

Does My Teacher Like Me?

A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Impact of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.



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Executive Summary

“I can see when a teacher is truly invested in teaching and if they like me or not. After years of being a student in school, what we do is sit around and watch teachers all day. So the kind of relationship I have with my teacher in the classroom is what makes the difference if I feel they like me or not.” Student Respondent

Many people can remember a teacher who fostered a positive, effective relationship with their students, created a sense of belonging in the classroom, and influenced academic achievement. In fact, one of the most overlooked school factors is the quality of the relationship between teachers and students and the powerful impact on student success. (Davis, 2003)

There is considerable literature on teacher-student relationships and a sense of belonging from adults’ perspectives. However, there is limited research from students’ perspectives, and an absence of research around the word “like”, which is how every student interviewed initially described their student-teacher relationships. Therefore, I chose to explore student-teacher relationships and the impact of a sense of belonging, race, and ethnicity from the students’ perspectives. My research used the conceptual frameworks of Social Capital Theory, Social Identity Theory, Nodding’s Theory of Care, and Critical Race Theory to inform the following four research questions:

1. What are the most important factors in positive, effective student-teacher relationships?
2. What does it mean to have a sense of belonging and how is that connected to student-teacher relationships and academic achievement?
3. How does race or ethnicity impact or influence student-teacher relationships?
4. How can teachers build positive, effective relationships with students and provide academic support?

My partner organization is The Palm Beach County School District, 10th largest in the country, and Park Vista High School, 3rd largest in the county. Their demographics are comparable. The multi-faceted strategic plan that commits to a positive, supportive, and inclusive school climate aligned with my research. I recruited sophomores through their English classes because all sophomores are required to take either an intensive, mainstream, or advanced English class. I categorized the sample by race, ethnicity, gender, and academic class level. In total, I interviewed 22 students, for an average time of 35 minutes per interview, reaching thematic saturation for the concepts of “like”, care, and belonging. The qualitative student interviews provided consistent and deep insights from which the following five findings emerged:

1. The concept of being liked by a teacher was influenced by the teacher’s intentionality in creating a sense of belonging or care for the student.
2. The most positive, effective relationships reflected the teacher’s commitment to their job, and demonstration of that commitment.
3. The most effective teachers fostered positive student-teacher relationships by consistently engaging them with multiple perspectives.

4. Positive experiences with teachers were not dependent on race or ethnicity, but race or ethnicity did impact the potential for negative experiences.
5. A sense of belonging influences students' ease of learning and higher academic achievement or success.

The findings informed my recommendation for a transformative, relevant professional development that highlights student voice. Therefore, I developed the Open Hand Leadership and Learning in Action Framework for ongoing and effective professional development. The findings align with the learning objectives of each of the five points or fingers of the hand metaphor. The design is human-centered which facilitates relevant and fluid implementation because the learning is situated in the context of the teachers, while validating students' perspectives.

On the one hand, students felt teachers seemed to care about them and teaching, but they failed to show they liked, or cared for the students. (Noddings, 2005) Intentionally caring for students made them feel liked and gave them a sense of belonging that fostered positive student-teacher relationships. In addition to being intentional in their daily interactions, students needed to see their teachers demonstrate their commitment to their job. Students felt that positive, effective student-teacher relationships occur when teachers seek multiple perspectives to personally and academically engage them. They said that students who had a sense of belonging, felt cared for and liked by a teacher were more motivated to achieve academically. These connections built positive student-teacher relationships where students felt a sense of belonging that facilitated their academic success with greater ease and enjoyment.

On the other hand, while teachers are being intentional, demonstrating their commitment to teaching, and seeking multiple perspectives to engage all students, they need to simultaneously build their own capacity for balance to optimize their effectiveness. Students perceived teachers who were optimistic and centered, most effective at building relationships. Teachers who seemed to enjoy their job were able to foster positive interactions with students and mitigate negative experiences based on race or ethnicity. Conversely, teachers who were perceived as stressed, fatigued, burnt out, or "just there to get paid", were more easily triggered to act on their implicit biases, stereotypes, or prejudices, thus creating negative experiences or relationships with students.

Lastly, to navigate the tensions between what teachers see as necessary for their job and what is mandated for their job, students felt they needed to remember their purpose in teaching. Focusing on their "why" daily, and sharing that with students fostered a sense of belonging that influenced their academic success. Remembering the specific "why", or purpose, of teaching is an asset-based, culturally competent, controllable mindset that students felt was key to initiate positive, effective interactions. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on student-teacher relationships and a sense of belonging and care, while creating new inroads for highlighting student voice and examining the concept of what it means to be liked by a teacher. *"Reach out your hand and hold it open for us. Say 'Hey, I'll be here for you'. Show us you mean it by being positive and offering to help. Then, I'll be willing to come to you. If you don't give me that hand, I just can't do it by myself."* Student Respondent

Organizational Context and Problem



“Students’ education shouldn’t come down to luck if we get a good teacher or not.” - Student Respondent



The School District of Palm Beach County is the tenth largest school district in the country. There are 265 schools and 193,000 students who speak 146 languages and dialects from 197 countries and territories of birth. Instruction in some schools is offered in several languages including Spanish, French, Chinese, Italian, Latin, Japanese, and American Sign Language. There are 322 programs throughout the school district for career academies to be inclusive of college readiness as well as technical careers. Palm Beach County Schools operate on a 3.8 billion dollar budget and the district is a fully accredited, high performing or ‘A’ rated, urban district. The student population is 56% White, 20% Hispanic/LatinX, 18% Black/African American, 3% mixed or multi-racial, 2% Asian, and 1% identified as Other. Palm Beach County School District is the largest employer in Palm Beach County with 22,600 employees, including 13,086 teachers. The District vision statement is to “envision a dynamic collaborative multicultural community where education and lifelong learning are valued and supported, and all learners reach their highest potential and succeed in the global economy”. The mission statement reads: “The District is committed to providing a world-class education with excellence and equity to empower each student to reach his or her highest potential with the most effective staff to foster the knowledge, skills, and ethics required for responsible citizenship and productive careers” (palmbeachschools.org). The School District boasts a 91.6% graduation rate from the class of 2019.

Park Vista Community High School is the high school I chose because it reflects The District’s demographics. It is an ‘A’ rated school overall and the third largest high school in the county with 3,100 students. 54% of the students are classified White, 24% Hispanic/LatinX, and 15% African American/Black. 34% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school offers four academies as well as accelerated, advanced placement classes, technical career certifications and the AICE, Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education, Diploma. The school has an array of extracurricular opportunities with clubs, honor societies, music and band, and a championship athletic program. The principal and his administration have led the school for the past decade, resulting in stability and consistency of leadership.

In 2016, The District created a strategic plan with 19 strategic initiatives designed to address the themes of their pillars of effective instruction: standards, personalized, high expectations, and engagement. The four pillars of excellence became: effective and relevant instruction to meet the needs of all students; positive and supportive school climate; talent development, and high-performance culture. Creating positive, effective student-teacher relationships aligns with the second pillar of a positive and supportive climate. Additionally, the second strategic initiative



deepens the alignment by embedding cultural competence, equity, and access into instructional practices (SDPBC, 2017)

With a consistently increasing focus on standardized testing, education and teacher accountability for students' academic achievement is also based more on testing outcomes. Compliance to the diagnostic and monthly assessments are time consuming and teacher evaluations have been redesigned to focus on testing and learning standards in Florida. The Palm Beach County School District adheres to those state mandates and standards and employs the teacher evaluation system from Robert Marzano to mitigate teachers' teaching to the tests. Nonetheless, teachers' final evaluations and salaries in Palm Beach County are determined by a Value Added Model score that includes the school grade and students' scores on these tests. There is no area of evaluation for positive, effective student-teacher relationships that affect the teachers' final evaluations.

In order to obtain feedback for continuous improvement, The School District of Palm Beach County distributes an annual School Effectiveness Questionnaire, now online. The School District of Palm Beach County publishes their annual School Effectiveness Questionnaire or SEQ to provide data that informs The District's efforts to promote and sustain one of the four pillars of the Strategic Plan: A Positive and Supportive School Climate. Three different surveys are administered online: one for the students, one for the parents or caregivers, and one for the teachers and staff. The SEQ initially helped inform this study as it is the only existing data that can be analyzed from the students' perspective. The District reports only the positive responses from the survey, which, essentially, reflects an overall positive school climate. Therefore, I wanted to explore what constitutes a positive school climate, particularly within student-teacher relationships.

The student School Effectiveness Questionnaire is given to middle and high school students in the district. It is an anonymous survey the students can fill out online. There are 49 questions that are broken into the following six categories: School Climate, Challenging Assignment, Diverse Community, Parental Involvement, and Individual Concerns. The School District publishes the data that reflects the percentage of positive responses from the survey annually. Data that helped inform this study were the questions from the category of positive school climate. Data published

is lagging data from the school year FY19. The data provided initial opportunities to inform the qualitative research for this study, in particular, by giving me a starting point for the organizational context for The District and Park Vista High. I was able to see the percentage of positive responses and create the interview protocols to probe more deeply into the categories of school climate and diverse community. Below, are seven questions from the survey that specifically informed the qualitative interviews. (See Appendices for full SEQ and interview protocol) The School Effectiveness Questionnaire informed the initial aspect of the interview protocols and provided a starting point for my inquiry around care and a sense of belonging. The conceptual frameworks and literature inquiries that surfaced around care and a sense of belonging within student-teacher relationships provided the necessary information to guide the crafting of the final interview protocol.

1. If I need to, I can talk to at least one adult about personal problems. Q.10
2. There is at least one adult at school who knows me well. Q.11(this informed the concept of “like”)
3. I feel like I am a part of this school. Q.3 (this informed the concept of belonging)
4. My teachers provide me with feedback that helps me improve my study. Q.17
5. My teachers encourage me to set academic goals. Q.20
6. My teachers value my cultural background. Q.33
7. At this school, all students are treated the same, regardless of their race or ethnicity. Q.31

There are a number of departments with programs and interventions to support the teaching and learning for The Palm Beach County School District: task forces, ad hoc committees, community advisory boards, School Advisory Councils, Parent-Teacher Organizations and opportunities for caregivers to participate, collaborate, volunteer, or give input. There are also Professional Learning Communities in the schools for teachers to learn and collaborate. One thing that all of these well-intentioned endeavors have in common is the absence of student voice. There is so much effort put forth to support and enhance the social, emotional, and academic well-being of the students, but with little to no student input or perspective. Convenings geared toward student achievement continually make decisions alongside District leadership, school administrators, and, at times, teachers without the most important and critical resource, the students. Therefore, in order to highlight the value of student voice, I chose to explore their perspectives, particularly with high school sophomores.

Conceptual Framework

Relationships, by nature, involve the interactions between at least two people. It stands to reason, then, that student-teacher relationships involve both the student and the teacher. Programs, interventions, and professional development designed to accomplish The School District’s mission and vision, should, therefore, include students’ perspectives. This is not atypical for Palm Beach County schools. It is reflective of a larger system of education that has adults determining the structures, mandates, rules, and requirements for students (Quin, 2017). There is a significant amount of literature and research that informed my study regarding student-teacher relationships and different variables within and without the relationships that influence or impact those relationships. Empirical studies confirm that positive teacher-student relationships

influence students' learning. Moreover, the relationships that were connected through caring, trust, respect, and support most certainly increased students' motivation to learn (Al Nasser et al., 2014). Given the fact that of this body of literature and research, very little has been studied from the students' perspective, I decided to explore student-teacher relationships from their perspective. I also wanted to explore the relationship in the context of whether or not students feel teachers like them. One of the most common phrases from student discourse is "My teacher doesn't like me". There is very little research done from students' perspectives in general, and no literature that includes research on the term "like" or "likeability" as related to care or a sense of belonging from students' perspectives. Although there is research on affirmation and love, no research has explored in detail the word "like". Therefore, it was necessary to expand the study to include the possible correlations and impact of student-teacher relations and students' sense of belonging. Moreover, I wanted to explore the impact of race or ethnicity on student-teacher relationships from students' perspectives because there is substantial research around teaching and learning, race and ethnicity as well as a plethora of data and statistics that suggest definitive connections, but also, very little from students' perspectives, especially high school students. There are studies from early childhood education and higher education, with less for middle school students, and even less with high school students. Therefore, this study hopes to expand the related terms of care and belonging to reveal and include the potential synonymous nature of the term "like" as it is used in students' discourse. Heather Libbey measured student relationships to school connectedness and one of her measurements did include the word "like". In order to measure attachment, she included as one of her 20 items, "People at school like me", "Do most of your teachers like you?", and "Do you like most of your teachers?" (Libbey, 2004). Her measurements, however, did not explicate the term "like" and there were no probes to determine connections to care or belonging as my research seeks through probing questions within one-on-one student interviews.

Because there are limited studies that contribute to this field, I hope to expound on the concepts of caring in the classroom from the students' points of view. The implications of Nel Noddings' research on care were foundational for this study. Her work on caring in secondary schools in particular argues the importance of caring teaching regardless of the students' age (Noddings, 1992). She posits that caring is an ethical and moral aspect of education, and necessary for deep social change (Noddings, 2005). If being liked is synonymous with feeling cared for, then the caring, or liking, can be explored as an action. Therefore, understanding of caring teaching may be viewed more as demonstrable actions than personality attributes (Davis, 2003). This study explored the actions related to the theory of care from the students' perspective in order to better understand what actions are perceived as caring for versus caring about the students, what actions help students obtain or deepen their sense of belonging, and what actions in the student-teacher relationship are seen as deterrents to helping facilitate positive, effective, student social-emotional and academic outcomes.

Fundamental to Noddings' work on caring is the nexus in which caring takes place, as "caring about" and "caring for". It is relational and the frame within which caring can be determined effectively in education is the teacher-student relationship (Noddings, 2005). My study deliberately changed the ordinal nature of teacher-student relationships to student-teacher

relationship so as to situate the student as the primary focus. Within this relationship is the potential for students to feel and accept being cared for. This is the concept the study will explore from the students' perspective because it is the tangible part of the relationship. Students may not know if teachers care about them unless they receive actions that confirm their values and belief that they are cared for (Noddings, 2005). Lisa Goldstein employs empirical evidence to the role of caring in teacher-student relationships to connect the caring encounter with greater academic achievement (Goldstein, 1999). Her findings suggest that the core of caring in education lies in the nature of the interactions within the student-teacher relationship. This study looked at those interactions from the students' perspectives to ascertain their concept of what it meant to be cared for by a teacher. Being "cared for" is not the typical student discourse. Students most often use the term "like" when discussing their relationships with their teachers. This study aims at determining if these terms are synonymous in nature and how that may or may not translate into a sense of belonging.

Additionally, Noddings Theory of Care is reliant upon the teacher-student relationship. Since the relationship is unequal because of the differing responsibilities between the "carers and the cared-for", she states that "whereas students need most to learn about unequal relations, teachers need most to analyze and reflect upon unequal relations" (Noddings, 2005 p. 103). I will examine the unequal relationship dynamic through the students' perceptions to better determine their understanding of how that is related to their concept of being liked by a teacher and if being liked fosters a sense of belonging in students.

This study explored how interactions with teachers affected students' sense of belonging. Limited findings from studies with high school students reveal a trend found in younger student populations which includes the continued importance of school belonging and supportive teacher relationships (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). Other studies examined the extent to which teacher-student relationships are used to predict a sense of belonging among adolescents. The majority of research on school belonging has focused on the relationship between the teacher and student (Ulsa and Gizir, 2016). Research revealed that adolescents' positive relationships with teachers predict changes in motivation outcomes, sense of belonging, interest in school, achievement expectancies, and values, as well as engagement, effort, and performance (Wubbels, T., & Brekelmans, M., 2005). Katherine Wentzel proposed that before expecting adolescents to feel a sense of belonging to the larger school community, they must first develop an attachment with the teacher. Her study explored these attachments and their effect on academic achievement and found that an attachment to the teacher did affect students' sense of belonging and academic achievement (Wentzel, 1999). My study explored this attachment within student discourse to examine these attachments from students' perspectives as related to being liked by teachers.

There are several variables tied to a sense of belonging based on previous studies, such as being proud of the school, feeling respected, activity participation, being able to talk to teachers, and feeling that school is a favorite place (Libbey, 2004). My study, however, focused on the interactions between the students and teachers in determining this sense of belonging and explored the connection between that and how teachers show they care for the students. Therefore, the theories that support this study will be the social identity and social capital

theories as well as critical race theory that will inform how race and ethnicity impact the student-teacher relationships. The interviews explored students' perceptions with the classroom as the learning environment and the interactions of the student-teacher relationship as the responses to the learning environment that facilitates the learning. (Bandura, 1977). Furthering Bandura's social learning theory, this study accepted as a premise that people learn directly through interactions and communication with others. Therefore, the student-teacher relationship, as this study explored, is potentially the most critical variable or catalyst to a student's learning.

Finding meaning in the subjective nature of a sense of belonging is arguably a part of the human condition. A desire to fit in, feel welcome, bond, or connect within social groups to develop positive relationships, may satisfy the need to belong, and affect how people make meaning of their life (Lambert et. al, 2013). In other words, this study explored students' perspectives on how a sense of belonging allows them to find meaning or relevance within student-teacher relationships and how essential that was to their academic development. There has been some research that found a sense of belonging as a predictor for students' academic success. One study revealed that teacher-student relationships are the respective significant predictors of a sense of school belonging among adolescents. The results also indicated that both teacher-student relationships and the peer relationships play a significant role in the ability to predict a sense of school belonging for both genders (Uslu and Gizir, 2017). This study and subsequent research shows that a sense of belonging is connected to teacher-student relationships, but they do not explore it from the students' point of view, nor do they delve into what the sense of belonging looks like within the student-teacher relationship. My study will probe, from the students' perspectives, what it means to have a sense of belonging and how teachers' actions create that sense of belonging to build positive, effective relationships.

Research that studies adolescents' sense of belonging in school consistently ties it to some sort of connectedness to relationships and those relationships are linked to positive outcomes. One study found that adolescents' sense of belonging involves four distinct school-experience factors: generalized connection to teachers; connection to a specific teacher; identification and engagement in school activities; and connections with peer groups. Two of the four factors involve a connection between students and teachers (Wallace et. al, 2012). Further research investigated the dimensions and mechanisms of belonging relevant to motivation and achievement among high school students and found that the quality of students' relationships with teachers was consistently linked with students' positive perceptions of the classroom, engagement, and achievement (Faircloth and Hamm, 2004). My research specifically explored these perceptions through one-on-one interviews with students to better understand how a sense of belonging is connected to the student-teacher relationships and their academic achievement or success.

Important in exploring student-teacher relationships through the concepts of care and belonging, includes conceptualizing its influence on academic achievement. Heather Davis researched databases from 1983-2003 to synthesize data on the nature and influence of student-teacher relationships. Her findings reviewed the conceptions of "what constitutes a positive relationship between students and teachers as well as who drives the quality of the relationship...specifically,

from attachment perspectives, motivation perspectives, and sociocultural perspectives” (Davis, 2003, p. 208). Much of her synthesis included research of pre-school and early adolescent students. Although there is a growing body of literature on student-teacher interactions, there was a limited number of studies from the students’ perspective. Therefore, these themes were included in the interview protocols as a means to probe and examine how students’ feel and think about what constitutes positive relationships. The implications from the existing research point to the strongest factors in building positive, effective relationships that impact the learning environment through a social constructivist pedagogy rather than an unbalanced reliance on test scores are caring, purpose, and personal regard (Gablinske, 2014). In order to more fully understand these factors as they are juxtaposed within standardized testing structures and systemic racist foundations, it is critical to seek students’ perspectives to more authentically explore their impact and influence.

My research will specifically address the impact of race and ethnicity on students’ perceptions of their sense of belonging and care as related to being liked by their teacher and the influence on the student-teacher relationship. In order to address the impact and analyze the data, it is essential to determine the students’ conceptual understanding of what they mean by a sense of belonging. “The literature on ‘sense of belonging’ is vast and spans a number of disciplines with no apparent consensus. Before we begin to tailor interventions to improve social belonging of marginalized groups and measure our effectiveness in achieving this goal, we require a clearer conceptual understanding of ‘sense of belonging’” (Mahar et. al, 2013 p. 1027). The only way to accurately and effectively obtain that understanding is to seek it from the stakeholders themselves, the students.

Two frameworks essential in studying a sense of belonging within student-teacher relationships are social identity theory and social capital theory (Easterbrook and Vignoles, 2013). I chose to explore students’ perceptions of their identities and how those identities may be situated as potentially advantageous in the classroom through a sense of belonging. Social identity theory is self-identification and situating that knowledge in relation to others in an environment or various contexts. Therefore, framing this study, in part, in Social Identity Theory, highlighting students’ self identifications was essential to understanding student-teacher relationships, especially by exploring their understanding of the connections between positionality and power in the context of the classroom (Takacs, 2002). Studies exploring undergraduate students’ perceptions of their teachers’ caring “were found to be positively related to their perceptions of their teachers’ immediacy, responsiveness, and assertiveness while negatively related to teacher verbal aggressiveness” (Teven, 2001 p. 159). There has been considerable literature studying this connection from the teachers’ perspectives, but little research that studies students’ perspectives in the context of the classroom. Most of the research studying relationships in schools state those relationships with the teacher first, as teacher-student relationships. I believe this is a systemic way of validating the positionality of the teacher as authority in the classroom. The relationship is teacher-centered, whereas my study consciously changes the positionality of the relationships to student-teacher to highlight student voice and maintain the human-centered design with the students at the core. Daniel Quin’s systemic review of 46 published studies have this positionality. The detailed analysis revealed that the teacher-student relationship was one of the

main indicators, though not exclusive, for enhanced student engagement (Quin 2017). My research explores these tenets with sophomores in high school.

The idea of substantiating the importance of social identity through the personalization of student-teacher relationships was a primary focus for this study. The social identity perspective conceptualizes that within social categories, feelings of group belonging could be predicted or expected to stem from the kinds of interactions and the quality of relationships between members of the group. (Easterbrook and Vignoles, 2013). In this case, the group or category was the classroom and the relationship was specifically between the student and the teacher, two members of the group. This study explored students' sense of belonging in the classroom to linked group membership within that classroom and how that sense of belonging was impacted potentially by race or ethnicity influenced academic achievement. Moreover, within the interview protocol, there were questions to probe if a feeling of belonging was linked to the group or class membership, and how that affected their engagement and grades. The idea that there could be a personalization for academic and social emotional learning in high schools that fostered greater academic achievement and well being is supported by a mixed methods study from Broward County, neighbor to Palm Beach County. That study found that the highest achieving schools were those who executed "systemic and intentional attention to the interconnection of the instructional core and the social emotional activities...Specifically, these organizational structures supported meaningful conversation and interactions among adults and students" (Rutledge et. al, 2015 p. 1072). Although this research yields informative data, no students were interviewed, thereby illustrating the necessity for exploring and highlighting their perspectives. No quantitative data can fully reflect or embody the complexities and nuances of students' experiences. Therefore, one-on-one, qualitative student interviews proved to be the best methodology for my study.

Considerable research has been done regarding teacher-student relationships and their effect on school engagement and achievement. A key study was a meta-analysis that investigated those key associations and based their results on 99 studies. This did include studies done from the students' perspectives from preschool through high school and studied both the positive and negative relationships. The meta-analysis showed statistical significance overall for both positive and negative relationships having an effect on both engagement and achievement. (Roorda et. al, 2011). A sense of belonging among high school students and its influence on motivation and achievement has been further substantiated through one study of four ethnic groups of high school students from seven different schools. It was determined that the quality of student-teacher relationships was linked with students' positive perceptions of the classroom, a sense of belonging and academic self-agency and engagement among European American students. The study "focused on aspects of students' perceptions of their teachers' involvement with them, including caring, liking, and dependability, predicting that these dimensions would contribute positively to students' overall sense of belonging. We are less certain of the strength of this relationship for ethnic minority students" (Faircloth and Hamm, 2004. p. 294).

Using Critical Race Theory as a lens for the interview protocol and analysis for understanding the dynamics of student-teacher relationships, it is important to establish how race and ethnicity

are used in this study. This study researches the student-teacher relationships and the impact of race or ethnicity as a variable in the relationships from the students' perspective. Student voice has been marginalized in the literature, and racialized student voice may provide deep insights on how race influences not only the day to day interactions, but how students identify and situate themselves in the relationship or classroom context. Race and ethnicity are critically important variables in the students' identities. It is not exclusive to their identities, and the interview protocols allow for self-identification of all facets of their identity. Moreover, for the purposes of this study, race was inclusive of color, culture, and consciousness (Singleton, 2008). As such, students' identification of ethnicity can be included in their racialization of their identity and experiences. Other students preferred the term ethnicity, however, they used it in the context of culture, which included other variables of their identity such as religion, gender identification, and aspects of their heritage and history. Therefore, this capstone does use the terms race and ethnicity side by side, knowing the differences, but using them to be inclusive of all aspects of the students' identities that were impacted by their student-teacher relationships.

Social Capital Theory accentuates positionality and power within relationships, in particular student-teacher relationships. "The whole notion of social capital is centred on social relationships and its major elements include social networks, civic engagement, norms of reciprocity, and generalised trust. Broadly defined, it is the collective asset in the form of shared norms, values, beliefs, trust, networks, social relations, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefits" (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009 p.480). My study explored the social relationship between the student and the teacher, the generalized trust students felt they had with their teachers, and the effect, if any, on students' sense of belonging.

Situative perspectives and framing assumptions are two aspects of social capital theory that affect student-teacher relationships. A situative perspective that draws on the social interaction between the student and the teacher accounts for the power and positionality of the teacher with the authority to situate class expectations, rules, and regulations within that environment. This situated environment can subsequently affect the framed understanding of the parameters for social interactions (Greeno, 1998). Therefore, the interview protocols allowed for the exploration of situated learning and the positionality of social capital within the classroom and the student-teacher relationships.

Moreover, the interviews probed into how critical race theory, social identity theory, and social capital theory intersect in the student-teacher relationships. Social Capital Theory is centred on social relationships that include social networks, norms, and generalised trust. Essentially, it is a theory of collective assets in the form of shared norms, culture, values, beliefs, trust, networks, social relations, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and reciprocity (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009). The qualitative interviews explored social capital theory to better understand its role in students' concept of race and ethnicity within the student-teacher relationships. Certainly, there are many variables to a person's identity and my research allowed for self-identification of other variables such as religion, multiple ethnicities, gender identity, and family structure to name a few. However, this study focused in particular, how student-teacher relationships were impacted by a sense of belonging, race, and ethnicity. There are implications

in the literature that include other variables of identity as having influence on effective teacher-student relationships and learning. For example, student characteristics could include, age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and learning abilities, while teacher characteristics could include gender, ethnicity, and teaching experiences (Roorda et. al, 2011). This study strengthens these implications while adding value to them using critical race theory within the interview protocols to explicitly explore how race impacts the student-teacher relationships as well as ethnicity. While the aforementioned meta-analysis does not explore race at all, nor ethnicity with depth, using critical race theory as one of the conceptual frames for this study allowed deeper exploration within the qualitative methodology.

Integral to critical race theory is the inclusion of implicit bias; unconscious or semi-conscious attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes. Race and ethnicity within critical race theory challenges the idea of cultural capital within the classroom and the relationships within that classroom. In classrooms where the teacher is white and the majority and dominant race is white, the community cultural capital, then, is white-centered and dominant. Therefore, any biases associated with non-white norms may threaten a sense of belonging and positive student-teacher relationships. The lack of conscious acknowledgement does not mean that race does not permeate every aspect of society. It simply means that when there are interactions and race is not explicit in those interactions, then it is implicit. If, then, there are racial biases, they can affect any interaction between people. Exploring the impact of race or ethnicity within student-teacher relationships, teachers are the assumed expert in the classroom so their positionality is evident. Additionally, white teachers are the dominant race and culture, causing an even greater imbalance. For example, during some classroom conversations, some voices are more relevant when discussing racism: students of color may help white students understand relationships of empowerment and marginalization through their own lived experiences, and through their own analysis of their positionality (Takacs, 2002). My study seeks to research these voices and explore the impact of race and ethnicity in the classroom environment for students with teachers of the same or different race. Moreover, it seeks to understand students' perspectives on race or ethnicity and its influence in building positive, effective student-teacher relationships. Margaret Zamudio synthesized much of the critical race theorists' general premise that race is a central structure in society, systems of belief, and ideologies whether acknowledged or not. Here, she encapsulates the research and illustrates how implicit biases, subtle and unconscious, are a part of the theory. "Subtle beliefs about racial superiority and inferiority serve to elevate the traditions, art, language, literature, and ways of being and knowing of some groups while disparaging the contributions of others...We learn to believe that a person's race can offer clues about that individual and his or her behavior unaware that ideologies and stereotypes often shape our initial impressions and judgements. Those very beliefs are also embedded in our educational system. Students of color often find themselves tangled in the middle of all these racialized social relationships, structures, institutions, ideologies, and beliefs. Critical race theory focuses on the all-encompassing web of race to further our understanding of inequality" (Zamudio, 2010, p. 3) My research focused on race and ethnicity through this theory to determine, from students' perspective, how their relationships with their teachers were impacted. Much of critical race theory draws on black and white experiences. Additionally, much of the popular discourse in the US, as well as the academic discourse, continues to be limited by the Black/White binary.

Therefore, it is necessary to look at the LatinX critical race theory, or LatCrit to extend critical race discussions and address the layers of race and ethnicity (Yosso, 2005). My study adds to the efforts to expand this body of knowledge by expanding the binary to include Hispanic/LatinX students as well. This field can continue to expand to include the entire color line, however, this study reflects the school demographics in the three main racial categories of White, Black, and Hispanic/LatinX.

This study adds to the body of knowledge of student-teacher relationships by providing information from students' perspectives. This will also highlight student voice, which can be a valuable way for teachers to reflect on and assess their instruction and community building within their classrooms. This study will also be valuable to contribute and inform professional development for teachers who can, in turn, provide benefit to all students with more substantive, productive, and effective student-teacher relationships. The recommendations as a result of this research are situated in the context of the learners in order to facilitate full peripheral participation necessary for optimal growth (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

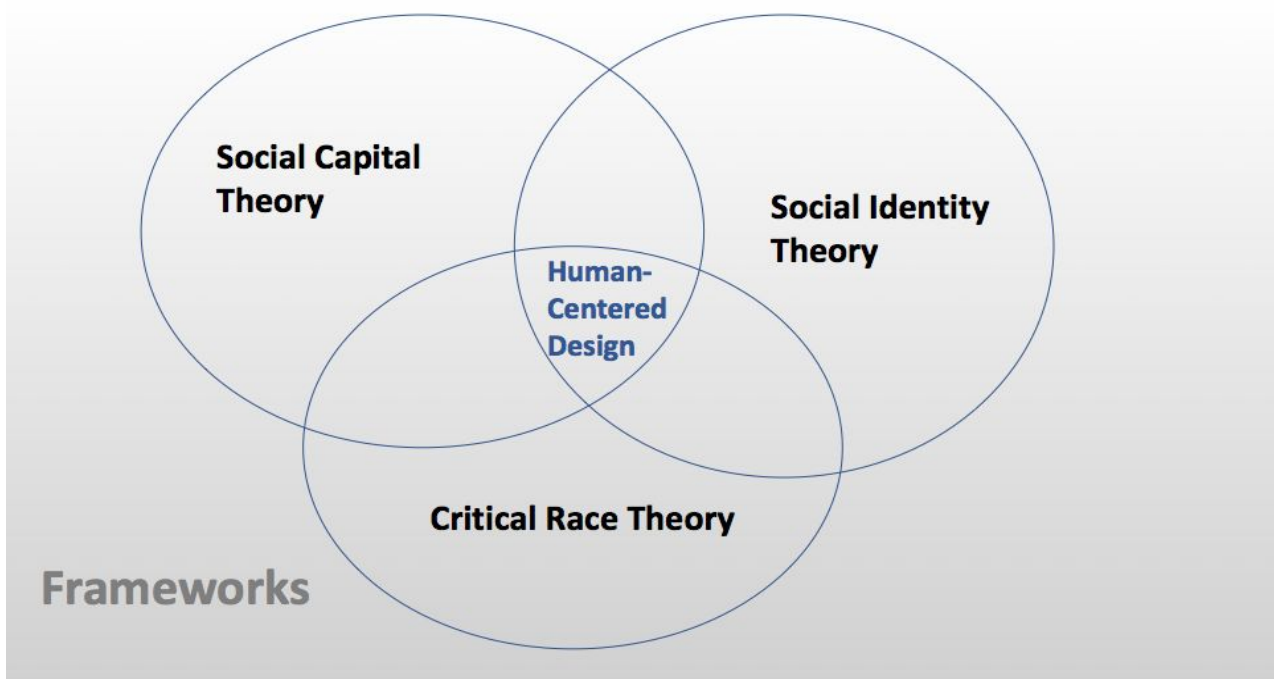
Given the research on student-teacher relationships within a mutual understanding of positional framing, this study explored the dynamics of achieving an alignment within the framing to adopt schemas that were mutually beneficial. The positive, effective student-teacher relationships were those where the students felt a sense of belonging such that they were comfortable enough to approach their teacher when they needed help and together, they were able to solve problems. (Greeno, 2012) Students were encouraged to tell their story on their own terms and speak their truth. The research questions have been informed from the considerable literature on teacher-student relationships from teachers' perspectives. However, there is far less literature on high school students' perspectives on student-teacher relationships. In the past 20 years of research on the nature of student-teacher relationships among high school students, there are only a handful of studies. Fewer still have examined the influence of student-teacher relationships in high school from the attachment or a sense of belonging to look at more specific social and cognitive outcomes (Davis, 2003). My study explored the students' perspectives on some of the behaviors and interactions between students and teachers to determine if they are liked by the teacher, and how being liked affected their academic engagement or performance.

Programs, interventions, and professional development designed to accomplish The School District's mission and vision, should, therefore, include students' perspectives. This is not atypical for Palm Beach County schools. It is reflective of a larger system of education in which adults determine the structures, mandates, rules, and requirements for students. Therefore, there is a need to seek students' perspectives to better inform these decisions. There is a significant amount of literature and research that informed my study regarding student-teacher relationships and the different variables within and without the relationships that influence or impact those relationships. Empirical studies confirmed that positive teacher-student relationships influence students' learning. Moreover, the relationships that were connected through caring, trust, respect, and support most certainly increased students' motivation to learn (Al Nasser et al., 2014). However, within this body of literature and research, very little has been studied from the students' perspective. This is another reason I decided to explore student-teacher relationships

from students' perspectives. There is quantitative evidence that race, within social identity and critical race theories, impacts academic achievement, especially when students share the same racial or ethnic identity as their teachers (Redding, 2019). Yet, relatively less work on how race or ethnicity impact student-teacher relationships regarding students' sense of belonging, feeling cared for, or liked. Qualitative student interviews help to provide insights into that impact.

The purpose of this study is to explore, from the students' perspective, the student-teacher relationship. This study will explore what it means to be liked by a teacher. Since there is no literature or research for the term "like", this study will explore how the term "like" may be interpreted through the students' discourse. Additionally, my research will examine students' perceptions of care and what it means to have a sense of belonging in a classroom. Conceptually, a relationship is some type of connection between at least two entities. Students are inevitably entered into a relationship with their teachers because of school structures and teacher-led classes. Therefore, from a student's perspective, this study will explore a student's sense of belonging and the degree to which it contributes to the development of a productive or effective student-teacher relationship. Moreover, it will explore the importance of race and ethnicity in that relationship and the impact on students' academic success.

I also wanted to explore the relationship in the context of whether or not students feel teachers like them. One of the most common phrases from students' discourse is "My teacher doesn't like me". Since there is very little research done from students' perspectives in general, there is no literature that includes research on the term "like" or "likeability" as related to care or a sense of belonging. No research has explored in detail the word "like". Therefore, it was necessary to expand the study to include a sense of belonging and the influence on student-teacher relationships. Moreover, I wanted to explore the impact of race or ethnicity on student-teacher relationships from students' perspectives. There is substantial research around teaching and learning, and race and ethnicity that suggest definitive connections, but again, very little from students' perspectives, especially high school students. There are some studies from early childhood education and higher education, fewer from middle school students, and even less from high school students. Therefore, this study hopes to expand the related terms of care and belonging to reveal and include the synonymous nature of the term "like" as it is used in students' discourse. Heather Libey measured student relationships to school connectedness and one of her measurements did include the word "like". In order to measure attachment, she included as one of her 20 items, "People at school like me", "Do most of your teachers like you?", and "Do you like most of your teachers?" (Libbey, 2004). Her measurements, however, did not explicate the term "like" and there were no probes to determine connections to care or belonging as my research seeks through probing questions within one-on-one student interviews. Most important in this study will be listening to student voice and highlighting their insights to inform recommendations.



Research Questions

The conceptual frameworks were used to build foundational knowledge for this capstone. Given the limited research from students' perspectives in high schools in the United States, the absence of research around the word "like", and the considerable literature on student-teacher relationships and a sense of belonging, I chose to explore student-teacher relationships and the impact of a sense of belonging, race, and ethnicity from the students' perspectives with the following four research questions:

1. What are the most important factors in positive, effective student-teacher relationships?
2. What does it mean to have a sense of belonging and how is that connected to student-teacher relationships and academic achievement?
3. How does race or ethnicity impact or influence student-teacher relationships?
4. How can teachers build positive, effective relationships with students and provide academic support?

Study Design: Qualitative Methods

A. Qualitative Methodology

This study focused on qualitative one-on-one interviews with high school sophomores. There are varying laws that dictate truancy parameters because state law dictates the age at which students can legally drop out of high school. In Florida, once a student turns 16, they may legally drop out of school. Generally, students are in their second or sophomore year in high school when they are sixteen, which makes that the critical year for high school retention. It is also a year when students have transitioned to a new normal as a high school student and the fear of freshman year tends to evolve into a greater sense of knowing how to navigate the established norms of the school environment. Junior year has the reputation for being rigorous and senior year a mix of looking toward the future with trepidation and celebration. If students make it through the legal age requiring school attendance, dropout rates show that they remain in school regardless or in spite of negotiable circumstances (Palm Beach Schools, 2019). There is substantial literature on attrition rates for first year college students, which also reflect the potential rationale of high school attrition as the second year is viewed as a period in which students encounter increasing academic, developmental, and social demands (Sterling, 2018). Moreover, there is research that indicates that poor academic achievement mediates the effect of all independent factors on school dropout, although general deviance, bonding to antisocial peers, and socioeconomic status also retained direct effects on dropping out. (Battin-Pearson et. al, 2000) Therefore, this study will focus on sophomore year before students reach the legal age to drop out to explore if a sense of belonging created from positive student-teacher relationships can lead to improved academic achievement. It will not try to prove causation or correlation with a sense of belonging to dropping out of high school. Instead, it will examine, from students' perspectives, how a sense of belonging may or may not impact academic achievement and how that is fostered through student-teacher relationships.

Additionally, 10th grade in Florida is the last year for standardized testing that fulfills graduation requirements. If students pass the required tests, they do not participate in any other tests unless they are a requirement of the course itself or for college admissions. For the students who may be wavering, unmotivated, or dealing with too much in their lives, it could be the last opportunity for teachers to inspire or impact the students in profound ways. Therefore, sophomore year is the optimum year to research and explore students' perspectives as it reflects both the promise and potential of student-teacher relationships.

The qualitative data for this study is in the form of one-on-one student interviews. In order to execute the student interviews, I developed a strategic process for collaboration and recruitment. Upon confirmation that Park Vista Community High School would be the collaborative partner for the study, I met with the administration and we determined that recruitment would be best through the English classes. Every sophomore must take at least one English class, either accelerated, mainstream section, or intensive. Therefore, I used a 6x3 matrix for my interview data. I broke down the sample by gender, race, ethnicity, and level of English class, creating six categories: White female, White male, Hispanic/LatinX female, Hispanic/LatinX male,

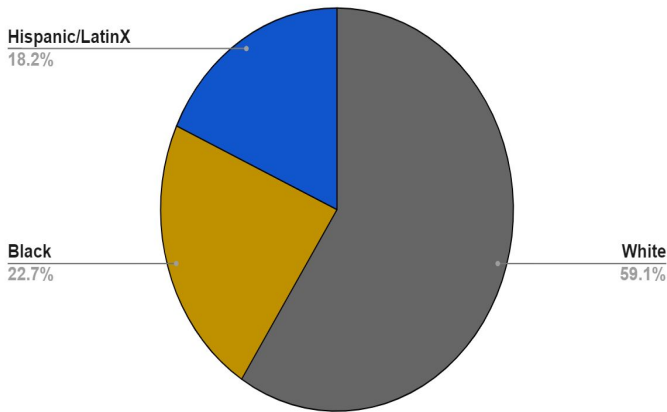
Black/African American female, Black/African American male. Each category had three possibilities for an English class. For example, there could be a white female in an intensive class, or a white female in a mainstream class, or a white female in an accelerated class. Each of the six categories had three levels to comprise the 6x3 matrix.

The teachers in the English department agreed to help recruit students for the interviews. I made copies of the consent forms and the recruitment process began shortly before schools shut down for the Covid-19 quarantine. Schools remained closed for the rest of the school year and transitioned to online, distance learning. With no real warning, the teachers were overwhelmed trying to learn all the technology needed in order to successfully transition to the online platform and teach the students how to navigate the new structures. Therefore, the recruitment process slowed to a minimum because posting in their virtual classrooms was just one more thing to do in an already overwhelmed environment. There were some teachers who did post the consents and information, but only a few students were receptive as they, too, were completely overwhelmed by their new normal. I was able to put a recruitment message in the text application called Remind that most students and families signed up to receive school communications. The guidance department also posted a help wanted section in their weekly newsletter.

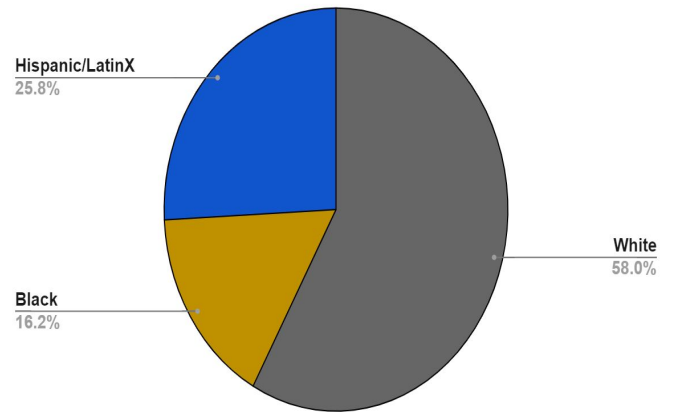
When the school year began, still virtually, I went through the recruitment process once again. In total, I was able to successfully recruit 27 students, 22 who followed up on the interview. The 22 one-on-one online interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes each. The interviews were recorded to ensure correctness on any potential limitations, interpretations, or biases. The data was gathered, transcribed, and analyzed. Steps were taken to ensure fidelity to the three ethical principles of research involving human subjects: respect of persons, beneficence and justice. The recruitment process was also kept confidential. Participating teachers sent out information and requests that allowed the students to respond directly to me, where all the information was kept in a secure file. The interviews were kept confidential and the respondents' identities deidentified. Special attention was paid to developing an interview protocol to elicit answers that were reflective of the research questions while validating to the respondents experiences, thoughts, and feelings. The protocol was followed with fidelity, keeping any potential conversational bias in check with every interview (Gubrium et. al, 2012). (See appendices for recruitment material and interview protocols

The charts below represent student demographics by race and ethnicity for the total sample of 22 students compared to the total Sophomore enrollment at Park Vista High School.

Student Interview Data by Race/Ethnicity

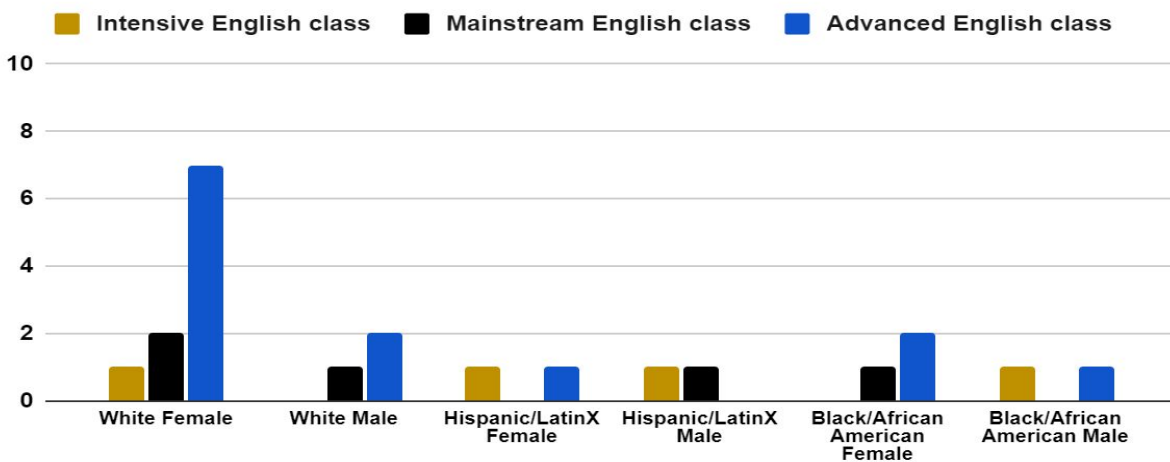


Park Vista Sophomore Enrollment Data by Race/Ethnicity



The chart below represents the total sample of 22 student respondents broken down by academic class level. There were more White females in the advanced English classes and fewer students of color, which is comparable to the demographic enrollment of Sophomores at Park Vista.

Matrix of Interviewed Students



B. Coding

Upon completion of the interviews, the data was transcribed and analyzed by employing Zoom and Otter ai, then coded and analyzed using NVivo, Excel, and Google Sheets. The top eight coding nodes that were consistent throughout the data are shown in the chart below. This chart shows that most of the concepts did reach thematic saturation, enabling the end of the recruitment and interview process. The concepts of “like”, “care”, and “belonging” reached saturation. No new information was being revealed after the 20th interview. Two themes that reached a solid consensus were around teacher and student responsibility. The students interviewed were consistent in their data when delineating and distinguishing between the teacher and student responsibilities. There were consistencies by race and ethnicity with the concepts of positive and negative experiences, but due to the nature of qualitative interviews, I cannot state those themes reached saturation because the numbers were not high enough in each category and each interview provided more information. Additionally, highlighting student voice provides a diversity of experiences that may yield trends, implied conclusions, or correlations, but individual experiences are absolute, thereby preventing saturation with this sample. The ways in which the students described race and ethnicity as part of their identity and how either their race or ethnicity or the teachers’ race or ethnicity shaped student-teacher relationships did not reach saturation after 22 interviews. The findings and conclusions drawn with the impact of race and ethnicity can be further explored in future research.

Percentage of Thematic Saturation by Coded Nodes

100								
75								
50								
25								
	Like	Belonging	Care	Academic Success	Negative Relations	Positive Relations	Race	Ethnicity

Findings

The findings in this study are not absolute. The qualitative nature of the research illuminates trends and consistencies or contradictions from relevant data. Correlation is not causality and the connections made through data analysis are not in support of causation. However, there are definite and clear implications that are evident. Highlighting student voice through qualitative student interviews provided consistent and deep insights from which the following five findings emerged:

1. The concept of being liked by a teacher was influenced by the teacher's intentionality in creating a sense of belonging or care for the student.
2. The most positive, effective relationships reflected the teacher's commitment to their job, and demonstration of that commitment.
3. The most effective teachers fostered positive student-teacher relationships by consistently engaging them with multiple perspectives.
4. Positive experiences with teachers were not dependent on race or ethnicity, but race or ethnicity did impact the potential for negative experiences.
5. A sense of belonging influences students' ease of learning and higher academic achievement or success.

Finding #1.

The concept of being liked by a teacher was determined by a teacher's intentionality in creating a sense of belonging and demonstrating that like or care for the students. This aligns with research questions 1,3,4.

Students used "like" in the affirmative as well as a wondering. One student spoke to the importance of being liked by a teacher and creating a sense of belonging in class: "being liked by a teacher in the classroom is important because you won't have the same class with your friends all the time so you won't be comfortable. For out of school activities we can find people with a common interest, but in the classroom, it's up to the teacher to create opportunities for us to connect and create comfort, to be liked" (LatinX, female). When probing deeper for the students to explain their meaning of the word like, students conceptualized it synonymously with the words care and belonging. One white female in advanced classes explained that when she says she is liked by a teacher, she means that she feels comfortable and cared for, in spite of her anxiety struggles. "I feel liked when I feel I belong in the class. When a teacher makes it a point to show me she is truly invested and shows me I'm not an outlier. Then, I can come out of my shell, connect with the teacher, and try to get involved in the lesson". Further probing delineated the ways the words were used in conjunction with the word "like". When using thoughts or feelings, or passive action verbs to explain, students replaced "like" more often with "care". One student, a White, male said, "teachers who make me feel liked are the ones that care. If you are having trouble with something, they give you time or let you ask questions. When teachers don't like you, they don't care about you. They just go and get the work done and get paid. Or they

give too much work to keep us busy and that just overwhelms us”. This supports Nel Noddings’ Care Theory with students not feeling cared for. In spite of the fact that teachers may care about the students, they are not demonstrating they like the students or care for them. Being liked by a teacher did not mean getting free or good grades with little or no effort. The intentionality of liking the students was seen as validation of their humanity and purpose or belonging in the classroom.

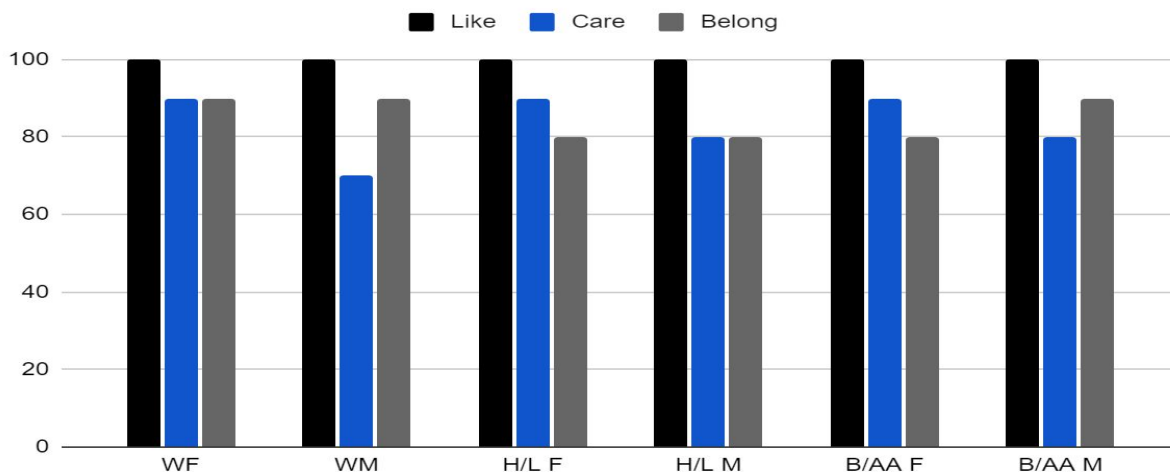
The vernacular from the students when speaking about connections with a teacher is either “The teacher doesn’t like me/him/her/them” or “The teacher likes me/him/her/them”. However, when asking a follow up to that statement, the conversation ends with a shrug or an “I don’t know”. Interestingly, 100% of the students interviewed all said that they had, in fact, said one of the aforementioned statements many times in their lives, but had never been asked what it meant. They all echoed the same sentiment: “I have never been asked these questions before!” The students never thought about the word “like” or why a teacher may or may not like them. It is a statement that they know to be true from their point of view and they move on from that reality, accepting the truth that they are either liked or not, and adjust to that classroom’s climate and norms. In fact, every student interviewed smiled or laughed when asked if they had ever used the phrase, ‘My teacher doesn’t like me’, because all of them said they had used that phrase many times with their friends and family. This study revealed that the students used the word, “like”, quite often, but never thought about what it meant; there were many assumptions about the meaning of “like”. Probing the students revealed the synonymous nature of “like” to care and a sense of belonging through the teachers’ actionable intentionality.

There have been stories, songs, poems, and films about relationships and affection, affirmation, or love. Within the relationships, there are oftentimes questions about whether or not one person actually cares for the other person or if they feel a sense of belonging in the relationship because there are more assumptions than actions that convey the caring. Such was the case for the students interviewed. They understood that teachers may care about them, but very few were intentional about showing that care in order to foster positive student-teacher relationships. One student spoke about the consequences of a teacher’s intentionality at helping build effective relationships and motivating students to attend and engage in their classes. “If I feel a teacher likes me, then I feel like I belong in the classroom and it makes me comfortable in that environment. It helps a lot, having that good relationship with your teacher. Knowing they like you makes it a lot easier to wake up at 6 in the morning to go to class every day!” (White, female) The concept of being liked by a teacher was determined by a teacher’s intentionality in creating a sense of belonging and demonstrating that like or care for the students.

Intentionality proved significant to engage the students and give them a sense of belonging. One student spoke about how teachers perceived him in a negative light without taking the time to really see who he was and why he behaved in a certain way: “it was a bigger class than I was used to and I thought everyone was smarter than me. The teacher didn’t like me. I think she thought I was disinterested or lazy. But if you haven’t made an effort to get to know me, you are probably wrong.” (Black, male)

When using examples or productive action verbs, the students almost always used belong. For example, a student felt liked, or cared for, when a teacher smiled at them or noticed them. A Black female was emphatic when speaking about the importance of being liked by a teacher and having a sense of belonging: “if a teacher doesn’t like you, it’s because they don’t care for some reason. Teachers’ connection to the students is key. We want to belong. We want to be there but we need to feel like the teacher is actually interested in us to feel liked or that we belong. Wanting to be there, in the classroom, that is belonging. Teachers need to show us, engage with us, have normal conversations with us, be positive, and share your life so we feel we can share ours. That is what starts a positive relationship”. These gestures made the students feel acknowledged and cared for which created a sense of belonging. This idea of being liked or cared for goes beyond an individual characteristic. For the students, being liked is embedded in the student-teacher relationship and demonstrated through daily encounters. This finding helps conceptualize how students use the word “like” when referring to their teachers beyond one interaction. As with caring, the definition moves beyond an individual attribute and expands the idea of caring to the relationship and encounters (Noddings, 2005). When a teacher shared aspects of their life, or asked the students questions, the students felt liked and that they had a purpose and belonged in the class. A LatinX female encapsulated what so many students talked about in their interviews about teachers who were intentional to create a sense of belonging and build positive relationships with their students: “a teacher likes me when they show me they are a person too. If they share a personal experience or are straight up with me, I feel liked, I feel that they care and I belong there. For example, if I am absent, they say to me ‘hey, I noticed you weren’t here yesterday’, or ‘ hey, you seem like you are a bit off today, can I help?’ That makes me feel like I belong, like an individual they want to take care of”. In all of the cases and examples, the students were consistent about how they used the words like, care, and belong. Additionally, they were all consistent in stating that they concluded whether the teachers liked them or not by the teachers’ intentionality in demonstrating that they liked the students; that they did care and wanted to foster a sense of belonging in the classroom.

Like Synonymous with Care and Belonging



The chart above shows the synonymous nature of the word “like” with the words “care” and “belong”. Like was the first word used when asked about student-teacher relationships. White females used them interchangeably 90% of the time. White males used the term “care” the least, and along with black males, used a sense of belonging to represent their perception of being liked or not by their teachers. Black and Hispanic/LatinX females used the term “care” 10% more than the word “belong” when referring to being liked. Essentially, these terms were synonymous in the students’ discourse, but the preferred term was “like”. In general, the terms were delineated through examples and non-examples. The student interviews overwhelmingly highlighted the key factor in the students’ perception of being liked, being cared for, or having a sense of belonging, was the teachers’ actions, both active and passive in showing, demonstrating, or reflecting their intentions to care and foster a positive relationship where students developed a sense of belonging in the classroom. “The relationship I have with my teacher in the classroom is what makes the difference if I feel they like me or not” (White, female).

Finding #2.

The most positive, effective relationships reflected the teacher’s commitment to their job, and demonstration of that commitment. This aligns with research questions 1,3,4.

The most positive student-teacher relationships were a reflection of the students’ perception of the teachers’ commitment to the students. Students understood that teachers have a lot of stress and teaching can be difficult. They also communicated their understanding that teachers may care about teaching or care about their students. However, the students collectively thought that positive relationships could only be built if the teachers demonstrated through actions that they were committed to teaching and helping the students learn. “Most teachers say they are here to help you, but they just give work and sit at their desk. It’s hard to feel comfortable asking questions if the teacher doesn’t want to seem bothered” (White, female). Another student added: “teachers say they care and are here to help, but don’t give us extra time or make an effort to prove they want to help” (Black, male). One way students felt teachers could demonstrate their commitment was through communication. Although that seems obvious, students said that just a smile communicates validation. When asked about one piece of advice to offer teachers, more than half of the students spoke to the importance of offering to share some aspect of their life and invite students to share theirs in order to demonstrate their commitment to the students.

Good communication skills were considered a basic need in the classroom and, in fact, strengthened the relationships between the students and teachers by improving their levels of understanding (Khan et. al, 2017). Students felt that how the teachers communicated through their actions gave them their greatest impressions. For example, one student said: “Teaching is about going above and beyond. You can’t just do the bare minimum and expect us to feel like you care.” Another student added, “Don’t just say you are here to help and then sit at your desk. Act like you want to help. Ask us questions first. Share things about your life. That way we can see you like us and teaching” (White, females) These skills, however, need to be determined as good or effective from the students’ perspective, not from what the teachers’ perceive or want to

convey. Students were understanding of teachers' challenges and why they fell short of building positive relationships with their students, but held true to their perception that it didn't change what a teacher's job should entail. "I know teachers have a lot on their plate. Teaching so many kids is stressful, but being a teacher means going above and beyond to let us know that we are important too. That is the job so it shouldn't be miscommunicated" (White, female).

Assumptions made regarding student-teacher relationships are not communicated or perceived by the students as perhaps the teachers' intended. Teachers may care about the students and want to work toward their success, but in most cases, the students did not perceive any good intent on the teachers with whom they did not have positive relationships. As one white, male student pointed out, "teachers act like things are good when there is no trouble. They think that because they told us at the beginning they care, that there is a positive relationship. But if I don't feel the respect, I won't have the ability to trust my teacher or even give them my best work. They can't just tell us something one time and be done and expect us to have a sense of belonging or be motivated to do the work". Another student spoke to the importance of building positive student-teacher relationships through committing to helping the students feel that they care for their well-being and showing them, through time and effort that their job was about helping students be successful. "School is important, but we don't wanna sit through a whole class and just listen. At least say something relatable. Don't make teaching like a business. We want to want to be there and belong" (Black, female). Another student remarked, "teachers don't seem happy. They don't smile or seem like they enjoy their job, so how can they have positive relationships with us?" (Hispanic, male)

Although the students viewed a teacher's job as going above and beyond, their metric for those who built positive relationships through a consistent commitment to demonstrate their caring became the exception and not the rule. Those teachers who did build positive, effective relationships were those seen as going "above and beyond" their job. The students consistently spoke about the teachers who did more than just their job. The example given by a Black, male was: "I can build a better relationship with a teacher who shows me more than once that they are here for me and willing to help. But not just with the words. They need to be available to meet me and help me at lunch, or before or after school. That's when you really know a teacher cares about you. There has to be a time when they can make the effort to talk to you. If not, you know they don't really care. It's just a job and they just come in to get their money". Further probing revealed that students understood a teacher's main job is to teach. However, the students felt that a teacher who fosters a sense of belonging in students and cares about their success will communicate those intentions, effectively doing their job of teaching; it is part of their job. One White, female said that "teachers need to communicate that they are here if we need anything. They need to show us that they want us to pass and succeed. I can go to my teachers if I feel like they won't judge me and the way for me to feel that is if they talk to me on some level, not like they are in charge or telling me what to do, but like a friend who wants to help and teach what they know". Teachers who fostered positive, effective relationships were consistent in that communication and time commitment. "Giving students time shows them that they really care, so yea, that's a big deal" (Black, male). For example, teachers who said they were there to help, but were not positive or engaging, communicated that they were unapproachable. Therefore, the

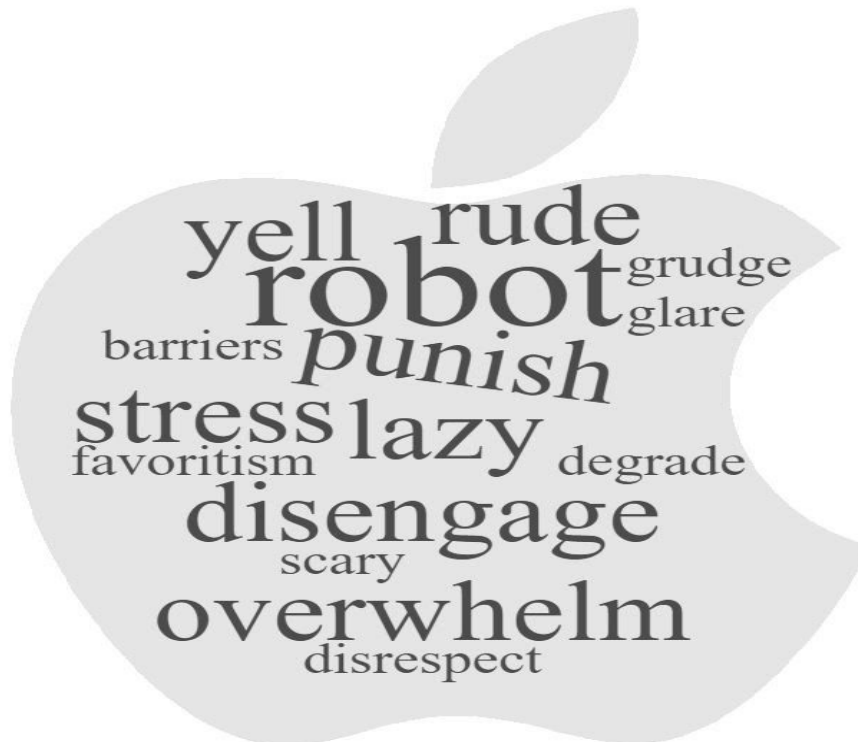
students did not feel safe or comfortable in asking for help. “Teachers can communicate that my opinion matters too. I’ll still respect the teacher because they are approachable and don’t yell, not just because they are the one in charge. Show me you are here for me and understand that students are different and have different needs. Then, we will believe you like us and we can ask for help”. (Black, male)

The students’ sense of belonging was what enabled them to ask for help, ask questions, or engage with the teacher and the lesson. Communication within the student-teacher relationship was arguably the key factor in developing the safety and comfort necessary for the students to approach the teacher and ask for help. In this sense, both participants in the student-teacher relationship should be considered comparably important as they depend on each other to maintain the interpersonal relationship (Dobransky and Frymier, 2004). The balance of this dependence, however, was defined by the teachers and that determined the effectiveness of the relationships. One student, a White, female stated: “teachers need to teach with some emotion, not like robots. If a teacher puts energy into teaching, I’ll feel more comfortable, like I belong there, and I won’t be afraid to ask a question. If a teacher makes that first move, then I feel safe enough to try and ask for help”.

The word cloud below shows the top ten words that described students’ perceptions on teacher attributes that build positive relationships and create a sense of belongi



The word cloud below shows the top ten words that described students' perceptions on teacher attributes that create negative relationships and experiences without a sense of belonging.



Crucial to understanding this finding is distinguishing between the importance of being committed to teaching and demonstrating that commitment. In order to better situate connections between students and teachers within Social Capital Theory, it is important to have common or shared definitions of norms, values, routines, measurements, and structures, within those relationships. (Bhadari and Yasunobu, 2009). One concept that arose in the interviews regarding building positive student-teacher relationships through demonstrating their commitment was the role of the teacher as a friend. Students felt that “if a teacher acted more like a friend, they would act in more understanding ways. A friend is someone you can trust, share, and feel comfortable with. We know the teacher is the authority. Being a friend doesn’t take that away or make us expect things for free. It just makes us feel like the teacher really wants to be there for us” (Black, female).

When the teacher communicated to the students in more personal ways, the students perceived a teacher who wanted to connect with the students. This was one of the ways teachers could demonstrate their commitment to their job; understanding that in order to teach, there needs to be a relationship or friendship. As one Hispanic male stated, “ teachers should try and be more like a friend to students. Not to give them total freedom, but to be more consistent. Teachers change the way they act toward us so we feel disconnected. A friend is someone who thinks about you too. If a friend has a bad day, then they will be understanding when you have a bad day. A friend knows that it’s hard for us to have to guess at a teacher’s moods. A friend notices changes in behaviors and asks about it. Teachers should try and be more like a friend. Then, I’ll feel I have a place in the classroom, like I belong, and that we actually have a real relationship”. This idea of a teacher as a friend gave students a sense of belonging and connection that made them feel comfortable enough to engage in the learning.

Communicating through demonstrable means proved most effective for building positive student-teacher relationships. In other words, a “do as I say, not as I do” teaching style did not give students a sense of belonging. However, simple ways that teachers communicated their care for students clearly demonstrated their commitment to their academic success. “It’s the little things that really do matter” (White, male). Students spoke of examples that included when teachers had sidebar conversations, fun facts, asked individual questions to the students based on observations, was reassuring, and helpful, the students perceived that as qualities of a friend. To the contrary, many pre-service teacher training focuses on classroom management and discipline, maintaining control of the class, and framed in requirements and compliance. Yet, teachers who embody these tenets are seen by the students as unapproachable, scary, negative, and disconnected. Teachers may view the concept of “teacher as friend” as having no rules, no consequences, nonacademic silliness, or no responsibilities. In those cases, teachers were seen as communicating a desire to connect with the students but acting contrary to what the students feel a teacher should be. The interviews reflected that the students were aware of the teachers’ responsibilities and understood they had to comply with the teacher as the authority in the room. However, the qualities that the students deemed valuable in a friend were not carefree, irresponsible, or rebellious. Communicating friendship to the students entailed trust, honesty, openness, helpfulness, comforting, and paying attention: all qualities necessary to build positive, effective relationships. When asked in the interviews if they could give teachers one piece of advice, students overwhelmingly spoke about the need for teachers to show their commitment at being positive and optimistic. “One thing I would tell teachers to do is to constantly communicate they are positive, smile, and be open about it. If there is no personal connection or they barely know your name, then you feel like if you weren’t there it wouldn’t matter. Just a smile when you come in and a smile when you leave can show some effort” (White, female).

Finding #3.

The most effective teachers fostered positive relationships with students through consistently engaging them with multiple perspectives. This aligns with research questions 1, 3, 4.

The most effective teachers built and fostered positive and effective relationships with students by consistently engaging them through multiple perspectives. Sharing some aspects of the teacher's personal life was an indicator to the students that the teacher was a person and for most of the students, it was a metric to determine student-teacher engagement. The level of engagement, however, had a range, and was dependent on the multiple perspectives used by the teacher to differentiate the engagement. It ranged from making the class fun and interesting to showing the relevance of the course; all perspectives connected to building a sense of belonging in the class through a positive relationship. One student spoke to this engagement as the class environment. "It's simple really. Maybe teachers think it's going to be too hard to see a new perspective or the idea just doesn't translate to them. Start with your way of doing things, then meet the students where they are. Get to know them, share. Then, you can see their struggles and figure out a new way to help them, with empathy to help you find a way. Maybe just giving some time and space is new for teachers or being relatable so students can trust and not be afraid to ask questions. Some teachers can try and make the classroom a safe space or make themselves more available. Maybe, teachers can be the one to ask the first question out loud to the class so students know they are seriously there to help. All of these are things my teachers don't do but would make me feel like the teacher wants to have a good relationship with me" (White, female). Another student spoke to the importance of engaging students through relevance and relatability. "The examples the teachers use are not reflective of my experiences. They are typical to them. I wish there were more diversity in the examples. That would give me a better sense of belonging and wouldn't feel like the only one like me in the class. If teachers pay attention and are observant, they will see opportunities for different perspectives and help students feel like they belong" (Black, female). Situating learning in the context of the students' lives, proved to be one of the most important factors in engaging the students, and it was the seemingly simple aspects of teaching that may be obvious, but are not always executed as one student pointed out: "If students have to raise a hand, teachers could give a helping hand." Students wanted the content to be relatable and needed it to be relevant in order for optimal engagement.

Given the students' perception of diversity adding to the value of the lessons and learning, the key word that was used consistently by the students in the interviews was engagement. Students were polarized in the perspectives of being called on in class. Some thought that was a sign of interest and engagement, while others said that was a sure way for them to disengage because they didn't want a spotlight on them. This reflects a need for teachers to seek multiple perspectives that include obtaining student feedback to determine how to care for the students and which perspective to use to facilitate a positive relationship and engage them in the lessons. The diversity the students spoke to went beyond race or ethnicity. They emphasized that there is diversity in personalities, thought processes, learning styles, and backgrounds. One White, female student said, "teachers could involve us and ask for feedback; allow students to make

partial or collective decisions instead of just giving the lesson which causes some students to become stubborn. I mean, there are times when I think about all the different ways I could do a lesson rather than the one way you are making me do it". They acknowledged the value in having a teacher seek diversity through multiple perspectives and communicate that through their teaching and engagement with the students. Doing so would engage the students and create a sense of belonging for them in the classroom, which, in turn, would make the class inviting and the teacher welcoming. One way of executing this as a different perspective was through empathy. The students constantly spoke empathetically regarding the challenges and stress of the teacher, while wishing the teacher extended the same empathy. "Coming together and having the teacher put themselves in the shoes of the students just like students try to do that with the teachers. It could be a more healthy and happy environment" (White, male)

Teachers who made students want to come to class, feel welcomed in class with a purpose and sense of belonging were the memorable teachers. The memorable teachers were used as both positive and negative examples in the interviews. Examples of negative relationships shared similar characteristics such as disconnected, uninterested, apathetic, and not cheerful. "You can tell when a teacher doesn't like you or want to be there or teach what they are teaching. There is a disconnect, a lack of conversation or positive energy. They just do the bare minimum and when they speak it's monotone." (LatinX, female). Common characteristics were also consistent in the interviews when sharing positive experiences with teachers. "Teachers I have had positive relationships with were those who made the classroom environment like a family or home. What I mean is that, like family or a home, you don't have to love it all the time. We are all human. But they seem happy to see me and I feel like I belong there. Then, they make it fun and there is a genuine feeling that they are looking out for your best interests. They find a path to help you and go above and beyond with their effort or kindness and understanding" (Black/African American, female). In order to find a path that works for all students, teachers need to be aware of how to engage in equitable practices, which is essentially giving students different perspectives that are culturally relevant to facilitate optimal learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The following is a word cloud for the top attributes and qualities the positive, memorable teachers possessed, and were perceived as intentional in their actions, and consistent in their commitment and communication while demonstrating multiple perspectives in their teaching and learning. All but one of the attributes were personal and contributed to a student's sense of belonging in the classroom. Help, any derivative of the word help, was the only attribute related to the academic content as well as the personal aspects. Teachers who built positive relationships were those who made the time to help the students, demonstrated their intent to help by walking around the room, or asked questions beyond a general comprehension check to ensure those who struggled could receive the help they deserved.



Finding #4.

Positive experiences with teachers were not dependent on race or ethnicity, but race or ethnicity did impact the potential for negative experiences. This aligns with research questions 2, 4.

“Just because you were born differently, look differently, or raised differently, doesn’t mean you should be treated differently” (White, female). Not many people would argue or refute that statement, and unless there were explicit, discriminatory practices that would be cause for corrective action, students and teachers consciously concur. Through the interviews, however, the students had different perspectives and their perspectives were polarized racially. In general, the students did not believe that the positive relationships with their teachers were as a result of race or ethnicity. When asked how important race was to them as an individual, not one White student said it was important. All of the white students said there was no impact and they hadn’t really thought of race or ethnicity as a factor. “I’m not racially or ethnically diverse so it doesn’t affect me”, or “I’ve never thought about it before”, or “race doesn’t matter as long as you are teaching me I’m fine” were the consistent answers. In fact, there was considerable wait time as they paused to think about the questions regarding race and ethnicity. The students were quicker to speak to the race of the teacher, but there was considerable pause time for most of the white students to speak about their race as a factor. Their answers on race and ethnicity and their impact on the student-teacher relationship were thought of in a deficit perspective. They did not see White as a race and since they had no negative experiences as a result of their unmarked race, they did not see it as a norm or variable. The white students, female and male, stated that race was not a factor in their educational experience. Some stated that they never thought about race. Others acknowledged that as a white student, they didn’t need to think about race because most teachers are white and whiteness is the norm. Others struggled to talk about race and said that as long as the teacher teaches, and connects to the students, then race does not matter. A few students spoke to their privilege and how they do see how race could be a factor for the students of color. Those students seemed uncomfortable talking about race or ethnicity and slowed their words which seemed like they were uncomfortable or fearful to say the wrong thing. Some students acknowledged their privilege and noted that they could see how race impacted the other students of color. One of the White female students spoke to this as she was musing about the importance of connecting race and ethnicity to relationships. “I think it’s more about the teacher. They need to be willing to ask the questions to connect and make the students feel more comfortable. I have never known a teacher who has openly admitted to being racist, but I have seen and experienced teachers who speak and behave in racist ways”.

On the other hand, all students of color did place importance on race and ethnicity because they said it was a part of their identity. They answered those questions without hesitation and were much more comfortable talking about race and ethnicity. The students of color all had similar conclusions about the impact of race and ethnicity regarding the student-teacher relationships. They concluded that it was their responsibility to navigate those spaces in spite of their circumstances because they were acutely aware of the positionality of the teacher as the authority who had the power to define their success in the classroom. “Yea, race does play a role, but, you

know, at the end of the day, I can't do anything about it. I can't change my skin color so all I have to do as the student is deal with it. I can't fight with the teacher, I can't leave. I'm not gonna be disrespectful or rude. I just have to deal with it" (Black, female). This astute insight has allowed this student to succeed in spite of any negative encounters, interactions, experiences, and relationships she has with her teachers. However, there are many students of color who may not be as centered in their analysis or have the capacity or ability to "deal with it" and still achieve academically. Students either find a way to make it work or receive discipline referrals. Although it is the teacher's responsibility to initiate a positive, student-teacher relationship, the students of color were the ones who navigated away from potential escalations so they could remain on track academically. When probing for more explanation on her insights, she told me that "being able to deal with teachers who may look at you differently or treat you differently even if they don't know it, depends on your experiences growing up. Your reactions are connected to those experiences. How you handle interactions may depend on how you were treated growing up". She went on to explain that having parents help her through experiences with racial bias and affirm her continuously has helped her put in perspective encounters that are not part of "her big picture". She did say she knew students who had worse experiences than her or didn't have as stable a family life, so they got in more trouble as a result. Gender did not seem to play as much of a role in this perspective because the Black males echoed the same thoughts. "How you react is based off how you were treated while growing up and how you are treated now. If people make fun of you or make comments because of race, it makes you uncomfortable, even if you laugh with it. So then, it depends on the triggers on any given day how you may handle it. It can be a big deal because sometimes you just stop caring".

The Black/African American students had no pause time when speaking about race. They were comfortable in their self-identification at the beginning of the interview and throughout. The students stated that the race of the teacher was not a factor in their positive relationships. They stated that it would be beneficial to have a teacher who looked like them because there could be more natural connections or shared lived experiences, it was not the key to their positive relationships. The teachers who came to mind as giving them a sense of belonging were White, Black, and Hispanic or LatinX.

The attributes that made an effective teacher were consistent with the white and Hispanic/LatinX students. The difference, however, was that all of the Black students interviewed did have examples of negative experiences they had with teachers and they did feel that race was a potential factor. One student spoke about the teachers who could not pronounce her name. "Some teachers have difficulty saying my name. They try the first day or two, then I just accept how they say it. Others just don't call on me". She learned how to cope through the years and although it was frustrating at times and made her feel isolated in advanced classes where there were only one or two students of color, she said it was "just that way". In her interview, she excused these teachers and spoke to how they "just didn't know any better". The other students, in their attempts at empathy for the teacher, said that their negative experiences usually stemmed from a difference in style, attitude, or perception. They spoke about how teachers may not know or realize they have biases, but the students can see and feel them, especially when there is unfair or inconsistent treatment of them to their white peers. In the end, when trying to build positive,

effective relationships, this affected the trust and potential for trust within the student-teacher relationship: “You are supposed to trust your teachers. If not, who do we have?”

The Hispanic/LatinX students were split between the concepts of race and ethnicity and their impact on their relationships with teachers, mostly because of the distinction between race as a color and ethnicity as culture. Therefore, more time was spent probing how they self-identified in order to be consistent for this research. Racially, the students defined themselves as not Black. Their focus was centered on ethnicity or culture. They stated that having a teacher of color did help them connect in the classroom and was a bridge to having a sense of belonging because cultural connections make it easier to share and understand. They also stated that what makes it easier for some teachers can also make it harder for others. Students’ behaviors that are different from the way the teacher behaves, students called it “the American way”, created potential power struggles that led to negative experiences at times. The students did not speak in absolutes, but their perception was that it had the potential for both positive and negative experiences. In most cases, they could not separate their culture from any of their experiences, even with the other students in the school and those interactions.

Trust was also a factor in building positive relationships, and connecting to their ethnicity was a key factor in building trust and comfort. “Teachers need to create trust and confidence for me to speak up. Talk to me. Ask me questions if you don’t understand me. Notice if I’m sad or something. I need to know that it is important to the teacher who I am and how I’m doing”(Hispanic/LatinX male). Essentially, the students understood how their culture impacted their relationships, and the teachers who had an understanding of their culture or an awareness of their lack of knowledge and the courage to ask questions and share made the difference in the kind of positive or negative experiences. “”My ethnicity is my culture and my culture is my community, So, if teachers can’t connect to that in any way, I won’t have a sense of belonging and I’ll feel isolated, so how could we have a positive relationship?” (Hispanic/LatinX, female) They did not feel like it was a make or break for building positive relationships, but it could certainly be an effective way to connect. “Connection to my ethnicity would be important because it would make me feel more like I’m at home. It’s all about the connection, but if we don’t have that connection, we can still have a good relationship as long as the teacher can show some support and hold out their hand to help”. (Hispanic/LatinX, male)

There was a consensus in the interviews regarding positive relationships. Positive experiences and relationships with teachers were not dependent on race or ethnicity, but did impact the potential for negative experiences. Students interviewed from all demographics stated that the race of the teacher did not affect their ability to have a sense of belonging in the classroom or build a positive relationship with the teacher. The factors that impacted a sense of belonging and building positive relationships were those stated in the previous three findings. However, the students of color did state that there was a greater possibility of connecting with a teacher who might share their ethnicity or be of the same race. “I connect with people of color because their experiences are similar to mine, so it can make a teacher relate to me better and not think I’m crazy for thinking or feeling a certain way about things that happen”. (Black, male)

Students were not critical of their teachers and tried to understand all the pressures of teaching. Many times, there are challenges teachers face in their personal lives which cause stress and fatigue. Likewise, there are professional challenges that also impact stress and energy levels. If these are compliance mandates that fly in the face of what teachers deem necessary or relevant, teachers may find themselves off balance trying to navigate the tensions between what they have to do and what they want or need to do. This imbalance can cause the student-teacher relationship to suffer. It may result in different perceptions between caring about the students and caring for the students. The teachers may care about the students, but are off balance, so they are perceived not to care for the students. (Noddings, 2005) “Teachers can help us by knowing and acknowledging that race issues and slurs are happening, then set some boundaries and deal with it. They shouldn’t avoid it. Gen Z, our generation is very, very, very strong and a lot of grown-ups either don’t get us, or don’t care. If they intrigue us or get our perspectives, or be realistic about race, whether we experience it or not, we can have exceptional relationships. They need to trust us - we won’t let them down!” (White, female)

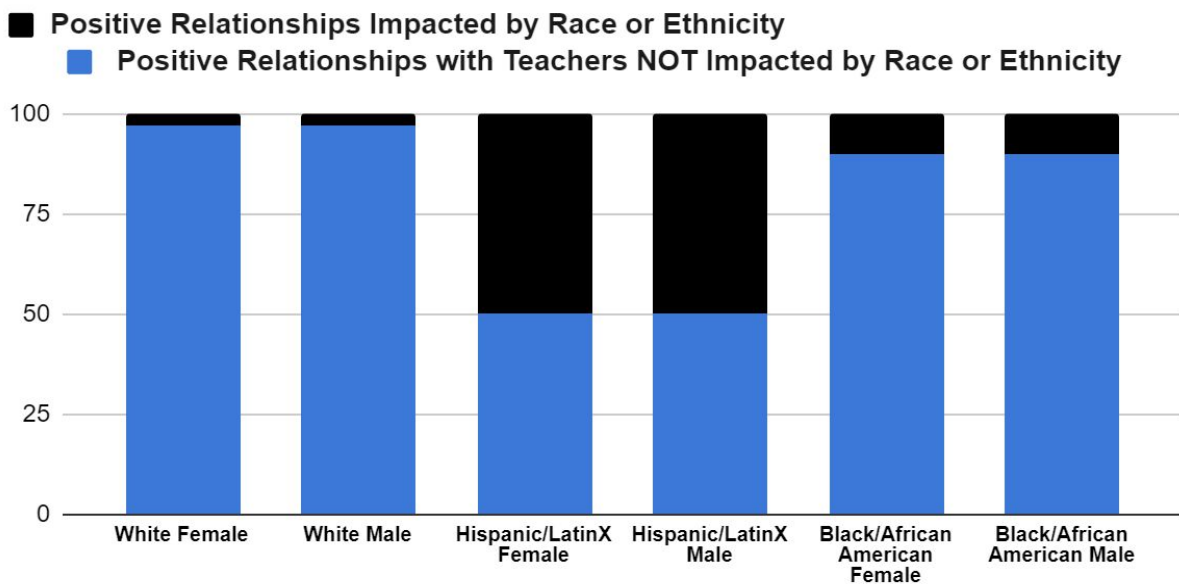
Being culturally competent is about self-awareness, understanding, and accepting that there are many ways to view the world while building the capacity to learn about diversity and culture (Okun, 2001). Therefore, in order to address this contemporary problem of naive, unintentional racism and create professional development that addresses implicit bias and structural, systemic racism and how it affects student-teacher relationships, an alternate approach is needed (Blanchard et. al, 1991). The alternate approach, according to the students, was not revolutionary. It was simple, yet profoundly transformative. “It’s the little things. They make all the difference. Even a smile at the beginning when you see me and a smile when I leave can change a mood.”. Another student’s advice was to “create the best atmosphere that you would want to feel like if you were learning with you as a teacher!” One by one, students echoed the sentiment: “the small, even tiny little things make all the difference. Some of us don’t have great lives so we recognize when you notice us and put out a helping hand!”

“Few things are more difficult than to see outside the bounds of our own perspective - to be able to identify assumptions that we take as universal truths, but that instead have been crafted by our own unique identity and experiences in the world. We live much of our lives in our own heads, in a reconfirming dialogue with ourselves. Even when we discuss crucial issues with others, much of the dialogue is not dialogue: it is a monologue where we work to convince others to understand us or to adopt our view” (Takas, 2002 p.169). Never has there been more urgency to be culturally competent and necessitate self-awareness that challenges our thoughts, values, and beliefs as the norm. Teachers need a deeper understanding of the power inherent in their positionality as the authority figure in the classroom and the impact that it has on students’ identity and their sense of belonging. One student, a Black female, offered her conclusions on building positive student-teacher relationships and the impact of race and ethnicity: “If teachers are observant, they will see opportunities to connect, step in and help students feel like they belong. A lot of stuff gets lost and unheard so no positive relationships can be built. Teachers are trying to be too careful because they don’t wanna come off as racist or ignorant. They just kind of avoid it. And I think that is worse. They have to confront it because it’s there. We have different races, we have different cultures, we have different names. If we don’t confront it, then

we are doing nothing to be a more inclusive society. There is a way to step forward. Teachers just have to try, otherwise, there will never be understanding”. The students were hopeful in the possibility of having positive relationships with their teachers regarding race or ethnicity, without diminishing their existence. “I appreciate efforts to help. I try to convince myself that I haven’t experienced a lot of racism, but at the end of the day, because of what I look like, I may be treated differently. It’s a lot of the same and it’s recurring and the truth is, it can be fixed.” (Black/African American, male)

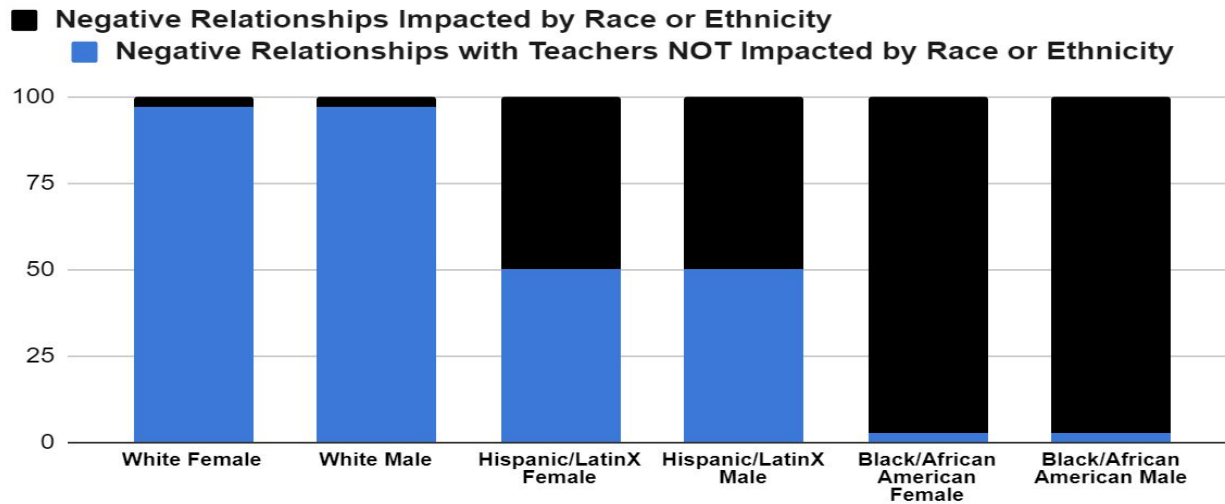
The charts below show comparisons between positive and negative student-teacher relationships by race and ethnicity.

Percentage of POSITIVE Relationships with Teachers Impacted by Race or Ethnicity



*None of the White students’ negative relationships with their teachers were impacted by race, while all of the negative relationships were impacted by race for the Black students. The Hispanic/LatinX students said that sometimes they were because of ethnicity but other times, they could not draw the conclusion that race or ethnicity was the determining factor.

Percentage of NEGATIVE Relationships with Teachers Impacted by Race or Ethnicity



*None of the White students' positive relationships with their teachers were impacted by race, and all but one of the Black students said their positive relationships were not impacted by race. The Hispanic/LatinX students said that sometimes their positive relationships were because of ethnicity and speaking Spanish, but other times, they did not think it was impacted by ethnicity or race.

Finding #5

A sense of belonging influences students' ease of learning and higher academic achievement or success. This aligns with research questions 2,4.

Students were motivated to achieve academically because of a sense of belonging that was created within the student-teacher relationships. The general consensus from all of the interviews was that "to be good in school, you need to have a good relationship with the teacher and feel like you belong. You don't wanna walk into a classroom and not be liked by the teacher because then you're not going to want to learn the information" (Hispanic, male).

There was a connection between a sense of belonging and academic achievement. The greater the sense of belonging, the higher the academic achievement or the easier it was to achieve academically. "The more you feel liked and good about a class, the better academically you do in that class. If a student has a bad relationship with a teacher, they will stop caring about learning, so having a positive relationship with a teacher is a big deal" (Black/African American, male). All the students who were interviewed without question acknowledged that a sense of belonging, which entails feeling welcome, being noticed, having one-on-one conversations with the teacher,

and feeling comfortable enough to approach the teacher as needed, had a definite impact on academic achievement. One Hispanic, female student explained “having a teacher who cares, who notices the little things gives you a sense of belonging in that space. It’s like they are telling you ‘I see you. I hear you. I see something in you, so that makes you feel like you can do anything!’” A White peer added, “ if a teacher cares, then you tend to care more about your education. If a teacher doesn’t like you, then your academics are affected because you get frustrated and start to struggle”. The students felt that a desire to go to class and an extended desire to stay engaged throughout the class was connected to the kind of relationship they had with the teacher. “ To do good in school, you probably want to be friends with the teacher” (White, female).

Students understood that it was their job to learn and the teacher’s job to teach. In fact, the students were keenly aware of the power structure and empathetic to the teacher’s responsibilities. Nonetheless, they said that when a teacher was able to nurture a sense of belonging for them in the classroom, it made it easier to learn and they were much more motivated to do their schoolwork. “I had a teacher who was the best! She was open and smiled. She noticed the students and when they were struggling. She made me feel welcome, like I belonged there. It made me want to go to her class and want to learn and listen to what she had to say. When I said something, she made me feel heard, like I had a place there. So I always did 100% of my work for her!” (White, male).

Many students, especially those in the accelerated classes were high achieving students, who accepted that no matter what kind of teacher their luck reflected, they had to get good grades. Those same students, however, did speak to the ease with which they were able to get the good grades when they did have a sense of belonging in the classroom or a positive relationship with the teacher. “ If you feel like you belong and your relationship is good with the teacher, then you can really thrive in your academics. If you are happy and engaged and you feel like you belong, then you’re going to do better than if you like an outcast, or dejected, or like the teacher doesn’t want you there” (White, female). The students in the mainstream and intensive classes said that without a sense of belonging, it was very difficult to go to classes, let alone be engaged. “It’s hard to be your best academic self if you don’t feel like you belong. Then, you just complain that your teacher doesn’t like you and you don’t wanna go to school. Who can be their best academic self under those conditions?” (LatinX, female) When adding a negative experience, just one, the students spoke to how difficult it was to complete their work and achieve academically. “Why would I want to be in class if I don’t connect with the teacher? Why would I want to do any work? If I’m somewhere I feel I’m not wanted or if I know I don’t belong there, then I just do what I have to do to get by and survive it.” (Black, female)

When analyzing the data by gender, this was the one area where all the females had a 90% connection between a sense of belonging to academic achievement while the males had less of a connection. The Hispanic and Black males acknowledged that a sense of belonging could make the difference in academic achievement, but due to their experiences, they had to learn how to navigate the classroom climate without a sense of belonging to be successful. Therefore, they accepted that a sense of belonging was a bonus rather than a major influence to their academic achievement. “It has the potential to deter me from doing well. If a teacher looks down on me, it

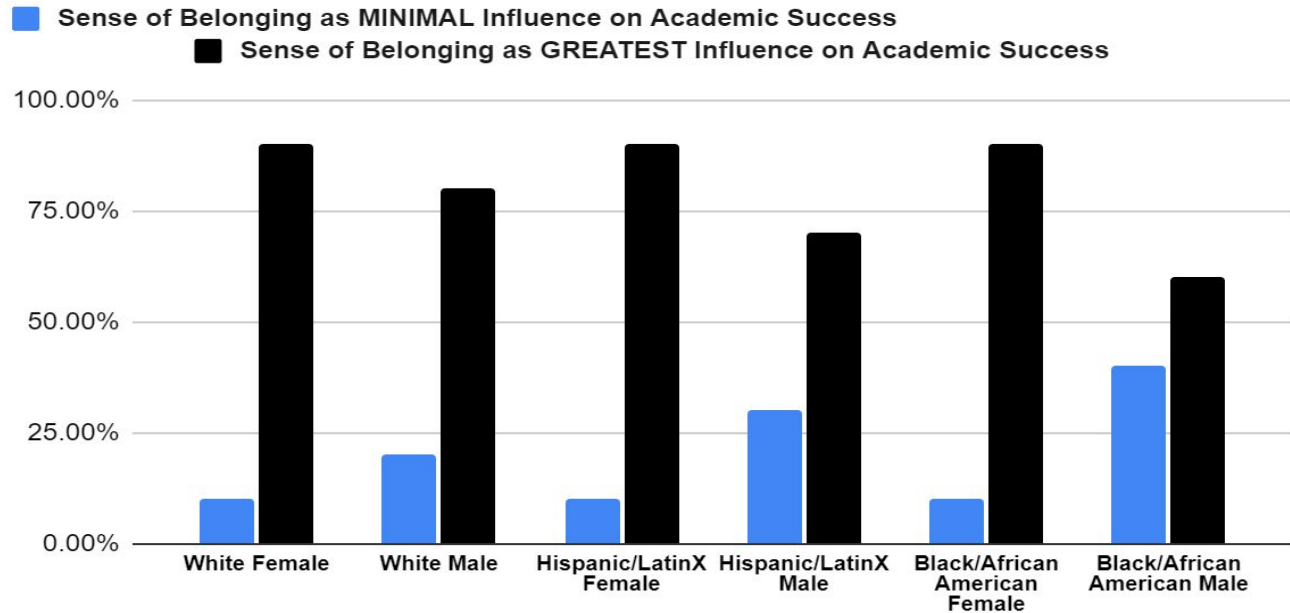
makes me feel worse so I can see how people wouldn't wanna try. Sometimes I wanna try harder to prove them wrong but sometimes I stop caring. In the end, if teachers don't provide you with a sense of belonging, then your academic achievements aren't really going to be what they could be" (Black, male). One Hispanic male said, "when you belong to something, you like it and are proud of it. With those feelings, it's hard not to do your best".

Their sense of belonging reflected the idea of being cared for because it resulted in a tangible feeling or thought that could be connected to the core of the student-teacher relationship. Thus, the relationship reflected the ethics of care education and the purpose, or "why", of teaching. In order to execute effective, positive relationships with students, teachers need to maintain their focus on their "why" of teaching in order to be culturally responsive within those relationships. "I can see if a teacher is truly invested in teaching. After years of just sitting in classes watching teachers, you can spot the ones who really want to teach. It shows in their effort and they are positive. They make us feel like we belong, like we have a place. Even if it's a class I don't like or I'm not good at, the teacher can actually make you like the class. I've done better in some classes I don't normally like because of the teacher and the relationship between us" (White, female).

One aspect of culturally responsive education is in confirmation of the students' behavior, potential, and presence in the classroom. Just noticing the students were there and acknowledging them was a form of confirmation and created a sense of belonging in the classroom. "Think about it. If a teacher cares about what I have to say, then I'm going to want to speak or ask questions. I'll feel like I belong, that I am important and valued. So, of course I'll be more engaged and learn much more than if I'm half asleep all the time because who cares?" (White, male)

The interviews connected a sense of belonging to academic achievement in very clear and real ways, leading to a reflection on the purpose of teaching. Teachers who demonstrated that their job was more than coming to school, assigning work, grading the work, and leaving school, were the teachers the students remembered as cultivating positive, effective relationships that created a sense of belonging that helped them achieve academically, either more efficiently or with greater learning gains. "Despite the fact that teachers' jobs ordinarily require staying after school to help students or call parents, most students interpret this help as a profound sign of care. Teachers who convey that they care about students' learning or patiently explain material alleviate the anxieties that preclude student performance" (Bernstein-Yamashiro, 2004 p. 59). The students were consistent in this perception. "It's gotta be up to the teacher. They are the one in charge in the classroom. Sure our friends give us a sense of belonging in the school, but in the classroom, we can't choose anything. We can't pick the teacher or the people in the class. They have to remember what it was like to be a kid or why they want to teach, something. If they can have a positive relationship with us, it can have lifelong effects!" (Hispanic/LatinX female)

Sense of Belonging and Academic Success



The chart above shows that all students saw a direct impact on academic achievement and a sense of belonging. 90% of the female students, regardless of race or ethnicity, and White, male students, saw a sense of belonging as the greatest variable in the potential for optimal academic achievement. 10% of the time, they said they left that room for error. A sense of belonging influenced academic success 60% of the time for Black males and 70% for Hispanic/LatinX males. These percentages are from the interviews, not quantified data. The Black and Hispanic/LatinX males did see a sense of belonging as having the greatest impact, but also said they could not allow that to determine their academic success due to the potential for negative experiences. Therefore, they recognized it as having the greatest potential to positively impact academic success. “It is all extremely important. If you are not liked, not comfortable, or feel like you don’t belong in some way, then it’s going to be a lot harder to have a good relationship with your teacher, which makes it a lot harder to enjoy the work you have to do or even want to try at school or get good grades to pass” (Hispanic, male).

Discussions and Limitations

Due to the limited number of interviews in some of the sections of the English classes, there was limited data to substantiate findings that may have related to the level of class. The findings ended up more consistent by race and ethnicity. Further exploration on gender differences could be a possibility for further studies in the future, as one of the findings did show a trend by gender. Even the findings, though they did show some differentials based on race, are limited because of the number of students interviewed. There were no Black or Hispanic/LatinX males that were interviewed in some of the sections. Students enrolled in intensive classes are still populated primarily with black and brown students, while most students enrolled in accelerated classes are White. The students of color all said that they were only one of a few students of color in their classes. This study lends itself to further research to continue to highlight student voice and explore within each academic level with more depth.

Another limitation from the study was the lack of insight into students' perspectives based on the level of English class they attended. Demographics did reflect that there were more students of color who were in the intensive, remedial English classes, but the lack of students interviewed from those classes could not determine any significant conclusions based on class level other than the perceptions of the students in advanced classes knowing they would get good grades in spite of the relationship with the teacher, but a positive, effective student-teacher relationship made it much easier to get those grades.

One interesting point that came from the interviews was the limited recollection of the teachers whom the students felt liked them. Using the positive examples in an effort to better define attributes that enable teachers to build effective relationships with students, the number of teachers who came to mind during the interview was astounding when put into perspective. Many times when people are asked about their favorite teacher, they can easily recall them. However, I went further and probed the students to recall all of their positive, memorable teachers who they knew liked them. Not one student could recall more than 4 teachers. The only demographic that could recall between three and five teachers were the white females. When asked, they did not think race was a factor in their student-teacher relationships. However, it is reasonable to conclude that in a workforce primarily composed of white females, there are more connections due to race and gender with the White, female students, thereby facilitating more possibilities to build positive student-teacher relationships. Nevertheless, by the time the students are in their sophomore year in Palm Beach County, they would have had exposure to roughly 40 teachers, not including pre-k, and all but three white females could only name one or two who stood out as teachers who created positive, effective relationships with them or that they felt a sense of belonging in the classroom. Exploring this in future studies could contribute to help inform ongoing professional development for educators and how to build more effective classroom communities.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research could include an evaluation plan that could be used to determine the effectiveness of the ongoing professional development through using Wenger's indicators of mutual engagement and shared repertoire. (Wenger, 1998)

Future studies should continue to focus on critical race theory and expand the demographic categories researched to include the entire color line, and explore the nuances and complexities of race and ethnicity in particular with all students of color and their intersections. "For example, with Students of Color, culture is frequently represented symbolically through language and can encompass identities around immigration status, gender, phenotype, sexuality and region, as well as race and ethnicity" (Yosso, 2005. p.76). It would be of value to conduct student-centered interviews on students of color who have had discipline referrals and suspensions to explore the impact of race and ethnicity in the interactions that preceded the discipline referrals.

Additionally, future research for the recommendations including the professional development could include using student perceptions of the Open Hand Framework and the learning environment to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework and the impact of executing the framework in the classroom. Allowing students to engage in the evaluation of the framework would reflect the fidelity necessary to engage in effective, relevant, and ongoing professional development using the human-centered design (Soebari and Aldridge, 2015). Incorporating students' perceptions of their learning experiences within the Open Hand Frame to evaluate its implementation and provide feedback would be a valuable contribution to facilitate modifications and further innovation.

Recommendations From This Study

This study informed the recommendations for The School District of Palm Beach County teachers by emphasizing the importance of building effective, positive student-teacher relationships while making connections to the student's sense of belonging and their social interactions with teachers. Professional development that is teacher-centered and situated in the context of student voice has the potential to be powerful, relevant, and facilitate engagement and growth (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I developed a professional development considering the work rooted in the frameworks from the study as well as inquiries and research on learning and the aspects of social interaction and activity (Flint et al, 2019).

For the recommendations, the teachers are at the core of the human-centered design as the professional development is directly relevant for their growth, but the recommendations highlight student voice as the content. Context in the classroom and learning environments is personal. Because the classroom context is personal for each member of that group or classroom, there is a logical need for equity. Teachers differ greatly from one another as do students. Therefore, this framework has a fluid design to address equity with every interaction. As such, integral to the professional development are opportunities to integrate new knowledge, develop

pedagogical practices, and actively engage in meaningful discussions (Van den Bergh and Beijaard, 2015). There is considerable research on teacher professional development programs that could inform future research on their effectiveness and implementation (Garet et. al, 2001). Furthermore, the professional development is designed so the learners or teachers can participate as novices and experts allowing for a community of practice that builds capacity and sustains personal and professional growth and empowerment. A major challenge to integrating evidence into practice is that it involves a complex process of acquiring and applying technical and adaptive, explicit and tacit knowledge into practice (Li et. al, 2009). The Open Hand Leadership and Learning Professional Development includes the explicit knowledge of teachers' academic content through situating their learning within their communities of practices and sharing their participation with a growth accountability partner, while applying tacit knowledge through pedagogical practice and engaging activities.

After 22 in depth student interviews, it is clear that they have both a unique and keen understanding and perspective on how decisions from educators impact their day-to-day lives at school. As, arguably, the most important stakeholder in education, student voice is critical in ensuring an equitable and quality education that fosters the mission and vision of The School District of Palm Beach County. Their perspectives reflect authentic insights that need to be highlighted in order to make informed decisions that impact their lives. These interviews demonstrated that in order to make informed decisions, it is necessary to reimagine, or bridge, the professional development needed to facilitate narrowing gaps and more effective bridging between the two communities of students and teachers (van Oorschot et al., 2006). The explicit shared goal of education is to achieve academically while reaching one's full potential. However, there are gaps and differences of perspectives that impede solidarity to pursue that common goal. Based on this research, the key lies in the potential of the student-teacher relationship which can bridge the gap through building a sense of belonging in students so they feel liked and cared for by their teachers, thus facilitating more effective engagement and higher academic achievement. This bridging is crucial for helping to build relationships, linking social capital through equitable education within the relationships and different social positions and power (Bhandari and Yasunobu, 2009).

Therefore, it is essential to provide professional development to the community of teachers, who, through their positionality and power in the classroom, can build more positive, effective relationships with their students, essentially creating stronger bonds and a sense of belonging that is key for academic achievement. With this in mind, the recommendations that embody the interviews and highlight student voice are in the form of a professional development framework that is fluid in its implementation and teacher-centered to reflect the relevancy of the learner. Just as lessons in the classroom should be student-centered, professional development for teachers should be teacher-centered. Therefore, Open Hand Leadership and Learning In Action is a responsive framework for professional development for teachers that is both relevant and responsive, and highlights student voice. It has a human-centered design with equity and effective instruction as the focus and reflects the tenets of evidence-based research included in the Learning Policy Institute's review of 35 methodologically rigorous studies that demonstrated a positive link among teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et. al, 2018).

Professional Development Alignment

Key Findings	PD Learning Objectives: Participants will...	PD Activities
<p>1. The concept of being liked by a teacher correlated to a teacher’s intentionality in creating a sense of belonging and demonstrating that like or care for the students.</p>	<p>1. examine intentions in routines and decision-making; 2. develop surveys, questionnaires, and intentionality cards to implement in classrooms routines.</p>	<p>1. Four corners 2. Surveys and Questionnaires 3. Intentionality cards</p>
<p>2. The most positive and effective relationships were a reflection of the student’s perception of the teacher’s communication and commitment to what students believe a teacher’s job entails.</p>	<p>1. explore what the job of teaching entails; 2. reflect on their communication styles establish protocols to elicit student feedback</p>	<p>1. A teacher’s job is: caring about vs caring for 2. Four corners: teaching 3. Creation of interviews for student feedback</p>
<p>3. The most effective teachers fostered positive relationships with students through consistently engaging them with multiple perspectives.</p>	<p>1. understand three perspectives through analogies and metaphors; 2. create a lesson plan or unit in collaboration using multiple perspectives for content, methodology, and student voice.</p>	<p>1. Windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors: engaging texts and creation of an analogy or metaphor. 2. Lesson Plan creation with multiple perspectives</p>
<p>4. Positive experiences with teachers were not dependent on race or ethnicity, but race or ethnicity did impact the potential for negative experiences.</p>	<p>1. reflect and process self-awareness and implicit biases; 2. engage in asset-based activities to highlight self efficacy; 3. develop and implement a self-care plan for personal and professional balance.</p>	<p>1. Cultural Quadrant Chart: engaging texts 2. Lines of Communication 3. Individual action plans</p>
<p>5. A sense of belonging influences students’ ease of learning and higher academic achievement or success.</p>	<p>1. explore and reflect on their reasons for teaching. 2. write a letter to their students reflecting their purpose; 3. generate with GAP deeper insights and revise their letter; 4. Demonstrate and celebrate their learning and growth.</p>	<p>1. Write letter to students 2. Engage with GAP 3. Revise letter 4. Share letters 5. Visual representations of learning</p>

Open Hand Leadership and Learning in Action Conceptual Framework

“Reach out your hand. Hold it open for us and say ‘Hey, I’ll be here for you’. Show us you mean it by being positive and offering to help. Then, I’ll be willing to come to you. If you don’t give me that hand, I just can’t do it by myself.” - White, female.

Open Hand Leadership is a frame and methodology for how to lead with equity and build positive, effective relationships with students that foster a sense of belonging. People are all leaders, whether they are leading their own lives, leading a classroom, or leading an organization. My recommendations focus on Open Hand Leadership and Learning in Action to provide five key aspects of how to lead a more effective personal and professional life. Each of the five key aspects are aligned with the five findings. Open Hand Leadership and Learning is very simple, yet profound to execute consistently and effectively. Using this framework will facilitate a way to practice the craft of education with human-centered design, keeping equity at the heart and knowing the answers are always in the palm of our hands. Studies have shown that the most effective professional developments include three areas of focus: content or academic subject matter, active or “hands-on” learning, and coherence, which is how the learning is integrated into daily life (Garet et. al, 2009). The content for Open Hand is the academic content of the teachers as well as the contexts of their teaching. Teachers will be able to generate their own relevant content within the sessions using their content expertise. The engaging activities are varied, inclusive of multiple perspectives, and experiential for “hands-on” learning. Lastly, there is coherence within the framework as the learning objectives are designed to be situated within the contexts of the classrooms, schools, and differentiated through an equity lens.

Open Hand Leadership and Learning is a professional development recommendation with a conceptual foundation designed for participants to engage in and co-create their growth based on their contexts and places on what I call the continuum of lifelong pedagogical practice. The recommendations were created as a whole with the understanding that they may be implemented partially or genre-switched out of their original purpose. However, for full benefit, this professional development should be implemented with fidelity. One aspect includes compensating the teachers for their time when engaging in the professional growth and development and providing support and opportunities for the teachers to engage in meaningful interactions of peer observations, follow-up conversations for feedback, and class coverage if needed for mentoring and coaching.

Logistics for Ongoing and Sustained Professional Development

This professional development has a human centered design. It is teacher-centered because that is the group referenced in this study, however, all educators may benefit from participating. Enhancing the human-centered design, the recommendations within the professional development stem from the student voices that were highlighted in the research study. Using student perceptions of their learning environment for teacher professional development can significantly impact changes in pedagogy and practice by soliciting and validating their insights for ongoing and sustained professional development (Soebari and Aldridge, 2015).

My recommendation for this professional development is to ensure people participate with at least one other person, who will serve as their growth accountability partner. This should be a person in the same department or school site, preferably teaching the same grade and/or content as there are sections that may be completed cooperatively. For optimum learning and growth, teams of 4-6 people should attend the professional development as they can engage in the ongoing component as a community of practice. Growth does not occur in a vacuum, therefore, it is necessary to have non-evaluative coaching and mentoring with at least one peer teacher or within a community of practice after attending the session to ensure sustainable capacity building.

Another recommendation is that this not be a one time PD. Ideally, it is a two-day workshop style professional development. It could be condensed into one day, but one of the barriers to professional development is the lack of time to create, practice, or process the learning. Therefore, for ample time to include the reflections, writings, and processing, two, consecutive days is what is recommended. It certainly benefits as such, however, ongoing professional development with relevant and responsive feedback and reflection has proven much more effective. In particular, this PD was designed not as a stand alone session, but as a way to initiate and execute communities of practices within schools that allow teachers safe spaces to share and discuss their pedagogy and experiences honestly and authentically in order to hold each other and themselves in affirming accountability. As such, this PD is both relevant and responsive reflecting the culturally relevant and responsive teaching that has proven most effective in teaching and learning. Best practices for professional development indicate that “sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact, as reported by teachers, than shorter professional development” (Garet et, al, 2009 p. 935).

Teachers need to engage in meaningful, relevant, and ongoing professional development in order to sustain the capacity built during the Open Hand sessions. Too often, one time PDs are seen as compliance mandates. Other times, teachers may build capacity, but there is nothing in place to sustain the capacity, so status quos remain comfort zones rather than zones of proximal development. Lastly, teachers may feel like they have implemented their learning in their teaching, but, in fact, their perception either does not yield student growth outcomes, or is not accurate when observed by others. Effective professional development programs are those where observation, coaching, and feedback are received and given from and by peer teachers (Ebert-May et. al, 2011).

Open Hand Leadership and Learning professional development is inclusive of seven best practices from effective, evidence-based research from The Learning Policy Institute. These tenets are viable and sustainable for effective, ongoing professional development which teachers create at the end of the Open Hand Framework. They are: content focus, active learning, collaboration, modeling of effective practice, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and sustained duration. (Darling-Hammond, et. al. 2018)

The role of the Growth Accountability Partner (GAP) and The Community of Practicing Equity (COPE)

Professional development in education has long been criticized for its irrelevance or inefficiency. (Hill, 2009) In order to address the information or relevancy and efficiency of professional development, it is the recommendation that Open Hand Leadership and Learning not take place as a compliance mandate. It is an essential component, when executing the Open Hand professional development model, that participants engage with at least one other person, their Growth Accountability Partner, or GAP. This person should be a colleague in the same grade level or content area so they may work collaboratively and understand their mutual context. It is not enough to understand the stresses of teaching and commiserate during the professional development because that will impede growth or learning. Reflecting the data from the student interviews, essential to building positive, effective relationships is a sense of belonging, care, trust, and sharing. Modeling those tenets, a Growth Accountability Partner should be a person with whom there is a certain level of comfort that has the potential to develop enough trust to engage in discourse within their zones of proximal development. Allowing this, allows the teachers opportunities to engage in generative, productive discussions and hold each other in an asset-based accountability. To optimize the potential for ongoing professional growth with this model, it is my recommendation that groups of Growth Accountability Partners attend the sessions from the same school or department. Keeping one GAP, but incorporating multiple partnerships within the same school or department will create communities of practice that may facilitate growth and development that foster the building of more positive, effective relationships with the students. These groups can move beyond traditional colleague interactions to form a particular relationships that build on the same tenets of trust, provocative questioning, and alternate perspectives that allow constructive critique and advocacy (Storey, 2013). The Open Hand Leadership and Learning Framework is designed with these communities of practice and growth accountability partners as essential aspects of effective, ongoing engagement for continued professional development.

A professional development structure that is asset-based, human-centered, and highlights student voice, can be powerfully transformative, especially when practiced within a community of peers. Therefore, having a growth accountability partner who can be a person to guide, support, and challenge learners is essential. Having a group of people, each with their GAP, form a community of practice that practices the technical and adaptive aspects of the Open Hand Framework consistently has the potential to demonstrate the effectiveness of the framework as practitioners of equity. Equity, for this purpose, is defined as giving people what they need when they need it. Essentially, the community of practicing equity, or COPE, can be structured to more effectively operationalize the pedagogy and practice of the Open Hand Leadership and Learning in Action.

Open Hand Leadership and Learning Professional Development

(See Appendices for full content, engagement activities, and script)

The following is a detailed outline of the two day professional development, followed by the conceptual content for the Open Hand Framework and quotes from the student interviews that substantiated the findings that informed these recommendations. It is important to note that the presentation of the content follows the hand beginning at the little finger and ending with the thumb. The activities follow beginning with the thumb and ending with the little finger. This is to allow fluid and cohesive engagement between the technical and adaptive aspects of the learning. Teachers will need a notebook for this pd and for the ongoing engagement.



Open Hand Leadership and Learning Professional Development Outline

Day One: Priming, Reflection, Awareness, and Processing

I. Welcome, Protocols, and Community Builder:

Learning Objective: Participants will prime their learning and build capacity within their Community of Practice and Growth Accountability Partner.

Alignment to findings 1, 2, 5.

1-Community builders should be intentional and consistent to engage all students to create a sense of belonging and demonstrate through actions that they are liked.

2-It is not enough to say you care about the content or the growth of the students. There needs to be consistent interaction that demonstrates the students are cared for and it must be perceived as such by those who would receive the care, the students or participants. Additionally, positive, effective relationships are built through interactions and engagement that is relevant, consistent, and perceived as more than minimal effort.

5-Remembering our “why” in education and allowing that to drive our interactions connects us with a sense of belonging and purpose that helps drive our engagement to achieve greater learning and growth. People will put forth more effort for themselves and their community when there is a sense of belonging and purpose.

A. Welcome: Expression using the word “hand” competition in COP or with GAPs.

B. Protocols: GAP/COP, Agreements, Flow of the day.

C. Community Builder: [Rita Pierson: Every Kid Needs a Champion](#)

Online: break-outs; In-person: Coffee/Tea Talk

II. Open Hand Framework Content:

Whole group instruction. See appendices for content and script.

Learning Objective: Participants will gain personal and professional understanding of how to lead and learn with an open hand; an equity focused, human-centered design framework.

Alignment to findings 1-5: each finding is represented in the hand frame and designed to align one finding for each finger, understanding that, like the hand, the findings are connected to achieve more effective outcomes.

Break

III. Open Hand Engagement Activities

A. Your Why

Learning Objective: Participants will explore and reflect on their reasons for teaching. They will write a letter to their students reflecting their purpose. They will engage with their GAP to generate deeper insights and revise their letter. Celebrate their learning and growth.

Alignment to finding 5: Students said that they would achieve higher grades if they felt a sense of belonging in the classroom. Some students who said that they needed to achieve high grades in spite of student-teacher relationships or having a sense of belonging, affirmed that in the positive student-teacher relationships where they did have a sense of belonging, getting those grades was made much easier and fun. Teachers who either choose to become an educator or are called to the profession tell the students that they want them to succeed and do well in life; that is the reason they teach. However, students perceive most of their teachers as seeming stressed with many challenges in their job, so they feel it is their responsibility to just do their work and move on. The memorable teachers who build a sense of belonging with the students through positive relationships are those whom the students perceived as remembering why they became a teacher, and that included connecting with their students and motivating them to do well academically. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers remain focused on their purpose and remember their “why” every day so they can foster a sense of belonging in their students in order for them to achieve better academic success.

1. Engaging Activity: Remember Your Purpose: reflective writing
2. Engaging Activity: GAP generative discussions and rewrite

LUNCH BREAK

B. Find Your Balance

Learning Objective: Participants will reflect and process their self-awareness and implicit biases; engage in asset-based activities to highlight self efficacy; develop and implement a self-care plan to help find personal and professional balance

Alignment to finding 4: Teachers face many challenges and time constraints in addition to their increasing mandates and personal commitments. Therefore, it is critical that they include themselves in their human-centered designs and pedagogy in order to find their balance when interacting with their students. Teachers want students to be their best selves in order to succeed, and the same premise is true for teachers. Teachers who are off balance will react to situations with less patience, understanding, and flexibility. They will react more on implicit biases and a style of classroom management that is authoritarian and transactional, thereby creating negative experiences and negative relationships. The more teachers find their balance through self-awareness of implicit

biases and how they view the world moment by moment through their thoughts, feelings, values, and behavior, the more likely they will build positive relationships. Additionally, in order to build their capacity and will to lean into discomfort within their zones of proximal development, they need to practice an asset-based pedagogy that includes themselves. Practicing self-efficacy builds on strengths and allows greater capacity to maintain balance when interacting with students. Lastly, in order to build capacity through self-awareness and self-efficacy, it is vital to be mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy. Students are told before high stakes testing or athletes are told throughout their training to get enough sleep, hydrate, exercise, and eat healthy. Teachers live and work in a high stakes job that requires daily practice and training, so it is no less important for them to focus on their self-care. Educators are categorized as nurturers in general and many give and give without tending to their own needs. However, it is my contention that no teacher can be as effective as possible, nor build extensive positive relationships that create a sense of belonging and facilitate higher academic achievement without taking care of themselves daily. It takes energy and effort to build equitable, positive relationships. If it were easy, then more students would have more memorable teachers or recall more positive experiences and relationships with their teachers. There is a need to refocus and change educational pedagogy, especially since 2020. Systemic changes are incremental at most and need policy and structural changes at macro-levels. Teachers have the power of one and can change the course of their students' lives in one moment, but to do that, they need to find their balance. Self-care is the key to building physical, mental, and emotional capacity that can fuel the effort and energy needed to build positive relationships with students and bypass negative encounters and interactions as a result of fatigue or stress.

1. Self-Awareness: Engaging Activities:

- a. Cultural Quadrant Chart
- b. <https://youtu.be/Ik8iDHyyxdc>
- c. Implicit Bias : [Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know, By Cheryl Staats, American Educator, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2015-2016,](#)
- d. [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED Talk](#)

2. Self-Efficacy: Engaging Activity:

- a. Lines of Communication

3. Self-Care: Engaging Activities:

- a. 5-4-3-2-1 Give One, Get One
- b. Individual Self-care Plan

HOMEWORK: Finish reading the Implicit Bias article and begin your Self-care Plan

Break for Day Two

Day Two: Co-creating, Designing, Practicing, and Committing

C. Seek Multiple Perspectives

Learning Objective: Participants will understand three perspectives through analogies and metaphors; create a lesson plan or unit in collaboration using multiple perspectives for content, methodology, and student voice.

Alignment to finding 3: Students consistently spoke about their different learning styles, different personalities, different backgrounds and needs. The students who were able to identify with the teachers' style or conform to the style were able to achieve good grades or achieve their grades with less struggle or frustration. The teachers who fostered positive, effective relationships with the students were those who engaged the students with multiple perspectives. They taught the content with different lenses and made the content relevant. Their methodology included employing multiple learning styles and engaging students in different conversations. The teachers who fostered positive relationships that engaged the students also included and validated the students' voice or gave them choice; they were responsive to the students. I have heard veteran teachers state how they have taught twenty years, but this finding revealed that these teachers have taught one year twenty times because they did not seek multiple perspectives.

1. Engaging Activity: Windows, mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors: Jigsaw and Annotate Your Thoughts
Video with Rudine Sims Bishop
[Diverse books in the classroom, all year round](#)
Text: [Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors](#)
2. Engaging Activity: You can quote me on this! Processing multiple perspectives
3. Engaging Activity: Lesson Plan Creation. Include: content, methodology, and student voice and choice.

D. Communication and Commitment

Learning Objective: Participants will reflect and process their self-awareness and implicit biases; engage in asset-based activities to highlight self efficacy; develop and implement a self-care plan to help find personal and professional balance.

Alignment to finding 2: Communication is only as effective as the alignment between the person producing the communication and those receiving the communication. Students spoke to the need for help in the classroom and the approachability of the teacher. Students felt teachers were more focused on all the things that they had to do and teaching in the classroom was just one of those things, not the one thing. Teachers communicated that they cared about their students and wanted them to succeed, but most times, the students felt their teachers did not want to put in any extra effort to help them. The teachers who had positive and effective relationships with their students were the ones who communicated that they cared for their students' well-being and academic success. Those teachers made a demonstrable commitment to their students that they

mattered and belonged in the classroom instead of going to class without a smile, assigning work, then grading the work and leaving. The positive teachers fostered positive relationships by creating a sense of belonging and made themselves available to the students at lunch, before or after school, or set aside time in class to help the students. Students consistently differentiated between the teachers who viewed teaching as “just a job” and those who made a commitment to make the effort to communicate effectively by being there for the students as necessary. The students' perspective on a teacher's job saw this commitment as a key to creating positive relationships as mutually interactive versus a more authoritarian style of class management. Students did not necessarily negate that teachers care about them, but the less effective teachers did not foster a sense of belonging or create positive relationships and the students did not feel cared for. Teachers who consistently communicated their commitment to teaching were viewed as approachable and the students felt cared for, safe, and comfortable enough to engage in their classwork and in the student-teacher relationship.

1. Engaging Activity: Four Corners: What Does Teaching Mean?
2. Engaging Activity: Dialogue with your GAP through active listening and probing questions. Create an interview protocol for students to provide feedback. Be inclusive, for example, an anonymous box.

E. Be Intentional

Learning Objective: Participants will examine their intentions in their routines and decision-making; develop surveys, questionnaires, and intentionality cards to implement in their classrooms routines.

Alignment to finding 1: Students assessed if they were liked by a teacher through the teacher's intentionality in creating a sense of belonging in the classroom. Students knew they had to be in the classroom, but being liked by a teacher meant that the teacher demonstrated that they wanted the students there; that the students had value and were noticed. Oftentimes, teachers at the beginning of the year activities to get to know the students, but students interviewed said rarely did teachers follow up on those activities. The memorable teachers, those who create a sense of belonging and build positive relationships followed up with the students. They got to know the students and were intentional about having conversations with them about things that were important and mattered to the students, even if it was a quick check-in addressing an extracurricular activity or family event. Teachers cannot make assumptions that the students know they are cared for. Intentionality with students that creates a sense of belonging where they feel liked is the gateway to building and sustaining positive, effective relationships. Teachers who demonstrated they liked the students were those who consciously and intentionally cared for their students.

1. Engaging Activity: Four Corners and Decision-making.
2. Engaging Activity: Development of student perspectives for intentionality.
3. Engaging Activity: Turn and talk

https://www.ted.com/talks/christopher_emdin_teach_teachers_how_to_create_magic?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

4. Engaging Activity: Creation of Intentionality cards.

IV. Demonstration and Celebration of Learning

Learning Objective: Participants will demonstrate their learning through sharing their action plans for follow up professional development; celebrate their growth through community building activities of visual metaphors and representations of learning.

Alignment to findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5:

1-Teachers will be intentional about creating a follow up professional development to ensure continued capacity building and growth that will demonstrate to their students that they are cared for, they belong, and they are liked.

2-Teachers will write and read their letters to their students to communicate what teaching means to them and how it is more than just a job. They will solicit feedback from their students to build more positive, effective relationships.

3- Teachers will share their multiple perspectives when creating their visual representations of learning using all participants' learning styles and personalities. Highlighting the value of every person's cultural capital and implementing multiple perspectives allows for deeper, more meaningful participant engagement that builds more positive relationships.

4-In order to minimize negative interactions and build positive relationships, teachers must find their balance and build capacity for the awareness and effort necessary to reflect an asset-based lens that includes their own self-efficacy. Self-care is the essential factor in finding this balance. The demonstration and celebration of learning allows participants to leave the session with greater confidence, affirmation, and good health. When people are off balance, they act more on implicit biases. There is a need for equity. People who are more aware, have a growth mindset, asset-based pedagogy and are centered/balanced which self-care helps build that capacity, will act less with microaggressions and implicit biases.

5-Demonstrating the learning from this PD reflects teachers' purpose; to make an educational impact in the growth and development of their students. When this impact includes a sense of belonging for the student that fosters positive relationships, then students are more likely to achieve academically. Having built more positive relationships with their GAP and COP, the participants will gain a sense of belonging connected to their purpose or "why", and motivate them to practice ongoing professional development with an Open Hand

A. Engaging Activity: Development of an Individual Action Plan for next Steps

B. Engaging Activity: Commitment Letter writing and whole Group Share

C. Engaging Activity: Visual representations of learning

D. Engaging Activity: Penultimate thoughts

<https://youtu.be/695VVSwtKvI> Prince Ea

https://youtu.be/sZVqJUw_ifk Student dancers to Prince Ea

“Reach out your hand. Hold it open for us and say ‘Hey, I’ll be here for you’. Show us you mean it by being positive and offering to help. Then, I’ll be willing to come to you. If you don’t give me that hand, I just can’t do it by myself.” - White, female student respondent



Conclusion

This study explored through students' thoughts, perceptions, and experiences, how to build positive, effective student-teacher relationships and the impact of a sense of belonging, race and ethnicity. In all of the 22 students who were interviewed, they stated that they had never been asked questions that solicited their points of view. Effective teaching cannot lose sight of these five ways to lead our personal and professional lives. Because without intention, we're going to be reactionary, and we're going to become part of the system. The system that is failing our children. Because the ones that are going to succeed, they're going to succeed. They will, they'll find a way. And then we communicate and how we can communicate more effectively every day and find all these wonderful perspectives, only be able to do that if I have my balance to remember that power of y, a power of one. The students are watching. They're looking to you to lead and teach through engagement, not management.

Part of the systems analysis shows gaps. Therefore, find a growth accountability partner, or GAP. This is a person who will tell you what you need to know, not what you want to hear, with affirming accountability. But there are times where we need to be asked, "What could you have done differently? Where were your intentions? Did you forget about them? Well, you might have thought you communicated this way but I think this is how you were perceived." Find somebody who will say you know what, this is how you people may be perceiving you. That's tough. Go back to that commitment, commit to it. We have to build the capacity to be able to take those risks. There is much isolation in our communities, never so much as since the Covid-19 quarantine. So we have to find that accountability partner that can help us through it. As we look at how we are leading our lives. And we look at all the work that has to be done, we look to our networks.. Who are the people that you can count on? Who are the mentors? And who are you mentoring? Putting teaching into practice with an Open Hand can lead to accomplishing the vision and mission of The Palm Beach County School District. In particular, its transformative frame has the potential to create communities of practice in every school and transform teacher planning rooms from toxic spaces to inspirational places.

Relationships involve interactions between two people, which is, by definition, a cross-cultural interaction. In each interaction, there exists a tension of power and positionality whereby the person with the power defines reality, to an extent, of the person without. In education, the person who holds the positionality and authority in the classroom is the teacher. The students were all well aware of their positions in their student-teacher relationships. This study elevated and highlighted students' perspectives and insights to offer different perspectives for teachers and educators so that they may move forward in their professional development to build more effective, positive student-teacher relationships. Many, if not all teachers want their students to succeed academically and make a difference in their students' lives. The students interviewed for my research gave clear direction as to how to proceed through purpose, balance, diversity, commitment, and intentionality. They are waiting for teachers to extend an open hand and build a positive relationship with a sense of belonging, which will allow them to achieve academically and reach a potential reflective of their greatest desires and worthy of such a noble profession.

One surprising outcome from the interviews was that 100% of the students said they had never been asked their opinion before. Students were happy and smiled when they were asked how they felt about being interviewed. One student remarked, “I feel so happy because I’ve never been asked questions like these before. It’s so cool to have someone care about how I feel and what I think!” All of the students felt validated for being asked their opinion because they said it contributed to the idea of feeling cared for, being liked, and having a sense of belonging. They spoke to the positive, effective relationships that could be fostered by including their voice as feedback in the classroom which would yield greater engagement and academic achievement. All 22 students interviewed stated that they had never been asked these questions before by any teacher and highlighted the value of having teachers understand how to embed this feedback in their classroom experiences. “I mean, I’ve thought about all of this before, but in my head. I’ve never heard it out loud before. I wish teachers did this!” (Black, male)

The sage understanding in every field is to know the people consuming or receiving the product or service. Chefs need to know if people have any food allergies and what their food they prefer in order to prepare a menu for the individual customers. Speakers should know their audience to make their content relevant. Engineers need to know the vision, parameters, or problem in which they work. Therefore, in education, in order to be effective, teachers need to know their students. Knowing their students, as individuals, allows them to build positive, effective relationships that foster a sense of belonging and motivates them to achieve academically. To know their students, teachers need to hear their voices. They need to see them, hear them, and allow their voice to guide the process and pedagogy.

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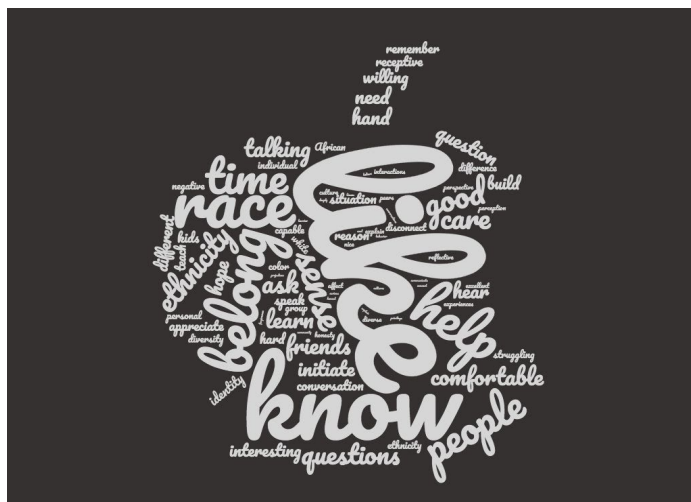
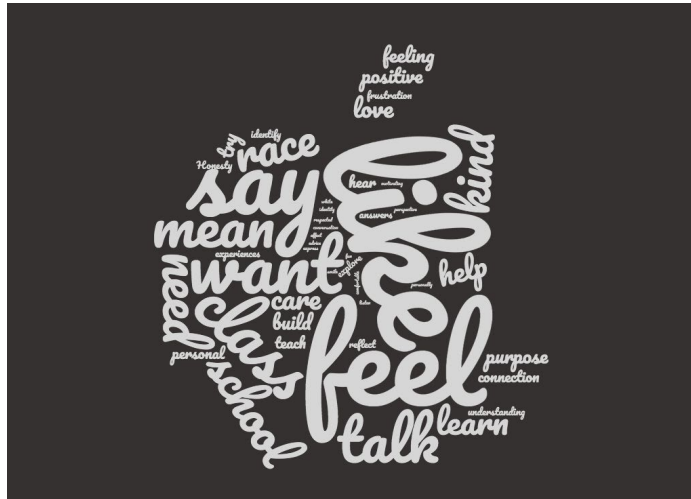
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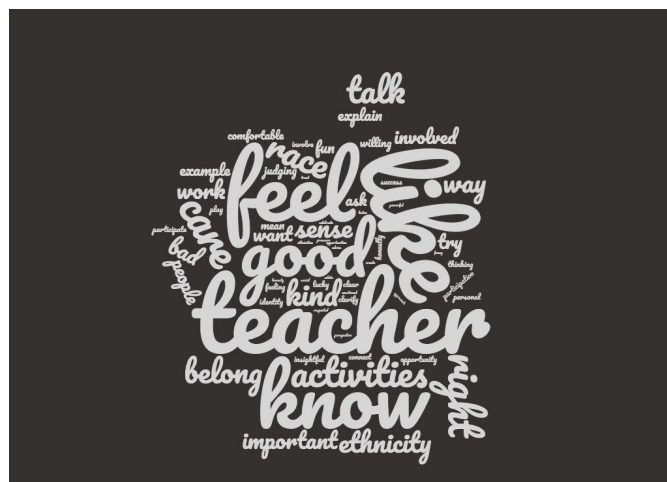
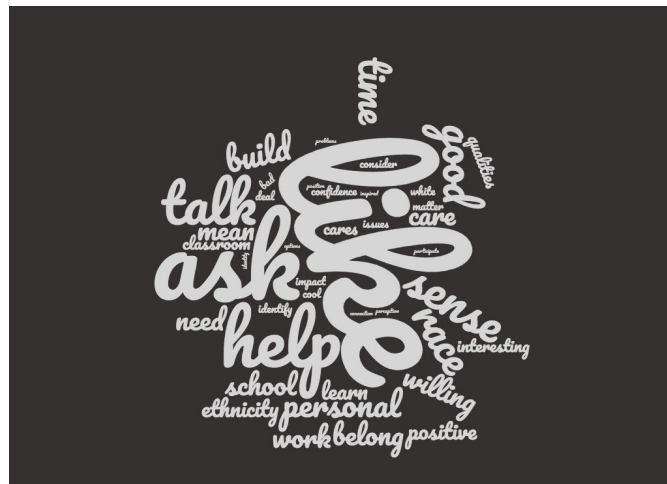
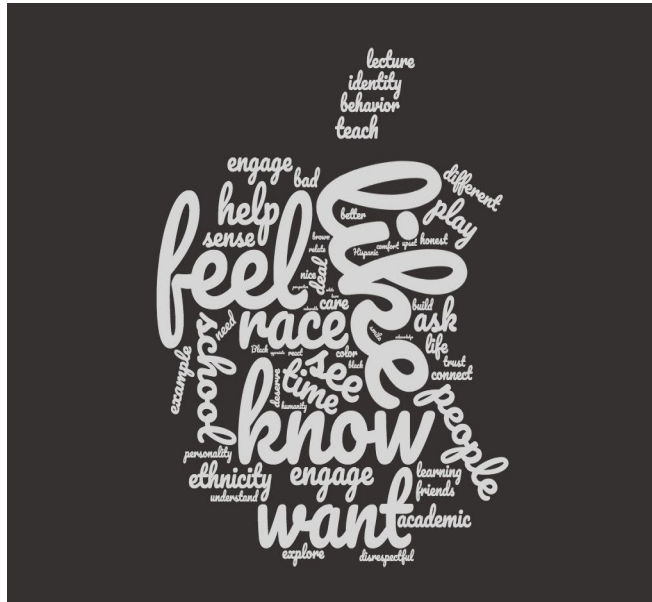
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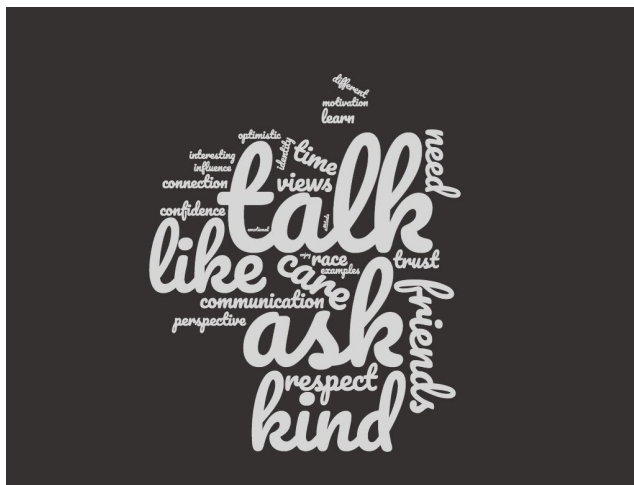
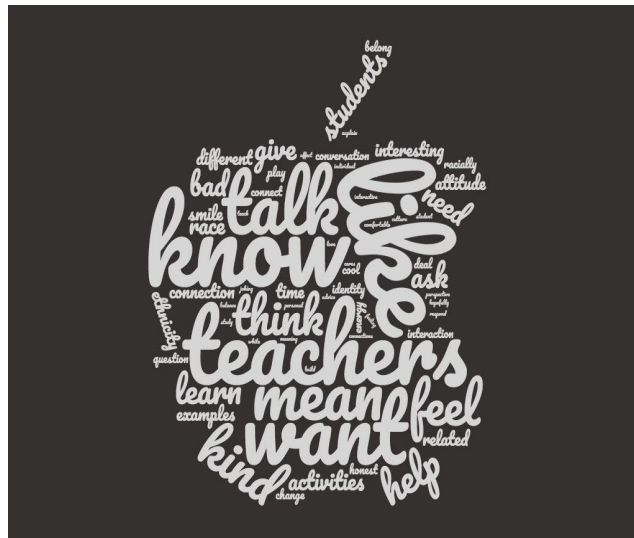
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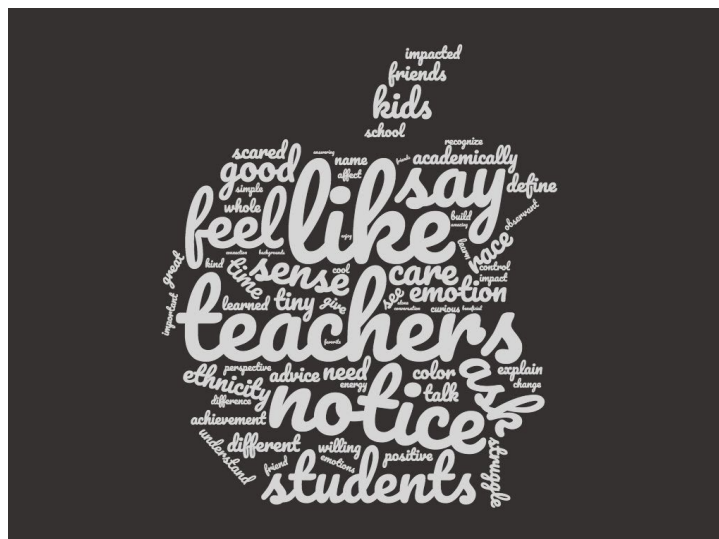
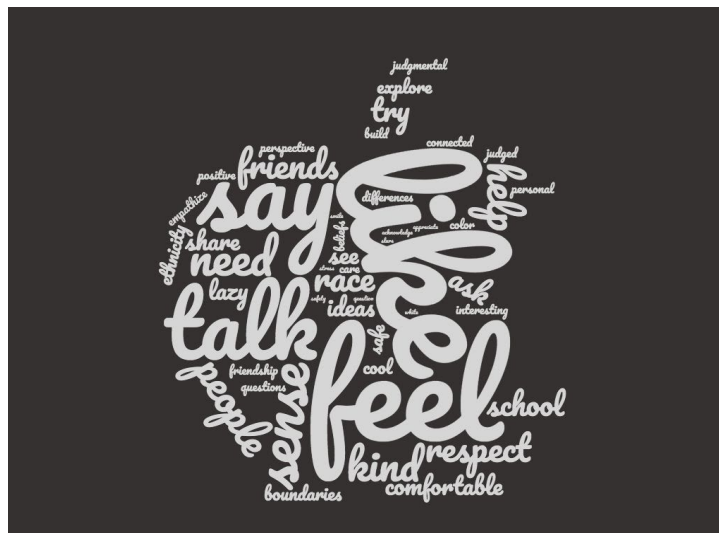
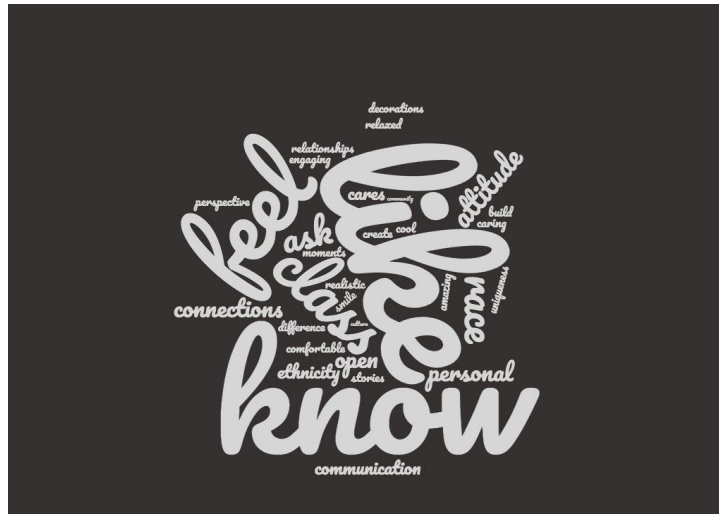
Appendices











Park Vista Community High School Profile At A Glance

Course Offerings

- Upper level courses for math, science, social studies, and English
- Advanced Placement and AICE classes for college credit
- Internships and on-the-job programs for real world work experiences
- Four career academies teaching Automotive Service Technology, Collision & Refinishing, Medical Science, Multimedia Communications
- Dual enrollment options with local colleges
- Art courses (2-D Art, 3-D Art, Ceramics/Pottery)
- Business technology courses that qualify for the Gold Seal Scholarship
- Foreign Language classes (Spanish and French)
- Journalism classes (newspaper, yearbook)
- Drama and Debate classes & clubs
- Comprehensive music program for both vocal and instrumental choral groups and concert, symphonic, jazz, & marching bands
- Technology classes (Digital Design, Web Design, and Digital Video)

Choice Academy Programs

Automotive Service Technology *ASE Accredited Training Program*

Skills include:
Safety Inspections
Basic Car Maintenance
Brakes & Suspension
Electrical Systems
Engine Performance and More

Automotive Collision and Refinishing

Skills include:
Safety
Welding
Filling/Repairs/Painting

Medical Science Academy

Students can earn various medical Industry Certifications.

Programs include:
Certified Nursing
EKG
Allied Health
Emergency Medical Responder
Medical Laboratory
Dual Enrollment Medical (w/PBSC)

Multimedia Communications Academy

Students can get Industry Certified in Microsoft and Adobe software

Programs Include:
Digital Design
Multimedia (TV/Film Production)
Website Design

Kim Bailey—Academy Coordinator

For more information visit our website at
www.pvchs.com

Park Vista Community High School

DESIGNATED AS AN "A" SCHOOL BY
THE STATE OF FLORIDA



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE



Profile for
2019-2020
School Year



7900 Jog Road
Lake Worth, FL 33467
Phone: 561-491-8400
Fax: 561-493-6853

Administration

Reginald B Myers, Principal
LuAnne Daucanski, Asst. Principal
Marie DiFonte, Asst. Principal
Reggie Lanier, Asst. Principal
Dr. Pia Pierre, Asst. Principal
Brent Higley, Asst. Principal
Ronn Peteck, Asst. Principal

School Counseling Dept

Peter Tarini	A—C1
Megen Stair	Co—Go
Theresa Varano	Gr—Lo
Mary Turner	Lu—Pe
Angela Masterson	Ph—S
Rick Dewalt	T—Z
Amy Carlson	504 Plans

The School

Park Vista Community High School opened in August of 2004 to serve the educational needs of the community and its students. Our mission is to provide students and staff with a safe, positive learning environment which challenges each student to achieve his or her highest level of educational excellence and to possess the skills required to make a positive impact on society.

The School Year

Seven classes are offered on a modified block style schedule, meeting on 7 period days for fifty minutes, and then on an even-odd alternating day schedule. On odd days, periods, 1, 3, and 7 meet for 107 minutes with period 5 meeting each day for 50 minutes. On even days, periods 2, 4, and 6 meet for 107 minutes with period 5 meeting for 50 minutes. The school operates 36 weeks per year and the school year is divided into four nine week grading periods. Semester grades, given twice a year, earn one-half credit for every course passed with a D or above. The semester grade is determined by averaging the two nine-week grades (80%) and the semester exam (20%). If two of these grades are F's, however, the final semester grade is automatically an F.

Grading Scale for School Year 2019-2020

A = 90-100
 B = 80-89
 C = 70-79
 D = 60-69
 F = 59 and below

Demographics

Current student population is 3098 with 54% White, 15% Black, 23% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 4% Other. 44% are eligible for free and reduced lunches. 1.7% are Limited English Proficiency students, and 13% are Exceptional Education Students.

Average Standardized Test Scores

PSAT ERV: 586 PSAT Math: 559 (GRADE 11-2019)
 SAT EBRV: 541 SAT Math: 521 (19/20)
 ACT Composite: 21.4 (2017-2018)
 Students Attending 4-Year Colleges: 63%
 Students Attending 2-Year Colleges: 30%

Graduation Requirements for c/o 2020

The minimum graduation requirements (for a regular diploma) are as follows: 24 credits, a cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.0 and a passing score on the Florida State Assessment ELA and Algebra I End of Course exam.

English	4 credits
Math	4 credits (Algebra I and Geometry are requirements)
Social Studies	3 credits: 1 World History 1 American History 1/2 American Government 1/2 Economics
Science	3 credits must include Biology and a physical science.
P.E.	1 credit including 1/2 credit in Personal Fitness or 1 credit of HOPE
Practical Arts/Performing Fine Arts	1 credit, can be any combination of these two subject areas
Electives	8 credits

All of the students' classes are used in computing their weighted honor point averages. Class rank is determined by quality points assigned to courses according to their level of difficulty.

The quality points assigned for grades in these various levels of courses are as follows:

Regular Classes
 A = 4.000
 B = 3.000
 C = 2.000
 D = 1.000
 F = 0.000

Honors Classes
 A = 4.500
 B = 3.375
 C = 2.250
 D = 1.125
 F = 0.000

Advanced Placement/AICE /Dual Enrollment Classes
 A = 6.000
 B = 4.500
 C = 3.000
 D = 1.500
 F = 0.000

SEQ Student Questionnaire The Palm Beach County School District

CATEGORY	ItemText
CHALLENGING ASSIGN	25. My teachers have given me assignments that require me to defend my point of view or ideas.
CHALLENGING ASSIGN	26. My teachers often connect what we are learning to life outside the classroom.
CHALLENGING ASSIGN	27. My teachers often require students to explain their thinking.
CHALLENGING ASSIGN	28. My teachers provide class work that is academically challenging.
CHALLENGING ASSIGN	29. My teachers provide assignments that require the use of technology.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	42. I have conversations about going to college with my family.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	43. My parents expect me to continue my education after high school.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	44. I want to continue my education after high school.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	45. I know what I need to do to meet college readiness requirements.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	46. My school emphasizes preparation for college or career education.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	47. I am interested in hearing others talk about their college life and study.
COLLEGE PREPARATION	48. I have the opportunity to participate in advanced coursework.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY	30. I feel that students of different races or ethnicities get along.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY	31. At this school, all students are treated the same, regardless of their race or ethnicity.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY	32. The school provides instructional materials (e.g., textbooks, handouts) that reflect my cultural background.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY	33. My teachers value my cultural background.
DIVERSE COMMUNITY	34. My teachers use classroom materials that reflect multicultural perspectives.
INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS	38. It is rare for students at this school to be teased or picked on.
INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS	39. It is rare for students at this school to be bullied.
INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS	40. I do not have problems with other students on my way to or from school.
INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS	41. It is rare for students at this school to be teased or picked on through social media.

CONCERNS	
INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS	This year has been a difficult one for me or for my family that has impacted me at school.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT	35. My parents attend scheduled parent conferences at school.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT	36. My family supports me in my school activities.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT	37. My family encourages me to participate in clubs, groups, or team activities.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	1. I feel safe at school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	10. If I need to, I can talk to at least one adult about personal problems.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	11. There is at least one adult at school who knows me well.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	12. Students are treated with respect by adults at school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	13. Homework help is available to me if I need it.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	14. Students are encouraged to work together and help each other.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	15. Students respect each other at this school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	16. Problems with dangerous student behavior are quickly resolved at this school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	17. My teachers provide me with feedback that helps me improve my study.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	18. My teachers have a system to allow me to make up work after an absence.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	19. My teachers have taught me different strategies that help me learn.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	2. I am happy to be at this school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	20. My teachers encourage me to set academic goals.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	21. I am regularly reminded about my academic goals.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	22. I feel satisfied with the work that teachers have done for the students at this school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	23. I feel that the school is clean.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	24. Students at this school work out their disagreements with other students.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	3. I feel like I am part of this school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	4. I feel socially accepted.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	5. I care about school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	6. I am treated fairly at school.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	7. Adults working at this school reward students for positive behavior.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	8. Adults working at this school help students develop strategies to encourage better behavior.
SCHOOL CLIMATE	9. School rules are applied equally to all students.

Analyzing the SEQ Data/Guiding Questions

The SEQ items are grouped by sub-category for each of the 3 surveys. This format provides you with the opportunity to triangulate and analyze the data from the perspectives of the staff, students and parents.

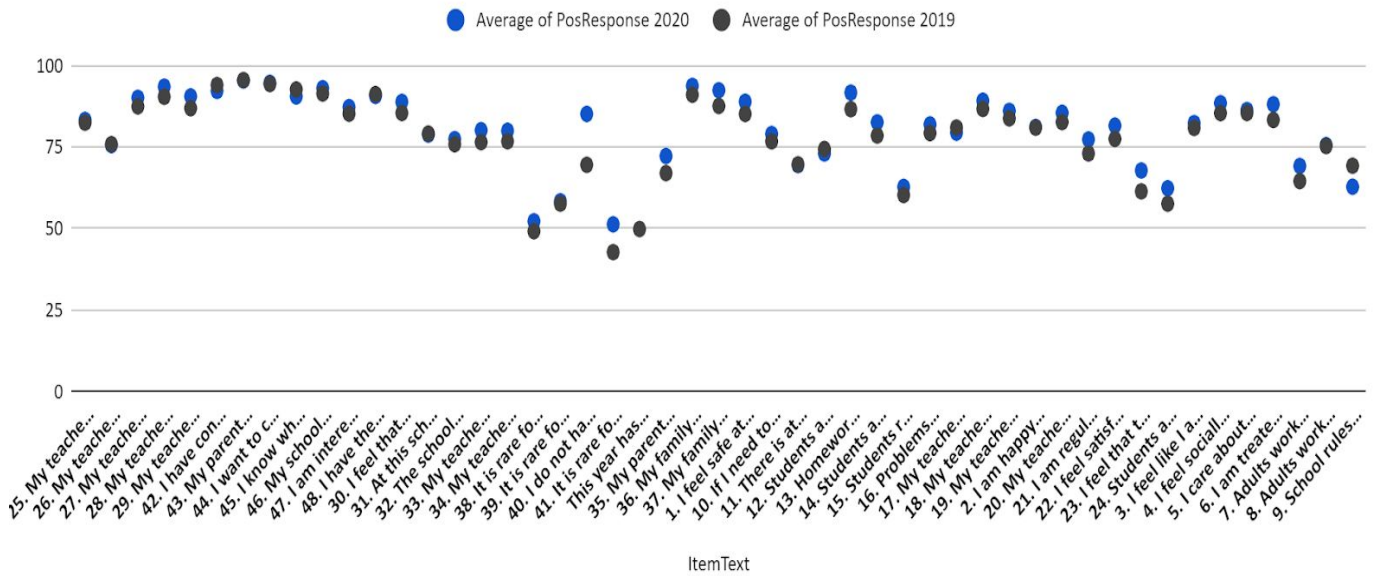
Source: Palm Beach County School District

These are the guiding questions used in identifying the trends in the data.

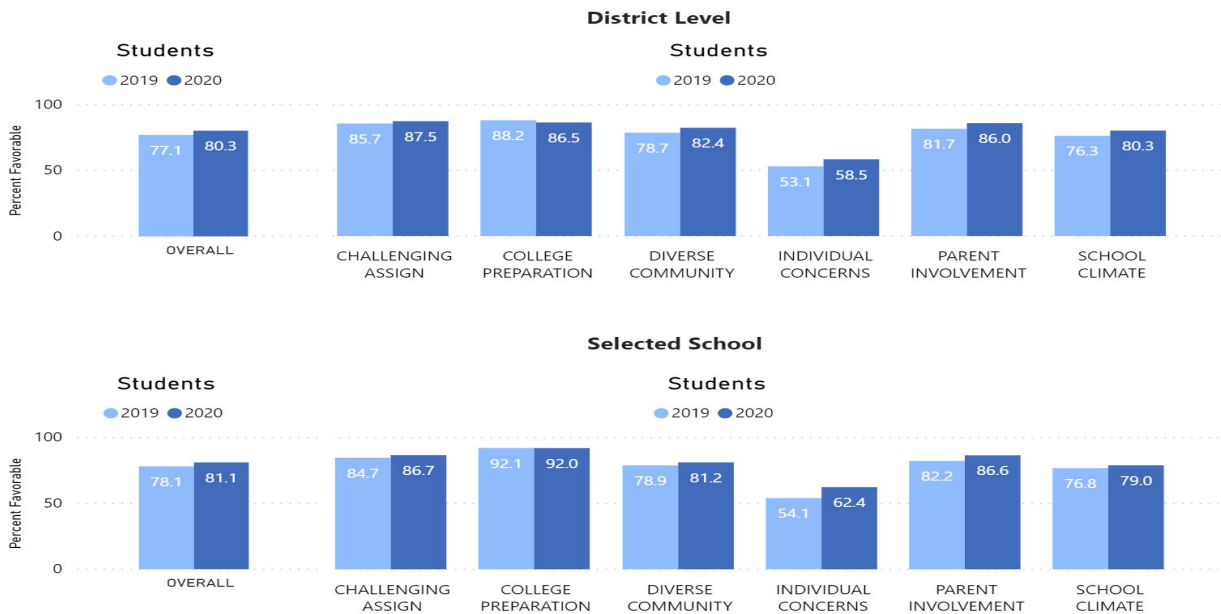
1. What is the participation rate for each of the 3 surveys (Staff, Students, Parents)? Do efforts need to be made to improve participation of any one of our sub-groups?
2. Do the scores collected over the past three years show any trends, upward or downward, for each of the items on the SEQ?
3. What is the current data telling us?
4. Can we identify patterns of strength? If so, how can we ensure maintenance or continuation of these assets?
5. Can we identify areas for growth? What resources, personnel, programs or strategies can support positive progression in these areas?
6. Are the items in a sub-category rated similarly by staff, student and parent groups? If not, what might be the factors that could account for the differences?
7. Do we have standard messaging and practices related to the item categories on our campus? If not, how might we institutionalize our messages and practices?
8. What are we currently doing on our campus to generate positive interpersonal connections between staff and staff, staff and students, and students and students? Do these activities need to be updated, re-launched, tweaked or replaced?
9. What are we doing to support the growth of adults and/or students who need more help with social and emotional skills?
10. How might we find out what other schools are doing to systematically address the school climate elements that concern us?
11. What other data/information (other than SEQ results) do we use to determine our climate needs?
12. What professional development, resources, personnel, programs or strategies might be tapped to help us achieve our desired outcomes?
13. What systems can we put in place or improve?
14. Would forming one or more sub-committees assist us in moving the work forward?
15. Who on our campus will take responsibility for the oversight of the sub-committee work?

The charts below show the positive responses for The School District, and the comparison data from all the high schools and Park Vista, the selected school.

Average of Positive Response 2020 and Average of Positive Response 2019



Data represent percent responding favorably.



IRB Documentation

Human Research Protections Program – HRPP
Supporting the work of the IRB and Providing HRPP Oversight



RE: IRB #192300 ""Does My Teacher Like Me" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity."

Dear Lhisa R Almashy:

A sub-committee of the Institutional Review Board reviewed the research application identified above. The sub-committee determined the study poses minimal risk to participants, and the application is approved under 45 CFR 46.110 (F)(5)(6)(7).

The Consent Form(s) have been stamped with the approval date and this copy should be used when obtaining the participant's signature. Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy be given to the subject at the time of consent. An additional record (i.e., case report form, medical record, database, etc.) of the consent process should also be maintained in a separate location for documentation purposes.

NOTE: Per VU IRB Policy I.C, a letter of cooperation must be obtained demonstrating that the appropriate institutional officials are permitting the research to be conducted at the performance site before research begins.

As the Principal Investigator, you are responsible for the accurate documentation, investigation and follow-up of all possible study-related adverse events and unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others. The IRB Adverse Event/Unanticipated Problem reporting policy III.L is located on the IRB website at <http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/irb/>.

If this trial requires registration as a clinical trial, accrual cannot begin until this study has been registered at clinicaltrials.gov and a National Clinical Trial Number (NCT) provided. Please provide the NCT# to the IRB as soon as it is obtained. If an approval is required from an additional source other than the Vanderbilt IRB, this must be obtained prior to study initiation. These approvals may include, but are not limited to CRC, SRC, IND, IDE.

NEW REQUIREMENT: For research that meets the definition of a clinical trial and is supported by a federal department or agency, one IRB approved informed consent document used to enroll subjects must be posted on a publicly available federal website (clinicaltrials.gov). The consent document must be posted no later than 60 days after the last study visit of any subject.

While federal regulations no longer require reporting of study activity information (continuing review) for minimal risk

1313 21st Ave., South, Suite 505
Nashville, TN 37232
www.vanderbilt.edu/irb

1 / 2

Human Research Protections Program – HRPP
Supporting the work of the IRB and Providing HRPP Oversight



studies that are not FDA regulated, VUMC requires reporting of enrollment numbers to document participant accrual for research studies. Any changes to the research study must be presented to the IRB for approval prior to implementation.

DATE OF IRB APPROVAL: 1/27/2020

Sincerely,

Megan M Saylor PhD, Chair
Institutional Review Board
Behavioral Sciences Committee

Electronic Signature: Megan M Saylor/VUMC/Vanderbilt : (e51678cc9e8b898e018e6e8177eca483)
Signed On: 01/27/2020 10:13:36 AM CST

Interview Protocols

Protocol for Interviews

Introductory Question

First, I would like to find out some general information about you and your definitions of some words.

1. Please tell me your name and how you identify yourself racially. What does race and ethnicity mean to you?
2. What makes you feel like a teacher cares about you?
3. Can you define what you think it means to have a sense of belonging in your classrooms and school? In your relationships with your teachers?
4. What does it mean when you say a teacher doesn't like you?

I would like to ask a few questions about your relationships with you're the teachers at school that help you learn.

When you need help and/or advice, do you feel you can go to your teachers in this school who you can talk with? Were there teachers in your previous schools who you could talk to?

[Probe] **What** was it that made you feel like you could go to them?? *[Make sure students state the qualities of the teachers or aspects of their relationship and why they say they felt like they were comfortable enough to speak with them.*

[Probe] **When** do you usually talk with teachers or other adults in the school to get help and/or advice?

What makes you feel like you have a sense of belonging in this school?

[Probe] **Can you** give some examples of times when you had a teacher make you feel like you belonged?

What is the connection between belonging and your relationships with your teachers?

Does your race or the race or ethnicity of the teacher play a part in how comfortable you feel in your relationships with teachers?

[Probe] **Does** the race or ethnicity of the teacher play a part in how comfortable you feel?

[Probe] **How often** do you talk with teachers or other adults help you with personal or emotional challenges?

[Probe] **What** kinds of things did you ask for help with?
[Listen For] whether students reach out to teacher(s) or teachers reach out to students

Can you share some examples of a time when you feel you had a good relationship with a teacher?

[Probe] **What** role did race or ethnicity play in those relationships?

[Probe] **Can you describe** your sense of belonging in those relationships?

[Probe] **What** could the teacher have done to make you feel more like you belonged?

Can you share some examples of a time when you feel you had a bad relationship with a teacher?

[Probe] **What** role did race or ethnicity play in those relationships?

[Probe] **Can you describe** your sense of belonging in those relationships?

[Probe] **What** could the teacher have done to make you feel more like you belonged?

How well do you think teachers in your school know you and other students?

[Probe] **What** role did race or ethnicity play in this?

[Probe] **How do** teachers show that they know their students?

[Probe] **What** things could teachers talk about to you that interest you and may make you feel more like you belong?

[Probe] **How do or how could** your teachers make more of an effort to get to know students?

What makes you feel like you have a strong (very good) relationship with teachers in the school?

[Probe] **What** would make you feel like you have a strong relationship with a teacher in the school?

[Probe] **What** else do you think teachers can do to create a positive culture at your school?

[Probe] **How** do adults show that they care about students?

[Probe] **What** role did race or ethnicity play in those relationships?

[Probe] **What** keeps you from building strong relationships with teachers in your school?

[Probe] **What** role did race or ethnicity play in those relationships?

How would you characterize your positive relationships with your teachers now?

Documents and Recruitment: The School District of Palm Beach County

Beginning in our 6th term of study in Vanderbilt's doctoral program in Leadership and Learning in Organizations, we engage with an organization to do a capstone project over the course of one year.

The purpose is to allow us, under faculty supervision, to use what we have learned to solve a problem of practice or to understand a phenomenon important to our School District.

We use a model of evidence-based practice that requires us to gather various types of data in a way that will help us understand what you need in your organization. For the issue I want to examine, equity related of course, I will use several sources of information:

- What I have learned in my courses and my own professional experience
- Information and existing data from the School District and the context in which it operates as well as additional information from you and any data you can provide about the organization and its environment
- The perspectives of the key stakeholders of your organization, in this case, sophomores at Park Vista in several contexts
- The research literature

In the process, I will conduct interviews and focus groups with representatives of Park Vista that are important to addressing the problem of practice. My focus will be specifically sophomores and students in general. I will also appreciate access to any surveys or pre-existing data that may assist in addressing the issue to be addressed, in this case, student-adult relationships. With your permission, I may need to conduct my own survey to get appropriate information that helps me understand the issue and the context as necessary to complement existing or missing perspectives.

Once I have that information in hand, I will begin to develop an intervention or solution for you, specifically, a design for professional development to address the problem of practice. I will put all of this information together in a proposal that I will present to you in the format you prefer (short proposal, paper, or presentation). I expect to finish all of that in 10-14 weeks. Using your feedback of this prototype proposal, I will make any changes you recommend to go into the next phase of the project.

In the last phase of our collaboration, I will develop a program evaluation plan for you. Although I do not expect you to implement my proposal, I will commit to providing you with an evaluation plan for the project should you decide to implement it. That is, if you choose to implement my proposal, you will have a well-vetted evaluation plan that will give you a means to assess its success. Again, I will present this information to you for feedback and make amendments to the final proposal as needed. It is, of course, my intention that it can be used to mitigate and enhance The District's professional development and professional growth.

The entire project will be completed by the end of my 9th term (the end of my third and final year), roughly 15 months from our first conversation, as my projected defense of this Capstone will be December 2020.

You might think of this as a consulting project. Like a consultant, I hope to be able to help you understand a problem or issue in new ways, provide you with what the current literature says about the problem or issue, and craft a solution or intervention customized

for your organization. I will also provide you with the evaluation tools that will help you determine whether the solution or intervention is effective should you plan to implement it.

In our initial conversations, we will make some decisions about whether you want your organization to be identified in my final paper which will be published in the Vanderbilt Library's Archives. Please be assured that my research plan will be evaluated and approved by Vanderbilt's Institutional Research Board, a group charged with protecting those who agree to participate in research at Vanderbilt. We take such protections of privacy and confidentiality very seriously.

I am especially grateful for your interest in being a part of this exciting, final experience of my doctoral education and look forward to answering any questions you may have about our collaboration.

Sincerely,

Lhisa R Almashy



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

PAUL HOUCHENS
DIRECTOR

MARK HOWARD
CHIEF, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH & EVALUATION
3300 FOREST HILL BLVD., SUITE B-246
WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33406-5813
PHONE: 561-434-8469 FAX: 561-357-7608
https://www.palmbeachschools.org/departments/research_and_evaluation

February 25, 2020

Ms. Lhisa Almashy
6945 Brook Hallow Road
Lake Worth, FL 33467

Dear Ms. Almashy:

The Superintendent's Research Review Committee has approved your request to conduct research entitled, "Does My Teacher Like me? A Student Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships", in the School District of Palm Beach County (the District). According to documentation submitted, the purpose of this study is to examine how student-teacher relationships affect academic and emotional support and identity development from the students' perspective.

This research is approved and limited to the study, scope, and methods outlined in the proposal. The study will utilize student and teacher interviews.

As this study is conducted, please be governed by the following guidelines and policies as outlined in District's Policy 2.142:

- Section 4 – General Provisions, Item C – *No Right to Access*: There is no right to access district students, staff or data related thereto for research purposes. Researcher may only access schools, students, staff, and data relevant to the research as approved by the Department of Research and Evaluation.
- Section 6 – Approval of Research, Item B – *Limited Approval*. The Department of Research and Evaluation's approval/acknowledgement of an external research study is conditional and subject to further approval by the school principal(s) and research subject(s) that form the basis for the proposed study. A principal may place restrictions on an External Researcher's access to students and staff to maintain a safe and secure school and to minimize disruption to instructional and other school activities.
- Section 7 – Document, Character, and Other Requirements, Item D - *Opportunity to Review Survey/Assessment Instrument*. Researcher must provide parents with notice of and the opportunity to review the survey/assessment instrument prior to the survey/assessment being administered or distributed. A Researcher's consent documents shall inform parents of their right to review surveys or materials created by an External Researcher prior to the time it is administered or distributed. Researcher shall be responsible for assuring that a parent's request to review surveys or materials is granted in a reasonable manner and in a reasonable period of time.

The School District of Palm Beach County
A Top High-Performing A-Rated School District
An Equal Education Opportunity Provider and Employer

Page 2 of 3

RESEARCH REQUEST: Lhisa Almashy - "Does My Teacher Like me? A Student Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships"
February 26, 2020

The consent of a student's parent or guardian is required before a student participates in any federally-funded survey dealing with sensitive topics as outlined in subparagraph 7(c) above. For any other survey dealing with these topics, regardless of funding source, a parent or guardian may opt the student out of participation. These survey inspection, consent, and opt-out rights also apply to those surveys including sensitive topics administered by the District as part of its instructional program.

- In the case of student subjects, obtain written informed consent (active consent) from the parent or guardian for all students under 18 years of age before proceeding.
- In the case of student subjects 18 years of age or older, obtain written consent from students (assent form) before proceeding.
- Section 7 – Document, Character, and Other Requirements, Item E – *Research Subjects*. Researchers must use independent research subjects in their studies. Researchers must not have a position of authority over proposed research subjects or have conflict of interest with proposed research subjects.
- Section 7 – Document, Character, and Other Requirements, Item F – *Data Requests*: Researchers may not request data directly from schools or departments. All data requests must be submitted to the Department of Research and Evaluation for handling. Researchers may not receive data hereunder unless the Researcher provides the Department of Research and Evaluation with written evidence of compliance with the requirements in this Policy. In particular, Researchers may not receive personally identifiable student level data unless the Researcher also provides the Department of Research and Evaluation with written evidence that the parent or student if 18 or over, has consented to the release of student records.
- Section 7 – Document, Character, and Other Requirements, Item G – *Confidentiality/ Data Security Agreement*: To receive access to district-held student level data or staff level data, the researcher must sign a Confidentiality/Data Security Agreement or other agreement, as approved by the Office of General Counsel, that identifies requirements for the storage, use, maintenance, protection, dissemination, and destruction of data provided hereunder. The Confidentiality/Data Security Agreement must be signed by the Researcher for each research proposal approved by the Department of Research and Evaluation.
- Researcher must not use any survey/assessment instrument that will: use personal or identifiable information, reveal student or parent political affiliation or religious practices, psychological problems, illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating or demeaning behavior, critical appraisals of others, privileged relationships (lawyers, doctors, minister) or income.
- Teacher participation is strictly voluntary. Obtain written Informed consent from teacher participants.

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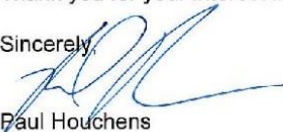
Page 3 of 3
RESEARCH REQUEST: Lhisa Almashy - "Does My Teacher Like me? A Student Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships"
February 25, 2020

- All collection activities involving students must occur in the presence of school staff members.
- Provide a copy of all completed and signed parental/guardian, student and teacher consent forms to the principal or principal's designee. Before starting research, the researcher must submit all original signed consent forms to the Department of Research and Evaluation.
- Contact **NO** school or department other than Park Vista High School. District policy provides that no one has the right to access students, staff or data, and prohibits researchers from requesting data directly from schools or departments.
- When contacting school administrators, either by email or in person, to obtain permission, please provide a copy of this approval letter.
 - Please ensure that you provide a copy of the approval from school principal received through email or school letterhead to the Department of Research and Evaluation - research@palmbeachschools.org.
- Research activities at schools must not occur during the testing window of the Florida Standards Assessments and End-of-Course Assessments – March 9 – May 29, 2020.
- Summarize findings for reports prepared from this study and do not associate responses with a specific school or individual. Information that identifies the District, schools, or individual responses will not be provided to anyone except as required by law.
- IRB expires January 31, 2021; research study shall be concluded at that time.
- If the study requires the use of additional resources or change in participants in the future, a written request must be submitted to this office. Please wait for an approval before proceeding.

Please submit one copy of the study results to the Department of Research and Evaluation no later than one month after completion of the research.

Thank you for your interest in our District.

Sincerely,



Paul Houchens
Director

PH/LK:wI

The School District of Palm Beach County
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Recruitment: Park Vista High School

Recruitment was primarily through the English teachers, but there were additional opportunities to recruit through online platforms which were needed, especially during the Covid quarantine.

PARK VISTA COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL



7900 Jog Road Lake Worth, Florida 33467
(561)-491-8400 FAX (561)-491-8406


Reginald B. Myers
Principal

March 2020

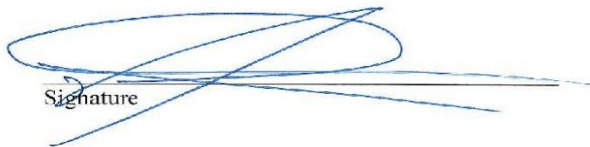
Dear Vanderbilt Researcher:

Via this letter, I grant permission for Lhisa Almashy from Vanderbilt University to visit my school to conduct an interview with me, and interviews with approximately 30 sophomore students during the spring 2020 semester. The purpose of the visit is to explore students' perceptions on student-teacher relationship.

Educationally Yours,



Print your name and title here


Signature


Date



There was a weekly guidance newsletter and text communications via Remind.

Dear English Teacher,

My name is Lhisa Almashy. I am a researcher from Vanderbilt University. I am asking if you would like to facilitate recruitment for participation in a research study called "'Does My Teacher Like Me': A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity". This is a study which is about understanding students' perceptions on student-teacher relationships, what makes them feel a sense of belonging, and how important race and ethnicity are in their relationships with teachers. The results of this study will help schools and districts identify how they can improve student learning.

What do you want me to do?

If you agree to help facilitate recruitment for this study, you will be asked to distribute the student assent form along with the parental consent. The students who voluntarily choose to participate in this study will return both forms to you. The researcher will then obtain these forms from you to determine a schedule for the interviews.

Via this letter, I agree to facilitate recruitment for this study and for Lhisa Almashy from Vanderbilt University to visit my school to conduct interviews with approximately 30 sophomore students during the spring 2020 semester.

Sincerely,

Signature

Date


Print your name and title here

Date of IRB Approval: 01/27/2020

Institutional Review Board



Senior College Planning Workshops




Seniors! Are you looking for more information to help you navigate the college admissions process? We will be hosting our Senior College Planning Workshop series throughout the fall. Our first meeting will be held on September 15th at 12:15pm. In this meeting, we will discuss topics such as key terms as well as what to do when. For more information about the entire series of workshops, as well as the invite link to join the meetings, visit our [College Planning Workshop page](#). Can't make it to the meeting? You can still join the [Google Classroom](#) to take advantage of all of the college planning resources posted there!

Community Service Information

Do you have community service hours to hand in? While the campus is closed, we will be accepting hours through our website. Are you looking for opportunities to earn additional hours or need a copy of this year's log? Visit the [Community Service Section](#) of our website.

Parent Coffee Talk: The State University System of Florida Spotlight and The College Application Process

Our first Parent Coffee Talk of the year will be available on Thursday, September 17th on the School Counseling website. The topic is the State University System of Florida Spotlight and The College Application Process. We will discuss the 12 public universities in the state. We will also cover the process for completing and submitting college applications and supporting documentation.



ACT and SAT

Students can now register for the ACT and SAT. Park Vista will be a test site on the following dates: SAT - Sep 26, Oct 3, Nov 7, Dec 5, March 13, May 8, & June 5. ACT - Sept 19, Oct 17, Oct 24, Dec 12, Feb 6, April 17, June 12 & July 17. For more information about the tests, visit the [SAT and ACT section](#) of our website. Students on Free or Reduced Lunch can also find out more about [fee waiver eligibility](#).

Help Wanted

Want a chance to earn a \$5.00 gift to Dunkin or Starbucks? A former Park Vista teacher is doing a study for her doctoral dissertation and would like to do a confidential, 20 minute, online interview with 10th graders at Park Vista. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact her at Lhisa.almashy@palmbeachschools.org.

Wed, May 20, 5:15 PM

**Park Vista Guidanc:
SOPHOMORES!!!!!!**

Want a chance to earn a \$5.00 gift to Dunkin or Starbucks? A former teacher from Park Vista is doing a study for her doctoral dissertation and would like to do a confidential, 20 minute, online interview with 10th graders at Park Vista. If you are interested in volunteering please contact her at Lhisa.almashy@palmbeachschools.org.

Informed Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Consent and Student Assent Forms

VUMC Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Document for Research	
Principal Investigator: Lhisa Almashy	Revision Date: 11/30/2019
Study Title: "Does My Teacher Like Me?" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.	
Institution/Hospital: Peabody College, Vanderbilt University	
Dear Parent or Guardian,	
We are asking that your child take part in a study that explores the student's perspective on student-teacher relationships. Your child is in the age group we want to study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow your child to take part in this study.	
Name of participant: _____	Age: _____
The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your child's participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.	
Key Information About This Study:	
My name is Lhisa Almashy and I am a researcher and doctoral candidate from the Leadership and Learning in Organizations program at Vanderbilt University. Your child is invited to be in a research study that seeks to understand the importance of belonging, race and ethnicity in student-teacher relationships. The results of this study will help inform the professional development for teachers as they work to be more effective at building positive relationships with students. Your child is being asked to participate because researchers want to learn about the experiences and perceptions of students in the school.	
There are minimal risks to participate in this study. At any time, the student may terminate the interview for any reason with no repercussions. The student's identity will be coded for confidentiality and securely stored. The student will participate in a one-on-one interview for approximately one hour at lunch or during a non-academic class. The interview will be held on campus. The benefits will be to enhance professional development for teachers to build more effective student-teacher relationships that can positively affect students' learning gains. This study is voluntary and the alternative to participate in this study is not to participate.	
What is the purpose of this study?	
Your child is being asked to take part in this research study because this study seeks to explore students' perceptions of their student-teacher relationships and what it means for them to feel a sense of belonging in school and within those relationships. This study, conducted through one-on-one interviews, will also explore students' perceptions of the importance of race and ethnicity and the impact of these relationships on their academic achievement. Your child does not have to be in this research study.	
Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:	
If you allow your child to participate, he/she will be interviewed in a one-on-one setting by the researcher. The questions will focus on the students' perceptions of their past and present relationships with their teachers and what they think make a good school and teacher, their sense of belonging, and how important race and ethnicity are in these relationships. The interview will last about one hour and will be conducted during the school day, either at lunch or during a non-academic class. The interview will be audio-recorded but will be kept in a secure server to ensure confidentiality.	
Expected costs:	
There are no expected costs for this study, and no costs for the participants whatsoever.	
Date of IRB Approval: 01/27/2020 1 of 3	Institutional Review Board 

**VUMC Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: **Lhisa Almashy** Revision Date: **11/30/2019**
Study Title: **"Does My Teacher Like Me?" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.**
Institution/Hospital: **Peabody College, Vanderbilt University**

STATEMENT BY PARENT/GUARDIAN OF PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document. I freely and voluntarily choose to allow my child to participate.

Signature of Parent _____

Printed Name of Parent _____

Date: _____ My child's name is: _____ Grade: _____

Consent obtained by:

Date Signature

Printed Name and Title

Date of IRB Approval: **01/27/2020** **Institutional Review Board**
3 of 3  **VANDERBILT**

**VUMC Institutional Review Board
Assent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: Lhisa Almashy

Revision Date: 11/09/2019

Study Title: "Does My Teacher Like Me?" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.

Institution/Hospital: Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

"Does My Teacher Like Me?" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.

Student One-on-One Interviews

Dear Student,

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your child's participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this assent form.

Key Information About This Study:

My name is Lhisa Almashy. I am a researcher from Vanderbilt University. I am asking if you would like to take part in a research study called "Does My Teacher Like Me? A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity", which is about understanding students' perceptions on student-teacher relationships and what makes them feel a sense of belonging and how important race and ethnicity are in their relationships with teachers. The results of this study will help schools and districts identify how they can improve student learning.

There are minimal risks to participate in this study. At any time, you may terminate the interview for any reason with no repercussions. Your identity will be coded for confidentiality and securely stored. Your participation will consist of a one-on-one interview for approximately one hour at lunch or during a non-academic class. The interview will be held on campus. The benefits will be to enhance professional development for teachers to build more effective student-teacher relationships that can positively affect students' learning gains. This study is voluntary and the alternative to participate in this study is not to participate.

What do you want me to do?

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked a series of questions about your perceptions of past and present relationships with teachers, what makes you have a sense of belonging in the classroom and how important race and ethnicity are in positive, effective relationships as well as negative or ineffective relationships with teachers. You will also be asked how much these factors impact or influence your academic success. You will be interviewed one-on-one on campus either at lunch or during a non-academic class period. The interview will last about one hour. You will be audio-recorded, but it will be confidential and kept in a secure server.

What are the benefits to society from participating in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the benefits to your school and district include increased knowledge about the processes that help schools succeed, which will be used to improve student-teacher relationships and teachers' professional development in high schools in the district. The results of this study will be used to inform the professional development for teachers. The information from the study will be used to benefit teachers and schools, but the individual participant's information will be kept strictly confidential and only their collective responses will be used to inform the study.

What are the risks of participating in the study?

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential and no specific individual information will be released. All information will be deidentified and kept in a secure file.

Date of IRB Approval: 01/27/2020

Institutional Review Board

1 of 2



**VUMC Institutional Review Board
Assent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: Lhisa Almashy

Revision Date: 11/09/2019

Study Title: "Does My Teacher Like Me?" A Student-Centered Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and the Importance of Belonging, Race, and Ethnicity.

Institution/Hospital: Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

Is this required?

No. You do not have to participate in this study. This study is voluntary, which means that you decide whether or not to take part in the study. Being in this study is up to you, and no one will be upset in any way if you do not want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop. At any point, you may also stop the interview. The alternative to participating in the study is not to participate.

We have asked your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parents said "yes" to this study, you can still decide to not take part in the study, and that will be fine.

Who will know what I say?

The researcher will not speak to anyone in your school or district about what you say individually. We will talk about what we learn from you and other students in a general way without revealing individual students. The other students in the study will only know the interview questions but not what you say.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you did not think of now or during the interview, you can call me at 561-715-0431 or you can call my faculty advisor, Dr. Marisa Cannata at 615-322-1746.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

I have read this document. I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

Assent attained by:

Signature of Student

Printed Name of Student

Date

Date of IRB Approval: 01/27/2020

2 of 2

Institutional Review Board



The Learning Policy Institute's 7 Best Practices for Effective Professional Development

- 1. Content focus:** Educator professional development that specifically focuses on pedagogical curriculum supports teacher learning within their classroom contexts. This element includes an intentional focus on discipline-specific curriculum development and pedagogies in areas such as mathematics, science, and literacy.
- 2. Active learning:** Active learning engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies, often providing them an opportunity to engage in the same kind of learning they are designing for their students. Such professional development uses authentic artifacts (e.g., curriculum plans, assignments, assessments, rubrics, and models of teaching), interactive activities, and other strategies to provide classroom-embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. This approach moves away from traditional learning models that are lecture based and have no direct connection to teachers' classrooms and students toward learning that can be directly applied to practice.
- 3. Collaboration:** High-quality professional development creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school, and/or district.
- 4. Modeling of effective practice:** Models of curriculum and modeling of instruction provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like. Teachers may view models that include lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.
- 5. Coaching and expert support:** Coaching and expert support involve the one-on-one sharing of expertise about content and evidence-based practices, focused directly on teachers' individual needs.
- 6. Feedback and reflection:** High-quality professional learning frequently provides built-in time for teachers to intentionally think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Reflection and feedback help teachers thoughtfully move toward the expert visions of practice.
- 7. Sustained duration:** Effective professional development provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, revise, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice

Open Hand Professional Development (Transcript/Presenter Notes)

I. Welcome, Protocols, and Community Builder

Welcome: Call and Response

Call: OHLA! (Open Hand Leadership in Action)

Response: OHLE! (Open Hand Learning Excellence)

Consider how much we use our hands. How many times we give rounds of applause. We shake hands as part of our culture. It's part of our protocols, we learn how to shake hands and even what kind of handshake you give; we fist bump and high five. Furthermore, consider all of the sayings that we have referencing our hands. I want us to consider that the answers are already in our hands, especially if we have the opportunities to, to look and see our life so as I go through these five things five fingers.

Introduction activity: Expression using the word “hand” competition in COP or with GAPs.

Agreements: Put in the chat online and in-person write out on chart paper.

Keep it personal, local, and immediate: use first person.

Push for discomfort and build endurance.

Use “Ouch”, then give your perspective.

Acceptance of the journey - non-closure

Navigate engagement

Community Builder: [Rita Pierson: Every Kid Needs a Champion](#)

Online: break-outs; In-person: Coffee/Tea Talk: Who was your champion? Who do you champion? With your GAP/COP

II. Open Hand Framework Content



Intentionality: Little Finger

Our first one is our pinky finger right because our pinky finger, and I want us to understand that this is to be intentional. When we have our pinkies up, we are intentional with our lives. And the most important thing about being intentional with our work with our lives is understanding what we do. This is the what, of what we do. This is about leading with our humanity. Remember times in your life where you may have had a day where you looked at your life and you said, “Why did I do that?”, or we ask our students all the time: ‘What were you thinking?’ Their response is most often ‘I don’t know’. We live our lives in a very semi-conscious state, much of the time. It is our systems 1 cognition at work. We go on automatic so much, so much of our professional life is just that we go to work, and we're reactionary, and we have to actually stop and pause and be intentional with what we are doing, And we're although we're all interconnected and we're all affected directly and indirectly, so people in the front row of our

lives that are everyday affected by our decisions. Therefore, intentionality is the front row of what we do. I call them front row decisions. And that's to remember not only our families in our personal lives but the students that we serve, or if I'm an administrator, the teachers and students that I serve so start to think about being intentional with your front row. Now, as we lead with our humanity. This is not going to prevent us from making mistakes. Okay. As a matter of fact, I will make you two promises as we work with equity and as we work with an open hand framework: one thing that you will cause harm. And I promise number two, you will be harmed. Because when we leave with our humanity. It is about relationships that are going to be inevitable, the people that we love the most, we cause harm sometimes, and we are harmed. So, this open hand leadership is really how you navigate through that and not avoid it. How do we get through challenges and how do we get to those best practices? Well, one is to be intentional. It doesn't mean we're not going to make mistakes. We will. But there is a big difference between making mistakes and learning from them and growing from them, and having regrets. And that is what being intentional can mitigate; it can mitigate our regrets in our lives to a minimum.

Students continually spoke about how teachers just did their job. The perspectives may be different about what a teacher's job entails. The role and responsibilities of a teacher may, many times, conflict with the purpose of why someone becomes a teacher. Remembering the reason why you became a teacher and focusing on the purpose of your teaching can anchor you to be able to more effectively build positive and effective relationships with students that can ultimately help them achieve academically.

Commitment: Ring Finger

The next finger. Now in most countries or many countries, what this finger represent it's our commitment. So this finger is our commitment to communicate our truth. Now, incidentally, you might say well of course, I mean it's my truth I'm going to tell them to talk about narratives, talk about counter narratives, talk about them. And of course I'm going to be committed to my truth, but I didn't say speak our truth because how we communicate goes beyond words, our language is also nonverbal, goes beyond the spoken word, so it's how we communicate. This is the only figure that you cannot hold up on your own. This represents how we communicate or think we communicate may not be how other people perceive us. This takes some bravery and some trust, and some comfort with someone to be able to ask the question of how you are being perceived. How am I coming across? How am I serving? This is my intention, but how am I actually doing this? Communication is fragile and needs consistent capacity building, like trust and comfort and a sense of belonging, and in a moment, it can be destroyed. So for example, do you say you have an open door policy? The doors may be physically open, but you are always very busy. We build our trust and as we build these perceptions. In just one quick incident, it can break down. How do we have conversations when we feel differently? Do we seek out people that have the same that are going to affirm us, are we really seeking out different opinions and when right because it's not an either/or, but an and/also. Teachers who are committed to building positive, effective relationships with students on a daily basis are those who are willing to share some aspects of their life, have conversations with the students, and make the content relatable and relevant. Therefore, it is important to make a daily commitment to build community in the classroom.

Seek Multiple Perspectives: Middle Finger

Now the middle finger. What is the norm for the use of the middle finger? To communicate very strongly our bottom line communication. We communicate when it's like I am done with you. When we don't want to argue we may not actually use the physicality of the finger. But in our heads. How many people do we cut off, how many people we might hear something out of context, and we're done. So the premise of our middle finger is actually to seek multiple perspectives. Seek multiple perspectives. And I said, seek them because you know what we have to actually be intentional and look for multiple perspectives. We have to seek multiple perspectives. What's so interesting about this, is that it's our longest finger so when we truly seek multiple perspectives, we get the most leverage. We really do get better together. I want to caution us to understand that we have to seek multiple perspectives, with diversity and diversity of thought. Even when we're passionate as a matter of fact, we have to be very careful when we're passionate that we don't let our passion override and influence and stop some barriers that we may unintentionally put up. As teachers, we do care and desperately want our students to learn. Why, then, is their perception so different from the majority of their teachers? Either teachers are failing to communicate their truth in a way it is perceived in alignment with their intentions, or they are doing things one way and expecting the students to comply and conform. So, seek multiple perspectives, even when we think we have team members who feel comfortable speaking their truth or communicating something different. Right now, and the other end of the spectrum, there's also a lot of fear. Seeking multiple perspectives gives people opportunities to speak their truths and add their thoughts, feelings, and share ideas. What are we doing to seek multiple perspectives and make it safe for people to actually say, even when you're passionate?

Seek students' perspectives to understand that there's a different way to look at the world. That will engage them.

Find Your Balance: Index or Pointer Finger

The next two recommendations are more adaptive in nature. They're not tangible, but they're still key facets to how we lead a more effective life.

The index finger or our pointer finger. I remember when I was growing up, people would say remember if you point at somebody, three fingers are pointing back at you. This is arguably a very important finger. This is to find your balance. Andrew Bennett, a British politician famously stated that the longest journey you will ever take is the 18 inches from your head to your heart. Therefore, these recommendations are simple to understand. It's more profound to live. And so when we find your balance the key word here is yours. To find your balance is to find what works for you. Some days may be better than others but those three fingers pointing back. There are three keys that I can tell you that will help us find our balance. The first is self-awareness. Teachers want to help: they want to "fix" students at times. In order to do that, the perspective they have is that there is a problem to be fixed and with that problem comes judgement, necessary or not, to determine the best fix or solution. Many times, assigning blame is added to this consciousness. Teachers may blame the kids, or the parents, or the families or the

system. We are the system. Educators are professional and experienced and wonderful and here, and are products of a system. So we have to be self-aware personally and professionally, of what we are doing. Therefore, the first step to finding balance is to be self-aware and acknowledge all that is known, unknown, and in question. However, we don't want to get stuck in a deficit mode, we don't want to get stuck in what we need to do. Always, because if that's not a productive space. So the second finger pointing back at us, the key is our self-efficacy. What do we do, that's good. What are we doing well? How much affirmation do you give yourself? Do you know what your strengths are, and you've been able to venture out and seek mentors who can help you build those strengths. Connect with those accountability and mentorship opportunities. And the third key, arguably the most difficult is self-care. When did self-care become selfish? Self-care does not mean that we are selfish, self-care does not mean that we are not willing to sacrifice for people that we love self-care, I want you to shift your consciousness on this self-care means that we are building the capacity within ourselves to do this work. There is far too much burnout. There are teacher shortages, and then the actual high quality teachers, and then the ones that we get are being burnt out. This is well before the global pandemic that has gutted both the mental and physical health reserves for teachers. Self-awareness can help understand the best things to do for self-care, personally and professionally. Networking is one example. Since the quarantine, many people have found online and virtual networking events. Think about what you need every single day, and try to shift your consciousness away from thinking of self-care as a sacrifice that is expendable. That's a huge challenge.

Self-awareness requires considerable and consistent reflection in order to broaden our perspectives and communicate more accurately and honestly to students, thereby building more positive, effective relationships. “We live much of our lives in our own heads, in a reconfirming dialogue with ourselves. Even when we discuss crucial issues with others, much of the dialogue is not a dialogue: it is a monologue” (Takacs, 2002). Moreover, when teachers are overwhelmed, stressed, or fatigued, they are more likely to act on implicit biases. This reflects the students of color whose negative experiences they felt did, in fact, have to do with race.

The students see teachers and are empathetic to their stress and responsibility. They also experience the lack of positive, effective relationships or a deeper sense of belonging due to the stress and responsibilities. It is ironic that teachers who can implement daily self-care routines to help find their balance, then they may have more capacity to be intentional, communicate their true intentions with fidelity so those intentions are seen as intended, and seek different ways to engage students, are the teachers the students will connect with and remember the most. Self-care is not selfish: it is a necessary aspect of effective, equitable teaching.

These three things: being intentional, communicating our truth and committing to our truth, and seeking multiple perspectives are more tangible or technical ways to mitigate negative relationships with students, build a sense of belonging in them, and foster positive, effective relationships that facilitate higher academic achievement that is more engaging and long-lasting. There are things that we can do, we can write them down, and we can remember them. Effort is needed to seek perspectives other than our own, but comfort or complicity do not facilitate growth. Moreover, adhering to one's own norms will continue to marginalize most students

through the barriers that are created instead of a sense of belonging. Seeking multiple perspectives is about change and change management. “Few things are more difficult than to see outside the bounds of our own perspective - to be able to identify assumptions that we take as universal truths, but that instead have been crafted by our own unique identity and experiences in the world” (Takacs, 2002).

Remember Your Why: Thumb

The thumb is what separates humans from the animals. It represents remembering your purpose; your why. There is a need to remember it every day, not just the reason teachers choose their profession or a general statement. With all the stress and responsibility, teachers can detour or get distracted. Maybe because we're out of balance. Maybe because we're so busy with time that we don't have enough of it. Remembering our Why is absolutely critical. Every day. When we have our purpose at the forefront, it allows permission for teachers to lead with their humanity and facilitate opportunities to validate people's humanity. So, every day remember your why and smile. Your smile makes you human. That may be enough for that day. Your why is your power of one. We are powerful beyond our wildest imaginations. We can look at the studies, we have the knowledge we are practitioners, our ability to influence people.

Students consistently said that in order to foster a sense of belonging and build positive, effective relationships, the teachers should be positive. One thing that most students said is that they would like to see their teachers smile. Ironically, older methods of teaching classroom discipline and control was a philosophy that framed not smiling until the winter break. Allowing teachers their own humanity allows them to validate their students' humanity and be more flexible and understanding, two qualities that were essential to creating connections in the classroom for the students. Extending an open hand to the students allows them to feel safer and more comfortable in the classroom. This, in turn, allows them to engage in building a positive, effective relationship with the teacher and ease the burden of laboriously achieving good grades.

III. Open Hand Engagement Activities

A. Your Why Activity (Thumb)

Why: Why I Teach: Write a draft between 200-400 words. Reflect on why you teach and write it in the form of a stream of consciousness. Don't worry about form as much as your thoughts, feelings, and reflections. If you choose, you may tape yourself speaking and download that transcript to share. Then, give it to your GAP who will read it and generate 3-5 questions or comments to probe your thinking in more detail and depth. Discuss the questions and your thoughts with your GAP during a time when you feel comfortable and fairly centered. After, revise and polish your pedagogical purpose. (400-600 words) (You will use this to assist you in writing your commitment letter at the end)

My Example: WHY I TEACH: draft (211 words)

I believe in the power of one. As a teacher, I want to inspire, motivate, and teach students what they may not know for themselves. Teachers have the power to have both a negative or positive impact on their students. When I think back to my life, teachers have done both, and it has helped form my pedagogy. Sometimes, I think teaching chose me before I even knew it. There have been some difficult and challenging times in my career and some amazing times. Those amazing times are what keep me going; they fill my tank so to speak. The best thing is when you know you made a difference.

It has become so challenging since the covid quarantine. It has been a hard balance to strike. Having to learn all about technology, learning students faces when all I see is a mask with eyes or blank screens when students don't turn on their video cameras, all the compliance I do, plus teaching in person and online. For the first time I look forward to Fridays. But then, I connect with a student and know I made a difference. And it all seems worth it. So why I teach is because I want to make a difference in my students' lives.

Questions generated: (for a conversation/discussion)

What makes you think teaching is a calling and not a job?

You have some good examples of your teaching, but it still dances around how you teach in your purpose.

Was there a specific moment that stands out to you - personally or professionally that made you solid in your why?

How can you or do you apply your philosophy every day? You spoke about balance, but it was more negative. Maybe try referring balance to your purpose.

Your why seems high quality with a high bar. How do you keep from a feeling of failure?

Your purpose is to make a difference to your students, but your example is one student here and there. How can you work toward making a difference in all your students - rooted in your purpose.

My Example: **Why I Teach (final) (593 words)**

Teaching is a profession, a calling. Those who succeed and thrive are those who remain focused in their “why”. This is easy to say but much more difficult to live, especially since the Covid quarantine and for teachers centered in equity, anti-bias, and anti-racist education due to the isolation, fatigue, and burn-out. Never has there been a time when it is more important for teachers to be centered in their “why”; the intrinsic motivation to wake up every day and lead students with the optimism they desperately need and deserve. The key, however, is to be focused on your purpose specifically, not in general. For example, my why may be that I want to help students and educate them to be successful and productive. Although accurate, it is so general that I can get lost in the gaps. I have to focus on why I teach every day, and take it day by day to control what I can: the moments. These moments are why I teach: it is the power of one.

I was fortunate to experience the power of one at 19. I was walking down the street when I saw a homeless man. As I walked by, I heard him say “thank you”. I turned and he was looking at me, so I said “What? Why?” He said: “Every day, I have to find a reason not to kill myself. When you walked by, you smiled at me and your smile made me human. And that is enough for today. So thank you.” This moment showed me the limitless potential of the power of one. It has become my why and guides my teaching and learning. It helps me stay centered in what I can control while advocating for change.

It is critical to remember our why daily. With all the stress and responsibility, teachers can detour or get distracted. Maybe because we're out of balance. Maybe because we're so busy and we never seem to have enough time. Keeping my purpose at the forefront, it allows me permission to lead with my humanity and facilitate opportunities to validate the students' humanity, which is what makes the connections and builds relationships. It is through these relationships that I can be equity focused, and lead with understanding and flexibility while still keeping the rigor. Students want to learn. They want to be inspired. They just need a hand; one hand has the power of one. Extending an open hand to the students allows them to feel safer and more comfortable in the classroom.

Every day, I remember my why and make sure I smile: a smile makes people human. I can control how I interact with at least one person. I can make that difference in their life by smiling, connecting, and acknowledging their humanity. I can't do everything. I can't be perfect or execute all that our profession is calling us to accomplish. But I can be intentional and connect individually with the students I see, both in person and online, one at a time. I can be equitable and see what needs to meet those for that day. It may simply be allowing some flexibility, listening, and understanding. One moment, one gesture, one smile: the power of one. In a day filled with moments, I have many opportunities to connect and build positive relationships with students, especially in this new normal. One moment, one encounter, and one person can make all the difference and has the potential to impact the trajectory of life. And that is enough for today.

B. Find Your Balance Activities (Index or Pointer finger)

Teaching is both an art and science. Navigating the tension between the two in addition to the adaptive nature of the daily interactions in addition to the many variables of compliance can be challenging. Additionally, teachers' personal lives which also take their time and energy is another variable to be considered. Therefore, in order to be intentional, communicate effectively to build positive relationships, and seek multiple perspectives to engage the students, it is necessary to be centered and find your balance. Students felt that teachers had too much to do or were too stressed or just didn't care. They felt teaching was just a job, and to the students, part of doing the job is to go above and beyond the minimum. Teachers who are tired at any time in the day, or have a rough encounter of any kind, may find they are out of balance and reactive in their interactions with students rather than intentional. Therefore, being out of balance creates the potential for less patience or triggers when reacting with students. Teachers who are out of balance or off center, fatigued, or having a rough day are more apt to act on their implicit biases. Teaching does not mean that biases do not exist. Teaching is not about loving or even liking all the students, though many teachers purport to do just that. If there is an exchange between a student and teacher that is not what the teacher expects or if there is a negative interaction, the chances of a student feeling attacked because of race or ethnicity is greater. Whether the teacher sees this as true or not is irrelevant because the students' perception is that the negative experiences were all about race or ethnicity (quote here). Teaching effectively is about teaching equitably, which means giving students what they need when they need, in spite of how they may feel about the students. In other words, every person has biases, explicit and implicit. They can be intentional about the explicit biases to mitigate the teaching and learning, but the implicit biases are subconscious and will be more apparent when off balance. Therefore, in order to build more positive, effective relationships with students, it is necessary to find your balance and stay centered in order to mitigate negative experiences with students.

This aspect of Open Hand is adaptive in nature. It is not tangible, but is a key facet to how we lead a more effective life. I remember when I was growing up, people would say remember if you point at somebody, three fingers are pointing back at you. This is arguably a very important finger. This is to find your balance. Andrew Bennett, a British politician famously stated that the longest journey you will ever take is the 18 inches from your head to your heart. Therefore, these recommendations are simple to understand. It's more profound to live. And so when we find your balance the key word here is yours. To find your balance is to find what works for you. Some days may be better than others but those three fingers pointing back. There are three keys that I can tell you that will help us find our balance. The first is self-awareness. Teachers want to help: they want to "fix" students at times. In order to do that, the perspective they have is that there is a problem to be fixed and with that problem comes judgement, necessary or not, to determine the best fix or solution. Many times, assigning blame is added to this consciousness. Teachers may blame the kids, or the parents, or the families or the system. We are the system. Educators are professional and experienced and wonderful and here, and are products of a system. So we have to be self-aware personally and professionally, of what we are doing. Therefore, the first step to finding balance is to be self-aware and acknowledge all that is known, unknown, and in question. However, we don't want to get stuck in a deficit mode, we don't want to get stuck in what we

need to do. Always, because if that's not a productive space. So the second finger pointing back at us, the key is our self-efficacy. What do we do, that's good. What are we doing well? How much affirmation do you give yourself? Do you know what your strengths are, and you've been able to venture out and seek mentors who can help you build those strengths. Connect with those accountability and mentorship opportunities. And the third key, arguably the most difficult is self-care. When did self-care become selfish? Self-care does not mean that we are selfish, self-care does not mean that we are not willing to sacrifice for people that we love self-care, I want you to shift your consciousness on this self-care means that we are building the capacity within ourselves to do this work. There is far too much burnout. There are teacher shortages, and then the actual high quality teachers, and then the ones that we get are being burnt out. This is well before the global pandemic that has gutted both the mental and physical health reserves for teachers. Self-awareness can help understand the best things to do for self-care, personally and professionally. Networking is one example. Since the quarantine, many people have found online and virtual networking events. Think about what you need every single day, and try to shift your consciousness away from thinking of self-care as a sacrifice that is expendable. That's a huge challenge.

Self-awareness requires considerable and consistent reflection in order to broaden our perspectives and communicate more accurately and honestly to students, thereby building more positive, effective relationships. “We live much of our lives in our own heads, in a reconfirming dialogue with ourselves. Even when we discuss crucial issues with others, much of the dialogue is not a dialogue: it is a monologue” (Takacs, 2002).

The students see teachers and are empathetic to their stress and responsibility. They also experience the lack of positive, effective relationships or a deeper sense of belonging due to the stress and responsibilities. It is ironic that teachers who can implement daily self-care routines to help find their balance, then they may have more capacity to be intentional, communicate their true intentions with fidelity so those intentions are seen as intended, and seek different ways to engage students, are the teachers the students will connect with and remember the most. Self-care is not selfish: it is a necessary aspect of effective, equitable teaching.

Every interaction between two or more people is a cross-cultural interaction, given the agreement that culture is multifaceted and encompasses the four main categories of values and beliefs, thoughts and analysis, emotions and feelings, and behaviors. Look at the following square with 4 quadrants. These categories have been placed into quadrants that I call the Cultural Quadrants. Each quadrant represents a space where people react from interactions. People have their comfort zones, personality styles, and tendencies that can become their norm for interactions. This is not to claim that people are one-dimensional and only embody one of the quadrants. Moreover, given different interactions, people may tend toward a different quadrant. Additionally, people may straddle two quadrants. This Cultural Quadrant Chart is not designed to simplify the complexities and nuances of human beings and their interactions. It is designed to address the simple yet profound way people engage and the effectiveness of those interactions. The goal is to recognize your norms and triggers with the quadrant you may frequent through self-awareness. Then, try and find your balance in the center before you assess and recognize where the other person may be on the chart. Educators teach their content by meeting students where they are.

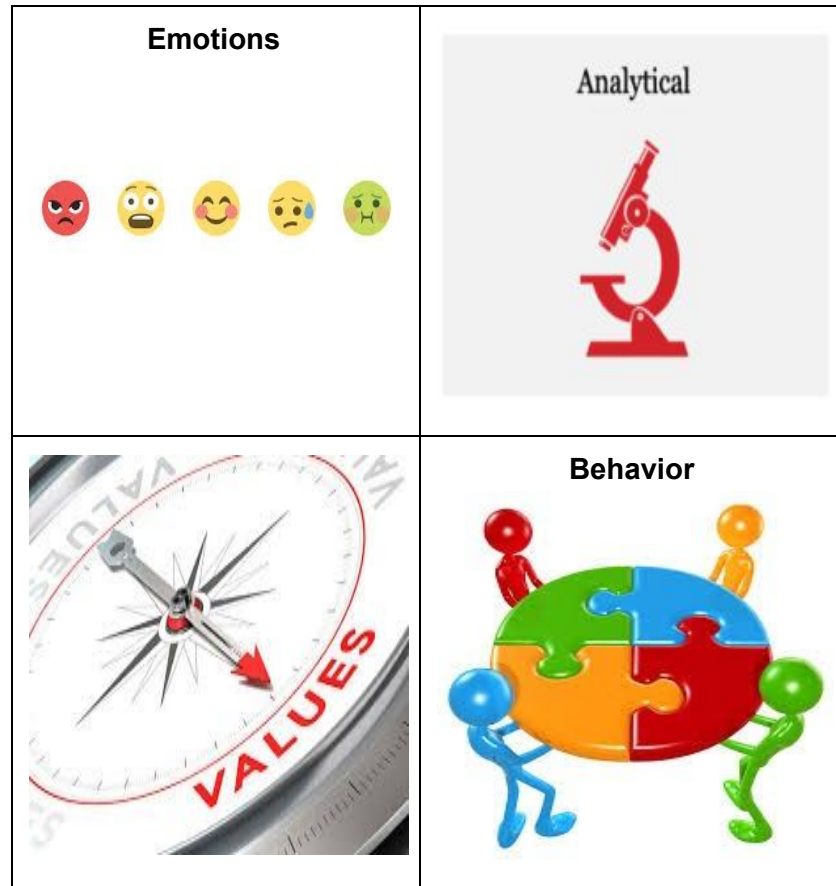
Therefore, they need to also meet students where they are on the chart in order to build more positive, effective relationships. In order to accomplish this, teachers need to find their balance because if they are in one quadrant, and the student is in another quadrant, the interaction has the potential to be ineffective or detrimental, especially if it is reactive with implicit biases.

Self-awareness: What do you know about yourself and your biases? What do you think you know, but don't actually know? What do you know you don't know? Self-awareness is a lifelong journey and a fluid continuum by which we ebb and flow throughout our lives with every interaction. Therefore, this component is to begin to reflect and understand the Cultural Quadrant Chart as it relates to your behavior, and the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that influence your behavior, both explicit and implicit. This professional development is not "either/or" or deficit-based. Rather, it is an "and/also", asset-based framework that operates with the accepted understanding that as humans, we operate with various degrees of biases, both explicit and implicit. The understanding includes the historical foundations of racism that are embedded in the systems and structures of this country and impact our daily lives, whether explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, for the self-awareness part of the journey, it is important when writing your thoughts and feelings, that you do not venture into your values or judgement quadrant. If so, you may have a tendency to deflect, avoid, or defend what you encounter. Instead, focus on your growth opportunity to become more self aware and build more positive relationships with students because you are more practiced at finding your balance.

Journal Reflection: Answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Then, follow up with your GAP by discussing your findings. What are your biases? Where did they come from? What do you notice about yourself when encountering a student who represents that positive or negative bias? How can you be more aware of your implicit biases? How does this awareness reflect each of the 4 quadrants? In other words, how do you feel about having those biases? How did you acquire those biases? How do you judge yourself regarding biases? Note: This is an area that has the potential to cause discomfort, but remember, that it also has the potential for great growth. Lean into the discomfort and lead with your humanity, knowing every person has biases. Being self-aware will allow you to be more equitable in your teaching and fulfill your purpose to a greater extent. Try and stay focused on your why, which can allow you to experience the discomfort necessary to have the subsequent daring dialogue with your GAP, which will, in turn, build your capacity to find your balance.

Self-Awareness Activity 1: Look at the following Cultural Quadrant Chart while watching this video and pay attention to your feelings, thoughts, judgements, or how you want to act. <https://youtu.be/Ik8iDHyxxdc> Note: the video is 2:47 minutes and you may flow in and out of various quadrants. Take note of which quadrant you were in at what time and why. After the video, discuss with your GAP. Online will go into breakouts.

Cultural Quadrant Chart



Self-Awareness Activity 2: Implicit Bias. Read the following text and Punctuate Your Thoughts with annotations. ! (**exclamation point**) if you feel it is an important claim; + (**plus sign**) if you think of something you could add; - (**minus sign**) if you disagree; ? (**question mark**) where you have wonderings or want to know more. This Is a flexible assignment depending on time. If there is only 30-40 minutes for this activity, then chunk the text and jigsaw it in break-out groups. After the reading, share your thoughts in break-outs online. Pick a spokesperson to consolidate some of the salient points.

[Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know, By Cheryl Staats, American Educator, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2015-2016.](#)

Self-Awareness Activity 3: Turn and Talk.

Biases, both explicit and implicit impact and influence the way we see the world. They also have the power to impact our student-teacher relationships, especially when we are out of balance. Finding and maintaining our balance helps mitigate acting upon the dangerous tendency to simplify students to a single story. Watch this video and practice your awareness on the cultural quadrant chart. Think about your story. Was there ever a time when people got your story wrong? Think of times when you have determined your students totality based on what you may think of their story. Share at least one time when you made someone the victim of one story with your GAP/COP. Do not judge or analyze - GAP while listening, do not validate, defend or comfort. Listen and hold in affirming accountability when you hear anything other than the story, no editorializing. There will be discomfort in this session, for the content as well as the protocol of the discussion that may be a different style. This is an opportunity to practice with your GAP and not fall into a validating or rationalization relationship.

[Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED Talk](#)

After the video, with your GAP, take two minutes each to recall and tell a time when you fell victim to being seen as a single story. Practice active listening and take turns. Then, take two minutes each to tell of a time when you reduced a student to a single story. Use the Call and Response to switch when time is up. Keep strict time as this is an awareness of a deficit and the purpose is to be aware that teaching is a profession where people will both be harmed and cause harm. This allows leading and learning with humanity and human-centered designs, so there is no need to linger on these moments or try to rationalize them.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is like power; the ability to control one's own destiny to a certain extent. Self-efficacy, however, is the belief in one's capacity and ability to control one's environment and the motivation or behaviors necessary to obtain desired outcomes. In this vain, teachers are faced with so many challenges in and out of the classroom, that there can be a sense of powerlessness that affects the ability to see individual strengths. Staying focused on what we can control with our assets can build capacity to help find your balance and regain that balance when confronted with an event or interaction that shifts your thinking, judgements, or emotions.

Think-Draw-Write choice for your journal. Then, follow up with your GAP by discussing your findings and add in a different color to demonstrate growth. What are your strengths? What are your professional strengths? What are your personal strengths? What are your professional strengths? How do you know? How can you build on them?

Self-Efficacy Activity: Lines of Communication

Prompts: 1. Who was your favorite Teacher and why?

2. One success story.

3. Your favorite thing to do.

4. Something you have mastered.

5. Something you want to share with the world.

Have the learners form two lines facing each other so each person has a partner in front of them. This does not have to be the GAP, in fact, to build community for the whole group, it should be someone new. One line is the “A” line and the other line is the “B” line. Begin with the people in line “B” (because they will assume you will begin with “A” and you can highlight the danger of a single story includes assumptions, so be aware of what we assume). Each person has 45 seconds to share the first prompt. Use the Call and Response to switch for line “A” to take their turn. Then, have two people from Line “B” walk to the end of their line, while the rest of the people in line “B” shift and adjust so each person will now have a new partner. Line “A” stays the same and does not move. (If you want to have some fun, have the two people from line “B” dance in the middle as they move to the end of the line) Then, begin again with line “B” and each person has 45 seconds to share the second prompt. Stay with the same partner and line “A” should begin with 45 seconds each to answer the third prompt. Repeat the shifting of partners with line “B” and two more people. (If you change to line “A”, they will end up with the same partner). Finally, for the last two prompts, and a third new partner, have them take 4 minutes total to share prompts 4 and 5, allowing them to determine the structure of their dialogue. Give a one minute warning.

Self-care: When did self-care become selfish? Too often, educators are nurturers and their desire to help others succeed often leaves little time and space for their own needs to be met. A teacher’s heart is generous and giving and too often, these qualities, when not supplemented with consistent self-care, can lead to fatigue, isolation, burn-out, or absenteeism. Moreover, there is another concept called presenteeism that is also a result of a lack of self-care. Presenteeism is when someone is physically present at work, but does not have the capacity to be fully functioning. This is when students’ perceive the teachers as not caring or liking them, because they do not engage, share, or even smile; they just sit at their desks and manage the content and students. Therefore, self-care needs to be a priority, especially as the challenges in education continue to increase.

Individual Self-Care Plan: Create a daily self-care plan. Make sure it is not a wish plan. It needs to fit your lifestyle and ability to execute with fidelity. For example, if you cannot afford to do something, it should not go in your plan. Create options for yourself, so if something comes up, you at least have a 5 minute option. If there is a day you are unable to fulfill even 5 minutes, then let that day go, practice forgiveness, and know there is another opportunity the next day. There is no place for guilt, rationalization, or avoidance in the Open Hand frame. Nor is there pressure to abide by this. Pressure can also cause disengagement for fear of failure. TThis is arguably the most important aspect of Open Hand Leadership and Learning: if you are not at your best, confidently centered in your self-awareness, then you will not be able to build the positive, effective relationships and create a sense of belonging necessary for your students to reach their full potential.

Self-care engagement Activity to facilitate the creation of the Self-Care Plan: 5-4-3-2-1 Give One, Get One (highlights voice and choice)

Online with live participants: breakout groups in increments of time but give more time in between for tech, an extra minute or two. Online self-paced module: make this a discussion thread of best practices, with a caveat that nothing can be repeated in a time category. This will help people post in a timely way. It will also ensure engagement and thought for the plan as no one can copy and paste the ideas. It will also push the reflection and thoughts.

In person: (15 minutes writing, 20 minutes engagement, 10 minutes whole group process)
First, write down at least one self-care option for each time category. If you have more, feel free to fill them in. Then, take the post-its and write down one self-care option for the 5 minute

category. Write it out on 5 post-its. Then, write out one self-care option for the 15 minute category. Write that on 4 post-its. Then, write down one self-care option for the 30 minute category and write that on 3 post-its. On 2 post-its, write out one option for the 1 hour category. Finally, on one post-it, write one option for self-care for the ½ day category. When finished, stack your post-its in ascending order beginning with the 5 minute options. You should have 15 post-its in total. Use protected writing time as the next part will be cooperative.

Directions: Facilitator will play danceable music for 1 minute while participants get up and move if they are able. Those who cannot may stay seated and when the music stops, partner with the person closest to them. Those who are able to move may do so in any fashion. When the music stops, get into groups of five with the people closest to you. You each have 1 minute to say hello and share your 5 minute self-care option. Then, give each person one of your post-its, keeping one for yourself. After 5 minutes, the music will play for another minute of movement or dancing. When the music stops, get into a group of four people. You will each have 1 minute to share your 15 minute self-care option and give those post-its. This will be repeated with a 1 minute transition in between each grouping. There should be a group of three for the 30 minute option, a group of two for the 1 hour option, and for the ½ day option, you should find a partner. Do not find your GAP as you should process with them once your plan is completed. There is always 1 minute to share that time category's self-care option. For the ½ day partnering category, you can extend the time to two minutes of sharing each. At the end of this activity, each participant should still have 15 post-its, but with 5 options for the 5 minute category, 4 options for the 15 minute category, 3 options for the 30 minute category, 2 options for the 1 hour category, and two options for the ½ day category, including their original options.

Play the music one last time so participants may dance back to their seats. Process this whole group metacognitively: ask them to think about how they felt about the activity, how it helps build community, and seek other perspectives for different ways to genre switch the activity. Allot 10-15 minutes, then give a break so participants can follow up on anyone they met during the activity, finish writing their self-care plan, or process with their GAP/COP. (You may back this into an autonomous break)

Individual Self-Care Plan

Write in 3 different options for all 5 possible time allotments

Give a copy to your GAP who can hold you in affirming accountability.

(Don't be surprised if this is difficult to fill in - back to self-awareness!)

5 minutes	15 minutes	30 minutes	1 hour	½ day

(Example) Individual Self-Care Plan

5 minutes	15 minutes	30 minutes	1 hour	½ day
Closing my eyes and breathing-am and/or pm	Stretching	Walk my dog	Read a book	Visit with family
Dance in my living room	Write in my journal	Ride my motorcycle	Go to the gym	Go to the beach
Sit with my coffee (am) or tea (pm)	Home spa treatment	Sit by my fire-pit	Get a massage	Visit with friends

C. Seek Multiple Perspectives: The Middle Finger

What is the norm for the use of the middle finger? To communicate very strongly our bottom line communication. We communicate when it's like I am done with you. When we don't want to argue we may not actually use the physicality of the finger. But in our heads. How many people do we cut off, how many people we might hear something out of context, and we're done. So the premise of our middle finger is actually to seek multiple perspectives. Seek multiple perspectives. And I said, seek them because you know what we have to actually be intentional and look for multiple perspectives. We have to seek multiple perspectives. What's so interesting about this, is that it's our longest finger so when we truly seek multiple perspectives, we get the most leverage. We really do get better together. I want to caution us to understand that we have to seek multiple perspectives, with diversity and diversity of thought. Even when we're passionate as a matter of fact, we have to be very careful when we're passionate that we don't let our passion override and influence and stop some barriers that we may unintentionally put up. As teachers, we do care and desperately want our students to learn. Why, then, is their perception so different from the majority of their teachers? Either teachers are failing to communicate their truth in a way it is perceived in alignment with their intentions, or they are doing things one way and expecting the students to comply and conform. So, seek multiple perspectives, even when we think we have team members who feel comfortable speaking their truth or communicating something different. Right now, and the other end of the spectrum, there's also a lot of fear. Seeking multiple perspectives gives people opportunities to speak their truths and add their thoughts, feelings, and share ideas. What are we doing to seek multiple perspectives and make it safe for people to actually say, even when you're passionate?

These three things: being intentional, communicating our truth and committing to our truth, and seeking multiple perspectives are more tangible or technical ways to mitigate negative relationships with students, build a sense of belonging in them, and foster positive, effective relationships that facilitate higher academic achievement that is more engaging and long-lasting. There are things that we can do, we can write them down, and we can remember them. Effort is needed to seek perspectives other than our own, but comfort or complicity do not facilitate growth. Moreover, adhering to one's own norms will continue to marginalize most students through the barriers that are created instead of a sense of belonging. Seeking multiple perspectives is about change and change management. "Few things are more difficult than to see outside the bounds of our own perspective - to be able to identify assumptions that we take as universal truths, but that instead have been crafted by our own unique identity and experiences in the world" (Takacs, 2002). Seek students' perspectives to understand that there's a different way to look at the world. That will engage them.

Seek Multiple Perspectives Activity 1: Watch a short video clip from author Rudine Sims Bishop [Diverse books in the classroom, all year round](#) (priming for subsequent activities)

Seek Multiple Perspectives Activity 2: Text: [Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors](#)
Windows, mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors: Jigsaw and Annotate Your Thoughts. This is the same that was used for the implicit bias text so participants should be familiar with this format.

Punctuate Your Thoughts with annotations. **!** (**exclamation point**) if you feel it is an important claim; **+** (**plus sign**) if you think of something you could add; **-** (**minus sign**) if you disagree; **?** (**question mark**) where you have wonderings or want to know more. This is a flexible assignment depending on time. If there is only 30-40 minutes for this activity, then chunk the text and jigsaw it in break-out groups.

After the reading, share your thoughts in break-outs online. Pick a spokesperson to consolidate some of the salient points.

Seek Multiple Perspectives Activity 3: You can quote me on this!

With GAP: process Audra Lorde's quote: "There is no such thing as a single issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives". Include race and biases to your reflection. Practice active listening and take turns. This should not be a dialogue. Answer the following questions: How is this a window? How is this a mirror? How is this a sliding glass door?

Seek Multiple Perspectives Activity 4: Lesson Plan Creation.

Include: content, methodology, and student voice and choice. This activity may be co-created with GAPs and COP's in order to build a collective repertoire of lessons and best practices. Teachers should design a lesson plan or unit, their choice. If they want to do different lessons during a week, or if they have different classes that they want to do a different lesson for each class, they may choose that. They should take that lesson and redo it in as many perspectives as possible. If it is a math lesson, for example, they could design different ways of doing math, and include the cultural perspectives from different countries. They need to create designs inclusive of different learning styles as well as language proficiencies. The lessons should also include different activities to engage the students. For example, for literature or social studies, the lessons should be inclusive of multiple perspectives on the stories being told: what are the authors and how many different sources can you bring in for those perspectives? That is the content part and engagement aspects. Next, design for the methodology using different perspectives. How many different ways, based on different learning styles can you actually teach the lesson? What are you bringing in to reflect the students? Make sure you also include student voice as a perspective. Teachers may not be able to fully design this part, but they may hold the space for when they see their students and seek student voice at that time. If there are multiple ways to engage the students, the lesson should facilitate student choice. The final lessons or unit should have three main components addressed using multiple perspectives: content, methodology, and student voice and choice.

For this activity, teachers may struggle as lesson plan design can be difficult and most have not designed the same lesson multiple ways. This can be as cooperative as possible, but allow for the struggle as that will facilitate growth. Circulate to mitigate frustration, however, as that may have participants outside their zones of proximal development.

D. Commitment: Ring Finger

In many countries, what this finger represents is commitment. So this finger is our commitment to communicate our truth. Now, incidentally, you might say well of course, I mean it's my truth I'm going to tell them to talk about narratives, talk about counter narratives, talk about them. And of course I'm going to be committed to my truth, but I didn't say speak our truth because how we communicate goes beyond words, our language is also nonverbal, goes beyond the spoken word, so it's how we communicate. This is the only figure that you cannot hold up on your own. This represents how we communicate or think we communicate may not be how other people perceive us. This takes some bravery and some trust, and some comfort with someone to be able to ask the question of how you are being perceived. How am I coming across? How am I serving? This is my intention, but how am I actually doing this? Communication is fragile and needs consistent capacity building, like trust and comfort and a sense of belonging, and in a moment, it can be destroyed. So for example, do you say you have an open door policy? The doors may be physically open, but you are always very busy. We build our trust and as we build these perceptions. In just one quick incident, it can break down. How do we have conversations when we feel differently? Do we seek out people that have the same that are going to affirm us, are we really seeking out different opinions and when right because it's not an either/or, but an and/also.

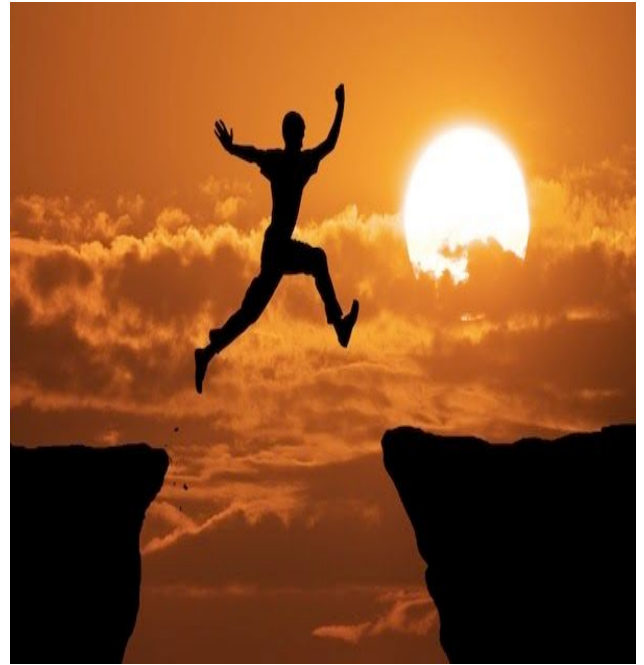
Commitment Activity 1: Four Corners

Online: decide which and write in the chat a number to be put into that breakout. In-person may move to the corner that has the visual they feel most connected. **Prompt: What is the best representation of teaching for you?**

Dialogue with your GAP. GAP dialogues with active listening and probing questions. How are your relationships with your students? How can you tell? How does race impact those relationships? Why do you think this?

Commitment Activity 2: Create an interview protocol for students to provide feedback. Be inclusive, for example, an anonymous box. Some examples may be: How do I believe I communicate to the students? How do I see myself? How do I communicate that to the students? How do I think the students perceive me? Be bold and then ask the students their perspective on each of these questions. Reflect on your comfort level with asking your students these questions in an anonymous survey or 1:1. Commit to what you have the capacity for and as you build more positive, effective relationships, you will also build your capacity. Consider the following questions: How are your relationships with your students? How can you tell? How does race impact those relationships? Why do you think this?

Activity 1: Four Corners



E. Be Intentional: little finger

Our littlest finger is our pinky finger which represents intentionality and the decisions we make in our lives with intention and focus. When we have our pinkies up, we are intentional with our lives. And the most important thing about being intentional with our work with our lives is understanding what we do. This is the what, of what we do. This is about leading with our humanity. Remember times in your life where you may have had a day where you looked at your life and you said, “Why did I do that?”, or we ask our students all the time: ‘What were you thinking?’ Their response is most often ‘I don’t know’. We live our lives in a very semi-conscious state, much of the time. It is our systems 1 cognition at work. We go on automatic so much, so much of our professional life is just that we go to work, and we're reactionary, and we have to actually stop and pause and be intentional with what we are doing, And we're although we're all interconnected and we're all affected directly and indirectly, so people in the front row of our lives that are everyday affected by our decisions. Therefore, intentionality is the front row of what we do. I call them front row decisions. And that's to remember not only our families in our personal lives but the students that we serve, or if I'm an administrator, the teachers and students that I serve so start to think about being intentional with your front row. Now, as we lead with our humanity. This is not going to prevent us from making mistakes. Okay. As a matter of fact, I will make you two promises as we work with equity and as we work with an open hand framework: one thing that you will cause harm. And I promise number two, you will be harmed. Because when we leave with our humanity. It is about relationships that are going to be inevitable, the people that we love the most, we cause harm sometimes, and we are harmed. So, this open hand leadership is really how you navigate through that and not avoid it. How do we get through challenges and how do we get to those best practices? Well, one is to be intentional. It doesn't mean we're not going to make mistakes. We will. But there is a big difference between making mistakes and learning from them and growing from them, and having regrets. And that is what being intentional can mitigate; it can mitigate our regrets in our lives to a minimum.

Be Intentional Activity 1: Four Corners: This is genre-switched for small group discussions. People in person may choose the corner they feel they are connected to the most at this time. Learners may not end up with their GAP or COP for this activity. Thus, it can serve to seek multiple perspectives and build community as well. After 5-10 minutes of discussion and writing, call and response will indicate the rotation. Groups will rotate together to build the small group community. Online, learners may write in a shared document to share their screen when presenting. Instead of rotating, the breakouts will remain the same but with the call and response, groups will switch to the next “corner topic”. In person: learners may walk to the corners and write on the chart paper. In your group, discuss how you are intentional within each category. For example, how are you intentional with things that are out of your control? Stay focused on being asset-based and hold each other accountable not to make this activity a venting session. Teachers have to abide by mandates that are out of their control. So, how are you or how can you be intentional about building positive, effective relationships with your students and giving them

a sense of belonging when faced with things outside of your control? Write as many ideas as possible in the time given. Then, rotate and first, read what the other groups have written. Each group will have their own color ink (4 colors total) and will rotate with their color. Then, the groups may add thoughts to that topic category. Groups will rotate four times. The final rotation will bring groups back to their original corner where they may read all the contributions. Lastly, process the process in the small groups. Have them choose a spokesperson to share, whole group, the experience.

FOUR CORNERS: place this as a heading in each corner of the room.

How can you be intentional with what you can control?

How can you be intentional with what you can influence?

How can you be intentional with what you cannot control?

How can you be intentional with what you can create?

Be Intentional Activity 2: This may be based on what was generated from the previous activity or activities. Creation of surveys, questionnaires, community builders. With GAP/COP but be self-aware and use what works with you.

Be Intentional Activity 3: Turn and talk

Watch this video on being intentional and creating magic to build positive relationships with students.

https://www.ted.com/talks/christopher_emdin_teach_teachers_how_to_create_magic?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Be Intentional Activity 4: Creation of Intentionality cards. Create 5 and pick one for each day to focus on. After you are comfortable with all 5, create 5 more but not until you are comfortable and your GAP/COP and students have seen them demonstrated. If all you do are those 5 for the year, that is enough. It depends on your capacity. You may choose to be intentional of one for the week instead of the day. Co-create these with GAP/COP and share.

Demonstration and Celebration of Learning

Activity1: Next Steps for Ongoing Professional Development

Creation of your individual action plan, coaching, mentoring, and ongoing engagement with your professional development.

Personal Open Hand Teaching and Learning Plan

Keeping the end in mind, write two action steps you want to grow from this PD. Remember to keep them minimal and sustainable. Share with your GAP and COP for the ongoing professional development of GAP observations, mentoring, and coachings.

Action Step	Intentionality	Commitment to Communication	Seek Multiple Perspectives	Find Your Balance: <i>Self-Awareness</i> <i>Self-Efficacy</i> <i>Self-Care</i>	Remember Your Why
Connect with more students	Smile Take 5 minutes to notice them during attendance Don't sit at desk;	1:1 time weekly so 5 per week. Create survey for styles Share something every day Ask more questions and listen	Ask the students what they need and how I can help. Ask COP best practices to add 1 new thing a month.	Allow myself to be tired - but let students know. Give myself the flexibility I give students. Have fun and laugh with them at least once a class.	If they are having a bad day, that moment can change their outlook
See and confront micro-aggressions	Pay attention to the side bar conversations and class changes.	Frame my intentions to learn and advocate as an ally when I have conversations. Remember to speak my truth and keep it personal, local, and immediate.	Create possible responses to them and vet them with colleagues and students, which will help their awareness too!	Learn more about them: once a week, search ot info Practice with my GAP/COP Remember my plan	b/c I can make the dif for the one person receiving the aggression so can't overlook them

Action Step	Intentionality	Commitment to Communication	Seek Multiple Perspectives	Find Your Balance: <i>Self-Awareness</i> <i>Self-Efficacy</i> <i>Self-Care</i>	Remember Your Why

Activity 2: Commitment Letter to Students:

There is value in writing down goals. Some people write “to do” lists to help them organize their thoughts, help with time management, and stay focused. Therefore, the final project for this professional development is a comprehensive culmination of the content and a demonstration of your learning and growth through a commitment letter you will write to yourself and your students. This should be reflective of all five aspects of the Open Hand framework and inclusive of your commitment to both yourself and your students. It is personal and professional and will most likely cause pause as you reflect and process. Remember to write with both details and depth. In person, give 20 minutes of protected writing time. Online: make sure you have a quiet, uninterrupted space for at least 20 minutes. You may only have a draft after 20 minutes, depending on your style. Write it and edit as necessary until you have a commitment letter worthy of your learning and growth. Share with your GAP/COP to ensure your entire hand is represented and edit as necessary before you give it to your students. Read it aloud to them, post it in the classroom, and revisit it each month to determine where you need to refocus. The letter should address all 5 points in the Open Hand Frame.

Example letter:

Dear Students,

Introduction: I am writing you this letter so you have a chance to get to know me a little better. The school year can be busy with so much to do, and I don't want there to be confusion as to who I am or what I want for you as your teacher. I also want us to work together and for you to feel like the classroom is a place where you belong, a place where you actually want to be and learn. Our personalities or styles may be different, and we may even clash at times, but I hope that this commitment letter will serve as an understanding and a foundation for us to build a positive relationship that will ultimately help you succeed.

First, I commit to being more intentional, every day, with how I think, feel, and behave. I want you to know that you are important and you belong in our classroom. It is not my classroom or yours, but ours. Therefore, I will be intentional to ensure that I notice you and that when I say I am here to help, that I do something to prove it. I will be intentional in sharing something every day and remembering that each day is a new day.

Secondly, I commit to more effective communication where what I want for you is also how you perceive. And I promise that I will work to share my humanity with you and trust you in the process so we can build more positive relationships where you feel comfortable enough to approach me. I want to make sure that your empathy for how challenging it can be to teach a roomful of teenagers and how much work there is to do is reflected with my empathy for the same reasons. I want to make sure we have the same understanding of our roles in the classroom and that we share our definitions of what it means to be friends so we can work together to build better relationships. I know you have been a student long enough to understand that I am the authority in the room, but I don't want to communicate a "my way or the highway" way of leading. I want to develop a trust that will allow us to have great conversations, challenging and difficult at times, while interesting, fun, and relevant all the time. This may not always happen, but I commit to myself and to you that I will do my best and ask that you do your best, and every day let us remember that we are all human and will make mistakes. I promise when I make mistakes, I will apologize and do better. If I can lead this way, I hope you can do the same.

Third, I have been teaching a long time and have gotten into a rhythm of how to teach and I think I know what works. This can be beneficial for some things, but I know now that doing things one way may not be the way you learn, are comfortable with, or that suits your needs. Therefore, I commit to opening up how I teach to seek multiple perspectives. Part of this is understanding what your perspectives are and how you learn best. So, I will design a survey or questionnaire for you to complete. That will help me better understand all the ways that you learn best. It will also help me understand who wants to be called on and who gets anxiety just thinking about it. I want to look for all the ways I can help you engage with the teaching and learning. I also want to make sure that we are all represented in both the content, the discussions, and engagement styles. I want to know what you think and how you feel about the world so I can relate the content in a way that is relevant to the ways in which we view the world. I commit to making the class inclusive of every person because that is what will make the class more interesting and help us all continue to learn about the rich diversity that makes us a better community.

Fourth, I will be more self aware of my values and judgements and take care to acknowledge them so as not to have them negatively impede my interactions with you. I know how important it is to get a good night's sleep and eat well and stay healthy. I know because I tell you all the time, especially before testing. I also know that stress affects every part of our life and that we can't be at our best if we are not centered and focused. So, this commitment I make to myself, but it will benefit us all. I will work to find my balance and do what I ask of you in this regard. I hope you will see a better me, and if not, that we have good enough communication that we can hold each other in loving accountability.

Lastly, I want you to understand my intentions, even though intentions can get lost and clouded with the everyday tasks we encounter. I have had both bad and good teachers, so I know the difference. I also know that one teacher in one moment can make all the difference. My 11th grade English teacher did that for me and I want to do that for you. I want to be the kind of teacher that I would be happy to have my daughters in that classroom. When your world is challenging, you are having problems, or life seems hopeless, I want to be that teacher you feel you can come to, and that classroom where you know you are wanted and belong. I want our classroom to be a safe space where at least for that time, you feel welcome, noticed, and valued. If you do and I know you do, then I will have done my job. Hopefully, you will have learned the content too! I teach because I believe in the power of one. I believe I can make a difference in your life if you can trust me enough to let me try. I also believe that you have the power of one to impact my life and decide your own destiny.

In conclusion, I give you this letter, my commitment to you, myself, and our class, with the unparalleled hope that with this commitment, we can all become better people. We get better together and I am looking forward to a fantastic year!

Activity 3: Whole Group Share 2-3 letters and penultimate thoughts

Reconvene as a whole group and have a few volunteers read and share their letters out loud. Give the volunteers a "Y" as affirmation. (Y's are found in nature, as shells, stones, wood, or coral on the beach).

Activity 4/Final Activity: Visual Representations and Celebration of learning

Collaborate with your GAP/COP to create a visual representation of your learning with Open Hand. Each GAP and/or COP will present to the whole group.

Finish the day with this video: choice between students dancing to the words, or collage with Prince Ea speaking the words.

<https://youtu.be/695VVSwtKvI> Prince Ea

https://youtu.be/sZVqJUw_ifk Student dancers to Prince Ea