



TEACHER TIPS FOR PROMOTING

Belonging & Trust

Considerations to engage students' experiences and identities

In our collective work (see Alvarez et al., 2023, Teeters et al., 2022, 2023) we identify common elements that bolster engagement, interconnectedness, agency, and justice within the classroom. Below, please find five of our suggestions for the classroom.

1

Use multiple modalities, especially the arts, to engage identity, imagination, and agency

Multi-modal approaches support imagination and creativity and allow for students from diverse linguistic and literary backgrounds to express themselves in varying formats. Activities could include writing and illustrating a children's book, photography, testimonio, drawing, music, poetry, movement or dance, and digital or interactive art forms.

2

Create spaces of belonging and trust

Learning happens most easily when the environment is one of belonging and trust. It is critical to attend to the emotional learning environment and to create a safe space for students and teachers to relate to one another. Belonging and trust can be cultivated by intentionally creating opportunities that foster relationships among peers and between educators and students. One way to do this is to set up a way for students to share what's on their mind, like a daily check-in that is unrelated to academic content. When students feel "seen" by their teachers, they report a greater sense of belonging. Belonging can also be cultivated by inviting students' stories into the classroom.

3

Link the curriculum to student identity

It is important for each student to see themselves reflected within the curriculum. This involves including historical figures and authors that reflect students' backgrounds and exploring ways to include diverse knowledge systems within the classroom pedagogy. It also involves including students' own stories in the curriculum with activities such as book making, photo testimonio, digital storytelling, and video creation.

4

Examine history and power within the educational context

While supporting students to tell their stories and explore their identities can be a powerful vehicle toward educational justice, it is important to consider historical and asymmetrical power relations transparently and carefully (i.e., who has the power to influence society and culture and to make the rules, and whose voices are missing) in order to ground pedagogical approaches toward students' experiences and their daily realities.

5

Invite students' full experiences into the learning environment, including challenging experiences

Recent scholarship has brought attention to the need for educators and schools to understand students' experiences that present challenges (Esteban-Guitart, 2021; Poole, 2020). Inviting students to share honestly about challenging experiences, particularly ones that are socially and politically constructed, can allow students to hear their experiences within the stories and the experiences of their peers. Sociopolitical challenges are often deeply internalized by students; by sharing them and seeing common connections, students may be able to recontextualize these challenges within broader systems of inequity (Teeters et al., 2022).

Works Cited

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- Teeters, L. P., Shedro, M., Alvarez, A., Schultz, K., Gleason, E., Zigarelli, J. C. & Trejo, B., (2023). Circles de confianza: using multimodal testimonios to build culturally sustaining schools. *Anthography and Education*, 18:4, 356-375.
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