

# Students' Advice to Teachers

A FILM SERIES **EMERGING VOICES FROM THE PANDEMIC: STUDENTS SPEAK OUT**

## Overview

This past spring, the National Urban League embarked on a journey to learn from young people about their experiences with remote learning. The result is a provocative 13-part film series. Young people share the challenges of school and home life, all the while navigating a COVID-19 nightmare. Their worlds have changed. They tell their stories in their voices. They also tell us what adults can do better! The films are packed with actionable recommendations for policymakers, administrators, youth development specialists, and adults who interact with young people. **#UnmaskedStories**



## What Students Recommend to Teachers

Create lessons that relate to real life and to what students are going through.

Get to know your students and their home situations so that you can be more understanding of their learning environments and external stressors.

Get to know your students' interests and passions and integrate them into classroom discussions.

Incorporate class discussion instead of mere lecture.

Take time to reach out to students and initiate an offer to meet with them one on one.



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, RANGING IN AGE FROM 15-19, PARTICIPATED IN THE FILM SERIES

**26**

young people

**13**

Identified as *"connected"* students—youth who have been consistently engaged in their academic experience thus far during the pandemic

**7**

Identified as *"reconnected"* students—youth who have at some point *"disconnected"* from their academic experience thus far during the pandemic

**6**

Identified as *"disconnected"* students—youth who have not been consistently engaged in their academic experience thus far during the COVID-19 pandemic

Because being subjected to working in a world where it's literally crumbling around you and there's chaos going on everywhere, I feel like the teacher should definitely find some way to sympathize with us about that." —WILLIAM



# What We Need You to Advocate For

**DISTRICTS** should allocate resources to provide teachers with the training and supports they need to engage students during this critical time and beyond. Supports should focus on making the learning environment more engaging, for example, by requiring less synchronous screen time with students when in a virtual format and engaging students through project-based and experiential learning activities.

**ADMINISTRATORS & TEACHERS** should work to make schools more supportive of the variety of needs that youth have, such as health counseling and college admissions, which begins with focusing on developing trusting and caring relationships with students to ensure they know that they matter and have the support of adults in the school.

**COMMUNITIES** should also step up to help support students' thriving, which requires being able to recognize the types of responses and supports that would help to build on their youth's assets, as well as to be versed in knowing how to address their needs as they continue to experience challenges and take on new opportunities over the coming years.

I felt so much better and a lot more confident with reaching out to my teachers, because they made a lot of spaces such as office hours to come and talk with them, no appointment needed." —TEIA



**Teachers who are high in cognitive empathy reported more positive mindsets about student behavior than less empathetic teachers.** They also reported greater competencies in handling problematic behaviors, an increased use of effective problem-solving strategies, closer relationships, and lower levels of job burnout.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology in the Schools. Teacher Empathy and Students with Problem Behaviors: Examining Teachers' Perceptions, Responses, Relationships, and Burnout.* Wink, Mackenzie N.; LaRusso, Maria D.; Smith, Rhiannon L. August 2021



An exercise that encouraged middle school teachers to take an "empathic mindset" to student discipline reduced the % of suspended students by half throughout the school year.<sup>2</sup>

SUSPENSIONS REDUCED FROM

**9.6%**

TO

**4.8%**

<sup>2</sup> *Stanford University. Teacher Empathy Reduces Student Suspensions, Stanford research shows.* April 26, 2016. Jason A. Okonofua, Gregory Walton



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