BOLD VISIONS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I HOPE I DON'T SEE YOU TOMORROW

A Phenomenological Ethnography of the Passages Academy School Program

Lee A. Gabay

Foreword by Jesse Eisenberg

SensePublishers

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Scope:
Bold Visions in Educational Research is international in scope and includes books from two areas: *teaching and learning to teach* and *research methods in education*. Each area contains multi-authored handbooks of approximately 200,000 words and monographs (authored and edited collections) of approximately 130,000 words. All books are scholarly, written to engage specified readers and catalyze changes in policies and practices. Defining characteristics of books in the series are their explicit uses of theory and associated methodologies to address important problems. We invite books from across a theoretical and methodological spectrum from scholars employing quantitative, statistical, experimental, ethnographic, semiotic, hermeneutic, historical, ethnomethodological, phenomenological, case studies, action, cultural studies, content analysis, rhetorical, deconstructive, critical, literary, aesthetic and other research methods.

Books on *teaching and learning to teach* focus on any of the curriculum areas (e.g., literacy, science, mathematics, social science), in and out of school settings, and points along the age continuum (pre K to adult). The purpose of books on *research methods in education* is **not** to present generalized and abstract procedures but to show how research is undertaken, highlighting the particulars that pertain to a study. Each book brings to the foreground those details that must be considered at every step on the way to doing a good study. The goal is **not** to show how generalizable methods are but to present rich descriptions to show how research is enacted. The books focus on methodology, within a context of substantive results so that methods, theory, and the processes leading to empirical analyses and outcomes are juxtaposed. In this way method is not reified, but is explored within well-described contexts and the emergent research outcomes. Three illustrative examples of books are those that allow proponents of particular perspectives to interact and debate, comprehensive handbooks where leading scholars explore particular genres of inquiry in detail, and introductory texts to particular educational research methods/issues of interest to novice researchers.

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For John Theodore Cochran, Jr.
A coach, mentor, teacher, scholar and friend

And to Crystal "Sabs" Lan Gabay ... You're welcome!

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JESSE EISENBERG

FOREWORD

A few years ago, there was an ad in the subway for a teaching fellowship that said, "You remember your favorite teacher. Who will remember you?"

At first, I was taken aback by the confrontational ad. I didn't realize I was in an existential argument with the subway, where I was being asked to justify my life. But the ad stuck with me because there was a truth to their question. We remember and value our teachers, even though the economic hierarchy of society indicates otherwise.

In fact, as I struggled to rebut this mass-transit missive, I realized that I remembered my teachers more than the curricula they were assigned to impart:

I remembered Mrs. Heuss' patience in kindergarten, how she allowed me to feel comfortable being away from home and in a learning environment. I remembered Ms. Albert's humor in fourth grade as she fostered my peculiar literalness, commending me for arguing with a test question on the grounds that it was sexist. I remember Ms. Sabatino who used her world-weary sarcasm to bring levity to the dark themes of Toni Morrison's *Sula*. I remember my college professor, Dr. Milowitz, who allowed us to spend an entire class dissecting Philip Roth's moral compass instead of adhering to the day's assignment.

These wonderful teachers had something important in common: they created a space for learning, irrespective of their subject. They transcended their fields and were as flexible as their students were diverse.

Over the course of the last decade, I have regularly visited my friend Lee Gabay at his school, Passages Academy. This unusual academic setting is designed for students who have been arrested and are awaiting trial and so the majority of Passages students are not there for more than a few weeks. As such, a full year's curriculum cannot be established and carried out as students come and go throughout the year.

This unique arrangement requires a special type of teacher who is comfortable with a flexible curriculum and an often-challenging student population. Luckily, under the leadership of Sydney Blair and Janet Brown

Anderson, Lee and his colleagues have a few qualities that are required for them to thrive in this environment:

Compassion: Passages students often come from broken homes and struggling families. At the point at which they're brought to Passages, they have experienced the trauma of an arrest and the bewildering process of the judicial system. In order to break through an often-hardened exterior, Passages teachers have to demonstrate that they understand what their students have experienced before they're able to teach. Lee does this implicitly. As he often notes, "These kids did the same things I did as a teenager. The difference is, they got caught." His colleague, the late Devaughn Smalls would say, "Students need to know how much you care before the care about how much you know."

Flexibility: Lee may start a multi-day lesson or begin a book with his students and, halfway through, have to include new arrivals. These new students have to not only catch up to the specific place in the book or lesson but also align with the general climate of the class, which can be very difficult. To account for this, Lee creates several assignments that run parallel to the overall lesson. For example, one of the books Lee reads with his students is called "The Gospel According to Larry," which is a young adult book about a young man who idealizes a simple life. One of the themes in the book is the main character's attempts to rid himself of all but 75 possessions. Instead of asking the students to do a straight-forward book report on "The Gospel According to Larry," Lee will ask them to make a list of all the possessions they can't live without and discuss why they need these items. This assignment can be equally effective for students who are immersed in the book and for those who haven't even started reading. In this way, Lee is teaching an important lesson in self-reflection that is enhanced by, but not in-need of, reading the book.

Patience: Because Passages students come from such varied academic backgrounds, teachers have to teach for those who are ahead while accounting for those straining to keep up. Some students are vastly behind in their reading skills so teachers have to not only be patient with struggling students but also occupy those who are more advanced and eager to progress. Passages English Teacher Julie Weber has discovered that books-on-tape are a great tool for helping those students who have difficulty reading at a high school level. Students who are comfortable reading can follow along and students who have trouble can get the subtle support of an audio guide without the embarrassment a public display of their inability.

Discipline: I am constantly struck by the behavior of the students at Passages Academy. I initially went in expecting to see kids bouncing off the wall – after all, I had heard about their reason for being there. But what I saw was the opposite: the students uniformly waited in the narrow hallways as classes let out, shook hands with invited guests (like me), and only rarely interrupted each other in class. I couldn't believe it. Even my performing arts high school peers were more undisciplined. Over the course of my visits, however, I began to notice how Lee and his colleagues subtly infuse discipline into their daily routine. Beyond the specific disciplinary threats ("Do you want to go to the principal's office?"), there was a savvy use of positive encouragement (e.g., if a student interrupts, Lee might say, "I'd really love to hear what you have to say and I'm glad you're so enthusiastic, but let's just wait for X to finish what she was saying.") Of course, these methods are employed in most school settings, but given the more sensitive nature of Passages Academy, it becomes a far more important and consuming task.

Passages Academy is not only a functioning New York City public high school, but a petri dish that reveals the value of teachers. It is an environment where the importance of teacher-student interaction outweighs any single book or math problem and where critical thinking is paramount; it is a literature class where themes trump page count, a history class where intent trumps chronology, a math class where puzzles trump times tables.

What follows is a thorough academic and rich personal account of one teacher's experiences in Passages Academy, a positive institution putting a new narrative forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

School food and prison food are both usually outsourced through the same vendor. Having served "over 26 million meals," ABL Management, Inc. is one of the largest vendors in the country, supplying tin-encased foods throughout the American Northeast. The meals are generally starchy, high in sugar, repetitive and, to quote a famous graduate of Brooklyn's Midwood High School, 'such small portions.' This study, about detained students and their teachers, is a co-generative search for nourishment through knowledge. Documenting the ordinary teachers and students in these sometimes-extraordinary circumstances offers a buffet of a varied society, where the best and worst dishes are on display.

Teaching at Passages Academy requires me to be constantly hungry, as the students and curriculum are constantly in flux and to be sated is to fail. Though this book touches on the Educational and Correctional policies at Passages, its primary focus is on people. The students', my colleagues' and my own experiences are what feed these pages. Those most involved in this project sustained and guided me to make sure this project had purpose, rigor and the most important nutrient, a craving for a valuable narrative:

Under his sublime direction and love of human foibles, David Brotherton's wisdom, perspective and experience has informed this piece of writing. David's graciousness with time and openness with thought has made me a better scholar and drinker. He is this book's Shepherd's Pie.

Shirley Steinberg's combination of self-analysis and social conscience is evidenced by her strong commitment to education and this project. She has been utterly immersed in and committed to this project since its first breath. Shirley is my Lox.

Nick Michelli is an excellent communicator of ideas and an engaged listener. His focus and continued interest broadened the scope and deepened my understanding of the writing process. If Nerd is the new cool, Nick is Ice Water.

Anthony Picciano, Dr. P., a fellow Knicks and Yankees fan, is a truly great man and only interested in his students doing great things. He brought the beauty of clean lines and clear thought to me during this writing. This rhyme of intellect and intuition could be applied to a wide range of subjects from the US education system. Anthony is Lasagna from Arthur Avenue.

As this research has taught me, connections are as fleeting as they are infinite.

I honor Joe L. Kincheloe, a man of majestic vision and peerless command of his craft. His genius and belief is why this book is complete. This is as much yours as it is mine. Joe had an appetite for something sensational for his students and embodies what many educators want to be, if only we had the guts.

Dr. Anthony Mbogho, a teacher and gentleman whose humanity was his armor. He convinced those in his classroom that they could succeed and showed them how.

To Devon Smalls, we don't know what we would have got had he lived, but we know what he gave us when he was alive. An artist whose canvas was any classroom and a perfectionist whose paintings were never finished. Someone who amazed onlookers by achieving great feats in such a small amount of time.

And lastly, Tawny Ong, editor, muse and cupcake maker, you put a smile on the teachers and students of Passages Academy and, more importantly, mine. "If you want to change the world, you change people, if you want to change people, you start with the heart. If you want to change people's hearts… feed them something wonderful." I am forever hungry for another minute with you but am also infinitely nourished by your unconditional love.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	Administration for Children's Services (NYC)
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice (NYC)
DOC	Department of Corrections (NYC)
DOE	Department of Education (NYC)
DOJ	Department of Justice (U.S.)
DYFJ	Division of Youth and Family Justice (NYC)
LTA	Long-term absence
N or D	Neglected or delinquent
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NSD	Non-secure detention
OCFS	Office of Child and Family Services (NYS)
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (U.S.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE: WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

Down a cramped, bumpy street with black pavement stands an ominous bureaucratic building. Temporary scaffolding one story above street level surrounds the entire structure. Next to it is an abandoned building on which is posted a skull and crossbones sign that reads, in bold red letters, "WARNING: KEEP OUT, BAITED AREA." To the right of that is the exit of a carwash. The ground is always slippery, and the concrete looks particularly dark because of puddles made by the dripping cars. At any time of day you will see carwash employees either sitting on the stoop of the abandoned building listening to music or drying off cars. Today I run into an old friend who lives in the neighborhood. We're shocked to see each other, and I tell her I am going to work. She asks where and I point to the 4-story brick-faced building on the corner.

"What is this place?" she questions. "I thought you were a teacher."

"I am," I said. "I teach English at this school."

"This is a school?" she asks.

I point to a sign that bears the school's name and emblem in a font and typeset so subtle that, walking by, one would have little indication that the building is indeed a Department of Education learning facility.

"Passages Academy. What did you think it was?" I asked my friend.

"I'm not really sure, but it doesn't look like a school." She is an architect who designs schools for a living. "This is really a school?" she asks once again. I explain to her that Passages is a school that tailors its curriculum to the needs of court-involved youth under age sixteen referred to the Academy by the courts, guided by both legal and social service considerations.

I then explain the process by which court-involved youths become students at the school where I teach. The first decision made by the juvenile justice system is whether the youth should be held at a juvenile detention

facility—either a secure detention facility, where students are locked up, or in a non-secure detention (NSD), which is less restrictive. If the court opts for an NSD, it sends them to government-subsidized group homes while they await sentencing. These residential homes are places for the children to live temporarily where they can receive medical, behavioral, and mental health services. Some of the children in NSDs attend school here, at the Academy. Their attendance lasts, on average, for 36 days.

My friend smiles, tells me she is late for work, suggests that we do lunch sometime and leaves.

BUT WHY DOES IT EXIST?

New York State law requires all persons between the ages of six and seventeen to attend school and mandates that students who have been suspended from school or arrested must be given alternative schooling during the terms of their suspension or detainment. In addition, incarcerated students under the age of 21 (even those no longer legally minors) are entitled to continue receiving a public education. According to New York State's compulsory education laws:

> The right to a public education in New York does not end upon incarceration. All people in New York including inmates between the ages of 6 and 21 have the right to a free, public education, until they receive a high school diploma or its equivalent. In New York City, all 16- and 17-year-olds are required to attend school. (Werlwas & Lewis, 2000)

Accordingly, both City and State governments must provide school facilities for juveniles who are detained. About 10,000 court-involved New York City students attend classes in City and State detention centers each year (Education in Detention, 2012).

This book presents an analysis of the ways in which the educational experiences of court-involved youths are shaped by social, political and pedagogical forces, along with an examination of the means employed by pre-service, new and veteran teachers to manage the practical problems and the social justice issues they encounter while working with this unique student population. My research is informed by a variety of scholarly and government publications addressing this topic. To date, there remains a dearth of longitudinal studies examining the effectiveness of school programs specifically oriented to prepare teachers for juvenile detention school settings. Thus, given the lack of research available that is specific to

the context under discussion, little of this book draws upon previous research on teacher preparation in secure and non-secure juvenile detention centers. One of my major findings is that there exist few, if any, *in situ* studies of this kind of institution. The written record or literature surrounding the subject of incarcerated education is broad, but woefully overlooked in the research and scholarship of schooling. Quantitative and qualitative research into this particular area of teaching is just beginning to be undertaken and, as the majority of U.S. states now spend more on prison building than on education, the need for such research to continue is urgent. During the 1980s and 90s, the number of prison cells in the U.S. more than quadrupled (Gonnerman, 2004). The rise of the prison industrial complex and its role in schooling remains real. As such the potential social and academic consequences of this system merit scholarly investigation.

In 2010, New York City spent over six and a half times more to incarcerate one young person than it did to educate him or her. The cost of detaining a juvenile offender in New York City was $358/day; in other words, it cost $130,670 a year to confine a young person to a secure detention facility. By contrast, the New York City Department of Education spent $18,597 annually per student on education (Public Education Finances, 2010). However, the growing number of students earning school credit behind bars is not merely a cause for financial alarm, for also poses very real questions about the quality of the education that these students receive. Pedagogy in these settings must be more thoroughly examined and evaluated by policymakers, community-based organizations, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Education (DOE).

In lieu of empirical research findings, I have drawn from my experience since 1990 working in these schools. To connect and support this anecdotal evidence, I have relied upon scholarship concerning urban schooling in particular, as well as literature addressing curriculum and teaching in general. However, this is not a *how to* book, but rather a *what is* book. My objective is to assist stakeholders to understand the issues involved in educating court-involved youth so they in turn can better serve teachers, children and ultimately our democratic society.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The first among several research objectives in this book is to add to the body of literature that examines teaching in custodial and non-custodial juvenile detention settings and address specific issues facing prison education. Of particular interest are pedagogical challenges that include

teaching methodology, curriculum design and program development (Gabay, 2007).

Another research objective is an examination of the educational philosophy and practices of one school for court-involved youths, Passages Academy, since its inception in 1997 until 2011 (when DJJ merged with the Administration for Children Services to have the newly created Division of Youth and Family Justice run the school), in order to determine how and to what extent its practices have changed. To this end I: consider Passages Academy in the historical and cultural context of the New York City juvenile detention education; provide a historical overview of Passages Academy in its role as an educator of court-involved youth; examine the evolution of juvenile detention over the past 150 years and how it impacts Passages Academy; and evaluate, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, both the benefits and the drawbacks of using the detention centers to promote learning.

This book focuses on the teachers of Passages Academy and charts the ways in which they navigate the correctional component of their work with the Department of Juvenile Justice and their lived practicum between thought and action. I examine the agenda of each group within this professional coexistence, as well as the question of whether and to what extent each agency is sympathetic to the aims of the others. Whether acting in solidarity with one another or not, each of the agencies considered in this book is active in curriculum design and plays a prominent role in the education of our youth.

The thread that ties these seemingly disparate research goals together is the work of the teachers in the school. The various concerns of this project are rigorously expounded and interrogated through continual reference to and exploration of what teaching means at the Academy. Perhaps the basic question may be expressed even more simply: Given that students only attend the Academy for a few weeks, can anyone teach—or learn for that matter—in such an institution?

I am telling the story of the school, through the words, eyes and actions of the teachers. The attempt here is to write a richly layered study that is not policy-driven, but is instead experiential and academic. By concentrating on the teachers via a study that problematizes the fundamental question of what teaching is like in the specific environment and culture of the school, this book brings to light some of the pedagogical contradictions inherent in the educational setting of a social control institution. Though significant in terms of number of teachers in its workforce, juvenile detention education remains considerably hidden behind prison walls.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY AS A WAY OF KNOWING

Phenomenological ethnography helps us understand the experience of teaching during a particular time in a particular place and, ultimately, discover how people construct their own cultural and political subjectivity in the context of this world. The world I scrutinize in this book concerns the facilities run by the Department of Juvenile Justice, as well as the social, political and pedagogical forces that determine how court-involved youths are educated. My research focuses on the beliefs and behaviors that inform the teaching experience within these facilities and addresses the critical question of how these educators negotiate the learning spaces within this school community.

Another question informs much of this book: How are the philosophies of the various stake-holding agencies enacted daily in real classroom settings? In other words, what is the status of learning as the competing agendas of multiple agencies are played out within such a limited physical space? In addition, this study considers the ways in which classroom protocols and teachers' pedagogies—including curriculum, instruction, classroom management and assessment—are shaped by their students' status as incarcerated youth.

By considering the ways in which juvenile justice and public education are historically interdependent, this phenomenological ethnography proves a useful paradigm for building a framework in which to accurately tell this story. The research conducted according to this method provides insights into an area of education that to date has not been a topic of scholarly interest, with the ultimate intention of better informing teachers and policy makers about the teaching and learning available in schools for a court-involved youth cohort. It also gives an account of the often-adversarial relationships between the various agencies involved in juvenile detention.

In Chapter 2, I present an auto-ethnography of my experiences as a teacher at Passages Academy, a methodological choice made in order to accurately share my personal experiences, as well as those of my colleagues and my students. This enables me to pay close attention to epistemological and ethical issues. By examining the issues I've confronted in my work as a teacher, I intend to illustrate a world that to many is not only unfamiliar but also unimaginable. Data culled from a wide variety of sources provide a broad perspective on the juvenile detention education system, including the size and nature of the court-involved student population and, where possible, information on trends. Finally, I examine the children whose development and lives are most affected by juvenile detention education: The disproportionally Black and Latino boys and girls, many with learning

disabilities, most residing in poor urban neighborhoods, who are increasingly coming into contact with the correctional system.

In addition to the qualitative method being used to describe and explain conditions of present juvenile detention education, a second research component of this project is the systematic review of the available literature concerning a range of interrelated issues surrounding juvenile detention education. Existing data sets compiled by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Justice, and the Department of Education provide reliable statistics on the offenders, including: age, region, length of stays, types of offenses, race, education level, economic status, school suspensions, dropout status, and absenteeism. These social and demographic factors, in addition to legal variables, allow for an exploratory analysis of what detained youths experience in court, school and at home. By focusing closely on patterns in this new data, especially in the context of the inner cities, I paint a more extensive and sobering picture of the challenges that teachers at schools such as Passages must face.

DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

To obtain a clear understanding of Passages Academy's past and present role as an institution that educates court-involved learners, I conducted interviews with individuals who are, or have been, closely associated with the school. As the central focus of my qualitative research, through a total of 30 interviews of teachers and administrators, I gathered information concerning their personal experiences, professional careers and philosophical beliefs about pedagogy at Passages, as well as the variables determining who ends up here and why. Given that each school site has its own distinct "culture," the study is necessarily multi-sited. I administered consent forms to four-to six participants from each Passages site, interviewing them on tape for later transcription and analysis. It was crucial that the study represent individual attitudes towards all aspects of their pedagogical experience—including their "commitment" to this professional experience. Although I established no participant quotas in terms of gender, race and cultural/ethnic backgrounds, I intended the administrators and teachers participating in the interviews to represent the diversity of the school population. I did not want to disrupt the dimensions of my professional relationships and avoided approaches that might change power dimensions. Therefore, I recruited the volunteer interviewees by general public invitation.

Prior to beginning the interviews I began to thematize segments, as a way to further substantiate and support emergent themes. I pre-coded the data for

this book revolving around themes that already were emerging in my earlier studies and my own published work [*Teaching City Kids: Understanding and Appreciating Them* (2006), and *The Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology* (2007)] as well as in my field notes about the school. I organized the questions in blocks, and from the subheadings, I used six pre-coded segments for data collections. While analyzing and coding the data, I sought verbal expressions that best uncovered the interviewee's experience about teaching at Passages. This led to the introduction of many of the themes within this study (Basit, 2003). I then coded the transcripts and cut-and-pasted electronic files into named sections according to the six overarching categories previously established for the interview protocol: (1) *Demographic breakdown of the person being interviewed,* (2) *Role of the person in the institution,* (3) *Person's perceptions of students,* (4) *Pedagogical philosophy,* (5) *Experiential understanding* and (6) *Criticality.*

Each heading helped me retrieve specific segments as I went back later to analyze the findings. This method produced a snapshot that I later used to articulate and support the study of the issues of teaching inside a juvenile detention center, thereby allowing me to revisit and refine the themes and narratives as they were developing.

My interview questions drew upon the wisdom of generations of sociologists whose calling is to transform messy, intimate personal experiences and social attitudes into discreet, orderly and crunchable numbers. I used Corrine Glesne's *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* (2006) to help structure this area of the study, as her work is particularly insightful in this process. The goal is not to look for simple binary answers to simple binary questions, but rather to avoid the pedantic and strive for dialogue.

Some sample questions include:

- How and why did you become involved in Passages Academy?
- What have been the biggest challenges in your experience?
- What do you think is the purpose of this program? Does it live up to its mission?
- How do you assess student achievement at this school?
- How are students encouraged to take interest and ownership in their education at this school while knowing they are here for an average of 36 days?
- Which pedagogical approaches and curricula best serve the teachers and students of the academy?

(For a complete list of interview questions and headings, see Appendix)

In 30 face-to-face, open-ended interviews with teachers and administrators, I asked essentially the same questions, but depending on how each individual responded, I manipulated the order in which they were asked. I based one-on-one interviews on structuring questions, asked over the course of interviews, depending upon the way that each discussion developed. Being of a rather intimate nature and intentionally designed to allow for open-ended responses, these questions evolved into discussions that could not have been anticipated.

Examining the myriad ways interviewees describe their jobs and roles in their students' lives, I was able to post-code data by analyzing consistencies, changes and emerging patterns.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

In analyzing the data for this phenomenological ethnography, my knowledge of the institution and its archives played an important role by allowing me to situate the subject both institutionally and historically. The archival data provide a "setting" for the school, within which this study's *in situ* structure is able to bring its history to life.

The numerous legal obstacles dealing with children are barriers that become more complex within a juvenile detention setting. Although Passages has no school yearbook, numerous writing publications, animated videos and musical recordings have been produced there. Reading, viewing and listening to this student-generated work provided additional points of access to the teaching and learning that the school offers. I analyzed the archival data in terms of academic development, critical consciousness and action towards change. This three-part approach is rooted in the belief that the desired outcome for pedagogy in juvenile detention centers is to impact academic achievement, identity development and civic engagement.

ENTRY AND IDENTITY

In the seminal television documentary series *Eyes on the Prize* (Hampton, 1987), the narrator, Julian Bond, cites the importance of getting a story right in order to know the meaning. Accordingly, I have drawn upon my experiences as a teacher at Passages to connect and support my anecdotal and empirical findings. Soon after I came to Passages as a teacher, my position expanded into multiple roles in the school site: practitioner, advocate, researcher, and scholar. All of these roles have influences the process and product of this phenomenological ethnography.

I considered who might benefit from the research. Through engaging in this discussion about teacher agency, purposes and practices, this project offered me a rare opportunity to consider educational philosophies and give voice to each staff member's individuality, professionalism and humanity. I was increasingly troubled to discover that the wisdom of teachers were not often included in scholarly conversations about education. In *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment* (2002), author Joe Kincheloe describes this disconcerting paradox: 'Such elitism precludes teacher-directed research and the democratization of the workplace; it reinforces hierarchical distinctions that disempower teachers and, ultimately, their students" (Gordon, 2009). Empowering teachers and administrators to express themselves is particularly important in an era during which there is increasing interest in de-individualizing teachers and de-professionalizing education. This is manifested in the growing number of schools and districts across the country adopting programs to address the needs of court-involved students.

POSITIONALITY

The ethical dimensions of research raise the questions of where I fit in the research and what I should include in it. To navigate these issues, I have drawn from the work of Francis Moore Lappé, who states, "Each of us carries within us a world view, a set of assumptions about how the world works-that forms the very questions we allow ourselves to ask and determines our views of future possibilities" (Feagin & Vera, 2001).

To understand the forces that have influenced my practice, I believe that my 25-year professional experience working with court–involved youth in both residential homes as a youth care worker and as a teacher in alternative, non-secure and secure detention school settings have provided me with certain insights. I would like to think that my professional resume has added an element of empathy, understanding, respect and patience toward my practice and this study. A disproportionate percentage of inner-city youth within detention centers are special education classified, including a population of adolescents who read below a third grade level equivalent; there is also correlation between inner-city students' higher special education identification and their over-representation in detention centers (Carris, 2011). Various studies additionally pointed out the connection between low reading levels and incarceration. In 2001, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice reported that the average reading level for ninth graders in detention facilities

was fourth grade. In a New York City detention center, in which the majority of the students' ages range from 13–16, The New York City Department of Education's statistics indicate that as of 2007, 25% of the students read below a 2.5 grade level.

Many of the students in the Passages program have difficulties with reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding), often referred to as dyslexia. Most of these students, due to lack of economic resources, may not have received adequate interventions, and thus their language-related experiences become socio-political interferences (Carris, 2011).

OUT HERE IN THE FIELD

It's only teenage wasteland.

~The Who

This is a story told from my point of view, as a person who's been there, and who's is even part of the story. I took field notes weekly over three years. I used spiral notebooks to write down my observations and typed out the notes the same evening. I was also careful to use the tape recorder only during the one-on-one interviews, the recordings of which were later transcribed. The matter of audio recording required discretion, because discussion of juvenile detention education can be a particularly sensitive topic for many teachers and administrators, some of who would consequently be uncomfortable confiding their thoughts on tape. I further understood that walking around with a tape recorder in a school where the students are wards of the court would be both inappropriate and distracting. Therefore, I wrote down most of the utterances, conversations and quotes contained in this study into my field notebook, occasionally supplementing them with what I recalled during my nightly rewriting sessions.

My methodology constantly required me to integrate my transcribed and rewritten field notes with previous data. Less consistent, though methodologically sound, was my process of re-reading this data and giving it the form of a phenomenological ethnographic narrative. This work was sporadic and continued as such until completion.

Phenomenological ethnography is the art of observation. It is also a narrative infused with a large degree of pathos. This phenomenological ethnography takes an in-depth look at teaching and teachers at Passages. Passages Academy is a school program spread out among the boroughs of New York City, with a faculty of 87 teachers. It contains seven schools, essentially encompassing 60 miles of distance. It is both a place and an idea.

CHAPTER 2

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

Everything has beauty, but not everyone can see it.

~Confucius

I suppose that every occupation has a variable that keeps it fresh. Doctors see new patients, writers explore different subjects or themes, and electricians work on different circuits. As a teacher at Passages, a school catering to students awaiting trial, the building is the same, the books are the same, and I am the same. But my students are the one glaring variable in my occupation. They are always different, though their tenure is most often brief.

Despite the high turnover rate, I must attend to all of the students in my class, regardless of their learning discrepancies, their unstable court-involved lives and their prior learning experiences. They are the definition of a heterogeneous group. Some students walk through my doors reading at a second grade level; others can breeze through Melville in a week. Some have been arrested for violent crimes, while others have arrived in my classroom because of minor cafeteria skirmishes. These differences are irrelevant to me. They have to be, because I am there to teach these students and to focus exclusively on their academic progress.

It is impossible to stagnate in this environment. Some of the lessons stay the same year to year, but the audience is constantly in flux. I take inspiration from the lessons I teach, from the teaching methods of my colleagues and, most of all, from my students.

TRANSPARENCY

The fate of one individual invariably fits the fate of the other, and each is the hero of his own drama while simultaneously figuring in a drama foreign to him.

~Arthur Schopenhauer

I began working as an English teacher at Passages Academy in August of 2002. From that time, I have kept a journal. Although the writing has been sporadic and occasionally soporific, I have pursued it with the intention

of using it to reflect on my teaching and lesson planning, as well as my evolution as a pedagogical practitioner. For the purposes of this book, I have formalized this process of documenting my teaching experience and my time as an employee of Passages. What follows are excerpts and entries gathered over the course of a decade. Some are personal and informal, while others are more structured and academic. I have purposefully omitted exact dates in an attempt to more accurately reflect my experience – to misquote Alphonse Karr, "The more things change the more they stay the same."

I borrow this method from Willard Waller, who made use of journal writing in his research; many of Waller's studies were lifted directly from his own experiences, particularly from the disappointments of his early days as a teacher. He also drew insights from the personal experiences of his colleagues and students, which at the time was hardly a traditional procedure. Waller observes, "If you believe that the way to research is to split hairs concerning what is and what is not scientific, you create a market for methodological disputations and that is all that you get" (1970). In this way, I hope that my journals will be relevant to a community of teachers not only on a personal level, but also on a scientific one.

Willard Waller was one of the early promoters of the philosophy that the society of a school reflected society at large. Further, Waller explained in his uniquely colloquial tone, by virtue of a school being part of a larger society, a rift would develop between school systems and the outside world. In such a framework, many things that often seem contradictory can be true at once, specifically when working with identity development, knowledge and emotional healing.

By implementing Waller's technique of using personal narrative by paying close attention to epistemological and ethical issues, my panegyric of non-fictive discourse includes self-analysis and self-evaluation, examining the issues I have confronted in my work as a teacher at Passages. It is important for me to discuss my personal experiences because they illustrate a world that is, to many, not only unfamiliar, but also unimaginable. I have become inured to circumstances that many would find disheartening at best and statutorily egregious at worst. It is important to personalize the academic because, ultimately, the policies and history of Alternative Schooling have affected individuals, not just institutions.

I'm watching the trial of a sixteen year-old boy, charged with vandalism and trespassing. From the open courtroom window across Leonard Street, I can barely see the local high school, where kids are pouring out into the spring day. The sounds of their laughter drift into the stuffy courtroom while, on the

stand, a witness points out the frightened young man sitting at the defense table. Idling on the street corner below is a Department of Corrections van, waiting to transport this young man to the Bridges Intake Center, where he will endure a medical examination and academic and emotional diagnoses before being shipped off to an unfamiliar new home and school.

I imagine that, upon entering Passages, students must feel like they are slipping into an altered reality where time and space shift. The world they knew—whether it was comfortable and homey or unpredictable and tumultuous—is gone. What follows is a tale of what happens on the other side.

A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

I am not supposed to have favorite students, but it is impossible to avoid. One Friday, just before a long weekend and a day before my birthday, Stacey solidified her special place in my memory.

The girls' class is waiting for the van to take them back to their group home and I am headed downstairs from my office on the fourth floor. Stacey sees me from the art room doorway and calls me over. We shake hands, formally, as is the norm for greeting someone at Boys Town and she leans against the dark blue doorjamb, her dyed orange-blonde-brown hair in stark contrast to her backdrop. I make myself comfortable in the chair across from her, eager, even after school hours on a Friday, to hear whatever stories she tells because her stories are funny, sometimes shocking and always revealing. As much as she may like me, I realize that I'm just an excuse for her to avoid the art teacher.

For the shortest second ever recorded, it is silent, while Stacey searches for something to say; all of a sudden, her face lights up. There is fire behind her eyes, and words tumble out of her mouth like a waterfall. "You neva' axed why I'm here!" she exclaims, her Queens accent beautifully mutilating her words. "Aren't chu curious? It doesn't make you scared? What if I was in here for killin' my English teacher?"

Tongue-in-cheek as ever, Stacey grins as she crinkles her eyes and forehead. I have learned that this is her version of a wink. She continues, half a breath later. "I got arrested. That was when I was at Passages before. Four months. Got let out on probation. I started smoking cigarettes cuz I couldn't smoke weed."

When I show my distain for cigarettes, Stacey jumps on it: "I know. I know! But I couldn't smoke weed! I was doin' good for a while, but then I broke

probation. That's what really got me in trouble. I wasn't keeping curfew an' I missed two drug tests…nah, three. But the third was cuz I was in a fight. Bitch pulled out a knife! Cops came before she swung though, so ain't nuthin' happened. 'Cept I got locked up again. But I broke probation, so I guess I'm not that surprised.

"I tol' you I got sentenced?" A strange energy infuses her voice, excitement and sadness intertwined. "Yea, they supposed to take me today. I don't know when tho – Damn…oh well. Anyways, I'm glad they waited 'til later in the day, cuz I wanted to take your test."

The fire returns to her eyes as the sadness leaves them.

"I aced it, Mista! I studied real hard. Did you grade it yet?" She looks disappointed as I shake my head, but remains upbeat. "Well…when you do… you'll see! A+… Anyways, I got 18 months, Cayuga Homes. Supposed to be kinda nice. I guess. And don't worry, Mr. G, I'm not down wit' the way I was. I'm gonna get my GED there. They got this program, you know?"

The front door opens downstairs and Stacey hears her name.

"What?!" she calls, standing to take a couple steps to the top of the stairs. "Oh… okay… I'm coming." She turns back to me: "I gotta go, Mista. Eighteen months if I'm good. Four years if I'm not. I'll be good." She smirks, shakes my hand, and heads back into the hallway.

Two seconds later, Stacey barges back into the classroom, her hair trailing behind her: "Oh yeah. Happy birthday, Mista. I'll holla at 'chu."

LES MISÉRABLES

You can learn a lot about a society by looking at its prisons.
~Fyodor Dostoyevsky

I have taught many Staceys. She, like many of the pre-adjudicated students at Passages, had made mistakes and was struggling, like most young adults, to figure out the world and her burgeoning place in it. In my role as educator, I feel it is inappropriate to pry into why my students have been detained. Instead, I focus on teaching individuals, irrespective of whatever brought them into my classroom. This offers them an opportunity to transcend the labels and allegations that are likely weighing on them and gives them a chance to interact with a sense of normalcy during this time of crisis.

Like Stacey, some students are academically motivated. Others, as I discovered early on, will read their first sentence on the premises. Some are shy, seeming to hide a secret life, and others extremely boisterous. Some thrive in these smaller classes, taking advantage of the extra attention we

can provide, and some are recalcitrant, likely feeling exposed in a classroom setting for the first time. Some are explicit about their dreams of becoming architects, lawyers or dancers, while others project a nihilism that seems tragically premature or are deeply entrenched in gang life. They tell me stories of life on the streets, of a Fresh-Air-Fund summer camp in upstate New York, or the terror of being locked up during the Blackout of 2003.

One of the encouraging cases was a fifteen-year-old girl named Tammi, who was extremely motivated. She was the kind of student who sits up front, as though this will allow her to receive the information slightly before those sitting in the back. But she was not selfish: she helped other students and, when there was a distraction in class, she became annoyed, seemingly on behalf of all of us. Tammi's eagerness to learn motivated me to be a better teacher. I would specifically think about her as I planned my lessons. For example, in prior years, I would bring in Ginsberg's poem *Howl*, and while the students were reading it, I would write five lines on the board for a post-reading discussion. However, anticipating Tammi's elastic interpretation of structure, I instead asked the students to select the five lines from the poem for our discussion. This proved to be more interesting because choosing the lines forced them to engage with the poem more deeply.

I was surprised, then, to find out that Tammi was barely passing in her community school. According to her, she had excelled throughout elementary school but when she got to middle and high school her social life took priority over academic work. With her strong personality, Tammi found herself in one fight after another, a pattern that ultimately brought her into my classroom. In private discussions, Tammi acknowledged that the small classes and constant supervision at Passages had gotten her back on track. When she finally left us, she was studying for the Global History Regents Exam.

Unlike Tammi, fourteen-year-old Martin could barely read. When he first arrived at Passages, he was extremely disruptive in class. Martin did not do any work and he was often written up and sent to the correctional officers. The reading teacher, Ms. Burwell, was the first to realize that Martin was a non-reader and she began tutoring him after school, a previously unheard of luxury for Martin. She also referred him to the reading specialist, Ms. Carris, who visited our site twice a week. After a few weeks of one-to-one tutoring, Martin made small but significant improvements. He seemed to develop a new trust for teachers and even began to settle down during class. Though he couldn't read very well, he was able to get involved in discussions. He especially thrived when we listened to music as part of the lesson.

I particularly remember during a drama unit (Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*) that he enjoyed when I played the *Eroica* symphony, which Beethoven wrote to honor Napoleon.

The staff at Passages not only helped demystify reading and writing for Martin, but we helped simplify and elucidate the confusing and intimidating world of school. I find it both encouraging and disheartening to see kids like Martin, Tammi and Stacey pass through my classroom. It is painfully clear that students like them thrive in our system, which promotes individual attention and inspired, unique lessons. But our system is not a permanent solution; Passages is a temporary artery that they pass through on their way back to an overcrowded public school or a stifling detention center classroom. I always value the little time we have together, struggle to make it sustainable after they are gone and, ultimately, wish it could be longer.

A CULTURE OF NO EXPECTATIONS

> *The message I stress: to make it stop, study your lessons. Don't settle for less – even a genius asks-es questions.*
>
> ~ Tupac Shakur

In order to meet the vastly different needs of my revolving door of learners, I have to create lesson plans elastic enough to suit each student. More specifically, I have to find ways to challenge those who are working above grade level and remediate those below—a single lesson plan that accommodates both the Martins and the Tammis. For example, one lesson plan that seems to successfully span all learning levels is the analysis of the Tupac Shakur song "Me Against The World." For the lower-level learners, a discussion of rhyme scheme might be sufficient, while the higher-level learners can focus on the socio-political philosophies behind Tupac's words. In this way, the following two lines can provide a full lesson for almost any student: "Can't reach the children cause they're illin'/Addicted to killing and the appeal from the cap peeling."

The lower-level learners can examine the way Tupac plays with rhyme scheme and alliteration – "illing" rhymes with "killing" and is a half rhyme with "peeling" and "appeal" is alliterative with "cap peeling." The higher-level learners can analyze Tupac's lament of the difficulties of educating those who are stuck in a cycle of violence. Furthermore, an even more in-depth discussion can relate Tupac's words to the students' own lives, creating a self-reflective discourse that is both academically relevant and personally valuable. Therefore, in one forty-five minute class period that focuses on

two lines of a rap, our lesson could span a genuinely high-level discussion of identity as well as a more simple analysis of poetry, alliteration and rhyme scheme. We are able to carry on this varied discussion without alienating any students; everyone feels integrated because each of them can relate and participate in at least one part of the lesson. And, more importantly, the lower level-learners are exposed to high-level discussions, which may accelerate their academic experience.

As a teacher at Passages, I am always determined to not only know my students, but also to understand the complicated environments in which they have been raised. Brazilian education philosopher Paolo Freire's (1970) work bluntly calls upon educators to understand the worlds of their students before addressing them: "Often, educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address. Accordingly, their talk is just alienated and alienating rhetoric." For this reason, I believe it is important for me to understand where my students have come from. I have been able to do this in a few ways: I have visited the four group homes that house the non-secure detention (NSD) residents on Thanksgivings, I have done personal walking tours of the neighborhoods that my students mention in class and I have spoken to the parents of students, either over the telephone or in-person at parent-teacher nights. But the most important interaction I have with students has been simply speaking to them.

What initially inspired me to bring in the Tupac Shakur piece is that my students often refer to him. However, I also had an interesting conversation about the Tupac lesson with a student who suggested I bring in some alternative resources. She said to me, "Gabay, I get enough negativity at home and I like you and your class, but I like it best when you keep the lessons positive. I like 'Me Against the World,' but it wouldn't hurt you to also find something happy." This student taught me that I had failed to acknowledge the beauty and positivity in their worlds and the dialectic between difference and deficiency. That is, in my attempt to connect with the students, I had brought in songs, magazine articles and books that all shared a heightened sense of urban drama and an element of sensationalized danger. I found myself playing into hackneyed imagery of violence and adversity as a means to capture their attention and win them over. Therefore, my student's request that I "lighten up" the classroom discourse made me realize that their worlds are as varied as anyone else's, despite their current unique situation.

This theme of resisting the tendency toward exoticizing the students was further hammered home when I was teaching at Crossroads Detention

Center in Brooklyn and a guard pulled me aside to say, "When you write your book, don't exploit us or the students. Don't make it Hollywood. Don't forget the beauty! You got to keep it real…but isn't beauty part of keeping it real?" The student and the guard reframed the way I taught at the school. Obviously, despite their incarceration, the students may experience hope and love, and productive things are happening in the areas where these students live. By omitting the positive aspects of their rich cultural, social and even economic histories, I was inadvertently limiting the students' classroom learning experience. Not surprisingly, as I began this shift to lessons of elevation or positivity, I noticed improvements in behavior during class time and even a rise in the number of students doing homework assignments.

SPEAK UP, BUT DON'T SHOUT!

As detailed above, my students' feedback is invaluable. In fact, it is the most important feedback I receive. Nonetheless, working in the tight quarters of the Boys Town non-secure building at Passages Academy, I have found it impossible not to take inspiration from my colleagues. In particular, the late Devon Smalls, who was the Music and Creative Writing teacher, made a perfect model for me. Specifically, I remember one experience where Mr. Smalls helped me grow:

There are two Mac computers, a bass guitar, a microphone and two students with headphones and preoccupied looks, holding marble writing books. Three other students are sitting at the table and compulsively thinking; brainwaves seem to be humming vertiginous sensations of recognition of something familiar. What I am observing is exactly how one might imagine a hip-hop recording studio in Brooklyn, as opposed to a classroom in a juvenile detention center.

When Mr. Smalls addresses the students, expounding on the historical significance of today's beat, which they will be singing and rapping over, they look at him as teenagers often do—bored and unimpressed. Billy, the poet and apparent raconteur of the group, complains, "Who cares about the history of rap? We're running out of time and need to finish!" Mr. Smalls looks at the candid student with the 'I don't give a damn what you think' mouth. He pauses, for effect. "Music and art are *history, Billy" he proceeds, "and this is part of the program. Though your fortitude is humbling, you will not be rude and cut me off, especially when I am about to talk about the Cold Crush Brothers." Mr. Smalls and Billy make quick eye contact and both smile knowingly, both aware of the other's games.*

In the scenario above, Mr. Smalls deftly does a dozen good things at once. His academic lesson is as important as his social one and his candor is as valuable as his kindness. He is able to use his student's creativity to teach them about history and, when he is challenged, he immediately – and with sly humor – draws a correlation between art and history. Frankly, I was in awe.

I would often find myself situated as the proverbial fly on the wall in Mr. Smalls' classroom. We were co-teachers but I sometimes felt like another student, furiously taking mental notes with the intention of emulating him. His teaching was not subtle and his lessons were implicit. He freely employed street terms—"let's get *crunk*," and "make sure your mind's *brollick*"—to let students know where he came from. But beyond his use of words, Mr. Smalls was able to seamlessly connect our students' lives with their work. He once told me:

> I wanted to try a different thing. I wanted to bring in the culture of their neighborhood in a stronger way, so I decided to have them narrate their stories in song, using their voice, persona, and elements from their neighborhood. Many of our students have been alienated from serious academic work; theirs is a culture of disenfranchisement. Education needs to respect identity by allowing the students to express their own emotional reality as opposed to one driven or prescribed. A teacher who can connect self and community has provided an honest exchange between people. The way I gauge it is, if at the end of the class I end up exhausted and the students are not, I am doing too much of the work.

Mr. Smalls taught me that our students' reality is something to be questioned and analyzed and is a subject as important to our curriculum as math and science. I have always felt that the described above hip-hop unit with Mr. Smalls was an example of the purest form of telling a story because we were opening up the schematic of literacy by using various forms of expression. We were employing in-class writing, music and oratory collaboration in a calculated attempt to offer a technical examination of this school and a conversation about life, art, philosophy, and even incarceration. In our own way, we were writing a mini-ethnography with music. When I asked him how he had so skillfully quieted Billy, his answer surprised me:

> Don't underestimate the sophistication of that kid. While his antics may seem reckless, I think they are intentional and part of a broader and complicated psychology: to motivate and inspire his peers and himself, and to disorient and annoy his opponents (like us teachers). This street

> psychology is a large part of why he is here, but it can also lead to success at this level. It's also why he has been able to maintain an incredible level of intensity and consistency in this classroom.

Though Mr. Smalls is no longer with us, his voice stays with me every day because of his insightful analyses of students like Billy. Mr. Smalls forced me to practice thinking in a way that was, for him, instinct. He was able to see so many things at once—e.g., Billy's recklessness and calculation, his supportiveness and antagonism—and the more I am able to acknowledge and reconcile these apparently conflicting motivations, the more like Mr. Smalls—and the better as a teacher—I become.

STRAIGHT OUT OF COMP. 101

> *An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.*
>
> ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

At the beginning of every school year, I am faced with an almost humorous conflict: what to do with the dense, two-inch thick *Curriculum and State Standards* tome? I have the simultaneous urge to frame and memorize it and also use it as a doorstop or seat cushion. The *Curriculum and State Standards* is a guidebook designed to take teachers through an entire year of teaching. It is replete with lesson plans, learning materials such as articles, short stories and poems and a "Pacing Calendar" that instructs teachers what and when to teach various subjects. It is valuable, but primarily as a point of departure, not a destination carved in stone. The *Curriculum* I am given is specifically designed for my unique school and rightly accounts for the average thirty-six-day stay of our students; my administration has suggested either telescoping or spreading out the concepts and activities over two or three days, as new students are constantly rotating through my classroom.

Fortunately, the scripted framework of the *Curriculum and State Standards* has encouraged me to experiment and personalize strategies to make them my own. With provisions for a certain degree of improvisation and spontaneity, many of my lessons follow a self-developed format: I begin to learn about the students on a personal level, evaluate their needs as writers, and assess their personal passions as a means of seeking to broaden their learning parameters. During a lesson on onomatopoeia that I felt was rote and stagnant, a student suggested that a hip-hop group, the Roots, used this literary technique to create words based upon sound and effect. With

each successive lesson on language, my students and I reference more hip-hop songwriters: Tupac Shakur for imagery (as explained in the previous section), Notorious B.I.G. for narrative, and Jay-Z for metaphor. I started bringing these songs into the classroom and asking students to analyze the lyrics as well as to use what others had written as a model for their own writing. With such an approach, my once-stagnant lesson was given new life and intimacy, celebrating creativity, history, diversity, intelligence and personal power.

Another time, during a lesson on "Symbolism in Writing," a student referenced the use in popular culture of iconic symbols such as Nike's "Swoosh" logo and McDonalds' famous Golden Arches. This fun and transformative moment ultimately lead to an exploration of trends in media consolidation by understanding basic principles of advertising and describing images and symbolism. The following semester, I continued with this analysis when teaching imagery by examining how the media influences self-conceptions of body image and how this affects social attitudes and behaviors. In this way, my methodology is such that lesson plans are rooted in traditional academic customs but are ultimately designed to grow out of departure points and expand into further educational exploration.

The most successful application of a unique teaching method to a more formal mandate was a nontraditional approach to our unit on theater. In this unit, the *Curriculum and State Standards* provides teachers with passages from Arthur Miller's *Crucible* and August Wilson's *Fences.* While these texts can be enjoyable and engaging for students, I wanted to take advantage of being in New York City and my personal connections to those in the theater arts community.

I asked a professional actor friend to take on the role of my co-teacher by visiting my class once a week over the course of a semester. She taught and administered various acting games that inspired students to learn in a totally new way. For example, one of the games she played with students was called "Taxi." In this exercise, one student is assigned the role of taxi driver and his/her job is to pick up various passengers, who are played by the other students, and make casual conversation. Entirely improvised, this game asks students to create characters and use their imaginations to project those characters onto an entirely fictional set of circumstances. More than just fun, this exercise forced students to empathize, because they had to immerse themselves in the mind of someone else. It also brought typically shy students out of their shells because they were encouraged to speak without the often-intimidating feeling of being judged—after all, it was "just a character."

Furthermore, though the acting project is not formally part of the curriculum, it is pedagogically reflective by nature as the learners look at characters and explore issues of self in relation to society. Evidence of its efficacy was found in a free-writing journal entry of a student, who expressed this very sentiment with great insight and aplomb:

> *When I'm alone I try to finally relax and think about the struggle of my parents and what it means for me. I can't just relax though, I need something to twist up or drink down. Just like Hubble [from* Runaways*], anger has built up in me. Performing keeps me safe because when I'm bored I do stupid things. It is better for everyone if I just chill when I'm alone, I don't know what else to do.* (Jonathan, student, age 16)

Jonathan's piece demonstrates different forms of reflectiveness and empowerment. During the theater unit, students have opportunities to act out their situations, emotions and feelings while hiding behind the safety of a costume and character. In this case, Jonathan is able to think about himself in a roundabout way—through the character of Hubble—and this is likely a more palatable experience for someone unaccustomed to confronting his inner turmoil.

By condoning my use of such a methodology, my school's administration has provided both its teachers and students the opportunity for agency while simultaneously offering a curriculum that is focused upon breaking the built-in structural antagonisms. In doing so, they were able to successfully alter the traditional hegemonic dynamic often found in schools without compromising the legitimacy of school as a place to learn (Gabay, 2007).

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND—BUT ARE THEY MOVING FORWARD?

I have described above the many ways I am inspired by my colleagues and students. But it is important for me to remember that, while emulating those whom I think are great, I also must emphasize what I believe I do well as a teacher. For this reason, I would like to explore my own style, how it has evolved and what I have learned from my experiences. In retrospect, my trajectory to Passages seems inevitable and I realize that I have always been attracted to teaching. Long before I had formalized any concrete thoughts of educating, I regularly volunteered to teach. Not surprisingly, this behavior led to more official teaching opportunities.

In eleventh grade, I was standing outside my school when I saw my teacher's daughter trying to ride her bicycle. She was struggling to stay balanced in the parking lot while waiting for her mother to exit the school.

Instinctively, I ran over and, as I'm wont to do, gave her some advice: "Keep your head up, relax your hands and trust it." It was advice that I would have wanted to hear.

Several weeks later, Ms. Quintos, my teacher and the mother of the budding cyclist, recommended to me that I become a counselor at the Helen Keller Day Camp for the Blind. When I asked her why she thought I would be a good fit, she said, "My daughter said you were the only one who taught her how to ride a bike." I hadn't thought much about helping her daughter. I was just doing what came naturally.

In the more structured environment at the Helen Keller Day Camp, I discovered that I had a skill set that I really enjoyed applying. The camp was comprised of young people with visual and hearing disabilities and I was assigned to be the counselor of the older boys group. Though my campers were disabled, they were also typical boys—rambunctious, competitive and curious about girls. In this way, I had to simultaneously temper their enthusiasm and protect them. It never occurred to me that this might be a difficult task because I always felt at ease. In retrospect, it seems that my comfort in this unique situation meant that I belonged; I excelled because I felt challenged but not overwhelmed. I spent the following three summers at the Helen Keller Day Camp.

After finishing my undergraduate degree at USC, I was in Los Angeles with an English degree and little direction. I attended a USC job fair to explore possible career opportunities and was struck by the results of a questionnaire: I was on track to be either a photographer, a beautician or a youth care worker. Though I was handy with an aperture and a hairbrush, I was most interested in teaching, so I was given the contact information for a group home in North Hollywood.

The Eddie Lee Home for Youth is an emancipation home for students transitioning out of incarceration. As a youth care worker, I worked twelve hour shifts with various responsibilities: I made sure the students went to school every day, did their homework, cleaned their rooms, did their chores, held a job and maintained a bank account. I felt immediately comfortable and, more importantly, valuable. I had grown up in a nice suburb of New York City, but I realized that the only thing separating me from these kids who had just got out of detention was opportunity and access. At Eddie Lee, I felt I was providing them with that missing link.

Determined to become a teacher in earnest, I decided to enroll in NYU's Graduate English Education Program. At NYU, I learned the trade of teaching—lesson planning, classroom management and creating a personal

philosophical disposition as a teacher—and I also studied the formal history of education. After receiving my Masters degree, I went to Geneva, Switzerland and taught English at an International School. Though I loved teaching and, in many ways, this experience confirmed my decision to pursue it as a career, I became a little homesick and vowed to begin teaching in the New York City public school system.

After returning home from Switzerland, I taught in two traditional New York City Public Schools: MS 321 and Columbus High School, both in the Bronx. Though many of my students were dealing with difficult personal circumstances, they were not in need of the kind of special attention that I had been asked to provide at the Helen Keller Day Camp and Eddie Lee. I felt like I was missing something, as though I was only doing half of what I was capable of doing and I decided to seek out a school setting that allowed me to reconcile my interest in teaching English with my interest in helping those in need. When a friend suggested Passages Academy, I became immediately intrigued. It seemed like the perfect fit, and I expected that it would give me an opportunity to teach in an environment where I would thrive. Of course, this transition was not initially easy.

The first few months at Passages were very uncomfortable for me. I found myself far out of my comfort zone, as I and the students were unused to this environment where the turnover rate was alarmingly high and their stays were exceptionally brief. Still, I knew enough about myself to know that I was on the right path, just in a difficult part of it. I decided to stick it out, be resourceful and pretend I was confident until I actually was.

It is a cliché at Passages to talk about "reinvention," because the teachers are always telling the students that this is a safe place to create their new lives. But at the risk of perpetuating a cliché, Passages reinvented me. Although the stakes for each student were higher than in my previous teaching environments, just by virtue of their more dramatic circumstances, I felt paradoxically at ease. My experiences there were similar to those at Helen Keller and Eddie Lee: I felt more valuable in a room that cried out for extra attention. More significantly, I was able to reframe teaching for myself by trying everything from repeating a lecture to exploring and questioning its purpose.

Over the next several years, my teaching style evolved, although the core has not really changed. Though I am shaped by great colleagues like Mr. Smalls and insightful and outspoken students like Tammi, I am also the same teacher I was so many years ago with Ms. Quintos' daughter: "Keep your head up, relax your hands and trust it." In an attempt to characterize

my teaching style, I like to emulate a marginally original quote from the movie *Hoosiers*: "Don't show them what you're not, just share who you are. Don't waste time hiding bad stuff, just let your good parts shine through." Mr. Smalls called me, "The Lady Gaga of teachers: assured, excessive, self-important and ridiculous beyond belief." My boss called my class "a masterpiece of under- and overstatement." In a classroom evaluation, my students referred to me as gentle, ironic, self-deprecating and tough.

When I started teaching at Passages, I tried to suppress my personality or tailor my behavior to my students. But I discovered I was far happier and more successful emphasizing what made me unique. I've learned how to reconcile who I am with what my students need: that is, how to be both boisterous and reserved, sympathetic and brutal, how to talk about life in general while simultaneously talking about the subject at hand and, finally, how to walk the fine line between frivolous conversation and formal instruction.

Most importantly, I try to reaffirm a positive message. I know that these students' lives are exceedingly difficult and that they are often surrounded by negative and discouraging examples. In this way, I have several mantras that I try to communicate, whether implicitly or explicitly. Many of my Passages students are either remarkably intelligent but unmotivated, or garrulously confident but bored. Instead of meeting these reluctant students with frustration or admonition that they are not living up to their potential, our classroom becomes place of acceptance and promise. My students are tiptoeing in a world of insecurity and it is my role to create a safe space for them to open up and experiment. The students do not want my pity, but rather they want me to be good at what I do; I can be firm and encouraging at the same time. Finally, I tell the students (and, in many ways, I tell myself) that if they are not making mistakes, they are not trying. It is only when we overcome the inevitable frustration of trying and failing that we can begin the very satisfying journey of trying again and succeeding.

NEVER GET IN THEIR FACE, BUT GET IN THEIR HEAD

> *All young people are looking for the same thing: a pat on the back for doing something well.*
>
> ~Joe Namath

As this chapter focuses on my experiences teaching, I think it is fitting to end with the most important part of my job: the students. As such, below is the complicated and all-too-common story of Aiden:

Aidan should have been in eighth grade, but he was stuck in seventh. The teachers and I agreed that this young Haitian boy was the sweetest student we had seen in years and we were all inclined to believe his story: He had taken the fall for a parole violation that his brother committed. His brother ran their family; Mom was crazy and Dad was heavily gang related, with ties going back to Haiti.

Aidan was fourteen years old but looked twelve and, when you asked him his name, he would always give you his first and last name, like there was a stenographer in the room. He was one of those students that arrives every few months: the kind that makes teachers want to go above and beyond to help. Aidan's problems were profound and institutional but we did the little we could to make his brief time at Passages as beneficial as possible:

- *Aidan liked to paint, so we made sure he had an unlimited stock of art supplies. I even went to Pearl Paint on Canal Street to get him the specific acrylic paints he liked.*
- *He mentioned he liked "Street Lit," so I went to the Strand Bookstore to pick up a few books by K'wan Foye.*
- *I rearranged the schedule to give Aidan extra time with the school social worker in an attempt to give him a feeling of safety and structure.*

These little gestures had an impact, but I felt like I was pushing water back into the ocean. I knew that much larger waves were sweeping him deeper in and, after a few weeks of minor progress, he was washed back into the system. Aidan was sent to Rikers one night with no warning and no explanation. I just showed up for work and his seat was empty. And this is the way my job works: You get attached to students, and want to help, and then the thing you were making progress with is gone. It's the most frustrating feeling; like any good I do is going to be discouragingly temporary.

But even more discouraging is hearing about what happened to Aidan. His story is unfortunately all too common and all too baffling. After mysteriously leaving Passages, he is brought to Intake at Rikers Island Prison, the largest Penal colony in America, to live under the same roof as murderers, high profile felons and the generally dangerous. Through the Passages social worker, I find out the following about Aidan:

Just before his sixteenth birthday, he is released from Rikers and gets sent back home. He is enrolled in a GED program, GED Plus, in Midtown Manhattan and is listed as being in seventh grade even though he was taking high school level classes at Island Academy, the school at Rikers. Presumably, because Aidan feels old and out of place amongst the seventh graders, he

stops going to the GED program. Unhelpfully, his parole officer says, "I don't care if you go to school or not. Just don't get busted for having drugs in you." The PO means this colloquially, implying that the most important thing for Aidan is staying clean, but Aidan, taking advantage of the PO, stops going to school. A few weeks later, he is called in front of a judge and, too nervous to discuss his academic truancy, skips the hearing and is eventually sent upstate to Oswego Prison. Seven months later, he is released and sent to Community Prep in East Midtown. Still trying to help, I call the Principal to tell him how great Aidan is. He says, "We had no idea, all he does is hang out with other kids from jail." About to be eighteen, he still has not a single high school credit to his name and cannot read above a fourth grade level. I feel powerless and wish he was back here at Passages, where we were able to let him paint and write and read and grow.

But before I can fully mourn Aidan and his unfortunate circumstances, a new kid has taken his place.

CHAPTER 3

AN EVOLUTIONARY DIALOGIC BETWEEN PENAL POLICY, EDUCATION POLICY AND RELATED FORMS OF SOCIAL CONFORMITY

In New York in the 1800s, formalized public school and prison systems emerged simultaneously, with both centering on the socialization of people for participation in society, and both employing techniques of social control to achieve this objective. The functions of contemporary prison schools belong to a historical narrative that begins, in the case of New York State, with the establishment of the reformatory in Elmira in 1876. As the first juvenile detention center that placed academic programs in the hands of professional full-time teachers, Elmira is an important precursor of Passages Academy.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In *The American School 1642–2000*, Joel Spring (2004) explores the origins and conventions of New York City's public education and its role in managing juvenile crime through rehabilitation. Beginning from the historical foundations of public education, reformers involved in charity schools and juvenile reformatories believed that education was the solution to the problems of crime and poverty. The Charity School movement spread rapidly in the 1790s and early 1800s, and later provided the basic framework for the development of public schools. Education was, according to the principles of the movement, supposed to provide an individual with the tools needed to function in a given social role, and the institutional environment was supposed to teach an individual how to use these tools in a moral manner.

The Charity School movement is very important because it represents the first major attempt to use the school as a means of socializing children into industrious ways of life. Charity schools and juvenile reformatories in the early part of the nineteenth century sought to create good moral character by replacing a weak family structure and destroying criminal associations. These schools operated under the assumption that a potential criminal was created when the family failed to provide adequate moral training for a child, who might then be easily led astray through contact with a criminal community.

As such, one of the first public schools in New York City, known as the Free School Society, was created as a preventive measure in response to the crime, poverty, and growing chaos of city life. In the early 1800s, the trustees wanted to keep New York from developing a large lower class, as was common in some of the big Europeans cities, and they believed that this program would safeguard the city's welfare (Spring, 2004). These efforts led to the establishment of public schools, which, along with city planning, police, fire, health, transportation, and other city services, were intended to aid in reducing crime, curtailing cultural, racial and religious clashes, socializing immigrants, pacifying the workforce, supporting commercial interests, promoting health, and inculcating republican political values (Spring, 2004). The socialization rhetoric of American schools has been characterized as the means by which individuals were prepared to participate in civil society. The aim of the Free School (which would soon become the common school) was clear: to promote positive citizenry. Although seemingly well-intentioned, the patrons of the Free School wanted to preserve the stability of their society while viewing poverty as a consequence of ignorance, which was rectifiable. Thus began the historical stimuli for the establishment of public schools: a desire to educate people according to social class and position status. Exposing the tension that existed between the common school ideal and the injustices that were perpetrated by the emergent educational system reveals the ways in which mechanisms of social control were integrated into the culture of schooling.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

As schooling became increasingly standardized during the late 1800s and early 1900s, conflicts arose between the realization of this ideal of social control and the socializing of troublesome youths. For those students who did not conform to the social control mechanisms of the school, they were excluded either from the regular classes by being placed in academically insufficient special education classes or forced from the school altogether through voluntary or involuntary attrition. In his book, *Schooled to Order*: *A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (1981), David Nasaw writes:

> The guiding force behind the common school crusade was not so much the education of the children as the maintenance of social peace and prosperity. Because the republic and its private property were endangered more by "immoral" than by illiterate adults, the common

> schools' responsibility for character training and moral instruction overrode all others.

A new discourse and social movement emerged around the issue of delinquency, as communities were simply not prepared to effectively control and socialize youth. Youth not attending schools were looked upon unfavorably as they often spent time on the streets. Formalized penal systems would not only remove and contain the unwanted youth from the streets but also have to fulfill the socialization function that schools failed to accomplish.

In *The Child Savers* (1977), Anthony Platt focused on the efforts to remove adolescents from the adult court system through the creation of juvenile courts, which were intended to protect young people. An unintended consequence of the well-intentioned juvenile courts was the stigmatization of labeling these children. Platt (1977) provides a discussion of how:

> The juvenile court system brought attention to and thus "invented" new categories of youthful deviance, particularly behavior in which the actor was seen as his own "victim"…reformation was more likely if they [the delinquents] were removed from "immoral" parents and a "vicious" environment.

The subsequent development of schools and juvenile detention centers began to foster social control by internal and external rules of social conduct—structures that are still deeply ingrained within the current juvenile detention framework.

JAILS AND SCHOOL GROW TOGETHER

Since its inception, education has grown throughout the juvenile prison system, as has the controversy over rehabilitation versus punishment. As early as 1820, New York legislator Samuel Hopkins argued that, "inmate life had not been sufficiently severe and should produce more terror and suffering." Such views gave rise to the Auburn Youth Reformatory, which subscribed to the belief that "too much faith had been placed in [the convicts'] reformation." Thus, education got little attention in the Auburn system (Barton & Coley, 2006). In 1825, the New York House of Refuge opened for boys and girls under the age of 21. The program was guided by two beliefs: first, that the home life of poor children had corrupted them; and second, that working in nature would inspire them to develop moral character (Nasaw, 1981).

In 1867, however, the New York Prison Association proposed to the New York legislature that the fundamental goal of their penal policy should be the reformation of the criminal. This proposal led to the establishment of one of the nation's first reformatories, which was located on a spacious farm near Elmira, New York. Zebulon Brockway, an advocate of the reformatory movement, was the first Superintendent of the Elmira Reformatory. Early on, the battle between punitive efforts and social uplift was evident at the Elmira Reformatory. Initially, Brockway held the notion that reformation should not focus on punishment or incapacitation, but rather on rehabilitation through education (Brockway, 1969).

Documenting various aspects of juvenile incarceration education as an area of academic inquiry, Steven Schlossman's (1977) *Love and the American Delinquent: The Theory and Practice of "Progressive" Juvenile Justice 1825–1920* provides a historical prism of juvenile punishment and incarceration, and the reform movements from which arose the current systems of correctional education. Schlossman's historical model is useful for situating Passages Academy—and particularly its mission to educate juvenile detainees—within a historical framework that begins in 1876. Inmates at Elmira Reformatory were primarily young men aged sixteen to thirty who were first-time offenders. As such, they were considered amenable to reform. These offenders were given indeterminate sentences—as are many of the students attending Passages Academy. In theory, Elmira offered treatment, not punishment. Superintendent Zebulon Brockway utilized the 1840s Australian penal colony system of "marks and rewards" that reinforced good behaviors while punishing bad ones, in an effort to induce inmates to make the "right choices" (Schlossman, 1977). Brockway became nationally known for his use of education and training in prisons, and placing academic programs in the hands of professional full-time teachers. These diagnostic adjustment centers are influential still today, and many of the methods are currently being utilized at the Passages Academy school sites, wherein professional teachers do the teaching and administrators make the decisions about curriculum.

At Elmira, the academic year mirrored that of public schools and included courses in reading, spelling, math, history, geography, civil government and moral philosophy. Like the rehabilitation programs of adult prisons during the 1800s, the initial focus for programs within the reformatories was religion and industrial training. In the early reformatories, the goal of rehabilitation was modifying or correcting the individual, which was accomplished by demanding individuals' conformity and cooperation (Brockway, 1969).

By using the educational techniques of both reformatories and the public schools, the Lancaster system of mutual instruction (that is, positioning better students in the role of a teacher) was, at the time, a progressive and early form of inclusion and cooperative learning that helped integrate special education students into the classroom. In Elmira, the inmates were even referred to as "scholars" (Schlossman, 1977). The attempt to use law to improve human conduct and consciously advance social progress was a new feature of social thought in the new 19th century. The two organizational models, public school and state penitentiary, employed pedagogical schemes drawing from punishment and knowledge.

JUVENILE DETENTION: A MODERN HISTORY

Over time, the linkages and parallels between schools and prisons became more embedded. While the 1800s form the backdrop for the emergent period of the education and juvenile justice systems, the decade of the 1970s is another critical period because it represents the beginning of a far more punitive trend against young offenders as the national perspective transitions from rehabilitation to punishment. For more than a century prior to the mid-1970s, there was an overwhelmingly unified recognition of the importance of prison rehabilitation programs that provided education, vocational training, psychological treatment, and other life skills to prepare incarcerated people for a promising return to the free community (Curtis & Spriggs, 2001). It was acknowledged that court-involved children were not mini-adults and their needs were far more complicated than that of adult offenders. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 is a Federal law that mandated complete separation between juveniles and adults (sight and sound) held in local jails. The law tied federal funding to state restrictions of detention and institutionalization of juvenile delinquents. This legislation also created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) within the U.S. Department of Justice (Martin, 2005).

The discourse on juvenile delinquency that dominated the 1970s enabled the public's embrace of the punishment paradigm, which "argues that the legal system should be used to punish youthful lawbreakers either to do justice and/or to control crime though deterrence…or through incapacitation" (Cullen & Wright, 2002). Despite legislative efforts towards rehabilitation, the discourse in Robert Martinson's 1974 article, "What works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," was based heavily on a 1967 New York Division of Criminal Justice research project, which aimed to determine

the most effective means of rehabilitation. From his survey of six academic and vocational programs for adult male offenders between 1948 and 1965, Martinson initially concluded that recidivism was not impacted by educational attainment. Martinson later revised his position (in 1979), noting that some treatment programs can positively affect recidivism. By analyzing and retracing public policy in criminalization and youth relationships to the penal system, Martinson found that in the case of juvenile delinquents, formal education seemed to help in rehabilitation, a conclusion based upon the significantly lower rates of recidivism and further run-ins with the law. Whether because of mere correlation or actual causation, many studies support the connection Martinson found between education of juvenile offenders and decreased recidivism. Martinson concluded that a drop in re-arrests was only true when education was provided in a prison, rather than an alternative to prison, such as a group home. Martinson does not suggest a particular cause in this article, but such results he noted, occurred "again and again" in the study. Conversely, low academic achievement has since been linked to recidivism (Katsuyanna & Archwamety, 1999). It can therefore be quantifiably determined that education as a component of the juvenile justice system is essential to any rehabilitation that will significantly reduce criminal activity (Lochner & Moretti, 2004).

New York City formed the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) in the late 1970s as a response both to the need for a more responsible detention system and to the desire to give the system's residents the opportunity to grow into productive members of society. Consequently, on July 1, 1979 the DJJ took control of Spofford, at that time the city's only secure juvenile detention facility, in addition to a non-secure detention group home for male and female residents on Beach Avenue in the Bronx. Within a few years of its creation, this agency found itself a leader in the relatively new field of juvenile justice. In the words of an early departmental report, the agency recognized that "while the judicial problems of these children may end upon release from detention, their personal, educational and social problems do not" (Wynn, 2001). This sentiment, however, would unfortunately not be sustained in the future either in New York or in the rest of the nation.

Over time, the goals set for the penal system by the criminal justice community slowly evolved (or devolved) throughout the country, as rehabilitation was replaced with deterrence and incapacitation. During the 1980s, the political tone altered to such an extent that most believed that the juvenile crime system was too lenient with offenders. Consequently, many states responded by passing more punitive laws. Juveniles were increasingly

put into the adult court system while the juvenile court system began to look like the criminal justice system and treat juveniles like adults in juvenile courts (Jacobson, 2007). The 1980s and 1990s saw significant change in terms of the increasing treatment of juvenile offenders as criminals. New legislation made it easier to transfer juvenile offenders from the juvenile justice system to the criminal justice system. Confidentiality laws were modified to remove traditional juvenile court confidentiality provisions by making records and proceedings more open (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999).

The new rhetoric of juvenile court emphasized deterrence and punishment. Programs such as Scared Straight, Tough Love, D.A.R.E. and boot camps essentially claimed that visits by youngsters to prison to be yelled at by inmates could cure all emotional and family problems. Despite compelling research that these programs were not effective (Finckenaur, Gavin, Hovland, & Strovoll, 1999), the Reagan administration issued the slogan "tough on crime." According to President Reagan, it was wrong to "pamper criminals" (Elsner, 2004); subsequently, he spent substantial federal funds on police intelligence programs and enhanced prosecution of juvenile offenders. The number of juveniles sent to adult prisons rose almost 50% during Reagan's first term (Krisberg, 2005). President Reagan's crackdown on crime reflected the growing cultural and political intolerance of criminal deviant behavior (Martin, 2004). In keeping with the Reagan-era perception of criminality, research conducted during that period indicates that "etiological factors such as early education failure, family disruption, drug abuse, and gang involvement are decisive in propelling children towards chronic and serious law-breaking" (Krisburg, 2005). Between 1985 and 1995, the number of arrests for juveniles grew approximately 23%; the vast majority of these were arrested for property crimes (Parry, 2005).

By the early and mid-1990s, scholars and experts in the field began employing rhetoric that was to become the super-predator scare (Elikann, 1999). Barry Krisberg (2005) describes some of the key moments in the history of the super-predator scare:

> The myth began with predictions of future increase in youth violence made by James Q. Wilson (1995) and John DiIulio (1995). Wilson claimed that by 2010 there would be 30,000 more "muggers, killers and thieves." DiIulio predicted that by 2000 the new wave of youth criminals would be upon us… Other criminologists, such as Alfred Blumstein (1996) and James Fox (1996), suggested that the rise in violent juveniles combined with a growing youth population would produce extended crime epidemics. … Not to be outdone…DeIulio …

> painted the future horror that "fatherless, Godless, and jobless" juvenile "super-predators" would be "flooding the nation's streets." (Dilulio, 1996, p. 25)

These predictions turned out to be wildly exaggerated.

Between 1990 and 2000, while the number of murders nationwide fell by 50%, murder reporting on television, police reality TV, and criminal cases followed on the news quadrupled (Elsner, 2004). Krisberg (2005) notes the shift in public perceptions of crime during the same period:

> The general public bought into these myths, as evidenced by numerous opinion polls illustrating the perception that juvenile crime rates are raging out of control (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001). Even during periods in which juvenile arrests were falling, the National Victimization Survey in 1998 reported that 62% of Americans felt that juvenile crime was rising.

Similarly, the public perception of school-based violence was greatly inflated when compared with the official statistics (Dilulio, 1996). The zeitgeist held that the juvenile courts were too lenient, that their sanctions were ineffective, and that treatment did not work for serious or chronic juvenile offenders. These assertions were not supported by empirical evidence. In fact, re-arrest rates for youths processed through the juvenile system were lower than those who went through the adult court system (Fagan, 1991). In this zero-tolerance political climate there arose a major piece of federal juvenile crime legislation: The Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act of 1997 (Krisberg, 2005). This act modified laws in order to permit younger children to be tried in adult criminal courts. It should also be noted that youths under the age of eighteen receive longer sentences and actually serve three times as long in detention as adults convicted of similar offenses (Howell, 1997).

THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1980S AND 1990S

From 1977 to 1999, as a result of the change in ideology of juvenile justice systems, the total state and local expenditures on corrections increased by 946%, about 2.5 times the rate of increase of spending on all levels of education (370%). The national prison population quadrupled from 500,000 to 2 million during this period. Subsequently, the proportion of inmates taking educational courses while incarcerated declined from 57% to 52%. The rate of growth of spending on corrections in state budgets exceeded that for education, health care, social services, transportation and environmental

protection (Jacobson, 2007). Budget money was effectively moved from primary and secondary education to prisons. A majority of states spend more on building prisons than on higher education. In the 1980's, the number of prison cells more than quadrupled, while federal appropriations for housing for the poor was reduced by more than 80%. Thus, prison building became the de facto national housing program for the poor.

Prison has become a large, state-sponsored corporation. In 1973 there were 18 prisons in New York State. Since then, the justice system has upped the number to over 70. During the Mario Cuomo years (1983–1994) the New York prison system doubled its number of facilities with the opening of four maximum-security prisons, 25 medium-security prisons, and three minimum-security prisons. Between 1974 and 2000, the rate at which students were suspended and expelled from schools doubled, from 1.7 million to 3 million (Weissmann et al., 2005). School violence dropped in the 1990s, but suspensions went up: although it appears the juvenile crime rate has gone down, there are more young people now in jails than ever before.

In 1997, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) opened two secure juvenile detention facilities: Crossroads in Brooklyn, and Horizons in the Bronx, at a construction cost of $70 million. These facilities were opened with the City's promise to close Spofford Juvenile Detention Center, the infamous facility that had been operating since 1957. However, less than a year after Crossroads and Horizons opened, the city spent an additional $8 million to renovate three wings in Spofford, renaming the facility "Bridges." By 1999, DJJ had increased its secure detention population capacity by almost 40%, to nearly 400 beds (Kelly, 2002). All three of the sites are part of the Passages Academy School Program.

New York is one of four states in the nation that treats minors ages sixteen and above as adults in the criminal justice system. These minors can fall under the jurisdiction of the State Supreme Court and the supervision of the New York City Department of Corrections. They can be incarcerated on Rikers Island during pre/post-trial to serve sentences of up to one year, or in upstate prisons for even longer sentences. All other governmental agencies draw the adult/child line at either 18 (Department of Health and Mental Hygiene), or 21 (Administration of Child Services and Department of Youth and Community Development), while some Community Based Organizations and health clinics fix it as late as 24 years of age. These differences in defining the age of adulthood create particular problems for coordination among governmental and voluntary agencies that should be responsible for the welfare and well-being of these youths, both pre- and post-release.

New York residents have the legal right to continue public education through age 21, whether or not they are incarcerated. Students who enter the criminal justice system are unlikely to graduate from high school on time.

The fact is that since the 1980s, state authorities have cut spending for prisoner education and vocational training, closed libraries, and done away with scholarships for students behind bars. The federal Higher Education Act of 1998 forbids the issuance of student loans to former offenders (Anyon, 2005). The loss of programs of higher education, along with the reduction in programs of basic education and reentry planning, have contributed to incarcerated persons' shrinking likelihood to succeed upon release, and have further added to ill-conceived transitions and increased recidivism. Because of these changes in the system, 76% of youths coming out of jail are re-arrested within 36 months of their release (Kelly, 2002).

According to studies conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than 75% of youths eighteen and under who are sentenced to terms in state prison are released before they reach age twenty-two. Ninety-three percent of the population that is sentenced to prisons while still in the teen years completes its minimum sentence before reaching age twenty-eight (Hubner, 2005). Since these young offenders are going to leave prison, both authorities in prison and society at large have to answer several questions: How do we want to prepare this population for the transition? How do we want to send them back into society? What systematic programs can be designed to alter the lives of these young students?

There has long been a dearth of community programs that assist released persons with re-entry into society. Programs that attend to the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals are proving to be as important to their future, as well as to the public's safety, as their rehabilitation in prison. In fact, in his 2004 State of the Union address, President Bush described the difficulty of a post-adjudicated life this way: "if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison." One problem is that public (non-prison) schools deny these students their right to an education by refusing to allow them to return.

THE CONDITION OF THE CONDITIONS

As French philosopher Michel Foucault (1980) argues, penal institutions serve as essential hegemonic apparatuses within a network of power formations, or relations of domination. In line with Foucault's analysis, I would therefore add that the original growth of schools and the modern

recent expansion of juvenile detention centers both function as contemporary solutions for domination and social control of those students who do not fit in or assimilate to mores and ideologies of the dominant culture. A critical political understanding illuminates how ethnic disparities within juvenile detention center populations reflect the racial-economic inequities pervasive throughout school and other social institutions. Juvenile prisons seem to provide such a function, since children in New York City juvenile detention facilities are disproportionately inner-city African-American and Latino youth who (a) have been placed in special education programs and (b) have below grade level literacy abilities (Carris, 2011).

Structurally, poor Black and Latino children are being lead to reproduce the systems of juvenile detention education; issues such as protracted poverty have contributed to both the historical origins of these social problems and the perpetuation of their present racialized form (Cross, 2003). In such non-diverse (or divided) urban communities, detention can lend itself as a justification and rationale for racial inequities, thereby maintaining the status quo, while also paralyzing young children into systemic forms of social control. Geographic locations are paramount in these structurations. Conversely, urban students often receive comprehensive detention education before they are ever even arrested. Children from just 15 of New York City's 59 community districts account for more than half (55%) of the admissions to juvenile detention. These neighborhoods with the highest juvenile detention rates also have the highest levels of poverty, poor housing, and underperforming schools (Department of Juvenile Justice, 2000).

NOT SO GREAT EXPECTATIONS: THE DUAL AGENDA OF EDUCATION AND INCARCERATION

Are young people who come before the criminal justice system offenders who have chosen to break society's rules and so deserve to be punished, or are they children 'in need'? Should we expect them to take full responsibility for the consequences of their actions or should we view them as being less capable than adults of understanding and abiding by the rules of society? As the Children Act of 1974 asserts, such children should be dealt with by specialist courts and personnel who have been trained to understand and remedy their needs. This means, at least in theory, that judges and educators need a wider range of options in dealing with young offenders than exists for adult offenders. Should we as a society help guide young people away from law-breaking behaviour, or should we provide an optimum deterrent in the

form of commensurate punishment? Should we punish the young offender's crime or the young offender him/herself?

These are just some of the questions that highlight the dilemmas facing those who structure and work within the juvenile justice system and form part of what theorists and practitioners call the "rehabilitation vs. punishment" debate. These two approaches have dominated educational and correctional philosophy for over a hundred years and, despite the development of other valid perspectives (which we will examine later), the rehabilitation vs. punishment debate still rages in academic, media, governmental and professional practice fields.

In 1842, Charles Dickens visited the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, an establishment created by Quakers. He reflected on the penitential system, a revolutionary new form of imprisonment, which he thought was "rigid, strict and hopeless solitary confinement." He believed its "effects to be cruel and wrong" (Behan, 2007):

> In its intention I am well convinced that it is kind, humane and meant for reformation, but despite the well meaning objectives of those who established the prison it 'wears the mind into a moribund state, which renders it unfit for the rough contact and busy action of the world'. (Dickens, 1842)

More than one hundred and seventy years later, in spite of numerous policy changes, countless political debates, the best intentions of the prison reformers and the diverse attitudes of the many agendas presented, there is still no agreement on the theory of imprisonment. The objectives of detainment in the contemporary context remain confused, ranging from deterrence to retribution and from punishment to rehabilitation. In light of such confusion it is imperative that we consider the role of juvenile detention and reflect on the contribution of education within such an institution.

History and theory offer important lessons about the ways that social and educational policies in the United States have decided who wins and who loses. What goes on in juvenile detention centers is a microcosm of society, and the issues faced in prisons cannot be divorced from the larger society. By examining juvenile detention education, I consider how social control is fostered by internal and external rules of social conduct. The organizational models of both public schools and juvenile detention employ pedagogical frameworks that include theories of punishment and knowledge. The attempt to use the law to improve human conduct and consciously advance social progress was a new humane feature of rational social thought in the

nineteenth century, yet the more juvenile justice has reinvented itself since then, the more it has stayed the same. The reasons change, but the institution does not, and hegemonic power is leveraged against those children and their parents who hold the least amount of social capital by those who arbitrarily control the processes of definition, classification, and management. The intention of this research, undertaken in the current era of robust punitive public policy, is to reframe issues, explicate discourses, and where possible uncover hidden assumptions.

SUMMARY: WHY?

The influential Committee for the Study of Incarceration (von Hirsch, 1976) was explicitly in favor of the imposition of less punishment, not more. To abandon the rehabilitative model without a simultaneous gradation downwards in prison sentences would, according to the committee, be an unthinkable cruelty and a dangerous act.

The critical ontological questions of who we are and how we act as a society are essential to understanding knowledge, power, discipline and control. This requires investigating the roots of our epistemological and ideological assumptions and the structures of the systems currently in place that are influenced by them (Gabay, 2007). If prison is a rehabilitative structure, particularly for a youth offender, then education (not discipline) is the most significant—if not most complicated—component of prison life.

CHAPTER 4

FROM INTAKE TO EXIT

A Literature Review of the Many Services and not so Fluid Systems for Court-Involved Juvenile Learners

Having examined the historical context of the court-involved juvenile educational system in previous chapters, we now focus our attention on the far-reaching effects of the juvenile justice system. In order to truly understand the juvenile detention education legacy in the United States, one must listen carefully to those professionals who have worked in it. In reviewing empirical studies on the education of incarcerated youth, it is crucial to look at the way both teachers and students interpret the purpose and goals of learning behind bars.

Before providing a review of literature on services and systems for court-involved juvenile learners, I feel it is important to describe juvenile detention and its many settings. Juvenile detention education refers to a system wherein many providers coordinate a myriad of services both within and across child service systems. The bureaucratic layers are deep. Literally thousands of subsystems—agencies—and millions of employees operate within these subsystems. The existing literature cited here explores the many structural dimensions associated with juvenile detention education. The size and characteristics of juvenile correctional education programs invariably lead to discussions about the social construction of race, class, gender and mental health, as well as the social theory of punishment.

In examining the texts that have influenced this research, I call attention to the political and social tensions that surround juvenile detention education. The extant research concentrates on three main areas: first, the social, political, and pedagogical forces that determine who enters the juvenile justice systems; second, how these court-involved youths are educated while they are in the system; and third, the practical problems and the social justice issues youths encountered when transitioning back to their community schools. I include a review on the effectiveness of services provided in these settings by examining a few policies and pedagogical strategies.

To best achieve the intended goals, this chapter will situate the discussion of education for juvenile offenders in relation to Passages Academy, which is both similar to and representative of many school programs in juvenile correctional facilities. Examining the mission and population of this school contributes to an understanding of the ways in which society thinks about and ultimately acts with respect to juvenile offenders, and particularly illustrates how the tension between punishment and rehabilitation is played out in school policies and design.

INTAKE

Juvenile detention centers are designed as temporary places of detainment to ensure that youth offenders comply with court mandates. They are also used as a preventative measure against youths reoffending prior to their release or further incarceration. The National Juvenile Detention Association has further determined that "juvenile detention is a temporary and safe custody of juveniles who are accused of conduct subject to the jurisdiction of the court who require a restricted environment for their own or the community's protection while pending legal action" (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 1997).

Juvenile detention policy varies across the country. Though the goal tends to be the handling of cases in an informal manner, youths are handled very differently as a result of the variation among jurisdictions in the administration, staffing, practices and authorization for admission to detention. Detention decisions may be made by legislation, police department policy, detention center policy, court discretion, or, sometimes, by the decision of an individual (Feld, 1991; Krisberg, Litsky, & Schwartz, 1984).

When a child is "accused of an offense or arrested and taken into custody, the first issue considered is whether he or she will be detained, or released to the custody of a parent/guardian" (Faruqee, 2002). The steps and procedures that may apply in a given case of youth detention cover a wide range of facilities that vary tremendously in terms of security level, size, location, structures, definitions, professional standards and desired effects. For example, juvenile offenders can be served by different systems and agencies including the juvenile justice, mental health, and educational systems (Hellriegel & Yates, 1999).

An intake unit often evaluates whether a case should go forward. Although prosecutors commonly participate in the intake process, it is most often handled by the staff of the juvenile probation department. The juvenile court

decision to file a petition declaring a child a ward of the court is guided by both legal and social service considerations. The pre-adjudication phase of juvenile detention places the greatest weight on in-depth social, psychological and individual factors (Krisberg, 2005), as the decision to remove a child from his or her home is a dramatic and costly step.

Nationally, approximately 600,000 youths are admitted to juvenile detention centers each year. Although many of these children spend less than 24 hours in detention centers, the average length of stay is far longer. In 1993, a child spent an average of 20 days in secure detention. By 2000, the average length of stay ballooned to 36 days. As a result, the court system has become overwhelmed with juvenile court cases (Faruqee, 2002).

In *No Matter How Loud I Shout*, Edward Hume (1997) illuminates many deep-rooted challenges facing juvenile detention intake and processing. Hume follows the cases of seven youths as they go through the juvenile justice system. In all seven cases he finds that systemic fumbling in the processing of these youths leads to a future of penal and potentially criminal involvement. Hume notes of the courts shift in focus to an emphasis on proving the facts of the crime from dealing with the needs of the children, families and society (as was intended when juvenile courts were founded at the turn of the century). Hume also concludes that the youths and their families all seemingly want success but do not know how to achieve it in practical terms. That is, these families do not have the wherewithal to navigate the many turns and obstacles within the juvenile justice system. The fiscal investment and human consequences of these approaches reveal a maze that is neither simple nor consistent (Cicourel, 1995). As a result, a number of reports have indicated the need for integrated services among the juvenile justice, mental health, and educational systems in order to meet the manifold requirements of this population (Briscoe & Doyle, 1996; Fredericks, 1994; Hellriegel & Yates, 1999).

Current studies on the effectiveness of intake point to several concerns. According to a recent study by New York City's Independent Budget Office, one concern is that the hours of juvenile court end at 5 p.m. and are closed on weekends. Therefore, when youths are arrested during these hours, they are sent directly to detention until the courts reopen the following business day. And, in some cases, the intake process can take multiple days. The irony is that, once youths are taken to court, two-thirds are deemed as "low-risk" and are immediately sent home with their parents. Having to spend several days in prison due to bureaucratic roadblocks is unnecessary, avoidable and upsetting (*New York Times*, 2008).

Theoretically, any youth in a detention center has committed a crime. However, this does not mean that every detained youth necessarily belongs in detention. Some young people who are justly in detention may be best served in an alternative setting. The results of several empirical studies are most concerning in their demonstration that time in detention can negatively influence young people because serving time with peers in the same correctional facility can lead to subsequent criminal behavior (Bayer, Pintoff, & Pozen, 2003). Tannenbaum (1938) explains that when impressionable individuals are placed into contact with other court-involved individuals, they tend to embrace their criminality because it is what they have in common with the others in detention. This attitude may be a survival mechanism that serves them well during incarceration, but it does not adequately prepare them for a life outside of the juvenile justice system. Studies have shown that incarceration does not promote rehabilitation, but instead reinforces institutionalization (Andrews & Bonta, 1994).

In the memoir of his own travels through the juvenile detention system, Jack Henry Abbott states, "Prison can alter the ontological makeup of a stone" (Abbott, 1981). At the age of twelve he served time at the Utah State Industrial [reform] School for Boys, an institution where, suggests Abbott, he contracted a penchant for future involvement in crime. He was repeatedly paroled and returned to the school up to the age of eighteen, when he was released as an adult. Five months later he was sent to the Utah State Penitentiary. Abbott considers his career as a criminal to be not the cause, but rather the effect, of his early experience in juvenile detention.

A common suggestion for improving the intake process is to send young people to community-based counseling and probation programs instead of detention centers. Community-based programs are less expensive than detention and more effective in reducing recidivism. This socially and fiscally sound idea is hampered by policies that provide financial incentives for sending young people to lockup. New York State reimburses the City for 50% of the cost of pre-trial detention but pays nothing for community-based alternative programs (*New York Times*, 2008). Thus, by default, keeping a child in detention has its own incentives.

THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

The initial gatekeeper of the juvenile justice system is most often the police. They are critical in determining how the juvenile is processed, beginning with the decisions of whether or not to arrest and whether or not to pursue formal processing (Siegal & Senna, 1994; Vollmer, 1936). Additionally,

whether to bring the child to Family Court or release him or her to the custody of a guardian is the police officer's discretion. If a guardian cannot be contacted or court is not in session, the officer has the authority admit the child to secure detention. Given the potential impact of this experience on the future of a young person, the nature of the interaction between police and juvenile is especially important. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the vital role that police play in shaping the identity of young people and creating deviance when these interactions remain exclusively informal (Mehan, 1993). Studies of police-adolescent interaction reveal that the majority of encounters between police and juveniles "involve relatively minor nuisance offenses, as the bulk of police work with juvenile centers around order maintenance and social services" (Whitehead & Lab, 1990; Werthman & Piliavin, 1967).

A number of factors influence the decisions made by police officers, determining, directly or indirectly, whether the youth is referred to services, assisted, warned, counseled, arrested, harassed or ignored. For example, where a young person lives may determine whether she or he will be arrested. In New York, youths from just fifteen of the City's 59 community districts account for 54% of all admissions to juvenile detention. These districts, which make up only a quarter of the city but over half of its incarcerated population, are the neighborhoods with the highest levels of poverty, poorest housing and most underperforming schools (Faruqee, 2002).

WELCOME TO PASSAGES ACADEMY

Facilities catering to court-involved youth are generally divided into two categories. The first type of detention center holds juveniles during the pre-adjudication phases of the case. The second type of correctional center, such as Rikers Island, is where both pre- and post-adjudicated juveniles are placed by court order because of a more serious offence (Desai, Goulet, & Robbins 2006). Passages Academy School Program falls primarily into the first category. Youth under the age of sixteen charged with a crime are detained while awaiting trial in secure (i.e., locked) facilities operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or in non-secure group homes operated by non-profit organizations under contract with the DJJ. The Department of Education (DOE) and the DJJ operate seven Passages schools at various locations in New York City to serve students who are awaiting trial (generally not those who have already been sentenced); the students are detainees for an indeterminate amount of time, having been charged with, but not convicted, of a crime. The student population tends to be incarcerated for relatively

short periods, ranging from a few days pending arraignment to several weeks awaiting trial. The population includes minors who have violated the terms of their parole or after-care, some of whom move in and out of the criminal education system repeatedly.

The first stops in intake to New York City's Passages Academy are through the three DJJ processing centers in the Bronx: Bridges, Summit, and Beach are the vaguely uplifting names of centers where students are examined medically and tested academically. Their school and medical records are sent from their previous schools through the electronic database. While at these processing centers, youths are required to attend school until they are transferred to another site.

At the initial court appearance in family court, a judge decides whether to release the child to a parent or remand a youth to a detention facility. If the latter is chosen, the judge may then choose between secure detention, non-secure detention, or an open remand, which allows the DJJ to determine whether secure or non-secure detention is appropriate (Faruqee, 2005).

At the adjudication stage, the first decision made by the juvenile justice system is whether the youth should be held in a juvenile detention facility—either a lock-up facility or a less restrictive Non-Secure Detention (NSD). If the courts opt for an NSD, children are sent to privately funded, government subsidized group or foster homes while they await sentencing. The students who attend Passages have been removed from their homes and placed in one of these small, secure, community-based treatment centers, which are essentially intensive home-based alternatives to secure detention. The residential homes are a temporary place for the children to live and receive medical, behavioral, and mental health services, all supervised by the privately contracted youth care staff. If, however, they are mandated to secure detention, they are sent to Horizons, Bridges, or Crossroads juvenile detention facilities.

The DOE operates two schools, Island Academy and Horizon Academy at the Rikers Island correctional facility for those children whom the criminal justice system treats as adults. This group includes juveniles aged sixteen or older who are awaiting arraignment, pending release on bond, held for trial without bond, or serving sentences of up to one year. The Rikers Island schools are staffed by approximately 225 teachers and support staff (Education in Detention, 2012). The Island Academy serves students aged sixteen through eighteen and the Horizon Academy serves students aged nineteen through twenty-one. According to The United Federation of Teachers, most of the students in both programs are unable to complete high school level or GED

coursework, and are typically grouped by ability rather than age (Education in Detention, 2012).

New York State law requires all persons under the age of seventeen to attend school and mandates that students who have been suspended from school must be given alternative schooling during the terms of their suspension. Accordingly, both city and state governments provide schools in the facilities where juveniles are detained, and 10,000 court-involved New York City students attend classes in city and state detention centers annually (Friends Committee, 2004). The processing a juvenile undergoes from the moment of arrest until further legal action may take about a week. Somehow within this labyrinthine system from arrest to incarceration, these juveniles are expected to take classes.

POWER RELATIONS

In reviewing empirical studies on the education of incarcerated youth, it is crucial to look individually at the youths learning behind bars. First, we must ask: Who are the children whose lives are affected by juvenile detention education? And an equally significant question: How are they affected? Finally: What is the classroom experience like for these students who are essentially performing for—and held accountable to—the two different (and often competing) agendas of the DOE and DJJ? This conversation about the robust juvenile detention education enterprise needs to be more nuanced and explore why the children educated in these facilities are getting younger in age and larger in numbers. It should also include a quantitative look at incarceration rates, arrests, probation, parole, types of offenses, lengths of sentences, and additional demographic data and statistics related to offenders (race, age, gender, location).

Anne Ferguson's *Bad Boys: Public School in the Making of Black Masculinity* (2001) examines macro-level data on social indicators that lead to juvenile detention; poverty, race, urban location, and educational levels. Ferguson explores the interdependence of these factors, and attempts to connect rigorous epistemological understanding with critically reflective research methodology. This information lends itself to structural and historical understandings of one group's battle against systematic disenfranchisement within specific metropolitan regions. Ferguson establishes a clear relationship between race and dropping out of school, imprisonment, unemployment, criminal behavior, health issues, and despair. In *Bad Boys*, Ferguson analyzes social justice, educational opportunities, and

issues of domination. She makes available the answers of the silenced others by examining the reproduction of racial inequalities within the distribution of power in society. Ferguson uses the term 'institutional practice' to explain how institutional norms and procedures in the field of education are used to maintain racial order. Through the exercise of rules, institutional practices evidently marginalize African Americans in the economy and exclude them from societal standards set by individuals who consider themselves racially unbiased. Ferguson describes and analyzes the disciplinary systems of the schools and the practices of labeling and categorization that construct African American male students as behavioral problems.

Bernard E. Harcourt's *Language of the Gun: Youth Crime and Public Policy* (2006) further exposes assumptions about human behavior embedded in various laws and policies. Harcourt shows how such assumptions inform many of the ideas related to punishment, politics and culture, and his analysis helps explain how children of low economic status, especially those with learning disabilities, low impulse control and a host of other causations, end up in detention or alternative probation programs. The majority of this excessively punished youth demographic will be released and re-enter free society only to subsequently return to the custody of the court. Harcourt exposes assumptions inherent in most of the laws and policies which continue to promote the epidemic of youth incarceration. The researcher finds gaps between actual scientific data and its many interpretations; this situation further sets up young people for failure by neglecting the rehabilitative role of incarceration.

In an attempt to understand some of the assumptions implicit in current policies, Harcourt looks behind the crime reports, survey data, and statistical methods; he gives voice to the young people locked up in order to analyze youth voices in relation to their experiences, while deciphering the symbolic meaning of these policies. Using a semiotic analysis to explore gun crime among youth, Harcourt poses the question: How can the relationship between empirical research, law, and public policy be redrawn? In analyzing and retracing public policy in terms of criminalization and youth relationships to the penal system, he aims to determine the most effective means of rehabilitation. His work calls into question the efficacy of most attempts at rehabilitation. The research further concedes that hard data was missing from the formulation of these law and policy assertions and assumptions. Harcourt implores practitioners, policymakers and reformers to consider the glaring racial inequalities within the court-involved cohort.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

Statistics about demographics in prisons provide evidence that when a young person drops out, is expelled or has troubles within a school context, he or she often becomes part of the prison industrial complex. In 1997, minorities made up about one-third of the juvenile population nationwide, but accounted for nearly two-thirds of the population detained and committed to secure juvenile facilities. According to Shay Bilchik, administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), "For black juveniles, the disparities were most evident. While black juveniles ages 10 to 17 made up about 15% of the juvenile population, they accounted for 26% of juveniles arrested and 45% of delinquency cases involving detention. About one-third of adjudicated cases involved black youths, yet 40% of juveniles in secure residential placements were black" (*Minorities in the Juvenile Justice System* December 1999, quoted in Hubner, 2005). These numbers cannot be ignored.

In New York City, virtually every child involved in the juvenile justice system is African American or Latino. Officially, 95% of the children entering DJJ detention centers are Black or Latino; however, the average daily population at the DJJ is closer to 100% children of color (Faruquee, 2005). In 2000, 10% of black males in New York aged 20 to 24 were incarcerated (Anyon, 2005). These figures are similarly alarming nationwide. A young black male in the United States has a 1 in 13 chance of going to prison by the age of 20 (Hayes, 2006). Black males are five to seven times more likely than white males to be arrested for similar crimes (Dance, 2002).

It is a social emergency when 95% of our children behind bars are African American or Latino. Nearly as alarming is the disparity between the racial and ethnic make-up of the faculty in regard to the students they are teaching. 88% of full-time educators in the United States are white, and 81% are between the ages of 45 and 60. Further adding to a classroom based disconnect is the fact that 80% of teachers are female, while most teacher educators are male (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

In *An Exploratory Study of Race and School Violations*, authors Goode and Goode (2007) examine the overrepresentation of minority youth involved in school misconduct incidents and schools' excessive reliance on the courts. The findings of the study sample were consistent with the extant literature regarding overrepresentation of students of color in school discipline and the juvenile justice system. Blacks constitute 40% of the urban school population but account for approximately 66% of all school

discipline charges. According to the authors' review of existing research, approximately two-thirds of the studies found that race and ethnicity did influence decision-making within the juvenile justice system. The results also indicate the notion of "justice by geography," as there are marked differences in outcomes depending upon the jurisdiction where the youth is processed. Urban areas were proportionately higher than other settings. One factor contributing to the over-representation of minorities is the fact that the majority of communities of color are concentrated in urban areas.

As of 1997, the US residential custody rate per 100,000 youth was 1,018 for African American children, 515 for Latino youths, 525 for Native Americans, and 204 for whites (Krisberg, 2005). American society has made significant strides to eliminate legally sanctioned segregation and discrimination, but these remaining disparities in incarceration cannot be ignored. The racial disparities and inequalities that plague the justice system as a whole and the juvenile justice system in particular challenge the legitimacy of these institutions. These racial and social class disparities also are reflected in the students at Passages Academy.

POVERTY

In addition to being disproportionally black and Latino, the children detained or committed to these educational settings are overwhelmingly from lower-income households. In the United States, 20.8% of the population eighteen years or younger are living below the poverty line (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In prisons, that percentage is closer to twice the national average. The effects of poverty on the education process are staggering. The less money one has, the less healthy one is. The teaching implications of this fact have a tremendous impact on our students' success, or lack thereof, in school. The rate of visual impairment among poor children is twice the national average. Difficulties in seeing and focusing contribute to the academic shortcomings of incarcerated youths. "Other physical concerns arising from poverty that may contribute to school failure and court involvement include hearing impairment, oral health problems, lead exposure and asthma" (Rothstein, 2004).

The fundamental needs to see, hear, breathe and focus properly must be—but are often not—addressed. Educators must respond to these diagnoses by implementing methodologies and technologies to teach these children. The more information that a teacher has, the more efficient he or she will become in developing teaching strategies and methods.

LEARNING AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Additionally, scores of children with learning disabilities, impulse control issues and a host of psychological challenges end up either in detention or alternative probation programs. More than one in three youths who enter correctional facilities have previously received special education services, a considerably higher percentage of youths with disabilities than is found in public elementary and secondary schools (Leone, 1997). More than 50% of the U.S. juvenile inmates are functionally illiterate; 40% of adjudicated juvenile offenders have learning disabilities never identified in school. Eleven percent of all inmates have been diagnosed as significantly, seriously or persistently mentally ill (State of Prison, 2002). Combined, this amounts to nearly 90% of our detained children having learning and emotional problems or being below grade level. 70% of the nation's mental health dollars for children and adolescents are spent on out-of-home placements (Burns & Friedman, 1990), including psychiatric hospitalization and juvenile detention centers. Such out-of-home placements, which are both restrictive and expensive, have nevertheless failed to achieve desired outcomes. Despite falling crime rates, the number of detained youth has tripled in the last two decades, with 50 to 80% of the youth suffering from psychiatric or substance use disorders, or both (Sondheimer, 1994).

The 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formally the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, included sections specifically geared toward youths with disabilities in correctional facilities. Under IDEA, youths in prison are entitled to special education and related services. Nonetheless, some unfortunate loopholes make it difficult or impossible for certain students to receive special services. These include students not technically identified as being disabled and students who did not have an Individualized Education Plan under part B of the IDEA.

Even when a student qualifies for special services, providing them can be challenging. Researchers have identified several issues that affect the delivery of appropriate special education services in correctional facilities: "These include transition of the student population, conflicting organizational goals for security and rehabilitation, shortages of adequately prepared personnel (particularly of licensed special education teachers), and limited interagency coordination" (Snarr, 1987). Thus, even policies supported by research and deemed successful in theory may fail due to the practical implementation problems in correctional settings. Staff caseload ratio ultimately determines the program's success or failure. The

assignment of additional responsibilities to school support staff on top of their already demanding portfolio of tasks is one ingredient contributing to failure; time constraints allow less attention to detail and result in a lack of real time spent to provide these services to students. Therefore, because of IDEA's design flaws, the social workers and guidance counselors, special education teachers and para-professionals are unable to provide students with the services, attention and time they so desperately need. As mentioned above, more than one in three youths who enter correctional facilities have previously received special education services, a considerably higher percentage of youths with disabilities than is found in public elementary and secondary schools.

Jennifer Wynn's *Inside Rikers: Stories from the World's Largest Penal Colony* (2001) brings the reader inside Rikers Island Prison where she taught writing to young adult inmates. Wynn discusses the social relations and practices of inmates as visceral experiences. What Wynn found most striking during her years teaching at Rikers was the glaring number of inmates with learning and emotional disabilities. Any young person in jail, whether diagnostically assessed or not, has special needs. Often his or her relationship with formal school has been minimal, as many pre- and post-adjudicated children have not responded well to school and/or have low-level reading skills; moreover, many are alienated from the school community or have dropped out completely. Such vulnerable students present a wide range of non-medical or psychiatric needs which has profound consequences in these classrooms. Wynn addresses the conditions and needs of young people being served by a court-involved education system and her voice captures the culture of instruction in order to inform the larger community. Simultaneously, she challenges schools to be active in designing curricula that foster the best dispositions for teachers, mindful of the role they play in the cycle of criminalizing youth, as they interpret and act upon their own beliefs of school discipline.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN A JAIL SCHOOL

Reviewing literature that documents aspects of juvenile incarceration education as an area of academic inquiry offers the opportunity to begin a dialogue about the influence of various agency ideologies upon how we imagine what education means in everyday life at juvenile detention centers. I begin this conversation by looking at how youth are actually educated in real prisons and detention schools, and then I will consider how authors suggest the youth be educated.

Since 1974, federal education funds for juvenile offenders have been allocated to state-operated correctional institutions under Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Neglected or Delinquent program (known as the N or D) provides educational services to youths engaged in educational programs in state-operated juvenile and adult correctional facilities. In 1998, Congress passed legislation to reauthorize Chapter 1 and changed expectations for the N or D program by including the vital provision that "all students can learn and are capable of mastering both basic and advanced skills" (Pfannenstiel & Keesling, 1980). Beginning with this legislation, correctional education has been caught up in the current wave of far-reaching mandates that all but ignore the educational background and neurological disabilities of many students in detention schools.

Research has found that traditional public school practices duplicated in correctional settings have proven ineffective for students (Rowe & Pfannenstiel, 1991). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) clearly articulates the expectation for N or D children to "have the opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic content standards and challenge State academic achievement standards that all children in the State are expected to meet" (p. 160). NCLB requires that states set academic improvement goals based on standardized test scores and graduation rates. It is almost farcical and certainly sad that many students who happen to enter detention on a day that coincides with the standardized tests are required to take, and are held accountable, for the exam.

If, for instance, an eighth-grader who should be in tenth grade and has not been to school in five months happens to show up on test day, he or she is put in the position of going through the motions of taking the eighth grade exam, thus setting him or her up for failure. As previously stated, many of these children are identified as in need of special education and will consequently receive accommodations such as having the test read to them. The teacher in this example has previously never worked with or even seen the student—and extra time does not make a difference to a student who is not prepared for the test. Under NCLB, the outcomes of such exams will affect both the academic future of students as well as the valuable federal funding for the school, since NCLB requires school districts to submit data to their state government if they are to receive federal money for education.

Education outcomes are deeply affected by legal frameworks, particularly by judges' decisions to release students. For example, a detained student might spend two months in a correctional facility working and preparing vigorously to take the Regents exam, but then be released the day prior to

the exam. The student with thus be unable to take the exam at the detention facility and will most likely not be readmitted to their previous school within the next twenty-four hours, and so will not be able to take the test at all. The judges are assumedly aware of this while these test dates are posted at the start of each school year.

Legal decisions and NCLB do not take into consideration the structural dimensions specific to an incarcerated educational setting. Political communities of both the Department of Corrections and the Department of Education determine the shape of the school. Education cannot be detached from the location and context in which it takes place (Thomas, 1995). The politicians, policy makers, and public want to quickly and easily fix all that is wrong with criminals without considering the specific conditions and requirements of detained students (Behan, 2007).

In *Walking on Water* (2004), Derrick Jensen, a teacher in an Illinois state prison, brings to light the disparity between what is being said and what is being done. This perspective provides a rich understanding of the relationship between the teachers, their needs, the environment and the students' needs. What often occurs is an oversimplification or distortion of complex teaching and learning situations. Teachers require practical advice on effective instructional strategies to help them gain the students' cooperation and manage a classroom. For example, in a class on any given day, there may be students who have been at the school one day, six weeks, or six months. Therefore, from an instructor's point of view, every lesson, even if it is part of a larger thematic unit, must stimulate the long-term student and be inclusive of the new or short-term learners.

In a two-year study that examined which aspects of the N or D program were most effective, the U.S. Department of Education, indicated that from 1987 to 1989 the quality of instruction in correctional institutions varied widely (Pfannenstiel, 1993). The results seemed to indicate that this was largely due to teachers' mistaken preconceptions about the capabilities of their students and their own ability to improve literacy skills (Rowe & Pfannenstiel, 1991). Educating young people is a difficult and complex proposition with no magical formula. Jensen further notes that teachers who choose to work in these schools are held accountable and have high expectations of their students. He also argues that these same teachers should be free from certain mandates of NCLB because detention is not a traditional academic setting.

The restrictions and regulations of the detention center hinder the implementation of education programs; these constraints are generally

understood by the teaching staff (Tam, Heng, & Rose, 2007). The host institution supports a certain status quo, which impedes the academic achievement and social growth of these pre-and post-adjudicated children. To a corrections officer, institutional circumstances such as routine drug tests and random searches take precedence over quiz time in a social studies class or a spelling test in English.

In addition to continual student turnover, absenteeism is a chronic problem facing teaching and learning. A NYS Department of Corrections study estimates that roughly 20% of the detained student population is in court or receiving medical attention daily (Martland & Miller, 1999). Correctional restrictions manifest themselves in curricula limitations that prohibit magazines with staples, spiral bound books, current newspaper publications, and pencils with erasers. Classrooms must also be free of pins, string art, and maps of local areas. These necessary precautions severely alter the methodology, implementation, and actualization of a lesson. Concerns about the availability of resources in juvenile detention schools—including the lack of access to the Internet and audio-visual sources, as well as study material and guidebooks—foster a less-than-conducive study environment (Tam, Heng, & Rose, 2007). The intricacies of juvenile detention education are often contradictory (Wilson, 2005) because of the great differences between the DOE and the DJJ in their systems of controlling programs, in the way curricula are created and in the diversity of the staff. Teachers are caught up in detention policies while attempting to provide an education; teachers and students are essentially servants of two masters.

As the rhetoric of get-tough-on-crime becomes an entrenched part of our national discourse, the idea of rehabilitation becomes tertiary—while a greater emphasis is placed on punishment. With its combination of ignorance regarding the disabilities of detained juvenile learners and its emphasis on accountability, NCLB is tacitly setting these students up for failure. This is further evidence that rehabilitation is in serious decline. Rehabilitation is perceived as being too costly, ineffective, and offensive to notions of justice—at least to those concepts of justice rooted in the public's desire for retribution. Although serious juvenile crime has declined over the past two decades, the public appetite for retribution and punishment is growing (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Former U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger suggests that this is a cause for deep concern: "To confine offenders behind walls without trying to change them is an expensive folly with short-term benefits—winning battles while losing the war" (Morrison & Epps, 2002). Educational programs are caught in the crossfire of this battle. From 1977 to

1999, total state and local expenditures on corrections increased by 946% – about 2.5 times the rate of increase of spending on all levels of education (370%) (Western, Schiraldi, & Seidenberg, 2003).

Research on strategies to improve literacy rates in correctional facilities suggests that a more effective educational model for incarcerated youth would involve changes in philosophy, curricula, and instructional techniques. It has been recommended that curricula include not just literacy, but functional life skills that accompany the academic courses (Meisel, Henderson, Cohen, & Leone, 2000). One-on-one instruction and direct tutoring approaches, which allow students to more actively engage, also appear to be effective instructional models for incarcerated youths with or without disabilities. Additional instructional practices such as learning strategies and content enhancement strategies (Deshler, Ellis, & Lenz, 1996), and class-wide peer tutoring activities (Arreaga-Mayer, 1998) were also found to be beneficial for instructing students in correctional education.

One pedagogical approach that best serves juvenile detention is an integrated curriculum. Integration connects subject areas in ways that reflect real-life situations; pedagogy set in the context of human experience transcends the boundaries of discipline (Drake, 1993) and encourages students to take interest and ownership while they construct personal meaning. Adopting an integrated curriculum means moving beyond a more traditional compartmentalized approached to curricula and moving towards student ownership through integrating disciplines with students interest, which results in higher academic achievement.

My interest in doing this research at Passages Academy seems to mirror national interest in incarcerated education, which is manifested by the growing number of schools and districts across the country adopting programs to address the needs of court – involved students. Over the last decade, prison enrollments have tripled, with the largest increases for high school dropouts. Funding for jails increased 600% while funding for schools increased 25% (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). The number of court-involved students is growing; therefore the need for highly-qualified teachers is rising with the increased student population. It is important to identify the practices of the many innovative, specialized curricula that provide new ideas and more effective programs to the juvenile justice education system. The particular dynamics of educating a court-involved cohort and the specific issues facing education in prison present pedagogical challenges that include teaching methodology, curriculum design, and program development.

In *Last Chance in Texas*, John Hubner (2005) goes inside the Giddings State School for violent youthful offenders. He captures the reality of daily life at the school through the eyes of students, therapists, teachers, athletic coaches, and administrators. The rehabilitation comes through continual monitoring, education, teaching and structured routines. The Giddings State School favors an environmental approach, or behavior modification program. The basic therapeutic model includes interactions with adults which are technical, by-the-book, and tactical. The instructions given to students are often simple and repetitive, invariably consisting of reminding the student of the fundamentals: "Accept feedback;" "Are you communicating honestly?" and "Check back in five minutes." Their methods, if not explicitly formal, are certainly time-tested. Some students clearly accept the program and even internalize the behavioral system. One student seems to enjoy articulating behavior skills as they develop throughout the class: "Way to communicate honestly with your peers," is one of his favorite slogans. The social mirroring and continuous feedback is part of the design and control of this school. To many teachers and students, this approach is theoretically strong but outdated for daily use.

In the spirit of the early 19th century reform cottage, or family system, that placed children in homes, the Giddings State School emphasizes the development of a self-conscious attempt to mold, reshape, and reform wayward youth (Krisberg, 2005). This means structured training or behavioral modification programs to help kids change their abilities to achieve in school, increase job skills, and improve capacities for self-control. This diagnostic quasi-clinical model incorporates psychologically orientated treatment approaches, including guided group interaction and group therapy. The program assumes that young people are capable of positive change and is founded upon the belief that while one does his time, he is capable of rehabilitation and education.

SUMMARY

Decades of juvenile justice research demonstrate that no particular philosophical or tactical approach to education provides all that a teacher needs to affect growth and change through education (Oesterreich & Flores, 2009). Furthermore, as explained, often the difficulty for juvenile courts is making the connection between theory and practice for incarcerated youth.

The next chapter will offer a micro look at the teachers at Passages. As individuals, they have their own set of values which are informed by their

own beliefs as well as those of the school and society. The various issues of pedagogical practice at Passages include: the power relations between the teachers and the students, as well as between the teachers and the institution; the ideologies of the teachers and those of the institution; the rituals of the classroom; and the resistance of the teachers and the students.

CHAPTER 5

AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT OF LIFE AT PASSAGES ACADEMY

The focus here is on the contemporary operation of the Passages Academy school program and reflects on it in light of the history of juvenile detention policy explored in the previous chapters. This phenomenological inquiry addresses the conditions and needs of teachers and students who comprise New York City's court-involved education system and highlights the culture of pedagogical instruction. Through engaging in a dialogue about the ideological influences of various agencies shaping education in everyday life at the Academy, this conversation begins with an examination of the systems designed for educating, supporting, disciplining, transitioning and rehabilitating the students of Passages while exploring the personal stories of those who have dedicated their professional lives to teaching here.

This section draws from the interviews I conducted with some of the school's teachers and administrators, and incorporates my own observations that I recorded in my field notes. I make use of this extensive and rich data, leveraging a wealth of information to immerse the reader in action while simultaneously stepping back to make sense of it all. As professional attitudes are difficult to measure and hard to prove, I draw conclusions from the designed observational and interview methodology.

While conducting this research, I spoke with some participants who were at the school from its inception in 1997, many others who were employed there, on average, for four to seven years, and one participant who was only there for five months. From the 30 who participated in this study, 14 were white, eight African-American, three Caribbean-American and five Latino; 26 were born in the United States, sixteen were from New York City; none had ever been in the juvenile detention system as a student. Not one teacher or administrator interviewed had ever received formal pedagogical instruction in teaching incarcerated students prior to working at Passages.

CHAPTER 5

ORDINARY PEOPLE IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES: THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTION

The seven sites of Passages Academy serve youths in both secure and non-secure detention (NSD) facilities. Four are at NSD sites: Summit in the Bronx; Project Haven in Queens; Boys Town and Project Blum, both in Brooklyn. Non-secure facilities have a number of locks on the doors and fences surrounding them. Students in NSD await court dates while living in shelters or group homes run by various agencies. The other three Passages sites are at secure facilities: Crossroads in Brooklyn and Horizons and Bridges (formally Spofford) in the Bronx.

Each of the seven sites has its own particular culture. Structural factors such as the location, type of facility and host agency set the tone for the curriculum and pedagogy in each school. For example, in the three secure sites, the desks are chained together and cannot be moved around the room. For the teachers whose strategies might otherwise include group circles or small group work, such techniques are no longer options. Similarly, the NSD agencies are aware of the potential for violence, even deadly violence and often have concerns with the text, content, and language of lessons. Consequently, the agencies have on many occasions interfered with content explored in the text of a lesson. These and other concerns are negotiated amongst the agencies—implicitly or explicitly—each day.

Uniformly through all sites, each classroom contains a smart board bearing the school heading, teacher's name, date, instructional goals, subject and the day's activities. On average, about seven teachers are at each site. Each setting has its own unique teaching process with its own equations and dynamics. Each school in the cluster has its own rhythm, feel, flavor, and its own staff, yet the schools are all part of the same vision and mission.

Teaching at Passages is like learning to swim in the Great Barrier Reef. None of the teachers or administrators interviewed ever took a course in teaching court-involved youths or the intricacies that it entails. Passages provides minimal mentoring, no apprenticeship, and a very steep learning curve. In fact, to date not one school of education in the United States gives pre-service courses in this type of pedagogy.

Teachers are part of a team and they tend to think that their particular team or school site deals with the biggest challenges and most obstacles. This not-so-quiet competitiveness further unites these unique pedagogues. The behavior of teachers interacting with one another at all-site meetings is reminiscent of a family reunion. They are joined together by a very strong relationship, one based upon their consciousness of a common language and

shared set of experiences. They are people together for a short or long period and, like family, they are bound by love despite occasional differences. The feelings of camaraderie, generosity, sovereignty, contention, and balance are elements at the base of strong working relationships. When asked about the major sources of enjoyment of working at the school, collaboration with other teachers and students was the common answer. One administrator muses:

> We've been given opportunities by the principal. The most important part to any school is its leader and the leader has to be able to give opportunities to the teachers. The principal has to be able to have the character and the courage to give teachers the chance to think outside of the box and to try something different. […] The standard issue-schooling program has not necessarily worked for the students – and maybe some teachers – at Passages. Therefore, it makes no sense for us to follow the same schooling program that's used everywhere else.

This quote clearly explains the jeopardy that goes into teaching at Passages.

While each Passages site is unique, all share similar challenges. Space is limited, and other agencies are constantly interfering. Principal Sydney Blair, a former English teacher and Special Education supervisor, emphasizes Passages' unique challenges with her teachers and administration. Passages is a different school with a different philosophy and following a different rhythm. Ms. Blair is well aware of the policies and practices that push students out of school and prevent them from completing secondary school, and she knows what is at stake in each classroom. She allows her front-line staff a lot of freedom in dealing with their unique challenges.

Common to the seven Passages sites is the never-ending movement of students in and out of the school. Students often switch sites, like players traded or changing teams. Teachers give each other the heads-up on students: "I hear one of my favorite students will be placed in your facility. Stay on him. He is great with numbers. He will be resistant at first. If you mention that you will call his dad, he will shape up immediately." This educational continuum is most clearly evident when students make comments at the beginning of a lesson. A student might complain, "We did the same lesson in Mrs. Jenken's class up in Bridges." In such a case, the teacher responds, "Yeah I know, she is the one who suggested that I do this. But this is a different take on the subject, and knowing that you have done something similar, I expect you could help us all navigate the process."

However different in approach and background Principal Blair may be, her cabinet and teachers have all concluded that their work is mostly about

personal efforts and not outcomes. One interviewee suggested that theirs is a thankless job and said that the teachers seem to have resigned themselves to the fact that whatever they achieve in the classroom is validated only in the classroom. "We do the little things, the dirty work, with little credit." They do not receive e-mails, letters or follow-up visits from former students or their parents. If they ever see the student again in the school, it is usually not for any good reason.

In considering the teachers from all sites, their obvious sense of common purpose and spirit is extraordinary. They will never know what difference they have made or about the future trials and triumphs of their students. As one teacher told me, "Working here is among the most thankless jobs known to humanity, but at least we can recognize ourselves when others can't."

LEARNING TO SWIM IN THE DEEP END: DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

The teachers I interviewed work in a vortex between public education and the prison-industrial complex, two of the most powerful engines for social and economic justice, each affecting young people in dramatic and often permanent ways. I first asked them to describe what motivated them to be part of such a unique system. I noticed a few common threads running through the dozens of pages of transcribed interviews. Some respondents indicated their "deep concern for social justice." Others described themselves as creative and gifted in a way that made them feel alienated in more traditional school settings, while a few have simply failed in other school settings, suggesting that they are possibly "at-risk" teachers for "at-risk" students. In this way, the following comment by one teacher sheds light on the often nontraditional way educators can become involved in juvenile detention education: "I had fallen into this position by circumstance…it was hard to find a job teaching. I figured [Passages] was my way into the profession, but now, some five years later, I couldn't imagine teaching anywhere else." The motivation of needing a job appeared frequently during this section of the interviews.

The teachers at Passages run the gamut from traditional to non-traditional, from rookie to veteran, and even include those alternatively certified through Teach for America and New York City Teaching Fellows. They are diverse in both their intellectual acumen and their educational pedigree. Many find their way via personal connections: one informant knew Principal Blair's daughter, while another had a friend working at Passages who suggested he apply. Many happen upon Passages through teacher fairs, hiring halls, word of mouth and college classes. One interviewee discovered the program

when he went on an Internet date with a Passages employee, while another overheard his college instructor discussing her work as a former Passages librarian.

Many interviewees described feeling not only enticed by the unique opportunity but also having a need to teach at Passages despite all the many structural obstacles of prison.

The structure of the Passages teaching program is unique when compared to traditional education. As a unit, the teachers may not be cohesive, but they are certainly compelling individually.

It is difficult to measure what's in a person's heart.

~Frederick Douglass

The findings of this study suggest that those in the classroom naturally fall into three broad categories in their attitudes towards working at Passages: The Disheartened, the Idealist, and the Contented. This triad of archetypical educators breaks down further into three methods of instruction: the Typical, the Outliers, and the Solo Acts.

The Disheartened group makes up about 35% of those interviewed. A closer look at this group reveals some of the sources of their frustrations. They are likely to voice high levels of dissatisfaction with their administrators and with disorder in the classroom. Further, they express great concerns about working conditions, student behavior and the current focus on testing, which they describe as excessive. They cite problems with discipline and behavior of both the students and the jailors. Members of the Disheartened group report the absence of educational vision and a lack of respect for teachers. They describe student behavior as out of control, with few consequences for breaking the rules. These teachers struggle with lesson plans, classroom management and relating to students. They leave each day with a feeling of defeat.

According to the Disheartened group, their greatest grievance is feeling paralyzed when correctional officers, who are everpresent in class, talk on their cell phones during a lesson, or when students attack them with verbal unpleasantries (e.g., "suck my dick"). Tellingly, this group views the correctional agency and the Passages staff as being equally as combative as the student population. By design or necessity, the rampant indifference of the Disheartened group seems to evolve from working in a school that has a near-sighted vision of control at the expense of youth reformation.

Due to the high student turnover rate at the Passages school sites, the disenchantment of the Disheartened group is understandable. A clear and uniform academic curriculum is lacking and is often manifested by a lack of

administrative accountability or expectations of student achievement. The Disheartened regard the students with a diminished sense of expectation. Many of the Disheartened teachers choose to work at Passages precisely because they feel free of administrative intrusions and are left alone to teach however they see fit. This latitude, as demonstrated later in this chapter, is great for the many fantastic teachers working in this program, but it also enables abuses because of the lack of accountability and expectations. While it is certainly possible to find such an insufficiency of oversight in many school settings, Passages simultaneously presents teachers who demonstrate the exact opposite sets of characteristics. There seems to be a split between gifted, unique and dedicated teachers and the ones who appear to be warm bodies that were simply unsuccessful educators in other schools. These are the Disheartened educators who see the school as a warehouse to hold these kids during school hours. Their intent is to have students do "busy work," and they necessarily ignore the needs of juveniles who will soon be released from custody and who are planning to return to mainstream education.

Because of the difficulties in teaching a full class lesson, let alone a sustainable unit with lessons building on prior work and knowledge, Disheartened teachers primarily ask their students to work on packets or textbook assignments. Although they used some textbooks, these teachers mainly employed resources such as printouts from books or the Internet. The role of the teacher largely involved moderating and tutoring. Most classes started with general instructions that students would interpret to work on the assignment and remain quiet. The majority of the Disheartened merely provided handouts and worksheets but offered little in the way of pedagogical instruction. They showed movies so often that colleagues referred to them as "Blockbusters."

My research suggests that the goal of these Passages teachers is simply to survive work. They seem to be depleted and discouraged, often appearing aimless and exhibiting otiose behaviors. Says one, "My expertise is waved away, disregarded, and overlooked. I am treated like a day-laborer." Their actions demonstrate a need to belittle and stifle the students by simply keeping them busy. The Disheartened teachers have been systematically indoctrinated into what seems to be a space of reaction and survival, of instincts curbed and curtailed. The motive for remaining in such a situation is solipsism born of necessity. When questioned about their pedagogic choices, the most common reply was: "I teach this way because this is all I have time for." This suggests that, among other factors, their dedication to teaching at Passages included not only exhaustion and burnout, but also disillusionment with Passages' approach to the issue of educational inequity.

Our worst fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

~ Marianne Williamson

In contrast, on the other end of the spectrum is a small but significant group of Idealists, representing 25% of the teaching force. They have a strong sense of mission about teaching. They believe that good teachers can lead all students to learn. Idealists came here to help disadvantaged youths for the very reason that they are poor, come from families with uninvolved parents and have been arrested. Many Idealists, remembering what their own education was like, have decided to work with children in high-risk and low-performance environments. (One informant even suggested that teaching at Passages is penance for the way he treated his own teachers.) Theirs is a constant struggle to reach the Passages students, many of whom come from the worst of socio-economic situations, lacking fathers, mothers or other adult role models. Idealists are motivated by the desire to serve students who know neither who they are nor who they want to be, who have gaps in their skills and abilities, who feel they are failures and are therefore reluctant to let another random adult into their lives and minds. And yet, as one teacher stated, "I'm needed. I do this to feel strong, proud, successful, vital, and because I can and want to."

A few Idealists are driven by a deep empathy for underprivileged youth, primarily African-American and Latino, who suffer unnecessarily at the hands of an uncaring society. Many see themselves as effective crusaders against juvenile delinquency and feel that they can galvanize the students with their honesty, creativity and commitment in a way that very few can. They see the influence of imagination and sensibility as a magical elixir winding its way through an obscure area of education and delving ever deeper into the cultural bloodstream.

The Idealists believe that Passages' model of collective education requires giving one's heart, head and soul to these students. Passages, according to one Idealist, "taught me education was more malleable than anyone knew. The detention partnership wants to shape the kids by kicks and caresses, but students oftentimes respond better to reason." Moreover, the Idealists never forget that Passages is a transient culture, wherein the students' reading levels are low, most are below grade level in credits accumulated, and they have been kicked out of other districts. Their emotional issues and non–academic problems cogenerate the short-term goals. Idealists are not apologists for the students' histories, nonetheless they recognize that they need to

address more than just learning issues. The Idealist teachers have created a school culture and pedagogy that attempts to humanize the students. These educators are more likely than other teachers to utilize narrative pedagogical components such as writing, painting, and music in their classrooms. This honors the students by including their life-worlds and recognizing how they see themselves. However, this approach remains result-orientated, simultaneously addressing emotional needs and educational strengths and deficiencies.

The enthusiasm of Idealist educators has not been tempered by the working realities of Passages – in fact, they seem galvanized by the prospect of teaching in the school each day. The administrators look to the Idealists for support and guidance. One such Idealist, Mrs. Matthews, paints herself as a sort of ambassador for the program: "If there's one thing that must start to change, it is the storyline; that these students are 'hopeless cases'." Mrs. Matthews wants the world to understand that Passages is not just a school program, but an idea or social construct, committed to promoting the inalienable right that all young men and women are created equal. Her conviction is that a street address should not be a death sentence in what she refers to as the "ovarian lotto," and, referencing The Bible, she asserts her belief that "love thy neighbor" is not advice, but a command. She sees her class as a leg-up, not a hand-out:

> Juvenile detention education is a thought, but not yet a feeling. People think about these schools, but they don't *feel it*. Sometimes it's easy to see why. Justice would suggest that education must help redress the wrongs inflicted on the most marginalized and impacted by juvenile detention.

She tells me, "Safety is important, but so is humanity. Humanity is universal." One theme, "It's not about charity," came up often during this section of the interview. To the Idealists, teaching at Passages is about justice and equality. "When we talk of detention, we talk of sacrifice. When we speak of the prison-industrial complex generation, the best term to use is 'wasted'." For Mrs. Matthews and her fellow Idealist educators at Passages, the role of education is to guide, empower and provide individual journeys for students. "I just try to be myself, not make mistakes, and affect others with positive energy by making each day comfortable, powerful and effective in a spiritual sort of way."

The largest percent of the Passages teaching population makes up the group of Contented teachers. As with the Discontented, those in this

group suggest that teaching conditions clearly play a role in determining the level of contentment. By contrast, however, Contented teachers are more likely to accept the working conditions and believe that what they do makes a societal difference, and this is important to them. They say that the school tone is generally orderly, safe and respectful. They have enough time to craft good lesson plans and they find the environment positive, the administration trustworthy and their colleagues collaborative. The Contented teachers are very aware of the unique challenges they face in each class, foremost among them that the majority of students confined in Passages are awaiting arraignment, trial or transfer to other correctional facilities. As one interviewee notes, "The students cannot reinvent themselves here, but they can reset themselves while here." The Contented teachers also know from the onset that the work is always unfinished and never completed. Some like the challenge that each day is different and enjoy the autonomy that allows for enhanced levels of creativity and productivity.

Contented teachers identify several issues as having an impact on the provision of appropriate mainstream and special education services at Passages. These include: transition of the student population, conflicting organizational goals for security and rehabilitation, shortages of adequately prepared personnel, and limited interagency coordination. Providing appropriate services for these students can be extremely challenging. Beyond this, the Contented teachers claim the restrictions of the host agency further challenge the ingenuity and resourcefulness of even the most motivated teachers as they attempt to provide legitimate, top-quality services to meet the many behavioral, emotional and academic needs of their students. Among the most serious criticisms that come from the Contented are concerns about space and place. Physical movement is highly regulated when students are moved across the facilities from their cells to the classroom, through the prison corridors, and within the classroom space. Students are not supposed to move without permission from the teacher or a member of the correctional staff. During class time, students are not allowed to leave the classroom unless a staff member is available to escort them. Outside of class, students rarely have the opportunity to interact with peers in other parts of the prison. These arrangements are in accordance with policies concerned with safety, control, and the maintenance of order, yet they also allow for very little sense of the school that the students attend each day. The Contented teachers also expressed disappointment regarding the restrictions on contact between classes, which, due to limitations on physical space, prevent assemblies, authentic skill-level classes and other educational opportunities. Schooling

in Passages is systemically related to prison practices, with the corresponding institutional emphasis on safety and control; prison norms (rather than educational norms) are enforced to control movement and activity. These practices and norms were official measures instituted to ensure physical safety for the students, teachers, school staff, correctional staff and other staff in the facilities.

For example, in one Passages site, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) residential students are not permitted to interact with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) non-secure detention (NSD) students. In addition, the NSD boys are not allowed to interact with (i.e., speak or be in physical proximity to) the NSD girls. This uniform method of governing students and making decisions certainly hinders the range of educational opportunities available as these rules also determine how students are placed academically. Despite the school's attempts to create age-, grade-, and skill-level-appropriate classes, every group contains a wide range of grade levels because the students are sorted according to prison criteria rather than academic considerations. Legitimate academic placement seems difficult if not impossible with such limits set on space and resources. The classes, according to Contented informants, were "not grouped in a logical fashion. Mixing middle school students with kids that are in high school has all the ingredients for disaster." One informant complained, "How do you take a whole class of kids and have seventh, eighth and ninth graders sitting in the same class and get work from everybody? That's been my biggest problem."

Further challenging these motivated Contented teachers is the lack of modern equipment and engaging material due to the restrictions of the host prison facility.

Format restrictions manifest themselves as physical limitations that prevent provisions of magazines with staples, current newspaper publications, pencils with erasers or spiral bound books, which may be used as instruments of harm. Because personal safety takes priority over educational considerations, classrooms must also be free of electrical and extension cords, food, glue, pins, string art and maps of local areas. These admittedly necessary precautions severely alter the technique, implementation and actualization of a lesson.

A school created inside a juvenile detention center is clearly special. Identifying superficial commonalities or typical traits among the teachers was simple, but the inquiry became more nuanced as this study evolved. This research surveys the lives of educators who often face losing battles against the collaborating agencies and juvenile justice mechanisms currently in place. Teaching in general poses tremendous challenges; teaching in a juvenile

detention school adds many further complications. In trying to capture the insights, struggles and triumphs of practitioners teaching at Passages, I noticed a wide range of teacher motivations: some are here for the love of the students, some for the lack of expectation (of themselves and students), some only for their convenience, and some because of their own incompetence. As the interviews developed, I found from this triad of teaching categories, that in educating court-involved students, the tests to one's strength of character are endless and the development of one's classroom management abilities is continual. As the data suggests, success under these circumstances demands numerous tactical and attitudinal adjustments.

Most practitioners who took part in this study lack specific agendas but have instead deep philosophies coupled with a strong desire to be left to teach. They are teachers with depth and with varying degrees of vision. The interviews and my fieldwork observations demonstrate the epistemological shifts taking place at Passages as administration and teaching staff must engage the difficult steps towards resolving the paradox of punishment and rehabilitation, as well as the tension between educating students and keeping them busy. Schools are ideological by their very nature, and this school is not different in this regard. But Passages teachers are also pragmatic, because they need to be this way to survive. The whole school is the sum of all of its parts, and everything serves a function. All those who work at Passages are professionals operating in high-stress conditions. In many cases, their enthusiasm is tempered with skepticism. Some are critical, others cynical, and a few are naïve. The commonality among the pedagogical practitioners in this setting is that each has discovered that normal rules do not apply. The teachers here are practitioners with the will to conform to a reality that is not of their own making but created and sustained by powers well beyond their influence.

INTIMIDATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

The philosopher George Gurdjieff pointed out that for anyone who wishes to escape from prison, the first thing that one must acknowledge is that one is in prison (Dass, 2008). This holds true for Passages, where many working in the program are able to recognize the entrapment of their roles. They are even prepared to acknowledge that they are in some ways contributing to this sense of imprisonment. There is great potential in that recognition alone. In order for Passages to exist, there must be students who are regarded as criminals by the DJJ. The staff members at Passages are educational providers

who go into buildings that have contracts with the DJJ. The teachers focus on the developmental and academic growth of the students in these facilities. They are employed to see the young people behind bars as scholars, despite the many issues they may bring with them into the classroom—everything from court cases to problems in their personal lives. The teachers seem to approach the extraordinary managerial circumstances—dealing with the dual challenges of a transient student population and the DJJ inside Passages—as both a street fight and a chess match. Although such conflicts among multiple agencies are not unknown in research or education, this battle is fundamentally one of ontology, in which each stakeholder employs a different strategy to achieve its mission. Every school wants to shape student behavior and design its own academic program. Passages differs from mainstream schools in New York City in that the potential levels of violence, chaos and miscommunication are heightened.

Why can't we be friends?

~Sly Stone

"It's complicated," reflects Ms. White, a Social Studies teacher with eight years of experience working at Passages:

> At my old middle school in the Bronx, I had a class of 34 kids and I had them all by myself for an entire year. I developed a relationship with them in that way. My teaching developed along with my discipline techniques—and they're intertwined. It was a little difficult to come here to have another governing body, another person who was more responsible for discipline. It was a relationship that took a while to work out; I sometimes feel like my authority gets undermined and I'm not the authority in the room, but there is something to that. Kids want to believe a myth that their teacher is this kind of strong person who knows everything. Obviously, that's not true but they want to believe that. When they see kind of a weakening there, it can get complicated.

The interview data indicates that managing a class is indeed a very hard thing to do when you have three or four agencies working simultaneously. Most teachers agreed that the dysfunction is primarily the byproduct of the enormous transition:

> When there's a lot of transition, there's a lot of different people (students and hired professionals) coming in. You can get some good people in and then they'll leave. When working with another agency you have all these people and they all have different passionate views about

> what should take place in the school, it then becomes hard. Because the kids come in and sometimes feel, "I don't have to do this because they said all I got to do is keep our mouth shut and stay out of trouble," and to certain staff from the other agency in the class, they might just agree with that sentiment. So you spend a lot of time trying to build up relationships with people and that steals times from the lessons and attention towards the students.

THE LEARNING CULTURE

Concerns about the working relationships between educators and facility staff were another important theme arising from the interviews. Respondents commented that facility staff perceived education as just another "program," the only purpose of which being to keep the detainees engaged during the day. There was little appreciation of the important role of education for the detained children and minimal respect for the dynamics of classroom processes, which resulted in constant interruptions (e.g., removing students for appointments, loud talking in the hallways, or having individual non-school-related conversations with students during class periods). The relationship between "school" and "facility" varied in content and quality dramatically across the schools. The type and quality of interaction with detention center staff were directly linked to issues of behavior management in classrooms. The more respect the facility staff showed for education, the more compliant the students were, resulting in a more effective educational process. Some teachers purposely involved the officers in educational discussions. All respondents mentioned the necessity of improving the interaction between detention staff and school staff.

The working relationship between the guards and the teachers is a delicate one. The guards are stuck in regular routines like the prisoners and they are often suspicious of the teachers, as one interviewee recalls:

> I recently had two guards around me coming in with "Whadda we going to do with these liberal teachers?" I interrupted, explained to the guard and said, "Mr. Woods, you should be ashamed with yourself…I'm an anarchist." It was a hard moment, actually. I saw a deep, hurting kind of suspicion about people like me, brought in here to give the inmates an education, while they can't afford to send their kids to college or get them a job in the area. These are problems that can be solved through technique, experience or know-how. I've learned not to broadcast on the days leading up to a break how much I'm looking forward to it, and

> when we are back I don't bring in pictures or wear white to accentuate my tan. The guards are watching out for anything that's going to make life difficult, the students are looking for whatever's going to make it easier and the teachers are coming up somewhere in the middle. You can't help somebody out if someone else thinks they're losing because of it. We've simply remembered who we are behind the roles and dissolve the barriers created by these roles.

It would be at the very least disingenuous and the very worst dishonest not to mention the racial and socio-economic dynamics among most of the agencies. The interagency antagonisms that exist seem to run along race, class, and perhaps also gender lines. Teachers generally have more education than the youth care workers/correctional officers. Teachers make more money, work fewer hours and have more vacation time than facility staff. Both parties are aware of this disparity. The youth care workers are mostly black and Latino. The school teaching staff is mostly white. Both the DOE and DJJ on-site office staff is predominately black. There is little empirical evidence to back these claims, but it is not hard to understand how racial or socio-economic patterns influence the perceptions of one's demeanor in these situations.

The DJJ or prison agency staff spends more time behind the prison walls than anybody. Students come and go, and stay at Passages for an average of 36 days; teachers work 156 days a year; DJJ staff are inside for roughly 230 days each year. They experience the detention center almost as a second home, especially in secure institutions like Crossroads, Horizon and Bridges.

THE PRINCIPAL: A SCHOOL 60 MILES LONG

> *Cancel my subscription to the Resurrection; Send my credentials to the House of Detention.*
>
> ~The Doors

Principal Blair is on the phone as I enter her office, which is part meeting room, part hallway. She is talking with someone at the DJJ, trying to negotiate terms and conditions for summer school. "What happens to the rest of our students?" she asks sharply. "…No Mark, this is not acceptable, last year we held it at all sites, not just the secure facilities. Please speak with him and let me know immediately." This is a woman who will not relinquish her demands.

Sydney Blair is a fit woman with diaphanous skin and striking features, whose appearance seems more suited to work the fragrance counter at Bloomingdales than a juvenile detention school in the south Bronx. She uses

words with economy and does not seem to be in love with hearing her own voice. Her eye contact is continuous and she demonstrates an uncanny ability not to blink. Principal Blair, like many of the students under her tutelage, is misanthropic and cannot be defined by her appearance.

Her responsibilities further involve overseeing the sites of Passages, each with her personally chosen cabinet of coordinators, assistant principals, teachers, para-professionals and students; most of the latter she will never see more than once (if at all). A principal is a public relations person and policymaker, the hirer and firer, a cheerleader and an agent of change. Similar to all school principals in New York City, her responsibilities involve monitoring and mentoring teachers, planning and policing, evaluating and envisioning, and balancing a budget. Unlike many principals in the city, Sydney Blair is the conductor of a cacophonous orchestra, with critical factors designed to educate and improve safety in schools for court-involved students. The players in her symphony include numerous agencies working in concert, parents, whom she virtually never sees (parental visits are limited to Sundays and parent/teacher night) and, as the phone conversation clearly indicated, many more components which also play a daily part in the school's infrastructure. Ten governmental agencies and a couple of labor unions are involved, including: the Department of Education, the Department of Probation, the Department of Correction, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Social Services, the Office of Children and Family Services, the State Education Department, the U.S. Justice Department, the United Federation of Teachers and District Council 37. Each agency is connected to Passages in a very deep and sometimes forceful way (Street Visuals, 2010).

PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Schools in general and Passages Academy in particular are about systems, but they are also about personalities. School administrators exist along a continuum with people on one end and paper at the other. At the "people" end of the spectrum is the concern for the real needs of others, which are seldom met by the system; at the "paper" end is the prioritizing of endless forms and records that, while serving administrative and political purposes, blinds them to those falling between the cracks.

Sydney Blair is on the people side. She never loses sight of what it takes to educate tough kids in tough situations, and she demonstrates warmth, humor and flexibility to help those around her retain their sanity. One teacher, Mr. Goetsch, reflects on his first of 6 years at the school:

> Coming in to Horizons after a holiday weekend, I waited with Sydney between the magnetic doors while the control room officers were busy watching their monitors. She struck up a conversation, asking how my Thanksgiving was. I told her I couldn't stop thinking about the kids locked up here. It freaked me out that, the whole time I was traveling and enjoying my holiday, this jail was operating non-stop day and night. Whereupon Sydney said, "I know: it's like Vegas!"

A lot might be said about such a remark. In addition to displaying a certain affinity for glitz and glamour on the part of Ms. Blair, it shows someone who brings an unusual perspective to her work, along with a sense of humor. And, of course, the familiar sentiment about Vegas is that what happens there stays there!

Sydney Blair has been compared to a ninja: slipping in through each Passages site, face unseen, but with a huge presence. This sleight-of-hand approach is carefully performed to keep the focus on the in-school administration. She is very accessible via e-mail, phone and, if you can actually find her, in person. When teachers make suggestions, provide pedagogical feedback or express other concerns, she listens, pauses and responds—usually with encouragement: "I didn't think about that," "sounds like an interesting idea," "I'll be here next week… submit something in writing, have them call me." Even when Sydney disappears from a particular site, as she is prone to do working with seven sites in three boroughs, a teacher will find his or her petition addressed the following week, either by the arrival at their classroom of the books and supplies requested, or with a faxed note stating that it could not be done.

Sydney Blair has never been seen in the same outfit twice, but she is more than a well-groomed figurehead, stationed high in her penthouse on the top floor of Horizon Juvenile detention center in the Bronx. She seems to be aware of the personal and professional situations of her staff members at all of the sites. She is fiscally conservative; making sure the government is not circumvented, but progressive on pedagogical and social issues, spending much of her million dollar budget on social services for the students.

EVERYDAY REALITIES FOR THE STUDENTS AT PASSAGES ACADEMY

> *I don't want to spend my time in hell, looking at the walls of a prison cell. I don't ever want to play the part, of a statistic on a government chart.*
>
> ~The Police

In his article "Fix, don't close 'failing' schools," United Federation of Teachers (UFT) president Michael Mulgrew (2009) asserts that the failure of once-successful schools such as Columbus High School and Evander Childs was "the result of an influx of non-English speaking recent immigrants, disabled and special needs students, along with students returning from correctional institutions." In other words, the ingredients for apparent failure, according to the President of the UFT, are the typical student demographic within the Passages classroom. In examining teachers' experiences in the secure and non-secure custodial juvenile detention setting of Passages Academy, we must begin with the students, who could be described as at risk of dropping out of the system as a whole, and more specifically as English-language learners, special education students and children from very low-income families. The likelihood of attending a class in this school is presented disproportionally to the most marginalized children of New York City. One-third of teenagers in detention read at a third-grade level.

Of the 10,000 youth attending either Passages Academy or other similar New York City district 79 schools for detained students, 15% "were on psychotropic medication at the time of admission." Moreover, "66% of these youth were referred for a mental health evaluation" and many of the students struggle with addictions or psychological illnesses for which less restrictive treatment programs are more advisable but not available. Three-quarters of all New York City children entering the juvenile justice system have drug or alcohol problems; more than half have received a diagnosis of mental health problems, and one–third have developmental disabilities (Leone, 2009).

New York incarcerates children with serious mental health disorders. Almost every court-involved student has a diagnosis, and although a psychiatrist working on contract visits once every two weeks, there are no-full time psychiatrists at Passages or at any of the state's juvenile prisons. A vast majority of the students are on psychotropic medication: As a result of the medications, many students fall asleep in class, either as a direct result of the drugs or because of insomnia, which may be a side effect of medication or of the stress induced by incarceration.

Moreover, of New York's incarcerated juveniles, 7% tested positive for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and 7% of the females entered custody pregnant. Also common amongst detained youths are asthma and diabetes. Although the median age of those admitted to New York juvenile facilities is just under 16, many of the informants for this research reported that they are now seeing the student population grow younger and younger (Leone, 2009).

In 2007, more than half of the youth who entered NYC detention centers were sent there for the equivalent of misdemeanor offenses—in many cases: theft, drug possession or even truancy. They are locked up because they violated probation either by being re-arrested or by disobeying rules, such as skipping school or staying out past curfew. Most are awaiting trial for low-level felonies such as property offences, robbery or petty larceny. One-sixth are imprisoned for assault (Gonnerman, 2010).

In the case of Passages, the students are all mixed together and placed in the school while awaiting adjudication, whether for these petty crimes or for more serious felonies. A Passages classroom is made up of young people battling mental illness or addiction alongside those held as violent offenders; and all are mandated to receive some sort of basic education.

THE STUDENTS' RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

For many, this educational discontinuity began prior to being incarcerated. One-fifth of Passages students have a history of long term absence (LTA) from a regular school, in many cases beginning well before detention. The statistics and numbers show that kids—many who have never been away from home before—do not come to the school as empty vessels: they arrive scared, confused, and emotionally guarded. The majority are educationally disadvantaged, disconnected and troubled. All are adjusting to jail culture, and 89% of the boys placed in these types of facilities go on to commit further crimes (Confessore & Lippman, 2009).

The above are just some of the things that teachers face, and these issues cannot be undone with three weeks of a math class in which elementary, middle and high school level students are all copying down the same assignment from the same board. Teachers have to sift through all of the described issues and then embark on building a teaching relationship with their students. Incoming students are tired, scared, confused, sick and hungry; for those reasons (and no doubt others), they are unable to see the relevance of an education at Passages. Many are awaiting outcomes of trials or are soon to be placed in other more permanent facilities. Most of the time the students do not want to talk about why they are here; in large part this is because, having not yet been sentenced, they are very nervous about the outcomes of their cases. According to an informant, the problem is that the students are not really concerned or even in a position to care about school while at Passages. As one teacher notes: "All they can see is the possibility of being sentenced for 12 months or so. They don't know

what's happening and learning how to use a gerund in English class is the last thing on their mind."

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS

Most interviewees suggested that it would be a mistake either to underestimate or to overestimate these students, whether in or out of the class. By this, they mean that it may be as easy to essentialize the appeal of the students as it is to discount them entirely. Similarly, the teachers might also be described as ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. One teacher discusses the situation in these terms:

> I'd rather not say I work in a jail because I think that is a bad way to identify the kids; it exoticizes them. I think the better way to identify the kids is: "These are young people in your community that have been rejected and therefore they're in jail because they have not been given a place to go to." They have been given no alternatives to detention. And they're going to come back. I try not to be aware of why they are here. I try to meet them where they are now, as human beings, not the kid on the street who did (or didn't do) whatever it was to get them in here.

WHAT KIND OF TIME ARE THEY DOING?

The students of Passages Academy are very much like New York City itself: forever in motion and always in transition. They are admitted and discharged at brisk rates each month. All involved find it confusing that in each classroom there are many adults, not all of whom are educators, which contributes to the uncertainty and ambiguity of the place. The teachers systematically agreed that student experience at Passages is inconsistent and limited. An issue that came up again and again during this data collection was time-sensitivity.

The conveyor belt system that checks the teacher's bags each morning may also be applied as a metaphor for the way that students continually arrive at the school. Passages is not in the enrollment business and no one on the school staff has any choice about who comes or how long they stay. Passages teachers do not possess the luxuries enjoyed by many other public school teachers. Some students stay for months, while others are assigned for as little as one day. According the DJJ, approximately half of all young people leave custody within the first ten days of detention, while youths with multiple or complex cases have higher-than-average lengths of stay in department custody. Annually, approximately 4,200 students visit a Passages

facility, and although the average length of stay for a resident in custody is only 36 days, a lot can happen in 36 days.

In addition to the temporary nature of enrollment at Passages, there is a high rate of absenteeism. Students are pulled from class for a host of reasons: court dates, mental health consultations and medical appointments. One Department of Corrections study estimates that on any given day, 15–20% of the total jail population is either in court or receiving medical attention. There is a roughly 20% absentee rate at detention schools (Martland & Miller, 1999). Whether Idealist, Contented or Disheartened, all of the educators at Passages accept this transitional student cohort and do not consider it an inconvenience. Teaching with limited time and no access to a student's prior knowledge seems to require uncanny instincts combined with outlandish patience. The brief stays and rapid turnover in class have led to the task of educating the students being compared to that of flying an Edwards Northwing plane, essentially suggesting that much of the experience was time spent keeping it aloft—not crashing, yet never soaring. Like war reporters, the Passages teaching core are drawn to the action, the excitement, and the possible danger. The principles of immediacy, skill-level disparities and numerous other variables are always taken into account in planning a lesson. As illustrated later in this chapter, the work is short and punchy with a quick summary. One teacher says:

> I was drawn to this job because I intuited that students detained were bound to be isolated with their suffering, would be in a state of self-reflection, and that as a teacher I could really communicate with them. What keeps me here is how interesting the students are. The exciting part is they are still young and have time to make themselves into what they want to be. Look into their eyes and you see children, but some seem weary, as if they've seen too many things in life that they didn't want to see. But when they smile, they are just kids, their mouths seem too big for their faces. The rules are different for different people yet when we feel sorry for the students, we make them less.

Extraordinary efforts are required of teachers who tend to the students' needs, who must nourish their minds as well as their spirits and bodies, all in the face of difficult and sometimes shameful conditions.

INTAKE, ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

Upon arriving at Passages, students are assessed according to the STARS program, which is a computerized test of each student's reading and math

skills. The resulting data is used to place youths in classes that will best meet their academic needs. The school has tailored the traditional high school curriculum to the functional level of its students, who are, on average, below grade-level in reading and math, and who may also require special education. Students who have a reading level lower than the fourth grade are placed in literacy classes, where the focus is on development of basic reading and writing skills. The remainders are placed in academic classes where they may earn school credit. The instructional program is designed to effectively adapt teaching to each student's learning style. Lessons often consist of four activities during each period, allowing students to build self-esteem through success (Education in Detention, 2012).

Passages students take courses in English, Global Studies, Math, Art, Science and Physical Education during a seven-period school day that lasts from 8:40am to 3:00pm. Classroom lessons and activities look just like they do all over New York City because Passages students are instructed according to the same standards and are prepared for the same exams. The school also follows the same calendar as public schools in the community.

English studies classes focus on literacy and literature, social studies classes cover topics in global and American History and math classes provide quantitative skills. Students receive school credit on their transcripts for their work (half-credit for every 30 days in class). The school also offers a special education program to students with special needs, including an academic skills class and speech and language services (Education in Detention, 2012). Social workers provide students with counseling, either in groups or individually.

If students are placed in this school they are expected to attend class and complete out-of-class assignments—homework for the NSD students or hallwork in the secure sites. The excuse, "my dog ate my homework" is replaced with "they inspected my room and trashed the place," or "they would not give me a pencil because of an incident in the housing unit." Students cannot graduate from Passages Academy, but they can be promoted to the next grade if they earn the requisite number of credits.

CARD TRICKS

> *Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.*
>
> ~Albert Einstein

"Who is Jesse Todisco?" a young teacher blurts out not looking up while leaning on a Poland Spring water cooler with a pencil in his hand, grading

a half filled-out test paper resting on a larger stack upon the flat top of the cooler. Without looking up from the cramped table in the middle of the small room, a colleague replies, "Jesse was here back in January. He was short with curly hair." The teacher next to her raises his eyebrow, "Jesse? I thought Jesse was the tall skinny girl who liked to sing?" "That is Jessica Moreno," another teacher hidden in a corner doing an *AM New York* Puzzle exclaims. Although it may sound like a bad Abbott & Costello routine, the shtick of "Who is this kid?" and "What did she look like?" means that it is grade time at Passages!

How do we grade at Passages? Measuring academic achievement is a difficult task in a school where the population is revolving and the very fact that most students are not here for very long severely limits the opportunity to prepare for and actually take standardized tests. Models of accountability at Passages Academy must solve two distinct problems: achievable objectives and measurable outcomes. The desire to show progress is a symbiotic activity of quantifying, measurable from both a teachers-and-student and administrative point of view. Traditional models of assessment and tools of testing do not accurately reflect the classroom teaching and learning.

The students at Passages get real New York City public school report cards with real grades; they take required state and city tests, including: ELA exams, GEDs, SATs, 8th grade promotional tests, and the Regents Exams in June and January. Yet Passages uses no normal markers to gauge teacher progress. Some student achievement is measured by standardized state and city exams. Passages' school administration encourages the teachers and students to respect and acknowledge the purpose of traditional exams but to not place too much stock in these assessment tools. Placing a premium on tests is often unfair to both students and teachers, because tests are not the most accurate indicator of what they may or may not have learned at the school.

The Passages administration also recognizes that although typologization (i.e., various types of tests and screeners) and standardization (i.e., various types of rigor exercised) cannot be mapped directly into gaps in skills and knowledge of the students, they may nevertheless use this information to identify targets for educational intervention, while being careful to avoid making sweeping simplifications about a Passages student's educational journey. The environment of the school is such that a student who has spent weeks of rigorous preparation for a June 12th Regents Exam scheduled may be removed from the school, remanded, or given probation on June 8 and thus be unable to take the exam that she or he has prepared so diligently

for. What makes this process more unjust is that the judges who place and release the students from Passages are theoretically aware of this. The judges ignore this information, to which they have access. It is not in their interest. The test dates are posted well in advance and the DOE has on numerous occasions petitioned the DJJ to persuade the judges to take these matters into consideration when giving out their deposition and arraignment dates. On at least one such occasion, however, a mother was able to convince the judge who was about to send her son home to postpone the release date by a week so that he would be able to take the Algebra Regents.

TESTING

> *Remember your strategies when you take this test. Read the questions first then the passage. It will help you know what to look for while reading. Make sure to leave enough time to complete your essay. You got this!*
>
> ~ Field notes, 6/22/09

On top of the issues of state exams, even simple tests during any of the classes at Passages are difficult to administer and hard to evaluate. Students are coming in and out of class and passing to and from school; in this situation, even to administer a math quiz poses a challenge and a teacher's ability to recognize exemplary scholarship is severely hampered. Teachers had many diverse answers to the question of how they negotiate this challenge:

> I give tests. It legitimizes what is done in class for both the students and the administration. That's one way students respond to the classroom topics, the way they talk about things. You know, we do a lot of repetition in class. So I do something one day, I'll bring it up again the next day. And you can see their eyes light up when they realize that they have learned or that they know something.

When asked about the fairness of this method for students just arriving, the same teacher replied, "I keep that in mind and have the first-day student try it, but inform them to do what they can even if that includes just putting their name on the page. I also grade on a very gracious curve. I never lower standards, but change expectations."

Another teacher had a slightly different perspective on the topic:

> Testing is just another term of communicating with my students. To see how we both are doing. I see tests as pausing and saying how much have we been engaged in the classroom. Not interested in testing per se

> as I am interested in communicating with my students. I rarely, if ever, give real formalized tests. I was doing the exam exactly the way the state prescribed, and found that none of my students passed. This was unacceptable to me because a majority of them had been doing very good work and really challenging themselves. So to do it with a straight rubric the way the NYS standards had mandated just didn't seem practical or fair. So I sort of developed my own way.

This teacher searches more for analytical or evaluative skills, asking "why did…?" instead of "who started…?" By giving them the facts to reach areas of criticality, rather than just exploring strict content, this teacher's exam questions ask, "Why was Martin Luther King shot?" rather than "Who shot him?"

Another teacher remarks upon the predicament of students sometimes having to take finals on their first day of school:

> It is downright bizarre to give finals on a student's first day of class. It's up there with living wakes and surprise weddings. But it happens and quite often. Did you ever see the movie *Summer School*, with Mark Harmon? In it a bunch of misfit students take class with a more misfit teacher. Due to his unorthodox methods, they all pass the exam, and the student with the highest grade was the kid who took the bathroom pass during the first minute of class on the first day and only came back for the final. I think about that movie often while here. Our students will not be as lucky as that kid in *Summer School*.

Another assessment tool is the STARS skill assessment test. This is not a pass-fail test, but specifically explores where the students are in regard to grade level. The statistics of the STARS reading and math assessment, which students take on their first and 30th day at the school, are significant because the findings indicate that students do improve their reading and math skills while at the school. The majority of the informants believe the aggregate higher results have less to do with their teaching and more to do with the fact that the students are in class, whereas before they were not. "Kids are improving because they're reading, writing and thinking about numbers more than anything that we're actually doing." To this teacher, however, this does not delegitimize the work that he and his colleagues are doing. The notion of grades at Passages was described as "a pedagogical wrestling match without any clear winners or losers where all involved leave crawling on their knees." At Passages, assessment does not drive instruction…survival does!

PORTFOLIO AND CLASSROOM WORK

Central to the history of Passages teachers is a prison teaching ethos that informs the way they take over the responsibility of delivering what has been structurally decided. Passages has a culture of inconsistency, as students' abilities vary and their presence in the classroom is transient. Teachers' daily routines differ from mainstream educators' in the implications of these variables on the rigor of classroom and work opportunities to earn high school graduation credits. The teachers and administration at Passages do not have the immediate market response to what they are selling. As such, their classroom curricula emphasize process as much as product. When asked how they assess student achievement as practitioners, teachers all voiced support for the notion that assessment and instruction are very closely related. The teachers suggested that neither assessment-driven instruction nor summative type assessment is well suited to education at Passages. Summative assessment tallies up after the fact; this approach is curricular-based and evaluative, and it works best in middle-class schools where teachers have the original diagnostics.

Principal Blair also realizes that traditional means of assessment and performance evaluation are difficult and unfair ways to gauge the students' mastery of a lesson. The key pedagogical question is: How do teachers encourage students to take interest and ownership in their education at this school while knowing they are enrolled for an average of 36 days? The teacher's focus is necessarily formative: short term and skill-based. Teachers assign daily grades and make constant adjustments; every student's performance in every class needs to be noted and recorded. Most of the work a teacher faces is simply reactive. It is not uncommon for a teacher to have a random student of unknown age or grade level dropped off in the middle of a class.

The fairest and most accurate way to gauge what the student has done and perhaps learned at the school is their individual portfolios. In each Passages classroom, students are given folders for the class and homework they complete while in the school. The teachers give significant consideration to the student classroom portfolios when grading. They find physical evidence and tangible efforts paramount when compiling academic grades and recording student performance. One teacher told me, "I like to assess their learning, interest and growth by sitting down next to the student and looking over their body of work with them." Administrators regard the authenticity of the portfolios so highly that they take portfolios into account when looking at alternative markers for promotional criteria; the judges take

portfolios seriously as a measure of how and what the student was doing with his or her time in Passages while awaiting trial.

Because many students are neither present for the state tests nor given adequate preparation and support, promotional criteria is often based upon authentic (differentiated) assessment. The principal and her brain trust look over what the student has done and they decide if he or she is ready to move on to the next grade. The scene is reminiscent of a co-op board deciding whether a prospective resident can move in, with the teacher playing an active role in classroom-based assessment of actual learning experiences. (Those who have had the opportunity to go in front of a NYC co-op board can attest that people in jails are infinitely more humane.)

FROM INMATE TO CITIZEN: SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The *Passages Academy Mission Statement* reads as follows:

> We believe all children can develop a lifelong interest in learning and are entitled to respect and dignity. We are committed to providing a nurturing environment where our students will grow emotionally, intellectually, and socially as they acquire the skills to become productive, effective members of a culturally diverse society.

The mission statement is about life-long learning and creating. While most teachers have not memorized it, a handful of teachers agreed to take a job because of it. Principal Blair wants incarcerated kids at Passages to view learning as about being a "citizen in the world." She asserts, "It's our job to teach them and prepare them that the classroom is something that they can use for the rest of their lives." The Passages staff who subscribe to the mission of this program look for effective practices of assessment and treatment, as well as planning the release of inmates with special needs into the community. The teaching strategies include provisions to reduce recidivism, improve school attendance and academic performance, improve family relationships, and promote leadership. In my attempt to find clarity in Passages' practical, intellectual and philosophical endeavors, I realized there was no unified program in use across the school.

Passages' youth-focused, teacher-friendly curriculum is comprised of many unwritten modules. The teachers all mentioned a priority that goes beyond the students just acquiring basic academic competencies. Integral to Passages' daily pedagogy is an expansive knowledge that stirs their imagination and prepares them for life outside. Each lesson always contains a reflection of a positive self-view, future orientation, coping skills, conflict resolution,

positive peer interaction and community responsibility. Teachers weave the words written on the board with lessons about postponing gratification, learning to accept responsibility for one's behavior, and developing personal investment in the well-being of others.

Teachers at Passages teach social lessons in addition to academics as a means of incorporating holistic elements into class instruction. The forces that drive the teachers are more environmental than external, as the interviewees detailed in discussing the practical and emotional sides to their work. For instance, a math teacher in a typical (i.e., non-detention) school might want to know the percentage change in a student's grade, but a Passages math teacher probably cares more about the change in a student's character and self-confidence; such changes are subtle and hard to measure. There is no simple answer, as discussed earlier; student growth and gain cannot be fairly measured in absolute scores. In the limited literature on teaching in prisons, data indicates that successful interventions in these schools have focused on social and moral rather than academic issues (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Even with a curriculum in place and materials available, a teacher is always hindered in what he or she can teach within the subject matter since a wide range of ages and abilities within each classroom is present.

The interviews also elicited responses regarding the general characteristics of instruction: In building on the social, emotional and mentoring components, how can a teacher engage and serve a student in subject content for the brief duration that they actually spend together in a class? From the instructor's point of view, any given lesson—even if part of a larger thematic unit—needs to be self-contained and readily accomplished within the 50-minute class period in order to stimulate the long-term student and yet remain inclusive of the new or short-term learners. The teaching framework is built around the thirty-six-day average stay of the students, and the administration has suggested either telescoping or spreading out the concepts and activities over two or three days. It is therefore difficult to teach sequential math, perform plays, foster engagement in student government, organize poetry festivals or arrange for any sort of assembly that needs advanced preparation, student interaction or space.

The short length of stay, limited parental involvement and lack of information on histories (educational, health, psychological) can hamper the teacher's ability to develop a helpful relationship with the student. To compensate, the Passages curriculum provides a framework that encourages teachers to experiment and personalize strategies. Lesson plans are seen as a living document and follow a self-developed format, meaning they are

malleable, allowing the teachers to embrace a large arsenal of teaching tools. This may include provisions for a certain degree of improvisation, spontaneity and creativity. Flexibility is exercised in delivery of the educational program to meet the specific needs of the population served, in the application of creative and effective models of teaching, and in the orientation towards real-life situations. Teachers begin to learn who the students are, discover their needs as learners and their personal passions as a means of seeking to broaden their learning perimeters. Using such diverse teaching strategies and techniques requires tremendous interpersonal skills.

In responding to the question, "Which pedagogical approaches in teaching and curriculum do you think best serve the teachers and students of the Academy?" a number of teachers explained the importance of "doing things to humanize the students." As one teacher reported, "I think the most important thing is to just stay focused on the kids. I think that's the thing no matter where you're teaching, but especially here. Just stay focused on the kids." Another observed:

> If you get all wrapped up in the administrative things, you're not going to be able to have moments where the kids pull you aside to tell you a story or share their poetry or anything, where they take that extra time to seek you out. Because they know that you've taken the extra time out for them. And to have that sort of mutual rapport, it's irreplaceable. And I'm sure you could achieve the same type of thing in a regular school. But in a regular school, the kids seek out the teacher's favor. Here, it's sort of the other way around. You've got to seek out the kids. I think some teachers here let that drop. They don't quite get it. I don't know who said it, but before they care about what you have to say, you have to show that you care about what they have to say. I think it's especially true here.

It seems that the personalization of academic activities increases the feeling of humanness. That is, the more that classroom tasks are designed for a specific classroom—e.g., encouraging students to select their own texts, incorporating more personal and thoughtful discussions—the more students will feel engaged with the material and the more it will have a sustainable academic impact.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

I observed variety of classroom instruction types: whole group, small group, pairs, and individualized instruction. I saw teachers present materials in

lecture form, teacher-student one-on-one interaction, whole class discussion, problem-solving activities, reading aloud by students, reading aloud by teachers, use of audio books, reading silently, working on assignments individually and in groups, using technology, and homework discussions.

Respondents recognized that for instruction to be effective, it had to be tailored for both specific groups of students and certain individual students. The degree of individualization of instruction was directly related to the utilization of material that bore some relevance to the lives of the students; this also influenced the level of satisfaction as communicated by the students themselves. When teachers adjusted curricula, they adjusted the amount of work or they provided for and developed specialized instruction. In the classrooms where the students were highly engaged, the lessons were well designed, artfully implemented and flexible to student needs.

Despite the fact that many adults were in the classroom (which I documented earlier as occasionally detrimental), I found it striking that during a Passages lesson many of these adults (teachers and correctional staff) worked in solidarity with the students. In addition to motivating and facilitating, these adults lead by example with a rigorous modeling of quality work, simultaneously facilitating and participating in the lesson.

The data further indicated that dogmatic approaches to pedagogy proved counterproductive. At Passages, less energy is expended on trying to determine the best way to teach than accepting that there are as many ways to organize classrooms and learning as there are talented caring teachers in a specific school context (Weiner, 1999). The flexible curriculum of Passages gives teachers the opportunity to teach, to fail, to risk, and to try to find what works—with administrative guidance instead of punishment. Teachers at this school are not afraid to question, to doubt, to start over, to ask for support and to act.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Teach the writer, not the writing.

~Anonymous

In this next sub-section, I asked the interviewees about the design and delivery of their curriculum, including how it is assessed and what external forces drive it. All curricula needed to be compatible with the philosophy that the potential of these students is high, but their immediate needs are higher. In *The Dreamkeepers*, (2009) Gloria Ladson-Billings refers to pedagogy as a:

> deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations. As both a political and practical activity, it attempts to influence the occurrence and qualities of experiences. Pedagogy is a concept, which draws attention to the processes through which knowledge is produced. (Giroux & Simon, 1989)

The Passages schools are struggling to build a culture of standards that frees the students rather than trapping them. Curricula and instruction that embrace a culturally responsive approach provide the strongest theoretical grounding for teaching in these classrooms (Villegas & Lucas 2002).

Many teachers interviewed have suggested that to increase educational equity at Passages, curricula must match both the interests and the academic levels of the students they serve. Thus a cultural as well as functional curriculum is needed. Instructional strategies that incorporated content, concepts, principle theories, and paradigms while adhering to the prison rules were successfully used to gain students' cooperation and manage the classroom. The teachers all agree to some degree that the most important things to teach these children are ways to think critically, to enhance their talents, and to help them be aware of the strengths they already possess. The interest is in learning itself. Teaching at Passages ideally consists of giving kids access to resources and showing them how those resources have political, social or economic value, and encouraging them to use those resources to make meaning in a carceral world.

When students gain a different relationship to history, they are able to reposition themselves in relation to their own histories and to their school system. The best practices of pedagogy I observed at Passages Academy do not shelter student from the harsh realities, but instead try to elevate. One colleague explained it this way:

> If what you're saying isn't said in a constructive and positive way, students aren't going to pay attention to it. So there has to be a beauty to what's said in order to make your thoughts and ideas uplifting. Those learnings are incidental to the goal, which is to be heard.

This particular teacher's lessons are a smooth combination of self-analysis and social conscience, which is evident in the strong commitment to education she expressed in the interview as well as in the classwork produced by the incarcerated students she teaches. The themes seemed quietly built into the curriculum, as they were a prerequisite to her teaching. Teachers identified their own strengths and those of the students as cogenerated to achieve

specific learning outcomes. They choose not to ignore, but rather opted to examine and highlight their pedagogical practices. Using counter-narratives, or stories that challenge narratives that normalize failure in juvenile detention schools, the teachers pay special attention to the effective pedagogy. The intent of counter-narratives is to be dialogic, humanizing, celebratory, and praxis-oriented. Most students learn best when they are able to participate in the curriculum rather than passively receiving it. Passages' biography-driven, "culturally responsive" teaching (Herrera, 2010) includes tools for understanding families and students in ways that value culture and language.

Approaching a classroom in a reciprocal manner, students take on the role of experts, not subjects: it is their ideas that help generate and negotiate the curriculum. The pedagogies that seemed to work best are those in which the line between teacher and student is blurred. This environment allows many opportunities to participate, permitting the students to bring in what is important to them from their own backgrounds and then, using different resources that they may not have had access to previously, to create new spaces for learning. The crafty part of teaching at Passages is allowing students to voice their opinions while simultaneously injecting their skill sets into a structure and discipline many are not familiar with.

THE MOST INTERESTED PERSON IN THE ROOM: LISTENS, REFLECTS, PRACTICES

Blair lets teachers (and students) exercise their skills and use their judgment to "allow for the magic," as she puts it. "If the teacher is happy the students will learn. Fun, excitement and enthusiasm are infectious inside a classroom." The academic program remains open to new ideas and goals. For example, over the years Passages classes have utilized lessons in such diverse areas as chess, yoga, music, steel drums, sneakers, comedy writing and journalism as a means to an end.

The principal shows a striking level of respect for and acceptance of those members of the teaching staff who are in constant pursuit of new ideas for the students' access and engagement to learning. Ms. Blair's belief that teachers need to use their talents and unique ideas to engage in all that is possible in education, including learning to appreciate one's own talents and those of others.

Passages Academy shares many characteristics of other urban schools as the range of family situations among students includes those who live in single-parent households, those who reside in homeless shelters and those who, with one biological parent deceased and the other living elsewhere,

are being raised by grandparents over the age of 60 or by stepparents. Most instructors at Passages confront these issues in a practical way that goes beyond the minutia of the curriculum. One interviewee explained:

> In here, my role as a teacher is to not simply teach, but to give my students an opportunity to be heard. Through the process of honing a voice, the things that need to be taught are taught. Teaching is not the end result; it is just the incidentals that go into getting these kids to have confidence in their own opinions and a way in order to convey that opinion in a constructive manner and put it out there for the public.

Principal Blair and the majority of the educational staff agree that educating young people is a difficult and complex proposition with no mandated formula. There is, however, one clear and consistent finding that is supported by this research: the most effective curricula in school are responsive to the students' needs and interests:

> The least important part of my job is the academics. I think the most important is just reaching out to them and showing that someone cares. Because a lot of these kids come from an environment where nobody's ever told them 'good job' or nobody's ever believed in them.

A majority of informants echo this sentiment.

To fully engage the learner, teachers use a varied arsenal of practices that promote holistic growth including, but not limited to music, films and literature from popular culture as well as politics and current events. What has emerged from this gathering of diverse students and teachers is an education program that combines mainstream academics with critical theory and cultural studies. The curriculum and the instructors provided a structure and a supportive environment in which the students can further their educational passions:

> My curriculum is mostly driven by stuff that I think is cool. There are monthly themes prescribed by Passages that I try to align my curriculum with. For example, we're in Black History Month right now. So rather than just teach Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement type of stuff; I found a graphic novel about Malcolm X, which is a guy that most people just know of as the violent rebel. But this graphic biography is a more holistic view of him. It gives, I find, a fairer portrait and it really enlightens the kids on sides of him that they don't know, such as the fact that he changed to a peaceful resistance attitude. The graphic novel genre seems to have fallen nicely into my

> curriculum. I didn't seek it out. It just sort of happened. We also have a real community connection to the book, as a teacher here knew the author's parents. So we got the writer to come down to the school for an end of the book celebration and Q & A discussion. This was really exciting for the students.

This teacher also employed traditional books such as *In Cold Blood*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, and the play *Fences*. She describes the instructor's situation thus:

> We're given a little bit more flexibility with what we teach. We don't have to be test-driven, though we are test-prep. So being in such a small environment, you can really cater to the interactive needs of the kids. On the other hand, things like cooperative learning, things like group projects; they don't really pan out so well. These kids don't really know how to interact with their peers.

This teacher seems to possess the necessary ingredients of a teacher in an incarcerated setting—didactic by example, curious in essence, demonstrating a command of language and a technical knowledge of the craft. Her most important attribute as a teacher in a juvenile detention school is that she is always aware of her surroundings and those occupying that space. Her teaching style is current yet formal; her work is technically sound, topical and innovative. Much of what she does in the classroom is quite scholarly, but it is also accessible to many of her students who are emerging readers.

Principal Blair will not allow teachers to do as they please, but she is certainly flexible, fair, and encouraging of different methodologies. She calls herself "creatively cautious," and as her mission statement alludes, she wants the teaching environment of Passages to set up both students and teachers for success in the classroom. Blair wants the students to leave with the tools for social mobility, under a different set of variables and supported by the belief in the merits of an idea. This openness does not allow for a free-for-all. For instance, Ms. Blair severed relations with a theater company because they would come in and just let the kids cuss and do whatever they wanted to do. She explains:

> I was really offended by that. We're working with young people and I wouldn't accept it from my children to say "F.U." on stage, and the same thing here. Because society right now doesn't accept you to sit in a board meeting and say these words—you have to switch the code up a little bit.

CHAPTER 5

THE ART OF THE CRAFT

Every picture tells a story, don't it?

~The Faces

Process is tantamount to product at the school. The students are always coming and going, often with little to nothing to show for their time in terms of academic results. The roster changes every day at Passages and with it, the size and intellectual shape of the classroom. Consequently, the arts receive a different type of attention at the school. Students at the academy are constantly making art: painting, drawing, music, video production, animation, creative writing all are self-contained lessons that show quick and often powerful results. The Passages School art program stands out as an optimal environment in which to cultivate studies and enable teachers to combine a collective enterprise with artistic practice, while solidifying the theoretical approaches towards visual studies. Passages affords teachers and students the opportunity to gain substantial practice in collaborative education as well as interdependent curriculum development for innovative programs.

Because students are enrolled here for a short period of time, the general (and logical) assumption would be to make short-term projects or lessons that are done in an hour, beginning and ending with one period. Most Passages teachers follow this pedagogic framework. However, one particular teacher does not subscribe to this view at all. He sees the limitations at Passages as its power. Mr. Berk's long-term projects combining music, art, computers and film last for the entire school year. The students have many different avenues with which they can influence the final product. Whether it's artistic, poetic, technological, aesthetic, or interpretive, the projects that are done in his classroom get students involved. Each student is an active part of the class long after he or she is gone. Mr. Berk structures his curriculum such that when a student leaves, his or her finished piece such as a poem could make it into one of the annual writing art anthologies or videos. Their work remains as evidence that validates both the student and the staff, demonstrating sustainability and growth. This offers the students and staff at Passages what they need: something to show for their efforts. Every student has an opportunity to make his or her voice heard within this project. They make their voice louder if they so choose, depending on how motivated they are by the project:

> Everything is encapsulated in the overall project, which is to make an animated music video. The plan for the entire year is to make this video.

> It starts with a beat. From the beat we create a poem. From the poem, we meld the words and the beat together into a song, whether it be more rap-influenced or more singing-influenced—R&B kind of influence. So the students bring their experience, their taste into the project, which is to make this animated, narrative music video. So this whole approach is not dependent on the culture of the school, but it's definitely colored by it. It would be colored by whatever culture you're doing it in.

This single project is comprised of multiple tasks and lessons. The parts and the whole constitute an interlocked and interdependent curriculum:

> In order to get to an animated music video, we have to have a song. In order to have a song, we have to have a poem. Once we have the poem and the music together, we have to create a storyboard. Once the storyboard's created, we create a power point presentation of that storyboard. From that we assign each scene to a different student, who animates each one. Once the scenes are completed, they're edited together, paired up with the song, and credits are added. Then the song is sent out to competitions and then screenings happen and we even film the screenings. And then those get edited and put into the options of our DVDs. It builds up. It's a snowball effect kind of planning. But there's certain things that have to be done first in order to get to the next step.

By showing the students projects from past classes, Mr. Berk is able to demonstrate the potential quality of the undertaking. Student work and projects are published; films are screened and receive significant recognition. The stated objective is: "Have your voice be heard, make your voice be heard." This means that the students have something to say and the class project provides a means so that other people will hear. They no longer remain invisible and marginalized, but instead they gain visibility through their project, which will be seen by hundreds of people. The art team present at conferences and their work is screened at the Saratoga New York Film Festival and the Hamptons Film Festival. This modeling and the knowledge that the work is being shown are motivational and often inspiring, since the better the quality is, the further it will go.

The topics addressed in Mr. Berk's mini-lessons seemed particularly relevant, providing an intersection between the theoretical and the experiential. Similar to much of the Passages curriculum, the work is informed by interest in the diversity of production and reception of artistic works in multiple cultural contexts. Through considering personal and collective histories, identity, and memory, the group projects have explored

such themes as time and distance, presence and absence, and global and local. The discourse relating to these topics became ever more relevant, in terms of both the teacher's own artistic/pedagogic production and also the students' reception of it as a "consumers" of art. While he does not discount the importance of art history and criticism, Mr. Berk recognizes the most valuable way of digesting contemporary art production and its historical precedents is through hands-on creation of art.

How is this connected to the NYC learning standards? As one educator observed:

> All of the standards that are in the blueprint of the arts and within the various other disciplines are automatic. The standards are so generalized and so basic, throughout all of the disciplines, that it's impossible to not do the standards even if you weren't aware of them. Simply standing in front of the students and talking already engages a standard, which is that the students learn by listening. That's an actual standard. So the standards that are out there that I've seen are givens. They're givens to human interaction. So they're almost irrelevant in the sense that they're so generalized. So they're constantly in effect in my classroom. These standards include higher order thinking and synthesis of ideas, self-evaluation, self-motivation, and being critical in a positive way.

SCHOOL INTO PRISONS, PRISONS INTO SCHOOLS

Justice is used to end crime rather than eliminate the criminal.

~Sir Thomas Moore

In the hundreds of hours spent listening to the stories and analyzing the transcription of those who took part in this study, I discovered among the many different voices an extraordinarily deep pool of collective wisdom, complexity and compassion. Many of these accounts were so moving that I had to include them as central elements of this research. Looking at what is known and what has been learned, these interviews have added to the conversation of juvenile detention (JD) education by pondering essential truths revealed about Passages Academy. On occasion, the testimonies helped identify and examine specific challenges of JD education such as transition, overcrowding, under-resourced classrooms, lack of supports for struggling students, off-base reforms, or any of the many harmful effects of widespread detainment and high student dropout rates, time wasted, and cost effectiveness. Regarding the design implementations of the school

program, flaws arise from demands put on teachers. In talking about the real problems affecting JD education, Passages teachers have shown themselves to be the bridge between the counterculture and the systemic meritocracy.

The epistemological question in this study primarily concerns the variety of ways an instructor can teach and serve the students and their communities, investigating which methodological strategies are being used and what actually works. Passages Academy is spending money on educating the students, but is this program improving their lives? This study looks at modes of being in the world and seeks to create critical exchange and broad reflection on the interplay of teacher and student individuality, suggesting that their unity does not consist of uniformity:

> The classroom is where we discover what the students are about, what the lessons are really about, and what we are about. My school of education gave me skills, and Passages gave me the experience, but I feel that it all comes down to instincts!

The best practices, as detailed by a few informants, start with the epistemological:

> If you believe that the kids have deficits, then I think that does not work to your advantage with the kids. It doesn't give a good entry point into the classroom. If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. Everybody is a genius.

The work that the Passages teachers do is explosive, because it forces them to confront the sometimes tragic facts of poverty, paranoia, despair and distrust, and it inevitably delves into class distinctions. The vision is neither a social utopia nor a political paradise, but an examination of civil responsibility and social accountability. As a teacher illustrated:

> Passages is an ocean liner, not a speedboat. If we can move this big battleship a few degrees, it's a positive direction… We may not see all the outcomes in three months or even three years, but ten years from now, twenty years from now our students can look back and say, this is when New York became serious about education for court-involved youth.

The respondents found it irresponsible and illogical that the realities of the classroom are ignored in too many discussions about what is truly needed to strengthen teaching and learning for court-involved youth. It

was interesting, but not surprising, to find that the Passages educators are not emphatically against detainment. They are not trying to change the paradigm; they are focused on education—not in a political way but as an ethical construct.

Teachers such as those participating in this study are not rare, but they don't often draw public attention. Due to the intrinsic element of working behind bars, their accomplishments, concerns, failures and professional expertise are not part of the dialogue about schools. This is the silenced narrative, ignored in public policy discussions and similar discourse. The people interviewed for this study have a deep understanding of the causes and solutions and are taking steps to address it in fundamental and lasting ways by showing up to work each day. There is no simple answer; sometimes the best way to gauge the success of Passages is if a student never returns.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

It was impossible for me to approach the study of Passages Academy myopically. My intention was to create a portrait of a school, a faculty and student body and to sketch out my place amongst these groups. I have tried to present this free of bias, judgment and, whenever possible, emotion. Nonetheless, it is difficult to describe a system with which I am so intimately involved without feeling the need to expose important trends that warrant further evaluation. For that purpose, I will use this final chapter to acknowledge the implications of this study as it pertains to discussions of juvenile detention education, particularly in light of the emerging shift to a more robust prison industrial complex. I hope to present a unique perspective on the ways this shift may affect the educational and economic futures of New York City's court involved youth and, if possible, offer modest prescriptions to address this situation.

First, it is important to make explicit the following data surrounding incarcerated youth:

- Incarceration rates are climbing.
- Black males are five to seven times more likely than white males to be arrested for similar crimes (Dance, 2002).
- Thirty-two percent of youth in juvenile correctional facilities have been previously identified as having special learning needs.
- In 2010, New York City spent over six and a half times more to incarcerate one young person than it did to educate him or her. The cost of detaining a juvenile offender in New York City was $358/day; in other words, it cost $130,670 a year to confine a young person to a secure detention facility. By contrast, the New York City Department of Education spent $18,597 annually per student on education (Public Education Finances, 2010).

In this book I have identified the relevant frameworks of thought for educators within a juvenile detention classroom setting and observed how theory underpins juvenile detention and education. Teaching at Passages Academy is in many ways a snapshot of New York's, past, present and future. As a means of emancipation, teachers have to use the students' lives

as a starting place and extend beyond their own horizons. Many of the children in this study are lost, confused, scared and lacking a sense of self. Real, everyday life problems and needs of students, that is, the immediate context of students' lives, must be part of the lived classroom experience. Unfortunately, it is often easier to ignore such complex and challenging issues, choosing instead to emphasize the means of strict technical control and judicial coordination that disavow the language kids use.

In this study, the issue of discrimination amongst or against the incarcerated youth has been highlighted and the need for anti-discriminatory policies have been demonstrated. It is important to stress, though, that policies seeking to right this particular controversy must take into account the very personal needs of each individual student. To ignore the circumstances of the students' lives is to miss an important part of the story and this part of the story oftentimes feels all too easy to omit.

It is evident and, at the risk of editorializing, discouraging to witness how the juvenile justice system in New York City is becoming increasingly punitive and lopsided with regards to race and geography. While this book has explored structural, governmental and pedagogical issues, my first-hand experience also includes witnessing the profoundly distressing consequences of this shift for the children and families of our poorest communities. Needless to say, there are dramatic fiscal concerns as well. Yet as a teacher in a classroom full of faces and names (and not spreadsheets), these concerns can seem far less relevant.

The difficulties described in the previous chapters are beginning to be acknowledged by more formal institutions and recently there have been some positive steps toward easing the complicated bureaucratic inconveniences that students face.

In 2012, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Juvenile Justice Reform Initiative, "Close to Home." A major aspect of this reform seeks to discontinue the practice of sending many juvenile offenders from New York City upstate to detention centers located hundreds of miles away from their families and communities. Most young offenders sent upstate often serve short sentences of less than six months, but the isolation created by long distance incarceration can further fray family ties that were often tenuous prior to detention. The Governor's "Close to Home" initiative has brought youth in upstate detentions centers back to facilities in New York's five boroughs that offer more intensive supervisions and, most significantly, allow inmates to stay closer to their communities. Nonetheless, as the *New York Times* reports, there is a growing feeling among policymakers

(including prosecutors) that the "Close To Home" initiative does not go far enough. Critics say that New York must "limit the number of young people sent to expensive prison-like residential facilities with the goal of creating more community-based intervention programs." Such alternative programs have proved less expensive and more effective at reducing crime (Confessore & Lippman, 2009).

If adolescence were not already difficult enough, incarcerated students transitioning back to their homes and community schools face several obstacles made exponentially more difficult by systemic complications. One of the more challenging aspects of re-entry is the lack of any official system in place for tracking and monitoring the enrollment and transfer of materials for students returning to school. Consequently, many students released from juvenile detention experience numerous obstacles, even in matters as simple and practical as obtaining transcripts and transferring credits from correctional schools to their community public schools (Black, 2005).

"Close To Home" is a good example of a well-intentioned policy that has been a struggle to implement in a practical context. And, more broadly, it speaks to the increasingly Byzantine nature of the juvenile justice system. Nonetheless, it is an important program and, more significantly, the intent behind it indicates a focus on these vital issues.

In June of 2009, the first official principal of Passages, Sydney Blair, retired after twelve years of leadership. Since her departure, the school has had five different Principals. During the post Sydney Blair years (six years at the time of publication), Passages Academy has closed, reopened, then closed—some within months of opening—more than seven additional school sites.

In 2011 the Department of Juvenile Justice merged with the Administration for Children's Services to create the Division of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ). DYFJ now runs the non-secure, limited secure and secure juvenile detention settings from where Passages Academy Schools are housed. Additionally, the DYFJ has eliminated its aftercare programs in the wake of almost $12 million in cuts. The direct effect is that caseworkers providing transitional support to students are no longer located in the youths' neighborhoods, working instead in detention centers. In order for aftercare services to be effective, clients must be able to access them – and must feel comfortable doing so. By shifting its aftercare from the community into detention centers, the DYFJ no longer sufficiently meets the needs of the children and their families. Thus, many of the 5,000 youths under 15 who are annually discharged from city detention have been left to face these transitions alone (Education in Detention, 2012). The ripple effect of budget

cuts for children who are incarcerated feels exponentially more significant; their tenuous transitions into adulthood are thrown off course at the worst possible time.

Furthermore, if adolescence were not brief enough, New York is one of four states that treats minors aged sixteen and over as adults in the criminal justice system. They can fall under the jurisdiction of the State Supreme Court and the supervision of the New York City Department of Corrections and may be incarcerated on Rikers Island pre- and/or post-trial, where they can serve sentences of up to one year or in upstate prisons for even longer periods. All other governmental and non-governmental agencies define adulthood at an older age: eighteen (Department of Health and Mental Hygiene), twenty-one (Administration of Child Services and Department of Youth and Community Development) or up to twenty-four years of age (in the case of some Community Based Organizations and health clinics). Although these differing definitions of adulthood may seem like benign bureaucratic technicalities, they can actually create problems of coordination among governmental and voluntary agencies that affect these youth, pre- and post-release.

New York residents have the legal right to continue public education through age 21, whether incarcerated or not. Students who enter the criminal justice system are unlikely to graduate from high school on time. Again, this is another example of a seemingly unnecessarily complicated bureaucracy causing countless real world problems for children at one of the most sensitive times in their lives.

Historically, re-entry became an issue of concern in the nineteenth century, leading, in 1870, to the formation of the American Correctional Association, which addressed the support, transition, rehabilitation and opportunities for former prisoners. For more than a century, until the mid-1970s, there was an overwhelmingly "unified recognition of the importance of rehabilitation programs to provide education, vocation training, psychological treatment and other life skills to prepare incarcerated people for a promising return to their community" (Curtis & Spriggs, 2001). Yet the criminal justice community's goals for the penal system throughout the country have slowly evolved (or devolved) to the point that, over the last few decades, rehabilitation has been replaced by deterrence and incapacitation.

Programs in the community that assist with re-entry have traditionally been few in number and limited in scope. This represents both in-prison and post-release transition programs, which are equally critical to their success and to public safety. In his 2004 State of the Union address, President

Bush recognized that there is little continuity between prison programs and re-entry programs, saying, "If they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison."

Student transition requires a long-term road map with explicit directions. If the policy-making agencies are not persuaded by a moral imperative, then maybe the strategic and financial fact that it cost $358 a day to keep a child locked up will reinvigorate these much needed aftercare/re-entry programs. Without such help, the current system has created a civic death penalty for former custodial students. At the risk of repetition, the financial implications discussed above seem like the most egregious bureaucratic oversight because the equation is so simple and the solution so clear.

As important as it is to address and re-evaluate how students are handled in this complicated system, it is also important to reflect on how teachers can be best prepared for working in schools like Passages Academy. As explained in a previous chapter, I came to Passages in a roundabout way and, up until then, had never heard about any school that catered to this student body. I felt disappointed that I had not been made aware of this kind of school throughout my many years studying to be an educator or during my pre-service teaching; I would have immediately jumped at the opportunity to work at a school like Passages. In this way, I think it is important that those studying to become educators have the chance to learn about this and other kinds of alternative schools.

In addition to making future teachers aware of the myriad school systems, teaching colleges must also prepare teachers to address a varied student body. As an example, my students have an often-contrary disposition based on their extreme life circumstances. Schools of education need to play a role in fostering a more flexible dogma that allows teachers to more effectively serve diverse classrooms and student groups. Much of my job is not something that can be taught; it is based on instinct and difficult to articulate to someone who has not been inside this kind of classroom. It is therefore that much more important to provide future teachers with the tools they need to approach this and any other uniquely challenging classroom setting.

Finally, I think it is vital to increase the number of African American teachers, particularly men, who currently represent less than 2% of America's K-12 teaching force. As the demographics of incarcerated youth indicate that the population is overwhelmingly comprised of young black men, it seems important to have people of a similar demographic leading the classroom. My illustration of Mr. Smalls' successful classroom navigation in a previous

chapter is emblematic of the benefits of this relationship. It would be a serious mistake—however it might seem—to overlook Mr. Smalls' identity as it relates to his incredible impact on these students. He is a wonderful teacher and an inspiring person and it is for this reason that children benefit by being exposed to role models who share their background. And even more subtly, Mr. Smalls' identity may provide the students with a feeling that they can follow in his footsteps in a more literal way, teaching and being a role model to other students like them.

Most significantly, although Passages can offer a wonderful alternative education, it and similar schools are often lacking in sufficient attention paid to students. A recent report about the school at Rikers Island echoes some of the problems I see at Passages. According to NY1 News, the average high school student at Rikers Island "reads at a fifth-grade level and many of the 16- to 21-year-old inmates are functionally illiterate." Compounding these disadvantages, almost half of these students have special education needs and many are classified as emotionally disturbed. Cara Chambers of the Legal Aid Society explained that:

> In many circumstances, you're looking at children who have struggled for years and years with undiagnosed disabilities with limited access to high-quality education and then you put them into facilities that also are not capable of providing them with the high-quality education that they need and deserve. (Street Visuals, 2010)

Regardless of their emotional or learning disabilities, it is important to remember that children in detention are, in fact, children. Like all children, they are unique and require special attention. Fortunately, Passages Academy is designed in a way that acknowledges that students are not mini-adults and should not be treated as junior convicts. The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed this when it declared that adolescents, even those as old as 17, were not eligible for the death penalty because they "cannot with reliability be classified among the worst offenders, because their overly impulsive and immature brains aren't developed" (Green, 2010).

Inside Passages, the young people in class are seen as students who have been sent here to learn; they are always referred to as students, never as prisoners, inmates, or detainees. They are not just locked away in a cell to sit around and wallow, scraping each day into the wall. Rather, the Passages system asks them to reflect, examine what they did (or did not do) and take some responsibility. At its best, the school can provide an emotional and spiritual experience that can alter the trajectory of its student's lives.

There has been a very clear and somewhat naïve consensus among educators, policy makers and scholars that detention invariably has life-changing effects. But, of course, one should not simply assume that some experience of incarceration would necessarily rehabilitate a student. A more likely (if unintended) consequence of detention is that a student returns to the community sicker and slicker. Arresting kids and throwing them in a school like Passages often feels like taking parts from a car, making them worse and putting them back in. And the demands on teachers sometimes make them feel as though the system is turning surgeons into butchers.

My life as a surgeon/butcher is consumed by urban education within the judicial system, but I straddle two very different worlds. I have one foot planted in academia, where I read about statistics and philosophical theories and draw broad conclusions about a massive system. My other foot, though, is in a classroom with individuals who account for those statistics and are governed by those philosophical theories. This book is my attempt to bridge the gap between these two worlds. After all, though these worlds may appear dramatically different and constantly in flux, life on the ground at Passages is, like anywhere else, often mundane.

Amongst the jargon I hear throughout the day in the hallways of Passages is the word "maintaining," as in:

- *Hey Jennifer, how are you doing?*
- *Maintaining.*

This word is, pointedly and appropriately, used to describe a feeling of determined resignation. It simultaneously reflects apathy and resolution and I think, inadvertently, sums up the current status of education within the juvenile justice system. We are progressing, if slowly, fiercely looking ahead and always maintaining.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Breakdown

- Where are you from and what type of high school did you attend (e.g., public or private high school, or other)?
- Where do you live now?
- How do you define your ethnic background?
- What is your collegiate background and what route did you take attaining your teaching certification (i.e., traditional teacher education programs, alternative routes, such as teaching fellows, Teach for America or other programs)?
- What were your previous teaching experiences?
- How did you end up here and what factors lead you to become involved in Passages Academy?

Role of the Teacher in the Institution

- What is the classroom experience like for you as a teacher as you reconcile the (often competing) agendas of the DOE (Department of Education) and DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice)?
- How is your job as a teacher effected by the other governing agency in your classroom?
- How would you describe this institution to a friend? To a colleague? What terms would you use?
- Do you view Passages as a 'real school'? If not, what constitutes a 'real school'?
- Can you share any stories that capture the general dynamic between the different agencies sharing the same physical space?

Teacher's Perceptions of / Questions about Students

- What are the challenges that students face by being incarcerated and how do these challenges affect your role as a teacher?
- How do you encourage students to take interest and ownership in their education at this school while knowing they are here for an average of 36 days?

- What are your expectations of the students and what are their expectations of themselves?
- What evidence can be assessed to determine whether you and your students have met these goals?
- How do you assess student achievement at this school? Explain as fully as possible.
- Has the way you assess student achievement as a practitioner changed during your career here? Why and how?
- Why teach students who have been arrested?
- If you have taught students in a non-incarcerated school, can you generally describe the differences among students?
- Do you ever ask the students why they are in detention and does this matter to you?

Pedagogical Philosophy

- What is included in your curriculum?
- How is it designed?
- How is it delivered and assessed?
- What external forces drive it?
- Can you give an example of the curriculum?
- Which pedagogical approaches and curricula do you think best serve the teachers and students of the academy?
- To what extent do these approaches differ from other Department of Education Schools in New York City?
- Which strategies have been successful?
- How are students' education effected by these challenges?
- How do you prepare for your lessons (e.g., planning in weekly or monthly units, and how far in advance)?
- How do you decide what to teach?
- As a pre-service teacher have you taken classes on teaching incarcerated students?
- Do you find the professional development workshops that you have attended geared toward teachers of incarcerated students useful?
- What is the relationship between the teachers and the learning standards set by New York City?

Phenomonogical: Experiential Understanding

- What is everyday life like at the school? Describe a typical day.
- How much work do you prepare and grade at home?
- If you had to list your major sources of enjoyment in teaching here, what would they be? What have been the biggest challenges in your experience?
- What is the most important aspect of your job of teaching court-involved youth?
- Do students ever ask you why you teach here and if so, what is your response?
- What is your life like teaching incarcerated youth? What is a typical day like for you before, and after, school?
- What reaction do people outside of the academy generally give you when you tell them about what you do for a living?
- Students come and go and often-times teachers never have a chance to say goodbye. If you can say one thing to a student before they leave, what would it be?
- What do you think is the purpose of this program? What is its mission? Does this school actually live up to this mission for the students?
- What personal challenges do teachers of incarcerated youth face at Passages Academy?

Criticality, Answers and Improvement

- How can the school be improved?
- Can you think of any teaching or institutional model that does work?
- Can you think of a film or book that shows what Passages can or should be?
- This interview is part of a research project capturing the lived experience of teachers of passages academy. Is there anything else you would like to add about the school, your job and your role in your students' lives? Perhaps something to be addressed for future scholars and practitioners in juvenile detention education?

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