

Preface: This session was written with Liberian context and language in mind, because it provides the most benefit to Liberian students. There are many problems and situations referenced herein that are unique to Liberian schools, circa 2019. Liberian English is not recognized as an international language. The use of standard English by teachers is mandated in the national curriculum. However, the use of ‘serious’ or standard English in the classroom often results in less learning by students, because it is most often not their first or even second language. Hence, effective teaching in Liberia often utilizes Liberian English. For these reasons, many of the directives in this session are written in Liberian English. Facilitators should be familiar with Liberian English and practice their wording before introducing the session. Liberian English is a pidgin. Many words used in Liberian English today may stem from 18th century Liberian settler or European trade English. Sentence structure is different and most often borrowed from tribal languages native to Liberia. Footnotes have been added to provide clarity to non-Liberians for linguistic and cultural clarity.

Remembering Relationships For Students 2.5 hours

Participants: students only.

Objectives: Students will identify behavioral issues within the school and explore what benefits there are to building positive relationships with each other. They will explore the relationship between verbal interactions and growth mindset or behavioral outcome. Students will learn the definition of the words *emotional*, *behavior*, *advocate* and *advocacy*. They will use these words to effectively describe advocacy opportunities within their own schools and their potential benefits.

Note to facilitator: Do not dismiss the problems that currently plague Liberian school administrations and present major challenges for students. If you are comfortable, directly address it at the beginning of the session. You can say that you are not trying to deny that it is a problem or blaming students, but that progress is made by everyone doing something to make things better.

While it is time consuming to write all of the responses of students on flipcharts, it is imperative that you do so. Do not use handouts. Liberian students are not used to directing what is written on the board by instructors. This practice equalizes perceptions of power between you, shows that you are listening to them and most importantly allows them to be vulnerable with each other and you. More importantly, it is crucial that they name their own obstacles to learning. Being heard when identifying struggles can be validating; being assigned struggles can be demoralizing. This thoughtful process must be navigated as a group.

Your response to these answers is crucial, because you are modelling receptivity, awareness and positive relationship-building. To be prepared to hear things from students that may disturb you, practice your responses beforehand, choosing those that best fit your personality. Do not dismiss or downplay these answers. Acknowledge and let them see that you care. It is fine to apologize to a student in front of the whole everyone if they confess that they have suffered abuse in school. Speak to them afterwards if the situation warrants (ongoing abuse). Direct them to resources in their area if you know about them, ask volunteers in that area if you don't and report it to your project manager. Follow up with that student, if possible, through phone calls.

This activity often calls for the facilitator to allow or direct a discussion. This is a skill that takes practice. If you could use guidance, Teach Like a Champion pedagogy (available through book and website) offers a plethora of information on what is termed 'Habits of Discussion'.

Preparation: Vocabulary (**emotional, behavior, advocate, advocacy**)

Flipchart 1 with 2 columns:

Safe and easy to learn	Not safe, not easy to learn
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Flipchart 2 with 4 columns:

Bad behavior	Need	What to do	Advocacy
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1. Opening (5 mins) - Create a safe space by asking everyone for no shaming and full participation. Explain that this session is all about understanding how we treat each other in class and how the ways that we routinely deal with each other can sometimes change the way misunderstandings are perceived. Don't make rules or list suggestions, do set the tone by asking that people be decent to each other. Be ready for one student or two to try to shame someone or make fun of a

child who has finally raised their hand after being silent for an hour. Respond quickly and firmly, but do it with kindness. Make clear to students that every one of them is important for this session and that all questions and answers will be respected as important. It is essential that this declaration is upheld by you. There should be time scheduled to provide for that and it will encourage a psychological safe space by letting students know that you are serious about the objective by modelling it. If aggression slips into your tone, apologize. Model kindness, openness and patience. If you do not feel comfortable answering a student's question, pose the question to the group and facilitate a discussion.

2. Good and Not So Good Classrooms (20 mins)

Do not lead the students in the visualizations. Trust them to see these things in their minds and tell you their experiences.

- Students visualize the things that students do, or ways they treat each other, in a classroom or school, at the times when everyone feels safe or easy to learn. Say, slowly and with repetition: *Close your eyes* (motion to the one or two that have not closed their eyes yet to close them) *See in your mind¹ the classroom where all of the students feel safe and learning is easy. See the students. See the classroom. What things are the students doing?*

List the things they saw on a flipchart divided into two, one side for *safe and easy to learn*, one side for *not safe and not easy to learn*. If you have more than one flip chart, you can use two, one for each visualization. Fill in the first side/flip chart before coming to the next visualization. Each side/flip chart will have at least fifty responses. Use this opportunity to make sure every student gets a chance to raise their hand and contribute. Respond to each suggestion, not with fake enthusiasm, but with matter-of-fact acknowledgement of its importance, like a scientist tallying up data points.

- Lead visualization on the things that happen in class at a time when they do not feel safe or and it is not easy to learn. Say, slowly and with repetition: *See in your mind the classroom where the students do not feel safe. Learning is not easy. See the students. See the classroom. What things are the students doing and saying?*

Add up² the things they see for the second visualization. If all of those listed below are not offered, suggest those missing. Some of the things they say will be about teachers or the school grounds. Write them all down. Some of the things from the not safe side will remind

¹ 'See in your mind' is a close translation for 'imagine'

² A common Liberian phrase meaning to fill in the blanks or build on what is already there

students of what they would also like for the safe side, so you can add that up then, too. Number 9 will always come up if only girls are in the group. If not brought up by the class, ask in vague terms about students making each other to feel not fine by doing something. make clear that you are talking about boys touching girls in a way they don't like, but that it can happen with girls touching boys, too. If you are a female and feel comfortable, use yourself as an example by asking *I will feel fine that a different teacher touching me and I not want that touching? I will feel free to teach? My mind will be playing on it.*³

1. *Verbal harassment/abuse*
2. *Physical abuse/fighting/putting mouth on someone*
3. *Shaming*
4. *Active students always putting down students who can't usually talk*
5. *Taking things from each other*
6. *Putting blame on others for things you have done*
7. *Talking over each other*
8. *Joking too much on each other*
9. *Making each other to feel uncomfortable through what they are saying or doing (sexually or otherwise)*
10. *Teachers loving to students*⁴.

3. The Importance of Relationships (10 mins)

Ask: *Do we always want to make people feel bad when we do? Are there times that confusion*⁵ *is not taken from somewhere different*⁶? Take 3 or 4 example answers from each question, inviting discussion.

Say: *If you think about one person who accidentally kicks the other person's foot in class, but the two persons are very close and good friends, what will be the result? What if the two persons are*

³ "Will I feel good about a male teacher touching me inappropriately? Will it not make me feel so uncomfortable I won't be able to teach?"

⁴ Teachers loving to students means teachers sleeping with or having a sexual relationship with students

⁵ 'Confusion' means a general state of conflict or misunderstanding between two people, as in the popular song 'Causing Confusion' by Ghanaian pop artist Kuami Eugene

⁶ Not what is intended

not close and not good friends, will there be a different end to the story (like no palava⁷) because of their relationship? Like how⁸? Allow time for discussion.

Explain that every classroom is sometimes on the good side, and sometimes on the bad side and that our goal for this session is to move our classrooms more to the good side. Admit that it is not the responsibility of the students to police each other, and that problems in school may come from administration. Point out that although it is not the responsibility of the students, what they do and say can change the classroom and it is their problem when another student is disturbing the whole class.

4. Explicit Vocabulary Instruction (10 mins)

Give context sentences for all. Leave the parts of speech blank and ask students to guess them.

- *Emotional* (adjective): **Having to do with the mind or how you feel.** Give examples of feelings like happiness, sadness, safety, knowing you are important, that your life is getting somewhere, etc.
- *Behavior* (noun) : **Things people do.**
- *Advocacy* (noun) : **The use of your own power to help those with less power.**
- *Advocate* (verb): **When you use your own power to help someone who has less.**

5. Emotional and Physical Needs (30 mins)

Explain that students may do hurtful things to each other mostly because they are trying to fulfill an emotional need or deficit. This may be the need to feel some control over their lives or to feel safe: maybe they feel unloved or like no one notices them, maybe they feel that the way they are treated by bigger people in their lives is unfair and they bring that bad feeling to school, maybe they are abused at home or even in school, maybe they have bad memories from their past that play on them and make them to feel bad. Ask someone to share an example.

- Students will be divided into groups of boys and girls. This is because of the common expectation in Liberia for girls to remain silent in groups. They will discuss *physical* and *emotional* needs that may be unmet and list them on a poster sheet, examples should be in *I* statements, such as ‘I need attention’ or ‘I feel unimportant’, or ‘I need food’.
- Groups briefly share out their poster sheets of needs with each other.

⁷ Palava means a verbal argument or ongoing conflict between two people

⁸ Liberians do not often use the word why. Instead, the best way to get to the bottom of a situation or to know how someone feels is to ask “Like how?”

This is a long session, so now is a good opportunity for a small break.

6a. Building Relationships and Advocacy (40-70 mins)

Use the flipchart with the below 4 columns:

Bad behavior	Need	What to do	Advocacy
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Make an example of one **bad behavior** from the list under the *unsafe, not easy to learn* poster sheet (like fighting in class). Fill in the poster sheet *together* for this bad behavior. Start by asking what the **need(s)** may be behind (for example) fighting in class, and how to counsel the students who were fighting. This is a good time to use *teachers loving to students* as a bad behavior, and to show expectations for examining all sides of this situation. Because this behavior involves two people, you need two rows. Use this opportunity to explore power dynamics between teacher and student. Because most secondary education teachers are male and most instances of teachers loving to students are male teachers and female students, pose a hypothetical situation to help male students understand sexual exploitation from the female student point of view: a female administrator, who is older and not attractive (“*you not want her at all*”), pressuring a young male student for sex. Ask specifically how, when and where students should approach those students and what they should say to them when filling in ‘**what to do**’. This column is for situational specifics.

Bad behavior	Needs	What to do	Advocacy
<i>Teacher loving to student</i>	<i>Need of teacher: validation, power</i>	<i>do not confront the teacher</i>	<i>Speak to town elders if it is safe to do so. Understand what abuse of power is and talk to your peers about that.</i>

<i>Student loving to teacher</i>	<i>Need of student: money, passing grades, somewhere to live, or perhaps validation</i>	<i>Start talking to the student, build a relationship with them so you can understand what is going on, perhaps advise them after you have built a relationship</i>	<i>Advocate on the student's behalf to administration or elders in the community if it is safe to do so</i>
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6b. Good Advisement⁹ (5mins)

Take this opportunity to discuss the requirements of effective advisement and list them on a poster sheet. Asking for what is necessary for correct¹⁰ advisement will probably provide the following answers. If not, suggest the remainder.

1. Having understanding and trust with that person
2. Finding out what the reasons for their need are through conversation
3. Advise them in the good and correct way¹¹
4. Advise them in a way that does not let other people know about it
5. Advise them more than one time

Talk about **advocacy** and how students who have a better relationship with a teacher can advocate on other student's behalf, or how class leadership, such as class president, appealing on behalf of someone may be the best solution in some cases, especially when a teacher is beating a student or abusing them in some way.

⁹ Advisment is a common part of Liberian culture: a way that people encourage each other but do not exactly tell them what to do. There is a widespread understanding in Liberia about the methods, exposure and relationship required for advisement to have an effect.

¹⁰ 'Correct' means the commonly accepted standard of decency

¹¹ The *good and correct way* or the *rightful way* means a way that is respectful and upholds community and tribal rules/norms for respecting the humanity of each person.

6b. Group Work and Share-Outs

- Assign one bad behavior to each group, and ask them to do it the same way, using the four columns, on a new poster sheet. At this time circulate the room, looking for groups who need help or encouragement. If a group chooses a tricky one or does not seem to have considered all sides of a situation, ask probing questions to help them understand the situation from a needs-based perspective: i.e. *‘What thing can make a human being to steal/beat their friend/touch girls in class? You know of any person that can always be doing that one? What can they be thinking on at the time they can do that thing?’*¹²
- Groups share out with the entire group. As they are sharing, ask them specifics about how they would enact their plans and praise them for their effort. Clap for each one.

Close by thanking the students for their effort and appreciating their participation.

¹² Liberian English does not utilize a past tense. “What can cause a person to steal/beat up someone/touch girls inappropriately in class? Do you know anyone that does that? What are they thinking when they do that?”