Promoting Educational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity While Balancing Research and Reality

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Presented by:
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Examination of the Equity Challenges for School Leadership

Deirdra Preis, Ed.D.
HOW A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION IS INFORMING A HIGH SCHOOL’S EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ITS ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AND INCREASE EQUITY FOR ITS MINORITY STUDENTS

How can a predominantly white, suburban high school faculty become more skilled in effectively teaching and supporting an increasingly diverse student body?

Improvements in Student Achievement Occur When Leadership:

- Raises awareness of the impact of bias on instruction and other school practices through ongoing reflection and professional development & uses narratives to increase understanding of white privilege and unconscious bias
- Includes staff, students and the school community in the change process

Based on a 2016 qualitative single-case study: “An Exploration of the Experiences of a Group of School Leaders Undertaking a Systemic Effort to Eliminate the Achievement Gap in their High-Performing Suburban District”

Executive Summary:

Informed by Critical Race & Organizational Change Theories, Fairfield Warde High School is creating student-led staff development and facilitating student dialogue to:

- Examine the relationship between identity and achievement
- Acknowledge and validate experiences of students of color in their schools
- Identify the adult actions that can make a positive difference

Presentation by Deirdra Preis, Ed.D Assistant Principal, Fairfield Warde High School, Fairfield, CT

Members of the FWHS Achievement Gap Task Force present their work to principals at the CT Association of Schools’ Principals’ Center, May 2017

School Leaders As Change Agents

Leaders must understand the presence of institutional racism in schools and take a systemic approach at addressing achievement gaps
LEADING FOR EQUITY IN A MAJORITY WHITE SCHOOL: 
THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE 
Deirdra Preis, Ed.D

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Administrators and staff leading equity efforts can increase success through the use of student voice in ongoing staff development and student-led advocacy efforts.

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE
Despite a high average graduation rate, students of color and students who are economically challenged at this high-performing, majority white high school achieve at lower levels than their white and/or more affluent peers and are underrepresented in AP courses regardless of achievement levels.

ROOT CAUSES
- Lack of understanding of institutional racism by staff; lack of self-efficacy by students

THEORY
- Critical Race Theory: shared narratives can promote understanding of disparate experiences of privilege and power.
- Adult Learning Theory: adults learn through exposure & when they can process their experiences in groups with others.

STUDENTS HOST A STATEWIDE, STUDENT-LED EQUITY CONFERENCE AT A LOCAL UNIVERSITY, ADDRESS TWO NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCES AND PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO HIGH SCHOOL STAFF & COMMUNITY GROUPS

ACTION RESEARCH FINDINGS
Anecdotal evidence indicates that student involvement in staff professional development, student participation in conferences and a student-led equity conference increased staff awareness, sensitivity and student self-efficacy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP
- Equity activities that are largely led by students, teachers and parents promote reflection and understanding which can influence mission & climate.
- Sharing narratives with adults and peers can help students to feel “seen” and empower them to challenge marginalizing practices.
- Administrators must stay closely involved to prevent the typical default away from equity as a priority.

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Understanding the balance between the teaching and learning processes in order to create a clear alignment

Kimberly P. Johnson, Ed.D.
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Blackboard, Economists, and Promoting Diversity

Noradeen Farlekas, LP.D., CFA
“We Believe in the Power of Technology to Expand Access to Education.

We believe that everyone—regardless of geography, financial situation, stage of life or disability—deserves access to education.”

~ Blackboard.com
Why should we care about Blackboard or on-line/distance education in general?

• On-line post-secondary education is growing.
• According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2015 approximately 30% of all post-secondary students participated in some form of “distance education.”
Blackboard can be used as a tool to promote diversity

• By expanding students’ sights – their mind can open up to possibilities for themselves and others.
How can this be accomplished on Blackboard?

• Blackboard is the perfect tool to showcase diverse experts.
• The field of economics and sustainable development offered an excellent opportunity to do so.
Economists – little diversity

• **Laureates in Economic Sciences**
  • 81 individuals have been awarded 1969-2018.

• **Little to no diversity in Laureates:**
  • Elinor Olstrom – the only woman
  • Sir William Arthur Lewis – the only person of color

• **Federal Reserve Chairperson**
  • Janet Yellen – the only woman/no people of color ever

• **Treasury Secretary**
  • No people of color or women

• **Dearth of diverse Full Professors in economics departments**
  • 62 Women Economists at 20 top schools (American Economic Association, 2018)
Blackboard Offers an Opportunity

- To show diverse and important voices through course related video content.
- This normalized and promoted diversity in what economists and other industry experts can look like.
  - Important
  - Easy
  - Effective
Examples of Diverse Voices Utilized on Blackboard

- Dambisa Moyo: Economic growth has stalled. Let's fix it
- Pavan Sukhdev: Put a value on nature!
- Kristina Gjerde: Making law on the high seas
- Majora Carter: Greening the ghetto
- Triona McGrath: How pollution is changing the ocean's chemistry
- Bill Gates: Innovating to zero!
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Presenters Bios:

Deirdra Preis, Ed.D. was a secondary school health educator, curriculum leader, dean and high school assistant principal for over 30 years in the Connecticut public system. She has taught courses on transforming human systems in the Ed Leadership doctoral program at Northeastern University and in school health intervention at Southern CT State University. She writes about leading for equity in suburban schools and, as an educational consultant, is currently working with public schools and higher ed to help them incorporate student voice and advocacy into their work around educational equity.

Dr. Kimberly P. Johnson is a children's author and educational consultant. She teaches Creative Activities for Youth and Working with Diverse Youth at Clemson University, Creative Writing For Social Change at Clinton College and serves as an On-line Course Facilitator for Leading Learning at Harvard University. She is committed to finding ways to help learners engage more in the educational setting. In addition, her latest book, "Data Doesn't Always Determine Success", challenges educators to look beyond testing and assessments to find more depth in students and how their experiences can add knowledge and culture to the setting. Dr. Johnson provides a research based look at what can happen when educators create a balance between teaching and learning.
Dr. Noradeen Farlekas, CFA is presently consulting and advising impact investing firms, foundations, and nonprofits, including JUST Capital and the World Business Council on Sustainable Development. Noradeen is also an Adjunct Professor at both Northeastern University and Fairfield University where she teaches courses including Sustainable Economic Development, Environmental Economics, and Global Capital Markets. Noradeen retired from the IBM Retirement Fund where she served as Head of Global Equity and was responsible for over $14 billion of global equity investments including all internally and externally managed portfolios, transition management, operations, and trading. In addition, she was the Senior Portfolio Manager of six in-house passive portfolios and the externally managed active international portfolio. She has extensive experience with defined benefit and defined contribution plans, as well as over a decade of direct client facing responsibilities for the IBM subsidiary portfolios that she directly managed. Prior to IBM, Noradeen co-managed the investments for Entergy Corporation’s DB and DC plans. Noradeen recently completed her doctorate in law and policy where her research focused on combining impact investing and philanthropy to increase educational outcomes for students living in concentrated poverty.