Souls of Our Teachers: An Inside Look at Urban Education

Facilitators’ Guide and DVD
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to use this Facilitators’ Guide and DVD</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Outline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to the Facilitator</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design detail</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pre-DVD Reflections</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B DVD Observation Sheet</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Brainstorming Transformational Change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Step Up, Charlotte!</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Souls of Our Teachers: An Inside Look at Urban Education is a collaborative project of Mecklenburg Ministries, Temple Beth El, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, and Communities In Schools. The DVD production was made possible through the generous support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and The Leon Levine Foundation. The Facilitators’ Guide was generously funded by Wachovia: A Wells Fargo Company.

The Souls of Our Teachers Committee includes Dr. Maria Hanlin, Executive Director of Mecklenburg Ministries; Rabbi Judith Schindler, Senior Rabbi, Temple Beth El; LaToya Walker, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Dr. Bill Anderson, Executive Director of Communities In Schools; Dr. Peter Gorman, Superintendent, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Barbara Ann Temple, Director, Teacher Professional Development, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; Ann Clark, Chief Academic Officer, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; and Russ and Wendy Gill, owners, Professional Communications.

The documentary Souls of Our Teachers was produced by Russ and Wendy Gill of Professional Communications.

The Facilitators’ Guide was developed by Rosalyn Allison-Jacobs, Principal, Peak Nonprofits Consulting.

December 2010 ©Mecklenburg Ministries
How to use this Facilitators’ Guide:

This guide is designed to assist facilitators in leading a participatory, guided experience for viewers of the *Souls of Our Teachers* DVD. The guide is intended for general audiences of all types to increase their understanding of the realities of teaching in high-poverty schools.

The guide includes the following components:
- A suggested process guide of approximately 2 hours in duration
- Notes for facilitators to ensure a successful experience
- Appendices: Pre-DVD Reflections worksheet, DVD Observation Sheet, Brainstorming worksheet, and “Step Up, Charlotte!” (personal commitment form).

Workshop Objectives:
- To provide a structured process through which participants explore the myths and realities of their perceptions about urban, high-poverty schools and the students who attend them
- To encourage dialog about the challenges and solutions associated with providing quality education in high-poverty schools
- To identify specific and practical opportunities through which businesses, the faith community, and the community-at-large can support and advocate for all public schools (high-poverty and others)
- To encourage dialog about the role of teachers and their impact on students and our society

This suggested guide is designed for a 2-hour presentation that includes a preliminary discussion, the viewing of the 27-minute *Souls of Our Teachers* DVD, and a process for debriefing the video. The primary audiences for this facilitated process are individuals and groups who have limited exposure to, and understanding of, the dynamics of teaching in high-poverty schools.

In order to provide an experience that creates opportunities for meaningful dialog and balanced participation, it is recommended that groups of participants be limited to 20-40 individuals. The process is designed to be facilitated without a break, so facilitators should invite participants to take any required breaks independently, only as needed, in the least disruptive way possible.

Facilitator’s Checklist

Pre-reading:
- Facilitators’ Guide
- View the *Souls of Our Teachers* DVD and familiarize yourself with the design detail
- Familiarize yourself with facts and information relative to poverty in the public schools

Equipment needed:
- TV/DVD player or projector and screen
- *Souls of Our Teachers* DVD

Materials needed:
- Post-it™ notes, flip chart paper, markers
Copies of the Pre-DVD Reflections worksheet, DVD Observation Sheet, Brainstorming worksheet, and personal commitment for each participant

Recommended room set-up

Symbols

Design Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Approximate time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop overview, ground rules, and objectives</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-viewing reflections</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of reflections</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What We Believe exercise</td>
<td>10-13 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD set-up and viewing instructions</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View Souls of Our Teachers DVD</td>
<td>27 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD debrief – whole group</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group work instructions</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group work – Brainstorming Transformational Change</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group report out</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap up</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes to the Facilitator:

The *Souls of Our Teachers* Facilitators’ Guide and DVD provide an opportunity for participants to explore their beliefs about teachers and students in high-poverty schools. The guide is intended to encourage participants to surface their impressions about the nature of high-poverty schools; to compare, contrast and reconcile their beliefs with the reality, as represented in the video; to make connections between their positive personal experiences with teachers in their own lives and the teachers in the DVD; and to build commitment for public schools.

Facilitators should be prepared for the possibility that some participants will recount negative experiences that they have had with high-poverty schools and/or students. The objective of this experience is not to refute or negate the reality of participants’ prior experiences, but to present another reality that dispels and overcomes generalizations and stereotypes. A primary goal is to address attitudes that can result in a wholesale write-off of high-poverty schools.

**On confidentiality:**

Emphasize that what is shared in the session is confidential. When individuals relate stories about their own personal experiences or the experiences of others, or about their beliefs and impressions, they are not to be criticized for their perspectives. Encouraging the group to participate in establishing ground rules will help to build an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality.

**On creating a climate of safety:**

It is impossible to validate or invalidate beliefs that have not been expressed. The success of the facilitated process is contingent upon participants feeling that they can share their opinions and perspectives with complete candor and without judgment. As part of establishing ground rules, please stress that “political correctness” adds no value to the quality of the discussion or the richness of the dialog. Stress the importance of respecting the opinions of all, especially those opinions that differ from our own.

**On poverty in public school:**

There is ample research that demonstrates the debilitating effect of high concentrations of poor children on the ability of all children – whether poor or not – to achieve academically in high-poverty schools. Optimistically, there is also research that demonstrates that racially-based and economically-based achievement gaps are being bridged when the appropriate resources are brought to bear (i.e., excellent teachers and principals, volunteers, and funding). It will be important to provide participants with fact sheets, resources, and references to encourage them to educate themselves about “best practices” in overcoming economically-based adversity in education.
On facilitating tough topics:

Some of the issues that will arise both before and after the viewing of the video are difficult and may not be regularly discussed in most people’s everyday lives. Discussing poverty can evoke a range of reactions and emotions – from denial to discomfort, guilt, avoidance, grief, sadness, etc. There may be reluctance and resistance to sharing negative perceptions about people in poverty for fear of offending others. Similarly, there may be embarrassment about sharing personal experiences of having lived in poverty or attended high-poverty schools.

In some instances, you may be able to share relevant personal experiences as a way to alleviate tension. Sharing your own experiences and feelings opens the door for others to do the same. However, avoid responding to participants’ opinions, perspectives, and stories and comments with one of your own, and/or telling participants how they should respond or react based on your own feelings or experiences. Make every effort to respond neutrally.

It is imperative to create a safe environment where people feel that they can really open up. It is helpful to open the session by asking the group if there are any ground rules or guidelines (suggestions below) they would like to have when talking about these topics. If they collectively agree on ground rules, they must be enforced by both you and the members of the group.

Discussions of difficult topics about which there may be disagreement will often create moments of silence. Often, participants are processing and thinking about the subject. If the silence lingers too long, feel free to rephrase the question, ask if the group requires clarification, provide a clarifying example, or offer another discussion prompt.

For further information about Souls of Our Teachers, please visit our web site at www.soulsofourteachers.org.

To learn more about Souls of Our Students: Appreciating Differences, and its corresponding curriculum, please go to www.meckmin.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator’s Instructions</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>• Introduce yourself</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Facilitator note: Have agenda recorded on flip chart paper in advance | • Talk about why this workshop is being offered  
  **Suggested overview of project goals:**  
  ➢ Our organization values community engagement in support of public schools  
  ➢ We want to help level the playing field for students in high-poverty schools  
  ➢ We believe that community commitment can help close the achievement gap for high-poverty students  
  ➢ We want to increase the understanding that excellent public school education across our community is in the best interest of every citizen |                |
| Workshop overview, objectives and ground rules: | • Review agenda  
  • Review workshop objectives  
  ➢ Explore myths and realities of perceptions about high-poverty schools  
  ➢ Encourage dialog about the challenges and solutions associated with providing quality education in high-poverty schools  
  ➢ Identify practical opportunities through which participants can support public schools  
  • Establish ground rules for how participants will interact  
  ➢ Listen to each other  
  ➢ Participate with candor, not “political correctness”  
  ➢ Respect differences  
  ➢ Create space for all to participate  
  ➢ What is said here, stays here  
  ➢ Others? | 8 minutes |
| Video pre-viewing reflections:              | • Distribute Pre-DVD Reflections worksheets  
  • Ask participants to individually and silently think about a teacher who positively impacted their lives (or their children’s lives) and write a brief description of him/her and the nature of his/her impact | 5 minutes      |
<p>| Sharing of reflections                      | • Invite a few volunteers to share their reflections                                                          | 5 minutes      |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator’s Instructions</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What We Believe exercise:                  | • Reiterate the ground rule that honesty, not political correctness, is important, and that participants are not to judge the perspectives of others  
• Instruct participants, individually and anonymously, to record words on Post-it notes that they associate with high-poverty schools and students (one word or description per Post-it)  
• Instruct participants to affix their descriptors to the blank flip chart paper at the front of the room  
• Facilitators will sort the Post-its into themes  
• Facilitators will briefly summarize and feedback themes reflecting participants’ perceptions                                                                 | 10-13 minutes   |
| DVD set-up and viewing instructions        | We are about to view a video that was created through a partnership between Mecklenburg Ministries, Temple Beth El, Communities In Schools, and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. In it, you will hear from seven teachers who teach in high-poverty public schools by choice. As you view the video, please jot down notes about anything that strikes you about the teachers, their stories and comments, and common themes. Record observations about what you see as well as what you hear. Especially note anything that you see or hear that changes your mind from the perceptions that you recorded during the reflections exercise. Additionally, write down any questions that you have about poverty in CMS.                                                                 | 3 minutes       |
| View Souls of Our Teachers DVD             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 27 minutes      |
| DVD debrief – whole group                  | • Ask participants to share their observations about the teachers  
  ➢ How would you describe the teachers in the video?  
  ➢ How do your descriptions of the teachers in the documentary compare with your descriptions of the teachers who made a difference in your (your child’s) life?  
Themes:  
• What did you hear that particularly resonated with you? | 20 minutes      |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Facilitator’s Instructions</th>
<th>Estimated Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small group work instructions</td>
<td><strong>Facilitator’s note:</strong> Distribute Brainstorming sheets. Be sure to instruct each group to designate a recorder and a reporter. Instruct participants to discuss at their tables what they believe about the power of individuals to transform public schools. Brainstorm strategies in the categories of giving time, giving voice and giving resources. In generating ideas, think in personal terms about the kinds of things that participants would be willing and able to do themselves.</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group work – Brainstorming Transformational Change</td>
<td>Participants will work at their tables and generate ideas. Ask them to record their ideas on Brainstorming Transformational Change worksheets.</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group report out</td>
<td><strong>Facilitator’s note:</strong> Record participants’ ideas on flip chart paper. Ask the reporter from each table to summarize ideas and strategies. Instruct participants not to repeat ideas already offered, but to share only those ideas not already provided.</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap up</td>
<td><strong>Facilitator’s note:</strong> Distribute Poverty in CMS Fact Sheet and “Step Up, Charlotte!” commitment forms.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Did you hear anything that contradicted any of the beliefs that were recorded on the Post-it notes before we viewed the documentary?
- What were the major themes that you heard throughout the documentary? (As necessary, facilitators may prompt the participants with the following themes:
  - Education and justice
  - Whose problem is it anyway?
  - The choice and rewards of teaching in high-poverty schools
  - What it takes to overcome poverty as a barrier to academic success
  - Reactions to quote from Aaron Pomis: “This (equity in education) is our generation’s civil rights issue.”

- Distribute Poverty in CMS fact sheet.
- Distribute “Step Up, Charlotte!” commitment forms containing CMS-sanctioned opportunities for advocacy and engagement. Ask participants to complete and return them, as they are comfortable, or to reflect on the opportunities and return them later, or to complete the commitment form online at [http://www.soulsofourteachers.org](http://www.soulsofourteachers.org).
- Inform participants that they will receive an email with a link to an online evaluation of the experience. Assure them that their responses will be confidential and anonymous.
- Thank participants for attending.
Facilitators’ Postscript:

1. Participants’ Evaluation of the Experience:
   Participants’ feedback on the Souls of Our Teachers experience is extremely important to us. After each facilitated session, please email the link provided by Mecklenburg Ministries to each participant so that they can complete an electronic evaluation of their experience.

2. Capturing changes in attitude and suggestions from DVD whole-group debrief segment:
   During the whole-group debrief after the DVD viewing, facilitators are encouraged to capture participant feedback on flip chart paper. In particular, we are interested in receiving feedback on responses to the question, “Did you hear anything that contradicted any of the beliefs that were recorded on the Post-it notes before we viewed the documentary?” Please summarize these responses in an email and send them to Maria Hanlin at maria.hanlin@meckmin.org.

3. Additionally, we welcome participants’ ideas and suggestions that emerge during their small group work for making quality education available to all students. Please submit a consolidated summary of Appendix C, Brainstorming Transformational Change, to Maria Hanlin at maria.hanlin@meckmin.org.
Pre-DVD Reflections

For the next few minutes, please reflect on an exceptional teacher in your life (or the life of your child) who made all the difference for you. Reflect on their specific traits and attributes, and about a pivotal event in your relationship with them.

Please write a brief description of that teacher including, if possible, an anecdote that captures the essence of what is (or was) special about that teacher.
Souls of Our Teachers DVD Observation Sheet

**DVD Themes:**
Myths and misconceptions about high-poverty schools:

Challenges of teaching in high-poverty schools:

Rewards of teaching in high-poverty schools:

Equity in access to quality education:

What surprised me:

**Observations of teachers:**
Sources of motivation:

Personal rewards:

What struck me about the teachers:
Souls of our Teachers: Facilitators' Guide

Aaron:

Anne:

Jacqueline:

Sara:

Shanna:

Tamica:
Souls of our Teachers: Facilitators' Guide

Thomas:
Brainstorming Transformational Change

What do we believe about the power of individuals and organizations to transform public schools?

In your small groups, brainstorm strategies, ideas, and opportunities to make quality education available to all students, regardless of income level. If possible, please group your ideas in 3 categories: giving time, giving voice and giving resources. Designate one member to be the recorder and one member to be the reporter for our whole-group report out.

**Giving Time**

**Giving Voice**

**Giving Resources**
Step Up, Charlotte!
Giving Time

One of the greatest gifts you can give to our high-poverty schools is your time.

Whether you are an individual or you represent an organization, you can make a difference in our community that will have a lasting impact. Please consider sharing your time with one of Charlotte-Mecklenburg School’s high-poverty schools. We’ve made it easy to get started!

Communities In Schools will assist you in matching your time and talent with a school to help students stay in school, successfully learn, and achieve in life. There are many ways to share your time – from working with individual students one-on-one, to serving our schools through special projects, events or group activities.

Our schools and our students need us all. You can be an important part of the solution in high-poverty schools. Will you step up and make a difference in a child’s life? To learn more about volunteering with Communities In Schools, go to: http://www.cischarlotte.org/howyoucanhelp.html

To see a list of high-poverty schools supported by Communities In Schools, please visit: http://www.cischarlotte.org/schoolsites.html
Step Up, Charlotte!
Giving Resources

One of the best ways to help CMS teachers is by supporting classroom projects in a high-poverty school. DonorsChoose.org enables community citizens to fund specific classroom projects directly and conveniently. Projects range from pencils for a poetry-writing unit, to violins for a school recital, to microscope slides for a biology class.

How to Donate to Charlotte Classrooms
You can browse project requests on the DonorsChoose.org website and contribute any amount to the one that inspires you. Once a project is fully funded, the materials will be delivered to the school. Donors receive photos of their project in action, a thank-you letter from the teacher and a cost report showing how each dollar was spent.

No matter the amount of funding, donors receive the same level of choice, transparency and feedback as someone who gives millions.

Please visit the link below to make a difference in CMS classrooms:
http://www.donorschoose.org/donors/viewChallenge.html?id=124099&max=50

Souls of Our Teachers is proud to partner with DonorsChoose.org
DonorsChoose.org is an online charity connecting classroom requests from teachers in high-need communities with donors who want to help. DonorsChoose.org has been highlighted as “the future of philanthropy” by media, including The New York Times, Business Week, NPR, Today Show and CNN.

Since 2000, DonorsChoose.org’s community of 465,000 donors and teachers has channeled $66 million into classrooms in need (including more than $1 million into Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools) and benefitted 4.1 million students.
Step Up, Charlotte!
Giving Voice

It is essential that your voice be heard in support of teachers in CMS high-poverty schools. Please share your opinions.

I have a VOICE in my school
- Join your Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and work together with other parents to support your teachers.
- Join your School Leadership Team (SLT) and support your school’s staff.

I have a VOICE in my community
- E-mail the School Board chair, vice-chair, and/or your district representative regarding school policy and program decisions: http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/boe/
- E-mail the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners regarding school budget decisions which impact schools: http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/BOCC/

I have a VOICE in my state’s capital
- Learn about our CMS legislative agenda: http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/boe/Documents/Legislative%20Agenda%202009.pdf
- E-mail our Charlotte-Mecklenburg state representatives:
  - State Representative Kelly M. Alexander, Jr., Kelly.Alexander@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Martha Alexander, Martha.Alexander@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Becky Carney, Becky.Carney@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Tricia Cotham, Tricia.Cotham@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Beverly Earle, Beverly.Earle@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Ric Killian, Ric.Killian@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Rodney Moore, Rodney.Moore@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Ruth Samuelson, Ruth.Samuelson@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Thom Tillis, Thom.Tillis@ncleg.net
  - State Representative Jim Gulley, Jim.Gulley@ncleg.net

- E-mail our Charlotte-Mecklenburg state senators:
  - State Senator Daniel Clodfelter, Daniel.Clodfelter@ncleg.net
  - State Senator Charlie Dannelly, Charlie.Dannelly@ncleg.net
  - State Senator Malcolm Graham, Malcolm.Graham@ncleg.net
  - State Senator Bob Rucho, Bob.Rucho@ncleg.net
  - State Senator Tommy Tucker, Tommy.Tucker@ncleg.net

- E-mail our Governor, Beverly Purdue, http://www.governor.state.nc.us/#

I have a VOICE in my nation’s capital
- E-mail our North Carolina representatives:

- E-mail our North Carolina senators:

- Email our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, Arne.duncan@ed.gov