Roundup 2b: Equity and Culture in Schools: Possible solutions

2018-03-10

This is the second post for Roundup 2. This one deals with possible solutions to the problem of equity in schools. This is long, you might want to download it as a pdf (see the side bar).

Empathetic Schools

Tomlinson, C. A., & Murphy, M. (2018). The Empathetic School. *Educational Leadership, 75*(6), 20-27. Retrieved from ASCD

In this short article the authors introduce the idea of the *Empathetic School*. In this idea for a school teachers and administrators see school through the student's eyes. With this in mind school personnel can minimize negative experiences and maximize positive ones. In this school everyone works towards dedicating their efforts and time to doing whatever is necessary to promote growth and welfare. Everyone must diminish their self-focus and act in the best interest of the community. In order for this to happen, teachers give voice to students and look for problems behind misbehaviors rather than treating the behavior itself. There is a need for flexibility and a focus on assets, rather than deficits. The principal plays a crucial role in this endeavor, he or she must seek out and provide the supports teachers need to work from a place of empathy. School leaders must be empathetic themselves. *This is a short article that shows some of the merits of an empathetic school. I would want to read a lot more before trying to enact this in a school. This is an interesting idea and one that could help with problems of equity.*

Teacher match

Egalite, J.A., Kisida, B. (2018). The effects of teacher match on students' academic perceptions and attitudes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 40*(1), 59-81. DOI: 10.3102/0162373717714056

For the first time ever, students of color outnumbered White students in Public schools in the fall of 2014 and the gender balance was evenly split. Despite this fact, most teachers are overwhelmingly White females. A growing body of evidence supports the benefits of having a demographically similar teacher, especially for minority students. One reason for this is that students could view teachers as role models and seeing a teacher who looks like them could increase the cultural value of academic success. A second theory is that teachers from similar backgrounds will have higher academic expectations and might be more likely to push students to work harder. A third theory is that cultural similarities allow for more culturally relevant and sensitive curricula. This could also lead to strong interpersonal relationships which may result in less discipline referrals and suspensions.

This study looked at academic perceptions and attitudes of students when matched, and not matched, to teachers who are of similar demographics. The researchers included 10 variables, seven of which are from the Tripod (7 C's) survey instrument administered to students in grades 4-8: 1. Care, if a student feels cared for by his/her teacher. 2. Captivate, Student interest and enjoyment of classwork 3. Confer, quality of teacher-student communication 4. Clarify, how well students understand the content 5. Consolidate, how well teachers help students integrate and synthesize information 6. Control, classroom management 7. Challenge, if the students feel pushed by the teacher 8. Effort, how much the teacher influences the student's effort and motivation 9. Happy, how happy students are in class 10. College, college aspirations of students

The largest, most significant effects of teacher match were on Care, Captivate, Happy, Confer, Effort, and Consolidate. The theory of cultural understanding is supported in this work, with the largest effects being on Black students taught by Black teachers.

The authors end the paper with a call for more professional development for the existing teaching force on culturally relevant and sensitive pedagogy, as well a call for policy makers to reduce barriers to the profession for minority people who would become teachers.

Language policy and culture

Cervantes-Soon, C.G., Dorner, L., Palmer, D., Heiman, D., Schwerdtfeger, R., & Choi, J. (2017). Combating inequalities in two-way immersion programs: Toward critical-conciousness in bilingual education spaces. *Review of research in education 41*, 403-427. Doi: 10.3102/0091732X17690120

In this Chapter in the March '17 issue of the Review of Research in Education, the authors discuss one program that is often upheld as a solution to inequality, Two-Way Immersion (TWI), or what some call Dual Language Education. This model of bilingual education is one in whih there are native speakers of a language

other than English (most commonly Spanish in NY) and naitve speakers of English in the same class. These students are taught both ELA (in English) and Native Language Arts (in the other language), and core content area instruction is delivered in both languages. This can be done in many different ways, by forcing children to speak one language for a whole week, or two (all classes are in that one language) or, by switching throughout the day. In this context you will hear of "English zone" teachers and "Spanish (or Chinese etc...) zone" teachers. The authors argue that this model, which theoretically creates more equity and fairness, does not do so in practice. The authors examined 80 papers and six books and found five potential areas of inequality: 1. Student access and experience 2. Classroom redagogy, curriculum, and linguistic choices 3. Teacher's preparation, background, and orientation 4. Parents and community engagement 5. District and state-level policies, economic contexts, and politics

In the discussion of student access and experience I found the fact that, in one California district, despite comprising 30% of the population, African American students made up 5% of the TWI enrollment. The authors support the notion that minority students are often left out of these programs and that the "English zone" is usually predominantly white with more evidence throughout the paper. One of the reasons the authors propose for this is that TWI is often seen as enrichment, open only to students who tested in to the program or proved their academic abilities. While the mixing of students from different linguistic backgrounds is positive, the authors make the point that integration does not mean equity. Much of the integration is surface-level, while "covert prejudice and racial stratification remained entrenched." "...TWI may result in advancing the goals of the dominant group, while benefits for minoritized students may be rendered only as a by-product of such efforts." This leads to language commodification. One disturbing example is the parents in one California school spoke about TWI as a way for their English-speaking children "to learn to speak with workers", to "learn from live specimens."

The next section of the paper discusses the accountability systems and the fact that these systems lead to a punitive view of biliteracy. Often the goals of biliteracy are pushed aside in favor of getting ready for the test and some students are forced to prepare for and take the test in their stronger language. This removes the benefits of TWI by not allowing students to use their full linguistic repetoire and demonstrate their conginitive abilities.

Here are some of the other problems listed in the paper: - Lack of bilingual teachers to interact with all students in both languages (librarians, "specials" teachers, counselors). Often the world around these students in monolingual English and they are on an island. This exacerbates the feeling of inequality and that this is enrichment. "Enlgish is the only non-negotiable language." - Some bilingual teachers are not aware of the cultural/socio-economic backrgrounds of students. In some places schools recruit teachers from abroad, who are unaware of the struggles these students have. - Students from these backgrounds do not always speak the "standard" form of the language, and are therefore thought

of as insufficiently bilingual or biliterate. - Language use in the classroom falls back to English when an English speaking child does not understand, but the same is not done in the other language side of the day. This reinforces the view that English is more important.

The authors propose that the solution to many of these problems may lie in the development of critical conciousness, which incorporates critical conciousness and pedagogies, translanguaging, and border pedagogies. "Critical conciousness involves the process of overcoming pervasive myths through an understanding of the role of power in the formation of oppresive conditions." In the context of TWI programs, school leaders must help parents, teachers, and students through the work of examining the programs that exist and to create more equitable programs in the future. This process starts by taking a critical look at how power and privilege influence the decisions made and the design of the program.

Border pedagogies are defined in this article as a set of pedagogies which "bring together interrogations of the self (identity, agency) and others (culture, society, and structures), *to examine one's position, how it is "read" and how it relates to power* in the word and world by encouraging each individual to locate her or his identity within particular histories of power, colonization, imperialism, and difference."

Translanguaging is a linguistic idea which highlights bilingualism and language as dynamic processes and tools. Language is seen as a means to an end, not the end. This process takes English away from the central role it plays and allows a more fluid use of language in the classroom, which promotes cognitive development and removes the artificial linguistic barriers that currently exist in TWI programs.

Jimenez-Castellanos, O., & Garcia, E. (2017). Intersection of language, class, ethnicity, and policy: Toward disrupting inequality for English Language Learners. *Review of research in education 41*, 428-452. Doi: 10.3102/0091732X16688623

This chapter discusses inequality in schools and states for ELLs. The authors frame much of their discussion around Arizona, which serves as a cautionary tale for the rest of the states and their policies and practices for ELLs. Arizona has passed a series of regressive, politically motivated, policies in edcuation that has greatly effected outcomes for ELLs. One of these was a result of a court case *Flores v Arizona*, which determined that Arizona was not doing enough for their languge minority students. Arizona implemented English only classrooms (after the passage of a state bill which required this) and removed bilingual education altogether. This system has created more segregation and created vast gaps in education for ELLs. I write this her because it is a cuationary tale of what could happen when politics get in the way of what the research says is the best educational practices.

Perhaps most interesting in this paper is the idea of intersectionality and ELLs. Usually intersectionality is discussed in terms of gender and race minorities (one

of the most famous scholars is a Black woman who discusses the feeling of never being equal and not having anyone else to share this feeling with. Black men cannot identify with all of her struggles becasue she is also discriminated against for being a woman, but white women can't identify with her struggles because she is black.) In this paper the authors take this a step further to discuss this idea in the context of ELLs.

ELLs are sometimes (most times?) seen as a monolithic group. The stereotype: They are Spanish speakers who are new immigrants, and many are undocumented. This is untrue and does not allow schools/districts/states to properly see ELLs for what they are, an extremely divers population that has a wide variety of needs. One of the most interesting facts in this paper, 85% of ELLs in PreK-5 in the US are native born, and 62% of 6-12 ELL students are native born. ELLs vary in immigration status, religion, race, class, ethinicity, language, and gender. All of these play their own role in informing the child's experience in school. The schools must do what they can to support the whole child.

The authors call on schools to begin to use the "Culture, Language, and Learning Framework." This framework takes in to account all of the different aspects of a child's life and has schools look at the entire child. This framework "emphasizes that an idividual's development and learning cannot be understood isolated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which it occurs."

Community Involvement in Education

Lee, R.E. (2018). Breaking down barriers and building bridges: Transformative practices in community- and school-based urban teacher preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education 69*(2), 118-126.

In this article Lee delivers a conceptual framework of a community-based urban teacher preparation model. He argues that the current system of clinical experiences for teacher candidates (student teaching), though much improved, still leaves out the community. Many times new teachers begin their careers in communities that are very different from them, and attrition at these schools and in these communities is much higher than the national average. Lee makes the point that some of this attrition is due to preventable cultural clashes, which could be solved by using a community-based approach. "By working alongside community-based experts and scholars (i.e., families and residents), we can collectively work to write an asset-based counter narrative of our urban schools and communities." A great quote on why this is important : "Although being knowledgeable in content and pedagogy are important, becoming knowledge-*able* in urban community contexts is equally as important toward the development of teacher resilience, especially as we work to curb teacher attrition from urban schools."

The author decribes this conceptual framework using examples from the field. The Chicago Teacher Education Pieline (CTEP) is the first such example. In this

program higher ed partners with the community to learn from the community, the goal is to not go in with the "savior" mentality, to learn organically from the community. Ther are no explicit research goals at the outset, they are developed organically with community input. Respect is key to interactions and this is a mutually benficial partnership. The top-down, university driven model is removed and all partners have an equal voice. This relationship brings tenchonolgy, money, and a pipeline of culturally responsive teaching to the community, and gives a gives the university the partnerships it needs for its candidates to be successful. Every stakeholder has an equal voice and "contribute ideas and share experiences to learn from each other and develop professionally in the same context in which the learning occurs." A sense of "growing our own teachers" develops for the community.

The author goes on to discuss successful programs that are having an impact in urban schools. I am not going to detail these here. The author describes challenges of this model, which are that the university has to create and maintain a physical presence in the community, what he calls the third hybrid space. Reciprocity must be ensured, as more and more programs take on this framework and courses are redesigned, the need for critical evaluation of the reciprocal nature of the relationship is increased. Increasing community membership for teacher candidates is difficult in neighborhoods that are not places where these students would typically live or that are a few hours away from campus. One proposal is to board students with families, like schools do for study abroad.

Creating these relationships with the community has gotten the preparation of teacehrs out of the "ivory tower" of higher ed and had an impact on teachers and students. This seems like a promising framework. I'll let the authors conlusion finish this summary "... we must stay the course if we are to protect this shared space–too many organizational silos remain, working to keep us apart. Together as a university-school-community partnership, we must continue to develop new solutions to the complicated process of preparing culturally responsive teachers for our communities. This is a resounding practical representation of how we can all strive to realize democracy."

Baldridge, B.J., Beck, N., Medina, J.C., & Reeves, M.A. (2017). Toward a new understanding of community-based education: The role of community-based educational spaces in disrupting inequality for minoritized youth. *Review of research in education 41*, 381-402. Doi: 10.3102/0091732X16688622

This article looks at community based educational spaces (CBES) (after-school programs, community based youth organizations, etc.) and "the ways these diverse out-of-school spaces inform the educational experiences, political identity development, and organizing and activist lives of minoritized youth." The authors assert that CBES are affected by the "neoliberal" education reforms, namely acountability, high stakes testing, privatization, and charters. These spaces can act as either places in which children can escape these pressures or places where these pressures are compounded. CBES can be the places where children expand

their horizons past the ever-narrowing curricula of school, yet the "neoliberal funding climate" pushes against this possiblity.

The authors suggest allowing student voice to be the center of these spaces. CBES can "treat youth as individuals with worth, value, and humanity or as sites where yoth are framed in deficit ways and viewed as being in need of saving, controlling and directing." When researchers and organizers have allowed student voices to be at the center of the organization they have consistently found that students speak about the CBES as a place where they can escpae the negativity of school. These spaces also provide a space for adults to become allies and to develop authentic relationships.

This is not part of the summary but a thought as I read this article. Why can't school be the place where all of this happens? The authors argue that we need CBES because kids are not getting what they need on the social/emotional level, because schools are ignoring those needs in favor of academic success. This is a shame and we ought to do more in our schools.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Warren, C.A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education 69*(2), 169-183.

Culturally responsive pedgagoy (CRP) includes an "active commitment to social justice, anit-oppresive, and anti-racist teaching." The author of this article argues that in order for teacher candidates to learn how to use CRP, and I would stretch this to new teachers or teachers who need to learn this, the systmes in which they are developed must provide models and develop the concept. The author states that the "application of empathy thorugh perspective taking" would sharpen their ability to make sense of what teachers who practice CRP do, would provide a model for teacher candidates to follow, and would support the development of skills necessary.

"Teaching through students' cultural filters implies that these cultural perspectives fuide a teacher's pedagogical orientations,. . . "

"Playing a song is not evidence of a teacher's cultural responsiveness."

These two quotes remind me of another article on CRP I read which uses the non-examples of celebrating cinco de Mayo and taco Tuesdays as a way to show how what people perceive being culutrally to be is actually, at best, a very surface level effort, and, at worst, a condescending offense.

"These cultural filters are the intellectual and ideological frames necessary to scaffold how teachers navigate classroom interactions with individual students, choose lesson examples, decorate their classroom, deliver instruction, plan cultural excursions, and negotiate any number of other professional decisions."

So, how do we help teacher candidates (and teachers) do this? Critical discourse, field experience, and engaging with literature that centers on race and equity in all areas of teacher prep. Teacher candidates must experience the act of perspecitive taking and learn explicitly, at times, the importance of this practice. People come to the profession with their own biases and morals, and we must help them to see the other perspective, to become empathetic. This is where critical classroom discourse comes in, having people reflect on their own beliefs and how those may be skewing their actions is an important first step to bulding empathy. Hearing dissimilar viewpoiints help shape perspective. Many times this lack of perspecitve is simply due to a lack of exposure and experience. Helping them to experience what the other side sees, hears, feels, and lives allows people to form some empathy. Having candidates perform home visits is one suggestion in this article. "After spending several hours sitting with families in the places where the proportion of power and authority is in the family's favor, teacher candidates are very liekly to have a different, or much better informed, viewpoint of family values, students' live realities, and the sociocultural context where students are receiving substantial racial socialization. Subsequently, such an activity will very likely change the way teacher candidates *see* their work, and thusly, potentially change the way they *do* their work." I could imagine doing this with new teachers as well and how much of an impact this would have on those new teachers and their ability to empathize with their students. The final suggestion is building in literature that centers on race and equity across the teacher education curriculum. Many times this type of reading is relegated to one or two classes. The author argues that this must be dispersed throughout the curriculum to consistently build these perspectives across the entire educational experience.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R.J., & Medirata, K. (2017).Eliminating disparities in school discipline: A framework for intervention.*Review of research in education 41*, 253-278. Doi: 10.3102/0091732X17690499

This is a long article that I am going to attempt to summarize concisely.

Currently there are major disparities in school discipline along racial and gender lines. Male and female Black students are the group which receives the most discipline referrals and out-of-school suspensions, at a rate of two or three times greater than their White peers. Males, Latinos, American Indians, and students with diabilities are also disproportionately affected. Some recent research has sounded the alarm on the disproprotionate "discipline sanctions" of LGTBQ students as well. The goal of this work is to synthesize the research of promising policies and practices of reducing these disaprities into a framework, called "The Framework for Increasing Equity in School Discipline." The authors make a clear distinction between prevention and intervention actions and stress the importance of prevention: "Schools that successfully develop communities of responsive and supportive adults and motivated and engaged learners typically prevent disciplinary incidents and punitvie responses to behavior from occuring in the first place." The authors also recognize that conflict is unavoidable at

times and do provide four principles which address intervention.

This framework must be implemented in a "Culturally Concious" manner. Without addressing the "longstanding issues of race and power" the problem of disparities in discipline will not be solved if these issues are not addressed.

The framework is described throughout the remainder of this paper, with effect sizes and evidence of the effectiveness of each of these principles. I am not going to include this information here in the interest of space. I am only including the practice and a description of that practice. This table is a word for word (or closely) replica of the table on p. 255 of the article.

	Principle	Description
Prevention	1. Supportive Relationships	Authentic connections are forged between and among teachers and students
	2. Bias-Aware Classrooms and Respectful Schools	Inclusive, positive classroom and school environments are established in which students feel fairly treated
	3. Academic Rigor	The potential of all students is promoted through high expectations and high-level learning opportunities.
	4. Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching	Instruction relfects and is respectful of the diversity of today's classrooms and schools.
	5. Opportunities for Learning and Correcting Behavior	Behavior is approached from a nonpunitive mind-set, and instruction proactively strenghtens student social skills, while providing structured opportunities for behavioral correction within the classroom as necessary
Intervention	6. Data-Based Inquiry for Equity	Data are used regularly to identify "hot spots" of disciplinary treatment of particular groups.

	Principle	Description
	7. Problem-Solving Approaches to Discipline	Solutions aim to uncover sources of behavior or teacher-student conflict and address the identified needs.
	8. Inclusion of Student and Family Voice on Conflicts' Causes and Solutions	Student and family voice are integrated into policies, procedures, and practices concerning school discipline.
	9. Reintegration of Studetns after Conflict or Absence	Students are supported in reenterinf the community of learners after conflict or long-term abscence.
Prevention and Intervention	10. Multitiered System of Supports	Schools use a tiered framework to match increasing levels of intensity of support to students' differentiated needs.

The end of the article has a very important point: "As of yet, there is insufficient empirical evidence to indicate which combination of the 10 principles from the Framework should be implemented together, or which principles might be prioritized . . . " This is always an important consideration when thinking about systems and framworks like the one presented here.