

Importance of Teacher Empathy in Student Success

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Questions

Think back to your best learning experience....

What were you doing?

What made it your best experience?

Think back to your best teacher....

What made them a good teacher?

Think back to one of your best teaching experiences....

What made it a good experience?

It is about relationships!



In general, the more interaction students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to **learn effectively** and persist toward achievement of their educational goals.

Personal interaction with faculty members **strengthens students' connections** to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress.

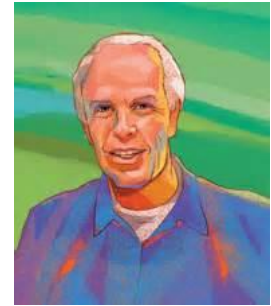
Carl Rogers (1963)



“A high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly the most potent factor in bringing about change and learning.” ...Freedom to Learn

“Empathetic teachers have more positive self concepts, are more self-disclosing to their students, respond more to students feelings, give more praise, are more responsive to students ideas, and lecture less often.” ...Ways of Being

Parker Palmer



“People who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each others, and everyone to the subject being studied, the connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but **in their hearts**.. the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge.”

Empathetic teachers help students learn

“The best teachers **teach from the heart**, not from the book.” - Horace Mann

“Empathy may be one of those necessary, though largely unexamined traits that define good teaching.” - (Neito 2006)



Attachment Based Teaching

“Teachers like their students, are unique individuals, and it is **the quality and uniqueness** of teacher-student relationships that create possibilities for learning.”

Session objectives

- Learn about research on [measures](#) of empathy (explore definitions)
- Briefly explore the issues of [meta-cognition](#) in the classroom and student success
- Learn about the connection of empathy to [student success](#)
- Examine your empathy index
- Explore ways participants can [increase empathy](#) in their teaching
- Learn about the connection between empathy and stereotype threat (learn about factors that affect the ability to empathize with your students)
- Explore the relationship between empathy and inclusivity in the classroom
- Next steps.....

Question

What is empathy?



Empathetic Civilization

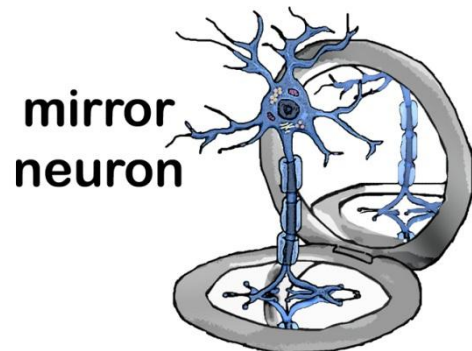
- [https://www.ted.com/talks/jeremy rifkin on the empathic civilization](https://www.ted.com/talks/jeremy_rifkin_on_the_empathic_civilization)

Empathy is Biological: Mirror Neurons

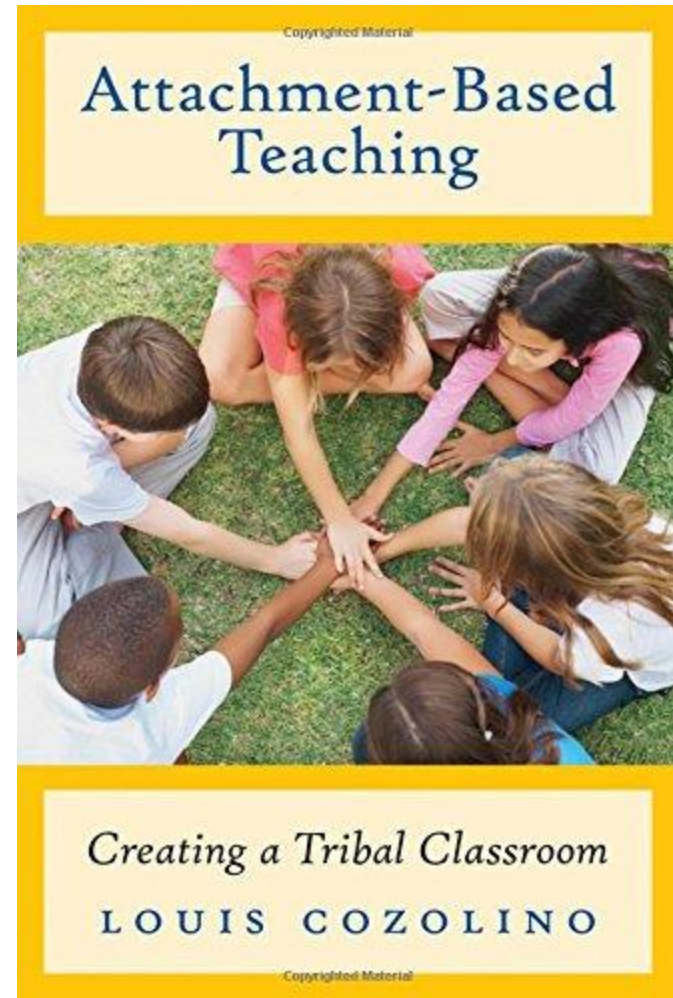
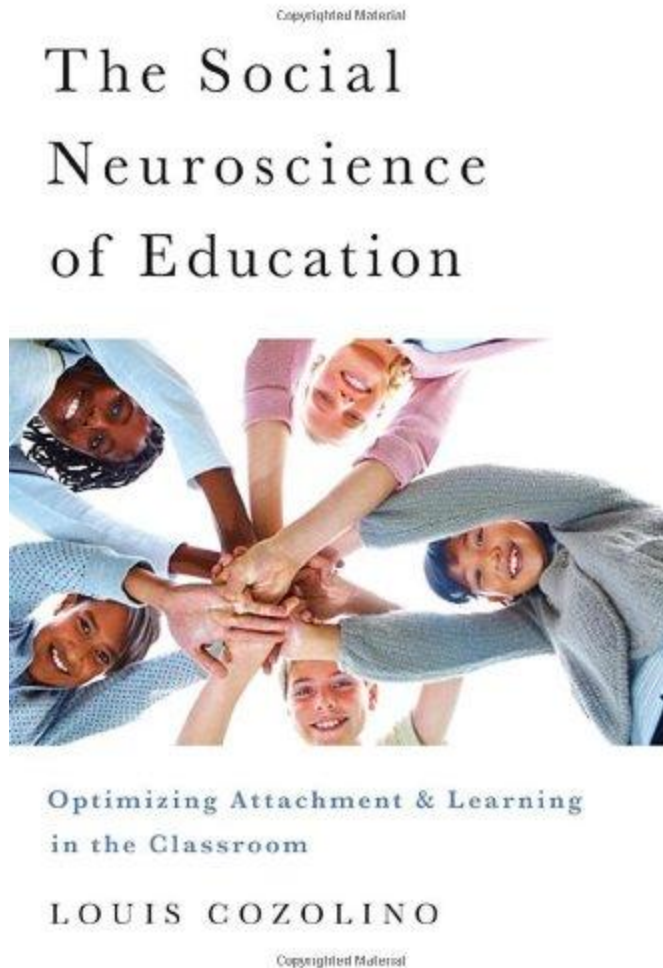
The mirror neuron system is a network of brain cells that fire during our own motor behaviors but, more important, also fire when we hear other people speak and listen to their vocal nuances; and view or observe their posture, gestures, actions and facial expressions.

- This trait correlates with the ability to **reconstruct accurately** the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than our own.

- <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/valuable-intellect>



We are wired to learn from others!



Empathy (Elizabeth Segal's work)

- Affective Empathy (feelings)
(physiological/unconscious)
- Cognitive Empathy (thinking)
(conscious/compassionate)
(self-other awareness)
- Intellectual Empathy (knowledge)

Intellectual Empathy

(Importance of Knowledge)

- This trait correlates with the ability to **reconstruct accurately** the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than our own.
- <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/valuable-intellectual-traits/528>

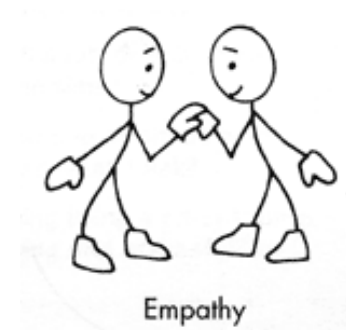
How different is empathy from sympathy?

- **Empathy:** “we feel what we believe to be the emotions of another.” I feel your pain.

Empathy is feeling into someone.

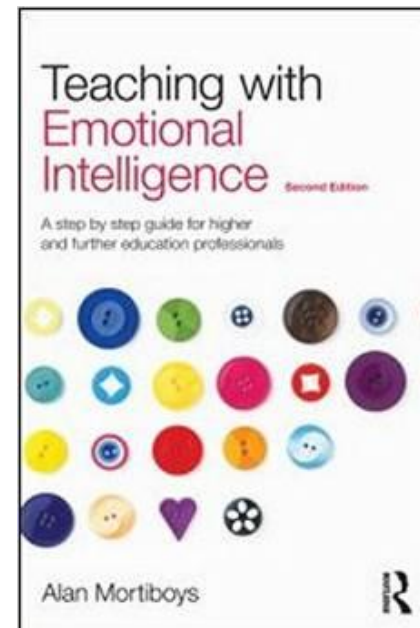
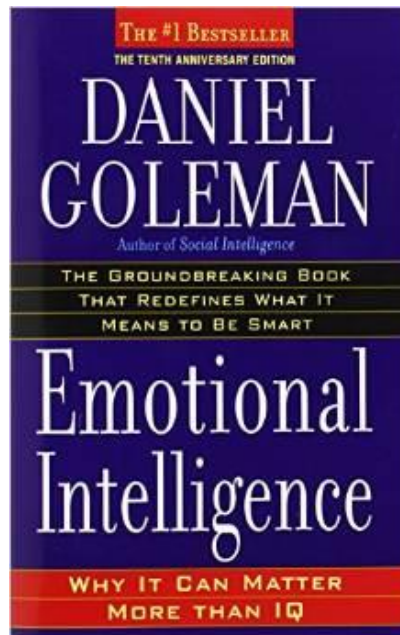
- **Sympathy:** “feelings for another occur.” I feel pity for your pain.

Sympathy is feeling with someone.



How is empathy different from **emotional intelligence?**

‘the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one’s self, of others, or groups.’



How different from compassion?

- <http://compassioneducation.com/>

“Cultivating compassion goes beyond feeling more empathy and concern for others. It develops the strength to be with suffering, the courage to take **compassionate action**, and the resilience to prevent empathy fatigue. These qualities support a wide range of goals, from improving personal relationships to making a positive difference in the world “



Question

Sympathy versus Empathy

- What would be some characteristics of a sympathetic teacher?
- What would be some characteristics of an empathetic teacher?

Why is empathy important for student success?

“When the teacher has the ability to understand the student’s reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the process of how education and learning seems to the student.....the likelihood of learning is significantly increased.”

- Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*, p. 157

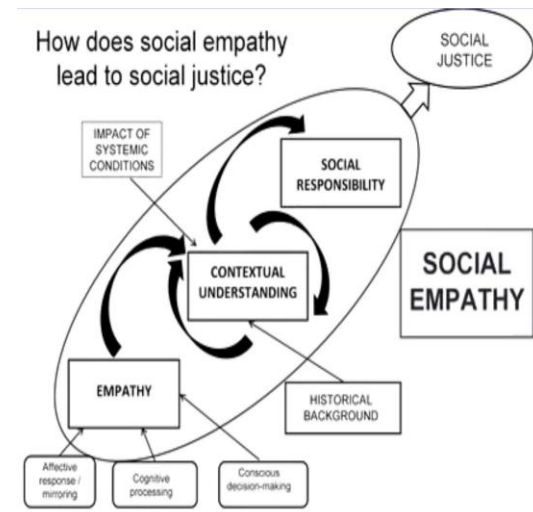
How to Measure Empathy?

- The Interpersonal Reactivity Index
- Empathy Assessment Index
- Social Empathy Index

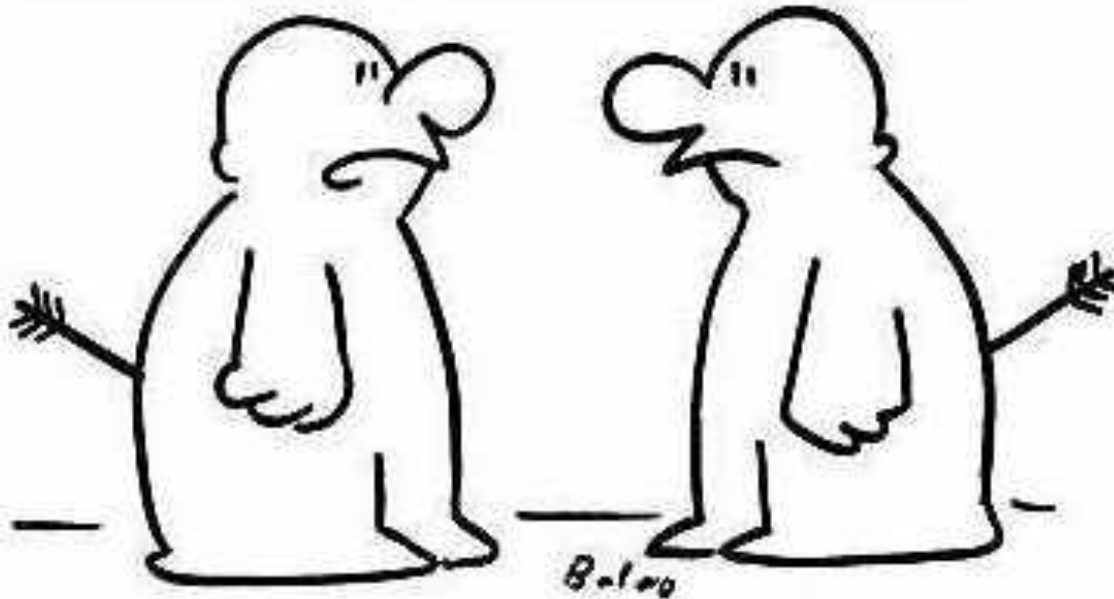
Social Empathy (Social Work)

Includes interpersonal empathy, but adds: insight into contextual barriers and **the ability to take the perspective of other groups** and imagine what it is like to be a member of that group.

- Elizabeth Segal,
University of Arizona



What is your empathy index?



"I know exactly how you feel."

Empathy Index

Questions

- What questions on the teacher empathy index did you find meaningful as you think about your teaching?
- What questions are problematic? Why?
- How do you think students perceive your empathy index? (What would happen if students were asked to give you a teacher empathy score)?

Why is empathy an important part of building faculty-student relationships?



Empathetic Teachers (Dolby 2012)

“We must first listen to our students: **we must ‘imagine others’ and understand how they see the world**, not how we wish them to see it. Today this is our work: to find a way to respect and walk beside our students, to listen intently to what they are saying, and to work with them so they can broaden their circles of empathy and knowledge about the world.”



Resistance to Empathy

I am not a touchy-feely person.

I am not a therapist.

I don't have time.

I teach in the hard sciences and we don't do this stuff.



Why important more than ever?

- Research suggest that college students have higher levels of anxiety and psychopathology than any other student cohort.
- In last five years, there has been a 20% increase in the stress levels of college students.
- Economic challenges and rising college debt
- Marginalized students (First generation, poverty)

Beyond Student Academic Preparation

(Meta-Cognitive Learning Skills)

- Persistence
- Self-control
- Hope
- Curiosity
- Conscientiousness
- Grit
- Self-Confidence
- Mindset

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Intelligence is static.	Intelligence can be developed.
Leads to a desire to <i>look smart</i> and therefore a tendency to	Leads to a desire to <i>learn</i> and therefore a tendency to
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • embrace challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give up easily due to obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persist despite obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see effort as fruitless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see effort as path to mastery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignore useful feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn from criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be threatened by others' success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be inspired by others' success

Connecting Hope and Empathy

Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it. In a way, **empathy** is predicated upon **hope**.

-----Cornel West 1999



Academic Hope

Goals, Pathways, and Agency

A person's ability to conceptualize their goals, develop pathways to achieve those goals, and remain motivated (agency) to follow those pathways to their goals.

See Dave Feldman's work

The Rapport Question

What does it mean to have rapport with students?

Is it possible to have rapport and not be empathetic?

What is the relationship between rapport and empathy?

Suggestions for building rapport

- Learn to call your students by name.
- Learn something about your students' interests, hobbies, and aspirations.
- Arrive to class early and stay late -- and chat with your students.
- Be enthusiastic about teaching and passionate about your subject matter.
- Lighten up -- crack a joke now and then.
- Be respectful.
- Don't forget to smile!
- <http://www.socialpsychology.org/rapport.htm>

What can you do?

Step 1: Students!

- Do you know your students?
- The importance of data!
- Do you know your students personal and academic goals? (Hope)
- Do you know their fears?
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlc&list=PLF4AD2BDD4349>



What factors might make it difficult to empathize with your students?



Paradox of Diversity

Kasl, E., & Yorks, L. (2016). Do I really know you? Do you really know me? Empathy amid diversity in differing learning contexts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 66(1), 3-20.

Cognitive empathy is difficult when we often inhabit different worlds from our students by various factors such as race, social class, etc.

Empathy and Stereotype threat

- The more prejudiced the less able to be empathetic towards those who are considered members of the “out-group.”
- What about teaching?
- How might this affect our ability to empathize with our students?
- Stereotype Threat work (Claude Steele)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Abi_KPVIJJo



whistling vivaldi

how stereotypes affect us
and what we can do

CLAUDE M. STEELE

"This is an intellectual odyssey of the first order—a true tour de force."
—WILLIAM G. BOWEN

What understanding group context matters?

Stereotype threat produces numerous consequences, most of which are negative in nature. Many studies have replicated and extended the finding first reported by [Steele and Aronson \(1995\)](#) that invoking group memberships associated with stereotypes can harm performance on tasks where poor performance might confirm stereotypes.

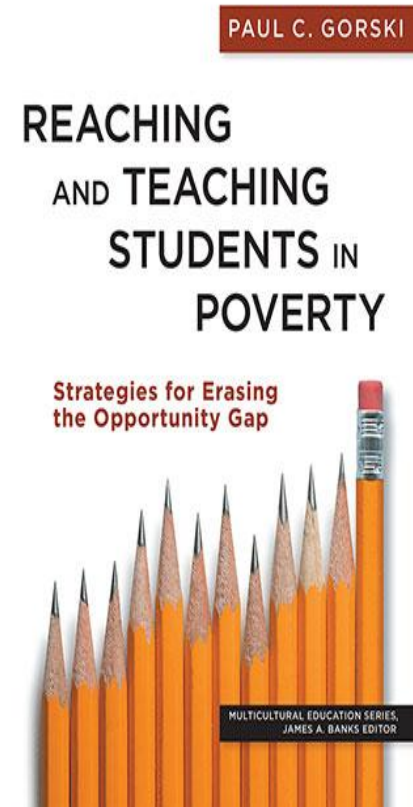
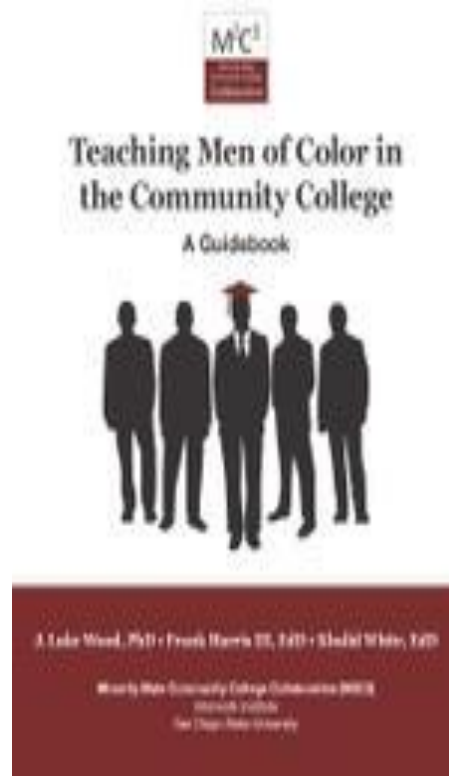
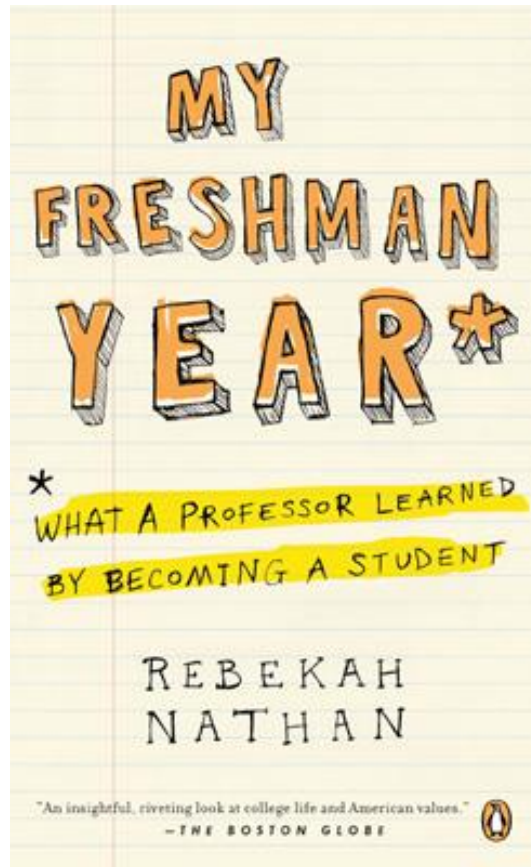
<http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/reduce.html>

Reducing the Stereotype Threat

- Reframing the task (acknowledge threat)
- <http://www.reducingstereotypethreat.org/reduce.html>
- Seek opportunities to learn more about your students
- See Video ALL THE DIFFERENCE
- <http://www.pbs.org/video/2365837600/>

Recommended Books and Sources

http://crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3_1



Step 2: You!

- Are you genuine? Do you prize your students? (Rogers, 1963)
- Do you seek out opportunities to understand students from different backgrounds than you?
- Do you share mistakes and vulnerabilities?
- Do your students feel felt by you?
- What is your teaching philosophy? Is it empathetic and hopeful?
- Do you believe students can learn your discipline?
- Do your students know you?



Authenticity in teaching

“Authenticity in teaching involves features such as being genuine, becoming more self-aware, being defined by one’s self rather than by others, being willing to bring parts of oneself into interactions with students; and critically reflecting on self, others, and relationships...”

- *Dimensions* (Kreber 2007;2010)

<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/six-paths-to-more-authentic-teaching/>

What do you do to empathize and relate to your students?

When students see their actions and voices are not only valued but also empowered, they begin to turn from motivation-free to motivated.

- Jason Flom in Education Week Teacher

Step 3: Showing you Care (1)

- Review the language in your syllabus (Warm Syllabus).
- Email / Text students when they miss class and send them their missed work (Remind me).
- Require office hours (Group office hours).
- Require outside of class activities (lunch).
- Redo and Retake
- Conduct semester student feedback evaluations early and often.
- See handout 10 Things You Can Do

Helpful Sources

- Caring Strategies for Attendance:
- <http://www.nea.org/home/50510.htm>
- Strategies for Redo and Retake
- <http://reedgillespie.blogspot.com/2013/04/12-steps-to-creating-successful-redo.html>
- <https://www.ocps.net/lc/southwest/mso/parents/Documents/Redos%20and%20Retakes%20Done%20Right.pdf>

Helpful sources

- <https://www.remind.com/>
- <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/january-11/creating-the-foundation-for-a-warm-classroom-climate.html>
- <http://ctl.sinclair.edu/curriculum-assessment/assessment/early-semester-feedback/>

Step 3: More things you can do!

- Scaffolding Expectations!!!! (High expectations)
- Review your attendance policy (Is it realistic?)
- Review your policy on late work (Is it realistic?)
- Require more meaningful pre-work from students (Flipped Classroom)
- Help students take responsibility for their own learning (Peer tutoring/Just in Time)

Step 4: Your conversation

SO WHAT?



Changing College and Classroom Culture

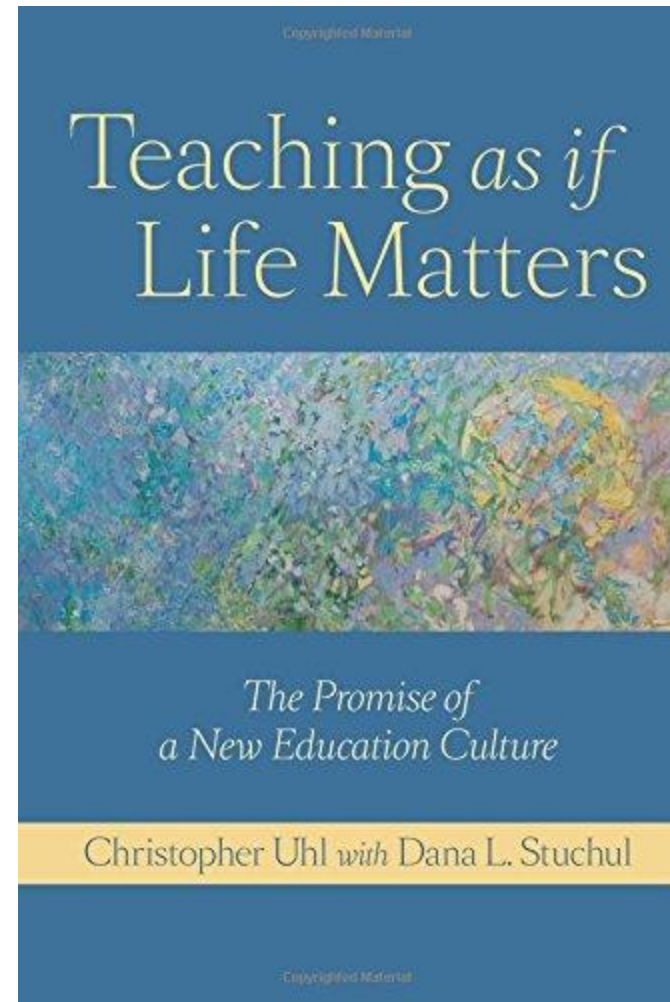
“Our colleges and universities need to encourage, foster and assist our students, faculty and administrators **in finding their own authentic way to an individual life** where meaning and purpose are tightly interwoven with intellect and action, where compassion and care are infused with insight and knowledge.”

- Parker Palmer 2010

i'm not telling
you it is going to
be easy, i'm
telling you it's
going to be
worth it.

Cultivating Classroom Kinship and Belonging

- Dialogue
- Physical Touch
- Shared Agreements

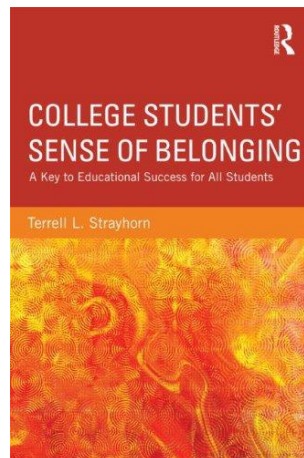


Creating Tribal Classrooms

An attachment based perspective calls on us to grasp the inner and outer worlds of students, including their interests, passions, needs and vulnerabilities. **Understanding the world from their point of view** and striving to empathize with their philosophies and beliefs creates the possibility for emotional attunement and helping them “feeling felt” by their teachers.

Creating a Sense of Belonging

- The sense of belonging is a basic human need.
- Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance in certain contexts such as being a newcomer or being a member of a marginalized group.
- Sense of belonging is related to, and seemingly a consequence of mattering (we need to believe others care about us)
- Social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging



Long term effects of Faculty Student Relationships

- *The 2014 Life After College Matters Study by Gallup and Purdue*
- <http://www.gallup.com/poll/168848/life-college-matters-life-college.aspx>
- Gallup conducted the Web study Feb. 4-March 7, 2014, with nearly 30,000 U.S. adults who had completed at least a bachelor's degree.
- Only 14% of graduates strongly agree they were supported by professors who cared, who made them excited about learning, and who encouraged their dreams.

The Long Term Effects of Having a Caring Professor?

- Students who reported having a professor who cared, who made them excited about learning, and who encouraged their dreams were 1.9 times more likely to be thriving in all areas of well being (health, life satisfaction, mental health..there was a long list).
- It is not just about student success but about overall life time well being.

Small Group Discussion

How do you set high expectations for students and remain empathetic and understanding? Are there disciplinary differences?

How do we help students take responsibility for their own learning? How do we help students learn how to learn?

What are some things you might do differently based on our discussion today?

Burning questions

- What about student responsibility?
- What about underprepared students?
- What about time? How do I find time?
- What about online students?
- My classes are too large?
- Empathy fatigue?
- Personal boundaries?
- Try not to take it personally?





Preparing for a
Multicultural World

Dana R. Soriano

Recommended Books

"If you manage people or are a parent (which is a form of managing people), drop everything and read *Mindset*."
—GUY KAWASAKI, author of *The Art of the Start*

mindset

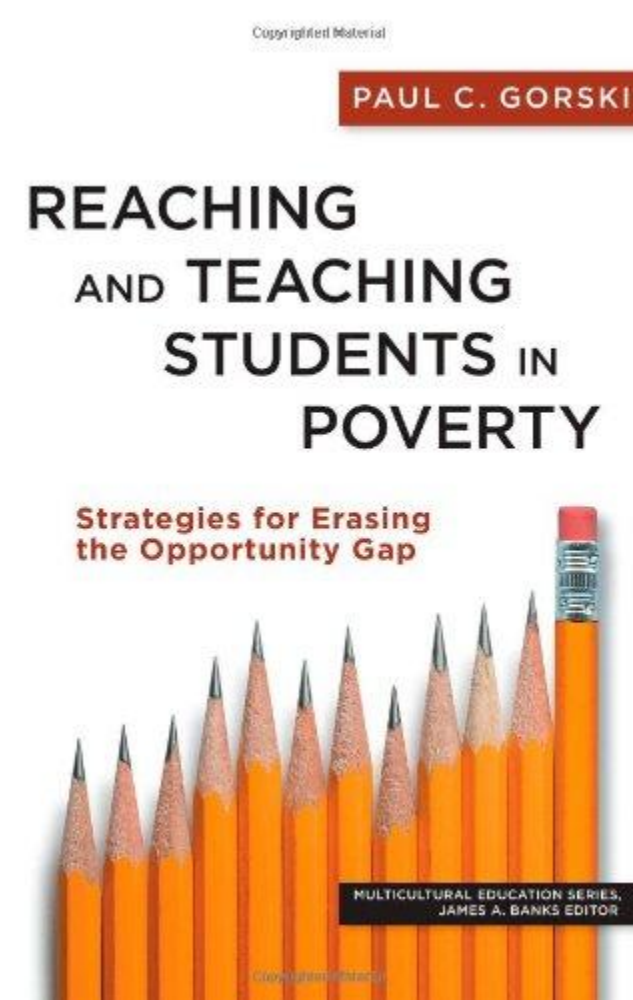
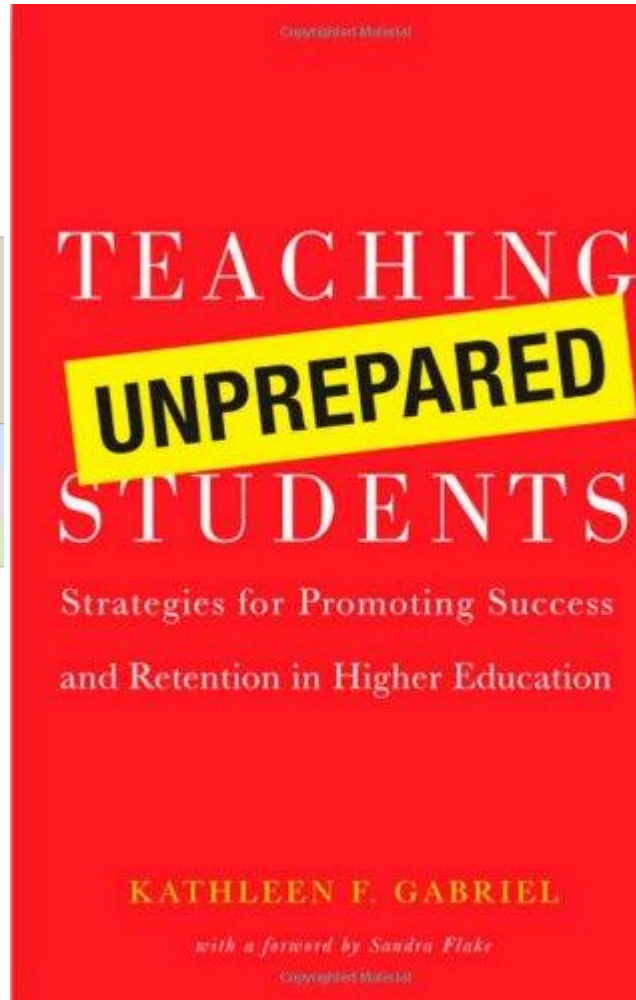
THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

HOW WE CAN
LEARN TO FULFILL
OUR POTENTIAL

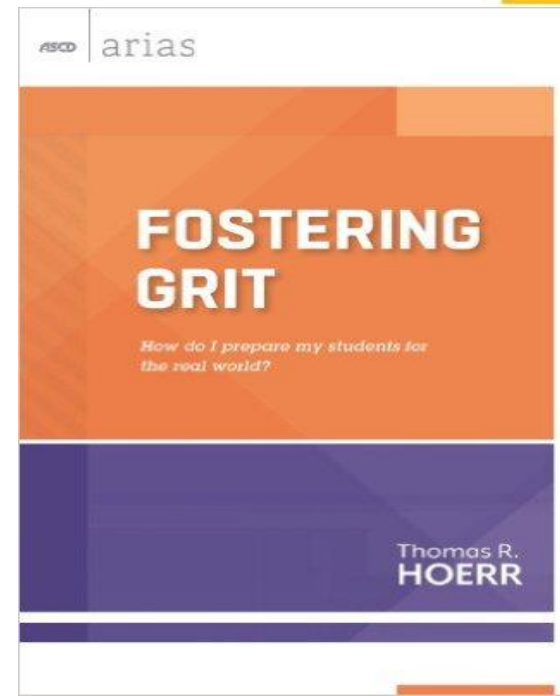
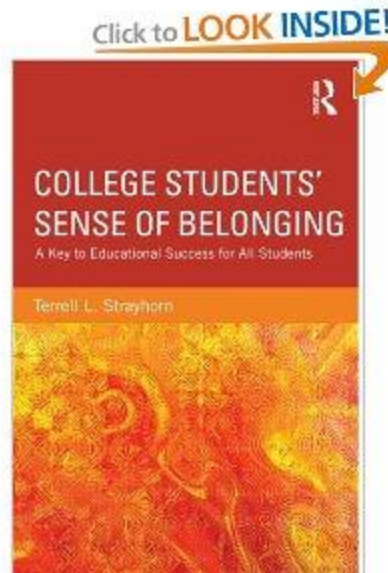
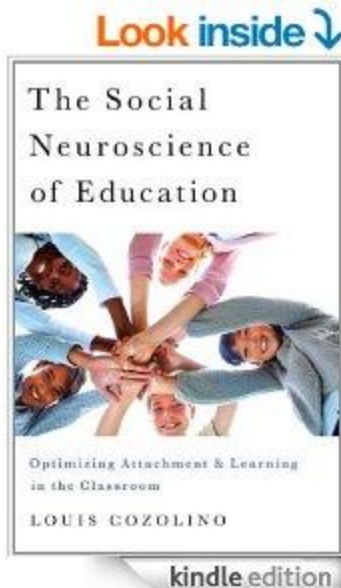
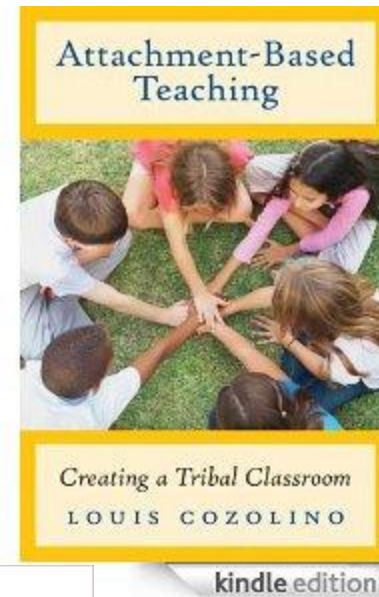
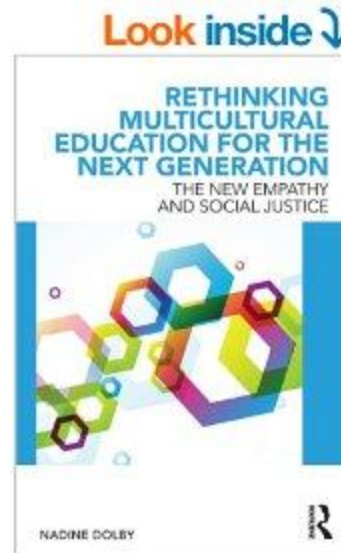
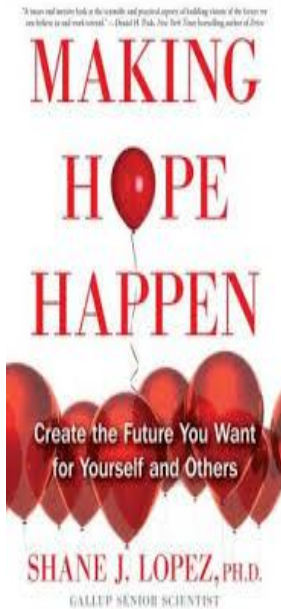
- *parenting
- *business
- *school
- *relationships

CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.

"Will prove to be one of the most influential books ever about motivation."
—PO BRONSON, author of *NurtureShock*



Recommended books



Copyrighted Material

"A smart and incisive look at the scientific and practical aspects of building visions of the future we can believe in and work toward." —Daniel H. Pink,
New York Times bestselling author of *Drive*

MAKING HOPE HAPPEN

Create the Future You Want
for Yourself and Others

SHANE J. LOPEZ, PH.D.

GALLUP SENIOR SCIENTIST

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Teaching as if Life Matters



*The Promise of
a New Education Culture*

Christopher Uhl with Dana L. Stuchul

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Education's End Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life

Anthony T. Kronman

"An impassioned defense of the humanities."—*Wall Street Journal*

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- <http://www.stress.org/college-students/>

Thank you!

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