DELIQUENCY PREVENTION THROUGH CULTURAL COMMUNICATION:
A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

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DELINQUENCY PREVENTION THROUGH CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

A Project

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Division of Criminal Justice
Abstract

of

DELINQUENCY PREVENTION THROUGH CULTURAL COMMUNICATION:
A TEACHER’S HANDBOOK

by

Kishaun L. Thornton

African American students are disproportionately suspended at a higher rate than their White counterparts. Most suspensions are a result of teachers not being able to communicate effectively with students of other cultures. This breakdown in communication creates a distressed atmosphere, where both the teacher and student are uncomfortable in the classroom setting, resulting in the student being suspended on the grounds of delinquency. The mainstream classroom, which is structured so that all students are expected to abide by cultural classroom norms. However, most of the time that structure is not conducive to who the teachers teach. Therefore, the teacher does not understand the student or the student’s needs, and the student does not understand the teacher’s structure.

Delinquency Prevention through Cultural Communication: A Teacher’s Handbook, guides the teacher through their own struggles to understand another culture and learn how to teach in a classroom where the students are of a different culture from their teacher. This Handbook is especially designed for the teacher body where the teachers have competing priorities and are not given the time or opportunity to have cultural, communication, or professional development training.
After teachers immerse themselves into the activities that were designed by professionals dedicated to understanding culture, teachers should have a better understanding of race and culture, be able to discuss race and feel comfortable, and be able to communicate to their highly diverse student populated classes.

Committee Chair
Sue C. Escobar, J.D., Ph.D.

5/21/09
Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

African American students are suspended from school more frequently than their white counterparts. This is in part due to the teacher’s perception of what is considered deviant behavior. Because deviant behavior can be perceived in many different ways, and by many different individuals, students can be removed from their classroom or school setting for such things as the lack of writing utensil in class to something perturbed as not liking the way the student looked as they were walking into the class. It is sometimes easy to misconstrue deviant behavior through behavior exhibited by the student that may not conform with the teacher’s expectations; however, in the bigger picture, it is likely minor to begin with.

With a better understanding of how students of different races and cultures behave, the likelihood is that the students’ behavior will be understood and/or the teacher’s relationship with the student will enhance and nurture a different type of response to expectations set forth by the teacher.

Purpose, Significance, and Need

The purpose of this study and development of the Teacher’s Handbook, is two-fold: 1) to shed light on differences between teachers and students and address those issues and, 2) to develop an easy-to-read Handbook to assist the teacher with
recognizing behaviors within themselves and foster a better working relationship with their students.

People approach their daily lifestyles by their perceptions of how life is and/or what it should be. Teachers are not excluded. It is with those perceptions that biases are formed and an academic achievement gap among different races exists. By recognizing and addressing personal ideas about race and culture different from theirs, the doors open to free thought and to other types of behaviors teachers encounter on a daily basis. Additionally, it is important to understand how teachers’ perceptions shape the lives of their students.

Delinquency Prevention through Cultural Communication: A Teacher’s Handbook is an easy-to-read guide to assist the teacher in addressing their own ideas, and perhaps changing their approach in class. Teachers today have competing priorities within the classroom with respect to trying to teach a rigorous curriculum as well as outside the classroom with respect to maintaining their “other duties” that are required of teachers, such as grade in-class and homework, as well as attend and support school events.

It is with the culmination of teachers recognizing and addressing their own ideas coupled with a new perception in the classroom where the most benefit from this research and Handbook will be derived. It is with great courage that teachers undertake this task with serious commitment.
Conceptual Definitions

In regards to this study, race is a group classified by physical features and color of skin to differentiate from another group in society. Race is an important factor to define because this study’s premise is that African American students are treated differently than their White counterparts. Although this study refers to only Whites and African Americans, there are other races in the school environment, which might play a role in the outcome of this study.

Culture is a group of people who share the same values, history, and patterns of behavior. It is important to understand what is meant by culture because the need to understand different cultures is pertinent to understanding how to communicate with different individuals. Especially for teachers, culture is important because people take in information and respond differently to information asked of or presented to them based on their value system, history, and perception of society to their social group.

Suspension is the removal of a student from an educational setting. There are two forms of suspension discussed in this research. In-house suspension consists of removal of a student from an educational setting, however, the student remaining on school property. The second form of suspension is suspension where the student is removed from the educational setting, including school premises, and cannot return to the school premises until it is appropriate as noted by the administration.
Labeling is identifying a student, in this study’s case, because of their behavior. The teacher or administrator’s actions towards or around the student could infer the identification of a student. In addition, the identifying actions of administrators and teachers cause the student to interpret a negative feeling and cause the student to react to the negativity. When the student acts in a negative manner, as a direct result of the labeling, he or she could act in a delinquent manner.

Delinquency is the conduct that is either unlawful or not accepted behavior in society. In this case, delinquency is the behavior looked upon as deviant, different from what is initially expected by the teacher. This term is important because what is accepted behavior in the educational setting may not necessarily be deviant, but not accepted by the teacher or administrator interpreting the behavior. In this research, delinquency is referred to the delinquency which takes place within the school setting and outside the school setting, regardless of the students grade or culture status in school.

Delinquency prevention is the prevention of future delinquency as a result of the removal of the student from the education environment. The more time the student is out of the educational environment, the more time the student is not receiving formal educational training from a certified teacher and within the curriculum standards set forth by the state.
The remaining chapters will discuss the literature review of education—both achievement gap and education's relationship to delinquency, as well as how discipline plays a role in education and delinquency. Interestingly enough, the next section of this chapter will show how labeling the African American student can create a decrease in education attainment, as well as causing or increasing delinquency.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Research indicates that African Americans are being suspended from high school at three times the rate of their White counterparts (Gregory, 2007). Because the disparities in suspension rates are at issue, and race being a major factor in this notion, this Handbook is necessary to understand the dynamics of race, suspensions, and delinquency.

The variables reviewed to determine why African Americans are being suspended at a disproportionate rate include culture, race, education, history, and delinquency. Each variable reviewed in this paper determines if it is in fact a contributor to the outstanding suspension rates across California, which leads to delinquency.

There are two forms of suspension. On-campus suspension involves a student removed from the educational setting and placed in a location away from the general population of students. In this setting, each school has different requirements in regards to how a student is expected to behave while serving in house suspension. The other form of suspension is when a student is forbidden to return to school until the amount of days in which the suspension was granted has expired. During this period, the student is not allowed to be on or near school
There are different expectations for students while on suspension away from school.

Due to terrorism and other actions that have occurred over time or legislation passed into law, most schools hold a zero tolerance policy. This policy is a policy set forth by school officials to curb violence and misbehavior within the school. It is very similar to sentencing guidelines, wherein if an individual broke a rule that is under the zero tolerance policy, such as possession of drugs and/or weapon on school campus, the student is automatically suspended or expelled. Over time, the zero tolerance policy evolved to address the discipline issue schools were facing. The discipline this policy began to address was basic deviance.

Zero tolerance creates an atmosphere for teachers to dismiss a student from class and/or suspend a student based on certain types of behavior the teacher does not feel is appropriate for their class (Slee, 1986). This does not necessarily mean the student is not behaving; however, it indicates that sometimes teachers are unaware or unable to deal with varying personalities (McFadden, Price, Marsh, & Hwang, 1992, p. 385). Teachers and administrators are not given tools, time, or encouragement to learn about the students in which they teach. Instead, they are given the zero tolerance tool to allow them to control their classes by dismissing or suspending students.

African American students may be motivated differently from other students. (Townsend, 2000, p. 382) Therefore, they may learn differently as well.
African American students have interests that sometimes are different from mainstream America. The behaviors and actions of African American students are a reflection of their interests, what is important to them, the society built around them, and the support they receive by adults, including expectations of them.

The overrepresentation of suspended African American students is common in schools across the nation. Usually, if a sub-group is represented ten percent more than their overall representation of the entire group, that particular sub-group is considered overrepresented. In the case of African American students, it is common to see an African American student population of fifteen percent, and this same group represents over thirty percent of the overall suspensions (Fenning & Rose, 2007, p. 541). Many of the studies raised issues within the education system, family structure, and culture that attribute to the high suspension rates. After careful review of the research available, there is no information or research indicating how suspension of African American students affect the crime rates of African Americans in the penal system compared to their White counterparts. The current rate of suspension tends to point in the direction of students eradicated instead of educated. Therefore, are African American students exposed to high suspension rates more likely to be delinquent than their White counterparts?

**Discipline in School**

Hirschfield (2008) suggests, "[o]rder and discipline have always been an animus of American public schools" (p. 79). Schools in the United States have
disciplined students since the beginning, but the type of discipline varied and continues to change. Questioning discipline practices began as the type of discipline changed. Corporal punishment was the primary way to discipline students, and it was not until the 1980s where corporal punishment almost diminished from the school systems across the nation (Owen, 2005, p. 86). Legislation was passed in over half of the states in America to address concerns with corporal punishment in schools. However, it persists today, but in another sense. Corporal punishment transferred to the responsibility of the parent. In the southern states where corporal punishment is still favored today, parents are more likely to spank their children in response to an action at school (Owen, 2005).

Since the declining use of corporal punishment, school officials changed to a different way of controlling their schools. To keep up with school requirements of high test scores, rise in crime, and to control the classroom, schools have used many tactics to fulfill their needs. Test scores determine whether a school is meeting district, state, and federal expectations, and money to these schools are distributed on those scores. To weed out under achievers, discipline in the form of suspension, expulsion, and re-directing students to special education became common (Owen, 2005, p. 87).

Furthermore, the rise in school related crimes increased and as a result, state legislatures passed “zero tolerance” laws. These laws are basic instruction and sentencing guidelines in regards to disciplinary issues that arise on school campus.
Hirschfield (2008) argues schools discipline students based on a common practice within that school or standard guidelines (p. 82). In addition, arguments say zero tolerance laws go too far in mandatory punishment from homework to off campus behavior (Skiba, 2000, p. 337). Because of the zero tolerance policies and the lack of process for using suspension as a form of discipline, students can be suspended for anything the teacher or administrator feels is deviant behavior—that is behavior not conducive to the teacher or administrator. Students are suspended for behavior exhibited at a local shopping mall before or after school, as well as for being offensive on the new Internet networking site, MySpace.

In the event students are deviant in class, a teacher will refer those students to the office. While in the office, the referred student is sent to either On-Campus Suspension or suspended from school in a traditional sense. Both options are the removal from the traditional educational setting and segregated from the main population. The Shotts Report (2007) describes suspension as the “removal of students from educational settings” (p. 2). However, each school and/or district has their own policies of actions that fit the requirements for suspension. Skiba and Patterson (2000) suggest suspension is a way for educators to push out the students not likely to succeed (p. 337).

The Shotts Report indicates that African American students are suspended at three times the rate of their White counterparts. This information is consistent with Townsend’s (2000) findings that “African American children received more
office referrals and subsequently more suspensions than any other ethnic group” (p. 381). In addition, Gregory et al. (2008) found African American students were overrepresented in school suspensions as well (p. 461). Atkins, et al. (2002) found that suspension used as a punishment was the “be all end all” consequence to discipline (p. 368). Hirschfield (2008) supports that documentation of minority students are overrepresented in regards to suspensions and expulsions and that there are no differences in their behavior (p. 82). In Skiba’s (2000) research, he reported African American students suffer from punitive “disciplinary strategies . . ., and are less often consequated with milder disciplinary alternatives when referred for an infraction” (p. 340).

A concern regarding African American students being suspended at a high rate is the perception of each individual teacher or administrator who suspends the student. Slee (1986) mentions the procedural difficulty in regards to the administrators’ discretion when disciplining students (p. 92). This means, each teacher deals with situations and students differently; therefore, it is at the teacher and administrators’ discretion as to the disposition of the student. Furthermore, Gregory (2008) suggests there is no common definition of defiance and teachers define defiance differently (p. 457). McFadden’s (1992) study clearly shows differences in the way disciplinary actions are taken towards students. Differences in defining deviance include suspending a student from class because they are not prepared for class and do not have a pencil or paper, or because a student’s pants
are baggy and the teacher does not like how the student looks as they walk into the classroom. Differences vary, especially when it comes to the way a student learns. Some students cannot perform in quiet atmospheres, and if a student taps on their desk to allow their creative juices to flow, the student can be suspended. In addition, students who understand material by having assignments explained so as to visually conceive the information, the teacher can get upset with the student asking questions; therefore, the student would be suspended. These small issues form the basis of removing students from the classroom.

Studies have shown that African American students’ cultural differences explain their behavior in class (Townsend, 2000, p. 381). These factors include culture, language and communication, educational setting, and family. Townsend (2000) suggests African American students learn differently and take in information differently than their White counterparts. This includes but is not limited to simple classroom rules, such as sitting in a chair to answering questions out of turn. She also suggests that these students are used to multi-tasking outside of school, especially in the home (p. 383); therefore, when instructed to do one task in class, it is difficult for the African American student to comply. Also noted in her research is the tendency for African American students to engage in “stage setting” (p. 383). This means African American students prepare to tackle an assignment after conducting multiple “rituals,” meaning students do repetitive activities prior to beginning their task, including but not limited to, sharpening their
pencil and straightening out their papers (p. 383). Public educational settings require students to sit in a uniformed procedure, tackle one assignment immediately and without distractions from others.

Cultural conflicts come into play when African American students act and react to the instructions in class. The type of behavior displayed by African American students creates a problem for mainstream educators who are not aware or receptive of cultural differences. Morris (2005) suggests students’ culture can make a student feel like an “outcast” and “confused,” and create an atmosphere where students become resistant and cause a greater disciplinary action to be taken (p. 28). He also proposes that styles of black boys are perceived as negative targets for greater discipline (p. 28). In any case, the non-compliant student would be deemed deviant and be removed from the educational setting. Morris (2005) suggests schools try to shape students to what they feel is compliant and acceptable behavior (p. 27). He further suggests that there is an underlying lesson about race, gender, and class (p. 28). Therefore, student bodies regulate their systems as such. For example, Day-Vines (2005) support the notion that African Americans are not comfortable revealing personal information to strangers (p. 241). She continues to explain that historically, African Americans cultural mistrust of authority figures is reflective of the lack of disclosure of personal information (p. 241).

Essentially, suspension and/or expulsion are a form of neglecting the student. Kendell-Tacket (1996) suggests children exposed to neglect have a
negative impact on the child when performing in or outside of school (p. 168).

Excluding a student from school results in the criminalization of youth in society (Hirschfield, 2008, p. 82).

**Delinquency**

Delinquency is a term that is two-dimensional. The social science field agrees as to the concept of delinquency; however, it could be operationalized differently. Moon, Blurton, and McCluskey (2007) described delinquency as physical or non-physical criminal behavior. On the other hand, delinquency is also defined by non-criminal acts that are not viewed as ideal in society, such as tattoos, speaking loudly, and perceived disrespect towards authority figures. Simons, Chen, Stewart, and Brody (2003) note students have a defense mechanism, which results in delinquent activities (p. 829).

The African American student learns differently than their White counterpart. In the African American culture, students learn by observing and acting out what they learned. It is suggested that White students take in information differently, rather than acting or talking about what they learned. The African American student, being the minority, is considered deviant when they do not react and take in information as their White counterpart (Townsend, 2000).

Townsend (2000) describes the African American student to be very social (p. 384). Their social nature does not stop at home, in school, or when they are mixing with mainstream society. Being social might mean to speak out of turn,
dialog with another, or ask questions. This type of behavior is usually not accepted in mainstream educational settings. When an African American student acts in this manner, they are perceived to be deviant due to their outspoken nature (Townsend, 2000).

Being social and learning differently is different from mainstream society; therefore, the labeling theory supports the notion that African American students are stigmatized as being "different." Although it is in the African American students' nature to learn or behave different from their White counterparts, it is sometimes considered being disrespectful and misbehaving in the classroom or school setting. In the event an administrator or teacher feels this type of behavior is breaking their rules, the African American student is suspended. Because there is no true definition of defiance or deviant behavior, the student is given unclear and inconsistent information. Therefore, teachers decide who and what they deem deviant or defiant. The student may have not been criminally delinquent prior to being disciplined in school; however, delinquency could take place because of the lack of education and continued perception of the student.

Given the high suspension rates of African American students, the amount of time an African American student is actually in class is questionable. According to Vacca (2008), education and crime go hand in hand (p. 1056). He suggests the amount of education a youth has, determines the likelihood the youth would engage in crime. Vacca concludes that, "... delinquency is associated with poor education
achievement, particularly poor literature” (p. 1057). In addition, “student achievement is more important than IQ in the prediction of recidivism” (p. 1057). Jacobi (2008) stresses the importance of educating, especially through literacy, and engaging students in school to prevent crime (p. 75).

Research concluded that when students perceive rules as unfair or lack clarity, the higher level of teacher victimization (Sprott, p. 555). Another study, this time conducted by Welch, showed that when students felt respected, treated fairly, and rules were clear, there was a lower level of offending at school. In addition, “a strong sense of community within a school accounted for lower levels of problem behaviours” (Sprott, p. 555).

Sprott’s review of research indicated that the more positive the relationship of students within a class and their teacher, the more positive the academic success of those students (p. 556). In addition, when a teacher provides academic support and has high expectations for all their students, then the students’ academic performance soars (p. 556).

Sprott (2004) comments that Battistich and Hom’s (1997) research indicates the more academic success through supportive and caring classrooms, the less likely those students engage in delinquent behavior, including drug use (p. 551). He also suggests from prior research, “emotional support is most beneficial for a subset of ‘higher risk’ children” (p. 557).
Sabates (2008) notes that areas with a higher level of education have a lower level of criminal behavior and criminal activity (p. 395). It is also suggested that education expands language, and social and cultural views (p. 396). Education increases potential for higher and future earnings. The degree of crime can be determined by the education level as well. Sabates' (2008) review of Lochner and Moretti's (2004) research indicates that people with a high school diploma in the United States reduces the probability of crime rates by three-quarter of one percent for whites and 3.4 percent for African Americans (p. 396). Sabates (2008) finds that the more educational attainment, the reduction rates for theft, burglary, vandalism, and drug offenses (p. 397).

Since education provides for enhanced and broader perspective, it is reasonable to believe that the mind would find other things to be interested in, besides crime (Lockner and Moretti, p. 156). Lockner and Moretti indicate that the education and incarceration gap between whites and African Americans are far greater for African American than whites, per additional year of schooling, is equal to that of .37 percent incarceration reduction for African Americans compared to .10 percent incarceration reduction of whites (p. 157). The murder and violent crime rates are lower for convicted offenders who have a high school diploma (p. 157). These researchers also suggest that male high school graduation rates would save “$1.4 billion, or about $2,100 per additional male high school graduate” (p. 157).
Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) note research by Siegel and Senna (1988), wherein the "considerable research showing school failure to be a stronger predictor of delinquency than socioeconomic status, race, or ethnic background, and peer relations" (p. 262). Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) also suggests that the failure of research addressing the delinquency of African Americans neglects the possibility of misidentifying deviant behavior and common adolescent conventional behavior (p. 263). Additionally, there is evidence that African American households hold education high in priorities, as that of a white household; however, there might be a glass ceiling for African Americans, which is apparent when socializing or through life experience.

Moreover, because the issues African Americans face, it is ironic that African Americans respond with delinquency as a form of survival (p. 263). There is a social context of the American educational system, which enhances the African Americans experiences in education. The integration into this American educational system ignores the differences in cultures. Historically, the American educational system was thought to only benefit white males. Although it has been some time since this initial thought originated, to some degree, this thought by both whites and Blacks still resonates as true (p. 265).

The Achievement Gap

Education is the backbone to the nation's development. It is with education that a country can grow to its true potential. However, education has not always
been a priority for all of its people. In the United States, many minority and socio-economically deprived students failed to receive the education needed to be successful, competitive in the job market, or even make it in the regular kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools. It is with those inequalities that the education racial achievement gap formed. This achievement gap is related to many subgroups in the nation, including but not limited to, African Americans, Hispanics, special education, or socio-economically challenged students. Because of the great deal of issues arising from this growing achievement gap, states across the nation are choosing to do their part in education to change the system. The system of education, from expectations to curriculum, is imbalanced and does not provide for the equality necessary for all students to succeed.

Although great strides have been made throughout the nation’s history, there is more yet to do, especially in the realm of education. In Social Problems, written by Martin Trow and edited by Becker, it indicates that since the huge shift in society and the changing aspects of social groups status in society, the importance of educating students within the nation relies on the commitment level of public authorities (81). It is the public authorities who will enforce equalities across the board so that students of all social groups can learn and have the same opportunities as the elite.

So much attention over the last couple of years has been brought about by various high level officials, one of which being the California State Superintendent
of Public Instruction (SSPI), to close the achievement gap. High-level officials across the United States identified and recognized an issue that faces every state, the academic racial achievement gap. The California Department of Education’s Achievement Gap Web site notes:

The U.S. Department of Education describes the achievement gap as the difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups. In California, the gap is defined as the disparity between white students and other ethnic groups and between English learners and native English speakers, socioeconomically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged, and students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities (http://www.closingtheachievementgap.org/cs/ctag/print/htdocs/about.htm, accessed May 18, 2009.)

This gap creates a bigger issue besides just the lack of educating all at the same levels; it creates issues that fall over into different areas of policies and laws, such as the criminal justice system, economy, and social justices. Although totally separated by different official heads or different policy focuses, all these issues do have an underlining common denominator—education.

Trow also states that it is necessary for the public authorities to place importance on a paradigm shift in the education system (p. 85). He also makes note to the need for teachers and administrators to make sure they recognize and understand the cultural issues facing students (p. 86). With the understanding of students, the administrators and teachers will have the ability to change the way of doing business and have the ability to educate students.

In addition, the current economic issues the nation is facing are pushing United States citizens to places they have never been before, such as debt,
foreclosures, and lost jobs. The strain and stresses these issues are causing people will create deeper issues—decreases in the monies allotted to public services, such as education.

**Theory**

“Modern societies are not simple organizations in which everyone agrees on what the rules are and how they are to be applied in specific situations. They are, instead, highly differentiated along social class lines, ethnic lines, occupational lines, and cultural lines” (Becker, 1966, p. 15). Therefore, deviance can be seen in a variety of ways. Generally, deviance is anything that varies from the average or commonality of society. Deviance is also “in the eye of the beholder (Schur, 1984, p. 22).

One of the great contributors to the labeling theory is Howard S. Becker. His book, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, discusses the term outsiders, the individual being judged and labeled by a particular social group. In this book, Becker explains that rules and laws are developed by a higher socio-economic group and imposed on a lower status group to suit the needs of the higher group. The lower group may not engage in law breaking, but are labeled as if they are lawbreakers and treated as such. Outsiders, as Becker explains, are the individuals who must follow certain rules set forth by the higher status group. When the outsider feels like they are no longer part of the larger group, they will react in a way that is less conducive to the larger group.
The Labeling Theory maintains that when an individual’s self-identity is formulated from the constant labeling of society onto that individual. In mainstream society, individuals must conform to society’s norms (Bernburg, 2006, p. 68). In the event an individual does not conform to those norms, the mainstream or majority society places labels or stigmatizes those non-conforming individuals as deviants. Because these deviants continue to veer from the norms of mainstream society, the stigmatisms are continually confirmed that these individuals are “different,” and therefore should be treated differently or do not measure up to the expectations of mainstream society.

There are two forms of labeling, formal and informal. Adams, Robertson, Gray-Ray, and Ray (2003), describes that formal labeling is through direct contact with the “social control agencies” and informal labeling is by “parents, teachers, and peers” (p. 71). The initial contact and labeling by the social control agencies, deals with the initial delinquent behavior, which causes the suspension. Bernburg, Krohn, and Rivera (2008) noted society’s reactions to the behavior displayed are a stepping stone to developing a criminal career (p. 68).

This theory also suggests that those individuals labeled as deviant would then conform to what their label prescribes for them, which in this case, crime. The deviant labeled individual would react and continue to act in the behavior that is expected of them. Becker (1963) suggests that groups identify themselves by how others view them. Adams et al, (2003) supports Becker’s claims and people choose
who and what they are perceived as in society (p. 173). In addition, Sweeten (2006) states disadvantaged groups are more likely to be identify and label than other groups (p. 464).

How far a student will go to commit a delinquent act is questionable, depending on the commitment level. The commitment level of delinquency defines the levels at which an individual drives to commit such delinquent acts. The level at which individuals “commit” themselves have different degrees of intensity. Ulman and Ulman (1994) explain Goffman’s approach to commitment as being “forced” behavior. Bernburg states the lack of research of deviance and labeling, so it is important to understand what would make a student deviant.

Becker (1966) contests that African Americans are under rules set forth by Whites (p. 17). The ways rules are set and enforced by different social groups indicate the differences in power in society. The social groups in power are armed with the legal and manpower to create and enforce rules upon those of a lower social class.

Fenning and Rose (2007) stated African Americans were perceived as “not fitting into the norm of the school” (p. 537). In addition, Slee (1986) mentions that students who are of a lower socioeconomic class oftentimes limit their own self worth and potential (p. 89). Becker indicates that sometimes an individual may be perceived as being deviant, although they have not committed any deviant act, but because they belong to a larger group (p. 9). This could be true for students of a
subculture whose teacher had a negative experience before, then uses their experience in handling the next student of the same subculture.

The labeling theory could help explain why the African American students’ suspension rates could determine whether these students will likely divert to delinquency and crime. Because the labeling theory focuses on the individual’s self-conception of whom and what they are, African American students suspended would perceive themselves as being a delinquent and rise to fit the description.

Students may feel the need to develop a career in being deviant in school for a variety of reasons. As Becker notes (1966), the deviant career is shaped by the perceptions of the people in and out of the group that judges the outsider. Therefore, if the student who is considered the outsider or deviant, may react to the way they are treated by both groups (p. 102).

Suspension for actions such as being social or learning in a different manner are some of the most common reasons African American students are being suspended (Townsend, p. 382 and McFadden, p. 3). It is much too common for African American students to be misunderstood and treated differently because of the social group in which they belong. Therefore, to understand a particular group is to understand their way of life and culture (Becker, 1966, p. 79). The need to understand why and how a specific culture behaves and reacts in certain situations is important to educate students with various cultural backgrounds.
Categorical devaluation is the objectifying a person due to their membership in a certain culture (Schur, 1984, p. 30). African Americans are treated more harshly when it comes to discipline in school than their White counterparts simply because of their relationship or belonging to a particular culture and the status of the culture in society. Unfortunately, race has clearly shown a place in the discipline of students in the United States. In addition, research shows the cultural differences between the White and Black students that causes the suspensions. However, research has not clearly indicated why one group is being treated more harshly than the other is. The enforcement of rules varies, depending on who is enforcing them or the benefit to enforcing the rules. Becker suggests that enforcers utilize their power upon the lower status person to satisfy their own personal interests (p. 122).

Hirschfield assumes suspensions increase the belief of at-risk students as future criminals or prisoners (p. 92). Labeling a student might define the route the student will take in connection to living the rest of their lives. It is not too much to assume that the harshness placed on the shoulders of African American students, from society’s expectations to school expectations, is creating and applying a label on them that is crucial to their role in deviant behavior and life in general. If a student is marked as being a certain type of student, the world’s view of the student will be the same as marked.
Research has not defined if labeling provides the theoretical approach in determining if the high risk of suspension plays a role in the African American student’s likelihood of committing more crime than their White counterparts commit. However, it is not too far a reach to make the assumption and through specific studies, determine if this notion is true.

As Schur (1984) indicates, “[i]t is often what one is perceived to ‘be,’ more than what one is believed to have done, that gives rise to stigmatization (p. 22). Therefore, labeling may begin as early as a child enters the educational system. However, a student can really understand their role in society, as they get older because of their experiences with others. Culture becomes a part of a person’s everyday life, and it generally forms as the person matures. Therefore, a high school student may feel as if they are labeled well before any form of delinquency begins. In fact, the student may react and conform to what they see as their reality of life.

Laguna Creek High School

Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD) has changed over the last decade. In the 1998-99 school year, EGUSD had an enrollment of 42,484 students. Although the District was diverse, its African American population was only 19.4 percent and the White population was 40.3 percent. Today, EGUSD’s African American population is 18.1 percent and the White population is only 26 percent; however, the population of other ethnically diverse populations is increasing every
However, Laguna Creek High School has changed over the past decade. The enrollment for LCHS rose from 2,313 percent to 2,321 last year. The African American population rose from 15.9 percent to 24.3 percent, whereas the White population decreased from 45 percent to 22.4 percent. Because the fluctuation of the population and increasing minority population, a need to change the way of doing business. The student body changed, and with it additional issues LCHS has not faced before. This information is important because the need for additional resources to handle this quick change is sometimes hard to brace.

High school students at Laguna Creek High School (LCHS) are the focus of this study because of the vast and diverse student body. There are 1,973 students enrolled at LCHS. LCHS' student body consists of 28 percent African American, 19 percent Asian, 8 percent Filipino, 18 percent Hispanic, 24 percent White (non-Hispanic), and 4 percent other or declined to state (California Department of Education Web site, www.cde.ca.gov).

The African American students at Laguna Creek are proficient in English-Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and History-Social Science at half the rate of White students. Only 35 percent of African American students are proficient in English Language Arts, 10 percent in Mathematics, 28 percent in Science, and 21 percent in History-Social Science. Furthermore, over 55 percent of African American students are not proficient in English-Language Arts and Mathematics on
the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), whereas their White counterparts are not proficient by only 29 percent. African American students almost rank the same in regards to the CAHSEE with their English learner counterparts. African American students API ranking is at least 100 points less than their White counterparts. Only 80 percent of African American students at Laguna Creek High School have successfully completed the high school graduation requirements. This group makes up the largest represented population at the school with the least percentage of completion of the graduation requirements.

At Laguna Creek High School, 380 students have been suspended from school and 34 expelled. However, this number does not include the number of On-campus suspensions (OCS) that occur everyday and throughout the year. The numbers for OCS is far greater than the traditional suspension; however, it is not readily focused on because students are still on campus during this suspension. This suspension includes the teacher removing the student from the classroom, for their class period only, for up to two days. A student can receive more than one On-campus suspension from more than one teacher, essentially allowing the student to be out of the traditional classroom setting for more than the entire day. This allows the student to be counted in the school average daily attendance, but not receive any education during the period the student is outside of the classroom. Because the students are still on campus during the school day and in a controlled classroom,
the school site does not have to report the student as being suspended, as asked by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). On-Campus suspension is more common than most people know because it does not have to be reported to anyone.

Teachers at Laguna Creek High School only receive three school days dedicated to staff development. New teachers with less than two years of teaching experience must complete the district's beginning teacher program. In addition, teachers are allowed one hour a week to focus on student development or use this time to reflect on the planning classroom instruction. Title II funding is allotted to Laguna Creek High that allows money towards some teachers in core academic areas to be used towards evaluating and developing curriculum.
This project addresses some of the concerns of African American students being disproportionately suspended to their White counterparts. When suspended, these students become excluded from the educational setting and do not receive information needed to enhance their education. Consequently, African American students are at a disadvantage. Most of the suspensions at Laguna Creek High School are due to deviant behavior, and it is likely that the African American students who are considered deviant by their teachers face a greater risk of being delinquent.

Teachers’ lack of professional development by the school or district creates an atmosphere where teachers will have to learn on their own or just conduct their classrooms as they deem fit. Therefore, there is no accountability or focus on teachers to provide them with information to abolish any biases or ideas towards students of a different culture. Although some, but not all, teachers may have biases towards students they teach, it is important to curtail their behavior and/or provide a reminder to teachers in regards to the students they teach.

This is especially important when dealing with a rapid increase of a minority population, as did LCHS faced. It is thought that all students think and learn the same; however, it is clear that not all students learn the same; especially those that are not part of the society’s dominate culture. Singleton and Linton (2006) says that, “[n]ot only does White define the dominant race, but also it represents the standard by which
our racial awareness, experiences, and perspectives are judged” (p. 181). This statement is the genesis to the need to explore the different ways to communicate and understand other cultures. Therefore, it is important to realize that one group of students’ intake instructions and information in the very same way another group of students. However, all students should have the same expectation that they are able to do the work needed to be successful in school and in society.

Being a parent volunteer at Laguna Creek High School, I noticed a disconnect between the teachers and students. Teachers deemed a student deviant if they did not conform to the teacher’s idea of what “being conformed” means and is in their classroom. Most teachers and people in general, indicate they do not have preconceived ideas about any given group, and some even say, “I have a Black friend.” Tackling these ideas in a positive way, by not placing blame on anyone and allowing teachers to work their way through their own biases, as well as remind others, and create an atmosphere where all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity can perform and succeed, just like anyone else.

It is with my personal observations that I feel it is important to assist teachers in their quest to educate children of any race. It is also important to me that teachers do not feel overwhelmed or criticized for their thoughts or actions. Instead, help teachers recognize and fix behavior they can tell is not conducive to educating all students.
Although this Handbook is geared towards the teachers at LCHS, it is a Handbook, which could be replicated at any level and at any type of school. In fact, this Handbook can assist a teacher with any type of student background. This Handbook does not require an instructor to teach a class, nor does it require a classroom setting for this Handbook to be utilized and implemented.

This Handbook is a combination of two highly utilized books in the education system to close the achievement gap, *Courageous Conversations* by Singleton and Linton (2006), and *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* written by Lindsey, et al. (2003). These books are the genesis to the discussion of race and culture in the school setting. They focus on understanding the issues, addressing the issues, and implementing a plan to curtail problems and close the achievement gap, for all teachers and administration. However, these books focus on teachers and administrators to take classes in a classroom setting and openly discuss the items within the book. Given the competing priorities in the education system for teachers and administrators, it is important that the teachers have an easy-to-read and friendly guide to address concerns focused in the Handbook, as well not make the teachers feel any more intimidated than they already sometimes feel when discussing race and culture in an open setting.

It is expected that each teacher receive this Handbook prior to the beginning of the school year, maybe during their pre-school meeting. The teachers are to pair up with another teacher they are not close with, preferably someone of a different culture.
Each week, the pairs go through each assignment, and then discuss the assignment with the other teacher. No minimum or maximum would be issued in regards to the discussion, but hopefully the thoughts and ideas are running through the teachers heads as they are doing the assignments each week. After the Handbook has been completed by the pairs, they will be asked to implement some of the exercises in their classrooms.

*Delinquency Prevention through Cultural Communication: A Teacher’s Handbook*, is a tool for teachers at Laguna Creek High School to learn and understand race and culture without the need to take courses related to this subject. This handbook is designed to teach the teachers how to provide better service to their students through understanding through communication. The understanding through communication with each student will provide a greater sense of encouragement, support, and trust in a teacher-student relationship. This relationship is a stepping stone for better educating students, which will increase student achievement and reduce the potential for delinquency.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Summary

Research shows that African American students are disproportionately depicted as deviant or delinquent for various reasons; therefore, African American students are being suspended at a higher rate. Contributing factors include being more social, interactive in class, and being labeled are to name a few. Being labeled plays a huge role in the way students are perceived and treated in class. It is with those labels that are placed upon African American students, which cause a student to be suspended, and the student lacks the education needed to succeed.

Delinquency Prevention through Cultural Communication: A Teacher’s Handbook enhances the relationship between teachers and students. Through this enhanced relationship, the teacher will understand the needs of students, which in turn will allow for the student to be educated more; therefore, the student will be less likely to engage in deviant activities.

Limitations

This project initially focused on African American students; however, it evolved to assist other cultures as well because Laguna Creek High School is diverse in its student body. Every cultural issue could be addressed by implementing the suggestions within this Handbook. In order to conduct a study in the Elk Grove Unified School District, it was difficult to obtain specific
information regarding student information, as well as specific On-campus suspension information relating to students. The EGUSD does not allow outside studies to take place with their student or teacher population. This prohibition limited the ability to get raw data on the numbers and specific reasons for suspension related to Laguna High School.

Although specific information was not obtained, information was available via the Internet through the California and United States reporting requirements for certain categorical programs. Schools are supported by state and federal funds as long as proper reporting takes place. The information obtained was enough to conclude that delinquency could be prevented through cultural communication.

**Project Experience**

I was able to branch out to many subjects besides criminal justice. Although my major is criminal justice, I was able to research sociology, education, social work, and psychology. The ability to learn about different issues related all to the same subject—culture, criminal justice, education, and communication.

It is with the ability to explore beyond criminal justice that allowed me to understand the different aspects of delinquency and how education plays a role in criminality. The new understanding experienced through this project allows for a deeper understanding of the true prevention needed—education. Through education, perceptions are shaped and reshaped. The new paradigms formed by educating teachers will not only benefit the students at Laguna Creek High School,
but all students. Instead, all schools can learn how to give everyone a chance and hold students to higher standards by providing leadership, showing respect, and earning trust between the teacher and student.

**Implications**

By implementing this Handbook in the school setting, it would allow for better communication between students and teachers of different cultures. This greater ability to communicate allows a student to learn from each other. The exercises and activities in this Handbook are shortened so that every teacher can read and implement it in a feasible manner. The gains from implementing this Handbook into the teacher’s professional development would save the district money in the long run from future classes that would have needed to be taken, as well as the time it would save the teachers. In addition, building the relationships between the teacher and student would enhance the education of many students within the school; therefore, increasing test scores and student achievement across the board, leading to more education and less delinquency.
APPENDIX

Delinquency Prevention through Cultural Communication: A Teacher's Handbook
DELINQUENCY PREVENTION
THROUGH CULTURAL COMMUNICATION:
A TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

Developed By
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"The Education of our children is a matter of life and death."
-Former Secretary of State Colin Powell

Introduction

This Handbook is designed for high school teachers to use in order to prevent delinquency through cultural communication. Although this Handbook provides a better understanding of cultural communication by the teacher, it does not replace attending additional cultural communication events to enhance an individual’s understanding.

It is important to understand that this handbook stresses cultural communication. It aims to create a foundation from which teachers can build from and enhance their own understandings. This Handbook is just the beginning to some and a reminder to others.

Although literature regarding closing the racial achievement gap refers to giving teachers the training needed for more rigor instruction, this handbook will assist the teachers in their already busy schedules. It is assumed that every teacher at Laguna Creek High School is highly qualified; therefore, very little emphasis will be given on improving instruction with a more rigorous curriculum. However, it is a belief that every teacher will have high level expectations for all students. With these high expectations, coupled with the cultural communication skills provided, will not only allow students with a greater educational experience, but should also decrease the students’ deviant behaviors and hopefully abolish the need to send a student to On-campus suspension or any suspension for that matter.
This Handbook is intended to be brief so it is feasible to the schedule and attention span of the hard-working teacher. It is straight to the point and offers exercises to assist with individual struggles. Teachers are not allowed that much time out of the classroom to focus on personal and professional development. This Handbook is a one stop shop for rapid development. Although this Handbook is geared for teachers to do quick self-assessments, learn exercises, and utilize quick tips to assist in teaching, the ramifications of practicing and continuing to learn will take a lifetime.

Delinquency Prevention Through Cultural Communication: A Teacher’s Handbook draws upon material from two very popular books, Cultural Proficiency and Courageous Conversations. Both books are geared for leaders in the education field, including, but not limited to, teachers and administrators.

Purpose

Hopefully administration will allow teachers to come together and learn from one another utilizing this Handbook. It is intended that teachers, along with administration, put forth the time and energy to review and conduct the exercises provided. During the review and discussion around this Handbook and exercises, it is possible to discover issues or struggles within yourself and potentially help others with their struggles in a non-offensive, healthy, and encouraging way.

This Handbook is intended to develop discussion and thought into culture and communication between different backgrounds. Enhanced communication
between cultures will create stronger bonds between teachers and students, and will allow for a more trusting and transparent relationship.

With trust, teachers are able to understand student behavior and thought process, as well as having greater expectations for students of a different culture. As a result, students will be more apt to achieve higher goals and succeed.

**Why is understanding culture important to me?**

Understanding the culture of students you teach is important in order for one to have a good understanding of how students behave, how they learn, and how they negotiate information when given to them. The more you are able to contextualize your role for setting the tone in a classroom that acknowledges cultural differences and similarities, the better students respond to practices that reflect your ability to connect with them. While trying to discover your function in relation to your students make an effort to remember how your biases and preconceived notions affect your teaching and the educational experiences of your students. You should then have the ability to navigate through relationships with your students by considering your own awareness of culture and their ability to access your consciousness. Keep in mind that this is an on-going process; cultural trends and practices are constantly changing. With those changes, you must also seek to understand the changes and then recognize the affect they may have on the tone of your classes and the connection with your students. Having a grasp on relevant culture has the potential to facilitate a healthier learning environment and
create learning opportunities not previously present due to a lack of knowledge or otherwise.

**How do we start?**

1. Let's talk about it

   It is important to understand that no one is perfect and that everyone should be constantly learning. Also, race and ethnicity are hard to talk about based on the fear of offending someone or exposing your own lack of cultural awareness.

   However, talking about race, ethnicity, gender, and other terms is the first step to understanding. It is possible that working through this Handbook, individuals will say that race, ethnicity, or gender is not noticed because everyone is human. Although that is nice to say, reality says differently. It is okay to notice differences, but the key is that those differences must be celebrated rather than rejected or dismissed. This is not designed to create divisions, but rather to foster a learning environment that effectively addresses the multiple needs of students. Understand that some differences will be easier to incorporate than others, but once you have opened yourself to accepting the multitude of cultural variance, the effort to converse about race and ethnicity will become much more fluid and relevant-based.

2. Be honest

   One of the first steps of beginning this handbook is to be honest. It is okay to be honest with yourself and your fellow co-workers. It is okay to be honest with management and other staff members. It is okay to be honest with parents and your students. It is okay to be honest. You must confront your own thoughts and
feelings, so that you can make the best from the training received and the information that is conveyed to you.

You may think this Handbook or similar training is not necessary. You may not be ready to learn anything this handbook has to offer you, or be ready to face the reality that sits in your class everyday. That is okay. It is important to begin where you are at and be open to that reality that you see in your classroom everyday.

**Why is cultural communication important to us?**

Cultural communication is the gateway to classroom management. After you have established that you actually do have innate bias and preconceived notions about students you must seek to acknowledge those differences. Understand that impartiality can lead to the idea of a homogenous group of students. We know that this is not the case; all students are not the same. Pupils require different levels of attention and consideration. In order to avoid a monolithic view of your class you should make an effort to learn about their family backgrounds, the cultural practices including, but not limited to, discipline expectations. Students learn and respond differently across cultures. Some students are taught to be quiet and passive, while others are challenging and confrontational. Keep in mind this is not a means to classify students, but rather creating the openness needed to facilitate a culturally inviting environment. Through cultural
communication you should seek to provide learning opportunities that address all students, all backgrounds, all cultures.

**Should we recognize differences?**

Absolutely! Recognizing differences in students is the key factor in gaining their trust and building relationships. When students discover that you have taken interest and consideration into who they are, in and out of class, you have started a journey that will create learning opportunities for both yourself and your students. Remember to celebrate their differences. Don’t use them as opportunities to single out those who deviate from social norms.

**Now what?**

1. You should feel better about talking about race and ethnicity.

2. Your honesty with yourself and others hopefully made you more aware of your feelings and thoughts about race and ethnicity. This awareness will guide you to appreciate differences among others. Again, it is okay to have your thoughts, but hopefully now you are able to see the world in a whole new light.

3. You are able to understand who you teach and their differences.

4. Teaching students with different backgrounds and perspectives, you will be more adaptive in the way you teach and approach your students.

5. Your students should be able to trust you and the amount of “deviant” behavior will decrease.

6. Students will learn more in your class, appreciate you for teaching them, and divert the criminal justice system.
20 (Self-)Critical Things I Will Do to Be a More Equitable Educator

1. I will learn to pronounce every student’s full given name correctly. No student should feel the need to shorten or change her or his name to make it easier for me or their classmates to pronounce. I will practice and learn every name, regardless of how difficult it feels or how time-consuming it becomes. That is the first step in being inclusive.

2. I will sacrifice the safety of my comfort zone by building a process for continually assessing, understanding, and challenging my biases and prejudices and how they impact my expectations for, and relationships with, all students, parents, and colleagues.

3. I will center student voices, interests, and experiences in and out of my classroom. Even while I talk passionately about being inclusive and student-centered in the classroom, I rarely include or center students in conversations about school reform. I must face this contradiction and rededicate to sharing power with my students.

4. I will engage in a self-reflective process to explore how my identity development impacts the way I see and experience different people.

5. I will invite critique from colleagues and accept it openly. I usually do well accepting feedback … until someone decides to offer me feedback. Though it's easy to become defensive in the face of critique, I will thank the person for their time and courage (it’s not easy to critique a colleague). The worst possible scenario is for people to stop providing me feedback, whether positive and negative.

6. I will never stop being a student. If I do not grow, learn, and change at the same rate the world around me is changing, then I necessarily lose touch with the lives and contexts of my students. I must continue to educate myself—to learn from the experiences of my students and their parents, to study current events and their relationship to what I am teaching, and to be challenged by a diversity of perspectives.
7. I will understand the relationship between INTENT and IMPACT. Often, and particularly when I'm in a situation in which I experience some level of privilege, I have the luxury of referring and responding only to what I intended, no matter what impact I've had on somebody. I must take responsibility for and learn from my impact because most individual-level oppression is unintentional. But unintentional oppression hurts just as much as intentional oppression.

8. I will reject the myth of color-blindness. As painful as it may be to admit, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share many dimensions of my identity than when I'm in a room full of people who are very different from me. I must be open and honest about that, because those shifts inevitably inform the experiences of people in my classes or workshops. In addition, color-blindness denies people validation of their whole person.

9. I will recognize my own social identity group memberships and how they may affect my students' experiences and learning processes. People do not always experience me the way in which I intend, even if I am an active advocate for all my students. A student's initial reaction to me may be based on a lifetime of experiences, so I must try not to take such reactions personally.

10. I will build coalitions with teachers who are different from me (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, first language, disability, and other identities). These can be valuable relationships of trust and honest critique. At the same time, I must not rely on other people to identify my weaknesses. In particular, in the areas of my identity that I experience privilege, I must not rely on people from historically underprivileged groups to teach me how to improve myself (which is, in and of itself, a practice of privilege).

11. I will improve my skills as a facilitator, so when issues of diversity and equity do arise in the classroom, I can take advantage of the resulting educational opportunities. Too often, I allow these moments to slip away, either because I am uncomfortable with the topic or because I feel unprepared to effectively facilitate my students through it. (I often try to make myself feel better by suggesting that the students “aren’t ready” to talk about racism or sexism, or whatever the topic might be, when it’s more honest to say that I do not feel ready.) I will hone these skills so that I do not cheat my students out of important conversations and learning opportunities.
12. I will invite critique from my students, and when I do, I will dedicate to listening actively and modeling a willingness to be changed by their presence to the same extent they are necessarily changed by mine.

13. I will think critically about how my preferred learning styles impact my teaching style. I am usually thoughtful about diversifying my teaching style to address the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Still, I tend to fall back on my most comfortable teaching style most often. I will fight this temptation and work harder to engage all of my students.

14. I will affirm and model an appreciation for *all* forms of intelligence and the wide variety of ways students illustrate understanding and mastery of skills and knowledge.

15. I will reflect on my own experiences as a student and how they inform my teaching. Research indicates that my teaching is most closely informed by my experiences as a student (even more so than my pre-service training). The practice of drawing on these experiences, positive and negative, provides important insights regarding my teaching practice.

16. I will encourage my students to think critically and ask critical questions about all information they receive including that which they receive from me.

17. I will challenge myself to take personal responsibility before looking for fault elsewhere. For example, if I have one student who is falling behind or being disruptive, I will consider what I am doing or not doing that may be contributing to their disengagement before problematizing their behavior or effort.

18. I will acknowledge my role as a social activist. My work changes lives, conferring upon me both tremendous power and tremendous responsibility. Even though I may not identify myself as a social activist, I know that the depth of my impact on society is profound, if only by the sheer number of lives I touch. I must acknowledge and draw on that power and responsibility as a frame for guiding my efforts toward equity and social justice in my work.

19. I will fight for equity for *all* underrepresented or disenfranchised students. Equity is not a game of choice—if I am to advocate education equity, I do not have the luxury of choosing who does or does not have access to it. For example, I cannot effectively fight for racial equity while I fail to confront gender inequity. And I can never be a real advocate for gender equity if I choose to duck the responsibility for ensuring equity for lesbian, gay, and
bisexual students. When I find myself justifying my inattention to any group of disenfranchised students due to the worldview or value system into which I was socialized, I know that it is time to reevaluate that worldview or value system.

20. I will celebrate myself as an educator and total person. I can, and should, also celebrate every moment I spend in self-critique, however difficult and painful, because it will make me a better educator. And that is something to celebrate!

Courtesy of Paul C. Gorski, EdChange.org
Six Critical Paradigm Shifts for Equity in Education  
(and the Questions We Should Be Asking)

1. The Base Shift: Equality → Equity
   a. Does every student who walks into our schools have an opportunity to achieve to her or his fullest regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, first language, (dis)ability, and other social and cultural identifiers?
   b. Is my work contextualized in a bigger social picture that incorporates the history of oppression experienced by a variety of individuals and groups?

2. Identifying “at-risk” students → Acknowledging a broken system
   a. Who am I problematizing?
   b. Is my goal to make shifts in student outcomes (for which inequities are actually symptoms, not the root problems) working within a broken and inherently racist, sexist, classist, etc., system? Is this possible?

3. Color-blindness → Self-examination
   a. How am I recycling the history of inequity in education?
   b. Is color-blindness possible? And if so, is it desirable?

4. Learning about “other cultures” → Dismantling systems of power and privilege
   a. “Other” than what?
   b. Is my work focused on helping people feel OK sitting next to each other, or on addressing the root problem of imbalances of power and privilege that will remain regardless of who sits next to whom?

5. Celebrating diversity → Advocating and fighting for equity
   a. Am I asking students who are already alienated by most aspects of education to celebrate a difference for which they are routinely oppressed? If so, to whose benefit?
   b. Can I justify the use of limited resources for celebration when inequities persist?

6. Focus on intent → Focus on impact
   a. Is it enough that I intend to do well and fight toward equity, even when my work is misguided and recycles oppressive systems?
   b. Is it enough to support equity philosophically (such as including it in a school mission statement) while I fail to reflect equity in practice?

Courtesy of Paul C. Gorski, EdChange.org
Exercise #1: Journaling

Purpose: To record your thoughts and feelings during a change process. During any change process, it is useful to record, in a systematic way, one’s feelings and reactions. We have found journaling to be a welcome activity to awareness and paradigm shift.

 Briefing: You are going to be hearing and experiencing things over the next few weeks that might change your perception of students, faculty, the school, and education. This will give you an opportunity to give one hundred percent attention to yourself and channel your feelings. After reviewing this handbook, you will see the gradual change of your perception.

Each participant is to:

- Make an entry into your journal.
- Write what happened today and use specific activities, exercises or stimulations to help you gather your thoughts and feelings.
- Write about how you feel about what happened and what are your basis for your feelings, ad be specific.
- What are you going to do about what happened?

At the beginning of each group time, ask participants to share, but note that they should not be required to share anything.


Reflection Journal Question #1: What can you recall about the events and conversations related to race, race relations, and/or racism that may have impacted your current perspectives and/or experiences?

   Courtesy of Courageous Conversations, Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton
Exercise #2: Cultural Proficiency Consensus

Please indicate whether you believe the following statements to be true or false.

1. Cultural proficiency recognizes that each individual is worthwhile and unique.
2. Culturally proficient education recognizes that each individual has dignity and integrity.
3. Skin color, language differences, sexual orientation, and other physical marks of difference are unimportant.
4. Students in U.S. schools need to speak, write, and read standards forms of English.
5. School curricula should deal directly with the differences among people.
6. Educators should be taught to understand cultural diversity of our society.
7. Parents and community people should help in planning and implementing a culturally proficient curriculum.
8. Schools should correct the differences found among students so that everybody in the United States learns to behave the same way.
9. Members of distinct cultural groups (e.g., ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and occupation) have some attitudes and values.
10. Education that values cultural proficiency serves only to divide people who are different.

Response to Exercise #2: Cultural Proficiency Consensus Preferred Responses

1. True. In the United States, the goal of culturally proficient education is to recognize that each individual is unique and worthwhile. Although some so-called multicultural curricula may not achieve this goal, it is the goal of culturally proficient education and one toward which, we believe, all educators should be working.

2. True. This statement is an outgrowth of and consistent with statement 1. Though current curriculum and instruction may not achieve this goal, it does not detract from the need to respect the dignity and integrity of all students and their families.

3. False. Marks of differences may be unimportant to those who do not have them. Such people may think they judge others independent of these marks of difference. These marks of difference are important to those who have them, however. Not only do these marks of difference influence one’s self-identity, but they also are often the basis of stereotyping or discrimination.

4. True. To have equity of opportunity in schools, business, or society in general, people must be able to speak, read, and write standard forms of English. This statement in no way detracts from the need for bilingual or multilingual skills or bi-dialectal. Every child who comes to school speaking a language or dialect other than standard English deserves to be respected for that language difference and to receive instructional support for maintaining that language and using it and standard English appropriately. Likewise, native English-speaking children should learn an additional language.

5. True. This statement is a corollary to statements 1 and 2. Of course, the statement does not deny the appropriateness of dealing with people’s similarities.

6. True. To achieve the goals of a culturally proficient education, administrators, teachers, and school support personnel need to learn about diversity in their communities and society at large.

7. True. Parents and community members can be valuable resources in setting school goals that embrace culturally proficient values. They can
also assist in developing guidelines for the implementation of goals and in evaluating those goals.

8. False. This may have been a hoped-for goal for those touting the assimilationist melting pot myth. Educators who value culturally proficient education understand that there is strength in diversity and that the appreciation of differences is an important goal for U.S. citizens.

9. False. An obvious stereotype. There exists the same degree of heterogeneity within groups that exists among groups. This becomes an important point of discussion when examining the compounding effects of class and caste.

10. False. Quite the contrary; cultural proficiency is not adversarial. A major goal of culturally proficient education is to support people in recognizing and appreciating their similarities and differences and learning from both.

Reflection Journal Question #2: Can you think of a time in a personal and/or professional circumstance when race became a topic of conversation and you either actively changed the subject or avoided the conversation altogether? What did you believe caused you to react in this manner?

Courtesy of Courageous Conversations by Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton
The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

Assess Culture: Name the Differences
- Recognize how your culture affects the culture of others.
- Describe your own culture and the cultural norms of your organization.
- Understand how the culture of your organization affects those with different cultures.

Value Diversity: Claim Your Differences
- Celebrate and encourage the presence of a variety of people in all activities.
- Recognize differences as diversity rather than as inappropriate responses to the environment.
- Accept that each culture finds some values and behaviors more important than others.

Manage the Dynamics of Difference: Frame the Conflicts Caused by Differences
- Learn effective strategies for resolving conflict, particularly among people whose cultural backgrounds and values differ.
- Understand the effect that historic distrust has on present-day interactions.
- Realize that you may misjudge others' actions based on learned expectations.

Adapt to Diversity: Change to Make a Difference
- Change the way things are done to acknowledge the differences that are present in the staff, students, and community.
- Develop skills for intercultural communication.
- Institutionalize cultural interventions for conflicts and confusion caused by the dynamics of difference.

Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge: Train About Differences
- Incorporate cultural knowledge into the mainstream of the organization.
- Teach the origins of stereotypes and prejudices.
- For staff development and education, integrate into your systems information and skills that enable all to interact effectively in a variety of intercultural situations.

The Guiding Principals of Cultural Proficiency

*Culture is ever present*

Everyone has a culture, even if it is not prevalent. One may not understand or recognize their culture, until that is, it changes. Some people in a dominant group say that they do not notice culture, however, that is because they are in the dominant culture and ultimately, they do not have to pay attention. Intuitively you know what the rules are in your group, in your society. Your culture shapes your values and behaviors.

The culturally proficient leader remembers that culture—the culture of the individuals and the culture of the organization—is always a factor.

*People are Served in Varying Degrees by the Dominant Culture*

Culturally proficient educators adjust their behaviors and values to accommodate the full range of diversity represented by their school populations. They see the need to ensure that members of dominant groups, dominated groups, and emerging groups share the responsibility for change.

*Diversity Within Culture Is Important*

Culturally proficient schools/teachers create an environment that fosters trust, safety, and the inclusion of all people who work and learn in them.
Each Group Has Unique Cultural Needs

School is not a one size fits all. However, the educational system teaches that if students behave and do x, y, and z, then they will be successful.

Unfortunately, not all students receive, articulate, and understand information the same way. Therefore, it takes the understanding of the teacher and the creativity to teach students the way in which they receive and articulate information.
Please wake me when I am free
I cannot bear captivity
where my culture I’m told holds no significance
I’ll whither and die in ignorance
But my inner eye can see a race
who reigned as kings in another place
the green of trees were rich and full
And every man spoke of beautiful
men and women together as equals
War was gone because all was peaceful
But now like a nightmare I wake to see
That I live like a prisoner of poverty
Please wake me when I am free
I cannot bear captivity
4 I would rather be stricken blind
than 2 live without expression of mind.

Reflection Journal Question #3: What thoughts and/or questions arose for you as you read this poem? How does the writer’s perspective about race connect to your own personal, local, and immediate racial experience? How do you think the writer connects to the world?
The poem on the previous page is that of someone who most authority figures would not deem the person who wrote this worthy of even reading it. There is so much more to people than what is perceived by rumors or what others say.

The writer of this poem and many other poems that are filled with passion, relevance, and depth is Tupac Amaru Shakur. This poem and other can be found in his book, The Rose That Grew From Concrete.

Labels and Effects of Discrimination

Historically, the dominant social group identified and labeled other groups to show dominance and inferiority. Fortunately, society has much improved, but how far have we really come since the days of flagrant and obvious discrimination.

Generations reflect and respond to the generations prior to them. This is true when policies are made regarding everything in society, including education. From Brown vs. Board of Education to closing the achievement gap, policies formed are concurrent with the schemes that take place at the time. However, perception stems from learned behavior and personal observations. These perceptions continue through generations.

Singleton and Linton (2006) note that a student who experience being stereotyped, regardless if it is negative or positive, will almost always perform to the stereotype, called stereotype threat (p. 218).
Reflection Journal Question #3: How have you personally been affected by stereotype threat? Have students with whom you have worked also been affected by stereotype threat? How might educators assist students in overcoming stereotyping threat?

Courtesy of Courageous Conversations by Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton

This next exercise is to explore the group stereotypes, and consider whether they are still prevalent today.
Exercise #3: Group Stereotypes

Purpose: To identify the stereotypes associated with different groups of people, and to examine how stereotyping impacts one’s perceptions of others. Recognize how often negative stereotypes are applied to every cultural group.

Time Needed: Approximately 30-45 minutes

Materials Needed: Several pieces of chart paper, tape, large Post-It Notes

Briefing: This activity will help you to see how we stereotype other people.

Process:

- Label each piece of chart paper with one of these group categories:
  - White women, White men, Black women, Black men, Hispanic women, Hispanic men, Gay men, Lesbians, etc.
- Hang the charts around the room.
- Give each participant a small stack of large Post-It Notes.
- Ask them to write labels and stereotypes they have heard used about each group.
- Silenty have the participants affix the Post-It Notes to the appropriate chart.
- Mill around and read what has been written.

Debrief:

- How did you feel writing the stereotypes?
- What did you think as you read what was written?
- How did you feel as you read what was written?
- What is your reaction to all these labels around the room?
- What are the implications of this activity?
- How will you use the information?

Variations:

- You may use different groups to make it more reflective to your school and training.

Teacher/Student Exercise #1: Name Five Things

Purpose: To help participants clarify how they define themselves. This activity will also demonstrate the effects of cultural blindness.

Time Needed: Fifteen minutes

Materials: Blank paper

Briefing: Think about who they are and how you describe yourself.

Process:

- Write five words or short phrases that describe the essence of who you are. These should be things that if they were taken away from you, you would not be the same person.
- With a partner, share your list.
- Cross one item off of your list so that only the purest essence of who you are will be listed.
- Now cross off one more item off the list.
- Participants may try to cooperate, but they will definitely struggle.
- The point of this activity is to help you to see that when you seek to engage with only one aspect of some, you are asking them to erase or deny the essence of who they are. It may be more difficult and take more time in a diverse environment, but if you don’t, you won’t be experiencing all of who the people are.

Debriefing

- What did you notice as you wrote your list?
- What did you notice as you shared your list?
- What did it feel like to have to cross items off of your list?
- What did you learn about your colleagues?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What conclusions can you draw about the members of this group?

Teacher/Student Exercise #2: Intercultural Communication

Purpose: To articulate differences between and among groups when communicating across cultures. This activity provides participants with the opportunity to define how their cultural groups prefer to receive communication and to learn the same about other groups’ communications preferences and styles.

Time Needed: 2 – One hour classes

Materials Needed: Chart paper and markers

Briefing: This activity will give you an opportunity to share information with the other participants that they need for talking effectively with members of your cultural group. It will give you a chance to shatter some stereotypes on one hand, but on the other hand it will allow you to share some useful generalizations.

Process:
- Have the group members sit with other members of their ethnic group. If they want to divide into subgroups due to size, that’s fine, but keep the groups diverse as far as men/women.
- Ask each group to list some rules, suggestions, and tips for interacting with that particular group. They may want to use some of these categories:
  - Initial Approach
  - Presenting oneself to the group
  - Attitude toward time
  - Introducing change
  - Giving feedback
  - Disagreeing
  - Pointing out errors
  - Things that help communication
  - Things that impede communication
- Encourage each group to discuss among itself the paradigms members might use for judging newcomers. What are the rules of discourse that they use when interacting with outsiders? What should a newcomer do if he or she wants to be accepted and listened to?
Debriefing

Make sure you ask questions that clarify and underscore the subtle but important differences in the expectations of each group when communicating. Seek to determine whether one group has different expectations for different ethnic groups. Talk about clothing and appearance if you perceive this to be an important issue as well.

Teacher/Student Exercise #3: Managing Conflict with our Core Values

Purpose: To discuss the relationship of your school’s core values, the elements of cultural proficiency and managing conflict.

Time Needed: 1 hour

Materials Needed:
- Copies of Response Sheet: Managing Conflict With Our Core Values
- A grid that has the same three-column headings but is otherwise blank.
- Chart paper and marking pens
- A list of the school/class core values or shared values

Briefing:

We are going to talk about the relationship of our core values to managing conflict.

Process:

- Distribute a list of the school’s shared or core values
- Distribute Response Sheet
- Complete one row of the blank chart as a large group
- Ask each person to spend 10 minutes making notes that reflect their individual views and perspectives regarding the school/class responses to its stated core values on Response Sheet
- Organize participants into diverse groups of 4-6 members
- Give participants 30 minutes to discuss each core value as it relates to managing conflict and to complete the blank Response Sheet
- Ask participants to post their work on chart paper
- Invite critical review of each group’s contribution
- Note the similarities and differences in the groups’ products
Debriefing:

- What did you think, feel, or wonder when you first received the Response Sheet?
- What did you think, feel, or wonder during the discussion in your group?
- How can you incorporate your new understanding of conflict into your daily practice?
- What did you learn about yourself? Your colleagues? Your school?
- What is the implication of this activity for your in your role at the school?
- What information or skills do you believe you need to do an even better job?
- How can we use this information?

Teacher/Student Exercise #3: Managing Conflict with our Core Values - Response Sheet

Examining Your Core Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Value</th>
<th>Relationship of Core Value to Managing Conflict</th>
<th>What I Can Say or Do to Reduce Tension and Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

Systemic Privilege: The Presumption of Entitlement

The people who feel they have gained everything on their own merit and nothing was given to them; will be less likely to lower their expectation for others seemingly thinking that everyone else has the opportunities to do the same.

Resistance to Change: Unawareness of the Need to Adapt

Change is hard. In fact, people will be resistant and may become defiant, regardless if they really want to change deep down. Change indicates giving up something they are use to or become accustomed to. People resist change for various reasons. Fear is amongst the most common. Turning away or refuting something you cherished all your life can be hard.

Cultural Proficiency suggests there are seven dynamics of change.

1. People are at different levels of readiness for change.
2. People will think first about what they are going to lose.
3. People will feel awkward, uncomfortable, and ill at ease.
4. People tend to be concerned that they will not have enough resources.
5. People will feel alone even though others are going through the same thing.
6. People can handle only so much at a time.
7. When the pressure is off, people will revert back to old behavior.
How do you handle resistant people?

Lindsay and Robins (2003) indicate handle the change or resistance with resilience.

- Flexibility
- Open-mindedness
- Clarity of values
- The ability to prioritize and re-prioritize when necessary
- Focus on goals
- The willingness to identify and correct mistakes
Exercise #4: The Process of Personal Change

Purpose: To raise awareness of how change takes place.

Time needed: 20 minutes

Materials needed: Copies of Response Sheet.

Briefing:

We have been talking about making change, and you are probably wondering why other people have not changed yet. Let's look at the process of personal change.

Process:

- Distribute Response Sheet.
- Ask participants what they think of it.
- Discuss the various points on Response Sheet and the movement from one to another.
- Elicit examples from the participants for personal changes they have experienced
- Discuss what the process would be for someone moving toward cultural proficiency
- Discuss the implications for the school's learning process

Debriefing:

- What did you learn or remember from this process?
- How does this process differ from how children learn?
- What are the differences between learning something as an adult?
- How should we adapt our expectations to one another as we grow? And learning something as a child?
- How should we adapt our expectations for our school as we implement the cultural proficiency model?

Exercise #4: The Process of Personal Change-Response Sheet

**Unconscious Competence**
- Reinforcement
- Practice
- Change to Value Set B

**Conscious Competence**
- Practice
- Reinforcement
- Feedback
- Behavior Change

**Conscious Incompetence**
- Attitudinal Shift
- Awareness

**Unconscious Incompetence**
- Inappropriate Behavior
- Value Set A

Through exercises, reflection journal entries, and engaging with your students, you should begin the road of cultural communication. With your new founded skills and openness to discuss one of the hardest discussions, you will allow for greater communications with your students, develop trust, and prevent delinquency because suspension will no longer be needed.

It is with your dedication to your students though committing yourself to openly participate in these exercises, you are setting the example of what a leader should possess and demonstrate the leadership to provide students with necessary skills to be successful in life.
Effective Leaders Have

A vision of what the group can be that is greater than what it is

The ability to communicate that vision in language that is understood by the prospective followers

The skills to assess and respond appropriately to the needs of the people and the environment in which they are working

The values and personality needed to build a strong school culture
Handbook References


REFERENCES


