

## Lesson Plan: Addressing Teacher-Student Cultural and Communication Gaps

**Today's Purpose:** Today we will consider how teaching and learning might be affected by differences in teachers' and students' backgrounds. In particular, we highlight the possibility of cultural and communication gaps between teachers and students in diverse and urban schools. We will examine this issue through the lens of school desegregation efforts in Kansas City, Missouri.

### Activity 1: Whole Class Discussion

- In what ways do you think teaching and learning might be affected by differences in cultural backgrounds between teachers and students?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where your intentions were misunderstood by a student or a parent? If so, do you think that a communication and/or a cultural gap contributed to the situation? Explain.
- As a student, did you ever feel as though you were misunderstood by a teacher? If so, do you think that a communication and/or a cultural gap contributed to the situation? Explain.

### Activity 2: Watch Video Clip: [Laura Bryant](#)

Laura Bryant identified a communication and a cultural gap as resulting in negative consequences for children during the time period of school desegregation in Kansas City. As you watch the video take notes on information regarding the following questions. Discuss responses as a whole group following the video.

- What role should students play in narrowing a possible cultural or communication gap in school?
- What role should parents play in narrowing a possible cultural or communication gap in school?
- What role should teachers play in narrowing a possible cultural or communication gap in school?
- What role should school administrators play in narrowing a possible cultural or communication gap in school?

### Activity 3: Small Group Discussion

Laura Bryant outlined in the following narrative her assertion of the imperative to re-think ways of supporting the needs of African American students from cultural and communicative perspectives.

*“Okay. I felt that because culturally, we’re so far apart and for most of the teachers who are not comfortable with African American children, frankly I felt as though integration was the worst thing that could happen to our children. It separated them from not only their own culture, but positive influences of people who look like them. It also, our history wasn’t taught. Most of the students believed that we started as slaves. And that’s as far back as our history books even today go when we mention African American history. Which, when children are already impoverished or in communities that are not thriving or prospering, then to know that you started as a slave and know nothing else about yourself, it has, I think it has a really severe impact on self-esteem and so forth.”*

- a) Working in a small group, compile a list of 5 reasons why children are expected to complete schooling.
- b) As a whole group, review small group responses to the purpose and function of schooling. Respond as a whole group to the following questions:
  - What is the function of education for society?
  - What is the function of education for communities?
  - What is the function of education for families?
  - What is the function of education for individuals?
  - What are some of the challenges and opportunities for attending to all of these multiple educational functions in schooling at the same time?

### Activity 4: Developing Pictures of Classrooms as Cultural and Communicative Communities

- a) Brainstorm as a whole group to create a list of ways to include students as cultural and communicative curricular resources.
- b) Work in small groups on a picturing exercise for 10 minutes. Each member of the group should describe a picture of an ideal urban classroom as a cultural and communicative community. Describe all of the sights and sounds in your classroom image to breathe life into your picture. Share pictures with the whole group. Discuss as a whole group barriers to developing those pictures of classrooms as cultural and communicative communities and ways of overcoming those barriers.