



NATIONAL
EQUITY
PROJECT

SPARK TEAMS RETREAT

JUNE, 2016



RESOURCES

S - Social Emotional Learning

P - Positive Relationships

A - Analysis of Data

R - Restorative Practices

K - Kindness



Your spark can
become a flame
and change
everything.

-E.D. Nixon

A Safe Place

By Gilbert Rees

In a safe place
I am wanted.
Me, all the edges
And the angles
And the hidden
parts that are me.

No one say,
"You just won't do.
You'll never be
The things I want
You never will."
No one says that
In a safe place.

And no one comes
With sudden anger
Or a "What am I
going to do with you?"
Look... in hopeless eyes.
Not in a safe place.

For there
If I reach my hand out only a little,
If I gently touch someone,
Then someone reaches back
As gently,
As softly,

And no one breaks
apart our reaching
and no one tears
apart our silence
In the safe place –
We make together.





The Art of Conversation

Behaviors that help take conversation to a deeper realm:

1. We acknowledge one another as equals
2. We try to stay curious about each other
3. We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners
4. We slow down so we have time to think and reflect
5. We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together
6. We expect it to be messy at times

"Listen for what surprises you. Notice what disturbs you. If what you say surprises me, I must have been assuming something else was true. If something you say disturbs me, I must believe something contrary to you. My shock at your position exposes my own. These moments are great gifts."

"We know how to have deep conversations, but we sometimes have to let go of our modern ways of being in meetings to get past the behaviors that keep us apart. We have cultivated some bad behaviors – speaking too fast, interrupting others, monopolizing the time, giving speeches or pronouncements. Many of us have been rewarded for these behaviors. We've become more powerful through their use. But none of them lead to wise thinking or healthy relationships. They only drive us away from each other."



NATIONAL
EQUITY
PROJECT

Some Definitions of COMMUNITY

A **community** is a group of people who acknowledge their interconnectedness, have a sense of their common purpose, respect their differences, share in group decision making as well as in responsibility for the actions of the group, and support each other's growth."

- *Sheldon Berman*



Community isn't always synonymous with warmth and harmony. Politeness is often a veneer for understanding, when in reality it masks uncovered territory, the unspeakable pit that we turn from because we know the pain and anger that can dwell there.

It is important to remind ourselves that real community is forged out of struggle. This is the crucible from which a real community grows.

Linda Christensen,
Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching about Social Justice and the Written Word



From Values to Vision... and Beyond

The Island Below the Surface

Daily Tasks

*What we do on a daily basis:
In most organizations we only
see the tip of the iceberg.*

SPECIFIC

GENERAL

Action Plans ----- Who, what, when, where...

Goals/Objectives ----- Mapping the work into doable chunks

Strategies ----- Steps we choose in order to proceed

Theory of Action ----- How we think we can best accomplish our vision

Vision ----- What we believe our work looks like when done well

Mission ----- What our work becomes

Purpose ----- What we think is worth doing

Values & Beliefs ----- What we care about and believe

Worldview ----- A cumulative view of the world based on experiences, identity, relationships, learning, and other inputs that provide us our "ways of seeing" and perspectives



Historical Timeline of Public Education in the U.S.

1647 The General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony decrees that every town of fifty families should have an elementary school and that every town of 100 families should have a Latin school. The goal is to ensure that Puritan children learn to read the Bible and receive basic information about their Calvinist religion.

1779 Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks in his words for “the laboring and the learned.” Scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance, Jefferson says, by “raking a few geniuses from the rubbish.”

1785 The Continental Congress (before the U.S. Constitution was ratified) passes a law calling for a survey of the “Northwest Territory” which included what was to become the state of Ohio. The law created “townships,” reserving a portion of each township for a local school. From these “land grants” eventually came the U.S. system of “land grant universities,” the state public universities that exist today. Of course in order to create these townships, the Continental Congress assumes it has the right to give away or sell land that is already occupied by Native people.

1790 Pennsylvania state constitution calls for free public education but only for poor children. It is expected that rich people will pay for their children’s schooling.

1805 New York Public School Society is formed by wealthy businessmen to provide education for poor children. Schools are run on the “Lancasterian” model, in which one “master” can teach hundreds of students in a single room. The master gives a rote lesson to the older students, who then pass it down to the younger students. These schools emphasize discipline and obedience qualities that factory owners want in their workers.

1817 A petition presented in the Boston Town Meeting calls for establishing of a system of free public primary schools. Main support comes from local merchants, businessmen and wealthier artisans. Many wage earners oppose it, because they don’t want to pay the taxes.

1820 First public high school in the U.S., Boston English, opens.

1827 Massachusetts passes a law making all grades of public school open to all pupils free of charge.

1830s By this time, most southern states have laws forbidding teaching people in slavery to read. Even so, around 5 percent become literate at great personal risk.

1820-1860 The percentage of people working in agriculture plummets as family farms are gobbled up by larger agricultural businesses and people are forced to look for work in towns and cities. At the same time, cities grow tremendously, fueled by new manufacturing industries, the influx of people from rural areas and many immigrants from Europe. During the 10 years from 1846 to 1856, 3.1 million immigrants arrive, a number equal to one eighth of the entire U.S. population. Owners of industry needed a docile, obedient workforce and look to public schools to provide it.

1837 Horace Mann becomes head of the newly formed Massachusetts State Board of Education. Edmund Dwight, a major industrialist, thinks a state board of education was so important to factory owners that he offered to supplement the state salary with extra money of his own.

1840s Over a million Irish immigrants arrive in the United States, driven out of their homes in Ireland by the potato famine. Irish Catholics in New York City struggle for local neighborhood control of schools as a way of preventing their children from being forced a Protestant curriculum.

1848 Massachusetts Reform School at Westboro opens, where children who have refused to attend public schools are sent. This begins a long tradition of "reform schools," which combine the education and juvenile justice systems.

1848 The war against Mexico ends with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which gives the United States almost half of what was then Mexico. This includes all of what is now the U.S. Southwest, plus parts of Utah, Nevada and Wyoming and most of California. The treaty guarantees citizenship rights to everyone living in these areas mostly Mexicans and Native people. It also guarantees the continued use of the Spanish language, including in education. One hundred fifty years later, in 1998, California breaks that treaty, by passing Proposition 227, which would make it illegal for teachers to speak Spanish in public schools.

1851 State of Massachusetts passes first its compulsory education law. The goal is to make sure that the children of poor immigrants get "civilized" and learn obedience and restraint, so they make good workers and don't contribute to social upheaval.

1852 Two years after California became a state; the legislature passed a bill barring African American children from schools. The First State Convention of Colored Citizens of the State of California met in 1854 and in a public pronouncement chafed against this discriminatory measure.

1864 Congress makes it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages. Native children as young as four years old are taken from their parents and sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools, whose goal, as one BIA official put it, is to "kill the Indian to save the man."

1865-1877 African Americans mobilize to bring public education to the South for the first time. After the Civil War, and with the legal end of slavery, African Americans in the South make alliances with white Republicans to push for many political changes, including for the first time rewriting state constitutions to guarantee free public education. In practice, white children benefit more than Black children.

By 1870 California had devised a formula of ten. When African Americans, Asian Americans, or American Indians numbered ten students, a school district was empowered to create separate schools for whites and non-white children.

1872, Harriet Ward attempted to enroll her daughter Mary Frances in an all-white school in San Francisco. When the principal refused to admit her, Ward filed suit. *Ward v. Flood* (1873) was California's first case challenging educational segregation. However, the California Supreme Court, in its ruling, foreshadowed the logic of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896); in using the principle of "separate but equal."

1877-1900 Reconstruction ends in 1877 when federal troops, which had occupied the South since the end of the Civil War are withdrawn. Whites regain political control of the South and lay the foundations of legal segregation.

1881, California legislators passed Political Code 1662. After the phrase noting "infectious diseases," came the passage "and also to establish separate schools for children of Mongolian or Chinese descent. When such separate schools are established Chinese or Mongolian children must not be admitted into any other schools."

1885 The case of *Tape v. Hurley* would force local and state officials to address public education for Chinese youth. In 1884, Joseph and Mary Tape, both immigrants from China, attempted to enroll their U.S. born daughter Mamie into the neighborhood public school. Principal Jennie Hurley refused admittance and the Tapes filed suit. The state Superior Court confirmed the right of Mamie Tape to attend the neighborhood school.

1893-1913 Size of school boards in the country's 28 biggest cities is cut in half. Most local district (or "ward") based positions are eliminated, in favor of citywide elections. This means that local immigrant communities lose control of their local schools. Makeup of school boards changes from small local businessmen and some wage earners to professionals (like doctors and lawyers), big businessmen and other members of the richest classes.

1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the state of Louisiana has the right to require "separate but equal" railroad cars for Blacks and whites. This decision means that the federal government officially recognizes segregation as legal. One result is that southern states pass laws requiring racial segregation in public schools.

1905 The U.S. Supreme Court requires California to extend public education to the children of Chinese immigrants.

1917 Smith-Hughes Act passes, providing federal funding for vocational education. Big manufacturing corporations push this, because they want to remove job skill training from the apprenticeship programs of trade unions and bring it under their own control.

1921 The California school law (Political Code 1662) was amended once again to read as follows:

"The governing body of a school district shall have power to exclude children of filthy or vicious habits, or children suffering from contagious or infectious diseases, and also to establish separate schools for Indian children and for children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage. When such schools are established, Indian children or children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage must not be admitted into any other school."

1924 An act of Congress makes Native Americans U.S. citizens for the first time.

1930s *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove*. This California Mexican American case was possibly the first successful court action in favor of school desegregation in the country.

1930-1950 The NAACP brings a series of suits over unequal teachers' pay for Blacks and whites in southern states. At the same time, southern states realize they are losing African American labor to the northern cities. These two sources of pressure resulted in some increase of spending on Black schools in the South.

1932 A survey of 150 school districts reveals that three quarters of them are using so-called intelligence testing to place students in different academic tracks.

1945 At the end of World War 2, the G.I. Bill of Rights gives thousands of working class men college scholarships for the first time in U.S. history.

Early 1940's, the NAACP began shaping a legal strategy to challenge the constitutionality of segregation per se, NAACP lawyers began experimenting with sociological arguments to demonstrate the inherent inequality of racial segregation.

1945 The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) lawyers implement such a strategy to challenge school segregation in California filed by Mexican-American parents in Orange County, California. NAACP lawyers followed the *Mendez v. Westminster* case closely and modeled the strategy in *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954.

1947 The Anderson Bill was passed which was the direct result of the *Mendez* case. This measure repealed all California school codes mandating segregation dating back to the 1850s and was signed into law by then Governor Earl Warren, who seven years later would preside over the *Brown* case.

1948 Educational Testing Service is formed, merging the College Entrance Examination Board, the Cooperative Test Service, the Graduate Records Office, the National Committee on Teachers Examinations and others, with huge grants from the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations. These testing services continued the work of eugenicists like Carl Brigham (originator of the SAT) who did research "proving" that immigrants were feeble-minded.

1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The Supreme Court unanimously agrees that segregated schools are "inherently unequal" and must be abolished. Almost 45 years later in 1998, schools, especially in the north, are as segregated as ever.

1957 A federal court orders integration of Little Rock, Arkansas public schools. Governor Orval Faubus sends his National Guard to physically prevent nine African American students from enrolling at all-white Central High School. Reluctantly, President Eisenhower sends federal troops to enforce the court order not because he supports desegregation, but because he can't let a state governor use military power to defy the U.S. federal government.

1968 African American parents and white teachers clash in the Ocean Hill Brownsville area of New York City, over the issue of community control of the schools. Teachers go on strike, and the community organizes freedom schools while the public schools are closed.

1974 *Milliken v. Bradley*. A Supreme Court made up of Richard Nixon's appointees rules that schools may not be desegregated across school districts. This effectively legally segregates students of color in inner-city districts from white students in wealthier white suburban districts.

Late 1970s The so-called "taxpayers' revolt" leads to the passage of Proposition 13 in California, and copy-cat measures like Proposition 2-1/2 in Massachusetts. These propositions freeze property taxes, which are a major source of funding for public schools. As a result, in twenty years California drops from first in the nation in per-student spending in 1978 to number 43 in 1998.

1974 *Lau v. Nichols* marks a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court ruling that established the judicial mandate for bilingual education for Chinese-speaking students. The case became a significant milestone within the legacy of Asian American activism and a remedy to inequality in education.

1976 The California Supreme Court holds that education is a fundamental right under the equal protection clause of the state constitution in *Serrano v. Priest*. The high courts in Connecticut and Wyoming followed suit in 1977 and 1980.

1980s The federal Tribal Colleges Act establishes a community college on every Indian reservation, which allows young people to go to college without leaving their families.

1994 Proposition 187 passes in California, making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to attend public school. Federal courts hold Proposition 187 unconstitutional, but anti-immigrant feeling spreads across the country.

1996 California passes Proposition 209, which outlaws affirmative action in public employment, public contracting and public education. Other states jump on the bandwagon with their own initiatives and efforts are made to pass similar legislation on a federal level.

1998 Multi-millionaire Ron Unz manages to put a measure on the June 1998 ballot outlawing bilingual education in California. In 2000, he sponsors similar legislation in Arizona. California's proposition 227 passes with 61% of the vote, 63% of Arizona's voters passed their Proposition 203.

2008 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell delivered his fifth annual State of Education Address and unveiled an ambitious, comprehensive plan aimed at closing California's pernicious achievement gap that exists between students who are white and students of color, as well as with English learners, students in poverty, and students with disabilities.

2010 The Texas School Board adopts revisions to the Texas social studies curriculum. The revised curriculum plays down the role of Thomas Jefferson among the founding fathers, questions the separation of church and state, and claims that the U.S. government was infiltrated by Communists during the Cold War.

2011 The Arizona state-legislature passes bill (HB 2281) that effectively bans the Ethnic Studies program in Tucson's largest school district. The new law prohibits any curricula that:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.
 2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
 3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
 4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.
- Under this law, the state can withhold up to 10% of a district's funding for a violation, about \$15 million per year that in the case of the Tucson's schools.



The Lens of Systemic Oppression

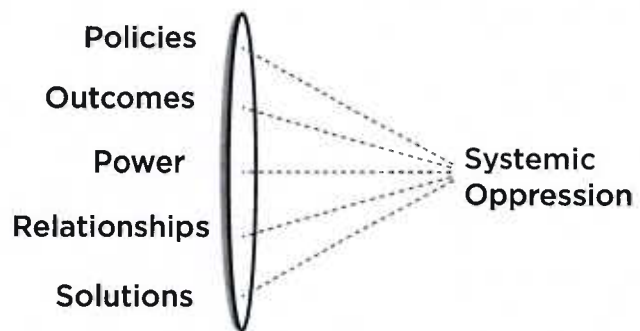
A “lens” is a metaphor to communicate the idea of looking at an event, experience, and/or a set of data through a particular perspective. The extension of this metaphor being that one can look at what is occurring and construct an interpretation and a subsequent action based on the “lens” being employed at any given time. Each of us views the world through a set of lenses everyday – it is how we read and make meaning of the world.

The lens of systemic oppression is a lens we intentionally employ to sharpen our focus on the ways in which any given form of oppression (race, gender, class, language, sexual orientation, etc) may be negatively impacting people’s ability to make progress on the things they care about and/or preventing individual or collective action toward the achievement of a particular goal.

The purpose of using any given lens is to improve the predictability of our actions relative to a desired outcome. We believe we increase the likelihood of successfully reaching a given set of objectives when we consider what is happening and what action to take from multiple perspectives – if we examine situations, relationships, practices, and policies, etc using multiple critical lenses (inquiry, change management, adult learning, etc). Learning about and applying the lens of systemic oppression is fundamental to coaching and leading for equity.

The Lens of Systemic Oppression assumes that:

- All negative forms of prejudice and/or bias are learned and therefore can be unlearned.
- Oppression and injustice are human creations and phenomena and therefore can be undone.
- Systemic oppression exists at the level of institutions (harmful policies and practices) and across structures (education, health, transportation, economy, etc) that are interconnected and reinforcing over time.
- Oppression and systematic mistreatment (such as racism, classism, sexism, or homophobia) is more than just the sum of individual prejudices.
- Systemic oppression is systematic and has historical antecedents; it is the intentional disadvantaging of groups of people based on their identity while advantaging members of the dominant group (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, language, etc.).
- Systemic oppression manifests in economic, social, political and cultural systems.
- Systemic oppression and its effects can be undone through recognition of inequitable patterns and intentional action to interrupt inequity and create more democratic processes and systems supported by multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual alliances and partnerships.
- Discussing and addressing oppression and bias will usually be accompanied by strong emotions.



Questions You Can Ask:

- How are people talking about the problem they are trying to solve? Is the conversation being had in a way that could lead to productive action?
- Who are the people affected by the current inequity being discussed and are they at the table?
- What are the specific disparities/inequities we are seeking to eliminate?
- How do we understand the forces behind the inequity we see? What forces are perpetuating the disparities we seek to address?
- What barriers are in the way of achieving an equitable outcome?
- What are the population and geographic targets for our effort? Specifically, for whom and where are we trying to make a difference?
- What will equity or racial equity in our OUTCOME look like? How will we KNOW we have made progress? When do we expect to see results? What is our timeframe?
- What are the potential UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES of our proposed solutions/actions? Do the proposed solutions ignore or worsen existing disparities for the group in which we are focused?
- Who has power here? What is power based on here?
- How are relationships and power differentials affecting the truth that is told and constructed at any given moment?
- Where and how does each person locate himself or herself in a conversation?
- How are oppression, internalized oppression and transferred oppression playing out right here, right now? (In this school, in this group, in this organization, in this district?) What will I do about it?
- How safe is it here for different people to share their truth?
- Does the truth telling connect to shared purposes and commitments for action?
- How can I build the alliances necessary here to move forward?
- How is leadership constructed here? What forms does it take? Who is missing? What can we do to make room for different cultural constructions of leadership?
- How do I understand my practice as an antiracist, anti-bias educator given how I am different or the same as my colleagues? Given how I am different or the same as the people I am serving?
- How can I build my practice as a leader for equity starting with who I am and what I bring because of who I am?

| An Equity Lens

Consider:

WHAT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS MOMENT?
WHO BENEFITS THE MOST? THE LEAST?
WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE INEQUITABLE OUTCOMES?

When looking at:

- Student performance
- Discipline rates
- Instruction
- Evaluation
- Expenditure
- Hiring
- Recruiting
- Promoting
- Setting priorities
- A new initiative

Can be applied to:

STUDENT OUTCOMES, EXPERIENCES • ADULT PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES
FAMILY & COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES • ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

In service of taking action:

GIVEN WHAT I SEE THROUGH THIS LENS, WHAT'S ACTIONABLE NOW?

WHAT INTERVENTION IS NEEDED NOW?



Academic Mindset Research

Excerpts from "Academic Mindsets as a Critical Component of Deeper Learning" (Farrington 2013)

1) I belong in this academic community.

Mazlow noted long ago that one of our basic human needs is for "belongingness" and "a place in [one's] group." In an academic setting, this refers to students' sense of connectedness to peers and adults in their classes and their school. Belonging is particularly important in an educational context because human learning is socially constructed: we come to understand the world through our interaction with others. Feeling part of a community of learners is a powerful motivator. Students with a strong sense of academic belonging see themselves as members of not only a social community, but an intellectual community. They tend to interpret setbacks and difficulty in their studies as a normal part of learning, rather than as signs that they are "out of place" in a particular academic environment. Conversely, students who do not feel a sense of belonging in school tend to withdraw from interaction with their peers; to the extent that they associate academic work with their sense of alienation from the school community, they are likely to put forth little effort to learn.

A large study of students in grades 4-6 across six school districts found that students' sense of belonging in school was positively related (with moderate to large effects) to their enjoyment of class, liking for school, and task orientation toward learning, as well as being significantly (but more weakly) related to mean reading scores. In a separate intervention study designed to mitigate the effects of "belonging uncertainty" on college freshmen, researchers found improved grades over time among African American students in the treatment group significant enough that the black-white grade gap was reduced 79 percent by senior year... Further, the percentage of African American students in the top quartile of their class had tripled following the intervention due to improved performance among treated students.

2) I can succeed at this.

The degree to which students believe they are "good" at a particular kind of task or field of study is strongly associated with academic perseverance. Research shows that self-efficacy and the belief in one's likelihood of success are generally more predictive of academic performance than one's actual measured ability. Individuals more willingly engage in tasks of any kind when they anticipate success. For students to expend the sustained effort necessary for learning, they must believe their efforts will be successful. This mindset also derives from our basic "need or desire for a stable, firmly based, (usually) high evaluation of [our]selves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others."

Students who anticipate failure or believe they cannot do something well will likely refrain from investing effort or devalue the importance of the task in order to maintain a sense of their own competence... Research suggests that students who believe they will succeed at an academic task are more likely to persist longer in the task and use cognitive and metacognitive strategies that improve their performance. There is also clear empirical evidence that self-efficacy is malleable. Providing feedback on students' prior performance (e.g., commenting that students have been working hard), feedback on ability (e.g., commenting that students are good at a particular academic task), setting goals, or providing skill training all had the effect of increasing students' expectations of success as well as their performance.

3) My ability and competence grow with my effort.

Much attention has been given to what Carol Dweck calls a “growth mindset,” which relates to one’s ideas about the nature of intelligence. Students with a growth mindset believe that “the brain is like a muscle” that gets stronger with use. Accordingly, growth-mindset students are more likely to interpret academic challenge or mistakes as opportunities to learn and develop their brains. Having a growth mindset is also associated with a “mastery goal orientation,” meaning that students are motivated by wanting to learn as much as they can in order to master the material; they enjoy challenging themselves to take on the next new idea. Dweck contrasts a growth mindset with a “fixed mindset.” Students with a fixed mindset think of intelligence as something that is predetermined and not within their control. Students with fixed mindsets are more likely to be performance oriented rather than mastery oriented, meaning that they are motivated either by the desire to show off their smarts by outperforming others or by their desire to not look dumb by underperforming... Students motivated to outperform others tend to give up quickly when success does not come easily. Students who are driven by the desire to hide what they fear is a substandard level of intelligence are likely to refrain from engaging in a task at all, lest they risk public failure.

In an experiment designed to encourage growth mindsets in college students, researchers found that students in the treatment group had higher GPAs the following term (average = 0.23 grade points) and that, among African American students, those in the treatment group reported higher levels of enjoyment and engagement in school following the intervention. In a study of seventh graders with declining math scores, those in a randomized treatment group focused on the development of a growth mindset were able to stabilize their grades, ending the school year with an average 0.30 higher grade points than their peers in a control group. Measures before and after the intervention also showed that students in the treatment group changed their understanding of the brain as well as their beliefs about intelligence during the study period, suggesting the malleability of student mindsets. In further evidence that growth mindsets can be cultivated, researchers found that “retraining” students to attribute poor academic performance to a lack of effort or to the use of an ineffective strategy (rather than a lack of ability) “has been shown to produce sizeable changes in persistence in the face of failure, changes that persist over time and generalize across tasks.”

4) This work has value for me.

Human beings are continually interpreting and making meaning of experience. Our brains naturally look for connections in order to process new information and ideas. For academic work to penetrate students’ consciousness and become a focus of attention, it has to mean something to them. Students value academic tasks and topics that connect in some way to their lives, their future educational pursuit / careers, or their current interests... The value a student places on a given academic task is strongly associated with both persistence and performance on that task. When a task is not valued, students have to expend significantly more energy to focus their attention on it; further, they are much less likely to remember information related to it.

Researchers tested the importance of value in an intervention study with ninth grade science students. Students in the treatment group were asked to write about how the weekly science topics applied to their lives. Students in the control group instead wrote summaries of the weekly science topics. Students in the treatment group who entered ninth grade with low

expectations for success in science earned significantly higher grades (average=0.80 grade points difference) than students in the control group. Students in the treatment group also reported higher interest in science after the intervention and indicated wanting to take more science courses. In a similar study with seventh-graders, students who wrote about values that were important to them in connection with school earned higher grades than students in the control group; the largest effects were seen with low-performing African American students, who increased their grades by 0.41 grade points, an improvement which was sustained over two years.

Across a broad collection of studies and lines of research, the evidence strongly supports the relationship between positive academic mindsets, increased academic perseverance, and improved academic performance. In short, when a student feels a sense of belonging in a classroom community, believes that effort will increase ability and competence, believes that success is possible and within his or her control, and sees school work as interesting or relevant to his or her life, the student is much more likely to persist at academic tasks despite setbacks and to exhibit the kinds of academic behaviors that lead to learning and school success. Conversely, when students feel as though they do not belong, are not smart enough, will not be able to succeed, or cannot find relevance in the work at hand, they are much more likely to give up and withdraw from academic work, demonstrating poor academic behaviors which result in low grades.



Mind Shifting: Cultivating a Growth Mindset

1. **Help students reconnect with a time when they learned something new that was a stretch or a challenge.** Point out the developmental nature of “getting good” – we all go through the process of making a lot of mistakes, practicing, and then getting better.
2. **Create a short script or “lesson” around naming famous people (someone famous and respected in the student’s eyes) who weren’t good at first,** experienced failure, then decided to “get good” through effort and deliberate practice. (*Search “Famous Failures” on YouTube*)
3. **Help students get curious about mistakes.** Help students reframe a mistake as new information or as a step in the process of learning. In addition, help them incorporate self-correction in their own learning process.
4. **Help students learn to hear their own fixed mindset “voice”.** Capture and, in a gentle and appropriate way, share their own statements with them. Most students are unaware of this self-talk because it has gone on so long and is subliminal.
 - *That guy is brilliant; either you’re born with it or you’re not*
 - *I got it wrong, I quit*
 - *I’m only as good as my achievements*
5. **Help student talk back to negative self-talk with a growth mindset voice.**
 - *I am willing to learn new skills to improve*
 - *I get better and better with practice, this is hard, but will get easier*
 - *This challenge is making me smarter*
 - *Admitting my struggles doesn’t mean I’m not smart*
 - *If I wasn’t afraid to fail, what could I achieve?*
6. **Try to give each student the experience of being successful or mastering something that is a little beyond their current reach, something they don’t think they can do.** Pay attention to the current skills students have and where they are actually capable of doing more, but don’t quite believe it yet. Scaffold the experience so they can get a taste of an early win based on effort. (Check out The Practice Project, www.FiresInTheMind.org)
7. **Build a classroom culture that emphasizes the importance of effort and making mistakes to the process of learning.**
 - *Post quotes that emphasize the qualities of a growth mindset*
 - *Adopt a class song, chant or anthem (The Climb: Miley Cyrus, Not Afraid: Eminem, Ain’t No Stoppin’ Us Now: McFadden & Whitehead)*
 - *Embrace and encourage effort as the pathway to success, rather than just embracing the success*

“

I don’t divide the world into the weak and the strong, or the successes and the failures. I divide the world into the learners and the non-learners.”

- Benjamin Barber



Developing a Learning Partnership

Each school has a “sphere of success,” a set of students for whom current practices are working to get on the path to college and career-readiness. Regardless of how successful a school is, not every child is within its sphere of success. In order to bring increasing numbers of young people into that sphere, educators have to learn to do something differently through fostering intentional “learning partnerships” with specific students. These partnerships can provide an approach to ensure that students outside of the sphere of success will have access to college and career opportunities - and the learning that comes from these partnerships can guide educators to new approaches to classroom practices and routines that can benefit every student in their care.

Learning partnerships require the educator to deeply learn about a student: who they are, how they think, how they learn, and their perceptions of self. This partnership is not just a positive rapport; it is built in service of the student’s learning and development of essential skills for success in school and life. It supports the student as they utilize their assets and strengths, identify their challenge opportunities, set personal goals, and work with the educator to achieve those goals. This partnership sets the stage for the educator to help a student make conscious movement toward independent, self-directed learning and productive decisions.

There are three components of a Learning Partnership:

1. Building Trust Across Identity Differences - Cultural Synchronization
2. Creating an Alliance
3. Formative Assessment for Independent Learning

Establishing a level of rapport with individual students and the classroom community as a whole creates a positive learning environment and begins to build trust so that students do not feel the need to be guarded or defensive. This is especially important for struggling students who try to cover up their skill gaps by acting out or trying to disengage during class or at school. One of the most important ways to build trust across differences of identity (race, gender, class, family background, life experience, values, etc.) is working toward cultural synchronization. Cultural synchronization refers to a shared, implicit understanding of communication and interaction styles, both verbal and nonverbal, between students and teachers of different cultural backgrounds that can lead to increased trust, decreased frustration and improved learning opportunities.

When some foundational trust has been established, it is important to move toward creating an alliance with the student – explicitly identifying a growth goal or “skill-based learning target” that is crucial for future success, and making a pact to work together in the service of improving identified skills (academic or “non-cognitive”), decision-making, or shifting a mindset. In order for an alliance to lead to results, a positive academic mindset needs to be fostered so that the student will stay engaged in the learning, believe and see evidence that growth is possible, and persevere through challenges. The alliance stage is critical for fostering student agency and personal investment.

Positive rapport and a strong alliance pave the way for the educator to gain a deep and holistic understanding of how a particular student is learning, thinking, and making decisions as they learn through multiple types of formative assessments. It is at this stage that the deep work of “intervening” takes place. The educator is able to help the student assess their own thinking and progress, and use new or pre-existing strategies effectively so that he or she is able to practice, self-correct and learn more independently. Through understanding a student’s multiple aspects of their identity, their perception of self, and how they understand their context, the educator can also support the student to better understand the needs underneath any unproductive displays of behavior, and take responsibility for choices in their best interest.