



# A TRUSTED SPACE<sup>®</sup>

*Building Bridges*

## Standing Together *for* Positive Change

**Discussion Guide & Recommended Delivery**



# Film Overview

Building Bridges is a pivotal resource for students and a tool for educators, parents, and community facilitators who aim to spark meaningful discussions among students about the importance of understanding and collaboration in navigating personal and social challenges. Amidst the evolving social landscape and ever increasing body of research around mental health and its correlation to positive relationships. This docu-training film highlights the profound impact of empathy and open dialogue while calling forward each of us to lean in and be a part of the change needed.



Experts and science say trusted relationships are critical. Building Bridges offers poignant narratives from students, educators, and community leaders in the trenches, it explores the complex dynamics students deal with daily within educational environments and the critical need for building supportive communities that foster acceptance and mutual respect.

This film underscores the importance of creating spaces where constructive conversations can lead to genuine understanding and problem-solving. By showcasing real-life scenarios and interactions among students, Building Bridges emphasizes the role of education in shaping a more empathetic and cohesive society. It encourages stakeholders across the educational spectrum to come together and contribute to a nurturing environment that prioritizes every student's emotional and social well-being which ultimately leads to successful academic outcomes.

# Maximize This Film With Your Students

## Recommended Audience:

**Middle School to College Students & All Adults Who Serve Youth**

"Building Bridges" is a powerful opportunity to build relationships across populations: students to students, students to staff, and students to families. The key word is **STUDENT**. This film is meant to be viewed by students with caring and trusted adults.

Once viewed, use this discussion guide to elicit conversations and deepen listening. It can be challenging to get students talking in ways that expand understanding, build empathy, and develop SEL skills that will support their ability to identify what matters most to them, what they need to flourish, and embrace the work it will take to achieve outcomes they feel proud of.

Students have ingenious and sometimes overhasty rationale which can feel impetuous and irresponsible. We encourage you to open the gates, let them feel and speak within a trusted environment.

Dive in with them and watch them rise to be more resilient, understanding, confident, empathetic, and accountable. They will astound you if you give them:

1. **Time** - dedicate for diving in, it doesn't need to be long - 5-10 minutes will be a good start.
2. **Space** - to safely explore their thoughts and feelings, even if it feels bumpy or messy.
3. **Belief** - that they know more than you expect and care more deeply than they typically show you.

## 30 Minute Screening and Discussion

**5 Minutes:** Introduce the film, *A Trusted Space, Building Bridges*. Let students know this film is meant to be viewed by them and that you are interested in their thoughts following the film. Share that you will be discussing the film after it is over and for them to watch for these topics:

1. Early in the film students will be talking about judgment and personal stories. Notice this and be prepared to discuss this after the film is over.
2. Several students talk about having a voice and getting involved/creating opportunities to bring your personal interests to light. Notice your thoughts on this and be prepared to respond.
3. What person or concept in the film did you identify with the most? Why?

**10 Minutes:** Show the film

**5 Minutes:** Ask a couple of students to respond to the the pre-viewing questions, one at a time. If no volunteers call on students to share.

**15 Minutes:** Break students into small groups and give each group a large piece of poster paper and some markers. You can also use the NCA® framework worksheet attached at the end of this discussion/activity guide.

Assign each group a prompt to discuss with one another and note their responses using the Notice Choose Act® framework. Alternatively you can ask each group of students to identify a topic from the film that they would like to make better in their own lives.

1. **NOTICE:** *What did your group Notice was an important and/or troubling topic in the film?*

- A. How does this topic and how it shows itself in school make you feel? Have them list at least 5 feelings.
- B. How do these feelings affect your (and others) behavior? What behaviors go with these feelings?

A couple of examples are:

*In the film students speak about feeling pressured to get involved in dangerous and unhealthy actions.*

*In the film several people speak about the importance of getting involved in school activities and how many students do not have this chance or do not take the chance and what are the consequences? What is possible if all students felt a connection to school?*

Students should either choose their own topic or the leader can use the topics at the end of this guide and groups can randomly draw one.

2. **CHOOSE:** *If you could have a different outcome, what would you choose it to be?*

- A. If this happened, how would you (and others) feel?
- B. What behaviors would go with these feelings?

Choose is not about the actual steps, it is about what we want instead of what we have. It is the vision, the dream, the possibility. Often Choose is confused with Act, support your students to identify what they want and then in the ACT section they can determine the steps to get there.

3. **ACT:** What words, moods, attitudes and actions will you commit to in order to get what you Choose? These statements should start with, 'I will...'

## EXAMPLE:

**NOTICE:** Our group notices that people judge each other and go after each other without knowing their story.

**Feelings:** Unsafe, untrusting, insecure, unhappy, isolated, uncertain, scared, angry, confused.

**Behaviors:** Withdrawal from others, take sides, start rumors, gang up on people, be aggressive, talk bad about others.

**CHOOSE:** Our group would like to have a school community that understands people have their own stories, their own pain and their own gifts. We accept this and are curious about each others stories.

**Feelings:** Included, trusting, cared for, understood, accepted, strong, valued.

**Behaviors:** Care for others, try and not be afraid to make mistakes, include others, reach out to others if they are having a difficult time, share stories.

**ACT:** These are the things we will do to create an understanding and accepting school. Every student in the group gives at least one (sometimes more if time and small groups) 'I will' statement and these are written down.

**I will:**

- Talk to people outside of my group
- Ask people what they are going through
- Believe that people are living their own hard stories
- Try new things with new people
- Be kind even if it is hard

# 15 Minute Dreamstorm

## An Exercise in Group Development

This activity will support students in co-creating a new idea to present to school leadership. The idea will be eventually agreed on by the entire group and developed to be proactive and solution oriented.

Have students in either a classroom size group or in groups of 4-6 Dreamstorm ideas that would make school a happier, healthier place for all students to flourish, socially, emotionally, mentally and academically.

This could be something the students work toward achieving over time or it could be an exercise in what is possible in just 15 minutes.

Have students identify multiple ideas that they would like to bring to leadership. The ideas must be:

1. Be achievable with direct **student effort** and **staff support**
2. An effort to solve a noted problem or create something new that would benefit the school or a specific group at the school
3. Solution based vs Complaint based

Whether done in a whole group or in small groups the goal will be to bring one idea to focus for the entire group if there is time. The process can be challenging and the opportunity huge as individuals and small groups work to overcome attachment to personal ideas as they work to a collective common goal.

Once an idea is settled on, students will work together to make a plan that can be presented to leadership. In this there is another opportunity to work on ideas to handle disappointments if the idea is not embraced by others.

It is important for growth to go through the process of identifying, planning, presenting, and accepting. This could also be done as a mock exercise and students could present their ideas to each other's groups. Simply in sharing there will be growth as groups will be able to identify each other's passions and purpose which offers direct access to key SEL skills such as: understanding, acceptance, constructive disagreement, creativity, confidence and sharing.

# NOTICE.

## **AWARENESS**

**Recognition of opportunities to improve situations or create new ones.**

What needs improving? Is missing? Doesn't feel good?

How do you feel because of this?

What behaviors go with these feelings?

# CHOOSE.

## **INTENTION**

**Purposeful consideration of options.**

What do you want instead?

How would you feel if you had what you want?

What behaviors go with these feelings?

# ACT<sup>®</sup>

## **RESULTS**

**Matching actions that deliver desired outcomes.**

What specific actions, words, & attitudes will **you** use to create what **you** want?



# THIS IS A TRUSTED SPACE®



**What are the benefits of building a trusted community?  
What are the consequences of not having a trusted community for ALL people in that community?**

- Who loses in a divided community?
- Are there any winners?
- Is something else possible?

**When discussing social pressures, Bodie uses the phrase: "forced to do it." Do you ever feel that way?**

- Why is it so hard to say no to social pressure? What are the consequences of this?
- What is possible for ourselves and others if we were able to stand our ground?



**In the film, Hadia speaks about everyone 'having a story.' What does this mean to you?**

- Understanding that everyone has a story, what are the consequences of judgment without understanding?
- What if we offered understanding rather than judgment?

**In the film, Courtney says, 'A lot of times I think kids take themselves out of the game or feel like co-stars to someone else's main story...'**

- Do you ever feel this way?
- What are the consequences of stepping out and not believing in yourself and your place among others? Who pays the price?



## What do you think of Christian's comment, 'I think in the future no one is going to care'?

- Do you ever think the same? Why or why not?
- What would the consequences be if this were the case? Is this a world you want to live in?
- What else is possible and what will it take?



Christian  
Student



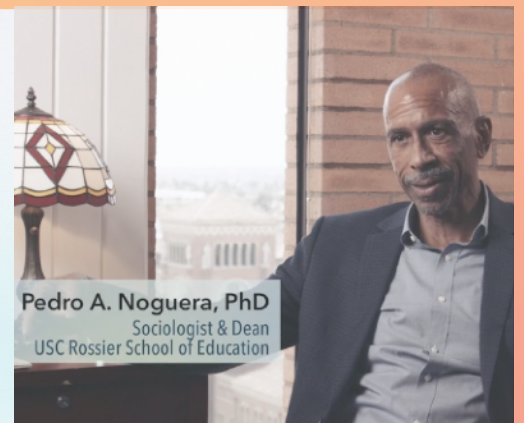
Marcy Melvin, MA  
Speaker, Mental Health  
& Education Consultant

## When Marcy says, 'It is okay to not be okay,' Do you agree?

- Do we really allow others or ourselves to not be okay? What do we do to cover up not being okay?
- Who pays the greatest price for this? What do you think it will take for all people to accept both the imperfect and the stronger sides of ourselves?

## Dr. Noguera talks about the value of being involved in school and Mia talks about joining or creating clubs.

- Research states that students who are involved in clubs, theater, sports, music etc., tend to have greater connection to school, to others, and to their future. Why do you think this is true? If you are not involved what holds you back?
- What is possible if you got involved in something? Or created something new? What kind of impact will you make?



Pedro A. Noguera, PhD  
Sociologist & Dean  
USC Rossier School of Education



Mia  
Student

## Mia and Christian both talk about speaking up, for yourself and for others:

- What is the value of speaking up?
- What are the barriers that keep people from speaking up?
- What rewards are possible if we speak up?
- What is the difference between speaking up, & throwing a fit? Which one is more effective in achieving positive outcomes?

**Courtney says, 'the man or woman who thinks they can are generally right.'**

- How does this show up in the world around you?
- What does this mean to you? Is it only a positive statement?
- Can it also be limiting? If so, how?



**PE teacher Rene Ayala, discusses his concern about echo chambers and learning from new perspectives.**

- As humans it is impossible that we will all agree on all things and it is important that we learn to understand each other more than agree with each other.
- Why is this important? What is possible if understanding was more valued than agreeing and if disagreeing was done respectfully?

**Dr. Noguera in the film speaks about our youth being the hope and promise for the future. He believes that our youth can bridge the divide - like Rene Ayala also says.**

- Do you think this is true?
- Why or why not? What will it take?



**At the end of the film, Brandi talks about Hope and Optimism. She believes the future is bright.**

- What will it take for you to feel this way also?
- What are the barriers and what are the possibilities?
- How will our world be with more of this mindset?