

Speaker 1: I think we have everyone in here. To get started, we'll just go ahead and introduce ourselves. My name is [A-kloss 00:00:09]. I work for Education Post. I do social media. I blog. I help other people blog so that's pretty much what I do on a day to day basis. If you find me on social media, I'm not that active but I help other people be active on social media and get their message and their voice out.

Nate Bowling: My name's Nate Bowling. I'm from Tacoma, Washington which is south of Seattle. I'm the 2016 Washington State Teacher of the Year. I teach at a high school in Tacoma called Lincoln High School where I teach American Government and Politics, and AP Geography.

Speaker 3: [Shariff-Amecky 00:00:46], met some of you out there. I'm from Philadelphia. I'm a principal of a school that serves 7th grade through 12th grade, and started an organization to try to get more young black males to consider teaching, leading class rooms in schools as a viable career.

Chris Stewart: Good afternoon, everybody.

Students: Good afternoon.

Chris Stewart: [All-the-sea 00:01:10]. This is better than other group-

Nate Bowling: Yeah, better than [Paris 00:01:12].

Chris Stewart: Yeah. I'm Chris Stewart. I'm the senior partner and CEO of the Wayfinder Foundation. We are a foundation that invests in activists. We invest directly in individuals to become activists specifically around education and welfare.

Speaker 1: Cool, and then we want to know who y'all are so we can go around the room. You can say your name, what part of the city you live in, and then what grade you're in. Go ahead. Start everything off.

Nicholas: My name is Nicholas [President 00:01:40]. I live on the south side of Chicago, and that's it.

Speaker 1: What grade are you in?

Nicholas: 9th grade.

Diego: Diego [O-quin 00:01:48]. I come from New City and I'm in 9th grade.

Speaker 9: My name is [Avante-Swift 00:01:53]. I live on the south side and I [inaudible 00:01:56].

Joy Lee: My name is Joy Lee. I live in the south side. I'm going to 10th grade.

Malcolm: My name is Malcolm. I live on the south side, and I'm in 11th grade.

Speaker 12: My name is [Zapore 00:02:09], and I live on [Oak-east 00:02:10], and I'm in the 12th grade.

Speaker 13: My name is [Day-Shawn 00:02:14], and I live on the south side, and I'm in 9th grade.

Speaker 14: My name [Ha-san 00:02:18]. I live on the south side and I'm a senior.

Rasheeda: My name's Rasheeda, and I live on the south side, and I'm going to the 12th grade.

Speaker 16: My name's [Ra-shay 00:02:26]. I'm currently in the 12th grade, and I live on the southeast side of Chicago.

Speaker 17: My name is [Na-kyla 00:02:30]. I live on the south side, and I'm in 12th grade.

Speaker 1: Cook, thanks. Then-

Speaker 3: Seniors-

Speaker 1: Yeah. We're going to have Nate and [Shariff 00:02:38], they are both teachers and, yeah, probably better. I've never taught so they're going to help us talk today about schools and what you like, what you don't like.

Nate Bowling: I just want to kind of demystify this whole thing. This is a focus group, but what that really means is we want to hear what you think. One of the biggest problems in education is is that in education teachers talk too much. They stand in front of class and they talk, and they talk, and they talk. In my brain, whoever's doing the talking is doing the thinking so us speaking to you [is-a-use 00:03:08] of our time. We want to hear what you think. That's our goal today is to kind of have an hour and kind of draw from you what your views are about teaching and your views about education because I know that nobody understands teaching in schools like students.

Speaker 3: Yeah, I would just say in a different way normally like Wu-Tang said kick the truth to the young black youth. We want it to be the opposite way today. We want y'all to kick the truth to us and share with us. A lot of what you're experiencing, we are confident that other people around the country may also be experiencing. Not enough adults are saying, hey, I want to learn from our youth. That's a big mistake in our field in education-

Speaker 1: [Shariff 00:03:52], do you think they know who Wu-Tang is?

Speaker 3: If they don't, that's their first homework assignment.

Speaker 1: Do you know who Wu-Tang is?

Students: Yes. It's a music group-

Students: It's a rapper.

Interviewer 1: Either what did you say, or what did you hear? Do you all feel like you're getting an effective education, and if so, if no, how do you know? What are your indicators?

Female 1: Can I start?

Interviewer 1: Sure.

Female 1: I say it's kind of in the middle. Sometimes, yes, sometimes no. Mainly, I'm really on the no side because ... Well, I know my school, our education that we get taught is like the same thing that we've learned in grammar school, just a little bit expanded, especially in the history classes.

My junior year, we had a teacher and he taught us real stuff that we didn't even know about. That was the only teacher in the school that actually taught us something. The rest of the teachers, we learned math and all that, but we've really benefit from the education and knowledge that our history teacher taught us that year, but they're not here this year, so we don't really know what we're going to learn this year. It's iffy.

Female 2: I'd say yes, because ... It depends on the class that you take because like she said, with our history class, you learn more deeper about who you are and where you came from, and also, it depends on the career you want to do after high school, that you actually benefit from the classes ... Because math, some people don't understand why we're doing graphs and finding out why and stuff and stuff like that, but if you want to be an engineer, you need them classes in order to become what you want to be life. It depends on what you take in and what you leave out.

Male 1: [inaudible 00:01:43] Pretty much most of my ... All of my table said no. One of the reasons was we live on the south side, so pretty much all the schools are predominately black, but we have a lot of white teachers, so the stuff that we're being taught in class, it doesn't really relate back to our history. We're not taught as much of our history as we should be, so we're kind of left out in the blank. That's all.

Interviewer 2: That was a question that we wanted to dive into, so I'm glad you raised it. [inaudible 00:02:14]?

Female 3: I said no, because most of my teachers just give me worksheets. They don't teach, they don't talk enough, and when we take tests, the scores come back bogus. When we take the SAT, scores come back bogus, you know.

Interviewer 2: When you say bogus, you mean low? Like ...

Interviewer 1: No, you're good.

- Interviewer 2: [crosstalk 00:02:32] Look, I'm almost 50. So I'm just trying to make sure I'm getting this down.
- Female 3: They just sit in here and wonder what they did wrong. Y'all are not teaching us or nothing, basically.
- Male 2: For us, we said yes. The reason why is because both of us go to the same school, the same high school, but the teachers that we have at our high school, they do [inaudible 00:02:55], talking to the students during after-school time and also during in-class. [inaudible 00:02:59] a hands-on talking to the students. They try to reach out to students and try to get them to understand what they are doing wrong or to expand their learning. For example, pre calculus, the math teacher for pre calculus, he would get you to talk more rather than explain or give out worksheets. He would explain what he was doing and how the problems were set up and then during after school time, he can talk specifically to students about what they may think is difficult about it and then try to explain in ways that can be easier for them.
- Female 4: Yeah, because at our school, during office hours, especially during freshman year, it was really key for us to go there because in the classroom you don't get as much attention as you want. The kids, some of them have behavior issues so they try to spend most of their time trying to get them in check and the students who actually came to school to learn is not really learning anything, especially in my composition class. We have a lot of misbehaving kids and he would spend most of his time with them and I'd come during office hours, hes not available to do this and that because some issues with the other kids so he'd kind of stop the office hours, which kind of affected my grade because I needed more understanding of what he was talking about. I'm more on the yes side, but then no because some teachers don't really like... They will tell you stuff, but they are not really teaching you, like showing you and stuff like that.
- Also at this school, they do group things where they have this one leader, this group leader, and they teach the kids at their table on the side if they are not understanding something and you get to have a student or students instead of the teacher with students doing assignments and stuff because we understand with, they don't understand and we know how to connect to them, so it will be easier for us to tell them or rather than the teacher telling the students.
- Interviewer 1: At this table, Diego, when Navantas and Nicholas were talking, you were nodding your head hard. What were you nodding about?
- Diego: They were talking about, in their schools they had after school programs, they had... If a student needed help, the teachers or even the students will help each other or if we couldn't find a way, the teacher would come in and they would help us.
- Interviewer 1: A couple of you mentioned after school... Please...

Female 1: I just want to piggyback off what they said. What's your name?

Diego: Malcolm.

Female 1: Malcolm, I know he said sometimes the kids are doing something wrong, but most of the time, since I go to a public school, most of the time it's really the teachers doing something wrong and we have actually caught our teachers sometimes teaching wrong. We have called them out on their mistakes and they don't admit their mistakes, but most of the time I think that in this generation especially, we know more than the adults do and... Now, educational-wise, I have to say that, with education they are a little bit expanded on education, but sometimes they are teaching wrong and you have to take in that you are in the classroom with 15-20 other people and they don't... everyone don't take in education and knowledge the same as you.

Interviewer 3: When you say they are teaching wrong, is it... they don't know the information or that they don't know how to teach it to you?

Female 1: No, no... Like she said, one way.

Interviewer 3: Okay.

Female 1: It's a class of 20 of us and maybe that one way... about probably 10 of us get that one away.

Female 2: I think it's both. I don't think it's just the teachers, because it is up to us too to come there and sit down and learn too. If you have so many students conversating in the back of the classroom while you're talking, you're gonna get distracted and focus on them. That's why I feel like it's both ways. It's not always the teacher and it puts stress on them too because they have to teach a class and they still have to be a babysitter to those that don't want to come in and sit down and learn and be respectful to those that do want to come in. It's just like a babysitter.

Female 1: School is falling off though, it's public school that's falling off. I have to speak for public school because I have never attended a charter school, but we are failing out. Now the security guards are friends with the students, so if you call a security guard in on a student that's talking they're like "Okay fine, I'll go with the security guard because I'm cool with the security guard, I know I'm not gonna suffer any consequences." Of course, it's not always the teachers, but the teachers sometimes focus too much on the kids that's making the big distraction and not focusing on the kids that's actually there for education and it makes it hard... The security guards are the principals now. You call the principals, they don't do anything. They're barely in the school and if they are in the school, they are barely walking around the hallways.

Interviewer 1: So many things I want to follow up on. I heard both of you say that within your school, there's behavior issues that distract from learning. To the whole group, is that an experience that you have experienced as well in school? If so, what do you

think is the cause of those behavior issues? Where is that coming from?

Female 4: Maybe it's the students feeling more comfortable to talk to teacher or to talk to the security guards. I know at my school everybody talks about everybody so... Those that we have in our school are childish, really childish. They are us. We can walk in the hallway and give them high fives, call them best friend, they are us so it's like we are in school just to be there, we are not really in there... Now, we could be in there learning, but we could really go to school and have fun cause the staff isn't strict at all.

Female 3: I feel like because of the fact that... It depends on the teacher that you have, because with some teachers, you have them like they are basically like another child because most of the teachers... I've heard teachers say that they are literally just here for the check so they don't really care about what you do. When she said they teach you wrong, I feel like it's not like they teach the subject wrong, its just that they basically just teaching off of what they know. They're not teaching out of a book or they just teaching to be saying stuff. I feel like certain teachers... I know teachers that they can get the kids under control because that's what they are here to do, but then there's some teachers that will just be like oh well at the end of the day I still get my money so I don't really care about what you do.

Female 4: I noticed this at my old school, with the older people, the older teachers that's been there for years, they know how to play with them, but the young teachers that's where they act a fool with and its not that... I'm saying you don't want them to be too strict because then kids are walking around depressed a little bit, but you don't want them too comfortable being able to call you best friend or stuff like that. I feel like the reason why students act a certain way in class is because like she said, everyone learns different and math is my subject, that's my subject, and when its something that's too easy for you, you will get distracted and do something else. That's why I think a lot of people act up sometimes is because the subject they are being taught is too easy or something is more important at home and that they might need some attention too.

Female 1: We are not challenged enough at school at all.

Interviewer 2: [crosstalk 00:10:56]

Interviewer 2: Being challenged or how challenged are you, how do you know its the right fit? If it's too easy or if its too hard, either one of them could lead to distraction, right?

Female 5: I know at my school they... we take... freshman year you take either the ACT was last year, but you take the SAT this year and it shows the teacher if this child is placed in regular math, this child is not going to be challenged because it is easy to them, so they put you in honors or either math two and you stay in that class and you feel challenged. At my school, they challenge you because I'm in this AP class and I'm like okay, I know I got here because I can do this and also I'm being challenged because it's building me and my educational level as well and yeah. I know at my elementary school, I wasn't as challenged because everything was easy

to me. I was like well I'm just gonna sit here and do something else. The teacher always gave me a grade up and that's the only thing that was challenging me because some kids they learn differently. Some kids learn faster than others so... I don't know. Sometimes I want to feel like I'm actually getting challenged because I'm a student that comes to school to be taught and I want to learn something so I can be something. Me not being challenged is like why am I here?

Male 2: TO add on, so as she said about students learning at different paces or learning differently, the student that still feels challenged when they take the higher courses class can usually go down a course when they feel too much, like they can't handle it with what's happening inside of school and then outside, and then they will have to talk to those teachers or one of the staff at our school and they can downgrade their class so that it can be a lot easier or they can handle their classes to where it won't be a problem with how they are affected in the outside, what they are doing outside school.

Female 5: With the classes, what was talking... both of them was saying is they have different levels and I feel like if you're not being challenged, then you need to change your schedule so you can be challenged because if regular math or honors math is not what is... not challenging you, why not go to AP, why not go to DP classes so you can be challenged?

Female 3: There's another thing like she said, why not go to AP? You can't just go to your principal and say, "I want to take AP classes," because they are gonna look at your academic background and say, "Are you eligible enough to go to AP classes?" I know we have three levels. You've got regulars, AP honors, and you have DP classes, and they put us honors and DP students on a pedestal and the regular kids see that we get special treatment like awards ceremonies and if we are going on field trips, the regular kids will go to community colleges and honor students will go to universities. Sometimes the regular kids will go to universities too, but that's just how it is and it makes them look like... you're basically saying since I'm in a regular class, I'm not good enough to have the same opportunities as the honors kids, so that could be another reason why students act out or don't want to come to school.

Female 6: [inaudible 00:14:33] GPA tour or college trip because if you... you can be in a regular class and actually have a higher GPA and still be able to go to a university trip. Basically, I feel like if you know you are not being challenged, why not take the time to sit down and talk to your counselors and see what they can do about your schedule? I know when my school... the first two weeks, they will be able to change your schedule if you feel like you are not being challenged or whatever.

Interviewer 2: Here's a question, I want to start off with your table. I have six children at home. When they are with their friends, it's a lot of kids, when they are with their friends sometimes they are talking about the experiences of their different schools, they all go to different schools, and they are so vastly different, sometimes I'm shocked they are within the same city. I'd like you to talk about the differences or the similarities between your school and maybe your friends or family members

schools.

Interviewer 3: I saw [inaudible 00:15:48] nodding his head.

Interviewer 2: He was nodding his head.

Interviewer 3: I called you out! You were like yeah...

Male 4: I have a friend named Eric and we was actually talking this summer and he was asking what are you doing on your summer homework and I was talking to someone else and they both go to South Shore and they was shocked that I had summer homework. I was like y'all don't get summer homework? They was like nah, and you know that shocked me, because ever since I been at Baker, I've gotten summer homework. Freshman, sophomore, junior, now senior year, and I noticed that was a huge difference or like a big thing that a charter school does have that a public school don't have.

Female 7: A lot of my... My two friends, one goes to Northside Prep and the other goes to Lane Tech and then when we go to the movies or whatever, we wait till the movie start, we talk about our experiences at school and then my friend that goes to Lane Tech, she talks about how they have so many different clubs and opportunities and classes like this computer class that they have. I was like well, my school, they are not as tech savvy as the other schools that my friends go to. I was like well, I mean, computer science is my thing so I need something to develop me in that area, but we don't have it. I don't know why, but I feel like that's something they should have more different things for us to do because they want us to be well rounded citizens, but how can we be when we don't know what else is out there? How can we do this, but we don't have that? You try to teach us something but you're not giving us the resources to be that person that you want us to be.

Female 8: Do you want to go?

I have a couple of friends that go to Baker and my sister graduated from there, and I know she used to come home and they used to get demerits for saying "huh" or "man" or "uhh," like they couldn't eat certain chips in school and it was like... we didn't have that in the public school and I don't think charter school rules will actually work in a public school because we are so used to being free and doing whatever we want whereas at a charter school, freshman year you've got rules to follow and we are senior and juniors and we are not gonna want to follow rules, because we are so used to all three or two years being free.

Interviewer 2: [inaudible 00:18:36]

Male 5: I have a friend that goes to [inaudible 00:18:39] when... we went to a party and he asked me can we go to another party and I was like no, I have to do my summer homework and he was surprised that we had homework. Most kids in high school, they don't get summer homework. They just read books and all that. They don't get packets of homework, so he was surprised that the homework that I had... I had

like two packets that I had and I had to read a book, and they were surprised at what I had.

Interviewer 3: Do you feel like the summer homework helps?

Male 5: It helps me get a better understanding of what I'm doing so when I go back to school, I didn't fall over. I know where I'm at and where I need to be and need to know in class.

Male 4: What I've heard about is it depends on what kind of school or what the school is focused on. If the school really wants you to learn and get your education, well then they focus on that. I was hearing that some schools, like public schools mostly focus on like being free and there's different kinds of rules and different perspective on education.

Female 9: My cousins, they went to CPS and I went to Ryansville and the difference between our schools is with CPS [inaudible 00:19:52] they have classes that you actually get to do career... [inaudible 00:19:57] yeah. In my school, you don't get the option to fix on cars or do hair or whatever, but at CPS, you're able to do that. My cousin, she took a nursing program there and she graduated. Whe, she graduated, she had a nursing degree and that really helped her when she went to college, but in the school that I go to, you are not able to do that. They don't... after school they offer acting, that's it. I do that, I love acting, but to see the difference between our schools is like wow. All the classes that they are able to take up and with CPS schools and teachers, when you come up with an idea, they don't listen to everyone, they only listen to a few people that they talk to really, because I had so many ideas with the extra classrooms, why not turn it into something that will be useful next year to students when they come back? Some people want to be mechanics, some [crosstalk 00:20:58] yeah. Some people want to do hair, but yeah we was talking about that too, with the funding and stuff like that with the money.

I think it's... We was breaking it down... I did [inaudible 00:21:10] and we was breaking down how come CPS don't always have as much as schools on the north side and stuff like that and she was like because parents actually go up to the school and give money to the schools so they can have programs to better their children's life and when you look at our schools... The only time you really see a parent up there is if their child did something and that's very sad because we want the same opportunities too. She also said because on the north side, more people own their property and on the south side parents a lot of us don't own their property, so that's how schools get the money too.

Female 8: Something I want to say was ,like what she said, how she felt like schools on the south side don't have as much as the schools on the north side. I go to Linkin Park and that's up north so people always think oh y'all got the best opportunities, y'all got all these programs, and we don't. The only thing we have is choir. It's not that much. One year I wanted to transfer to [inaudible 00:22:12] because I'm a very artistic person, I'm very creative, so that was the school for me, but everybody kept saying, "No, Linkin Park is most likely better, they've most likely got all these

programs," and I got in there and I was like this is not what I thought it was going to be. I thought I was going to come in here and there was going to be all these different art programs, like there was gonna be all this stuff, but there was nothing, but a Glee club that you really cannot even get into.

Interviewer 3: You say you live on the south side, right?

Female 8: Yeah, I live on the south side.

Interviewer 3: You travel all the way up to Linkin Park everyday?

Female 8: Yeah, because I was thinking I was going into this school, like I'm fixing to get the best education, like they are fixing to be on it and that...

Male 6: To add onto what she said about not having many extra curricular activities after school, we definitely do many fund raisers and different events to fund raise money sometimes it not for school events, sometimes it's for charities or... can't remember the name, last time we did an event it was a charity for cancer awareness and a lot of people and a lot of folks joined in, so I'll say probably the reason why not many schools have many activities to do after school is either because the parents won't be able to lend a helping hand or [inaudible 00:23:27] and then the schools aren't thinking of doing fund raisers to help do these events or properly connect these events to improving the school.

Female10: I went to [inaudible 00:23:43] for the first two months of my freshman year and I was very challenged at that school and if I didn't do my homework [inaudible 00:23:51] they gave out detentions, if you weren't acting right and had too many demerits. I was very challenged on an educational level, but I transferred to Morgan Park and the only thing they did [inaudible 00:24:04] is sports and activities like I wasn't at that school, I'm not challenged at that school. I need more. I'm in all honors classes and they still, it's still like a baby level work.

Interviewer 3: You would rather go back to the noble school that had the demerits and all of that...

Interviewer 1: She didn't say all that.

Moderator: So, talk about how you ended up where you're at?

Speaker 2: Talk about your grandparents.

Male: Well my grandparents, they forced me to go to Gary Comer, and I didn't want to go because they told me about demerits and how strict it is and stuff like that. You can't do nothing. So I went and I kind of liked it in [inaudible 00:00:49]. The week that I was on, that's a practice week for how the school runs and stuff, and I got two detentions over stupid....I got a LaSalle for not doing my summer homework,

because I got a book late and I ain't go to that LaSalle, so I had got a detention. Then I got a detention for something else. So, I gotta go to detention next week. And I was just, man, I was like, "Oh, no, this is too much." But as you get it, like they're doing the discipline for a reason, to show you stuff like life is discipline. Like, your bosses will do the same thing, and they want you to be ready for everything.

And then my kids? They're gonna go through the same thing I'm going through.

(laughter)

Female Moderator: Wait, because you think that it's helpful or are you like, "Listen, I had to do it."

Male: Both.

Male: I would like to add on. So about Gary Comer, they mainful focus on discipline because it's mainly about the students that they bring in. They're not really good in knowing about discipline and respecting teachers. So, they have a lot of rules set up for it. But also they have, they don't have that bad of classes, but it all depends on if you can handle the discipline, if you can handle the discipline or not. For me, I could have went to a different Noble school or Mount Carmel, because I was able to get accepted there. But for me, I wasn't able, I didn't feel like it was worth paying the tuition fees because they raised it. So, going to Gary Comer probably was one of the best options I could have done, actually.

Female: My mom...I got accepted to like all of these different high schools. I got accepted to King, Brooks. I was like, "Yes!" Then she was like, "You're going to Gary Comer," and I was like, "Oh, okay." Because somebody in the building that she works with, her child goes to Gary Comer, and she was talking about how much she loved this school and the discipline. I was like, "I get enough of this at home." But she was like, "No."

So, we go there. The school is alright. I'm glad that I did go there, because, I don't know, it's like, it has pros and cons, but there's more pros than cons, so I'm like really excited. And plus, we have a youth center, like a couple of, a five minute walk away, and it's like there are programs there. It's helpful for that Noble system thing that they got. So, yeah. And my children, they'll go to a Noble school. It's not optional.

Male: Alright, so, my mom always told me, "Go to a school that best fits me."

Moderator: That best fits you, okay. And how so? Like what fits you? What type of school best fits you?

Male: Charter school.

Moderator: In what way? What about it?

Male: Like demerits, we got like 26 principles we got to follow.

Moderator: 26 principles?

Male: Yeah, that's what they call it. I call it demerit.

Male: So, like I was just saying, my parents since I was little I always wanted, like I what I was focused on. So my parents always wanted me to go to a strict school, somewhere where they would discipline me, and right now I'm going to the Chicago Military Academy in Bronzeville. So, they put me there. Well, right now, I'm trying to see where I'm going to get.

Female Moderator: Well, that's discipline...a military academy.

Moderator: So, one of the things I heard in the earlier sessions is that Chicago has a lot of selected enrollment schools. What I heard from the other groups is that they weren't impressed with those because they take high kids and just do high-kids stuff with them. So, I'm curious to you all, do you think there are schools in Chicago that take struggling students and then get them...do you know if there are schools that take low students or struggling students, and then get them up to higher levels?

Female: My school actually was a selected enrollment school, but I think they looked at it in a different way. Like, I guess not many kids, because before our class of 2018 came in, they didn't have that many students. With us, it was like a lot of us that came in. Then they just took it away because it's an IV school and everything like that.

[crosstalk 00:04:49]

Then, I would say the reason why I chose it is because, I was, like the everyday that I live in, I was not going to Chilton. I was not going to John Hope. And why not go somewhere? They kind of tricked me a little bit because with the stuff that they said they had, and when you get there they don't have it. I think it's the best, it's kind of decent to me because you have freedom to express your thoughts. And with some schools, you're not able to do that. I think when you get in life, you can't just sit back and don't say nothing on something that you don't like and try to be quiet, because nothing is going to change. And if you speak up now, you'll, like in a respectful way, then you'll start seeing change. Because if you sit back, you won't see change. My kids, I will definitely put them in a school that is perfect for them, not perfect for me, because they're strict or because they have freedom, but somewhere where they can be successful and somewhere where they can dip in different things, like have opportunities and stuff like that.

Male: I believe there are schools who can change kids around. I believe my school is one of them because when I came in there...at first I was at South Shore. I was enrolled, I was in programs and everything. They took me out and I'm glad my parents did, because I honestly think I would not have done as good academically at South Shore as I do at Baker College Prep. And, like the support of my school that they give to the students, is like family-based. And I can say that for multiple adults

there, that I feel like, you know, I can call them a mentor or I can look up to them and go to. So I believe there are schools out here that can actually change kids around and actually help them.

Male: Sometimes, it's like schools or even the teachers are like the parents. Like the teacher actually cares about your schooling. Back in my elementary school at Hammer, we had a teacher where if she seen that a student was falling behind in education, she will put them in the group, and then the whole group, we would get it to the point where we had to be.

Female: I think these school boards, you know, when they have like their meetings to decide what's best for students, I think they sit around and they say what they think is best for students, instead of getting like the students' input on how they would like to learn or be taught, and stuff like that. So, I think any school can take a child that's struggling and help them succeed. But that can only really happen if you go around and ask the students, the kids in the school, and take in their input and the ideas of how they would like to be taught and stuff like that.

Female: Yeah, because all my life I went to CPS schools and in my elementary school I went to [inaudible 00:08:03] I did not like my principal because she was very strict. You had to tuck your shirt in while walking in the hallway. Well, I think it was family, it was like a family school because some kids was not able to afford the things that other students were able to afford. In my eighth grade year, this girl wasn't able to buy a dress or anything like that for graduation. Teachers gathered money so she could be able to do that and look nice and be able to walk across the stage looking presentable and stuff like that. I think any school can change you.

Female: Yeah because that's how my elementary school...they had a lot of kids that people say were like problem kids? So I know that when, the principal would actually stay after school to like five o'clock or five-thirty actually teaching the kids that they call problem children, so they can learn, and so that when a grade comes, they can walk across that stage, get their diploma. So like...cause my friends, I had some friends that was like in trouble or whatever, and they used to tell us to help the kids, help your peers that are struggling. That was a part of our pledge of allegiance. It was like help the kids that's in trouble and stuff like that, so we did that because it was like really family-oriented, like most schools are. We feed off of each other. So like, yeah, it depends on how dedicated your, the school is to teacher-child in any situation.

Moderator: I always wonder, what does it feel like to be in a classroom where you're guided and you're learning? So, like, I guess the question is what does good teaching look and feel like to you? Like a couple of you mentioned like we had that one teacher in that one class and it was like click. Right? So what does good teaching feel like, look like, sound like in the classroom?

Male: So, like, let's say they're teaching and when I see that they're not only teaching you about what comes out of the books, so what they have been taught to teach us, but they're trying to get in things from the real world to come in and help you with

those things.

Female: I'd say, it's not an option to take notes, a teacher that helps you take notes. I say for myself, taking notes, it helps, you know. And making sure that you get everything that they're teaching, they ask you questions. So after that, before giving you an assignment, they make sure your questions are answered, they clarify anything that you're not sure about. And being strict on notes, because I notes are...

Female: Yeah, and when you see more students engaged in the lesson that they're being taught, because that's the key right there. That's how you know you're getting something, and getting in their minds. And also, like she said, when your teacher, when the teacher is teaching something and they clarify everything that's going on so like no one will be lost. A teacher that is patient, because not everyone is going to get it the second that you teach it. And with that, when students raise their hands, they're able to answer questions, even if it does come up multiple times sometimes.

Female: Because I know my math teacher will say, like, you know he'll call us up to the board, like, "Come up to the board and do this problem." And it's not like putting you on the spot to do it in front of everybody, it's just so everybody can see how this problem is going to be done. And if you get it wrong, then you get it wrong. It's not like, "Oh, you got it wrong. You're slow." It's like, "Okay, you got it wrong. Let me show you how you could do it better, or how you can go about it the correct way."

Moderator: When you say engaged, what does engagement look like? If I'm going to walk into a classroom and see an engaged classroom, what am I going to see?

Female: Well, it's like I hope you all are engaged, but I feel like that they're not distracted or anything else, and they're absolutely taking in knowledge. You can see heads shaking, like, okay I agree with you on that one. And you see hands going up too, because that's like you know they're paying attention to what you're saying.

Moderator: You were going to say something, too?

Male: Yeah, I was going to say like, you can feel like the energy in the classroom. You can see it in their face that they want to learn, they want to participate.

Moderator: And how often do you all have that feeling that you're engaged in a classroom? Is that like once-a-period thing or an every-period thing, or a once-a-week thing for you all?

Speaker 19: About three class periods and then the rest, I'm like ugh.

Moderator: Three out of seven or eight? Something like that?

Female: For me, I only had that with like one teacher because, like a situation happened at my school, so they switched out my history teacher. His name was Mr. Klenders,

and when like he came in there, like he made sure that he kept us engaged. He would say something about history, but like we didn't understand it. Like the kids that didn't understand, he would break down for them on something that he knew they could relate to. So, something that he knows a teenager could relate to so we could all stay engaged. I feel like that was the only teacher, well him and like my English teacher, because they would always bring like the real world in there, so you could better understand it. Because if you hear like, okay, they start talking about, like, "Well, on the South side this happened," then you're like, you're going to listen because like, I know about that.

Speaker 21: I'd say maybe two out of 7.

Moderator: Your hand is up.

Male: Just like certain classes like I feel like I could be a part of, and like no one laughs. Like, if you get a question wrong, they won't laugh at you. They would like, help you and be able to make you better at what you're doing if you get it wrong. They won't just like laugh at you and say like you're stupid. They will like actually help you and the teacher will give you help if you need it.

Female Moderator: Is having a teacher that believes you can succeed, does that fold into what it means to be a good teacher? Or maybe that doesn't matter to you. Maybe you're just like, "Cool, they're teaching me what I need to know." How important is it to have teachers that you know believe you can succeed?

Male: I think in our school that would be very important, because there are a lot of students that would misbehave or do things that they shouldn't do. And for a teacher to believe in them, that they actually can do better, would probably greatly improve them. Probably show them what they can truly do in their class, and then that they can advance farther than what they're teaching them, or understand what they're teaching them, and pass through high school and probably get up to college.

Female Moderator: So, you say right now you have teachers at your school who you feel they don't believe, and the kids are kind of like misbehaving or kind of just like...

Male: No, I wouldn't say that. I would say about 90-100% of the teachers actually do believe that. It's just that they also have to put in the effort to do that, otherwise, it will be meaningless for the teacher to try to believe in them.

Female: Yeah, because I know everybody in [inaudible 00:15:18] at first it was a very hard class for me, but she was present. I was struggling, but she was like, "I believe in you because you're very intelligent," and everything like that. By the end of the year, I was two points away from an A and I was mad. But I think it also depends, like he said, it depends on the student, too. Because you can say you believe in someone and they'll just, it'll go through one ear and out the other one and they will just continue to do what they want to do. And after awhile, if you keep believing in them and they keep doing the same thing, you're going to lose a little

faith in them every time. So I think it goes with both of them.

Moderator: I want to push that a little bit. So, hearing a teacher say, "I believe in you," what does the teacher do, or principal or whatever in the school do, on a day-to-day basis so you know for sure, like when you talk to your peers, they're like, "Oh, yeah, they believe in us." Like what do you see them do? Let's start over there.

Male: Like the teachers and the principal, they were like after school, like during a period they would check up on you, make sure like you got all your notes down, make sure that you wrote your homework down so you understand what you're doing. If you need help, they're like office hours after school or anything else that could help you get better if you're confused in what you're doing.

Male: Yeah, like, they will help you, like I said, if you fall behind, they'll come and help you and be there for you. Like okay, "You're missing this," or "You're behind in this subject. Come here, I can help you." And they stay after class or they teach you with the class.

Moderator: There are some other hands.

Female: I would say I know that they believe in you, like Mr. Grisby, he was our last African American teacher, male teacher, and he was like, if you were struggling to pull up your grades in whatever class you were struggling in, he would definitely take you to that class, make sure you get the work so you can pass. He was like, because my school is an all-Black school and he was like, "You all are going to college," because we need to break down these walls that everyone believes that we're not smart and that we're dumb, and the only reason we come to school is just to sit around and talk and play all day. He was like no. He wanted us to do something in life and he stayed on us, like no matter what...even though he was just our law teacher, he made sure he was in everybody's classroom and whatever. He took us places that our regular teachers wouldn't take us. He took us to a fashion show last year and it was a great experience because you got to see different models and stuff like that. That's how you know that someone cares. They say it to your face, not behind your back.

Moderator: Can I just say it's awesome to hear that because he was here earlier on?

Male: I'm trying to get him to move to [inaudible 00:18:14].

[crosstalk 00:18:17]

Female: He was here? I didn't see him but I know Grisby is like...the first time I met Grisby, we walked into class and he said, "You find the definition of this and you find the definition of this." And it was like the definition of what and the definition of black. That was his first approach to us. So I'd say like the approach that teachers have toward students. And then he walked in, like he's goofy. He'll crack jokes with you. But you knew when Grisby was serious. He's like, "Okay, the joke is over. Time to take out the books today." And then I know, like, with the counselors, because I

can't relate to a principal actually, you know interacting with them.

Moderator: No offense.

Female: Yeah, no offense. But I know my counselor, I was walking upstairs from gym and she was like, "Ms. Lacie." And I was like, yeah. She was like, "I want to see you in my office." And I walked in and she's like, "Girl, how you got this grade?" And that let me know that she was like looking at my grades and stuff like that and keeping tabs on me. So I'd say like the approach teachers have on students. Because if a teacher approaches you like, "Okay, you all take out your books," and stuff like that. You're not going to want to go to a teacher's class, because they basically are just telling me what to do. But if a teacher comes in and like, you know, "Hey, how is everybody doing?", you know being goofy, because I like goofy teachers. But I like mean teachers, too, because they're showing me that they care. They're showing me that they care. So, I'd say their approach.

Female: I'd say going that extra mile and having positive vibes in the classroom. Like those two for me, it kind of tells me that they actually do care about me, so I'm going, I care about myself, too. So that means we're both caring about me, and that shows me that I can actually be somebody. Like I can actually do this and that because I see you have faith in me, and I have faith in myself. It's a two-way thing. If the teacher keeps showing you that they have faith in you, but you don't believe in yourself, it's worthless. So that's when I think a teacher is just like, they just give up because you've got to work on yourself first. You've got to believe in yourself and then that extra person who believes in you, too, it brings it up even more. It brings your self-esteem up even more, which shows that you can actually be something.

Male: So, I would say that every teacher has their own way showing that they believe in their students. For example, the world history teacher at our school, he will give like vague worksheets. He'll tell us specific students what they should be doing for their homework, what they should be doing in class. He won't do much, but it all depends on what the student does. If he doesn't show much effort, he won't get a good grade in the class. It all depends on what the student does. And not only that, he also gives out random tests at times, but he'll give you like a vague time to when it will be happening. So, that student has to put in that effort to try and study to make sure he or she is prepared for that test, and to pass his class.

Female Moderator: Okay, Shawn, you had your hand raised.

Male: Yeah, I would agree with everybody. A teacher who takes an extra step to help, because there were times when I had, like a rough stretch in school, and there were like teachers who would call home and talk to my parents about what was going on. I would come home and think everything was okay, and they'd approach me about it. I was like, whoa. Like, I really need to get my stuff together. Or they would take me out of the class and talk to me personally, and that's how I know like, like people who care about me and I should always be doing my best.

Female: And also, like when the teachers call you out, not in front of everybody, but call you

out, because I know like with students, we feel like we can call our teachers out and they can't call us out. But I know like when I went to my teacher and I'm like, "McClure, I've got this B and I know I've been doing A work," so she's like I'll just leave you a B student because you got a B. [inaudible 00:22:42] But I felt like teachers that call you out, it's like maybe I am doing B work, because you see yourself different than what other people see you. So, it's like, you know, if I'm sitting here and I'm thinking that I'm doing A work, really I'm doing B work because that's the grade I got.

Female
Moderato: That's funny. This is so random, but like how you see yourself differently. I've always seen myself as being like 5'6" and people are like, "Actually, no." But we only have a couple more minutes. I have a quick question if that's okay. How many of you want to be teachers? Oooooo. Raise those hands high. So far, I'm only seeing one. Are we hiding here? All these great thoughts that you just shared, and nobody...

Moderator: Has anyone ever asked you or told you to consider it?

Female: Yes.

[crosstalk 00:23:30]

Speaker 2: Consider teaching. You're smarter than us all. You can do it.

Moderator: Here's a related question.

Female
Moderato: Well, I would like to know why they don't want to be teachers.

Moderator: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask.

Female
Moderato: Oh, that was your question? Yeah.

Female: I don't have the patience. It's like, I don't know, I'm kind of old school, so if you're going to disrespect me, mmm, I'm going to have to get you. (laughter) I don't have the patience.

Female
Moderato: I mean, there are schools where they do that.

Moderator: Many schools. Is that like a no chances in class?

Female: I would teach if them kids was really serious and they don't like have the attitude problems. I can't do it because I would lose my job if I was a teacher doing that. I can't do that.

Female
Moderato: You had your hand raised.

Male: I say no, not to be a teacher, because I don't like disrespectful kids. If you're like disrespectful and all that, the same thing. I might lose my job, might say the wrong

thing or put my hands on somebody's child. I might lose my job.

Male: [inaudible 00:24:40]

Female: I actually have a lot of patience. I'm very patient, but...because I wouldn't mind having students that are really there to learn and students that are doing stuff bad. Because I'm going to get the bad ones. Not like put my hands on them, but I'm going to get them. So, it's like, I think, you know, being a teacher takes a lot of time. You gotta...you already was in school and you've got to stay in school for the rest of your life. That's just like, oh, no. So, that's the only reason why because it's school. I could teach, just not a teacher.

[crosstalk 00:25:22]

Moderator: You said yes. . Why?

Female: Oh, not in a school, though. (laughter)

Female Moderator: Where are you teaching if not in a school?

Female: Like, I like fashion so I could teach a fashion class.

Female Moderator: Oh, okay. I see.

Female: But when it comes to kids, I can't cause...

Female: Not like little kids, but like infants. I would say, I don't know, kids under the third grade I cannot teach because they just do too much to me, for some reason. But if you're in like 8th grade to high school, you should have enough sense to know how to conduct yourself, so I would do that. But them 3rd to...no, no.

Female: At first, I did want to become a teacher because there was something that Grisby said. He was like, "If you look now there's not many African American teachers. When we have kids, do you want kids in a school where there are teachers that has their skin color, or teachers that are not their skin color?" I had to think about that. Like they said, I'm going to get you.

But no, if I do become a teacher, it's going to be something that I love to do, like history. I love history because you could teach people where they came from and actually help build their character and be proud to be Black and be happy like that. We have curly, some of us have nappy hair, but be happy about it, because at the end of the day, with our hair you can do so many styles to it that many people would be like, "Oh, I can't do that to my hair because my hair is not the same texture as them."

And music, because music can change anyone. It can touch down deep in your soul because I was listening to a [inaudible 00:27:19] song this morning, and I will listen to Gospel music like that, but they had one song that she did with Nick Manont. It

stirred deep in me because she took a leap of faith and actually did a song with a hip-hop rock person. That's one thing that I think I might do. I might become a teacher because I have to take that leap of faith and touch more and do to become a teacher, because there's not many of us in the teaching system right now. That's one thing, taking a leap of faith.

Female: You shouldn't have told them that. I bet they're going to be on you.

Moderato:

Moderator: It doesn't matter. So 80% of teachers across the country are White, and most of them are White female. And some people say that doesn't matter if they're teaching all Black children. How do you feel about that? Does it matter?

Female: That's wrong. That's wrong right there. That's wrong because can't nobody teach your history like someone who has your skin color, because you're not going to, well White teachers teaching you your history? Like, you've never been through it before. And we haven't either, but it touches deep down in your, because it's coming from a Black person. And I think strongly a Black male teaching a class is very powerful, because he can touch other Black males to become strong, independent males. With Grisby, he taught us about law and how law became, and how the system was set up. What she say, the first day look up the definition of white and look up the definition of black. From that day, I was like, yeah it was [inaudible 00:29:09] because you look at things that's going on now, and you see like, dang, they really don't want us to see.

Female: I disagree because I had a White, what Caucasian, history teacher and he wasn't biased or anything. He gave it to us how it was. You know, because all of us were African American in the classroom. He was just being a Caucasian teacher. And Grisby was more effective because that's what he went to college for. My Caucasian teacher, he went to college for history, too, but it wasn't African American history. It was US history he went for. But he taught us, like there was something that happened with his history that he went to college for, that had something to do with history, too. So, he wasn't, you know, holding anything back from us. So I disagree, because I've learned something from him and also from Grisby, too. So, if I said, "I don't think a Caucasian person can teach history more effectively like an African American can," then I would just be throwing in stereotypes.

Female: I think it depends on what history, because US History...I think African American History, I think a Black teacher definitely should teach on it, because like older teachers, because they have parents and they have grandparents that actually went through it, and they can take that experience and tell us about it. And, you know, touch us.

Moderator: So, let's even look outside of history. What about just the idea that there are some Black and Latino children who never have a teacher, K-12, that looks like them?

Female: And before we go ahead and answer that, we only have a couple more minutes. So
Moderato: let's just have a few people respond to that, and make sure we give space so a few

people can respond. Anyone over here? Would you repeat the question.

Moderator: Yes, there are a lot of students around the country right now, who are Black and Latino, who never had a Black or Latino teacher, throughout K-12. Does that matter?

Male: Well growing up in my grammar school, I had one White teacher, she was a female. But the majority, I had black, and they was female. I didn't have a male teacher.

Male: I'd say it depends on, let's say, where they come from and where the students come from. So, like, let's say like the earlier question, it was something about...so like, let's say for instance a White teacher teaching us Black and Latinos, they could probably...I said something earlier about mixing the subjects, so like teaching us what comes from the book, but they're teaching us the real-life experience. So they could be telling us the right facts that come from where we're from, or they could be telling us the real thing, how it is out there.

Female: I'd say it doesn't really matter because I had some teachers that matched my complexion, that I don't know what they was teaching. And I just knew because the word is hyperbole, and she was saying high-per-bowl-ee. I knew that wasn't that word. (laughter) That's what she said, I promise. So I'm just saying like some, it wouldn't matter.

Female Moderator: So, for you, it's just like, do you have information, can you teach?

Female: If you have the information and enough knowledge, and you have the heard to teach that subject, I believe you could teach it.

Female: I'd say that it does matter because it can show those Black and Latino youth that, "I can do this, too. I see my people in this field. They're successful." Like, wow, if I could actually consider this, I could be as successful as them. And it inspires other people to become teachers and stuff like that. Like, me seeing a Black teacher, like a whole Black staff, and I was like, wow, like we are so intelligent and this other stuff. And then if I go to a different school and I see a majority of White, I was like...and we had the White history teacher. It felt really uncomfortable. I mean all the students were really uncomfortable. He was talking about slavery, and he kept apologizing. I was like, "Dude, just teach us this." It was really uncomfortable the way he taught us about our history. It was like, no. No, I would have preferred a Black teacher probably because it would have been a little more comfortable. And most people in my school, they was like, they was in that during that time, so they could have gained some more information and stuff.

Moderator: I want you to remember that, "Wow" as you go to college and choose a career.

Female Moderator: That's true. Alright, I want to give it off to [inaudible 00:34:15] for a minute, because right now we are, unfortunately, out of time. I know. It's so sad. I didn't know if you wanted to share some final words?

Moderator: Yeah. So, first of all, when I was in high school and college, I did not think about becoming an educator. So, that's number one. I'm just saying there are a lot of concerns were mine, too. I didn't think I had the patience and things, but I also, over the years, found out that I did have a lot of patience. But even more than patience, what I had was a lot of love for my people and my community, and I found that education and classrooms were just great ways to show my love. So think about that seed. If no one else has planted the seed, I believe we have. So, at least think about it and talk to your peers about it.

Then, secondly, I just want to really say thank you all for giving us time on a Saturday to come talk to strangers, to be on camera and film, but also to speak candidly. I think we quickly built a level of trust amongst us in this kind of instantaneous community that we were able to establish. We could not have done that. That was really you doing that and sharing, and I just really appreciate it. It was very meaningful.

And continue the great things that you've done and will continue to do. You are very inspiring, and I get to go back to [inaudible 00:35:45] where I'll ask my students about how they think they can step their game up to meet the challenges that you guys are shooting for. So, Greg, do you want to end this?

Speaker 2: I want to, "Me too" almost all of that. Me too, me too, me too. I want to add that I appreciate how reflective you are about your education and your own life trajectories. You all are so thoughtful about the path that you're on right now, and what's happened to you, figured out it's a process. And your thoughtfulness and reflection actually is going to help us all.

We're going to go back to the places that we're from and share what we've learned today. I always say the people who know education the best are students. They know teaching the best. They sit through teaching. If you could walk in a school and grab a kid, they'll tell you who the five best teachers are and the five worst teachers in thirty seconds. And so, you've reminded me that I need to go back to my school this year and start listening to my students. So, thank you.

Female
Moderator: And I just want to add, I agree 100% on the patience factor. I taught one summer and could not do it, but I really care about education, right? I have family, friends that dropped out of high school and couldn't make it through college. I just want Black kids to learn and get a good quality education. But I also like lobbying. I like comcasting. So there are other ways to be involved in education. Thank you. Chris, did you want to say anything else?

Moderator: I'll say thank you all. I ditto what everybody else has said. You are the most important people in the entire process. You're the reason why we do this, and you're my only hope that I think things are going to get better. Right now you all know, you're probably watching the world and knowing some stuff has been going crazy now. You all are my hope for that. So, this is my one piece of advice. Whenever you're doing something that you're really successful at, whether it's sports or something where you feel like you're in your zone, that moment, that

quick moment that you have, be in touch with that. Take that with you throughout your whole day. Be in touch with your star player and be radical, be brave, be strong and win the game. Because that's what this is. This is all just a game. Win it! Win it! And don't just win it for you. Win it for me and for my grandchildren and for all of us, because we're counting on you. So thank you.