

Final Project 2

HTH GSE

Dr. Michelle Pledger and Rachel Wegner

EDU 655E: Leadership Fieldwork II

February 2, 2021

My role in my organization involves helping and educating all of our students regarding the importance of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. I also collaborated with a colleague on researching the effectiveness of the family outreach program. The goal of this program is to bridge the gap that exists between our people of color community and our school. Through my conversations or empathy interviews with students and families, some areas of needs expressed are belongingness, mindfulness, access to a safe space, voices being heard, and being seen. As an educator and an aspiring leader, empathy needs to be part of our practice and approach to students and families. We need to foster relationships with our students that build on the foundation of knowing and understanding the identity of all students.

Due to this reason, and based on my role within my school/organization, the component I chose to focus on for my project is creating an environment of trust and belonging. It is more important now than ever in our country's history that building trust and creating a sense of belonging for both our students and families is crucial in our work as educators and aspiring leaders. In order to attend to deeper learning through the lens of equity, families need to be immersed and engaged within the school and community. There needs to be a focus on the importance of having families engaged in the early onset of their child's educational journey. Lauryn Mascarenaz, Teaching & Learning Specialist (2020, as cited in Equity Matters: Engaging Families Through Home Visits, 2017) described how statistics from the U.S. Department of Education reveals the influence family engagement has on a child's educational success (7:13).

The current climate at the moment is filled with a lot of unknowns and frustrations. In order to allow the opportunity for implementations or strategic interventions and be able to support this situation through shared vision and purpose, I am collaborating with a colleague

with the hope that this research will provide the knowledge and expertise required to develop a professional skill that helps with better understanding the challenges our students are facing. Through my learnings in this program and exposure to readings and other findings, my awareness of equity issues that exist in my school continues to shape my interactions with students and families and pushes my thinking as an aspiring leader on how to go about dismantling these issues. Also, in doing this work, I have come to realize that it is important to be transparent and reach out to students, parents, the community at large, and not only ask what it is they need but also listen to their stories. Through this, I feel I will give creation to a system that is not conformed to systems of social injustice, inequity, and injustice-oriented learning environment. Through learnings from the readings, podcasts, and video resources, I understand that as an educator and an aspiring leader, connections are important in building and sustaining positive relationships with parents and students. From this, I believe one gets in-depth knowledge regarding the importance and the value of empathy and shared stories. I also gathered from my learning and resources thus far that taking the time to understand and see things through the lens of our students and families is imperative in this work.

Currently, through empathy interviews and having authentic conversations with students and families, things are moving in a positive direction. What I mean by this is that by creating a space for others to share their stories, I am able to have a better understanding of their challenges and struggles. As with every work that involves social change, challenges exist and it all depends on the approach taken towards addressing them. But as I continue in this work, I have to make sure that I always remind myself that one size does not fit all, and to continue in this liberatory work and promote social change, I have to look very closely at our process as well as data collection. The implication of this learning as it applies to my current role and my journey

towards being an aspiring leader is that it is important that I not only elevate students and their families voices regarding their needs and support but also bridge the gap between social injustice and inequity when it comes to student and family engagement.

Cited Page

Mascarenaz, L., Rose, C., & Geffen, Y. (2017, January 17). Equity Matters: Engaging Families Through Home Visits in 1 hour [Webinar]. Teaching Tolerance.  
<https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/webinars/engaging-families-through-home-visits>