Building Community In Our Schools

Facilitator’s Guide

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Justice Matters works to build and support a national racial justice movement working towards transformative education for students of color – and to develop and advocate for a racial justice policy agenda in local schools and on a national level.

The purpose of Building Community In Our Schools module is to:

- To create authentic partnerships among parents, families, teachers, and administrators that lead to success in schools
- To support the creation of an educational culture that values and leverages the assets that all children possess, including children of color
- To understand how we, as members of society, become aware of others, their stories, and why they matter

Context/Target Audience:

The module, Building Community In Our Schools, targets parents, teachers, and administrators through community building exercises designed to highlight the voices of parents where they have, in the past, been unrecognized and unheard. Building Community In Our Schools includes two core workshops provided by Justice Matters, an educational policy organization located in Oakland, California. The workshops include additional exercises and reflections contributed by World Trust. We have provided sections that use film, art, poetry, music, and story as a way to build trust in the community and to access “other ways of knowing.” These multiple modalities are intentionally designed to use the cognitive, emotional, and imaginative aspects of learning. The system of racial inequities is complex, often subconscious, but reinforced in institutional and structural settings. For this reason, we need a multi-layered, holistic approach to ‘crack the codes.’ Each section herein contains suggested exercises that you may use sequentially. However, you may also use any of the sections independently in ways that serve your needs and community, whether you are an individual or working with a group.

Materials: Computer w/Speakers and Internet connection, LCD Projector

PowerPoint Presentation: This facilitator’s guide refers to and will support you in using the PowerPoint presentation that accompanies this Racial Equity Learning module.

Handouts referenced in the directions can be found at the end of this Facilitator’s Guide.

Approximate Time: 4 ½ hours, for a 1-hour module please do section 1 and 3
SECTION 1: Our Stories, Our Experiences: How We Learn

This community-building exercise asks participants to respond to a short story in an effort to articulate how leaving out significant details can create misunderstanding (in this case). In other instances, such misunderstandings can promote injustice.

Learning Goal:

- To recognize that knowledge can be limited when we do not have the entire story

Estimated Time: 15-20 minutes

Instructions: Welcome your group. Read from The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other, Chapter 1, “Ghosts in the Classroom” by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot.

Read this out loud to the class:

“Our stories, when told and honored, can be maps that lead us to understanding our core beliefs about ourselves, our possibilities, our wounds, our triumphs, how we view other people, and, in this case, our values about relationships between parents and teachers or parents and educational institutions.

When we use art to bring a visual representation to our stories, we literally ‘get to see’ what’s been on our minds, what's been guiding us, and what new consciousness we can bring to the table, desk, conference, or meeting at our child’s school. When we can ‘see it’ as a story, we can identify with it and be the storyteller, not the one being told the story. We can then listen to other peoples’ stories with ears, hearts, and minds that understand we are not responding from ‘childhood trauma’ or ‘a system failing.’ We can choose to be present, open, transparent, and authentic.

We have walked, danced, and marched in our own stories for all of our lives. We now get to take steps that move us toward what’s at stake, what’s most precious: our children’s voices and minds, nurtured and guided to their fullest brilliant potential.”

Reflection/Discussion in triads:

1. Think of an example from Sara Lawrence of a core belief embedded in the story. (1 min)

2. Reflection - Please take a moment to remember an interaction where you or your parents felt invisible in school. (1 min)

3. Now share your story with your partners. Also share why you think you remember it; what makes it significant enough to remember. (5 min)

4. With your partners, talk about the core belief(s) that surface as a result of your story; i.e., any messages you may have received, how your parents or you may have been perceived at school, etc. (4 min)

Group Share: Facilitate the discussion: What are some of the experiences that made you feel good or bad about yourself or your family? Your parents’ experiences? Teachers, share an example of your own. (4 min)

After groups have reflected, ask a few groups to share what they discussed.
SECTION 2: Using Art to Address Social Problems: Extreme Experiences All Over the World

Learning Goal:

- To understand how the issue of ‘disappeared’ people is not something that happens only in the ‘third world’; it is a global issue
- To recognize that these stories are a part of a larger system of inequity that undermines our ability to create a healthy world

Estimated Time: Approximately 30 minutes

Instructions: Introduce the video with the following:

Art is a powerful medium that invites us to enter and explore complex issues. In this installation from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo depicts common individuals who were murdered by a government operating in a world of systematized oppression and violence. Salcedo memorializes the disappeared by creating a labor-intensive installation consisting of old, unpaired shoes placed in niches covered in scraps of cow bladder. Empty boxes fill one corner of the room. Salcedo tells us this is “the way the world is going…and it can happen to any of us, anywhere in the world…and it continues to happen.”

Watch the video twice. Instruct the group that as they watch the first time, to pay attention to what they notice and how they feel. Ask them to sit in silence for about 20-30 seconds when the first showing is over. (When the movie is over let there be silence for 20-30 seconds).

http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/210

Group Conversation: What did you feel, see, and/or become aware of while watching this video? Please note: The facilitator may contribute what he/she may have noticed, such as the meaning of only one shoe and that relationship to violence; or the empty boxes stacked up, waiting for the disappeared to come home. (5 min)

Ask the group: What does it mean to have someone disappear? What do you lose when someone is no longer there? (Give people a chance to answer.) Make sure the group understands the following (if they do not reach these conclusions on their own): You lose their voice, their presence; you lose how they have added to your life and/or to your family/community. Has that happened in your life, or to others/leaders in your own community? When someone drops out of school or is taken off to jail, or even killed, they are ‘disappeared’...suddenly not there. Now look at the video a second time.

http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/210

Reflection/Dialogue Questions:

Please ask the following questions and let the participants know that they may silently reflect or take notes in between each question. Allow about 10 seconds for each. If people are writing, you may allow more time:

1. Are you aware of, or have you had, the kind of personal “extreme experience” of someone being ‘disappeared’ from your life (either directly or indirectly)? Have you ever felt
“disappeared”? How does your awareness of this phenomenon make you feel?

2. How have you or how could you memorialize them? Why would it be important to do so? (For example, perhaps someone has dropped out of school, been taken off to jail, or even died).

3. The title of Salcedo’s piece is *Atrabiliarios (Defiant Ones)*. What are ways that we can resist, defy, and call attention to these patterns of ‘disappeared’ in our own communities?

Ask a few people to share, then move on to Section 3.
SECTION 3: Extreme Experiences In U.S. Schools: Our Disappeared

Learning Goal:

- How can we create educational culture and systems that value and leverage the cultural assets that children of color possess?

Estimated Time: 20 – 30 minutes, depending on group size

Instructions: Introduce the clip by reading the following:

People are disappearing from our communities every day. Some drop out of school, some are victims of violence, and some enter America’s over-crowded prison system never to become productive members of our society. Others are not seen or heard in their classrooms and simply give up hope of achieving their dreams. In this module’s video clip, the Executive Director of Justice Matters, Olivia Araiza, talks about her own extreme experiences of being a Chicana in the American public school system.

Watch the clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZekbxxB9vq0

After watching the clip, discuss questions in groups of three or four.

Reflection/Dialogue Questions:

1. What connections can you make between Salcedo’s art, which calls us to look at a violent and painful history, and Araiza’s personal experiences of being invisible and not valued? You may draw on identity, history, and culture.

2. What may be your own or another’s (or others’) extreme experiences of being invisible in schools?

3. Can you think of (or have you experienced) a way in which a school could uphold the vibrancy of a community and ethnicity? How would this bring value to everyone’s lives?

After discussion, each group can share their insights with the larger group before moving on to Section 4.
SECTION 4: In My Shoes Community Mural Project

Learning Goal:

- Discovering collective values to mobilize and empower administrators and teachers in order to create a welcoming environment for all students and families

Estimated Time: 60 minutes, depending on size of the group

Materials: colored markers, clear post-it notes or mailing labels, tape, large wall or white board to hang shoe mural (Optional: projector, speakers, and web access to view video featured in Section 3)

Handouts:

1. Baby Footprint Handouts
2. Large Footprint Handouts
3. Blank Shoe Mural (either printed large or projected and traced)

Instructions: Gather materials. Place an enlarged photocopy of the shoe mural on the wall. (Many local copy centers can do this. Alternatively, project the shoe image onto butcher paper and trace it.) Give each participant these materials: baby footprint, large footprint, clear labels, and colored markers. Welcome the group and introduce the learning goal.

WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

a. Community Building: Baby Steps (10 min)

Ask the group to introduce themselves to the group by writing on one of the Baby Footprints the answer to these questions: What small things can you do to make your voice heard in order to create joyful, life-long learning among our children? What are the baby steps?

b. Core Values Work: In My Shoes Mural (35 min)

Please choose one or two questions from each part of the shoe listed below and answer in a single word or short phrase. Please note: if you have access to different colored stickers or post-it notes, you can use different colors to represent each of the questions asked and the part of the shoe from which they came. Then, labels are placed on the enlarged shoe mural and answers are shared aloud.

The Shoe Speaks

Sole: Orange: On what do you stand? How do you stay balanced? How do you protect or grow your values for your own spiritual life? What is your wish for young people, families, and your community? What would you wish for the teachers’ souls, beliefs, and values? What keeps you going?

Tongue: Green: Who are you? What is your dream? What is your story? Who tells your story? Who listens? What haven’t you said out loud? What does your journey say about you? What do you want to say?

Eyelet: Yellow: Parents are the primary teachers of their children. What is your vision of the schools’ relationships with parents? What have you seen? What haven’t you seen? What would you like to see?

Heel: Purple: Who are your heroes? Who made a way for you? In whose shoes/footsteps do you walk? Are there any experiences in your education journey from which you need to heal?
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Toe: Blue: What does it feel like when your wisdom is not being valued (like when someone steps on your toes)? *(Facilitator note: Use this question to talk about oppression and bring to the surface what it feels like to be silenced, excluded, and not valued.)*

Shoelaces: Pink: What ties us all together? What binds us? What is our knot? How do we keep from coming undone?

c. Commitment/Compromiso: Big Steps *(15 min)*

On the Large Footprint handouts, each participant/group writes own and/or collective commitment to action in response to the questions: What big steps can be taken to make sure your voices are heard and change happens? What is your next step?

In an ending circle, participants share this closing word, or *última palabra*, by voicing their commitment to the group.

Next Steps: Brainstorm things you might do as next steps, e.g. start a parent group to discuss equity issues, or share this mural activity with more parents, students, or another local school or community-based organization.
SECTION 5: **In My Shoes Community Sculpture**

**Learning Goal:**
- Create authentic partnerships between parents, families, and teachers to support all children’s experience of belonging and success in school

**Estimated Time:** 65 minutes

**Materials:** old shoes, Sharpies, plastic spoons, garden stakes, rocks, and Mylar

**Instructions:** Prepare sets of old shoes for each group: one pair for each 4–6 people. On each table, place Sharpies, plastic spoons, garden stakes, rocks, and Mylar. You will also need hot glue or tape. Welcome the group and introduce the learning goal, expressing how important relationship building is to creating just and fair spaces for all our children.

a. **Community Building (10 min)**
Participants introduce themselves with a word and a gesture about good communication between parents and teachers, between parents and students, or between teachers and students.

b. **Sculpture Activity (25 min)**
Break into groups of 4–8 people. Each group creates a communal sculpture out of old shoes, objects, and text to reflect core values.

Use the prompts below to write on spoons, garden stakes, rocks, and Mylar, then affix those objects to the shoes in any way that is artful.

1. When you think about the relationships of schools with families, write on the spoons:
   - How can you feed and nourish the brilliance of families and their leadership? How can this relationship feed you as a leader and your instruction? What can this reciprocity taste like?
   - Place the spoon in the shoe.

2. When you think about the relationships of schools with families, write on the garden stakes:
   - What lessons, values, ideas, or hopes could you help to grow?
   - Place the stake in the shoe.

3. When you think about the relationships of schools with families, write on the mirrored paper:
   - What would you like to see reflected in their (the families or the students) eyes when you speak with them?
   - Place the mirrored paper in the shoe.

4. When you think about the relationships of schools with families, write on the rocks:
   - What are your beliefs about families? What word(s) guides your principles?
   - Place the rock in the shoe.

c. **Gallery Walk (10 min)**
Participants move around the room viewing the sculptures one by one. Sculptors may comment on the elements of their group’s artwork and field questions/comments from the larger group.

d. **Big Steps (20 min)**
Each participant makes a written commitment. Choose three of the following statements and think about incorporating them into our schools, classrooms, and communities. Discuss how you might work with members of your community (parents, teachers, students, administrators, leaders) to create an...
authentic environment where everyone is heard and valued:

- We all have different journeys.
- One size does not fit all.
- We use art as a way to tell our stories.
- We tell stories for survival.
- We make statues, sculptures, and altars any way that honors our own stories.
- We don't just show up; we all come from somewhere.
- We wish, hope, encourage, have opinions, make requests, and demand to be recognized as artists, liberators, listeners, thinkers, and families.

Ask participants to share their ideas of action steps. Some examples might include: sharing your experience with a colleague, families, or co-workers, joining a parent or community social justice group, doing this activity with coworkers, friends, teachers, or families.
SECTION 6: The Poetry in Me Writing Workshop

Learning Goal: We make the road as we walk. How can we use poetry to locate and record one another’s life experiences and paths?

Estimated Time: 45 - 55 minutes

Materials: printed copies of “On the Question of Race” poem

Instructions: Read the following to the group: When we use poetry to bring an auditory representation to our experiences, we literally “get to hear” what’s been on our minds, what’s been guiding us, and what new consciousness we can bring to the table, desk, conference, or meeting. When we can “hear it” as a poem, we can identify with it; we can learn symbolically, which allows us to see things from a broader perspective. We can then listen to other people’s poems with ears, hearts, and minds that know we are not responding from “childhood traumas” or “system failings.” We can choose to be present, open, transparent, and authentic.

Hand out and read aloud the poem “On the Question of Race” by Quique Aviles and Michelle Banks. Give participants time to reflect on the poem in small groups. Ask people to generate their own ‘identifying’ characteristics, values, etc. using the list of questions below. Once they generate their own lists, ask them to share. Then give an example of how those lists might turn into a poem (see example below). Write poems using the format given and then share aloud (voluntary). Reflect.

WORKSHOP: Creating a Poem using “On the Question of Race”

a. Read poem and contemplate (15 min)
Read aloud the poem “On the Question of Race” by Quique Aviles and Michelle Banks, from the book Beyond Heroes and Holidays, edited by Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey.

Participants write (in whatever language is most comfortable) lists of the ancestors and images they carry inside as part of their cultural and family heritage. Draw on visual images that describe the place that they or their families feel most at home, smells that remind them of home, feelings that suggest home, and sounds they would hear there. Explain how they can now take their lists and craft them into a poem. Reflect upon and write answers to these questions:

- How many cultures, worlds, and languages do you straddle?
- Who lives in you?
- Which places live in you?
- What times live in you?
- Smells? Voices/Sounds? Foods?
- Dreams? Memories?
- Other?

b. Construct personal poem (15 min)

Once the list making is complete, each participant writes a poem. Each poem starts with the “On the Question of Race” format:

They ask me to write down my race. And I think and think, very seriously
and consider writing down the truth and having my answer read.
____________________ lives in me…____________________

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___________________ is a place that lives in me…__________
___________________ is a time that lives in me…__________

Example:

I have a grandmother I call Tita who lives in me. In our home she commands great respect, so when she invites me upstairs to her room, I am very happy. Her room is away from the others and very quiet. Inside, it smells of burning candles and feels like church. There, in front of the little altar next to her bed, she teaches me to pray in Spanish and, later, how to sew a hem with a stitch called the cat’s tail.

I have a place that lives in me where I can be very still. This place is under a fuchsia bush, and it smells of moist dirt and has tall green grass all around. I can press my face close and breathe in the richness of mother earth.

I have a time that lives in me when a boy gave me a ride on the back of his bike. We rode through a noisy, open market and a beautiful park while he told me, with great pride, of the mysteries of this place called Mexico City.

c. Sharing poems (15 min)

Participants share their poems with others. As they listen, ask them to think about commonalities and differences in the poems. Then, reflect on the following:

1. What was it like to write the poem?
2. What was it like to read your poem aloud?
3. What did you learn from the other poems you heard?

Once people have shared, go around the circle and ask people to give one last word, la última palabra, to express what they are feeling right now, after this poetry writing workshop.

Thank you for participating.
Baby Footprints
Large Footprints
izakura's
AIR JORDAN
V Template
On the Question of Race
by Quique Aviles and Michelle Banks

1. They ask me to write down my race
and I think and think
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

I have a dark man
listening to a bolero
lighting a match
inside this body

I have an old lady
showing pictures to her children
talking in a language called Spanish
inside this body

2. They ask me to write down my race
and I think and think
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

I have a cargo of stolen people
crossing the Atlantic
inside this body

I have a brown man
he is painting a picture
we share a secret
it hides in the memory of a kiss

3. I have a drunk man
asking directions
he wants to go home
wants you to tell him
which highway leads to Cuzcatlán

I have a kid in the fifth grade
who says he’s American
"but my father’s from El Salvador
and my mother is black"

4. I have an old man
he is singing patience
passing on the tradition
through the rhythms
in his hands

a school girl in Bahía
and a young man cutting cane
just outside of Santo Domingo

I have all these voices
that have not learned to speak orisha
sawas ancestors
all these rhythms
tales these languages
these songs

5. They ask me to write down
my race
and I think and think
very seriously
consider writing down
the truth
and have my answer read

6. I have my tía Menche
tía Zoila
a mi abuela
a la señora con chile
a la papa sub lady
and Lorenzo’s inside my body

7. I have my Aunt Josephine
my Uncle James
and my grandfather’s poetry
Miss Mary Mack
a royal crown
and king of the mountain
inside this body

8. I have 18th & Columbia Rd
15th & Irving Petworth
Shaw
Julio Iglesias
the Jackson 5
and Lilo Gonzalez
inside this body

9. I have Rare Essence
that E-flat boogie
Five Blind Boys
Sarah Vaughan
the Shrimp Boat
and a Yaque de los dos song
inside this body

10. I have a son
named John Enrique
who is black and brown
and human and tender

I have you inside this body

11. I have a blanket of memory
woven from my grandmother’s laughter
inside this body

12. But I stop
and simply write down

13. “Hispanic”

14. “Black”