

Empathic Teaching

Promoting Social Justice in the Contemporary Classroom

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Series in Education



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Preface

Empathic Teaching: Promoting Social Justice in the Contemporary Classroom was written for pre-service and veteran teachers, school and educational psychologists, related special education service professionals, educational administrators, guidance counselors, graduate education professors, policy-makers, parents and student leaders. While this tome will largely focus on understanding the role that equity should play in P-12 education, it will do so with an acute awareness that there are myriad factors that influence student engagement and the motivation to learn. Although some of the subjects under consideration have been written about elsewhere broadly, this tome will offer a unique contribution by examining each from a social equity perspective. As schools move to ensure a more inclusive and well-rounded student body, this book will be a substantial asset to anyone interested in advancing a social justice agenda.

The motivation for writing this book arose due to...

- Our concern that the inequities that currently exist in schools threaten the ability of teachers and students to adequately prepare for a future that is socially just;
- Our knowledge that each administrator, educator, parent, and student play an integral part in creating schools and classrooms in which everyone feels safe, respected, and important;
- Our belief in equitable outcomes for all students so that they can become leaders of their communities and productive member of society; and
- Our passion for helping to guide the conversation surrounding social justice through research and examples, explicitly teaching the concepts that will carry the message to all who engage in raising the next generation.

Each chapter provides the reader with a better understanding of how to bring social justice concepts into the classroom and beyond. The book begins with a look at the beginnings of social justice and considers the contribution of Paulo Freire, Martin Luther King, Jr., and other influencers and continues on to explain the need for an inclusive and calm classroom

culture that values all students. Engaging students in social success cycles and differentiated instruction based on a social justice curriculum promotes positive experiences in school, while an examination of extracurricular activities is also considered in this tome. Money and religion are two divisive areas and they are both considered here in terms of concerns and promising practices. Parents and students will enjoy reading about student leadership and the possibilities that exist if the student is willing, while educators and those who are involved with the schools in any fashion should consider learning more about self-development.

Written by a team of educators and professors whose life experiences and research interests span the collective concerns of equity in education, it is with confidence that we share this book with the readers. *Empathic Teaching: Promoting Social Justice in the Contemporary Classroom* is for those who are committed to using social justice as a lens through which all students can succeed in the classroom. Our overarching goal for this work is simple: We wish to support our colleagues with educating the next generation to demonstrate tolerance, respect and empathy for all others in society as a lifelong endeavor. And last, but far from least, thank you for you doing your part to achieve those same outcomes.

Chapter One

The Leaders of Equity: Past and Present

Elizabeth Jean, *Endicott College*

Anne E. Mead, *Danbury Public Schools*

The education system is plagued with inequities; both in the way it is structured and the way it is financed (Drover, 2009). Beginning in the late 1800s, the one-room schoolhouse disappeared, making room for neighborhood schools whose academics were determined by a group of neighborhood individuals known as a board of education (Church, 2015). These neighborhood schools were typically financed by the local government based on the population and housing practices (Irving, 2014, Drover, 2009). Since many communities sought to fund their systems by the local property tax, it predominantly became white communities that had the most funding, best teachers and students who could achieve (Irving, 2014).

Communities in redlined areas became schools for children of families that struggled financially, were oppressed, and often drew teachers who couldn't make it in the better suburban schools (Irving, 2014). It quickly became evident that students in these schools suffered from inadequate resources, poor quality teachers, and the beginning of systemic inequities (Drover, 2009). The evidence was clear that a division between those who could afford and those who could not attend schools with very different characteristics; a classroom that espoused cultural and education behaviors of white middle-class families at the sacrifice of less dominating and influential social classes (Irving, 2014). These inequities prompted educators to quickly switch their teaching pedagogy from a classroom focus to one that looked at systemic inequities and a society where oppressiveness is prevalent (Drover, 2009).

Paulo Freire

Defined by Freire (1970/2002), an oppressed society (those within the redlined areas) must seek out humanitarians who will free those in the

affected areas. At this point in time, Freire (1970/2002) felt that those who lived in oppressed systems were aware of their living situations but did not see a way out of the oppression; rather “their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression” (Freire, 2002, n.p.). The oppressed were not energized, nor did they know how to overcome this level of subjugation and, thus, stayed in it longer than they should (Davis & Steyn, 2012). Outside forces would then notice the situation and try to make changes for the system (Davis & Steyn, 2012). These outside forces often included the oppressor; that is, those who were termed privileged as well as “white people who benefit from systemic whiteness” (Davis & Steyn, 2012, p. 30).

Though most of Freire’s work was done in the 70s, at least one of his books stressed the need for democracy (Freire, 1985). Freire (1985) maintained that oppressed societies had the need to organize themselves to be active proponents of their own ideas and goals through education. It was argued that through political determination a democracy could be formed that ultimately developed a society of people with the characteristics of good citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Shanker and G. W. Bush (as cited in Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) continued the cause by promoting the establishment of programs in schools that aimed to renew the democratic spirit; however, through these discussions the definition of democracy can still be unclear as it relates to students who become good citizens educated in safe schools.

The idea of safe schools was further challenged by Davis and Steyn (2012) who asked, “safe from what or whom?” (p. 33). Still today, the ideas of safe schools are not well defined. Most consider a safe school to be free of violence; however, there are often minimal discussions about how to make classrooms feel safe for students regarding issues that affect them such as LGBTQ+, cultural differences, or education inequities (Young, Michael, & Smolinski, 2019a). Safe schools must also include open discussions between the school and community regarding what equity in education means and how cultural competencies and other relevant issues can be addressed (Lopez, Patrick, & Sturgis, 2017). These discussions are just beginning.

There have been many leaders, both educational and non-educational, who have acted upon their beliefs in order to change the culture of social justice. Leaders such as Ghandi, Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr. have had “a vision of transformative change for his or her country” (Redford, 2017, p. 1831). This led to deep-seated changes in the lives of those previously affected by marginalization and poverty. In doing so, these progressive

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About the Primary Authors

Nicholas D. Young, PhD, EdD

Dr. Nicholas D. Young has worked in diverse educational roles for more than 30 years, serving as a teacher, counselor, principal, special education director, graduate professor, graduate program director, graduate dean, and longtime psychologist and superintendent of schools. He was named the Massachusetts Superintendent of the Year; and he completed a distinguished Fulbright program focused on the Japanese educational system through the collegiate level. Dr. Young is the recipient of numerous other honors and recognitions including the General Douglas MacArthur Award for distinguished civilian and military leadership and the Vice Admiral John T. Hayward Award for exemplary scholarship. He holds several graduate degrees including a PhD in educational administration and an EdD in educational psychology.

Dr. Young has served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserves combined for over 34 years; and he graduated with distinction from the U.S. Air War College, the U.S. Army War College, and the U.S. Navy War College. After completing a series of senior leadership assignments in the U.S. Army Reserves as the commanding officer of the 287th Medical Company (DS), the 405th Area Support Company (DS), the 405th Combat Support Hospital, and the 399th Combat Support Hospital, he transitioned to his current military position as a faculty instructor at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA. He currently holds the rank of Colonel.

Dr. Young is also a regular presenter at state, national, and international conferences; and he has written many books, book chapters, and/or articles on various topics in education, counseling, and psychology. Some of his most recent books include *Sounding the Alarm in the Schoolhouse: Safety, Security and Student Well-Being* (2019); *Creating Compassionate Classrooms: Understanding the Continuum of Disabilities and Effective Educational Interventions* (2019); *The Special Education Toolbox: Supporting Exceptional Teachers, Students, and Families* (in-press); *Acceptance, Understanding, and the Moral Imperative of Promoting Social Justice Education in the Schoolhouse* (in-press); *Educating the Experienced: Challenges and Best Practices in Adult Learning* (in-press); *Securing the Schoolyard: Protocols that*

Promote Safety and Positive Student Behaviors (2018); *The Soul of the Schoolhouse: Cultivating Student Engagement* (2018); *Embracing and Educating the Autistic Child: Valuing Those Who Color Outside the Lines* (2018); *From Cradle to Classroom: A Guide to Special Education for Young Children* (2018); *Captivating Classrooms: Educational Strategies to Enhance Student Engagement* (2018); *Potency of the Principalship: Action-Oriented Leadership at the Heart of School Improvement* (2018); *Soothing the Soul: Pursuing a Life of Abundance Through a Practice of Gratitude* (2018); *Dog Tags to Diploma: Understanding and Addressing the Educational Needs of Veterans, Servicemembers, and their Families* (2018); *Turbulent Times: Confronting Challenges in Emerging Adulthood* (2018); *Guardians of the Next Generation: Igniting the Passion for Quality Teaching* (2018); *Achieving Results: Maximizing Success in the Schoolhouse* (2018); *From Head to Heart: High Quality Teaching Practices in the Spotlight* (2018); *Stars in the Schoolhouse: Teaching Practices and Approaches that Make a Difference* (2018); *Making the Grade: Promoting Positive Outcomes for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2018); *Paving the Pathway for Educational Success: Effective Classroom Interventions for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2018); *Wrestling with Writing: Effective Strategies for Struggling Students* (2018); *Floundering to Fluent: Reaching and Teaching the Struggling Student* (2018); *Emotions and Education: Promoting Positive Mental Health in Students with Learning* (2018); *From Lecture Hall to Laptop: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Continuing Evolution of Virtual Learning in Higher Education* (2017); *The Power of the Professoriate: Demands, Challenges, and Opportunities in 21st Century Higher Education* (2017); *To Campus with Confidence: Supporting a Successful Transition to College for Students with Learning Disabilities* (2017); *Educational Entrepreneurship: Promoting Public-Private Partnerships for the 21st Century* (2015); *Beyond the Bedtime Story: Promoting Reading Development during the Middle School Years* (2015); *Betwixt and Between: Understanding and Meeting the Social and Emotional Developmental Needs of Students During the Middle School Transition Years* (2014); *Learning Style Perspectives: Impact Upon the Classroom* (3rd ed., 2014); and *Collapsing Educational Boundaries from Preschool to PhD: Building Bridges Across the Educational Spectrum* (2013); *Transforming Special Education Practices: A Primer for School Administrators and Policy Makers* (2012); and *Powerful Partners in Student Success: Schools, Families and Communities* (2012). He also co-authored several children's books to include the popular series *I am Full of Possibilities*. Dr. Young may be contacted directly at nyoung1191@aol.com.

Elizabeth Jean, EdD

Dr. Elizabeth Jean has served as an elementary school educator and administrator in various rural and urban settings in Massachusetts for more than 20 years. As a building administrator, she has fostered partnerships with staff, families, various local businesses, and higher education institutions. Further, she is currently a graduate adjunct professor at the Van Loan School of Education, Endicott College and previously taught at the College of Our Lady of the Elms. In terms of formal education, Dr. Jean received a BS in education from Springfield College; an MEd in education with a concentration in reading from the College of Our Lady of the Elms; and an EdD in curriculum, teaching, learning and leadership from Northeastern University.

Dr. Jean is a primary author on *Acceptance, Understanding, and the Moral Imperative of Promoting Social Justice Education in the Schoolhouse* (in-press); *From Cradle to Classroom: A Guide to Special Education for Young Children* (2019); *The Potency of the Principalship: Action-Oriented Leadership at the Heart of School Improvement* (2018); *Dog Tags to Diploma: Understanding and Addressing the Educational Needs of Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families* (2018); *Stars in the Schoolhouse: Teaching Practices and Approaches that Make a Difference* (2018); *From Head to Heart: High Quality Teaching Practices in the Spotlight* (2018); *From Lecture Hall to Laptop: Opportunities, Challenges and the Continuing Evolution of Virtual Learning in Higher Education* (2017). She has also written book chapters on such topics as emotional well-being for students with learning disabilities, post-secondary campus supports for emerging adults, parental supports for students with learning disabilities, home-school partnerships, virtual education, public and private partnerships in public education, professorial pursuits, technology partnerships between K-12 and higher education, developing a strategic mindset for LD students, the importance of skill and will in developing reading habits for young children, and middle school reading interventions to name a few. Additionally, she has co-authored and illustrated several children's books to include *Yes, Mama* (2018), *The Adventures of Scotty the Skunk: What's that Smell?* (2014), and the *I am Full of Possibilities* Series for Learning Disabilities Worldwide. She may be contacted at elizabethjean1221@gmail.com.

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