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Significant Relationships

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Editorial Introduction: Significant Relationships

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Editor of *Networks*

"No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship."
Dr. James P. Comer, professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale University.

Dr. Comer's famous quote is often referenced to highlight the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Although the teacher-student relationship is important, Dr. Comer's initial lecture referred to the learner's connection not just to the people teaching, but to the material, environment, and experiences. In other words, learners invest and engage in the things they find meaningful – whether it is through a book, a YouTube/TikTok video, or a teacher. This issue's three articles highlight the various ways educators invest and engage in their own learning to enhance the learning and engagement of their students.

Mark **Matuzas** invites us into his English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Korea to explore the factors that influenced his students' willingness to communicate in English. He found that knowing and using students' backgrounds, intentionally developing social interactions in the classes, building on the familiar, and using consistent and on-going assessment, feedback, and placement enhanced students' willingness to communicate.

Chris **Sclafani** used community mapping with his third-grade students to connect his students to each other and their local community which created a meaningful and authentic literacy experience for the children. Through this project, students not only developed a deeper understanding of their local area, but used technology to conduct research and develop a presentation. During the project, students also practiced interpersonal and communication skills

as they reflected on their experiences in the community and created recommendations for a broader audience.

Using the framework of self-study, David **Schmid** and Mark **Townsley** used critical friend observation and feedback to improve their teaching practice. Even though the content and modality of their courses were different, their investment in each other's work fostered a stronger collegial relationship, improved their pedagogies, and enhanced the connection between their teaching and scholarship.

Each of these articles present a different perspective on how to support students in investing and engaging in learning through developing significant relationships with people, places, and content. As you reflect on the articles, I encourage you to ask yourself, "Where can I enhance my students' abilities to create significant relationships to enrich their learning?"