RAISING THE VOLUME
with Techa Smalls-Brown

Sixth Grade and Up
Mastery of core subjects and twenty-first century themes is essential for all students in the twenty-first century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts; world languages; arts; mathematics; economics; science; geography; history; and government and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving twenty-first century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

**Global Awareness**
1. Use twenty-first century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

**Civic Literacy**
1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Work Creatively with Others**
1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.
Everyone has a story. It’s our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

“Raising the Volume” is a series of Black stories. These are stories about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. These are stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard’s Artists-in-Residence Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, “Raising the Volume” gives a platform to Black community members whose lives matter.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, “To break down racial barriers, start where you are.” So, let’s start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume Episode XXII, please email Sterling DeVries at sdevries@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XXII.
Raising the Volume
Episode XXII: Techa Smalls-Brown reviews the importance of practicing mindfulness.

(CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH EPISODE XXII)
Techa Smalls-Brown discusses how important mindfulness is and how she practices it to bring her best self into the classroom. She says, “In order to fully bring yourself to whatever you do, you have to have a level of authenticity. Mindfulness brings that authenticity to what you do.”

According to the Mayo Clinic, “Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you’re sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.”

How are you feeling today? Take a moment to become aware of what you are feeling at this exact moment. Techa states, “Your outside work and life reflect each other and what you do in the classroom.” Is there something weighing on you from your outside life that is currently interfering with your performance in the classroom?

Marcus Amaker and Techa Smalls-Brown go deeper into anger and how we all deal with anger differently. According to her, “It is ok to feel anger. It is a natural emotion that we all feel. It is a message. If we feel anger, there is something that triggers that. There is something that lies beneath the surface of that anger.” She encourages you to take a step back when you feel angry and figure out why you are angry and where it stems from. Recall a time when you were really angry. Think about that time and dive deeper into the memory. What triggered your anger? How did you react? What would you have done differently to address your anger?

“You have to care for yourself in order to care for others,” Techa says. She talks about how there are many different ways that you can practice self-care. Some of these include meditation, breathing techniques, journaling, exercising, or whatever you need to do to be self-aware. If you had a technology-free day and free-from-school day, what would be some mindful activities that you would like to participate in?

Techa Smalls-Brown has taught African American history for over ten years and comments on the resilience of Black people and how they had no choice but to be resilient throughout history. She explains, “Resilience is a part of our DNA. We have gone through so many things and still managed to create beauty, to see art, and to make change.” Techa and Marcus discuss some African American jazz musicians and how even though their music does not have lyrics, it still tells a story and evokes emotions.

Begin by listening to this jazz piece called “Morning” by Yusef Lateef. 3

For the first two minutes, just listen to the music. How does the music make you feel? For the last eight minutes, on a piece of white paper, either draw or write how the music makes you feel. Does this song make you feel a certain way?

ABOUT TECHA SMALLS-BROWN

Techa Smalls-Brown is an artist in every sense of the word. Using her gifts to add beauty wherever she goes, Techa has been an educator for 20+ years with the Charleston County School District. As a teacher she has taught exceptional children, African-American studies at the secondary level, and Elementary Montessori. She is also endorsed as a Gifted and Talented Teacher and has recently completed the Omega Institute’s Transformative Educational Leadership (TEL) program under the direction of Meena Srinivasan, Daniel Reschtschaffen, and Linda Lantieri. As a result of this work, she is equipped to integrate mindfulness-based social-emotional techniques in academics as well as focusing on equity and ethical learning in school systems. Techa is a true visionary. Currently she is working on an M.ED. in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on Trauma and Resilience in educational settings through Concordia University, Portland. With this degree, Techa seeks to transform the lives of students and educators across the state, teaching them about trauma, resilience, self-care as well as how to support students’ social, emotional, and academic development in education. Techa is married to her soul mate, Michael J. Brown, who has been a part of her life for over 23 years.4

ABOUT MARCUS AMAKER

Marcus Amaker was named Charleston, SC’s first Poet Laureate in 2016. He’s also an award-winning graphic designer, an accomplished electronic musician, the creator of a poetry festival, and a mentor to hundreds of students. His poetry has been featured by PBS Newshour, SC Public Radio, Huffington Post, A&E Network, Charleston Magazine, and more. In 2019, he won a Governor’s Arts award. His poetry has been studied in classrooms across the country and has been interpreted for ballet, jazz, modern dance, opera, and theater. Marcus has recorded three albums with Grammy Award-winning drummer and producer, Quentin E. Baxter. His latest book is The Birth of All Things (Free Verse Press).  

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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