

Creating Conditions to Raise Student Achievement:

What it Takes to Leave No Child Behind

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I. What we know about the achievement gap

- The achievement gap is an educational manifestation of social inequality:
 - It mirrors other disparities (health, income, employment)
 - Tends to follow consistent patterns with respect to the race and class of students
 - External conditions affect academic performance (e.g. health, housing stability, poverty)
 - Influenced by a history of perceiving race and intelligence as linked
 - We have historically seen the pursuit of excellence and equity as conflicting goals

Confronting the Achievement Gap

- Manifest on most indicators of achievement (grades, test scores, graduation rates, discipline patterns), key areas:
 - Discipline - punishing the neediest students
 - Special education - removing students due to our inability to meet their needs
 - English as a second language - perceiving non-English speakers as deficient

Normalization of Failure

- You know normalization of failure is a problem if:
 - Staff has grown accustomed to the predictability (particularly with respect to race and class) of academic outcomes
 - Teachers and administrators rationalize low achievement by pointing the finger at their - parents, students, community
 - Staff believes that culture and biology determine intelligence rather than access to resources and educational opportunity
 - There's no sense of urgency about addressing low achievement

We know we are succeeding in closing the gap when the backgrounds of students (race and class) cease to be predictors of achievement.

II. Dimensions of the Gap

- Preparation Gap - Poor children arrive at school less prepared
 - Limited literacy/vocabulary for poor children
 - Inability of schools to intervene early in response to student needs
- Opportunity Gap - Limiting access to rigorous courses, highly skilled teachers
 - Tracking, labeling and low expectations limit opportunities

Other Aspects of the Gap

- **Teacher-student gap**
 - Relationships between students and adults are strained or weak
 - Lowest achievers alienated and estranged from school
- **School - Parent gap**
 - Parents of lowest achievers not involved with school
 - Strained/antagonistic relations with parents

Reflection

- What do you know about the background of students who have been most likely to under achieve at your school? (race, gender, neighborhood, grade, etc.) How welcome do they feel at your school? Who are their advocates and mentors?
- What strategies have been used to address the needs of these students? How effective are these strategies?
- How would you characterize relationships between adults and low achieving students?
- What factors are motivating your school to address this issue?

Need for a Paradigm Shift

<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Old Paradigm<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Intelligence is innate■ Job of schools is to measure intelligence and sort accordingly■ Inequity in resource allocation: give the best resources to highest achievers■ Discipline used to weed out the "bad" kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ New Paradigm<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Intelligence and ability are influenced by opportunity■ It is the job of school to cultivate talent and ability among students■ Resources allocated based on student need■ Discipline used to reinforce school values and norms
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Conditions Needed to Raise Student Achievement:

- Systems to facilitate school effectiveness
 - Diagnostic assessment to gauge learning needs of students
 - Early intervention procedures
 - Evaluation to insure quality control
 - On-site, ongoing professional development
 - Shared leadership
- Normative adaptations:
 - Reciprocity - Supportive relationships between teachers and students
 - Collaboration - Willingness among teachers to share ideas, curricula, materials
 - Deliberations - Opportunity for staff to meet and to discuss goals and work
 - Social Closure - Partnership between school and parents

Recommendations for closing the gap:

- External partnerships with service providers to address unmet non-academic needs
 - Health, nutrition, counseling, etc.
- Quality control in interventions through ongoing evaluation
 - Title I and Special Education
- Key principles:
 - Kids who are behind must work harder and longer under better conditions
 - Improving the quality of teaching is the most effective way to raise student achievement

Close the Preparation Gap

- Increase access to quality early childhood programs
 - Provide professional development for providers
- Use summer school and after-school programs to address needs of kids who are falling behind
 - Build safety net - use data to identify kids who are falling behind early, intervene early
 - Transition - design strategies to identify and provide support to students moving from elementary to middle school, middle to high school.

Close the Opportunity Gap

- Increase access to rigorous courses and increase support
 - AVID, MESA
 - Increase enrollment in higher level math
- Insure equitable access to effective teachers
- Address inequities in parental resources by providing greater support to disadvantaged students in college advising, SAT prep, tutoring

Close the Relationship Gap:

- Move toward a new advising model in which every teacher serves as an advisor
- Increase student connectedness to the school through extracurricular activities
- Hire personnel from backgrounds similar to that of your students who can relate and provide direction to students - moral authority
- Focus on improving teaching by:
 - Strengthening link between teaching and learning
 - On-site professional development in content, pedagogy and rapport with students
 - Bring groups of teachers together on regular basis to analyze student work

Close the Gap Between Parents and School

- Engage parents in partnerships based on respect and shared interests
- Initiate contact before problems arise
- Design a variety of activities throughout school year for parents
- Hire personnel who are effective at working with parents

III. Effective schools

- Have a **coherent strategy** for delivering high quality instruction
 - Teachers adhere to a common set of instructional and assessment strategies
 - In some cases, teachers follow a common curriculum
- Research shows three whole school reform strategies are producing sustained gains in achievement:
 - Success for all
 - Accelerated schools
 - Core knowledge

Effective Schools

- They have systems to monitor academic performance
 - They use data to make decisions about school improvement
- They engage in constant assessment
 - Diagnostic assessment
- They have effective leadership - shared and distributed
- They have a culture of high expectations for all
 - Systems of mutual accountability for teachers, students and parents

Three Schools Closing the Gap

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Aki Kurose Middle School, Seattle, WA | ■ Jeremiah E. Burke, Boston, MA |
| ■ Integrated curriculum, project-based learning | ■ Small schools, career academies |
| ■ Block scheduling | ■ Parent, student, school contracts |
| ■ Advisories | ■ Clear mission - focus on college |
| ■ Positive discipline | ■ On-site professional development |

Emerson Elementary School, Berkeley, CA

- Strategies:
 - Diagnostic assessment
 - Effective use of supplemental resources
 - Parents as partners
 - On-site professional development

Group Discussion

- Which of the strategies utilized by effective schools are you presently using at your school? Which ones should you adopt?
- What factors detract from your school's effectiveness at serving the needs of your students?
- If you had extra resources how would you use them to support your school's efforts to raise achievement?

IV. What we Know About Teaching and Learning

- Good teaching matters - low achievers tend to be assigned to less effective teachers
- Many teachers expect students to adjust to the way they teach, rather than adjusting their teaching to the way students learn
- Teaching and learning tends to be seen as two disconnected activities
 - Teachers must take responsibility for student learning and achievement
- Most of what teachers learn is learned on the job, not in graduate school
 - Find ways to reduce teacher isolation

Improving Instruction: Building strong links between teaching and learning

- Reflective teaching
- On-site and continuous professional development
 - Make use of skilled teachers
 - Use staff meetings to discuss teaching and student needs
- Aligning instruction to standards and assessments
 - Effective use of homework

Professional Development Activity: Learning from student work

- Start with the standards: What should our students know and be able to do?
- Examine the assessments together
- Examine student work together: What patterns do you observe?
- Discuss strategies for improving quality of student work: What are the implications for teaching? How will we get our students to meet the standards?

Effective Teaching Strategies for Reducing Academic Disparities

- Active learning, interactive classroom, on-task learning
 - Moving away from the cemetery model
- Teaching within the zone of proximal development
- Constructivist, inquiry-based pedagogical strategies
- Simulations
- Socratic seminars
- Project based learning
- Experiential learning
- Student leadership in the classroom
- Public presentations of student work

Interventions that work

- AVID, MESA
 - Provides support to peer groups
- Project SEED - early exposure to higher level math
- Popular culture in the classroom - Algebra Project
- Accelerated summer school
 - Provides advanced preparation for students
- After-school and community-based enrichment
- Extra curricular activities - sports, music, clubs
- Transition classes
 - Smaller classes for students who are behind

Helping students to succeed: Demystify school success

- Teach study skills, form study groups
- Show students what excellent work looks like and how to produce it
- Teach and explain code switching behaviors
- Discuss future plans early and expose students to options

V. Teaching Across Race, Class and Cultural Differences

- Is it a problem?
 - Met Life Survey: 40% low income students, 45% minority students report that they do not identify with their teachers
 - Most teachers claim to be "color blind" yet many report having greater difficulty working with minority and low income students
 - Disparities in achievement and discipline suggest that there is a problem
 - Good news - Students are less prejudiced than adults. They are generally willing to learn from anyone who cares and takes an interest in them.

Indications that cross cultural teaching is a problem:

- Normalization of failure
- Differential expectations - lower standards for minority students
- Conflict in the classroom, lack of respect and fear among teachers
- Students perceive racial identity and achievement as linked
- Strained relations between teachers and students, teachers and parents - distrust, hostility, suspicion
- Tendency to blame students and/or their parents rather than accepting responsibility for their role in raising achievement

What does it take to teach across cultures effectively?

- Skills and cultural competence - you can't teach what you don't know
- Awareness of and willingness to unlearn personal bias
- Ability to affirm the cultural identities of students
- My research shows students respond well to teacher that demonstrate:
 - Firmness, organization and structure
 - Compassion - students need to know you care
 - Challenge- students are expected to learn
 - Understanding - identify and empathize with students

Reflection:

- What are the barriers that keep you or your colleagues from being effective in teaching across racial and cultural differences?
- How has your background helped or hindered you in this work?
- What skills, knowledge or information do you think you need to increase your effectiveness as a teacher?

Things to be aware of when teaching cross culturally:

- Avoid tendency to take a "color blind" posture toward students
- Avoid tendency to stereotype your students based on race or culture
- Be aware of how unconscious bias may influence your interactions
- Strive to know yourself and your students so that your relationships are not affected by race/cultural differences

VI. What We Know About Safe Schools

- Safety is a by-product of social relationships, not advanced security
- Cannot separate safety from academic mission
- Schools tend to have a shortage of adults with "moral authority"
- Social contract - students are expected to obey in exchange for an education

Use Data to Monitor Effectiveness of Discipline Strategies

- Examine patterns
 - Who is being disciplined? (race, gender, academic profile, year in school)
 - What is behind the misbehavior of students who are frequently in trouble?
 - Do disciplinary practices serve as an effective deterrent?
 - Which teachers/administrators give most referrals? For what reasons?

Alternative Strategies

- Base discipline on school values
 - Focus on changing behavior not getting rid of students
- Respond early and often to minor infractions
 - What are the values behind school rules
- Create school environments where all students are known (size matters)
 - Decrease alienation, increase personalization
- Engage students more actively in school
 - Utilize extra curricular activities

Alternative Discipline Strategies

- Effective deterrence
 - Figure out what is causing persistent behavior problems
 - Extra work - in-school suspension
 - Retribution to victims
 - Community service
 - Counseling
 - Parental involvement
 - Interaction with community agencies

VII. Basic Requirements for Improving Relationships Between Parents and Schools

- Must be based on a recognition of mutual need, responsibility and respect
- Must be based on the recognition that all parents can help their children
- Must be based upon understanding and empathy for the situation confronting parents and families
- Schools need personnel who can communicate effectively with parents

Possible Areas of Cooperation Between Parents and Schools

- Parent-School Contracts - Formal agreements laying out expectations for all parties, including children
- Site-based leadership - Comer model, Chicago site councils, provide parents with decision making roles at schools
 - Mutual accountability
- Academic enrichment - math and literacy nights, diagnostic testing
- Parent education - discipline, raising teenagers, talking to kids about sex, helping kids get ready for college

Developing the Partnership

- Effective use of the Parent-Teacher Conference
 - Diagnostic assessment
 - Concrete information on how they can help their children
- Back-to-School Night
 - Creative strategies for explaining the goals and mission of the school
- In-take interviews with parent and student
 - Rights, responsibilities and opportunities

- Contact information:
 - pedro.noguera@nyu.edu
 - imotionmagazine.com- education rights section for articles and papers
- New book - City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education (Teachers College Press, 2003)
