

## **What Kids Love and Hate about School**

### **Documentary Film and Dialogue on Student Voices**

**Today's Purpose:** To encourage participants to reflect on, evaluate, and expand their own mental models regarding academic and behavioral supports for diverse students through listening to student voices as they share their unique perspectives on education.

**Introduction:** How could student voices contribute to school improvement efforts that promote a positive school culture and achievement for diverse learners?

**Small Group Activity:** (Draw a line down the center of a large sheet of chart paper; Write "Love" at the top of one column, and "Hate" at the top of the second column.)

In your groups, have someone record your responses to the following question:

**What do you predict urban elementary school students will say when asked what they love and hate about school?**

**Students' Voices - As you watch the documentary film, take notes in the spaces on page two of this handout:**

"Partnering with students to identify school problems and possible solutions reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate (Kushman, 1997; Levin, 2000; Mitra, 2001, 2004; Rudduck, Day, & Wallace, 1997; Thorkildsen, 1994)."

-Dana Mitra (2005, p. 521)

### **Math and Science**

**“The achievement gap is most pronounced in mathematics and science...even when [students] are successful in math and science in the early years, their confidence and interest often decline later on.”**

-Freeman Hrabowski III (2003)

Raising minority achievement in science and math. *Educational Leadership*, 60(4), p. 44.

### **Reading**

**“When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.”**

-Maya Angelou

### **Homework**

**“Homework studies confuse grades and test scores with learning...if homework doesn't help students to learn better, then it must help them to develop good work habits. (The possibility that it does neither is apparently beyond the realm of consideration.)”**

-Alfie Kohn (2006)

Abusing research: The study of homework and other examples. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(1), p. 17

### **Kids - Bullying**

**“Being bullied is not just an unpleasant rite of passage through childhood. It's a public health problem that merits attention.”**

-Duane Alexander, MD (2001)

Director, National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)

Bullying Statistics: <http://www.atriumsoc.org/pages/bullyingstatistics.html>

**Reading the following excerpt related to School Culture:**

Friend, J., & Caruthers, L. (2009). Cognitive and affective reform in urban elementary schools: Listening to the voices of children. *Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research AERA SIG 2009 Yearbook*.

The expectations of teachers frequently are based on the initial achievement of students or knowledge of their past performance. High expectations of teachers are correlated with student achievement and, in some cases, intelligence quotient scores (Ferguson, 1998; Good & Brophy, 1995; Good & Nichols, 2001; Rosenthal, 1994). Expectations for the achievement of culturally diverse students are often depicted in teachers' behaviors toward students. For example, Casteel (1998), analyzing the behaviors of 16 teachers, concluded that these teachers displayed different degrees of approach and avoidance when interacting with culturally diverse students. White teachers called on Black students more often using direct questions, and they received fewer process questions than their White counterparts. A process question requires an extended answer and is often described as a "why" question. Additionally, teachers gave more clues to White students compared to Black students. White boys received more praise than any other group, while Black boys received less praise than any other group.

Levine (1995) provided a concrete example of how the hidden curriculum marginalizes students and renders them as "more challenged to teach." He noted that the achievement and exclusivity of the dominant mono-culture lies in a "hidden curriculum," where one has to be White to know the hidden rules for success. The hidden curriculum consists of structures of power and authority, teacher expectations of how students will behave and achieve, and student tracking designed to maintain the dominant culture or status quo.

In schools where educators and community members endeavor to reconstruct their work around children's diverse needs, students' voices are heard and their experiences are supported and expanded by skilled professionals who link affective factors to outcomes such as achievement and behavior. In essence, learning is viewed as a socially constructed act that involves establishing relationships with learners, valuing their diverse backgrounds, and helping learners use their voices to construct meaning of the world. (p. 6-7)

**Conclusion: Deconstruct what you saw in the video through a discussion of implications for elementary school educators and other stakeholders.**

**What can you do to provide opportunities for diverse students' voices to be heard?**