

HOW TO SAY NOTHING AND EVERYTHING AT THE SAME TIME: A WHITE  
TEACHER, STUDENTS OF COLOR, AND THE TRIAL AND ERROR OF  
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OF OPPORTUNITY WITH ENVOY

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, MN

December 2019

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## CAPSTONE PROJECT

### BLOG

#### **Summary**

This capstone project aided me in answering my research question, *how might ENVoY's classroom management techniques impact relationships and academic success in diverse classroom settings?* To answer this question, I share my experience using ENVoY's seven gems (Grinder, 2018) in my high school classrooms through a blog. As an early career teacher, and as somebody who is new to ENVoY classroom management, I use the blog platform as a way to hold reflective space for integrating ENVoY skills into my classroom management practices. Through this blog, I post information about ENVoY, while also posting reflections on what went well for me or what did not work in my specific context. I also share connections I make about student-teacher relationships and how implementing ENVoY skills has impacted those relationships. I also interview teachers who practice ENVoY in their classrooms and give them space to reflect on how their management practices, and specifically ENVoY, create an equitable classroom environment in their contexts.

**Audience**

My main audience for this project is other teachers who are interested in also implementing non-verbal classroom management in their classrooms in an effort to create more opportunities for student success. I could also see the blog being relevant to administrators or other school professionals who may be curious about a teacher's perspective on implementing ENVoY in their classroom. I plan to share my honest personal experiences engaging with this classroom management system.

**Project Format**

I use blogging to connect with other teachers in a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994) who may want more information on classroom management, non-verbal communication with students, or ENVoY in particular. I use it as a way to reflect on my practice away from my school, but still in community with other teachers. The blog acts as both a personal and public space to reflect and connect. I wanted to share my perspective on non-verbal classroom management, student-teacher relationships, academic success, and educational equity away from the school environment, but still in a place where I could share what I was learning and thinking about with others.

**What is ENVoY?**

ENVoY stands for Educational Non-Verbal Yardsticks and was created by Michael Grinder. It uses non-verbal communication as a cornerstone to classroom management. The goal of the system is to preserve relationships with students and use influence rather than power to ensure academic success through our classroom management choices. I use Michael Grinder's *ENVoY: Your personal guide to classroom*

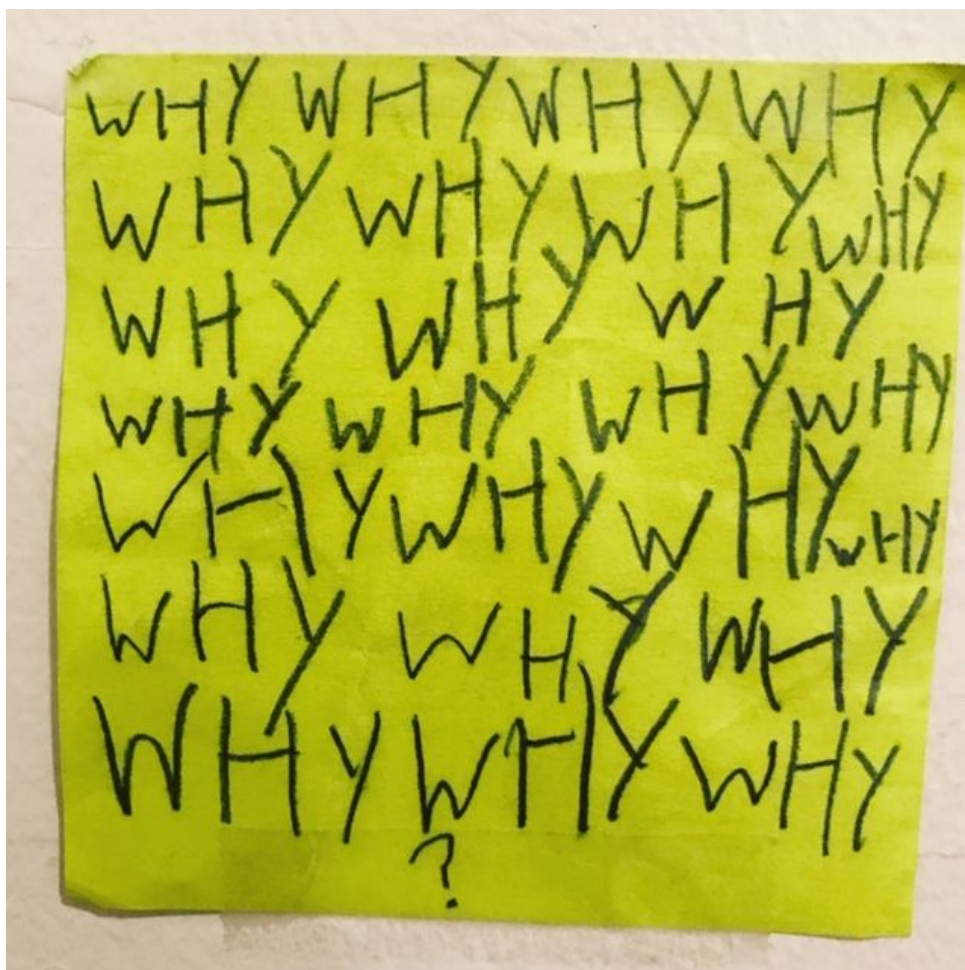
*management* as a focus text for this project as I explore how implementing ENVoY (Grinder, 2018) might affect relationships between white students and teachers of color that increase academic achievement in a racially diverse high school setting.

### Blog Posts

#### Post 1: Why me, why ENVoY, why a blog, why now?

Throughout college, I was a teacher's assistant at an elementary school across the street from my university. I always partnered with this one reading teacher. She was friendly and I loved reading with all of the students everyday. As a teacher now, feeling so much pressure for everything to be JUST RIGHT for my students, I am so eternally grateful for the teachers who welcomed young and inexperienced me into their classroom and gave

me opportunities to work with students, create materials, and sometimes, actually lead class. She was one of these awesome teachers. They truly live up to one of my favorite quotes about education: "Education should be in the world and in its messiness." (Although I



can't remember who said this.) I was absolutely, for sure, a mess, and they still let me be a part. They are true teachers.

During one of my shifts in the reading teacher's classroom, I was helping to manage students and get them focused on the teacher during whole group instruction. There was this one student (you know, there's always THAT ONE STUDENT) who just had trouble with the *act* of school. She couldn't sit still, she couldn't focus, she didn't raise her hand: she was the student it was easy to collect the "didn't" and "couldn't" and "wouldn't" instead of the "did" and "could" and "would". So, as it goes, she became my job during whole group instruction. While all the other students sat on the carpet, she sat on a chair, next to me, by the kidney table. Her teacher and I would often give her post-it notes to write or draw on. One day, she passes me this post-it note:

I think I had asked her to do something, although I don't remember what. I don't remember how I replied. But I will never forget this post-it note. I took it home to my college dorm and taped it above my desk. I don't own the post-it note anymore, but I do have this picture of it and I have this student forever stamped in my memory: a student who was smart enough to ask why? I will never forget how right she is: why, though? Why do we ask students to do the things we ask them to do? Why is school the way it is? Why is it so dang hard for some?

This blog is titled, "How to Say Nothing and Everything at the Same Time: A White Teacher, Students of Color, and the Trial and Error of Building Relationships of

Opportunity with ENVoY”. It’s the same title as my Master’s thesis, and this blog has been created to fulfill a requirement as part of that thesis. However, more importantly, this blog is here as a way to ask “why?” more often of my classroom management practices, and specifically, my work with ENVoY. Why ENVoY? Why might it be good for me and my students?

ENVoY (Educational Non-Verbal Yardsticks) is a non-verbal classroom management system created by Michael Grinder. ENVoY utilizes various non-verbal communication techniques to manage student behavior and learning in a way that cultivates and maintains relationships in the classroom (Grinder, 2018). What I’ve found ENVoY to be in my teaching practice is a framework for the ideal learning environment that grounds itself in specific skills for classroom managers (a.k.a. teachers) so that they can actually create and maintain that environment. All of us want and believe in healthy learning environments. But can you actually create and maintain one? Could you tell somebody else how to? Could you even tell me what a healthy classroom *looks like*?

ENVoY is going to help you say “yes, yes, and yes”.

The thing is, any other answer isn’t and can’t be good enough: I am a white educator who works with primarily students of color. And by students of color I don’t just mean black students, although I definitely do mean black students as well as Asian students, Latinx students, Native students—my school is just about as diverse as it gets, in the true sense of the word. I bring this up because it matters. It matters because achievement at school is

predictable by race. And my students are predicted to achieve less than their white peers. When students walk into our classroom, the odds are against them from the get go; they are set up by the system to fail (Darden & Cavendish, 2012). This indicates that perhaps students are not achieving less due to their race, but due to a lack of opportunities provided to them by the system. Thus, as a white teacher with power and privilege inherent in everything I do and am, it is my job to manage the classroom in such a way that my students have the greatest opportunity to succeed academically.

I know what you're thinking. I know what you're thinking because I've also thought it: *But as long as I create relationships I'm okay, right? Students learn that I'm actually really cool and they respect me for my authenticity and how woke I am and I'm going to totally change them and they're going to write me journals about their struggles and I'm totally going to change that kid's whole perception of school. Right?*

Unpopular opinion: the word relationships is the most overused and under-explained buzzword in education right now. The misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation of this word by adults is contributing to education malpractice that is creating even more barriers to academic achievement and opportunity for our students.

You've got a kid that sleeps everyday in class? Relationship. Oh, and I know you have that one student that can't write in complete sentences, doesn't know about capital letters, oh and by the way he's 17? Relationship! And on top of that, you have another kid shouting all sorts of swear words at you down the hall as you phone the office? *But have*

*you tried to build a relationship? You know, I hear he likes basketball and hot Cheetos.*

It's even in the research: Murray (2009) found that relationships are one of the biggest contributors to positive student functioning in a school environment.

It seems so easy and so simple on the surface, but in my one year and three weeks of teaching it has already become clear to me: we as educators think we know how to do relationships, but we don't, as a collective, know how to do relationships that *serve our students*. The people that say the word relationships over and over again don't know. And we don't know. Because that kid who is screaming all sorts of swear words at you down the hall as you phone the office? You already have a relationship with her. The relationship is already built. She's already communicating something important to you. So no, you don't need Cheetos and basketballs. Go ahead and eat them on your prep period and hit up the open gym after school. You need skills and techniques. You need, as my department chair likes to say, "craft". You do not need tools to manage her. You need tools to manage YOU (thanks, ENVoY).

This is where I coin the phrase that defines almost every idea I have about classroom management so far, and that I believe ENVoY skills helps me to do (drum roll, please): building and maintaining relationships of (and to) opportunity. It is our job, if we truly and really want to close the opportunity gap, to manage relationships with our students (and for our students) that constantly nurture and sustain the opportunity of academic achievement. To do this, as classroom managers, as teachers, we are not in the business of changing the behavior of our students. We are in the business of changing our behavior



so that students have the greatest opportunity, the healthiest classroom environment, to succeed academically. Our behavior as teachers influences the whole room. This is the backbone of ENVoY Classroom Management.

I have found among many equity-focused education professionals that when I bring up classroom management as a core component of closing the achievement and opportunity gap, a core indicator of whether a school or classroom is moving towards an education system that is inherently equitable rather than inequitable, I am immediately shushed. We are supposed to say “relationships” many times over. We are supposed to say “student voice and choice”, “learning community” and a lot of other fancy vague words. We are scared to say as teachers, as educators, that we are managers: we are responsible for the learning environment that exists in our classroom, in our school. We have power in that room and in that building. We have to be honest. How I manage myself and my position of power is just that: powerful. It affects the whole room and the education of each and every student in that room. Instead of shying away from that power, trying to push it away from us as fast as we can, we need to harness, respect, and cultivate that power *in the service of our students*. Our students deserve the best of our power. Our students deserve the power of well-managed, well-crafted, learning environments with as few barriers in place as possible to academic achievement. I believe ENVoY can help us do that.

So this blog seeks to be my honest conversation about classroom management as a young, white teacher trying to create an environment for optimal learning with primarily

students of color. There is an inherently unhealthy power dynamic there that I am only beginning to scratch the surface of understanding. But I have a gut feeling that ENVoY might be a step in the right direction, especially for white teachers, and especially for my students who deserve every opportunity to learn.

If you are looking for honest conversation about classroom management and race, more information on what ENVoY is and how you might go about starting to use it, and stories about how much I fail at practicing what I preach but show up again anyway and continue to try, then you've come to the right place. I am here because I have about 150+ students that I will see tomorrow who deserve the best education they can get. And so do you. Let's learn to say "you matter therefore your education matters" to each of our students with every management decision we make and without ever saying a word. It may just be true that actions speak louder than words.

**Reflection on Post 1.** I wrote post one to introduce readers to my "why" behind the blog. This is really where I address the gap that I'm noticing in education--a gap of discussion and action around classroom management practices that contribute to an equitable academic space. I focus specifically on ENVoY and how I use the classroom management program. I propose ENVoY as an answer to this gap.

**Post 2: "HOW TO SAY "HELLO EVERYBODY! WELCOME TO ENGLISH CLASS! GET OUT YOUR NOTEBOOKS! EVAN, TAKE OUT YOUR EARBUDS! ASHLEY, PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY! I STILL SEE TWO PHONES OUT! YOU**

**ALL NEED YOUR NOTEBOOKS AND A PENCIL RIGHT AWAY TODAY!  
JOSE, WHY DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR NOTEBOOK OUT? EVAN, I ASKED  
YOU TAKE YOUR EARBUDS OUT. I AM STILL A HAPPY TEACHER WHO  
LOVES LEARNING, I SWEAR, BUT I MEAN IT ABOUT THOSE PHONES!  
EVAN. I'M NOT PLAYING. SERIOUSLY." WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING  
AT ALL"**

ENVoY chunks the classroom session into four phases of the lesson. The first one is called the "Getting Their Attention" phase. Sometimes I think that half of my job is really just reminding myself that I really *am* the person with the most important things to say because literally zero people seem to care when I open my mouth. It's not that teenagers don't want to learn, or hate you, but unfortunately nobody just texted me with news about who is fighting who next hour or whose boyfriend just cheated on them. So why listen to me?

ENVoY recommends, for phase one, two great skills you can use to get the class focused on you, non-verbally. The first one is called "Freeze Body". For this skill, you go to the front of the room (specifically to an assigned spot for getting attention) and you do this:

1. Stand still and settle (take a deep breath and smile)
2. Distribute even weight on both feet
3. Position toes and feet forward
4. Make a brief request for attention

Seems simple enough, right? A few things always mess me up with this one. First, I do this stupid thing where I walk in the classroom when the bell rings and shout to the whole class Oprah-style as I'm closing the door behind me "goOOOOOOD MORning everybody!" and I walk across the room to my desk and grab a post-it note and pen to use to write down kids who come in late and sometimes I grab my attendance to just do it right away and I make everything 10x more hectic. I know this, but its a bad habit that I don't think about until I do it and by then it's too late. Now, half the class is looking at me like "oh hey Ms. Bougie's here and she's really busy still" and another 5 kids are now running up to me to ask me a question because I just initiated engagement with them and they see I'm not quite getting things started yet and then there's another group of kids that is still talking and by this time the half of the class that did notice me walk in is now back to talking because I've just taught them all that when I talk they really don't *have* to pay attention because I'm not even totally ready yet. So really, if I'm talking, it may or may not matter. So why not just wait until I get a little pissy about them not shutting up? Then I'll definitely be ready to go.

Well shoot, right? And this is only one of the problems that gets in my way with this one. But here's the thing--this situation is not setting my classroom up to be an equitable learning environment. First of all, students have to carry the mental load of trying to "figure me out". Do I have to listen to her when she talks, is she saying something I have to listen to right now or is this information not for me? Also, for students who have trauma in their background, or are diagnosed with an attention disorder, my craziness and constant movement from the get-go is creating stress. The more I move and make noise,

the more other students move and make noise, and the more hectic the classroom environment becomes. The more I can slow down and shut up, the more others in the room will too, creating a more calm and peaceful environment that will help keep students' stress levels low.

Ideally, I would walk in and close the door silently, walk over to my getting attention spot (and I would have a post-it note and pen in my hand already so I could mark kids late) and I would pause and stand there and do those four steps above with a friendly look on my face AND I WOULDN'T HAVE SAID ANYTHING YET. EVEN IF I JUST NOTICED MY BOARD WASN'T ON I WOULD JUST TURN IT ON and not say, "Oh, sorry guys I forgot to turn my board on! My bad! You need your notebooks today". I would just turn on my screen in silence and then point at it. They know the drill. They know the picture of a notebook means go get your notebook.

You guys, I catch myself *all the time* doing stupid stuff that undermines my credibility non-verbally (and thus, fundamentally) to my students. And that's really the basis of our relationships with students: building the perception of us as trustworthy and caring adults. Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green & Hanna (2010) note that the student-teacher relationship is defined by the specific behaviors, strategies, and attitudes that the teacher demonstrates to students. And 80% of that demonstration is non-verbal. The more credibility our non-verbal behavior communicates, the more substantial our relationship with students. When people in the education world say that you need to get rid of teacher-talk, they

aren't talking about when you're standing up there delivering your content. They are talking about all the extra stuff that rips your credibility to shreds.

After you do the majority of "Freeze Body", the next important thing that you need to do is Step #4: "Make a brief request for attention". The important thing with this one is to listen to the room and watch your volume. You only want your volume to be JUST over the volume of the room and you want what you say to be quick. That way, when students hear your voice and turn toward you, what you are non-verbally communicating to them when they look at you is calm, silence, stillness, and maybe a general air of pleasantness with that nice smile on your face. In this sense, you are *influencing* the room, modeling the exact behavior you want students to do. This is constantly how I am self-evaluating my own behavior in the classroom: am I acting the exact way that I want students to act right now? Am I doing the exact thing I want students to do right now? Yes, I want them to shut up and sit still and maybe be happy to be here. So I'll do all of those things too.

The "Freeze Body" skill rolls right into the next skill that helps you get students' attention: "ABOVE (Pause) Whisper". The ABOVE is Step #4 in "Freeze Body". Like I said, you need to get their attention using a volume of your voice that is right ABOVE the volume of the students. Then, like the title suggests, the next step is to pause. You stand there and wait, with a big old smile on your face because you are a friendly, approachable teacher and you're not mad (and you want friendly, happy students so you're modeling how you want them to be too). But this is the step of this that I think is the most important to highlight: "After 3-4 seconds, call the names of students not yet focused".

Often, people who aren't super well-versed in ENVoY think that ENVoY is all about this pausing part and that once you're pausing you can't get out of it because you can't say anything. You just wait. And wait some more. But you totally can talk! You start saying students' names. And then smile at them. You get everybody, yes everybody, in the room on board with you while you pause. The pausing is active, especially when you start going verbal with it. Your verbal plus your non-verbal communication is agreeing with each other and students see that you will continue to freeze until all students are on board.

And then, once all students are with you, you whisper. Something. But it probably shouldn't be content-related so that nobody misses out on instruction if they can't hear you. I will often say something like "alright" with a smile on my face and then turn immediately to the board where my content is posted.

AND THEN YOU'RE DONE GETTING THEIR ATTENTION AND YOU CAN JUST TEACH THE GOOD OL' CONTENT AND EVERYTHING WILL BE TOTALLY JOLLY!!!!!!!!!!

Well, probably not. Because you still have 30+ students in the room who are complicated, fantastic humans trying to learn. But my goal this week is to cut the Oprah crap. To walk in quietly and to not say ANYTHING until my initial ABOVE. I'm hoping that even just this little switch will help my classroom be a calmer, more focused learning environment.

I'll check back with you again next week and let you know how it's going.

**Reflection on Post 2.** This is where I discuss the first two essential skills of ENVoY. Rather than just discussing what the skill is, I also attempt to address what the philosophical basis is behind the skill and why that philosophy might contribute to an equitable classroom management program. I do this to help teachers see not only the practical skills, but why the practical skills are important to use.

### **Post 3: How to Avoid Popping Off About Pop-Tarts**

This past weekend, my girlfriend and I were having dinner at a friend's place (yes, I promise this is going to be about classroom management). We parked across a busy street from her building because parking in some parts of Minneapolis is, as many of my readers will know, practically impossible. We had our over-eager poodle, a huge jar of fresh salsa my girlfriend made the night before, and two bags of tortilla chips and here we were trying to cross this busy road after dark.

We all know the rules of the road: at an intersection, the pedestrian has the right of way. We inched uneasily into the street, and thankfully cars had stopped and waited for us on both sides. However, it was a two lane road on both sides. So of course, even though the lane closest to us stopped, as we were about to head into the next lane a car came in REAL HOT right next to the car that was so nicely stopped for us and dashed forward before we had even hit the curb. My girlfriend got mad at the car, and started shouting at it (yes, we know, not the best reaction) and instead of the car owning that it was kind of a



piece of crap right then, the dude driving the car decided to stop his car REAL ABRUPT and rolled down his window and started yelling at us, “What did you just say?! Yeah, you! What’d you just say to me!” We shut right up and kept walking.

As we approached the front door to our friends’ building I went from being angry at the car, to scared, to deeply angry at the guy. He suddenly represented more than just a stupid car on a stupid road. He represented all men. Yes, all men. “What toxic masculine crap!” I yelled to the air as we walked up to our friend’s door. Yes, my girlfriend could have \*not gotten angry\* but also, what right did that guy have to literally push the breaks on his car, after he had started driving again, and start yelling at us? That was intimidating and rude, and a total power move. We all know the dangerous stuff that men with power have done. Exerting that power over us in that moment brought with it a whole schema of the danger of men and power against women with it and it frightened me. A lot.

As we waited for our friend to come let us in at the door, I thought to myself “this is exactly how students must feel”.

A student gets angry. Or does something I don’t like. But they have less power. Kind of like us in the street. In the street, we physically just had less power against those cars. We were doing something, crossing the street, that the guy in the car didn’t expect or like. So he used his power over us, not stopping until the last possible second and then starting up

and stopping again to yell at us. How many times have you used your power over your students?

How many times have I used my power over my students? Too much. The thing with power is that singularly, as a white 24 year old, I don't necessarily FEEL on a day to day basis that I am really that powerful. But when students see us in front of them, we don't only hold our individual power, but the power of what we represent. As a white person, I hold the power of whiteness. As a teacher, I hold the power of grades and information and behavioral expectations. I also hold the power of the whole education system. As somebody who is older, I hold the power of authority. All of that stands behind me. So even when I just exert a little bit of power, like that guy in the car did, the strength of that power is felt more poignantly than I imagine it will. We don't know our own power.

This is where I think classroom management, especially for white teachers with students of color, can get really tricky. We hear trains of thought similar to what I just said above, and we decide that we are going to stop using our power all together. We are going to focus on getting students to like us and see that of course we are not like *the other white teachers* we are *good white teachers*. This is where we have to remember that power isn't necessarily the enemy, but that power is just a fact of our position. Just like the guy in the car, it isn't the fact that he was a white male or in the car that was necessarily problematic, it was how he chose to exert the power that comes with being a white male and being in a car.

Classroom management that contributes to equitable student achievement is about *how we choose to exert our power*.

One of the philosophical pillars of ENVoY is using “influence” to manage rather than “power”. Situations like what happened to me last night, remind me of why I think this philosophical base of classroom management matters so much to me.

What if that guy would have stepped out of his power and into his influence? What if he would have rolled down his window, raised his hand, and said “I’m so sorry!” to us? That would have *influenced* our emotional states, our perception of him, and also might have even influenced my next interaction with white men. Instead of building upon my schema that men I don’t know are potentially dangerous, he might have influenced my narrative differently.

*Influence is powerful*. Influence leans our power less on what *we* represent, and more on what *our relationships with students represent*.

As I’ve said before, the power of student-teacher relationships doesn’t lie in whether or not students like *us*, but in the narrative we create for students through the ways we communicate and interact with them.

So let's ask ourselves: what if we stepped out of our power with students? What if we started to model for them the exact behavior that we wanted out of them— *influencing* their narratives of school, teachers, and authority?

I'm skipping ahead in the ENVoY Seven Gems to the "Influence Approach". But personally, I believe it to be one of the most powerful skills I use and acts as a philosophy that supports every other skill in the ENVoY repertoire.

The "Influence Approach" is utilized by ENVoY specifically during the fourth phase of the lesson, called Seatwork, where your main goal is to *influence* students to do their work instead of all the other fun things they could be doing. Some of these fun other things they might be doing include face-timing their friend in another class, drawing Sharpie tattoos on their neighbor's forearm, or stealing Pop-Tarts. Yes, these have all happened, multiple times. Oh, ninth grade.

The "Influence Approach" always kicks in the second you see students doing something that isn't what you want them to be doing. As teachers, we often immediately dive into what ENVoY calls "The Power Approach". The "Power Approach" includes actions like approaching students face on, looking students in the eye, clenching our breath, getting really close to the student, and using loud non-verbal or physical redirection.

I'm going to use the Power Approach on my favorite Pop-Tart dudes (names are changed).

\*Ms. Bougie walking peacefully around the classroom helping students. Spots Michael stealing Pop-Tarts from Leo.\*

Ms Bougie, speaking loudly across the room, walking quickly in the direction of the boys, “Michael! Sit down. You need to do your work.”

Leo: “But Ms. Bougie, he was just getting a pop-tart!”

Ms. Bougie: standing in front of Leo, still talking so the whole class can hear, “Leo just give me the Pop-Tarts”.

Leo: “No! They’re mine!”

\*Ms. Bougie grabs the Pop-Tarts from Leo and turns quickly around and stomps off to put the Pop-Tarts on her desk.\*

At this point, who knows how the boys are going to react, right? Leo might roll his eyes and kind of get back to work. Or, he might yell at you across the room. Or Michael might now jump in too. Like I said, who knows. Either way, the boys are probably learning that they should be scared of me because I’ve just put all of my power into what I represent. This approach though, to many, sounds really intuitive and perfectly acceptable for a teacher. We are the boss of our own room, aren’t we? This is for the good of the students, who need to do their work! Especially if *everyday there is a thing happening with the*

*stupid Pop-Tarts*. At this point, Ms. Bougie is pretty fed up and those students had it coming.

The thing I am definitely not saying: we should just let the forearm tattoos and the face-timing and the pop-tarts go. No way. Equitable student achievement means that students are learning and the Pop-Tart dudes are not learning if everyday they are distracted by Leo who *always has Pop-Tarts*.

ENVoY instead would still suggest managing the situation, but using what they call the “Influence Approach”. With influence, one would do things such as: approaching a student from the side, keeping your eyes on the student’s work, breathing, keeping farther away from the student, and using non-verbal redirection if possible. If the teacher does need to go verbal, they would say something brief and quiet.

For my Pop-Tart friends, I might influence them like this:

\*Ms. Bougie walking peacefully around the classroom helping students. Spots Michael stealing Pop-Tarts from Leo.\*

\*Ms. Bougie gets Michael’s attention. She tries non-verbally but that doesn’t work so she whispers “Michael”, gets his eyes, and points to his seat. Michael goes to his seat. Note that Ms. Bougie has not moved during this whole interaction.\*

\*Ms. Bougie continues walking peacefully around the classroom helping students, making her way slowly but surely to Leo. When she gets to Leo, she'll kneel down next to him and tap the table lightly next to his Pop-Tarts and whisper, "Put those away". She'll stay kneeling and looking at the Pop-Tarts until Leo puts them away. Then she'll whisper something like "How's the worksheet going?" while she's still kneeling and keeping her eyes on the work. She'll help him if he needs help, but if not, she'll get up slowly (utilizing the skill "Off-Neutral-On"—more on that later) and move on to the next student.\*

With this approach, the teacher relies not on what she represents, but instead utilizes her relationship with the student to achieve the same result (bye Pop-Tarts). Expectations of achievement and learning don't change, approach to getting that achievement to happen does.

This is what I think is truly powerful about influence. Often, what I've seen with white teachers is that because they don't want to use power to manage student behavior (and so they're afraid of managing) they are then forced to lower academic expectations for students. It makes sense: for high achievement you need behavior that contributes to a learning environment that achievement can happen in. If students aren't behaving in a way that allows for achievement, achievement won't happen. This is where teachers start to believe that they just aren't *engaging* students enough, and what they're teaching must

not be *relevant* enough because otherwise then wouldn't students want to behave in a way where they could learn this amazing material?

I'm not against engaging, relevant material, although I may sound like it. What I am against is teachers not managing the classroom because they're confused about how to use their power and so they just don't use it. At this point, it will *never* matter how engaging your material is. If you aren't managing the room, you will continuously have to lower your academic expectations for your students so that they can achieve even while eating Pop-Tarts, face-timing, and drawing forearm tattoos. Right now I can barely write this blog post while my girlfriend talks to my dog, how are students supposed to do their work if we aren't managing a classroom environment conducive to them completing their work?

As white teachers, if we want to close the achievement gap for students of color, we have to use our power and step into our roles as classroom managers. But we aren't being equitable if we use our power in a way that scares students into submission. We are instead being deeply problematic. We need to use our power to influence. Seriously, keep your expectations high for your students, people: if they're going to eat a Pop-Tart, it might as well be toasted first.

**Reflection on Post 3.** In this post I discuss another one of the essential ENVoY skills, "The Influence Approach". I discuss again the philosophical basis of this skill and how



this philosophical basis contributes to an equitable classroom and also serves as the philosophical basis for all of ENVoY.

#### **Post 4: How To Teach How You Want Students to Learn**

In an earlier blog post, I mentioned my intention to improve the ENVoY skills “Freeze Body” and “ABOVE (Pause) Whisper” and to report back. To review, “Freeze Body” points to the idea that you shouldn’t be moving when you get students’ attention.

“ABOVE (Pause) Whisper”, on the other hand, refers to how you actually get students’ attention: first, using some sort of signal (or your voice) at right ABOVE the volume of the room, then to pause, and then to whisper.

To start, Freezing was an easy fix. I stopped doing my Oprah-style “goOD MORNING everybody!” as I closed the door and instead got myself situated at my designated teaching spot (more on this later). Even by doing this simple fix of just NOT SAYING ANYTHING UNTIL I WAS COMPLETELY READY totally changed how I approached the class for the day. I was calm and organized, so they also became calm and organized that much faster.

The second skill, “ABOVE (Pause) Whisper” is always a bit of a challenge for me. I can do the Above. As I started watching myself these past few weeks I noticed some of my favorite aboves are

“Alllllrrrrright, everybody”

“Good morning, I mean afternoon, everybody”

“If I could get your attention, please.”

“If I could get your focus up here, please”

“Alllllright, everybody focus up here, please”

“Hello everybody”

“Alllright, Hello”

Basically my big verbal tick is saying Alllllllright. Which isn't the worst thing in the world. More than exactly what you say, it's important to be consistent. Which as you can see from above, I'm not. So going forward, I need to start using my ABOVE with purpose rather than just verbal vomiting SOMETHING to get attention on me. The more intentional we can be with what comes out of our mouths, the more we can ensure that we are creating a learning environment that is as clear as possible to students. I even know some teachers who don't do verbal aboves, instead they chime a bell or some other sound. This can be even more consistent to students.

The other problem is my PAUSE. A bad habit of mine is to start talking or keep talking when students are still doing the things they need to do, like moving their backpacks

around or getting started on the worksheet or whatever. But then I'll catch myself and stop. I want to keep working on breaking this habit. If students aren't ready to listen to me yet then I'm not talking yet.

And the whisper, oh man, the whisper. I do not whisper as effectively or as much as I could in the classroom. The real purpose of the ENVoY whisper is to increase attention and focus on you as the teacher. I could always use some more attention and focus. I'm hoping to continue to work on just playing more with whispering as I teach and see if I can get more comfortable with it.

Can you see that even just two classroom management skills can be extremely complex and require continual development? This stuff is not easy, people.

But what I really want to focus on today is moving from the "Getting Their Attention" phase, which includes the two skills above, and moving towards the "Teaching" phase. Hopefully you've done the hard work in the "Getting Their Attention" phase that by the time you've started the "Teaching Phase" you at least have their attention. But we all know that having their attention is not the same as keeping their attention. In fact, that can change second to second (honestly, really—we've all had the student who picks his head up and looks at you with one eye only to put their head back down again the second you start to even try to say something). The "Teaching Phase" moves the teacher's attention from Focus to Engagement. You are now managing for student engagement in what you're teaching. It's always helpful to be clear about what exactly you're managing

for. You aren't managing the kid, you're managing yourself in a way that is conducive to an environmental purpose, and for the purposes of teaching, its engagement.

We've all heard it: make your lessons more relevant! Add student voice! Use alternative texts! Be creative! This will all surely boost student engagement.

But honestly, student engagement has very little to do with what you're teaching.

Obviously, we hope to make our content relevant and important and critical for students' growth. Content, in truth, is a whole other blog. However, your content *isn't necessarily* the key to student behavior. What *is* the key to student engagement is your communication to the student about how they might relate, literally in that moment, to the content you're delivering. Here's where the next important ENVoY skill comes in: "Signal the Mode".

Here's the basic deal of this skill: teachers use a variety of methods to deliver instruction. Teachers use a variety of methods to teach content. Teachers, in order to teach that content, include students in that content in a variety of ways. "Signal the Mode" suggests that you non-verbally communicate with students very clearly what method you are using and expect them to use and then to follow through on that non-verbal communication.

ENVoY suggests a gradual release. First, you will use your non-verbal symbol for that particular mode along with a verbal cue. You will enforce your mode non-verbally. So let's say you want students to raise your hand. You might do something like this:

Teacher poses question to class: “So what is the author REALLY trying to say?”

Teacher immediately then says: “Raise your hand”. Teacher also raises her hand and keeps it raised until she picks a student. If a student shouts out, she looks at her raised hand and points to it until the student raises their hand.

Then, slowly, once students start to catch on, you phase out your verbal and just go non-verbal. Teacher poses question, raises hand, picks student who is raising hand.

This skill is quite broad, as there are SO many different modes that we use as teachers. And honestly, switching to using non-verbals to signal the mode to students takes a lot of follow through on the teachers’ part to implement successfully. I’ll be honest, this skill is not my forte. I can imagine though, that if it did become my forte, my content delivery would be much smoother and would offer more students more chances to engage with the curriculum more fully.

So here’s my problem(s): 1) I am not always super intentional about where exactly in my lessons students are going to participate and I tend to signal modes on the fly. This makes me unprepared to implement a non-verbal effectively. 2) I do raise my hand as a non-verbal sign when I want students to participate. However, my problem, especially with ninth graders, is that they will just shout out but then MY BIG PROBLEM IS I DON’T ENFORCE MY OWN NON-VERBAL and I just take their answer and keep going. So basically, my raised hand has turned into a non-verbal signal that I want

student participation and I don't care how I get it. Which seems fine, but then on the other hand, raised hands are important for a few reasons: it gives students who take more time to think, time to think, and it also helps me when eight kids all mumble the same thing and I have no idea what they said. 3) There are a lot of modes. Thinking I am going to transition to non-verbal with all of them all at once has proven ineffective. I need to start with one.

My goal for the Teaching Phase: enforce hands being raised if I want hands raised. Don't take shouting out if I've raised my hand. Otherwise, if I am okay with students shouting out I need a different non-verbal for that. I'll let you know how it goes!

**Reflection on Post 4.** In this post I specifically address the teaching phase. As in previous posts, I discuss the skill itself as well as the philosophical grounding of the skill. In this post I also discuss my own difficulty with the skill, and reflect on my own practice. This is essential for my own development as a teacher and also to model the reflection process for teachers reading the blog, showing them how they might apply ENVoY skills and then reflect on them.

**Post 5: How to tell students where to turn in their worksheet for the millionth time without saying anything at all**

The next ENVoY skill I'm going to talk about has to be my favorite of all the ENVoY skills, "Exit Directions". I like Exit Directions because it helps me to really structure the Seatwork phase of the lesson in a way that is explicit to students. Win-win.

“Exit Directions” is the first skill in the “Transition to Seatwork” phase of the lesson. At this point, you are done teaching your content and you are ready to transition students to working independently. The focus of your management switches from engagement to managing student productivity. Without “Exit Directions”, productivity is extremely hard to manage. Another point for my favorite skill.

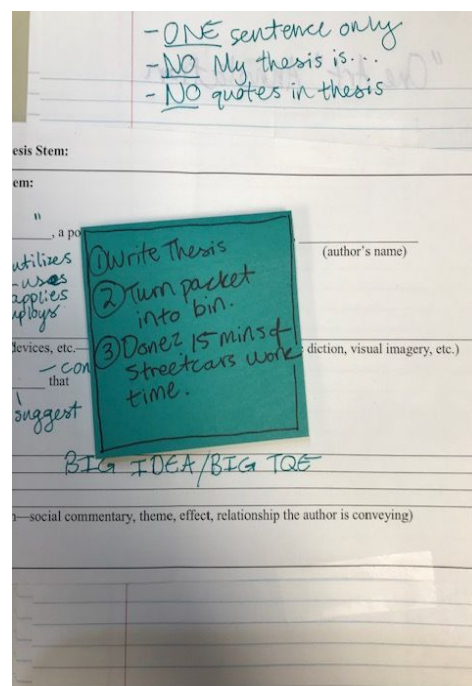
“Exit Directions” refer to the way in which we tell students what they have to do. Do you constantly have students asking procedural follow up questions? Do students start goofing off because they don’t know what they are supposed to do when they’re done? Exit Directions are going to be *your best friend*. There are a few things to keep in mind for delivering strong Exit Directions to students:

1. GO VISUAL. Everything that you tell students to do should be visually supported.
2. Your exit directions should include: what to do, how to do it, when it’s due, where to put it, and what to do when students are done. The point is to increase student independence. Throughout the entire seatwork portion, exit directions that include all these things allow a student to be *completely independent*. They shouldn’t have to seek out the teacher at all for procedural needs.
3. Check for understanding after you are done giving your “Exit Directions”. Ask for questions, ask students to give you a thumbs up if they know what they’re doing—whatever. Just make sure there is an opportunity for students to clarify. One of my

favorite things is to tell students to turn to each other and confirm what they are supposed to do today. Then I'll ask for questions. Make sure your directions are somewhere near you where you can make changes or notes as you clarify student questions. *Again, always support your directions visually.*

Visually supported exit directions help students to gain access to academic independence. It keeps them on task longer. And honestly, I think it proves to students that you, as the teacher, mean what you say. Later, when you are enforcing your exit directions, all you have to do is point at the exit directions, point at the student, and smile. It's your "proof" to students that there *really is* something they should be doing and it's *not that*.

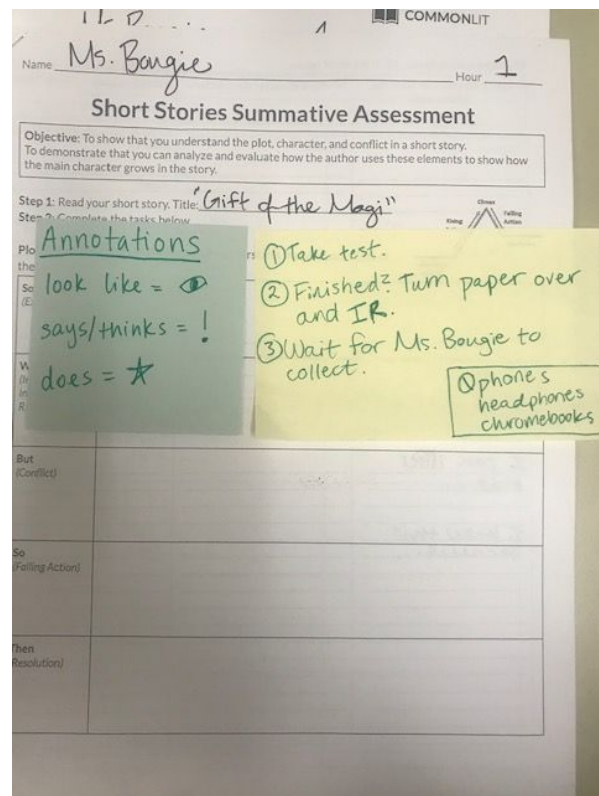
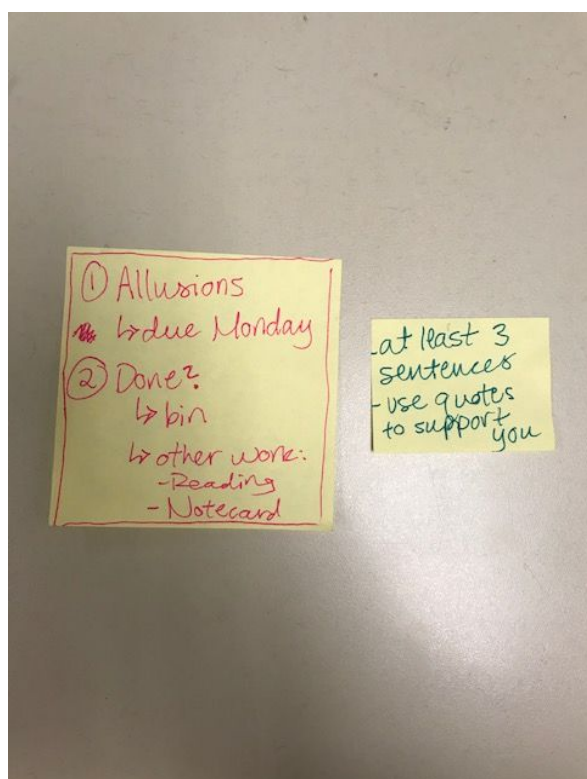
You can use whatever you would like for your visual exit directions. Some teachers have a whiteboard specifically for them, some just write on the whiteboard as they go, some teachers have beautiful slides prepared ahead of time, and some have magnets and pictures they use. I've done a mix of different things at different times, but the thing I do most consistently is use post-it notes under the document camera and project them on the board. I learned this from a teacher I worked with last year who made post-it notes that were much more beautiful than mine, but the same idea stands.





Here are some examples of my Exit Directions. Do you use Exit Directions in your classroom? I would love to see examples of yours as well! It's so interesting to see how others structure their directions for students (and many are much more creative than me!).

**Reflection on Post 5.** In Post 5 I discuss another ENVoY skill, Exit Directions. I again



discuss the philosophical backing behind the skill as well as the skill itself. I provide reflection on my own practice and also include some pictures of examples of the skill in practice in my own classroom. In order to build community, I also invite teachers to share their examples of Exit Directions.

**Post 6: How to Build an Equitable Classroom in 20 Seconds**

The next skill in ENVoY's "Seven Gems" that I am going to highlight is called, by those in the know, "MITS". MITS stands for "Most Important Twenty Seconds" and might be way longer or way shorter than twenty seconds, but that's besides the point.

MITS works directly with "Exit Directions", a skill I previously covered on the blog, and also falls within the "Transition to Seatwork" phase of the lesson. This is one of those skills that completely changed my approach to classroom management and how I view relationship building with students.

One of the essential reasons that we are teachers is because we like to help people. We want our students, more than anything, to be able to do the work that we have assigned for them to do. We want to see success and we will do just about anything to make it happen. This means that when we give students our directions and we release them to get started we instantly put on our cape and start flying around the room because that's our job! We're here to help!

But here's the problem: by instantly switching into superhero mode you are subtly communicating a few things to students that I don't believe you actually want to communicate:

1. You are completely available and will help them no matter what and they don't actually *have to* get started on anything to get said help. Their education is your problem and not theirs.

2. You don't believe they are capable. You believe they need your help, right now. You are not sure they can actually do this or can actually get started without your direct assistance.
3. Your expectations are low.
4. You don't think your directions were good enough. You don't trust your own teaching. You really aren't sure of yourself.

Seriously. You give all your directions and then start flying around the room talking to all your students? Why get started? Why try? Ms. Bougie will do it for me. This isn't because students are lazy, this is because a decade of teachers have reinforced this narrative: teachers don't expect me to do much of anything by myself.

Here is where MITS asks you to do *one* thing differently in order to communicate an entirely different viewpoint. MITS says, after you are done with your lesson, don't move. Do the exit directions stuff: ask for questions, clarify directions for students, but after you say "Get started"...don't move for twenty seconds. Or longer. Or shorter. The real length of MITS is to not move until every student in the room is working.

The first time I did this it was super awkward. I just stood there and stared at my Exit Directions and rocked back and forth on my feet with my hands in my pockets. I didn't really know what I was doing or why I was doing it. But I stood there with my co-teacher on the opposite side of the board. Students started calling out to me, coming up to me,

and all I did was single the “one second” hand signal to them. I felt like a total jerk. (Sometimes I still do because I suck at boundaries. I really feel that analyzing your classroom management practices is deeply personal and reveals a lot about your sense of self to yourself). But here’s the deal: as we stood there in MITS, suddenly, the class noise started to fade. I have no idea if it was 20 seconds, but it actually faded. And suddenly almost everybody was working. My co-teacher and I, once the room hushed, walked slowly around the room, helping students get started who truly needed it. Most of the questions students had while I was standing up there in MITS were already answered. For the first time that school year, students were focused independently on their work. I was able to sit at my desk during work time in less than 5 minutes.

People: this was a freakin’ miracle and once you experience it, I swear you will really start to “get” how ENVoY works.

And here’s the awesome part: when you are standing in MITS, putting the power into the students’ hands to get working, with a smile on your face and your Exit Directions next to you, here’s what you are non-verbally telling your students:

1. I believe you can do this work. Just try it. You are capable. You don’t need me.
2. I trust my teaching and what I just said. These are the directions for this time. I *literally stand* by my expectations. My expectations are high.
3. I will be available—just not yet. Everything you need is available to you—I will not repeat directions that I have already said. I believe you are capable of figuring it out. I

have boundaries. This classroom has boundaries. I respect my own boundaries and because I have proven that I respect my own boundaries by standing in MITS, you can trust me to respect yours too.

I really believe that MITS is the most powerful communication skill. It doesn't work perfectly every time and for every kid and sometimes you need to reset the whole situation and repeat all the directions again. But by consistently standing in MITS, for as long as it takes, students really start to *see* you as their teacher. Respect starts to form in small ways. I even remember one time I heard a student say, while I was standing in MITS, "Okay c'mon she wants us to get started." Students will start hearing your non-verbal cues beyond that 20 or so seconds (lets be real it's more like a good minute, at least for me).

But here's the real question that I know you're all really asking, and the question I am asking myself: how does MITS build an equitable classroom environment?

Here's what we know about student-teacher relationships: they are built through the way students perceive you. It has nothing to do with you being cool and relevant and likable. It is simply what they believe you are communicating to them about yourself and your belief in them.

As a white teacher, students of color perceive me negatively right off the bat. And why wouldn't they? White people do not have a good track record with people of color. They

are uncertain of me. They don't trust me. I think not enough white teachers own this—that we carry a narrative with us that we need to actively build against. Through MITS, we start to build a counter-narrative. Instead of reinforcing their expectation that white teachers don't get them/don't approve of them/don't believe in them, we start to communicate a different story: that they are good enough, that we believe in what we are teaching them, that boundaries are important, that we care about the class time we've given them, and thus, we care that they use that class time. I'm not talking to any one of my students, yet I'm building an extremely positive relationship with them: one of trust and mutual understanding, one where they know that I know that they can do it.

To me, that's the foundation of equity in our school system. And I didn't even say a word.

**Reflection on Post 6.** In this post I explain another ENVoY skill, “The Most Important Twenty Seconds” (Grinder, 2018). I explain the skill, addressing the most recommended and least recommended approach to the skill. I then provide insight into the philosophical background of the skill and address exactly what we are communicating with students.

The research that I have found indicates a need for us to communicate non-verbally with students in order to build relationships, and I address how this skill enables teachers to do just that.

**Post 7: Interview with ENVoY Demonstration Teacher Elisha Tamura**

Today we have a *guest* on the blog! Elisha Tamura also teaches at the high school where I teach and is a certified Demonstration Teacher of ENVoY classroom management skills. This basically means that she is the real-deal when it comes to using ENVoY skills with fidelity in the classroom. Her other amazing credentials: this is her 18th year teaching, she has experience in both elementary and secondary settings, and has a license to teach both EL and Japanese. In her current position she is an EL teacher and co-teaches Human Geography. I get if you don't want to listen to a second year white teacher tell you about ENVoY, but Elisha is a teacher you should be listening to and I'm excited to share our conversation. She graciously sat down with me to answer some of my questions about how she sees equity work and ENVoY intersect in her teaching practice.

*Note: Elisha and I have both received differing levels of ENVoY training through Nancy Burns and Jacki Brickman, who now call their classroom management program "The Catalyst Approach". In the interview, I link Jacki and Nancy's website. If you are interested in receiving ENVoY training or want to hear more about how you might continue (or start!) utilizing ENVoY in your teaching practice or school-at-large, they are the people you will want to connect with next.*

Melissa: How did you get started using ENVoY?

Elisha: I started ENVoY training at the elementary level, at the beginning of Nancy Burns' and Jacki Brickman's initial "we're going to take this ENVoY thing on the road". I was sort of like "yeah, yeah, yeah...I don't really need to get certified, it's all good."

But then I got to high school. My first day of class we had advisory students the entire day and I had three difficult students in particular. Across the room one of the students said to another student “Shut the \*\*\*\* up!” and I had my light bulb moment and I was like, “What would Nancy do?” and I got down and whispered something like “We need to use better language” or whatever, but in that moment I was sold. I had no skills to use with high school kids. What works with elementary students is so different than what works with secondary if you’re doing it intuitively. ENVoY was my toolbox: strategic and very laid out and not based just on intuition. There are good teachers and then there are...you know. This is the art of teaching and managing. So that was my ah-ha! It’s all about energy. As teachers, we are all working to the same end. It’s just that one of us is going to exert more energy than the other. But when you don’t have the training and don’t see the thinking around it, it’s really hard to know how not to exert that energy.

Melissa: I think that’s the piece so many teachers are missing. It’s about the philosophy behind why you’re doing what you’re doing. The skills are just tools—what matters is what’s behind them and what’s driving you.

Elisha: I still see teachers in the hall going straight to power. And I think “Oh! If only I could just turn your body! Just drop your volume a little bit! If you do that, things are going to go so much better for that student. But often it doesn’t end well.

Melissa: People will often talk about de-escalation techniques in that situation.



Elisha: That's all ENVoY! If everybody had ENVoY, there wouldn't even be any reason to go there because kids and teachers aren't flipping off the handle.

Melissa: Because you've already created that classroom...

Elisha: Exactly—a classroom that's low breathing, and mindful. When we're just repeating things to students over and over and using their name over and over, we could be putting students into flight and fight mode. You're also elevating that student's status to the rest of their audience, or your class. Suddenly, everybody knows what Bill is doing. Suddenly, Bill is the bad kid. You're elevating that student in a way that you don't want to elevate.

Melissa: How does ENVoY help your students in particular? Is there a racial or cultural group that you think ENVoY helps the most, or in particular?

Elisha: Can I intersect EL kids here?

Melissa: Totally!

Elisha: I'm thinking about Exit Directions. It's visual and students are able to foster independence. Even if they can't read "chromebook", they can see a chromebook on the screen. And of course, I believe what is good for multilingual students is what is good for all students. It's important to be as clear as possible. And when you have a toolbox that all teachers are using, it's consistent. The expectation is very clear. Students who are

multilingual or students who are autistic who don't always understand the same social cues that "If I'm yelling at you it means I'm angry!" No, we don't yell in an ENVoY classroom and you don't need to read the expression on my face because I'm always going to approach you from the side. It brings the whole affective filter down. And for students of color—if you just know that a certain teacher isn't going to approach you from the front, it makes all the difference. Often I see power happening and intuitively teachers might want to go to power. But if you stay consistent with influence approach, students start to know: I'm not going to get in your face.

Melissa: And that's what I've noticed as a white teacher. I'm already in this position where I have more societal power, so by me intentionally not using that to control your behavior, I'm starting to level that racial power struggle as much as I possibly can in the classroom setting. I'm always thinking about power versus influence.

Elisha: It's huge. And you're keeping kids in the room, which if you're looking at racial disparities... we don't want kids to be sent out. For me, we might step out in the hallway. We are going to talk about it: side by side, with no eye contact, and looking at a third object.

Melissa: I hadn't even thought of that, using ENVoY in the hallway.

Elisha: Yeah! I keep my back to the wall. I angle myself so I'm not facing them. I always drop my voice to a whisper. I'm trying to be less intimidating. Students are much more

likely to come down. That's your deescalation right there. But there are kids that are really hard...

Melissa: There are kids that no matter what you do, they're already all the way there.

Elisha: They've been hurt by the system so many times. I don't fault them for that. But you're trying to maintain the relationship. And bringing them in the hallway keeps it private and you're taking away the audience. With ENVoY there's less to discuss.

Everything you expect is completely clear to students. Like students know: "both of these teachers are going to stand by the board and point until I do it."

Melissa: So you might as well just do it.

Elisha: This year, I have three ESPs (ESP= paraprofessional) in one hour and they are just like, "What? What are you doing?" and I'm like "Yup, this is ENVoY." and they're hooked!

Melissa: Wow, that's awesome because they really notice.

Elisha: They say that it's so different than what they see in other rooms and kids are able to work and focus. Kids aren't surprised anymore. They know for all four of us that it's going to be the same treatment. There's no "Oh I know this teacher won't let me do it, but this teacher will..."

Melissa: You're not using your power to surprise them into a situation, so they're less in fight or flight.

Elisha: The classroom and my management style is very predictable for them. Which hopefully transfers to them being more successful.

Melissa: The more time you're in the room, the more time you will spend working, which will lead to students actually completing work and being successful. How do you feel about the general advice that teachers get for classroom management: "build relationships, use students names a lot etc."?

Elisha: Why and how? What does that mean and what does it look like? If you take Healthy Classrooms (a more advanced ENVoY training), you learn that you shouldn't use the names of the students who are not doing what you want them to do and there are different strategies for when you should use certain kids' names in order to either elevate or lower their status. For me, I try to use everybody's name at the door, in a private setting. But in the room, with the kids who tend to be misbehaving, I never say their name. Because the more you say their name, the more everybody knows who they are. And everybody knows that Ben is the one who isn't doing what he's supposed to if all you're saying is Ben's name. You can make relationships in different ways without always saying their name.

Melissa: And those are the kids who are always getting their names said. So they're dreading hearing their name and so is everybody who is doing what they're supposed to who never get their names said.

Elisha: Everybody will know who Ben is. So I spend my time trying to say the names of the kids who I want everybody to emulate.

Melissa: Right, so they're the kids who have the status in the room.

Elisha: Everybody should know Diana's name because she's doing the right thing. They also give a bunch of other techniques. One technique is the "sandwich technique".

Something like you take a regularly good kid, and then a kid that you want to elevate a little bit in a good way, who you want to do what the other kids are doing more, and then you take another regularly good kid. You sandwich their names so the group subconsciously thinks of all those kids together.

Melissa: So now the group is thinking, "Oh wow, she's actually doing what she's supposed to!"

Elisha: And it can be something super basic, like having your pencils out or opening to page 50. But that's a skill I'm still practicing.

Melissa: Yeah that sounds really hard! I need to be more conscious about how I use student names.

Elisha: Another one I do is put three boxes on the board when I want three answers from students. And then I check off as they give me answers. And so if I only get one, I'll wait. Because if I don't ever give in they know that we aren't moving on until I get three answers. And these are all explicit strategies, they aren't just intuitive.

Melissa: Yeah, they have to be taught.

Elisha: And not just taught but coached. And that's the part ENVoY is really good about. And it's an investment in your school because its expensive.

Melissa: But it helps teachers actually do it.

Elisha: You can't just sit and get.

Melissa: Yeah, this year has been really hard for me to keep up with ENVoY. I feel like I'm not at the level I want to be at but its really difficult when you're by yourself practicing the skills. I might do one or two, and then another halfheartedly. I catch myself doing it wrong all the time and then I'm like "Oh, shoot!" because the moment has passed.

Elisha: And that's where it's so important that they do site visits and we get coaching as Demonstration Teachers. If they weren't coming, I don't know what I would be doing in the classroom. I even have notecards hanging up in the back of my room with each of the seven gems.

Melissa: That's awesome! They have so many good things. I noticed they now have college credits you can earn for ENVoY.

Elisha: Yeah, and they even have a Trauma-Informed ENVoY class! It's just such a good program for teachers and schools to be consistent with students. It's important to have a school-wide understanding.

Melissa: What are some typical misconceptions of ENVoY?

Elisha: "It looks like they're standing up there and doing nothing!" "You're being too nice on them!" I also see teachers not doing it to fidelity and then others getting the perception because of them that ENVoY is not effective. ENVoY is so subtle. Like when you're helping a student, you are supposed to point at the work with the arm that is in between you and the student. So if people don't have the training, they aren't aware that even your arm movement is intentional.

Melissa: What would you say to those that think ENVoY isn't confrontational enough?

Elisha: Well, ENVoY says that there are times when you need to go to power.

Melissa: How do you think ENVoY differs for teachers of color?

Elisha: Well, I obviously can't talk for all teachers of color. But there are teachers of color who are opposed to ENVoY who actually know a lot about ENVoY.

Melissa: Do you know what their argument is?

Elisha: I've heard through the grapevine the word "oppressive". So I'm not really sure why they think that.

Melissa: I would be really interested to know why they think that.

Elisha: And I mean, I can see where they might think that. There are times when I'm trying to redirect a student and I come up from the side and I'm pointing and smiling and kids are like, "Get the \*\*\*\* away from me! Oh my god, you're in my business!" So there are times like that where I can sense I'm a little bit in their space. But then that takes professional judgement to back off and know that the student has other things going on today and needs to be managed in a different way. But in a non-ENVoY situation, that teacher may be like "Why aren't you doing the work! C'mon, I just want you to work!" and "You're being rude to me! Don't talk to me like that, I'm your teacher!" and it just escalates. But I've talked to other teachers of color who love it. There's multiple perspectives. And I mean, if there's a fight in the hallway of 20 kids, you're not going to



be in influence approach. You're going to go for all power because at that point its about safety. But the thing is, because students are used to me whispering and low-breathing, when I go to loud volume it's much more effective because they aren't used to hearing it from me.

Melissa: So now they're like "Oh crap, this is real." So maybe you're increasing your effectiveness and giving yourself more room to respond.

Elisha: And if you only see one situation of ENVoY, that's your single story. And people who actually go and observe different Demonstration Teachers will quickly see that teachers still maintain their own authentic style and you can still do call and response and high-volume class discussions. You're just taking away the high-power approach.

*If you are a teacher of color who has thoughts about ENVoY, or equitable student achievement and classroom management, I would love to hear your perspective. Please contact me at [mbougie02@hamline.edu](mailto:mbougie02@hamline.edu).*

**Reflection on Post 7.** In this blog post, I interview a teacher of color who practices ENVoY in their classroom. In my research, I am addressing how racial power manifests itself in the student-teacher relationship. To aid my understanding, it was important that I talk with teachers in the field who are using ENVoY and how they see racial equity addressed in an ENVoY classroom.

**Post 8: So you have high expectations for your students. But do they really believe that?**

Today I am going to share the final skill that ENVoY considers one of its “Seven Gems”, or their seven most essential skills for classroom management success. This skill, like the “Influence Approach”, is also in the “Seatwork” phase of the lesson with a management focus on student productivity. It’s called “OFF/Neutral/ON” and works hand-in-hand with “Influence Approach” to address how we might know WHEN a student needs our help being productive rather than just assuming when a student is off task and a student is on task.

The OFF in “OFF/Neutral/ON” refers to a student who is obviously off task. The “ON” refers to a student who is obviously on task. The problem with student productivity is that some students fall into what ENVoY calls “Neutral” territory. They aren’t obviously off-task, but they aren’t on-task yet. And lots of times as teachers we let these “neutral” kids go because at least they aren’t OFF-task, right?

So as I’m writing this, I’m thinking of myself today. Students had work time in my ninth grade English class. Looking back, I was kind of a mess. I wasn’t awful...I was approaching from the side, I kept my voice quiet, I used the influence approach...probably not as much as I should have but I was trying. What I really didn’t do? I didn’t necessarily always push those neutral kids into on-task behavior. I would react to off-task behavior by bringing them back to neutral, but then, I would just walk away to help another student, often one who had just called me over because they needed

help. Here I was in what I like to refer to as “superhero mode”, which is basically when I just start reacting to behavior. Student raises their hand, I go right away. Student is off-task, I go to that student immediately. I’m being managed by the classroom instead of managing myself. So how do we influence actual on-task behavior? Instead of just neutral behavior where students hold their breath and wait for you to leave so they can get off-task again?

Don’t leave so fast. Cut the superhero mission. You aren’t saving anybody today, Ms. Bougie.

Here’s what ENVoY suggests:

1. If a student is off-task, get their attention with as much influence as possible. “Influence” is all your non-verbal cues: a look, proximity, etc. Basically, you’re doing your thing to get the student to neutral. Often, what I do is just move toward the student without looking at them, maybe with a finger to my lips as a non-verbal signal of why I’m moving closer to them. Sometimes I’ll say their name.
2. Then here’s the big one. Once the student is in neutral, you pause. **YOU DON’T MOVE ON TO THE NEXT KID CALLING YOUR NAME IMMEDIATELY** (this is such a bad habit for me!). Look anywhere but the student’s face (I usually try to look at whatever they are supposed to be working on). Here is where you **WAIT** for the student to go from Neutral to ON-task. ENVoY points out that at this point, you are waiting for the student to breathe. Students often stop breathing or go into high-breathing while you

are redirecting them. We want to get them back to breathing while we are still there.

While I'm waiting here, I will try to focus on my own breathing as well. Often, if I'm breathing slow and deep, the student will start to settle next to me.

3. Once the student is actually working—for me I look for typing or writing, or actually reading (not just that they opened the book—that would be neutral behavior) and the student has taken a few breaths, then I might take a step or two back, wait for another breath or two, and then slowly walk away to the next student.

Getting a student to neutral, for me, is pretty self-explanatory. Go non-verbal if at all possible, go verbal if you have to. But getting myself out of superhero mode and actually waiting for the student to be all the way on-task is HARD and takes some re-wiring. It's hard, at least for me, to slow myself down. We want to help students, we want them to be on task, and we are only one person and there are 30+ of them!!!! But we have to take a step back and remind ourselves that no learning is happening if a student is in neutral, pretending to be on-task. All they are thinking about is you going away. When OFF-Neutral-ON is done right, we are communicating some crucial information to students that builds their perception of us. and contributes to a healthy student-teacher relationship. Here's what we're saying when we push students to On-task instead of just neutral:

1. You have high expectations. This is the big one. You can give students the most rigorous work in the world. You can tell them all day how many amazingly high expectations you have for them. But when you let a student sit in neutral status rather than on-task, all of that hard work you put in front of them means nothing. You just said, without saying anything, “You know you don’t *really* have to do this well. I’m not going to make you. I don’t *really* care that you’re *actually* working, just as long as you don’t bug me or anybody else.” But when you use OFF/Neutral/ON, and you enforce, and stay by the student, until they are in full on-task behavior, you are communicating very clearly: you actually have to be working. It’s not about shutting up and not annoying anybody. It’s about you doing the work. You are communicating that you know that they can actually do the work and you aren’t budging until they are actually doing it. When you walk away when a student is only in Neutral, you are telling them that you don’t *really* want them to work, you just want them to *act* like they’re working. You just want them to be *quiet*. I will be the first to admit that I communicate this to students far too often. I am in such a “superhero” mindset and worried so much about those kids that are so off-task, that by the time I get to the neutral kids, I’m too tired/overwhelmed to worry about the kids who aren’t quite on-task, but who aren’t off-task. I truly think that this jump from allowing neutral behavior to requiring ON-task behavior is where the rubber meets the road of high expectations. If we influenced students more often to move from Neutral to ON-task behavior, we would really be helping them reach their highest potential.

2. You're really there for them. You aren't just going to run away after they ask their question and leave them high and dry. You're going to wait around a little bit and make sure they are able to complete the task before you run off. *You care about their success.*
3. You have boundaries. This is where you communicate the opposite of what "superhero mode" communicates. You have boundaries for your time. You are not just going to react to every little thing a student does. You aren't their puppet. You are self-controlled and purposeful. Students start to respect you for this. In superhero mode, students see you as somebody they can control and walk all over and trick. When you step out of superhero mode, you own your own space and your classroom. You aren't at their beck and call. The more you communicate to students the respect you have for yourself, the more students are going to see you as someone they can respect and can trust that because you respect yourself, you will respect them as well.

For me, classroom management is all about being intentional about what I really want students to believe about themselves and about education. What do I not only want students to know, but what do I want them to believe? When I line up my actions with what I truly want students to feel deeply about themselves and their education and my role as their teacher, I start to manage the classroom in a way that lines up with those beliefs. Like I've said before, classroom management is all about managing YOU, not your students. When my behavior truly communicates to students the things I believe, not just my words, I'm showing them that my classroom is a place of authenticity and integrity. I think that's where the ENVoY skills really become about how we build

relationships with students: relationships that center them rather than us. The more conscious and intentional we can be, the more we will consistently communicate to students what we really want to say: we believe in you, we care about you, and you and your success matters. Period.

**Reflection on Post 8.** In this post, I discuss the last essential ENVoY skill. I address the least effective and most effective implementation of this skill. I also provide insight into how this skill connects with cultivating an equitable classroom.

**Post 9: Interview with ENVoY Demonstration Teacher Lindsey Burdick**

I am really excited to feature Lindsey Burdick on the blog today. Lindsey is another ENVoY Demonstration Teacher that I work with and was also trained through what is now called The Catalyst Approach (an ENVoY classroom management program for schools and teachers in the Twin Cities). Lindsey has been teaching for seven years. She has a middle school background teaching science classes working with students across the board: from honors students, to multilingual students, to students placed in alternative learning settings. Now, she teaches high school Biology and Anatomy and Physiology. I met Lindsey through our school's Equity Team and she stands out to me as a white teacher who thinks deeply about her position in the classroom and how she might use her position to create a classroom that can be a place where students thrive both through relationships and with their academic work. While I have not observed Lindsey teaching, from those who have I hear she is a master with the ENVoY whisper.

Melissa: How did you first get involved with ENVoY?

Lindsey: My first year was awful. Like AWFUL. I basically didn't want to come back from winter break. But that's how I got hooked up with ENVoY. I had an observation with an instructional coach who emailed my principal and said, "I think you might lose a new teacher unless you do something to help because she isn't doing so good." The day before winter break that year, a kid that I thought I had done everything in my wheelhouse to help, and who I actually had a good relationship with, just had a freak out and whipped a locker lock at my face. It missed me by two inches and nailed the wall behind me. And that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I was like "Okay, I'm done with this!" So the instructional coach emailed my principal and the principal emailed Nancy Burns (note: Nancy Burns is one half of The Catalyst Approach). She came in and talked to me and she got me interested in ENVoY. She gave me some feedback and it felt like the first real tangible advice that anybody had given me in the six months I had been teaching. And I could see an immediate difference. It wasn't this thing where it was like, "Try it for three weeks and see if it slowly makes a difference." It was like, "Literally do this next class period and see if it makes a difference." And it did. I've always been a psychology buff. So the idea of falling back on non-verbals and the basic ways that humans communicate with each other without words made sense to me. At that school is where I got certified as a Demonstration Teacher.

Melissa: What was so great about ENVoY at the time?



Lindsey: I was going home slightly less exhausted everyday. I was going to work and actually enjoying it.

Melissa: Who do you think ENVoY works for? Does it work better for some students than other students?

Lindsey: So I've heard kick back about ENVoY, even in our district. And I kind of get where it comes from. One of the arguments that I've heard get brought up are that some cultures that are more verbal would find ENVoY off-putting. But I have had success with it across the board, despite racial or cultural background. But you have to know your kids. This isn't a set protocol where "the book says do it like this so you have to do it like this". If you have a certain kid where if they ask you a question and you don't talk to them and just stare and point, and you know that would set them off because being ignored really upsets them, then you wouldn't do that. You use other strategies. You might go verbal for a second and then point and look at the board. So I feel like, just with anything, you have to differentiate it for your students. I've found that because I'm a white female, I maybe have to differentiate it more for students who are racially different than me. But I think that has to do more with the fact that I'm white and the culture that I grew up with and my background. I need to change what I do to fit our students.

Melissa: How would you define your management philosophy and how does ENVoY play into it?

Lindsey: I think ENVoY put words to the things I didn't know how to put words to. Like how to balance between the productivity and the relationship. I would say that I try to hang closer to the middle but I definitely swing closer to the relational side. And that definitely took a few years for me to figure out. Like how far on the relational side can you go before you start losing productivity.

Melissa: Yes! That's something in my second year I am still trying to figure out.

Lindsey: Yeah, it's really hard. But if you swing too productivity, you sometimes damage the relationship. It's kind of like a circle. ENVoY relies on relationships with kids to work effectively and it helps you build relationships. They pat each other on the back. But if you swing too productivity, you're not able to fall back on the mutual understanding.

Melissa: How do you think ENVoY does that? How does ENVoY build relationships or maintain them?

Lindsey: The thing that pops into my head first is that it limits power struggles.

Melissa: Totally!

Lindsey: I mean, you get into teaching because you like kids (or I hope so). And I really believe that kids inherently want to learn and do the right thing. Sometimes they don't make that choice, but deep down kids want to be "good" kids, whatever that means. So if,

at least, you can take away those instances where you're just struggling for who is in charge, you can save a lot of the relationship. And that would be true in any kind of relationship. If you can take away the daily squabbles, the relationship itself will be stronger. That's how it is with students. If you can take away those nit-picks and their public response, where you then have to say something publicly and the whole class is involved ...nobody wins in that situation. So that's what ENVoY helps with: keeping things deescalated, which obviously helps the relationship.

Melissa: How does race impact your classroom management style?

Lindsey: When I first got started teaching, I got stuck in the thing that most new teachers do, thinking, "I just have to be more strict. I just have to crack down more and more and more". Saying to myself, "Well, you won't do that, well you can't do this either now. You can't handle this, well now you can't talk. You can't look at each other either now."

\*Laughs\*

Melissa: YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING! \*Laughs\*

Lindsey: You're just trying to get the upper hand. And as a white person in white culture, I think that makes sense. At least for how I grew up, it made so much sense to just say: I'm going to be authoritarian and you need to respect me just because I'm older than you or something. And at the time, I wouldn't say that's how I thought but looking back, that's how I acted even if it's not how I thought.

Melissa: Like deep down, that's how you felt even though it wasn't what you wanted to say you felt.

Lindsey: Right! And especially when I talk to some of our students of color, especially our black males and I should say black females: respect is a two-way thing. I can't tell you how many times I've heard from students, "Well you respect me first and then I'll respect you." And as an adult it is my job to be the first person to respect. I don't need to get in this thing of like, "well, you do it first!" I try to come from the standpoint of showing the kids I can be trusted to respect you. If I tell you this or this, I will stick to it whether it's a negative or positive thing. If I tell you that I'm going to call mom if you do this, then I'm going to do that. But also if you do a great job at this and I tell you I'll recognize that then I'll do that. I want to come across as trustworthy and fair. I'm trying to be transparent about the things that I'm doing. If I do something that cracks down and for example, I'm going to have students sit in straight rows for the next two weeks because I just can't, then I'll tell them why. Lots of people get stuck in the trap of not wanting to explain themselves or they don't want to get into a conversation with the class because they are worried it will turn into a big argument, but I've learned it's so much better to make space for those conversations. Most teachers, I want to believe this, want to be fair to their students. And if you can try to be transparent, it can really make a difference and help build relationships.

Melissa: Yeah, there's a reason behind what you're doing.

Lindsey: Yeah! Like I said, with some students who culturally work differently than me, they rely on a two-way street of respect.

Melissa: How do you think ENVoY impacts students' academic success? Or does it?

Lindsey: In lots of ways. I don't think anybody would disagree, you're going to learn better from somebody you at least have somewhat of a decent relationship with, somebody you know isn't going to be unpredictable or freak out at you because they don't have other types of coping strategies than just getting loud. We were talking about what teenagers need. They need structure and consistency. They need to know that even if they show up in different ways, that you'll show up in the same way. That's one thing I feel ENVoY really helps with. It helps me show up the same way everyday.

Melissa: Totally! Because I know that I'm going to start right there (\*points to my teaching spot\*) and I'm going to do the ABOVE (Pause) Whisper and it's always going to be the same, so you can do whatever you want because it won't impact how it looks like I perceive you or how I teach you.

Lindsey: All these procedures help you. Because it doesn't matter what's going on in your head, or if you're still kind of mad at the class from the day before, ENVoY helps you fake it until you make it. It looks like you're giving them a new chance and that you're relaxed, therefore they feel more relaxed. It's a cyclical thing. So to get back to academic success: ENVoY builds predictable relationships and it makes the class a

consistent and less chaotic environment. People are listening to each other. For example, ENVoY teaches about how to do volume control and thinking about the audio noise you bring into the space, and the visual noise you put on your walls. The less noise you bring to the space, the lower the energy level, which helps to make the room a better learning environment. So I don't have test data to back that up, but I do think ENVoY helps teachers to build better environments and build a better relationship, so how could it not improve academic success?

Melissa: Do you feel that ENVoY helps your classroom become more equitable? On Equity team, we talk often about what would make an equitable school, or what an equitable classroom looks like. How does ENVoY contribute to how you see those things?

Lindsey: I think the first thing is consistency. With all of our own internal biases, it's so hard to catch yourself when you're falling into those before it's too late. But when you have a procedure for things, when you personally have made it habit level to react to a specific situation in the classroom in a specific way, then you respond based on that habit instead of your reactions in that moment which are just based on your unconscious biases. So it helps me limit my own unconscious biases from controlling my reactions. How I manage the classroom isn't based on whatever is popping into my head. But also to talk more broadly about equity, ENVoY helps the classroom to feel like a space where everybody feels listened to. When the space is a better listening space, students feel more welcome to put their voice out there. This is really important for me in thinking about

equity and making students who have traditionally been marginalized from the education experience feel like they're part of the classroom. If your classroom has that listening feel, they are going to feel more welcome. It's not the same 10 kids raising their hands.

Melissa: Exactly. Like when you're told to shut up less, you're going to be more willing to not just always shut up. A lot of people think that when you're pausing so much with ENVoY that you're just waiting and wasting time, but what I'm really doing is non-verbally saying to students, "I'm not going to tell you to shut up. You're going to choose eventually to be quiet, hopefully \*laughs\*, but I'm not going to tell you that your voice is not important right now even though I know that my voice needs to be the most important at some point because I have things to teach you and you are here to learn." So like you're saying, hopefully that helps students to see your room as a listening space. They feel less like, "Ms. Bougie just wants me to shut up." They feel like, "Ms. Bougie is listening but she wants to talk now so I'll listen to her."

Lindsey: It helps to spread the power around a little bit. Like as a white female teacher in a building of mostly kids of color where most of the teachers are white...I mean, we can try to be as equitable as possible with all of the things we have our students do... but if you are constantly commanding all of the control and the voice space in the room, you are still not making it a racially equitable space. You are still saying that my voice is the most important. And in our heads we can be like, "Oh, it's because I'm the teacher or I'm older." But realistically, intentionally or not, you're also saying, "It's because I'm white."

Because I'm the teacher up here telling you what to do and you have to listen and what you think about it doesn't matter.

Melissa: Exactly. You're saying, "I'm white and I'm in this position because of all the good ol' whiteness stuff that happened to me so you have to sit here and listen to me." So it's like...how do you avoid saying that to students with every last thing that you do. And in my opinion, I've found that ENVoY has helped me find a way to not say that through my non-verbals.

Lindsey: I definitely agree with you. And I've had students say they really like it...because with ENVoY you have all these visuals and routines and you have these Exit Directions that they know they can expect. I had a kid come back from last year, who was sitting in my room over lunch as I was typing up Exit Directions for an assignment and she was like, "I wish more teachers would do that! I love that about your class. We'd come in and what we shouldn't do was in red and what we should do was in green. So I would just scan for the green." She liked the consistency.

Melissa: They feel like they can trust you. I can imagine that it's kind of scary for a lot of kids, feeling like when the teacher is talking they don't know what to listen for and then some just tune out. But if you have a teacher who gives you Exit Directions, you know that you're going to be fine. There's reassurance that at the end of the big explanation,



you'll know exactly what to do. Man, when we talk about ENVoY, I just wish I could give it to all teachers. It's really Step 1 for an equitable school.

Lindsey: It's the elephant in the room. When we think of all the problems we have with equity in the education system, I can tell you how ENVoY personally helped me overcome all of these issues in the classroom. Or at least helped me do better with them.

Melissa: Or at least think about the mistakes you're making more clearly. It helps you to become more reflective of what you do as a teacher and how it might elicit a certain reaction out of students. I can't tell you how many times I've looked back when something went wrong and, because of ENVoY, know exactly what I could have done better and have a road map for how to do it differently next time.

Lindsey: It helps you to be more thoughtful as a teacher. Because if you're thinking about the way you use your body, you're becoming a more careful teacher in how you're presenting yourself to students and how you're interacting with them. How could that possibly be negative?

Melissa: ENVoY shows you how to build relationships with students. Otherwise so many white teachers get into this trap of thinking that building relationships is about being like, "Oh you like rap? I like rap!" Or, "look! This book is about a black kid who goes to parties and his parents left him, that's relevant!" And it's so frustrating to me to watch that happen to students and teachers.

Lindsey: Exactly, that's not authentic.

Melissa: ENVoY really sets up a framework for authenticity. No matter where you come from or what your background is: this is the expectation. This is how we relate to each other in the space.

Lindsey: It models respectful relationships for our kids. Our bodies, as humans, respond in certain ways to certain cues from other people. And if something gets escalated, or they're afraid you're going to get angry with them, and they watch you respond in a soft way, in a predictable way, we're modeling appropriate social and emotional skills and appropriate responsive behavior.

Melissa: That's totally how I think about classroom management! I am the model of how I would like everybody to act and learn in this space. I am going to do exactly what I would like you to do. If I want you to be quiet, I will be quiet. I even try to put that into instructional practice using the document camera and model notebooks. I'm definitely not perfect, but it's the goal. And I really learned how helpful this is through co-teaching. If all teachers had ENVoY training, you would have so many less issues on the whole with co-teaching because you wouldn't run into the problem of modeling contradicting behavior to students. You could actually model how to follow the teacher's model.

Lindsey: Totally. It wouldn't be about philosophy anymore. There is a common base: this is the way we respond in these situations. And for me personally, in my co-teaching over

the years, the times it has been the toughest is when somebody swings way further on the productivity end than I do. And it's hard for them too. Because when they get frustrated with me being too relational, they tend to swing even more productivity. But then I feel like I have to be even more relational. And it pushes us into philosophical corners. And that's only ever happened in situations where that person did not have ENVoY training. In situations where we both are ENVoY trained, co-teaching has been much more cohesive because we both understand what we're bringing to the table energy-wise.

Melissa: Right. You can sense the other's intentions more clearly. You don't have to guess, "Do they know how this is affecting this?"

Lindsey: It would be so helpful for co-teachers to have ENVoY. It's important that people have the full story about ENVoY. Just pointing at the screen and ignoring kids is not ENVoY with fidelity.

Melissa: It's a shared philosophy with practical actions to support the philosophy. But it's not a rule book. So yes, I am going to point at the screen if a student immediately says, "Ms. Bougie I don't know what we're doing." But then if the kid really can't get started, after I've attempted to foster their independence, I go around and I whisper, "Okay, so where are you stuck?" And that's how I show them: I believe in you and think you can do this. But what I'm not going to do is immediately think you're dumb and can't figure it

out and go help you right away. You are intelligent and can read the board. So I'm going to let you read the board first. Because you're competent and I believe in you.

Lindsey: So it's really frustrating when people judge ENVoY based on somebody who isn't getting the proper support to do it right. It's like judging salad based on a McDonald's salad. But actually McDonald's salads are pretty good.

Melissa: \*Laughs\* yeah, McDonald's salads are delicious. What about hamburgers? Don't eat a McDonald's hamburger and then judge all hamburgers.

Lindsey: I do feel like we are getting a newer set of teachers who are interested in ENVoY and sounding the alarm a little more.

Melissa: Yeah, and that's really why I wrote this blog. We had to choose a project for my grad school thesis and I thought, you know, I'm going to write about this even though its controversial. And it's interesting because more people have come and talked to me about ENVoY and are thinking about how equity is about more than representation, but how it is fostered in our relationships with students. I'm trying to get teachers to see that there is a philosophy that drives the ENVoY skills and that's really where the gold is. Because you're a teacher, the skill is something you're going to do in the way that best fits you and the situation with your kids at the end of the day. But if we had a consistent philosophy about how our actions communicate specific beliefs to students and were

dedicated to improving implementation of specific skills across the board that staff members could use to more consistently treat students equitably...

Lindsey: Everything would be 100% better. It's so exhausting to watch situations that ENVoY could have helped so much. Maybe it wouldn't have fixed the whole thing, but it would have deescalated it. I just watch thing after thing after thing happen. It's like you're in a car without breaks and you're ready to crash. We could change the way we're doing things. We could turn this around.

**Reflection on Post 9.** In this blog post I interview another white teacher who practices ENVoY in her classroom. As with my other interview, it was essential to speak with teachers about how they personally saw equity and ENVoY connect in their classroom practice. While my first interview was with a teacher of color, this interview was with a white teacher. They both provide unique perspectives on their role in the classroom and how their race and students' race impact their ENVoY practice.

### **Post 10: What the Research Says**

So far on this blog, I've spoken to my own experience with ENVoY and equity as well as interviewed two experienced ENVoY teachers about their views on how ENVoY might help point us towards what an equitable school really looks like in practice. I have also given a detailed overview of the most important seven skills, "gems" as ENVoY calls them. I've explained how I use them in the classroom, the philosophy behind each of the skills, and how I feel I could specifically improve my own practice.

Last year, when I started using ENVoY in my classroom, it was about attaching myself to whatever I could to feel like I was somehow doing this teacher thing right. Looking back a year later, I'm so thankful that ENVoY was the thing I latched onto. As I started to use the skills more and more, and adapt them for my own students and classroom, I started to feel deeply that something was really *right* about what I was doing with ENVoY. It wasn't perfect (and it still isn't—I'm no pro). But, what began to emerge for me in my teaching practice was that the philosophy that backed ENVoY was really a philosophy of educational equity. Here's the deal about me and this career path I chose: I'm here to do right by my students. I'm not here to save the world. I'm not here to make some sort of dramatic difference in some kid's life. I'm not a therapist that is going to heal everybody's emotional wounds. But my promise to my students: I'm here to do right by your education. I am not going to waste a year of your time when you could be learning and growing.

I'm white. I went to a really white, really rich high school and was in all the higher level classes. I had friends that went on to Ivy League schools who were much richer than I was. They traveled to interesting places and said interesting things in class, all of us participating for that intrinsic feeling of learning and a little bit of healthy intellectual competition. They played instruments and sports and spoke other languages and won awards for things. They did service work. Education was a value all around us, all of us

in pursuit of that beloved feeling of learning. We all were given the gift of the opportunity for self-actualization. We didn't know another way.

Now I teach. Not at a rich school or a white school. There is definitely a gap between what I know I experienced as my high school education, and what my students experience as their high school education. I'm sure you've heard about the "gaps":

-the achievement gap

-the belief gap

-the opportunity gap

-the curriculum gap

I want to add some more:

-the expectations gap

-the management gap

-the feeling gap

And here's the thing about gaps: it's all predictable by race. So what we're REALLY talking about is how our students of color do not get what our white students do. Black

and brown students are not given: achievement, belief, opportunity, expectations, complex curriculum, management of behavior, or the feeling of learning. White students are. I'm not the first to say it and I better not be the last: THIS, all this gap crap, is not doing right by students. It's not what I signed up to do.

ENVoY is one way that I try to do right by students, in one aspect of the multifaceted way that students move through school. It's the way I close the management gap in my classroom in a way that cultivates careful use of my position of authority and aids me in thinking clearly about the way whiteness impacts my teaching. While I started my graduate school thesis last June, I was just starting to really understand that there was a philosophy of educational equity behind ENVoY. But now that I've done the research, it's starting to become even more clear to me. ENVoY is an actual management system that takes down barriers to achievement and opportunities, communicates belief in students to students, and sets up expectations, giving students and teachers the support to teach and learn complex curriculum that gives students that truly amazing human feeling: learning. So I'm not saying it's *the* way, but it better be *a* way that you seriously consider. I would argue this especially if you're a white person working with students of color.

Here's what the research tells us about the connections between classroom management and educational equity, the connection that ENVoY sets its foundation on:



Classroom management includes three things: the decisions teachers make, student-teacher relationships, and the expectations that they set for students (Jones, Jones, and Vermette, 2013). (Notice: classroom management has nothing to do with control of students.)

Classroom management differs from discipline which refers to consequences students receive for specific behaviors they display (Lassonde and Lassonde, 2010). (ENVoY does not deal in consequences for actions.)

Classroom management is one of the most important factors that contribute to student success at school (Jones, Jones, and Vermette, 2013).

Jones, Jones, and Vermette (2013) point to eight characteristics of a highly effective relational approach to classroom management (you might notice that ENVoY includes all eight of these characteristics): student-teacher relationships, high expectations for student behavior, non-verbal cues and redirection, teacher consistency, teacher perseverance and assertiveness, capitalizing on human resources, restorative justice, and school wide consistency for student behavior.

Zeki (2009) suggests that interpersonal communication in general is mostly nonverbal (ENVoY is all about the nonverbals).

If most of our communication with students is nonverbal, and our relationships with students are based in communication with them about our high academic standards and

our openness, helpfulness, and respect towards them (Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2013), then we need to ensure that our communication of those things are nonverbal. (Again, ENVoY is all about how we communicate and build relationships with students nonverbally.)

Trustworthiness and care are the two most important aspects of a student-teacher relationship. Trustworthiness in a teacher is built through explaining grading, exercising authority in a way that students perceive as fair, offering feedback quickly (if not immediately) and preserving the student's credibility and dignity in front of their peers (Teven & Hanson, 2004). (These are all things that ENVoY has skills to support.)

Zeki (2009) cites Cruickshank et al. (2003) stating "regardless of a teacher's knowledge, experience, education level, or position, a teacher is credible only when his/her students believe s/he is. Since eye contact and facial expressions are considered as signs for reflecting teacher's self-confidence; they have an impact on teacher's credibility and trustworthiness," (p. 2). (Long story short: non-verbals directly contribute to a student's sense of how trustworthy a teacher is.)

The greatest contributor to a student's perception of caring relates directly to a specific teacher strategy: high nonverbal immediacy (Teven & Hanson, 2004). Immediacy relates both to our closeness and high amount of non-verbal interactions with another person (Mehrabian, 1969, 1971). The non-verbal interactions that increase immediacy include eye contact, gestures, calm body position, positive facial expressions, and proximity

(Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). These also all happen to be teacher behaviors included in ENVoY classroom management skills (Grinder, 2018).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a relationship as “the way in which two or more people, groups, countries, etc., talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other”. However, a student-teacher relationship takes that basic relationship and puts it in the context of an educational space. Often in personal relationships, we base the effectiveness of relationships on personality and likability. Instead, Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green, and Hanna (2010) cite Bender (2003) who clarifies that student-teacher relationships are more complex and teacher-driven. Student-teacher relationships are built through the way students perceive the teacher’s communication of clear learning goals, their interest in the student personally, and clarification of appropriate and positive behavior for the environment (Beaty-O’Ferrall, Green, & Hanna, 2010; Hall & Hall, 2003; Rogers & Renard, 1999).

Meehan et al. (2003) found that positive student-teacher relationships led to less aggression among African American and Latino children that had previously been labeled as expressing aggressive behavior. The effect of the student-teacher relationship proved to be even more effective for them than for White children that had also been labeled aggressive (Meehan et al., 2003).

Relationships build resilience in students (Henderson, 2013). Resilience in students is one of the most important aspects of academic success (Henderson, 2013). Peters and

Woolley (2015) further found that high control levels (aka a high level of classroom management implementation), which included establishing rules, guidelines, and boundaries for students, were the greatest predictor of academic success for students. Interestingly, they are also considered protective factors and help to build resilience in students (Benard, 2004; Theron & Engelbrecht, 2012).

The philosophy of educational equity that exists behind ENVoY, that I've attempted to clearly lay out in my blog this semester, sits solidly on the research that I collected about the connections between non-verbal communication, classroom management, relationship building, and academic success. There is very little research about ENVoY specifically, and the research I have found is all very new. But what I have seen seems to show that ENVoY not only lines up with the research philosophically, but is proven to work in practice. Here's what I know to be true: it's doing right by students. And that's what I'm here to do.

**Reflection on Post 10.** In this post, I attempt to address some of the conclusions I've drawn about ENVoY and equitable classroom management. I also provide some research to support the philosophies that I have offered about ENVoY classroom management and how it contributes to equitable classrooms and schools. I attempt to draw some closure on the project and process.

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