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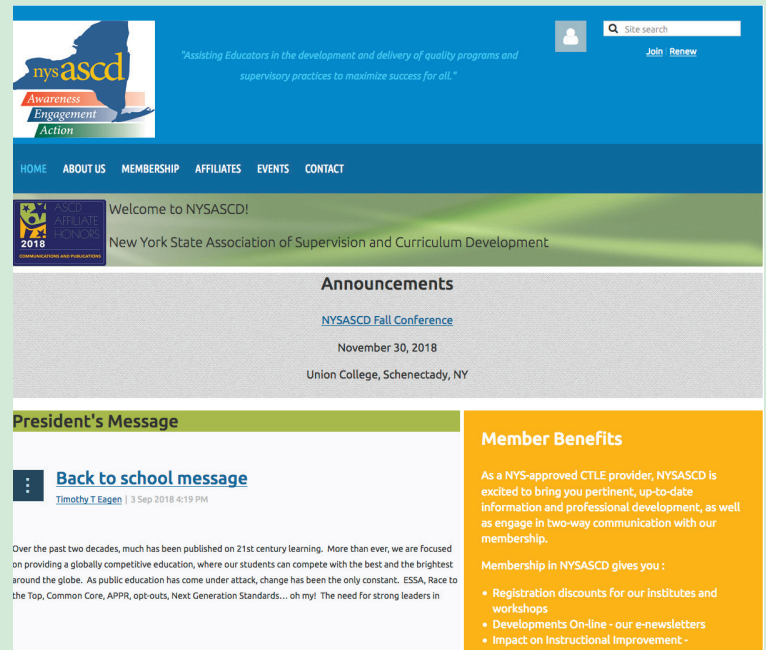
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Foreword



Dr. Shawn Robertson

is an Associate Professor in the Child Study Department at St. Joseph's College. He is a former middle school and high school English teacher and has served as an Assistant Principal, Principal and Chief Academic Officer. He is a consistent presenter to local, national and international audiences in the areas of pedagogy and technology integration.

This edition of the **Impact** Journal tackles the challenging topic of cultural responsiveness in the educational arena. It takes on the notion of how we see our students and the impact that vision has on the ways we interact with them in the school setting. Topics that are relevant to today's educator in relation to understanding how culture relates to student performance and connectedness are explored thoroughly.

The major thematic focal point is one that demonstrates the reflective and practical nature of understanding cultural responsiveness and implementing practices that allow for deep understanding of students while helping them make strong connections with caring adults.

This practice of culturally responsiveness is a habit of mind that all educators need to develop and establish in their teaching and leadership roles. From district level leaders to educational aides all members of the school community need to understand and embrace the self-reflective nature of being culturally responsive. Schools and communities will only continue to become more diverse in all aspects, homogenized school districts also need to be able to teach from multiple perspectives in order to prepare their students for the diverse world that awaits them. In this issue culturally responsiveness is explored from a number of perspectives, and practical ways of understanding and implementing this concept as a reality for educators and a benefit to students is explored thoroughly.

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Introduction



Dr. LaQuita Outlaw has worked in school leadership for over a decade. Dr. Outlaw serves as a peer editor for Corwin Press and assists several local organizations with organizing professional development opportunities for educators across Long Island.

When students feel a connection to the content or the person teaching the content, the probability of their success increases. John Hattie’s research shows that one indicator of a student’s academic success is the connection he/she has with the teacher. In this issue of the **Impact** Journal, you’ll read about how some schools and/or Districts make that connection. The deliberate actions of the school community members ensures that student needs are met. Although the practices look different, the desired outcome of being culturally responsive in order to help establish solid relationships at school is the same.

At the school level, a number of leaders have promoted practices that get results. In the article, “Culturally Responsive Schools in Action...And the Results to Prove It!,” Penny Ciaburri outlines the journey some schools took as they sought to increase the academic achievement of African American males. To accomplish that goal, we learn about how they each employed very different practices to improve achievement.

Finding responsive practices to ensure students with disabilities experience success is another focus of this issue explored. Suggestions made by Dr. Whitney Rapp and Dr. Katrina Arndt in “The Culture of School for Students Who Receive Test Accommodations” demonstrate that there are ways to support all students as we seek to respond to the needs

of students with learning needs. From whole group to individual support, the authors share practices that can be incorporated that will make a difference for these students.

When looking at the entire educational system, there are practices that can begin at the pre-service level. Before teachers enter the profession, they can examine their personal belief systems to better understand how they can support any student. One college course does just that; in “Unpacking Privilege: Teacher Education Toward Anti-racist Pedagogy” by Joanne Larson explains how those entering the profession can do so with empathy for the various ethnic groups they may work and communicate with as educators.

When examining the educational system as a whole, another important factor is the role of the superintendent. One study conducted by Dr. Teresa Grossane finds that leaders with a special education background feel more prepared for the role. Therefore, including candidates with a special education background may increase the number of qualified leaders who know how to be more responsive to the various cultures and communities they serve.

In each article, you’ll find recommendations that can help you move toward more culturally responsive practices at any level. Even the consideration of one may move your classroom, school, or district closer to better serving those who may have been overlooked. Not sure where to begin? It does not matter where you start, any one of these strategies has the potential to move you one step closer to helping every child experience success.

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The Culture of School for Students Who Receive Test Accommodations

Dr. Whitney H. Rapp and Dr. Katrina Arndt, St. John Fisher College



Dr. Whitney Rapp is Associate Professor of Inclusive Education at St. John Fisher College, where she teaches courses on inclusive education pedagogy, assessment, and classroom management.

Dr. Rapp's current research interests include universal design for learning (UDL) throughout the school years and college, as well as strategies for executive functioning. She is the author of the textbook **Universal Design for Learning: 100 Ways to Teach All Learners** (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2014) and coauthor of the textbook **Teaching Everyone: An Introduction to Inclusive Education** (with K. L. Arndt; Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2012) and the textbook **Picture Inclusion: Snapshots of Successful Diverse Classrooms** (with K. Arndt and S. Hildenbrand, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2019).

Sara, a 10th grader, is stressed about her algebra exam today. She is confident that she knows the material and has studied hard, but because algebra is right before her English class, she is worried about going late to English because her English teacher, Mrs. Cooper, is always frustrated with her coming in halfway through class. She sometimes rolls her eyes or makes a comment out loud about Sara coming and going at all different times. Sara has test accommodations and must take her algebra test in the library's testing center. Because she gets extended time and the library is across the building, she will have to report to English 45 minutes after the 80 minute period starts. Besides that, she has an English test coming up and now she will miss some of the information that will be on the English test! It all feels completely unfair—but, thinks Sara, isn't that why she has test accommodations in the first place? To make things fair?

Overview

Culturally responsive teaching “is not a practice; it’s what informs our practice so we can make better teaching choices for eliciting, engaging, motivating, supporting, and expanding the intellectual capacity of ALL of our students” (Hammond, 2015, vii). This includes students with disabilities. **IDEA and Section 504** of the Rehabilitation Act mandate



*Dr. Katrina Arndt is Professor of Inclusive Education at St. John Fisher College, where she teaches courses on educational technology, inclusive education pedagogy, assessment, and upper elementary literacy. Publications include **Teaching Everyone: An Introduction to Inclusive Education** (with W. H. Rapp, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2012) and **Picture Inclusion! Snapshots of Successful Diverse Classrooms** (with W. H. Rapp and S. Hildenbrand, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2019).*

special education support services that respond to the needs of students with disabilities or learning needs that impact their success in school. These services are essential for students, but the implementation sometimes misses the mark in providing support, particularly when it comes to testing accommodations. Fisher and Frey note that students with disabilities . . . are frequently left out of discussions about equity. We're not sure why that is—perhaps many educators believe that students with disabilities are protected by laws that ensure their access to, and meaningful participation in, school and school activities. The reality, unfortunately, is different. According to the **National Center for Education Statistics**, one in sixty-one percent of students with disabilities spent at least 80 percent of their time in regular education classes in 2014. Although that represents progress (only 33 percent spent that much time in regular classes in 1990), we still have a long way to go (2016, p. 85).

Part of the long way we have to go is creating a culturally responsive environment for students who use test accommodations. Many students report feeling stressed, frustrated, and devalued when they use test accommodations—a completely different experience that seems opposite of culturally responsive. In this article we review some common experiences and challenges for students who receive test accommodations, then present some solutions for teachers.

Challenges

In an article about teaching black girls, one of the fundamental questions the author posed is: “are our systems and policies (such as those related to dress code, discipline referrals, or eligibility for participation in sports or extracurricular activities) creating an environment that

is conducive to the healthy development of black girls?” (Morris, 2016, p. 51). We ask the same kind of question about students who receive test accommodations: *Are systems and policies—such as those related to moving in the building, being given time to complete*

In theory, these accommodations are supportive and responsive. In reality, the steps needed and the ways adults interact with students as these accommodations are provided often create more work and stress for students who need them.

testing and transition to class, or eligibility for participation in sports or extracurricular activities—creating an environment that is conducive to the healthy development of students who receive test accommodations?

The question about creating an environment that is conducive to the healthy development of students is dependent on the number of steps involved for the student and how the adults interacting with the student at each point support or do not support the student; students may experience an environment that is ideally conducive to healthy development (and performance) or one that is extremely detrimental to healthy development. Test accommodations are intended to level the playing field for students who need them—extended time for students with slower processing speed; alternative settings to minimize distractions; rest breaks

or multiple sittings; test questions read aloud; and answers spoken aloud by the student written by an adult (scribed). In theory, these accommodations are supportive and responsive. In reality, the steps needed and the ways adults interact with students as these

accommodations are provided often create more work and stress for students who need them. Below, we describe the challenges of various accommodations and how they often create an environment that is less responsive to these students.

Extended time. Extended time is provided for students who need more time to read the test, process the information, and/or record their responses. Most students receive 1.5 times the regular test time, others may receive double the time. Because classes in middle and high school are on a tight schedule, typically 40-45 minutes long, students who use their extended time accommodation must find 20-45 more minutes in their school day to complete the test. Many students spend most of their study halls and/or after school time as the extended time for finishing tests. This leaves them with

fewer to no opportunity to use study halls for homework or getting extra help. They have less opportunity than their peers for spending after school time in clubs or going to study sessions for the next test. Having to quit clubs to use that time to finish tests is particularly unfortunate. Often, the clubs help students feel more engaged, motivated, and supported in school. Having to cut that part out makes school much less culturally responsive.

Alternative setting. Alternative settings (sometimes referred to as distraction-free settings) are provided for students who require fewer students in the room while taking a test, which theoretically reduces the visual and auditory distractions in the room. The alternative setting is often the special education resource room, the school library, or a specifically designated testing center. Taking the test in a different setting than the usual classroom can be problematic for several reasons. Schools may require students to complete a form each time they have a test they would like to take in the alternative setting, so a copy of the test will be sent to the room in advance. Sometimes the student reports to the alternative setting and the test is not there waiting for them. The child is then sent to seek out the teacher to ask for the test before the student can get started. This is time-consuming and adds stress and distraction for the very student who receives the accommodations because less stress and

distraction are needed. Also, in alternative settings, students don't have access to their usual teacher to ask any questions they may have about the test questions. Nor do they benefit from taking the test in the room where they learned the material, which can improve recall (Goldstein, 2011; Smith & Vela, 2001).

Last, students may be chaperoned in the hallways while bringing their test to the alternate setting, to make sure they don't cheat. This supervision occurs in the classroom as well, by one or two adults for the whole class. Because there are often only a few students taking a test in an alternate setting, the adults sometimes monitor so closely that the monitoring feels intrusive or even suspicious. The result is a student trying their best in an environment that feels untrusting, which may erode the student's confidence and poise; not a good environment for best test performance.

Rest breaks or multiple sittings. Rest breaks are provided to students who require periodic respite from cognitive activity to replenish their stamina. In some cases, a five to ten minute break is adequate. In other cases, students may need to take the tests in multiple sittings to replenish their stamina over several hours or even overnight. When this happens, tests are usually given in halves. The student only has access to the first half of the test during the first sitting, and the second half of the test in the subsequent sitting,

presumably to deter cheating. This deprives the student of the opportunity to look ahead or back to get clues for answers. Other test taking strategies that are not possible when a student cannot inspect the whole test include completing harder or heavier weighted questions first while fresh, and doing a “brain dump” of ideas for responses when first reviewing test questions. That “brain dump” would have to be completed twice if the student has two separate test papers.

Test read and or/ answers scribed.

Students with reading processing difficulties may have their tests read. Students with difficulty writing answers may be provided with a scribe to record their answers for them. In either of these cases, there is always another person sitting alongside the student for the entirety of the test. This may be awkward, distracting, or even intimidating. How the adult reading or scribing talks to the student is a vital piece of the testing environment.

Solutions

These issues may make testing cumbersome and stressful for students who need accommodations. Meanwhile, students who don't need accommodations simply walk into their usual classroom and take the test. It is tempting to do what is convenient for the majority, but it is not the majority that most needs the convenience. Below, we outline four

solutions to support students who use test accommodations.

Universal testing time. What if students who use extended time did not have to spend extra-curricular time trying to finish tests? If tests were constructed to take half of a class period, every student would have double time to finish. All students would be able to finish and move on with the class.

Use of technology. Assistive technology can be transformational for students with and without disabilities. Using technology in the classroom can support many students, particularly those who receive test accommodations. Redford agrees, noting that “one of the most compelling attributes of assistive technology is the sense of independent confidence it provides for students with learning disabilities (or differences). Without assistive technology, these students are often our most dependent learners. Becoming proficient using various tech tools helps them build academic autonomy and develop a sense of agency” (2019, p. 74). The world of technology is changing so quickly that there are more options than ever for representing test questions in multiple ways (for example, using a test read with electronic supports such as **speechify**, or using “e-tests” presented online that have hyperlinks to photos, illustrations, or word definitions) and giving students multiple ways to express test answers (writing out responses, typing responses, speaking aloud for a scribe to record, using

The practice of separate, add-on, reactive accommodations defeats the intended purpose of the law that regulates them and simultaneously creates a school culture that is not responsive to students with disabilities.

More about Speechify

technology to dictate a response without a scribe, such as **otter dictation**).

Provide training. Adults who monitor tests, read tests aloud, or scribe tests need training and expertise to provide a supportive, culturally responsive environment. This training should include how to build rapport with the student, how to read aloud and provide repetition as needed, how to be supportive without leading the student or giving hints. Training should also include teaching students how to work with proctors (Salend, 2011).

Alternatives to tests. When possible, other assessments could be used to reduce the amount of testing for students, particularly those receiving test accommodations. Project-based assessments, portfolio assessments, presentations, and written papers can assess a student's knowledge and application of the content in addition to professional skills.

Summary

The practice of separate, add-on, reactive accommodations defeats the intended purpose of the law that regulates them and

simultaneously creates a school culture that is not responsive to students with disabilities. When testing accommodations are provided with a thoughtful consideration of serving students in culturally responsive ways, accommodations can meet the intended goal of meaningful participation. When that is the case, we can say that yes, systems and policies DO create an environment that is conducive to the healthy development of students who receive test accommodations.

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The Lived Experiences of Women Who Navigated the Trajectory to Superintendent: The Role of a Special Education Background

Teresa Grossane, Ed.D.



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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of six women who navigated the trajectory to the position of superintendent. The guiding research question was, “How do women who lead suburban school districts of various sizes describe their trajectory to the position of superintendent?” Themes that emerged from the one-to-one interviews were academic and professional preparation and the transferability of skills obtained from their special education background. Recommendations for boards of education and search firms include broadening the pipeline to include more women in the position of superintendent whose pathway includes special education backgrounds for their professional experiences.

Literature Review

Career Path

Kim and Brunner (2009) found “the typical pathway of women superintendents was as an elementary or secondary teacher, club advisor, elementary principal, director/ coordinator, assistant superintendent and superintendent” (p. 95). While most female teachers are elementary school teachers, the majority of current female superintendents (63%) have experience in secondary schools or both elementary and

secondary schools. Only 35% of female superintendents had experience as a secondary principal, and 57.4% of them held directorships in central office. Conversely, the typical route for a male superintendent was as a secondary teacher, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent, suggesting many male administrators move directly to the position of superintendent without the experience of central office. In the year 2000, 75% of men followed this route to the superintendency. “More than 80% of men had taught in secondary schools, and 63% of them had the experience of athletic coaching duties. 65% of men were secondary principals while only 28.7 % were a coordinator or director in central office” (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) conducted a study regarding the role of the superintendent in promoting, developing and sustaining a culture of collaboration between general and special educators throughout Local Educational Agencies (LEA). These superintendents were selected randomly from diverse areas across the country. Four out of the seven (57%) participants held special education positions at some point in their career (Keller- Allen, 2009), suggesting their knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions were transferable to the position of superintendent.

Participants

Six sitting superintendents in northeastern suburban school districts who serve communities with middle to upper income households agreed to participate in the study (see Table 1 on the following page).

Results

Participants spoke about their educational attainment and professional positions held prior to the position of superintendent. During the interviews two themes emerged: *academic and professional preparation*, and *the transferability of skills obtained from their special education background*.

Academic and Professional Preparation

For the theme *academic and professional preparation*, participants indicated they held doctoral degrees and state certification required for the position of superintendent. Although their professional backgrounds varied leading to the position of superintendent, all six participants held the position of assistant superintendent and five participants held a position as

Table 1
Participants Demographics

Participant	Highest level of Education	Prior Professional Experience	District Enrollment
Superintendent 1	Doctorate	Physics/Math Teacher Science Chairperson Director of Science Director of Curriculum Deputy Superintendent	Grades K – 12 < 3,500 students
Superintendent 2	Doctorate	Special Education teacher Committee on Special Education Chairperson Director of Special Education Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources	Grades K -12 < 3,500 students
Superintendent 3	Doctorate	Special Education teacher Chairperson of Special Education Assistant Principal Director of Curriculum & Instruction Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction	Grades K – 12 > 3,500 students
Superintendent 4	Doctorate	Purchasing agent Assistant Superintendent for Business Deputy Superintendent	Grades K – 12 > 3,500 students
Superintendent 5	Doctorate	Special Education teacher Director of Technology Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum	Grades K -12 < 3,500 students
Superintendent 6	Doctorate	Special Education teacher Director of Special Education Assistant Principal Elementary Principal Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum	Grades K -12 < 3,500 students

a director. In addition, four of the participants had a professional background in special education: three were special education administrators and all four were special education teachers. Presented below is a sample of units of text from participant’s interview data in support of the emergent theme regarding their preparation for the position of superintendent.

Assistant Superintendents

When asked how their position as an assistant superintendent prepared them for the superintendency, participants noted the following:

Superintendent 4 stated:

I was at [district name] from 1996 until 2002 as their assistant superintendent

for business. I absolutely fell in love with the job, and with people, and made a choice to be in a smaller school district [less than 3,500 students]. Because I did not have a classroom background, I wanted to make sure that I understood the classroom, and how my decisions affected instruction for children. So, a small school environment is really what worked well for me. It worked for me that I could be with the director of special education in the office right next door, I could be talking to the athletic director, and walk out into the field, and figure out what was going on with the paint and the sprinkler system. It allowed me to be involved in just about every aspect of education, except instruction, which was in the classroom.

Superintendent 5 stated:

I was a district level administrator when I was 28 years old. Some people would see that as a negative, I don't. I don't think you have to travel the path of teacher, to supervisor, to assistant principal, to principal to do this job well. And there have been some people in the past who have said, "Well you've never been a principal. What makes you think that you can be an assistant superintendent or a superintendent?" It's not one or the other. It's really, I

think it's your experience and who you are. I think being smart helps. I think there is a prescribed path, but I don't subscribe to that.

Transferability of Skills Obtained from Special Education Background

Some participants in the study indicated professional positions held in the past included having experience in special education. They noted the positions called for them to interface more. *Please note:* I am not sure what "more" means here directly with parents, community agency representatives, and other stakeholders, which requires a political acumen in addition to the administrative duties required of a superintendent.

Director/Chairperson of Special Education

Superintendent 2 stated:

Prior to that [School District] I was a special education secondary teacher and CSE chairperson for the district. I...got more involved in terms of human resources and personnel, and I really enjoyed it. Quite honestly... personnel [and] human resources definitely were a calling for me. It's very similar in some ways I would say to adult special education, in the sense of being there for people and helping people. My world was always special

education, teaching and also working with the parents and then why not [become the superintendent]?

Superintendent 3 stated:

I took the [special education] chairperson's job in...July. My son was seven months old, and my daughter was almost three. I was chairperson in [district name] for eight years. Then after that, I became an assistant principal for three. After that I became the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for two years.

Special Education Teacher

Superintendent 6 stated:

I got a 0.8 position in a suburban school in New York. I took it without looking back. I was full-time before September came around, and I started my career as the speech teacher. Nobody knew what I did, but I did a lot with special education early on: I did mainstreaming before there was such a thing; I did inclusion before there was such a thing.

Discussion and Implications

Using a thematic analysis for the interview data, the themes *academic and professional preparation* and the

transferability of skills obtained from their special education background emerged. The participants' trajectory is consistent with findings in the research literature regarding the professional experiences for many women who ascend to the superintendency (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Kelsey et al., 2014; &

Women in special education administrative roles may not have been considered as qualified candidates because of negative perceptions of special education as a narrow experience when these superintendents describe their special education experience as broadening their skills.

DiCanio et al., 2016).

Based on participants' descriptions of their trajectory to the superintendency, recruiters should increase the pipeline of qualified candidates by extending their search criteria to include individuals with special education backgrounds. Boards of education and other executive leaders can direct search firms to expand their criteria to include prior professional positions and experiences in special education. Women in special

education administrative roles may not have been considered as qualified candidates because of negative perceptions of special education as a narrow experience when these superintendents describe their special education experience as broadening their skills. Participants indicated their knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions acquired through their special education backgrounds helped them to build relationships that inspire innovations, ensure instructional practices, promote student learning, and work with families and community members. These were part of their leadership practices that assisted with their preparedness to attain the position of superintendent.

In the current study, participants did not report any differences regarding experiences relating to district size and their gender. Thus, further research in this area might provide insight on the correlation between higher interest in employing women for the position of superintendent and the size of the district. These findings can also inform the search criteria used to increase the pipeline for aspiring superintendents.

These findings suggest that understanding that the role of special education provides opportunities for women to learn the culture and collaborate with a community which is an important skill needed for the superintendency.

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Unpacking Privilege: Teacher Education Toward Anti-Racist Pedagogy

Joanne Larson, University of Rochester



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*Her most recent book, **Community Literacies as Resources for Transformation** (Routledge, 2018), tells the story of a long-term collaboration between community members and university faculty and students, who together transformed an urban corner store into a cornerstone of the community. Her book, **Radical Equality in Education: Starting Over in U.S. Schooling** (Routledge, 2014), chronicles how the United States has reached a crisis point in public education and offers suggestions for a complete reboot*

There are young adults in graduate teacher preparation programs who have not been around people of color in their lives. This may surprise some, but it has been consistent across the 25 years of my teacher education experience (Haddix, 2015; Sleeter, 2017). It is possible for white college students, undergraduate and graduate, to be siloed in racially and linguistically homogeneous communities. Our job as teacher educators in this context is to support their journey to unpack white privilege and to develop anti-racist pedagogy. One way this can be done is through courses with specific foci on identity markers that are commonly marginalized in K-12 schools (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). One such course on race uses readings, assignments, and class experiences to support a student's journey.

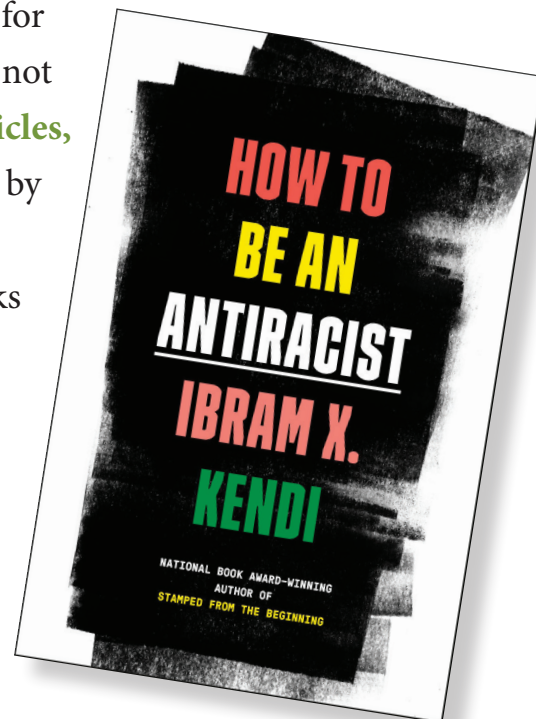
A course I teach, *Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in American Schools*, is required for all students seeking New York State certification as well as any student seeking certification in Urban Teaching and Leadership (UTL) at my university. As the course syllabus states, the purpose of the course is "to explore how and in what ways schools produce social inequalities based on socially constructed conceptions of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language). Students will critically analyze relevant literature and their own experiences as raced, classed, gendered, (dis)abled, etc. individuals to

develop an understanding of how educational institutions serve as agents of the transmission of social injustice. Students will understand race, class, gender, (dis)ability and other identity markers as intersected and mutually constituted, not as isolated variables.” The overarching goal is for students to develop a collective sense of responsibility to improve society by developing a practice of interrogating and disrupting the marginalization of human difference and to understand how schools and teachers, counselors, and administrators can serve equity and justice rather than reproducing the status quo.

Readings

Following these goals as organizing principles, professors integrate readings, class activities, and assignments around the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). By intersectionality, we mean understanding the complex ways identities come together to produce marginalization or privilege. Because classes are sequential, each area of identity is layered onto our discussions over the course of a semester, which sometimes presents challenges for understanding intersections of identity that are not time-based. By weaving a series of **research articles**, videos, and activities into general topics guided by questions designed to provoke deep discussion, students come to see how intersectionality works in their lives and in the lives of their potential students. We watch films such as *Crash* and *13th* as well as a number of shorter clips from YouTube or sites dealing with current events. Ibram X. Kendi’s (2019) new book, *How to be an Antiracist*, covers a series of intersectional identities in discussions about antiracist practices into which readings that go deeper into some marginalized identities while including those not discussed in

*of the current K-12 educational system. She is the editor of **Literacy as Snake Oil: Beyond the Quick Fix, Second Edition** (Lang, 2007) and co-editor of **Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy, Second Edition** (Sage, 2014). Her book, **Making Literacy Real: Theories and Practices in Learning and Teaching, Second Edition** (2015), co-authored with Jackie Marsh, explores the breadth of the complex and important field of literacy studies, orientating literacy as a social practice grounded in social, cultural, historical, and political contexts.*



the book are added. Key educational research literature that explains theoretical frameworks such as culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, critical race theory, feminism, and disability studies provide historical and theoretical framings for discussions and assignments (Brockenbrough, 2016;

Assignments are designed to provide students direct experience with how schools perpetuate or transform injustices so that students begin with understanding how their intersecting identities are privileged and how that privilege impacts practice.

Crenshaw, 1991; Grande, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014). It is essential to ensure scholars of color are included in the readings.

Examining Injustices

Assignments are designed to provide students direct experience with how schools perpetuate or transform injustices so that students begin with understanding how their intersecting identities are privileged and how that privilege impacts practice. Students write weekly reflective commentaries that bring together interpretation of readings and experience. In the self-portrait assignment, students creatively represent how they define themselves in relation to race, class, gender, (dis)ability, and other salient identity

categories. These self-portraits reflect the communities and groups with whom students identify and reflect the cultural influences that have helped shape who they are as a person. The border crossing assignment asks students to examine the prejudices, biases, and stereotypes they

hold about a particular community or group then conduct a micro-ethnographic study of the identified community or group in an attempt to explore the basis of personal biases. In the impacting practice assignment, students design an educational intervention that operationalizes an anti-oppressive stance on K-12 schooling. Projects can take on a range of topics and formats to provide specific strategies and tools for effecting change in K-12 education or related fields. At times, students are connected with teachers at a local high school with which our university partners with an opportunity to participate in classrooms which ground the assignment. For many students, this is the first time they have been in a classroom with African American and Latinx youth.

Our class discussions get deeply personal and sometimes emotional as many students come to realize that what they have been taught is a partial and biased view of the world.

In addition to school-based experiences, we host guest speakers, watch a series of films (Crash, 13th), documentaries, and Ted talks (see sample links on page 28), and conduct interactive classroom activities designed to provoke vibrant discussions. We have classroom guidelines where we all commit to listen for understanding, not response, and where we commit to not use hate speech or other comments/actions that will be hurtful. Our class discussions get deeply personal and sometimes emotional as many students come to realize that what they have been taught is a partial and biased view of the world. There are times when hurtful comments arise that can be painful and can provoke tension. Educators utilize a delicate process of hearing all voices while protecting all students; principles of restorative justice are useful guidelines. Sometimes it means calling out hurtful comments in class, while other times it means having a meeting with an individual or group to repair relationships.

One important insight from these experiences was that the primary audience was white students. There are African American, Latinx, and international students who end up listening to white fragility in ways that excluded them. An exercise common

in courses that discuss race and/or gender involves asking students to step forward or backwards in response to questions about aspects of their identities. As I led this activity outside on our university's quad one spring, I noticed, not surprisingly, that the students of color were all heading backwards. One young man from the Dominican Republic was so far back he couldn't hear the questions. To be sure, this is the point of this activity, but it occurred to me that it was emotionally damaging to these students and perpetuated a deficit narrative. That the white students might "feel bad" and thus gain empathy no longer was a goal I could support. I brought up my realization in our post activity discussion which helped gain students' perspectives about whether or not to continue using this activity. I do not use this activity any more.

Closing reflections

A crucial part of teaching this course is developing a trusting context for interaction around difficult issues. The instructors themselves need to have begun the journey to understand their privilege and begun the work to build an antiracist pedagogy. As a white, middle class, heterosexual,



and abled woman, this work includes understanding and disrupting white supremacy, heteronormativity, and abled-mindsets and being constantly vigilant about acknowledging my privilege while not using it at the expense of anyone else (Matias & Mackey, 2016). One does not arrive at some final point of awareness; it is a lifetime journey of constant learning.

Building a trusting context for learning is another part of this story. In my own practice, I balance sharing my journey with rigorous academic argumentation. This can prove difficult in the contemporary hostile political environment in predominantly white institutions. There have been times since the 2016 election where students have felt emboldened to say hurtful, often racist or sexist, comments in class. Responding to these comments while making sure no one is hurt can be very challenging. But when we are dedicated to a critical praxis in which all people are valued as fully human, that means everyone. We can disagree and seriously critique without hurting anyone. This does not mean that conversations won't get emotionally heightened. These can be turning point moments where deep and authentic learning can happen.

TED Talk links:

Kimberly Crenshaw
[The Urgency of Intersectionality](#)

Adichie Chimamanda
[The Danger of a Single Story](#)

Jamila Lysicott
[3 Ways to Speak English](#)

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SELF-PORTRAIT EXERCISE AND RUBRIC

As multiculturalist discourses have rippled throughout teacher practitioner and teacher education circles over the past two decades, a simple yet poignant catchphrase has become common parlance among practitioners and researchers alike: “We teach who we are” (Palmer, 1998). This short mantra acknowledges the enormous impact of teachers’ identities, cultural backgrounds, prior educational experiences, political orientations, and other personal characteristics on the shape, style, and aims of their pedagogies. Given the culturally and institutionally sanctioned authority that teachers possess, it is crucial for all educators to critically examine how their life experiences inform who they are—and what they do—when they enter the classroom. This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to engage the crucial task of ongoing self-reflection as a new or experienced educator.

Create a visual self-portrait that can be shared with your classmates. ***The primary requirement for this self-portrait is that it must represent how you identify yourself within at least three of the following identity categories: race, class, gender, gender identity, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation.*** How do you see and value yourself as a female? How does it feel to be white? How have you responded to your family’s or society’s messages about being heterosexual, working class, Asian, or male? Pick at least three of the identity categories listed above and create a self-portrait that tells the story of how you define yourself vis-à-vis those categories.

Here are a few more guidelines for the self-portrait:

- Make sure the self-portrait is about your story and your experience. This should not be a representation of broader racial politics, the social construction of gender in the U.S., etc. This needs to be a personal and intimate representation of you.
- You are free to represent more than three of the identity categories listed above, and you can also depict identity categories not included in that list. However, you must represent at least three of the above categories.
- While you will not be graded on the level of your artistic abilities, you will be graded on the thoughtfulness and sincerity of your expression.
- You will also be graded on creativity, so be creative! Possible formats include (but certainly are not limited to: paintings, comic strips, collages, photographs, sketches, pictured storybooks, dioramas, Photoshop or PowerPoint creations, I-Movies, or some combination of the above. Find a format that helps you tell your story. (Note: If you create a portrait that requires technology to present it, make sure you bring that technology with you.)

Name:

Total:

Categories	1	2	3	4	Score
<i>Creativity of self-portrait</i>	Creative elements are mundane, poorly executed, and unable to capture viewers' interest.	Creative elements struggle to demonstrate originality and uniqueness and to hold viewers' attention.	Creative elements demonstrate some originality and uniqueness but could do a little more to spark viewers' attention.	Creative elements demonstrate originality and uniqueness and entice viewers' attention and interest.	
<i>Thoughtfulness & sincerity of self-portrait</i>	Project does not represent at least 3 of the assigned identity categories, or it does so in a vague fashion that offers limited insights into the author's sense of self.	Project represents at least 3 of the assigned identity categories in a somewhat vague and cursory fashion, thus offering slightly unclear and limited insights into the author's sense of self.	Project represents at least 3 of the assigned identity categories in a thoughtful fashion but could do so with a little more nuance and insightfulness into the author's sense of self.	Project represents at least 3 of the assigned identity categories in a thoughtful and nuanced fashion, offering clear and sincere insights into the author's sense of self.	

BORDER CROSSING ASSIGNMENT AND RUBRIC

This project requires candidates to examine their own prejudices and stereotypes held about a community or group. Each candidate will conduct a microethnography of an identified community or group to explore the basis of personal bias. After determining where personal bias, prejudice, or stereotypes may lie, candidates will enter the selected community to observe activity of this group or community in context and write a personal reflection paper, critically examining their experience. Questions to consider (in addition to those listed in the syllabus): What current myths/assumptions exist about this group of people? What did you observe? What did you observe that might inform educational practices and policies? What did you learn from this observation and reflection that will inform your future work?

Name:

Total:

Criteria	(1) Unacceptable/ Insufficient	(2) Emergent/Needs Improvement	(3) Basic Proficiency	(4) Outstanding	Score
Introduction	The project is poorly described and the explanation about who/what was observed and why this choice is not clear. The research question is not stated.	The project is described in general but the explanation about who/what was observed and why this choice is made are vague. The research question is unclear.	The project is described in detail and there is an adequate explanation about who/what was observed and why this choice was made. The research question is stated.	The project is described in detail with clear explanation about who/what was observed and why this choice was made. The research question is clearly stated.	
Autobiographical section	The autobiography does not explain the candidate's identity as a raced, classed, gendered, abled, etc. individual nor how the candidate arrived at this particular place in her/his life. The details in this section do not describe the ways in which interactions and experiences shape the candidate as an individual. The bias and/or prejudice under investigation are not articulated.	The autobiography vaguely explains the candidate's identity as a raced, classed, gendered, abled, etc. individual and how the candidate arrived at this particular place in her/his life. The details in this section vaguely describe the ways in which interactions and experiences shape the candidate as an individual. The bias and/or prejudice under investigation are unclear.	The autobiography adequately explains the candidate's identity as a raced, classed, gendered, abled, etc. individual and how the candidate arrived at this particular place in her/his life. The details in this section describe the ways in which interactions and experiences shape the candidate as an individual. The bias and/or prejudice under investigation are articulated.	The autobiography clearly explains the candidate's identity as a raced, classed, gendered, abled, etc. individual and how the candidate arrived at this particular place in her/his life. The details in this section provide a rich description of the ways in which interactions and experiences helped to shape the candidate as an individual. The bias and/or prejudice under investigation are clearly articulated.	

RUBRIC CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Criteria	(1) Unacceptable/ Insufficient	(2) Emergent/Needs Improvement	(3) Basic Proficiency	(4) Outstanding	Score
Description of the research	The project points are not addressed (e.g. who was observed, what activity/activities were observed, how the project was conducted (e.g. how many times, how was access negotiated, issues of disclosure). The context for the research is not described.	The project is vague: who was observed, what activity/activities were observed, how the project was conducted (e.g. how many times, how was access negotiated, issues of disclosure) – these points are unclear. The context for the research is described with little detail.	The project is described in general: who was observed, what activity/activities were observed, how the project was conducted (e.g. how many times, how was access negotiated, issues of disclosure). The context for the research is adequately described.	The project is described in detail: who was observed, what activity/activities were observed, how the project was conducted (e.g. how many times, how was access negotiated, issues of disclosure). The context for the research is richly described.	
Reflection	The reflection does not demonstrate that the candidate understands her/his biases under investigation. Connections to course readings and class discussion are not made and the theoretical orientation is not described. The candidate has not been able to articulate the consequences of bias/prejudice against the group observed for their work in the field. Discussion about the candidate's positionality does not demonstrate the candidate's understanding of the consequence of privilege or lack thereof on equity and social justice.	The reflection demonstrates that the candidate has a vague understanding of her/his biases under investigation. Connections to course readings and class discussion are unclear and vaguely used to describe the theoretical orientation taken. The candidate has only briefly mentioned a few of the consequences of bias/prejudice against the group observed for their work in the field. Discussion about the candidate's positionality somewhat demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the consequence of privilege or lack thereof on equity and social justice.	The reflection adequately demonstrates the candidate's examination of her/his biases under investigation. Connections to course readings and class discussion are mostly integrated and used to describe the theoretical orientation taken. The candidate has articulated some of the consequences of bias/prejudice against the group observed for their work in the field. Discussion about the candidate's positionality demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the consequence of privilege or lack thereof on equity and social justice.	The reflection clearly demonstrates the candidate's careful examination of her/his biases under investigation. Connections to course readings and class discussion are meaningfully integrated and used to describe the theoretical orientation taken. The candidate has articulated several of the consequences of bias/prejudice against the group observed for their work in the field, including those that support systemic injustice. Discussion about the candidate's positionality clearly demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the consequence of privilege or lack thereof on equity and social justice.	
Mechanics, Style, and Presentation	There are numerous and consistent errors related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and usage that make reading and comprehending the text difficult. Most the information presented that is based on other sources is not referenced or footnoted. Most of the references cited in the essay do not appear in the bibliography, or these citations are incomplete. The title of the essay is vague and/or confusing and it is not doubled-spaced or paginated. The length of the essay is inadequate.	Some of the essay conforms to standard English academic writing conventions related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and usage. Use of APA style as reflected in the citation of bibliographic references and footnotes is inconsistent. The essay has an adequate title and is doubled-spaced and paginated. The length of the essay is minimally appropriate given the complexity of the topic and intended audience, and conforms to the requirements for the assignment.	Most the essay conforms to standard English academic writing conventions related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and usage. Most the essay uses APA style as reflected in the citation of bibliographic references and footnotes. The essay has an interesting title and is doubled-spaced and paginated. The length of the essay is minimally appropriate given the complexity of the topic and intended audience, and conforms to the requirements for the assignment.	The entire essay conforms to standard English academic writing conventions, and it is free from errors related to spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and usage. The essay consistently uses APA style as reflected in the citation of bibliographic references and footnotes. The essay has an engaging title and is doubled-spaced and paginated. The length of the essay is appropriate given the complexity of the topic and intended audience, and conforms to the requirements for the assignment.	

Culturally Responsive Schools in Action... And the Results to Prove It!

Penny Ciaburri



Penny L. Ciaburri is CEO and sole owner of PLC Associates, Inc., a results-based consultancy that works in the fields of education and business, including both the public and private sectors. PLC Associates is supporting work in an extensive number of schools across New York State and has worked in 19 states, and over 950 schools, nation-wide. The company has been named by NYSED as Independent Receivers to assist with schools who do not achieve results. PLC has developed and successfully utilized several methodologies and tools which have resulted in schools achieving measurable results.

The Issue:

The academic success rate for minority students, as measured by graduation rate, remains low compared to other students. As schools across New York State are striving to raise the academic performance and career prospects for all students, the graduation rates for young men of color (YMOC) over the past three years have been below 65 percent, compared to 80 percent for all students. A recent study (2019) conducted by PLC Associates, Inc. has documented **key findings** from schools who are consistently exceeding the graduation rate for young men of color and achieving significant, continued progress.

The Challenge...And the Opportunity to Get It Right

In education, there is the popular, the current (status quo), the “new idea” and sometimes, the renaming of the old and presenting it as new. Far too many schools lack a clear theory of action predicated on proven practices. Many are not aware of the school design (curricular and instructional components), which are especially meaningful for young men of color. We are in a time where the culturally responsive curriculum is now being acknowledged. In this article, we will give a brief history of culturally responsive education and what several high schools did to not only meet their students’ needs, but in a way that breaks long-held false beliefs and narratives about what black,

brown, urban, and economically disadvantaged students can achieve.

Dr. Ronald Edmonds pioneered the idea that all students can learn and not just be allowed into classrooms, despite disadvantaged backgrounds and other issues. This belief is being recognized across the state and nation, spurring the rethinking of our educational designs.

ASCD in its *Vision for Action: The ASCD Whole Child Award* details six critical tenets utilized in their selection of schools deemed to be authentically culturally responsive. We, as educators, must consider, discuss and intentionally plan implementation around these strategies if we are to be successful in fulfilling the promise for all students, regardless of background or ethnicity. These tenets center on educating the whole child and ensuring that each student:

- enters school *healthy* and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- learns in an environment that is *physically and emotionally safe* for students and adults.
- is *actively engaged* in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- has access to personalized learning and is supported by *qualified, caring adults*.
- is *challenged academically and prepared for success* in college or further study

and for employment and participation in a global environment.

Let's Prove It!

The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) selected PLC Associates, Inc., a consultancy well-known for its successful practices in school turnaround, to identify ten schools and two districts across the state who meet the criterion for schools graduating young men of color at a rate that exceeds the New York State graduation rate for young men of color by significant margins. The charge was to comprehensively study these schools and identify the structures, practices and systems that are driving such extraordinary results. The definition of YMOC, for purposes of the study, includes all males in the subgroups of Black/African American; American Indian/Alaskan Native and Hispanic/Latino. Criterion for selecting these schools included: exceeding the NYS graduation rate of 80%, greater than 50% of enrolled males being students of color, unscreened, varying levels of need, located in diverse geographic areas of the state (urban, suburban and large city) and experiencing a positive trajectory of growth. The schools ranged in enrollment from 375 to 1675, with the percentage of YMOC from 61% to 97%.

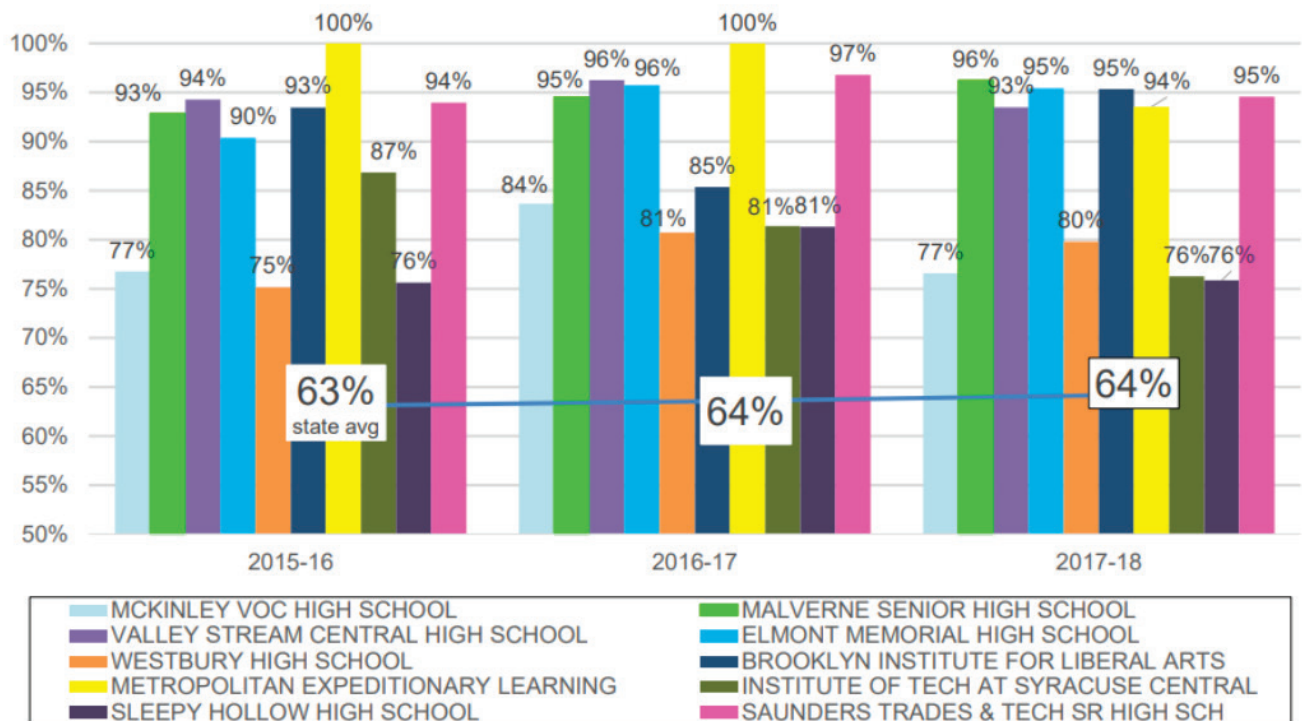
The results are incredibly informative. A false narrative has perpetuated that schools

A false narrative has perpetuated that schools with certain demographic patterns, which include high numbers of young men of color, are destined to have low performance. Incorrect!

with certain demographic patterns, which include high numbers of young men of color, are destined to have low performance. Incorrect! The findings of this study completely debunk that thinking. Not only are many of these ten schools (Reference below: NYSED 2015-16 to 2017-18 data) exceeding the graduation rate for all students in NYS (currently 80%), these high performing schools are significantly surpassing the young men of color graduation rate over these three years which has held at 63% to 64%.

Our analysis of these ten schools evidenced ten key findings which were observed in various forms throughout the schools. These ten common practices have a high correlation to the work of Dr. Ronald Ferguson (**The Influence of Teaching: Beyond Standardized Test Scores: Engagement, Mindsets and Agency. The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, October 2015**) and the ASCD criterion identified. Although there were variations in the operationalizing of these

Comparative Graduation Rates for YMOC



ten findings within each school, there was an intense application and judicious implementation of most, if not all, of these practices. These findings are definable and may be replicated.

The Findings:

1. Systems Approach to the Operation of the School.

All schools featured an intact infrastructure with the elements expected of a well-designed school. The schools and districts operate according to “systems thinking” where effective and immediate follow-up is expected as challenges are identified.

2. Strong Leadership – School and District Levels. School leaders have extraordinarily high expectations, conveyed daily through their visibility, positive messaging and continual reinforcement of the school’s mission and philosophy.

3. Rigorous, Relevant, Responsive Curricula with High Impact Instruction. Curricula is meaningful, clearly geared toward the areas/pathways that students find of interest. The content is connected to students’ future goals and paths forward.

4. Intentionally Planned, Extended Activities/Connections Beyond Academics. Schools, many with limited resources, maintain vast numbers of extracurricular clubs, activities and an extended day. These successful schools have significant partnerships with various businesses and organizations in order to provide mentoring, new learning experiences and expanded opportunities.

5. Relationships and Reciprocal Respect. Relationships are a primary element that was discussed in each of the schools as being significant for achieving results. Staff and students know each other well.

6. The Right Staff/Right Positions/Right Thinking. Staff maintain a high level of personal performance and expect the same of their peers. School staff are willing to “go above and beyond, to pull students through.” Staff share a common philosophy and approach to teaching and learning.

7. Students at the Center/Student Ownership of Learning. Student voice is “loud and clear.” Decisions are filtered through “whether or not this will benefit the educational, social, or emotional development of students.”

8. Safe Schools with No Tolerance for Violence, Bullying, Negative Risky Behaviors. Schools are safe, with very few disruptions in the academic day. There is no tolerance for violence, bullying or negative risky behaviors.

9. Well-Defined Culture with Shared Accountabilities. Strong beliefs, values, mission, purpose and philosophy form the basis for a culture that creates a “bedrock” for the school’s operation. Distributive leadership is in place, meaning everyone has an “expected role” in contributing to the school and student success. No exceptions.

10. No Fail Mentality. There is a clear “no fail/no excuses” mentality. All schools resist false narratives related to family history, poor choices of students, generational poverty and ethnicity.

On a five-part Likert scale, students and staff were asked several questions related to their overwhelming success. Data was collected from over 600 staff members and 5,000 students with 1,823 being young men of color. A sampling:

- 85% of young men of color and 97% of staff indicated that “the way teachers teach and are available when I need help” was significant.

- 84% of young men of color and 89% of staff indicated that the curricula and its relevance was a driving force in success.
- 81% of young men of color and 96% of staff indicated mentoring programs and “having people to go to” make a significant difference.

Great Examples - What Works

• ***The Brooklyn Institute for Liberal Arts***
Ms. Ann-Marie Henry Stevens, Founding Principal

BILA’s curriculum units and lessons are designed around the inquiry process and make classroom learning authentic; students become problem-solvers and discover information. Front loading (changing the sequence of academics) in the content areas of ELA and math in 9th and 10th grade allows students to be more successful. For example, students in 9th grade do not take science, instead they have extra ELA and math classes. 32% of students participate in AP courses in their junior and senior years.

• ***Malverne High School***
Mr. James Hunderfund, Superintendent
Dr. Vincent Romano, Principal

Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to keep classes interesting and engaging for students, providing the opportunity for collaborative work and

student discussion. Students said they like the classes where they are given a question that cannot be answered alone, and where they must interact with other classmates. A very significant noted instructional practice is

practice, student ownership of learning and higher order thinking protocols accompanied by targeted student feedback.” The school’s goal is to reach 75% of the integration of these five instructional practices being observed

These practices can be replicated.

building relationships with students. Teachers and students reported everyone has great rapport with students. A teacher continued, “We treat them with respect and care; we get the same back. Students care more about our subject area when they know we care about them.” The organizational support for the school involves the assistant principal and dean being responsible for two grades each, and they move up with those students until graduation, forming strong relationships with the students and their families. They look at student data daily and meet with incoming middle school students who have struggled academically with attendance or socially.

- ***Westbury High School***
Mr. Eudes Budhai, Superintendent
David Zimble, Principal

The school has identified five instructional priorities. The principal indicates: “We are not interested in one-time hits in professional development. Instead, we have five major threads that we focus on. These five threads are: checking for understanding, active student engagement, differentiation of instruction and

on a consistent basis. Classrooms evidence effective questioning techniques that extend conversational interaction among students, cooperative learning groups, opportunities to compare and contrast, primary document analysis, drawing and defending conclusions with relevant evidence and comprehensive integration of instructional technology. The school’s administrative team assesses the growth of these instructional practices via a highly effective learning walk tool which produces data then shared and analyzed with staff.

This is a Learning Opportunity

Most recently, NYSED facilitated six regional workshops where high schools were invited to bring a team of administrators and staff to hear the findings and practices of these schools. In particular, the sessions identified the why, what and how of the way each school operates. Again, amazing results in terms of the responses from attendees. On a 1 to 10 Likert scale, participants indicated 10 as the most often given score (mode); additionally, 85% of those attending these powerful sessions scored the workshops at an eight,

nine or ten. Why is this significant? Easy to answer. From the successful schools, along with field research and data, we can clearly identify what works. That is what resonated in these sessions. These practices can be replicated. This has far-reaching positive consequences for our New York State schools.

At the September 2019 Board of Regents meeting, I was asked, “What is next?” to which I emphatically responded: “What we need to realize is not only can this be done, it IS being done - we have proof of model and proof of concept. That now gives us, as educators, a clear mandate to move this forward – now.”

Three Schools...More of “The How”

Saunders Trades and Technical School, led by Principal Steven Mazzola, has over

1,100 students and is a high needs school with over 70% of the students receiving free and reduced lunch. The school has consistently posted spectacular results and has received various distinctions, including a **National Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence** with a graduation rate of 99%. Saunders is incredibly creative in their design of curricula. Principal Mazzola explained a “best example” of designing culturally responsive curricula. He shared, “I pulled a team of teachers and administrators together and used the same curricula to make three different courses; College 101, Precollege, and Drama Through Literature. These three, along with English 12, are all taught with the same curricula, but students have the choice of which class they would like to take. This model is also like the college registration process when creating a schedule.”

Video of Mayor recognizing Saunders in 2014

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada, Superintendent of Yonkers Public Schools also added that, “It is so important for a student to take ownership of his/her learning. The more interest a student has in school, the more successful he/she will be.” He continued by sharing that “The school practiced the same concept around modifying science curricula. Interestingly, the students were queried in terms of what would make science more relevant; many of them identified their interest in several television programs that deal with forensics. School leadership and staff engaged students in discussions and focus groups regarding ‘what would make classes more interesting and relevant?’ Now, as the principal says in ‘tweaking’ the curricula to make it interesting, we feature Science Forensics - College Credit.”

Principal Mazzola is a strong believer in students becoming “true drivers of their own learning.” To this point, he offered, “The fundamental premise of Career & Technical Education (CTE) is a powerful platform for truly engaging young people, in particular, our males of color. Like CTE, when instruction across content areas is intentionally planned and offers challenging relevant curricula it provides concrete recurring instances for students to find real meaning to their learning. A recent **NBER study** (Thomas S. Dee & Emily K. Penner, 2017. “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance,” *American Educational Research Journal*, volume 54(1), pages 127-166) argues

that culturally responsive curricula (also known as ethnic studies) can have major causal effects on outcomes for at-risk minority students.

McKinley High School, a high needs school in Buffalo, New York is also leading the way. Principal Dr. Marck Abraham refers to McKinley as “the best school in the land.” The McKinley High Pledge is said every morning by administrators, staff and students to provide inspiration and motivation to staff and students. According to Dr. Abraham “It’s important everyone feels their native tongue and language matters—therefore, the pledge is recited in other languages.”

The principal believes it is important that secondary administrators operate according to a theoretical framework. The one selected by Dr. Abraham is the **Culturally Proficient Leadership Model** (Lindsey, R. B., Roberts, L. M., & Campbell Jones, F. 2009. *The culturally proficient school: An implementation guide for school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin). This model centers on assessing and institutionalizing cultural knowledge while managing the dynamics of difference. In terms of innovative curricula, the school offers a full year of African American history as well as an afterschool program entitled “Our Story” which highlights the successes of Black and Brown people throughout the country.

When asked how McKinley has achieved such success, Dr. Abraham quickly responded,

“In order to increase graduation rates for males of color and to do this work, one must first start with knowing their ‘why.’ That will give you the needed strength to persevere through the hard times—and those times will be there.” Watch the [video from WKBW](#) on McKinley obstacles.

Elmont Memorial Junior Senior High School, led by Principal Kevin Dougherty, discusses the power of success emanating from their program **“The Men of Elmont.”** This includes a collection of students who are empowered and meet weekly to identify problems, discuss current school matters and propose innovative ideas. The principal stated that this has been an incredibly effective medium for giving students “a true voice” in the school. According to Principal Dougherty, “We have a committee on cultural responsiveness that meets on a regular basis in order to explicitly infuse culturally relevant materials, provide information that connects to student life as a teenager while being inclusive of viewpoints representing ethnicity, religion and sexuality into curricula. Staff receive and welcome continual professional learning around cultural relevance and its significance.” Mr. Dougherty stated clearly, “We don’t perseverate on concerns, but rather address them quickly and efficiently. We promote success stories continually through multiple mediums – emails, conversation, notes, announcements and ‘shout outs.’ In other words, we reinforce exactly what we are looking for.”

When asked about his perspective on leadership, Principal Dougherty stated, “I believe in leading from the front. That means I am 100% in it with staff and must go first. I purposely put myself in a position to work with students with the greatest challenges and difficult situations.”

Now What...Courage or Comfort?

Dr. Anael Alston, Assistant Commissioner, challenged the field at the New York State My Brother’s Keeper Symposium in May 2019, to realize a graduation rate for men of color of 90% by 2024/25. Dr. Ronald Edmonds asks, “How many schools do you need to prove that we are able to achieve this?” The answer is obvious, and Regent Lester Young echoed it in a recent Board of Regents session – “just one.”

The data sets from ten highly successful schools who are beating the odds and who have found unique ways to create true cultural responsiveness, are clear. The data is the data, it obliterates any false narrative. Now, according to Dr. Alston “Do we want comfort (status quo), or are we willing to step out with courage? Because the answer is, to do this work, we can’t have both.”

***Note:** These findings are being published by NYSED in a resource guide to be followed by a series of workshops, webinars, and other key supports, so that schools may replicate these proven practices.*



FACTS *about* NYSASCD

VISION STATEMENT

- Is a diverse organization with a strong, representative infrastructure and ties to other professional organizations
- Anticipates and responds to needs and issues in a timely manner
- Provides quality, personalized, accessible and affordable professional development services that support research-based programs and practices, particularly in high need areas
- Recognizes a responsibility to identify and communicate the views of members
- Promotes the renewal and recognition of educators
- Supports the development of teachers and leaders, with an emphasis of those new to the profession

GOALS

- NYSASCD will provide research-based quality programs and resources that meet the needs of members
- NYSASCD will ensure that NY's diverse community of learners is reflected in our programs, resources, membership and governance. Diversity will be reflected in the following ways: board members, association members and committees are diverse in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, region of the state, professional position, and years within the position, with the intention of building the capacity of the organizations
- NYSASCD will influence educational policies, practices and resources in order to increase success for all learners
- NYSASCD will create and utilize structures/tools which enable us to be flexible in our actions and responsive to the changing climate and environment within education

PURPOSES

- To improve educational programs and supervisory practices at all levels and in all curricular fields throughout New York State
- To help schools achieve balanced programs so that equal and quality educational opportunities are assured for all students
- To identify and disseminate successful practices in instruction, curriculum development and supervision
- To have a strong voice in the educational affairs of the state by working closely with the State Education Department and other educational groups across the state and nation.

MEMBER BENEFITS

- IMPACT-New York State ASCD's professional journal provides in depth background on state and local issues facing New York State Educators
- ASCDevelopments-the newsletter, furnishes timely announcements on state and local events related to curriculum and instruction
- Institutes-two or three day institutes that bring together national experts and state recognized presenters with practitioners to share ideas and promising educational practices
- Regional Workshops-bring together recognized presenters with practitioners to share ideas and promising educational practices
- Diverse Professional Network-enables members to share state-of-the-art resources, face challenges together and explore new ideas



NYSASCD

Over 60 Years of Service to New York State Educators **1941-2020**

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