

# Building Classroom Communities

EDUC 224 E/F

*Syllabus subject to change*

## Instructor:

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### Words to Guide Us

“The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves. And in doing that, he or she lives the experience of relating democratically as authority with the freedom of the students.”

- Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking*, p. 181

“Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others. They see their teaching as an art rather than a technical skill.”

- Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers*, p. 28

“In thinking of community, we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like. Community cannot be produced simply through rational formulation nor through edict. Like freedom, it has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together ... it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group’s becoming. Community is not a question of which social contracts are the most reasonable for individuals to enter. It is a question of what might contribute to the pursuit of shared goods: what ways of being together, of attaining mutuality, of reaching toward some common world.”

- Maxine Greene, *Imagination, Community, and The School*, p.39

## Dear STEP Elementary Teacher Candidates,

Hi! I'm Harper, and I'm going to be your instructor for this course. I'll tell you more about myself soon, but for now, please know that I am very excited to get to know each of you. In our ten weeks together, we will engage with the wonderfully challenging task of building and supporting classroom communities.

### *What we're aiming for*

Instead of thinking about organizing a classroom like the manager of a factory with strict rules for quality control and production, I'd like you to think about designing classroom environments like an artist designing a shared art studio. After all, we'll need imagination and creativity so that we can dream about a better world and resist injustices. The classrooms we'll strive for will be caring, collaborative, driven by supportive relationships with a collective vision built on individual hopes and dreams. They will support children to be independent and flexibly work with others. They will be well-organized, beautifully designed places where children can ask great big questions and explore the wonders of their imaginations with lots of tools that they know how to use and take care of. They will be places where children make friends, play together, and navigate conflict. They will be places where children can be whole and where they can change.

### *The urgency and importance of our work*

There are many obstacles that can get in the way of classrooms like these. Classroom management, a term I don't particularly like (we'll talk more about that later), is often cited as the greatest challenge for new teachers. Many of us work in underfunded schools without all the supplies we want to build the classroom environments we dream of. More than half of children in public schools live below the poverty line. We live in a nation with an ongoing history of violence and oppression that clouds our work in schools. There is sobering evidence that likely more than 40% of people in the U.S. have had a severely adverse childhood experience, known as ACEs, which include things like abuse, neglect, violence, or incarceration of an immediate family member. More than 12.5% of people report two or more ACEs<sup>1</sup>. Disproportionality in the prison system and its connections to schooling experiences loom large for too many students of color, queer/trans students, poor students, and students with disabilities. These conditions can make our work more difficult, but they are not reasons to give up on a vision of caring and artful classrooms. To the contrary, it is all the more reason that we need classrooms that respect and nurture children in a world that can be a very harsh place.

### *What you can expect*

First, you can expect that we will build a foundation for dialogue that I hope will continue for a very long time. Here, I want to emphasize the word *foundation*: sometimes, or often, it will probably feel like we haven't had enough time to talk about a topic in class. Each week, you will have a set of readings and/or videos to peruse before class. During class, we'll talk about the materials with the expectation that everyone has given them close attention. There's a lot of reading, but in class, I'll go over how to read the texts efficiently. You can also expect that some of these materials will contradict each other – in part, that is because there are lots of ideas about how classrooms should be organized. The model I will be emphasizing in class is a relational one, but we will discuss other approaches, too.

We'll have whole-class meetings at the beginning and ending of each class, so please be sure to come on time. We'll also have interactive discussions, time to play and explore together, and quiet time for reflection. There are several course assignments, which are detailed on the next page, and which we'll talk more about as we get closer to them. We will also have several classroom visitors to enrich our learning and connect with communities and resources outside of Stanford.

### *A note on accessibility*

One of the central organizing frameworks of this course is accessibility. If there is anything you need in order to make the classroom space or course content more accessible to you as a learner, let me know, regardless of any diagnosis or formally documented accommodations you may or may not have. If, at any point, you feel bored with, frustrated by or disconnected from the course content, I'd like you to let me know so that we figure out how to make things better.

I know that each of you is going to be a fantastic teacher, and I can't wait to meet you. At any time, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have questions or want to talk more.

In a while crocodile,  
Harper

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<sup>1</sup> Felitti et al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), p. 245-258.

## HONOR CODE:

Students are expected to adhere to Stanford's honor code. According to the Office of Judicial Affairs (OJA) website, "For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s)." For further information, please consult the OJA website:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm>

## STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk; phone: 723-1066; web site <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>.

### **A note on the use of digital technology:**

Cell phones and laptops are excellent research and note-taking tools, but they are sometimes distracting and can detract from our ability to be present with each other. If you are using your laptop to take notes in class, please turn off your wireless Internet. The use of cell phones for anything other than assistive learning support is discouraged, unless we are explicitly using them for a class activity. If you have an emergency situation, please do let me know.

## Course Assignments

### **Due Session 1: Self-Portrait & What I Wish My Teachers Knew**

*Self-Portrait:* Using any media (e.g. paint, collage, pencil, digital drawing), please create a self-portrait on an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper in advance of our first class. Make sure that your name is clearly shown somewhere on the sheet. **NOTE:** These will be on public display in our classroom. The goal here is not artistic perfection, but self-expression.

*What I Wish My Teachers Knew:* Write a letter to your elementary school teachers. You may use illustrations, poetry, storytelling, video, photography, or create a comic. What do you wish your elementary school teachers knew about you at the beginning of the school year? Interpret this however you wish. This document will only be shared with Harper, but you may elect to share parts with your peers in class.

*This assignment will be graded as incomplete/complete.*

### **Due Session 2: Snack Sign Up, and Childhood Story**

1. *Sign up for a snack with Harper (details to be provided in class)*
2. *Childhood story*

In line with our readings for this week, write a story (1-3 pages), poem, annotated illustration, or comic strip about an instance of childhood learning about building community, friendships, or relationships with others that was impactful for you. This should be an experience that took place during your elementary-aged years, but it doesn't have to have taken place at school. Be descriptive in your account. Where were you? Who were you with? What did you learn, and how? Did you leave the experience with any questions? Feel free to describe a positive experience, a negative one, or something in-between. You can take this in whatever direction feels right to you as long as you reflect on those questions. **NOTE:** You will share this writing with one of your colleagues in class.

*This assignment will be graded as incomplete/complete.*

### **Due Session 3: Morning/Closing Meeting Plan**

Sometime during Week 3 or 4 of summer school, you will lead a Morning or Closing Meeting for your class. You may choose to do this in tandem with your cooperating teacher. The meeting should be 10-20 minutes long, and include a morning message, greeting, sharing, and group activity. Please submit a lesson plan for your morning meeting. *An optional template will be provided to you in class.*

*This assignment will be graded according to the rubric below:*

	1: Approaching expectations	2: Meets expectations	3: Exceeds expectations
Structural Organization	Meeting plan demonstrates little or no attention to timing.  Meeting plan does not include all recommended components or a rationale for not including them.  Meeting plan does not clearly or positively communicate expectations for student actions.	Meeting plan demonstrates careful attention to timing.  Meeting includes all recommended components, or includes a rationale for not including them.  Meeting plan demonstrates clearly communicated and positive expectations for student actions.	Meeting plan demonstrates careful attention to timing, as well as a backup plan or anticipated potential challenges.  Meeting plan includes all recommended components, or a rationale for not including them.  Meeting plan demonstrates clear communication, positive expectations for students, and multiple means of student engagement.

Responsive Design	Meeting plan does not show evidence of responding to students.  Meeting plan does not consider accessibility needs of students.	Meeting plan responds to student identities, interests, and abilities.  Meeting plan demonstrates careful attention to accessibility needs of all students.	Meeting plan specifically addresses individual as well as group identities, interests, and abilities.  Meeting plan demonstrates careful attention to accessibility needs of all students.
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**Due Session 5: Morning/Closing Meeting Reflection**

After you’ve led a Class Meeting, submit a narrative reflection (about 1 page), and/or you may choose to annotate your lesson plan for the meeting using track changes. Either approach should address the following questions: What went well? What was challenging? What might you do differently next time?

*This assignment will be graded as incomplete/complete.*

**Due Sessions 7, 8, and 9: Observational Video & Notes**

Each week, find time to film your placement classroom without interacting directly with children for 15-20 minutes, paying particular attention to situations or students that might be especially puzzling to you. You will select a 2-5 minute clip to discuss with your peers each week, and you will be expected to provide contextual notes and a guiding question for your peers. *Further specifics for this assignment will be provided in class.*

*This assignment will be graded as incomplete/complete.*

**Due September 25 (after course ends): Philosophy Statement and Practical Reflection**

As the culminating task for this course, you will write a classroom community building philosophy statement (1-2 pages) that articulates the approach you aspire to use in designing classroom environments and building relationships with students. This will approximate a statement you could give to a principal in a teaching portfolio for a potential job. Then, you will write a practical reflection on one puzzling and/or difficult situation drawn from your video observations through the lens of your philosophy (1-2 pages). This reflection is designed to simulate questions similar to ones you will likely be asked to address in a job interview. Address the following questions in this reflection:

1. What was the situation as it took place?

*Using your philosophy as a guide...*

2. If the event took place again, exactly as it did, how might you have responded differently to the situation?
3. How might you have proactively done things differently if you were to start that interaction or event all over again?

*This assignment will be graded according to the rubric on the following page:*

## Final Assignment Rubric

	1: Approaching expectations	2: Meets Expectations	3: Exceeds Expectations
Philosophy Statement	<p>Philosophy statement does not clearly articulate how the candidate would design the physical environment of the classroom.</p> <p>Philosophy statement does not clearly demonstrate ideas about how the candidate will build relationships with and among students.</p> <p>Philosophy statement does not clearly demonstrate how the candidate will establish classroom agreements or rules.</p> <p>Philosophy statement does not clearly demonstrate how the candidate will address classroom challenges and conflict.</p>	<p>Philosophy statement clearly articulates a vision for how the candidate would ideally like to design the physical environment of the classroom.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates ideas about how the candidate will build relationships with and among students.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates how the candidate will establish a set of classroom agreements or rules for the year.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates how the candidate will address classroom challenges and conflict.</p>	<p>Philosophy statement clearly articulates a vision for how the candidate would like to design the physical environment of the classroom, as well as a pragmatic approach to adjusting to a variety of schools' resources.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates ideas about how the candidate will build relationships with and among students, and clearly references the "schools of thought" and other sources for these ideas.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates how the candidate will establish classroom agreements or rules, and explains <i>why</i> they will take that approach.</p> <p>Philosophy statement clearly demonstrates how the candidate will address classroom challenges and conflict, and explains <i>why</i> they will take that approach.</p>
Practical Reflection	<p>Practical reflection does not clearly explain the classroom situation.</p> <p>Practical reflection does not consider alternative responses.</p> <p>Practical reflection does not consider proactive design alternatives.</p>	<p>Practical reflection clearly explains a puzzling/difficult classroom situation with adequate context so that an outsider could begin to imagine what took place.</p> <p>Practical reflection considers alternative responses to the situation as it took place.</p> <p>Practical reflection considers proactive classroom design alternatives that might have led to different actions.</p>	<p>Practical reflection clearly explains a puzzling/difficult classroom situation with detailed context <i>and</i> considers alternative explanations.</p> <p>Practical reflection considers alternative responses to the situation, and provides a detailed alternative plan or imagined dialogue.</p> <p>Practical reflection considers proactive classroom design changes that might have led to different actions, and provides a basic alternative plan.</p>

## Course Readings, Guiding Questions, and Focal Routines

### **Session 1: Monday, July 2nd, 4pm**

*Drawing a Sketch: Class Meetings and Getting to Know Each Other*

#### Guiding Questions

How do adults relate to children and childhood?

How might teachers relate to children and childhood at school?

What can we do to begin building relationships with the children, families, and communities we work with? Why does it matter?

Focus Routine: Greetings, institutional values, morning and closing meetings

#### Required Readings

1. William A. Corsaro (2003), *We're Friends, Right?: Inside Kids' Culture*. Read: Introduction & Chapter 8: "Appreciating Childhood." Ebook available online through Stanford Library.
2. Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson (2016). *(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research*. (in *Harvard Educational Review*).
3. Robert Lake (2000), *An Indian Father's Plea*. (in *Education Week*)

#### Recommended for Further Reading

Marjorie Orellana (2009). The work kids do: Mexican and Central American immigrant children's contributions to households and schools in California (in *Harvard Educational Review*)

Christine Hertz & Kristin Mraz (2018). *Kids 1<sup>st</sup> from Day One: A Teacher's Guide to Today's Classroom*. What Kids Wish Their Teachers Knew (In *The New York Times*)

**Assignments Due:** Self-portrait & What I Wish My Teachers Knew

### **Session 2: Monday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 4pm**

*Building with Blocks: Designing a Classroom Environment*

#### Guiding Question

How might we develop a physical and social space that fosters community, engagement, imagination, and generative play among children?

Focus Routine: Supporting free play, cleaning up, and material organization in the classroom

#### Required Readings

1. Catherine C. Lewis (1995), *Educating Hearts and Minds: Reflections on Japanese Preschool and Elementary Education*, Chapter 3: The Whole Child Goes to Elementary School
2. Teresa Strong Wilson & Julia Ellis (2007), *Children and Place: Reggio Emilia's Environment as Third Teacher* (in *Theory into Practice*, 46(1))

### Recommended for Further Reading

Rethinking the Colorful Kindergarten Classroom (NYT)

Vivian Paley, *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*

**Assignments Due:** Snack sign-up and childhood story

### **Session 3: Monday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 4pm**

*Being Onstage: The Classroom & the Emotional Worlds of Children*

#### Guiding Questions

How do young children's emotions develop?

How can we support young children to better understand their emotions?

What are some ways to practice meaningful and respectful ways of relating to young children?

What are some ways to support young children to practice meaningful and respectful ways of relating to each other and their environments?

Focus Routine: Classroom snacks, breaks, and quiet time

#### Required Readings

1. Daniel J. Siegel (2012), *The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*. Read Chapters 2, 3, and 4.
2. Shauna L. Tominey, Elisabeth O'Bryon, Susan E. Rivers, & Sharon Shapses (2017). *Teaching Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood*. (in *Young Children*, 72(1))

### Recommended for Further Reading

Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson (2004). *The Compassionate Classroom: Relationship Based Teaching and Learning*.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*

Daniel J. Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson, *No Drama Discipline: The Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*

**Assignment Due:** Morning/Closing Meeting Plan

### **Session 4: Monday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4pm**

*Painting a Picture: Hopes, Dreams, and Community Agreements*

#### Guiding Questions

How might we work with children to build a vision and expectations for a classroom community?

What does it mean to make community agreements? How can we do it?

What are the roles of trust, responsibility, and risk in building a classroom community?

Focus Routine: Establishing hopes, dreams, and community agreements

#### Required Readings

1. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Chapter 4: We Are Family. Available as an Ebook through Stanford Library.



2. Maxine Greene (1995), *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*, Chapter 3: Imagination, Community, and the School.
3. Responsive Classroom, *Our Hopes and Dreams for School*  
<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/our-hopes-and-dreams-for-school/>

### Recommended for Further Reading

Ed Brockenbrough (2012), *Emasculation Blues: Black Male Teachers' Perspectives on Gender and Power in the Teaching Profession* (in *Teachers College Record*).

Ed Brockenbrough (2014). *Becoming queerly responsive: Culturally relevant pedagogy for Black and Latino urban queer youth* (in *Gender and Education*).

Ruth Sidney Charney (1993). *Teaching children to care: Management in the responsive classroom*.

Gregory Mitchie, *Teaching in the Undertow* (in *Rethinking Schools*)

Nel Noddings (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*.

### **Session 5: Monday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 4pm**

*Dancing Together: Ways of Being, Moving, and Acting in Classroom Space*

### Guiding Questions

What can we do to be positive in our expectations of all of our students?

How can we make our expectations clear to students?

How do we support children's freedom while ensuring that classrooms are generative spaces that are as safe as can be?

Focus Routine: Interactive modeling and transitions

### Required Reading

1. Pedro Noguera (1995). *Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence*. (In the *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(2))
2. Responsive Classroom, *Reinforcing, Reminding, and Redirecting*.  
<http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/reinforcing-reminding-redirecting>
3. Responsive Classroom, *What is Interactive Modeling?*  
<http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/what-interactive-modeling>
4. Responsive Classroom Interactive Modeling Video: Using Scissors

### Recommended for Further Reading

Vivian Paley, *You Can't Say You Can't Play*

Lisa Delpit (1988), *The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children*

Jean Anyon (1981), *Elementary Schooling and Distinctions of Social Class*.

**Assignment Due:** Morning/Closing Meeting Reflection

**MID-COURSE BREAK** - Be sure to allow yourself enough time to read the entire *Troublemakers* book for Session 6.

### **Session 6: Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1pm**

*Weaving a Fabric: Observing, Recording, and Understanding the Behavior of Young Children*

### Guiding Questions

What can we do when children's behavior is puzzling to us?

What are some tools we can use to better understand children's behavior?

Focus Routine: Observing children's actions

Guest Speaker (via Skype): Dr. Carla Shalaby, teacher educator and author of *Troublemakers*

### Required Reading

1. Carla Shalaby (2017), *Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*
2. **Skim:** Dorothy H. Cohen, Virginia Stern, Nancy Balaban & Nancy Gropper (2008), *Observing and Recording the Behavior of Young Children*, Chapter 1

### Recommended for Further Reading

Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*

### **Session 7: Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1pm**

*Studying the Architecture: Small Puzzles and Bigger Challenges for Classroom Communities*

Guest Speaker: Fanna Gamal, Staff Attorney at the East Bay Community Law Center, and Equal Justice Works Fellow in Education Defense & Justice for Youth Practice

### Guiding Questions

What kinds of challenges do classroom communities face, and how can we respond to them with care and respect for children?

What can we do to better understand students and situations that challenge us?

Focus Routine: Energizers, choreographed games, and supporting group work/play

### Required Readings

1. Joan F. Goodman (2017). Student discipline: The shame of shaming. (In *Phi Delta Kappan Online*)
2. Fanna Gamal (2018). *Good girls: Gender-specific interventions in juvenile court.*

### Recommended for Further Reading

Tim Walker (2016). *Is stress contagious in the classroom?* (in NEAToday).

Subini Annamma, Deb Morrison, and Darrell Jackson (2014). *Disproportionality fills in the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline, and special education in the school-to-prison pipeline.*

**Assignment Due:** Observational Notes

### **Session 8: Tuesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1pm**

*Writing a Story: Difficult Feelings, Conflict, and Trauma in the Classroom*

Guest Speaker: Dr. Lindsay Fulton from the Ann Martin Center for Psychotherapy and Educational Support

### Guiding Questions

What can we do to address difficult emotions and conflict in the classroom?  
How can we support children who have experienced trauma?

Focus Routine: Reflective storytelling and social stories

### Required Readings

1. Susan E. Craig (2016), *Trauma Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children's Lives, K-5*, Chapter 3-6.
2. Nadine Burke Harris, TED Talk Video (2014): *How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime*.

### Recommended for Further Reading

National Association of Educators of Young Children (NAEYC), *Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms*.

**Assignment Due**: Observational Notes

### **Session 9: Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1pm**

*Acting Together: Moving from Punishment to Transformative Justice and Repair*

### Guiding Questions

When and how might we need to redirect student behavior?  
What can we do to repair and restore community in response to harm?  
What are some of the consequences of school punishment systems?

Focus Routine: Classroom circles, conflict resolution, and redirecting students.

### Required Readings

1. Maisha Winn (2018), *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice*. Chapter 1 - Paradigm Shifting on Both Sides: The Art & Science of Making Things Right.
2. Erica Meiners (2016), *For the Children?: Protecting Innocence in a Carceral State*, Chapter 2 - The Trouble with the Child in the Carceral State.

### Recommendations for Further Reading

Philly Student Union website: [www.phillystudentunion.org](http://www.phillystudentunion.org)

William Ayers, Rick Ayers, and Bernadine Dohrn (2001). *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools*.

Erica Meiners (2011). *Ending the school-to-prison pipeline/building abolition futures*. (In *Harvard Educational Review*)

Healthier SF/Center for Restorative Process. *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*.

Angela Davis (2011). *Are prisons obsolete?*

Michel Foucault (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

**Assignment Due**: Observational Notes

### **Session 10 DATE TBD**

*Singing a Song: Celebration and Caring Closure*

### Guiding Questions

What are our commitments to ourselves, to each other, and to the children we work with?

Why is closure important, and how do we practice effective closure in a classroom community?

Focus Routine: Celebration and caring goodbyes

Required Readings

Responsive Classroom, *Learning Celebrations*

Responsive Classroom, *Joyful Endings: The Last Few Weeks of School*

Capital District Childcare Council, *Saying Goodbye to a Friend or Teacher Tipsheet*

**Assignment Due NEXT WEEK (September 25)**: Community Building Philosophy and Practical Reflection