



Developing Responsive Classroom and School Communities for Students with Interrupted Education: NNER October 2018
Presenters: Dr. Lisa Auslander & Magdalen Beiting

Activity:

Read one or more of the quotations from the interviews.

- How can a student's life outside of the classroom impact his/her learning in the classroom?
- What are some potential setbacks SIFE might bring with them into their context?
- What are ways we can provide access to SIFE in our classrooms and schools to create a more democratic, safe learning environment?

Role of Life Outside the Classroom

Drugs: There was somebody who was recruiting them (Bridges students) to do like an Amway drug thing. That was a real safety concern and those kids are still, they can see the glittery money, street cred and their literacy is not propelled forward, so I'm afraid we might lose those particular students, at least some of them (District Administrator, School A)

Basic Needs: In my country, no have money for this: for eat food, no have money for help my family, but in this country, if I work, I can help my family. (Student, School A)

Gang Violence: So there, I don't know how to say in English, they want to kill other people. And some persons, they want to kill the little kids, and you can't stay long because, how do you say, they want to hurt you. (Student, School B)

(I have one student) who's being approached by gangs. Someone not coming to school for a week because they're scared to come to school because they're being approached by gangs. (Catherine, Teacher, School A)

Border crossings: I had one student who crossed the border pregnant, 14 or 15 years old, and lasted 3 days with no food or water. And that alone just made me think and change my ways of how to present and not "oh you didn't bring your homework? What do you mean you didn't bring your homework....not knowing what the situation is at home. Did they have a hot meal? Are they working until a certain time? Are they taking care of their younger brother or sister? Are they taking care of their own child? (Teacher, School A)

I mean these are 15 year olds, you know, girls and boys, that travel for six to eight weeks at a



time, by foot, by bus through desert, swimming across the Rio Grande These are our kids.
(Teacher, School A)

Being Undocumented: We have undocumented students in our school, some of them came into school without having an attorney, and so I worked to make sure that they had someone representing them when they had to go in. You know, undocumented students who are in detention centers have to go in to these mass docket court appearances every few months, which to me is problematic because they're pulled out of school multiple times a year to go stand in court and say "yeah, I'm still here" and then they send them home. I took two students to a - there's a center specifically Central American support in Williamsburg. So we went there and they were set up with attorneys. Usually, students are set up with attorneys, sort of, in their first court appearance, but for some reason, they were not. And then after the immigration ban, we brought in a volunteer attorney. And she came and she spoke to families during parent-teacher conferences, and answered questions, and also gave them some advice. And that's an on-going process that we're sort of trying to muck through and sort out. (Teacher, School C)

They have come from a host of backgrounds. Many of them having worked, held, supported, or carried a full-time job or worked many hours, had many responsibilities, so they bring all of that to us. We learn from them. (Administrator, School A)

Some kids are working through the night. Some students are in group homes. Students are exposed to English outside of school, students are locked in rooms outside of school. I have one girl who flourished because she's living in a group home, they speak English. But then there's a student who the parents don't realize he's illiterate and lock him in his room every day. Or they don't ask him how his day was. (Teacher, School A)

Role of Counselors

The students come in and just the same as us, they need absolutely everything. They come in and the guidance counselor has to spend so much time with the new entries just getting them situated. Reading through their records, finding out what they have, what they need. Other things come up too. Some of our high school kids may have children at home, so sometimes it's childcare. Sometimes health things come up. When you're sitting that closely with somebody who you finally meet, they start asking them about getting the bus and all those things, other things come up. It's not just getting them situated in school. They bring lots of other baggage with them. When you start asking them if they are here with a parent, it's not a parent. It's somebody whose house they're living in. You find out a whole lot and then you have to handle those situations. Where our counselors might have another plan for the day, they come in and there's three parents waiting for them, three new students, so she's got to drop everything on her agenda and tend to the students. (Administrator, School A)

Having guidance staff that really understands the purpose and the trajectory of what happens



and why kids are placed there and where they go afterwards is pretty darned important." (AP, School B)

Lack of Positions: We have one guidance counselor and she has like a load of 500. (Teacher, School A)

We have asked for additional counselors and we haven't been approved for that. Even our own guidance staff, they cut the support in terms of bilingual social work. Even though we've proposed all of those things, we don't have the sufficient support in those areas. (Administrator, School A)

One of the reasons for that is that we have to eliminate many guidance counselors to hire teachers because of the increased population,.. They (Superintendents) have a task force and they were asking the Deputy Commissioner, for this kind of funding and that it's needed in this building, in this district definitely, we need guidance counselors and social workers, we don't have enough to deal with all of the situations that we have here in the district. (District admin, School A)

Creating & Sustaining and School and Classroom Culture

Addressing Stereotypes: Okay, one of the things that I would like to see, and this is something that I'm trying to do, is I'd like to be sure that everyone really understands what the students go through. And I would like for everyone to be sensitive to this, especially with what is happening with the election. I'm just talking about being more sensitive to their needs. And I do feel that our own teachers are very sensitive to the students, but I'm talking about the community, the actual community, our community. I would like to see that everyone embraces our population...So, for example, I hear a comment: you know, we have to build a wall up in Brentwood, that's where the wall has to be built. (District Admin, School A)

Scheduling. The key thing to allow that to happen is that we also provide a lot of built-in time during the regular schedule for staff to have those conversations. For example, the interdisciplinary teams meet twice a week, an hour each session. Our departments meet once a week, and we do our best to create schedules where the majority of the people in the department share the same preps so that they can informally work with each other. (Principal, School B)