

2nd Interviewee: Kendra Gragg

Occupation: Teacher at San Francisco 49er's Academy in East Palo Alto

Interview Date: 3/18/19

Location: San Francisco 49er's Academy in East Palo Alto

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Jordan- please state your name and occupation

Gragg- [My name is] Kendra gragg, teacher at 49ers Academy

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Jordan- all right and what class do you teach here?

Gragg- [I teach] reading intervention

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Jordan- how would you describe the majority of your students, just overall like personality wise?

Gragg- they're [students at 49ers Academy] energetic they are very bright, fun, this group in particular is just a very kind, sweet group

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Jordan- so your 7th and 8th grade?

Gragg- just [teach] 8th the grade this year

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Jordan- how and when did you become part of the school system in East Palo Alto?

Gragg- i actually started at 49ers academy in 2001 and I was placed there through a program called teach for america

1.08

Jordan- and why did you choose to become involved in this school district specifically?

Gragg- [I became involved in this school district] through my placement with teach for america, so that program targets under resourced districts, so i knew going into my teaching career that i wanted to serve underperforming or under resourced districts that were in need and so the program that i was with placed me at 49ers academy

1.37

Jordan- how would you describe this school's community?

Gragg- [The community at our school] is super family oriented, like we have a very close relationships with the students and also their families that we build up over many years. I mean i literally have kids in my classroom now that i knew as babies so it's definitely a strong community feel and family feel at this site in particular

2.01

Jordan- alright and kinda changing gears in your own words what is gentrification?

Gragg- so to me gentrification is the encroachment of a more affluent, wealthy community onto a higher need, low income community and often times it can kinda, in

some ways feel like a mini invasion of sorts where new folks, new organizations, new companies are just little by little encroaching upon that land, that space, the community, the schools, everything.

2.51

Jordan- what do you think are like the causes of gentrification, and effects of it as well?

Gragg- i think particularly here in the bay area it seems to be one that i mean the tech boom seems to have contributed greatly there's just more and more people moving into the area and there's just limited space, limited housing, and so that's more people and limited space, i think it's sort of a natural repercussion

3.24

Jordan- and in which ways have you noticed effects of gentrification in the community of the 49ers academy?

Gragg- so i see the effects of gentrification particularly in my classroom i mean i see it everyday working with the students and families and the number one way i think it shows up most blatantly or most obviously is with housing. So many of our families right now are struggling with housing the rents have grown astronomically and then starting with that piece , i mean housing is a basic need, a basic necessity and then from there there's just this sort of trickle down effect, all these stressors that impact these students directly on a day to day basis cause if you don't have a place, you know if your housing is insecure, the family struggling with money, they may not, you know some of our students don't have enough to eat, they don't have a place to lay their heads and that can create, not only physical stressors, but the emotional ones as well. You know the students bring that sort of emotional trauma and impact into the class room and then its understandably harder for them to learn, harder for them to concentrate because they have all of these basic needs on their mind, consciously or subconsciously

4:48

Jordan- How do you think gentrification affects students like teenagers and preteens more than any other age group

Gragg- ya thats a great question, I think gentrification has a particular impact on teens and preteens because i think they are more aware of it as opposed to some of our younger students who may feel the stress at home but may not necessarily understand where that's coming from or why. And I think our older students get it, they literally see with their eyes the physical changes in the community, it looks different and feels different. And they understand the social justice side of it and they understand the more equity pieces, they are just more aware of the inequality that they've faced and lived through and you know it's more just sort of in their face.

5:45

Jordan- how would you say gentrification affects your students lives socially and economically as well. Because i know you talked about housing and security, so does that affect their school life?

Gragg- from an economic standpoint definitely, i mean the families may not have that extra money to spend on school supplies, uniforms, shoes, you know so they just don't have means to provide all the things our students need on a day to day basis, which we try to then support some of that. I think from a social standpoint we probably see that more at the highschool level when our students then filter into much more affluent schools and a more affluent district, and then are put side by side with the students that are in the surrounding communities. I think sometimes when it comes to the social sides of gentrification there is a feeling with students where they are somehow considered or seen as less than, which couldn't be further from the truth, and I think that has an impact on them both emotionally and socially.

7:25

Jordan- And when did you really start to notice the big changes in this community because you have been here so long?

Gragg- I think that the biggest change was probably with facebook honestly. I mean I can literally stand outside my classroom door and see the facebook campus right across the way. And I think that was the most visible sign of the change and that's really when I think we started feeling the most impact from the housing crunch.

8:20

Jordan- Do you have any specific stories in the classroom or anything that has really stuck out to you or touched you here?

Gragg- Um, let me think about it. (takes long pause) I think its just, i think one of the hardest things is when you have a really bright, capable student, who has been you know, you've been working with for years and years and years and middle school is such an important time, making that big transition into high school. I can think of one family we worked with, the brother, the sister, the parents for years and years and years and then shortly after the older student made that transition to high school and that the younger sibling was coming, um, they were back and forth to central valley just trying the best that they could to, to hang onto housing here and secure something and they ended up reluctantly having to move out of the area and it was just heartbreaking because they were finally on the right track we had helped them get a lot of the academics stabilized and they were really excited to be continuing at the local high school and to have too you know, move for them start over, fresh, loose that stability it

can really be, its crushing for the students and the family and i think it's heartbreaking for us after seeing the progress they've made.

10:10

Jordan - Have you noticed housing and economic insecurities in your students? Have they ever come to you talking about that stuff or asking for help or?

Gragg - Yea, for sure. We see I mean, I would say on a weekly basis there are definitely discussions about housing that happen with students and families And you know some are shy about it, they are more reluctant but it will come up sometimes in other ways when we get to the root of the issue, you know why a student is so tired in class or why is the student late, it's often times what comes out is he or she has been sleeping on the couch at a relatives or friends house with multiple people in the living room so yeah I would say on a weekly basis stories like that come up or you know the older students to they understand economic pressures that their parents are under or students wanting to find a way to get jobs to help their parents financially or you know just talking about how they can, how can we help them find a house or place to stay or can we send transportation for them because they are living far away but want to continue going to the same school.

11:29

Jordan - Have there been any changes that you've noticed in academic performances when it comes to the real stress that housing insecurities bring?

Gragg - I don't know that i could necessary make a direct correlation between the classroom performance in terms of grades and scores and the housing crisis i can say i think what i've noticed or what i can point to is the level of resiliency that our kids have and to know what they're going through behind the scenes and to continue to see them push through and try to perform as well as they can in the classroom, i think that's what stands out the most. But definitely, again, the trauma that it causes our students and just them trying to get by on a daily basis, meeting basic needs it can def be a huge challenge to switch gears and get them to focus on us history or analyzing the theme of a story, it makes it really hard, but our students are, they've been incredibly resilient.