Oak Park and River Forest High School
201 N. Scoville
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Special Board Meeting
Saturday, February 9, 2008
8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Board Room

AGENDA

1.   Call to Order & Roll Call

2.   Visitor Comments

3.   Board Work on Raising Student Achievement   Discussion

4.   Adjournment

C: Board Members
     Administrators

Conversations about race need to be fearless
An interview with Glenn Singleton

Educator promotes honesty and courage to make education equitable

By Dennis Sparks

Journal of Staff Development, Fall 2002 (Vol. 23, No. 4)

JSD: I thought about your advocacy for courageous conversations about race when I read this passage in Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard's book, Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation (John Wiley & Sons, 1998):

"Our continuing existence depends on a diversity of life that surrounds and quite literally inhabits us. And still we have an innate distrust of diversity. It is fear that makes talking about diversity so difficult. Fear that I will say something that will offend you or reveal my ignorance or prejudices. Fear that you will think less of me after I speak. ... We need to be and feel heard, to be willing to listen without feeling that we must change to conform to another's way of thinking and being. Until we can create a place for such conversations to occur, I doubt we will be able to create new of ways of being together that honor us all."

Singleton: Typically, white people fear that they will say something that will be viewed as offensive or will be misinterpreted by people of color. My experience, however, has been that when people speak from a place of personal truth and risk being uncomfortable, only then do their interracial relationships deepen. It's important that white people move past their fear of offending and being corrected to a place where they can understand the points of view expressed by people of color. People of color need to recognize that their experiences are unique and to have patience and compassion as we try to translate them to a white audience. Absent such a conversation, we form inaccurate views about what others are thinking and/or experiencing.

Conversations by race

JSD: In preparing for this interview, I learned how much many African-Americans withhold in cross-racial conversations. Here are three examples. An editor's note in an early 2002 issue of Black Issues in Higher Education noted that black cultural centers on college campuses provided "a place where we could enjoy each other's company and talk honestly and openly about what was going on around campus." By implication, the writer was saying that she didn't feel she could talk honestly in other campus settings. In It's the Little Things (Harvest Books, 2002), Lena Williams and Charlayne Hunter-Gault discuss in detail what blacks say to each other about whites but not to whites. In a New Yorker article from earlier this year, Henry Louis Gates Jr. says this about a manuscript purportedly written in the 1850s by Hannah Crafts, an escaped slave: "Crafts writes as an opinionated, keen insider, capturing the way black people talked to, and about, each other when white auditors were not around."

Singleton: Race is the hardest topic to discuss in our society. In interracial company, I am far more likely to be private and somewhat guarded in sharing my racial experiences because a powerful voice outside of me says my experiences are not valid. People of color often develop a couple of different personas, play multiple roles, and wear masks because we know that our honest expressions may be viewed by white people as rude or overly emotional.

Sacrificing our selves

JSD: In interracial settings, we all give up our authentic selves.

Singleton: Absolutely. My white counterparts sacrifice their authentic selves when they have feelings they don't express. This lack of authentic discourse is destructive to our relationships. We want to get to a place where our true thoughts can be shared and difficult questions can be asked.

Micro-aggressions take a toll

JSD: I'd like to pursue this a bit further. In It's the Little Things, Williams writes: "(M)y actions ... are the result of the cumulative effect of a lifetime of racial slights and injustices suffered because of my color." Williams describes what psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint calls micro-aggressions, "the things you experience every day that then add up and take their toll."

Singleton: That really resonates personally with me. Some days I'm less able to cope. People of color are like pressure cookers walking around with racial pressure building inside. For me, courageous conversation is a valve that slowly releases that pressure so that I don't explode, which will appear inappropriate, overly aggressive, or emotional. Black Americans, and other people of color for that matter, require healing places to deal with these micro-aggressions. That's what black cultural centers on campuses provide. That's why informal and formal caucuses of black educators at conferences and meetings are important. Without these safe spaces, we don't have opportunities to slowly release that pressure. It's also important that we have opportunities to heal by talking honestly and openly about these micro-aggressions in the moment and in the multiracial settings in which they actually occur.

Speaking our truths

JSD: Williams also observed that, "Whites said they are often afraid to speak openly and freely around blacks, fearing that a misstep or a word taken out of context would place them in the awkward position of having to defend their words, actions, and race." As you well know, honest conversations about race and many other important but potentially divisive and emotionally laden topics are rare in schools because of fears that conflict and anger will surface and irreparable harm may be done. The culture of most schools runs contrary to the norms of such conversations--speaking our truths, listening deeply to one another, and raising conflict rather than avoiding it. Is the creation of such a culture a precondition to courageous conversation about race, or does having the conversation change the culture?

Singleton: If it's considered to be a precondition, I am afraid we'll never get there. The prevalent norms are that we not speak our truth. It's important in these conversations that we agree that as we have these conversations, we agree to stay engaged with each other and committed to the expression of our truth. It's also important that we understand we will be uncomfortable.

Ultimately, we want to create safe conditions in which educators can be uncomfortable. Courageous conversations are clearly not an institutionalized practice in schools. Therefore, they are a gamble. But we are not experiencing each other fully if we do not communicate our honest and sincere perspectives and ideas. I challenge folks in the districts in which I work to have these conversations to better understand our multiple truths and to move to a deeper understanding of how we racially affect each other and how that impacts the schooling of our students.

Courageous conversation is an essential prerequisite for addressing the very significant and difficult challenges we face in closing the racial achievement gap. These conversations also help educators become more passionate learners themselves and more productive in their work. If we really want to close the achievement gap, we are going to have to engage in courageous conversations to understand the barriers to higher achievement faced by students and adults of color. Part of what I'm talking about here is understanding whiteness. People of color are

constantly explaining or defending their racial perspective and experience. White educators need to examine and investigate their racial experience if we are to move ahead. When we begin this discussion, those who are white may feel called to define and perhaps defend their racial experience. White people often don't see themselves as racial beings, so I can see why it's uncomfortable to learn that others have been thinking about their white identity a lot longer than they have. Because people of color understand at a deep level that we cannot transcend the racial hierarchy of our society unless we have courageous conversations, it behooves all of us to make those conversations productive.

It's important, though, to remember that this is not a conversation that is quickly over and done. We will not be finished at the end of this interview, Dennis. I hope we come back for more conversation, and that's what we need in schools. I work at all levels of the school system, and I've found that when you invite adults and students to participate in this gratifying discourse, they never want to return to the old ways of engaging.

Closing the gap

JSD: You mentioned the problem of the achievement gap. Some experts say the solution is to ensure that every student has a qualified and caring teacher. Others say the solution is to provide a culturally sensitive curriculum. Still others argue that it's mostly a problem of poverty, not race.

Singleton: Race and racial conditioning are always happening. Therefore, it always has to do with race. As racial beings, our race is always there; it's always playing a role. Good teaching and good curriculum are keys to quality schooling. The question is who and what defines quality teaching and quality curriculum. I believe the goal of schooling is to prepare students to thrive in a multiracial, multiethnic democracy. What that means is not only understanding our own culture, but also having the ability to negotiate unfamiliar cultures. Therefore, good teaching means presenting a multicultural perspective and providing the skills for negotiating various cultures. If we accept that as the goal of American education, then we have a different view of quality teaching than the one present in our system.

Experiencing whiteness

JSD: In the Winter 2001 issue of American Educational Research Journal, Amanda Lewis observes that "anti-racist or critical multicultural education says that although we cannot ignore social, cultural, and home factors, much of the blame must be located in institutionalized racism in the classroom, school, and society." Later she says, "It is essential to talk about how race operates even in settings where people say it is not important. Race matters as much in (almost) all-white settings ... perhaps even more so. ... (I)t is crucial that whites learn more not only about the reality of racial inequality, but also about their own role in its reproduction."

Singleton: Absolutely. For example, students at a predominantly white suburban school who have an entirely white experience in advanced placement classes are unconsciously learning that white equates to smarter. Students are, perhaps unconsciously, developing a sense of white supremacy because the absence of people of color signals to them that people of color aren't smart. In addition, they don't learn how to interact with people of color and their perspectives on color, which further nourishes the seeds of racism.

The rule of respect

JSD: An unpublished study by Charles Payne and Mariame Kaba, "So Much Reform, So Little Change: Building-Level Obstacles to Urban School Reform," reports that the quality of social relationships in high-poverty schools correlates highly with the improved academic performance of students. More specifically, the study found that "the quality of social relationships proved to be one of the best predictors" and that "social trust is the key factor associated with improving schools." The researchers note, "In our worst schools, the basic web of social relationships is likely to be severely damaged. Such schools can be angry, discouraged places, where people trust only those in the personal clique."

Singleton: There's only one rule that's necessary in schools, and that's the rule of respect. Respect is at the heart of successful social relationships. But it's important to understand how respect may look and feel different across racial borders. To effectively show me respect, you must understand what my experience is all about. As my teacher, I need you to understand that as I come to the school each morning I go through a number of racial tests. If you don't understand where I'm coming from, I will feel less safe in your classroom and in my relationship with you. And so I'm going to distance myself from the tasks you as my teacher want me to perform. I see that happen every day with students and teachers. Most educators claim they respect and love the kids, but if they don't truly understand what they're going through and their need for healing in a society that's so intense in its racial oppression, then they are not respecting that child. Through curriculum and instructional choices, teachers must communicate that their students' experiences matter to them and that those experiences are valid.

Multiple perspectives

JSD: Your work assumes that there are multiple, valid perspectives on situations rather than a single correct view.

Singleton: That's precisely the difficult paradigm shift that I am seeking. What nourishes me in this work is that I see people learning how to engage with perspectives different from their own without needing to judge someone as wrong. The challenge in society and certainly in schools is creating a space in which my perspective of color can sit beside yours--and to allow those perspectives to interact. That's hard work. It is courageous just to get in touch with your own perspective and to express it. You then have to be even more courageous to listen carefully to the viewpoint of another and allow that perspective to deeply influence your own.

In race, this courageous interaction is critical. As a white man, Dennis, you don't walk down the street and experience it as I do. And while you can never have my experience, you can believe me when I express to you that something remarkably different is happening to me. Once you accept and affirm that different experiences exist, your own perspective and life will be changed. And that's what I'm asking of teachers and administrators.

Teachers do not have to have the daily experiences of urban black kids in order to affirm their reality and create classroom conditions that support their needs. White teachers who understand that theirs is not a universal experience can recognize their students' racially unique experiences and incorporate this understanding into curriculum and instruction.

Through the power of a Eurocentric education, some educators of color have lost their racial perspective or have greatly devalued the importance of these cultural connections in the classroom. So teachers of color may also say they have trouble understanding their nonwhite students. That means it's important for educators of color to be aware of how students see us as part of a white educational machine.

Better learning as the result

JSD: Exactly how do courageous conversations about race among adults translate into better educational experiences for students?

Singleton: When adults engage in interracial discourse, they become clearer about how they and others are perceived racially. As a result, when I am talking to someone of a different race I can interact more fully and authentically. Similarly, when courageous conversation becomes the classroom norm, a student of color can say how distant he or she feels from a white text or from an activity, thus offering a teacher information that might challenge her initial perspective that the student is purposely disengaged or perhaps simply lazy. Courageous teachers go back to the classroom with greater will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to educate the students of color who struggled to relate to a strictly white classroom context. Because they do not fear conversations about race, they can transform instruction by making it both challenging and accessible for all students.

Courageous conversations

JSD: Are there particular skills or dispositions that are important in leading these conversations?

Singleton: Principals start the process by becoming more aware of their own racial identity. It begins as a personal journey. As principals become more comfortable in examining their own racial perspectives and experience, they find they are more willing to engage their teachers in this conversation, first informally and then formally. They give personal examples of how they have perpetuated a racial achievement gap and call on staff members to consider how they also might be doing so. These principals express a vision for change in which race no longer predicts student achievement. They guide staff members through discovery of their own racial experiences and how they unconsciously bring them into the classroom.

This conversation we are having, Dennis, is why I am doing this work. It is a healing conversation, one that is rich for me because it affirms me and does not insult you. This kind of conversation nurtures us as human beings and creates the possibility for us to be more productive and interdependent in our lives and in our work. It liberates us just as it liberates teachers and students in schools. Seeing this liberation occur in schools brings me joy.

Glenn Eric Singleton

Position: President and founder of Pacific Educational Group, an organization that strives to advise districts in ways to meet the needs of underserved populations of students, primarily those of color, and address systemic educational inequities.

Education: Bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Pennsylvania and master's degree in administration and policy analysis from the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University.

Professional history: Director of admissions at the University of Pennsylvania before founding Pacific Educational Group.

Accomplishments: Singleton has appeared on ABC's Good Morning America, has hosted and produced educational programs for cable access television and has written numerous articles on equity, institutional racism, leadership, and staff development for national journals, magazines, and newspapers. He teaches a graduate seminar on educational equity at the University of California, Berkeley and San Jose State University to aspiring urban principals. Singleton is a nationally recognized keynote speaker and consultant to a variety of educational consortia, school reform, and support provider organizations.

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How to have a courageous conversation about race

Commit to four points for engaging in, sustaining, and deepening interracial dialogue about race. We will:

- *Stay engaged;*
- *Speak our truth;*
- *Experience discomfort;*
- *Expect/accept nonclosure.*

About the author

Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council.

A
Field
Guide
for
Achieving
Equity
in
Schools

COURAGEOUS
CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT
RACE

GLENN E. SINGLETON
CURTIS LINTON

An African
American
School
Community
in the
Segregated
South

Their
Highest
Potential

Vanessa Siddle Walker

What would it take to close the achievement gap?

By Jill Shackelford, KCKPS Superintendent

Earlier this week, I was reading a report from the Panasonic Foundation, which began with the following statement:

"It is a disturbing truth that race and class are highly predictive of student achievement in our schools. It is almost as though the literal chains that restrained African slaves have been transformed into figurative chains that form an iron-clad connection between children's social and economic circumstances and their prospects for success in school and life."

The author continued: "The links can and will be broken. It's a matter of will, moral courage, strategic acumen, applied knowledge, and persistent work at every level of the system ... To blame inequality of educational outcomes on the race and class of children and their families is to ignore extensive and ever-growing data revealing that, on the whole, public education is hardwired – consciously or not – to perpetuate the inequalities that children are born into."

Wow!

I don't know if I've ever heard it so clearly stated: Rather than being the great "equalizer" that many of us imagine education to be, schools actually perpetuate the unequal circumstances into which children are born. Or, if we turn it around and say it in a positive way, public schools could be the vehicle by which we break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness into which so many children, particularly children of color, are born.

If this is true (and I believe it is,) then we must ask ourselves: "What would we need to change, in order to create schools where you couldn't predict a child's academic achievement by the color of their skin, the family's income, the language the family speaks in the home, or how much education the parent had?" In other words: "What would it take to close the achievement gap?"

Well, if I knew all the answers, I would write a book. But there are some things I do know:

To close the achievement gap, we would have to decide that we had both the power and the responsibility to close the gap. Until we are willing to confront the idea that "public schools are hardwired to perpetuate inequality," nothing will change. This is difficult to comprehend, especially for educators. None of us would be in this job if we didn't believe we could make a difference, particularly for the children who need us most. None of us wants to believe that our actions, no matter how well intentioned, might actually perpetuate, rather than eliminate inequality.

We would have to find a way to talk together without blame, but with each of us willing to shoulder our share of the responsibility to change how we do business. To close the achievement gap, it will take the entire community working shoulder to shoulder, over a long period of time. Our hands will be full with the work we have to do, and no one will have either the time, the energy, or even a free hand with which to point fingers.

We would have to figure out how to talk in this community about race. As a society, we have fallen into what is essentially a collective silence about the issue of race, and its ongoing impact upon our

communities. More ominously, we have left it to people of color to raise the issue, and frequently expressed annoyance when they do. The impact of race upon achievement is something we all would need to be willing to explore. My colleague Addye Hawkins is leading a group of district staff in "courageous conversations" about race. These conversations need to be continued, and expanded.

Finally, we would have to believe that there is strength in diversity, and that equality of opportunity is something that benefits the entire community. We would have to believe that more opportunities will come to a community where all students are achieving at high levels, and that, rather than fighting over a piece of the pie, we could actually expand the size of the pie.

I have heard it said that equality of educational opportunity is the civil rights struggle of the 21st Century. During a week when we pause to celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I can think of no better tribute, than to work to make sure that our education system serves all children well, regardless of race, gender, language of origin or family income.

Is anyone else willing to dream with me?

Dr. Jill Shackelford is the superintendent of the Kansas City, Kan., Public Schools District.

What is the Relationship Between Race and Achievement in Our Schools?

Minority Student Achievement Network Statement of Purpose

Adopted June 2003

> Our goal is to ensure that racial differences in achievement are eliminated while we improve achievement for all students.

Note: This document was developed by the Research Practitioner Council and was approved by the Governing Board of the Minority Student Achievement Network in June 2003. This document summarizes our beliefs and the knowledge base that guide our work; it is a living document that will change as we increase our knowledge on improving minority student achievement.

What core beliefs guide our work?

- Eliminating the gap is not only the right thing to do, but it is essential to ensure the future of our democracy.

- Because achievement is not innately determined, children will achieve when they are effectively taught how to learn.

- All children come to school with a variety of individual strengths; our responsibility is to discover and build upon these strengths.

- While recognizing the crucial roles that parents and community groups play, we need to focus on what schools can do.

- Schools that concentrate on how their practices affect students will be more productive that those that blame students, families or poverty for underachievement.

- Each individual staff member must examine his or her beliefs and change practices to counteract the contemporary and historic impacts of racism and discrimination.

- Schools should be considered excellent only when students of all racial and ethnic groups are achieving at high levels.

What do we know about the relationship between race and achievement?

- Analysis of test scores, grades and graduation rates document significant gaps in achievement between white students and students of color.[1]

- Despite the gaps in average performance among racial groups, there are substantial numbers of high achieving students of color.[2]

- Causes of achievement gaps are complex and include school, community, home and societal factors.[3]

- The current gaps in achievement are not due to racial differences in innate ability.[4]

- In the early grades, there are measurable gaps between students of color and white students in the skills that schools value; too often, these gaps widen as students move through school.[5]

- Schools can have a powerful, positive impact on the achievement of students. [6]

- Racism within schools continues to be a significant barrier to student achievement.[7]

- Partnerships between schools and parents can have a positive impact on student achievement.[8]

- Strong and encouraging teacher-student relationships, when accompanied by effective instruction, may contribute to improving achievement even more for students of color than for whites.[9]

- To close the gaps in achievement, African American and Latino students must improve at a greater rate than others.[10]

How will we eliminate racial differences in achievement?

- Implement, monitor and evaluate changes in what we do that improves student achievement.

- Develop in teachers, students and administrators the leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary and critical for change.

- Synthesize, interpret and contribute to research that informs practice and that combines the wisdom of researchers and practioners.

- Contribute to the policy debate on "The Gap" at the local, state and national levels.

ENDNOTES

[1] The analyses are available from multiple sources, for instance: Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, "The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction," in Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, eds. *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1988) pp. 1-51; The College Board, *Reaching the Top: A Report of the National Task Force on Minority High Achievement*, (New York: The College Board, 1999); in addition, MSAN districts' annual reports of student achievement document the gap in test scores, grades and graduation rates. See, for example, *Superintendent's Annual Report 2001-02*, Evanston Township High School, Evanston, Illinois.

[2] See, for example, W Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River* (Princeton Press, 1988).

[3] Nancy Kober, *It Takes More Than Testing: Closing the Achievement Gap*, (Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy, 2001), pp. 21-25. This document provides a brief summary, with citations, of many factors influencing the gap.

[4] Richard Nisbett, " Race, Genetics and IQ," in Jencks and Phillips.

[5] Gaps in early childhood (preschool or kindergarten) performance are summarized in Jerry West, Kristin Denton and Lizabeth M. Reaney, *The Kindergarten Year* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The widening of the gap is discussed in Meredith Phillips, James Crouse, and John Ralph, " Does the Black-White Test Score Gap Widen after Children Enter School?" in Jencks and Phillips.

[6] In the 1980's, the Effective Schools Research effort established that there are significant differences in student achievement among schools that were very similar in terms of resources and in terms of the students they served. The focus on identifying unusually successful schools includes recent studies, for instance: *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High–Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools*, (Charles A. Dana Center: University of Texas/ Austin for the US Department of Education, 1999); Craig D. Jerald, *Dispelling the Myth Revisited: Preliminary Findings from a Nationwide Analysis of "High-flying" Schools*, (The Education Trust, 2001).

[7] While effects of racism are less visible and subtler, racism continues to have a negative impact on students in academic settings. See, for instance, Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson, " Stereotype Threat and Test Performance of Academically Successful African Americans," in Jencks and Phillips.

[8] While research has not conclusively demonstrated that parent involvement enhances student achievement, and under what conditions, several literature reviews suggest that parent involvement may lead to improved student outcomes. See, for example, *1994 A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement* (Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994).

[9] The importance of encouraging (versus demanding) teachers was identified as an important element in creating effective teacher-student relationships with students of color in *What DOESN'T Meet the Eye: (mis) Understanding Racial Disparities in Fifteen Suburban School Districts*, Ron Ferguson, 2002. The Tripod Project, led by Ron Ferguson, and involving many MSAN districts continues this work by asking teachers and students to experiment and study aspects of the classroom routines that contribute to positive teacher-student relationships.

[10] Kober, p.11.

As Diversity Grows, So Must We

Gary R. Howard

Schools that experience rapid demographic shifts can meet the challenge by implementing five phases of professional development.

Many school districts nationwide are experiencing rapid growth in the number of students of color, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students from low-income families. From my work with education leaders in some of these diversity-enhanced school districts, I know they are places of vibrant opportunity—places that call us to meaningful and exciting work. In these "welcome-to-America" schools, the global community shows up in our classrooms every day, inviting us—even requiring us—to grow as we learn from and with our students and their families.

The Need for Growth

All is not well, however, in these rapidly transitioning schools. Some teachers, administrators, and parents view their schools' increasing diversity as a problem rather than an opportunity. For example, in a school district on the West Coast where the number of Latino students has quadrupled in the past 10 years, a teacher recently asked me, "Why are they sending these kids to our school?" In another district outside New York City—where the student population was once predominantly rich, white, and Jewish but is now about 90 percent low-income kids of color, mostly from the Caribbean and Latin America—a principal remarked in one workshop, "These kids don't value education, and their parents aren't helping either. They don't seem to care about their children's future." In a school district near Minneapolis with a rapidly increasing black population, a white parent remarked, "Students who are coming here now don't have much respect for authority. That's why we have so many discipline problems."

Other educators and parents, although less negative, still feel uneasy about their schools' new demographics. In a high school outside Washington, D.C., where the Latino immigrant population is increasing rapidly, a teacher told me that he was disappointed in himself for not feeling comfortable engaging his students in a discussion of immigration issues, a hot topic in the community in spring 2006. "I knew the kids needed to talk, but I just couldn't go there." And a black teacher who taught French successfully for many years in predominantly white suburban schools told me recently, "When I first found myself teaching classes of mostly black kids, I went home frustrated every night because I knew I wasn't getting through to them, and they were giving me a hard time. It only started getting better when I finally figured out that I had to reexamine everything I was doing."

This teacher has it right. As educators in rapidly transitioning schools, we need to reexamine everything we're doing. Continuing with business as usual will mean failure or mediocrity for too many of our students, as the data related to racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic achievement gaps demonstrate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Rapidly changing demographics demand that we engage in a vigorous, ongoing, and systemic process of professional development to prepare all educators in the school to function effectively in a highly diverse environment.

Many education leaders in diversity-enhanced schools are moving beyond blame and befuddlement and working to transform themselves and their schools to serve all their students well. From observing and collaborating with them, I have learned that this transformative work proceeds best in five phases: (1) building trust, (2) engaging personal culture, (3) confronting issues of social dominance and social justice, (4) transforming instructional practices, and (5) engaging the entire school community.

Phase 1: Building Trust

Ninety percent of U.S. public school teachers are white; most grew up and attended school in middle-class, English-speaking, predominantly white communities and received their teacher preparation in predominantly white colleges and universities (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003). Thus, many white educators simply have not acquired

the experiential and education background that would prepare them for the growing diversity of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Vavrus, 2002).

The first priority in the trust phase is to acknowledge this challenge in a positive, inclusive, and honest way. School leaders should base initial discussions on the following assumptions:

- Inequities in diverse schools are not, for the most part, a function of intentional discrimination.

- Educators of *all* racial and cultural groups need to develop new competencies and pedagogies to successfully engage our changing populations.

- White teachers have their own cultural connections and unique personal narratives that are legitimate aspects of the overall mix of school diversity.

School leaders should also model for their colleagues inclusive and nonjudgmental discussion, reflection, and engagement strategies that teachers can use to establish positive learning communities in their classrooms.

For example, school leaders in the Apple Valley Unified School District in Southern California, where racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity is rapidly increasing, have invested considerable time and resources in creating a climate of openness and trust. They recently implemented four days of intensive work with teams from each school, including principals, teacher leaders, union representatives, parents, clergy, business leaders, and community activists from the NAACP and other organizations.

One essential outcome in this initial phase of the conversation is to establish that racial, cultural, and economic differences are real—and that they make a difference in education outcomes. Said one Apple Valley participant, "I have become aware that the issue of race needs to be dealt with, not minimized." Said another, "I need to move beyond being color-blind." A second key outcome is to establish the need for a personal and professional journey toward greater awareness. As an Apple Valley educator noted, "There were a lot of different stories and viewpoints shared at this inservice, but the one thing we can agree on is that everyone needs to improve in certain areas." A third key outcome in the trust phase is to demonstrate that difficult topics can be discussed in an environment that is honest, safe, and productive. One Apple Valley teacher commented, "We were able to talk about all of the issues and not worry about being politically correct."

Through this work, Apple Valley educators and community leaders established a climate of constructive collaboration that can be directed toward addressing the district's new challenges. From the perspective of the school superintendent, "This is a conversation our community is not used to having, so we had to build a positive climate before moving to the harder questions of action."

Phase 2: Engaging Personal Culture

Change has to start with educators before it can realistically begin to take place with students. The central aim of the second phase of the work is building educators' *cultural competence*—their ability to form authentic and effective relationships across differences.

Young people, particularly those from historically marginalized groups, have sensitive antennae for authenticity. I recently asked a group of racially and culturally diverse high school students to name the teachers in their school who really cared about them, respected them, and enjoyed getting to know them as people. Forty students pooling their answers could name only 10 teachers from a faculty of 120, which may be one reason this high school has a 50 percent dropout rate for students of color.

Aronson and Steele's (2005) work on stereotype threat demonstrates that intellectual performance, rather than being a fixed and constant quality, is quite fragile and can vary greatly depending on the social and interpersonal context of learning. In repeated studies, these researchers found that three factors have a major effect on students' motivation and performance: their feelings of belonging, their trust in the people around them, and their belief that teachers value their intellectual competence. This research suggests that the capacity of adults in the school to form trusting relationships with and supportive learning environments for their students can greatly influence achievement outcomes.

Leaders in the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township, outside Indianapolis, have taken this perspective seriously. Clear data showed gaps among ethnic groups in achievement, participation in higher-level courses, discipline referrals, and dropout rates. In response, district teachers and administrators engaged in a vigorous and ongoing process of self-examination and personal growth related to cultural competence.

Central-office and building administrators started with themselves. Along with selected teachers from each school, they engaged in a multiyear program of shared reading, reflective conversations, professional development activities, and joint planning to increase their own and their colleagues' levels of cultural competence. They studied and practiced Margaret Wheatley's (2002) principles of conversation, with particular emphasis on her admonitions to expect things to be messy and to be willing to be disturbed. They designed their own Socratic seminars using chapters from *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* (Howard, 2006) and used the stages of personal identity development model from that book as a foundation for ongoing reflective conversations about their own journeys toward cultural competence.

As this work among leaders began to be applied in various school buildings, one principal observed, "We are talking about things that we were afraid to talk about before—like our own prejudices and the biases in some of our curriculum materials." In another school, educators' discussions led to a decision to move parent-teacher conferences out of the school building and into the apartment complexes where their black and Latino students live.

Phase 3: Confronting Social Dominance and Social Justice

When we look at school outcome data, the history of racism, classism, and exclusion in the United States stares us in the face. Systems of privilege and preference often create enclaves of exclusivity in schools, in which certain demographic groups are served well while others languish in failure or mediocrity. As diversity grows in rapidly transitioning school districts, demographic gaps become increasingly apparent.

In phase three, educators directly confront the current and historical inequities that affect education. The central purpose of this phase is to construct a compelling narrative of social justice that will inform, inspire, and sustain educators in their work, without falling into the rhetoric of shame and blame. School leaders and teachers engage in a lively conversation about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, and other dimensions of diversity and social dominance. David Koyama, principal of a diversity-enhanced elementary school outside Seattle, said, "One of my most important functions as a school leader is to transform political jargon like 'no child left behind' into a moral imperative that inspires teachers to work toward justice, not mere compliance."

Unraveling social dominance takes courage—the kind of courage shown by the central office and school leadership team in the Roseville Area School District outside the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Roseville is in the midst of a rapid demographic shift. As we approached this phase of the work, I asked Roseville leaders to examine how issues of privilege, power, and dominance might be functioning in their schools to shape educators' assumptions and beliefs about students and create inequitable outcomes.

One of the workshop activities engaged participants in a forced-choice simulation requiring them to choose which aspects of their identity they would give up or deny for the sake of personal survival in a hostile environment. Choosing from such identities as race, ethnicity, language, religion, values, and vocation, many white educators were quick to give up race. Among the Roseville administrative team, which is 95 percent white, the one white principal who chose to keep his racial identity during the simulation said during the debriefing discussion, "I seriously challenge my white colleagues who so easily gave up their race. I think if we are honest with ourselves, few would choose to lose the privilege and power that come with being white in the United States."

As an outgrowth of the authentic and sometimes contentious conversations that emerged from this and other activities, several core leaders and the superintendent identified a need to craft a strong Equity Vision statement for the district. The Equity Vision now headlines all opening-of-school events each year and is publicly displayed in district offices and schools. It reads,

> Roseville Area Schools is committed to ensuring an equitable and respectful educational experience for every student, family, and staff member, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, home or first language, religion, national origin, or age.

As a result of the increased consciousness about issues of dominance and social justice, several schools have formed Equity Teams of teachers and students, and an Equity Parent Group has begun to meet. The district is looking seriously at how many students from dominant and subordinate groups are in its gifted and AP classes and is conscientiously working for more balance.

Like Roseville, other diversity-enhanced districts must establish clear public markers that unambiguously state, "This is who we are, this is what we believe, and this is what we will do." Any approach to school reform that does

not honestly engage issues of power, privilege, and social dominance is naïve, ungrounded in history, and unlikely to yield the deep changes needed to make schools more inclusive and equitable.

Phase 4: Transforming Instructional Practices

In this phase, schools assess and, where necessary, transform the way they carry out instruction to become more responsive to diversity. For teachers, this means examining pedagogy and curriculum, as well as expectations and interaction patterns with students. It means looking honestly at outcome data and creating new strategies designed to serve the students whom current instruction is not reaching. For school leaders, this often means facing the limits of their own knowledge and skills and becoming colearners with teachers to find ways to transform classroom practices.

In Loudoun County Public Schools, outside Washington, D.C., teachers and school leaders are taking this work seriously. One of the fastest-growing school systems in the United States, Loudoun County is experiencing rapid increases in racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity on its eastern edge, closer to the city, while remaining more monocultural to the west. Six of Loudoun's most diverse schools have formed leadership teams to promote the following essential elements of culturally responsive teaching (CRT):

- Forming authentic and caring relationships with students.
- Using curriculum that honors each student's culture and life experience.
- Shifting instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students.
- Communicating respect for each student's intelligence.
- Holding consistent and high expectations for all learners. (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McKinley, 2005; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997)

CRT teams vary in size and membership but usually include principals, assistant principals, counselors, lead teachers, specialists, and, in some cases, parents. In addition to engaging deeply in the phases outlined above, these teams have begun to work with their broader school faculties to transform instruction. At Loudoun County's Sugarland Elementary, teacher members of the CRT team have designed student-based action research projects. They selected individual students from their most academically challenged demographic groups and then used the principles of CRT to plan new interventions to engage these students and track their progress.

In one action research project, a 5th grade teacher focused on a Latino student, an English language learner who "couldn't put two sentences together, let alone write the five-paragraph essay that is required to pass our 5th grade assessment." The teacher's first reaction was to ask, "How was this student allowed to slip by all these years without learning anything beyond 2nd grade writing skills?" When the teacher launched her CRT project, however, her perspective became more proactive. She realized that she couldn't just deliver the 5th grade curriculum—she had to meet this student where he was. She built a personal connection with the student, learned about his family culture and interests (a fascination with monkeys was a major access point), and used this relationship to reinforce his academic development. The student responded to her high expectations and passed his 5th grade writing assessment. And after missing its No Child Left Behind compliance goals in past years, Sugarland recently achieved adequate yearly progress for all subgroups in its highly diverse student population.

This phase requires a crucial paradigm shift, in which teachers and other school professionals stop blaming students and their families for gaps in academic achievement. Instead of pointing fingers, educators in Loudoun schools are placing their energies where they will have the most impact—in changing their *own* attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and practices. I frequently ask teachers and school leaders, "Of all the many factors that determine school success for our students, where can we as educators have the most influence?" After educators participate in the work outlined here, the answer is always, "Changing ourselves."

Phase 5: Engaging the Entire School Community

Changing demographics have profound implications for all levels and functions of the school system. To create welcoming and equitable learning environments for diverse students and their families, school leaders must engage the entire school community.

Leaders in the East Ramapo Central School District in New York State have committed themselves to just such a systemwide initiative. The school district, which lies across the Tappan Zee Bridge from New York City, has

experienced a dramatic shift in student population in the past 15 years as low-income Haitian, Jamaican, Dominican, Latino, and black families from the city have moved into the community and middle-class white families have, unfortunately but predictably, fled to private schools or other less diverse districts.

In the midst of this demographic revolution, East Ramapo's broad-based diversity initiative has engaged all groups and constituencies in the school district community, not just teachers and administrators. For example, the district has provided workshops to help classified employees acknowledge their powerful role in setting a welcoming tone and creating an inclusive climate for students, parents, and colleagues in school offices, lunchrooms, hallways, and on the playground. For bus drivers, this work has meant gaining cultural competence skills for managing their immense safety responsibilities while communicating clearly and compassionately across many languages and cultures on their buses.

In one session that I led with school secretaries, we worked through their confusion and frustration related to all the diverse languages being spoken in the school offices and, in some cases, their feelings of anger and resentment about the demographic changes that had taken place in "their" schools. Asked what they learned from the session, participants commented, "I saw the frustration people can have, especially if they are from another country." "We all basically have the same feelings about family, pride in our culture, and the importance of getting along." "I learned from white people that they can also sometimes feel like a minority."

In addition to these sessions, East Ramapo has created learning opportunities for school board members, parents, students, counselors, and special education classroom assistants. The district has convened regular community forums focusing on student achievement and creating conversations across many diverse cultures. White parents who have kept their children in the public schools because they see the value of diversity in their education have been significant participants in these conversations.

As a result of East Ramapo's efforts, the achievement gaps in test scores along ethnic and economic lines have significantly narrowed. In the six years since the district consciously began implementing the professional development model discussed here, the pass rate for black and Hispanic students combined on the New York State elementary language arts test increased from 43 percent in 2000 to 54 percent in 2006; on the math test, the pass rate increased from 40 percent to 61 percent. During that same period, the gap between black and Hispanic students (combined) and white and Asian students (combined) decreased by 6 percentage points in language arts and 23 percentage points in math. The achievement gap between low-income elementary students and the general population decreased by 10 points in language arts and 6 points in math—results that are particularly impressive, given that the proportion of economically disadvantaged students grew from 51 percent in 2000 to 72 percent in 2006.

A Journey Toward Awareness

Professional development for creating inclusive, equitable, and excellent schools is a long-term process. The school districts described here are at various stages in the process. Everyone involved would agree that the work is messier and more complex than can be communicated in this brief overview. However, one central leadership commitment is clear in all of these rapidly transitioning districts: When diversity comes to town, we are all challenged to grow.

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PREVIEW Culture shapes behaviors, values, and institutions—and everyone is influenced by norms and expectations. To provide equitable education, educators must assess their own culture and learn to manage the dynamics of difference. Four tools help educators work toward cultural proficiency by acquiring the skills and language to engage their students and their families in communities of learning.

Cultural PROFICIENCY:

Tools for Secondary School Administrators

By Kikanza Nuri-Robins, Delores B. Lindsey, Raymond D. Terrell, and Randall B. Lindsey

G ive me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

The world has heeded this invitation on the Statue of Liberty, and the United States has learned that although creating a racially and ethnically diverse nation is laudable, the real work of an equitable and inclusive society has only begun. When equity and inclusion are viewed as problems to be solved in education and elsewhere, the result is tension laden. The goal is to see cultural proficiency as a way to understand, embrace, and talk about differences that recognizes and respects individuals and their cultures.

Educators must respond to the needs of communities that are diverse in many components of culture. Moreover, schools have been asked—in many cases, mandated—to educate specific demographic groups of students who are identified by their race, ethnicity, sex, special needs, or socioeconomic status. The accountability movement is an unprecedented challenge to school leaders, but it offers opportunities for school and community members to challenge prevailing notions of equity and diversity by linking them to access and inclusion in ways not envisioned by most schools and school districts before.

Changing the Conversation

Individuals and organizations are defined by their cultures, which reflect the belief systems and behaviors that are informed by race and ethnicity and other factors, such as sex, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability. Cultural proficiency is an inside-out approach that makes explicit the values and practices that enable both individuals and schools to interact
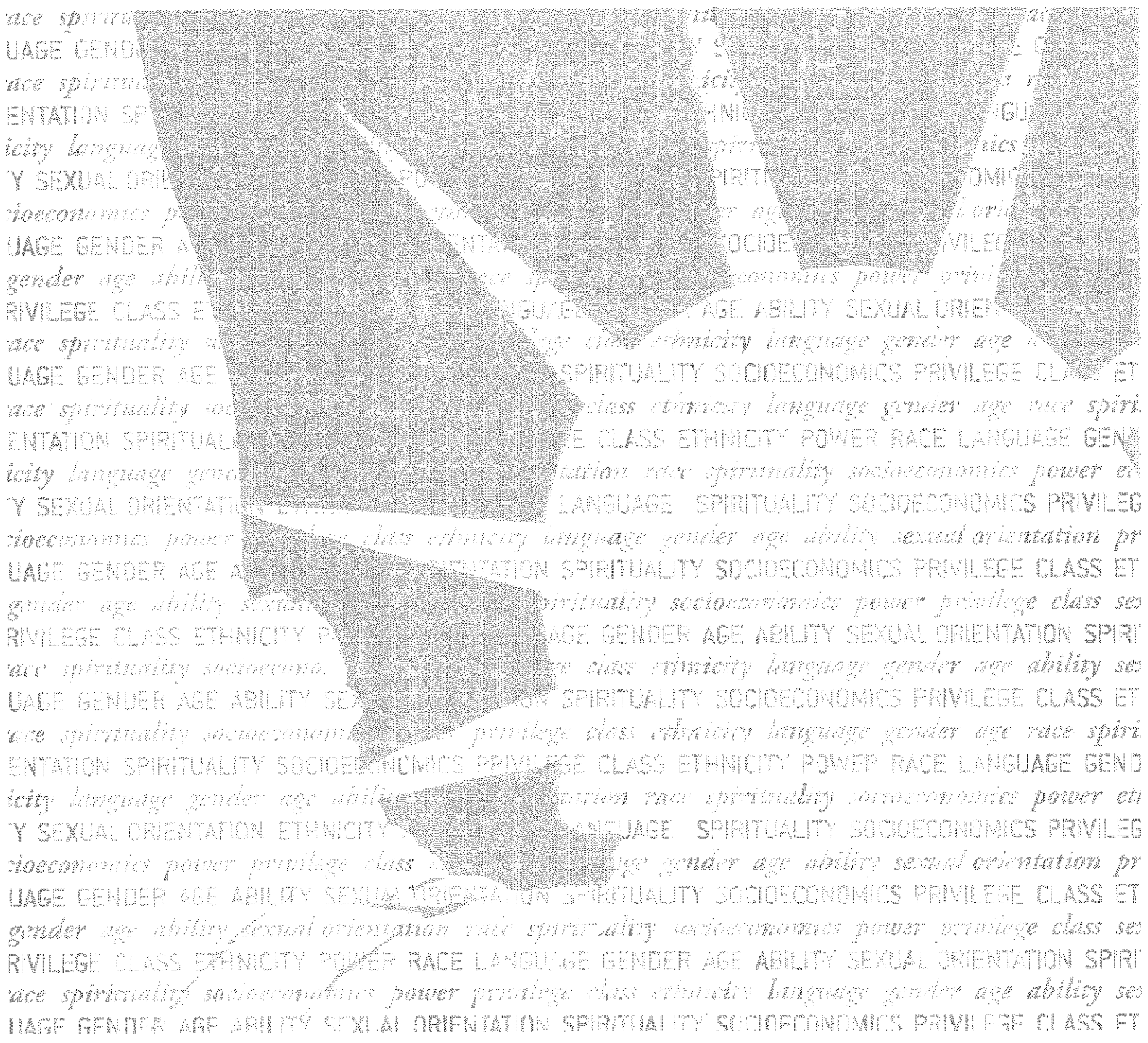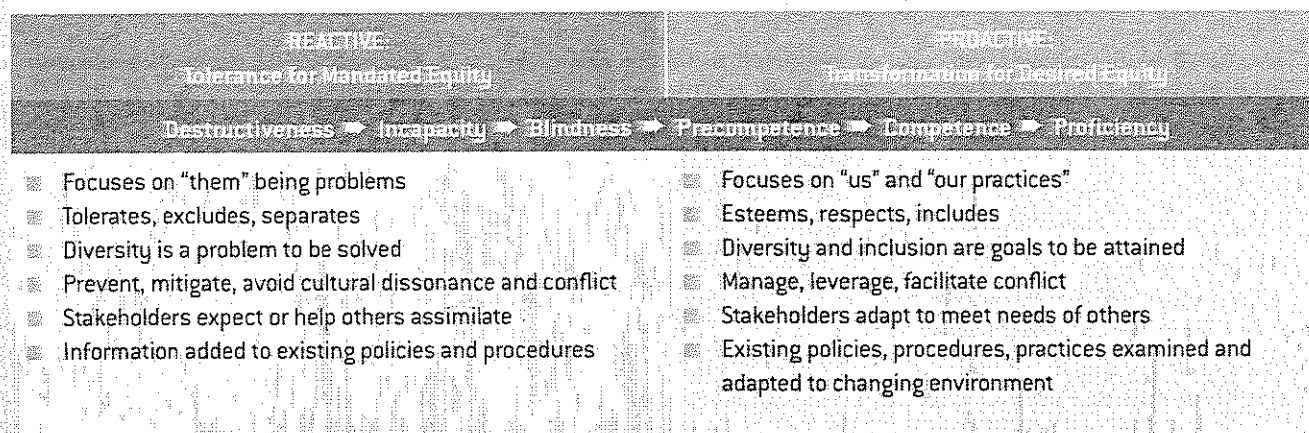
FIGURE 1

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum

The cultural proficiency continuum depicts the least and the most desirable behaviors and practices as people move from cultural destructiveness to cultural proficiency. On the left are culturally incompetent behaviors and reactive practices, the goal of which is to generate tolerance and comply with mandates for educational equality. On the right are the activities and attitudes of those who are proactively seeking personal transformation to support a goal of educational equity.

REACTIVE Tolerance for Mandated Equity	PROACTIVE Transformation for Desired Equity
Destructiveness → Incapacity → Blindness →	Precompetence → Competence → Proficiency
- Focuses on "them" being problems	- Focuses on "us" and "our practices"
- Tolerates, excludes, separates	- Esteems, respects, includes
- Diversity is a problem to be solved	- Diversity and inclusion are goals to be attained
- Prevent, mitigate, avoid cultural dissonance and conflict	- Manage, leverage, facilitate conflict
- Stakeholders expect or help others assimilate	- Stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others
- Information added to existing policies and procedures	- Existing policies, procedures, practices examined and adapted to changing environment

effectively across cultures. Becoming culturally proficient means raising awareness of and closing the gap between a person's expressed values and how he or she is actually perceived and experienced by clients, colleagues, and the community.

To achieve proficiency, educators must align their values and educational philosophies with their daily practices to create learning communities among and between educators, students, and their families.

The public schools in the United States are most effective for the populations for which they were created, and as many educators lament, most current student bodies are not like the students they taught 10 years ago or whom they taught well 20 or 30 years ago. The principal's task is to help colleagues and teachers understand and accept that despite their years of exemplary work, they need additional skills and different perspectives to provide effective learning services today. Schools must change—not because they are broken, but because they must respond to demographic

shifts in society that have caused major changes in the student populations and in the needs of the students' families. Schools that are trying to become culturally proficient systems are growing and maturing and adapting to their new and future environments.

Students and their families can access the best of what schools offer if educators can communicate effectively with them, understand who they are and the cultural context from which they come, and perceive and treat them with respect. This means that educators must shift their thinking from helping underachieving students and underprivileged families to meeting the needs of underserved clients.

The Tools of Cultural Proficiency

Developing cultural proficiency involves using four tools from the framework developed by Terry Cross. The Guiding Principles are the underlying values of this deceptively simple approach. The Continuum provides language for describing both healthy and counterproductive policies,

practices, and individual behaviors. The Essential Elements are behavioral standards for planning and measuring growth toward cultural proficiency. The Barriers are obstacles that impede the process of developing cultural proficiency (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989).

Guiding Principles

Diverse groups of students cannot be taught well and expected to achieve if educators do not understand and respond to the dynamics of culture in their school environment. The Guiding Principles are the core values upon which the approach is built. They can be aligned with or used to expand the values of any particular school. The Guiding Principles for culturally proficient practice are the following:

- Culture is a predominant force; it shapes behaviors, values, and institutions
- The dominant group serves people who are not members of the mainstream, in varying degrees
- Diversity within cultures is as important as diversity among

cultures; cultural groups are not monolithic

- Diverse populations have unique needs, which may not be met by the mainstream culture in which they are expected to succeed
- The dignity of individuals is not guaranteed unless the dignity of their cultures is affirmed and preserved
- Thought patterns of non-Western, non-European cultures provide different ways of viewing and solving problems, which often are ignored, unrecognized, or demeaned by members of Western cultures
- People who belong to cultures that are not part of the mainstream culture must be at least bicultural to be successful
- Multicultural affirmation enriches everyone and enhances the capacity of all.

The Continuum

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (see figure 1) is a conceptual framework for assessing personal and organizational progress and providing common language to describe both healthy and dysfunctional events and policies. The points along the continuum can identify the current state of a situation or practice, project a future state of development, or gauge the distance between the current and future states. The six points along the continuum are the following:

- Cultural destructiveness: eliminating other people's cultures
- Cultural incapacity: believing in the superiority of one's own culture and behaving in ways that disempower another's culture
- Cultural blindness: acting as if cultural differences do not matter or as if there are no differences among and between cultures
- Cultural precompetence: recognizing the limitations of one's knowledge and skills or an organization's practices when interacting with other cultural groups
- Cultural competence: interacting with others using the five essential elements as the standard
- Cultural proficiency: esteeming culture, interacting effectively in a variety of cultural groups, and committing to continuous learning.

The Essential Elements

The Essential Elements are aligned with cultural competence on the continuum. A culturally competent educator uses the elements as standards for individual behavior and organizational policies and practices. These elements can also be used to plan for and assess change or can serve as guidelines for culturally proficient interaction:

- Assess culture
- Value diversity
- Manage the dynamics of difference
- Adapt to diversity
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge.

Teachers and administrators have different roles that correspond to each essential element. (See figure 2.) For each element, one can identify the individual and organizational activities that are currently in practice and those that could be initiated.

The Barriers

The barriers to cultural proficiency are both organizational and individual. They may be systemic, be based on values, or be tied to past experiences. There are three categories of barriers: unawareness of the need to adapt and resistance to change, presumption of entitlement and unearned privilege, and systems of oppression and privilege.

Get Started

Shift your thinking. Diversity is not the problem. How you respond—or do not respond—to diversity is what becomes problematic.

Focus on diversity and inclusion.

Consider the needs of tomorrow. Prepare for the opportunity of the future, not the past you may long for.

Define goals. Movement is not progress and progress is not excellence.

Identify the components in your system that are functioning well now. Start there. Help the good become excellent.

Unawareness of the need to adapt and resistance to change is evident when stakeholders do not recognize the need to make personal and organizational changes in response to diversity. These stakeholders believe that other people and groups need to change and adapt to them. Expecting others to change and clinging to practices that no longer serve the students or their families are forms of resistance.

The presumption of entitlement and the existence of unearned privilege is another barrier that occurs when stakeholders do not recognize that members of certain groups receive more privileges because of their position or the groups to which they belong. Many students assume that their personal achievements and societal and organizational benefits are due to their personal competence or character. They also believe that they do not need to share resources with different groups. This view is sometimes shared by students' families. Parents of the dominant or mainstream groups often resent any "entitlements" that are offered to the underserved children and

their families. Faculty and staff members who welcome people from other groups only if they assimilate into the mainstream cultural norms and values exemplify this barrier as well.

Distributing power and privilege, consciously or unintentionally, only to members of mainstream groups or abusing power accrued through rules and roles within the school creates systems of oppression and privilege. Refusing to examine these oppressive systems or not taking responsibility for naming or changing them creates barriers to cultural proficiency. Systems of institutionalized racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, and ableism exist in most organizations. There are systems, innate to school or classroom cultures, that reward certain groups and punish or oppress others. These systems are often supported and sustained without the permission of and at times without the knowledge of the people whom they benefit.

Cultural Proficiency in Schools

Secondary school educators often look for cause-and-effect relationships between professional development and student achievement. Specific materials and prescribed instructional approaches are selected, purchased, and implemented with the expectation that they themselves will boost test scores and narrow the achievement gap. Educators are often surprised when very little changes or when scores decline and the gap widens.

Perhaps these instructional decisions are being made without looking at the data and what those data might mean for students and community members. Maybe the important question to ask before selecting programs and materials is, "If this program [e.g., professional learning communities, differentiated instruction, or a particular diversity program] is the answer, what was the question?" Another question that can guide educators in making decisions about particular materials and strategies is, "What data do we have and what conversations might we have about those data that would cause us to select a particular program or approach?"

Cultural proficiency provides a frame for data-focused conversations that help educators explore assump-

FIGURE 2

The Essential Elements

Essential Element	Role of Teachers	Role of Site Administrators
Assess Culture	▪ Assess own culture and its effect on students, assess the culture of the classroom ▪ Support students in discovering their own cultural identities	▪ Assess the culture of the site ▪ Articulate the cultural expectations to all who interact there
Value Diversity	▪ Teach all subjects from a culturally inclusive perspective ▪ Insist on classroom language and behaviors that value differences	▪ Articulate a culturally proficient vision for the site ▪ Establish standards for holding teachers and staff accountable for the vision
Manage the Dynamics of Difference	▪ Use conflicts as object lessons ▪ Teach students a variety of ways to resolve conflicts	▪ Provide training and support systems for conflict management ▪ Help faculty and staff members learn to distinguish between behavioral problems and cultural differences
Adapt to Diversity	▪ Learn own instructional and interpersonal styles ▪ Develop processes to enhance them so that they meet the needs of all students ▪ Help students understand why things are done in a particular way	▪ Examine policies and practices for overt and unintentional discrimination ▪ Change current practices when appropriate
Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge	▪ Teach students appropriate language for asking questions about other people's cultures and telling other people about theirs	▪ Model and monitor schoolwide and classroom practices

tions and beliefs about access, equity, inclusion, and student achievement. These conversations can help educators shift from blaming students and their cultures for their circumstances to studying how students learn and from reacting to a mandated assessment system to using assessments to create a system of moral responsibility and accountability for all students.

Adopting culturally proficient practices results in a stronger core culture that is known, supported, and sustained by all members of the community. The cultural expectations of the school are explicit and a part of the overt curriculum. Rather than punishing students and their families for not knowing how to navigate the culture of school, the school assesses

and adapts strategies to better meet the needs of the current students. In this way, organizational behavior is aligned with the expressed values of the school.

Most schools have a mission statement, a vision statement, or a list of values that is framed and posted conspicuously for visitors to see, but a culturally proficient school community takes the time to translate those values into behavioral norms for all members of the community. Culturally proficient administrators ask the question, "Are we who we say we are?" If a school says that it believes that all students can learn, that value will be reflected in the master schedule, teacher assignments, resource allocation, professional development, and

parent engagement opportunities. If a school declares itself to be a collaborative learning community, then administrators will ask, "Who is included in decision making?" Because data-driven decision making is viewed as a requirement and a value, the appropriate leadership question becomes, "Do the data reflect our values?"

In many schools, faculty members want to make a difference and engage more meaningfully with their students around some of the tough issues caused by differences, but faculty members don't know what to do or say. When a student has the courage to say, "That comment objectifies and stereotypes me," teachers are often stymied and don't know how to respond. By learning to be culturally proficient,

Resources

educators can develop skills for having the tough conversations needed to manage and respond to the dynamics of difference.

Conclusion

Culturally proficient change is systemic change, which requires that school leaders work strategically with stakeholders throughout the system. Ultimately, when schools provide what students need and educators teach students and their families how to better access all that schools offer, achievement increases for all students. As school leaders address the issues and opportunities that arise from diverse and complex secondary school environments, they will approach diversity as an opportunity for inclusion and achievement rather than a problem to be solved. PL

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Closing the Achievement Gap: Two Views from Current Research. ERIC Digest.

Historically, we have tried to raise the achievement level of low-achieving minority and immigrant students living in urban low-income areas, but we now recognize that there is an even greater gap in student achievement in schools in suburban middle-income communities than in the inner cities, particularly at the higher achievement levels. (College Board, 1999). More minority students attend suburban schools than popularly believed; in 2000, 33 percent of African-American children, 45 percent of Hispanic children, 54 percent of Asian children, and 55 percent of white children lived in suburban areas, and they attended both poor, segregated schools and excellent racially integrated schools with many resources (Ferguson, 2002, p. 2).

We now have two major studies that can help us understand the achievement gap in suburban schools. Ronald Ferguson of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University analyzed the data collected by the Minority Student Achievement Network, formed by fifteen middle- and upper-middle-income districts throughout the nation. To better understand the experiences of different racial and economic group students that affect their academic achievement and academic engagement, the Network surveyed middle- and high-school students in ninety-five schools in fifteen districts using the"Ed-Excel Assessment of Secondary School Student Culture," developed by John Bishop of Cornell University. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine how the schools can be educationally productive in closing the achievement gap in their heterogeneous student bodies.

The late John Ogbu, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, conducted an ethnographic study of students at all grade levels in schools in Shaker Heights, Ohio. The ethnographers conducting the study observed 110 classrooms from the start to the finish of the lesson, in classes of (1) different racial makeup, (2) the same subject taught at different levels, (3) different subjects, (4) the same teachers teaching the same courses at different levels, (5) the same teachers teaching different courses, and (6) teachers of different races and genders. In the elementary school, the researchers also acted as participant-observers by assisting the teachers with small tasks when they asked for help (Ogbu, 2003). The purpose of this study was to determine how the identity of African-American students as an oppressed group outside the opportunity structure affects their academic achievement specifically and their school experience more generally. This digest distills and compares the findings and recommendations of these two important studies.

THE FERGUSON STUDY OF THE MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT NETWORK (FERGUSON, 2003)

Self-Reported Achievement and Skill Disparities: Black, Hispanic, and mixed-race students reported lower grade-point averages than white and Asian students. Black and Hispanic students also reported less understanding of the lessons being taught and less comprehension of the reading material assigned.

Socioeconomic Status and Home Learning Resources: White and Asian students came to school with more of the educational resources identified with higher academic status (e.g., books and computers) than their African-American and Hispanic peers. However, these resources boost achievement less among African-American and Hispanic students than among students of other ethnicities.

Effort: African-American and Hispanic students identified teacher encouragement as a motive for their effort and substantially indicated that this encouragement was more motivating than teacher demands, unlike white students, who cited demands more than their minority peers. But white students also indicated that teacher encouragement was an incentive for them to make an effort to achieve.

Academic Behavior and Homework Completion Rates: By these measures whites and Asians appear more academically engaged and leave a greater impression of working harder and being more interested in their studies than their African-American and Hispanic peers. However, the students in all the population groups differed very little in time spent studying and doing homework, except Asians, and no group of students - including Asians - expressed a great deal of interest in schoolwork.

Ferguson (2003) draws a number of conclusions from his research for changes in the behavior of teachers in the classroom and in schools generally that can help close the achievement gap:

* Although teachers observe differences in academic performance and behavior between African-American, Hispanic, and mixed-race students on the one hand and white and Asian-American students on the other, in practice they should assume that there are no systematic group-level (as distinct from individual) differences in effort or motivation to succeed among the two groups (p. 18).

* Because there are observable racial and ethnic group gaps in standardized achievement test scores and self-reported differences in comprehension of the content and lessons, schools should identify and respond to specific skill and knowledge deficit problems of particular groups.

* Because students value and respond to encouragement, teachers need to provide it routinely.

* Schools need to provide more educational resources and learning experiences because of student differences in advantages due to their family background.

THE OGBU ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY (OGBU, 2003)

Opportunity Structure and Education: Many African American students did not perceive schooling to be a preparation for future success in the job market. They did not understand how their academic performance at one level of schooling affects the courses they will be able to take at a higher level of schooling, which could lead to greater opportunity. Further, they did not know enough about the educational requirements for future jobs. Their role models were entertainers and athletes because they are wealthier and more visible to them than lawyers, engineers, and university professors whose success depended on their educational credentials.

Race Relations and Schooling: African-Americans felt disparaged and misrepresented in the community, despite the appearance of racial harmony, and fearful and socially distant from whites. As an example, whites in the community felt that the achievement gap was due to social class differences while African-Americans maintained that it was the result of racism. African-American students also

strongly believed that their teachers did not "care" for them because they were not supportive, nurturing, and encouraging. They also held teachers accountable for their academic performance.

Identity and Culture: African-American students were unengaged in the attitudes and behaviors that lead to school success because to them accepting the school curriculum, language, and pedagogy would mean rejecting their collective identity. However, they were not opposed to earning good grades although it meant being accused of acting"white" by their peers. Many of these same students also questioned their intelligence, having internalized the beliefs of others', and often acted as if they were less intelligent than their white peers.

Educational Strategies: African-American students recognized the need for effort to meet high academic standards, but chose not to apply it for reasons noted above. They reported that they realized that they did not work hard enough to get good grades. They also felt that the lack of discipline and other disruptive behavior in the classes where they were in the majority were not conducive to learning, unlike the climate in advanced placement classes, where most of the students were white and performed academically at a higher level. Parents of African-American students believed that their children should work hard to make good grades; however, they did not involve themselves in their children's schooling by supervising the completion of homework and the use of time or by protecting their children from negative peer pressure. Culturally, African Americans believed that it was the role of the school and teachers to make their children learn and perform successfully. Finally, African-American students often were not educated in honors or advanced placement classes because counselors in the upper elementary grades assigned them to less academically rigorous tracks with less academic and career rewards; further, parents did not fully understand the consequences of the placements, did not adequately prepare their children for academic work, and did not intervene to try countermand the placements.

Based on his research, Ogbu (2003) also makes several recommendations for communities and schools like those in Shaker Heights, Ohio, for closing the achievement gap:

* To increase African-American students' academic orientation and performance, communities need to provide supplementary education programs using the resources of for-profit and non-profit community-based organizations to create a parallel educational system.

* The community needs to provide academically successful role models, publicly recognize achievement, and encourage schools to infuse multicultural perspectives into the academic curriculum to counter students' idea that to achieve is to act white and to help students develop a sound self-concept and identity. The schools, in turn, need to develop strategies to help parents take a greater role in the academic life of their children, and to help them learn to be academically self-motivated and persistent.

* Students need help to learn how to distinguish between short-term and long-term educational goals in course-taking, and between courses in academic subjects and courses that develop a cultural identity. They should also help students to develop study habits and study skills and to resist anti-academic peer pressure.

* Teachers need to recognize that their expectations have an effect on their students' concept of themselves as learners and achievers and the internalization of negative or positive beliefs about their intelligence.

* Schools need to provide parents information on tracking practices, and about differences between honors and Advanced Placement classes, regular classroom placement, and remedial classes. Parents also need to be helped in working with teachers to monitor and effectively enhance their children's academic progress.

A FINAL NOTE ON CLOSING THE GAP

In their conclusions about their research findings, Ferguson and Ogbu do not differ in their views on how schools can help minority students to be more academically engaged and better achievers, only in emphasis. For Ferguson, the role of the teacher and the school is to encourage the individual student to meet the demands of academic work by changing classroom practices. For Ogbu, students will perform better and be more engaged in school if they are helped to modify parts of their collective identity that reject school success, through caring individual and institutional practices. This difference of perspective is noteworthy, however. Ogbu maintains that minority students do not participate in the opportunity structure of the United States because they have identified with their oppressed and marginal position in American society. For him, schools must actively alter these students' identity as outsiders, through caring. Ferguson, on the other hand, argues that schools need to develop interventions that improve minority students' capacity to master the learning tasks of the classroom through academic encouragement, implying that their success will change their self-concept and identity.

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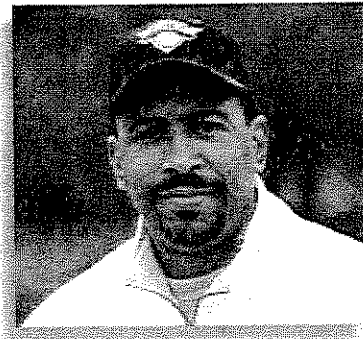
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The Significance of Race in the Racial Gap
in Academic Achievement

by Pedro A. Noguera and Antwi Akom

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Once again national attention has been drawn to the
phenomenon now commonly referred to as the racial
gap in academic achievement. The issue has become
particularly salient as states have adopted new exams
in an effort to raise academic standards to hold
schools and students accountable for their
performance. Despite its many faults as an
educational reform strategy, the advent of high stakes
testing in states throughout the nation has focused attention to the long neglected issues
surrounding student achievement.

Pedro Noguera. Photo by Nic Paget-Clarke.

The appearance of a racial gap in student achievement is by no means a new
development. For years, evidence of disparities in achievement have shown up in test
scores, grades, drop-out and graduation rates, and almost every relevant indicator of
academic performance. However, more often than not, the presence of significant
differences in measures of performance among African American, Latino, and Native
American students who generally fall on the lower end of the achievement spectrum, with
larger numbers of White and Asian students more likely to be found at the higher end,
has been accepted as normal and unproblematic. The consistency of such patterns in
almost every school and school district in the nation has the effect of reinforcing well
established assumptions regarding the relationship between race, academic ability and
intelligence. Nonetheless, despite lingering doubts about the abilities of certain children to
learn, the new tests and the penalties that accompany them have focused attention on
the racial achievement gap. In many cases the tests are also forcing schools to seriously
examine how they educate children of color.

The drawbacks related to the new high stakes tests are not insignificant. In states such as
California, the tests are generally not aligned to the curriculum which means that students
are tested on material to which they may not have been exposed. The tests are also
administered in English which means that over a third of the students in California are
unable to comprehend the questions. The purpose of the tests also raises important
questions for rather than providing teachers with useful diagnostic information on the
abilities and skills of their students, the tests are typically used as a basis for ranking
students and schools; a process which predictably results in poorer students and the
schools that serve them being ranked at the bottom of the achievement ladder. Finally,
and perhaps most importantly, there is growing concern among educators that the tests
are being used to determine the content of what children learn in school, and that the
content will be so limited and narrowly conceived that education will be reduced to
preparing kids for tests while other purposes of education - encouraging critical thinking,
creativity and intellectual curiosity will be abandoned.

Of course, the results obtained from achievement tests reflect more than just racial
disparities. Most consistently, an analysis of test scores also reveals a close
correspondence between the scores children obtain and broader patterns of social

inequality within American society. With few exceptions, the children of the affluent out-perform children of the poor. However, what makes the racial gap unique is the fact that the benefits typically associated with middle-class status don't accrue to African American, and in many cases, Latino students. In many school districts, children of color from middle class, college educated families continue to lag significantly behind White students on most achievement measures. The performances of these relatively privileged students have brought renewed attention to the relationship between race and educational performance, an issue that historically has generated controversy and paralysis for those charged with figuring out what should be done.

Explaining why poor children of color perform comparatively less well in school is generally a less complicated matter. Consistently, such children are educated in schools that, on most measures of quality and funding, are woefully inadequate. This is particularly true in economically depressed urban areas, where bad schools are just one of several obstacles with which poor people must contend. In inner-city schools throughout the United States it has frequently been the case that schools are unable to provide consistent and reliable evidence that the children they serve are learning and provided quality education. Parents often perceive the public schools available to their children as hopeless and unresponsive to their needs, prompting many who can to opt for private schools to withdraw. For those who can not escape, a growing number of parents have actively sought alternatives via vouchers and various privatization schemes. The proliferation of these kinds of educational alternatives in cities such as Milwaukee, Cleveland and Baltimore is yet another sign of the mounting pressure exerted by parents who are no longer willing to accept the status quo.

The stark inequities manifest in inner-city and some rural schools help to explain the low achievement rates of large numbers of poor children, a disproportionate number of whom are African American and Latino. Left unexplained is the lagging performance of middle class and poor African American and Latino children who have access to better schools. This is the question that has prompted fifteen racially integrated, affluent school districts to form a consortium known as the Minority Student Achievement Network. Comprised of districts located in communities such as White Plains, NY, Ann Arbor, Michigan and Berkeley, California, the network seeks to understand the causes of the racial achievement gap and to devise solutions for reversing it.

On the face of it, the potential for success in reducing the gap in these districts would seem to be high. All fifteen school districts in the network have a track record of sending large numbers of affluent White students to the best colleges and universities in the country. Additionally, unlike schools in high poverty areas, funding is largely not a major obstacle to reform. Each of the districts are located in affluent communities with highly educated populations known for their commitment to liberal political and social values. Yet, in all fifteen districts prospects for producing change are hampered by a deeply ingrained sense that even this ambitious, well intentioned effort will fail to alter student outcomes.

To a large degree, much of the pessimism in these districts and many others that have launched efforts to overcome the racial achievement gap can be attributed to the confusion surrounding the relationship between race and student achievement. Lack of clarity on these issues can be seen most clearly at the level of policy and practice. From a policy standpoint, most issues pertaining to race and education have historically centered on efforts to support racial integration in schools. For a variety of reasons, figuring out how to desegregate schools has taken precedence over the need to figure out how to serve the educational needs of a diverse student population. Policies born out of court orders have seldom been based on an understanding of sound educational practice. Moreover, even in the liberal districts in the Minority Student Achievement Network, (some of which were among the first in the nation to voluntarily de-segregate) the arrival of significant numbers of students of color in the late 60's and early 70's was met with

considerable opposition. From the very beginning, the presence of African American children, especially those from low income families, was perceived as a "challenge" to which to respond because the children were typically perceived as disadvantaged and deficient in comparison to their white schoolmates. Framed as "problems" and "challenges" from the very start, it is hardly surprising that the education of students of color would continue to be treated as a problem requiring special interventions years later.

In addition to policy, educational practices often have the effect of favoring privileged students and hindering the educational opportunities of poorer students specifically, and African American and Latino students generally. This is particularly true with respect to the various strategies employed by schools to track and sort students on the basis of some measure of ability and acumen. A large body of research has shown that students of color are more likely to be excluded from classes for those deemed "gifted" in primary school, and from honors and advanced placement courses in high school. The Education Trust has shown, through its research on science and math education, that even students of color who meet the criteria for access to advanced courses are more likely to be restricted based on the recommendation of a counselor or teacher. They are also more likely to be placed in remedial and special education classes, and to be subject to varying forms of school discipline.

Beyond the policies and practices which contribute to the achievement gap, there are also a number of ambiguous cultural factors related to the attitudes and behaviors of students, the child rearing practices of parents, and the expectations and effectiveness of teachers, which also influence patterns of student achievement. Several studies have indicated that middle class African American and Latino students spend less time on homework and study in less effective ways than middle class White and Asian students. Also, despite the visibility of African American students in sports such as football and basketball, research shows that these students are less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities (which are shown to positively influence achievement) and in response to surveys, are more likely to emphasize the importance of being popular among friends than doing well in school.

Missing from the research and policy debates on the racial gap in student achievement is an understanding of the ways in which children come to perceive the relationship between their racial identities and what they believe they can do academically. For many children, schools play an important role in shaping their racial identities because they are one of the few social settings where they interact with people from different backgrounds. To the extent that a school's sorting process disproportionately relegates Black and Brown children to spaces that are perceived as negative and marginal, it is likely that children will come to perceive certain activities and courses as racially defined and therefore either suitable or off limits for them.

For example, in schools where few minority students are enrolled in advanced placement courses, even students who meet the criteria for enrollment may refuse to take such courses out of concern that they will become isolated from their peers. The same is true for the school band, newspaper, debating team or honor society. To the extent that these activities are perceived as the domain of White students, non-white students will be less likely to join. This occurs because peer groups play a large role in determining the academic orientation of students. The peer group with whom a student feels a sense of affinity can influence their style of clothes, manner of speech, and future career orientation. For middle-class African American and Latino students, this may mean that, despite receiving encouragement from their parents to do well in school, the peer group with whom they identify with may have stronger influence and push them in a different direction.

Finally, racial images rooted in stereotypes which diminish the importance of intellectual pursuits limit the aspirations of young African American and Latino students. Such images permeate American society and have an impact on attitudes toward school. Despite the odds of success in professional sports and entertainment, many young people believe that they have a greater chance of becoming a highly paid athlete or rap artist than an engineer, doctor or software programmer. Moreover, with the advent of roll backs on affirmative action policies at colleges and universities, there is little doubt that students who possess entertainment value, who can slam dunk or score touchdowns, will always be admitted regardless of their academic performance - even as aspiring doctors and lawyers are turned away.

When placed within the broader context of race relations in American society, the causes of the racial achievement gap appear less complex and mysterious; the gap is merely another reflection of the disparities in experience and life chances for individuals from different racial groups. In fact, given the history of racism in the United States, and the ongoing reality of racial discrimination, it would be even more surprising if an achievement gap did not exist. If the children of those who are most likely to be incarcerated, denied housing and employment, passed over for promotions, or harassed by the police did just as well in school as those whose lives are largely free of such encumbrances, this would truly be remarkable news. But this is not the case, and if we recognize that educational patterns generally mimic other social patterns, we should not be surprised.

However, lest recognition of the racial achievement gap drive us into greater despair about the prospects for eliminating racial inequality in America, we must also recognize that, to the extent that change is possible, it is more likely to occur in education than in any other sector. This is because, despite its faults, public education remains the most democratic and accessible institution in this country. In fact, in the post-welfare reform period, it is all that remains of the social safety net for poor children. Moreover, though the number of cases is small, there are schools where no achievement gap exists, and there are students who achieve at high levels despite the incredible odds against them. These bright spots of success provide us with a window through which we can examine what might be possible if we lived in a society that truly valued children and was genuinely committed to equity and high quality education for all.

We are living in a time in which politicians recognize that the public is deeply concerned about improving the quality of education. There could be no better time at which to raise issues related to inequality in funding and the need to focus upon expanding educational opportunities as a way of reducing social inequality. Clearly, public opinion on these issues is divided and few politicians will dare to even raise these issues. But for those who believe that education can serve as a source of hope and opportunity, the time is ripe for making our voices heard so that this historic opportunity is not missed.

EVERYDAY ANTIRACISM IN EDUCATION

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Introduction

The world of K-12 education contains infinitely complex race questions—and endlessly oversimplified race answers. In US K-12 education, the field in which I work as an anthropologist of education, "race groups" are often portrayed as falsely static, firmly bounded groups. They are portrayed as "cultural" groups, if not explicitly "genetic" ones, with different ways of behaving that directly cause racially inequitable outcomes like "achievement." Educators need tools for thinking and talking far more complexly about racialized difference and racial inequality.

Race Wrestling

I have found that anthropology and its methodological tool, ethnography, offer some key components for moving dialogue in education beyond oversimplified notions of "racial" difference and oversimplified explanations for racial inequality. For rather than simply asking respondents to restate these commonsense notions, ethnography can show educators the ways in which they and their students struggle daily *with* race. By focusing attention on *everyday struggles* over race categories and racial inequality, ethnography can facilitate what I call "race wrestling": people struggling self-consciously with normalized ideas about "racial" difference and about how racial inequality is produced.

Anthropology, in its serious attention to the ongoing everyday activity of ordinary people, also helps educators think about how their own ordinary moves either reproduce or challenge structures of racial inequality. Educators need tools for analyzing the consequences of their everyday behaviors because they are often unsure which ordinary moves, in an already racialized world, are racist and which antiracist. Indeed, antiracist educators must constantly negotiate between two *antiracist* impulses in deciding their everyday behaviors toward students.

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Moment to moment, they must choose between the antiracist impulse to treat all people as human beings *rather* than "race" group members, and the antiracist impulse to recognize people's real experiences *as* race group members in order to assist them and treat them equitably.

The ethnographic question to ask about antiracism in education is thus not abstractly *whether* people should be treated or not treated as race group members in schools (this is the typical US debate about "race consciousness" vs "color blindness"), but rather concretely *when* and *how* it helps in real life in specific places to treat people as race group members, and when and how it harms. Static advice to "be colorblind" regarding one's students, or to "celebrate" their diversity, or to "recognize" their "identities," is not equally helpful in all situations. In daily life, *sometimes* being colorblind is quite harmful to young people; *sometimes* a "celebration" of diversity can be reductive and harmful; *sometimes* "recognizing" one aspect of an identity (a student's or one's own) detracts from a sense of common humanity.

Educators in the US and elsewhere are routinely given too-static, overarching, abstracted recommendations for dealing with race in school. Educators need instead to wrestle with their own daily *struggles over* race in educational settings, and to consider moment to moment decisions about how best to assist real children in real world situations.

Lessons for Antiracist Practice

Some lessons for everyday antiracist practice in education have emerged in a forthcoming collection of essays I am editing (see the work of sociologist Michele Lamont for exploration of "everyday antiracism" in other realms). These lessons engage, in part, Audrey Smedley's arguments about the key features of racism since race categories were developed to facilitate slavery and colonial expansion in the 15th century. Then and today, racism has been about building structures of unequal resource and power on oversimplified notions of human difference. Today, racism still involves unequally measuring human worth, intelligence and potential along static "racial" lines, and accepting the distribution of racially unequal opportunities, and the production of racially patterned disparities, as if these are normal.

Everyday antiracism in education thus requires that educators make strategic, self-conscious everyday moves to counter these ingrained tendencies. First, then, everyday antiracism in education involves *rejecting false notions of human difference*, and actively treating people as equally human, worthy, intelligent and potentialed. In educational settings, antiracism particularly requires actively affirming that intelligence is equally distributed to human beings, and that no "race group" is more or less intelligent than any other. Antiracism in education also involves actively rejecting race categories' "genetic" reality. It involves learning, proactively, that "races" are not groups that are genetically different in

any real way, but rather geographical groups that developed minor physical differences and have come over centuries of social practice to live very different lives. Everyday antiracism in education also involves challenging oversimplified notions of human diversity, and asserting that complex people do not always fit easily into single, simple boxes of "racial" (or "ethnic") identity or behavior.

Second, everyday antiracism in education involves *acknowledging and engaging lived experiences along racial lines*, even if the categories themselves have been built upon genetically insignificant differences. Over six centuries of American history, people have both been lumped into ranked "races" by others, and chosen race-group membership for themselves as a means for social empowerment. The Irish "became white" in the 19th century, and Jews "became white" in the 20th; "Asian-Americans" became "Asian-Americans" in the 1960s; then too emerged "Latinos" or "Hispanics." Today, we all make one another "racial" on a daily basis. Racialized "groups" in the US today bring very different experiences to the table, and they are shaped by very different experiences with educational resources, opportunity and success. Everyday antiracism thus entails engaging one's own and others' experiences of this differential treatment—whether we have benefited from such differential treatment or been sabotaged by it.

Third, everyday antiracism in education also involves *capitalizing upon, building upon and celebrating* those diversities that have developed over centuries and decades to sustain strength and foster enjoyment within racialized groups, long grouped involuntarily and destructively by external others and grouped proactively and positively by themselves. As Cornel West wrote in "Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power," being "black," for example, involves both the negative experience of responding constantly to denials of equal opportunity (typically, in history, at the hands of "whites") and the positive experience of enjoying a community that has bonded through expressive and political practices with one another even in the midst of such oppression. Antiracism thus requires *enjoying* and *sharing* difference in ways that assist individuals to feel respected, broadened and challenged. It involves not just sharing and respecting "group" forms of expression, but also sharing and respecting the critical lenses that members of various "groups" bring to any table.

Fourth, everyday antiracism in education involves *equipping self and others to challenge racial inequality*. Everyday antiracism particularly involves actively challenging the widespread tendency to see racial disparities in opportunity and outcome as "normal." Everyday antiracism in education involves clarifying any ways in which opportunities must still be equalized along racial lines, and then equipping people to actually equalize life chances and opportunities arbitrarily reduced along racial lines. Everyday antiracism in education also entails proactively reminding students of color laboring under false notions of racial "inability" that they are equally intelligent and potentialed. Everyday antiracism in education also entails reminding white students that they

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are not naturally superior, but rather privileged by an intricate system that they, too, can make more equitable for others.

These four paragraphs suggest seemingly contradictory things: rejecting false notions of human difference, engaging lived experiences shaped along racial lines, enjoying versions of such difference, and constantly critiquing and challenging systems of racial inequality built upon these notions of difference. The four are actually not self-contradictory. Rather, they demonstrate that everyday antiracism requires doing each situationally on a daily basis. Antiracism requires *not* treating people as race group members when such treatment harms, and *treating* people as race group members when such treatment assists. Deciding which move to take when requires thinking hard about everyday life in educational settings as complex, conflict-ridden and deeply consequential. Anthropology can assist educators and students to turn a critical analytic lens on their own everyday experiences in schools and districts to see how "racial" difference and racial inequality are being produced or dismantled in small bits.

Mica Pollock is the author of *Colormute: Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School* and the forthcoming *Everyday Justice: Disputing Educational Discrimination in the New Civil Rights Era.* She is editor of the forthcoming book *Everyday Antiracism: Concrete Ways to Successfully Navigate the Relevance of Race in School.*