



Executive Report

Promoting Civility and Tolerance in Our Schools and Communities

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Introduction

On June 6, 2017, individuals and organizations that work with schools, teachers, and communities convened at the National Press Club to address issues of civility and tolerance in schools and school settings. Fernando Reimers, Ford Foundation Professor of Practice in International Education and Faculty Director of International Education Policy, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Anthony Jackson, Vice President of Education, Asia Society, and Charito Krivant, Founder and Chair, Creative Associates International, convened the gathering. The discussion was facilitated and supported by Creative Learning/International Peace and Security Institute. Participants engaged in conversations centered on three questions:

1. **Is there evidence that there is a change in the incidence of expressions of exclusion, hatred, or discrimination in schools that undermines the goals of teaching tolerance, appreciation of diverse identities, and developing the skills to collaborate across all lines of difference?**
2. **What programs, approaches, or initiatives currently exist to curb expressions of intolerance and teach students tolerance? What do we know about their impact and scale? Are those adequate and sufficient?**
3. **Is there a need for collective action among organizations focused on promoting tolerance and the appreciation of diversity in schools?**

The objective of this conversation was to provide the opportunity for mutual learning and to create the opportunity for the development of one or various commu-

nities of practice that would enable those interested in participating to share knowledge about the extent to which schools are welcoming, valuing and respectful of students from all ethnic, cultural, religious, and gender identity backgrounds, and where all students learn to appreciate our differences as a strength of our communities, democracy, and society.

This report captures the dialogue, shares data gathered, and highlights areas of agreement from the Promoting Civility and Tolerance in Our Schools and Communities gathering. It also offers recommendations to the community based on an analysis of participants' inputs.

Methodology

Facilitators focused on capturing the voices and experiences of all participants. They structured the conversation into three sessions: (1) **Addressing the Root Causes of Intolerance**; (2) **Building Resiliency in Schools and Communities**; and (3) **Cultivating Cultural Understanding, Preventing Online Bullying, and Teaching Tolerance**. Conversation Starters provided context and points of departure on each topic. Participants then delved more deeply into the conversation in groups of 5-8 individuals.

The application of design thinking methodology to the sessions maximized the opportunities for participants to address the three core questions of the convening and to facilitate the emergence of solutions and communities of practice. Participants shared their knowledge, identified patterns, built on each other's ideas, and discussed how to collaborate to become a resource for schools and communities.

Findings

The intensive dialogues among participants yielded 502 data points in total. Using a variant of discourse analysis, evaluators coded data into a series of patterns that evolved over time. Evaluators then examined data within the context of each of the three sessions, as well as within the patterns identified across sessions. Using discourse analysis in this way provided analysis of the entire group's contributions and a new point of departure for future conversations.

Conclusions from the analysis of data gathered at the event include:

1. **Teachers must receive better training on how to manage conflict and promote civility in their classroom;**
2. **School systems need the necessary resources to ensure they have the capacity and tools to support their students, teachers, and administrators to prevent and respond to incidents of hate and exclusion;**
3. **Interventions must have the flexibility to be customized for each school setting, student body, and surrounding community; and**
4. **Comprehensive evidence on the prevalence of expressions of hate and exclusion in schools does not seem to exist.**

Findings are organized first by session and then by pattern observed across sessions. This organization is meant to capture the analyses and experiences of the day. Facilitators structured sessions to encourage responses and ideation that would build from the individual to the group.

Participants Came from the Following Organizations:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

ASCD, Professional Learning & Community for Educators

Asia Society

Brookings Institution

Creative Associates International

Creative Learning/International Peace and Security Institute

Facing History and Ourselves

Global Citizens Initiative

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Longview Foundation

National Council for the Social Studies

National Education Association

National Mental Health Association

National Teacher of the Year Program

Open Learning Exchange

Qatar Foundation International

Southern Poverty Law Center

St. Mary's Church and School

U.S. Agency for International Development

U.S. Department of Education

Wilson Center

Women's Media Center Speech Project

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Distribution of Data by Session

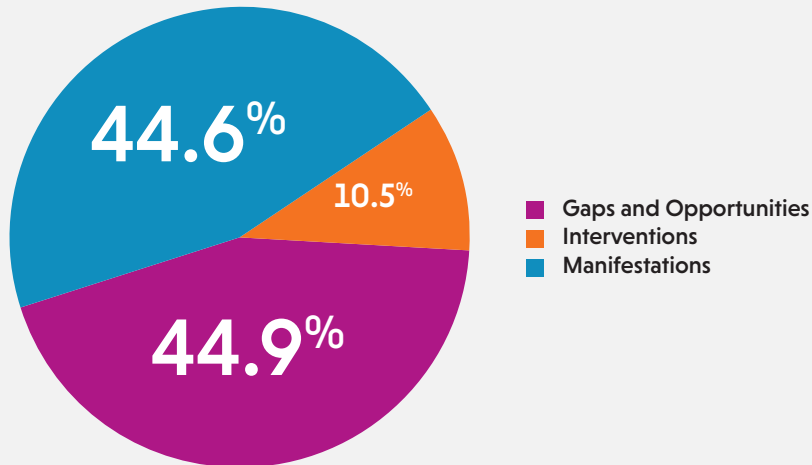


Figure 1: The application of design thinking to issues of civility and tolerance in schools gave participants the structure to share information, ideate, and develop innovative solutions. This image illustrates the proportion of data gathered during each session. The image does not capture the meaningful discussions and debates fostered by the data on interventions.

Findings from Each Session

Each session of the conversation focused on gathering data from participants and encouraging participants to begin analyzing that data. In the first session, participants identified manifestations of hate and exclusion in schools and school settings, determined whether these manifestations emerged as a new trend in recent years, and considered their impact from least to most damaging. The second session focused on interventions for schools and school settings, their implementation cost, subsequent impact, and the identification of gaps and opportunities for future interventions. The third session called for participants to explore how they as individuals, organizations, or partners could fill gaps or realize opportunities for collaboration and more effective interventions.

Manifestations of Hate and Exclusion in Schools and School Settings

Participants agreed that there was a perception of increased incidence of hatred and intolerance in schools over recent years. They could not agree whether this perception resulted from increased incidents, increased reporting of incidents, or a combination thereof. Participants were generally familiar with the psychological and emotional repercussions hate and exclusion have on individuals. Most data clustered around the impacts on psychological, social, and biological aspects of resilience.

Responses also focused on ineffective, or counterproductive, teaching behaviors and interactions within the classroom. Training, or lack thereof, for teachers and administrators may contribute to the non-inclusive nature of learning environments. The impacts of limited financial resources prompted additional concern. Participants felt there was not an increase in the root causes of incidents of hatred or exclusion. They ranked nearly all identified manifestations as more damaging

than less damaging to individuals and categorized most problems as old rather than new, acknowledging the nuance that manifestations were being expressed in new ways (i.e. online). Manifestations identified as "newer" involved the use of technology and impacts from the systems within which schools exist.

Interventions for Schools and School Settings

Participants discussed several programs in place to address hatred and intolerance in schools. They concluded that such programs were insufficient, as not all schools have access to these programs, and that greater support would be necessary. Participants focused primarily on the impacts of the systems within which schools exist. This encompassed the training teachers and school administrators receive to build their capacity to shape their classroom/school settings. The application of social and emotional learning (SEL) approaches and of inclusive teaching pedagogies in schools were considered good ways to intervene and to prevent manifestations of hate in schools and school settings.

Participants highlighted ways schools and school systems can build external support networks for students and teachers. They identified the additional need to support teachers who do not feel safe in their own classrooms. Participants recognized constraints on teachers' ability to introduce new interventions into their classroom, such as school policies, pressure for stu-

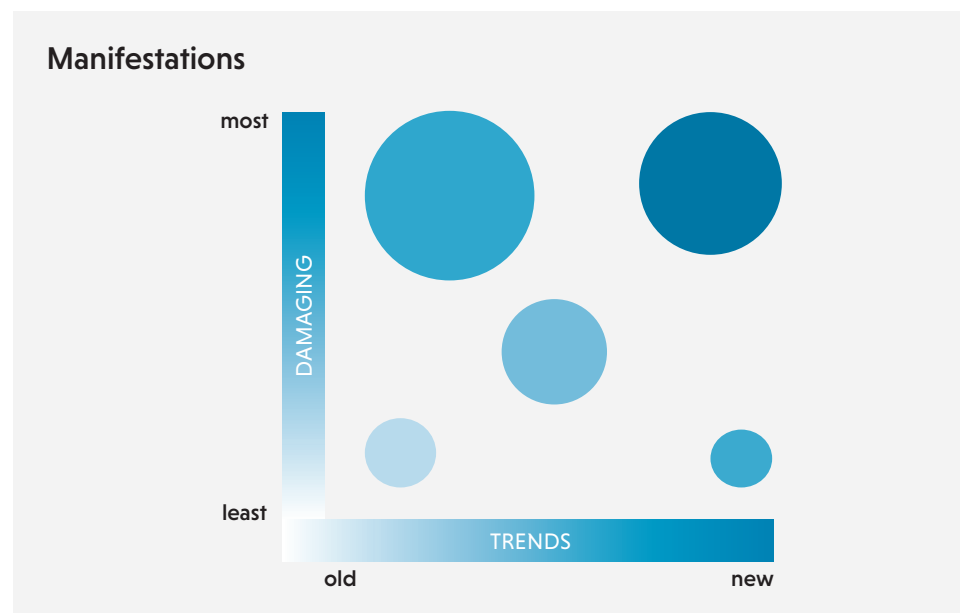


Figure 2: Participants considered trends and impacts of manifestations of hate and exclusion in schools. Each group determined whether each manifestation emerged as a new trend in recent years or existed prior. They also assessed each manifestation's impact in terms of damage caused. This figure reflects the data analysis of manifestations of hate and exclusion in schools for all participants.

dents to perform on standardized tests, and pushback from parents.

Most interventions start with in-person interactions, which can be potentially enhanced through online engagement. The data showed a need to address financial resources to provide long-term support, additional training, and school-provided counseling.

Gaps and Opportunities for Future Interventions and Collaboration

Participants agreed that there is a need for collective action in order to respond at a sufficient scale to address incidents of hate and intolerance in schools. As a first step to determine where such a model could make the most impact, participants identified gaps and opportunities for future interventions and collaborations.

Most gaps and opportunities participants identified concerned the classroom and school environments. Data showed concerns about the ability to reduce expressions of hate and exclusion. Participants emphasized the opportunity to support schools to create opportunities for positive interactions among diverse groups. For example, schools can empower students by giving them a sense of agency to express themselves.

The data revealed limitations imposed on individual schools by school system policies, for example, the continued prevalence of archaic teaching behaviors, the frequency of school assessments, and

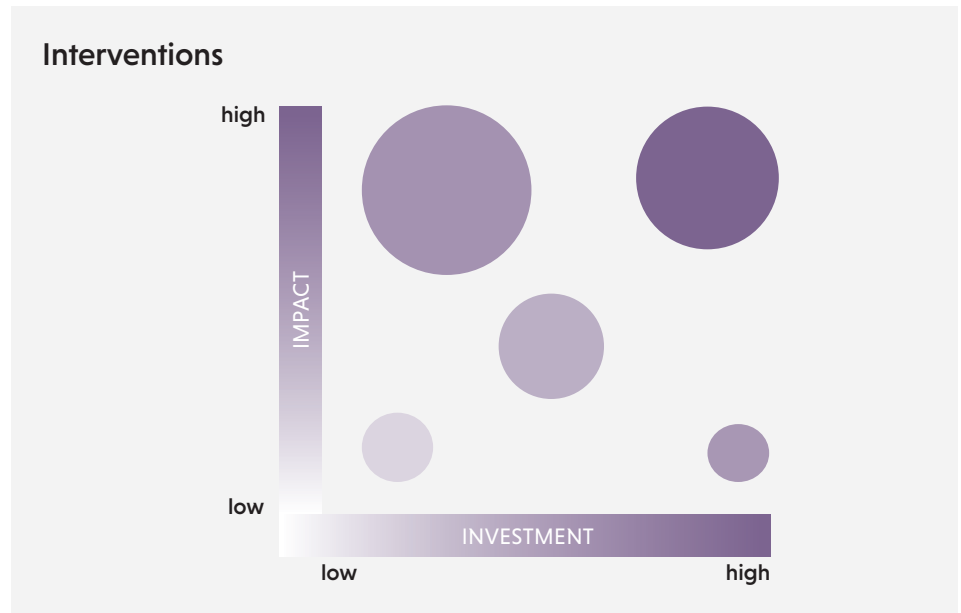


Figure 3: Participants considered the magnitude of investments and impacts of interventions for schools and school settings. For each intervention, participants assessed the level of investment required and the magnitude of impact. This figure reflects the data analysis of interventions for schools and school settings for all participants.

the metrics applied to teachers, students, and individual schools. Such limitations may impair the willingness of teachers and administrators to openly discuss issues and areas of contention. Participants also discussed technological gaps and opportunities, particularly the use of social media platforms by students to communicate.

Findings from Patterns

Evaluators conducted an analysis of the data gathered throughout sessions to identify patterns that appeared across sessions and participant groups. Responses

were then categorized individually by pattern. Five patterns emerged from this analysis: (1) **Teaching Inclusivity and Cultural Understanding**; (2) **Impacts on Psychological, Social, and Biological Aspects of Resilience**; (3) **Training of Teachers and School Administrators**; (4) **Limited Financial Resources**; and (5) **Use of Online Social Networking platforms**. This section provides additional insight on the findings within each pattern.

Teaching Inclusivity and Cultural Understanding

Most participants focused on teachers' lack of awareness, indifference, discomfort, or even direct contribution to expressions of hate and exclusion in schools and school settings. To counteract these problems, approaches must address educational aspects (i.e. pedagogical solutions) and prejudices held by teachers (i.e. lowered expectations). This will concentrate efforts on preventing manifestations and will increase teachers' confidence that they are handling their students in ways appropriate for all.

The interventions focused on how to create the best classroom environment, curriculum, and student interactions. Instead of teaching to standardized tests, participants expressed a desire to expand teaching priorities to include art, SEL, and



Figure 4: Participants acknowledged that the opportunities identified for collaboration and more effective interventions revealed gaps and conversely that gaps revealed opportunities. This image captures the most prevalent terms from participant discussions on gaps and opportunities. Higher prevalence of a term is illustrated with larger text.

Distribution of Data by Pattern

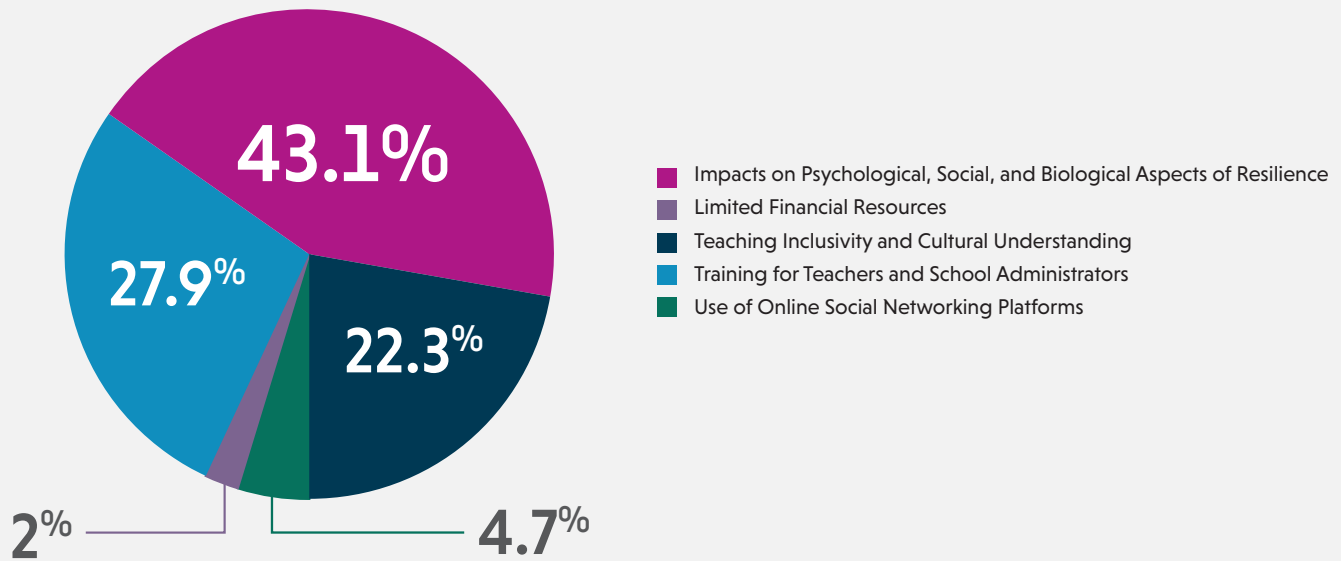


Figure 5: The data collected revealed five patterns across the three sessions. Evaluators categorized each response by pattern. This image illustrates the prevalence of each pattern within the data gathered from all participants across sessions.

multicultural education within classrooms. A point made by some participants was for schools to launch violence prevention campaigns. Together the data suggest that reducing hatred and exclusion requires new ways to teach tolerance.

Data showing gaps and opportunities focused primarily on ways to improve teacher education, pedagogy, and curriculum to create an inclusive culture within the classroom. Better readings to educate students on multiple cultures and training on SEL provide some insight into suggested curriculum development.

Additional emphasis was placed on how teachers should be instructed to interact with students, continuing education to improve teacher's capacity to interact more effectively with students, and the integration of psychology to create an inclusive classroom environment where everyone feels welcome to participate. Responses suggest that with the opportunity for additional engagement, classes can evolve and function as active communities through their interactions.

Impacts on Psychological, Social, and Biological Aspects of Resilience

Participants largely focused on direct impacts of hate and exclusion on students. Manifestations related to psychological, social, and biological aspects of resilience included systemic infrastructure that have the potential to serve as support networks

but often become harmful environments, such as the school bus or playground. Participants recognized that manifestations of hate and exclusion outside the classroom are likely to go unreported.

The data suggesting the need for interventions emphasize the importance of human interactions to build student resilience. Whether through counseling or external support networks from sports, religion, family, or local community, this type of engagement and belonging strengthens an individual's resilience in the face of aggression or negativity.

Related to gaps and opportunities, the data suggest the need for more emphasis on creating open, safe, and supportive environments where students and teachers feel safe. There is opportunity to incorporate SEL into teacher training. Additional opportunities to strengthen support networks include access to counseling and mentoring, support to improve communication between students and their families, and the opportunity to join student affinity groups or improve mindfulness. Participants also emphasized the need to involve law enforcement as part of solutions.

Training of Teachers and School Administrators

Participants recognized the discrepancies in training requirements for teachers and school administrators across school

systems. Teachers did not feel prepared to address incidents of hate, exclusion or intolerance in the classroom. Consequently, data focused heavily on manifestations of hate and exclusion.

Data related to interventions revealed three distinct yet complementary areas that build on each other: **(1) Teacher-to-teacher support networks;** **(2) Training of teachers and administrators in innovative practices;** and **(3) Creating an open and inclusive school culture.** Access to SEL training for administrators, teachers, and students was referenced multiple times. Participants expressed opportunities for innovative programming as means to instill greater empathy in school settings. One example, reverse mentoring (mentoring by students of teachers and administrators), would advance community building within the school and provide a forum for teachers and administrators to learn from students and connect as individuals.

To change schools on a systemic level to create an open, inclusive learning environment, participants considered the active involvement of students, families, and their communities as both a gap and opportunity. Some data suggest providing an environment for students to interact with those who they see as different is not sufficient to achieve civility and tolerance. Some challenged schools to advance their efforts to cultivate positive interactions among student groups.

Limited Financial Resources

Participants did not see a relationship between limited financial resources and manifestations of hate and exclusion. They did recognize that schools would require additional financial resources to implement interventions.

Data on limited financial resources related to interventions focused on the ways in which education is funded in the United States and the priorities reflected by this funding. Some suggested a need for increased transparency. Others described the discrepancies in the ability to fund programs from state to state as a result of the public education funding structure.

As related to gaps and opportunities, data focused on the limited financial resources provided to schools and the increased demands on schools by stakeholders. Data again reflected a general acknowledgment that schools would need additional resources to fund additional programming or after-school activities.

Use of Online Social Networking Platforms

In the manifestations session of the conversation, participants pointed to how the widespread use of online social networking platforms by students expands opportunities for them to engage outside the classroom and school setting. Online social networking platforms were seen as a new means for expressions of hate and exclusion to manifest and disseminate more rapidly and cause more harm. Participants also noted that because the online manifestations of hate and exclusion take place outside the physical classroom, these incidents are likely to go underreported or unnoticed by teachers, administrators, or family.

Only a single data point concerned known electronic interventions. This finding may suggest that participants largely did not have personal experience implementing interventions using online social networking platforms. It may also suggest that teachers are unfamiliar with how to apply interventions to the online platforms where students communicate with each other. Alternatively, a substantive body of data may not yet exist on the impact of interventions using online social networking platforms.

Recognizing the positive potential of online social networking platforms, partic-

ipants identified various opportunities to engage online communities and networks to raise awareness of issues, engage in solutions, and scale activities.

Recommendations

Based on insights shared at the Promoting Civility and Tolerance in Our Schools and Communities gathering, it is clear that schools commonly face challenges related to lack of civility and tolerance. Participants reinforced the negative impacts on students from experiences of hate and intolerance. Schools, educators, and the wider community of educators are expressing an urgency to address issues of civility and tolerance.

From the data analysis, evaluators distilled four immediate recommendations to build individual resiliency and teach students tolerance, appreciation of diverse identities, and the skills to collaborate across all social groups.

1. Consider interventions that adapt easily to evolutions in how students engage

Interventions to curb expressions of intolerance and teach students tolerance must also address student interactions outside the school. The platforms students use to communicate continue to evolve (i.e. from Facebook to Snapchat to Instagram), and programming should reflect an understanding of this ongoing evolution. There is a need to gain understanding and identify opportunities to extend the reach of interventions. For example, promoting positive social media interventions to counter cyberbullying will foster more positive environments within schools and communities.

2. Establish evidence-based data to inform and prioritize interventions

Evidence-based data provide the foundation for effective interventions. The communities of practice provide an opportunity to share existing data on the incidence of expressions of exclusion, hatred, or discrimination in schools and, from this information, to determine what has not yet been measured but should be. The evidence should drive the exchanges and collaborations that create interventions to effect substantive change. For example, if data reveal increased perceptions and incidents of hatred and intolerance in schools over the last year,

then one can identify the variables that changed over that period to develop targeted interventions.

3. Identify opportunities to collaborate collectively, including local communities

Collective action to promote tolerance and the appreciation of diversity in schools drives practical, scalable solutions. Increasing open dialogue among and with individuals, families, community leaders, schools, and students leads to more effective and impactful interventions. For example, giving community leaders active leadership roles in a collective impact model increases the community's contribution and ownership of the solution, creates relevant interventions, and drives sustainable change.

4. Serve school systems through training and community engagement

School teachers and administrators need updated training to expand their capacity to curb expressions of hate and intolerance in their classrooms and schools. Community engagement in the wellbeing of students and schools complements the capacities built through training and provides the opportunity for community-driven solutions. For example, the integration of SEL into teaching approaches equips teachers to identify problems early, reduce conflict, and encourage understanding among students. Support networks from the community then reinforce these principles outside the classroom through afterschool programming, mentorship, or job training opportunities.

Next Steps

The participants of the gathering agree that they have created the foundation for a network to address issues of civility and tolerance in schools, where participants can share resources and learn from each other. At the gathering, facilitators invited participants to join this network to continue collaborating on the topics discussed in this report. The group hopes that the communities of practice can continue to build on their shared knowledge and practice through this network.

To join this network and explore ongoing exchanges and collaborations to promote civility and tolerance in schools and communities, email promotingtolerance@creativedc.com.