“Get Up Stand Up”: Fighting Systemic Injustice Through Teaching

Deborah Loewenberg Ball
TeachingWorks Virtual Summer Institute
July 19, 2020
The last few months have seen a huge rupture in everyday life.

Music: “Echo,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock
(available on Spotify here)
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“We are all enduring the same storm—but we’re not all in the same boat.”

–Brittany Packnett Cunningham

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Is there a growing recognition that racism is systemic?
Being uninsured is deadly. A comprehensive review of studies, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, confirms that thousands of people die each year because they don’t have coverage. We need to close these gaps and cover everybody with improved Medicare for all.

PNHP
pnhp.org/mortality
DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE IN THE U.S.: 
K-12 TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Brown (2014); Carver-Thomas (2018); Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge (2018); Irvine (2003)

Brown (2014); Carver-Thomas (2018); Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge (2018); Irvine (2003)
RATES OF SUSPENSION:
BLACK STUDENTS VS. WHITE STUDENTS

BLACK BOYS MAKE UP:

- 8% of school enrollment
- 25% of those suspended

BLACK STUDENTS MAKE UP:

- 15% of school enrollment
- 31% of those referred to law enforcement or subjected to school-related arrests
Clip from Fifteenth Annual Brown Lecture in Education Research
H. Richard Milner IV
10:17–11:19
(Available on YouTube here)
Why Are “Bad Boys” always Black?
Causes of Disproportionality in School Discipline and Recommendations for Change

Carl H. Hornbe

I was a middle-school teacher employed in a large urban school district when the stories related to school discipline were first told. I taught in a predominantly African American school and observed that black students frequently received discipline referrals, suspensions, and even arrest for minor infractions. These events were often triggered by minor conflicts or altercations that were perceived by the school staff as serious and disruptive. As a result, black students were more likely to be referred to law enforcement or subjected to school-related arrests.

The problem of racial disproportionality in school discipline is not unique to the United States. Similar patterns have been observed in other countries with diverse populations. For example, in South Africa, a study by the Human Rights Watch found that black students were more likely to be referred to law enforcement than white students, even for similar offenses. Similarly, in Australia, a study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that black and Indigenous students were more likely to be referred to police for school-related offenses.

These patterns have been linked to several factors, including structural racism, implicit bias, and systemic inequalities. For example, black students may be more likely to be perceived as disruptive or threatening, even in situations where white students would not be subject to the same treatment. This perception may be influenced by implicit biases held by teachers, administrators, and law enforcement officers.

In order to address these issues, several recommendations have been made. These include increasing diversity and representation in the teaching workforce, providing cultural competency training for teachers and administrators, and implementing fair and impartial discipline policies. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of addressing the root causes of these issues, including poverty, inequality, and systemic racism.

These recommendations are not new, but they have gained increased momentum in recent years due to the growing awareness of the problem and the ongoing efforts to address it. It is important that these efforts continue and are supported by all members of the school community, including students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

Carl H. Hornbe is an associate professor atWheelock College in Boston, Massachusetts.
So what would be involved in our title — to “get up and stand up” to fight systemic injustice through teaching?

What is involved in disrupting this very successful curriculum of white supremacy?
Teaching is constrained by policies, curriculum, testing regimes. . .

Teaching is highly idiosyncratic and individual.

Lipsky (1980), Shulman (1983)
Teacher: Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show us your reasoning by coming up to the board?

Dante: You did not!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Discourse Analysis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show up your reasoning by coming up to the board?</td>
<td>1. Deciding what to do to open a group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>what if you think that's okay.</td>
<td>2. Deciding what to do to launch discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>And you know, it might not be right. That it's okay because we're learning something new.</td>
<td>3. Framing the expectation for presenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>I'd like someone to come up and sort of be the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it.</td>
<td>4. Framing what it means to come to the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>and then this morning.</td>
<td>5. Encouraging student to present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>What about that?</td>
<td>6. Describing whether to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>What about that?</td>
<td>7. Deciding whether to comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Can you come up and sort of be the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it.</td>
<td>8. Setting norms for what to do when a student is presenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student</td>
<td>What about that?</td>
<td>9. Responding to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student</td>
<td>Looking at that person.</td>
<td>10. Taking up an individual student question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Oh?</td>
<td>11. Clarifying task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You want me to do that?</td>
<td>12. Setting task for the other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>You're going to make what you think this number is and explain how you figured it out.</td>
<td>13. Responding to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>I put one-seventh because there's...</td>
<td>14. Setting task for reasoning to student explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Did she say one-seventh?</td>
<td>15. Clarifying task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You agree or disagree. I want you to ask questions if you think it's somewhere you don't understand what she did.</td>
<td>16. Responding to student explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You're saying to make what you think this number is and explain how you figured it out.</td>
<td>17. Responding to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Youdid not.</td>
<td>18. Responding to student speaking out of turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Why did?</td>
<td>19. Responding to student laughing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You did not.</td>
<td>20. Responding to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Let's listen to her answer now. That was a very good question.</td>
<td>21. Clarifying task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Teaching is Dense with “Discretionary Spaces”

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<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Talk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Why would I try to explain what you think the answer to? And show you your reasoning by coming up to the board and try to tell you how you can use them. I'd like to show up and sort of see the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it. Why's she like to try that this morning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Grew into a pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student</td>
<td>Playing with hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>When someone's presenting at the board, what should you be doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Looking at them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Looking at the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Oh, who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You want me to write it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You're trying to make what you think this number is and explain how you figured it out,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>I put one-seventh because there's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Did she say one-seventh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>(Come to Pinda) Yes, that's one-seventh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Before you agree or disagree, I want you to ask questions if there's something you don't understand about what she did. No agreeing and disagreeing. summer. All you can do right now is ask Any questions. Who has a question for her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Okay, Tom, what's your question for her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Why did she do it? (Notice another student who says something to her from across the room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Go ahead, it's your turn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Why did you pick one-seventh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>You did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Let's close her answer now. That was a very good question</td>
</tr>
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What number does the orange arrow point to?
Explain how you figured it out.
Aniyah and Toni
Video: Aniyah and Toni

This video and additional supporting materials are available online here.
# Discretionary Spaces in Just These Few Seconds

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<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Discretionary space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
<td>1. Joining a group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
<td>2. Launching the presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
<td>3. Launching a new idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&quot;Hello everyone!&quot;</td>
<td>4. Launching the presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
<td>91. Launching the presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>&quot;Hey, Albert!&quot;</td>
<td>100. Launching the presentation</td>
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Discretionary Spaces in Just These Few Seconds

Toni: Did she say one-seventh?

Teacher: What did she say?
Toni: One-seventh.
Teacher: Why did you pick one-seventh?
Toni: I put one-seventh because there's a fraction on the chart.
Toni: Why did you pick one-seventh?
Teacher: It's not a fraction on the chart.
Toni: Fractions are greater than whole numbers.
Teacher: What did she say?
Toni: One-seventh.
Teacher: Why did you pick one-seventh?
Toni: I put one-seventh because there's a fraction on the chart.
Teacher: Why did you pick one-seventh?
Toni: I put one-seventh because there's a fraction on the chart.
Discretionary Spaces in Just These Few Seconds
Seeing Inside Discretionary Space #19

- Toni is asking a question of Aniyah.
- Toni is laughing and playing with her hair.
- Toni and Aniyah are Black girls, who are positioned with different statuses in the classroom, have different physical embodiments, and perform their meanings and understandings of their Black-girlness in different ways.

What to do next?

(Gholson, Evan-Winter, Neal-Jackson)
What to Do Next in Discretionary Space #19?

• “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”

• “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”

• “What do others think?”
What Does Each of These Different Exercises of Discretion Do?

POSSIBLE NEXT MOVES

• “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”

• “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”

• “What do others think?”

POSSIBLE RESULTS

• Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.

• Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.

• Toni is excluded and her mathematical point is sidelined.
What Do These Three Different Teaching Moves Do to Toni and the Other Children?

• Toni’s contributions to the class are not read as appropriate or valuable.
• Her participation and mathematical attentiveness are made invisible.
• Her mathematical identity is not supported.
• These combine to eclipse her humanity.

• Toni is named as being a distraction, mocking Aniyah, and as playing with her hair.
• She is not seen as someone who contributes to math discussions, or who asks good questions.
• These combine to images of Black girls as “troublemakers” and not “good at math.”
Looking at the Micro Through the Macro: Discretionary Spaces and the Curriculum of White Supremacy

Black girls:
- % of enrollment: 15.6%
- % of in-school suspensions: 41.6%
- % of single suspensions: 52.0%
- % of multiple suspensions: 36.6%

White girls:
- % of enrollment: 36.6%
- % of in-school suspensions: 50.1%
- % of single suspensions: 32.9%
- % of multiple suspensions: 28.4%

Epstein, Blake, & González (2017)
Video: Aniyah and Toni

This video and additional supporting materials are available online here.
Using a Discretionary Space to Disrupt Instead of Perpetuate the Pattern

• Reading Toni as asking a real question that she means
• Hearing Toni’s question as central to the advancing of the mathematical content
• Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as disruptive

• Other children hear Toni being read as asking an important mathematical question
• Toni is positioned as a contributor to the discussion
• Children see a teacher attending to a Black girl’s thinking and not as someone making trouble
What would it take to learn to use the discretionary spaces in teaching in ways that disrupt the curriculum of white supremacy, instead of reinforcing and perpetuating it?
What Regularly Fills the Discretionary Spaces in Teaching?

1. Teachers’ experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.
2. Normalized practices in schools that institutionalize dominant values and habits.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll
Anyon (1981), Heath, Martin, Tuck
What Regularly Fills the Discretionary Spaces in Teaching?

1. Teachers’ experiences in a society filled with racism and oppression.
2. Normalized practices in schools that institutionalize dominant values and habits.

Professional education does not effectively intervene on these.

Professional education and teaching experience often teach these.

Lortie (1975), Banks, Grant and Koskela, Moll Anyon (1981), Heath, Martin, Tuck
What Does It Take to Disrupt the Patterns Through Which a Black Girl Is Marginalized?

• Seeing Toni’s question as key to the class’s work
• Taking as axiomatic the brilliance of Black children, and thus Toni and Aniyah

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- . . . AND having something different to DO

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- Seeing Toni’s question as key to the class’s work
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- ... AND having something different to DO

Knowing and using mathematics in teaching (MKT)

Interpreting Toni as asking a mathematical question that she means

Having a repertoire of practices that can be adapted and used in contexts

Disruption Requires Commitment and Learning

• Seeing how racism and white supremacy permeate us, our institutions, and our patterns of practice
• Understanding oneself and one’s identity and positionality in that history and experience of white supremacy
• Seeing the discretionary spaces that fill our practice
• Being committed to using those discretionary spaces to disrupt patterns of racism

• Understanding Black children as brilliant — instead of as “struggling” or “exceptional”
• Knowing content deeply to be able to hear and use children’s ideas
• Developing broad and sensitive capability with language and communication
• Having a repertoire of teaching practices and nuanced skills at using them responsively in contexts
• Developing language, reasoning, and skills for continuing to grow and learn

...knowledge, awareness, beliefs, commitments

...knowledge, skill, judgment, adaptability
This takes collective professional and personal work.

The workshops and interactions in the week ahead offer one such opportunity and resources for our ongoing work as educators in the struggle to use teaching as a force for justice.
We who believe in freedom cannot rest
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers’ sons
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers’ sons

That which touches me most
Is that I had a chance to work with people
Passing on to others that which was passed on to me

To me young people come first
They have the courage where we fail
And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on
Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power
Not needing the light just to shine on me
I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Struggling myself don’t mean a whole lot, I’ve come to realize
That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives

I’m a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard
At times I can be quite difficult, I’ll bow to no man’s word

Music: “Ella’s Song,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock (available on Spotify here)
“To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail . . .”

“. . . teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives . . .”

Music: “Ella’s Song,” written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by Sweet Honey in the Rock (available on Spotify [here](https://open.spotify.com/track/7956695998?si=60b87fa2a23948f0))
This is our work. To build teaching as a force for justice.

Our power is in our collective efforts to get up, to stand up . . . . . .

. . . to learn, to grow, to share, and to push forward with the fight.
What if we recognized this moment as also a possibility to reconfigure life towards the world we want? What kinds of new questions would we ask, what kinds of reimagining might we do together?

Na’ilah Suad Nasir and Megan Bang, Spencer Foundation (2020)
# Thank You: Colleagues and Students

## Colleagues
- Chandra Alston
- LaTisha Ballard
- Hyman Bass
- Alyssa Brandon
- Monique Cherry-McDaniel
- Nicole Cirino
- Francesca Forzani
- Nicole Garcia
- Maisie Gholson
- Imani Goffney
- Simona Goldin
- Mark Hoover
- Debi Khasnabis
- Cheryl McPherson
- Carla O’Connor
- Mikkaka Overstreet
- Carla Shalaby
- Kara Suzuka
- Kathryn Taylor
- Kyana Taylor
- Camille Wilson
- Suzanne Wilson

## Students
- Karen Ahn
- Gabrielle Bernal
- Annie Blais
- Amber Davis
- Rosalie DeFino
- Kolby Gadd
- Rebecca Gadd
- Susanna Farmer
- Lauren Hickman
- Lindsay Mann
- Blake Noel
- Darrius Robinson
- Sabrina Salazar
- Emily Theriault-Kimmey
- William Waychunas
- Charles Wilkes
- Amber Willis
THANK YOU!
dball@umich.edu
Slides will be available on my website
https://deborahloewenbergball.com/
(“Google” Deborah Ball)
Credits

Image on slides 2 and 57:
“Ripped Fabric Image” by clker user >\SAS.

Images on slide 3:
Interactive Coronavirus map and graph from The New York Times
Credits

Image on slide 3:
Photo from “As hospitals focus on coronavirus, patients with other illnesses wait in fear,” by Ellie Kaufman, CNN

Image on slide 3:
Photo from “World virus cases top 6 mln as leaders disagree on pandemic response,” The Edition
Retrieved from https://edition.mv/world/16988

Image on slide 4:
Photo from “Cuomo Allows Businesses to Deny Entry to Customers Not Wearing Masks” by Alexa Lardieri, U.S. News & World Report.
Image on slide 4:
Photo from “Should my kid wear a face mask? What parents need to know” by Grace Dickinson, *The Philadelphia Enquirer*

Image on slide 4:
Photo from “How the fatality rate of Coronavirus changes with age” by Niall McCarthy, *World Economic Forum*

Image on slide 4 and 55:
Photo from “Should your child wear a face mask in public? How do I get my child to wear a face mask?” by Amber Diaz and Sarah Cody, *News 8 WTHN.*
Credits

Image on slide 5:
Photo from “Why you shouldn't help your kids with their homework,” by A. Pawlowski, Today

Image on slides 5 and 55:

Image on slide 5:
Credits

Image on slide 5 and 55:
Photo from "Imagine math a home," Imagine Learning.
Retrieved from https://www.imaginelearning.com/at-home

Image on slide 6:
Screen capture from Brittany Packnett Cunningham's Facebook page.
Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/MsPackyetti/posts/560564601233456

Image on slide 6:
Graph from "COVID-19's Devastating Impact On African Americans," by Niall McCarthy, statista
Credits

Image on slide 7:

Image on slide 8:

Image on slide 9:
Credits

Image on slide 11:
Photo from “Protest erupts in Phoenix after viral video shows police fatally shooting man in parked car,” by Allyson Chiu, The Washington Post

Image on slide 11:
Graphic from “Why don't black and white Americans live together?,” by Rajini Vaidyanathan, BBC News

Image on slide 11:
Graphic from “Housing Segregation In Everything” by Code Switch, National Public Radio.
Credits

Image on slide 11:
Graphic from “The Criminal Justice Reform Plans of 2020: And Why Kamala Harris’ is the Best,” by Mia Brett, Medium

Image on slide 11:
Graphic from “Lack of health insurance and U.S. mortality,” PNHP

Image on slides 12–14, 22, and 44:
Photo from “Why You Need an Experienced Real Estate Agent” by Elizabeth Weintraub, the balance.
Retrieved from https://www.thebalance.com/experienced-real-estate-agents-1798883
Credits

Image on slides 12–14, 22, and 44:

Image on slides 12–14, 22, and 44:
“Noise.” by Flickr user G20 Voice
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Image on slides 13, 14, 22, and 44:
Credits

Image on slides 14, 22, and 44:

Data on slide 16:

Image on slide 17:
Photo from “19th Amendment Centennial Celebration.”
Retrieved from https://www.ctbar.org/events-education/19th-amendment-centennial-scavenger-hunt
Credits

Image on slide 17:
Photo from “When Did African Americans Actually Get the Right to Vote?,” by Sarah Pruitt, History.com.

Image on slide 17:
Image from “First Thanksgiving Meal,” History.com.
Retrieved from https://www.history.com/topics/thanksgiving/first-thanksgiving-meal

Image on slide 17:
Image from “Slavery: Good Times,” by Janet S., Racespective.
Retrieved from https://racespective.com/2015/07/06/54/
Credits

Image on slide 17:

Data on slide 19–21:
2013–14 Discipline Estimations by Discipline Type, U.S. Department of Education

Data on slide 19–21:
Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf
Credits

Data on slide 19–21:
Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf

Data on slide 41:

Image on slide 53:
Photo from “Teachers Share How Often Their Schools Talk About Race,” by Joanna Breault., We Are Teachers.
Retrieved from https://www.weareteachers.com/race-equity-teacher-pd/
Credits

Image on slide 53:
Photo from “See up to 16 Google Meet participants at once with tiled layout,” Gsuite Updates. Retrieved from https://gsuiteupdates.googleblog.com/2020/04/see-up-to-16-google-meet-participants.html