

Excellence Through Equity

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I. Making equity central

- Equity is:
 - Giving students what they need to be successful
 - Academic and social
 - Recognizing that not all students are the same
 - They learn in different ways and at different paces
- Pervasive inequality makes pursuit of equity difficult but essential
- Staying focused on outcomes – academic and developmental

Equity and excellence: compatible goals

- Schools frequently fail to ensure that learning opportunities are available for *all* students
 - Access to good teachers
- Schools must identify and eliminate practices that contribute to race/class disparities – tracking, special ed placements, access to rigorous courses (e.g. AP)
- Internal accountability is essential in promoting achievement for all
- **The primary responsibility of leaders is to ensure that conditions conducive to good teaching and learning are in place and that all children have the opportunity to learn**

What we know about the achievement gap

- It mirrors other disparities (health, income, employment)
- We have historically viewed genetics and culture as the cause of disparities
- External conditions affect academic performance (e.g. health, housing stability, poverty)
- Schools often exacerbate disparities through practices that reward privilege and punish the disadvantaged
 - Teacher assignment
 - Discipline practices
 - The hidden benefits of privilege – homework/parental support

Normalization of failure

- Tendency for staff to treat patterns of achievement as “normal”
- 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 holds fixed view of intelligence rather than seeking ways to enhance educational opportunities
 - There’s no sense of urgency about addressing disparities in achievement

A framework for pursuing excellence through equity

- Child Development – A holistic approach to education and differentiated support
- Neuroscience – elasticity of brain requires personalized approaches to learning
- Understanding and responding to the way students are affected by environmental context
 - Family – Peers – Community - Society

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

II. Case studies: Balancing technical and adaptive work

- Technical work - A focus on managing the operations of the system, insuring that procedures are working and that employees are in compliance with policy.
- Adaptive work - A focus on the dynamic and complex nature of the work, its substance, meaning and purpose. Work guided by a long term vision, with medium and short term goals. An awareness that we are trying to achieve our goals in a constantly changing environment
 - Ron Hieftiz - Leadership on the Line

Five Principles of Courageous Leadership

- Courage to act
- Getting to your core
- Making organizational meaning
- Assuring constancy of purpose
- Building sustainable relationships

Key Adaptive Questions:

- What does it take to educate children in our schools?
 - What are their lives like outside of school?
 - How do they learn at home?
 - What motivates and interests them?
 - What challenges do they and their parents face?
 - What are their unmet needs that may impact learning?

The skills and knowledge of the educators must match the needs of students.

Focus on the Five Essential Ingredients for School Improvement

- A coherent instructional guidance system
- Ongoing development of the professional capacity of staff
- Strong parent-community-school ties
- A student-centered learning climate
- Shared Leadership to drive change

Brockton scholarship winners 2015



Key Elements of the Brockton Strategy

- Shared leadership
- Concerted effort to obtain buy-in around the strategy
- A coherent strategy focused on student needs
- Differentiated professional development
- Follow through, examining the evidence, sticking with it

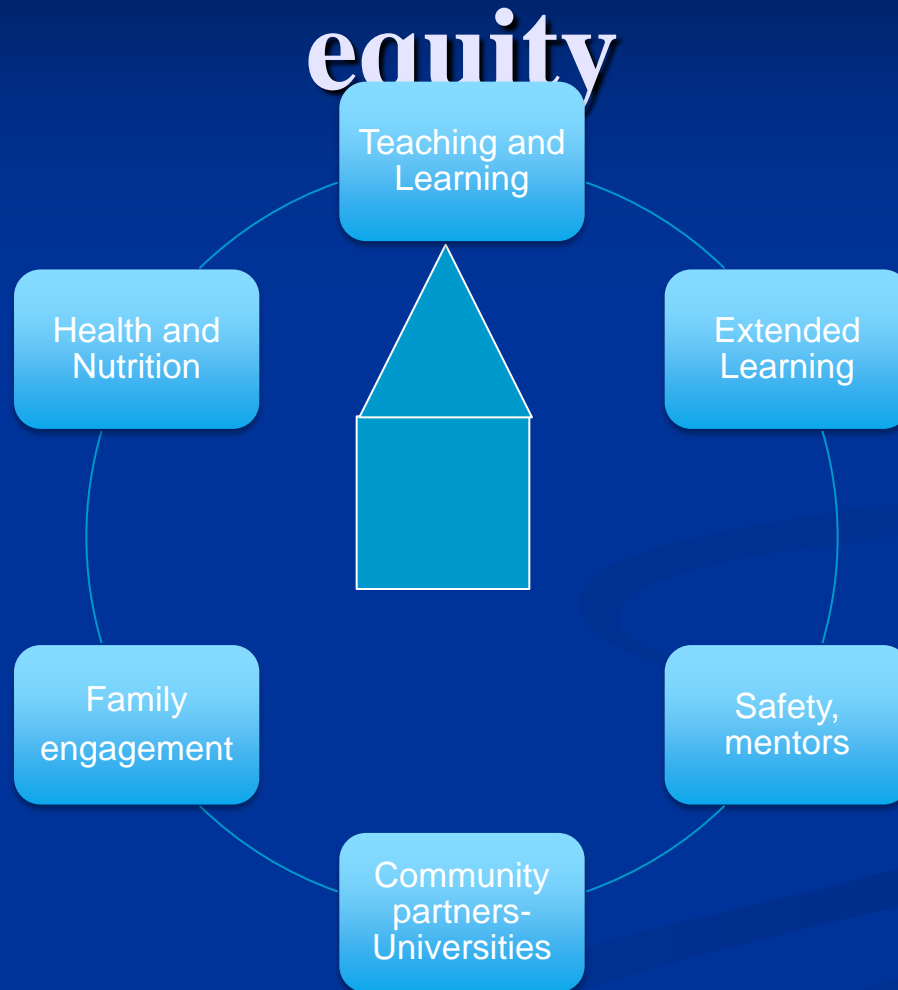
PS 28 obtains highest gains in literacy and math in Brooklyn -2012



Key Elements of PS 28 Strategy

- Instructional leadership
- Parental support
- Community partnerships
- Ongoing focus on building the capacity of teachers
- Individualized support for students

III. Developing a vision: Build capacity for excellence and equity



Implementing an excellence through equity plan

- Systems to facilitate school effectiveness
 - Diagnostic assessment
 - Early intervention procedures
 - Evaluation to insure quality control
 - On-site, ongoing professional development
 - Shared leadership
- Cultural Changes:
 - Supportive relationships between teachers and students
 - Willingness among teachers to share ideas, provide critical feedback and support
 - Peer culture where it is “cool to be smart”
 - Partnerships between school, community and parents

IV. Make good teaching transparent: Focus on evidence of learning

- Make expectations clear and standards explicit by modeling and exposing students to high quality work
- Utilize diagnostic tools to check for understanding
- Learn about their students interests in order to make their lessons culturally relevant
- Focus on motivation and engagement by soliciting feedback and questions from students
- Analyze student work with a focus on evidence of competence and mastery

Focus on Engagement

- Behavioral Engagement
 - Preparation
 - Persistence
 - Instrumental Help-seeking
- Cognitive Engagement
 - Deep Processing
 - Meta-cognition
- Affective Engagement
 - Interest
 - Value

Students in control of learning at Hollenbeck Middle School, LA



To be effective teachers must understand their students

- Academic needs – What are the gaps in learning that we must address?
- Cultural frame of reference – How will we incorporate the history, culture and lived experience of students to stimulate, motivate and make the curriculum relevant?
- Learning styles – How can we incorporate strategies that make it possible for my students to learn?
- Personal needs and challenges – How can we overcome and mitigate the obstacles my students face outside of school? Work together to devise strategies to overcome obstacles.

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
- 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

Keys to Success

- Teachers understand the external pressures students face and take that into account when working with students
 - Homework, family responsibilities
 - Draw upon funds of knowledge: View the community and parents as a resource
- Treat every assignment as a first draft
 - Real learning is in the revision
 - Real teaching is in the feedback
 - Homework is an equity issue
- Clear focus on life beyond school

Discussion:

- What is your district doing to motivate and engage students?
- What is your district doing to support teaching?
- How do you address teaching across social boundaries? What are you doing to counter stereotypes?

V. Need for a Paradigm Shift

■ Old Paradigm

- 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

■ New Paradigm

- 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

Bringing the work back

- What are the primary equity challenges in your district?
- What factors explain achievement patterns?
- Which “sub groups” are experiencing the greatest difficulties? In which schools?
- Which of the key ingredients to school success should your schools be focused on?
- What type of support will the central office provide so that greater progress is made?
- How will be priorities be established? How will benchmarks be used to monitor progress?

Focus on the Right Questions:

- Instead of focusing on how to raise achievement we should ask: How can we get our students excited about learning?
- Instead of focusing on how to prepare our students for state exams we should ask: how do we prepare our students to be independent learners? What will they need to know to be successful in this community/country?
- Instead of asking how to cover the curriculum we should ask: How will I make what I teach relevant and meaningful to students?

for More Information:

Host an Excellence Through Equity Summit:

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