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From Silence to Collaboration: Supporting Children with Incarcerated Parents in the Classroom

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From Silence to Collaboration:
Supporting Children with Incarcerated Parents in the Classroom
By Lily Cavanagh

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To the people whose parents have been, are, or will be behind bars:
I promise to work with you until mass incarceration is abolished.
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Abstract

Mass incarceration rates have skyrocketed in the United States since the 1970’s. This means that the number of children with an incarcerated parent has also increased dramatically. Few preparation programs or professional development opportunities teach classroom teachers to handle such a highly stigmatized family circumstance sensitively. To better support children with incarcerated parents in the classroom teachers must first know themselves and their biases. Teachers and schools must work to train staff and create a school environment that supports families to form a collaborative relationship with teachers in order to provide the best care for the child. Through the creation of a handbook for teachers and a three-part professional development workshop this thesis aims to fill this gap in teacher education and proposes some concrete examples for ways teachers can support children with incarcerated parents in the classroom.
Rationale

I began researching children with incarcerated parents for a Foundations of Education course at Bank Street College of Education in an assignment to create a hypothetical project involving children in social justice work. For this assignment I asked children in a hypothetical kindergarten class to create bookmarks that could accompany books mailed to prisoners by a community organization. As research I met with an organizer of the New York City Books through Bars and asked what needs her organization had. We brainstormed how children could help, and how to talk to children that are not necessarily experiencing the impacts of parental incarceration themselves. This was the first time I had considered the impact of increasing incarceration rates on my future classrooms. When presenting my work in small groups during class, I realized that even graduates of a progressive teacher training program may be woefully unprepared to support children of incarcerated parents or to understand their challenges. This gaping hole in resources for teachers inspired and guided this project.

I delved deeper into this project in my Developmental Variations course, in which I created an introductory handbook for teachers on how to support children with incarcerated family members. That handbook is the starting point for this more in-depth guide. I hope to expand this work as I teach and converse with teachers throughout my career as an educator.

It has become clear throughout my research for this project that support specifically for teachers regarding children with incarcerated family is nearly nonexistent. I found only two articles and one unpublished thesis that are specifically addressed to
teachers, all of which are listed in the “additional resources” section of the following handbook. There are many that focus on caregivers, or social service providers, and many of the same suggestions apply to teachers. One organization, The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated At Rutgers University Camden, provides professional development to teachers. The organization's director, Ann Adalist-Estrin, shared the scope of their national trainings, “we do about 8-10 2 day teacher trainings a year. But we also do city wide trainings across the country that include teachers but also include social workers, correctional officers and other professionals. That raises the number to 24-25 a year with between 40 and 200 folks in each training” (Adalist-Estrin, personal communication, April 26 2016). This type of in depth training can make a huge impact, and, a few thousand teachers each year is not enough.

Teachers are in unique positions. Often teachers are the adults who spend the most amount of waking time with a child, especially in early childhood. Teachers are not often one-on-one with a child, so they must find ways to make these suggestions for service providers applicable to groups of children with a spectrum of life experiences. Teachers do not need to know the status of the child’s parents, but it can contribute to understanding and compassion if they do know the home circumstances. It can absolutely also be harmful, depending on the teacher’s understanding of the challenges the child and family face.

As teachers we do the best we can with the knowledge we have and with the students in our classrooms. There are likely students in the classroom who have experienced situations that we have never dealt with ourselves, such as their parents’
divorce, or a new baby sibling, or a death in the family; but we have had enough training or experience to know what might help this child through these situations. In our teacher education programs we may have practiced recommending to a parent that their child be evaluated for a developmental delay. Our experiences and training may help us gain knowledge about supporting children through traumatic events, and our practice as teachers may have made us trauma responsive.

However, the discussion of how to support children with an incarcerated parent or parents was never a conversation I encountered in my teacher education program, until I brought it up. This could be because many don't realize how high incarceration rates are in the United States and the State accreditation system does not require it. It could be because incarceration is something we are taught not to talk about; it is highly stigmatized. Often times teachers are unaware of the parental situation because of the stereotypes associated with being “in jail” as having done something “bad.”

This handbook is designed to give working and pre-service teachers a starting place for supporting these children and their families. Every child and family will respond to the stress differently and there is no one panacea. Often there is actually very little that a teacher can “do” for the family, yet in my experience being compassionate and respectful will go a long way.

**Mass Incarceration**

The United States has the highest per capita incarceration rate and the biggest prison population of any country in the world. Largely due to the “war on drugs,” the U.S. prison population has increased fourfold in the past 25 years; currently there are
over 2.7 million people locked behind bars (Glaze, 2012). In California the number of incarcerations rose nearly 700 percent between 1970 and 2003 (Males, 2006). Because of such high rates of incarceration many children are left without a parent. The Osborne Association (2014) says, “More than 1.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent and approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.” The likelihood that at least one of these children will be in any given classroom is high, especially if the students fit the demographic with the highest incarceration rates, low income and African-American or Latino (Carson, 2014).

In addition to underfunding of schools, there are other factors at play that funnel children from low income areas into the prison system. Because of many societal reasons that will be discussed people of color and poor people are more likely than white people to become incarcerated. This puts their children at risk of incarceration as well. Sarah Roberts explains how this phenomenon works.

This does not mean that an offender is more likely to give birth to another offender, as if somehow crime is an infection that can be passed on; rather it is that ‘disenfranchised grief,’ compounded by trauma and stigma, can lead to disengagement from the school system and a mistrust of authority, which in turn increases the potential to be involved in at-risk behaviour. In other words, it is not the imprisonment of the parent in and of itself, but the response to the imprisonment (social isolation and a sense of shame in addition to trauma) that increases the risk factor” (2012, p. 7).
With record numbers of people being sent to prison, and structural biases towards “preparing” children for prison as well, it is important to develop resources that make young children not seem ostracized by situations beyond their control or pushed further towards a life of incarceration.

Not only are there close to no resources for teachers on children with incarcerated family, but many schools have structures in place that make the trauma and stigma of the child even worse. Parental incarceration is also related to the phenomenon called the “school-to-prison pipeline,” a name for the perception that youth are being funneled from school to prison. Schools in poor and primarily Latino and African-American neighborhoods are systematically underfunded, and those students are vilified, then incarcerated. Students in school at all grade levels are sometimes even treated as if they are already criminals. At an elementary school in Kansas a 7-year-old was placed in handcuffs by school police officers to bring him to the principal’s office (KTLA, 2014). In Texas a police officer slammed a 12-year-old girl to the ground and after handcuffing her dragged her unconscious body out of the classroom. (WRBC, 2016). In South Carolina in 2015 a school police officer was placed on administrative leave after violently removing a high school student from her chair (WRBC, 2016). These are just a few examples of misconduct. This is not acceptable in schools, where children are supposed to find safety and education.

I have come across a handful of resources for teachers to create lesson plans for talking about mass incarceration with middle school and high school age children, including a complete teaching guide and curriculum put out by Teaching Tolerance.
Much of the focus is on high school, when students can dig deeply into understanding their own biases, understanding structural racism, and making plans to do something about the existing injustice. I have not found any curriculum developed around mass incarceration for an early childhood or elementary classroom, although the materials created by Sesame Street (Sesame Street, n.d.) are a valuable resource as they give a starting point for caregivers to understand what is developmentally appropriate for young children. I have found no curriculum for college level teacher education programs.

In an interview by Rethinking Schools’ Jody Sokolower (2012) Michelle Alexander talks about how schools can play a role in educating students about the societal and political issues that created and perpetuate mass incarceration.

I think it’s important to encourage young people to tell their own stories and to speak openly about their own experiences with the criminal justice system and the experiences of their family. We need to ensure that the classroom environment is a supportive one so that the shame and stigma can be dispelled. Then teachers can use those stories of what students have witnessed and experienced as the opportunity to begin asking questions: How did we get here? Why is this happening? How are things different in other communities? How is this linked to what has gone on in prior periods of our nation’s history? And what, then, can we do about it? (Sokolower, 2012).

This sharing of stories is something that can easily be incorporated into classrooms of all ages-- in a developmentally appropriate way. You would not ask a child to recount when they witnessed their mother getting arrested at circle time in a kindergarten classroom.
However, you would make it clear to your students that they can talk with you about anything, and that their emotional expressions are appreciated. In the “additional resources” section of this thesis, there is information about separation and loss, as this is the most developmentally appropriate way to discuss incarceration with very young children. Often times parents and caregivers choose not to tell the truth about where the parent is. Young children do not have a well developed concept of time and to tell a 4-year-old child that their parent is going to be in prison for 25 years would be incomprehensible to them. Through research and discussions with colleagues, parents and caregivers teachers can come to discern the best way to communicate with each individual child about their parent’s incarceration.

**Stigmatization**

No one wants their identity defined by one feature. We are all complicated people with many identities and our own personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. Many parents and caregivers on Prison Talk Online, an online discussion forum, say they choose not to tell teachers about parental incarceration. Our society demonstrates devaluation of formerly incarcerated people by taking away their rights and ability to find good work and safe housing (Alexander, 2012). This stigmatization impacts the entire family. The levels of stigmatization are outlined below, including how children of the incarcerated are impacted.

...people are socialized to associate stigmatized groups with stereotypes, to devalue stigmatized people, and to discriminate against them through interpersonal communication and mass media. Devaluation is defined as a loss of
status, whereas discrimination is defined as extensive social distancing (Link, 1987). Labeling occurs when people are seen with a characteristic or engaging in a behavior that places them within a stigmatized group (Peterson, B.L., Cohen, B.M., and Smith, R.A, 2013, p. 89).

This labeling of children of incarcerated parents is what Goffman (1963) calls a “courtesy stigma,” meaning, that children are stigmatized along with the parent as a “courtesy” to the children. This is meant ironically, but the impact is real. Research has shown “that when incarcerated individuals are released from prison, the reintegrative shaming filters down to the family and specifically the children” (Peterson, B.L., Cohen, B.M., and Smith, R.A., 2013, pp. 86-7).

In the classroom teachers can have an impact on reducing a child’s courtesy stigmatization by creating a space of safety. Many times a day a preschool teacher will overhear a child say “I’m the police and you’re going to jail!” or some version of this statement. Children understand the power of jail, and they associate jail with where “bad” people go. Teachers can help reduce stigma around incarcerated people by how they respond to statements like these. In the next section of my Independent Masters Project (IMP), I have created a handbook and prepared workshop material, along with additional resources that will support teachers who want to dig deeply into teaching children of incarcerated parents.

**Overview of Handbook and Workshop**

This Independent Masters Project (IMP) is both a handbook and series of three modules for a professional development workshop for classroom teachers. It is applicable
to classrooms of all ages but focuses on younger children. While the handbook can act as a standalone document, it does not attend to the important work that teachers must do to examine their own biases, which impact their teaching practice with regards to issues of incarceration. The handbook is designed to provide a base level of information for teachers who have never thought about, or are just beginning to think about, how mass incarceration impacts the life of their classroom. It provides an overview of the issue, what children face and how parental incarceration may influence their behavior, and provides a list of resources so teachers and administrators can learn more.

The first module of the three-part workshop allows space for participants to explore and analyze their own biases and stereotypes about incarceration. The second module highlights effect of mass incarceration on communities, and assists participants to develop ways to talk about these and other details of criminal justice with children. In the final module participants create a lesson plan to use in their classrooms. The workshop design is based on the principle that people learn best through experience and discussion, instead of lecture and statistics. It calls for participants to actively construct and share knowledge.

I am presenting an abbreviated version of the workshop at the Philadelphia Teacher Action Group (TAG) annual educator conference on April 30th, 2016. To accommodate a 90-minute time frame, I will combine the first two modules of the series into one workshop focusing on solutions. Also, I will have copies of children's books about incarceration issues as well as some of the resources I’ve compiled for teachers and caregivers.
Handbook

This handbook gives teachers and school staff an overview of what mass incarceration means in today’s society and how it impacts children in the United States. The handbook also provides a list of eight actions that schools and teachers can take to support children facing the specific challenge of having a parent who is incarcerated.

Introduction to Mass Incarceration

Photograph: This exhibit at Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, PA highlights the huge spike in incarceration rates in the last few decades.

Text on Graph: The expansion of the U.S. Prison system in the past 40 years is truly historic in scale. For more than a century the U.S. Imprisoned between 100 and 200 people for every 100,000 citizens. That began to change around the time that Eastern State Penitentiary closed in 1970. New laws and longer prison sentences began to dramatically increase the prison population. Today the U.S. Imprisons more than 700 people for every 100,000 citizens. This is the highest rate of incarceration in the world. Crime rates have gone up and down throughout these years. They are largely independent of the rate of incarceration.

Photo credit: Rob Hashem.

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Incarceration rates have skyrocketed between the 1980’s and 2016, becoming an epidemic. As a result, the rates of parents in prison have also increased. “The number of children with a father in prison increased from 881,500 in 1991 to more than 1.5 million in 2007, a 77 percent increase. During that time, the number of children with a mother in prison increased by 131 percent, from 63,900 to 147,400” (Christian, 2009, p. 1). The most recent numbers show that there are an estimated 2.7 million children with an incarcerated parent (The Pew Charitable Trust, 2010). The rates of mass incarceration are even higher in communities of color and in poor communities. One out of every three black men will be in jail, prison, or probation during their lives (Stevenson, 2012).

Parental Incarceration Impacts On Children

Figure 1. This graph shows how African American children experience a disproportionate rate of parental incarceration (Wildeman, 2009).

![Diagram of parental incarceration rates](image-url)
When a person is incarcerated it does not just impact their lives alone, it disrupts their entire community, and when a child is involved, it can lead to an array of problems within the home and classroom.

Children with an incarcerated parent experience a number of changes in their lives that can impact their ability to learn. They experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Children who witness a parent’s arrest are traumatized by the event (Graham and Harris, 2013), as well as having to change their residency and primary caregiver in some cases. They may also experience a change in financial status. As one father writes, “My daughter was about to graduate from high school. She was heading to college but for my incarceration because I was the primary source of financial support. Now, she’s working instead. My kids have always been middle class. Now for the first time in their lives they’re living in poverty. They understand what a single parent life is like for them” (Allard, P and Greene, J., 2011, p. ii). Many times schools are not informed of the situation, or if they are informed there is no discussion or opportunity for collaborative planning about how best to support the child (Clopton and East, 2008).

Children have a variety of different experiences when a parent is involved in the justice system. Many behaviors present similar to behaviors associated with bereavement (Roberts, 2012). All children are different, but these are common behaviors you may see in children with an incarcerated parent in your classroom (Lander, 2012).

- Regressive behavior
- Delay in achievement of a solid personal identity
- Decrease in autonomy, initiative and productivity
• Internalizing behaviors: depression, self blame, loneliness, shame, loss of self esteem
• Externalizing behaviors: anger, defiance, aggression, truancy, running away
• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

An important thing to remember is that every child and family is different and will have different needs. The best thing we can do as educators is to find ways to appropriately support the children and their families through a collaborative approach that keeps the child's need at the center. Communication between all stakeholders is critical, and also not always possible. Use this handbook as a way to become more knowledgeable about and comfortable with this issue, and seek support from other resources as the need arises.

**Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents**

The Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents helps to ground our work with children facing these challenges. It reminds us how children deserve to be respected and included in decisions adults make in their interest. This is important for teachers to keep in mind as we develop plans for new behaviors and interact with families.

This Bill of Rights was established by San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (Bernstein, N. and Newby, G. 2003) to provide a clear directive for all people working with families affected by incarceration.

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.

3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.

4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.

5. I have the right to speak with, see, and touch my parent.

6. I have the right to support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration.

7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed, or labelled because I have an incarcerated parent.

8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

The Bill of Rights is available with more detail at:


Considerations for Teachers and Schools

While some of the articles of the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents are outside of the teacher’s jurisdiction, teachers can certainly support the child and uphold many of these rights. Teachers and schools can provide care and support. A teacher can be an adult that does not judge or label them. Teachers can also help facilitate a relationship with the child’s parent. While sometimes teachers are not informed of the parent’s incarceration, schools can work to create an environment free of the stigmatization that often holds caregivers back from disclosing the parent’s status.
In one study, caregivers and parents reported that informing teachers of parental incarceration resulted in more benefit for the child (Roberts, 2012). When teachers know what the students in their classroom are going through they can be more understanding and supportive. However, many caregivers do not feel safe disclosing stigmatizing information to teachers and schools. They don’t want their child treated disrespectfully or differently. Because it is better for teachers to be informed it is up to the school and teachers to create an environment of safety and respect. They must invite caregivers and families to tell them, letting everyone know that their teachers are trained to support children with incarcerated family members and know the issues they face.

1. Know Yourself and School Staff

Examining your own biases and feelings about incarceration is the first and most important step. Our words and actions are a reflection of our personal history; we are a reflection of how we were raised. Often this will connect to beliefs about race, class, privilege and status. Do the self work you need to prepare yourself for the issues the children in your classroom face. Here are some starter questions to ask yourself:

- Do you know of someone who has been incarcerated? Why were they?
- If you don't think you do, do you think there's a reason for that?
- What do you think of when you think of a person who has been incarcerated?

Remember, “you do not have to say negative things about the parents—if you think it, children sense it” (Aldrist-Estrin, 2014). Personal stories and case studies are helpful to
deepen understanding of an unfamiliar issue. Hearing or reading the words of those directly impacted by incarceration can be a powerful boost of awareness.

2. Create a Safe School Environment

Creating a safe school environment for families affected by incarceration is crucial. If caregivers, students, and parents feel that the student will be judged and stigmatized they are less likely to disclose information about incarceration. Schools should show that they are going to be understanding and supportive. A school should be a “safe space” where children and their caregivers feel they can share what is happening in their families (Roberts, 2012).

- Schools should provide information for children and families affected (posters, leaflets, helpline numbers) in public places and also places where parents can access the information anonymously (such as restrooms and online).
- In the classroom teachers can let children know that having and expressing big feelings are not only acceptable behaviors but are encouraged (Sesame Street, n.d.).
- Remove bias from actions and language (Roberts, 2012) by avoiding words that imply judgement, like “inmate,” “offender” and “convict.”
- Part of creating a safe classroom environment is providing opportunities for children to see themselves in the books on the shelves. Be sure to include a variety of children’s picture books about incarceration (Lindon, 2006, p. 189 in Clopton and East, 2008). An annotated list of recommended children’s literature
on incarceration, loss, and trauma is included in the additional resources section of this handbook.

3. Train Teachers and School Staff

Working with children who have parents in prison can be very complex. Because of the nature of the issue, many people are unfamiliar with what families affected by incarceration face. Be sensitive about how you talk to children about their families. The following story from Roberts (2012) highlights why training for teachers is so critical to student success.

When she moved to high school the bullying started; whispers at first, followed by blatant comments: “Stay away from her, her dad’s in jail.” The day that one of her teachers announced across the classroom, “You’re going to end up just like your father” was the last time Savannah attended school. She has a deep mistrust of authority and has disengaged from any formal system of support, putting her at high risk of harmful behaviour patterns, future unemployment and ultimately of entering the criminal justice system herself (p. 3).

Children may have been told not to talk about their parents, and they may be worried about how to answer questions that teachers and classmates might ask (Clopton and East, 2008). Share information publicly about teacher trainings, as this helps to show families that the school is proactive.

Teachers and staff should also be trained to talk about difficult issues in developmentally appropriate ways. For young children this may be just talking about
separation and loss, for older children this can mean specifically about prison and what prison is like, why it exists in our society, including the injustices that mass incarceration perpetuates. The additional resources list has a section called “Trauma, Loss, and Separation” for both children and adults that will help support teachers to develop their skills.

4. Offer Specific Educational Supports and Counseling/Mentoring/Support Groups

Teachers and school staff should recognize that this is a challenging time for both the child and the family. Provide additional and specific educational supports, tutoring, or in-prison homework clubs to help build relationships between parent and child around academic work (Roberts, 2012).

One reason children with an incarcerated parent suffer mental illness is because they do not have enough emotional support. Find ways to build up a supportive community at school (Roberts, 2012). Unfortunately because of inconsistent funding for school counselors in major cities and lack of funding for outside service organizations there are very few opportunities for these types of groups.

The Teaching Tolerance Project created some guidelines for helping classrooms cope with loss. While these guidelines to not specifically mention parental incarceration they address grief, which exists no matter what the reason for the loss is. They suggest that teachers:

- Explain carefully and simply the nature of the tragic event being experienced and the emotions involved.
● Focus on the grieving child in ways that promote inclusion and acceptance.

● Emphasize children's power to exert a positive effect on other people's lives and on the larger community (Teaching Tolerance Project, 1997, pp. 192-3).

5. Build Relationships with Children and Caregivers

When talking with children about incarceration do not assume their parent has done something wrong. Not only are people innocent until proven guilty, but many people go to prison without a fair trial and many people are proven innocent after being incarcerated for years. Also something to consider is, “what are they guilty of?” While you may not know why someone is incarcerated and it is inappropriate to ask, many people are in prison for nonviolent offense such as the inability to pay a traffic ticket. “Challenging judgmental attitudes can go a long way to helping children of prisoners feel that they can talk about their experience without being condemned by the crime of their parent” (Roberts, 2012).

While communication and collaboration with the child's caregivers is best, it may not be possible, as “some caretakers do not share information about the parent’s incarceration with educators and do not allow the children to speak about the parent’s incarceration” (Clopton and East, 2008, p. 195). Additionally, families may not seek out services for fear of stigmatization (Bouchet, 2008 in Graham and Harris, 2013). Remember: you do not have the right to know.
6. Support Parent-Child Contact

Research has shown that visits can be effectively support both the child and the parent. Here are some ways that schools can assist children to visit their incarcerated family member.

- Authorize visits to prison on school days and assess children’s needs following visits
- Provide work for in-prison homework groups where available
- Encourage and help the child to send copies of work, pictures, photos from trips etc. to the parent in prison

“I would love copies of my daughter’s academic achievements or of her pictures... even if I had contact with the school counsellor so I could make sure she’s ok, that she’s getting counselling. I have no contact with her mother so that makes it hard.” Male prisoner, New York (Roberts, 2012, p. 7).

While supporting visitation, do not assume the child will be able to visit their parent. In fact, “almost 57% of parents in State prisons and 44.1% of those in Federal prisons indicate no personal visits with their children. Over one-fifth of those parents in State prison reported having no contact with their children” (Mumola 2000 in Clopton and East, 2008, p. 196). Often the incarcerated person will be placed in facilities hundreds of miles from their families and visits are costly and time consuming. If a child is able to visit their parent, it may be an exhausting, frightening and/or frustrating experience. This behavioral reaction could last into the week and cause problem behavior (Clopton and East, 2008).
Here is a great story of parent-child contact that a teacher could reproduce in the classroom:

My daughter's father is in Fed prison. Because he is states away, we don't visit him. When we get our five minute phone calls, I fill him in on what she is doing in school. What keeps them close is that he sends her little tests to do and send back to him. He might give her questions related to school work, or silly questions to make her laugh like is a chicken the fastest [fastest] animal. They also have an ongoing story, he starts it and writes a paragraph and then she writes one and sends it back to him. I didn't tell her that he was in prison, but she found out when she answered the phone the other day and it said that the call was from a federal correction institute. She then asked him "daddy are you in jail?" She was a little sad to hear the truth, but accepted it. (Prison Talk Online, 2004).

7. Encourage Parent-Teacher Contact

Inform the parent of the child’s progress at school. Teachers may be able to mail copies of school reports and, newsletters directly to the prison. Ask the caregiver and prison staff if it’s possible to arrange a parent-teacher conference by telephone.

Unfortunately there is not a master list of which prisons accept what types of contact and mail. It usually requires a call to the prison, or to a prison rights advocacy organization local to the prison. One reflection from a social worker highlights what this means to the child: “When a kid comes on a visit and their mom says, ‘I spoke to your teacher last week’ that means such a lot to the kid. At least this way the mom has a little bit of a role in terms of being a participant and the kids think, ‘my mom really cares’. The kids really
thrive on that and it motivates them to do better.” Social Worker, New York” (Roberts, 2012, p. 17). In The Role of Schools, Roberts writes about the importance of a strong relationship with the family.

What is important to recognise with the children of prisoners is that this kind of separation from a parent is particularly traumatic, often leading to a mistrust of authority and feelings of anger that can make engaging in education challenging. If schools can help foster the parent/child relationship, thereby strengthening family ties, this can go a long way to restoring a child’s trust in authorities as well as reinforcing their belief that their parent can still have an important input into their life (2012, p. 8).

8. Integrate Justice Issues into the Curriculum

Children with incarcerated parents are at heightened risk for personal involvement in the criminal justice system due to the isolation and potential for trauma of the circumstance. Practice restorative justice in your classroom instead of punitive or “zero-tolerance” policies. Incorporate discussions of social justice and criminal justice into your curriculum. By engaging young children in consciousness-raising discussion, and activities that cultivate empathy and understanding about incarceration, you can lay foundations for children to have a greater impact if they choose to be activists. When discussing tough issues with small children our primary goal should be to make sure children, especially those who currently have an incarcerated parent, feel safe and cared for. Children often have very little direction from adults about how to understand and
express their feelings. An open and honest discussion about prison and the justice system helps children feel safe asking questions.

Having a parent in prison does not destine the child for prison. It may increase the likelihood, but “what is crucial for teachers to understand, however, is that this does not mean that an offender is more likely to give birth to another offender, as if somehow crime is an infection that can be passed on; rather it is that ‘disenfranchised grief’, compounded by trauma and stigma, can lead to disengagement from the school system and a mistrust of authority, which in turn increases the potential to be involved in at-risk behaviour” (Roberts, 2012, pp. 5-6). Even if no children in the classroom have experienced this specific loss, our responsibility as educators remains to be honest about the existence of injustice.

**Additional Resources: Books and Videos for Adults and Children**

While an increasing amount of research explores the impacts of parental incarceration on children, there is still very little addressing the specific support that teachers and schools can provide for families. This resource section includes books for children and a categorized list of books, journal articles, and organizations that can help adults learn how to best support students and their families.

**For Children**

For children with an incarcerated parent, these books provide an opportunity for to realize that they are not alone and that their emotions are valid. For children without an incarcerated parent, these books can provide another kind of gift: that of becoming adults with compassion and understanding for incarcerated people.

This story about a child on a routine visit to the prison where her mother is incarcerated tells of the sadness of separation. Age: 7-10


Along with their mother, Rose and Willy prepare for their first visiting day with their father. Five-year-old Willy doesn’t understand why his father is gone, but with help from his mom he learns how to cope with his big feelings. Age: 5-9


When Kofi's mom is sent to prison, he works through his grief and isolation to eventually feel happy anticipation about seeing his mom again. Age: 3-6


This story follows a puppy as he witnesses his father’s arrest, copes at school with the help of a guidance counselor, and visits his father in prison. The book also gives the adult reader information to help support the child they are reading to. Age: 4-8

Raymond’s seventh birthday falls on a Sunday, the day he always visits his mom in prison. His mom gives him a special surprise, and tells him that when his cake has nine candles she will be home with him. Age: 7-11


This beautifully illustrated book shares the story of a young girl and her grandmother as they prepare to visit the girl's father in prison. Age 3-6

**Trauma, Loss, and Separation**


After Sherman sees something terrible happen he becomes anxious and then angry, but when a caring adult helps him talk about these emotions he feels better. Age: 4-8


Separation-anxious children may find calm in this story about an invisible string that keeps you connected when separated from someone you love. Age: 3-7

**For Adults**


This book is a complete overview of the social and political history of mass incarceration in the United States.

A comprehensive collection of research and case studies chronicling the impact of parental incarceration on the family. This book is a great resource to read about personal stories of those directly experiencing the impacts of incarceration on a family.


Volume I of a three volume resource gives an overview of the issues and impacts that face children. The other two volumes focus on family relationships and caregiver support. All are available for download at

http://www.osborneny.org/nycip/download_nycip.cfm


The resources available for download on this site are helpful tools for educators and caregivers. One especially helpful one for teachers describes in bullet points a few straightforward things to do to promote trust and safety between a teacher or service provider and the child with an incarcerated family member.

An detailed overview of what children and families can expect when a parent is incarcerated in New York State. Much of what applies to New York State applies to other states.


The film is a ten minute documentary created by children with incarcerated parents. The project’s aim is to “train and empower young people to tell their stories and advocate for change.” Other documentary projects are available at www.echoesofincarceration.org


This article discusses how children with incarcerated parents tend to have a harder time learning emotional regulation. Children with trouble regulating their emotions tend to become bullies, which can lead to more aggressive behavior and eventual trouble with the criminal justice system.

This article outlines a case study of an early intervention program for children (ages 4-9) with incarcerated parents on the Westside of Chicago within a community that has high incarceration rates. In this article summarizes the research about the risks associated with having a parent in prison and the companion research about the impact on the child.


The full brochure includes the Bill of Rights with detailed explanations and information about how to meet the expectations of the children’s rights.


This toolkit from Sesame Street is full of valuable information, ideas, suggestions and activities to do with young children. It is primarily directed at caregivers but also includes all purpose suggestions like “let them know what to expect.”


This toolkit has a lot of sample scripts for how to answer common questions that children may have about their parent’s incarceration and the whole process from arrest to sentencing to parole.
Focus on Schools


A one page handout describes in bullet points a few straightforward things to do to promote trust and safety between a teacher or service provider and the child with an incarcerated family member.


A brief summary of impacts of parental incarceration that includes many personal stories and case studies to highlight the costs to children and families.


This article summarizes the major concerns and challenges to providing support for young children with incarcerated parents. The authors also provide some clear recommendations to educators.


A study that demonstrates that children experience stigmatization in schools and exposes teacher biases of fictitious students who are new to their class because of maternal incarceration.

A book is full of activity pages to do with children of all ages. Many of the activities and prompts would be great one on one or small groups, done with a counselor or the children’s caregivers. The book is meant to be a therapeutic tool.


This article discusses how the use of derogatory language can be harmful and what to say instead. When teachers use language that shows respect caregivers may be able to see teachers as more willing to understand the issues facing the child’s parent and as less likely to stereotype.


This thesis has a great overview of the history of incarceration and includes a teacher’s reflection on their own biases and their hopes for the middle school students they teach.


This article addressing the role of schools in supporting children with incarcerated family members. The primary suggestion was that teachers need training in order
to provide a safe and trusting environment for the children as well as their
caregivers. Secondly, teachers and schools should work to create a connection
between the child's classroom teacher or counselor and the incarcerated parent.

**Trauma, Loss, and Separation**

Jarrati, C.J. (n.d.) *Helping children cope with separation and loss.* Child Development
Institute. Retrieved on April 4, 2016 from
http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-
psychology/anxiety_disorders_in_children/helping_children_cope_with_separation/

Reading like a FAQ sheet, this text answers all the important “how tos” for
parents and caregivers to talk about separation and loss.

National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint

This website provides lots of information and resources about trauma, though not
specific to teachers.

Ngandu, J. (Jan 22, 2015). "It's not what's wrong with the children, it's what's happened
to them" *Edutopia.* Retrieved from http://www.edutopia.org/blog/not-whats-wrong-
whats-happened-jennifer-ngandu

This article highlights how teachers can reframe their mindset when dealing with
challenging classroom behaviors that may be stemming from trauma.


A detailed and reflective guide for talking about loss with children and teenagers.

This book also includes many stories and case studies.
Workshop

This Professional Development Workshop has three modules. The first module focuses on getting to know each other, building trust, and developing investment in the issue. The second module focuses on the necessary background knowledge for teachers including the some statistics about mass incarceration and developmentally appropriate ways to talk about justice. The final module participants will develop their own lesson plans that address parental incarceration in a developmentally appropriate way.

Module 1: Building Relationship with Self, Others, and the Issue of Mass Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 1: Learning Targets and Checks for Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Term Learning Target</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can describe some of the issues that face children with incarcerated parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Learning Targets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can describe the current state and history of mass incarceration in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can describe the challenges that face families when one or more parent are incarcerated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can assess behaviors and emotions that children with incarcerated parents may exhibit in my classroom as related to their experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How facilitators will know participants met the target</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Closing Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Back to Back, Face to Face Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pair Share Outs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Closing Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Walking Across the Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Video Pair Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gallery Walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Gallery Walk</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Video Reflection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Module 1: Building Relationship with Self, Others, and the Issue of Mass Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Learning Target</th>
<th>Higher Level Purpose</th>
<th>Instructional Practices</th>
<th>Documents &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:10</td>
<td><strong>Introductions:</strong> Name, working with children/age group</td>
<td><strong>Norms and Trust Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Name tags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10-1:25</td>
<td><strong>L1:</strong> I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator</td>
<td><strong>Building relationships with each other, making connections. Sharing why we are here.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Back to Back, Face to Face Protocol</strong></td>
<td>Questions: - Why do you teach? - What is hard about your students? - What do you love about your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:25-1:45</td>
<td><strong>L1:</strong> I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator</td>
<td><strong>To increase awareness of difference in the room</strong> To increase awareness in individuals of their own issues around difference</td>
<td><strong>Walking Across the Room</strong></td>
<td>Identities to Announce: Educator Parent Student Son/Daughter PGP (He, She, They, Another Option - shout out) Grew up with less money than classmates Grew up with more money than classmates Grew up in a single parent household Was raised by a grandparent Moved a lot as a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:20</td>
<td><strong>L2:</strong> I can describe the current state and history of mass</td>
<td><strong>Building a relationship with the emotions of</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gallery Walk</strong></td>
<td>Text and Art Samples from Books Through Bars Art and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>L1: I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator.</td>
<td>Hearing voices of COIP</td>
<td>Helps participants focus on reflection</td>
<td>Small group or individual written reflection -What did we learn? -What does this mean to me as a teacher and as a person -Now what will I do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:40-2:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outline agenda for next two modules and answer questions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2:50-3:00</td>
<td>L2: I can describe the current state and history of mass incarceration in the United States.</td>
<td>Video and Pair-Share</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can describe the challenges that face families when one or more parent are incarcerated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:20-2:40</td>
<td>L3: I can describe the challenges that face families when one or more parent are incarcerated.</td>
<td>Connecting with the issue, feel feelings</td>
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<td>Prison Talk website</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Materials for Gallery Walk**

“I have a six year old and a few months ago a kid was picking on him and saying how he doesn't have a dad and teasing him about it... He very proudly stood up in front of”
everyone and told her I do have a dad! He's in jail!!! When I went to pick him up his teacher told me about it...I told her his dad is in prison and I was kind of embarrassed cause of all the people standing around... His teacher tells me well his dad could help him with a few things in school... She goes on to inform me that she thinks it would be a great idea if he starts writing actual letters to his dad because hes struggling in reading and writing and she thinks this will help... Turns out her dad was in prison when she was younger ...point is you never know how some people or gonna react... I asked my son why he told and he said cause I have a dad and he's in a time out right now for being bad but he's still my dad and I dont want daddy to think I forgot about him... Makes me wonder if sometimes they should tell even though we do our best they are struggling to missing their parents....” (Prison Talk User, June 2012)

Festival
by Derrick Corley
How strange to look
out a prison cell window
to see children running--playing
on a prison field: THE YARD,
and hear their voices, laughter
sights and sounds so alien in this
forbidding, bleak, hostile environment
as is seeing affection--love
given, taken, and shared freely:
lovers holding hands, kissing
a mother hugging her child
kids hugging, touching, playing with
an imprisoned father, brother, uncle
unaware of their surroundings, for awhile
the magic of love has transformed
this place of dry grass and pain
that holds the years, and bloody tears
shed by caged flesh and souls
into a field of hope and dreams.
And as I watched it came to me
the sum total of my life, and loss
a deadness within, something missing
from my life and what I was
what I am and am supposed to be
and, whether stolen by life or prison
robbed of healthy human contact, I am
yet able to find comfort in knowing
that something still lived within me
for I FELT the pain of my loss
and while my flesh was not upon that field
my soul was, and I
found hope that I would love
and be loved yet again, and so
later, when the festival was over
the field cleared and empty of all
my eyes saw again the magic
my ears heard the echo of laughter
and my spirit danced upon that field
that wasn't empty at all.
(Prison Express, n.d.)
Art for Gallery Walk (from letters mailed to Books Through Bars Philadelphia)
Module 2 - Building Background Knowledge and Learning New Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 2: Learning Targets and Checks for Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Term Learning Target</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can analyze the ways that mass incarceration impacts a family and what that means for a child in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Supporting Learning Targets</strong></th>
<th><strong>How facilitators will know participants met the target</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can describe the current state and history of mass incarceration in the United States. I can describe the ways mass incarceration impacts a family.</td>
<td>- Building Background Knowledge Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I describe developmentally appropriate ways to talk about loss and separation with children.</td>
<td>- Last Word Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can assess behaviors and emotions that children with incarcerated parents may exhibit in my classroom as related to their experiences.</td>
<td>- Book Share discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can describe where I can find more information about children with incarcerated parents.</td>
<td>- Building Background Knowledge Protocol - Book Share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 2: Agenda</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15-1:25</td>
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<td>1:25-2:00</td>
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<td>2:00-2:20</td>
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<td>2:20-2:50</td>
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Module 3 - Strategizing for Our Students Success

Module 3: Learning Targets and Checks for Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Learning Target</th>
<th>How facilitators will know participants met the target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I can create a lesson plan related to incarceration that is developmentally appropriate for the age I teach. | - Consultancy Protocol  
- Lesson Plan Share Out                                                                   |

**Supporting Learning Targets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Learning Targets</th>
<th>How facilitators will know participants met the target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can analyze my own biases and describe how my beliefs impacts me as an educator.</td>
<td>- Status Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can analyze my lesson plans for instruction that is appropriate to children with incarcerated families.</td>
<td>- Consultancy Protocol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. I can describe some behaviors and emotions that children with incarcerated parents may exhibit in my classroom. | - Pair-share, and group share out,  
- Consultancy Protocol                                                                      |
| 4. I can describe my ideas and ways I can help children of incarcerated parents feel safe in my classroom. | - Carousel Brainstorm                                    |
| 5. I can explain where I can get more information about children with incarcerated parents. | - Have copies of resources available at workshop, resource list included in handbook. |
# Module 3: Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Learning Target</th>
<th>Higher Level Purpose</th>
<th>Instructional Practices</th>
<th>Documents &amp; Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:00-</td>
<td>Re-</td>
<td>Interactions of</td>
<td>Interactions of Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Status Game:</td>
<td>“Each member of the group is assigned a secret number from 1 to 7. Each begins to walk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1: I can</td>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>around the space, thinking about this number in terms of status with 1 being the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>analyze my own</td>
<td>participants to</td>
<td>lowest and 7 being the highest. On this scale, how does someone with this status</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>biases and</td>
<td>think about own</td>
<td>walk? How do they carry themselves? What actions do they perform in daily life? In</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>describe how</td>
<td>status in their</td>
<td>silence, each person develops a character based on their assigned status and begins</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>my beliefs</td>
<td>lives</td>
<td>to interact with others, solidifying these status roles though wordless dialogues of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>impacts me as</td>
<td></td>
<td>gesture. At the end of this part, the group discuss experiences playing their roles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an educator.</td>
<td></td>
<td>and interacting with others.” (Andrews, 2012).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:15-</td>
<td>L5: I can</td>
<td>Reminder of our</td>
<td>Popcorn Read</td>
<td>Children with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>explain where I</td>
<td>purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>incarcerated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>can get more</td>
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<td>Parents Bill of</td>
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<td>information</td>
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<td>Rights</td>
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<td></td>
<td>about children</td>
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<td>with incarcerated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:25-</td>
<td>L3: I can</td>
<td>Strategies for</td>
<td>Carousel Brainstorm</td>
<td>Tips for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45</td>
<td>describe some</td>
<td>Schools (topics would be)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Handout</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1:45-</td>
<td>Share a model</td>
<td>Consultancy Protocol</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2:45   | L2: I can analyze my lesson plans for instruction that is appropriate to | 1. You ask presenter to present lesson (3 min)  
| 2:45-  | children with incarcerated families.                                      | 2. Participants ask clarifying questions (2 min)  
| 2:50   |                                                                         | 3. Participants ask probing questions (2 min)  
| 2:55   |                                                                         | 4. Participants discuss lesson plan. Presenter listens and takes notes. Participants should give warm and cool feedback (5 min)  
| 3:00   | L2: I can analyze my lesson plans for instruction that is appropriate to | 5. Presenter says what he/she has learned and what modifications they will make to their lesson plan. (3 min)  
|        | children with incarcerated families.                                      |                                                                                                                                                    |         |
| 2:45-  | Closing                                                                  | Small Group (4-6 ppl) Reflection -What did we learn? -What does this mean to me as a teacher and as a person |         |
| 3:00   |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                    |         |

L4: I can describe my ideas and ways I can help children of incarcerated parents feel safe in my classroom.

Discussion - School wide  
- Classroom  
- With Parents  
- With Coworkers
Resources for Module 3

What Schools Can Do Brainstorm

One or two of these quotes will be on each piece of chart paper/for each group to consider

1. But whereas with the death of a child’s family member, in which case schools are often well equipped and resourced to put support in place, and empathy and help are readily on offer, imprisonment can be perceived as ‘unacceptable’ within communities (including schools), leading to what Doka (1989) refers to as a sense of disenfranchised grief; that is, the grief “that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported” (Roberts, 2012, p. 4)

2. “My father was been in prison since I was 13 years old and now I am 17. He won't be released for another 2 years, so by then I'll be in college. I feel as though he has missed out on my entire life. When I was younger I had full time nannies and now that I'm older, he's not around. I visit him 6 times a year and I speak to him every other week. I also email him through Corrlinks occasionally...Sometimes it's been very difficult with me, especially in school. I got gossiped about a lot after my father left and people were very rude to me. A lot of very ignorant people seem to think inmates are violent, dirty outcasts.” (Prison Talk Online User, September 2011)
3. The parents I am "close" with know my husband is away "working" simply because my daughter blurted out in the middle of group time last year that, "Daddy has been working for a long time." I don't feel the need to tell the teacher about our situation. Am I wrong? I don't want my child to be treated differently because of where he father is.” (Prison Talk Online User, May 2011).

4. Schools, however, should be communities where families already have an established relationship with members of staff who can provide information and support in how to access other agencies. In this way, schools can be a gateway to further support and are less ‘threatening’ for families than contacting social services directly, for example (Roberts, 2012, p.5).

5. What is important to recognise with the children of prisoners is that this kind of separation from a parent is particularly traumatic, often leading to a mistrust of authority and feelings of anger that can make engaging in education challenging. If schools can help foster the parent / child relationship, thereby strengthening family ties, this can go a long way to restoring a child’s trust in authorities as well as reinforcing their belief that their parent can still have an important input into their life. (Roberts, 2012, p. 8)

6. The antidote to stress and trauma is trust, and so until we understand that, we are not helping children. So the most critical thing that we must get to a place where we can examine our biases and acknowledge we had them and work towards trust because every adult, every parent, no matter who it is, they love their children.” (Osher, 2015, p. 19).
7. In every discussion with each of the organisations I visited, staff training was identified as the single most important thing that schools can do in relation to children affected by imprisonment and that it is this training that should underpin every other intervention and programme. Without adequate training and awareness of the main issues, teachers may inadvertently add to a child’s distress through casual comments, or worse, openly and directly undermine his or her potential. And it is not just teachers: administrative and support staff all have their role to play in creating a nonjudgmental and caring community for children and young people.” (Roberts, 2012, p. 9)

**Conclusion**

This workshop and handbook is far from a complete training for teachers. There is so much work to be done by teachers and schools, as well as by social service and political means to improve outcomes for children with incarcerated parents. I hope that this workshop and handbook are just the beginning of the journey as educators continue to deepen their understanding and self education about oppressed people. I hope this workshop plants a seed in each participant that continues to grow through reading more resources, self reflection, and peer conversations. I would love to be a part of this process for educators and am happy to be a resource, connector, and trainer. Please contact me for more information and discussion about how I can help you and your team of educators start or continue this journey. You can reach me at lcavanagh@bankstreet.edu.
Reflection

Throughout this process of creating this handbook I have been required to explore my own biases and feelings about incarceration. I strongly believe that punishing people solves nothing. As an early childhood educator I have seen the resentment build on both sides as teacher assigns child time outs for behavior the teacher finds annoying. I have seen kids dig in and refuse to “say sorry” when they clearly aren’t sorry for whatever the teacher thinks they should be sorry for. Even I have found myself occasionally doling out punitive discipline with vague explanations in times of stress, saying things like “if you can’t play safely then you can’t play together at all today!” Like a stressed teacher, our society lacks creativity and the ability to think critically about how an immediate problem can be solved over the long term.

When I tell people about this thesis project they subtly (or sometimes not so subtly) express their biases against people who are incarcerated. They don’t know what to say. Or they say, “oh, we don’t have a big population of those kids at our school,” or “I guess that is really needed these days.” I have also had much encouragement along the way. People appreciate the work and want to help, like a principal in a high-poverty district in Southwest Philadelphia who wrote “I am THRILLED you emailed because my counselor, climate manager and I have been discussing how our kids need support groups on this… yet we know of none!” (S. Andrewlevich, personal communication, February 24, 2016). Many people tell me that my work is important and that it will greatly help the
children that need support the most. This has been both gratifying and motivating; I see that my project has a purpose.

I am convinced that this handbook and workshop is necessary for teachers across the country. I hope that training teachers to be sensitive to issues of mass incarceration in their classrooms will also help them explore how their teaching practice perpetuates a system that uses punishment to solve every problem. I hope that teachers, myself included, will see they can reduce the chances of their student sending up incarcerated by creating a space where children feel safe and respected, no matter their behavior. I am looking forward to continuing this work through opportunities to train others on how mass incarceration impacts youth and to continue to develop best practices and methods that can be easily adapted to the classroom.
Permissions

Derrick Corley Poem

Gary M Fine <gmp@cornell.edu>
To: “lcavanagh@gmail.com” <lcavanagh@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 25, 2016 at 11:23 AM

Hi Lily,

Yes you may use the poem. If you go to www.prisonerexpress.org, website there are 15 volumes of poetry you can browse. Vol 18 will be up in a month or so.

The Big Graph

Lily Cavanagh <lcavanagh@gmail.com>
To: a.margaret.anderson@gmail.com

Tue, Apr 19, 2016 at 4:03 PM

Hello Anna,

Now gave me your email because of a facebook hive mind request for someone who can give me the rights to use their photo of the big graph at Eastern State for my thesis. My thesis is about how teachers can support children of incarcerated parents. Any chance you have a photo of the graph that you can give me written (through email of course) permission to use? It would be most helpful.

Thank you,

Lily Cavanagh

Annie Anderson <a.margaret.anderson@gmail.com>
To: Lily Cavanagh <lcavanagh@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 19, 2016 at 6:18 PM

Hi Lily,

Thanks for reaching out. You are welcome to use any of the photos on our press page: http://www.easternstatelive.org/contact/press-room/photos.

We just ask that you credit Eastern State along with the photographer. A sample credit would be Eastern State Penitentiary. Photo: Annie Anderson.

Photographers are listed alongside the images.

Good luck with your thesis! It sounds interesting.

Annie
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