Moving Toward Equity: Local Equity Action Development

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The Equity Project
Center for Evaluation & Education Policy at I.U.
April 11, 2007
Equity

The quality of being fair
Justice
Fairness
The application of dictates of conscience to principles
Equity in education

A principle that guides policy and practice holding high expectations and providing appropriate resources so that all students can achieve at a rigorous standard.
The Equity Project

• Collaboration of IDOE and The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at I. U.
• Document status of minority disproportionality in Indiana
• Use that information to guide remediation
Project History and Timeline

• Phase I (1999-2000):
  – Developing Measures of Disproportionality

• Phase II (2000-2001):
  – Understanding What Contributes to Special Ed. Disproportionality

• Phase III (2002-2007):
  – Addressing Disproportionality in Local School Districts
Disproportionality must be understood contextually.

The disproportionality of students of color in educational programs cannot be fully comprehended as long as it considered a singular event, somehow divorced from the broader context of American education and American society.
Lenses of Inequity

Disproportionality in Achievement
Disproportionality in Discipline
Disproportionality in High School Graduation
Disproportionality in Special Education
National NAEP Percent Scoring Basic or Above: 2003

Percent Basic and Above Grade 4
Reading

Percent Basic and Above Grade 8
Mathematics
National Graduation Rates by Race in 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69%</td>
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National Data on School Discipline


Relative Risk Ratio (Compared to White Students)

- Black: 2.84 for Out-of-School Suspension, 2.47 for Expulsion
- Hispanic: 1.23 for Out-of-School Suspension, 1.50 for Expulsion

Equity Line
National Special Education Disproportionality Data: Disability Categories

• African American
  – Mental Retardation 2.35 x more
  – Emotional Disturbance 1.59 x more
  – Other Health Impaired 60% less
  – Gifted and Talented 59% less

• American Indian
  – Learning Disabilities 1.20 x more

• Hispanic
  – Slight over-representation in HI
  – Under-representation in a number of categories
How Much More Likely Are African American Students to Be in Special Ed.?

- Relative Risk for Indiana’s AA students:
  - Mild Mental Disability 3.29 x more
  - Emotional Disturbance 2.38 x more
  - Moderate MD 1.91 x more
  - Communication Disorder 35% less
  - Learning Disabled 6% less
  - Regular Class Placement 35% less
  - Separate Class Placement 2.84 x more
We need to ask why…..

If our examination and understanding of the root causes of social inequality are too shallow, then our approach to corrective action will necessarily be superficial and ineffective

Christine Sleeter
The Context of Disproportionality

- Interviewed across 7 corporations:
  - 28 teachers
  - 14 principals, 8 assistants (deans)
  - 9 school psychologists
  - 7 directors of special education
- 7 African American, 59 Caucasian
- 12 male, 54 female
The Effects of Poverty

“Is the ethnicity the problem or is poverty the problem?”
--Principal

“You look at the students that we are identifying and for some reason they are disadvantaged.”
--Principal
The Effects of Poverty on Classrooms

“There are days that I walk away with like 200 pounds on my shoulders thinking ‘it keeps getting worse.’ The stories are more bizarre, more traumatic; how can we possibly meet all these needs?”

--Classroom Teacher

“I’m tired. It gets harder and harder and there is less and less help for us.”

--Classroom Teacher
Race and SES: Identification of MIMD

Probability of Identification

Percent Receiving Free Lunch

African American Children

Other Children
Sometimes we tend to put middle class values and expectations on another group, another culture. And when you look at the school setting the majority of teachers are Caucasian, middle class, I find a lot of my African American boys need movement. I’ve talked with teachers about that, it isn’t ADHD or any of those things, this is just a kid who has to move and you need to provide them with the opportunity to do that.
– Principal
School Factors: High-Stakes Testing

“Our expectations for youngsters have sky-rocketed, more and more aren’t attaining the standards the feds and state think should occur. A lot of stressed teachers feel tremendous pressure to get kids to a certain level and if I don’t then by gosh I better [get them tested] and find a reason why.”

--Special Ed. Director

“This year we were told that we had to refer anyone who didn’t pass ISTEP. So I had to refer 13 kids to [the prereferral team] and I don’t really need that…I know what their problem is.”

--Classroom Teacher
Problems with Referral and Decision Making

“I think because they know that something is not working for a child and they feel that they can’t tap into some resources. One stable resource that they have to tap into is special education. It has funding to support it, it’s a process that is in place. So it is an easy tap into subsystem.”

--Special Ed. Director
Referral and Decision Making
Teacher Perspective

“I am pretty open to referring any child that is not finding success. My goal is for every child to be successful.”
--Classroom Teacher

“If there’s a chance they might qualify, it’s always to their benefit to have them checked.”
--Classroom Teacher
“‘When you say minorities, are you, what are you speaking of?...[INTERVIEWER: Ethnic and racial minorities]...Oh....OK...Alright...We have like...I guess we have about half and half. I don’t know that I’ve ever really paid attention to it .”

--Classroom Teacher
In addition to the problems the students experience in their personal lives away from school, the schools create a whole new set of problems for children they deem different. As schools become more wedded to psychological models, students are recruited into new categories of pathology. Students who do not conform to particular behavioral expectations may be labeled "disabled" in some way, that is, suffering from attention deficit disorder, emotional disability, or cognitive disabilities. Students do in fact confront real mental and emotional problems, but we need to consider the way students' racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic characteristics are deployed to make their assignments to these disability categories more likely.

Gloria Ladson Billings
Culture

The shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people
Identity is complex

- Nationality
- Class
- Religion
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Ability
- Sexual Orientation
- Family
- Education
- Geography
- Profession
Diversity & Cultural Competency

Valuing Diversity is a necessary step along the continuum of cultural competency and culturally responsive pedagogy, but it is not enough.

Cultural Competency requires knowledge, skills and experience and the ability to transform these into practice which results in improved services and outcomes.
Four Core Points

• You are part of a pluralistic society
• There is inequity
• Everyone bears some responsibility
• We can do something.
Cultural Competence Continuum

Destructiveness  Incapacity

Blindness

Pre-Competence  Competence  Proficiency
Cultural Competence

A developmental process.

A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Having the capacity to function effectively in cultural contexts that differ from your own.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Facilitates and supports the achievement of all students through cultural competency at three levels:

- The Institutional
- The Instructional
- The Personal
Institutional

- School organization
- Policies and procedures
- Community Involvement
PL 221
Cultural competency component of school plan

(a) In developing a school's strategic and continuous school improvement and achievement plan under IC 20-10.2-3, the school's committee shall consider methods to improve the cultural competency of the school's teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students.

(b) The committee shall:

(1) identify the racial, ethnic, language-minority, cultural, exceptional learning, and socioeconomic groups that are included in the school's student population;

(2) incorporate culturally appropriate strategies for increasing educational opportunities and educational performance for each group in the school's plan; and

(3) recommend areas in which additional professional development is necessary to increase cultural competency in the school's educational environment.
• Acknowledge students’ differences as well as their commonalities
• Validate students’ cultural identity in classroom practices and instructional materials
• Educate students about the diversity of the world around them
• Promote equity and mutual respect
• Assess students’ ability and achievement validly
• Encourage students to think critically
• Challenge students to strive for excellence as defined by their potential
Approximately 88% of classroom teachers are White

“I thought it was wrong to see color. Like the t-shirts- “Love sees no color”. As I’ve come to understand you’re missing a big part of a person if you refuse to see it” – elementary school teacher

“When a teacher doesn’t see color do they also ignore discriminatory institutional practices such as disproportionality in suspension, graduation, achievement etc…..?”
Culturally Responsive Teachers

- caring, committed, and respectful
- validate, affirm, facilitate, liberate, and empower
- cultural organizers, mediators, and orchestrators of social contexts
- believe in their students’ abilities and desire to learn
- explicitly teach skills and cultural capital
- sense of responsibility
- experts in instruction & management challenge & support students

Source: NCCREST, 2003
Personal

Gay, Villegas & Lucas

- Engage in reflective practice
- Explore personal and family histories
- Acknowledge membership in different groups
- Learn about the history and experiences of diverse groups
- Visit students’ families and communities
- Visit or read about successful teachers in diverse settings
- Participate in reforming the institution
“Multicultural education needs to be accompanied by a deep commitment to social justice and equal access to resources…, in short it needs to be about much more than ethnic tidbits and cultural sensitivity.”

“It is easier to adopt a multicultural reader than to assure all children learn to read, to have a concert of ethnic music than to give all children instruments.”
Profoundly Multicultural Questions

Who’s taking calculus?
Which classes meet in the basement?
Who’s teaching the children?
How much are children worth?
What are the Local Equity Action Development projects?
**LOCAL EQUITY ACTION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

**ONGOING QUESTIONS**
- What do we know about disproportionality in our district?
- What changes in school-based processes will have the greatest impact on disproportionality in our schools?
- How do we involve others in the process of creating ownership for and bringing about change?
- How will we know if our efforts are working?
- What impact will this have on other issues of equity?

**PROCESS STEPS**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Form a Planning Team</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form a preliminary planning team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review existing data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name the issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand the planning team to include other key district stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gather and analyze new information</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Identify the Action of Greatest Potential Impact</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Hold focus groups to examine the issue and possible actions</td>
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<td>Examine and discuss input from the focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gather research and information on best practices and models</td>
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<td>Engage in honest conversations about expectations for ALL students and staff</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Develop a Plan</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Design a LEAD pilot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide professional development, time, and other supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an Action Plan for Implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot in a few places</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gather feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapt the pilot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan for expanded implementation</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Implement, Assess, Adapt</strong></th>
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<td>Expand the team to include representatives from all sites to assure two-way communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide professional development as needed for best practice</td>
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<td>Clarify links and communicate with other district initiatives and ELL, Title, School Improvement etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use data consistently</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deepen conversations about equity and culturally responsive pedagogy</td>
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<td>Include parents and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing assessments continue to inform implementation</td>
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Creating a Culture of Inquiry

- Relevant data
- Probing questions
- Examining beliefs about school culture and equity
  - Issues of access
  - Opportunities to learn
  - Expectations of students, staff and community
What does it look like in the districts?

- Ten districts currently participating in LEAD
  - K-2 Instructional Project
  - Family Involvement
  - GEI Process

- Develop Standardized Measure to Track Disproportionality
  - Referral -> Assessment -> Placement
Ongoing Questions

- What do we know about disproportionality in our district?
- What changes in school-based processes are perceived to have the greatest impact on disproportionality in our schools?
- How do we involve others in the process of creating ownership for and bringing about change?
- How will we know if our efforts are working?
- What impact will this have on other issues of equity?
1. Form a planning team
   • Representative of your district
   • Find ways to continually incorporate other voices into the planning (focus groups, surveys, site based meetings)
2. Examine the data

- What do we know?
- How do we share what we know?
- What else do we need to know?
- How will we find out?
  - Importance of FOCUS GROUPS
3. Decide on the action which will create the greatest impact

- Research best practices
- **Know your district**
- Look inside and outside your district for models
STEPS

4. Develop a plan

• That will meet the needs and culture of the schools
• Reflect best practices
• Identify data that will assess the impact of the project
STEPS

5. Include necessary professional development
   – cultural competence
   – leadership
   – family involvement
   – differentiated instruction
   – using data to inform decisions
Steps

6. Implement, Assess, Adapt

- Pilot in a few locations
- Gather data
- Gather feedback
- Adapt
- Re-assess
- Use evaluative measures
- Continue conversations
Lessons from the Field

Data is an integral part of the process. When a school is willing to ask itself about the expectations it holds for children and about culture and power, it begins to bring accountability for equity inside.
Difficult Dialogues

Conversing about issues of equity, especially race, is a developmental process; ample time to build trust is necessary.
Local Ownership

Ownership of the process grows through action: ongoing dialogue with colleagues, gaining a deeper understanding of the issues, design, implementation, and assessment.
Addressing issues of equity is more likely to be ongoing:

- When it is viewed as an effort that benefits all children.
- When incorporated into the district’s overall plans for school improvement and other initiatives.
- When the community is involved.
LEADERSHIP

By questioning assumptions, a leader is able to influence change. Leadership that is willing to examine their own beliefs, and empower those they work with to do the same, is essential to the process of creating equitable change.
Whether you call it multicultural education, a diversity perspective, cultural competency or culturally responsive pedagogy the elements are the same.
Creating change

“The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you can alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change the world.”

James Baldwin