



TEN NEWSLETTER

Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Transformative Education Network
at Montclair State University

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

- Feature Article

PAGE 2

- Spotlight On...

PAGE 3

- Did You Know?

PAGE 4

- Antiracist and Social Justice Resources

PAGE 5

- Upcoming events



Photo by John LaRosa



Photo by Mike Peters

YOUTH POWER AND AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH TO SCHOOLS

Schools have a long history of being places where young people go to learn how to be adults in society. Sometimes, in this pursuit, schools turn into places centered around adult's ideas. "Adults determine what is valuable for students to learn and how young people need to demonstrate their learning" (Fletcher, n.d.). Adults determine much more than the learning that occurs in schools. Adults determine what ways of being and belonging are valuable in schools, often overlooking the importance of an intergenerational approach. Principle 9 of Black Lives Matter at Schools asks us to revisit schools' priorities through an intergenerational lens. "We cultivate a communal network free from ageism and adultism because of our belief in the leadership and learning potential of all people, regardless of age. We recognize and celebrate the intergenerational relationships that have always been and must continue to be when working for justice" (BLM@Schools).

As we see in adult movements for justice, the youth that are on the forefront of leading youth-power work are often grounded in the work of "healing justice, transformative organizing, and radical healing. Such frameworks seek to undo the many pervasive harms of white supremacy that intersect with other systems of oppression" (Lin & Corpuz, n.d.). One of these intersections is the omnipresent nature of adult-driven spaces in education. The guiding question, "How can student voice breathe new meaning into the phrase class participation or transform student-teacher interactions into partnerships of mutual respect rather than skirmishes for control?" (Cervone & Cushman, 2003, p. 87) helps us consider how to design schools that are rooted in student realities instead of adult conveniences.

"Everyone wins, youth and adults alike, when we prize the participation, ideas, and contributions of young people" (Cervone & Cushman, 2003, p. 85). Some justice-centered organizations have realized that making decisions for and about young people requires their input. One space, however, that has been slow to empower youth participation is school, a place that has a direct impact on the well-being and future of these very important stakeholders. For schools to become truly liberatory arenas for students, they must begin to partner with youth, giving them meaningful opportunities to participate in all elements of their education, including building policy and determining curriculum.

One approach to including student voice is the model of *Meaningful Student Involvement*, "the process of engaging students as partners in every facet of the education system for the purpose of strengthening their commitment to education, community, and democracy" (Sound Out, n.d.). Meaningful Student Involvement includes strong Student/ Adult partnerships and an active Student Voice in education. It means allowing students to engage in ways that are meaningful to them, not adult-driven. Intergenerational approaches can combine the contributions of the past with the aspirational dreams of the future to shape the present into a place that is transformational and empowering for all ages.

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Dr. Yancisca Cooke

Dr. Yancisca Loften Cooke, is a devoted principal and change agent at Forest Street Community School in Orange, New Jersey, a school that serves students in pre-K through Seventh Grade. Prior to assuming the role as Principal nineteen years ago, she served as the Assistant Principal of Lincoln Avenue School also within the Orange School District. Dr. Loften Cooke's previous career experience includes ten years of service as a Special Education and General Education educator within the NYC Department of Education. She is an active member of Rho Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. TEN chose to interview Dr. Loften Cooke because she is a seasoned educator and a keeper of deep intergenerational wisdom.

What is your connection to TEN?

We have actually had the honor of partnering with the TEN program now for two years. We've utilized the same teacher for the past two years, who has actually blossomed. She's always been an amazing teacher—her classroom is just magical. We actually feel privileged to have this partnership because it has helped the mentor and the mentee. There is more of a rapport between the university and that candidate. We actually feel like we're part of TEN as well!

As a seasoned educator, what words of wisdom do you have for new teachers?

The first thing that I look for in a new teacher is a love for the profession and a passion to work with children. If you have those, then the next step is taking time out to learn your children. If you don't have the passion, love them, and take time to learn and know them, there's no way you're going to be able to teach them! [Young teachers] come out of school like, "Okay, where's the curriculum guide, the pacing guide?" but all of that is simply paper. If you don't have the intrinsic motivation to really get to know you who you are working with, then you will never be able to reach them.

What is one change you would like to see in public education?

If I could have my world, I would not have grade levels. I believe that we need to focus more so on growth, as opposed to mastering a grade level standard. You may have a third grader that may be operating on a fourth grade level, in some areas, and on a second grade level in other areas. Educators need to meet them at their level. If the student is growing academically than they are progressing! In my world I would totally embrace and utilize more of a growth model to gauge progress. It alleviates the pressure on the kids. [We can say], "look where you came from!" Allow them to take pride in that, which will then propel them to the next level. They're going to look at it and say "I did this. Let me try harder." As opposed to, "I didn't make it, I'm not proficient like everybody else." I would love to do away with that if I could.

What are some changes to public education you have noticed since you began as a teacher?

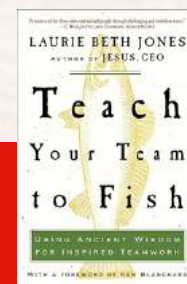
When I was in the classroom myself, years ago, many of today's practices we utilized then as well. They just had a different name. But there are two areas that we didn't focus on when I was a teacher that I truly wish we did, because it would have taken my students to a whole other level. One would be the science of reading. They're now teaching reading according to how students develop. It's a more developmental approach, which I love. I think that our kids are really benefiting from us looking at how they learn as opposed to what it is that they need to learn. Another area that we didn't have was the students being the facilitators of questioning and having rich student discourse taking place. When I was in the classroom, it was more "Listen to me, I'm the one teaching you". But we now know, and research has shown, that students learn better from each other than they do from us. What I love the most about our TEN class that we have here at Forest is, you can sit in the classroom and the student discussions that take place, totally blows your mind! I had no idea that the students were so knowledgeable of some topics! And you wouldn't know that they knew it if we never gave them a chance to show us. Now we are giving them the reins, I love it!

The Orange District recently renamed a day last month as Dr. Cooke Day! Can you tell us the story of how that came to be?

I never, ever, ever imagined that I would receive a day devoted it to me. I come to work and this isn't work. This is my other home, this is where I live. Everybody does not have the opportunity to work and operate within their calling on a daily basis. How did this come about? We actually went through the process of being evaluated as a Blue Ribbon School, which is a really extensive process. So we were the first school in Orange to become a Blue Ribbon School of excellence. We were recognized on the national level, as a 2018 Distinguished School. We received [this award] because my teachers work hard and they care about what they do, and they care about our kids. So it is not me at all. I'm a teacher of teachers. So and I operate in that role at all times.

What's the book that changed your life?

The book that changed my life is 'Teach Your Team to Fish' by Lori Beth Jones.



DID YOU KNOW?



Wisdom weaving is the intentional practice of cultivating meaningful intergenerational experiences and relationships (Natasha Deganello Giraudie, 2023).

VALUING THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCED TEACHERS



Wisdom Weaving in a School Community

TEN encourages the practice of wisdom weaving in our community. We envision schools that seek the value in all individuals, transforming the educational system into a dynamic place of exploration including intergenerational knowledge.

Here are some ways we recognize the value of different generations:

What do you see as the values different generations can bring to schools?

Ancestors

Possess wisdom that we no longer have access to, including insights into the past and the decisions made by previous generations. This ancestral knowledge informs veteran teachers, guiding their decision-making based on the experiences of those who came before them.



Intertwining the experiences of older and younger generations creates a communal network that benefits everyone involved

Future Generations

The product of everything that has come before.



Students

Students empower the learning environment by bringing their voices and perspectives. Fostering spaces where they can shape their experience. They benefit from interacting with varied forms of wisdom.



Encountered a wide range of challenges and successes throughout their careers, providing them with a wealth of experience, community building, and patience to share.



Veteran Educators

Infuse their classrooms with energy, innovation, and a fresh perspective, often leveraging technology to enhance the learning experiences.



Young Teachers

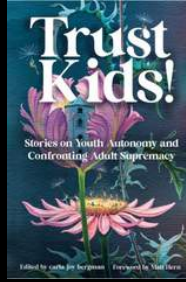


INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTION

a Way Forward



RESOURCES



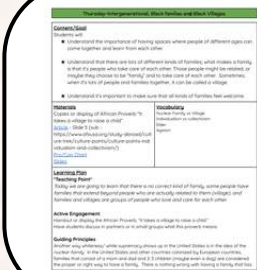
"Trust Kids!" is a multifaceted exploration of our relationships with children. Emphasizing youth autonomy and challenging adult supremacy, the book offers a fresh perspective on child-rearing, advocating for inclusivity, love, and care in more just and egalitarian ways.



Community organizer Tai Simpson highlights the shortcomings of current societal structures and calls for a return to Indigenous wisdom, drawing from the creation myth of her Nez Perce tribe. [Watch here.](#)



Discover effective strategies for age-inclusive communication with these guidelines. Learn how to create messages and interactions that respect and engage individuals of all ages, fostering inclusivity and understanding.



This elementary lesson plan explores the concept of intergenerational Black families and Black villages, emphasizing the understanding that families can extend beyond blood relations, encompassing communities of care and support.



What Kids Can Do (WKCD) is a nonprofit organization empowering marginalized youth through media and collaborations, amplifying their voices and contributions in education and beyond, with a focus on poverty, race, and language barriers.



This comprehensive toolkit empowers individuals to challenge ageism by fostering understanding, initiating conversations, organizing awareness events, and leveraging social media to advocate for #AWorld4AllAges.



Join Villy Wang in her inspiring TED Talk as she shares her mission to empower youth of color by giving them the tools to shape their own narratives through filmmaking. Discover how her program is equipping young leaders to challenge stereotypes and reshape media narratives for a more inclusive future.



PAST TEN HONORS

Winners

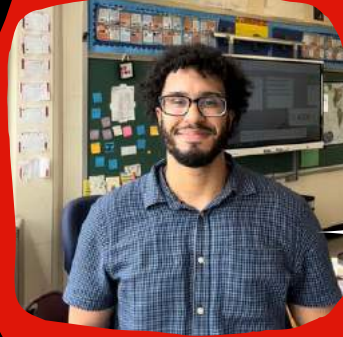
For commitment to
Racial and
Social Justice Education



Katie Krommenhoek



Carl Savage



Peter De La Cruz

Submit Today!

Deadline extended until April 30th!!

TEN HONORS

Submit an application or
nominate someone today!



At our 2024 May Gathering,
TEN will honor two
educators who are **teaching
for racial and/or social
justice in their classrooms!**

Submissions may include
lesson plans, unit plans,
curriculum overviews,
instructional materials, short
video recordings, and/or
student work.

Selected entries will be
added to a shared Google
drive.



Timeline

- ★ Submissions Accepted Feb 5 - Apr. 15
- ★ Nominations Due April 15



Eligibility

- ★ Currently teaching PK-12
- ★ In a NBOE or OPS school, or an alum of MSU's UTR, NTP, or WWTF

See all eligibility requirements and submission details by scanning the QR code, or [by clicking this link.](#)



<https://forms.gle/6GaVf4io4ZQ3WaPA6>

The Transformative Education Network (TEN) at Montclair State University prepares, supports and develops teachers who teach toward antiracism and social justice.



If you would like to nominate someone else you know who is doing racial and/or social justice teaching in their classroom and meets the eligibility requirements, please complete the nomination section of the Google Form by April 30, 2024, so that we can reach out and invite them to submit artifacts.

APPLY NOW

Mr. Peter De La Cruz, was honored for his submission entitled "The Ableism Project." In this unit, he engaged his 10th grade students at University High School in understanding the history and impact of ableism in society and schools.

Ms. Katie Krommenhoek, was honored for her focused unit on highlighting activism in literature. During this unit, students were able to identify problems and solutions to various social justice concerns through text.

Mr. Carl Savage, was honored for starting "The Boys to Men Club." The club provides boys with essential skills to tackle daily obstacles healthily, fostering self-esteem, independence, health awareness, respect, and leadership through discussions on real-life situations, aiming to create a safe environment for self-expression.

