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*Innovation in Education*

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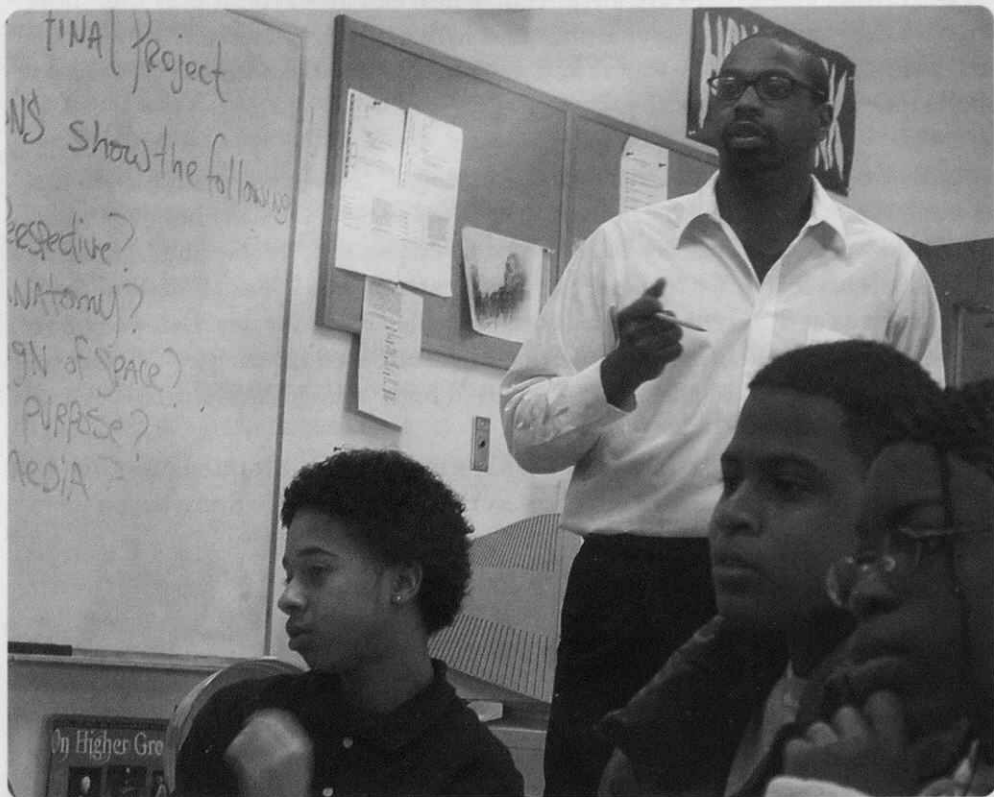
LEADERSHIP



LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY

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For many beginning teachers, who are just adjusting to the pressures of teaching along with classroom management, evaluating student work, being creative while at the same time "covering" the essential concepts, differentiated instruction feels completely "pie in the sky." I hear our student interns groan, "I just want to learn how to instruct—I can't think about how to differentiate at this point." There is, of course, some truth to this. It is much more difficult to manage multiple entry points into a lesson or a unit than just one, but, in fact, differentiated instruction is what good teaching is all about.



On a recent visit to a senior humanities class, I watched Ms. Clark move from the study of Classicism to Romanticism while providing multiple supports for less skilled students (a gridded notetaking format that followed her lecture, for example) and ample opportunity for extra readings and writings for her open honors students. This teacher has also made it clear to her class that some days the lesson will fit the learning style of those who like lectures and notetaking, and other days it will be more engaging for those who like group work and discussion.

When Ms. Clark plans her lessons and units of study, she is already thinking about the many levels in her classroom; thus, differentiation is part of her repertoire from the beginning. But when the pressures of outside high-stakes testing come into play, many teachers throw out their own thoughtful planning in an attempt to get everyone through the gatekeeper that is the test. We are attempting to do what many schools are unwilling to do—work in an untracked environment—by

combining many levels and types of students in one classroom, and to keep the mania of high stakes testing at bay so it does not destroy our curriculum and our students. Our goal is to provide teachers with the support they need to feel more confident with students who have learning disabilities, as well as students who need extra challenges—and to do all of it with seriousness of purpose while still having a good time.

#### HOW OPEN HONORS WORKS

Our initial work in differentiated classrooms began with our open honors program in humanities in 2001-2002. In 2002-2003 we extended it to advisory/writing and science. We did not include arts classes, Spanish, or math.

BAA's open honors program is based on the elementary school model of heterogeneity. There are no separate honors classes, but students in heterogeneous classes can choose to work at a higher, more intensive level. For example, in our Humanities 4 (or senior level course) students must complete the "A" paper options on all papers. The humanities teachers lay out in a clear rubric what entails an A, B, and C paper. (Lower than a C is not acceptable in Humanities 4.) Students in open honors must always choose the A option, which requires additional reading and research. In addition, students are required to read an extra novel from a given list and write an additional paper that links the student's interpretation of the novel to ideas covered in class. Given that this is a semester course, and there is already a lot of reading, this is a considerable challenge.

Finally, students must complete an honors reflection as part of the final portfolio. Before the program's inception, our humanities teachers spent two full days during the summer and held follow-up meetings during the academic year to review their curriculum and define the goals of open honors, which are:



- To give students a chance to push themselves intellectually
- To provide more challenge and rigor and to help individualize instruction
- To encourage a culture of risk-taking by allowing *any student* to take Humanities Honors as long as he maintains a B average
- To encourage a culture of achievement

We made two further decisions that proved to be critical. First, we said that open honors had to be a partnership between the student, the family, and the teacher. Parents and students had to decide *together* that the student would enroll in the program. We didn't want parents to assume that the decision was solely the teacher's.

Second, we said that no student would ever be penalized for choosing open honors. It could only help you. In other words, if you found that you needed to drop back to regular status in the class, that was okay. In the first year of the program this was an important part of encouraging a culture of achievement. We did not want only the white middle-class students to choose honors. By making the program easily permeable, we encouraged participation. It worked, though not completely. We got a broad cross-section of honors candidates in terms of race, culture, and socioeconomic status. But there was a huge gender gap: very few males enrolled. Our school is about sixty percent females, but open honors was still disproportionately female in the first year. Perhaps it is still more acceptable in high school to be a smart girl than a smart boy. As we watch this year's demographics, we will see if those numbers change.

Our evaluation of the program after its first semester found that teachers felt that it helped motivate students, and also that it helped teachers to address a wider range of student abilities. They also believed that the open policy encouraged some able students who would not have chosen a traditional honors class to take on the challenge. Teachers also felt that the honors component gave students an edge in applying to college.

Of course, there were some things we needed to work on, too:

- We needed to improve consistency among all classrooms and teachers on policies regarding contracts with students, parents signing off on these agreements, and exactly how students would opt in and out of the program.
- We needed to refine the "more work" versus "busywork" concept. That is, how do we make sure that the honors component of the class is truly about stretching students intellectually?
- We needed to acknowledge that dealing with multiple assignments can be difficult for some teachers.
- Male students of color were underrepresented in the program.





- Time constraints: teachers ended up spending at least another two to three hours a week making open honors work—a significant added burden.
- Students who were intellectually capable but had poor organizational skills did not follow through.
- Class sizes were just too large.

This last issue is central to the program's chances for ultimate success. Some of our humanities classes have as many as twenty-seven students. That's just too many for a heterogeneous classroom. Ideally, the limit should be twenty. We are working hard to bring our class sizes down. Most teachers feel that with smaller classes, and therefore a smaller total student load, time constraints would diminish considerably.

Our goal is to make open honors an integral part of our school culture. In our first pilot semester with tenth and eleventh graders, approximately 21 percent of the students enrolled. Within five years we want to see 40 to 50 percent of our students enrolled in open honors, representing every race, class, and gender.

If we extend this model to more classrooms, I believe we can create a more challenging curriculum. Think again of the elementary classroom, in which children regularly write and publish books or papers on a given theme. It is rare to see all

the books at the same skill level. Some books are short, others long; vocabulary may be very sophisticated or not; illustrations complex or simple. Each book still has enormous value and has pushed the child beyond his comfort level into a new skill area.

As part of our evaluation of open honors, we interview students and parents about their expectations and experiences. This helps to strengthen our commitment to heterogeneity and equity. Students who had dropped the honors option said that they were "too stressed out by the work," and "I wasn't ready for the challenge." One student said, "I thought it was a little weird; all of the honors classes at previous schools were classes of just honor students. It was not integrated; it was easier to keep on track with the work that way. The assignments were delivered to the class and not to random students in the class."

Other students who stayed with the honors option said that parental support helped: "My parents told me to do the best that I can and to always try new things." Thirty-three of the forty-two students who took open honors felt that college admissions officers would look more favorably at them. Some students even said, "It felt like I was in a college course with late nights and everything." Other students said that "it kept me on a strict schedule—I procrastinated less!" Students were critical, too. "It was an interesting concept, yet needs more structure and organization." And "Quantity versus quality. Is this just about doing more work?"

Finally, we make sure there are many opportunities for students to excel both academically and artistically beyond the traditional classroom. This has also helped our efforts. Our entire assessment structure is based on portfolios and



exhibitions. Students are thus able to flex their artistic and scholarly muscles in a variety of ways unrelated to honors credit. This plays an important role in alleviating the pressure that we might otherwise be under to track our students into homogeneous classrooms.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

We have not solved all the problems of creating successful heterogeneous classrooms. Sometimes when the gap between students with skills and students without skills is very large, the best solution is to divide the class into homogeneous groups. At other times, we need to bring more adults into the classroom to provide more direct teaching of small groups. Our Learning Center gives some of our most needy students the opportunity to receive focused attention and support. Our open honors program provides challenges for a wide array of students—those with strong skills and even, at times, those with special needs.

Still, this isn't enough. We need to continue to push ourselves as teachers to think about how to differentiate instruction—or how to provide multiple entry points for students and diverse ways for students to demonstrate mastery of skills. This requires an extraordinary effort on the part of teachers and lots of time to plan and reflect. We don't have nearly enough time for any of this. Nevertheless, given our commitment to our schoolwide goals, we decided that we would use our faculty meetings this year to embark on an ambitious initiative to provide all teachers with more skills in differentiating instruction, and the opportunity for teachers to pursue special education certification. This decision was a natural extension of BAA's four-year schoolwide work on literacy. For four years, each BAA staff member has taught an intensive writing and reading course. We have worked together to plan that course, and we have worked together to seek the professional development we need to implement it.

Just as we all worked to learn and implement the best practices of literacy instruction, we now need to further our understanding of best practices in special education. We hired a local scholar, Evangeline Stefanakis, with expertise in bilingual and special education, as well as a wealth of teaching experience, and had her teach us about differentiated instruction.

As we began our work together, we asked the following questions:

- What are the biological, socio-cultural, linguistic, developmental, and educational factors associated with learning disabilities?
- What are some of the challenges of linking assessment and instruction for students who are bilingual or have learning disabilities?
- What accommodations are needed to support these learners to build on their abilities, not their disabilities?

We used our own students as case studies and supplemented our classroom knowledge with readings and videos that Professor Van, as we came to call her, provided us. We also paired with a local full-inclusion elementary school, the Mary Lyon School, to provide both faculties with another kind of opportunity to integrate and assimilate new professional skills and knowledge.

At the outset of this course we did not plan to become a full-inclusion school, but it is now clear that this is the direction to which we are all committed. It is one thing to just talk about how regular education teachers provide accommodations and adaptations for students. It is another thing altogether to learn how to really do it in your classroom.

The program we designed with Professor Van and Mary Nash, the principal of the Mary Lyon School, is informed by the Massachusetts Department of Education Special Education Standards. All fifty teachers, and approximately ten interns, received professional development and coaching focused on:

- Understanding developmental processes and what affects them
- Understanding formal and informal assessment procedures
- Preparing and using the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Supporting students' communication skills (expressive and receptive language)
- Supporting students' functional living competence
- Supporting students' performance in literacy (reading)
- Supporting students' performance in math
- Supporting students' social competence
- Setting up a positive learning environment

Mirroring our open honors program for students, we provided opportunities for an intensive schedule for teachers wishing to pursue certification in special education.

This smaller group—fourteen teachers—receives additional professional development, organized in three Saturday trainings. These sessions focus on the history of special education, legal issues, assessments, literacy interventions, and math instruction for students with special needs. The small group will receive additional support and coaching to become lead teachers for special education curricula and pedagogy at BAA. They will complete a two-day residency at the Mary Lyons School and will work on the BAA model of full inclusion.

As we evaluate our professional development program, we discover, as with all good initiatives, that we have more questions than answers. Our conversations continually focus on how to meet the needs of our most academically unprepared students as well as those in the middle. We want each student to feel special and





cared for. Sometimes we feel that we are not doing enough. But when we take time to celebrate our work (something that schools often neglect) we realize that we are making progress.

In light of our policy of admitting students without regard to previous academic performance, the achievements of our first two graduating classes are truly spectacular: more than 90 percent of them have gone on to two- and four-year colleges or professional training. More important, as our students go forward to college, conservatory, or professional jobs, we believe that our Habits of the Graduate are in their minds, hearts, and souls. They know what it means to be inventive, to refine your work again and again, and to connect what you know to other experiences. And they know what it means to own your work and your ideas.

Our graduates are prepared to take their place in the world. They will not be able to change everything that needs to change, or to solve every problem. But they will make the world a more just and caring place. They have come to understand and empathize with difference. They know that art has the power to break down walls and to nurture the fragile and precious seeds of peace. For me, more than anything else, that defines a truly democratic school.

*Visit the Boston Arts Academy web site, <http://artsacad.boston.k12.ma.us>, for detailed information about the school's arts and academic programs. On the site, you can find the BAA Community Handbook, mentioned in this article, which contains descriptions of the open honors program, a comprehensive list of community standards referred to by the school's Shared Values, descriptions of the school's assessment structure, and much more. The direct link to the BAA Community Handbook is <http://artsacad.boston.k12.ma.us/documents/Handbook02-03.pdf>*

## STUDENTS FROM LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL SPEAK OUT ABOUT EQUITY: ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEW I

Stewart Jones, Rachel Russell, T.J. Estandian, Yaffa Katz-Lewis, and Peter Lauterborn, five seniors from San Francisco's Leadership High School, discussed their views on educational equity with *Horace* editor Jill Davidson. A 400-student public charter school founded in 1997, Leadership High School attracts students from across the city. To learn more about the school, visit [www.leadershiphigh.org](http://www.leadershiphigh.org).

*Horace:* First of all, tell me what you think equity and inequity mean.

*Yaffa Katz-Lewis:* I think about equity as trying to use leadership for equality, and use it to make things equal among other people and situations that you're in.

*Peter Lauterborn:* There are a lot of people, especially in the Bay Area because we're so laid back, who say everyone's equal. But the truth is that we're not and it has nothing to do with race or gender or any of that. On an individual basis, people have different needs, so in order to encourage equity is to have no barriers that would hinder anyone's ability to try to get knowledge.

*T.J. Estandian:* I would sum it up as people accepting each other for who they are, regardless of their socioeconomic status, the school they go to, or where they live. People form first impressions based on where you're from or what you look like. Equity is the exact opposite of that.

*Rachel Russell:* I believe that inequity is everywhere. Since we're applying to college, we see a lot of inequity. Socioeconomics are not always equal and people can't pay for college. I'm one of them—I can't pay for the school that I want to go to. If you're trying to get into the best high school, some people can't afford private schools, and so they have to go a bad public school, a place where there aren't opportunities.

*Horace:* What do you think are the most significant barriers to academic success?

*Stewart Jones:* I think it's lack of resources for some students in certain middle schools. Some middle schools don't provide you with what you need next. My middle school just mentioned names of high schools, no details, so we had to do our own research. They left it up to us.

*Yaffa Katz-Lewis:* I went to private middle school and they looked down on public high schools. When they found out I was going to go to a charter public school, they looked down on that. They wanted us to stick with the private schools, and that sets up a barrier—it shows how people want you to think that private schools are better than public schools and people think that if you came from where there's money, you should go to where there's money.

*T.J. Estandian:* The same goes for the high school to college transition. I have friends who go to private high schools and their schools are only pitching expensive private colleges. For them, junior colleges or state universities aren't even an option. It sort of scares me to think about that because they could be missing out on a whole world that could be perfect for them.

*Peter Lauterborn:* I also think that in high schools, there's a problem with curriculum. If you're not training people to find out what's important to them, when you're not letting people find out what the information means to them, then you're taking away equity.

*Horace:* And what's most important for success: having a personal connection to school, really being able to put yourself into your schoolwork, versus a certain level of performance on tests?

*T.J. Estandian:* Our admission to college is based on test scores and grades, and the grades don't tell the whole story. There are different home circumstances, for example. Some of the schools do worry about what's going on in your head, the schools that ask for personal statements, but otherwise you're pretty much like a number attached to transcripts. If everything was based on who you are and how much you know, how smart you are in and out of school, the whole system would be totally different. You wouldn't have to be so stressed out about the test scores but be able to look and reflect on how much you're learning, how you learned it, how you got through it.

*Rachel Russell:* I am not a good tester, so I have to work extra hard with my grades so I can make up for my test scores. I want to go to college and I know it's like T.J. said, I am just a number with grades and test scores attached, so I have to work harder to get to where I want to go. Sometimes that's not fair, compared to people who go to other schools where they have opportunities to get test prep and help with their grades.

*Horace:* What happens here, at Leadership High School? What allows you to do your best? What seems like a barrier to your success?

*T.J. Estandian:* Our School Wide Outcomes, which are communication, social responsibility, personal responsibility, and critical thinking, have allowed us to do our best academically. Because you're graded on those four outcomes, to do your best on assignments you have to raise the bar on all four. For me, it's helped out a lot, no matter how much I complain about it.

*Yaffa Katz-Lewis:* There's academic success and then there's personal success. To academically succeed, you have to get into the teacher's head, but to personally succeed you have to feel passionate about what you're doing and do it from your view and from your own insights. There are a lot of assignments where I succeed academically but not personally.

*Rachel Russell:* Because the school is so small, it really is a community. You have teachers who care about you and care about your success. For example, right now I'm not doing too well in English and my chemistry grade has also started to drop. But my chemistry teacher doesn't want me to drop one of my classes, so he's forcing me to go talk to my English teacher to see if I can get an extension. That's really nice—he doesn't have to go out of his way to help me like that. I know that at a lot of bigger schools, teachers don't care. But here, the school's so small, and you have a lot of help, especially in advisory.



## DEAR READERS

If you're a regular *Horace* reader, you'll notice that this space lacks a guest editor letter. Not that we don't have one. Pedro Noguera, professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who electrified the audience at the conclusion of the 2002 Fall Forum in his dialogue with Ted Sizer, has contributed thoughts on the kind of leaders we need and on the obstacles they face as they seek educational equity and social justice. We've featured his essay on page 26.

One such leader is Linda Nathan, Headmaster of Boston Arts Academy, who wrote this issue's feature article, "Creating Equity from the Ground Up." Describing Boston Arts Academy's ongoing efforts to create equity within a diverse student body, Nathan illustrates how all students can be challenged to pursue their passions—and the whole range of academic subjects—with "seriousness of purpose."

This issue contains another special section: two roundtable interviews. In the first, a group of five high school seniors discuss equity and bias, opportunities and barriers in our schools. Facing anxieties about college acceptance and college tuition, these students discuss the interplay of hard work and personal achievement within a system that they see as promoting various inequities. In the second roundtable, four Bay Area teacher-leaders discuss challenges they face as they work toward equity for all in their schools. They point out, particularly, the insidious role of low expectations—from teachers, communities, parents, and students themselves.

Every issue of *Horace* depends upon collaborative effort; in this issue, we've allocated more space to the first-person writing and voices of educators and students. Many thanks to Linda Nathan, Pedro Noguera, and the students—Leadership High School's Stewart Jones, Rachel Russell, T.J. Estandian, Yaffa Katz-Lewis, and Peter Lauterborn—and teachers—Michelle Lau, David Montes de Oca, Monica Vaughan, and Michele Dawson—who commented so thoughtfully on their own paths toward achieving educational equity.

Finally, a note about this year's final issue of *Horace*, which will focus on the dynamic connections between schools and families and their effects on academic and personal success. You can expect to see that issue in early June, 2003—later than usual, due to the dynamic connection between my own work and family, as I am expecting my second child this spring. As I get to know our new addition, I welcome ideas for the year's finale along with commentary on past *Horace* issues—email me at [jdavidson@essentialschools.org](mailto:jdavidson@essentialschools.org).

JILL DAVIDSON  
*Horace* Editor



*Stewart Jones:* As much as we want to think there are barriers at our school, an individual who thinks that there are barriers at our school is putting barriers on himself. There are so many other ways you can succeed at our school. Some people think that we don't have enough language classes because we only have Spanish—to them I say, "Well, go up to City College and take French." This school is very lenient in letting you take classes somewhere else, so if they give you an opportunity, take advantage of it.

*Horace:* How much should colleges take creating balance among a class of people into account versus just looking at each of you as an individual? What should the colleges do to ensure equity?

*Peter Lauterborn:* The best argument I have heard is that colleges are essentially research centers and if you're in a class like a civics class, you're going to learn a lot more if you have kids from everywhere instead of having fifteen kids from San Francisco private schools. Speaking to someone face to face is the best way to learn.

*Stewart Jones:* You do learn more when you have a variety of minds working together—you're able to see both sides of an argument.

*Rachel Russell:* I think there should be equal opportunity, equal availability. You should only be accepted if you deserve the opportunity. Otherwise it's not fair to anyone else. A lot of people aren't getting in because they don't have the opportunity, they don't have people to help them, or money for SAT classes, or money to take the SATs. I think it all has to do with money.

*Yaffa Katz-Lewis:* I agree totally. A lot of the colleges don't know who you are, they don't know who your family is. They just know what's on the paper, what's on the tests, and what's in the bank. For a lot of bigger universities, it's about how much you'll donate as an alumni or how much you'll pay now. We want scholarships so people can afford it—so the ones who are motivated, who could be the next Einstein, can go as opposed to those who can be there because they happen to have the money or their parents went there.

*Peter Lauterborn:* The whole concept of affirmative action is reactionary to the problem that there aren't good high schools. Besides charter and alternative schools in the public system, there are maybe two schools I'd consider going to. And it shouldn't have to be that way. It should be that you can walk into a public school and have equity, an equal chance of going to whatever school you want and get an education that will serve you well. But most schools are awful. When I was in middle school, I qualified for the honors program, but chose not to go because the regular teachers were really rigorous and I was learning a lot. But because I didn't take honors classes, I didn't have the chance to get into Lowell. That one decision to have those teachers changed it all.

*Yaffa Katz-Lewis:* The next step in school sees where you came from—they don't see who you are. They see that you went to a public school or a private school. If they have two people, they say, well you went to the better school, you probably have the better education, and that's who gets in, and that's how it goes.

## EDUCATORS TALK ABOUT LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY: ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEW II

*Horace* editor Jill Davidson met with four Bay Area educators—Michelle Lau, math teacher at Fremont's Irvington High School, David Montes de Oca, educational strategist at Oakland's Urban Promise Academy, Monica Vaughan, teacher-leader at Oakland's Street Academy, and Michele Dawson, technology coordinator at Daly City's Jefferson Elementary School District—for a roundtable discussion on leading for equity. All four are current or recent students in LEAD, the Leading for Equity, Achievement, and Democracy Tier I Administrative Credential Program, a joint initiative of the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools and the Department of Educational Leadership at California State University at Hayward. More information about LEAD is available at [http://www.bayces.org/school/tier\\_one/](http://www.bayces.org/school/tier_one/).

*Horace:* Let's talk first about what the term "achievement gap" means to you and your school.

*Monica Vaughan, Street Academy:* We have a student body of low income African American and Latinos, mostly. Students come into my English class who have never read an entire novel or written an essay. We have ninth graders who do not know multiplication. But everyone is programmed into college preparatory classes. We do not separate students out with the exception of some enrichment classes after school which are aimed primarily at people who are needing extra skills work. The achievement gap is obviously reflected in the measurement of what they know through their testing. I see the low skills but I also see what the strengths are, which are not things that are measured. So even though I recognize that there is a real gap in terms of what they are achieving skills-wise, I also know that they have a lot of strengths, but there's not a concrete fill-in-a-bubble-test to demonstrate those achievements.

*David Montes de Oca, Urban Promise Academy:* I don't see us using that specific term, achievement gap. Our concerns relate more to expectations—it feels like the gap exists around if folks are expecting that the kids can succeed at high levels. This includes situations such as families who continue to feel the priorities for their students rest, understandably, in areas like safety. There comes a point, then, when attention needs to be turned to the classroom. We want to move our families into being more critical—just because the campus is clean says nothing about whether or not the kids are learning. We invite parents to develop their critical skills and help us to view parent involvement beyond just seeing them at school. Typically, I'll know parents are involved if I see them here. But the data show that the most effective parent involvement is how much are they engaging with their child about school, wherever that happens.

*Michelle Lau, Irvington High School:* I went from a small autonomous school [last year, Lau worked at Silicon Valley Essential High School, which closed at the start of the 2002–2003 academic year] to a very traditional school. Last year when I taught, all of the students were in the same math course, and so I taught them essentially the same things. Now I teach both honors and remedial classes, so I see the perpetuation of inequity. Where I find my place in terms of what I can do for this comprehensive high school is to get to know my colleagues so that, hopefully, in the near future, we can create a space and have some safe dialogue around equity. At this point, there isn't any. I think that what has been done is that they disaggregate the test scores and say, "Look, this group

of kids are not performing and this group is doing well—we have this gap.” But in terms of directly addressing some of the deep-down causes of inequity, the dialogue isn’t quite happening with the staff.

*Horace:* Let’s talk about specific strategies your school uses to try to address equity issues.

*Monica Vaughan:* The most important thing that we do is that each of our teachers is a counselor for twenty students through their duration at Street Academy. Teachers are responsible for scheduling the student, keeping track of their records, working with the family, tutoring, dealing with any sort of punitive things that need to happen, helping them get into college. And we have two staff meetings weekly that last for two hours. It’s interesting to hear Michelle Lau talk about being at a huge school and trying to get to the point where you know other staff well enough to engage them. That’s so much a part of what happens constantly at our school. The most important thing that we do is we deal with these achievement gap issues openly as a group. But we don’t just look at it as an achievement gap. We’re dealing very openly with the fact that there’s an economic gap, and a health care cap, and an education gap. Even though we’re measured on our academic outcomes, sole focus on academics is not enough. We deal with our students more wholly. A lot of times that means not saying, “This kid needs reading intervention,” but rather, “This family needs legal resources.” That is why the student is not coming to school, that is why the assignments weren’t turned in, and that is why, when she looked at the standardized test questions, she had no idea. A lot of our students can look at the world with such a keen sense of justice. They’re not fooled into thinking, “Oh, I need reading intervention because I’m a bad student.” They know what is unfair. I have administered tests where I have seen my kids spell out F\*\*\* YOU in the bubbles, and I know they could do well on the test. But when you have such anger at the system that is testing you, it gets complicated. It becomes very important to us to have those open dialogues with the students, not to hide it and encourage them all to do great on the tests. You have to really open it up and look at the history of testing in our country, what the biases have been, and how they have been used negatively. Then you look at why you would want to do well on these tests.

*Michelle Dawson, Jefferson Elementary School District:* And it has to do with how you structure a school and build a community where there’s safety in having those conversations. Starting small structures with teams and houses really allows for those conversations to happen, and so does asking essential questions such as, “What is social justice?” Students come to their own answers and give evidence of what is social justice, what does it look like, where do we see it? We want to do well because we feel as a community that we value education and aim to do well. Those structures exist help students perform better academically.

*David Montes de Oca:* Important strategies for us include our life skills class, our leadership class, and our morning advisory. We have a gender-based advisory on Friday, and a community meeting on Friday afternoon to develop some unity before we head off for our weekends. And we have a conflict resolution program. We have made a school where kids feel safe stating their needs. What we want to do next is help them state their needs when they don’t understand what’s happening in the classroom. A lot of times they feel safe in saying, “I really felt like I was being put down by that kid when we were walking to lunch,” but often, they won’t raise a hand to say that they didn’t get the problem on the board.

*Michelle Lau:* Last year when we started our school, one of our priorities was to know our students well. So we met with families and created a much more meaningful context.

We treat school as separate from family life. The family visits challenged me to put the two together. It was powerful to see the range of homes students came from, too.

*Monica Vaughan:* Often, I encounter students who feel that they have been treated as though they weren't expected to go to college—by people at school. For example, they encounter the assumption that they're Latina, so they're probably going to get pregnant and drop out and have lots of babies anyway, so as they're well behaved, it's fine. But these students wanted to graduate and go on to college. I have encountered a lot of parents who have been treated with the assumption that they don't care about their children's education, that they aren't going to be involved, or that they wouldn't be responsive to a member of the school community. I think I've encountered that a lot more than the opposite.

*David Montes de Oca:* We talk with parents about who their child is now and what their goals are for their children a year from now. We try to lighten it, and note that they've probably never been asked that question before—we say, "We know that this is awkward and may take a moment because probably no one has ever asked you to do this before." It helps us all tremendously to have those kinds of questions surfaced. (For more on this process with parents, please see "The Ideas of the Body: Parents and Teachers Create Urban Promise Academy," *Horace* 18.4, Summer 2002.)

*Horace:* As school leaders, when you hire new teachers, what do you look for? Is it most important that teachers "match" their students ethnically, or do you look for a certain attitude without regard to race and other factors?

*David Montes de Oca:* It would be so much easier to say, "Hey, you're going to be great with them! Look at you, you match." Unfortunately, that hasn't been the case. If you're playing a role in who's coming on board, it's so important to have a critical way of looking at how this person defines equity for himself or herself.

*Monica Vaughan:* I agree with David that it's the person, and just being the same ethnicity or the same gender doesn't equal identifying with or being successful with students. But while being African American doesn't make you successful with African American students, I do think if you have an African American population and you don't have African Americans represented on the staff, that's a problem. I think that all students should see themselves reflected in the staff in terms of gender and race and also experience people who are not the same.

*Michelle Lau:* Last year when we started the charter school, our target population was Latino population in Mountain View, and it was difficult to find teachers who reflected that background. So we sent our middle-aged, white, female educators to recruit Latino students, and that wasn't effective. At the same time, I look at teachers who are effective with our kids even though they aren't of the same background. They have the desire to identify with kids and not say, "I know you," but rather, "I want to learn more about you."

*Michele Dawson:* There's a commonality when you have teachers of the same ethnic background. Students say, "They're like me," and that brings down a lot of walls. Unfortunately, that's where we are in society right now, where the walls are up and it's a lot easier for an African American student to trust an African American adult and not feel oppressed.

*David Montes de Oca:* It is incredibly empowering for kids to see at school someone who is familiar to them, who can wield the kind of power that they desperately aspire to have.

*Horace:* I wish we had more time! Thank you all so much.



## WHERE TO GO FOR MORE

*Resources for learning more about leadership for equity*

### TOLERANCE.ORG

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, [Tolerance.org](http://Tolerance.org) features extensive civil rights-related resources for teachers, parents, teens, and younger children. The teachers' area reflects the work of the Teaching Tolerance project, known outside the web for *Teaching Tolerance* magazine, and includes information about grant programs for student projects focused on equity, a wide range of anti-bias curricula, an online educators' discussion area, professional development material, and more. The parents' section includes book recommendations and essays on how to talk with kids about image and acceptance. The teen area offers opportunities to get published on the [Tolerance.org](http://Tolerance.org) site, among other features. The section for younger children, Planet Tolerance, offers stories, a guide to the Civil Rights Memorial and milestone civil rights events, and more that—while perhaps not well suited to independent exploration by young children—would make excellent elements in a larger civil rights curriculum.

website: [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

telephone: 334/956-8200

mailing address: Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104

### BAY AREA COALITION OF EQUITABLE SCHOOLS (BAYCES)

Dedicated to creating a network of small, equitable schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, BayCES's focus on equity makes it a great resource for schools anywhere that are working toward social justice. A section of its website, "What is an Equitable School?" is particularly relevant and inspiring, outlining lessons learned about and visions of transformational education, student achievement, and leadership for equity. The rest of the website describes various aspects of small, equitable, autonomous schools—their classrooms, their community connections, their leaders—and provides specifics about BayCES's work, affiliated schools, and programs, including its annual Small Schools Conference (this year, March 14–15, 2003 in Oakland, CA—see the BayCES website for more details).

website: [www.bayces.org](http://www.bayces.org)

telephone: 510.208.0160

fax: 510.208.1979

mailing address: 1720 Broadway Ave., 4th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612

### THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The Civil Rights Project states its mission as helping to "renew the civil rights movement by bridging the worlds of ideas and action, and by becoming a preeminent source of intellectual capital and a forum for building consensus within that movement." The website focuses extensively on education-related issues, sponsoring conferences and other gathering, amassing news items relevant to equity work in education, issuing civil rights alerts (a recent example: "What to Watch for in No Child Left Behind Act of 2001") and studies (such as "A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream?"). The site's resources section maps useful paths to related organizations' work. By identifying, analyzing, and suggesting solutions to today's education-related social justice obstacles, the Civil Rights Project offers great support to schools and communities that are striving toward equity for all.

website: [www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)

telephone: 617/496-6367

fax: 617/495-5210

email: [crp@harvard.edu](mailto:crp@harvard.edu)

mailing address: 124 Mt. Auburn Street, Suite 400 South, Cambridge, MA 02138

## THE JOURNAL OF THE ANNENBERG CHALLENGE

### —"CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: HOW SCHOOLS ARE MAKING IT HAPPEN"

The Annenberg Institute's Challenge Journal documented the work of the Anneberg Challenge, a ten-year, \$500 million effort to improve urban, rural, and arts education. This particular issue, Winter 2001-2, focuses on the achievement gap—in this context, the differences in academic achievement between white, economically stable students and economically challenged students of color. Articles detail the dilemmas facing particular schools and describe the solutions that seem to be providing the best answers. "The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations," a look at the role of well-intended but damaging diminished expectations for some groups of students, is particularly insightful and useful.

website: [www.annenberginstitute.org/mediacenter/gap\\_cj.html](http://www.annenberginstitute.org/mediacenter/gap_cj.html)

telephone: 401/863-3833

fax: 401/863-1290

mailing address: Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University, Box 1985, Providence, RI 02912

## EQUITY ASSISTANCE CENTERS

This umbrella website provides links to the ten regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This website's main function is to link to the ten centers, each of which provides invaluable regional guides to equity resources, professional development, initiative information and more. Each regional Equity Assistance Center has a website; see the Contacts section for those links.

website: [www.edgateway.net/pub/docs/eacn/home.html](http://www.edgateway.net/pub/docs/eacn/home.html)

## THE EDUCATION TRUST

Primarily an advocacy organization, the Education Trust works to defend the rights of all to a high-quality education, with a particular focus on research on and data dissemination about achievement gaps among students. The Ed Watch Data section offers National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data clearly and powerfully, allowing users to create their own queries and comparisons. Among other projects, the Education Trust also issues publications, hosts an annual Closing the Gap conference (this year, November 6-8, 2003 in Washington, DC—see the Education Trust site for more information), and organizes more than forty K-16 Councils, which "bring together the leaders of local schools, colleges, businesses and community to work to raise the academic achievement of all children at all levels." The Education Trust also has a West Coast office based in Oakland, CA—see its website for Education Trust West contact information.

website: <http://www.edtrust.org>

telephone: 202/293-1217

fax: 202/293-2605

mailing address: 1725 K St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006

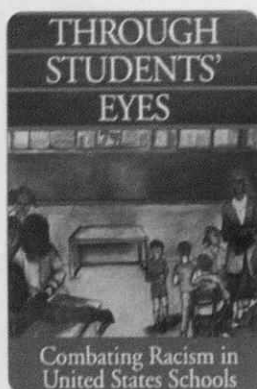
## COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS: ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS AND OUTCOMES

CES National has collected a range of resources that elucidate various aspects of equity in education. Particularly useful is *Horace* Volume 14, #3, from January 1998, which describes the development and examples of the tenth common principle, the need for democracy and equity.

website: [http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/114](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/114)

## THROUGH STUDENT'S EYES: COMBATING RACISM IN UNITED STATES SCHOOLS

by Karen B. McLean Donaldson (Praeger Publishers, 184 pages, \$19.95) reviewed by Stephanie Dahlquist



As an African American parent, grandparent, woman, and educator I strongly believe in the need for multicultural education. I am delighted to have discovered *Through Students' Eyes*, which addresses how power, white privilege, institutionalized racism, individual racism, the minority achievement gap, and equity impact student learning.

Donaldson's research examines how an antiracist curriculum can empower students. As an educator and researcher, Donaldson has documented the experiences and solutions shared by students and educators who participated in her High School and Middle School Arts Projects and her Teacher Project, developed to develop teachers' antiracist education awareness across the United States.

Fourteen students are profiled, eight of them African American. As a result of participating in the High School Project plan, one student stated, "I've learned that racism is indeed a problem but that people are willing to come together to deal with it and that races can come together and work to improve a situation and make things better because in our case we had Hispanics, whites and blacks, and everybody worked nicely together. I've learned that people are just people. The whole experience was a powerful thing and we can take a lot of positive steps."

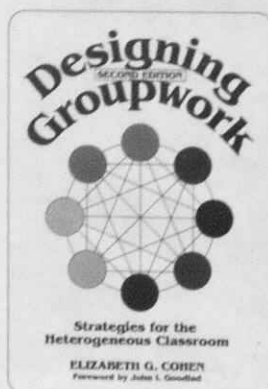
My own community is working at empowering students and educating teachers about cultural diversity and racism just as this student from Donaldson's study has suggested. Donaldson supports such local efforts, stating, "Since studies reveal that students of color perceive racism more from teachers than from their peers, a more in-depth study should be done. Both student and teacher attitudes should be researched to address why many white teachers fear addressing issues of racism. Such research could be helpful in designing professional development programs such as the Teacher Project. It is also necessary to further explore the connection among racism, student underachievement, and the high dropout rates of students of color."

Donaldson has given parents, teachers, administrators, and community members an inside look at what it means to be a student of color in our schools. I will continue to refer to *Through Students' Eyes* as I work with issues of multicultural education, equity in education, leadership for equity, and empowerment of students against racism.

Stephanie Dahlquist, MBA, MAT, former high school English teacher and Title I Parent Liaison at two elementary schools, is currently a community member of the Education That Is Multicultural Council for Carroll County Public Schools in Westminster, Maryland.

DESIGNING GROUPWORK:  
STRATEGIES FOR THE HETEROGENEOUS CLASSROOM (Second Edition)

by Elizabeth G. Cohen, (Teachers College Press, 202 pages, \$18.95) reviewed by Michelle Collay



Elizabeth Cohen believes that children should learn together—integrated in all ways, but especially across ability levels and styles. Cohen, professor of education and sociology at the School of Education at Stanford University, continues to study and teach about working for equity in heterogeneous classrooms and offers one of the most useful and well-researched books on the topic. First published in 1986, the second edition continues to be one of the best resources for teachers seeking to build communities of learners within their classroom walls.

Detracking students is a moral imperative for many, but there are few guides for the development of democratic learning communities. Cohen begins with a carefully crafted rationale for groupwork and moves through steps in the structures, processes, and challenges teachers and students face as they learn to work together. Cohen makes no assumptions that grouping students in heterogeneous classrooms is easy. She grounds her recommendations with bite-sized pieces of relevant theory while offering a full meal of ideas to create truly productive classrooms. Focusing on both intellectual and social goals, she outlines stages, roles, and problem-solving strategies that support student competence. *Designing Groupwork* has earned its place in the library of anyone seeking to create high achieving, equitable classrooms.

Michelle Collay is a School Coach at the Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools

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## MORE ABOUT THE SCHOOLS

*Information for learning more about the individual schools featured in this issue of Horace.*

### BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY

Public school serving grades 9-12  
174 Ipswich Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
telephone: 617/635-6470  
fax: 617/635-8854  
website: <http://artsacad.boston.k12.ma.us>

### IRVINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Public school serving grades 9-12  
41800 Blacow Road  
Fremont, California 94538  
telephone: 510/656-5711  
fax: 510/623-9805  
website: [www.irvington.org](http://www.irvington.org)

### LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Public school serving grades 9-12  
300 Seneca Avenue  
San Francisco, California 94112  
telephone: 415/841-8910  
website: [www.leadershiphigh.org](http://www.leadershiphigh.org)

### MARY LYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Public school serving grades K-5  
50 Beechcroft Street  
Brighton, Massachusetts 02135  
telephone: 617/635-7945  
fax: 617/635-7949  
website: <http://boston.k12.ma.us/lyon/>

### OAKLAND STREET ACADEMY

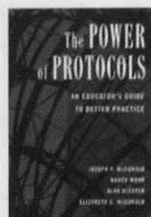
Public school serving grades 9-12  
417 29th Street  
Oakland, California 94609  
telephone: 510/879-3130

### URBAN PROMISE ACADEMY

Public school serving grades 6-8  
2825 International Blvd  
Oakland, California 94602  
telephone: 510/879-4299  
fax: 510/879-4297  
website: [www.urbanartsacademy.com](http://www.urbanartsacademy.com)

To learn more about all Coalition of Essential Schools affiliated schools and Regional Centers, visit the CES National website at [www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces\\_docs/schools/schools.html](http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/schools/schools.html)

## New Books from Teachers College Press



### The POWER of PROTOCOLS

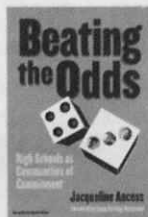
An Educator's Guide to Better Practice

JOSEPH P. McDONALD,  
NANCY MOHR, ALAN DICHTER, and  
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2003 144 pp. Pb, \$15.95 4361-5  
Cl, \$34 4362-3



### BEATING the ODDS

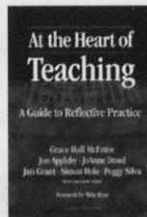
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SIMON HOLE, and PEGGY SILVA,  
with JOSEPH W. CHECK

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## THE LEADERS WE MUST HAVE

by Pedro Noguera



Educational leaders who have the knowledge, skills and courage to guide their schools toward greater equity in academic outcomes and in the treatment of students are rare, largely because equity is not a goal that has been pursued or treated as a priority in public education. Instead, schools in the United States have historically operated like sorting machines, practicing a form of educational triage not unlike hospital emergency rooms during times of war. Such practices have ensured that the most privileged students receive the best public education has to offer, while relegating the most needy and disadvantaged students to an inferior education.

Similar tendencies are present even in schools that have an impressive track record for producing academic excellence. A close look at the distribution of academic rewards and resources typically reveals glaring disparities in grades, test scores, drop-out and suspension rates that correlate in disturbing ways with the race and class backgrounds of students. Like hospitals that only succeed at serving healthy patients, such schools often display a remarkable inability to serve the needs of the students that need the most help, especially if they are poor or children of color.

There is a tremendous need for school leaders who are willing to risk making equity a priority, and the risks of such a course of action are real. Those who dare to reduce the degree and extent of tracking, or to open access to honors and advanced placement courses, or to distribute more challenging courses evenly among teachers run the risk of inciting politically powerful parents. Such parents, who believe that their children benefit from inequity, often pose in a formidable challenge to change. In many schools, it is far easier to maintain the unequal status quo and to continue allowing those who have the most to get the most than it is to work for social justice in education.

In addition to powerful parents, the practices used to assign teachers to courses can also serve as a significant obstacle to equity. In many schools it is common to assign the "best" teachers to teach the "best" students, while the weaker teachers or the newer ones are assigned to teach the students with the greatest needs. Such practices make it much more difficult to raise student achievement and also contribute to the inability of many schools to retain new teachers.

Educational leaders who understand the importance of ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn and who genuinely desire to advance equity must be able to do at least three things. First, they must be able to articulate a vision that makes it clear that academic excellence and equity need not be regarded as conflicting or competing goals. Second, they must work with teachers, parents and students to plan and devise strategies that allow these goals to be combined in ways that do not undermine the quality of education provided to students. Finally, they must be willing to support and encourage the development of a constituency that is willing work for greater equity, that will monitor the school's progress, and that will hold the school accountable to these goals.

Admittedly, this is a tall order. To have the credibility and wherewithal to lead for equity, one must have a strong sense of conviction and a genuine commitment to the values that underlie its pursuit. Yet these are the leaders we must have if schools are to become the just and caring places that our society needs for them to be.

*Pedro Noguera is currently the Judith K. Dimon Professor of Communities and Schools at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. His research focuses on the ways in which schools respond to social and economic forces within the urban environment.*

LEADERSHIP:  
LEADING FOR EQUITY  
HORACE VOLUME 19 #3

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*Cover: Miles Coiner, Boston Arts Academy adjunct faculty and retired Emerson College professor, works with three sophomore theater students.*

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## HORACE AND THE COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

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*Horace*, the quarterly journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), is published by CES National, located in Oakland, California. CES is a national network of schools and centers engaged in redesigning schools and teaching practices to create equitable, personalized, student centered, intellectually rich schools. Interested schools are invited to participate in this network by affiliating with CES National. More information about the schools in the network, the CES Common Principles, and affiliation is available on the CES National web site at [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org).

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### THE NEXT ISSUE

*Horace's* next issue, on community connections, focuses on the dynamic connections between schools and families and their effects on academic and personal success. If you would like to contribute questions, thoughts, or your own experiences, contact Jill Davidson at [jdavidson@essentialschools.org](mailto:jdavidson@essentialschools.org). And see our themes on the next page for a broad sense of what's coming up. We welcome book review suggestions, contributions, and ideas for future issues.

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## SCHOOL DESIGN



How do we design schools so that all students can learn to use their minds well?

Topics include: structures for space and time, teacher collaboration, and data collection and analysis.

## CLASSROOM PRACTICE



How do we bring Coalition ideas like less is more, teacher as coach, and demonstration of mastery to life in the classroom? Topics include: curriculum and instruction, assessment, and classroom culture.

### THE COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

## LEADERSHIP



What kinds of leadership are necessary to transform schools into more humane and intellectually rigorous environments? How can the change process be sustained? Topics include: governance, distributed leadership, and managing the change process.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



How can schools most powerfully engage the community as advocates and partners in the education of its students? Topics include: parental involvement, service learning and internships, and using community members as resources.



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## LEADERSHIP

### LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY

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CHARLES S. MOTT FOUNDATION  
& THE BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

## CREATING EQUITY FROM THE GROUND UP

by Linda Nathan  
Headmaster, Boston Arts Academy

*Boston Arts Academy is the city's first public high school for the visual and performing arts. The Arts Academy is committed to a rigorous academic and arts education for students who are eager to think creatively and independently, to question, and to take risks within a college preparatory program. As a pilot school within the Boston Public Schools, the Arts Academy is charged with being a laboratory of academic innovation and a beacon for arts education. (From the BAA Mission Statement, 1998)*

The work of creating an equitable, inclusive school from the ground up is exhausting, but the rewards are huge. Late one afternoon I was showing a visitor around our school. "There won't be much to see," I said apologetically, "because the school day is essentially over." I was wrong.

Every room we visited was bursting with activity. More than forty students were crammed into the computer lab. Some worked at the machines, others at tables with teachers, college tutors, or peer tutors. One student was helping another finish her math portfolio because both were late for concert chorus rehearsal. The director of the chorus understood—it was the last week of the term.

All the music practice rooms were filled—some with teachers working one-on-one with students, others with students practicing alone. In another room, auditions for the Culture Share and Talent Show were going on. Student government representatives and a faculty adviser were judging the entries.

In the large dance studio, seniors presented their choreography to a panel of dance critics, professional dancers, and dance teachers. Other students crowded the room, listening attentively, as their peers received professional feedback.

The theater rehearsal was just getting under way. Ms. Rodrigues was explaining that they would start after they had a chance to see the eleventh grade visual arts show, "Inferno." Robert Pinsky, the former U.S. Poet Laureate, was here with students from his creative writing class at Boston University for the "Inferno" opening. He was thrilled that his translation of Dante's *Inferno* had been the inspiration for our students' wood carvings.

The school was filled with purposeful activity. Students rose to challenges as teachers both pushed and supported them. The message in every classroom, studio, and exhibition space was "We adults are here for you, because you matter. We have set high standards for every one of you, because every one of you matters."

#### A DUAL COMMITMENT

The Boston Arts Academy (BAA) is one of the few arts schools in the United States that has a completely open academic admissions policy. That is, we admit students solely on the basis of an artistic audition or portfolio, without regard to their previous academic record. At the same time, we are committed both to preparing all our students to do college work and to maintaining heterogeneous classrooms, without tracking, in most subjects. To meet both of these commitments is an enormous challenge.

Students audition for BAA in one of five areas: vocal or instrumental music, visual arts, dance, or theater. At these tryouts, we look for "the light behind their eyes"—evidence of a passion for their art. Clearly, this is difficult to judge in a thirteen-year-old, but our audition panels, made up of arts college admissions officers, community artists, and our own faculty, have been successful in selecting a student population that reflects the social, economic, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Boston.





Many students have little prior experience in or exposure to the arts before coming to BAA. Some may have participated in our Saturday music program sponsored by our partner, the Berklee College of Music; others may have had one art class in middle school or at a community center. But most of them come to our school with the "Fame" fantasy, thinking that dance education means hip-hop all day. (They soon learn that dance at BAA means ballet and modern classes every day, with small doses of hip-hop and jazz.)

Academically, we know nothing about our students before we admit them. Some went to strong middle schools. Others have never read a novel and were taught by substitutes all year. The range of preparation is vast, and the diversity of cultural and family backgrounds is equally broad. We celebrate this diversity. At the same time we must push ourselves to create a truly equitable school that meets the needs of all our learners.

#### COMMON GOALS

One way we have found to work together in this effort is to make sure that all of us, teachers, students, and families, are striving in the same direction. We named two central goals for the 2002–2003 school year:

- To practice, demonstrate, teach, and assess seriousness of purpose;
- To use differentiated instruction to support a heterogeneous group of students.

We develop our annual goals through a yearlong process of observation, reflection, and discussion. It culminates in a leadership team decision in late June about how to frame our goals for the upcoming year. The leadership team includes representatives from all parts of the community (student support, teachers, administration, parents, and students). This policy-making body has final authority to articulate the goals and then link our professional development to those goals. Teachers' midyear and end-of-year reflections are key factors in informing the entire school community about "where we are at." We attend closely to what teachers write in these reflections and to what students and parents are saying and experiencing. In some years, the school-wide goal has emphasized assessment in heterogeneous classes; in other years, the goal has focused more on teaching. Although the emphasis may differ from year to year, we maintain a steady focus on some aspect of teaching and learning in heterogeneous classes.

This year's first goal, seriousness of purpose, also evolved from a focus on shared values. Since the school opened in 1998, we have tried to articulate our community standards. Some of these have to do with sexual harassment or weapons or plagiarism—the usual stuff of school disciplinary codes. But unique values emerged in our own unique community. They speak to our core beliefs: the importance of working and learning together as a community and being passionate about the arts.

As with all authentic public documents, our shared values went through many iterations until they became something we were proud to post in all our classrooms and teach to our students. Like our Habits of the Graduate, our shared values help us focus on the attitudes that we want our students to graduate with. The focus on seriousness of purpose emerges naturally from our desire to inculcate and act on these shared values.

Last year's goal focused on accountability. How are we—students, staff, and families—accountable to our commitments? To deadlines? To the goals we set for ourselves? But that language seemed to limit our discussions to attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines. How could we teach about something that spoke to an attitude or a state of mind? For this year, we wanted a goal that helped us describe intangible qualities like passion, dedication, risk-taking, and commitment to practice. Seriousness of purpose was born from this struggle to combine accountability with passion.

As we began the 2002–2003 school year, we asked parents, community members, students, and staff to talk about these goals and give them meaning. Some thought the first goal was about the importance of being passionate about one's art; some named the need to practice one's craft outside of school hours. Students discussed the importance of a respectful environment that values all perspectives. Some even acknowledged that it means doing your homework on time.

## BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY SHARED VALUES

We are passionate about the arts.

We believe that ALL students should have the opportunity to learn, create, and achieve success through a rigorous academic and artistic education.

We contribute positively to building a successful, supportive, and inclusive school community.

We work and learn together as a healthy community.

We respect diversity.

We believe that each individual in our community has a responsibility for himself or herself, for others, and for our shared space.

We respect and adhere to the Community Standards (see the Boston Arts Academy Community Handbook for a list of Community Standards—<http://artsacad.boston.k12.ma.us/documents/Handbook02-03.pdf>).

## BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY HABITS OF THE GRADUATE

### INVENT

What makes this work inventive?

Do I take risks and push myself?

### CONNECT

Who is the audience and how does the work connect?

What is the context?

### REFINE

Have I conveyed my message?

What are the strengths and weaknesses?

### OWN

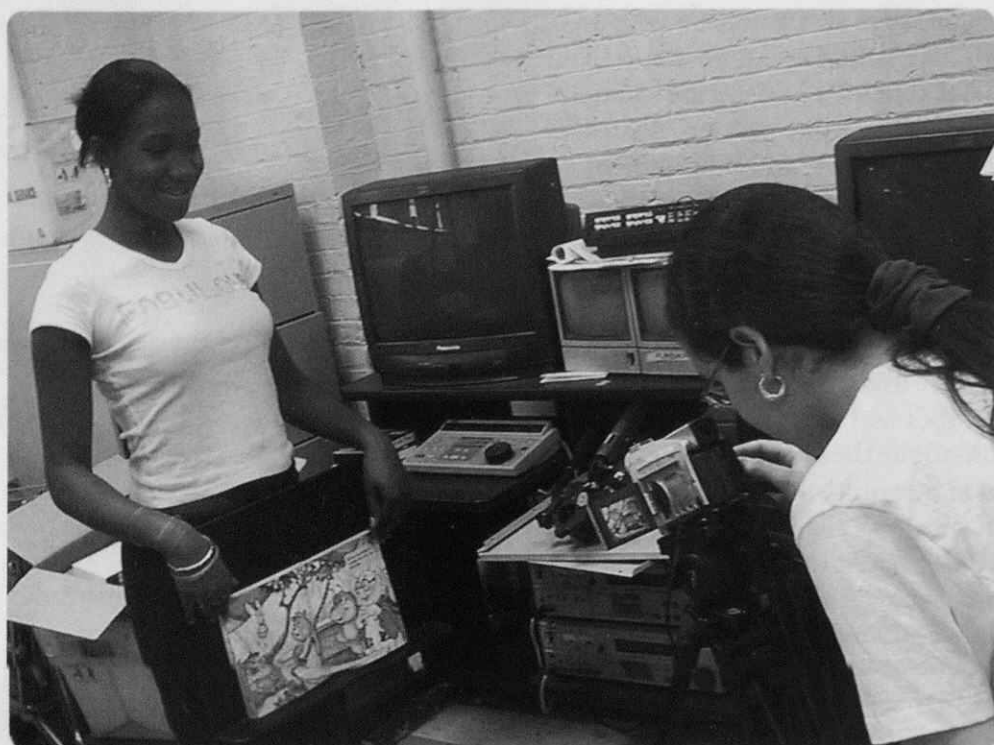
Am I proud of the work I am doing?

What do I need to be successful?

Still, we worried: would students make the connection that seriousness of purpose existed in the scholarly realm as well as within the arts? BAA features an open honors program, discussed in more detail below, which was developed to give students who needed extra challenge that opportunity, as well as to provide students with the chance to take risks and stretch themselves intellectually. Teachers wondered how many students would accept the open honors challenge.

Seriousness of purpose applies to parents as well. Our parent coordinator spoke about families reading the Community Handbook with care so that they really understand what is expected of students as well as the importance of regular communication with advisers and teachers. We have a very detailed handbook that is our bible. We review it at the beginning of the year. We ask parents to read it carefully and to ask us questions when they are confused, but often, in parent meetings, we realize that we still haven't found ways to ensure that parents are really digesting all the information we have laid out for them. On the most basic level, we want every parent to know who the student's adviser is and how to reach that person by e-mail or phone.

Seriousness of purpose should not be confused with lack of humor or joy. When you watch Bill T. Jones's dancers move, you see both joyfulness and seriousness of purpose. We want to see students, parents, and teachers focused on clear academic and artistic goals.



The language of our second goal, "To use differentiated instruction to support a heterogeneous group of students," had to be "unpacked" before we could talk about it. *Heterogeneous* means having many different kinds; *differentiated instruction* means teachers look for different entry points to help students grasp the material as well as different ways they can show mastery or understanding. But this second goal is not easy. It pushes teachers to think and plan differently. How do we challenge all students when they are starting from very different levels of background knowledge? In instrumental music, for example, some students are just beginning and others are advanced. When can all of them play together? When do they need to work separately and with different material? How do we fairly assess both student progress and outcomes? Must the outcome be the same for all students?

In academic classes, all students usually must master the same content, often at the same rate. Given our experiences in arts classes, do we really believe that is good for kids? Our arts classes have helped us be less rigid in our understanding of how students learn. We feel freer in arts classrooms to speak about how students progress at different rates in dance or visual arts or theater. Can we honor different rates of learning, and practice differentiated instruction, in all our classrooms, especially at a time of intensified high-stakes standardized testing?

Mathematics offers a case in point. Perhaps math doesn't immediately call to mind the question of equity. In fact, however, race, class, and culture have a lot to do with who in our society gets to learn and even enjoy math—and progress in math has a lot to do with post-high school success. Last year, our ninth-grade Level 1 math students participated in a math fair in which they had to discuss math problems with peers and outside judges. Using the model of our one-day science fair, students set up their poster boards, laid out their written papers and other physical exhibits, and got ready to be questioned on their work. All the other math classes visited the fair and did a fabulous job of judging the projects and writing peer reviews. Each Level 1 student was judged by at least two external judges.

The students clearly explained the problems and connected them to other real-world situations. One student explained blue-chip stock trading and how working through this complex math problem would help him work on dense word problems. Another student worked out a rate, time, and distance problem through an innovative toy car demonstration. A third explained slope and "rise over run" more clearly than I have ever heard a fourteen-year-old do it. A fourth used data to show that state college tuition was cheaper than university tuition. Almost every student had made a strong, visually pleasing display. Students spoke well, answered difficult questions, and felt proud of their work. No one could be heard saying, "I can't do math," or "Math just isn't my thing." For one day, our classrooms and hallways rang with the joy and possibilities of mathematics.