're having, and they know that I understand them. Also the kids are respectful in a different way. They hold the class together because they know that if they're messing around, or if they're not doing their best, it impacts the whole class. So as a community, as a whole, they support each other.”—Kindergarten Teacher, The Friends School, Boulder, CO

Urban School Project

Launched in the Spring of 2009, the Urban School Project supported schools with limited funding sources to bring the PassageWorks model to their teachers and students. The initial $15,000 supported programs at Think College Now in Oakland and West High School in Denver.
Curriculum

...In 2009 PassageWorks completed the development phase of its kindergarten curriculum entitled First Steps into Elementary School...

Kindergarten First Steps Curriculum Completion

By the end of 2009, the first semester of our First Steps curriculum had been piloted in four schools across the country in rural, urban and suburban environments. The experience with our four Kindergarten sites in urban California (TCN), rural Missouri (Doyle Elementary) and suburban Colorado (Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies and Friends School) gave us critical feedback regarding the use of the First Steps kindergarten curriculum in a variety of contexts and with a diversity of student populations.

In the fall of 2009 Carrie Simpson and Rachael Kessler completed the development and writing of the second semester of the Kindergarten curriculum. The full-year First Steps curriculum positively supports personal growth and interpersonal skill and supports teachers to provide Kindergartners with a dedicated time each week to honor this important passage.

Academic achievement, peer relationships, emotional resiliency, and inner life development are bolstered when students are thoughtfully supported as they begin elementary school. Honoring where students are (Kindergarten), where they have come from (early childhood/preschool), and where they are going (first grade and through elementary school) are critical aspects of this time of transformation.

Another important part of this curriculum is the way it is designed to involve parents and guardians with their children's PassageWorks' experiences. Parents are encouraged to interact with their children at home to complete “homework” assignments (PassageWorks Family Connections) periodically throughout the year. These assignments give structured opportunities for strengthening parent-child communication skills and parent-child bonds. In addition, parents are invited to an informational evening in the fall and a student honoring ceremony in the spring.

“Using PassageWorks with my class has created very strong bonds among students. They are adept at resolving conflicts, working in pairs and groups, and have a good basis for knowing and discussing their feelings.”—Kindergarten teacher, Think College Now, Oakland, CA

“Kindergartners need adults to listen fully, normalize what is happening, and trust, encourage, and empower them. They need adults to honor the joy and excitement of this transition as well as the challenges and confusions.”—Carrie Simpson, Co-author of the First Steps Into Elementary School Curriculum

Carrie Simpson co-author of kindergarten curriculum
PassageWorks Comprehensive Curricula K–12

**First Steps into Elementary School**: A curriculum to support the transition into the kindergarten year. Through play, verbal and artistic sharing, and reflective practices, this curriculum supports Kindergarten students in developing self-awareness and meaningful interpersonal connections. Students acknowledge the depth and range of changes that are taking place and have opportunities to build trust in themselves and in each other. A strong parent component strengthens families and guides parents to empower and honor their children.

**Making Healthy Transitions out of Elementary School** (for the 5th or 6th grade year) provides tools that help students and parents cope and thrive as they navigate the profound shift that comes with completing this stage of childhood and schooling and preparing for the academic, physiological, social and emotional challenges of adolescence and middle school.

**Entering the Culture of Middle School** (for the 6th or 7th grade year) strengthens individual identity while fostering meaningful new relationships across social divides. This program promotes a culture of kindness and emotional and social competence that can mitigate the slide into incivility, insecurity and the lure of risk behaviors common to the middle school years.

**Journey into High School** (for the 9th or 10th grade year) is designed to build community, promote identity definition and resilience, and take students and teachers on an inward exploration of meaning, self-awareness, and transitions.

**Senior Passages** (for the 12th grade year) is a school-based rites-of-passage designed to help students navigate the major transition at the completion of high school, which is often characterized by both deep anxiety and exquisite awakening.

**Newcomers Transition Curriculum** serves students who are recent immigrants, a population at especially high risk for alienation from school, school failure and self-destructive behaviors. This curriculum offers students the opportunity to honor the people, lands, cultures and personal identities they have left behind; reclaim and integrate aspects of their past; and become empowered to move with strength and confidence as they transition into a new school, culture and country.
Courses and Professional Development

“This experience was enriching beyond words. The balance of theory, experiential, small and large group process was ‘perfect’ for me.”

2009 Courses & Professional Development

Foundation Courses
- February 2009, facilitated by Laura Weaver and Jenelle Peterson (Maui, HI).
- March 2009, facilitated by Carrie Simpson and John McCluskey (Boulder, CO).
- June 2009, facilitated by Batya Greenwald and John McCluskey (Boulder, CO).
- October 2009, facilitated by Carrie Simpson and new faculty members Lorri Acott-Fowler and Ari Gerzon-Kessler (Boulder, CO).

Teaching Presence Course
- June 2009, facilitated by Rachael Kessler and Laura Weaver (Boulder, CO).
“After twenty intensive hours of living the PassageWorks Curriculum, I can see that it is an invaluable method to help young people grow in a safe environment into healthy, positive, and contributing members of society. This course fills in the pieces that too many teachers don’t even know we’re missing.”—Teacher/Participant, February 2009 Foundation Course, Maui, HI

“It was pure joy this weekend to be with this group. But not only the group, it was a pure joy to be held by the facilitators. The course was well organized, open-hearted, which made it easy to feel at ease quickly and extremely knowledgeable about this work.”—Teacher/Participant, October 2009 Foundation Course, Boulder, CO

“The Foundation Course reminded me to slow down. Take a breath. Enjoy the moment. Notice more in that moment. Connect. Be a listener!”—Teacher/Participant, March 2009 Foundation Course, Boulder, CO

Laura Weaver and John McCluskey at Teaching Presence

“This work is vitally important in schools because of the simple fact that children have an Inner Life that they each bring with them to school. It is this Inner Life that can enhance and fuel learning to occur, and it is this Inner Life that must be honored. PassageWorks impacts my teaching and my students by showing me how to nurture this Inner Life.”—Teacher/Participant, February 2009 Foundation Course, Maui, HI

“This experience was enriching beyond words. The balance of theory, experiential, small and large group process was ‘perfect’ for me. I truly appreciated the emotional range invited and held in the circle—it was truly a heart-opening experience.”—Teacher/Participant, October 2009 Foundation Course, Boulder, CO
“The Foundation Course is like taking that long put-off trip to your deeper self that is full of reminders about why you chose to teach.”—Teacher/Participant, March 2009 Foundation Course, Boulder, CO

“It was such an incredible gift to attend the Foundation Course. At the course I received real tools for building a safe and supportive heart-opening community.”—Teacher/Participant, March 2009 Foundation Course, Boulder, CO

“Watching students come together and develop increasing comfort with the group is continually inspiring. It is a constant reminder of how much we ask of students on a daily basis, and how important it is to create a safe container in which they feel comfortable letting their true selves be present.”—Fourth Grade Teacher, Friend’s School, Boulder, CO

**Customized Professional Development**

PWI continues to develop a variety of customized professional development options to meet the unique needs of teachers and schools.

In August 2009, PWI offered a half-day of professional development at the Boulder Jewish Day School, including experiential activities that illustrated PWI core practices and principles. In November 2009, PWI offered the first in a series of three professional development modules at Daniel C. Oakes High School, Castle Rock, Colorado.

“Our professional development with PassageWorks really helped solidify some of the classroom environment issues we are trying to reinforce with some of our teachers. It really got us thinking.”—Faculty Member, DC Oakes High School, CO
Outreach

...In 2009, PassageWorks began a social networking initiative to support our outreach to the community...

PWI's Social Networking Initiative

In 2009, PassageWorks began a social networking initiative to support our outreach to the community. Under the leadership of Mark Wilding and Liz Amore, graduate student intern Erynn Simone and volunteers Margaret Thompson, Jim Halligan, Marya Read, and Kirsten Boyer developed a more comprehensive strategy involving a number of social media. This comprehensive Social Networking Initiative is comprised of the following outreach tools:

PWI Facebook Page

In June 2009, PassageWorks launched a Facebook page for the general public. Please go to www.facebook.com. Search: PassageWorks Institute

PassageWorks Blog

In October 2009, PWI launched a public blog with Mark Wilding's reflections on “21st Century Education” and the need for an emphasis on both skills and content in our educational approach (http://passageworks.org/index.php/blog). A second post on “Teacher Quality” authored by Laura Weaver was published in December.

PassageWorks On-Line Learning Community

In July, PWI launched the PassageWorks Learning Community—a password protected section of our website designed for educators, administrators and parents who have taken the Foundation Course or Teaching Presence Course. Registered users are given access to our “Teacher to Teacher” blog, photos, videos, links, articles, and resources that relate to the PassageWorks mission and vision, as well as to national and global education topics.
Rachael’s Keynote on the Teaching Presence

Being Present: “The first dimension of the Teaching Presence is about being present, or maybe we should say becoming present. It’s not something that we ever achieve in a permanent way; it’s a practice we’re always working with. And it starts with being open to perceiving what’s happening right now.”

Open Heart: “What does it feel like to have an open heart in the classroom? It is to be warm, and alive, and flowing and daring to be spontaneous, and connected to ourselves, connected to our students, and able to truly feel compassionate. It’s also about being able to care deeply about our students, about our subject, about our mission, without being attached to an outcome. Not until a teacher has developed boundaries can he or she afford to be truly vulnerable with students without losing his or her own center.”

Respectful Discipline: “Respectful Discipline is not about obedience that comes out of a desire to please, or out of fear. It is about a teacher holding boundaries with respect and compassion. In this dimension, our goal is respect, not compliance. It is about helping our students develop internalized discipline, respect for themselves, and respect for others.”

Emotional Range: “When we are able to make friends with each of our emotions, there is an experience of waking up, of flowing, of being spontaneous. To do this we have to go through a journey of melting our numbness.”

Conferences:

Holistic Education International Conference at OISE

In October 2009, Rachael Kessler presented a keynote on the Teaching Presence at The 7th International Holistic Education Conference: “Holistic Learning: Breaking New Ground: Soulful Spaces: Transforming Self — Transforming the World.” The HEIC conference was sponsored by University of Waterloo and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. This moving talk was the last public presentation Rachael gave before her death in 2010. Rachael discussed the four dimensions of teaching presence and also shared poignant stories about her journey with cancer.

“If the social bond between the child and adult is absent, the transmission of knowledge, of wisdom, is distorted or aborted. We are living in a time when so many young people need healing from us. They need to learn to trust us before they are going to be willing to learn with us and from us. That trust can only develop if there is love, if they can feel our open heart, if they feel our connection and deep caring for them.” —Rachael Kessler at Holistic Education Conference

National Network for Educational Renewal

Mark Wilding presented a break-out session entitled “It’s About Relationships” at the annual National Network for Educational Renewal Conference in Seattle WA in October 2009. Mark also spent valuable time meeting with strategic allies from the northwest. One of the highlights was a panel with James Comer titled: “Those Who Dared: Five Visionaries Who Changed American Education”

Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE)

In July 2009, Mark Wilding and West High School Principal Pat Sanchez presented at the annual CASE conference to over 50 administrators about the West High School advisory program that resulted in 9th grade promotion to 10th grade increasing from 64% to 80% from prior year. The presentation included video interviews with the students and teachers involved in the project.
Mind and Life Conference

Mark Wilding and Laura Weaver attended the Mind and Life Conference: Educating World Citizens for the 21st Century in Washington, D.C. The conference offered panel discussions with professors of education, developmental psychologists, neuroscientists, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and contemplative practitioners. PassageWorks co-hosted a post-conference dinner and dialogue with Board Member Erica Shafroth and her husband Will Shafroth. The group of twenty colleagues represented a diversity of leaders in education, youth development, character education, contemplative education, and social and emotional learning programs. Together the group explored possible future collaboration and partnerships.

21st Century Education Coalition

In 2009, PassageWorks joined the emerging 21st Century Education Coalition and worked with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and other stakeholders to support the revision of state standards and participate in Race to the Top dialogues. The Coalition is dedicated to developing effective schools in Colorado through the integration of new state standards for post-secondary and workforce skills (21st century skills: critical thinking, self-direction, information literacy, collaboration, invention) and academic content knowledge. The coalition members support schools in sustaining effective learning environments, cultivating positive school culture, building strong relationships within school communities, and promoting civic responsibility. Participating organizations include PeaceJam, PassageWorks Institute, Earth Force, Foundation for Character Education, Rachel's Challenge, Institute for Excellence & Ethics, and Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development. The organizations involved span the range of the fields of Social-Emotional Learning, Service-Learning and Character Education.

Garrison Institute: Initiative on Contemplative Education

In early 2009, Rachael Kessler was invited to serve on the Senior Advisory Board for the Garrison Initiative to support a systematic field building process. Mark Wilding was also invited to join the Leadership Council for the project and attended the project retreat in November 2009. Because of Rachael's illness, she was unable to attend. The weekend was a wonderful opportunity to share ideas about education.

“Of all the professional forms of work I have seen, teaching is the most difficult. I have worked with the training of physicians, and the only practice of medicine that is remotely as difficult as teaching is being a doctor in an emergency room during a natural disaster. Only then does the physician have to deal with thirty different patients all clamoring for attention at the same time—be cognitively able to deal with illness, emotionally prepared to deal with suffering, and skilled enough to do something about it. And yet we teachers, on an average day in third grade, are expected to do this constantly with a twenty-minute break for lunch. Doctors are prepared for thirteen years for the work they do. We try to prepare teachers in one year, in many cases, and then drop them into very difficult challenges, give them little sustained development and then we wonder why teaching is so difficult. Teaching is an enormously complex “practice”—all true practices are intellectual, emotional and moral and require a level of coordination that most can’t walk in off the street and do.” —quote from Mind and Life Conference by Lee S. Schulman Ph.D. the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education and Psychology at Stanford University, and President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Six Passages of Childhood Article
Rachael Kessler and Laura Weaver co-authored the chapter “The Six Passages of Childhood: A Model for School-Based Rites of Passage” for the upcoming book Educating from the Heart, edited by Aostre Johnson and Marilyn Neagley. The book is due to be published in 2011. The article explores the ways school based rites of passage programs can assist students with the profound and vulnerable developmental shifts throughout their K-12 school years.

Early Childhood Transitions Book
Judy Langford, Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of Social Policy, has included material about PWI’s Kindergarten Transitions Program in an upcoming book on early childhood transitions edited by Sharon Lynn Kagan from Teachers College, Columbia University: Transitions for Young Children

Publications

Spirituality in Education Article
UK Journalist Karen Sullivan interviewed Laura Weaver to inform her article about PassageWorks. The article entitled “What Exactly is Spirituality?” was published in the summer of 2009 in the UK Journal “Secondary Ed.” To view this article, go to: www.sec-ed.co.uk

“When young people lose their sense of meaning and purpose, when they have no internal compass, there is nothing to stop them from acting in destructive ways towards themselves and others. However, when students are invited to explore meaning, purpose and relevance, when they experience connection to self, to others, and the world around them, they are more apt to choose to act in life-sustaining ways.

At PassageWorks, we invite students to develop a sense of what they value so that they can understand when the choices they are making are actually sabotaging what they most long for. In the presence of their peers and a mentor/teacher, students are invited to share these values, hopes, dreams and questions.

Teachers are the heroes of our communities. They are the ones in the trenches working with the hearts of our young people, growing the minds of our students. These young people will inherit a very complex planet, and they often spend more time with teachers than any other adults in their lives. Teachers are a wonderful potential source of connection for students. What if every student felt really truly known by at least one teacher in the school? Think of how that would truly change their lives. But in order to do this, we need to take other pressures off teachers, so that they don’t continually feel they are being asked to do more and more with less and less support. Our culture needs to re-invent our relationship to teachers, for whether we like it or not, they are mentors for our students.”

—Laura Weaver, Associate Executive Director of PassageWorks Institute
Our Organization

Before she passed away in January of 2010, Rachael Kessler, Founder and President, was on intermittent medical leave and continued to provide critical strategic direction, and curriculum, course and faculty development.

2009 Staff, Faculty and Volunteers

- Batya Greenwald, PassageWorks faculty member and public school kindergarten teacher, joined our staff part-time to support outreach and development work.
- We are grateful for the contributions of all of our faculty members over the years: John McCluskey, Carrie Simpson, Laura Weaver, Batya Greenwald, Ari Gerzon-Kessler, Cathy Fink, Lorri Acott, Ron Lamb, Chuck Fisher, Francisco Garcia-Quezada, Dana Knox, Bruce Rose (retired), Jenelle Peterson and Erin Tanner.
- PassageWorks welcomed two volunteer graduate student interns for 2009/2010 academic year, Marjorie Wyman and Alex Peterffy.
- Margaret Thompson continued to volunteer in support of our social networking project and Jim Halligan continued as volunteer in technical support for our website, on-line learning community, FaceBook, Twitter, and the launch of blog.
- Marya Read, of People Productions, continued to assist in the development of a rich digital library of video and audio documentation of our work in schools.
- Kirsten Boyer, professional photographer, volunteered her time to capture beautiful photos of BCSIS students, and of our Foundation Course program.

In addition to the volunteer support from our committees, we have received the donation of high level expertise from professionals in several arenas: our webmaster, videographer, presentation coach, mentoring and professional learning communities consultants, leadership consultants and research advisors all donated significant amounts of their time to support our progress.
The Board and Committees

Board of Directors
David Brand and John Lainson served as co-chairs of the board throughout 2009, and their leadership during this challenging year was critical.

2009 PassageWorks Board of Directors

- David Brand
- Gordon Dveirin
- Rachael Kessler
- John Lainson
- K.J. McCorry
- Erica Shafroth
- Jennifer Walton

Advisory Board

PassageWorks continues to benefit greatly from our esteemed board of advisors and will be relying on the wise counsel of these leaders in this next phase of our growth.

Strategic Planning

In Spring of 2009, PassageWorks began a strategic planning project led by the board of directors. Co-chair David Brand facilitated five consecutive monthly meetings with board, staff and advisors to help shape the next phase of the Institute.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

PassageWorks Advisory Board

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- Alexander Astin
- Joan Borysenko
- Peter Cobb
- Dee Dickinson
- Charles Elbot
- Maurice Elias
- Jeannette Gerzon
- Julie Glover
- Mark Greenberg
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- David Sluyter
- Dan Spinner
- John Steiner
- Peggy Taylor
- Roger Weissberg

Rachael Kessler, Celeste DiOrio, and Robert Kenny at Strategy Meeting
Thank You

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, board of directors, committees, and pro bono consultants, PassageWorks continues to inspire, prepare, and support educators to implement our model for nurturing the inner lives of students. We are grateful to the following financial contributors who helped make our work possible in 2009:

Foundations and Organizations
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