



InspiredTeaching

Closing the Engagement Gap: A Social Justice Imperative



Executive Summary

This white paper both affirms the benefits of engagement-based education, and confirms the reality of the current “engagement gap” in this country. While engagement-based education is not yet the norm in the United States, white, wealthy students are far more likely to have access to it than are low and middle income students and students of color. A review of the research suggests that engagement-based education is particularly beneficial for students from underserved groups, which means that expanding opportunities for engaging teaching and learning is especially urgent for these populations. This paper provides and expands upon the following recommendations 1) build strong relationships through an asset-based approach to working with students; 2) honor and center students’ funds of knowledge and ways of knowing, and 3) engage students with learning experiences that are meaningful to them, that are relevant to their lives, and that bring them joy. These are followed by resources that educators can use to begin implementing the recommendations.

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Introduction: Engagement-based education is a social justice issue

Too often in this country, education reformers tell students from traditionally underserved backgrounds (including students of color and students impacted by poverty) that they need to develop “grit” and discipline to overcome their circumstances (Golden, 2017), that they need teachers who give them “tough love” (Zirkel, Bailey, Bathey, Hawley, Lewis, Long, Pollack, Roberts, Stroud, & Winful, 2011), and that compliance with authority is an achievement to be rewarded (Goodman, 2013). According to these education reformers, the nurturing, engaging, affirming learning environments enjoyed by many wealthy white students are too “touchy feely,” “weak,” and impractical for students from underserved communities (Zirkel et al, 2011, p. 7; Carter, 2000). Research, however, shows otherwise. A growing number of studies demonstrates that students from historically disadvantaged groups experience great benefit from the engaging pedagogies typically reserved for well-off students (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Hertzog, 2005). This research suggests that when given the opportunity to engage in meaningful teacher-student relationships, critical thinking, and real world problem solving, students labeled by reformers as “at-risk” achieve at higher levels than would ever be possible in compliance-based environments.

Since its founding in 1995, Center for Inspired Teaching has been working towards our vision of a world in which every student has access to engagement-based teaching and learning. As demonstrated by our previous white paper on the critical need for replacing compliance-based teaching with engagement-based teaching, students learn academic content, study skills, and social emotional competencies best when they are intellectually, emotionally, physically, and behaviorally engaged in learning (Center for Inspired Teaching, 2018). This type of

engagement requires mutual respect between teachers and students, a strong belief in students’ innate curiosity and desire to learn, openness to multiple learning styles, and the understanding that the most meaningful learning is inquiry-based, student-directed, and joyful. Compliance-based education, by contrast, views students as passive receptacles to be filled with knowledge, and prizes rote learning and obedience over exploration and inquiry. While compliance-based education may have been appropriate for the industrial era, it is no longer sufficient for students coming of age in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century, where skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability are becoming more and more essential (Leland & Kasten, 2002; Chu, Reynolds, Notari, & Lee, 2017).

Since Inspired Teaching’s beginnings, it has been clear that engagement-based education is more accessible to some students than others. Compliance-based education is still the norm in the United States for students of all races and socioeconomic circumstances (Center for Inspired Teaching, 2018). Still, research shows that students of low socioeconomic status and from historically minoritized racial or ethnic groups are far less likely to have access to engagement-based educational experiences in school than are their wealthier and whiter peers (Valentino, 2018; Windschitl & Calabrese Barton, 2016). Additionally, students from more privileged backgrounds are far more likely to access engaging learning experiences outside of school, even while attending mainstream schools focused more on “achievement” than on engagement (Lareau, 2011). As Lareau (2011) notes, wealthier parents are more able to indulge in “concerted cultivation” of their children through carefully curated extra-curricular activities, and conscious development of their children’s voice and agency (p. 2).

The reasons for this engagement gap are varied and complex: in addition to the phenomenon of concerted cultivation in wealthier families, contributors to this current state of affairs include the proliferation of high-stakes testing, inequities in school funding, lowered expectations for minority students, and high teacher turnover in schools serving students from historically underserved communities (Lareau, 2011; Gardner, 2007; Windschitl & Calabrese Barton, 2016). Perhaps the most disturbing contributor to the engagement gap, however, is the prevailing attitude that engagement-based education is somehow inappropriate or impractical for students impacted by poverty and racism. In their analysis of public reactions to the exposure of a particularly abusive compliance-based urban school, Zirkel et al (2011) found that both the media and the general public tended to justify extreme compliance-based practices with such statements as, “isn’t that what ‘those’ kids need?” (p. 12). What “those kids” need, according to these commentators, is harsh discipline, forced assimilation into white, mainstream culture, and a focus on test scores at the expense of authentic learning or social-emotional development (Zirkel et al, 2011). As the authors explain, the holders of these attitudes “explicitly note that such methods are not warranted for all students, and they imply that should such approaches be used with some students it would be shocking. At the same time, however, this is an approach that is advocated for ‘certain’ children – poor, urban children of color” (Zirkel et al, 2011, p. 13).

It is important to note that compliance-based education does not have to be blatantly abusive to be damaging. In fact, even practices that seem to be engagement-based can often fail to serve students. Recalling a workshop he had given to white educators of Sioux youth, Emdin (2016) writes that his audience members seemed to genuinely love and care about their students, but were still stuck in deficit-based mind sets toward them, asking such questions as “how can we get disinterested students to care about school? Why are our students not excited about

learning? Why aren’t they adjusting well to the rules of school?” (p. 2). These teachers were enthusiastic about and receptive to engagement-based strategies like hands-on activities, guided inquiry, and real life applications. However, Emdin notes that these tools would likely be insufficient to address the root of students’ disengagement, saying, “after all was said and done, I wasn’t sure that the teachers knew or cared about the origin of their challenges: the vast divide that existed between the traditional schools in which they taught and the unique culture of their students” (Emdin, 2016, p. 2).

The attitudes observed by Zirkel et al (2011) require the othering and dehumanization of poor students of color. The ignorance observed by Emdin (2016) requires the equally harmful erasure of these students’ histories and lives. These kinds of beliefs are both inherently racist, and detrimental to the academic and social-emotional growth of the very students that compliance-based urban schools claim to serve. The research cited in our previous white paper affirms the efficacy of Inspired Teaching’s engagement-based philosophy of teaching and learning generally (Center for Inspired Teaching, 2018). Additional research demonstrates that this philosophy is particularly beneficial for students from historically marginalized groups (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008, Mehalik, Doppelt, & Schuun, 2008). A review of the literature reveals three broad steps schools must take to implement this philosophy and close the engagement gap: 1) build strong relationships with students through an asset-based approach, 2) honor and center students’ funds of knowledge and ways of knowing (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2006), and 3) engage students with learning experiences that are meaningful to them, that are relevant to their lives, and that bring them joy. The sections below elaborate on the literature informing these three recommendations.



Build strong relationships with students through an asset-based approach

In order for students to succeed in school and beyond, they must be treated as emerging experts with valuable perspectives to share, and not as problems to be fixed. According to Gardner and Toope (2011), “deficit discourses which label, pathologize, blame, and over-emphasize youth vulnerabilities limit opportunities for students to engage strengths-based subjectivities in school” (p. 87). In some cases, outright pathologizing of students from underserved groups is masked by the popular “grit” view, which Gorski (2016) describes as “a cousin to deficit ideology” (Gorski 2016, p. 383). Proponents of grit suggest that students who have difficulty in school simply need to develop more self control and persistence (Perkins-Gough, 2013). Those who continue to have difficulties are labeled “problematic children,” and blamed for their own struggles (Perkins-Gough, 2013, p. 4). However, as Gorski (2016) notes, grit discourse “ignores the fact that the most economically disadvantaged students, who show up for school despite the structural barriers and the inequities they often experience in school, already are, by most standards, the most gritty, most resilient students” (Gorski, 2016, p. 383). It is therefore the responsibility of teachers and schools to recognize the strength and resilience of these students (Vossoughi, Hooper, and Escudé, 2016).

Whereas deficit and grit ideologies both blame students from historically underserved groups for their difficulties, and belittle their strengths and accomplishments, an asset-based approach allows students to draw and build upon their cultural practices, prior experiences, and inherent talents (Gardner & Toope, 2011). While

students from all backgrounds require the kind of empathy, nurturing, and high expectations inherent in the asset-based approach to teaching (Wender, 2014), it is especially essential for students from traditionally underserved communities to experience asset-based teaching and strong relationships with teachers (Whyte & Karabon, 2016).

Skewed teacher demographics and implicit biases against students of color decrease the likelihood that these students will receive the asset-based pedagogies they need (Musu, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics’ most recent analyses, 80% of teachers in the United States are white (de Brey, Musu, McFarland, Wilkinson-Flicker, Diliberti, Zhang, Branstetter, & Wang, 2019). As McGrady and Reynolds (2013) illustrate, numerous studies of varying student age groups demonstrate that white teachers are both more likely to have asset-based attitudes towards white students, and more likely to hold negative biases against African American students. Their own analysis of a nationally representative sample of approximately 9,000 10th grade students confirmed not only that white teacher bias against African American students persists, but also that some teachers of color hold similar biases (McGrady and Reynolds, 2013). Additionally, Wood, Essien, and Blevins’ (2017) study of over 18,000 kindergarten-aged children suggests that white teachers are also much less likely to build warm, mutually respectful relationships with students of color, particularly black boys, and much more likely to pathologize their behavior and social interactions. These and other studies like them demonstrate that, all too

often, students of color do not receive the same empathy, patience, and attention to learning needs that whiter, wealthier students enjoy (Downey and Pribesh 2004; Ehrenberg, Goldhaber, and Brewer 1995; Morris 2005; Sbarra and Pianta 2001).

Research suggests that African American students are more powerfully influenced by teacher expectations than white students (Ferguson, 2003). This finding is particularly troubling given the prevalence of deficit-based attitudes towards students of color (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004). Additionally, the mainstream education system's continued devaluation of non-white students' cultures and histories reinforces their alienation (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Students impacted by poverty and racism therefore need asset-based approaches even more than students already privileged by race or socioeconomic status. This requires culturally competent teachers who understand the importance of context and culture in students' learning styles and preferred modes of interaction, and who are committed to learning about students and their families and building authentic relationships with them (Gardner and

Toope, 2011).

When students have mutually respectful, supportive relationships with teachers, they are able to commit to and succeed in school (Klem & Connell, 2004). As demonstrated by Muller's (2001) study of over 7,000 10th grade students and their teachers, this is especially true for students deemed by the education system as being "at-risk" of school failure. This study found that when students labeled as "at-risk" perceived that their teachers cared about them, they both expended more efforts on studying, and scored higher on math achievement tests (Muller, 2001). Wood et al (2017) discovered similar effects in their review of the literature on African American, male kindergarten students' relationships with their teachers: their findings suggest that building strong relationships between teachers and students in the early years has positive effects on students' academic and non-academic outcomes later on. This is evidence that, far from being an unnecessary distraction from academics, cultivating strong teacher-student relationships is essential to student success, particularly for those from traditionally marginalized groups.

Lunch Bunch: Going beyond academics to build human relationships

Inspired Teachers know that strong student-teacher relationships form the foundation of meaningful learning. In order to take risks, share ideas, and collaborate with peers and teachers, students must first feel safe in the knowledge that their teacher knows and cares about them as individuals. Fellows in Inspired Teaching's Residency program learn to prioritize relationships from the very beginning of their teaching careers, and frequently implement strategies to improve and deepen their connections with students.

One of these strategies is "lunch bunch"--when teachers invite students to eat lunch with them either individually or in groups. Frequently, Inspired Teachers make it a point to host lunch bunches for students who have challenged them in the classroom, or who have even expressed outright that they do not like the teacher. Inspired Teachers make it clear that lunch bunches are not punishments, and are not times to review academic content. Rather, they are opportunities for teachers and students to get to know one another as human beings, and to see beyond their roles as students and teachers. Sharing a meal and engaging in conversation unrelated to classroom activities both alleviates tension, and provides students and teachers time to get to know one another as individuals. When teachers know their students' interests, strengths, and fears, they are much better equipped to engage them academically.

2 Honor and center students' funds of knowledge and ways of knowing

Students from all backgrounds come into the classroom with their own experiences and expertise, as demonstrated by the “Funds of Knowledge” approach to teaching culturally diverse students. As Gonzáles et al (2006) define it, the Funds of Knowledge approach is based on the premise that “people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (p. ix). According to this approach, successful teaching requires learning about students’ funds of knowledge (ideally through home visits that position the teacher as learner and the family as experts), and then harnessing and building upon that knowledge to help students learn more effectively (Gonzáles, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles, & Amanti, 1993).

Unfortunately, the majority of teachers are less likely to appreciate the funds of knowledge of poor and minority students. According to Whyte and Karabon (2016), “despite a willingness to take up this perspective, for teachers working with minority

and/or under resourced children and families, a disconnect remains between home and school relationships” (p. 208). While the experiences and strengths of white, middle class students are generally valued by the education system, those of poor or minority students are pathologized (Hogg, 2011).

Research shows that when teachers honor students as experts and acknowledge their strengths and contributions, students thrive (Rios-Aguilar, 2010). Delgado Bernal (2002) quotes two Mexican American students who share very different experiences. The first student shares her feelings about a personal essay she wrote for English class that referenced her family’s cultural beliefs and practices. She then shares her teacher’s subsequent negative reaction to the essay: “I started to feel the

discrimination...in the expectations of what you talk about or what you don’t talk about in school. And what’s academic and what’s not academic” (p. 106). The second student shares a contrasting, transformative experience of taking her first Chicano studies course in college,



saying “I wish that somehow I could [teach at] the elementary school ‘cause I think it’s important that we start that early, just giving that gift of giving someone their history....And I don’t think it should even be a gift, it’s a right. It’s a right; unfortunately, it’s not happening [in schools]” (p. 106). These students’ statements show the power of valuing culturally diverse students’ lived experiences.

When students of color and poor students do not succeed on common measures of academic success (usually standardized tests or other assessments centered on norms from white, middle class culture) they are deemed low-achieving (Jencks & Phillips, 2011). When administrators and teachers recognize the flaws in mainstream ways of measuring student learning, students disadvantaged by these testing practices are able to demonstrate their understanding more effectively, in the ways

that make the most sense for them (Noguera, Darling-Hammond, & Friedlaender, 2015). They note that collaborative projects, in particular, have especially beneficial effects for low-income students, students of color, and urban students (Noguera et al, 2015). Another powerful tool for unleashing the capabilities of students from underserved groups is the intentional elevation of student voice in school and community matters: as Baroutsis, McGregor, and Mills (2016) argue, the conscious development of student voice improves both educational and civic engagement. The evidence therefore suggests that when assessment systems that favor white mainstream culture are given less weight, and when culturally diverse students are given a voice in school matters, and the freedom to demonstrate evidence of their learning in ways that build upon their funds of knowledge and ways of knowing, students’ strengths become clear.

Speak Truth: Honoring students’ Funds of Knowledge through student-led civil discourse

Center for Inspired Teaching’s Speak Truth seminars bring together middle and high school students from diverse backgrounds to engage in student-facilitated discussions about contemporary social issues. Students choose the discussion topics, which in the past have included colorism, allyship versus accompliceship, rape culture, and the DACA program. These discussions center students’ lived experiences and honor their expertise, while simultaneously broadening their worldviews by putting them in conversation with other youth who have differing perspectives and experiences.

Speak Truth participants know that they are engaging in powerful and necessary learning: as one participant noted in a post-program survey, “it is an imperative to bring these issues into the classroom; cultural and social literacy is a must-have for all young people.” Another student agreed, saying “education needs to cover EVERYTHING. Leaving out things because of discomfort is doing a disservice to youth.” These discussions also make it clear to students that their voices have value, and that their power extends beyond the classroom. As one student noted, the discussions “really inspired me to get engaged [in social issues], and to not let age be determinate of involvement.” Such learning experiences make it clear to students that their experiences matter, and that their contributions to academic spaces are valuable and necessary.

3

Engage students with learning experiences that are meaningful to them, that are relevant to their lives, and that bring them joy

Experiential, joyful, engaging teaching and learning is the right of all students. However, champions of the no-excuses and grit movements claim that students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have time for joy, and that boredom and stress are appropriate prices to pay for higher test scores and increased graduation rates (Zirkel et al, 2011; Dobbie & Fryer, 2015). However, research shows that eschewing engagement in favor of rote memory-based test preparation is misguided. Although compliance-based, “no excuses” schools are occasionally lauded for their high test scores, a number of studies have shown that such schools’ academic successes come from factors that have nothing to do with their harsh disciplinary practices, factors such as significant amounts of time spent on tutoring, and high academic expectations (Golann & Torres, 2018). There is also evidence that no-excuses schools’ disciplinary practices seem to have negative effects on non-academic outcomes such as social-emotional skills, and intrinsic motivation. (Golann & Torres, 2018).

Fortunately, research shows that students who haven’t succeeded in more conventional settings, particularly students who are disadvantaged by mainstream education practices, can succeed when properly engaged (Wilson, Taylor, Kowalski, and Carlson, 2010). Hertzog’s (2005) qualitative study set out to explore how project-based learning--often used with students identified as exceptionally “gifted”--would work in an elementary school considered to be underperforming, with a low income, predominantly minority population.

The study found that project-based learning effectively engaged the students, and that, once engaged, many students began to display traits often associated with “gifted” children, including intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and high level questioning. Mehalik et al’s (2008) study of over 1000 middle school students found that those who were given the opportunity to learn science by engaging in authentic engineering design projects had greater gains in knowledge and understanding of core science concepts, stronger engagement, and higher retention, than did students who had learned science content through more traditional, scripted lessons. The effects were most pronounced for previously low-achieving African American students (Mehalik et al, 2008).

The integration of arts into instruction can also have particularly strong benefits for students from underserved groups. Ingram and Riedel (2003) found correlations between arts-integrated academic programming and increased achievement in reading and math. These correlations were particularly strong for students whose test scores previously formed the lower end of the achievement gap (Ingram & Riedel, 2003). Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter (2007) also note that the arts can be a powerful resource for incorporating and celebrating diverse cultures in lessons and units. Changing lessons, units, and curricula to reflect the broad spectrum of identities represented by America’s students is another essential tool for ensuring equity in student engagement (Hollins, 2013). The curricula currently used in the majority of schools in the United States is Eurocentric and

Joyful learning: Connecting content to students' lives

Inspired Teachers' classrooms provide numerous examples of students engaged in lessons that explicitly connect academic content to their own lives and experiences. One Inspired Teaching Fellow facilitated his second-grade students' exploration of world geography, immigration, and cultures by inviting students to share about their heritages and family histories. A participant in Inspired Teaching's in-service teacher institute provided a similar opportunity for students to explore their cultures and histories: when teaching students how to utilize the school's online research database, she had them research the geography and history of their own countries of origin. Both of these teachers were meeting all of their districts' requirements for teaching content and skills, while also making the learning meaningful and relevant to students.

dismissive of diverse cultures' contributions to history (Lee & Buxton, 2011).

This does not only result in unengaging coursework; it also reproduces narratives of white superiority (Emdin, 2016). To combat these effects, districts, schools, and teachers must recreate curricula including diverse perspectives and histories. Doing so has been shown to improve students' academic achievement, social emotional skills, and engagement in a variety of subjects including English language arts, science, and social studies. (Wilson, 2016). To be effective, culturally diverse curriculum cannot be limited to annual Black History month units or other occasional events. It must be embedded in all curricula students experience year-round: English curricula must include books from diverse authors; science and math curricula must acknowledge and use discoveries made by people from diverse backgrounds, and social studies must give voice to histories and cultures previously silenced. This inclusion both demonstrates to culturally diverse students that their stories matter, and also teaches white students that theirs are not the only stories worth studying (Hollins, 2013).

The research cited above demonstrates that students who are immersed in activities that fascinate them, give them joy, and relate to their lives achieve better results on all measures of learning. As Zyngier (2008) notes, it is not enough for learning to simply be "fun;" it

must also be "learning over which [students] have ownership; that empowers them to make a difference to their lives" (p.1771) Lee and Buxton (2011) find that students who see real world or personal purpose in their academic work are motivated to persist in completing their projects, and in many cases in taking action even beyond the classroom. One example they cite is of a class of children affected by poverty and homelessness, who were encouraged to take the lead on science-based projects that were relevant to their lives. These students chose to pursue exploration of the sources of pollution in their community, their homeless shelter's food policies, and community gardening projects. An additional example cited by the same authors was of a diverse group of students at nature camp who were assigned to create public service announcements based on the local environmental issue of their choice. As the authors note, "this critical, place-based instructional approach proved to be engaging for young adolescents because it positioned them centrally as actors with the power to make a difference in their local community, while positioning science as a tool to be used in support of their goals. At the same time, students' science content knowledge increased over the course of participation in the 2-week project." (Lee and Buxton, 2011, p. 282). This engagement, as well as the increased content knowledge, is proof that joy fuels learning; it does not detract.



Conclusion: Resources for action

An extensive body of research shows both the benefits of engagement-based education for students from historically underserved groups, and an urgent need to close the engagement gap in education. To help readers get started on implementing this white paper's recommendations to 1) build strong relationships through an asset-based approach to working with students; 2) honor and center students' funds of knowledge and ways of knowing, and 3) engage students with learning experiences that are meaningful to them, that are relevant to their lives, and that bring them joy, Center for Inspired Teaching offers the following resources for districts, schools, and teachers:

1 Build strong relationships with students through an asset-based approach

- The National Alliance for Engagement-Based Education is an initiative of Center for Inspired Teaching and the Astra Center for Innovative Education. The Alliance's 2019 report details the ways in which relationships are essential to engagement-based education. The report, entitled "Radically Reimagined Relationships: The Foundation of Engagement," is available at: <https://inspiredteaching.org/radically-reimagined-relationships-the-foundation-of-engagement/>
- Center for Inspired Teaching's Instigator of Thought Challenge is an online platform that offers teachers powerful ways to build their practice and hone their craft. By completing challenges, teachers receive ideas that are immediately useful and can spark professional learning – at their own pace and in ways they can control. The challenge is currently organized into seven themes. The theme of "know your students...better" is particularly relevant to relationship-building, and can be accessed at: <https://www.instigatorofthought.org/knowyourstudentsbetter>
- The Steinhardt School of Education at New York University has put out a blog post that succinctly addresses the importance of an asset-based approach for educators and policymakers who wish to work towards educational equity. The post can be found: <https://teachereducation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/an-asset-based-approach-to-education-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters/>
- Katrina Schwartz's KQED Mindshift article, "How Teachers Designed a School Centered on Caring Relationships," tells about Social Justice Humanitas Academy, a school in Los Angeles. The school's foundation is its commitment to strong, caring relationships with students, over 90% of whom live in poverty. Students both feel nurtured and fulfilled, and achieve highly on traditional metrics. The article can be found at <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52413/how-teachers-designed-a-school-centered-on-caring-relationships>

2 Honor and center students' funds of knowledge and ways of knowing

- The 2006 anthology, *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*, edited by Norma González, Luis C. Moll, and Cathy Amanti, was “written for educators who are willing to venture beyond the walls of the classroom” to get to know their students and their families. Through learning about students, their families, and their everyday lives, teachers discover that their students already have rich funds of literacy, math, science, and social emotional skills and knowledge that can be channeled into meaningful, culturally responsive classroom experiences and activities.
- Center for Inspired Teaching’s Speak Truth seminars honor students’ funds of knowledge through student-led discussions that put students’ interests and concerns at the center. While in-person seminars are currently held only in the Washington, DC area, virtual seminars allow students from across the country to participate. Find out more on Inspired Teaching’s website: <https://inspiredteaching.org/youth/speak-truth/>
- In the latest (2006) edition of her book *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, MacArthur award winner Lisa Delpit dives deeply into the “cultural slippage” that often happens when white teachers try to engage with students of color. Delpit documents and describes the damage that occurs when educators leave mainstream, Eurocentric ideas about education uninterrogated, and proposes strategies for classroom teachers to correct power imbalances in the classroom.
- Bettina L. Love’s Education Week article, “Dear White Teachers: You Can’t Love Your Black Students If You Don’t Know Them,” makes the point that teachers may have good intentions. Good intentions matter little, however, when teachers do not take the time to learn about their students’ lives and cultures. The article can be found at <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/03/20/dear-white-teachers-you-cant-love-your.html?r=1384706657>



3 Engage students with learning experiences that are meaningful to them, that are relevant to their lives, and that bring them joy

- Center for Inspired Teaching's Real World History class is a year long social studies course open to students in the District of Columbia. The course addresses parts of history that are not generally covered in social studies classes, but which are highly relevant to students of color and their families. During the first semester, students learn about the Great Migration through Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, and then interview an older adult who was a part of the Great Migration. During the second semester, students intern at museums throughout Washington, DC, where they put their historian skills to use, and get to know their home city more deeply. Find out more on Inspired Teaching's website: <https://inspiredteaching.org/youth/real-world-history/>
- Teaching for Change, a partner organization of Center for Inspired Teaching, has a growing library of resources for teachers who wish to engage students in the social justice issues that affect them and their communities. They can be found on the organization's website: <https://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-resources>
- HipHopEd, founded by Dr. Christopher Emdin of Teachers College, Columbia University, connects educators and scholars who wish to challenge the education system to incorporate and elevate youth voice. HipHopEd specifically focuses on Hip-Hop as a powerful teaching and learning tool. More information can be found at their website: <https://hiphoped.com/> Educators can also join HipHopEd's Twitter chats on Tuesdays from 9-10pm ET using the hashtag #HipHopEd.
- Elliot Washor, of Big Picture Learning and the MET Center, writes about the ways in which standardized educational tracks can hinder authentic learning and disadvantage students who did not fit what policymakers consider to be the norm. The article can be found on Education Reimagined's website at <https://education-reimagined.org/what-are-we-losing-by-keeping-learners-on-track/>

Readers might also wish to explore the research informing this white paper. References for these can be found in the Works Cited section.





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