



180 DAYS

Hartsville

DISCUSSION INTO ACTION GUIDE



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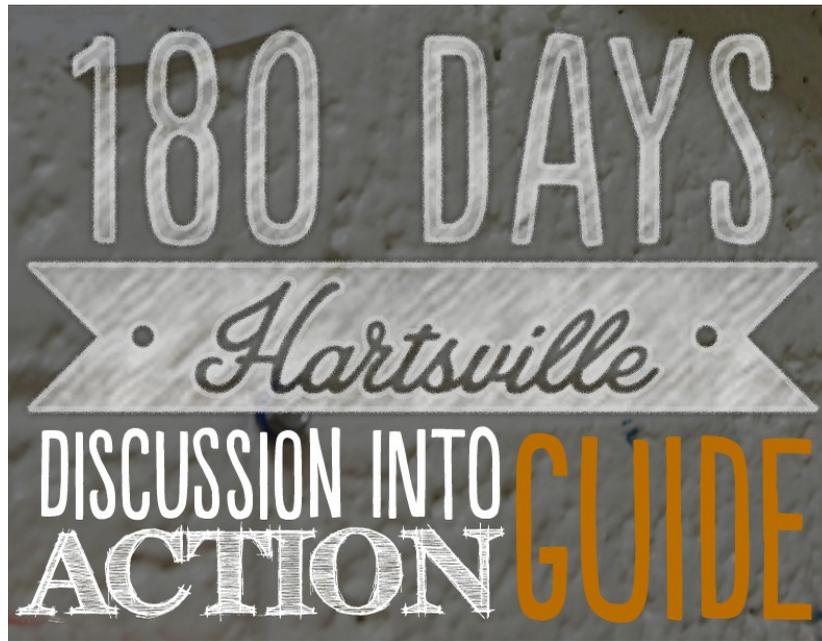


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Introduction

As our society has become more divided economically, and more complex socially and technologically, the system of education that seemed to hold us in good stead for many decades has begun to unravel. Today's schools need to prepare more complex populations of students from more challenging circumstances for a more global world. Educators, representing both rural and urban schools, are working to improve school outcomes including low high school graduation rates especially among young men of color. Since workplace realities now make a college education the necessity for a middle class life, increasing graduation rates is imperative.

What can we learn from Hartsville – and can these lessons help to transform other schools and school districts in America? Given both a challenge, and the resources to meet it, from a local major employer seeking to grow a viable workforce and community, the town of Hartsville agreed to be a testing ground for systemic education reform based on the work of James Comer, Ph.D. The goal is for Hartsville students' test scores to be in the top quartile in South Carolina in five years, and to be in the top quartile nationally in ten years. 180 Days: Hartsville introduces the key players and documents the one-year progress of two elementary schools and their principals toward achieving these goals – on the way to a high school graduation rate of 100 per cent. While the kinds of coalitions shown in the film may be common in more affluent areas, the story of Hartsville illustrates similar opportunities in rural and less advantaged communities. Lessons learned can spark discussions about how local communities can work together to take action and effect change.

This project offers media resources including the 180 Days: Hartsville documentary, film clips from the documentary, and this Discussion into Action Guide to support community action by public television stations, elementary schools, community programs and organizations, and other stakeholders. Project content helps these stakeholders to address important education efforts to keep children in school and build higher aspirations among students/parents/teachers for youth to thrive in elementary school, graduate from high school, and then college. The motivation and mindset for youth – especially African-American and other youth of color as well as those from low-income families – to graduate from high school and then college begins in elementary school. Boys and young men of color are reluctant to ask for help – a crucial step in building support networks to achieve goal-directed results in education and in life.

For Hartsville creating a culture of graduation, college going, and employability is the goal – and the purpose of their work. Find what is working in your community – highlighting individuals, schools/educators, and community stakeholders that are helping to close the achievement gap and raise graduation rates. Spotlight these American Graduate Champions in your community to inspire others to forge local pathways to success. Build on local achievements to reach more children and families to advance their educational prospects and economic futures.

180 Days: Hartsville Documentary

In *180 Days: Hartsville*, viewers will experience a year in the life of one Southern town’s efforts to address the urgent demand for reform in American public schools, and watch what happens when the systems that can either fuel or diffuse that reform – bureaucracy, economic opportunity, and fixed mindsets – interact and intersect. Is Hartsville an anomaly, or do its successes point towards some transferrable and sustainable solutions? Can a community really change the fortunes of a generation by doubling down on their neighborhood schools? Or does the stark reality of the 21st century global economy outweigh the impact of one rural town’s efforts to prepare its children to compete in that economy?

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PART ONE. THE FILM. *180 DAYS: HARTSVILLE*

Themes

180 Days: Hartsville has multiple themes related to creating a culture of academic success, children's and families' well-being, graduation, college going, and employability. With an emphasis on elementary school education, consider which themes might be most appropriate to advance your community's education goals.

- Raising student aspirations or expectations.
- Building community knowledge about what makes a good student, teacher, leader, and school.
- Making the goal of high school and college graduation more attainable.
- Spotlighting leaders and leadership.
- Prompting more parent activity.
- Engaging community stakeholders for long-term results.
- Focusing on the specific challenges of black males in education settings.

Enhancing each theme, stations could consider how to recognize American Graduate Champions, individuals who are helping students to stay on the path to success.

Background on *180 Days: Hartsville*

On the night of her 37th birthday, first-year principal Tara King surveys the empty cafeteria of West Hartsville Elementary School in Hartsville, South Carolina. The first parent engagement meeting of the year was supposed to start fifteen minutes ago, but so far just one parent has bothered to attend. While a colleague frantically calls parents on her cell phone, Mrs. King stands silently outside the school's front door and waits. Her face reveals the range of emotions she feels: embarrassed, angry, discouraged, and resolute. Tara knew long before she decided to become principal of a high-poverty school in her hometown that it was going to be difficult. She also knew that without the active involvement of her students' families, "difficult" could turn into "impossible."

The film also focuses on Thornwell School of the Arts, another Hartsville elementary school, which is celebrating its move from being graded as a C to an A school on the state achievement test, the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards or PASS after four years of leadership by principal Julie Mahn. Both principals evidence a strong belief in affirming the capacity of their students, even against tough odds. As long-time residents and career educators, they have seen the extremes of the community reflected back with each succeeding generation. On one side of town is the Fortune 500 company Sonoco, the private college, and the reputation as the "little town with the big heart." The other side is challenged by high unemployment and a crime rate that's three times the national average.

Yet Hartsville defies such binary characterizations. It's a community with high rates of poverty, and yet its schools are some of the highest achieving in the state. It's a community with limited job

opportunities and yet its schools have one of the highest graduation rates in South Carolina. And it's a community located squarely in the center of what has become known as the "corridor of shame," and yet its schools intend to become a national model for excellence.

How do you reimagine the structure and purpose of public education in this community – or in any other? In Hartsville, an eclectic coalition of citizens is wrestling with both of those questions thanks to an ambitious \$5 million plan to reform its schools and, by extension, transform the life trajectories of a whole generation of young people. To launch this reform, Hartsville schools benefitted from the ideas and practices of a team of educators from Yale University who espouse the holistic and affirming theories of Dr. James Comer. They conducted an assessment and provided some strategic thinking for the town. But the real work belongs to the community itself and the Yale team has essentially moved on.

In ***180 Days: Hartsville*** viewers will experience a year (2013-2014) in the life of one Southern town's efforts to address systemically the root causes of inequality. Dr. Ingram comments, "What we do is representative of what a lot of rural America goes through." Is Hartsville an anomaly, or do its successes point towards some universally applicable solutions? Can a community really change the fortunes of a generation by not letting its youngest children fall through the cracks?

The film highlights the roles of two elementary school principals and the district superintendent, Dr. Edward Ingram. These are critical leadership roles that determine resources and focus for the schools and the system as a whole. However, behind them is the larger political structure manifested in the governor and the tension around determining the right education system for the state. To a great extent, the students, principals, teachers, and parents are caught in the middle and are judged by rules they have little say in creating. So they have to find ways to serve the students regardless of the political drama around them. The politics of issues like racial balance, school financing, and state standards make these positions more visible, more accountable, more challenging, and perhaps more tenuous.

180 Days: Hartsville is more than a story of school reform, or of a single town's successes and struggles, it's a story about who we are, whom we've been, and whom we aspire to become.

Hartsville's Stakeholders and Change Agents

Viewers learn from ***180 Days: Hartsville*** that diverse Hartsville residents have a stake in the success of their schools. First, of course, are the children. They are the ones who will thrive or fail depending on how the schools and community surround them with the tools they will need to survive and ideally flourish. Next is the education infrastructure: teachers; principals; school superintendent; school board; and political figures (like the governor) who often determine school policy, standards, and resources. Critical, too, are parents. Many are struggling to help their families; they want the best for their children even though they may not have the resources to provide all that would be optimal. Other players include those who interact with the children in a variety of contexts, but whose presence can be vital. These may be school bus drivers, librarians, cafeteria staff, coaches, Scout leaders, tutors, and creators of community initiatives.

Harris DeLoach, the recently retired CEO of Sonoco Products Company, is the person most responsible for educational change in Hartsville – both because he put together the coalition of civic leaders that decided to hire an outside team of school reform experts from Yale, and because his company is solely responsible for the \$5 million that is funding the effort. In the film DeLoach spells out his goal for Hartsville schools, saying, "We committed \$5 million toward the goal ... [of] going to

be in the top quartile in test results in the state of Carolina in five years, and in the top quartile in the nation in ten years.” In 2011, Sonoco founded Partners for Unparalleled Local Scholastic

Excellence or PULSE to support students in Hartsville schools. PULSE provides professional development for teachers, a mentoring program, Boy Scouts program, and support for the families of students. Why? Sonoco needs to develop the kind of local infrastructure that will attract employable newcomers to the town as well as create a stream of well-educated employees. An educated workforce will also demand high quality schools for their children. DeLoach explained his grand plan while giving Hartsville’s new superintendent of schools, Edward Ingram, a tour of his company’s manufacturing plant. “I realized we may have a situation here that is small enough that we might be able to control it, and that if we could figure out a way to get it right, then others might try to replicate it.” He added, “Folks don’t realize that this is where it all begins.”

Tara King, principal of West Hartsville Elementary, is a lifelong educator whose own life trajectory was changed when one of her teachers saw something in her and refused to let her settle for anything less than her full potential. Tara King understands what it will take to overcome the weight of local history. The town dates back to 1817 when Captain Thomas Hart bought 500 acres of virgin pine forest, purchased hundreds of enslaved Africans, and made a fortune growing cotton and raising cattle. Today, the people of Hartsville need to achieve a systemic cultural shift in how they see themselves, their neighbors, and the world

When Hartsville’s reform efforts first began, Tara occupied the essential bridge role. For two years she served as the Yale team’s local voice and consultant for all of the participating schools. Beginning in the third year of the project, however, Tara moved into a different position, becoming principal of one of the schools she used to advise. A graduate of Hartsville’s first desegregated high school class in 1997, Tara is beginning her first year as the new head of Hartsville’s most underperforming elementary school. She is giving everything she has to upgrade the inadequate learning environments her school had previously offered to children.

In her first year as a school leader, she needs to navigate the fine line between what she knows is in the best interests of children – holistic development – and what the larger policy climate says they are – test scores. The scores have told her that her students have been losing rather than gaining ground so she has to move from a deficit position to a much stronger one.

Julie Mahn, principal of Thornwell School for the Arts, has been an educator in her soul since childhood and was the first in her family to go to college and break the cycle of poverty. For Julie, Hartsville is not just her hometown; it’s the best place to live in America. It’s where she met her husband – in middle school. It’s where the entire community came together in prayer to pull her teenage son back from death’s door. And it’s where she now serves as the white principal of the school with the highest percentage of African-American children in the city. The granddaughter of sharecroppers, Julie knows what these children are struggling to overcome. In a lot of ways, she’s still struggling to overcome them herself.

After four years of dedicated effort, her school, Thornwell, has advanced from a C (76.7) ranking to an A (92.9) as a result of the children’s performance on the state’s PASS test. To maintain an A rating, 90 percent of students will have to meet or exceed state standards. The hard work has clearly taken a toll on Mrs. Mahn, but she is committed to and exuberant about keeping her school on that path. Ninety-three percent of her students come from challenging circumstances and participate in the free lunch program.

Edward Ingram, school superintendent, is a 32-year veteran of public education. As Hartsville's new superintendent, he's also the new kid on the block. As Dr. Ingram researches his new community, he's surprised by the inconsistencies. Hartsville has high rates of poverty – and it has a graduation rate of 92 percent. He says they are “not going to rest until they have a graduation rate of 100 percent.” Hartsville has great racial and economic diversity, but that diversity is bunched at the extremes, with very little connective tissue between the haves and the have-nots. As Ingram listens and learns, however, he wonders how his schools will fulfill the vision DeLoach is describing. On one level, they have all the elements of success in place: \$5 million of funding from Sonoco Products Company to fuel their efforts; a district that already boasts some of the highest-achieving schools in the state; and a coalition of the town's key partners pledging to do whatever they can to help.

Parents: Parents are stressed with work; they may have multiple jobs and several children. They may not feel confident to take part in the education dialogue if they are not well educated themselves. Poverty destabilizes families. In 2013, the federal poverty threshold for a family of four was \$23,550. A worker that receives the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour has to work more than 60 hours a week to reach the threshold for poverty. A minimum wage worker must work more than 100 hours per week to reach South Carolina's median income of \$38,560.

In the film, **Monay Parran** shows what's at stake for families. At age 16, her own life path veered irretrievably off course when she dropped out of high school. A single parent, Monay must now work at two minimum-wage jobs in two different cities to support her family. Most nights, she doesn't come home until 11 pm and barely has time to see her three children. And although she knows that her children's education is the key to their own chances for a better life, she is limited in her ability to keep them on the straight and narrow. With the problems her eldest Rashon is experiencing at school, Monay is wondering whether, despite all of her efforts, he is destined to follow the same path as his mother, dropping out of school too early. At the end of the film viewers find out that Monay has also been attending classes and has received her high school diploma.

Children: As Julie Mahn says, “children come first.” The students themselves want to succeed and want their schools to succeed. But too many come with the baggage of stress born of poverty, racism, and a lack of cultural capital. We root for them. In the film, the children are represented, particularly, by Monay's son, **Rashon Johnson**, a fifth-grade student at West Hartsville Elementary. He is regarded as a bright student, but as the school year progresses his behavior becomes a concern to his teachers. After yet another disciplinary referral – when he hits a teacher – he is expelled at the end of April. What will happen to him now? *(This part of his story is shown in the film clip on Rashon's expulsion.)*

Teachers are trained to engage in positive ways with students. For **Pierre Brown**, Hartsville is a new adventure. Recently relocated from his childhood home in Timmons ville, SC, Pierre developed a passion for education as a young boy, in part to fill a void in his life for a male role model and the kind of teacher he never had: someone to whom he could relate and share his experiences. He teaches both science and math at West Hartsville Elementary, mentors fifth grade students, and is involved in the Scouting program. At one point, he mentions that Rashon is his special project for the year. Just a few short years into his teaching career, Pierre is beginning to understand the magnitude of his role in the lives of his students. He is named “Teacher of the Year” at West Hartsville.

Supporting cast: In the film, you will meet many students, parents, and teachers who are part of Hartsville's quest. This is a community that is invested in change.

PART TWO. USING THE GUIDE: SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The *Discussion into Action Guide* is designed to be used in education and community settings to guide discussions and, later, to help participants make decisions about shared action planning (see Part Four). Since ***180 Days: Hartsville*** is a two-hour film, it is recommended that groups watch the first hour as part of their school or community screening events – whether prior to the broadcast on PBS or after it has already been broadcast. Video clips drawn from the film (also described in this guide) will also support the discussion process.

Suggested Screening/Discussion Formats

Your station should decide when it will engage with one or more community partners in creating the action plan that will be submitted with your final report. You may want to have a two-stage process in which your screening will occur first, followed at a later date by your action planning. This will allow you to reach a larger and broader audience for the screening. The planning meeting may be partner-specific so agreements on the issues and actions will be more efficient.

Here are some screening scenarios for you to consider. All discussions could end with some ideas for local activities.

- Screening of ***180 Days: Hartsville*** (first hour). This may be followed by facilitated discussion or by commentary/discussion by a panel of experts. Panelists could include education leaders and other school personnel, community stakeholders, elected officials, and parents. Discussion would then be opened up for audience members.
- Screening/Discussion of ***180 Days: Hartsville*** (first hour). Introduce the concept of American Graduate Champions, letting people know the station will produce **five 2-5 minute profiles**. People can nominate American Graduate Champions at the meeting as well as on the station's website. Or, if the station has already produced its profiles of American Graduate Champions, these may also be screened at the event; the individuals profiled may be honored at the event. People/programs/schools nominated should be making a difference in school/student achievement and in helping elementary students to stay in school and gain higher aspirations to graduate from high school and then college.
- Screening/Discussion of ***180 Days: Hartsville*** (first hour) followed by a screening/ discussion of the station's local production or program segment. Time requirements may mean that only a portion of each program can be shown since discussion should be part of the experience.
- Screening of the ***Hartsville*** teaser as an introduction to the station's broadcast town hall to discuss local issues in relation to the themes presented in ***180 Days: Hartsville***. Additional clips from ***Hartsville*** and roll-ins of local schools/program/issues produced by the station may also be used during the broadcast town hall. Participating experts could include school and community leaders, business leaders, elected officials, teachers, and parents.

Participant Surveys: Stations will be given Participant Surveys designed by Nine Networks so they can assess audience responses and individual commitments to action at screenings and events.

Tips for Discussion Leaders

180 Days: Hartsville shows that the topic of education can engender strong feelings. People have differing views about testing, Common Core standards, federal versus state versus local authority, teacher accountability and tenure, parental responsibility, budgets, and other issues. The film also shows different areas for supportive action that can center on the work of district leaders, principals, teachers, parents, and students. Your objective is to lead a constructive discussion that finds areas of commonality, brings people together, produces creative ideas, and ultimately encourages people to take individual or group action to support elementary school children's academic achievement and dreams of college. (See ideas in the last bullet point below.) Discussions must be respectful and guided with an eye toward building community. Here are some helpful tips.

- Watch the film before screening it with an audience (always a good idea even for technical reasons). Look for areas in which you have your own strong feelings or views. You want to be aware of these so that you maintain a balanced perspective in leading the conversation.
- Read Part Three of this *Guide* to learn more about raising student aspirations or expectations, the role of poverty and race in engaging parents and the community, and educating boys of color. Explore the articles that are referenced so you can add to your own base of knowledge about the issues represented and ideas offered.
- Think about your role as the facilitator. You will be guiding others – often peers – in a conversation. You will facilitate the flow of ideas and perspectives. In some ways you will have to rise above the discussion to guide it. Be careful not to have too many other things to think about during the event. For example, perhaps others can take care of refreshments and other logistics.
- Know who is in the audience. Different categories of people may have been invited, so you need to find a way – even by a show of hands – to learn who is in the room. You may know none, some, many, or even all. You may like some more than others. However, this is also a time to leave your judgments at the door so that you can be the guide to a balanced and healthy conversation.
- Make sure you use some form of introductions. If it is a large group it may be that you just ask for a show of hands for categories such as parents, teachers, administrators, students, afterschool program leaders, school board members, or interested community members. If it is a small group, actual introductions (time limited) may be appropriate. Be sure all feel valued and recognized.
- Remind people that they will all be sharing ideas from their own experiences and perspectives. Even though everyone will be seeing the same film, each will see it through his or her own lens. A parent may identify with other parents in the film and teachers with classroom scenes. The comments that follow in the discussion period will reflect these diverse perspectives.
- Establish ground rules for discussion. You want people to speak one at a time; you want everyone to be heard; you want people to speak respectfully to each other.
- Encourage ideas, support discussion, and engage as many people as possible.

- Reinforce active listening as part of hearing people’s different views. This may involve restating or paraphrasing what a previous speaker has said to show that what they presented was heard correctly.
- Consider brainstorming techniques as part of your meeting. If you are trying to produce as many ideas as possible about a topic (such as how to create a college-going culture), create a list without judging them as they are suggested. Analysis and selection of the most workable ideas can come later.
- Allow for breathing space if things do become heated. Some ideas include taking a break for coffee and healthy snacks or breaking into small groups for constructive discussion about key issues. The group can then reconvene.
- Focus the group. If some ideas seem too contentious or too far afield (perhaps for budgetary reasons), restate some areas of agreement and move those ideas forward. For those wishing to pursue hot button issues, suggest places or resources in which they can be addressed outside your discussion session.
- Seek common ground. While differing viewpoints will be aired and different strategic directions may be suggested, you may want to narrow the focus so everyone is working together to come up with action ideas that individuals (e.g., teachers, principals, parents) can implement on their own.
- Ask audience members to choose one of the ideas suggested so they can take their own solution-based action step such as mentoring, tutoring, reading with their children at home, volunteering to read at story time in a library or pre-K to first grade class, developing school or family “school and life success” or “go to college” creeds, or making a commitment to parent involvement in a school activity. Individuals can report their ideas or you can ask for a show of hands as you list each of these options.

Tips for Panel Discussions or Broadcast Town Halls

Here are some tips if you plan to engage expert panelists to discuss aspects of the film as well as highlight key issues in your community. The panelists could be part of a school or community event or a broadcast town hall.

- Identify community partners who could help to plan your event or broadcast town hall. Their constituents will form an important part of your audience. Partners may represent schools, school districts, colleges or universities, community organizations, afterschool and other youth-serving organizations, black or other minority group closing the achievement gap initiatives, service clubs, businesses, or public agencies. They can also help with logistics including transportation and/or child care for low-income parents, refreshments, and creating/distributing support materials related to the issues presented.
- Communicate with all partners to identify the key issues that will be addressed as part of the event or town hall. These issues may be drawn from the ***180 Days: Hartsville*** film, this *Discussion into Action Guide*, or issues relevant to school achievement and graduation rates in your community. Whatever issues you choose, they should be relevant to elementary school education.

- Choose panelists or spokespersons with expertise in the issues you've chosen – and suitable to the type of event you are planning and the target audiences you hope to engage. This may include school personnel (superintendents, principals, teachers, and guidance counselors); college researchers or professors; elected officials; data analysts related to education, social, economic, and employment measures; and parents.
- Determine what types of program information or performance data you will distribute or showcase. If you are producing a broadcast town hall, choose or produce roll-in segments that will support your presentation and the community issues you've selected.
- Take note of any information or ideas that may be useful when you are ready to develop your Action Plan. Some of the partners involved in the expert panel or broadcast town hall may become part of your planning and implementation team for the Action Plan.

Discussion Questions for *180 Days: Hartsville* (Part One)

Before discussing the film, read Part Three of this *Guide* to learn more about raising student aspirations or expectations, the role of poverty and race in engaging parents and the community, and educating boys of color. Explore the articles that are referenced so you can add to your own base of knowledge about the issues represented and ideas offered.

Before screening the film suggest what your audience might watch for ...

- We find out that in 2009, Darlington County Schools, which include West Hartsville Elementary and Thornwell School of the Arts, “were rated below average on the South Carolina State Report Card. In 2013, Darlington County Schools were rated excellent.” As you watch the film, look for examples of programs and practices that would result in such a change. What else happened in the community to propel these gains?
- The film focuses on the two elementary schools mentioned above, West Hartsville and Thornwell. Tara King is a first-year principal at West Hartsville, while Julie Mahn is a fifth year principal at Thornwell. Identify similar strategies – and those that are different – that the two leaders employ to make their students successful.
- The film talks about poverty, economic divisions, testing and measurement, the need for black male teachers and role models, and parent engagement. Look for challenges to families, students, and teachers. The stories of Monay Parran and her son Rashon Johnson are particularly compelling. Think about how issues are handled in the film and what actions you would recommend to address them.
- Look for examples of what makes for a good student, teacher, leader, and school. What stories or people in the film help you to learn about good education practices that can make schools successful?

After viewing the film, begin with your audiences' ideas about what you asked them to watch for ...

- What examples of programs and practices in the film helped to create the enormous gains achieved in Darlington County – moving from below average to excellent? What else happened in the community to propel these gains?

- What did you think about the two elementary school principals: Tara King at West Hartsville and Julie Mahn at Thornwell? What strategies did they use to make their students successful? How did their personal stories influence their work as principals?
- What did you learn about the community of Hartsville that would make it easier or harder for children, teachers, parents, and schools to be successful? Think about the stories of Monay Parran and her son Rashon Johnson. How would you address their challenges?
- What can schools do to build community knowledge about what makes for a good student, teacher, leader, and school? What stories or people did you see in the film that you would want to use as examples of good practice?

Other general questions ...

- Harris DeLoach, recently retired CEO of Sunoco Products Company, says that “education is not a sprint. It’s a journey.” What does that mean? He goes on to say that we need to start planting seeds today for what will grow ten years from now.” What timeline do you envision will accomplish positive change in your local schools? What seeds would you plant today?
- Principal Tara King says that “Leadership is the ability to empower others.” Do you agree with this statement? How does she practice that belief in the film?
- Julie Mahn believes that her job as principal is to “stop the cycle of generational poverty.” What does that mean? What is she doing to help her children and families?
- Carlita Davis, Assistant Superintendent of the Darlington County School District, suggests that “our schools are a reflection of our community.” In what ways do West Hartsville and Thornwell elementary schools reflect their communities? How do they or can they create opportunities so children can prepare for a more complex world than they experience in Hartsville?
- What are West Hartsville and Thornwell doing to promote a college-going culture – so that all students will graduate from high school and then from college? Think about what the principals and teachers are doing and what is happening in the classroom and at school. (See ideas for creating a college-going culture in Part Four of this guide.) (An example in part two of the film is the ceremony in which 36 “academically elite” fifth graders at Thornwell are inducted into the National Junior Beta Club. Principal Julie Mahn tells the children and their parents that, “This prestigious club is the beginning to an academic resume and the beginning to a college education. It is the beginning to money for a college education.”)

Discussion Questions: Student affirmations and raising student aspirations

- What examples do you see in both Hartsville schools that offer evidence of student affirmation by the principals and teachers? In what way are they student-centered schools? (To affirm something is simply to declare that it is true.)
- How would you describe children’s responses to their classroom and other school experiences? What examples stood out for you?
- What practices have you seen or engaged in that would create an affirming student centered environment in your own school?

- How can your school or community organization create a college-going culture for youth and/or a program to recognize American Graduate Champions?

Discussion Questions: Testing and measurement

- Based on what you saw in the film, what are the good points about the use of testing as a measure of student progress? What are the negatives created by testing? For some arguments see: http://standardizedtests.procon.org/#pro_con
- How did Julie Mahn and Tara King use measurement/data to help bring about change in their schools? What kinds of data could you access and use to affect or change outcomes in your schools?
- How does Julie Mahn help students understand how test results are used to measure their performance and that of their school? What was her purpose in doing this? What strategies do you use?

Discussion Questions: Engaging parents and the community

- The film shows three people attending a parent meeting at West Hartsville followed by a Thanksgiving lunch at Thornwell that is attended by many parents. What strategies have worked for you or others who are successful at engaging parents?
- What are some reasons parents do not take part in school activities? What counter arguments can you suggest? How can you facilitate their participation?
- What are some ways that the community (or community organizations) can partner with schools to provide afterschool experiences that both support children and provide learning opportunities beyond the classroom?

Discussion: Educating boys of color

- We see Rashon in different situations – at home, in the classroom, attending a Boy Scouts meeting, and meeting with principal Tara King and his mother. We also hear him talked about in a principal/teachers meeting on behavioral referrals. In what way is Rashon a familiar figure? What do you see in your interactions with young black and Hispanic boys? How are they similar to and different from boys of other backgrounds? What suggestions do you have to help Rashon?
- Building a supportive community for people of color (students, teachers, and parents) is crucial to enhancing the outcomes for black and brown male youth. List strategies that could work in your community or school to create these key networks of support. What are some anticipated barriers (enough time will be one) and how will you creatively overcome them?
- What can you do to change the images that boys of color have about themselves based on the media? Think about healthy use of technology. Create a movie list with films like *42*, *Pursuit of Happyness*, or *Coach Carter*. (Visit <http://www.imdb.com/list/ls008621601/> for a good list of popular films). Documentaries like *The Powerbroker* or *Bring Your "A" Game*, among others, can create conversations. Create a book list and/or section of the library that is affirming. What other ideas can you generate? What can happen locally in the media?

Watching and Discussing the *180 Days: Hartsville* Clips

Stations, schools, and community organizations can use the ***180 Days: Hartsville Clips*** as part of discussion events, parent and teacher meetings, and action planning sessions. For each clip, this guide provides an introduction, questions to engage participants, and some suggested actions that schools and community organizations may consider. Users may select the clips that best support the local education issues they have prioritized. All clips, with the exception of Rashon's expulsion, are from the first hour of the film. Here they are organized by topics.

Clip: *180 Days: Hartsville - Tease*

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

*Stations may want to use this first clip, **180 Days: Hartsville Tease**, to introduce the documentary and your station's project to prospective community partners, to introduce your broadcast town hall, and/or to begin your action planning process with one or more partners so your station can submit an Action Plan (see Part Four) with your final report.*

Introduce the Clip: This clip introduces viewers to one town (Hartsville), two schools (West Hartsville and Thornwell), and one family (Monay Parran and her sons) – and tells us that the story will cover one year. We hear the governor, Nikki Haley, saying, "We have to lift up all of South Carolina." A news anchor asks whether the American education system is in crisis.

Individuals essential to children's lives encourage them, set high expectations for them, refuse to give up on them, and are even prepared to fly for them. Thornwell's principal Julie Mahn asks children waiting to take a standardized test, "How many of you are going to work? How many of you are going to make yourself proud?" Tara King, West Hartsville's principal, says, "It's a miracle I can ... be a principal." She says she was "horrible" in 6th to 8th grade, but "somebody didn't give up on me." And she won't give up on the children in her school. Parent Monay Parran says she is trying to get her sons to "become doctors" rather than the basketball and football players they say they want to be. A supervisor tells a teacher, "The expectation is that children learn. Period. No excuses are accepted. None. If you have to jump off the building and fly, then you have to figure out how to fly."

Ask your audience to look for measures of children's well-being in the clip as well as strategies to encourage children – as a way to identify key issues. Look for areas in which to take action in your community to raise the aspirations and expectations of children, parents, and educators to help build a college-going culture.

Questions on measures of well-being and academic progress

- What are the measures of children's well-being and educational progress that you heard in this clip? Audience responses could include:
 - A drop in its Kids Count standing from 43rd to 45th among the states in children's well-being (economic, education, health, and family and community). For Kids Count data in your state, visit www.datacenter.kidscount.org.
 - Low 9th grade student reading scores: 35 percent of 9th graders are reading at 4th grade level or below in some schools.

- Julie Mahn encouraging students to “do your best” as they prepare to take standardized tests on computers. She says, “If you’re going up five points, that’s fine. If you’re going up 20 points, I’ll take it.”
- Do these measures and the issues they represent sound familiar to you?
- How do these measures compare to what’s happening in your school or community?
- Which issues seem essential or particularly challenging to your family or community?

Questions on stakeholders

- Who are the stakeholders – the people involved in children’s education – whom you saw or heard in the clip? Audience responses could include:
 - School leaders: Principals Julie Mahn and Tara King.
 - Parents protesting against Common Core.
 - Teachers and children.
 - Media: newscaster.
 - Governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley.
- Who are the significant players in your school or community that have an impact on children’s learning environments and resources?

Think about **action steps** that your public television station, community partners, and/or elementary school can take to build a coalition or showcase efforts in your community to improve school outcomes for youth including raising children’s aspirations so that the goal of high school and college graduation are more attainable. How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville’s** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Roles of School Leaders: Superintendents and Principals

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville – Dr. Ingram Principal Meeting – Roles of School Leaders

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: Superintendents are responsible for the performance of their districts, schools, and principals. Both West Hartsville Elementary and Thornwell School of the Arts are in Superintendent Edward Ingram’s district. Both Dr. Ingram and his two principals demonstrate a high level of purposefulness. They understand what they are doing and why, and the value of the intended outcomes.

In this clip, we see Dr. Ingram in a meeting with the principals in his district. The date is September 6, 2013, the start of the school year. He explains that often schools focus on the middle group of students because that’s often where the biggest bump in academic growth occurs. In an interview he also explains that he’s not necessarily concerned with the performance of a nearby school

district. “We need to set our bar along the line of what are the best practices in America and the world.”

Questions:

- How would you respond to his question about performance: “How does a high performing school district get better?”
- Dr. Ingram says that it is necessary to “work with the floor and ceiling simultaneously” in order to sustain permanent growth in academic knowledge. What does this mean and why would that be true?
- When Dr. Ingram visits schools, he asks younger children, “*What time do you go to bed? What time do you get up?*” Why are children’s answers to these questions important?
- What makes Superintendent Edward Ingram a motivational leader?
- Can you recall other scenes in the film in which he acts as a cheer leader to motivate or give credit to others?

Think about **action steps** that principals or organizational leaders can take on their own or through motivating staff to build children’s confidence and academic knowledge. How can your station and its partners (including elementary schools) leverage **180 Days: Hartsville’s** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville – Principal Julie Mahn – Generational Poverty

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: Both Hartsville principals have compelling stories to tell; Julie Mahn is the first in her family to attend college. No doubt that is true in other schools among faculty and staff. Superintendent Edward Ingram is proud of his experience as a principal and feels that district leaders need to have been principals. He states that the “principal position is probably the most important position in the school district.”

Julie Mahn, principal of Thornwell School of the Arts, wanted to be a teacher from the time she was ten-years-old. This clip tells us how Julie credits her mother for building her aspirations to graduate from college – and how her own success has inspired her to stop the cycle of generational poverty for the children at Thornwell School of the Arts. She tells us that her mother told her repeatedly: “You’ve got to get your education. No one can take that from you.”

Questions:

- (Ask for a show of hands.) How many of you (in the audience) are first generation college graduates? How many of you now have children or other family members who have also gone to college?
- As a principal Julie Mahn believes her job is to “stop the cycle of generational poverty.” What does that mean? She explains, “I went to college and my son went to college, so we broke that cycle. Our children [at Thornwell] can do it, too.” What can principals and schools do to break the cycle of generational poverty?
- In what way is Julie Mahn’s family background similar to some of the children in her school? (*She talks about her family history: her grandfather was a sharecropper who finished eighth*

grade; her grandmother finished third grade. Her mother left school in the 11th grade. An onscreen statistic tells us that 93 percent of Thornwell's children qualify as low income by federal standards.) How might this make her a better principal? (We also learn in part two of the film that one in five people in Hartsville do not have a high school diploma.)

- What does Julie Mahn mean by saying that “children are written off because they come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds”? In what way are they written off – and what would be the consequences for those children? How do you think her family background motivates her to set high expectations for her students and, in turn, establishes a path for them to achieve?

Brainstorm ideas about how the school principal sets the tone or creates a climate for children's achievement. How does s/he work with his/her teachers to create an environment in which children see themselves as having value and being capable of great accomplishments, building their aspirations for a successful future?

Think about **action steps** that principals or organizational leaders can take to build an organization/school that raises children's aspirations so that the goal of high school and college graduation are more attainable. How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville's** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville – Title I Conference

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: On October 24, 2013, Thornwell principal Julie Mahn and her team were in Myrtle Beach attending the South Carolina Association of Title I Administrators conference. Coordinating teacher Wanda Govan-Augustus explains that Thornwell is one of eight Title I schools in the state that showed tremendous growth on state tests over the past year. Title I is a federal program that provides funding to schools with a high percentage of students from low-income families. In her presentation, Julie explains that she is now in her fifth year at Thornwell. When she started in 2009, out of 265 children, 700 disciplinary referrals were made; 7 children had been expelled; 60 percent of first graders were reading below grade level; and the school had no parent support. She said it took a long time to turn around the test scores, but growth was slow and steady. Finally at the end of her fourth year, “We had the data. It was big this year.” Thornwell moved from a C school (with a grade of 76.7) to an A school (with a grade of 92.9). The school didn't win the award, but was in the top three performing Title I schools in the state.

Questions:

- What lessons did you learn from Thornwell's turnaround?
- What were some of the reasons Julie Mahn gave for the school's improvement? (*Building relationships; community involvement included a bus tour to meet families and gain a better understanding of the children's neighborhoods.*)
- What benefits do you see in having administrators and schools compete with one another for statewide recognition?

- Julie was disappointed but not discouraged by her school's loss. She explained, "When you're competitive, it makes you work." How do you think her school will perform in the school year (2013-2014) shown in the film?
- What impact will increasing test scores have of improving graduation rates? How can competition motivate children to achieve ... and strive to attend college?

Think about **action steps** that your public television, its partnering organizations, and/or elementary schools can take to replicate Thornwell's "slow but steady" progress to increase test scores. How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville's** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Parents and Rural Education

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville - Rural Education

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: The clip has three sections.

(1) It begins with WMBF news reporter Theo Hayes talking about Governor Nikki Hayley's \$2.5 million cut to education in the state budget. Renee Montagne, co-host of NPR's *Morning Edition* reports that, "The 44 million Americans who rely on food stamps will have to make due on less starting today. The officially named Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program loses \$5 billion in funding. That's because a temporary increase in benefits that was part of the economic stimulus in 2009 is expiring." Mike Moen, WNU Northern Public Radio, explains that "those cuts in federal benefits may be felt more in rural areas" based on USDA data showing that rural residents are using more aid, while city residents are using less.

Questions:

- Why would families in rural areas require more financial aid than those in cities? What makes rural families more vulnerable?
- What effect would cutting food stamps have on low-income families? How might this affect children's ability to learn?

(2) Carolina Kids provides an example of community assistance being given to Hartsville families. Andrea Pulling, its Director, talks about how her organization began with providing school supplies to children. Now it provides weekend food bags for children to take home during the school year. Pulling says that "80 percent of children in the district theoretically need food bags." With 10,000 students in the school district, "we're only doing 425 [food bags]." In addition, she keeps "learning about more need." Signs show that West Hartsville Elementary receives 70 food bags while Thornwell receives 150.

Questions:

- What concerns does the clip raise about children and families in Hartsville – and the ability of organizations like Carolina Kids to meet their needs?

- What is the role of schools in securing assistance (food, clothing, school supplies) to help families?
- How can community organizations help children to succeed in the classroom?

(3) This part of the clip provides a snapshot of Rashon Johnson's family. His mother Monay Parran has been on her own from the age of 16; she didn't know her mother and rarely saw her father. She struggles to keep her three boys "on the right track" and to support her family by working two low-wage jobs. Monay says that Rashon has "always been a handful," but she wants him to continue to get good grades and graduate. Rashon tells viewers that he's looking forward to the sixth grade. Statistics shown in the clip note that to reach the poverty threshold (\$23,550 for a family of four) based on the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour, a worker would have to put in 60 hours per week. To reach South Carolina's median income of \$38,560, a worker must put in more than 100 hours per week.

Questions:

- What did you learn about the family's daily routine? (*Everyone wakes up at 5 am. You see the children preparing for school and making their own breakfast. Monay drops them off at the school bus stop so she can make it to her morning job by 7 am. Her second job begins at 5 pm and she finishes work around 11 pm.*)
- What impacts do you think this schedule has on her three sons? How do you think their home life might affect their performance in school?
- How well do you relate to Monay's struggles? What actions tell you that she cares about her children and wants to help them?
- Rashon is practicing basketball with one of his brothers. Monay comments that while her sons are interested in sports, she hopes they will become doctors. How should Monay talk to her sons about her aspirations for them? Would it be better if she talked to them about going to college – rather than promoting a specific career? Why?

Brainstorm ideas about how the school could connect with Monay, provide some support to her, and help her to promote the academic progress of her children.

Think about **action steps** that your public television station, partnering organizations, and/or elementary schools can take to engage parents who are struggling economically to support their families? How can you help them to become more active in supporting their children's education including reinforcing college as an achievable goal? How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville's** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Supporting Black Male Achievement

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville - Mr. Brown

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: Pierre Brown is a wonderful example of a dedicated teacher. He is one of the rare black men teaching in the K-12 system. He, therefore, is not just a teacher but a role model and mentor, especially for boys of color. In this clip, he explains that he loves teaching and is confident he is “changing somebody’s life.” Mr. Brown says he “didn’t have a male teacher until 8th grade” and he was a teacher in the school, not his own teacher.

Survey your audience (raise their hands) to find out how many have had male teachers in K-12, and how many of those were men of color? How did that make a difference for you?

Questions:

- What makes Mr. Brown a good role model? What behaviors do you admire in Mr. Brown that make him a good teacher who can help his Hartsville students?
- Mr. Brown says that, “If you want to be a successful educator, you have to think about what happens to students in the hours after 3 pm and before 7 am.” Why should teachers and schools be concerned about students’ lives outside of school?
- What evidence did you see in Mr. Brown’s classroom that indicate he is raising his students’ expectations about school performance and aspirations to succeed?

Brainstorm ideas about what additional changes Mr. Brown could make in his classroom in order to support a college-going culture.

Think about **action steps** that your public television station, its partner organizations and/or elementary schools can take to increase the number of male teachers of color as well as find ways they can become role models to encourage the college aspirations of male students of color throughout the school. How can your station and its partners leverage *180 Days: Hartsville’s* media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville - Rashon Expulsion

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: Now let’s look at Monay’s son, Rashon Johnson. Many articles have been written about the fact that boys in general and boys of color in particular are more likely to be singled out for disruptive behavior starting as early as preschool. In the following clip, we hear Rashon’s behavior described as disruptive. We hear that he doesn’t follow directions, talks during class, and picks on or hits other students. Now he has hit a teacher.

First we hear people say how “very smart” Rashon is. Someone adds that his mother works two jobs. Principal Tara King comments on his “regression” and asks what needs to be done differently with Rashon. She says that the school has been working a lot with Rashon and his mother and had recommended outside counseling.

Rashon's math/science teacher, Pierre Brown said his behavior in class had gradually become worse during the year. He feels that had he not reported Rashon for hitting, a worse incident would have occurred in middle or high school. Rashon's mother Monay says that she was aware of some behavior incidents, but not all of them. Principal Tara King tells us that the decision was made (on April 28, 2014) to expel Rashon for the remainder of the 2013-2014 school year. She says, "It was a very emotional meeting. Everyone around the table really cares about Rashon."

Questions:

- How do you feel about Rashon's expulsion – does it seem fair?
- To what kinds of risks is Rashon now exposed following his expulsion?
- What can be done to support children who have a difficult path at home and in school, especially boys of color?
- The film doesn't show any examples of group problem solving with children so they can provide feedback to one another on different behaviors. Would this be helpful to Rashon?

Think about **action steps** that your public television station, its partner organizations, and/or elementary schools can take to help students like Rashon work on emotional or family issues as well as positive interactions with peers and adults that may help him to improve his school behaviors. How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville's** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville – Boy Scouts

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

Introduce the Clip: Adding to their experiences in the classroom, boys at West Hartsville Elementary School may also participate in the Boy Scouts. We see them raising and lowering the flag, repeating the Boy Scouts pledge, and running outside. Even in this setting, Rashon Johnson calls attention to himself – swinging his arms unnecessarily and not preparing for the command to run. Pierre Brown is one of the Scout leaders. Principal Tara King questions dropping him from the Boy Scouts as has apparently been discussed.

Questions:

- What aspects of the Scouting program address the needs and issues of the boys enrolled in the program?
- What reasons does Tara King give for keeping Rashon in the Scouting program?
- What would you recommend: keep Rashon in or drop him from the program? Why?

Think about **action steps** that your public television station, partnering organizations and schools can take to collaborate on providing afterschool programs for youth that support a college-going culture. How can your station and its partners leverage **180 Days: Hartsville's** media assets to address or give visibility to this effort?

PART THREE: EXPLORING KEY ISSUES AS BACKGROUND TO DISCUSSIONS

Raising Student Aspirations or Expectations

Hartsville has adopted a philosophy of affirmation and it appears to be embracing that philosophy consistently and at every level – from Superintendent Edward Ingram to the principals and teachers. At the beginning of the school year, Tara King performs a powerful act. She tells the students that everyone is on the honor roll, so each student begins the year feeling that they are fully capable of high achievement.

The attitude that she takes is affirmed in the book, *The Pedagogy of Confidence*, by Yvette Jackson, Ph.D. Dr. Jackson asks teachers, “What are the strengths of your students?” This is a different orientation as teachers usually look at deficits that need to be fixed. Education has become a fixing process instead of an affirming process. But Hartsville has decided to become a place in which students are affirmed consistently. However as Dr. Jackson notes, it takes a coordinated effort inside and outside school to make the shift in pedagogy and policy that can be true game changers for students. A discussion in the *Ecology of Education Journal* (March 2009) on *The Pedagogy of Confidence* says:

She [Yvette Jackson] makes the case that in order to reach low achieving students we need to help students understand the target by making the objective clear and relevant. Students need to be given experiences from which they can process the constant question our brains ask, “What is relevant and what is not?”

Dr. Jackson cites research to propose that brains want challenge, feedback, and to be pushed to the edge. That students are all different is without question. In light of this, she suggests we ask ourselves, “What are the behaviors that allow students to function at a high level? What do they need?” The brain research she cites (as reported in *USA Today* http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-12-07-childrens-brains_N.htm) links the role of poverty on brain development and leads to the gap between a student’s potential and actual performance.

Dr. Jackson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFthscODmbU>) has something to teach us all about how to make education relevant to students who have been under-served (and perhaps mis-served) by our well-meaning attempt to help them overcome their weaknesses.... How can we help students fully realize their potential? Give them a pedagogy that builds on their confidence and their natural areas of high achievement, as well as a sense that what they learn in our schools is relevant to their lives.

While South Carolina rejects the federal Common Core standards, testing is still very much a part of school life. Metrics are a fact of life in education as in many other sectors. The school is competing to be among the top schools in the state – maybe *the* top performing school. The funding by Sonoco is a challenge to make this happen. In *180 Days: Hartsville*, we see both Hartsville principals using data to drive change in their schools. Instead of data mining to affirm deficits they are data mining to find solutions. They are using it to find, affirm, and encourage their students’ strengths. They not only use data with their teachers, but also with the students. Another aspect of student affirmation is empowering them by helping them to understand why and how data affects them and how they can improve the results for themselves and their school.

Broad based participation is critical to changing the culture of a school. Students are often seen as objects to be acted upon whereas they need to be considered as stakeholders in their own futures.

Part of preparing students within a **college-going culture** is teaching them the power of self-efficacy – believing in themselves and their ability to complete tasks and achieve goals. We see several examples of how both principals engage students in understanding *why* and *what* they need to do, and the positive and negative consequences based on performance. Empowerment is affirmation.

The Role of Poverty and Race in Engaging Parents and the Community

In a recent survey by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, of the 802 principals responding, more than 94 percent listed engaging students, engaging parents, managing increasing numbers of special needs students, and coping with new education technology as among their biggest challenges. (*Challenges of School Administrators in the New Millennium* by J.L. Cornelius and Joe P. Cornelius, www.nationalforum.com). In addition to these challenges, a principal in Hartsville has to deal with racial and economic divisions.

When Tara King invites parents to a meeting at West Hartsville Elementary School, only one parent shows up. Many had previously committed to attending. A report from Child Trends DataBank on Parental Involvement showed that:

Parents of students living in a household with income above the poverty level are more likely to be involved in school activities than parents of children living in a household at or below the poverty line. In 2011-12, for example, 45 percent of children living above the poverty line had a parent who volunteered or served on a committee at their child's school, compared with 27 percent of children living at or below the poverty line.

Read more at: <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=parental-involvement-in-schools#sthash.SIW4J2fi.dpuf>

Because poverty is too often aligned with race whether in urban or rural communities we see the outcomes in racial terms also mitigating against parent engagement. From the same Child Trends DataBank referenced above:

Hispanic and black students were less likely than white students to have parents who attended general meetings or school events, or who volunteered their time. In 2012, 85 percent of black, and 86 percent of Hispanic students had parents who attended a general meeting, compared with 89 percent of white students. Sixty-eight percent of black, and 64 percent of Hispanic students had a parent who attended school events, while 82 percent of white students had a parent who had done so. Thirty-two percent of Hispanic students and 31 percent of black students had a parent who volunteered their time, compared with 50 percent of white students.

The National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education wrote a report on Does Family Engagement Matter? (<http://ncpie.org/docs/Does-Family-Engagement-Matter.html>). The article reports on research on high-impact practices to engage families in improving student achievement such as “what happens when schools support families’ efforts to encourage their children’s learning, monitor their progress, guide constructive use of out-of-school time, plan for post-secondary education and a career, and model life-long learning.” NCPiE suggests the following strategic direction: A State of the Art Compass for Family Engagement.

- **Link to Learning:** High-impact practices are aligned with school and district achievement goals. Not only do teachers inform families what and how they are teaching, they share

strategies families can use at home that are directly linked to the skills students need to learn at their age and grade level.

- **Build Relationships:** Developing respectful, trusting relationships between home and school fosters shared responsibility. For example, understanding families' home cultures and the value they place on education, as well as listening to families' concerns and ideas, allow teachers to tailor instruction to students' needs and interests.
- **Develop Dual Capacity:** Providing training and professional development to teachers and families together so they can test out and apply new skills enables them to be confident, active and knowledgeable partners in the effort to improve student achievement.

In a blog about Hartsville for *Education Week* (04/2013), Sam Chaltain describes how the community prioritizes the well-being of children. Chaltain is an educator and author who has been writing about challenges and changes in our schools for the past decade.

[Hartsville adults] understand that they teach children, not subjects. They believe that the ultimate measure of success is the holistic well-being of the children. And they recognize that meeting children where they are – intellectually, psychologically, physically – day in and day out requires not just content knowledge, but also a healthy dose of humility, collaboration, and love.

It is important to understand the community and its participants in order to serve them well.

Educating Boys of Color

As the film ends, Rashon graduates from fifth grade, full of hope, to an unknown future. He had been expelled from school at the end of April. Principal Tara King successfully advocated on his behalf and he was readmitted in order to finish with his class. Rashon represents the most at risk of our schools' young men and boys of color. They are often stigmatized as trouble early on for being what boys are, active and rambunctious. Because boys in general are not as attentive or as verbal as girls, they are often seen as "problems." Thus, they may not progress as fast, may be held back, may be put in classes for troubled students, and may end up on a fast track to nowhere. The approach we see in Hartsville seeks to shift attitudes of others toward students like Rashon and especially the perception they have of themselves.

Laureen Riddick recently published her study on African-American boys in elementary school. According to Riddick,

African Americans currently comprise nearly 13 percent of the total U.S. population ...and more than 35 percent of African Americans under age 18 live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). African American males have a 52 percent chance of dropping out of high school. In some cities, the rate is as high as 70 percent. While African American males currently make up 17 percent of the total school population, they account for 32 percent of the suspensions and 30 percent of all expulsions (U.S. Census Bureau 1999). African American male teens are placed in remedial or special education classes at triple the rate of their white counterparts, and they are underrepresented in gifted and honors classes. – *African American Boys in Early Childhood Education (Elementary School) and Understanding the Achievement Gap through the Perceptions of Educators* by Laureen Riddick, California State University Sacramento <http://bit.ly/1ny3qsN>.

It is no accident that Rashon is a focal point of the film. He typifies a situation in our schools so dire that the White House has created the My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MBK) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>. The objective is to turn the tide on the grim

statistics of the past decade or more of declines in graduation rates for black men and an increase in what has been called the “school to prison pipeline.” Statistics offered by MBK show black and Hispanic males significantly lagging in third grade reading scores compared to white and Asian students. This is juxtaposed to data showing a huge spike in young black males in residential placement facilities. A student who does not read at grade level by third grade, and certainly by eighth grade, is more likely to leave school. Young men out of school and unemployed are more likely to find themselves in trouble.

As part of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s American Graduate Let’s Make it Happen initiative, *Tavis Smiley Reports* created a fact sheet entitled “How Bad is the School-to-Prison Pipeline?” to accompany Episode Six: Education Under Arrest (first broadcast in 2013). Well-known for his radio and television work (as host and broadcaster), Tavis Smiley has also written 16 books. Asking “*Are our Children Being Pushed into Prison?*” the fact sheet offers the following statistics:

- 40% of students expelled from U.S. schools each year are black.
- 70% of students involved in “in-school” arrests or referred to law enforcement are black or Latino.
- 3.5X Black students are three and a half times more likely to be suspended than whites.
- 2X Black and Latino students are twice as likely to not graduate high school as whites.
- 68% of all males in state and federal prison do not have a high school diploma.

www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/tsr/education-under-arrest/school-to-prison-pipeline-fact-sheet/

An introduction to the fact sheet by Carla Amurao states:

The school-to-prison pipeline: an epidemic that is plaguing schools across the nation. Far too often, students are suspended, expelled or even arrested for minor offenses that leave visits to the principal’s office a thing of the past. Statistics reflect that these policies disproportionately target students of color and those with a history of abuse, neglect, poverty or learning disabilities.

Students who are forced out of school for disruptive behavior are usually sent back to the origin of their angst and unhappiness – their home environments or their neighborhoods, which are filled with negative influences. Those who are forced out for smaller offenses become hardened, confused, embittered. Those who are unnecessarily forced out of school become stigmatized and fall behind in their studies; many eventually decide to drop out of school altogether, and many others commit crimes in their communities.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the school-to-prison pipeline. Many attribute it to the zero tolerance policies that took form after the 1999 Columbine High School massacre. Others blame educators, accusing them of pushing out students who score lower on standardized tests in order to improve the school’s overall test scores. And some blame overzealous policing efforts. The reasons are many, but the solutions are not as plentiful.

Behaviorists note that girls are more naturally inclined to the kinds of things that teachers tend to value. They are verbal, more likely to be readers, better at sitting still, and are generally more compliant. Boys wiggle more, drift off, or are more aggressive. Any parent will tell you that boys and girls are not the same. Today, despite best efforts at gender neutral parenting, girls will most often have a “princess phase” and boys a “trucks and guns” phase.

From a *New York Times* Opinionator blog, “The Boys at the Back” by Christina Hoff Sommers:

As our schools have become more feelings-centered, risk-averse, collaboration-oriented and sedentary, they have moved further and further from boys’ characteristic sensibilities. Concerns about boys arose during a time of tech bubble prosperity; now, more than a decade later, there are major policy reasons – besides the stale “culture wars” of the 1990s – to focus on boys’ schooling.

One is the heightened attention to school achievement as the cornerstone of lifelong success. Grades determine entry into advanced classes, enrichment programs and honor societies. They open – or close – doors to higher education. “If grade disparities emerge this early on, it’s not surprising that by the time these children are ready to go to college, girls will be better positioned,” says Christopher M. Cornwell, an economist at the University of Georgia and an author of the new study, along with his colleague David B. Mustard and Jessica Van Parys of Columbia University. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/02/the-boys-at-the-back/?_r=0

Clearly, given the gender balance in the workplace boys/men have caught up in the past, but that may not continue. In recent years women have surpassed men in degrees earned including in some traditionally male arenas including doctorates; in professions like medicine and law men and women are at parity. Formerly all-male Princeton University is about 50/50 and at one point virtually the entire senior management of the university was female. And women of color are among those doing better in school as well surpassing men of color in college applications by nearly two to one.

In the film we see some of the challenges faced by Rashon. He is the eldest in a single parent home headed by his mother as the sole breadwinner. The structure of her day determines the structure for her sons’ days. It is a “late to bed and early to rise” household so that she can work two jobs. Therefore Rashon does not get the sleep that scientists now say is essential for children. In the UK Millennial Cohort Study:

The study found a clear clinical and statistically significant link between bedtimes and behavior. Irregular bedtimes affected children’s behavior by disrupting circadian rhythms (body clock), leading to sleep deprivation that affects the developing brain.

As children progressed through early childhood without a regular bedtime, their behavioral scores – which included hyperactivity, conduct problems, problems with peers and emotional difficulties – worsened. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/267366.php>

Further, the images of black males presented by the media and in the news are not positive or affirming. At one end of the spectrum, they often depict them as frightening, at risk, non-trustworthy, and economic and social failures. At the other end of the spectrum are celebrities whose net worth may be laudable but whose values may not be. It is a confusing picture and does not lead boys to feel that they can succeed in safe and meaningful ways. So many young men set out to become what they feel they are expected to be – in the worst way. The cycle needs to be broken, hence efforts like *My Brother’s Keeper*.

Dr. Shaun Harper at the University of Pennsylvania studies black males in college, in particular. He cites five characteristics that have to be in place for black men to make it through college successfully. They are:

- A sense of community
- Solid academic achievement (GPA of about 3.0)

- Mentorship
- Opportunities to lead
- Opportunities to serve

These would also seem to be indicators of programmatic direction for any institution seeking to raise up young black men.

Having black teachers who can serve as role models is also important. Teaching remains a female dominated universe as evidenced in the two Hartsville elementary schools. Mr. Brown is thankfully passionate about his work as a teacher. His experience is reflected in this blog, “How Do We Get More Teachers of Color,” by Travis J. Bristol, PhD:

The experiences of Black male teachers may well parallel the experiences of Black boys in schools. Black men account for about 2% of all public school teachers. The reason, often cited, for increasing the number of Black male teachers is that by serving as role models, these recruits can improve Black boys’ schooling outcomes. While there is research to support the claim that students’ learning increases when assigned a same race teacher, increasing the number of Black male teachers also has the potential to benefit other stakeholders in schools. Black men are uniquely positioned to assist their colleagues, many of whom might be White and female, in designing curriculum that is culturally and gender responsive.

In 2013, I conducted a yearlong study on the school-based experiences of 27 Black male teachers in a northeastern urban school district, who accounted for approximately 10 percent of Black male teachers in the district²One of the largest studies conducted exclusively on Black male teachers, this study has implications for policymakers and school administrators looking to recruit and retain Black male teachers. (Read a two-page summary of the study: www.otlcampaign.org/sites/default/files/TravisBristol-PolicyBrief-BlackMaleTeachers.pdf.)

One finding was that Black male teachers felt responsible for improving academic outcomes and creating environments that were socio-emotionally supportive for students of color. However, Black male teachers described feeling socially alienated and pedagogically not supported in their schools.... “Loners,” or those participants who were the only Black man on their faculty believed they were socially alone and disconnected from the core mission of the school compared to “Groupers,” or those participants in schools with three or more Black male teachers. <http://www.otlcampaign.org/blog/2014/07/08/how-do-we-get-more-male-teachers-color>

The reality is that, to some extent, the issues around black males signal a deeper crisis affecting the entire system. Whatever positively impacts them will also benefit the larger community. The brainstorming around the challenges and opportunities for change focused on these young men will generate outcomes that will enhance the entire school. In any event our country cannot afford to maintain a school-to-prison pipeline. It is neither economically wise nor morally sustainable.

Conclusion

In 1970 Alvin Toffler wrote the book *Future Shock*. In it he espoused the idea of “high tech/high touch.” By this he meant that an era of technological advance (to a degree he could not have envisioned at the time) would generate a need for “high touch.” He was referring to balancing the impersonal nature of technology with the need for human interaction and touch. As schools use more technology and are more data driven, both of which are useful tools, they cannot lose sight of the fact that they are engaging with human lives. In this case these are lives that are already made more fragile by broken homes, economic insecurity, sleep deprivation, perhaps violence, challenges beyond their understanding, and more. They need the balance of high tech and high touch.

Hartsville is clearly trying to get this balance right. The engagement of teachers with students and with each other, the efforts to include parents and the community all signal caring. Further, the financial investment communicates how seriously change is being addressed. But what stands out most in **180 Days: Hartsville** is the caring dedication of everyone – from the superintendent to the principals to the teachers and the parents. The children are not data points, but people, and that can make all the difference in their lives. Rural America is being challenged; the Hartsville experience can inspire change in all kinds of communities.

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PART FOUR. ACTION PLANNING

This section of the *Discussion into Action Guide* supports the development of an Action Plan in collaboration with one or more community partners, perhaps including a school. The action planning process is intended to advance school and community utilization of the **180 Days: Hartsville** documentary and video clips as a means to increase student, school, and community aspirations for all children to graduate from high school and college.

Through leveraging **180 Days: Hartsville** and its media assets, as well as your station's local production(s), the plan will build a longer shelf-life and create sustainability for the celebration of American Graduate Champions.

Sample Idea: An action plan that elementary schools could undertake is to raise the aspirations or expectations of students/teachers/parents by establishing a **college-going culture**. Schools could engage teachers in wearing college alumni t-shirts/sweatshirts on a particular day each week; put up college banners; invite people in the community to visit on "college days" to share their excitement about their college experiences; and arrange for college student volunteers to tutor children in after-school or extended day sessions. Classrooms could be given the names of individual colleges, and children could take field trips to nearby colleges (perhaps to see a museum or attend a performance/event). Schools (and families) can develop a creed or set of affirmations that children can recite together. Some statements could include that they are college bound; that they are exceptional, committed, and focused; and that they believe in themselves and have a successful future ahead. A college-going culture can be replicated at all elementary schools within a district. As the partner station, you could showcase these college-going practices by producing and broadcasting them as video shorts. Other videos could highlight school leaders and personnel, recognizing them as American Graduate Champions. Use social media to expand your reach and encourage replication.

The Action Plan will be implemented primarily by the partners, although your station may want to be involved as a media partner that can highlight the work achieved. In developing an Action Plan think about what kind of sustainable school and community result could be achieved for: (1) parents and families, (2) schools, (3) communities, and (4) students/youth. Choosing one of the themes from **180 Days: Hartsville** will provide the focus for your planning efforts.

Stations that received 180 Hays Hartsville grants should email their completed Action Plan forms to Judy Ravitz, judy@outreachextensions.com, as part of their final project reports.

Introduction to Action Planning

Use the **180 Days: Hartsville Tease** to begin your action planning process. Provide a brief set-up to the clip and ask planning participants to look for measures of children's well-being as well as strategies to encourage children – as a way to identify key issues. They should also identify key stakeholders and individuals who have a major impact on children's lives. What measures are used in their community? What are the expectations for children's success? Let participants know that identifying measures, issues, and stakeholders in their own community will be major steps in their planning process.

Clip: 180 Days: Hartsville Tease

Video clip on the *180 Days: Hartsville* Outreach DVD or go to PBS.org/180Days

See Part Two of this Guide, **Watching and Discussing the 180 Days: Hartsville Clips** to find out how to introduce the clip and questions to ask about it.

After you've watched and discussed the 180 Days: Hartsville Tease, continue your planning.

Ask planning participants to think about the scope of their plan and what types of stakeholders can be successful in implementing it.

- What measures of children's and families' well-being do you want to address in your Action Plan? (For Kids Count data, visit the Kids Count Data Center at www.datacenter.kidscount.org. A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count is the premier source for data on children's and families' well-being in the United States.)
- How encompassing a project do you want to create? Will it engage your school, your district, your organization, or your community (including parents)?
- What results do you hope to achieve? How do these results relate to one or more themes in the *180 Days: Hartsville* documentary? As part of your theme, consider how to recognize/spotlight American Graduate Champions, individuals who are helping students stay on the path to success. One action plan may include developing a college-going culture in schools, an afterschool program, or community organization.
- Identify the stakeholders who need to be involved in your Action Plan.
- What are the potential roles of each stakeholder? What reasons are driving their willingness to participate in the project? Who will take the lead on implementation?

Complete the 180 Days: Hartsville Action Plan

The planning form includes the following categories; selected categories offer tips and guidance on the form.

- Community Partners and Stakeholders. This project encourages stations to develop new partners as well as work with existing partners.
- Action Plan Theme(s) selected from the themes in *180 Days: Hartsville*
- Target Audiences / Key Issue(s)
- Actions / Result / Timeline (chart)
- Project Resources selected from *180 Days: Hartsville* and your station's project productions
- Station's use of media to support the project
- Budget

180 DAYS: HARTSVILLE ACTION PLAN Form

Station:

Contact Person:

Phone:

Email:

1. Community Partners and Stakeholders

Name the community partners and stakeholders who prepared this plan. Provide a one/two sentence description of who they are and why they want to be involved, and a one/two sentence statement about their roles in the project. Please indicate whether one or more partners will take the lead on the project.

2. Station's Role in the Project

This may include broadcast, web, or social media to promote the project.

3. Action Plan Theme(s)

Choose one or more of the themes provided by *180 Days: Hartsville*.

4. Target Audiences / Key Issue(s)

180 Days: Hartsville encourages projects to work with low performing elementary schools or feeder elementary schools to high schools with low graduation rates as well as education and community organizations and stakeholders that provide services to children and families in these schools. Why did you choose this target audience? Think about data related to student and school performance and the special family situations and economic needs of the community.

5. Actions / Result / Timeline

Planned actions should be specific and achievable within a reasonable time period. Your result could be an increase in learning or awareness building, or a change in attitude or behavior.

Actions	Result	Timeline

6. Project Resources

Let us know the resources you plan to use; check all that apply.

- **180 Days: Hartsville** documentary
- **180 Days: Hartsville** video clips
- **180 Days: Hartsville Discussion Into Action Guide**
- Local station's broadcast production, news and information segments, or interstitials
- American Graduate Champions video profiles
- Other _____

7. Budget

Approximately how much will your project cost?

Cash: \$ _____

In-kind: \$ _____

About the Author: Marcia Young Cantarella, Ph.D.

Following a long corporate career, Dr. Cantarella moved into higher education as a senior administrator, dean, and vice president at schools ranging from New York University to Princeton University, Metropolitan College of New York, and Hunter College. She co-directs the CUNY Black Male Initiative at Hunter College, chairs the advisory board for the all-male Eagle Academy Schools, and serves on the Board of Directors of The READ Alliance. She has combined her experience in the corporate world with her academic focus to attain a practical view of the relationship between education and work. Having worked for nearly 25 years with a vast array of students who are first-generation, low-income, and/or students of color she has written *I CAN Finish College: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide*. The *Guide* is a highly rated practical tool to help students like these navigate to successful college completion. She has authored the *All the Difference* College Bound Students Handbook in association with Outreach Extensions for the *All the Difference* documentary, which will be broadcast on PBS' acclaimed POV series as part of CPB's American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen. She is a frequent blogger on the college experience on the *Huffington Post*. Perhaps most important she has reared a young black man, now an adult and father, as well as two stepchildren, and is a proud indulgent grandmother of five.

About America Graduate: Let's Make It Happen

[American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen](#) was launched in 2011 with 25 public media stations in high need communities to spotlight the high school dropout crisis and focus on middle and high school student interventions. Today, more than 80 public radio and television stations in over 30 states have partnered with over 1000 community organizations and schools, as well as Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, Alliance for Excellent Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Newman's Own Foundation to help the nation achieve a 90% graduation by 2020. With primetime and children's programming that educates, informs, and inspires public radio and television stations — locally owned and operated — are important resources in helping to address critical issues facing today's communities. According to a report from the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, American Graduate stations have told the story about the dropout crisis in a way that empowered citizens to get involved, and helped community organizations break down silos to work more effectively together.

About the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)

The [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,400 locally-owned and -operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television and related online services.

About South Carolina ETV (SCETV)

[South Carolina ETV](#) is the state's public educational broadcasting network with 11 television and eight radio transmitters, and a multi-media educational system in more than 2,500 schools, colleges, businesses and government agencies. Using television, radio and the web, SCETV's mission is to enrich lives by educating children, informing and connecting citizens, celebrating our culture and environment and instilling the joy of learning.

About the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC)

The [National Black Programming Consortium](#) is committed to enriching our democracy by educating, enlightening, empowering and engaging the American public. We support diverse voices by developing, producing and distributing innovative media about the Black experience and by investing in visionary content makers. NBPC provides quality content for public media outlets, including, among others, PBS and PBS.org and BlackPublicMedia.org, as well as other platforms, while training and mentoring the next generation of Black filmmakers. Founded in 1979, NBPC produces the *AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange* documentary series and manages NBPC 360, a funding and training initiative designed to accelerate the production of important Black serial and interactive content.