

7 Key Lessons for Educators

1. **Transform from Manager to Co-Learner** - Stop seeing your role as primarily managing student behavior and start seeing students as co-teachers who can provide valuable insights about their learning experience and your teaching effectiveness.
2. **Create Dialogue Spaces Outside Traditional Class Time** - Establish small group conversations where students can share how they experience your classroom and offer critiques of your teaching methods.
3. **Connect Academic Content to Students' Real Lives** - Weave curriculum connections to students' neighborhoods, family experiences, current events, and community issues rather than teaching abstract, disconnected content.
4. **Institute Democratic Decision-Making** - Give students agency in classroom decisions about assignments, activity duration, discussion topics, and classroom responsibilities that count toward their grades.
5. **Embrace Student Joy and Cultural Expression** - Create space for students to compete, create art, write music, and express themselves culturally as part of their learning rather than demanding silence and compliance.
6. **Self-Diagnose for Unconscious Bias** - Videotape your teaching to identify moments when you may be "placing metaphorical knees on students' necks" through racist practices you're spreading unintentionally.
7. **Use Your Classroom as a Platform for Social Change** - See your pedagogy as a form of protest against educational norms that silence and harm vulnerable students, creating a model of what an equitable world should look like.

What Teachers Can Ask Parents to Support Reality Pedagogy

1. Supporting Student Voice and Agency

Teacher Requests:

- "At home, ask your child about their opinions on what they're learning and validate their perspectives, even if they differ from yours"
- "When your child shares classroom experiences, ask follow-up questions like 'What would you have done differently?' or 'How did that make you feel?'"
- "Encourage your child to speak up when they have ideas or questions about their learning"
- "Share with me stories, traditions, or experiences from your family that could connect to our curriculum"

2. Embracing Co-Teaching Relationships

Teacher Requests:

- "Talk with your child about what teaching and learning looks like at home - everyone teaches and learns from each other"
- "Ask your child what they taught someone else recently, not just what they learned"
- "Support your child in seeing themselves as someone who has valuable knowledge to share"
- "Let me know what your child teaches you about their interests, culture, or experiences"

3. Connecting Learning to Real Life

Teacher Requests:

- "Help your child see academic concepts in everyday situations - math in cooking, science in gardening, history in family stories"
- "Discuss current events and community issues at home, encouraging your child to think critically about them"
- "Share neighborhood knowledge and community resources that could enhance classroom learning"
- "Tell me about local issues or celebrations that could connect to our academic content"

4. Celebrating Joy and Cultural Expression

Teacher Requests:

- "Celebrate your child's creative expressions and cultural identity at home"
- "Share music, art, stories, and traditions from your family that your child could bring to class"
- "Encourage your child to express their learning through different modes - drawing, singing, storytelling, movement"
- "Let me know about cultural holidays, foods, or practices that are important to your family"

5. Redefining Success Beyond Compliance

Teacher Requests:

- "Ask your child about their thinking process, not just their grades or behavior reports"
- "Value questions and curiosity as much as correct answers"
- "Support your child in respectful disagreement and critical thinking"
- "Help your child understand that meaningful learning sometimes involves productive struggle and discussion"

6. Addressing Real-World Issues

Teacher Requests:

- "Create safe spaces at home for your child to process difficult topics and current events"
- "Share your family's values and perspectives while encouraging your child to think independently"
- "Talk openly about social issues affecting your community, making it age-appropriate"
- "Let me know if your child is experiencing anxiety or stress about world events so we can address it together"

7. Supporting Democratic Decision-Making

Teacher Requests:

- "Give your child choices and decision-making opportunities at home"
 - "Ask for your child's input on family decisions when appropriate"
 - "Encourage your child to take ownership of their learning goals and classroom responsibilities"
 - "Support your child in advocating for themselves respectfully when they disagree with something"
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Building Home-School Partnership

Communication Requests:

- "Share with me what you're noticing about your child's engagement with learning at home"
- "Let me know if classroom discussions are continuing at your dinner table"
- "Tell me about your child's interests and passions so I can incorporate them into lessons"
- "Help me understand your family's cultural practices and values"

Advocacy Requests:

- "Support these teaching approaches when talking with other parents or school administrators"
- "Advocate for flexible, culturally responsive teaching practices in school board meetings or parent organizations"
- "Help create a community of families who value student voice and democratic classrooms"
- "Share success stories about this approach with other parents who might be skeptical"

Feedback Requests:

- "Tell me when you see positive changes in your child's attitude toward learning"
- "Let me know if you have concerns about any aspect of our classroom approach"
- "Share ideas for how we can better connect home and school learning"
- "Give me feedback on how our classroom practices are impacting your child at home"

What This Looks Like in Practice

Daily Conversations: Instead of: "Did you behave today? What's your homework?" Try: "What did you think about in class today? What questions came up for you?"

Supporting Critical Thinking: Instead of: "Just do what the teacher says" Try: "What do you think about that? How does it connect to our family's experience?"

Celebrating Learning: Instead of: "Did you get a good grade?" Try: "What are you proud of learning today? How did you help someone else learn?"

Addressing Challenges: Instead of: "Don't talk back to your teacher" Try: "How can you respectfully share your perspective? What questions could you ask?"