



Equity Dispatch

Toward an Equity-Centric Model of Teacher Quality

April 2015



IMPACT: Educate, Engage, Empower - for Equity

(Click words to navigate to sections)

"Any good teacher knows how important it is to connect with students and understand our culture."

~ Adora Svitak

Educate

High Quality Teachers: An Equity-Minded Definition

Note: This newsletter is excerpted and adapted from the Great Lakes Equity Center's Equity by Design Brief "Rethinking Quality: Foregrounding Equity in Definitions of 'High Quality' Educators"

In July 2014, the US Department of Education (USDOE) informed chief state school officers of a requirement to submit new State Educator Equity Plans (Duncan, 2014) that document efforts to ensure equitable distribution of high quality educators. Such plans reemphasize requirements within No Child Left Behind (2001) to reverse

Meet the Authors

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Equity Spotlight

trends of low income and racial/ethnic/linguistic minority students being taught by disproportionately unqualified teachers (McNeil, 2014). But what makes an educator "high-quality"?

The definition of what makes a "high quality" educator matters because it informs the ways in which educators are trained and credentialed, how they are expected to operate in schools, and how they are evaluated (Tefera, King Thorius, & Artiles, 2014). An increasingly popular model for teacher quality assumes student achievement is a direct result of an educator's personal resources and performance. Further, it implies that educators' attributes or activities that increase student test scores are most valued. Because student achievement is privileged in these models, we call them achievement-centric.

There are some important implications of achievement-centric models. They require standardization so that families can be informed "consumers" of educational services (Tefera et al., 2014). Reducing schooling down to standardized activities requires a "one size fits all" approach which feeds into deficit thinking. Students who do not respond to the standardized approach are labeled at-risk or disabled in some way (McDermott & Varenne, 1999; Tefera et al., 2014).

When applying a standardized approach, the students who respond best are those who share cultural similarities with those who developed and perpetuate the standardized system (Weiston-Serdan, 2009). A standardized system is, then, inequitable. It creates unequal outcomes under the guise of a fair playing field (Lopez, 2003; Nolan, 2014).

An Equity-Minded Definition of "High Quality" Educators

A definition of educator quality requires a holistic view of the educator's personal qualities, practice, and student outcomes (Kennedy, 2007). An equity-minded model should consider achievement outcomes, but should also consider cultural outcomes of schooling and account for educators' learning about themselves, their students, and their communities. We offer a holistic, equity-minded model, followed by a discussion of how the components are inter-related.

Personal Qualities

An educator's personal qualities comprise both her values and her skills and knowledge. In terms of values, great educators are those who believe in all of their students and are committed to working with them, particularly in historically underserved communities (Sleeter, 2008). These educators value students' existing social, cultural and linguistic resources as critical components of academic learning (Sleeter, 2008; Weiston-Serdan, 2009). Finally,



Dr. Madeline Hafner is and Associate Scientist and the Executive Director of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Hafner's research and teaching interests focus on developing educators' attitudes and beliefs regarding issues of diversity, equity, and social justice and collaborative university-school partnerships.

In her role as Associate Scientist, Dr. Hafner is currently engaged in The Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) via MSAN. SERP brings together leaders of a set of suburban school districts and a group of prominent researchers to take on the challenges of providing effective mathematics instruction to diverse groups of students entering ninth grade, and engaging those students in academic life.

In 2012, Dr. Hafner completed a two year project—TOWN—the

these educators have a deep hope for their students and communities (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), and a love of knowledge and for the world (Assiter, 2013).

Great educators' skills and knowledge include equity-informed pedagogical and content knowledge (Sleeter, 2008) as well as knowledge of their students' heritage practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012) and situational contexts in which teaching and learning occur (Kennedy, 2010). Specifically, educators also have knowledge of equity and oppression (in both content knowledge and practice), of the relationship between language, culture and learning, of privilege, and of how schools contribute to inequity (Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 1996).

Practice

Equity-minded educators leverage their personal qualities to create a classroom environment that centers students, removes barriers to knowledge, and values and sustains the cultural assets students bring into the classroom. Specifically, these educators employ critical pedagogies using principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). These two approaches are complementary because they recognize and value difference (Waitoller & Thorius, under review).

UDL and CSP mutually reinforce each other. Drawing from these critical pedagogies, high-quality educators work not only to reduce ability barriers to knowledge and expression but also to reduce cultural and linguistic barriers. In practice, equity-minded educators identify vehicles for delivering critical pedagogies that resonate with students, and they create opportunities to apply students' learning in ways that directly impact and improve students' lives (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). And, when further bolstered by tenets of UDL, CSP ensures all learners are able to access learning content, and demonstrate their learning in varied ways.

Student Outcomes

High quality educators are mindful of an array of desirable student outcomes. Equity-minded educators will realize growth in student academic achievement, but they will also have an impact on students' personal and social growth, and, through their students, a positive impact on the communities in which they teach. Educators do not have to choose between social justice outcomes and academic achievement outcomes (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Empirical data suggests that pedagogies like CSP can lead to desirable academic outcomes (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Sleeter, 2012).

In terms of personal growth, students should learn about

Teen On-Line Writing Network. In collaboration with the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and Purdue University, MSAN is engaged in a two year project to develop, field test, and scale an interactive on-line learning environment.

TOWN's goal is to increase high school students' motivation to engage with writing tasks, scaffold their transition to the more formal composing required for conventional academic writing, and prepare them to create complex immersive texts as required by the Common Core writing standards.

In her role as executive director, Dr. Hafner works with educators and researchers to carry out the mission of MSAN by collaboratively designing and conducting research, analyzing policies, and examining practices that affect the academic performance of students of color.

Upcoming Events

Illinois

April 24 - 25, 2015

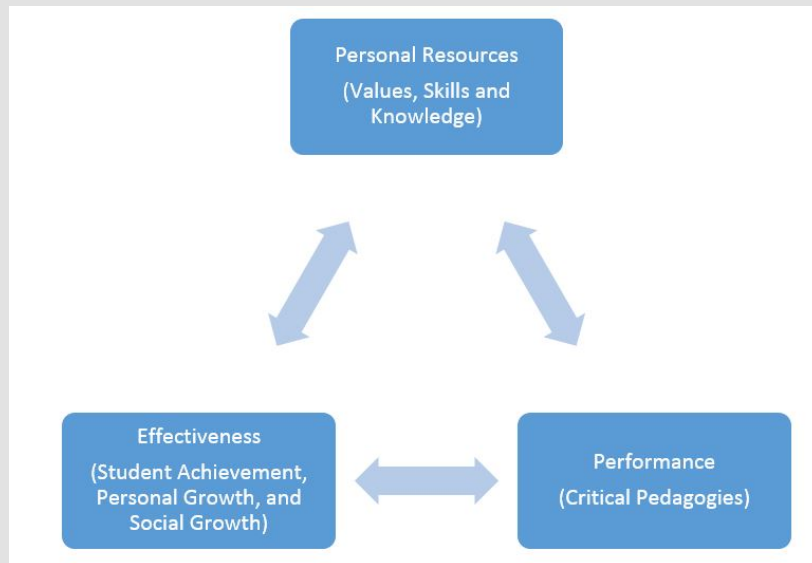
IEA Student Program
Spring Conference
East Peoria IL

themselves and the various identities they live throughout the day (Dahlin, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). A good education experience allows students the freedom to express their identities (through language, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, etc.) in ways that they choose. In general, personal growth means the student has the desire, means, and opportunity to be constantly becoming (Lorde, 1984) who s/he wants to be (Biesta, 2010) and loving her/himself in the process (Dahlin, 2012).

Social growth reflects the fact that the United States is becoming increasingly diverse and pluralistic (Nussbaum, 1997; Paris, 2012). Growing into this pluralistic world carries implications. Students should be equipped to identify and resist injustice present in daily social life (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). Furthermore, students must learn to love others' cultures (Dahlin, 2012) while being given the opportunity to imagine what it may be like to live as others live so they can be ethical citizens of the pluralistic world (Arendt, 2003; Nussbaum, 1997).

Integration and Reflexivity

The achievement-centric teacher quality model is implicitly linear. It assumes that an educator's personal qualities shape her performance, and that her performance leads to student outcomes. We instead suggest these domains are not linear, but that they are mutually informing and mediating. Accordingly, we extend the dominant model (see Figure below, adapted from Kennedy, 2007).



This model highlights the mutual influence the three domains have on each other, made possible by an educator's reflexivity. A high quality educator is one who is reflexive and mindful of herself, her identities, and ways in which she affects her performance and shapes student outcomes. Reflexivity is a crucial part of professional

Indiana

May 2 - 3, 2015

PowerED UP

Conference

Indianapolis, IN

Michigan

April 29, 2015

Early Mathematics and

Literacy Initiative

Boyne Falls, MI

Minnesota

April 30, 2015

Making Meaning of
Multiple Measure (M4)

Workshops: Minnesota

Student Survey Data to

Inform Improvement

Planning

Roseville, MN

Minnesota

May 15, 2015

Special Education

Advisory Council

Roseville, MN

Ohio

Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 2015

Special Education

Conference

Columbus, OH

Wisconsin

April 30, 2015

Autism Society of

Wisconsin Annual

Conference

growth. It allows educators to consider how their pasts influence how they experience the present (Moore, 2007). It can also help educators to explore differences they have with their students, to dismantle internalized stereotypes, and to turn those differences into strengths (Lorde, 1984; Milner, 2006; Asher, 2007).

Conclusion

Policymakers' attention to how high quality educators are distributed is understandable and should be lauded. We argue here for an equity-minded model in which a high quality educator is one who (1) views students' existing cultural resources as assets, (2) applies these assets within critical pedagogies toward empowering students in their lives and communities, and in doing so, (3) fosters students' academic, social, and personal growth. Equity-minded educators are reflexive and open to ways in which their professional practice and interactions with students may (will) change their own values, skills, and knowledge. They are also aware of how their own identities affect their understandings of teaching, learning, and students, as well as how students experience them. It is true that every child deserves great teachers, but if we do not take the time to think about who a great teacher is, and towards what outcomes great teachers work, policies will likely fall short of addressing the original equity concerns which spurred their development.

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Engage



Minority Student Achievement Network

The Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) is a national coalition of multiracial, suburban-urban school districts that have come together to understand and eliminate achievement/opportunity gaps that persist in their schools, and to leverage supports to improve instruction for all learners.

Across MSAN districts, racial disparities on an array of achievement data demonstrate wide gaps in performance

Wisconsin Dells, WI

Wisconsin

August 11 - 13, 2015

Institute for Urban

Education: Second

Annual Professional

Development

Conference

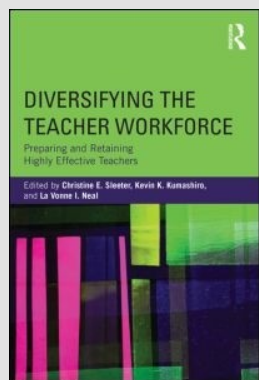
Milwaukee, WI

between students of color and their white peers. MSAN districts have student populations between 3,000 and 33,000, and are most often well-established first-ring suburbs or small to mid-size cities. Additionally, the districts share a history of high academic achievement and connections to major research universities.

Since 1999, MSAN districts have worked fervently to conduct and publish research, analyze policies, and examine practices that support the Network's mission: to understand and change school practices and structures that keep racial achievement gaps in place.

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Empower



Something to Read!

***Diversifying the Teacher Workforce:
Preparing and Retaining Highly Effective Teachers***

Diversifying the Teacher Workforce grows from work that educators and researchers have been doing with the National Association for Multicultural Education, focusing on diversifying the teacher workforce and narrowing the demographic gap between who teaches and who populates U.S. classrooms. While the demographic gap is often invoked to provide a needed rationale for preparing all teachers, and especially White teachers, to work with students of color, it is far less often invoked in an effort to examine why the teaching force remains predominantly White in the first place. This edited collection brings together leading scholars to look closely at this problem. They examine why the teaching force is predominantly White from historical as well as contemporary perspectives, showcase and report available data on a variety of ways this problem is being tackled at the pre-service and teacher credentialing levels, and examine how a diverse and high-quality teaching force can be retained and thrive. This book is an essential resource for any educator interested in exploring race within the context of today's urban schools.

Something to Watch!

Funding Disparities and the Inequitable Distribution of Teachers: Evaluating Sources and Solutions

In this [video](#) from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE), education and policy researchers, Dr. Frank Adamson and Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, discuss their paper about the inequitable distribution of effective teachers in California and New York. After examining policies in states that have made great strides in equalizing the distribution of highly effective teachers, Adamson & Darling-Hammond recommend several state strategies for improving and equalizing teacher quality such as improve and equalize salaries, raising teacher standards, and improving teacher retention.

Something to Use!



Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Toolkit

This [toolkit](#) provides a wealth of resources for teachers interested in implementing UDL into their classrooms. The toolkit includes: literacy tools, graphic organizers, math tools, study skills tools, and more.

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