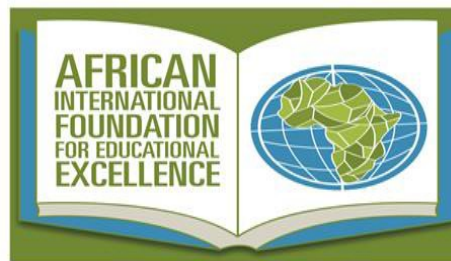


# **Report on the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Achieving Educational Excellence Conference: Nurturing School Climates that Promote Student Success**

Venue: Kagumo Teachers Training College

Dates: July 11-12, 2019

Sponsored by:



in partnership with:



# Appreciation and acknowledgements

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- The Board of Directors, for providing consistent and focused critique and feedback
- The Nyeri County Government, especially the County Governor who committed the County into a formal partnership with AIFEE
- Mount Kenya University for providing expert co-facilitators
- Mrs. Margaret Macharia, the Nyeri County Executive for Education and her staff
- Mr. Omwega, the TSC County Director and other TSC staff who graced the conference
- The management of Kagumo Teachers Training College
- All conference facilitators
- All Conference participants, including student panelists

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## Executive Summary

*By Dr Peter Gitau, Vice President for Student Affairs, Dixie State University, USA; Founder and President, the African International Foundation for Educational Excellence, AIFEE, USA.*

The purpose of this conference was to bring together relevant stakeholders to collaborate, brainstorm, and document strategies for nurturing school climates that promote student success. Participants included educators, county and national government officials, parents, and students. Facilitators were drawn from the United States joined by local experts in education and governance. In addition to insightful and thought-provoking plenary keynote sessions, participants worked in groups around the following key themes:

### **1) Managing student behavior 2) Promoting learner engagement and 3) Developing effective partnerships for student success.**

Guided by the overarching theme of nurturing climates that promote student success, participants discussed various strategies on how to create cultures that promote warm and welcoming climates at their schools. By being more intentional about the routines that define a typical school day, educators can identify and implement those habits, practices and programs that can cumulatively define their school cultures.

School practices that are affirming, positive and inclusive can go a long way in shaping climates that encourage students to be successful. By defining and measuring success more broadly, schools can reach and effectively educate all students irrespective of academic ability. A culture of engagement extends a hand of welcome to students and their families to share any concerns that they may have about their school, thus creating a better sense of ownership.

Students and community members who feel a sense of ownership and inclusion are less likely to engage in destructive practices. Recent incidents of school unrest, arson and general violence can be drastically reduced if educators paid more careful attention to simmering and unaddressed concerns with their students and the community. It is of paramount importance that educational leaders depart from authoritarian approaches, respect the evolution of the modern student and learn to engage the student and their families in more meaningful and respectful ways than in times past. Teachers likewise must device more engaging pedagogies and appreciate their students as partners in learning.

The abuse of drugs, alcohol and other illegal substances by students and/or staff should be taken as a symptom of serious disconnect between the academic mission of the school and the needs and aspirations of the students and the community. Disruptive behavior, truancy, absenteeism, disengagement, and other types of undesirable behaviors should be seen as expressions of a deeper, untouched, disaffection and disconnect with the school. Rather than rushing to punish such behaviors, administrators need to practice effective reflection to get to the roots of such behavior.

The assessment of student success has never been more urgent. By defining success in broader terms than test scores, schools can capture and nurture other forms of success and thus ensure that they educate the whole student. It is a fact that students who feel left out of the learning enterprise will most likely engage in disruptive and undesirable conduct. The use of quantifiable instruments such as well thought out surveys, combined with qualitative measures such as anecdotes, stories, narratives and focus groups can produce priceless intelligence on students' perceptions of their school and the learning environment.

Effective partnerships between the students and administration are very essential to maintain a school climate that promotes student success. School administrators are encouraged to maintain active and dynamic school councils where critical and timely feedback can be shared. Equally important is the need for parents' councils to be more intentionally involved in certain aspects of the school. Oversight bodies such as the Teachers Service Commission, the Ministry of Education and the County government need effective roles that are not adversarial but consultative and empowering. The conference provided a perfect setting where these various groups converged and engaged in productive conversations.

## Conference Facilitators



**Dr. Peter Gitau** is the Vice President for Student Affairs at Dixie State University in Utah, USA. He is also the Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of the African International Foundation for Educational Excellence (AIFEE). He holds a PhD in Higher Education Administration from the University of Kansas, a Master's in Education

Administration from Eastern Illinois University and a Bachelor's in Secondary Education from Kenyatta University. A proven and seasoned higher education administrator and leader with many years of executive leadership and management experience, Dr. Gitau consults nationally and internationally on School Improvement, Diversity and Globalization, Strategic Planning, Capacity Building and Organizational Development.



**Dr. Ted Grace** is the Director of Student Health Services at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He earned his undergraduate and MD degrees from Ohio State University and his MPH degree from San Diego State University, where he also completed a Fellowship in Student Health Administration. He has previously served as the Medical Director of the

Student Health Center at San Diego State University and Director of Student Health Services at Ohio State University. Dr. Grace is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Family Practice, American College of Preventive Medicine, and American College Health Association (ACHA). Following his 6-year term as Executive Editor of the Journal of American College Health, he continues as the Journal's photo-editor. He has been honored by ACHA with the E. Dean Lovett Award (2000) for exemplary contributions to a college health program, the Ollie B. Moten Award (2005) for outstanding service to one's institution, and the Clifford B. Reifler Award (2011) for outstanding contributions to the Journal of American College Health.



**Susan Dalton** holds a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Interdisciplinary Studies from Johnson University, a Masters of Arts in Human Service Counseling with a specialization in Marriage and Family from Liberty University, and an Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction from Carson-

Newman University. She is currently finishing a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership from Carson-Newman University. She has facilitated the enrollment of students from over 40 different countries into local public schools, and teaches English as a Second Language in K-12 classes. Susan volunteers as Director of children's ministry at Life Church, Knoxville, Tennessee and consults with a variety of nonprofit organizations.



**Dr. Ruth Thinguri** is a professor of Education at Mount Kenya University and formerly the Dean of the School of Education at MKU. She has widely published and has facilitated AIFEE conferences with tremendous success.



**Ms. Mary Muindi** is an Assistant Lecturer of English, Linguistics and Communication at MKU. She is currently completing her doctorate in Cognitive Linguistics. Her study examines the relationship between language, mind and culture. Ms. Muindi is well published and has facilitated at multiple AIFEE conferences.



**LaDawn Richey** believes that God and family are the most important things in life. She is a mother of four, grandmother of one and has been married to her husband Mike for 30 years. She is passionate in helping others and loves giving others a chance to improve their circumstances. She understands that education is the key to achieving this. She has many years of experience in running, managing, organizing, and building businesses and has built a successful business with her husband Mike. She has experience and expertise in the retail, hospitality, health, and travel industries. She is looking forward to fulfilling her lifelong dream of visiting Kenya this year.

## Conference Schedule

### Day 1. Thursday, July 11, 2019

TIME	TOPIC	SUB TOPICS	PRESENTER	NOTES
8:30-9:00	Welcome and Introductions	Opening and remarks by Nyeri County Commissioner; TSC, Ministry of Education Officers and CEC Education	Ministry of Education, TSC & CEC Education	
9:00-10:30	School climate and student success in perspective	Defining school climate; Defining student success; Climate and student success dashboards, Intersectionality of school climate and student success	Dr. Peter Gitau	
10:30-11:00	Tea Break			
11:00-1:00	Behavior management for the modern student	Understanding today's student; Effective behavior management strategies	Susan Dalton (Main) Ms. Mary Muindi (Assisting)	Plenary and workshops
1:00-2:00	Lunch	All		
2:00—4:00	Promoting student wellbeing to enhance student success	Student mental health; Developing coping skills; Support systems; Alcohol and other drugs; Student wellness	Dr. Ted Grace (Main) Dr. Ruth Thinguri & LaDawn Richey (Assisting)	Plenary and workshops
4:00- 5:00	Student panel	All	Dr. Ted Grace Madysen Richey	
5:15	Adjournment			



## Day 2. Friday, July 12, 2019

TIME	TOPIC	SUB TOPICS	PRESENTER	NOTES
8:00-8:30	Welcome	All	Dr. Peter Gitau	
8:30-10:30	Critical partnerships that promote student success	Effective partnerships with parents; Students as partners in learning; Governance agencies	Dr. Ruth Thinguri (Main) LaDawn Richey (Assisting)	Plenary and workshops
10:30-11:00	Tea Break			
11:00-1:00	Promoting learner engagement as a tool for behavior management and student success	Defining student engagement; Engaging pedagogies; Inclusivity in learning; Shared governance	Mary Muindi (Main) Susan Dalton (Assisting) Dr. Ted Grace (Assisting)	Plenary and workshops
1:00-2:00	Lunch			
2:00-3:00	Nurturing school climates that promote student success; Actionable items	Breakout sessions; Key findings and recommendations	Dr. Peter Gitau	
3:00-3:30	Closing remarks Certificates; Adjournment		County Commissioner	

## **Defining and operationalizing School Climate and Student Success**

*By Dr Peter Gitau, Vice President for Student Affairs at Dixie State University, USA; Founder and President, African International Foundation for Educational Excellence (AIFEE), USA.*

School climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student's educational experience. A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community no matter the setting—from Pre-K/Elementary School to higher education.

The major purpose of a school is to create and provide a culture that nurtures a climate that is conducive to student learning and success. Culture refers to a system of shared values, norms, beliefs, behaviors, repeated practices and rituals that form a part of the school's routine. It is therefore important for a school to pay careful and detailed attention to the daily routine, ensuring that every practice helps define a culture of success versus one of despair and failure.

School climate refers to how different constituents perceive the school. Thus, school climate can be warm and inviting or be intimidating and hostile, resulting in institutional apprehension. School climate is the heart and soul of the school. It is what draws teachers, students and the community to love the school and to want to be a part of it. Conversely, a chilly school climate drives away the very students it is supposed to serve, and prevents critical and beneficial partnerships between the school and the community.

Positive school climates promote academic achievement and student success in general. Using the old adage that "a rising tide lifts all boats", school climate has the same effect on students from every social economic background. Thus, while students from wealthier backgrounds may already have more support structures and better learning environments, an intentional effort by school administrators to engage in affirming and supportive cultural practices has been seen to improve the academic performance of their students. Students from lower social economic backgrounds especially benefit from positive school climates. It is a known fact that most of these students learn in very challenging environments, hail from homes that lack basic human survival needs and often have few role models. Schools serving these students must put the extra effort in providing holistic educational support systems if their students are to compete with their more fortunate colleagues.

Healthy schools periodically conduct assessments of how different constituents perceive them. Qualitative assessments (focus groups, narratives and other such artifacts) are very effective ways of putting the pulse on the school's culture and climate. Quantitative assessment (usually done in surveys) provides statistical evidence that various programs are working. In addition to providing useful intelligence on students, perceptions of various services and programs, assessment documents the impact of various interventions, establishing a cause and effect system thus ensuring continuity and sustainability of programs and initiatives that work. Academic test scores are not the only form of assessing student success. An obsession with test scores can have a chilling effect on school climates, providing no time to focus on relationships or meaningful engagement. School administrators are encouraged to include non- academic factors in defining student success.

According to the Safe and Supportive Schools Model, which was developed by a national panel of researchers and other experts, a positive school climate involves:

- **Engagement** - Strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools and strong connections between schools and the broader community.
- **Safety** - Schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and controlled-substance use.
- **Environment** - Appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy.

Finally, schools that promote high academic standards and have stable and qualified leadership normally register higher levels of student success. Effective leaders are trained in the foundations of leadership and management. Such leaders are effective communicators and promote collegiality and team work as opposed to sowing dissension and strife. The school principal has the most direct influence on school culture and climate (The buck stops here!).

## **Promoting student wellbeing to enhance student success**

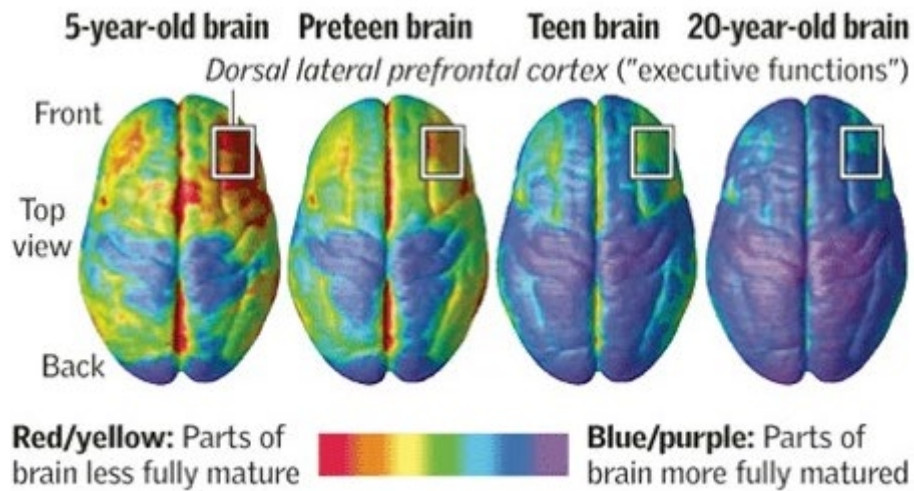
*By Dr Ted W. Grace (MD, MPH), Director of the Student Health Center at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and Secretary to the board of the African International Foundation for Educational Excellence (AIFEE).*

### **Key considerations:**

1. Understanding Today's Students: Defining Generation Z (the i-Generation or Internet Generation), how they differ from other cohorts of students (such as the Millennials), what motivates them, and identify their unique health problems
2. Dealing with drug & alcohol abuse issues in the schools
3. Recognizing teen depression and suicidal ideations, and using the QPR Method to respond to them.
4. Identifying causes of the mental health crises in today's students:
  - Unhealthy Lifestyles: diet, substance abuse, physical activity, sleeping patterns, etc.
  - Environmental Factors: especially exposure to violence and terrorism have peak impressionability on young people
  - Changes in Parental Practices: authoritarian, authoritative, negligent, permissive, and over-protective
  - Social Media: correlated with mental health issues, and early studies suggest it is causing changes in the brain
5. Finding solutions to today's mental health crisis/Building Resiliency:
  - Must adopt a public health model of prevention that involves not only the individual and schools, but also the family, peers, and community
  - Resilient students can bounce back from adversity to become successful students, and it is possible to measure and increase a person's resiliency through building on authenticity, balance, purpose, perseverance, and self-reliance

### **Summary:**

An adolescent's brain is continuing to develop until age 21, and the last part to develop is the prefrontal cortex that controls executive functions like judgment and reasoning. It is critical for adolescents and young adults to avoid the use of drugs and alcohol that damage the developing brain.



An immature brain requires more sleep to grow and repair itself:

- Grade Levels 1-6 require 11 hours of sleep
- Grade Levels 6-8 require 10 hours of sleep
- Grade Levels 9-12 require 9 hours of sleep
- College students require 8 hours of sleep

Use of alcohol before age 21 permanently damages the brain:

Brain Region	Function of Brain Region	Consequence of Alcohol
<b>Pre-frontal cortex</b>	Reasoning and impulse control	Poor decisions and impulsivity
<b>Hippocampus</b>	Memory and learning	Irreversible damage
<b>Myelination Process</b>	Stabilizes/speeds brain processes	Cognitive deficiencies
<b>Dopamine Pathway</b>	Produces pleasure	Reduces natural capacity to produce dopamine resulting in depression, anger, boredom, and anxiety

- The use of drugs such as marijuana before age 21 also damages the brain: cannabis use at an early age is associated with impaired neurocognitive functioning of the brain and damage in the corpus callosum, gray matter, hippocampus, and connectivity.

- The new NIH study in the U.S. is studying over 11,000 young people for over a decade with serial brain scans to determine the effect of social media on the brain. So far, they have already identified that over 8 hours of social media use per day is associated with thinning of the cerebral cortex.

### **Conclusion:**

Conditions that affect the brain, like lack of sleep, drug and alcohol use, and social media use are all associated with increased mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, suicide, and cutting.

### **Information Gathered About School Burnings from Audience Comments, Student Panel, and Break-out Groups**

- Behavior change is really difficult, and people don't always do what they know. Examples:  
In recent studies, when parents in Kenya are quizzed about their parenting styles, only 7% of mothers and 11% of fathers admit to an authoritarian or corporal punishment style, but their students report otherwise
- A break-out group of 50 teachers told us how they all regularly get input from their students, while the student panel said this rarely ever occurs
- When we asked multiple teachers about using corporal punishment in the schools, they all said they didn't use it. But we not only witnessed them using it, but also saw the canes in the classrooms and had students admit the teachers use it quite frequently.

### **Discussion:**

- If parents and teachers know the politically correct answers, they will use them in order to please the interviewer and to protect themselves. This makes it especially difficult to identify the problems when misinformation is being given.
- The media in Kenya (television and newspapers) is full of information about strikes and violence being used by adults to affect the elections and political platforms. This form of behavior is being modeled to young people as the method to get your voice heard and bring about change
- Asking the student panel about satisfaction with their food was deemed too sensitive an issue that would elicit such negative feedback that the question was removed
- Some secondary schools begin their school day as early as 3:30 am and end it as late as 6:30 pm. Sleep is not deemed to be important
- Students must pay an extra \$10 per semester for hot showers

- Most students have never been away from home before and are seriously homesick
- Students have very little voice or input into school policies & procedures
- Faculty continue to use corporal punishment
- Free time and play (exercise) are being replaced by academics and test preparations
- Dissatisfaction with national testing: Months before testing happens, students have to do repeated test preps that are boring and do nothing to prepare them for the future. Then for at least one hour a day over a period of weeks, students have to take ELA, math and science state exams, which don't give them any feedback on learning. They are given a score that is not explained to them that is used to sort them into groups that are supposed to provide them with help that they may or may not need.
- All students are treated the same, with no testing or help for students with learning disabilities. Also, there is a general lack of counselors for students with substance abuse disorders or suicidal thoughts

### **Conclusion:**

Students are sent away to boarding schools at a young age (immaturity) that results in homesickness, to live in deplorable conditions (poor food, no hot water, few physical activities or social opportunities, and lack of sleep), and driven relentlessly to prepare for national exams. There are insufficient resources to assist students with learning disabilities, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, or other mental health issues. There is little to no student voice in their day-to-day activities, although they can see how learning occurs in schools from other parts of the world on social media. They continue to undergo corporal punishment, which is actually being discussed as the solution to this problem. Just like teachers that use corporal punishment are not being held accountable, Kenyan citizens that break the law with violent demonstrations are not being arrested. Students are being taught by example that reform in Kenya is brought about by rebelling and riots. Change in the schools must start with social changes in the country that reform national testing and eliminate political riots & violence as acceptable paths to reform.

# **Promoting Learner Engagement as a Tool for Behavior Management and Students Success**

*By Mary Muindi, Assistant Lecturer of English, Linguistics and Communication at Mount Kenya University.*

Student Behavior Management (SBM) is a contemporary and global issue. Unproductive behaviors such as bullying, dropouts and violence are rampant in Kenyan schools. According to a report released by UNESCO (2019), entitled 'Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying', 32% of the students have been bullied in Kenyan schools. Students thus find schools unsafe; there are increased risk of depression and low morale in academics. Moreover, novel teachers are leaving the profession due to lack of support from colleagues, students and administrators (Ouma, 2019). When new teachers are not inducted into the profession, they are demotivated, frustrated and fail to offer quality teaching. There is therefore need to equip teachers with student behavior management skills and educational practices and strategies that prevent and manage inappropriate behavior, creating and maintaining an environment that promotes student engagement (Bissonnette, Gauthier& Castonnguay, 2016).

Research has shown that there is a relationship between student engagement, student behavior and academic success (Angus et al., 2009). Engaged students are likely to behave well leading to high academic achievement. Teachers should therefore create a favorable school environment for learning by developing strategies that work for instruction to achieve the desired learning outcomes, prevent undesired behavior and encourage active learning. Differentiated Instruction is one strategy that teachers can use in their classroom to engage the learners. It emphasizes on teaching students according to their abilities, learning styles and needs using engaging pedagogies. This allows teachers to provide a holistic presentation of a concept leading to students' high



academic achievement. Moreover, teachers should create classroom and school environments that are inclusive and allow all students, despite their diversity, to learn together and develop to their full potential.

### Defining Student Engagement

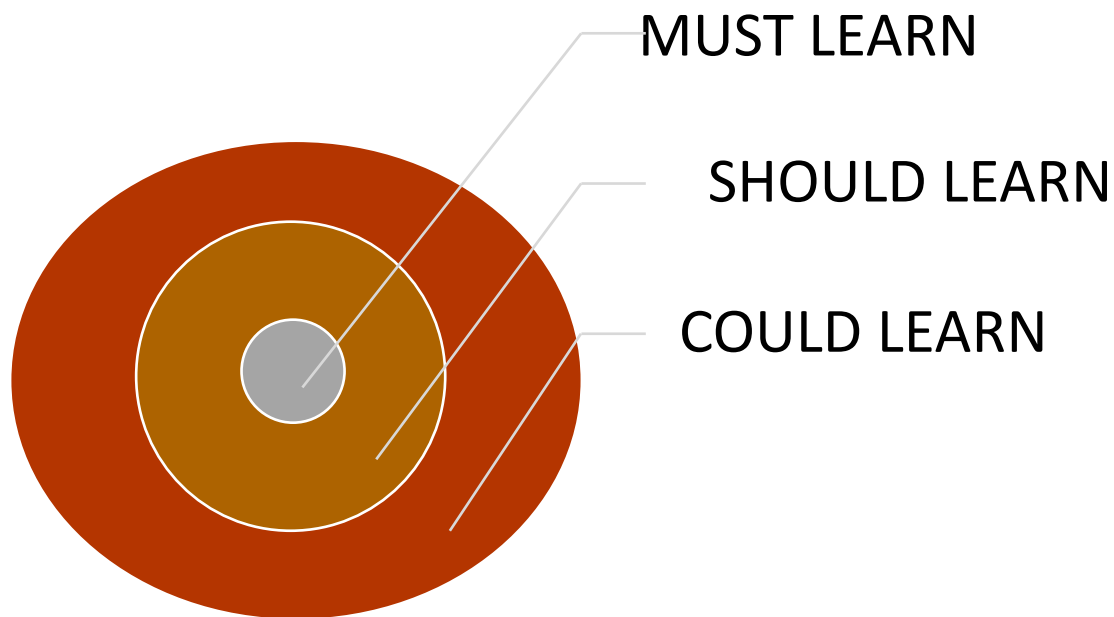
This is involvement of learners in and out of school in educationally purposeful activities. As educators, it is crucial to constantly look for ways to engage learners in and outside the classroom. Teachers need to align their lessons and assessments to the learners' needs, provide learning activities that motivate, allow students to process information deeply and become active participants in their learning.

Students are active participants in the learning process when they are able to connect and apply what they are learning in class to the society. The Kenyan educational system is currently undergoing curriculum reforms with the intention of making teaching and learning process meaningful and effective to the learners. The education system is moving from 8-4-4 to Competency Based Curriculum. The 8-4-4 system encouraged rote learning where learners memorized and reproduced content taught in examinations. The table below captures the differences between the two systems of education.

8-4-4 CURRICULUM	COMPETENCY BASED CURRICULUM
Emphasis in knowledge acquisition, memorization and reproduction.	Knowledge application (competencies); skills, abilities and values.
Teacher centered; constructed knowledge	Learner centered; involved in construction of knowledge.
Little parental engagement	Engage all stake holders to support learners
Summative evaluation	Balance between summative and formative evaluation
Ignored pertinent and contemporary issues and ICT.	Integration of pertinent and contemporary issues and ICT.
Exclusive learning	Inclusive learning

**Differentiated instruction** is an approach to teaching and learning that offers several different learning experiences. It recognizes that students learn in different ways and requires teachers to be flexible and to

adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners of different abilities (UNESCO, 2019). This means that learners should be taught differently according to their capabilities, learning styles and needs. Students have different potential and should be allowed to progress independently of each other by focusing on their own learning pace. While some will have grasped the point before the teacher has finished explaining it, others may get there in the end, but with additional effort and support. The teacher as a facilitator should plan and deliver instruction under differentiated learning using the formula 'THE MUST, SHOULD AND COULD'. He/she should ensure that at the end of the lesson, all learners must know the basics of a concept. For instance, in the teaching of adverbs in English grammar, by the end of the lesson, all learners should be able to define an adverb regardless of their ability. Again, the average learner should be able to give examples of adverbs whereas the gifted should construct sentences using adverbs. This is captured in the diagram below.



Students prefer to be instructed according to their different learning styles. There are learners who prefer to work on their own while others understand the concept while interacting with their peers. Teachers as facilitators in the learning process should accommodate the different learning styles to assist students attain their full potential. The styles are exemplified below.



**Visual-Spatial** - They are aware of their environments. They like to draw, do jigsaw puzzles, read maps, day-dream. They can be taught through drawings, verbal and physical imagery. Tools include models, graphics, charts, photographs, drawings, 3-D modeling, video, videoconferencing, television, multimedia, texts with pictures/charts/graphs.

**Naturalistic intelligence** - They are sensitive to and appreciate nature. They focus on how people relate to their natural surroundings. Nature walk and outdoor activities will always be appreciated by such learners.

**Linguistic/verbal learners** - They use words effectively since their auditory skills are well developed. They are good story tellers, play word games and enjoy reading. Teachers should encourage them to talk in class and read books.

**Interpersonal** - These students learn through interaction. They have many friends, show empathy for others and are street smart. They can be taught through group activities, seminars and dialogues.

**Intrapersonal:** They are independent learners who tend to shy away from others. These learners try to understand one's own interests and goals. They have wisdom, intuition and motivation, as well as a strong will, confidence and opinions. They can be taught through independent study and introspection.

Bodily-kinesthetic - They use the body effectively, like a dancer or a surgeon. They like movement, making things and touching. They communicate well through body language and need to be taught through physical activity, hands-on learning, acting out and role playing.

Musical - They show sensitivity to rhythm and sound. They love music, but they are also sensitive to sounds in their environments. They may study better with music in the background. They can be taught by turning lessons into lyrics, speaking rhythmically, and tapping out time.

Logical –Mathematical - These learners enjoy reasoning and calculating. They think conceptually, abstractly and are able to see and explore patterns and relationships. They like to experiment, solve puzzles and ask cosmic questions. They can be taught through logic games, investigations, and mysteries. They need to learn and form concepts before they can deal with details.

**Inquiry based learning** is an engaging pedagogy that embraces learner-centered teaching and learning and encourages student-student interactions. This approach to learning is learner centered where learners are active participants in the learning process. In this pedagogy, learners are encouraged to explore the material, ask questions, and share ideas. The five E's of inquiry-based learning include:

- Engagement: This is the first phase of the lesson which should be motivational and arouse the learner's interest on the topic linking it to previous knowledge. The teacher identifies the learner's prior and possible misconceptions on the topic. Students may brainstorm by responding to open ended questions such as: why do second language learners of English (ESL) mispronounce certain words in the teaching of pronunciation?
- Exploration: The students are given a "hands-on" experience. For example, in the teaching of pronunciation, the learners can watch a video clip on pronunciation by native speaker of English. They can also check for the correct pronunciation from the dictionary. This is followed by formal explanation of terms, definitions, or concepts are discussed or explained by the teacher.
- Explanation: Learners describe their understanding of the concept by giving their own explanations. They can also pose questions about the topics they have been exploring. The teacher may also decide to integrate videos on pronunciation and other visual aides to help with student understanding.
- Elaboration: Collaborative learning is encouraged where learners in groups check for understanding with their peers. The purpose of team learning is to help learners broaden their understanding of the concept. Digital learning may be integrated in this phase such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the teaching of pronunciation.

- Evaluation: The learners assess their responses or do peer assessment. This is normally formative (an ongoing process) where teachers keep on making observations of their students as they apply new concepts and skills. Facilitators also check if the students have modified their way of thinking. Students may also have the opportunity to conduct self-assessment or peer-assessment. However, the evaluation may also include a summative experience such as a quiz, exam, or writing assignment.

Other examples of engaging pedagogies include

Role play: Students take up different roles in real life situations. For instance, in an English story telling lesson, the teacher can allow the learners to act out different characters in the narrative. This will build the learners confidence and enhance their creativity.



Field trips: These are structured activities that occur outside the classroom. This helps to deepen the comprehension of a concept taught in the classroom. For instance, learners experiencing a storytelling session from an expert in the community.



Gallery walk: A discussion technique that allow students to walk throughout the classroom and work in small groups responding to meaningful questions and problem-solving activities. It can be used in the

teaching of imaginative compositions where learners in groups share ideas on what to include in the essay.



Surveys: A method of collecting information from individuals. They can be used to collect information on learners' needs and learning styles for quality teaching and learning.

## SURVEYS

- The purpose of a survey depends what the survey is used for.
- It is a method of gathering information from a selection of individuals.

**Are You Sure?**

☒ YES

☐ NO

Survey: ☒

Excellent: ☐

Good: ☐

Fair: ☐

Poor: ☐

[LIST](#)

Modeling: Teacher demonstrates a new concept or approach to learning and students learn by observing. In the teaching of pronunciation, the teacher can demonstrate how to pronounce certain sounds/ words, learners listen, mimic and practice what they have heard.



- Story telling: This is using one's voice and body to relay a story to an audience.



- Use of Media to Enhance Learning such as the use of video clips, short films among others can be used to reinforce concepts and spark the discussion. For instance, in the teaching of speaking skills, learners can watch a video clip of a speech from a native speaker of English. The learners can practice on the correct intonation of words and use of non-verbal cues that enhance communication.



- The use of group discussions where students meet face to face to discuss academic concepts in or out of the classroom.





- Anecdotes which are exciting stories about an event or real person can also be used to introduce a reading comprehension lesson. This arouses the interest of the learners at the beginning of a lesson.



Schools must be more intentional in creating a more engaging environment by supporting learning outside the classroom. Students put into practice what they have learnt in class by practicing collaborative learning. Students work in small groups to search for understanding and solutions to academic work or projects. School administrators can set apart specific places in the school compound where learners discuss academic work. Moreover, students can participate in co-curricular activities such as debates and science fairs so as to bring together learning experiences.

To optimize student success, schools should provide safe and caring school environments that welcome students from diverse backgrounds. Students must have a sense of belonging at the institution. Teachers should likewise invest in strong relationships with their students. This includes greeting them when the learners come to class and building trusting and caring relationships. Other strategies for engaging learners might include identification of individual learner physical and emotional needs in the classroom and ensuring that they are met. A teacher could make use of 'trouble basket' where learners write down their problems and drop

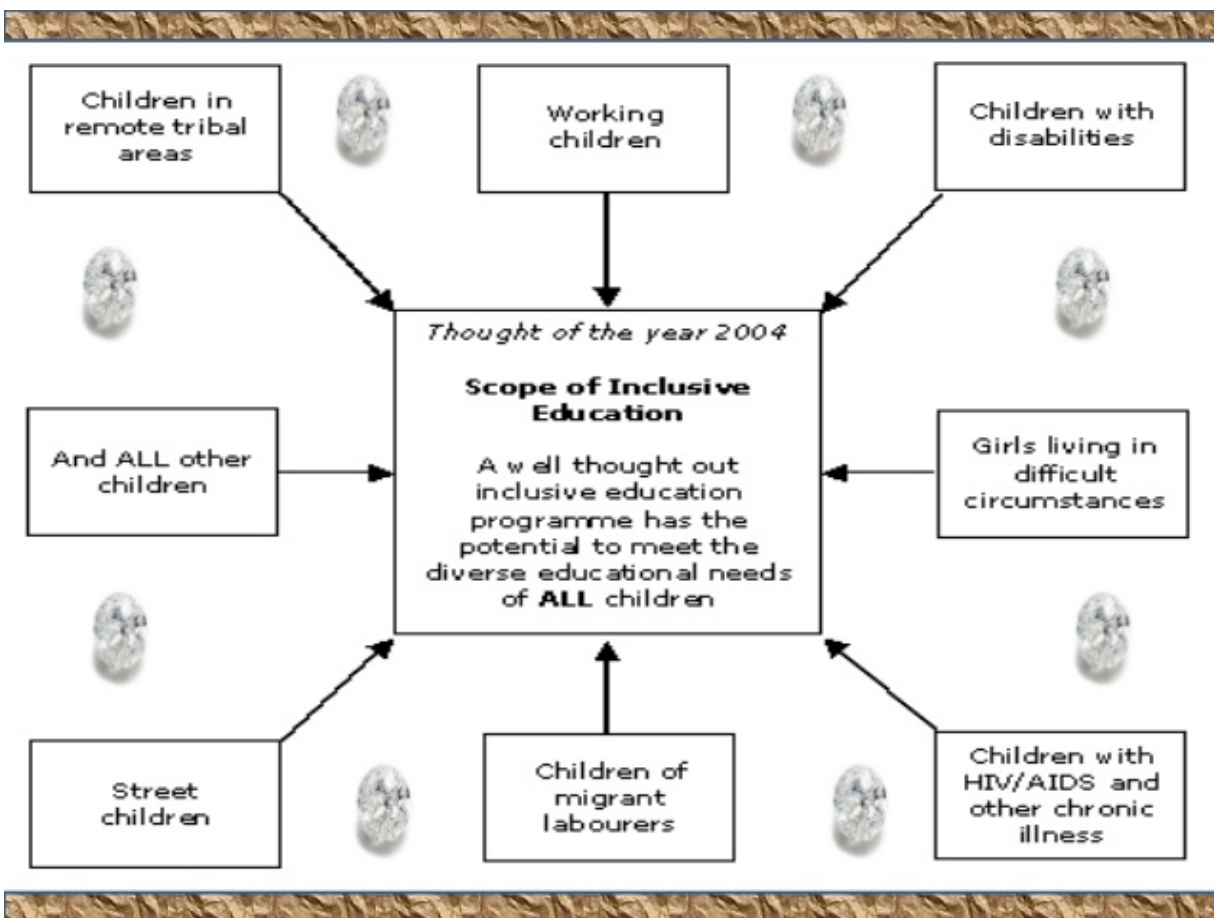


in the basket. The teacher could go through the issues raised later and see how to address them. This helps in making the learners feel safe in the school.

Finally, it is important for learners to have a voice in the school. Teachers should involve the learners in all the school activities and try to get students opinion before implementing any policy. In the classroom, students should be given an opportunity to select enriching learning activities.

### Operationalizing inclusive learning

This is a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of race, class, color, gender, disability, sexual preference, learning styles and language. Inclusive teaching and learning practices are instrumental in creating and maintaining a learning environment in which all participants are fully engaged and respected, and in which all participants are open to ideas, perspectives, and ways of thinking that are distinct from their own. The following table depicts inclusive learning.



Inclusive learning ensures that the needs of all students irrespective of talent, disability, race and socio-economic status are met, preparing them for life. It promotes positive values such as patriotism, respect,

friendship and understanding among the learners. Inclusive learning environments promote confidence and a sense of belonging among the learners. Inclusive learning ensures that the learning environments are safe and collaborative. It further recognizes that individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, and not a problem. Inclusive learning recognizes that students learn in different ways and encourages the use of diverse approaches to deliver course content (Engaging pedagogies). Schools that use inclusive learning listen to and take seriously students views and do not allow discrimination or bullying. Such schools take the time to celebrate the success of all students.

Promoting shared governance is an integral part of inclusive learning. Shared governance refers to set of practices and procedures that allow all stake holders to participate in significant decisions concerning the operation of their institutions. This ensures that decisions on significant issues are fully, deliberately and inclusively considered and communicated by the institution and that all stakeholders are informed and given ample opportunities for participation. Effective shared governance ensures that all stake holders have well defined areas of authority and responsibility. Some benefits of shared governance include improvements in morale and school environment and more informed decision making.

### **Personal reflections**

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual achieving conference provided an excellent opportunity for networking and sharing experiences in nurturing school climates that promote student success from a global perspective. It provided conference participants with strategies of handling the new generation of students commonly known as millennia's who bring to class a new set of values that are different from the previous generation. The conference was meaningful and geared towards the entire County rather than just One County. This brings out uniformity in the continuous professional growth for the participants and provides AIFEE and the County with an opportunity to measure the progress of these conferences. Educational stakeholders were challenged to propel their educational institutions to levels of excellence by creating school environments where teachers, students and parents are engaged.

# Developing critical partnerships that promote student success in the 21st century

*By Dr. Ruth Thinguri, Professor of Education at Mount Kenya University.*

## **Overview:**

1. School partnership dynamics
2. School partnership goal
3. School partners
4. School partnership in the CBC system of education
5. School partnership benefits-student success
6. Creating effective partnerships with parents
7. Students as partners in learning
8. Government and governance agencies as partners in education
9. Community and non-state actors-as partners in education
10. The self-evaluation practice-breakout activity

## **School partnership dynamics**

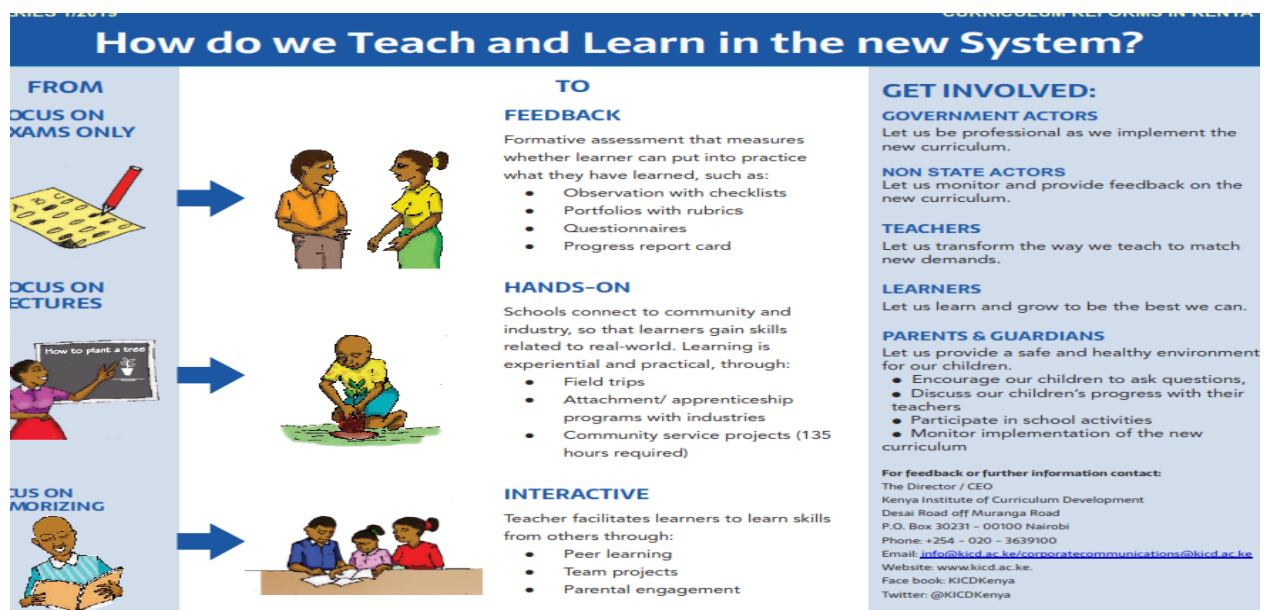
1. School partnerships and relationships with other stakeholders can be complicated and challenging.
2. They involve the distribution of power and responsibility which is seen as one of the fundamental features of partnership,
3. Partnership requires empowerment and accountability.
4. School partners are members of multiple communities within and outside the school and different aspects of their identity dominate at different times and in different contexts.
5. Therefore, there is need for dialogue across differences in identity, not to focus on reaching consensus, but to acknowledge, respect and begin to understand others' perspectives and experiences; to engage with difference.

One of the most commonly cited definitions for teaching and learning partnerships is: "A collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis." Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014, p. 6-7

The goal of creating effective school partnerships is to promote a positive school climate. The following steps can be used to achieve this:

1. Educators encourage and maintain regular interaction between the school and partners.
2. Everyone is treated with respect.
3. The school culture develops a sense of community and caring relationships.
4. Partners are involved in school activities.
5. Everyone feels safe and secure.
6. School partners include the community, non-state actors, business community, development partners, government and governing agencies, Teachers Service Commission, Ministry of Education, Boards of Management, *parents* /guardians/families and most important, students

### **Creating partnership in the cbc system of education as per the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development**



### *An illustration of the benefits of school partnerships*



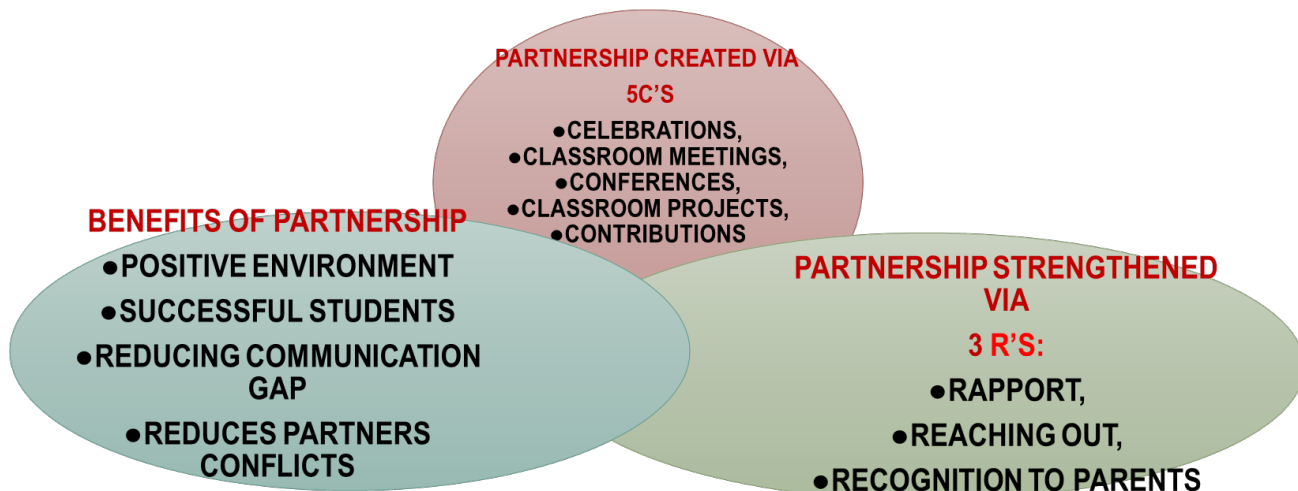
### **Creating effective partnerships with parents**

Parental empowerment and engagement are a critical component of the Competency Based Curriculum.

Parents play a very important role in determining the success of a child's education as follows:

1. Provide an enabling environment that is conducive to learning and which motivates the child to achieve their full potential.
2. Make a sustained follow-up of the students' academic performance.
3. Provide appropriate funding and support for the school's programs.
4. Provide adequate support to the learners emotionally, physically and spiritually/ nurture the learners
5. Support guidance and counseling programs in the school
6. Ensure the learners maintain the highest levels of discipline and commitment
7. Make a sustained follow-up of the student's class work, academic performance and maintenance of high grades.
8. Stimulate interest, work morale and enthusiasm of learners in the learning process.
9. Help the learners to make connections between what they know and newly acquired knowledge and skills to real or simulated situations

## *A model for creating effective partnerships with parents*



### **Students as partners in learning**

1. Students as Partners (SaP) creates space for students and staff to work together on teaching and learning.
2. Students become active participants with valuable expertise to contribute to shaping learning, teaching, and the work of the school alongside other school partners.
3. In order to be successful, partnerships between students and teachers should be based on three principles: respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in learning.
4. Teachers and students – see each other as partners, as people who can meaningfully (albeit in diverse ways) contribute to the process of teaching and learning

### **The role of students as partners in learning**

Learners are a critical element in curriculum implementation. While teachers control classroom practice, the learners hold the key to what is transmitted and adopted from the official curriculum. The official curriculum can be quite different from the curriculum that is implemented. The learner factor influences teachers in their selection of learning experiences. In the CBC, learners are no longer seen as passive recipients of knowledge.

Learners are expected to:

- Be engaged in and contribute to teaching, learning and assessment processes
- Understand the purpose of classroom activities and participate actively in them;

- Know what they will learn and why, their expectations and how they will know that they have learnt well;
- Be open to innovative ideas;
- Be curious and willing to ask questions;
- Raise what they take for granted to the level of conscious critical scrutiny;
- Engage in assessing their own and other students' learning as well as learning the content and associated skills,
- Support and respect other students' efforts to learn
- Be present in the school and to attend all programs.
- Develop independent learning and revision programs.
- Maintain the highest levels of discipline and commitment to learning.
- Make connections between what they know and newly acquired knowledge and skills to real or simulated situations

### **Benefits of promoting students as partners in learning –for students**

1. Increased student engagement/motivation/ownership for learning leading to enhanced student confidence/self-efficacy
2. Increased understanding of the 'other's' experience (e.g. students understanding staff experiences) leading to a more positive relationship or trust between students and staff
3. Increased student learning about their own learning (metacognitive learning, self-evaluation, self-awareness) and raised awareness of graduate attributes or employability skills or career development
4. Increased sense of belonging to school or discipline or community (school connectedness) leading to improved student content/discipline learning (actual or perceived)
5. Positively shifted identity as student/learner/person/professional leading to much enhanced student-student relationships

### **Benefits of promoting students as partners in learning –for staff**

1. Enhanced relationship or trust between students and staff
2. Development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials
3. Increased understanding of the 'other's' experience (e.g. staff understanding student experiences)

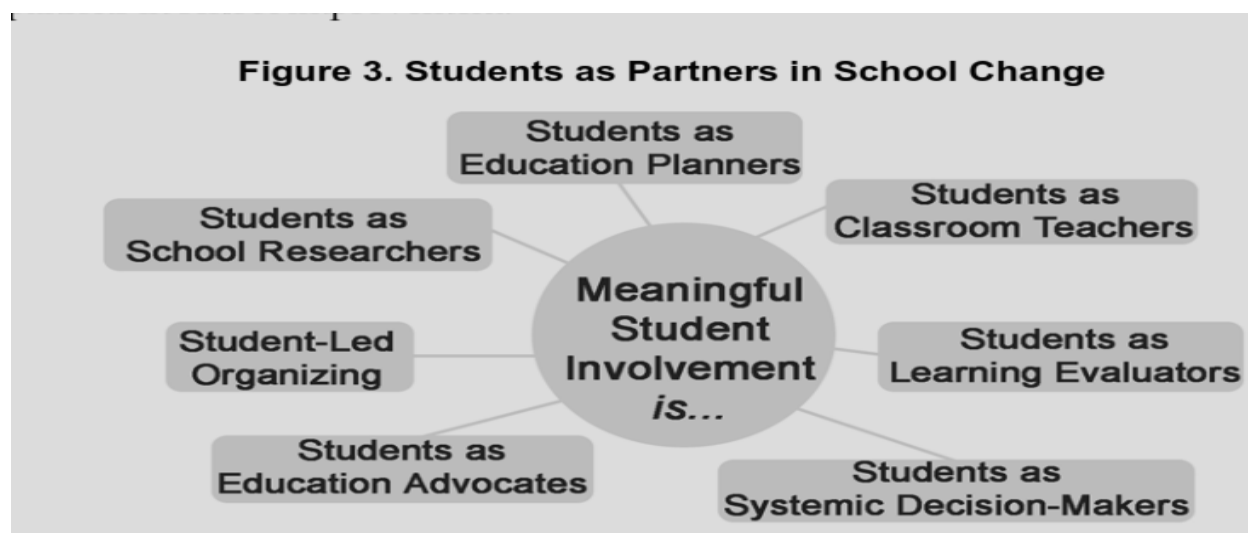
4. New beliefs about teaching and learning that change practices for the better
5. Re-conceptualisation of teaching as a collaborative process to foster learning

### **Guiding principles of creating students as partners in learning**

1. Foster inclusive partnerships: Ideally, institutions will direct attention to the experiences of a diversity of students as the focus of partnership work, while also offering a plethora of partnership opportunities that specifically seek to include students and staff from all backgrounds in meaningful, power-sharing learning partnerships that shape the school.
2. Nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection: Power, whether discussed or left unspoken, is always a factor in student-staff partnership interactions. Those in partnership should aspire to share power.
3. Accept partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes: Partnership gives primacy to the co-creation of shared goals and outcomes that are mutually decided during the process of partnership. As such, the outcomes of students and staff engaging as partners are unknown at the beginning of the joint endeavor.
4. Engage in ethical partnerships: Engaging in partnership should be governed by ethical guidelines; conducted in an ethical process and for ethical outcomes.
5. Enact partnership for transformation: Transformation begins through our own active reflection and ongoing dialogue with others about who engages and why in partnership, what it means for higher education, and how we advocate for SaP more widely.



## Ways of engaging students as partners in learning



### Government and governance agencies as partners in education

This is especially critical as it fosters an inclusive and transparent dialogue on the country's education policies and supports the government in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national education plans in the following ways

BOM/SMC: Support the schools in development implementation and monitoring of educational activities

To encourage learners, teachers, and non-teaching staff as well as parents and the community including other key stakeholders to render voluntary service to the schools

PTA: Represent parents in the in implementation and monitoring of educational activities

MOE/CEO: Support the government in achieving SDG 4, national goals of education and vision 2010 social pillar

TSC: Registration, appointment and promotion of teachers

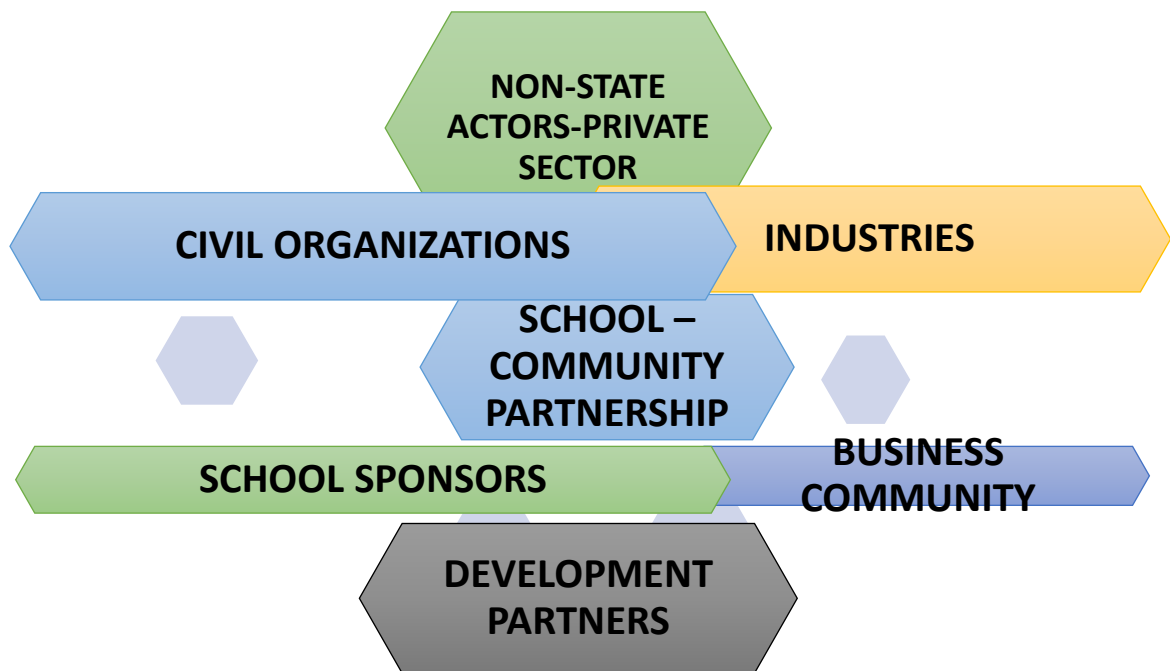
### Government and governance agencies roles as partners in education

Government and Governance agencies roles as partners in education include the following:

1. Building stronger, more equitable and more efficient education systems is at the heart of all education partners.

2. Ensuring strong education systems that can ensure that all children have access to quality education and can serve future generations of children
3. Provision of opportunities to bring together all education partners in local education groups which enable them to contribute at all stages of the education planning cycle, from school analysis to evaluation.
4. The government and governing bodies have a major role to play in supporting the schools in development, implementation and monitoring of educational activities

**Community and non-state actors-as partners in education**



### **Non-state actors-private sector**

1. Help support the country's education system and align corporate giving with the education plan priorities
2. Develop violence, drugs prevention programs
3. Sponsor student field studies
4. Assist the school with its law-related education program
5. Provide field studies to court, city hall, or jail
6. Serve as judges for academic competition
7. Allow journalism or debate students to interview employees or officials

### **Civil organizations**

1. Raise awareness and promote advocacy and dialogue on the development, implementation and monitoring of education sector plans
2. They also help improve accountability in education
3. Sponsor a service club
4. Provide incentive awards or scholarships
5. Serve on a school advisory committee

### **School sponsors**

1. Religious school sponsors are required to take part in spiritual, financial and infrastructural development of the school they sponsor in order to maintain the sponsors status
2. They participate in activities like pastoral counselling, seminars, spiritual retreats, Sunday services among others.

### **Development partners**

1. Appraise and endorse the education plan and mobilize financing.
2. Promote alignment, transparency and mutual accountability

### **Business community**

1. Build Career Awareness and Job Preparedness avenues
2. Offer internship or employment opportunities for students
3. Allow short-term job shadowing for students and/or teachers
4. Serve as guest speakers on career awareness topics (interviewing, resumes)

5. Participate on a career days

## **Industries**

1. Teaching-learning processes can be improved by integrating industrial training to the students which also provides an exposure of the corporate world
2. Students should be encouraged to undertake the final year projects in the industry with a joint supervisor from the industry.
3. This is the most preferred activity for mutual benefit and growth of industries as well as institutions.
4. This also provides the best platform for showcasing the best practices, latest technological advancements, and their implementation and impact on the industry.

### **The critical role of the community as a partner in education**



## **Breakout activities**

The participants participated in filling a questionnaire to assess their schools in terms of the school partnerships and student success. There were four questionnaires distributed among four groups as follows:

1. Group one: Bridging the gap between community and school through partnership for student success
2. Group two: Bridging the gap between student as partners in learning and school through partnership for student success

3. Group three: Bridging the gap between government, governance agencies and school through partnership for student success
4. Group four: Bridging the gap between parents/families and school through partnership for student success

### **Findings:**

- a. The overall findings from all the participants is that the school partnerships play a great role in enhancing students' success
- b. The extent to which the participants engage the school partners seem to vary ranging from weekly, monthly, every few months, once or twice per year and almost never
- c. Some of the challenges facing the participants in establishing the school partnership include:
  - i. Lack of commitment to the exercise
  - ii. Lack of ownership and negative attitude
  - iii. School partners' refusal to attend meetings
  - iv. Lack of awareness of government policy requirement on school partnership roles
  - v. Community ignorance
  - vi. Lack of finances/inadequate funding
  - vii. Time factor

### **Key recommendations on how to mitigate the challenges mentioned above as per participants**

1. Creation of awareness through government agencies and motivational speakers
2. Discuss with the partners on the need for attending meetings and partners' capacity building workshops
3. Exposure of partners through various activities/ events for them to acquire more information on their roles in education
4. Mobilize for funding for the events/and workshops from well wishers
5. Educate partners through public barazas
6. Create a positive climate and attitude towards the school

### **Personal observations**

The 7<sup>TH</sup> Annual Achieving Educational Excellence Conference was a success and a good opportunity for all the facilitators to interact with the school heads from the entire Nyeri County and to see the diversity in the county. It was a good forum to offer support to the participants in major emerging issues in the Kenyan education

system like mental health, stress, depression and suicidal issues, CBC, students wellbeing, school climate and behavior management as the schools have come to a cross -road in most of these issues.

# Behavior Management for the Modern Student

*By Susan Dalton, Director of children's ministry at Life Church, Knoxville, Tennessee*

All students are unique in many ways. They each have different goals, interests, background experiences, abilities and behaviors. As teachers build relationships with students, they begin to see what makes each child unique. While each student has their differences, there are needs that all students share. Students all share physical needs like the need for food/water, sleep, shelter and safety. They also share emotional needs like the need to have belonging and value, self-worth and purpose. Inappropriate behaviors often occur when physical and emotional needs are not met appropriately. Educators do not often have the ability to meet a student's physical needs, but they must ensure they are meeting student's emotional needs both through daily interaction and when behavior management is necessary.

The following are strategies that can be used to effectively manage behaviors while still building student capacity.

- **Well-planned curriculum and engaging lessons:** Lessons should be appropriate to students' age, ability and intellectual development. They should be stimulating, challenging and rewarding.
- **Building relationships and positive school climate:** Teachers should develop relationships with students, parents and community partners. Likewise, schools must develop a school-wide culture of caring and respect between teacher and student and between peers.
- **Clear rules, expectations and procedures:** Rules give acceptable boundaries to student behaviors. Expectations show students how acceptable behaviors look. Procedures guide students through daily routines. These must be explicitly taught and practiced.
- **Give students the opportunity to have input:** Students feel more ownership of rules and procedures when they are able to give input. This can be done through student councils, suggestion boxes, school assemblies, class meetings, etc.
- **Teachers should be effective classroom managers:** Teachers must attend to disruptions quickly by redirecting and re-teaching appropriate behaviors. They should reward/praise appropriate behavior while avoiding inconsistencies, favoritism or disregard for students' cultures.

## Key Presentation and Discussion Points

- Students are different, yet have similar needs. Often when these needs are not met, behavior issues occur.
- Behavior management is necessary, but must be done in a way that nurtures and guides students.
- Student engagement is the number one strategy to maintain behaviors.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils will help teachers recognize issues before they become major problems.
- Behavior management is directly related to school culture. How students behave and the way it is handled creates an atmosphere felt in all areas of a school.

### **Key Recommendations, Action Points and Next Steps**

- School leadership directly impacts the school culture. Schools that have a good culture have strong leaders who are building relationships with faculty and students, listening to input and taking action to address problems that arise.
- Teachers need opportunities to collaborate about students and successful teaching/behavior management strategies.
- Initiatives like differentiation, multiple intelligences and student-centered learning are good, but teachers need guidance, training and accountability on what that looks like practically in their classrooms.
- Teachers need opportunities to collaborate with one another. This is a time to share ideas, encourage one another and build a team of support. Collaboration also needs to happen with students, parents and other stakeholders in order to gain various perspectives of the school's culture.
- Teachers need practical guidance on how to address issues that students exhibit in their classroom – how they can counsel students with the problems they typically face.
- Schools need to develop campus-wide systems for addressing student behavior so students know what to expect from all teachers and inconsistencies can be avoided.



## **Conclusions**

*By Dr Peter Gitau, Vice President for Student Affairs at Dixie State University, USA; Founder and President, the African International Foundation for Educational Excellence, AIFEE*

There is a great sense of urgency to address the subject of school climate before it is too late. The scenes that have played out in secondary schools are all too familiar, and very frightening. Educators have to pause and ask themselves these questions: Why would learners wake up one day and decide to burn up their school? Why would students, unprovoked, turn on their peers, lock them and burn them without mercy? Why would students turn on their teachers in a manner unheard of? In a country where education is the main key out of poverty, why would students turn their backs on the school, the very symbol of economic liberation?

There is a fierce urgency of “now” in unraveling the answers to these questions. Knee jerk reactions and responses have never been, and will not be effective. Suspending all students, charging them exorbitant readmission fees, reintroducing corporal punishment and the like will only add fuel to a fire that is already burning out of control.

The answer lies in the careful and intentional development of a school climate that nurtures student success. Schools leaders must ask themselves, “What kind of learning environment facilitates student learning? How do we create a school culture where everyone, including students and community partners feel valued and validated? What kind of school culture do our school practices, habits, rules, traditions etc. produce?”

School climates that nurture success do not happen by accident or happenstance. Educators must be very intentional about how to create and nurture those cultures. Every school community must device ways of bringing its teams together regularly to study and evaluate their cultures and climates if any meaningful changes are to occur. It is absolutely necessary for every school and governing unit to develop appropriate dashboards that indicate, way ahead of time, if things are going well, rather than waiting for tragedy to happen.

There is a very urgent need for educational leaders to devise ways of engaging their learners in meaningful ways. Establishing forums for students, parents and others to provide meaningful critique and feedback is not only essential but critical. Learners and their parents who feel isolated and marginalized from the schools in their communities may contribute to school tensions and animosity. Learners who perceive that the school does not treat them with the dignity that they deserve will not become loyal alumni, neither will they be willing to support their school and its programs. Schools that work to improve and beautify the physical learning

environment, ensuring that the learning environment is safe, habitable and that it facilitates learning are more apt to identify with their schools and therefore support them. The same is true of schools that constantly engage their learners, collecting feedback on their satisfaction with the learning process and respecting the rights of learners. Every school should develop a process of assessing its climate and addressing accordingly.

It is our humble conclusion that unless educational leaders, and especially educators at the school building level, pay attention to their school climates, what is happening in secondary schools will eventually happen in primary schools. In this digital era, learners and their families are much more aware and can communicate globally in ways that previous generations did not. Educators must shun an authoritarian approach and embrace a more consultative approach to create effective partnerships in learning.

## About AIFEE

### **AIFEE Mission**

The African International Foundation for Educational Excellence (AIFEE) is a Not for Profit organization committed to providing educational development in Africa.

### **AIFEE Vision**

AIFEE aspires to create educational excellence in rural African communities

**The Foundation pursues its goals and objectives through need based interventions, community development through service learning and outreach, research and assessment, education and training, and strategic consultancy.**

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