

Postsecondary Transition Companion Film:

## *Dream Out Loud* Discussion Guide



Mariah Romero and Alan Wagner prep donuts at the Pine Ridge High School coffee shop, which they help operate and manage. Since the shop opened in 2015, the graduation rate for students with disabilities at Pine Ridge has increased by 50%.

**P**ine Ridge, South Dakota, High School has launched an entrepreneurial initiative for students with disabilities living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Pine Ridge is one of the poorest communities in the nation, with an unemployment rate of 90% and a median income of \$4,000 per year. Pine Ridge High School has been recognized nationally for helping students with disabilities, including film subjects Alan Wagner and Mariah Romero, learn business startup skills by managing and staffing an in-school coffee shop.



**WATCH  
NOW**

Click to  
view *Dream  
Out Loud*.

### Before watching the film: Learning to dream

Before starting the film, ask audience members to answer the question—either individually in or small groups—“What is one dream you have for your future?”

### Learning to work

*“What we try to do here with our transition program is kind of expose our kids to what is out there after high school. By having a school-based program, that kind of exposes them to the nature of the job force.”*

—Kevin Shot With Arrow,  
Pine Ridge Special Education Coordinator

- What skills are students with disabilities learning by working in the coffee shop? What is the coffee shop teaching other people in the building about students with disabilities?
- Are there places in your school where opportunities like this are happening?
- If not, how could there be? What might be some examples?
- How do you feel about the fact that a student needs to have an identified disability in order to work at the Pine Ridge coffee shop?
- How might these opportunities be available for all students?

### Entrepreneurship development and paid work

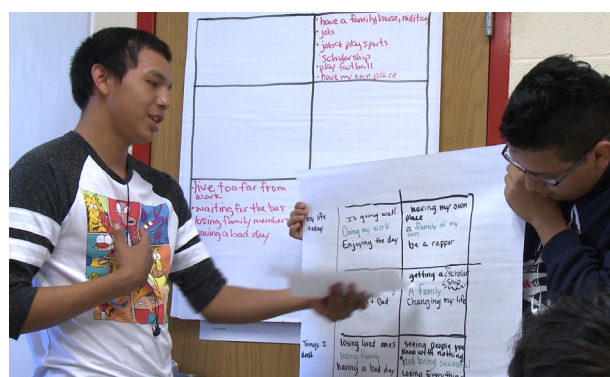
*“My advice to them is find something that you’re passionate about.”*

—Morris Brewer, Pine Ridge High School Transition Coordinator

- What entrepreneurship or business skills to you think Mariah and Alan were learning from their work at the coffee shop?
- What are the risks of a school-run business?
- Students earn a monthly paycheck at the coffee shop that can exceed \$500. What impact do you think that paycheck has on the student and their family?
- Of all of the researched factors and conditions associated with positive postsecondary education and employment outcomes for students with disabilities, having a paid job while in high school has the most research to support it. Why do you think paid work experiences prepare students for success in education and employment after high school?
- What motivates you to show up and do well in your school, work or volunteer opportunities? What motivates students in general to show up and do well in school?

### Cultural intersection

*“In Lakota teachings, it tells us all that we all need to prepare for, train, mentor for, and*



**Top:** Mariah sits with her mother Frenchie Tobacco at their Pine Ridge home. “I had Mariah right as I graduated from high school,” Tobacco says, “so she was motivation for me to do better.” **Bottom:** Students in Emmaline Tallman’s transition class identify their plans for the future. Tallman encourages her students to “dream out loud.”

*plan for our next seven generations.”*

—Bob Cross, Pine Ridge High School Native American History Teacher

*“Here at Pine Ridge School, we’re called the Thorpe Family. It doesn’t matter if somebody speaks slower or computes a math equation slower. We’re all in this together.”*

—Morris Brewer, Pine Ridge High School Transition Coordinator

- How does Pine Ridge honor the Lakota culture of students and staff?
- Are cultural differences recognized and valued in your school?
- Do you think having teachers who represent a student’s culture helps motivate students to stay engaged and learn?

- Can you think of examples where a student's cultural identity is a disadvantage?
- Who in your educational life was a role model and represented your culture?
- Are you familiar with disability culture?
- Who are the role models in your school for the culture of disability?
- Are students with disabilities who are also part of minority culture at a particular disadvantage in schools?
- What did you notice that reinforced a sense of family in Pine Ridge?
- When schools separate students with disabilities, how does this impact a sense of family or community?
- What are ways your school creates a welcoming environment for students and families of diverse cultures and experiences?
- What can your school or community do to create a stronger sense of family (or community)?

### Family and community expectations

*"I want him to go to college and hopefully get off the reservation. But I need him in my life 'cause...he fixes my house up when I need it."*

—Candance Zah, Alan Wagner's mother

- Have you ever felt conflicted about your family's wishes and your personal goals?
- How can community resources be engaged to support success for students and their families from various cultural backgrounds?
- Are we aware of our students' roles beyond that of being a student? Do we know what other responsibilities or commitments they have in their homes or neighborhoods that

may affect their capacity in school and beyond school?

### "Good side and bad side"

*"There's a good side and a bad side. Like there's like a good side and people be quiet and all that. Other side of housing there's like probably someone like getting stabbed, I guess—cars getting broken into, houses getting broke into."*

—Jordan Long, Pine Ridge Freshman

- Do you think most communities have a "good side and a bad side"?
- Are expectations different depending on what "side" you live on?
- Which "side" did you grow up on and how did it impact your learning and future?
- What do you think schools can do to support students who live on the "bad side"?

### Support systems

*"To actually stand up and speak out loud and share...that's one of the things that I strive for my students to do is dream out loud."*

—Emmaline Tallman,  
Pine Ridge Transition Specialist

- Who have been the supporters in your life helping you "dream out loud"?
- Is it the responsibility of schools/school personnel to help students "dream out loud"?
- How does your school or community create the space for students to "dream out loud"?
- What happens in your school for students who don't have strong support systems? How can this change?

### Writer

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