

## On Social Emotional Learning

In *Remix Podcast Episode 2*, Karen talks with [Ron Berger](#), Senior Advisor, Teaching & Learning for [EL Education](#), and [Margarida Celestino](#), a freshman at Colgate University and alumnus of Casco Bay High School (an EL school). Their conversations pushes more deeply on themes from the Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) Alliance Strategy session in which all three were panelists – [Design Principles for Schools: Putting SoLD into Action](#) – school culture, social emotional learning and the role of community partners and engagement in the community.



*Karen:* Margarida, I know you gave the valedictorian speech. And Ron, you mentioned that 99% of the class is graduating and moving on. That must mean that they're well-prepared. We haven't talked about academics in this entire conversation, but clearly something was going on that these young people were not just engaged and connected and learning about their identities and building out their full selves. They were also becoming very well-prepared. We often hear is it either/or? Do we focus on the social emotional? Do we focus on the academic? How did that really work together?



*Ron:* **It is a crazy thing that we think of this as a tradeoff – that we focus on the social-emotional health of students, their identity and their sense of belonging and their character, or we focus on their academics** – because the science makes it so clear that those things are interdependent.

Every parent already knows that if your child does not feel that she belongs, does not feel respected and valued in school, she's not going to do well. That confidence and a sense of belonging and a sense of being valued are a foundation for doing well academically.



So, it's not a coincidence that a school like the high school Margarida just graduated from not only had 99% of students (most of whom are low income students, many of whom are students of color and many immigrants) graduate on time and 99% of students get into college, but that has been their graduation record and college acceptance record for more than a dozen years since they opened. So it's working academically.

**It's not a trade-off. It's by building an environment that kids feel safe and cared for and where they look out for each other, that we can push academically.**

And it's not just the adults pushing. There's a positive peer pressure in those schools where our students are supporting each other, but also pushing each other to succeed academically.