

CASDA EdCasts Episode 2

Alternative Educators: Serving Students Beyond the Stigma

Alternative education presents unique challenges for many districts. Disengaged students are often isolated within their home buildings, leading to a stigma that reinforces their negative school experiences. Mike Schell, a social studies and special education teacher at HFM BOCES Adirondack Academy, and CASDA's Gregg Weinlein discuss the challenges of serving these students and the rewards that come from making deep connections that can alter the course of their lives.

 **Download the podcast here or by visiting www.casdany.org/podcast.**

CASDA aims to provide educators with research-based programs that can make a difference in the lives of their students. Educators Jennifer L. Martin of University of Mount Union and Jane A. Beese highlight a program that was able to foster the kind of connections and impact discussed in the podcast. Their paper *Girls Talk Back: Changing School Culture through Feminist and Service-Learning Pedagogies*¹ highlights a program that "explores the intersection of feminism and service-learning by describing the creation of a women's studies course for girls attending an alternative high school."

The authors sought to empower girls through critique of sexist media representations and social norms and service-learning through volunteering to support survivors of domestic violence. Students who previously "felt powerless to combat the sexism they faced in their lives" became invested in fostering positive change in their school and community. Their work demonstrates the impact that creative alternative education can make in the lives of disadvantaged students.

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"On any given day, the most important thing I do might not be a lesson about the French Revolution, it's the walk to go get a coffee and talk about their problems. The most challenging and rewarding part of the job is developing those connections and seeing how it pays off in the long run."

- Mike Schell, social studies and special education teacher, Adirondack Academy



¹ Martin, J. L., & Beese, J. A. (2016). Girls Talk Back: Changing School Culture through Feminist and Service-Learning Pedagogies. *The High School Journal*, 99 (Spring 2016), 211-233.