

Keynote Session: Leveraging Emotional Intelligence and Culturally Responsive Practices for Thriving Students



Session Description:

For students to thrive at school, they must feel safe to be who they are; they must love themselves. As a result, our leadership, instruction, and assessment must foster psychological and emotional safety through emotional intelligence and culturally responsive pedagogy. During this interactive session, participants will explore the five key skills of emotional intelligence—recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotions—and culturally relevant practices. Through narrative, Simmons will discuss how the intersection of emotionally intelligent and culturally responsive practices can create equitable and welcoming communities, where students can learn in the comfort of their skin.

Session Objectives:

- Discuss the skills of emotional intelligence
- Define what cultural responsive practice is
- Explore the intersections between culturally responsive practices and emotional intelligence
- Describe ways to incorporate culturally responsive and emotionally intelligent practices into participants' lives and work

Dena Simmons, Ed.D., is a lifelong activist, educator, and student of life. As the Assistant Director of Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, she supports schools to use the power of emotions to create a more compassionate and just society. Prior to her work at the Center, Dena served as an educator, teacher educator, diversity facilitator, and curriculum developer. She has been a leading voice on teacher education and has written and spoken across the country about social justice pedagogy, diversity, education reform, emotional intelligence, and bullying in K-12 school settings, including the White House, the inaugural Obama Foundation Summit, the United Nations, two TEDx talks, and a TED talk on Broadway. Dena has been profiled in Education Week, the Huffington Post, NPR, the AOL/PBS project, MAKERS: Women Who Make America, and a Beacon Press Book, *Do It Anyway: The New Generation of Activists*. Dena is a recipient of a Harry S. Truman Scholarship, a J. William Fulbright Fellowship, an Education Pioneers Fellowship, a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship, a Phillips Exeter Academy Dissertation Fellowship, and an Arthur Vining Davis Aspen Fellowship among others. She earned her doctorate degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, where she is now faculty, teaching aspiring school leaders in the Summer Principals Academy. Dena's research interests include teacher preparedness to address bullying in the K-12 school setting, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the intersection of equity and social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions—all in an effort to ensure and foster justice and safe spaces for all.

Selected publications: <https://www.denasimmons.com/film>