

Learning to Listen: The Lesson of Engagement

The following Student Voices contribution hits home for me. Emily Arenz and Alexa Thornton describe what I have come to know from my own work in multicultural teacher education: If we let them, young people will tell us what they need. It's not only that the students Arenz and Thornton observe in their classroom-based field experience say or show themselves to be bored and unengaged, it's that they communicate how things could be otherwise. Arenz hears from the student she observes that the source of inattention is the boring lesson; Thornton, from her student, understands lack of peer and teacher interaction to cause his demotivation. Taken together, their collective act of listening tells us that young people want to experience intellectual stimulation through meaningful activity with others. Arenz and Thornton are now poised to take this lesson with them as they assume leadership over classrooms of their own.

This Student Voices contribution affirms for me the importance of the listening framework proposed by Kathy Schultz (2003). Elegant in its simplicity, Shultz's framework directs us to listen to students' lives, to the lives of their classrooms and communities, and, importantly, to where and how those lives have been silenced in schools. Through their field experience, Arenz and Thornton learned to listen to the life of the classroom and, through that, understand how much more there is to learn about students, community, and schooling in society. Further, they learned to listen to the voices of themselves as future teachers, talking their way into the kind of teachers their students have taught them to be.

Reference

Schultz, K. (2003). *Listening: a framework for teaching across differences*. New York: Teachers College.



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