PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER
Our Practice of Respect and Community Building

1. Create a hospitable and accountable community. We all arrive in isolation and need the generosity of friendly welcomes. Bring all of yourself to the work in this community. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed as well. Hospitality is the essence of restoring community.

2. Listen deeply. Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.

3. Create an advice free zone. Replace advice with curiosity as we work together for peace and justice. Each of us is here to discover our own truths. We are not here to set someone else straight, to “fix” what we perceive as broken in another member of the group.

4. Practice asking honest and open questions. A great question is ambiguous, personal and provokes anxiety.

5. Give space for unpopular answers. Answer questions honestly even if the answer seems unpopular. Be present to listen not debate, correct or interpret.

6. Respect silence. Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker, as well - be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have said.

7. Suspend judgment. Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.

8. Identify assumptions. Our assumptions are usually invisible to us, yet they undergird our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.

9. Speak your truth. You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Own your truth by remembering to speak only for yourself. Using the first person “I” rather than “you” or “everyone” clearly communicates the personal nature of your expression.

10. When things get difficult, turn to wonder. If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”

11. Practice slowing down. Simply the speed of modern life can cause violent damage to the soul. By intentionally practicing slowing down we strengthen our ability to extend nonviolence to others—and to ourselves.

12. All voices have value. Hold these moments when a person speaks as precious because these are the moments when a person is willing to stand for something, trust the group and offer something they see as valuable.

13. Maintain confidentiality. Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions held in the group. Allow what is said in the group to remain there.

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Institute with considerable help from the works of Peter Block, Parker Palmer, the Dialogue Group and the Center for Renewal and Wholeness in Higher Education.
The Mindful Gift of the PRINCIPLES

Each morning I sit quietly and invite stillness into my life. This is a radical act. I meditate to open my heart to whatever arises and to free my mind from the biases that diminish me and my relationship with others.

Mindfulness is an open invitation to examine our lives, to slow down and pay attention to our thinking, our emotions, and our bodily sensations. And through this careful examination, we begin to uncover how we treat ourselves and others. We notice how we react, cruelly or kindly, to our own actions and the actions of others. We may see for the first time how our actions are directed by internal biases from past conditioning and not by the situation at hand. Seeing our behavior with clarity becomes the first step in conscious awareness, and this clear seeing creates a precious wedge of awareness between the situation and our reaction. In this space, we have time to choose a more skillful response, unfettered by the ghosts of past scripts, and instead guided by compassion, curiosity, and kindness. Living an awakened life is the gift a mindfulness practice offers us and the gift bestowed on us by practicing the Principles for How We Treat Each Other.

In both the Principles and in mindfulness, we learn to embrace silence and see non-doing and journeying inward as essential to awakening. We learn to sit in community and alone, examining ourselves to discover our truths so that we can speak them to others with compassion and honesty. We learn to listen fully without judgment, turning to curiosity when judgment arises and saying, “I wonder why she said that? I wonder why I reacted that way?”

These questions and practices create a container for thoughtful reflection and conversation, allowing the soul to show up. They require discipline and steadfastness as well as patience and self-compassion. For as we practice opening our hearts, we sometimes shut down. We fall back into old patterns of judging and criticizing ourselves and others, for being different, for not measuring up. And in this moment of despair at our human lapses, we can turn gently inward and say with kindness, “That’s okay. Many people feel this distress. Change is difficult. You are loved, just as you are.” In accepting ourselves, we learn to accept others, allowing all of us the space to grow.

The Principles for How We Treat Each Other invite us to live our lives with present moment awareness in service to creating the change we wish to see in ourselves and in the world. They support us in creating a hospitable, compassionate community that seeks to welcome all, value all, and hear all through discipline and gentleness, strength and flexibility, accountability and compassion. And, in the mud of these tensions, the lotus of peace and justice blooms.

Celine Kavalec-Miller is an English Professor at Valencia College as well as the Academic Coordinator at PJI. She is a qualified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) instructor, trained through the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness Teacher Training program.
A LOOK INSIDE:
The Peace and Justice Institute Academy for Teachers’ Influence on Participant Professional Practices

By Jennifer Sanguilliano & Rachael Mack
The Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) Academy for Teachers is a weeklong workshop that focuses on creating more inclusive, respectful, compassionate and loving classrooms and citizens. Throughout this five-day professional development workshop, participants explore their own identities, hidden biases, and life experiences in order to discover their impacts on the selection and delivery of curriculum and student engagement. Participants engage in selected reading, written-reflection, experiential activities, and dialogue while identifying ways to expand inclusion and create safe spaces for learning.

PJI received funding from Wells Fargo in 2018 to analyze the impact of the PJI Academy for Teachers on participants’ instructional, personal, and professional practices. Twenty-three OCPS faculty members representing Academic Center of Excellence (ACE) downtown K-8; Boone High School; Early Learning Coalition; Evans High School; Orange County Academy K-12; Palm Lake elementary; Park Maitland K-6; and Princeton Elementary, participated in the PJI Academy for Teachers (see Table 1). This study involved eleven of the alumni and consisted of participating in focus group interviews and responding to a brief questionnaire (see Table 2). The teacher focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers, and the comments were organized into three emerging themes, (1) Principles as a Guide, (2) Relationships in the Classroom, and (3) Influence of Training on Professional Practices. The following highlights the results of the evaluation, emphasizing the teachers’ experience as a PJI graduate.

THE PRINCIPLES AS A GUIDE

The Peace and Justice Institute promotes Principles for How We Treat Each Other, Our Practice of Respect and Community Building (The Principles) throughout their curriculum. A major finding of this evaluation was that graduates of the Academy for Teachers are utilizing the Principles as a form of guidance in their personal and professional lives. This speaks to their knowledge of respect and community building which are the fundamental components of the practices and language taught at the PJI Academy. It was identified that in addition to integrating these Principles into participants’ home life by serving as a moral compass for promoting positive behaviors, they also prepared teachers for difficult conversations that related to race, privilege, and politics through methods that challenged them to unpack their own privileges and encouraged them to promote justice by taking action.

A seminal quote that highlights the impact of the Academy on equipping teachers with tools needed to engage in honest conversations surrounding sensitive subjects after exploring one’s own identity, hidden biases, and life experiences as part of the PJI Academy for Teachers workshop is expressed below.

“I got to challenge myself a little bit too about cultures and lifestyles and things that I didn’t know very much about. I probably would have been a little nervous to like step into that water in fear of, ‘Oh, I might offend someone, or I might say the wrong thing, so I’ll just avoid it altogether.’ And so, I feel like with the Academy, like I was able to find language and ways to lead those discussions really positively and not be afraid to kind of go there and explore some of that.”

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As it relates to the Principles as a Guide, the PJI Academy for Teachers shows participants that the core of promoting peace and justice is starting with one’s self, which might be the program’s most important contribution to creating more inclusive, respectful, compassionate and loving classrooms and citizens.

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM

As the teachers discussed the personal and professional changes that stemmed from their experiences at PJI Academy for Teachers, one theme emerged, the change in relationship between the teacher and their students. A high school teacher, Ms. B, reflected on the change sharing that her classroom “was kind of like a home environment and I gave autonomy to the students... they helped me do attendance and they help the autonomy in the classroom.” Many talked about how they celebrate student success, heritage, and birthdays, while others explained that by taking the time to suspend judgment and check in with students, they created a stronger bond with their students.

While teachers have always been considered community role models, PJI Academy alumni discussed how they became more mindful of their role in their school, and the influence they had on the students around them.

I realized that our students are watching every move I make. Am I going to model those principles? Am I going to be a role model for them? But they’re observing. And when I was home with my ankle injury, Ms. A’s class made little love notes for me and they wrote, I love how you do this or how you do that. But one of her students said, ‘I love how you’re careful with everyone that you meet’. I was blown away. This was a second-grader. ‘I love how you’re careful with everyone’, that was so impacting to me and really brought home that they’re watching (Mrs. M).

The relationships that are formed between the students and the teachers changed the classroom dynamic and created a more welcoming and accountable environment.

One of the most exciting changes that occurred in classrooms, however, was the change in the student-student relationships in participant...
Influence of Training on Professional Practices

As an overall evaluation of the PJI Academy for Teachers, another staple finding was based on the influence of the PJI training on participants’ professional practices in regard to classroom management and curriculum improvements. As it relates to classroom management, participants associated the outcomes of using the Principles as a foundation for respectful engagement to character development for their students, and correspondingly the mindfulness activities taught in the Academy as appropriate restorative justice approaches towards correcting students when rules were broken. As it relates to curriculum improvements the inclusive Emily Style’s (1989) framework of Windows and Mirrors, where students are able to see themselves within the curriculum (mirror) and are exposed to others (windows), was a seminal component of PJI Academy’s training. This resulted in participants being more deliberate about incorporating content, texts, and activities into their classrooms that provided insight into students’ interests and personal experiences. Furthermore, participants noted that higher classroom morale existed when students were presented with activities that represented their various cultures and a variety of perspectives.

Conclusion

The overall response to the PJI Academy for Teachers was positive and appeared to have made an impact within the participants’ personal and professional life. There is substantial evidence that the participants are using the Principles within their classrooms, and the strategies and knowledge gained during the summer program have greatly influenced their professional practices.

UCF Doctoral Candidates in Public Affairs and Education, Jennifer Sanguiliano and Rachael Mack conducted this study. To protect the confidentiality of the participants in this evaluation, this study used pseudonyms. For further information regarding the PJI Academy for Teachers please contact pjiacademy@valenciacollege.edu

“...This is Sophia’s time and she’s choosing not to use it. We still need to respect the fact that she has a voice and this is her time... Eventually those kids [like Sophia] would become comfortable with filling that time... So in that way, we really got to hear everybody’s voice. It did become like a community and everybody was a lot more welcoming.”

classrooms. Teachers noted that following the integration of the PJI Principles their classrooms were beginning to resemble small communities. This feeling spanned grade levels, from Ms. A, a second-grade teacher, sharing her morning classroom routine:

So, every morning they’re greeting someone from the class and, we have a little sharing time... This is an important piece of what I’m building, an accountable and respectful community. And just the other day one of the students said, "you know, I feel like our class really likes each other".

Mrs. B, a high school teacher, discussing having new students enter her classroom, addresses the value of building community:

We would get new kids throughout the year, 'okay, today we have a new neighbor that’s coming into our community'… one of my 10th graders told me that they were a little nervous about coming into a new environment and that they felt like they just kind of got absorbed and, and it wasn’t weird.

PJI introduced multiple strategies, including McIntosh’s Serial Testimony, to help create a community atmosphere. During Serial Testimony, each participant gets a designated time to share their personal testimony, or story, while also reinforcing the skill of listening deeply to others and connecting on a deeper level. Ms. D, an elementary school teacher, used this strategy in her classroom:

I’m like, because this is Sophia's time and she's choosing not to use it, we still need to respect the fact that she has a voice and this is her time... Eventually those kids [like Sophia] would become comfortable with filling that time... So in that way, we really got to hear everybody's voice. It did become like a community and everybody was a lot more welcoming.

These examples and the rest of the focus group responses serve as a testimonial to the magnitude of impact the weeklong training had on the participants and their schools.
### Table 1
Grade Levels and Roles of All PJI Summer Academy for Teachers 2018 Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
Participant Teaching Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in the Classroom</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 years</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 6 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research project was funded by Wells Fargo.
A Transformative Experience: One Teacher’s Testimony

By Dr. Alecia Blackwood

When I first started teaching in one of Florida’s urban public schools, I almost quit because it was challenging for me to support the diverse students’ social and emotional needs while teaching them the academic content. I felt like my teacher preparation program did not equip me with the skills to teach culturally diverse students. The students were disrespectful and disorderly, and I was being pressured by the principal to rectify the situation. The principal criticized my lack of management skills, but she did not offer any practical help. I was left to figure it out on my own. During a random classroom walkthrough, the principal explicitly told me that I needed to “get my act together” in two weeks. I was unable to “get my act together,” so the principal removed me from the classroom. I was devastated! I felt like my dreams to become a good teacher were falling apart. Yes, this was my story 16 years ago!

In the early 2000s, I relocated from New York City to escape the traumatic experiences of 9/11; however, reflecting, I unknowingly brought my traumatic experiences and transferred those experiences in my teaching practices. My experiences were wrapped up in who I was as an educator. It was not until the following year that my teaching skills began to improve because I attended a workshop on culturally responsive teaching and became more self-aware.

To further understand my journey as an educator, I decided to do a self-study during my seventh year of teaching. The goal of the self-study was to better understand what the observers were witnessing in my teaching practices. For example, some of my colleagues would refer to my classroom as the “zen classroom.” Many university professors were impressed with my teaching techniques when they visited my class. For example, a research professor in South Africa observed me teaching one day and said, “you teach in the spirit of Ubuntu.” Unaware of Ubuntu’s meaning at that time, I went on a quest to understand Ubuntu’s philosophical concept and how it had a positive impact on the classroom environment.

The self-study focused on how culturally responsive teaching strategies impact students’ learning. Gay (2010) defined “culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p.31). Although I was intentional about using culturally responsive strategies in my class, the observers saw something unique and different in my actions and my students. For example, the students in my 3rd grade classroom were respectful, compassionate, and had a strong sense of community. They were caring, peaceful, and hospitable to each other. A self-study analysis confirmed that as the facilitator of learning, the shifts happened in my practice when I became more culturally competent. Cultural competence is “the ability to extend oneself, form authentic relationships and understand, communicate, and effectively interact with diverse others” (Ukpokodu, 2016, p.43).

As an educator, I created a safe environment where students were validated, affirmed, and dignified as human beings. I acknowledged the humanity in each of them. Ukpokodu (2016) posited when we validate others’ humanity, we, in essence, validate our own humanity. For instance, I taught the students the importance of not devaluing and dehumanizing each other. They learned about the importance of tolerance and respect in the morning meetings. Morning meeting is a structured part of our day when students learn how to build a strong classroom community. In the morning meetings, we talk about Ubuntu. In its simplest meaning, Ubuntu is an African concept from the Bantu languages in Southern Africa, which loosely means “Humanness.” Ubuntu is an all-inclusive worldview that considers values shared across cultures and encompasses the concepts of care, compassion, empathy, honesty, hospitality, respect, and tolerance (Biraimah, 2016; Letseka, 2012). Archbishop Desmond Tutu succinctly explained it when he posited that a person with Ubuntu

To fully understand the “connectedness of the heart,” it is incumbent upon us to first understand ourselves and build authentic relationships with others in the spaces that we share. As educators, this is what we are called upon to do in the business of teaching and learning.
feels diminished when others are humiliated, oppressed, and treated as less than their human worth. In the African cosmology, “Ubuntu means I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Ukpokodu, 2016, p.106). This shows that as humans, we are interconnected, and what we do has a direct impact on others. Through the knowledge of Ubuntu, I had a deeper understanding of self, and I created learning spaces in which “community of truth” is practiced and where both the students and I were able to express what Parker Palmer refers to as the “capacity for the connectedness of the heart” (Palmer, 1998, p.92). To fully understand the “connectedness of the heart,” it is incumbent upon us to first understand ourselves and build authentic relationships with others in the spaces that we share. As educators, this is what we are called upon to do in the business of teaching and learning.

The Peace and Justice Institute at Valencia College has designed and implemented a unique program that teaches educators how to transform their lived experiences to become more culturally competent, the PJI Academy for Teachers (PJIAT). PJI has revolutionized how to apply sociocultural theories by presenting a comprehensive approach that will help educators transform their practice. The PJIAT workshops are grounded in the belief that all students are humans that can excel in their academics if their humanity is placed front and center in their learning. Evident in PJIAT’s conceptual framework are sociocultural theories, including Ubuntu pedagogy and Mezirow’s transformative learning theory.

Ubuntu pedagogy is a transformative framework that uses a humanizing approach to help engage the students by putting their humanity at the forefront before teaching academic content. A significant part of Ubuntu pedagogy is that teachers must be self-aware, examine personal biases, build authentic relationships with students, and strengthen communication and collaboration (Blackwood, 2018; Ukpokodu, 2016). Transformative learning theory is a learning process that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discerning, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 2000). Throughout the workshop, participants were engaged in critical reflection and discourse. Mezirow (2000) explains that when people are involved in this type of critical reflection process and discourse, it leads to the transformation of habits of mind, heart, and action.

At the weeklong summer program, participants learned about the PJI principles, explored their own identity, hidden bias, and unpacked life experiences to discover their impact on the delivery of schools’ curriculum. Throughout the program, they also learned the importance of understanding self, building authentic relationships with students, and how to use trauma-informed approaches to build a strong community and connection.

Furthermore, the readings, written reflections, experiential activities, and dialogue contributed to the educator’s transformative experiences. Research has shown that a significant number of teachers who participated in PJIAT reported that the experience transformed their teaching practice and expanded their frames of reference (Sanguiliano & Mack, 2020).

It was evident from my experience that a systematic inquiry-based process guided the overall design of the program. The workshop’s facilitators were intentional with planning, questioning, and guiding the participants through critical reflection. Pre-service and in-service teachers can benefit from the pedagogical tools and theoretical frameworks that PJI introduces to help them create learning spaces that humanize all learners.

Alecia Blackwood has a doctoral degree in education from the University of Central Florida. She was a recipient of the 2017 Fulbright-Hays Scholar award for Namibia and Botswana. She is an active community leader, an instructional coach at a charter school, and an adjunct professor of the New Student Experience at Valencia College.

References


Teachers have the unique opportunity to shape a generation, to instill knowledge and values, and impact the future. Education is often considered to be the great equalizer, where students are taught and assessed on the same curriculum and standards. But what happens when the standards are not enough, or leave out entire groups of people? How do teachers ensure that every student feels that they are valued and important? I began my journey into public education nine years ago as a middle school world history teacher. As a first-year teacher, I remember sticking to the state standards; after all, I had eight civilizations and 4,000 years of history to cover and the standards were the backbone of the district end of year test. After that year I started to wonder about the information that was not being included in the standards. What voices and histories were absent from the curriculum? How does this affect the students, and what was I, as a teacher, able to do?
After four years in the classroom, and four more years working as a graduate research assistant in gifted education equity research, I decided to devote my UCF PhD dissertation to answering these questions.

I started with looking at previous research into missing voices in the curriculum. In a study of history standards in nine states in 2008, Journell found that only two of the states included Harriet Tubman, and three of the states listed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the only influence within the Civil Rights standards. One state completely neglected to recognize Dr. King in their US History curriculum. In Florida, Latinx, a person of Latin American origin or descent, individuals make up 26% of the state population, but are only represented in 68 of the 1,186 social science standards for K-12 education (.05% of the standards, Davis, 2018). In Texas there are only six references to Hispanic/Latinx Americans and no mention of Asian Americans or Native Americans as important historical figures in contemporary American History standards (Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012). The list went on, and included the absence of voices of people of color in language arts, math, science, and the arts. These standards not only failed to acknowledge the importance and achievements of individuals of color, but created an incomplete view of the diverse world.

After discovering the significant issue of missing voices in curriculum standards, I began to research how the state curriculum influenced the day to day classroom. Unfortunately, the state standards often translate directly to the daily lessons. Like my first year in the classroom, many teachers rely on the standards to determine what happens in the classroom. The Center for Education 2016 survey, for example, indicated that out of the more than 3,000 public school teachers studied, 78% of math teachers and 68% of English/Language Arts teachers reported receiving curriculum directly from their district that complied with state mandates. In Mississippi, a study of 107 teachers reported that 96% of them felt that student achievement of test scores had the greatest influence on their daily teaching (Volger, 2005). If the information is not on the test or in the standards, it is left out of the classroom.

While identifying issues with the curriculum and state standards is relatively easy, it is far more difficult to address the problem. Research has suggested that students who feel connected to the curriculum had a higher sense of achievement and academic potential, greater feelings of confidence and motivation, and an increase in school and civic engagement (Chun & Dickson, 2011, Hubert 2013, Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Changing the curriculum, however, is not enough. Teachers need to feel capable and empowered to teach such a curriculum and comfortable supplementing the inadequate state standards. When teachers have a high sense of agency, meaning that they feel that they can enact change in their classroom, they feel empowered to supplement the curriculum with information that meets the needs of their students. This suggests that if teacher education focused first on increasing feelings of teacher agency and then on developing an inclusive curriculum, classrooms could become more equitable for all.

Fortunately, there is a program in Central Florida that provides this form of professional development. The Peace and Justice Institute Teachers Academy develops inclusive and socially just pedagogical practices. This innovative professional development for educators, the PJI Teachers Academy, disrupts the traditional approach to teacher development by beginning with the heart of the teacher and an in-depth analysis of personal beliefs, biases, and privilege, before addressing curricular concerns, inclusive and social justice education, and trauma sensitive and restorative practices, including mindfulness.

The final step of my research included interviewing 13 Teachers Academy alumni about their experience with the Academy,
their classrooms, and their professional practice. Nearly every teacher described feeling more confident in supplementing and reimagining their curriculum, rethinking classroom management, and transforming daily lessons to meet the needs of their students. Ms. Adria credited Teachers Academy with changing her classroom and her professional practice, “I know I am a better listener; I have more patience with the students and staff. I just feel like I can ‘deal’ with situations better… I have the tools to do it.”

The teachers also discussed changes to their curriculum. Ms. Stella explained, “I would start 11th grade American literature with John Smith and the settlers coming in, and then after going to Teachers Academy, I realized, no, I have to start with Native Americans. I have to get their voices heard first.” Others, like chorus teacher Ms. Bea, talked about the importance of incorporating student background into the course material:

We talked about some of the big ones that they need to know, Beethoven and Mozart, but especially as we moved into modern music, we talked a lot about those important Black, African American, and Latin American influencers in music so that they could see themselves in it.

Middle school science teacher Mrs. Iman, who spoke multiple languages, would engage her immigrant students in their home language. Dr. Turtle, a high school Spanish teacher, had a map on her wall that highlighted countries where her students were born. These techniques stem from the strategy Windows and Mirrors Style (1988) which is discussed during Teachers Academy sessions. The goal of Windows and Mirrors is to ensure that the curriculum provides a window into other cultures and reflects the experience of the students. This ensures that all students feel that their voices, and the voices of people who look and sound like them, matter. Ms. Supreme explained the impact of this strategy in her classroom:

The most impactful strategy for me was the ‘Windows and Mirrors’ because it helped me to see that even though my students are learning... Just making those connections with my students has made a complete difference between what I saw my students accomplish this year and what they were able to accomplish the previous year. Last year was my first year in world history, I literally felt like I was just talking at them. I was talking at them and they were writing down notes. But this year it felt like they were actually able to make some connections, and they were able to express themselves a lot more because they felt more connected to the content.

This changed the classroom dynamic as each teacher noted that their classrooms grew to resemble a family more than a group of disconnected students. Their students were more engaged, had higher rates of participation in class activities, and an overall improved relationship with their peers and teachers. Finally, the Academy reminded them why they were in the classroom and reignited their passion for teaching and working with students.

Dr. Jenni Sanguisuliano Lonski is a former middle school teacher and has worked to combine her research with practical classroom experience. She has presented at multiple conferences, and has research interests in education equity, teacher professional development, gifted education, and social reproduction theory in education.

References:


PJι SUMMER 2021

TEACHERS ACADEMY

PJι Teachers Academy is a week-long intensive program designed for educators by educators. This immersive cohort-based program supports teachers in reflecting on their lives and current practices with an eye to deepening equity in their hearts, minds, and classrooms. Based on the latest neuroscience and teaching literature, participants will explore topics such as privilege, race, gender, trauma, resilience, empathy, mindfulness, and missing histories while also building relationships and community with others. Connect back with your love for teaching and share your experience and expertise with others as you move beyond compliance to connection in your vocation and with your students. Become a champion of peace and justice.

FIND REGISTRATION INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE:
bit.ly/PJITeachersAcademy