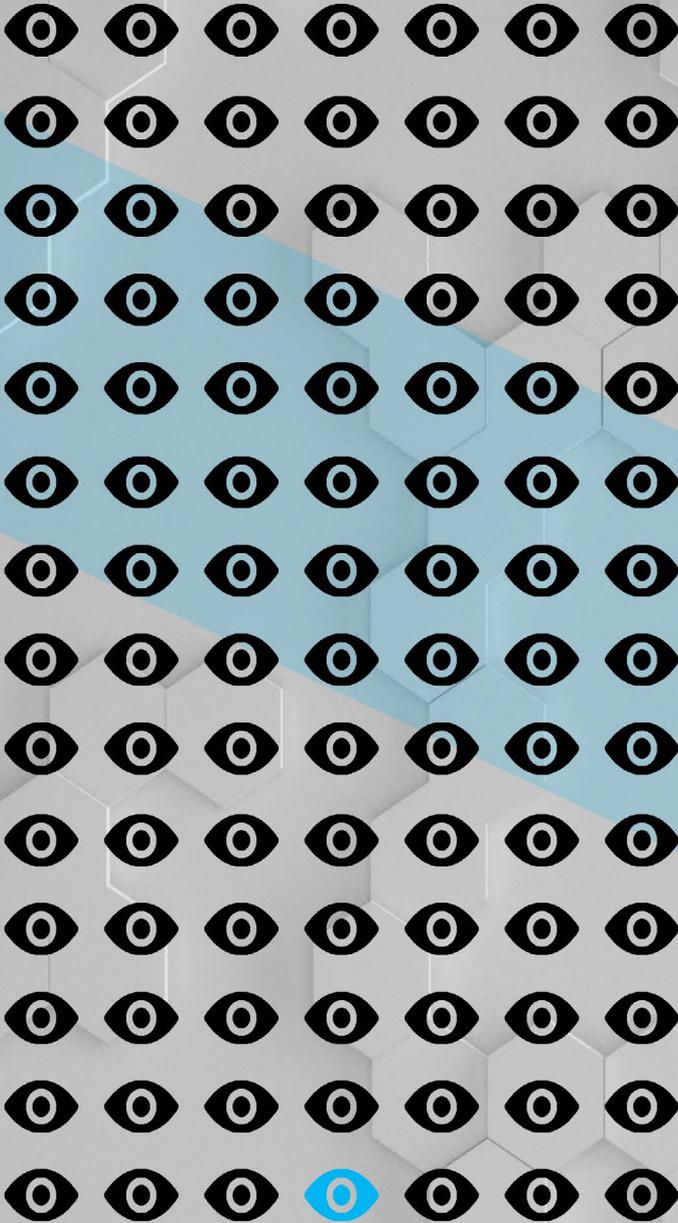


# DEPROGRAMMING



MANUAL



# INTRODUCTION

## Who is this resource for? What classroom subject? What age level?

This book is for anyone looking to instill elements of progressive education into their classroom, and are concerned at the student reaction to their policies. By passing power from teacher to student, we may have the belief that chaos or confusion will ensue. This resource contains questions, activities, and resources to affirm our progressive beliefs and build purposeful communities in our classroom.

These ideas take time to develop and we must be bold in “giving up” standards and content to build community first. We must dismiss the idea that by checking every box and curriculum topic that we’re effectively teaching. Instead, using our time to promote values and build important student-centered norms in our classroom will have insurmountable effects on our student’s motivation, curiosity, and ultimately - learning in our rooms. They will shape our lessons and help craft experiences with us.

Each discussion and activity is more than possible with any age level. Some vocabulary or topics may make more sense to certain age groups than others, but we expect that as an educator, your professional judgment will stand. Be sure, however, that we do not confuse judgment with fear. Some of these topics will question our roles and our power, which is not an easy thing to give up. We must be steadfast in promoting a student-centered community and sometimes that will be uncomfortable.

## How should I present the ideas in this book?

The ideas in this book may be radical in your school or district. Students may be confused on why they’re doing these things. Preface that the goal of these activities is to “think different” and re-imagine what school could be. We want to make a classroom space that “does school differently” and we - as an educator - are an ally in that endeavor.

We shouldn’t force any of these discussions or make anyone participate. It would go against the principles of progressive education to turn any of these into points-based assignments or authoritarian endeavors. Instead, these should be authentic discussions that build into action. Each is designed for classroom communities to not only discuss said topics, but to act accordingly.

Each activity and/or discussion may last forty minutes or longer. It’s entirely dependent on what students desire to do and how engaging the topic is. We recommend setting aside as much time as possible.

## How did you collect these ideas?

Most of these ideas have been collected, adapted, and used within Nick Covington and Chris McNutt’s work in progressive classrooms. Others have been adopted from the specific source referenced. As these materials are developed in our contexts, be sure to critically analyze each (including media) and decide on what is most appropriate for your setting.

## Engaging the Coalition

Educator and critic Jonathan Kozol urges us to build upon radical education through our connections. Incorporating progressive practice and analyzing the curriculum is liberating for students, and they’ll end up being your support network. These practices are necessary for change, yet they may not be accepted by your school. By building these relationships, you’re making yourself irreplaceable. The more you bring to the school, the more respect you have among your students, parents, and coworkers, the greater the chances that any “blow-back” to your radical ideas will result in termination (and if it does, your hireability is bolstered.) Making connections in the classroom, to parents and the community, as well as online is sadly necessary for teachers changing the narrative of education.

## Directory

This book is sorted into three categories:

- Critical Pedagogy and Progressive Education Principles
- Restorative Justice
- Ungrading and Experiential Education

These categories are arranged in three sections:

- Discussion Questions **4**
- Activities **6**
- Additional Resources **20**

## Use and Appreciation

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Ungrading and Experiential Education

- What is “competence”? Would you trust a doctor who achieved all A’s? What about if they barely passed their licensure examination?
- What is excellence? How does it differ from competence? What is our goal in the classroom?
- What is “success”? What does success mean in school?
- What does a grade imply? Do you wish that grading was different?
- What is the end goal of taking a class in high school? (Highlighting the debate between “college readiness”, achieving high grades, and/or actually learning content.)

### Restorative Justice

- Why do we enforce discipline in school? Is it effective?
- Are detentions an effective way to deter poor behavior choices?
- Why do students “act out” in school? Are punishments effective at solving these problems?
- What role does the classroom community play in solving disciplinary issues?
- What rules should a classroom have? How do we foster an environment where those rules are followed?

### Critical Pedagogy and Progressive Education Principles

- What is the purpose of education?
- What is the “hidden curriculum”?
- What is the role of a teacher in school? Do you believe teachers fulfill this role?
- Who do you want to be when you’re 30 years old? Do these values align with what you’re aiming for now?
- Who has power within the education system? Do students have any power? Why or why not?

## SYSTEMIC CHANGE

As we instill progressive education into our classrooms, we should aim to be as radically student-centered as possible. **The following are examples of sizeable shifts that could occur within a traditional system.** Visit other HRP materials for more information.

### Ungrading and Experiential Education

- Changing from tests and assignments to portfolio assessment.
- Moving away from the “language of grades” (you passed, this is “A-level”, how will we bring up your grade?) to a “language of learning” (how can I help?, what are you struggling with?)
- Adopting PBL to integrate class curriculum.
- Eliminating homework or making it optional.

### Restorative Justice

- Practicing “creative non-compliance” toward 3-strike penalties, dress codes, and other inequitable practice (having a conversation to encourage behavior within the system.)
- Connecting and relating to learners rather than passing judgment.
- Taking time to understand and solve every issue for both victim and aggressor.
- Becoming involved in local non-profits and organizing to reduce inequities within the school community.

### Critical Pedagogy and Progressive Education Principles

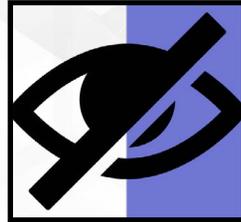
- Focusing on one-on-one conversations, rather than full class lectures.
- Creating as much self-directed time as possible, while offering teacher-led activities based on student interest.
- Co-crafting classroom rules and expectations with students.
- Leveling the relationship between student and teacher through ongoing conversations on the inherent power of student voice.
- Discussing on the same level as students, contributing to the process while not being the “leader.”



## DECIPHERING THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

**Activity Description:** The “hidden curriculum” consists of the ideas school teaches without explicitly telling a student “that’s the point.” Start by explaining to students what the hidden curriculum is. Explain that our goal is to question authority. Is school set up to always do the right thing? And if it isn’t - what can we do to change things?

For each of the following situations, have students work in whatever means they prefer to analyze the “hidden meaning.” Ensure they have proper time to discuss and debate how these relate, and if there’s a reason to change how the classroom uses each of these. An example is provided that may/may not be provided to students.



Encourage students to come up with their own situations and how these express the hidden curriculum. If they desire, have them share their own experiences and how they’ve felt as a result.

**A student asks another student for help during a test. The teacher fails the student for cheating.**

Asking for help from others is a negative trait. We should rely only on ourselves. In the real world, it’s “every man for themselves.”

**A student begins to walk out of class to go to the restroom. The teacher gives the student the “evil eye” and tells them to sit down.**

In the classroom, the teacher has total control. A student has no right to move freely or act on their own volition. Students should be afraid of authority figures.

**The teacher makes an error on a problem on the board. A student questions if they’re sure about the solution. The teacher writes them off and continues to lecture.**

Authority figures cannot be wrong and students should not question authority. A student’s voice does not matter as much as an adult.

**A student falls asleep in class. The teacher slams their desk, startling said student, and many of the other students laugh.**

A person’s well-being does not matter in a school and/or work environment. People must be prepared or face public humiliation.

**A student fails a test. The teacher records the grade. The class moves on.**

There are no opportunities for retakes, and therefore, learning isn’t the goal. Instead, we’re promoting “test-takers” - those who perform the first time - and leave behind those being challenged or who are struggling.

**The teacher selects the curriculum from the state standards. All students learn the same curriculum. (This may require additional documents and discussion.)**

Student input is not valued in selecting what they learn. Curricula (no matter the subject) convey, overwhelming, a white, male, affluent perspective and tend to exclude the perspective of those marginalized.

**Every time a student walks into the classroom, the teacher has a prepared lesson plan. Students complete their activities and move on.**

The teacher holds all knowledge and student input does not matter. A student’s experiences, knowledge, and ideas aren’t important within the classroom. Authority figures control all power in making decisions.

**A student is late for class and the teacher remarks, “Nice of you to join us!” in a sarcastic manner.**

The intent is to make the student “feel bad” for the decisions that they’ve made. The class is told that public humiliation will follow for those who don’t obey the rules set by authority figures.

## WHAT DO WE VALUE AS LEARNERS?

**Activity Description:** Why do we attend school? What do we value in our life? In this activity, students will decide their goals for the upcoming school year. Start by inviting students to answer the question: “Who do you hope to be when you’re 30 years old?” Note that this question isn’t purely occupational, rather we’re focused on every element of being a human being.

Then, [watch this clip from academic critic Alfie Kohn.](#)

Have students discuss the clip:

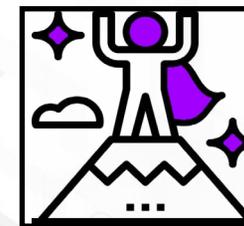
- Does this video clip resonate with you?
- How does this relate to what you’ve written?
- Do you believe school is preparing you to meet your goals?

Students may be focused on Kohn’s monetary achievement metrics. Many desire high GPAs, college-preparedness, or material goods. This shouldn’t be dismissed or painted poorly. Any educational outcome is desired as long as the student is the one making these choices. We should ensure that students want these things, not feel pressured by outside forces.

Have students contemplate:

- Are they the ones who want to see these goals fulfilled?
- What outside forces shape who we want to be?
- Are there any potential negative outcomes of our culture and learning?
- What can this classroom do to help us realize our potential?

Record what students discuss and utilize this information to co-create lesson plans, units, or norms within your classroom. Refer back to these ideas to reinforce that our goals are to envision their aspirations, not a predefined expectation set by the school.





## COMMUNITY WALK

**Activity Description:** Connecting to the community is a cornerstone of progressive education. A sense of place and purpose drives all aspects of learning, from cultural understanding to experiential learning empathy. When we tour the neighborhoods that surround our schools, we give students the opportunity to bond and appreciate the diverse populous of their building.

1. Choose a neighborhood that surrounds that school, especially one that students live in. If possible, try starting with places within walking distance.
2. Contact community leaders and potentially find a local venue to discuss and learn more about the area. Let students freely interact with these community leaders (rather than listening to long lectures.)
3. Visit local attractions, such as parks and landmarks, as well as important community cornerstones, like religious centers and city councils.
4. Try to eat within the community. Many local restaurants will offer substantial discounts to groups, especially schools. If possible, use school funds (or group fundraising) to make these purchases, as to not ostracise those who can't afford it.
5. Throughout the walk, talk about everything from the location itself to simple conversation. Invite students to share their own knowledge of the area.

This is a powerful and transformative experience in making connections across place. From conversations over lunch to letting students share their "home base", this activity is well worth doing multiple times per year.



## "PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE"

**Activity Description:** The Portrait of a Graduate is a formal process of creating an educational experience for students. Using the design process, administrators, educators, and students develop the words used to describe the role of a school.

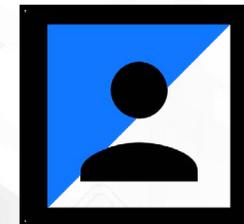
Three elements are used to brainstorm the portrait:

1. The hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the community and young people.
2. The skills and habits of mind that students need to be successful.
3. The implications for the system and design of equitable learning experiences.

Although this process is usually done formally by a school district, it can be implemented at the classroom level:

1. Have students form a discussion circle and introduce examples of a "portrait of a graduate." An example can be [found here](#).
2. After explaining the purpose of the portrait, have students brainstorm and write down their ideas.
3. Lead a discussion with students on narrowing down and selecting the portrait of learning for your classroom.
4. Finally, illustrate and create a formal poster that declares your classroom's goals.

This portrait can be referred to and utilized while crafting lesson plans, projects, and more. This can serve as an anchor for an early introduction to critical pedagogy and leveling the planning process with students.



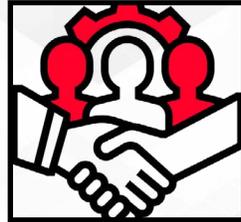


## WHOSE CURRICULUM?

**Activity Description:** Who writes the curriculum? Regardless of one's subject area, a school's curriculum will likely feature predominantly white male authors and figures. Many educators will (and should) take time in incorporating diverse perspectives when presenting their content. However, this activity takes it one step further. Students should be aware of this bias in the curriculum. They must understand that with knowledge comes substantial power in its presentation.

Locate the textbook and/or state standard recommendations for your class. If you don't use a textbook, you will be able to find a free electronic variation online. Have students "de-construct" the message:

- Browse the actors and imagery presented. Who is primarily represented? To juxtapose this to later figures, the educator or students could write the actors/imagery on the board.
- Do you believe important information is left out? Is this intentional? If it is, why would it be? If not, why would it be left out?
- Do textbooks and state curriculum avoid "political" topics? Why is social justice not in the curriculum?



Students will need assistance in "knowing what they don't know." The majority of students have not been presented more than the white supremacist narrative/curriculum. You can introduce important figures, their backgrounds, and then continue the discussion above.

(This is a small selection. There are many more examples one could incorporate.)

### Mathematics

**Abū Sahl al-Qūhī (940-1000):** Persian mathematician who theorized a center of gravity and contributed to the invention of the compass.

**Francis William (1702-1770):** Jamaican mathematician who showed that black individuals had the same intellectual capabilities as white individuals.

**Benjamin Bannaker (1731-1806):** The first scientist to showcase the relativity of time and space, preceding Einstein, among many other achievements.

**Emmy Noether (1882-1935):** German mathematician who coined Noether's Theorem, which showed the relationship between conservation laws and symmetry, and Noether's Ring, changing the principles of abstract algebra.

### Science

**Ernest Everett Just (1883-1941):** A biologist who pioneered innovations in the role of a cell surface.

**Dorothy Vaughan (1910-2008):** A mathematician and "human computer" who worked in the segregated West Area Computers, who were instrumental in challenging the Soviet Union during the Space Race.

**James West (1931-present):** A physicist who co-developed the modern microphone with over 250 other patents.

**Flossie Wong-Staal (1947-present):** A virologist who was the first to clone HIV and understand its gene makeup, leading to prove that HIV causes AIDS.

### Social Studies (United States)

Although some of these figures are commonly known, it is interesting to analyze what is "left out" of the curriculum.

**Squanto (Tisquantum) (1585-1622):** Six years before the "Thanksgiving story", Tisquantum was kidnapped and brought to Spain to be sold into slavery. He escaped and made it back to North America, where he found his village destroyed. Allying with a neighboring group, Tisquantum became a translator to colonizers in Plymouth.

**Helen Keller (1880-1968):** A political activist and outspoken member of the Socialist Party of America who focused on women's suffrage, labor rights, and anti-militarism.

**Barbara Gittings (1932-2007):** A prominent activist for LGBT equality who organized the New York Daughters of Bilitis and was one of the first to protest the ban on employment of gay individuals by the United States government.

**Claudette Colvin (1939-present):** A leader of the Civil Rights Movement who refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama at the age of 15 (before Rosa Parks), and challenged bus segregation in *Browder v. Gayle* (1956).

### Music / Art

**Wen Zhengming (1470-1559):** A Chinese painter and poet who is regarded as a master of Ming painting, an important cornerstone in Chinese art history.

**Florence Price (1887-1953):** An American classical composer who was the first African American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer and be played by a major orchestra.

**R. C. Gorman (1931-2005):** A Navajo painter who has been called "the Picasso of American Indian art" who focused on Navajo women and their roles in the Navajo Nation.

**Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988):** An American graffiti artist who focused on racism and classism under the name SAMO.

### Language Arts

These are all books that were banned or challenged in some way by school boards. Why would these works be intentionally left out?

**The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (2007):** The story of a 14-year-old who lives on the Spokane Indian Reservation who transfers to an all-white high school. It has been challenged for "excerpts on masturbation" as well as "vulgarity, racism, and anti-Christian content."

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Mark Haddon (2004):** A murder mystery told through the lens of a 15-year-old autistic boy named Christopher Boone. Christopher discovers the body of his neighbor's dog and comes under suspicion of killing the animal. Some found this book had too much "offensive language" and "took the name of God in vain."

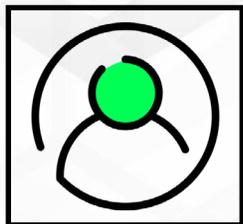
**Eleanor and Park by Rainbow Rowell (2013):** The story of Eleanor (a 16 year old girl with curly red hair) and Park (a half-Korean, 16 year old boy), who meet on their first day of school and fall in love. This book came under fire for its "problematic depiction of race and abuse."

**Beloved by Toni Morrison (1987):** The story of a former slave who escapes to Ohio and is haunted by the ghost of Sethe's infant daughter, who is forced out - but soon the new character Beloved appears. This work is challenged and/or banned in many school districts due to its "sexual material, violence, and bestiality."

## PEACEKEEPING CIRCLE INTRODUCTION

**Activity Description:** A peacemaking circle is a place for honest conversation between students and educators. Typically used after conflict, these circles are developed from Native American cultures of North America to help reconcile our differences. Peacemaking circles can serve as powerful experiences to help everyone understand our perspectives and break down barriers.

Students can be introduced to this practice after a minor disagreement in class or perhaps after an educator's mistake (Such as lashing out or becoming frustrated. It happens to all of us.) It's important to introduce this topic slowly, and not recommended to introduce this after a serious issue. We recommend professional development for using peacemaking circles for high-profile disciplinary action.



Peacemaking circles are discussion where everyone is valued and respected. Everyone should be allowed to participate and each meeting is prefaced by the values we'll uphold in the conversation. These values are co-designed by students and educators - and therefore, time must be spent writing these down. Take time to write down these ideas in an easy to read location. Importantly, these are not coercive. We're not trying to belabor a point or "win students over" - these are actual discussions born out of trying to understand one another.

During discussion, there are some set structures:

- Students and educator(s) are arranged in a circle so everyone is visible. Participation is voluntary.
- A "talking piece" is used to distinguish when each person is allowed to speak.
- Two "keepers" of the space keep the circle a safe space. They guide participants and ensure everyone follows the community's rules.
- The same process is followed each time, ensuring that the practice is fair.
- Decisions are made as an entire community. Everyone's voice is valued.

For example, students become involved in a lively political debate. Students form sides and multiple feel offended by the other's comments and some intolerant remarks are mentioned (which is never justified in a classroom.) The teacher opens up class the following day and explains what a peacemaking circle is, then co-creates the space with the students. Students then have ample opportunity to share their grievances and experiences, and everyone ultimately grows as a result. The classroom is reminded that intolerant ideas are not acceptable behavior through the sharing of experiences rather than by authoritarian command.

## "SHOW AND TELL" CHECK-INS

**Activity Description:** Not all practices are complicated. Getting to know our students better presents a better opportunity for all.

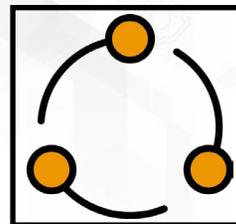
In this activity, students bring in something from home to share with the class. It is advised to discuss what's appropriate to bring in. Have students share this in a circle, with one student presenting at a time. After presenting, add their object to the center of the circle, forming a collage. If a student forgets their object, they can describe it and pantomime placing their object.

Then, repeat the discussion with the collage formed. Invite students to discuss what they'd like to share with the class, but did not say. They can also appreciate the objects in the center of the room. Try prompting a discussion around patterns, similarities, or differences in what people shared.

Finally, have students pick up their object, real or imagined, one at a time from the center of the room.

This activity can be altered to various check-ins around one's day:

- Sharing a positive or negative experience.
- Telling jokes or stories.
- Drawing a concept or idea.
- Discussing a "simple field trip" (e.g. a community walk.)



## BREAKING DOWN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**Activity Description:** Students need to understand “the why” of restorative justice, just as much as they understand “the how.” When introducing progressive concepts, it’s important to facilitate gradual change. As many students aren’t familiar with these ideas, we want to give them the knowledge to be successful.

Teaching Tolerance offers a fantastic facilitation guide to introduce restorative justice. Starting with [this video](#) from Montbello High School, lead students in a discussion on what restorative justice is. Consider:

- What is “justice”? Do schools enact “justice” with the current discipline system?
- What is “restorative”? How does this tie into the idea of “restorative justice”?
- Is restorative justice relevant to your school? What about the community at large?

Create a list of disciplinary issues that students have faced. Ask if they feel they were rightfully treated and disciplined. Then, consider breaking students into groups or pairs to discuss how restorative justice could handle these issues.

[This video](#) demonstrates how restorative justice looks in action. Further, students can use [these scenarios](#) from Teaching Tolerance as a starting point.

Finally, have students reflect on the benefits, elements, and applications of restorative justice. How can these ideas be reflected in the classroom? What can you do as a community to instill restorative justice in your community and beyond?

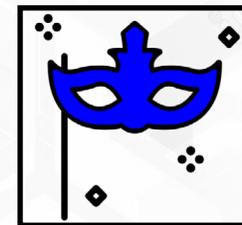


## THE MASK YOU LIVE IN

**Activity Description:** Ashanti Branch brilliantly incorporates social emotional understanding in the activity he shares in the acclaimed documentary, *The Mask You Live In*. As explained within, our children - especially young boys - are ashamed to share their emotional well-being, and often have inner thoughts of inadequacy, depression, and lack of a true human connection with their peers.

This activity is very powerful. Support staff should be notified that this activity is going on, and it should be prefaced with its seriousness.

Start off by explaining to students that we’re going to examine how we show ourselves to the world. Who is it that we want people to see? Who don’t they see? Provide students with a sheet of paper and a nondescript marker. Don’t have them write their names on the paper.



Explain that other students will see this paper eventually, but no names will be shown and you won’t know whose paper you receive. Encourage students to not look at each other’s work.

Have students draw a mask on their paper. As detailed or as simple as they’d like. On or around this mask, have students write how they want to be seen by the world: physically, emotionally, and/or mentally.

Then, have students flip their paper. On the backside, have students write how they see themselves, or how they worry others may see them. Write this anywhere on the backside of the paper.

Students should then crumble up their paper and place it into a bag or compartment, held by the teacher. The teacher then mixes up their responses.

Prompt students to understand what this activity means - that it’s engaging in critical dialogue and that laughter or sharing people’s answers is not appropriate. Keep the room silent. Distribute the papers to students and tell them to not open them.

Finally, have students open their sheets all at once and examine. If students want to receive a different response, have them raise their hand (this prevents students from recognizing that if they receive their own and raise their hand, everyone will know it’s their response.)

This will build into a powerful discussion on how connected we are as humans, and why communities of support are powerful and needed. Be sure to collect these responses and dispose of them discretely.

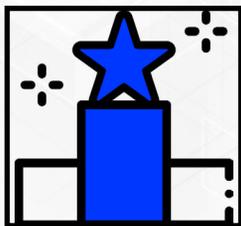


## BREAKING DOWN GRADES

**Activity Description:** Our students have likely been exposed to traditional grading in the entirety of their educational experience. In order to implement gradeless learning, we need to decipher what these grades are - and what they aren't. Pose the following table to students and have them work individually or in small groups to break down what grading means. This may lead to a discussion over the anxiety of high grades, to the feelings of failure with low grades, to the ramifications of grading in performance and lack of breadth/depth in assignments.

What do these grades mean? What do they leave out?

	What does it mean to achieve this? What does it feel like to achieve this?	What's missing?
A (4)		
B (3)		
C (2)		
D (1)		
F		



## INTRODUCTION TO SELF-ASSESSMENT

**Activity Description:** Self-reflection is the fundamental point of learning. Even in the most traditional classrooms, having the ability to self-assess (and reflect) is the key point in which we relate our tasks with learning experiences.

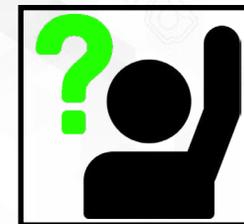
Lead a discussion over judgment: how does it feel to receive feedback from a teacher? Is it a positive or negative experience? Does it depend? If so, how does judgment play into the feeling of receiving a positive or negative grade?

Explain to students that the goal of self-assessment is to instill self-monitoring, self-judgment, and integrate instructional coaching. Instead of the teacher supplying all feedback, the majority is through a student's eyes.

Have students break down the terminology of "self-monitoring", "self-judgment" and "instructional coaching." Have them write these break downs somewhere everyone can see. Utilize these terms to facilitate discussion (in small groups or as a class) on how self-assessment will look in this class.

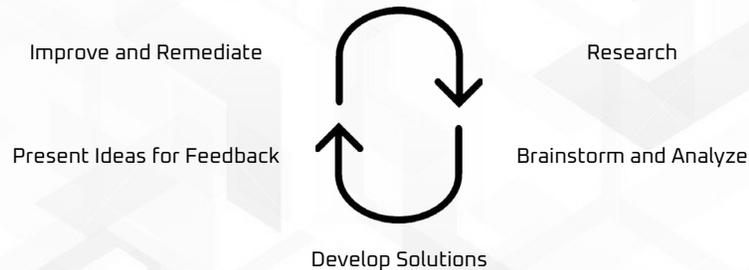
Finally, have students write what they need from you, the educator, to ensure success in a self-assessed classroom. What questions do they have? What resources would they like?

Self-assessment must be introduced slowly, especially if students haven't ever used it. Start by establishing with students what it is (this activity), then model the practice, provide students feedback on their progress, and then leave them to their devices to apply it.



## THE DESIGN PROCESS

Empathize With and Define the Problem



**Activity Description:** Central to experiential learning is the design process. Cognizant or not, the design process takes hold in everything we build and accomplish. Showcase to students the entire process and break down each section. Let students define what each section means:

- Empathize With | Define the Problem: Before starting our designs, we need to know what problems exist. This means we must understand the perspective and problems of whomever and whatever we're solving.
- Research: Problems can't be solved without understanding the baseline core knowledge surrounding it.
- Brainstorm and Analyze: What are ways that we can solve the problem? What is the most effective way?
- Develop Solutions: Now that we've brainstormed an idea, how can we make it work? What solutions exist? We can make a prototype.
- Present Ideas for Feedback: With our prototype, we can relay it to stakeholders and see what they think.
- Improve and Remediate: With feedback, we can develop new, better ideas (or completely start over).

Have students relate the design process and experiential learning to traditional class assignments. How does this differ from a worksheet or test? This discussion may result in: having multiple opportunities to retake, normalizing failure, more open-ended, more challenging, and more student choice/voice. Consider interjecting and throwing in these ideas to prompt discussion, if warranted.



## BRINGING IN THE COMMUNITY

Central to any great project is outside involvement. Whether students be assisting local non-profits in calls to action or families are educating students in the school, the community is imperative to experiential education.

Although setting up these networks in advance can ensure some success, having students reach out to the majority of stakeholders builds communication skills and adds legitimacy to their work.

Near the start of a project, encourage students (during the empathize/define stage) to call, Skype, and email local organizations or individuals who can help answer questions or spur ideas. For many, this can be a scary experience. Consider starting out with a simple "[guide to conversation](#)." Scripting the conversation in advance won't lead to authentic discourse, but having the necessary sections mapped out, as well as helpful tips, will help students navigate the situation.

Here are some ways to design "phone/email" opportunities:

- Have students answer a question that can be answered by an expert (e.g. a professor.)
- Design a project that is open-ended and asks, "what problems need solved in our community?"
- Invite businesses/non-profits/community activists in for small group discussions.
- Require students to have resources donated to successfully complete their work, while limiting personal contributions (e.g. recycled boxes.)



This, of course, allow students to use their phones at school (and anything can happen with outside contacts.) It's important to emphasize proper etiquette, as well as frequently meet with students to discuss their progress and experiences. This "real world" outcome is authentic, but there will certainly be situations where students are shot down or make mistakes. This is part of the learning process. It's messy, but needed in the long run.

Soon, you'll have students making phone calls on their own as soon as they have time. This skill lets students see the natural connections of their learning, and the real impact they can have. Without the community, student work remains stagnant. We need to grow our networks to legitimize work and come to real solutions.

As an introductory activity, one may have students gather a list of "potential stakeholders" who agree to become a partner with the school. Instead of having a specific project in mind, students could populate a list of those interesting in working with their class. This could be a simple Excel document that lists contact information, their point of contact, and what they're willing to do.



## CURATED WEB RESOURCES

Below is a list of resources to dive further into a deprogramming mindset. Many of these websites overlap between the three categories in this book:

- [Teaching Tolerance](#)

A vast network of professional development, writings, and high quality lesson plans over bringing in multiple perspectives, promoting equity, and instilling systemic change within the education system.

- [Zinn Education Project](#)

Fantastic lessons, projects, and curated book lists to decolonize the curriculum and ensure all voices are heard in history. This website specializes in social studies, but can easily be applied to any subject area's discipline.

- [Deeper Learning Network](#)

Provides resources, overviews, networking, and strategies for incorporating progressive education - from portfolio-based assessment to data privacy.

- [EL Education](#)

A wealth of free resources on how to create engaging projects and bring the community into the classroom (and vice versa!)

- [Greater Good Magazine](#)

A series of articles and informational videos on promoting social/emotional well-being and research-backed practice.



## NEXT STEPS

These activities are designed to introduce these ideas to your class, both at the beginning of the year and as a reaffirmation throughout. However, it's important to recognize our role in shaping these systems. Depending on the district, school, and personal comfort level, we must ensure that our systems hold the moral imperative to be as safe, transparent, and learning-focused as possible.

Therefore, we must speak out, organize, and carry out:

- Sharing power with students, including at the administrative level (such as through board policy.)
- Building curricula that openly speak out against bigotry and allow students to have important conversations for people of all backgrounds.
- Training teachers, administration, and all those working with young people explicitly on bias and tolerance.
- Removing the language and extrinsic motivators of grades as much as possible.
- Shifting to a restorative justice system and removing traditional forms of blanket sentencing.
- Removing traditional assessment in favor of experiential learning and student voice/choice.
- Promoting self-directed behavior, including questioning authority and making impactful decisions.
- Having students write and retain their rights within the education system.

