

Mentor's Introduction to Audrey Reeves

Christine Ballengee-Morris, PhD

The Ohio State University,
Columbus, OH

It is my pleasure and honor to introduce Audrey Reeves and her research about trauma-informed pedagogy. Too often, we, as citizens in the United States, have viewed horrific scenes of violence occurring in the schools. Too often, students go to schools with no food in their stomach; no parent home to send them off or greet them when they come home; abuse, drug addiction and more. Too often. Her research examines how teachers, with little to no training, find themselves dealing with students' trauma and home issues and that as a teacher, they are not educated to do so. This is also compounded with the fact that there is no emotional support to help the teacher cope with this type of stress in the classroom. Through a case study of one teacher and her students, Audrey documented the struggles and struggles, wins, and suggestions/advice. Audrey is committed to incorporating arts-based approach including social fiction stories, poetry and a visual art piece to express the lack and need for self-care when teaching at risk students. Utilizing that approach, Audrey and the teacher collaboratively created an art piece that demonstrated compassion fatigue solutions. The students also made art, which was placed on one side of their piece, illustrating their stresses such as, "My mom cries at night when she thinks

we are asleep because she can't pay the bills" (Reeves, 2019, p.iii). As many know, this type of ongoing stress can lead to teachers leaving the field.

At the beginning of Audrey's research, we explored the works of Paulo Freire and she was influenced by his work. Freire (1973) wrote that "to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world" (p.3). If people adapt to the world, accommodating themselves to situations, they become passive; unable to change anything. If they integrate and have relationships with the world, they become dynamic and will be able to change things, creating culture. By developing a critical attitude, people can overcome a posture of adjustment and become integrated. According to Freire, teachers and students should experience this process in education by experiencing art, expressing through their cultural arts, integrating subjects, integrating one to the world, developing a critical consciousness and encourage dialogue. Instilling critical consciousness requires a new pedagogy, attitude, and approach. This is where Audrey begins with her research. What are teacher preparation programs doing about student traumas issues? What can be done to prevent compassion fatigue for the future teachers? Courses? Workshops? Should we not be exploring teacher self-care? How can that be taught? I conclude with a thought that Freire expressed during an interview I did with him, "Education is a process that requires collaboration, democracy requires patience, and life requires both." Audrey's research is compelling and currently relevant.