

Narrowing School-Based Relationship Gaps

A Generation Next / University of Minnesota (UROC) Project

User Guide and Resources for Professional Learning

Video 2: Gaps between Families and Communities and Schools

Guiding questions:

- Michael Walker talked about engaging with the community outside of school. How would you describe the current relationship between your school and its broader community? What do you think that relationship should be?
- What are specific ways your school attempts to engage with the broader community? How are those efforts going?
- What is the current state of parental involvement at your school? How can you empower parents to draw on their strengths to help their kids in school?
- Michael Walker refers to parents having “educational trauma” and students being “forged” in trauma. What kinds of trauma do you have in your school? What might have contributed to these kinds of trauma? What effects might they have on parents and children? What can you do about it?
- Note: Because talking about trauma can be emotion-laden and potentially re-traumatizing for people who experience it, we recommend such questions only be discussed in the presence of expert facilitators.
- How does, “How you show up” matter in establishing relationships with families and community members? In your experience, what has worked well? What has not worked so well? How can schools build trust with parents and communities?
- Carly Jarva talks about how to talk with parents about their children. What are the most helpful ways you and your staff members have found to talk with parents about their children?
- Courtney Bell and Michael Walker talk about the importance of treating students “like family.” (Joyce Epstein, Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools, refers to this as more “family-like schools.”) How much do staff members treat students like family in your school? How can students be treated more like family? How can they treat each other more like “cousins?”
- Juliana Pena-Marconi shares some of the ways she has found to meaningfully help kids. What are some of the hidden rules for student success in your school or in our educational system that some parents might not be aware of?

Helpful Resources:

- Gorski, Paul (2013). Reading and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Reaching and teaching students in poverty: Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap.
- Gorski, Paul (2013). "Five Stereotypes About Poor Families and Education." Washington Post, November 27, 2013.
- Five Stereotypes about Poor Families and Education
- Center for Excellence in Children's Mental Health – What is Trauma and Why is it Important? (PDF)
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network – Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators (PDF)
- National Network of Partnership Schools (website)
- Pollack, Mica (2013). It Takes a Network to Raise a Child: Improving the Communication Infrastructure of Public Education to Enable Community Cooperation in Young Peoples' Success. Teachers College Record.
- The Oneville Project (website)

Video 3: Overcoming Institutional Racism

Guiding questions:

- Courtney Bell emphasizes the importance of teachers knowing about the history of education and race in the United States. What do you and your colleagues know about how schools in the U.S. have both perpetuated and attempted to address racial inequality over the last two hundred years? Why does this knowledge matter in teaching?
- How does systemic racism show itself in your school? Are there any policies, practices, or ways of teaching, that, as Scott Masini says, "do not have students of color in mind?" Or, as Courtney Bell says, may be, "holding some students back" in your school? How?
- Michael Walker talks about "a system of broken beliefs." Are any "broken beliefs" evident among students and parents in your school and community? What do these look like? What do they sound like? What can you and your colleagues do about them?
- How would you honestly "grade" your school's record in treating students fairly and equitably? What are your reasons for this grade? How could it be improved?
- Carly Jarva highlights the importance of greater integration in communities. What is the state of racial isolation or integration in the communities of which your school is a part? What can be done to enhance integration?
- Scott Masini talks about how the Philando Castile case really "hit home" with his staff with regard to understanding the continuing problem of racism in society. Have there been any events in your community involving race that would be important to talk about as a teaching staff?
- Is it possible that families in your school community have been, as Scott Masini says, "burned" by public education? How might it make sense for them, from their point of view, to not "trust" schools? How might you and your colleagues be able to learn more about their experiences or



people like them?

Helpful Resources:

- Ladson-Billings, Gloria (1998). "Just What is Critical Race Theory and What's it Doing in a Nice Field like Education?" *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*.
- Brayboy, Bryan (2005). *Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in education*. Urban Review.
- Wing Sue, Derald, et al (2007). "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice." American Psychological Association: Psycnet.
- Race: The Power of an Illusion
- Slavery by Another Name
- Pollock, Mica (2017). *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and To Students Everyday*. New York: The New Press.
- *Schooltalking: Tools for Talking in School Communities*
- Rothstein, Richard (2013). *Our House Divided: What U.S. Schools Don't Teach About U.S.-Style Apartheid*. Zinn Education: If We Knew Our History Series.

Video 4: Narrowing Gaps between Students and Teachers

Guiding questions:

- Anastasia Martin, Scott Masini, and Michael Walker all talk about the role of relationships between teachers and students in student academic engagement – Anastasia Martin says that students "need supportive and caring adults in their lives before they're ready to learn." What are ways that you and your colleagues have found to establish supportive, caring, and trusting relationships with students? What has worked well? What has gotten in the way?
- Teacher content knowledge is an important part of the educational equation. But, as these leaders point out, so are relationships. Are there any ways that your school could enhance teachers' capacity to build effective relationships with students to foster greater engagement and achievement?
- Part of relationship building is demonstrating respect for students and a belief in their capabilities. What are ways that you and your colleagues show respect for students and their meaning-making in school? How do you and your colleagues communicate to students that you have optimistic beliefs in their capabilities and future prospects?
- Juliana Pena-Marconi expresses concern for teachers who "feel sorry" for students, because she believes it means they do not have high expectations for them. What is the difference between sympathy and empathy? How can you and your colleagues demonstrate empathy instead of sympathy for marginalized students in order to build caring, trusting, and supportive relationships with them? How can you communicate to students that they are all capable of

doing things and learning and succeeding in school and beyond?

- Tricia Wilkerson talks about the importance of giving students feedback in helping them be successful. What ways have you and your colleagues found to effectively give students feedback – especially feedback based on what Carly Jarva refers to as “active listening without judgment?”
- Courtney Bell talks about her two favorite teachers and how race didn’t matter in her relationships with them. How important do you think race is in student relationships with school and student-teacher relationships? What did these teachers do that was so meaningful to her? How did they connect with her? After establishing that trusting relationship, how did they push her?
- Courtney Bell reflects on “the work” this teacher had to do to establish this kind of relationship with her. What kind of work do you think teachers and staff members need to do in order to establish these kinds of trusting relationships with their students?
- Scott Masini says he tells his teachers that their most important job is “loving” their students, and that if that is there, everything else will “fall into place,” including learning, respect, and caring. Do you agree that this is your most important job? Why or why not?
- Courtney Bell emphasizes the importance of being “transparent” with students, which involves a “level of vulnerability.” What does this mean to you? How transparent or vulnerable do you think you need to be with your students in order to gain their trust? What do you think you should be prepared to tell students about yourself? *Note: In the necessary vigilance around preventing sexual misconduct today, how should teachers determine and negotiate proper boundaries?*

Helpful Resources:

- Allensworth, Elaine & Farrington, Camille et al (2018). Supporting Social, Emotional & Academic Development (Research synthesis). Chicago: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. (PDF)
- Immordino-Yang, Mary, Darling Hammond, Linda & Krone, Christina (2018). The Brain Basis for Integrated Social, Emotional, and Academic Development: How Emotions and Social Relationships Drive Learning. The Aspen Institute – National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development.
- Search Institute – Developmental Relationships Framework (PDF)
- Dweck, Carol (2016). The Remarkable Reach of Growth Mind-Sets. Scientific American.
- Rubin, Beth, Abu El-Haj, Thea et al (2016). Confronting the Urban Civic Opportunity Gap: Integrating Youth Participatory Action Research into Teacher Education. Journal of Teacher Education. (PDF)
- American School Counselor Association
- Baum, Joel & Westheimer, Kim (2015). Sex? Sexual Orientation? Gender Identity? Gender Expression? Knowing the Difference can Make all the Difference to Students who do not Conform to Binary Norms. Teaching Tolerance.

- The Genderbread Person V. 3
- Great Lakes Equity Center

Video 5: The Promise of Culturally Responsive Teaching: Building Relationships, Engagement, and Achievement

Guiding Questions:

- Juliana Pena-Marconi tells a troubling story of how one teacher in her school tried to deal with students not participating in their class. How much is student participation a challenge in your classes? How do you understand the reasons for student non-participation? What can you do to better engage students?
- Juliana Pena-Marconi emphasizes the importance of finding out about students' backgrounds and home lives. What are ways you can learn more about your students' lives?
- Scott Masini talks about how his school shifted from seeing student "behavior" (disengagement, defiance, noncompliance) as a "choice" to trying to understand the causal factors behind it - including different kinds of stressors in student's lives. How does your school see the causes of these sorts of student "behavior?" How effective are the ways in which you are addressing these issues? How might you rethink your approach?
- Anastasia Martin highlights how restorative practices can "build and rebuild positive relationships" around students. What has been your experience with restorative practices? How useful do you think they can be with improving student belonging, their perceptions of school and how they are treated, and ultimately, their academic engagement?
- Carly Jarva says that in her school, most students who end up getting sent out of their classrooms have exhibited "nonacceptable school cultural behaviors." What sorts of behaviors are and are not acceptable in your classroom? How can you raise the threshold of what is acceptable to make more students feel comfortable and engaged in your classroom?
- Anastasia Martin and Carly Jarva discuss making sure content is "relevant" for students and that they can "see themselves in the curriculum." How do you and your colleagues strive to make school learning and curriculum relevant to students' lives? How can this help students, as Michael Walker says, "believe" in their own capabilities?
- Tricia Wilkerson talks about the need for students to be able to "balance" staying "true to their cultures, values and traditions," and fitting in to higher education, or school culture. Courtney Bell talks about this in terms of students learning to become aware of their "character" and how they "govern" and "represent" themselves in school. How do you and your colleagues help students "navigate" and find this balance?

Helpful Resources:

- Hammond, Zaretta (2008). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. New York: Corwin.

- Aronson, Brittany & Laughter, Judson (2016). The Theory and Practice of Culturally Relevant Education: A Synthesis of Research across Content Areas. Review of Educational Research.
- Moll, Luis et al (1992). Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. Theory into Practice.
- Duncan-Andrade, Jeff (2009). Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing
- Roses in Concrete. Harvard Educational Review.
- Pérez-Gualdrón, Leyla et al (2016). Boys II Men: A Culturally-Responsive School Counseling Group for Urban High School Boys of Color. Journal of School Counseling. (PDF)

Video 6: The Role of Leadership

Guiding questions:

- Juliana Pena-Marconi talks about the importance of “being present” as a leader to make people more “comfortable” in her school. In what ways can you “be present” so that your students feel a greater sense of belonging in school?
- Michael Walker says it is important as a leader to model that he doesn’t “know everything.” How can you as a leader model this stance, and especially, what it means for being an active “listener” and “lead learner” in your school?
- Scott Masini believes that “the answers are in the room,” and the challenge is “tapping into” the expertise in his building to narrow school-based relationship gaps. How is your school tapping into the experiential knowledge and practice-based expertise of teachers and staff members to narrow school-based relationship gaps? How are you learning about what seems to be working well in your building?
- Juliana Pena-Marconi and Scott Masini talk about the importance of bringing various resources to their school to narrow relationship gaps. What additional available resources might be helpful to do this in your school?
- Scott Masini’s school partnered with the College of Design at UMN to redesign a room to be a more effective “calming space” for students. Are there any spaces that could be redesigned for similar purposes in your school? What local partners might be able to help?
- Courtney Bell talks about strategies for “hiring for mission” in schools, and lists several characteristics she says will ensure effectiveness. What qualities do you and your colleagues look for in new staff members?
- Michael Walker talks about hiring local community members to teach his organization’s African Studies course. How can your school engage members of your local community to enhance the cultural relevance of teaching strategies and course content in your school? How can such people inspire students and serve as role models, in the sense that Julia Pena-Marconi and Carly Jarva describe? How can they serve as cultural resources for staff members?

Helpful Resources:

- Khalifa, Muhammad (2018). Culturally Responsive School Leadership. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Peterson, Kent & Deal, Terrence (2009). The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Quantz, Richard et al (2017). Culture-Based Leadership. International Journal of Leadership in Education.
- Murphy, Joseph & and Seashore Louis, Karen (2018). Positive School leadership: Building Capacity and Strengthening Relationships. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Change Leadership – A Guide for School Leaders, Minnesota Department of Education (2018).
- Change Management Leadership Guide, Ryerson University (2011). (PDF)
- The Irrational Side of Change Management, McKinsey and Co. (2009)
- Larson, Madeline, Cook, Clayton et al (2018). Stressed Teachers Don't Make Good Implementers: Examining the Interplay between Stress Reduction and Implementation Fidelity. School Mental Health (2018).
- Teacher Powered Schools

