

The Need for a Comprehensive Multi-Year Strategic Plan for Ending Racial and Ethnic Discrimination: A Focus on Schools

WILLIS D. HAWLEY*

In this Article, research is reviewed that provides the bases for a strategic plan for ending racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination while enhancing the academic learning opportunities for all students. Such a plan involves four types of actions: (1) creating and sustaining racially and ethnically heterogeneous schools and classrooms; (2) implementing curricula and instructional strategies that address the challenges and utilize the opportunities presented by diverse learning environments; (3) establishing and nurturing organizational capabilities and environments that promote the attainment of high academic standards and the development of positive intercultural dispositions and competencies; and (4) fostering leadership that values and relentlessly pursues comprehensive strategies to maximize the unique learning opportunities possible in racially and ethnically diverse schools. Without such actions, the prospect of significantly narrowing the achievement gap among students of different races and ethnicities is inherently limited. Moreover, learning in racially and ethnically diverse schools and classrooms offers exceptional opportunities for cognitive development and unique opportunities to develop the social and intercultural proficiencies that are increasingly essential to our individual and collective social, economic, and political welfare.

I. THE TASKS AHEAD

While progress has been made, racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination persist in the United States with damaging consequences for virtually everyone. There appears to be a sense of inevitability to this reality, a sense that we have done what we can and if we continue to enforce the laws involved, prejudice and discrimination will diminish. Thus, issues of race and ethnicity, aside from concerns about the achievement gap and interracial violence, command little attention in public discourse, much less in proposed public policies. But, waiting out the demise of prejudice and discrimination is waiting for a miracle. There is no chance that the need for actions to remedy the effects of prejudice and discrimination will dissipate in

* Professor Emeritus of Education and Public Affairs, University of Maryland, College Park. I would like to thank Janet Schofield, Jomills Braddock, and Jeff Milem for their assistance in developing this Article.

the next twenty-five years, as Justice O'Connor imagines will be the case for affirmative action,¹ without a comprehensive plan to achieve that goal.

To develop and implement such a plan, we will have to successfully undertake at least four types of tasks: (1) make effective use of the abundance of evidence to convince opinion leaders, if not the general public, that significant racial and ethnic discrimination persists; (2) develop convincing evidence that discrimination is harmful not only to its victims, but that it also reduces educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, undermines the economic welfare of individuals and the society, contributes to crime and social disorder, and negatively affects the quality of the nation's civic life; (3) show that action can be taken that will reduce prejudice and discrimination *and* that these steps will have positive consequences for more people than they disadvantage; and (4) formulate and implement specific strategic plans for reducing prejudice and discrimination in schools, post-secondary institutions, public and private workplaces, housing and community life, and law enforcement and prisons.

This brief Article addresses the fourth of these tasks and outlines the elements of a comprehensive plan for ending prejudice and discrimination through actions in our schools.²

II. A STRATEGIC PLAN TO END DISCRIMINATION THROUGH THE REFORM OF P-12 SCHOOLS: BEYOND REMEDYING INJUSTICE AND INEQUALITY

A. *The Importance of Realizing the Potential of Racial and Ethnic Integration in Schools*

While many of our schools are not racially and ethnically heterogeneous, thousands of schools have diverse student populations. Schools are the most important venues in which to develop the dispositions and competencies that will reduce prejudice and discrimination, and enrich the educational and life chances of all students. Despite the racial isolation of many schools, public schools are *the* institutions in which people of different races and ethnicities can interact most productively. Moreover, dispositions and competencies related to intergroup relations develop during an individual's school years in ways that tend to persist throughout the individual's life.

¹ See *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306, 343 (2003).

² This Article is based on a much longer book chapter by the author. Willis D. Hawley, *Designing Schools that Use Student Diversity to Enhance Learning for All Students*, in *LESSONS IN INTEGRATION: REALIZING THE PROMISE OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICA* (Gary Orfield & Erica Frankenberg eds., forthcoming 2006).

One cannot learn to be socially and culturally proficient from books or lectures; it is a capability that requires experiential learning that can best be experienced in racially and ethnically diverse schools. In addition to social and cultural proficiency, diverse schools provide opportunities for cognitive development not available in other schools. This justification for diverse schools is firmly grounded in research on learning in heterogeneous school and work groups.³ Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that the improvement of race and ethnic relations that is one outcome of improved social and cultural proficiency will provide incentives for students of color to pursue academic learning more aggressively and more effectively.

Other things being equal, schools that are diverse provide educational opportunities that other schools cannot offer. The most obvious is the opportunity to develop “social and cultural proficiency”—the ability to learn from and work effectively with people who are different from one’s self. The educational, social, and economic benefits to individuals and to society that are related to social and cultural proficiency are substantial and will become even more critical in the future. However, the exceptional contributions that racially and ethnically diverse schools can make to student learning and to social and economic progress are infrequently realized. What we need is a comprehensive plan for using the opportunities for quality education that schools with racially and ethnically diverse students offer.

B. *Core Elements of the Plan*

A strategic plan for ending racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination would encompass four types of actions: (1) create and sustain racially and ethnically heterogeneous schools and classrooms; (2) implement curricula and instructional strategies that address the challenges and utilize the opportunities presented by diverse learning environments; (3) establish and nurture organizational capabilities and environments that promote the attainment of high academic standards *and* the development of positive intercultural dispositions and competencies; and (4) foster leadership that values and relentlessly pursues comprehensive strategies to maximize the unique learning opportunities possible in racially and ethnically diverse schools.

1. *Creating and Sustaining Heterogeneous Schools and Classrooms*

Dispositions toward people who are racially, ethnically, and economically different from ourselves develop early in life and tend to be

³ *Id.*

sustained, if not deepened, over time.⁴ While admonishing students to be fair and unprejudiced is desirable, research is clear that prejudice and discrimination are much less likely among students who had the opportunity to learn with and from persons different from themselves.⁵ Positive interracial and interethnic relations involve the use of knowledge and skills that are best learned from experience and practice in racially and ethnically diverse settings. Thus, it is important to do what we can to create and sustain heterogeneous schools and classrooms in at least five ways.

First, design pupil assignment plans that maximize diversity. Despite the fact that the resegregation of the nation's schools is underway,⁶ there are many school districts in which pupil assignment plans (i.e., school boundaries) could be drawn to maximize diversity without violating prohibitions against race-based policies.

Second, begin in the early grades. Student dispositions develop early and differences in achievement are less marked in early grades than in later years.⁷ Class sizes tend to be smaller in the early grades, making it easier for teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies that facilitate crossracial interaction.

Third, create attractive choices (e.g., charter and magnet schools) for diverse schools that encourage parents to choose such schools for their children. It remains to be seen whether charter schools will promote integration; few assert that integration is their goal. Indeed, some charter schools emphasize ethnocentric curricula that probably discourage parents and students of diverse ethnicities from selecting such options.

Fourth, ensure diversity within schools. Even when school populations are diverse, students are often resegregated within schools and classrooms.⁸

⁴ Melanie Killen et al., *Morality in the Context of Intergroup Relationships*, in HANDBOOK OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT 155-83 (Melanie Killen & Judith G. Smetana eds., 2006).

⁵ Thomas F. Pettigrew, *Intergroup Contact: Theory, Research, and New Perspectives*, in HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION 770, 770-79 (James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks eds., 2d ed. 2004).

⁶ ERICA FRANKENBERG ET AL., *MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY WITH SEGREGATED SCHOOLS: ARE WE LOSING THE DREAM* 53-67 (2003).

⁷ Thomas D. Cook, *What Have Black Children Gained Academically from School Integration? Examination of the Meta-Analytic Evidence*, in SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND BLACK ACHIEVEMENTS 6, 32 (Thomas Cook et al. eds., 1984); Robert L. Crain, *Is Nineteen Really Better Than Ninety-Three*, in *id.* at 68, 85 (Thomas Cook et al. eds., 1984); NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL AND INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE, *IMPROVING INTERGROUP RELATIONS AMONG YOUTH: SUMMARY OF A RESEARCH WORKSHOP* 10-11 (2000).

⁸ JEANNIE OAKES, *KEEPING TRACK: HOW SCHOOLS STRUCTURE INEQUALITY* 65-67 (1985); Ronald H. Heck et al., *Tracks as Emergent Structures: A Network Analysis of*

Diversity within schools can be promoted by de-tracking the curriculum and using ability grouping selectively and flexibly.

De-tracking the curriculum is the first method of promoting diversity within schools. The assignment of students to “tracks” related to the level of achievement expected of students often has the consequence of segregating students by race and ethnicity and seldom has a positive impact on student achievement and educational attainment.⁹ De-tracking requires work with students (who may self-track), parents and professional development for teachers, but many schools operate effectively without tracking.¹⁰

Another method of promoting diversity within schools is to use ability grouping selectively and flexibly. Students obviously differ in what they know and are able to do. Good teachers take this into account and group students by ability for particular purposes. The test of the usefulness of ability grouping is whether the students involved are retained in the same level groups over time. There are many strategies for teaching diverse students that do not involve ability grouping.¹¹

Finally, maximize diversity in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, band, etc.) provide opportunities for students to interact across racial and ethnic lines that foster improved intercultural competencies and reduce stereotyping.¹² Maximizing these opportunities requires recruiting efforts, scheduling school transportation accordingly, and knowledgeable supervisors.

Student Differentiation in a High School, 110 AM. J. EDUC. 321, 344–45 (2004); Roslyn A. Mickelson, *Subverting Swann: First and Second Generation Segregation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*, 38 AM. EDUC. RES. J. 215, 215–52 (2001).

⁹ *Tracking and the Literacy Gap*, ENGLISH UPDATE (Nat’l Research Ctr. on English Learning & Achievement, Albany, N.Y.), Spring 2003, at 1, 1–3; Adam Gamoran et al., *An Organizational Analysis of the Effects of Ability Grouping*, 32 AM. EDUC. RES. J. 667, 700–07 (1995); Jeannie Oakes et al., *Detracking: The Social Construction of Ability, Cultural Politics, and Resistance to Reform*, 98 TCHRS. C. REC. 482, 482–510 (1997).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Carol C. Burris et al., *Math Acceleration for All*, EDUC. LEADERSHIP, Feb. 2004, at 68, 68–72; Hugh Mehan & Lea Hubbard, *Tracking Untracking: Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Educational Innovation*, RES. BRIEF #3 (Ctr. for Research on Educ., Diversity & Excellence, Univ. of Cal., Santa Cruz, Cal.), July 1999, at 1, 1–2.

¹¹ See *infra* Part II.B.2 (discussing instructional strategies for diverse learning environments).

¹² NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, *supra* note 7, at 17; Janet W. Schofield, *Fostering Positive Intergroup Relations in Schools*, in HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION 799, 803–04 (James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks eds., 2d ed. 2004); WILLIS D. HAWLEY ET AL., STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE DESEGREGATION: LESSONS FROM RESEARCH 131–33 (1983).

2. *Instructional Strategies and Curricula for Diverse Learning Environments*

Racial and ethnic diversity increase opportunities for learning, but they also put greater demands on teaching, because diverse students bring different understandings and motivations to school.¹³ Moreover, racial and ethnic diversity sometimes mean socioeconomic diversity and this, in turn, may mean that students are starting from different levels of past achievement. So, if students are to be successful in diverse schools and classrooms, they must have curricula that are both rigorous and adaptable and teachers who know how to use diversity to enhance the achievement of all students, regardless of their cultural background, economic condition, or current level of achievement. In diverse schools capable of maximizing the learning of all students, we would want to find the following:

- High expectations for all students. Teacher expectations are a significant influence on students' motivation to achieve and on the level of learning opportunities students have, even within the same curriculum.¹⁴
- Rigorous courses to which all students have access. Not all students will achieve at high levels, but they cannot do so when they do not have the opportunity to learn material that is challenging intellectually. Increasingly, schools have opened up Advanced Placement classes and otherwise tried to ensure that all students have access to rigorous curricula.
- Teaching that embodies current research on learning and is therefore student-centered and culturally responsive.¹⁵
- Instructional strategies that are particularly effective in diverse classrooms. Such strategies include cooperative learning,¹⁶

¹³ P. KAREN MURPHY & PATRICIA A. ALEXANDER, *UNDERSTANDING HOW STUDENTS LEARN: A GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS* 101–19 (2005).

¹⁴ Thomas L. Good, *Two Decades of Research on Teacher Expectations: Findings and Future Directions*, 38 J. OF TCHR. EDUC. 32, 32–47 (1987).

¹⁵ Patricia A. Alexander & P. Karen Murphy, *The Research Base for APA's Learner-Centered Psychological Principles*, in *HOW STUDENTS LEARN: REFORMING SCHOOLS THROUGH LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION* 25–60 (Nadine M. Lambert & Barbara L. McCombs eds., 1998); *COMM. ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING, HOW PEOPLE LEARN: BRAIN, MIND, EXPERIENCE, AND SCHOOL* 131–54 (John D. Bransford et al. eds., 2000).

reciprocal teaching,¹⁷ peer tutoring,¹⁸ differentiated instruction,¹⁹ and “complex instruction.”²⁰

- Multicultural curricula with experiential components. Teaching students about other cultures and their responsibilities for pro-social behavior can have modest effects on student dispositions. But, if students are to learn how to learn with and from students different from themselves, multicultural curricula need to involve students in interactions with students of different races and ethnicities.²¹

3. *Organizational Contexts That Support Learning in Diverse Schools: Beyond “Effective Schools”*

In addition to the general characteristics of effective schools—such as evidence-based collaborative decisionmaking and opportunities for teachers to engage in coherent, student-centered professional development²²—the organizational characteristics of racially and ethnically diverse schools should include the following:

- Policies and processes for fairly adjudicating school rules, perceived inequity and discrimination, and interpersonal conflicts. Conflict among students, and between students and educators, is inevitable and interracial conflict often is seen as more threatening

¹⁶ Robert Cooper & Robert E. Slavin, *Cooperative Learning: An Instructional Strategy to Improve Intergroup Relations*, in EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR IMPROVING INTERGROUP RELATIONS: THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE 55, 55–70 (Walter G. Stephan & W. Paul Vogt eds., 2004).

¹⁷ COMM. ON THE PREVENTION OF READING DIFFICULTIES IN YOUNG CHILDREN ET AL., PREVENTING READING DIFFICULTIES IN YOUNG CHILDREN 221–22 (Catherine E. Snow et al eds., 1998).

¹⁸ What Works Clearinghouse Current Topics, http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/topics/current_topics.html (last visited Jan. 19, 2006).

¹⁹ CAROL A. TOMLINSON, FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM: STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR RESPONSIVE TEACHING 36–55, 68–87 (2003).

²⁰ Elizabeth G. Cohen, *Producing Equal-Status Interaction Amidst Classroom Diversity*, in EDUCATION PROGRAMS, *supra* note 16, at 37–54.

²¹ Walter G. Stephan & Cookie W. Stephan, *Intergroup Relations in Multicultural Education Programs*, in HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION 782, 791–94 (James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks eds., 2d ed. 2004).

²² Cf. FRED M. NEWMANN & GARY G. WEHLAGE, SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING: A REPORT TO THE PUBLIC AND EDUCATORS 30–37 (1995); Kenneth Leithwood et al., *Leadership and Other Conditions Which Foster Organizational Learning in Schools*, in ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS 67, 67–90 (Kenneth Leithwood & Karen Seashore Lewis eds., 1998).

than intraracial conflict. How schools deal with conflict, and with perceptions of discrimination, sets the stage, in effect, for what students learn about learning with and from others.²³

- Instructional practices and curricula, such as those discussed above, that promote positive interactions among diverse students through student-centered, cooperative, equal-status activities.

- A diverse school staff that reinforces, by word and deed, the importance to individuals, the school, and the society of intercultural collaboration. While research on the importance of a diverse school staff to student learning about intercultural competence is slim, it seems reasonable to believe that seeing examples of such competence would be both instructive and motivating. There is no doubt that what teachers and school administrators say and do can influence student dispositions and behavior.²⁴

- School-wide activities that examine similarities and differences across and within racial and ethnic groups, including differences related to social class, gender, and language. Such activities should recognize the value of bicultural and multicultural identities of individuals in the school, allowing students to decide with what racial and ethnic groups they identify.²⁵

- Active engagement of families and community organizations with respect to issues and opportunities confronting the school, especially those relating to diversity. There is no question that students bring to school the values and skills they learn at home and in their communities. Active engagement of families and community

²³ Peter T. Coleman & Morton Deutsch, *The Mediation of Interethnic Conflict in Schools*, in TOWARD A COMMON DESTINY: IMPROVING RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN AMERICA 371, 371–97 (Willis D. Hawley & Anthony W. Jackson eds., 1995).

²⁴ Cookie White Stephan et al., *The Evaluation of Multicultural Education Programs: Techniques and a Meta-Analysis*, in EDUCATION PROGRAMS, *supra* note 16, at 227–42; John F. Dovidio et al., *From Intervention to Outcome: Processes in the Reduction of Bias*, in *id.* at 243–65.

²⁵ See Willis D. Hawley et al., *Strategies for Reducing Racial Prejudice: Essential Principals for Program Design*, in TOWARD A COMMON DESTINY, *supra* note 23, at 423, 430.

organizations in support of the lessons taught in school is invariably productive.²⁶

- Continuing professional development *focused on skill enhancement*, driven by continuing efforts to discover whether the goals of the school are being met for all students. Most professional development that teachers experience is not very effective, and this is probably even more true when it deals with how best to promote positive race and ethnic relations, because the latter tends to focus on attitudes and values, rather than behavior. Research on professional development suggests that, if it is to affect student learning, it must be focused on particular problems, on-going, evidence-based, and collaborative.²⁷
- School structures that increase teacher opportunities to know students personally—such as looping, blocking, small schools, and schools within schools. The extent to which students are engaged in school is related to their belief that teachers and administrators care about them and want them to succeed.²⁸ Caring and supportive environments affect student willingness to pursue both the academic and social norms and expectations of the school that promotes interracial and interethnic interaction and learning.

4. *Leadership for Learning in Diverse Schools*

Good schools are typically characterized by distributed leadership and shared responsibility for outcomes among the school staff. So, leadership is not just the job of the school principal. There is not much empirical research on the direct effects that leaders have on race and ethnic relations in their

²⁶ JOYCE L. EPSTEIN ET AL., *SCHOOL, FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: YOUR HANDBOOK FOR ACTION* 20–26 (2d ed. 2002); Schofield, *supra* note 12, at 807.

²⁷ Linda Valli & Willis D. Hawley, *Designing and Implementing School-Based Professional Development*, in *THE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS: EDUCATIONAL REFORM AS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT* 86, 87–91 (Willis D. Hawley & Donald L. Rollie eds., 2002); Michael Knapp, Teresa McCaffrey & Judy Swanson, *District Support for Professional Learning: What Research Says and Has Yet to Establish* (Apr. 18, 2003) (unpublished manuscript, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association).

²⁸ NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL & THE INST. OF MEDICINE, *ENGAGING SCHOOLS: FOSTERING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN* 14 (2004).

schools. However, scholars who have written about this topic²⁹ seem to agree that in order to make good use of the opportunities for learning that are particular to diverse schools, school leaders, in addition to manifesting good leadership behavior in general, need to:

- Articulate relevant values and goals and model appropriate behaviors.
- Facilitate teacher and student learning in ways that enhance intercultural proficiency.
- Organize instruction that maximizes the opportunities of students of *all* races and ethnicities to learn with and from one another.
- Monitor information about student achievement, student discipline, and the composition of both informal and formal learning settings in order to identify programs and practices that might need improvement.
- Respect and nurture students' self-defined cultural identities.
- Focus on shared values (e.g., justice and equality) and create or draw attention to groups and activities that cut across race and ethnic "lines."
- Make efforts to improve race and ethnic relations integral to the overall mission of the school to enhance student learning.
- Address issues of intergroup conflict immediately and openly.
- Continually sensitize the school community to the importance of positive intergroup interactions by rewarding positive, and discouraging negative, practices.

²⁹ See, e.g., Rosemary C. Henze, *Leading for Diversity: How School Leaders Achieve Racial and Ethnic Harmony*, RES. BRIEF #6 (Ctr. for Research on Educ., Diversity & Excellence, Univ. of Cal., Santa Cruz, Cal.), June 2002, at 1, 1–2; Julian Weissglass, *Reasons for Hope: You Can Challenge Educational Inequities*, PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP, Apr. 2003, at 24, 24–29; RANDALL B. LINDSEY ET AL., CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: A MANUAL FOR SCHOOL LEADERS 118–22 (2d ed. 1995); Hawley et al., *supra* note 25, at 427; JAMES A. BANKS ET AL., DIVERSITY WITHIN UNITY: ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY 10–12 (2001); Schofield, *supra* note 12, at 799–808.

III. CONCLUSION

One might look at the several elements of the plan just outlined to make schools places in which students maximize the benefits they can get from their precollegiate education by learning with and from persons of different races and ethnicities and conclude that the pressures that educators and students are under now are more than enough. Adding to the agenda of school reform in ways suggested will, no doubt, seem daunting.

But all of the actions recommended above will enhance the academic achievement of all students as well as enhance the willingness and ability of students to learn with and from others, in school and out. Without such actions, the prospect of significantly narrowing the achievement gap among students of different races and ethnicities is inherently limited. Moreover, learning in racially and ethnically diverse schools and classrooms offers exceptional opportunities for cognitive development and unique opportunities to develop the social and intercultural proficiencies that are increasingly essential to our individual and collective social, economic, and political welfare.

Only the most optimistic among us will agree with Justice O'Connor's surmise that racial and ethnic discrimination and its consequences will wither away over the next twenty-five years or so. But, it is certain that progress toward this worthy goal will be "deliberate" indeed, unless we decide to take concerted action in a number of public policy arenas to attack racial and ethnic discrimination with the fervor that its destructiveness to the quality of life in America warrants.

