



A TRUSTED SPACE[®]

Meeting The Moment

A BLUEPRINT FOR HOPE

Discussion & Activity Guide



Discussion and Solution Prompts

based on concepts from the film

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1. How will you Meet this Moment?

You've just watched *A Trusted Space: Meeting the Moment - A Blueprint for Hope*. The film highlights what we know: "the mental health crisis in our children and youth existed before the pandemic and now it has been exacerbated...we haven't recovered...". The experts and education thinkers convey the critical importance of *this* moment and if we "meet this moment well, with courage and optimism, with innovation, with learning for ourselves and shifting our mindsets...it's how we move forward and heal in the most beautiful ways..."

- A. Turn and Talk with a neighbor or in small groups and discuss for ~3~ minutes how you are *Meeting this Moment* and providing a trusted space. How are we all (admin, teachers, campus supervisors, aides, support staff) working together to insure an atmosphere of trust and belonging for everyone? Ask 2-3 or participants to share what they heard.
- B. As a group, summarize 3-5 things that you collectively believe would be meaningful to add to what you are **already** doing on your campus and/or will do to *Meet this Moment*. If available, document on a large poster and/or post-it poster where faculty and staff will see it often.

**"They don't care
how much we know
until they know how
much we care."**

- Tom Hixon, High School Teacher

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2. How do we show students that we are *Visible* - present and accessible?

“Being visible - that’s where the connection comes in, it’s not from an office or an ivory tower or where you’re going to write a slip and tell them I want to talk to you. Right now I’m out in the open... I’m here in this yard, it’s not just to stand here as another object but something where I can bounce an idea off of a student... Maybe get their perspective on something. Maybe ask them how they’re doing...” *Alexis Boyadjian - Dean of Students (7:48)*

We know from science, research, and best practice pedagogy, that connections and relationships are the foundations on which learning can thrive. Mr. Boyadjian (7:48) shares his belief about visibility (being physically present and available) and how this demonstrates our care and concern for students. Let’s discuss this.

- A. Turn and talk to your neighbor or form small groups. Take 3-5 minutes and reflect back on a time when you were literally visible, available and made connections with a student or group of students. Why was it a connection - how did you know? Ask for 2-3 shares from the larger group.
- B. Use sticky notes and markers: ask each participant to draw 2 columns and write down 3 things they are doing to make themselves more available, present and accessible to their students.
- C. Using the same sticky note, and in the other column, ask them to imagine 3 more things that they will add to their already-existing repertoire of strategies and put these on the other column of their sticky note. Once they are finished doing this, ask them to place their sticky notes on the larger poster that has been placed in a prominent place in the room.
- D. Ask someone to volunteer to come up and read some or all (depending on number of participants) to the group.

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3. Personal Stories Matter - It Can Be Easy!

"I think I mostly just see the teacher...because they don't really tell us stories about them, we just know that they are there to teach us...there are a few teachers I know what happens at home and what they're going through...those are the teachers that help me and have conversations with me to know what i'm going through...I think those are better teachers".

(Christian, student, 9:58)

Christian expresses why a teacher is better than other teachers based on how much they share about their lives outside of school. His words are a clear cry for more shared and real experiences with the teachers in his life.

Often, we as educators and crucial adults in children's lives, don't bring any of our personal life into the classroom - it can be intimidating for a teacher to be vulnerable and share personal life stories. But we know that trusted relationships inside and outside of the home are where connections truly make a difference in the lives of students.

How do we tackle the concept of being open knowing it is best for students and often challenging for educators?

It can also be a fine line - are we sharing too much or too little?

A teacher can come into the classroom, having had a restless night's sleep worrying about finances or a fight with his partner or worry about a family member's addiction...these specifics do not need to be shared. But what CAN be shared is this:

Good morning everyone. How are you all doing today? I'm coming in with a bit of worry in my brain and body. So I'm a little tired today. If I could ask for a bit more patience than usual that would be very helpful to me. I will be able to reset and be back to myself with you shortly. In the meantime, I am wondering, has anyone else ever had worry on their mind and needed extra patience from others?

There is solid modeling of resilience in this way of connecting with students of all ages.

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**“If we don’t
tell our story,
then who will?”**

- Loretta Whittson
Executive Director, C.A.S.C.

30 Minute Staff Development Exercise

1 Minute: Introducing the film, A Trusted Space, Meeting the Moment, the first in a series of short films that follow the internationally acclaimed, award winning film, A Trusted Space, Redirecting Grief to Growth. The first film delved into the real time effects of the pandemic on the education eco-system. Three years later we are in a new place, one that for many, is more challenging than during shutdown. Filmed in April/May 2023, the series meets this moment.

14 Minutes: View the film with your audience

5 Minutes: Take initial thoughts from the audience - no guidance here, simply allow staff to share their thoughts. If you have a quiet group, have them Turn and Talk to a neighbor about their thoughts then get a few group shares.

10 Minutes: Heel to Heel | Toe to Toe - *see next page for activity facilitation*

1. What is normal? Explore your thoughts on normal and this concept: how can the word normal mean the same thing to different people when 100% of us are living our own personal story?

Change partners

2. Find an uncommon thing you both have in common.

Change partners

3. What is one challenge and one win to this concept: 100% of our students feel welcome, included, and believed in?

Change partners

4. What is one thing you will add/change/elevate/embrace this year that will add to your ability to create an atmosphere of trust and belonging?

BASIC version (10-15 minutes)

Have everyone get up and find a partner and stand back to back. Tell them you will be posing a question or a statement, will give them a few seconds to consider their response, and then I'll say, Toe to Toe where they will turn and face each other and one (have them pick an A and a B, taller/shorter, longer hair etc.) at a time share their response. Give ~ 1 ½ min per person to respond.

Find a new partner - Heel to Heel (back to back):

New statement/question

Toe to Toe (face to face) - share x 1-2 minutes each.

Find a new partner, Heel to Heel, ***New statement/question***, Toe to Toe ... continue until the last question is done.

ADVANCED version (extra 15-20 minutes)

Once you have completed all the questions for the topic you are discussing, ask partnerships to form groups of 6 (3 partnerships each) and have a group discussion that forwards the conversation along. This is often a discussion that starts with obstacles and ends with forward thinking ideas that look to overcome obstacles and lean into what 100% of neuroscience, social science, and educational research says is urgently needed.

Having each group of 6 write their ideas on poster paper is a good way to capture a collection of ideas that can be collated and sent to the team for implementation ideas. When materials are not available discussion is powerful also.

Two-Sided Conversation in groups of 6:

1. Discuss some of the concerns, reservations, and obstacles the group considers in the way of creating atmospheres of trust for all students in all settings. Write down if materials are available
2. Discuss and document if available a list of proactive ideas and actions to build a culture of trusted atmospheres across all settings for ALL students within the school environment.

Leader of the group summarizes and ideally can put this in writing and send it to all staff so everyone is the recipient of all the brilliant ideas. Post in staff work rooms, individual classrooms, lunch rooms or wherever they will be seen often.