

Rebuilding After COVID

Professional Development Program

Case Study: Greater Lowell Technical High School



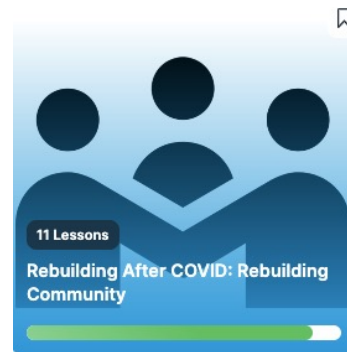
About *Rebuilding After COVID*

***Rebuilding After COVID* helps educators and youth leaders manage the impact of the pandemic on their students and staff.**

This online, self-guided social-emotional learning (SEL) and community building training helps to re-engage students and support the mental and physical health of everyone in the school or program community:

- Easily searchable, state-of-the-art online learning site.
- More than 30 proven community-building games, discussions, and lessons — each with easy-to-follow demonstration videos and instructions and informed by trauma recovery research.

Here is the story of how one school adopted the program and saw results...



The Challenge: Spring 2021

When Greater Lowell Technical High School (GLTHS) in Lowell, MA began bringing students back from remote learning, school administrators noticed concerning social behaviors.

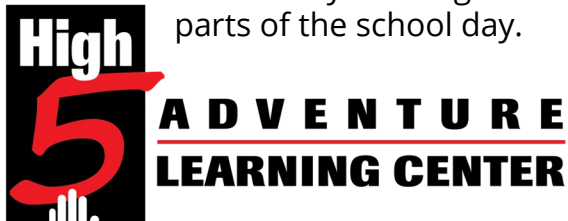
Students weren't communicating well, they weren't working together, and they were expressing considerable frustration — even steering away from group projects to avoid conflicts.

School leadership knew this situation would only worsen in the fall of 2021 when the entire school population was back in person, including 600 new freshmen.

GLTHS adopted High 5's *Rebuilding After COVID* program to empower their educators to address this need. Through an easily accessed learning website, GLTHS teachers who volunteered to pilot the program received training and a library of targeted community building activities that they could integrate into various parts of the school day.

At the outset, GLTHS leaders and educators identified their goals for *Rebuilding After COVID*:

- Improve students' relationship skills, including communication, cooperation, and negotiation.
- Create an environment of mutual trust where students felt safe to unwind fears and difficult emotions.



GREATER LOWELL
TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

The Process: 2021-2022 School Year

The GLTHS educators quickly learned how to facilitate and apply the *Rebuilding After COVID* activities through the learning platform and videos.

Key Process Learnings:

- **Even with the pressures of the pandemic, GLTHS educators found the program easy to integrate into instructional and community time.**
- **Students demonstrated that they could take ownership of the activities.** Empowering students to rebuild their own community helped accelerate the goals. Several teachers began to develop learning activities that required students to work together and interact with each other more, accelerating community building through a student-centered, rather than teacher-centered, focus.

"I changed my teaching format to incorporate these fun activities and it worked."

— Susan O., teacher

"This was a great way for me to learn how to incorporate these techniques into my everyday lessons."

— Michelle M., teacher

The Process: 2021-2022 School Year

"They all felt like the [Poppers] activity brought us together as a class, which was the goal. Every time I went to take my turn one of the students would say, 'Wait, Ms. D, you're playing, too?'"

"My favorite part was when they decided that if a specific thing happened in the activity that none of us thought would happen, that was worth a million points. The student who won had a million and one points."

"When all the students were cheering and yelling because she got the million points you could see how huge her smile was. It was amazing to see the entire class cheering for her."

"They asked if we would do more activities like this. I think it was absolutely successful." — Sonia D., teacher



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY Poppers



HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Poppers are simple toys – slices of a pool noodle – and in this activity sequence, students will have opportunities for movement, creativity, and sharing of skills. Research has shown that providing students with opportunities for input and control in their environment leads to higher sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence, particularly after difficult events. This fun sequence of relatively free play has infinite possibilities and allows students to think of their own variations of the game.



The Impact: Spring 2022

In a survey, GLTHS educators identified the skills most impacted by *Rebuilding After COVID*:

Communication

"Face to face communication. Many of the students unwilling to speak in class came out of their shell during the Rebuilding After COVID activities."

— Michael W., teacher

Problem Solving

"It allowed for students to communicate, figure out what problem was going on in the exercise and how to solve it. It was great to see students interact with each other and figure out how to solve the problem together." — Jillian A., teacher

Connections

"Students felt more comfortable opening up and talking about what's going on in their life." — Yunwei K., teacher

"Breaking down barriers and being more accepting of others created more substantial connections with their peers."

— Patrick T., teacher

Cooperation

"They seem more willing to listen to each other, collaborate, and build ideas together." — Alexander E., teacher

Student-Teacher Relationships

"It helped me see students in a different way, take a minute to get personal with them, instead of all business, and therefore formulate better relationships."

— Rebecca I., teacher

The Impact: Spring 2022

***Rebuilding After COVID* also strengthened faculty relationships**

GLTHS teachers also benefitted significantly from working together through *Rebuilding After COVID*.

They met biweekly throughout the school year and used the private group chat built into the learning website to share their progress, provide feedback, and exchange learnings.

The mutual support that came from sharing their experiences created a welcoming environment that deepened their relationships as well.

"I loved working with my colleagues on this program."

— Jillian A., teacher

"It was an excellent way to build a community among teachers with a shared vision. Being able to share wins and frustrations with others made teaching feel less isolating."

— Sarah S., teacher

Looking Forward: 2022-23 School Year

The classes that piloted the program saw *measurable improvement* in the school climate and community.

Based on this success, GLTHS plans to *double the number of participating teachers* in the 2022-23 school year.

“Based on the feedback from students and teachers, I think we made significant progress toward our goal of reinforcing relationship skills. The teachers who piloted the program feel they are more connected to their students through doing these activities and having these conversations, as well as making sure the students have conversations with each other. While we still have a way to go, they feel like their students are in a much better place.”

— Ron Vercellone, Dean of Students, Greater Lowell Technical High School

A faded background image showing two individuals from the chest up. On the left, a person with short blonde hair, wearing a tan hoodie and a patterned face mask, is making a hand gesture with their right hand. On the right, a person with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, a colorful scarf, and a black face mask, is also making a hand gesture with their right hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Bring *Rebuilding After COVID*
to your school or youth program
Contact Us: onlinelearning@high5adventure.org

