

Minimum Time Required: 45 minutes

Slide #2: Truly Connected Learning Task

With a partner, share a time in your education when you felt truly connected to your school experience. This time could be when you were very young or much more recently.

What factors contributed to this connection?

We will share and record responses.

- ▶▶ Encourage participants to partner for this activity, not work in a trio or group.
- ▶▶ Allow time for partners to share their stories and identify factors, then facilitate a group discussion.
- ▶▶ As participants share their factors, create a list on a piece of flip chart paper. Once the list is created, share with participants that we will be comparing this informal research with the formal research on school connectedness.

Slide #3: The other Bookend Research

At the same time the research around the rampage school shooters is being conducted, some profound research around student mobility is also being conducted. The military is interested in finding out what effect moving from one school community to another (not moving with a school-based cohort from elementary school to middle school). Student mobility is about moving to an entirely new community of peers and adults. This military reality is also a reality in so many of our districts, especially urban centers where children moving across a town or city to another school is as far as moving to another state. It turns out that on average, when children (over a kindergarten through high school lifetime) have seven or more moves that every school related and health-

based outcome diminishes exponentially. There are outlying students who have “made it” and had more than seven moves, but for the most part even though children are “resilient,” a great deal of negative outcomes exist for children who experience a lot of student mobility.

Slide #4: School Connectedness Measures Learning Task

As a large group, sort the provided cards.

Which are the top measures of being connected to their school experience for students?

- ▶▶ Ask for volunteers and give each person a card to hold. Have them line up in front of the group and read the cards out loud one at a time. Once they have read the cards ask the group to decide which order the cards go in.
- ▶▶ Do not tell them which factors are the ones identified by research – allow them figure it out on their own.
- ▶▶ Encourage them to use their own research as a guide in selecting cards to include
- ▶▶ Once the group has decided on which cards they think are correct, compare what they have selected with the next slide.

Slide #5: School Connectedness Simple Measures

Question: *What counts as “being connected to school?”*

Answer: Students in the school feeling: (1) close to people there, (2) happy to be there, (3) a part of the school, (4) being treated fairly by teachers (and other adults) and, (5) a sense of personal safety while at school.

This slide summarizes the five important measures contained in the two PDF monographs entitled “Improving the Odds” and “School Connectedness.” Refer to those monographs for the explanation that ought to be explained around this slide.

Slide #6: Levels of Emotional Distress

This slide summarizes the research contained in the two PDF monographs entitled “Improving the Odds” and “School Connectedness.” Refer to those monographs for the explanation that ought to be explained around this slide. Specifically pp. 4 - 6 in “Improving the Odds.” “The value of ‘0’ represents the average level among students. Negative number indicate below-average, positive numbers indicate greater than average.” It is good to be below the line.

Slide #7: Percent Ever Pregnant

High levels of connectedness result in greatly decreased risky sexual behaviors.

Slide #8: Levels of Substance use

High levels of connectedness result in greatly decreased substance abuse.

Slide #9: Levels of Violent or Deviant Behavior

High levels of connectedness result in greatly decreased amounts of violent or deviant behavior. This does not just refer to high-end violence or deviant behavior. This includes disrespectful day-to-day treatment.

Slide #10: Factors Associated with School Connectedness

This slide summarizes the research contained in the two PDF monographs entitled “Improving the Odds” and “School Connectedness.” Refer to those monographs for the explanation that ought to be explained around this slide.

Slide #11: Mapping Friendship Groups - Segregation

“ Each circle on the maps above represents a student, and each line depicts a friendship selection made. Clusters of connected circles are friendship groups; circles on the perimeter with no connecting lines reveal socially isolated students.

The first slide is a map of a large school with relatively equal numbers of White students and Black students. There are two large friendship groups made up predominantly of Black students. There are also two predominantly White friendship groups. Other

minority students are well represented throughout the school's social network. In this racially integrated school, Black and White students have formed segregated friendship groups.

To a lesser extent friendship groups tend to segregate themselves by socioeconomic status and gender as well. The result is a lower level of connectedness among most students." (Quote from PDF monograph, "Improving the Odds"). More details pertaining to friendship groups can be found in the two PDF Connectedness documents referenced earlier.

Slide #12: Mapping Friendship Groups - Integration

"The second slide depicts a school that is predominantly White. Students of color are equally represented in each of the five friendship groups. When friendship groups are integrated in this way, school connectedness tends to be higher." (Quote from PDF monograph, "Improving the Odds"). More details pertaining to friendship groups can be found in the two PDF Connectedness documents referenced earlier.

Slide #13: Mapping Friendship Groups

"In both schools there are students with no friends. Not surprisingly, these students feel the least connected to school.

Many schools have implemented strategies to identify these young people and help link them into the school's social fabric." (Quote from PDF monograph, "Improving the Odds"). More details pertaining to friendship groups can be found in the two PDF Connectedness documents referenced earlier.

Slide #14: The WHY of Friendship Groups Learning Task

In a small group, consider the two student groupings. Brainstorm your top 5 reasons for explaining how the two groups formed so differently.

- ▶▶ Allow each group to brainstorm potential reasons on their own. After the groups have come up with their top 5 reasons, facilitate a discussion and create one

master list on a piece of flip chart paper.

- ▶▶ It is up to the adults in the building to provide opportunities for students to interact with other students. The more opportunities that adults create for student interaction, the more likely it is that students will integrate themselves. Left on their own, students will not get to know others and socialize/work with peers they do not already know or have positive attitudes about. Adults must change this dynamic.
- ▶▶ When we first start to integrate students, especially if this is not something that the school typically does, it may seem artificial and awkward. The more we continue to practice mixing it up, the more a part of the culture it will become.

Slide #15: School Connectedness is Higher

The content in this slide is literal, and as before, more details pertaining to friendship groups can be found in the two PDF Connectedness documents referenced earlier.

Slide #16: Critical Importance of Making Healthy Friendships

Bottom line, friendships are important for student health and success. It is unrealistic and disingenuous to believe that everybody will be real friends with everyone else. However, a positive school climate requires that everyone be friendly to everyone else.

What is ultimately required is for the culture of the school to change and that is done by focusing on the overall school climate (playground, classrooms, hallways, buses, bathrooms, cafeterias, etc.). Having a school climate that does not support mean-spirited behaviors is the ultimate remedy for bullying; a school where everyone knows that meanness “does not happen *here!*” This can and will happen when all school community members, adults and children, understand and act upon certain established boundaries/norms about what is appropriate in treating others respectfully. Unfortunately, there are circumstances when what adults in the school setting set as rules and boundaries conflicts and are at odds with what children are hearing in their homes and communities. Whether the issue has to do with appropriate ways to solve

problems or dealing with acceptance of difference, it is never necessary to make the child choose one way of behaving over another. For example, if a child's parents tells him or her to "hit back" when someone crosses them or if the belief in the home is that non-heterosexual families have made bad choices and it is thus OK to use hurtful language toward those in non-heterosexual families and the school rules do not permit such behaviors, it is essential to make clear to children what is acceptable ***in school***. So, when a child hurts another physically because "my dad told me to use my fists," or calls someone "gay" in a pejorative context, rather than telling the child that these actions are universally wrong (even if you believe that they are!), the phrase, "we don't do that ***here***" is a much safer way to manage the situation. Finally, after establishing these boundaries, the last and hardest task is to convince any wayward parents/guardians that children ***are*** safe and ***are*** better off without hitting back or using any hurtful language.

It is critically important to make sure that children understand the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate use of words and deeds. Clarity and explicit attention will help them understand what the boundaries are, even if they are receiving different messages at home and at school.