



OnPoint Prize for Excellence in Education Educator of the Year **Sample Nomination Excerpt**

This sample nomination excerpt is intended to illustrate how a compelling nomination might be organized. Nomination materials are welcome in the format that best illustrates the strengths and unique skills of the teacher. Please review the acceptable file types and tips for success at: <https://www.onpointprize.com/EOTYguidelines>

Excerpt includes:

- Strong letters of recommendation
- A brief statement of educational philosophy unique to the nominee
- Portfolio including:
 - A variety of engaging lessons
 - Photo montage of finished projects
 - Examples of the nominee's leadership through extracurricular activities
 - Essay questions addressing nominee's strengths as an educator and referring to the lessons and photos provided

Notes:

- For brevity, parts of this nomination were omitted, including parent letters of support and a video of student performances.
- There is no requirement for length of responses or number of examples. The nomination should help the OnPoint Prize Selection Committee get to know the educator and understand his/her impact.
- This nomination was organized by parents who worked with school staff and student families to collect the materials presented.
- During evaluation, the OnPoint Prize Selection Committee noted that the materials provided made a strong case for the nominee's creative facilitation, ability to foster a safe environment for risk taking, and her focus on the cultivation of student voices in all aspects learning.
- These examples are available for review and should not be duplicated.

Philosophy of Teaching: Addie Lyden

“Leave people brighter, softer, freer, and lighter than when you found them.” -Victoria Erickson

This quote is my mantra for teaching and life. We all have had a teacher that either uplifted us or broke our spirit. That is how powerful teachers are in our lives. I look back to my own education and will always recall the time a teacher scolded me. It was over a small issue that I am sure the teacher quickly forgot about, but I can feel the sting of it like it was yesterday. It literally crushed me and shut down my learning. But then there were the teachers I had who brought out my inner spirit and confidence. Those who inspired me and connected with me. It took me years of teaching to fully realize the impact that teachers have on the psyche of a child—that there is so much more to teaching than content and skills. My goal has always been to get to know the students and uplift who they are. To start them down a path to knowing their own identity and strengths. And I aim daily to tear down the walls of institutional racism that has dominated our educational system since its beginning. A system that has created a society of haves and have-nots that we are just now beginning to fully see.

I was 21 years old when I started teaching high school social studies. I bumbled my way through my first couple of years thinking that the key to teaching was about the firm demanding of students, rigor, and creative lessons. Looking back, I was working way too hard to keep students engaged by entertaining them or pushing them all towards the perfect essay to get into the four-year university. I worked to plan lessons that I thought were the best for creating future historians, politicians, lawyers, and activists. But in those early years, I did not slow down enough to really know the youth in front of me. I believe most teachers start this way before they realize the heart of teaching has absolutely nothing to do with lessons.

There was a defining moment in those early years that literally woke me up to what teaching means. I was teaching a sophomore student who had been very quiet in the classroom all year. I didn't really know her, and later realized that I had never asked anything about who she was as an individual. She asked if she could meet with me at lunch, and I was sure it was about makeup work and how to get a better grade. Our meeting blindsided me, as she told me the reason that she was behind in class was that she was hiding a pregnancy that her parents would never support. She had nobody else to talk to about it, so she sought out advice from a teacher. I was so young and not sure of the best advice that I could give; as it turns out she wanted me to go to an abortion clinic with her. After a lot of tears, we ended up working through getting counseling and a plan to tell her parents (which she did, and they were much more supportive than she expected). What this experience taught me as a new teacher was that students are carrying so much more than what we see on the outside. It was at that moment that my philosophy of teaching changed. I decided to know my students. What has worked best for me over my twenty-four years of teaching is just to offer myself to students to talk privately, and also to ask questions of them. The one question that has opened them up more than anything is simply: “How are you doing? What is going on in your life?” And then to make real time to talk when they are ready. I learned to listen, and in doing this I have learned more about humanity and myself than any lesson plan could have ever achieved.

This philosophy has opened up the relationships I have with students. I had a student say to me once, “Ms. Lyden- you are a great teacher not because of your lessons. Your lessons aren't really any different than any other teacher. But you are great because you care and I trust you. So I do the assignments because you tell me they are important for my future.” If I could give

one piece of advice to a new teacher, it would be to save your energy for the relationships; don't burn yourself out over which article to use or planning a song and dance each day for students. Use that extra energy and space in your mind and heart to work with kids and know your kids. Be available.

While teaching is a labor that constantly evolves and matures with experience, I have stayed true to this priority. And because of it, I have had many difficult, but also joyous, moments. I have counseled students through deaths of both peers and family members. I have bought groceries for a student who is homeless. I have helped students write immigration pleas for their parents held in a detention center during the ICE raids. I have worked with a student through a Measure 11 probation program and have been there to meet with his attorney because his mom didn't understand the legal system (I also teach law). My husband (also a teacher) and I have picked up a runaway student and brought her home on a Sunday night. I have worked with rape cases and connecting young women with School Resource officers. I have made far too many calls to DHS over child and sexual abuse. I have been the person a student confided in over a sexually transmitted disease before they would talk to a parent or a doctor. I have marched with students to support them in a walkout over gun reform and school shootings. I have walked with students and families to support policing reform after George Floyd's murder. I have helped suicidal students, among other mental illnesses, get counseling and treatment. I have delivered course materials to a young woman living in a foster group home because she had no internet during online learning. I have picked up a senior student in my neighborhood every day in the morning because she needed a ride to school to be able to graduate on time. I have been to multiple funerals of students. Many of these issues are really hard. But there are also the moments of joy, where you get to celebrate with students. I have attended a Quinceañera, multiple baby showers, and weddings of current and former students. I have celebrated with a family who had the DACA papers accepted that we worked on together. I have had tamales dropped off at my front door in thanks. I have had an ornament made out of chip bags for me from a dad in the Immigration Detention Center in Tacoma. I have attended grad parties for seniors who barely made it to graduation, seeing the joy on their parents' faces. I have celebrated with a student who had a gender reassignment surgery and supported him as he told his story in front of the entire school. I have had students run into my room to tell me that they finally came out to their family, and they are finally able to be their true selves. I am not saying all of this to brag about my work with students. Every teacher that cares has countless stories such as mine. If they don't, they haven't discovered the heart of a teacher. What I want people outside of education to know is what teaching is really like, and when you put your heart into it and make yourself available, this is the magic.

Because of the relationships I have developed, I have learned that we, as educational institutions, are filling the many roles needed in our society. And my philosophy of teaching is that if not us, then who? I dream someday that we have the mental health support and resources that our students need. Our school has a high poverty rate, and with poverty comes many issues brought into students' lives. These issues are really hard, and they impact learning and equity. I have heard some teachers say that they don't ask students how they are because they know that the answer will involve many hours of emotional support that they just can't give right now. I understand- I have my own kids and family, too. But I can tell you that when you open yourself up to really know students, you realize how much they need us. We are the ones closest to youth. They often don't go to see school counselors because they have a better and closer relationship to teachers. Like I said before, it is a labor of love. And I would not trade this career for any other if doing it all over.

Finally, I wanted to mention the work that schools are also doing to break down hundreds of years of racism in our society. These issues intersect with issues of poverty and equity. On top of filling the other roles our country needs, I also believe the role of a teacher should be to question practices in education that continue to put barriers up for BIPOC, women, and LGBTQ+ students. Our school had a major boundary change five years ago that took us from majority white and high SES demographics to now mostly BIPOC students with about half of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. With this change, our school brought in new leadership and philosophies. Our new principal knew that we had to focus much more on equity for our students, and with that we began an overhaul of our systems. We had ignored the data and issues as a district and school for years. I was asked to be a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) and to work on staff development and anti-racism work, along with a team from other high schools. When we developed an equity team and broke down statistics, it was revealed that we had long-standing racism and discrimination that was silencing some students and causing others to fail or succeed. We discovered huge gaps of student success and where many problems lie systemically in schools. We found racism and discrimination in who is celebrated in not only our school, but also curricular areas of in history, the arts, the sciences, and literature. We found that our lessons used academic vocabulary that was not always known by students of poverty or non-white academia. Once I started studying systemic racism and achievement gaps, I realized they dominate every aspect of education in our country. I see them everywhere. This has become my focus over the past five years, and a lot of it comes with getting to know students and their families and asking them what works for their education. We have done home visits to try to bring back chronic non-attenders. We meet as teachers now regularly to do this work. We have done book groups to discuss ongoing issues. I have made it a deliberate point to restructure all of my curriculum to build empathy and give voice to those perspectives that we have ignored in history. Every student can learn from others' stories and learn to be inclusive of others. My philosophy is that those in education have to start doing this work now, as racism and inequality is tearing this society apart and leaving kids behind. It is the most important work schools can do.

Along with this TOSA assignment, I was also approached and asked to advise our new Black Student Union Club. Working with and learning from our Black students has been the most rewarding and educational experience for me over my career. We have hosted student panels for youth around the Portland metro area to discuss racism. We have met at the NAACP office in Portland, have done a day of service together on MLK Day, have attended many youth leadership conferences, presented at Diversity assemblies, spoken at school board meetings, and created the first Beaverton School District Black Graduation. We have cried together over the killings of unarmed Black citizens and have fought hard together for Black Lives Matter. These kids have had a profound impact on my life and on our community. And again, all I did was listen and support them. They have also helped us to identify the racial gaps in our schools. They have made us, as a district, very aware of the need to hire teachers of color. BSU has become a major part of our school's culture and has also connected our students with BSUs around the Portland area.

To wrap this up, I want to take it back to the quote I started with. When a student enters a school or a classroom, a teacher can either break this child or uplift this child. The teacher controls that room and that relationship. We control which people we celebrate in history. Every day, our teachers should be leaving these students better than we found them. While schools are about academics and skills, they are really about helping students through life and relationships. They are an integral piece of the puzzle of a stronger society. If Covid-19 has taught us anything, it is that our society can't function without schools and teachers.



SOUTHRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

An International Baccalaureate World School

David Nieslanik, Principal

Lori Krumm, Assistant Principal

Sho Shiqeoka, Assistant Principal



March 6, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I have the distinct honor of recommending Ms. Addie Lyden for the OnPoint Educator of the Year Award. Addie Lyden is a consummate professional, educator, teacher leader, and student mentor at Southridge High School in the Beaverton School District. Addie makes our school better, and the teaching profession better across the board.

We have many outstanding teachers at Southridge High School. They cover all subjects and grade levels. Many teachers stand out as the "among the best", but few rise to the top like Addie. She always places the well-being of the student alongside the academic content. Students are welcomed daily, encouraged to be themselves, and honored for their voice, their inquisitiveness, and their work. Addie sees every student in her classroom as able and capable. Addie teaches social studies at Southridge High School and lends her expertise in US History, Law, Gender Studies, and IB history within our academic program.

As Principal I often rely on teacher leaders to lend their voice and wisdom in the decision-making process. For my five years at Southridge High School, I have asked Addie to use her leadership skills in multiple areas. I highlight several below:

- Being an AVID elective teacher. Addie supported and mentored students in our AVID-elective program for four years.
- Leading staff through her role as a Professional Development Teacher on Special Assignment (PD TOSA). Addie worked with staff for several years as a PD TOSA facilitating staff learning and guiding decision-making on building goals and work.
- Serving on our School Leadership Team. Addie's voice help guide Southridge High School Leadership moves by sitting at the table and being part of the broader conversation around vision and mission work.
- Establishing an Equity Team. Addie, alongside several other teachers, created and facilitated our first Equity Team looking at Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist work.
- Creating a venue for our Black Student Union to prosper, to have a voice, and to improve our community. Addie's work in building our Affinity Group Model at Southridge High School is thoughtful and purposeful.
- Working alongside peers in being a LINK program Advisor. Addie has spent multiple years supporting our incoming freshman students as they transition from eighth grade to high school.

I am honored to recommend Ms. Addie Lyden for this prestigious and thoughtful award. Thank you for considering this dedicated, determined, student-centric, and visionary teacher leader.

Respectfully submitted,

David Nieslanik

Southridge High School Principal

9625 SW 125th Ave.; Beaverton, Oregon 97008

Phone: 503.356.2890 Fax: 503.356.2895

District Goal: WE empower all students to achieve post-high school success.

The Beaverton School District recognizes the diversity and worth of all individuals and groups. It is the policy of the Beaverton School District that there will be no discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, marital status, age, veterans' status, genetic information or disability in any educational programs, activities or employment.



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An International Baccalaureate World School
David Nieslanik, Principal
Lori Krumm, Assistant Principal
Sho Shigeoka, Assistant Principal



1 April 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter of recommendation on behalf of Addie Lyden for OnPoint Educator of the Year. Addie is a passionate educator who cares deeply about her students.

When I joined Southridge High School four years ago, Addie was one of the first to reach out to me welcoming me on board. That kindness and care for others is a hallmark of her style. Since then, she has continued to be generous with her time by seeking out opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to improve her teaching to create rich and meaningful educational experiences for her students. She takes joy in sharing with her colleagues the resources she has developed and in trying new things.

Just one example of her growth mentality can be seen as Southridge makes changes to our two-year IB History HL course. The second year of the course has a regional focus and our school is transitioning from a second year focus on European history to one that has a second year focus on the history of Latin America. The previous teacher of the European history opted to not to take on the new course. Addie volunteered to teach this course despite not being a specialist in the region. I teach year one of the course and I have seen her first hand dive in to reading about 20th century Mexico and Cold War Latin America. She sees this for what it is: an opportunity for her to learn and improve her teaching, and to provide a rich and relevant course for our students. She has done the same in her preparations for teaching the Gender Studies course. Addie is not one to say "I haven't done this before so I'm not going to do it." Rather, she considers what is best for students and then puts in the work to get there.

Addie advocates for and amplifies the perspectives of students of color. Addie is a white woman with a white family who grew up in a homogenous environment. Despite that she has done a remarkable job as the club advisor for our Black Student Union. She has collaborated with other teachers and

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administrators to bring the voice and perspective of the students of the BSU to the entire student body. Our BIPOC students are more seen due to her work that goes beyond her teaching duties.

Addie sees the humanity in her students. Her empathy informs what she does, and it makes her colleagues and school better for it. I recommend her for this award without hesitation.

Sincerely,

Anil Naik
Social Studies Department
Southridge High School

My name is Elijah Jagne, I'm a senior at Southridge High School and I had Mrs. Lyden for law earlier this year. Though I never had her class in person I felt very welcomed and comfortable. I had previously interacted with Mrs. Lyden as she ran my school's Black Student Union, and as I am a black student, she had asked me to join. I regret declining, but I was knee-deep in my Junior-year studies. Despite barely knowing me she would still check in with me anytime she'd see me in the halls, and let me know that she would be happy to have me if I decided to join the BSU.

Because of these previous interactions, I knew that I was in good hands when I went into her Law class. What I appreciated about the way she taught Law was how she incorporated conversations about racial justice into her lessons about criminal justice, as the two often overlap in this country. I remember a specific instance where we were studying a case of two men who committed the same crime and were tried by the same judge on the same day. One of those men was white, and the other was black. The black man was sentenced much more harshly, and Mrs. Lyden took this as an opportunity to educate on the disproportionate prosecution of blacks in the criminal justice system. She didn't have to do that, but she used her position as a teacher to create a conversation around a complex and unfortunately controversial issue.

I wish I was able to have Mrs. Lyden's class in person, but I am so excited for the students who will be able to have her class in person as we all return to school. She is a fantastic teacher and an even better person.

Immigrant Voices (unit: Who is American and What is an American?)

The American Immigrant Story

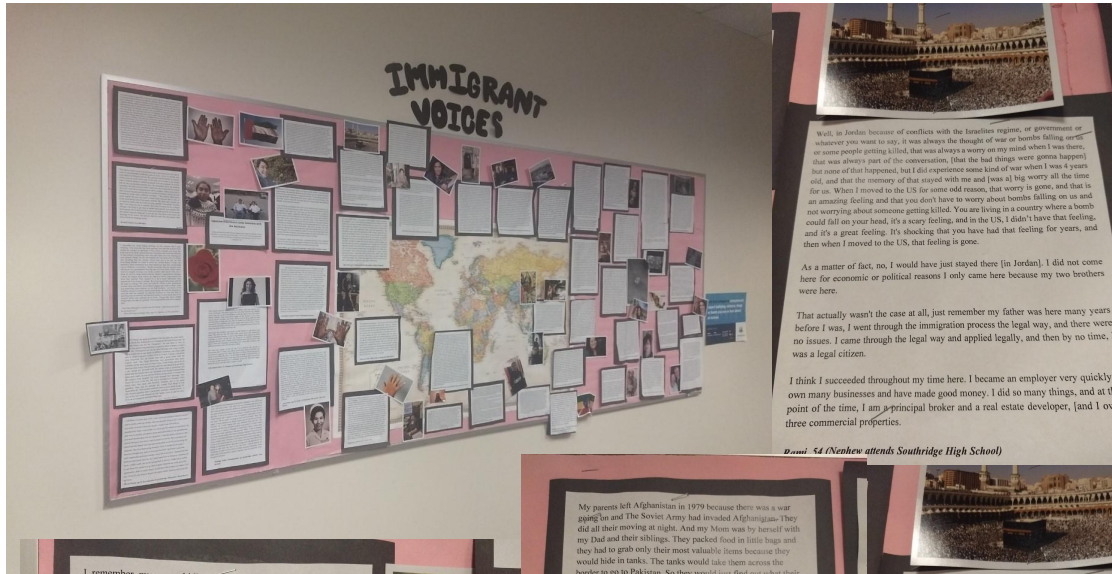


ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: Due:

Choose ONE person who you can conduct an oral history project of his/her immigration story into the United States OR of your family's history of Immigration. This person should be someone who immigrated into the United States in their lifetime, and who was old enough to remember their story OR someone who has a strong understanding of your family's immigration story. This can be someone in your family, or someone who you know well enough to interview. You must have access to either meet in person or speak on the phone (has to be recorded) in the next week.

Overall Steps are;

- Select your interviewee, set up a date to conduct the interview, and prepare a consent form to release the information to our class (see attached). Some of this information can be sensitive for people to talk about, so if you feel the person is uncomfortable with some of the subjects, assure them that they only need to share what they are comfortable with and that their name can be kept confidential. Also, the person can use a false name if they wish to remain anonymous.
- Prepare for your interview by conducting some background research on the history of what was happening in the country (or the family) emigrated from at the time period in which they left. Take notes on a piece of paper of anything you think might help you draft questions to show you have some background information. Include the push factors (why people leave their country) into some of your questions.
- Write at least 15 interview questions as a starting point for your interview. The interview questions should capture why the immigrants left their country (push factors), why they chose the United States (pull factors), what the journey was like, their experiences when they arrived, and the challenges and successes they had once in America. See my sample ones if you are stuck.
- Get the consent form signed and then conduct a (approximately) 10-15 minute interview. You may conduct the interview in any language, but it will need to be translated into English for the project. You must be able to record your interview as that can be done on a phone or computer (checkbook can be just their voice OR video). You want the interview to flow like a conversation, so you won't want to take notes (which is why you are recording it).
- Take a photo of the person (can be a family photo, a photo of their face, their hands, or an object they want to share from their culture). The photo should be good quality something the person feels is appropriate to share, as it will go on our wall to display.
- After the interview is over, transcribe a relevant selection of the interview, word for word.
- Select a part of the interview to turn in (without your questions). Turn in 250-350 words carefully proofread.
- Turn in the items (see next page of the separate parts to submit). Be prepared to turn this into our final project in class.



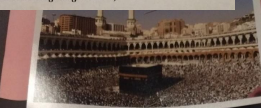
Well, in Jordan because of conflicts with the Israelis regime, or government or whatever you want to say, it was always the thought of war or bombs falling on us or some people getting killed, that was always a worry on my mind when I was there, that was always part of the conversation, [that the bad things were gonna happen] but none of that happened, but I did experience some kind of war when I was 4 years old, and that the memory of that stayed with me and [was a] big worry all the time for us. When I moved to the US for some odd reason, that worry is gone, and that's an amazing feeling and that you don't have to worry about bombs falling on us and not worrying about someone getting killed. You are living in a country where a bomb could fall on your head, it's a scary feeling, and in the US, I didn't have that feeling, and it's a great feeling. It's shocking that you have had that feeling for years, and when I moved to the US, that feeling is gone.

As a matter of fact, no, I would have just stayed there [in Jordan]. I did not come here for economic or political reasons I only came here because my two brothers were here.

That actually wasn't the case at all, just remember my father was here many years before I was, I went through the immigration process the legal way, and there were no issues. I came through the legal way and applied legally, and then by no time, was a legal citizen.

I think I succeeded throughout my time here. I became an employer very quickly, own many businesses and have made good money. I did so many things, and at the point of the time, I am a principal broker and a real estate developer, [and I own three commercial properties.

Dani 54 (Nephew attends Southridge High School)



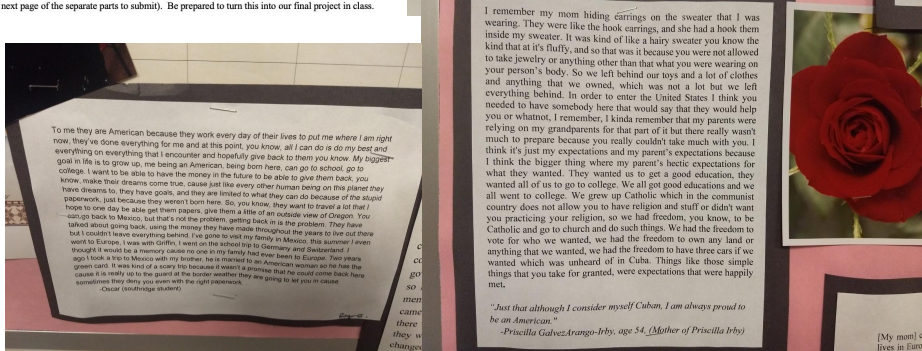
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Rami, 54 (Nephew attends Southridge High School)

[illegible]

"Just that although I consider myself Cuban, I am always proud to be an American."

-Priscilla Golver Arango-Irby, age 54, (Mother of Priscilla Irby)

[My mom] lives in Europe.

My parents in Afghanistan in 1979 because there was a war going on and the Soviet Army had invaded Afghanistan. They were going to be moving at night, and I was only 10 years old. I was with my Dad and their siblings. They packed food in little bags and they had to grab only their most valuable items because they would be leaving in a hurry. They would take items across the border so go Pakistan. So they had to take items that they thought were the most valuable items and find a way to take it but they could only take so much because they didn't have a lot of money. Pakistan was the only country that they could go to. My Dad's brother had agreed to help our government with information and that's how they got that special Visa and special privileges to all come to the United States and that's also one of the reasons why we were able to come to the United States must have been really scary because they were really young. My Mom was twenty-five so my Dad must have been thirty. I could not remember anything about the trip. I was only 10 years old. I was scared. My Dad's older brother really made all of the decisions. I was scared. They were really scared. My parents told me that he thought that America had the best future for them, the best life for them, and that it was safe over here whereas it was not safe over there. They thought that if they came here they would be able to learn how to speak English. My Dad also had to learn how to speak English. My Mom started going to school and she became really successful because her entire life was in Afghanistan and that's all she ever knew. It's a completely different society and a completely different culture. I was born in Afghanistan and I grew up from being in a country in Afghanistan and then coming to America.

When my parents first came here, my Mom really thought that it was gonna be the same thing but safer. No war, nothing like that. The longer she stayed, she realized that there's so much more here than any chance she would have in Afghanistan.

Leading Staff Development and Equity Team- sample agenda and student panel on for Conversation Around Race

A Conversation Around Race- plans for the student panel:

Topic: Black Students Navigating a Time of Crisis in America (Student panel with community and district audience)

Part I- Student Panel (4:00-4:50)

- Addie:** Welcome and a few group norms and agenda- Panel with students and questions led by BSU advisors, followed by breakout room discussions for audience participants (depending on time and if students are finished).
 - Participants-Cameras off unless you are a student who is or would like to participate in the panel discussion. If you have a question as an observer, you can write it in the chat for the end or wait to reflect in breakout rooms at the end. All on Mute and cameras off except student panel members during this student panel.
 - Student and Hosts cameras need to be on (even if not directly on your face) Participants can switch to a "Gallery view" you will see them on your Zoom. I am recording this session (but not for outside use), so I wanted you all to be aware of this. If there is a problem with Zoom or it glitches and we get kicked out, go ahead and sign back in. There is a waiting room we are monitoring.
- Addie:** Student Introductions- school, quick bio relevant to this topic
- Noah-** starts student panel- asks each student to introduce themselves- name, grade, school, and anything else relevant to this conversation (such as you moved here from elsewhere, work with BSU or around this work, etc). Keep this fairly short.
- Daryl- Question 1 (asked by Daryl) for students-** This session is titled "Black student voice navigating a time of crisis in America" What has been your living experience the past year during a time of violence and hate crimes against Black persons, but also at a time that there is an increased awareness that the time is now for a reckoning of our history as a country? How have you personally navigated this as a young adult. Daryl can share how he has if he would like before students go. This is the meat of the conversation, so students can elaborate. Everyone can talk here depending on comfort.
- Noah- Question 2: for students-** all depends on time and how long question 1 goes- What gives you hope for the future of our country, your future? Noah can share his quickly if he wants.
- Addie will make the call about timing: and ask Question 3- what does an ally look like to you, and where you have found them and where are they still needed? What about schools? What is needed?**
- Thank the students for participating (we all can)

Black Student Voice- Navigating a Time of Crisis in America

Talk with student leaders and advisors about responses to current events in America as they pertain to justice and equality.

Presenter(s): Addie Lyden



"A Talk to Teachers"

By James Baldwin

Source: James Arthur Baldwin (born August 2, 1924, New York – died December 1, 1987, Saint Paul, France) was an American novelist, journalist, and playwright whose eloquence and passion on the subject of race in America made him an important voice, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the United States and, later, through much of western Europe. "A Talk to Teachers" was delivered October 16, 1963, in "The Negro Child – His Schooling" originally published in *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Non-Fiction 1928-1985*, Saint Martin's Press.

Let's begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. The society in which we live is desperately misnamed, not by Khrushchev, but from within. To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible – and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people – must be prepared to "go for broke." Or to put it another way, you must understand that in the attempt to control so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fanatic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won't happen.

Since I am talking to schoolteachers and I am not a teacher myself, and in some ways am fairly easily intimidated, I beg you to let me leave that and go back to what I think to be the entire purpose of education in the first place. It would seem to me that when a child is born, if I'm the child's parent, it is my obligation and my high duty to civilize that child. Man is a social animal. He cannot exist without a society. A society, it turns out, depends on certain things which everyone within that society takes for granted. Now the crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society. Thus, for example, the boys and girls who were born during the era of the Third Reich, when education to the purposes of the Third Reich, became barbarism. The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God or heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it – at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.

Now, if I have tried to sketch any validity, it becomes thoroughly clear, at least to me, that the Negro who is born in this country and undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the star and stripes and he is assumed to represent a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees "liberty and justice for all." He is part of a country in which anyone can become president, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assumed by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization – that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured. He is assumed by the republic that he, his father, his mother, and his ancestors were happy, content, who loved Mr. Charlie and Miss Muffet, that the value he has as a black man is proven by one thing only – his devotion to white people. If you think I am exaggerating, examine the myths which proliferate in this country about Negroes.

All this enters the child's consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very different. Children, and yet more so, that it is dangerous to look too deeply at anything, look at everything, look at each other, and draw their own conclusions. They don't have the vocabulary to express what they see, and we, their elders, know how to intimidate them very easily and very soon. But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot

Equity Team Agenda: 10/18

Materials: Pencil/pen, article, post-its

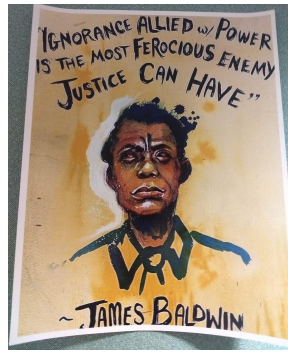
- Overview where this group might go short and long-term; goals
- James Baldwin "A Talk to Teachers" and Socratic seminar, reflection

Essential Questions:

- How are students feeling about the climate of our country, community, and Southridge, as it fits into their perspectives and stories?
- What is the role we (as education) play in working towards social justice in our community, country, and world?

Directions:

1. Number the paragraphs in "A Talk to Teachers"
2. As you read (about 15 minutes), interact with the text, underline key claims, connections in your own work, etc. Then, choose 1 phrase or sentence that really stood out for you.
3. Write 2-3 high level questions for discussion...from Costas levels of questioning
4. Socratic Seminar protocol- If a large group beyond 20 people, we will do an inner/outer circle (fishbowl).
 - 3 before me, refer to text, connect to what others said/add onto- purpose if not to debate, but to come to a deeper understanding, nobody talks while anyone else is talking, work towards solutions and where you could take this in your own practice of working in school and with kids, parents, administration. Nobody's truth is wrong, speak from your truth. Also, think about as a school, what systems can we work on to improve equity? If nobody has a great question to start, ask yourself: "What resonates with my thinking?" "What pushes your thinking?" "How will you apply your learning and understanding to your role?"
5. Socratic Seminar- start reading 1 question
6. Time to reflect- On the blank paper attached to your reading: capturing the spirit of this reading, what is one thing you will move forward and work on in your practice?
7. Exit slip- To us, Ideas for systems, what we can do at a building level to improve equity?





I hope this note finds you well, as we are living through one of the craziest time periods in our lifetime. I am glad we are finding small ways to celebrate you as you move into your next world from Southridge High School. You have worked hard, and you deserve to be recognized.

A large group of students, approximately 25 in total, are posing for a group photo on a paved area in front of Southridge High School. The students are dressed in casual attire, including hoodies, jackets, jeans, and sneakers. They are arranged in several rows, with some standing and others crouching or kneeling in the front. The school building behind them is a two-story structure with tan-colored walls and dark-framed windows. The words "SOUTHRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL" and the address "9625" are clearly visible above the entrance. Two black light poles stand on either side of the entrance. The overall atmosphere is one of a formal group portrait for a school organization.

A photograph of two young women standing in the foreground, smiling and holding protest signs. The woman on the left is wearing a black jacket and a headband, holding a blue sign that reads "PLEASE STOP SHAMING MY WHITE AND PURPLE T1 T100 T1000". The woman on the right is wearing a plaid shirt, holding a white sign that reads "PLEASE HIRE MORE TEACHERS LIKE ME". In the background, a large banner for "NARCIS" is visible, along with other students and a stage area.

Student Letters and why relationship building matters

Lyden,
What a journey it has been,
I cannot even begin to
express how grateful I
am that I got placed in
your advisory class four
years ago. I am a firm
believer that everything
happens for a reason and
I knew that that is where
I was supposed to be.
Thank you for always
pushing me to go above

and beyond and to aim
for something never
thought possible. I loved
getting to be in your
history class. I have always
loved history, but your
teaching helped me gain a
deeper appreciation for it.
Thank you for giving me
a chance to be an avid
reader this semester, it
has been so amazing to get
to meet a whole group
that I may not of had

experience would not have been possible without your guidance in my life.

It is important to give thanks to the people who have left a positive effect on your life. It is even more important to give thanks to people in our communities who genuinely care about the people around them. This letter is long overdue. The amount of positivity and joy that you have brought to my life in the past four years is more than any other person at Southridge High School. From shielding our advisory from the boring and monotonous lesson plans to nagging us to get our service learning hours in, you have always been looking out for your student's best interests. This one of your many character traits that are worthy of commendation. It is in your character to bring others in as your own and to help them achieve their goals. I see this in the halls where I see you talking to students from all grades. This is also why you are such a fantastic teacher. But to me, you are more than just a teacher. You are a scholar, a humanitarian, an activist for an equal and just world, and my friend. The experiences that we have shared together are some of the memories I will remember most from my time in high school. Journeying to Japan together is something I will always treasure. No one event has changed my perspective in such a drastic way. I had so much fun touring the concrete jungle of Shibuya, walking inside millennia old shrines, and relaxing in an onsen. However, what I learned from Japan goes far beyond culture.

Experiencing life in Japan taught me the importance of learning and respecting other people's culture as well as believing in yourself. Before I went to Japan, I often struggled to find the courage to believe in myself. I had always felt uncomfortable when speaking in front of large crowds. I did not have the ability to act calm under pressure. However, something about being lost in the large crowds of people that roamed Tokyo's streets, made me realize that it did not matter what people think of me. As long as I believe in myself when I am under pressure, everything will turn out okay. You helped me discover this. For that, I am sincerely grateful.

Being a teacher is more than teaching students a lesson plan or how to be proficient in a learning target. Being a teacher is about guiding students down the path to find a deeper meaning. You have had a large impact on my high school career and my life. As I move onto college, I will never forget the lessons I have learned from you. Using the confidence you helped me gain, I see myself succeeding at Creighton University. Thank you so much for everything. I would happily accept any advice you give to me about succeeding in college. Thank you, Mrs. Lyden.

Sincerely,

Lyden,
I feel like I don't say
these words enough, but
thank you. Thank you
for everything you
have done for me in the
3 years I have known
you. You have not only
been ~~over~~ there to help
me track down another
teacher, or help me
boost my grades. But
someone who I have
grown so close to, and
can trust ~~unconditionally~~

been a mess. You've
seen me at my best,
but also at my worst
and have continued to
support me, even though
I can be a butt
sometimes.
Words can't explain
how grateful I am to
have you as my avid
teacher, but also as my
school mom. I'm truly
going to miss you
so much.

given this assignment, was you.

That sounds a little bit cheesy, but it is true. Going into my sophomore year, I was doing pretty good. My doctor had decided that I was doing well enough to be taken off of my medication for depression and anxiety. I was motivated and your class was interesting. It made me want to work hard. It also helped that our class was a fun mix of people. As the end of the year came around though, I let myself fall a little behind. This has always been a clear indicator for me that my depression and anxiety were coming back. However, I ignored it and finished out the school year, and your class helped me. Not only were the course and assignments engaging, but you as a teacher were kind and encouraging. I felt like I could tell you everything. I did not though, because I hated talking about my mental illness; it made me feel weak. After sophomore year, I ended up in a mental hospital for two weeks over the summer. Coming back to school that year, I was scared and did not know how to approach the year at all. First semester went okay, teachers were understanding and supportive. Second semester though, when I took your street law class, I was finally happy to be in school again. You have this energy that I connect with so well, and that energy in class made me happy and excited to learn for the first time my junior year. I cannot

even begin to describe how thankful I am for you and how that class made me feel, even though you did not do anything special, you were just yourself. Then this year, as your TA, it was the perfect way to start my day. I was able to help you get things graded and I also had time to get some of my homework done. Not only that, but I was able to talk about my day or week without feeling judged. You have always had a calming presence whether or not you realize it. Considering how much you have done for me, I do not think I have ever thanked you. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for everything you have done, even if it is something you did not realize you did.

Considering you wrote me a recommendation for the foundation school will be attending PCC next year. I found out that I qualify for Oregon

I like to being in your
class. Because your class
always make people have
fun and enjoy to your
Project. Thank you to being
my teacher and thanks
for your help.

get one on one help, and I used it as a late arrival. I'm sorry I didn't take advantage of that opportunity as I should have. In the future, I'll continue to manage my brand.

Mrs. Lyden, where do I start? You've always been there to remind me of my culture, as well as telling me never to be embarrassed by it but to embrace it. I appreciate you helping me find myself culturally by always encouraging me to be the best version of myself. You and I connected because I'm usually a pretty mellow person and didn't often stress about anything, if ever. You usually just rolled with it, so when I would say, "Don't stress I got this," or "Why are you freaking out more than me?" you trusted me and let me do it. If I failed at doing what I set out to do, you were always right there to help me get back up. I've finally got this, and I'm sad to leave my security blanket of you and Mr. Small, but it's time.

Sincerely,

Dear Mrs. Lyden:

I know I've reiterated this more times than I can count, but thank you for all you've done for me over the past four years. The world is full of change, and for someone who suffers from anxiety, it can be a terrifying place at times. At the beginning of my senior year, I was worried beyond belief that anxiety was going to get the best of me again. All the panic attacks I endured throughout high school allowed me to look within myself and understand what a strong individual I really am. As I have heard before, your differences don't define you—you define your differences. Once I got to my senior year of high school, I learned that it doesn't matter what people think of you. As previously mentioned, I was constantly judging myself and wondering whether or not people were proud of me, despite the anxiety. Now I can say with confidence—thanks to you—that I need to love myself no matter what others think of me. You are unique and special in your own way and have given me the strength to move forward into a whole new me, which is why I want to thank you in writing. Thank you for four years of constant support, which helped me to become a strong young female.

Once again, from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for all the time you took to comfort me in times of great sorrow and worry. Specifically, I remember during my sophomore year, I was starting to get to the peak of my anxiety. I could feel myself beginning to lose control and knew that the following year was going to be hard. Due to the fact that my anxiety was popping up again, you helped me find ways to believe in myself. One specific memory that I will always remember is how you helped me forget my worries by thinking of something else to get my mind away from the panic. The fact that you would give me a safe space to relax, laugh, and get away from the stress of school makes me eternally grateful. During the time I was in your classroom at lunch, I remember watching April the Giraffe's live camera. We would laugh together about when the baby would come and what his/her name would be. Everyday during April's pregnancy, I would look forward to eating lunch with you while watching the giraffe camera. My emotions were given a much needed break in those moments. You got me to realize that I can take a break from homework and studying to laugh and have some enjoyment in my life.

"Do you mind if I sit and study for my chemistry test a little bit?" I asked in a nervous and solemn voice.

Four years ago, coming into high school was like boxing. Dodging every responsibility that came my way without a care in the world. I came into into high school as someone who lived life day to day never considering the future or the consequences of my actions. When I first met you, Mrs. Lyden, I thought you would be one of those teachers that just says they will be there to help out. I thought you were just trying to make yourself look good. No teacher actually cares about the students. They are just here to collect their paychecks. Looking back, these past four years would not have been the same without you. I can truly say you are one of those teachers who cares for their students well-being. You single-handedly changed the way I think, act, and without a doubt you will always be my favorite teacher. You have been there through the worst times of my life and through those times, you have been there to consult me and encourage me to learn from my past mistakes. You have never judged me by my actions, unlike other teachers who probably thought: "Noah? He is nothing but trouble." You on the other hand, had faith in me. I may not have displayed it, but I am and will forever be thankful for you Mrs. Lyden.

October 11th is a day that will always linger in my mind as the most eye-opening, and terrifying