

MARISSA PIENAAR, M.ED.

FOUNDER OF EDUCATING MARISSA | LITERACY SPECIALIST & EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

"TO CO-DESIGN THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION, WE MUST BUILD AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF LIBERATION, HEALING, LITERACY, AND COMMUNITY."

Marissa Pienaar is an educational practitioner, reading specialist, and thought leader who helps educators look beneath surface-level challenges to respond with clarity, humanity, and possibility. With over 20 years of experience across K-12/adult reading instruction, independent study, Peace Corps service in Namibia, and leadership facilitation, Marissa equips educators to move beyond quick fixes and create learning environments where both students and staff can thrive.



PROGRAM FORMATS

KEYNOTE

Inspiring, visionary presentations that challenge standard assumptions about behavior, power, and learning while delivering clear, humanizing frameworks.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

Deep-dive sessions with structured protocols, collaborative sense-making, and immediate strategies to apply in classrooms or leadership teams.

VIRTUAL KEYNOTES & MASTERCLASSES

All offerings can be adapted for live virtual delivery via videoconferencing platforms.

Every session includes a digital takeaway featuring summary frameworks, self-reflection prompts, and curated resource links.

SIGNATURE TOPICS

1 LITERACY WITHOUT LABELS: GETTING CURIOUS ABOUT THE READING

KEYNOTE: 45-60 MIN · WORKSHOP: 90-120 MIN

When a student struggles with reading, we often default to static labels. This session reframes reading as a complex, dynamic process and teaches educators how to uncover reader identity, make metacognition visible, and diagnose what is actually happening beneath a reading difficulty.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Strategies to analyze reading behavior without reducing students to "good" or "bad" readers.
- Practical ways to support reader identity and strategy across all subject areas.
- Diagnostic approaches that center curiosity over compliance.

2 CARING AUTHORITY: BALANCING STRUCTURE WITH BELONGING

KEYNOTE: 60 MIN · WORKSHOP: 90-120 MIN

Educators are frequently told to choose between strict control and loose flexibility. Using the *Caring Authority Framework*, Marissa demonstrates how high systemic structure and high relational care come together to build safety, accountability, and true belonging.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- How to diagnose your operational profile (Control, Chaos, Friction, or Caring Authority).
- Concrete tools to set firm boundaries while deepening relational trust.
- Strategies to eliminate toxic classroom and staff dynamics.

SIGNATURE TOPICS, CONTINUED

3 THE FOUR EXPRESSIONS OF POWER: WHAT IS YOUR POWER MAKING POSSIBLE?

KEYNOTE: 45–60 MIN · WORKSHOP: 90 MIN

Power dynamics impact everything in a school—from classroom management to adult collaboration. In this session, educators examine how power flows through learning spaces and learn to shift from power over students to power *with* and power *to* co-create liberatory spaces.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A clear breakdown of the Four Expressions of Power in educational settings.
- Self-assessment tools to examine how authority and care are currently balanced.
- Actionable frameworks for sharing authority and building student agency.

4 RIGHT RESPONSE: HUMANIZING BEHAVIOR & CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

KEYNOTE: 45–60 MIN · WORKSHOP: 90–120 MIN

When behavior becomes a discipline issue, quick punitive reactions often mask the root cause. *Right Response* gives educators a framework for responding to behavioral challenges with proportionality, purpose, and dignity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- How to de-escalate power struggles by identifying unseen needs.
- Frameworks for maintaining boundaries while honoring student dignity.
- Protocols for restoring relationships and rebuilding classroom community after conflict.

FEATURED FACULTY & TEAM EXPERIENCE

THE CULTURE & COMMUNITY INTENSIVE

A 1-Day Immersive Gathering for Faculties, Leadership Teams, and Organizations

A structured, full-day experience designed to help teams examine their culture, address friction, and align their daily practice with their core values.

Opening Keynote: Setting an intentional tone around humanity and shared purpose.

Co-Design Protocols: Collaborative problem-solving around real classroom and staff culture challenges.

The Caring Authority Audit: Small-group diagnostic work to identify school-wide default patterns.

Actionable Next Steps: Translating organizational insights into concrete, sustainable practices.

TESTIMONIALS & PRAISE

"Marissa has such an amazing ability to create spaces that foster vulnerability and growth... As a Black woman I can't even begin to emphasize how important this is. I feel much more confident to show up as my full self, feel grounded in my ability to advocate for my students, and have learned a plethora of culturally responsive teaching."

Anisa, Middle School Teacher

"You inspire me. I strive to live life freely and boldly and unapologetically like you do. I hold your vision of Decolonizing, Dreaming, Dismantling, Designing in my heart and in the center of everything I do... You are a JEDI master, a warrior, a boss-ass abolitionist, a healer, a weaver, a seer, and doer..."

Sulynn, DEI Coordinator & Educator

"Marissa is a bright, loving, fierce, and passionate person... Thank you for the authentic ways you show up for yourself and your community each and every day. You deserve to be loved, valued, and supported in the invaluable work you provide in every space."

Raylene, Non-Profit Program Manager

CONTACT & BOOKING

Website: www.educatingmarissa.com

Inquiries: Submit booking requests via the [School & District Inquiries Form](#)

Available For: School District Professional Development, Conference Keynotes, Administrative Retreats, University Lectures, and Interactive Workshops.