Public Engagement & Research Initiative

The Public Engagement & Research Initiative (PERI) at Bank Street College brings together research and public engagement to advance high-quality, culturally responsive public education. PERI facilitates research-engagement partnerships with schools and communities to explore and co-construct solutions to complex problems in education. Through these partnerships, PERI develops new narratives that support public education, reflect community needs, and re-center the best progressive educational practices for a multiracial democracy.

Our Approach

PERI's work includes three areas of focus: educator professionalism, family voice and vision, and the demands of democracy. Through our collaborative work, we build on Bank Street's longstanding commitment to improving education, with a deep focus on the knowledge and skills educators need to support learning and help schools and communities build a more just and democratic society. Through our research and partnerships, PERI contributes to the education field's understanding of professionalism, the power of family voice and community engagement, and the role of public schools in preparing children for democracy.

Our Work

PERI's research-engagement model is founded on the principle that research alone is never enough to make meaningful change in local communities, state policies, higher education systems, or society writ large. We believe that research, when paired with the engagement of practitioners, students, and constituents of the educational system, better connects findings to people's lives and struggles, making it more impactful in driving meaningful change.

Undergraduate Pathways into Education

Amid declining enrollment in teacher education programs, this research project builds on college students' growing interest in education as a field. Our research includes an in-depth study of undergraduate pathways into education, including interviews with more than 50 Gen-Z college students interested in education and their faculty advisors, such as directors of education studies programs, as well as a systematic review of more than 100 college and university websites for undergraduate teacher education and education studies programs.

To engage with a broader community of future and current educators, PERI hosts the annual Summit on Undergraduate Pathways into Education event for college students and their faculty advisors and mentors. More than 200 college students from 20 partner institutions gather for presentations, workshops, and dialogue, creating opportunities for connection and community.

Civics Education for Democracy Through Research and Engagement

This project focuses on supporting K-12 educators in providing students with high-quality civics education in and out of the classroom. Research titled "Education for Democracy In and Out of the Classroom: Civic Engagement and Learning in New York State" features case studies of six secondary schools across New York State and documents models of exemplary out-of-school civics learning, emphasizing the power of civics education to foster participatory democracy.

To engage with a wider network of educators around this work, PERI hosts the Building for Education and Democracy event series, which brings together public school educators and distinguished thought leaders to participate in dialogue on past and present public education policies to help support the civic learning experiences of all teachers and students.

For Democracy's Sake: Research-Engagement Partnerships for Bridging and Leading Divided School Districts
This research-engagement partnership project is based in two racially diverse suburban school districts in Westchester County and Putnam County, New York. In these contexts, PERI's research focuses on how parents, educators, public school constituents, and high school students make sense of "good" teaching and learning for a multiracial democracy. We connect the emerging themes from surveys and focus groups to research on good teaching and learning in order to support these communities in developing shared goals to support public education, our most basic democratic institution.

PERI also hosts regular engagement sessions within these communities to highlight the interconnectedness of people around shared values. Aligned with Bank Street Founder Lucy Sprague Mitchell's belief that democracy requires an understanding of the concept of interdependence, PERI's work supports district and school leaders to redirect the discourse and dialogue within their local communities toward high-quality, culturally responsive education.





