

## **EXHIBIT # 2**

### **ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY**

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Much work remains to be done to understand and improve education for all children. In the spring, 2005, issue of *The Future of Children*, researchers noted that the fact that socioeconomic differences underlie racial differences in academic performance is supported by research showing minorities are at much greater risk for growing up in poverty. Regardless of race or ethnicity, children in poverty are more likely than non-poor children, to have developmental delays, drop out of high school, and have babies during their teen years. The consequences of growing up poor are far reaching. There is a “persistent connection between socioeconomic status-most commonly measured using education, occupation, and income-and childhood cognitive ability and achievement”...and these “disparities in achievement due to socioeconomic status increase with age.” (p. 75) Researchers also found that large scale interventions to increase parents’ socioeconomic resources have been few and unsuccessful, therefore the policies, programs, and interventions that directly target children’s aptitude or mental and physical health, (such as those in K-12 public schools and high quality early childhood education programs), are the most efficient way to address test score gaps.

In the book, “*A Framework for Understanding Poverty*,” Ruby Payne acknowledges that an education is the key to getting out of poverty. She recommends that people in schools, who want to better serve these students and raise their achievement, must understand the following: (pp. 61,62,65,107,108 )

\*Individuals leave poverty for one of four reasons: a goal or vision of something they want to have; a situation that is so painful that anything would be better; someone who “sponsors” them (i.e., an educator or spouse or mentor or role model who shows them a different way or convinces them that they could live differently); or a specific talent or ability that provides an opportunity for them.

\*Being in poverty is rarely about a lack of intelligence or ability.

\*Many people stay in poverty because they don’t know there is a choice- and if they do know that, have no one to teach them hidden rules or provide resources.

\*Schools are virtually the only places where students can learn the choices and rules of the middle class.

\*The focus of schools should be on learning.

\*Instruction in the cognitive strategies should be part of the curriculum.

\*Staff development should focus on a diagnostic approach rather than a programmatic approach.

\*Efforts to promote learning should pay greater heed to what is in the student’s head.

\*Insistence, expectations, and support need to be guiding decisions about instruction.

The author tells educators not to believe they must save those in poverty, but to offer support systems, role models, and opportunities to learn. She believes that schools are the greatest avenues for positively impacting the lives of individuals in poverty around the world.

Ensuring achievement for *all* students means rethinking and coordinating the actions of the entire school community so there is a comprehensive system for assuring success. When there are agreed upon beliefs and indicators of what “success looks like in our school” then it is easier to take action. In his book, *Failure Is Not An Option*, Alan Blankstein identifies essential components of a plan for all students’ success to include having an overarching strategy that encompasses the majority of learners; having systems for quickly identifying those in need; providing a continuum of support and targeted strategies for low achievers; and publishing results on closing the achievement gap. He **references research that shows a link between student success or failure and teachers’ and principals’ expectations for those students.** High performing schools realize that what they do really matters to the learning of each student and ALL children can perform at high levels.

However, gaining staff commitment (not just compliance) to take responsibility for the learning of *each child* and to succeed in reaching the low-achieving students is a lengthy process. When schools struggle with this commitment it can be because teachers may not believe that the school CAN succeed with ALL; or they feel personally incompetent to succeed with all students; or because they’ve experienced disappointments with past reforms or are new personnel with overwhelming demands on time, they think it’s just not WORTH the effort. Blankstein offers leaders ideas to connect individual teachers so they understand there’s a collaborative system-wide approach to work with all students, to understand and bring teachers’ underlying assumptions to the surface, to hear concerns and help staff overcome fears.

He talks about schools where banishment is popular. There are hundreds of suspensions each year, labeling, lines to the principal’s office, and referrals for special education or treatments for disorders like ADHD. When students don’t comply with school policies, they are punished. If the punishment does not work, then suspension or expulsion is next. Whether the student succeeds academically or grows from the experience is not a deep concern. “Although there may be a place for this cut-and-dried approach to student misbehavior, there have been many advances in the behavioral sciences. This new information has the power to lead us to different understandings of the complex interactions between students and teachers, students and the school environment, and students and their home. We now know that there is more that the school community can do to positively influence behaviors and the development of young people.” (p. 107)

Focusing on students’ learning improvement with prevention strategies that build relationships with students, systematically identify and build on students’ strengths, build in meeting times with students each day, have staff visible and available, and involve students in the decision-making process are effective for all students. Intervention strategies target struggling students who aren’t performing as expected. These strategies are graduated in intensity and the high intensity at the top only apply to a few.

It is essential that we carefully portray issues relating to any student’s performance to ensure that his or her successes or root causes of problems were accurately identified.

We can't rely on perceptions or opinions without accurate data collection and analysis. The author explains in detail the following points about examining data to make decisions, set goals, target interventions, support change, guide continuous improvement, and monitor progress. Data must be:

- Quantitative and qualitative
- Collected from multiple sources
- Relevant
- Timely
- Consistent over time
- Collected by users
- Disaggregated

Schools that are successful with ALL children do not give up. Creating a collective culture in which courageousness, persistence, and hope reside in the teachers, parents, principal, custodians, secretaries and ALL students is possible. Even though there is no formula for success there are some examples of best practice to learn from, some guiding principles, and tested research to help educators act on the best information possible. Mike Schmoker, in *On Common Ground*, said that we, (educators), just don't do what we already know how to do. The will to do, the human factor, is hard to engineer. Knowing ourselves as educators and why we are here – so that no children fail – is the foundation of continuous improvement. How we fulfill our individual and collective purpose is flexible and adaptable.

## REFERENCES

Blankstein, A. M. (2004). *Failure Is Not An Option*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R., (eds.), (2005). *On Common Ground*.  
Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Payne, R. K. (2005, revised edition). *A Framework For Understanding Poverty*.  
Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

The Future of Children, "School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps,"  
The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at  
Princeton University and The Brookings Institution: vol. 15, no.1, Spring, 2005,  
pp. 12, 71-83, 170-188.