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Multiple Case Studies of Teachers and Classrooms Successful in Supporting Academic Success of High Potential Low Economic Students of Color

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ABSTRACT

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Virginia conducted a 4-year qualitative case study in three very different school sites to explore how teachers contribute to the academic success of high potential, low economic students of color. Typically, the ethnicity, race, and/or economic status of these students would predict that they would not be high achievers in school. Yet in some classrooms, the pattern of underachievement is reversed and the students do succeed.

The three study sites were (a) a high school in a university town where the majority of students were Caucasian and affluent and a relative small minority of the students were African American and low economic, (b) a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school in which virtually all of the students were African American and of low economic status and located in a urban neighborhood of a heavily populated metropolitan area, and (c) a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school in which about half of the students were Hispanic, about a third African American, and the remaining were Caucasian students and second language learners of Asian or African descent. In all of the settings, researchers worked for approximately 2 years, using observation, interview, and document analysis to answer the research question.

Among factors influencing student success in the three schools were: (a) the nature of the school setting and its vision for low economic students of color, (b) the degree to which educators understood the academic and affective needs of low economic students of color, (c) the nature of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the classrooms, and (d) attitudes about the role of the teacher in supporting the success of low economic students of color.

Data suggest that to support the academic success of high potential students of color (a) teachers and schools do not have to be excellent in all factors to make a very positive difference in the achievement, (b) the definition of success established by a school or teacher will shape student opportunity for long-term academic success, (c) to be more effective in developing the capacity of high potential low economic students of color, schools will have to be more effective in developing the capacity of virtually all students

of color, (d) educators who are most effective in supporting the academic success of students of color support the students in learning to live comfortably in two worlds.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Increasing diversity is a given in most contemporary school settings (U. S. Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, 2002). In addition to diversity in students' rate of learning and facility in learning, ethnic, racial, and economic diversity play a key role in student success in many classrooms. A parallel reality in many educational settings is that low economic students of color tend to enter school at a disadvantage for learning and to continue the pilgrimage through school on a course that both predicts and confounds the disadvantage (College Board, 1999; Levine, 2005). It appears critical for both the welfare of these students and for the nation that is increasingly populated by those students and their families to understand roles that classroom teachers can play in supporting increased academic success for low economic students of color. The "achievement gap" is a term with virtually universal recognition in education—and broad spill-over into the public at large (College Board, 2000).

The status of low economic students of color in the field of gifted education interacts with and likely contributes to their status in general education. Under-representation of low economic students of color in programs for gifted learners and in advanced classes continues to be a challenge in search of a solution despite several decades of conversation, research, and sporadic to ameliorate the problem.

It is not an overstatement to suggest that until classrooms and schools are vastly more effective in identifying and fostering the development of the academic potential in low economic students of color, students remain at high risk both for school failure and for marginalized adult lives, schools will fall short of their fundamental responsibility to ensure access to equity of opportunity to all citizens (College Board, 2000), and programs for the gifted will continue to be associated with privilege and exclusivity (Ford & Harris, 1999; National Research Council, 2000).

Research Questions

This case study project was designed to examine the practices of teachers who appear to be successful catalysts for increased academic achievement in their low economic students of color who are otherwise at high risk for academic failure. The overarching question for the study was: How do teachers contribute to and support the academic success of high potential low economic students of color in their classrooms? More specific questions were:

1. How do teachers effective in supporting academic success of high potential students from low economic groups come to understand their students' needs?
2. How do teachers make sense of and implement an instructional approach that attends to the academic and affective needs of low economic students of color?
3. Why do these teachers make the decisions they make related to both content and instruction in their classrooms so that they are able to support the success of low economic students of color?
4. How do low economic students of color contribute to and understand the role of teachers in their progression toward academic success?
5. What personal and contextual factors contribute to teacher skill and will in developing classrooms that support the academic success of low economic students of color?

Method

This qualitative research project employed emergent design case study method as a means to facilitate understanding of the many variables in and multiple realities of participants in an evolving context (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Specifically, the study employs case study design to understand settings in which low economic students of color seek to find support for academic success at higher levels than they might have achieved based on their ethnicity, race, and economic status.

A case study is a kind of empirical inquiry that explores current phenomena in their real-life context—particularly when the phenomena and context are difficult to separate (Yin, 1994). Case study is the preferred approach to research when "how" or "why" questions are at the heart of the inquiry, when the study's focus is on contemporary events in a real-life context, and when researchers have little control over events being studied. Case studies of this sort may include explanatory, exploratory, illustrative and/or descriptive elements (Yin, 1994). The current study is a multiple-case design examined classrooms in three school sites, in three states, and involving a range of grade levels from primary through high school. The multiple case approach allowed for both independent investigation of a phenomenon (in this case, support for academic success in low economic, minority students) within a site, and for examination of the phenomenon across sites. Such an approach uses a sort of replication logic, with each individual site

feeding both questions and understanding of subsequent sites. Multiple case study method thus results in a study generally considered more robust than one employing a single case design (Yin, 1994).

Participants

This study took place in three schools assigned the pseudonyms of Sunnydale, Flagstaff, and Lionel. It used purposive sampling to gain maximum insight from the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Target teachers in the setting were those who gave evidence of effectiveness in supporting the academic success of low economic students of color. Target students were low economic students of color who were in the classes of target teachers and who were achieving at higher levels than predicted by their ethnicity and economic status. Administrators and relevant support personnel were included in the study as relevant.

Sunnydale High School is located in a college town in the Southeastern United States. Its community is predominately White and middle/upper middle class. There is some racial and ethnic diversity in the community. At the time of the study, Sunnydale High School was 69% White, 16% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 12% Asian or other racial/ethnic groups.

Flagstaff, located in a heavily populated area of the Mid-Atlantic United States, is a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school that serves approximately 800 students, over 95% of whom are African American and virtually all of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch. Flagstaff is considered a public school which is part of the school district that surrounds it, but it also has a private foundation that supports the school in offering an extended day and extended year, a tennis academy, and some additional materials and supplies for the school.

Lionel is an elementary school located in a sprawling metropolitan area in the northern Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and serves approximately 350 students in grade pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Lionel students are approximately 51% Hispanic, 33% African American, and 16% Caucasian and "other," with many in the latter group being second language learners from Asia and Africa. Lionel is in a school district that is largely affluent and widely recognized for high achievement. Lionel, however, is neither affluent nor high scoring. Most of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Most of its scores on state-mandated standardized test scores are below benchmark levels specified for competence.

Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers, who were university professors and advanced-level doctoral students, conducted intensive classroom observations in the three sites ranging from 3 to 5 full weeks of school days and using semi-structured observation protocols to encourage awareness of factors reflected in the literature related to achievement of low economic students of color and factors emergent in the various sites (Patton, 1990). Similarly,

researchers used semi-structured interview protocols in conversations with teachers, students, and administrators. Each researcher took notes during observations, tape recorded interviews for later transcription, and maintained observer notes.

After transcription of observation notes and tape recorded interviews, researchers assembled the raw data, including available documents. Next, researchers constructed a case record using content analysis by organizing, classifying, and editing raw data into a form that is more easily read and managed. Notebooks of raw data, categories, and codes were ultimately used to develop initial case study narratives, which subsequently served as the basis for cross-case analysis. On-going conversations among the researchers throughout the 4-year research cycle facilitated immersion of all researchers in the study's questions as well as emergent issues and potential findings.

Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was developed through credibility (prolonged engagement, triangulation of method, and researcher credentials), dependability (use of a code/re-code process within and across sites, and development of an audit trail), transferability (purposive sampling and thick description), and confirmability (triangulation of data, use of observer notes and reflexive journals, audit trail, collaboration of two researchers in each site, and review of documents and findings by the project's research team).

Results

The three sites differed considerably in: (a) the degree of school wide focus on and daily commitment to reversing underachievement in low economic students of color, (b) depth of staff understanding of the backgrounds and needs of low economic students of color, (c) attitudes about the role of the teacher in reversing underachievement in low economic students of color, (d) the nature of curriculum appropriate for use with low economic students of color, (e) the nature of instruction appropriate for use with low economic students of color, and (f) the role of assessment in informing instruction.

The differences in the sites in these areas is a catalyst for examining factors that seem to be critical for success in reversing underachievement of low economic students of color across sites. Among cross-site conclusions are the following:

1. Teachers and schools do not have to be outstanding in all of the factors noted above to make a positive difference in the achievement (and lives) of low economic students of color.
2. When a school functions with an unambiguous and shared mission to reverse underachievement in low economic students of color, there is greater opportunity for more of these students to experience success and to do so consistently than when teachers function as "soloists," with a lesser school wide commitment, or with a mission that is more rhetorical than enacted.

3. The definition of "success" implicitly or explicitly adopted by a school or teacher establishes ceilings of expectation for low economic students of color.
4. To work more effectively with high potential, low economic students of color, the field of Gifted Education will have be a full participant in schools to work more effectively with virtually all students of color. This necessarily includes elimination of school structures that restrict access to the highest quality curriculum and instruction.
5. Effective instruction of high potential, low economic students of color fully and simultaneously supports both forward movement (toward the highest expectations) and backward movement (to deal with prior academic deficits).
6. Teachers and schools most effective in developing the potential of low economic students of color affirmed the culture and experiences of those students rather than attempting to displace it.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background

In the field of gifted education, the issue of under-identification of students from low income and non-Caucasian/non-Asian backgrounds has been persistent and virtually intractable. In the broader field of general education, it is also the case that low economic students of color generally achieve at levels considerably lower than their Caucasian peers. For the field of Gifted Education, failure to understand how to tap into dormant academic potential in low economic students of color stands in the way of achieving a student population that is representative of the nation's variety of ethnicities and its full range of economic patterns. As schools in the United States become more ethnically diverse, there are educational problems more important for general education to solve than to find and apply processes and systems through which schools and teachers can more effectively engage students from diverse backgrounds in the process of education.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand how teachers in a variety of grade levels and school settings contribute to the academic success of low economic students of color who have the potential for academics but who, by virtue of economic status, race, and/or ethnicity would likely not fare well in school. The overarching question for the study was: How do teachers contribute to and support the academic success of high potential low economic students of color in their classrooms? More specific questions were:

1. How do teachers effective in supporting academic success of high potential students from low economic groups come to understand their students' needs?
2. How do teachers make sense of and implement an instructional approach that attends to the academic and affective needs of low economic students of color?

3. Why do these teachers make the decisions they make related to both content and instruction in their classrooms so that they are able to support the success of low economic students of color?
4. How do low economic students of color contribute to and understand the role of teachers in their progression toward academic success?
5. What personal and contextual factors contribute to teacher skill and will in developing classrooms that support the academic success of low economic students of color?

Definitions Used in the Study

It is useful to clarify researcher thinking about three terms used repeatedly in the study.

1. "Low economic students of color" is used in this study to describe students who come from low income families (e.g., qualify for free or reduced lunch by federal standards) and whose ethnicity is African American or Hispanic.
2. "High potential low economic students of color" refers to students from the above groups who have the capacity to succeed academically but who often do not do so in school. They are often students who do not qualify for services for students identified as gifted via standard identification practice but who have high ability. In the study, it became evident that this group of students is frequently unidentified and unidentifiable among the larger population of low economic students of color. Thus to find the former group, it becomes important to work with the latter or larger group of low economic students of color. For that reason, the two terms are often used interchangeably in the study.
3. "Success" or "academic success" is defined differently in different settings—even among the study sites. In the study, researchers use the term to mean: (a) a student is meeting requirements of advanced classes, (b) a student scores above expectations and at a level beyond competence on standardized tests, or (c) a student is making good grades and sustaining interest in quality academic performance.

Review of the Literature

An increasingly diverse student population benefits the United States and its schools. Newcomers from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and language backgrounds continue to join groups long present in American life. In an era of increasing globalization, such diverse voices provide our nation with a unique opportunity to profit from a collection of perspectives that many other nations lack. Unfortunately, many children from diverse backgrounds, who are often students of color and from low economic backgrounds, are not receiving an education that will allow them to function as fully productive citizens of the United States, much less take part in a global economy (Ford & Harris, 1999; Oakes, 1985). Schools are especially important to students whose

homes are unable to provide strong educational support (Ford & Harris, 1999; Oakes, 1985; Tomlinson, 1999). Indeed in many schools in the United States today, students from non-majority backgrounds exhibit performance that is markedly less impressive than that of their majority culture peers.

Evidence of this "achievement gap" is manifest in a plethora of areas. African American and Latino students, for example, each now make up over 17% of American students (U. S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, 2002). These groups, however, score consistently lower on the SAT and ACT exams than do their Caucasian or Asian counterparts (College Board, 2000; Ford & Harris, 1999; Oakes, 1985). This disparity in performance begins early and is startling in its pervasiveness (College Board, 2000). In a study that examined the academic performance of nearly 3 million students, for example, the College Board (2000) found that African American students comprised 1% of those scoring above the 95th percentile in first grade reading achievement while Hispanic students made up only 5% of this group. Caucasian students constituted 88% of the high-achieving group, and Asians comprised 5% of these students (College Board, 2000).

Other measures of academic success are equally grim. By the end of fourth grade, African American and Latino students, and low-SES students of all ethnicities, are two grade levels behind wealthier peers in reading and math (Levine, 2005). This performance gap increases so that children of color are 3 years behind in eighth grade and 4 years behind by completion of high school (Levine, 2005). A multi-year study on achievement found that in 1995, when African American and Hispanic students made up 30% of the school-age population, students from these groups received only 13% of the bachelor's degrees, 11% of the professional degrees, and 6% of the doctoral degrees granted (College Board, 1999). Recent studies indicate that the problem has grown to gargantuan proportions in some areas, such as Los Angeles, where more than half of adults are deemed functionally illiterate (Uranga, 2004).

These disparities have wide-reaching consequences. Students of color are underrepresented in gifted and Advanced Placement programs compared to other groups (College Board, 2000; Ford & Harris, 1999). Recent estimates indicate that African American students are three times as likely as Caucasians to be placed in special education programs and only half as likely to be found in gifted and talented classes (Levine, 2005). These same students, especially Hispanic and African American children, have much higher school drop-out rates, and lower GED completion rates, than do other groups (College Board, 2000; Ford & Harris, 1999; Levine, 2005). School districts, especially those unaccustomed to dealing with these populations, are struggling to provide adequate and equitable educational opportunities to children of color, English-language learners, and students from low economic backgrounds (U. S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, 2002). School districts that do not have much experience with diverse learners seem to be especially challenged (U. S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, 2002). One source concludes:

> Overstating the importance of the achievement gap is not easy. The difference in educational achievement of White students, on the one hand, and African American and Hispanic students, on the other, is large and persistent. In the last decade, it has gotten worse. The average Black or Hispanic student in elementary, middle, or high school achieves at about the same level as the average White student in the lowest quartile of White achievement. These distinctions have dire consequences once students leave school. Blacks and Hispanics are much less likely than Whites to graduate from high school, acquire a college or an advanced degree, or earn a living that places them in the middle class. Blacks and Hispanics are much more likely to suffer the social problems that accompany low income. If the achievement gap could be reduced, the fortunes of Blacks and Hispanics would not only be raised, but the social and economic tensions that intensify the country's racial tensions would also be ameliorated. (Chubb & Loveless, 2002, p. 1)

What causes such disparities? How can schools and teachers, support diverse learners in improving their chances of academic success? Which intervention approaches are most significant? A review of the literature suggests that teachers who successfully impact their students exhibit at least three discernible traits: (a) teaching well and providing students with a quality curriculum, (b) intentionally focusing on students of color, as evidenced by planning and incorporating the students' culture into the classroom, and (c) spending out-of-school time with these students and ensuring that these students are able to participate in extracurricular activities (Perkins, 1995; Sternberg & Spear-Sterling, 1996). These factors, in turn, are evidenced in schools that demonstrate seven unmistakable criteria:

1. Common mission and vision for student success with strong leadership that has little tolerance for behavior that jeopardizes these (e.g., DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Riehl, 2000),
2. Intense focus on caring for diverse students (e.g., Foley, Levinson & Hurtig, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994),
3. Clear expectations regarding the quality of teaching (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000),
4. An enacted belief of student success (e.g., Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Moore, Ford & Milner, 2005),
5. Significant numbers of teachers with backgrounds similar to those of the students (Chubbuck, 2004; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997),
6. Scaffolds that build academic and social context with students who may come to school with no such context (Hicks, 1996; Trent, Artiles & Englert, 1998), and
7. A lengthened school day (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay & Greathouse, 1996; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

This literature review examines research supporting each of these criteria. It also explores issues facing students of color as they attempt to negotiate the current educational system and those all too rare classrooms that enable them to thrive.

Common Mission and Vision for Student Success

Consensus exists, from the perspectives of theory and experience, that any successful organization must have a clear mission and vision for what it hopes to accomplish; this is especially true for entities such as schools, where resources are scarce and time is of the essence (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Schools that have a common mission and vision for success have established the solid foundation necessary for creating a learning community where the needs of all students are paramount (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). A school's mission and vision for success affect not only students, but also teachers and others who work within its walls (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Osterman, 2000; Pajares, 1996). Effective missions and visions influence teachers' "professional commitment, sense of efficacy, and professional performance" (Osterman, 2000, p. 325). Leaders at schools that successfully serve students of color and students from low economic backgrounds embrace the mission and vision that allows success to occur and, when necessary, take steps to eradicate behaviors that might jeopardize these goals (Riehl, 2000; Walker, 2000).

Many reasons exist for schools to establish a common mission and vision regarding their students' performance and success. The process of formulating a common mission and vision must involve the entire school community, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community leaders (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Creating the appropriate environment creates an atmosphere that supports "the behaviors, emotions, and psychological orientations" necessary for increased student engagement (Osterman, 2000, p. 339). These supports are especially important for students of color. Walker (2000), in a quasi-ethnographic historical investigation, examined schools that historically have successfully taught students of color and found that they stressed a vision of (a) exemplary teaching, (b) rich curriculum, (c) strong parental support, and (d) decisive leadership. *Exemplary teachers* "made" students do their work and "made sure they got their lessons" while simultaneously engaging in continuing education to build their skills (Walker, 2000, p. 265). *Rich curriculum* included academically accelerated classes, similar to those taught at predominately Caucasian schools, as well as vocational and music classes that appealed to students (Walker, 2000). *Strong parental support* incorporated such diverse actions as strong advocacy for teachers and physical acts, such as painting and repairing the school building (Walker, 2000). *Leadership* of the schools was entrusted to a person who was viewed as "the best-educated African American" in the community, a person who was a role-model for the group who was able to interact with Whites while also demonstrating the value of service to his or her own group (Walker, 2000, p. 275). Teachers' high expectations for student success were manifested through a demanding teaching style that also touched on students' personal needs (Walker, 2000). Teachers met with students before and after class, transported them to and from extracurricular activities, and purchased school supplies and clothing for needy students (Walker, 2000). Teachers who share a clear vision of where they want their students to go take the steps to make sure that these goals are brought about (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Riehl, 2000; Walker, 2000).

A key element to ensure academic engagement and success for low economic students and students of color is supported access to learning opportunities that consistently demonstrate expectations for high level, advanced learning. Hilliard (2003) suggests that a key reason for low academic performance by African American students is one of the simplest reasons: these students are not included in courses that groom students for excellence and support them in achieving excellence. In other words, in the absence of equity of access to excellence, students perform at levels well below excellent.

Implementing a school vision that eschews classes that are tracked, grouped, or otherwise segregated by race and/or economic status is crucial in supporting academic achievement for students from low economic backgrounds and students of color (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2003; Center on English Learning and Achievement, 2003; Denbo & Beaulieau 2002; Educational Research Service, 1992).

Administrative Actions

Implementation of a common mission and vision is often dependent upon the school's administration, if only because these individuals are in the position to ensure that implementation of the mission and vision takes place (Pajares, 1996; Riehl, 2000; Walker, 2000). On a school-wide basis, meanings must be negotiated socially, through a shared community process (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Miron, 1997; Riehl, 2000). Qualitative evaluations of successful schools have shown that administrators alone have the tools to focus the stakeholders on the common mission and vision, to negotiate conflicts that invariably arise, and to move the constituents toward new, and ever higher, levels of performance (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Riehl, 2000). Much of the work necessary to increase the level of performance of students of color deals with altering perceptions of what is possible (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Pajares, 1996; Wells & Crain, 1994). In an analysis of schools that built a culture where many students were successful, for example, Deal and Peterson (1999) found symbols, rituals, and artifacts crucial to building a sense of school community. Individuals' interpretation of "their performance attainments informs and alters their environments and their self-beliefs" (Pajares, 1996, p. 544). As teachers begin to see their students attaining higher levels of performance, they increasingly accept higher and higher goals for the students.

Teacher Actions

After a common mission and vision are in place, all members of a school community must work to "promote forms of teaching and learning that enable diverse students to succeed and mold school cultures that embrace and support diversity" (Riehl, 2000, p. 62). In a review of normative, empirical, and critical literature, Riehl (2000) found that in urban schools serving low-income students of color, perceptions of success are important to assisting teachers "feeling more certain about what they are doing," in contrast to less-successful schools where teachers feel disaffected (p. 63). These perceptions must also be transmitted to students (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Riehl, 2000). Thus while creating common goals and missions is important to all schools, "It is particularly pressing for urban schools, where other resources supportive of school

reform are limited" (Riehl, 2000, p. 63). Student achievement rises when all members of a school community work together for the same goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Riehl, 2000). Riehl (2000) concluded that effective school mission statements and visions for schools working with low-income students and students of color might address:

1. A personalized strategy that treats students as individuals rather than as members of a group,
2. Appreciation of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them to school,
3. Embracing inter-ethnic conflict as a chance to make positive changes,
4. Creating a caring environment amongst students, teachers, and families,
5. Holding high expectations for all students,
6. Focusing on academic achievement,
7. Reconfiguring schools to ensure equal and effective access to instruction,
8. Encouraging teachers to examine practices for possible race, class, or ethnic biases,
9. Working and meeting with parents whenever possible to build competencies and leadership in the community,
10. Advocating for equity and access, and
11. Maintaining an environment of critique. (p. 65)

Not all of these criteria would be practicable, or advisable, at every school, since certain institutions already concentrate on the learning needs of ethnically and economically diverse students or have in place exemplary outreach programs. But, as a whole, these principles provide a framework from which to begin the conversation, introspection, and reflection necessary to construct a school mission and vision. Teachers examining their practices must continually reflect upon, and revise, their actions so that these goals are met (Riehl, 2000). Such a focus ensures a school culture that regards economically and culturally diverse students as, "posing opportunities instead of problems for teachers" (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Riehl, 2000, p. 64).

Intense Focus on Caring for Diverse Students

Individuals perform best in an atmosphere where they feel valued, safe to take risks, and aware that others hold their best interests at heart (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pajares, 1992). Schools that succeed in working with students of color possess an intense focus on caring for students that is almost palpable (Langer, 2000; Tatto, 1996). While teacher preparation programs often struggle to implement training that inculcates this sense of caring in new practitioners (Carrington & Tomlin, 2000), it appears that teachers' sense of caring stems from the personal values and beliefs of teachers (Pajares, 1992; Tatto, 1996). Studies examining teacher self-efficacy in schools with traditionally low-performing populations where students were "beating the odds" have found that positive teacher beliefs make a tremendous difference in student perceptions regarding school, and assist learners to achieve better out of a sense of belonging (Dillon, 1989; Jiménez & Gersten, 1996; Langer, 2000). Teachers with an intense focus on caring for students of color tailor instruction to specific students' needs, use flexible standards in evaluating

student work so that every child has a chance to succeed, and conceive of innovative ways to arrange their classrooms and schools (Foley et al., 2001; Langer, 2000; Tatto, 1996). Julia Devereaux, one of the teachers profiled by Ladson-Billings (1994) in an ethnographic study of 8 teachers successful with African American students, reflects on teaching in the African American community in which she grew up,

> I wanted to teach here so much! My first job barely paid the rent . . . . I just don't believe that you just take, take, take from the community and never give back. That's what I try to tell my students today. You've got to get a good education because the community needs your brain power. (p. 39)

Such teacher beliefs are crucial for schools that work with students of color, insofar as such beliefs tend to make teachers introspective about their practices instead of blaming students for disappointing academic performance (Tatto, 1996).

Administrative Actions

Possessing, and acting upon, such feelings of caring is intensely important for creating an environment in which learning can take place. Simply put, the students know whether they are cared for in schools and classrooms (Dillon, 1989; Jiménez & Gersten, 1999; Walker, 2000). Administrators at successful schools demonstrate that teacher caring can be manifested in a variety of ways, such as dressing nicely for students, treating children as important, having pupils come to the teacher's home, and arranging Saturday fieldtrips (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The feelings of trust and motivation that strong teacher caring engenders creates an atmosphere in which scaffolding, modeling, and differentiation can take place (Dillon, 1989; Jiménez & Gersten, 1999; Moore et al., 2005; Walker, 2000). Without this atmosphere, such endeavors become artificial and insincere, sometimes because subtle forms of "racial superiority and privilege" hinder Caucasian teachers' ability to value the culture children of color bring with them to school (Foley et al., 2001, p. 56). Although much about how these feelings affect students remains unclear, certain behaviors appear to build this sense of rapport. Equipping students of color with better study and social skills allows them to build the cultural capital necessary to succeed (Foley et al., 2001). Schools must engage a community, including all its members, in school activities—this allows teachers and students to build on a cultural group's "fund of knowledge," which assists teachers to direct instruction toward students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Foley et al., 2001).

Teacher Actions

Positive feelings that teachers care about students as individuals can make students feel more inclined toward participating in extracurricular activities that are crucial to academic success (Hughes, 2003; Podsiadlo & Philliber, 2003; Pollard-Durodola, 2003). When teachers provide evidence that they care deeply about students and student learning, students begin to see themselves as part of an inclusive community that is meaningful in their lives (Farkas, 2003; Jeffries & Singer, 2003; Kroeger et al.,

2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Such confirmation can be provided in significant, yet seemingly small, ways. Teachers who create such a community are active in local cultural and social events, invite students to their homes, and include students in lunches at school with napkins and place mats—these acts serve to "demonstrate a connectedness" between teacher and student (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 66). Once such a relationship is established, the teaching of complex academic matters, augmented where need be by remedial activities, may occur (Tharp & Entz, 2003). This relationship is predicated upon teacher actions that demonstrate to students the intense level of caring about their present and future performance (Hughes, 2003; Podsiadlo & Philliber, 2003; Pollard-Durodola, 2003). Such actions need not be grand exhortations but often are symbolized through simple acts of inclusion (Hughes, 2003; Podsiadlo & Philliber, 2003; Pollard-Durodola, 2003). Teachers may use entry questionnaires to discover more about the students, include them in activities that interest them, or show a keen interest in their sporting or social activities (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Any variety of ways may be used to express such interest, and no one method is the "correct" one. What is most important is that the teachers possess enough knowledge about their students to recognize what conditions might be hindering their performance or participation and then take proactive measures to ensure that all students are able to participate for success (Hughes, 2003; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Podsiadlo & Philliber, 2003; Pollard-Durodola, 2003). It is also important that teachers—and other educators—persistently and consistently take steps to ensure that students identify individually and as members of their cultural group—with academic achievement (Perry et al., 2003).

Clear Expectations Regarding Quality Teaching

It is an axiom of practice for many educators that making public clear expectations for quality teaching increases student performance (Linn, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The issue of expectations, however, is a complicated one. Whether the expectations themselves cause increased performance is a matter of controversy (Goldenberg, 1992; Wineberg, 1987). More practical observers note that certain conditions related to expectations are present in classrooms where students succeed—that is, specific teacher behaviors and student trust of the teacher (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). These factors, defined below, when consistent and present in a classroom, seem to have a positive effect on student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Administrative Actions

Teacher behaviors and trust cannot, of course, be examined in isolation. Hundreds of studies have been conducted regarding teacher perceptions of students and their effect on learning (Braun, 1976; Linn, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The results of these studies tend, initially, to be confusing, contradictory, and complex. What does emerge, however, is the importance of certain teacher behaviors that positively affect student learning (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). These behaviors include:

1. Openness to new ideas and willingness to experiment with new ideas to better meet student needs,
2. Greater levels of planning and organization,
3. Fewer remarks critical of students,
4. Working longer with struggling students,
5. Making referrals to special education based on data,
6. Greater enthusiasm for teaching,
7. Greater commitment to teaching, and
8. Greater sense that they can make a difference. (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 223)

Such beliefs are strongly related to school climate (Hoy & Sabo, 1998). Schools with strong leadership encourage innovation, and are responsive to teachers' concerns regarding discipline and coverage of curriculum—such steps increase these desired teacher behaviors (Bandura, 1993; Fuller & Izu, 1986; Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989).

Responsiveness encompasses frequent communication, social interactions, and an absence of racial and ethnic tensions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Once teachers trust school leaders, the teachers are better able to focus on student learning needs (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A strong correlation, for example, has been found between schools with high levels of trust and student ITBS scores (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Those administrative measures that build trust among the school community also seem to encourage strong teacher performance.

How does strong teacher performance look? Teachers who exhibit behaviors that are effective in assisting student learning group material into easily mastered sub-skills, verbally model cognitive problem solving strategies, provide students with the skills to set reasonable goals, offer frequent feedback related to both ability and effort, provide positive incentives, and allow students to engage in self-verbalization of task strategies (Bandura, 1993). In the end, Goldenberg (1992) maintains, "the teacher's behavior is what matters—what a teacher expects matters less than what a teacher does" (p. 522). School leaders and teachers must strive to create the environment that enables all to know the expectations for students and pursue those behaviors that raise student achievement.

Teacher Actions

Such teacher behaviors also tend to fashion classrooms where a high degree of trust is evident between teacher and student (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust is a reciprocal phenomenon, one whereby teachers and students affect each other in a complex and shared way (Goldenberg, 1992). Effective and productive schools manifest strong levels of trust through behaviors that are cooperative, cohesive, efficient, and well-managed (Goldring & Rallis, 1993; Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Summarizing findings from numerous empirical studies, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) found teachers increase student trust when they exhibit certain behaviors:

1. Willingness to risk vulnerability,
2. Confidence,
3. Benevolence,
4. Reliability,
5. Competence,
6. Honesty, and
7. Openness. (pp. 556-558)

The exact relationship of these elements, of course, varies from situation to situation. Certain situations, however, should serve to make teachers and administrators even more vigilant about focusing on trust between student and teacher. These situations include those in which students are seen as not sharing key values held by the teachers (Sitkin & Roth, 1993) and where students perceive themselves as dissimilar from the teachers (Kipnis, 1996). In the primary grades, for example, a lack of shared values often relates to negative teacher perceptions of students' work ethic and social skills while older students are seen as having discipline problems (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In such situations, teachers must nurture trust carefully, paying attention to student definitions of appropriate behavior and working to develop behaviors that engender that trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2000). Students are acutely aware of these teacher actions, and attempts to reach out to students are usually met with student reciprocation (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

An Enacted Belief of Student Success

Some schools are more successful than others promoting student achievement. Why is this so? Why are some schools able to work with students who come with very little formal preparation for school while others focus mostly on causes for underachievement, seeking to lay blame more than to change outcomes? Successful schools have institutionalized a belief in student success in such a manner that teacher efficacy increases (Fuller, Wood, Rapoport, & Dornbusch, 1982). Schools that believe in student success also reach out to parents so that they are included in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In a review of the research related to parent involvement in schools, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) categorized most parental school efforts as either home-based or school-*based*. Home-based involvement includes such activities as reviewing and monitoring a child's progress, helping with homework, or discussing school with the child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). School-based involvement, refers to helping on field trips, volunteering at school, attending conferences and the like (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Teachers and schools that make an effort to involve parents in either form have been found to increase positive parent perceptions of the school and to increase trust between parent and teacher (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This combination of student support and parent involvement appears vital to those schools that want to assure that every child is as successful as possible.

Administrative Actions

Building successful support systems, those that meet students' academic and affective needs, at a school site is a situational endeavor; what works for one group of students may not work for another (Graham, 1994; Kraft, 1991). Boundaries once established by law, such as slavery and segregation, are now often maintained by tradition that prevents the success of some students (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Marger, 1991; Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu (2003) conducted an extensive qualitative study of the experiences of African American students living in an exclusive Cleveland school district. The researchers found that African American students, "did not study or work as hard as they should have and could have because of peer pressures. Among their peers, 'it was not cool to be successful' " (p. 24). Interestingly, some of this attitude was associated with the students' parents, who felt "that it was the responsibility of teachers and the schools to make their children learn and perform successfully; that is, they held the teachers, rather than themselves, accountable for their children's academic success or failure" (pp. 261-262). Awareness of such a conundrum, however, only increases a school's obligation to work with parents (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Fuller et al., 1982; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parent decisions to become involved in the children's education often depend upon (a) the parent's construction of his or her role in the student's life; (b) the parent's sense of efficacy for helping the child be successful; and (c) the number of invitations, demands, and opportunities for parental involvement presented by the child and the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parent perceptions regarding their level of welcome at school are crucial to their willingness to participate (Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Meier, 1995). School climates must include invitations welcoming parent involvement. Appeals for parents' help and support, messages that make them feel needed, and updates about their children's schoolwork all work to draw parents into the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Schools must institutionalize the academic monitoring and support necessary to assure that children of color succeed (Moore et al., 2005).

Teacher Actions

Schools with high rates of parent involvement have teachers who strive to include all parents, and parents are most involved when teachers actively encourage their involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Working to understand parents and families is crucial on the part of the teachers (Anson et al., 1991; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). As a result of the year-long ethnographic evaluation of an upper middle class, mixed ethnicity, suburban high school, Ogbu (2003) observed that, "Teacher expectations have been shown to be an important cause of academic disengagement and low performance" (p. 286). Successful schools do not ignore but embrace racial and ethnic backgrounds of students (Banks; 1988; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Fordham, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ogbu, 1992). Examining two teachers who were successful in working with students of color, Ladson-Billings (1994) observed that, on the surface, each was very different in terms of race, style and approach. On a personal and ideological level, however, both were quite similar (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Both

teachers "disrupted the notion of African American males as social outcasts," imported the culture and everyday experiences of the students" into the classroom, and included all students in challenging academic activities (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 117). It is imperative that students of color not be forced to abandon their race to achieve academic success (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Ogbu, 1992). As each group of students, including those within the same ethnic group, may have different barriers that prevent educational and social mobility, teachers must attack these as they arise.

Significant Numbers of Teachers With Backgrounds Similar to Those of the Students

Teacher ethnicity is a sensitive, and sometimes controversial, topic. Teachers of many racial and ethnic backgrounds can successfully teach students of color, even if the ethnicity or race of the teacher is different from that of the student (King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Teachers from a majority culture can view positively the home culture of diverse students and incorporate those cultures into classroom curriculum and activities (Henry, 1992; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Teachers from the majority culture generally do not intend to treat students of color differently or misinterpret their actions (Chubbuck, 2004). Nonetheless, some scholars theorize that these teachers' Whiteness as an obstacle to understanding, one that must be overcome and dealt with before progress can be attained (Chubbuck, 2004; Kolchin, 2002). Whiteness "is a social construction intimately linked to hegemonic issues of power and privilege" that, through socialization, leads some educators to internalize multiple racial messages regarding the "superiority" of Whites and the "inferiority" of people of color (Chubbuck, 2004, p. 306). These conceptions of Whiteness can be disrupted, and overcome, through a community of support and accountability that examines practices and beliefs in the context of the classroom (Chubbuck, 2004). The community of support and accountability requires participation of both members of the majority culture and teachers, parents, students, and community leaders of color (Chubbuck, 2004). The presence of such teachers at a school is likely necessary to facilitate this process.

While students benefit from interacting with some members of cultures other than their own (King, 1993; Schofield, 1991; Steinberg, Biinde, & Chan, 1984), they also benefit from the presence of faculty members of ethnic and racial groups similar to their own (King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1984). All students of color have this need for teachers with similar backgrounds, including access to teachers with similar language, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (Dehyle & Swisher, 1997; King, 1993; Raudenbush, Fotiu, & Cheong, 1998, Rumberger & Willms, 1992).

Administrative Actions

The presence of teachers with backgrounds similar to those of the students assists the students on several levels, both personal and academic. This support is important since negative experiences in school and teachers' differential treatment are both factors that cause students to leave school (Steinberg et al., 1984). Students of color often need special assistance "to overcome a long history of discrimination in education and employment" (Schofield, 1991, p. 340). Since many individuals lack the ability to

provide this assistance, it is crucial that schools provide teachers who care deeply about student success and possess the skills necessary to help students achieve (King, 1993; Schofield, 1991). Schofield (1991) suggests that those interested in ethnic, racial, and economic equity for students focus upon two questions: " 'What is going on here?' and 'What works?' " (p. 384). Experience shows that school districts serving students of color must hire, and support, an ethnically diverse teaching corps (Carrington & Tomlin, 2000). Support provided to new teachers might include mentors, cohort groups, and special training regarding working with students of color (Carrington & Tomlin, 2000).

Teacher Actions

Teachers who share the same racial or ethnic background as their students may have insights into the students' behaviors, struggles, and motivation that teachers from a different background may not discern (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; King, 1993; Steinberg et al., 1983). These insights are often subtle, central, and significant to students' perceptions regarding the school's level responsiveness to the students' needs (Steinberg et al., 1984). In practice, for example, teachers of a different ethnic or racial background from that of the students they serve may misinterpret or misunderstand the students' motivations and actions (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; King, 1993). Deyhle and Swisher (1997) examined a reservation school, where a group of Cherokee students' silence, which their non-Cherokee teachers perceived as "timidity or shyness, and their control and restraint were seen as docility" (p. 158). The teachers determined this to be appropriate student behavior (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). The silence, in reality, "was the sound of nonviolence and passive resistance as the students created a 'Cherokee school society' to block out the inappropriate intrusion of the Anglo teachers" (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997, p. 158). Teachers from the same ethnic and racial group as students share "a communication style, [an] awareness of the present and past relationship between the . . . community and the larger society" (King, 1993, pp. 119-120). Teachers from the same community as students of color "educate the intellect as well as attend to the social and emotional growth of their students and work to ensure that their students will experience success and satisfaction within their own communities and the larger society" (King, 1993, p. 120).

Scaffolding That Builds Academic and Social Context

A central tenet of teaching is that teachers provide scaffolding for students to assist student learning (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding refers to the process where two or more individuals engage in a joint learning activity where one individual is more capable than the other(s) (Hicks, 1996). Research from cognitive psychology demonstrates that teachers, who are more knowledgeable than their students, structure the activity for the student or provide "explicit verbal directions that direct the child's activity" (Hicks, 1996, p. 55). As this process is repeated, the more capable individual gradually provides less support, therefore allowing the student increased ownership and mastery opportunities (Hicks, 1996; Trent et al., 1998). As such, the teacher leads the students' cognitive development, using those tools most appropriate—for example, modeling, instructing, or questioning (Trent et al., 1998). This process supports the

conceptual framework developed by Vygotsky (1978) to initiate learners into the cognitive practices of the broader intellectual community. Trent et al. (1998) summarized the principles underlying this framework as: "(a) apprenticeship in applied settings, (b) access to empowering modes of discourse, (c) guided instruction that leads to self-regulated learning, and (d) learning in cultural historical contests" (p. 285). Scaffolding is particularly beneficial for students of color, assisting them to achieve in a variety of academic and social settings (Hicks, 1996; Jiménez & Gersten, 1999; Stein, Grover, & Henningsen, 1996; Trent et al., 1998). Students of color benefit from scaffolding's "provision of clear instructions, frequent feedback, models of proficient performance, and frequent checking for understanding" because it allows teachers to provide meaningful teaching at the child's instructional level, which may be deficient of certain academic skills in some cases (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999).

Administrative Actions

School leaders must provide training that allows teachers to view students from low economic groups and students of color, like all students, as active learners who use their prior experiences to craft knowledge (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999; Trent et al., 1998). Students bring to school with them cultural tools that can be ideational or material (Cole, 1996; Trent et al., 1998). When these cultural tools are honored, when a teacher validates a student's home experiences, scaffolding is much more effective for the student (Dillon, 1989; Dyson, 1999; Jiménez & Gertsen, 1999; Stein et al., 1996). Schools must also sometimes provide students with the understanding and ability to deal with racism (Moore et al., 2005). For scaffolding to be truly effective, administrators must ensure that teachers know how to closely monitor student learning, understanding, and progress (Jiménez & Gertsen, 1999; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998).

When an activity is truly within a student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), he or she feels in control of his or her actions and the immediate environment (Wigfield et al., 1998). As such, Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) concept of "flow," of being immersed in and carried by an activity, is reached (Wigfield et al., 1998). Flow is best attained when the child feels comfortable and supported by the classroom environment. Schools dedicated to providing quality scaffolding to all students must ensure that teachers have the skills and training, and the will, to provide this support (Jiménez & Gertsen, 1999; Wigfield et al., 1998). Administrative actions will, of course, differ from situation to situation—not all faculties, or all individual teachers, require identical training or support (Jiménez & Gertsen, 1999; Wigfield et al., 1998).

Teacher Actions

At its most effective, scaffolding ascends to a level where a level of discourse exists between teacher and students (Hicks, 1996). Several studies demonstrate how such effective scaffolding works (Dillon, 1989; Jiménez & Gersten, 1999). Dillon (1989), for example, examined how a Caucasian male high school teacher related to his mainly African American, remedial-level, students. The teacher worked "to ensure that his students knew what to expect of him and what was expected of them during lessons"

(Dillon, 1989, p. 243). More importantly, the teacher "cared about [the students] personally and cared about their performance and learning in class," prompting them to care about their work (Dillon, 1989, p. 242). Teachers who care, for example, are perceived by students as taking an interest in students personally, talking to them at their own level, and helping them with school work when needed (Dillon, 1989). Similarly, Jiménez and Gersten (1999) examined the practices of two teachers working with elementary Hispanic students. These teachers, for example, established a shared language to assist their students in comprehending stories read as a class (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999). This shared language involved building, "a thoroughly understood set of conceptual English vocabulary for use as a framework for talking about stories" (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999, p. 285). When the academic goal was for students to describe character, the teacher initially guided students to describe a cat as "crazy," "funny," and "active"—a more familiar source of vocabulary (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999, p. 285). When careful monitoring disclosed the students were having difficulty with idiomatic expressions, the teacher would model answer finding techniques and demonstrate the cognitive processes required when necessary (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999). Again, the students benefited from the stability of structure within the classroom, effective use of modeling and scaffolding, and the representation of the students' culture within the academic day (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999). The creation of a caring environment that validates students and encourages their academic discourse thus seems an integral part of effective scaffolding.

A Lengthened School Day

Instructional time, as it relates to the length of the academic year or the length of the school day, appears to exert a considerable influence on achievement of students from low economic and culturally diverse backgrounds, especially for younger learners (Brown & Saks, 1986; Fuller & Clarke, 1994). In particular, the more time spent on specific curricular topics, the greater increases in student achievement (Fuller & Clarke, 1994). Overall, summaries of the various time and learning studies have found a positive and moderate average effect size for time to be .38 (Karweit, 1985). Time has a dual nature, since it can refer both to the length of the school day and energy teachers spend on their students. Findings regarding the advantages of time have resulted in calls for the school day to be increased (Karweit, 1985; Timar & Kirp, 1988; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992). Many school districts that have tried lengthening the school day, however, have found that there was little, if any, increase in the level of student performance (Wehlage et al., 1992). Time is perhaps such a confusing construct because the value of the interval spent with students is more one of quality rather than quantity (Cooper et al., 1996; Duke, 2000). A recent study, for example, found that the level of connection students feel with teachers had a larger effect on the students' math achievement scores than SES (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004). Students who believe teachers "show an interest" in them have an increased sense of connection with those teachers (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004, p. 422; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teachers who spend time with students outside of school hours demonstrate that interest (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

This emphasis on quality over quantity explains why schools sometimes struggle when they try to extend the school day while doing little else to change services, as Wehlage et al., (1992) found when examining major reform efforts carried out in Dayton, Pittsburgh, Little Rock, and Savannah. All of the schools examined worked predominantly with students of color, and half of these tried extending the school day to improve student performance (Wehlage et al., 1992). The researchers found extending the school day had no impact "on curriculum and instruction and only minimal impact on social relations" at the schools (Wehlage et al., 1992, p. 65). This is perhaps because any increase of instructional time must be one of quality as well as quantity (Duke, 2000; Fuller & Clarke, 1994; Whelage et al., 1992). Quality, in this context, reflects research-based instructional practices and an environment that honors and incorporates the students' cultural heritage. Changing the structure of schools without altering the underlying beliefs of teachers regarding instruction does little to improve the instruction and support students receive (Duke, 2000; Wehlage et al., 2000). The types and lengths of academic activities available to students are much more important to their achievement than just the length of the school day (Duke, 2000).

Administrative Actions

School leaders seeking to improve student performance must concentrate professional development so that teachers can focus on three things: (a) identifying good thinking, (b) using effective strategies to promote good thinking, and (c) evaluating the thinking of students (Sternberg & Spear-Sterling, 1996). Time spent with the students then needs to focus on combining these skills with quality curriculum and an environment where the students feel engaged, connected, and monitored (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ligas, 2002). School leaders must ensure that teachers' time with students is well-spent, that students are engaged in rich and illuminating activities, and that teachers understand their impact on student achievement (Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Perkins, 1995). Careful monitoring of the achievement of students of color and students from low economic backgrounds and an emphasis on teachers who build relationships with students and provide necessary support also is helpful (Meier, 1995; Moore et al., 2005). Schools might also consider alternative ways of compensating teachers so that the time they spent with students, time that builds and supports student achievement, is rewarded (Kelley, 1999; Muncey & Conley, 1999).

Teacher Actions

One way of improving student performance *is* through extending students' time spent in class is ensuring that extension is carefully tailored to improving student performance (Cooper et al., 1996; Karweit, 1985). Cooper et al. (1996), for example, reviewed research dating back to 1906, involving hundreds of thousands of students, that demonstrates that student test scores decline as a result of extended time away from school. This decline in school performance is particularly damaging for students of color and students from low economic backgrounds, many of whom depend heavily upon school for academic support (Cooper et al., 1996; Wehlage et al., 2000). When

Caucasian and African American students were studied in Baltimore for two consecutive summers, the "setback" suffered by African American students was greater than that that occurred in Caucasians (Cooper et al., 1996; Entwistle & Alexander, 1992). Researchers surmise that, because "middle-income and lower-income homes differ in their access to reading materials and language learning opportunities," the effects of less school affects low-income students more severely (Cooper et al., 1996, p. 262). Schools that increase the effective instructional time of students, not just the length of the school day, seem to achieve measurable increases in student performance (Cooper et al., 1996; Duke, 2000).

One teacher interviewed by Ladson-Billings (1994) summed up the difference between scheduled school hours and the time students need by observing,

> Being with the children for five or six hours a day is just not enough for the kind of impact you want to have on them . . . . They need a chance to see things and live their lives in ways that nurture them. (p.63)

Such a commitment includes working with students after school, going camping with children, taking them on Saturday trips, and a myriad of other activities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teachers must focus on providing students with the rich time that focuses the children's attention on those academic, and social, aspects of life that are crucial to future success.

Gifted Education Programs That Serve Diverse Learners

Ensuring academic success of high-achieving students who come from communities that are historically underrepresented in gifted education programs is of interest to many (Ford & Harris, 1999; Levine, 2005; O'Connell, 2003; Passow & Frasier, 1996; Tomlinson, Callahan, & Lelli, 1997). Under-representation of students of color and students from low economic groups in programs designed for gifted learners remains a stubborn reality over recent decades (National Research Council, 2002). Reasons for the under-representation are many and include (but are not limited to) differential preparation of students for the demands of school, teacher bias, identification procedures that have historically excluded many diverse learners who are unable to meet rigid cut-off scores used to identify students as "gifted," (National Research Council, 2002; Terman, 1925). More recently, such theorists as Sternberg (1985) and Renzulli (1986) have devised more multi-dimensional conceptions of giftedness that allow more students to be identified for and potentially benefit from services for gifted learners. Despite such approaches, and after years spent examining the issue, however, there is little hard evidence to show which approaches are most effective in identifying and effectively serving children of color, English-language learners, or student from low income backgrounds. Perhaps this lack of data occurs because very little funding is in place to encourage such programs (National Research Council, 2002; Patton, Prillaman, & VanTassel-Baska, 1990). Various studies conducted over the years, however, indicate that if certain supports are put in place, gifted programs can provide an environment where children of color, English-language learners, and students from low income backgrounds can thrive. Simply enabling more students to have access to curriculum and

instruction designed for students identified as gifted might improve educational outcomes for all students (Gay, 1990; National Research Council, 2002)—and would likely serve as a catalyst for development of capacity in ethnically diverse learners from low-income backgrounds.

Examining undergraduates enrolled in math classes at the University of California, Berkeley, for example, Treisman (1992) observed that African American and Latino students did not do as well as other groups. Examining the students, Treisman found, contrary to expectations, that the minority students were motivated, academically well-prepared, and enjoyed strong family support (Treisman, 1992). The minority students' difficulties were attributed to their feelings of isolation, both in their study habits and in the lack of other students like them in the calculus classes (Treisman, 1992). Once larger numbers of minority students were recruited, allowing for a critical mass of students of color, and supports were put into place, such as summer bridge programs and study groups, the students of color excelled in calculus classes (Treisman, 1992). Instruction sometimes needs to be modified, so that it is more concept-based and more explicit in its procedural and tacit demands (Treisman, 1992). Working with younger students, others have found similar results (see, e.g., Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000; Tomlinson et al., 1997). The numbers of students examined in these studies is quite small, which somewhat limits their generalizability.

Perhaps the lack of research into gifted programs successful in developing the academic capacity of students of color and students from low economic backgrounds is due in part to intense focus upon identification of students as eligible for services. Because students of color and students from low economic backgrounds do not tend to score as well on typical identification instruments, they do not receive access to advanced services and thus lose opportunity provided in such settings (National Research Council, 2002). When such students do gain access to gifted education programs, not enough has been done to meet those students' needs once they arrive at the classroom door. Thus it is important for educators to understand settings that both recognize high potential in students from low economic and culturally diverse groups and provide appropriate supports and exemplary instruction to ensure that advanced academic potential ultimately translates into advanced academic performance.

Toward this end, high potential students who are also members of ethnic or language minorities, or who are from low-SES backgrounds will also need: approval of peers for academic achievement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), supportive environments (Treisman, 1992), and contact with and models of academic excellence and exemplars of scholarly practice (Gordon & Bridglall, 2005). Examinations of programs examining the development of talented children of color, English-language learners, and low-SES students must look for these elements as well as others that may not have been revealed in research to date (National Research Council, 2002).

Conclusion

Schools that are successful in serving students from low economic backgrounds and students of color have several features in common. They ensure that students from these populations have consistent and supported access to high level learning opportunities. These schools have established warm, safe, accepting, and affirming environments where student performance is paramount. A consistent focus exists to ensure appropriate and rigorous instruction for each student. When a student comes to school without level of skills the teachers might wish, scaffolds are devised that will allow that child to be successful. The student is not blamed for a lack of success, but teachers and administrators look within to determine how they can more effectively reach the student. Similarly, students are not taught according to tightly defined, prescriptive programs. Instead, the child's culture and knowledge are respected and honored, and made a part of the learning experience. This emphasis on the student creates an atmosphere where the trust is palpable and the motivation to learn keen. Such schools—and the classrooms in those schools—are likely to have: (a) A common mission and vision for student success with strong leadership that has little tolerance for behavior that jeopardizes these; (b) An intense focus on caring for students without much; (c) Clear expectations regarding the quality of teaching; (d) An enacted belief of student success; (e) Significant numbers of teachers with backgrounds similar to those of the students; (f) Scaffolds that build academic and social context with students who may come to school with no such context; and (g) A lengthened school day.

Figure 1 suggests an interrelationship of these elements. No one factor predominates; instead, all the factors work together to create an atmosphere where student success is seen as the paramount goal. The central factor, an intense focus on caring for students, is not necessarily the most important factor, but is central to all the other themes. This factor focuses administrators, teachers, and other adults on all the other themes, and interrelates with them so that focus is always on student needs. Such schools provide rich environments in which student learning occurs.

Students of color and students from low economic backgrounds continue to be under-represented in programs and services for gifted learners. That under-representation hinders access such students need to high quality learning opportunities. Additional work is needed to describe the school- and classroom-level process of recognizing and developing advanced potential in these groups.

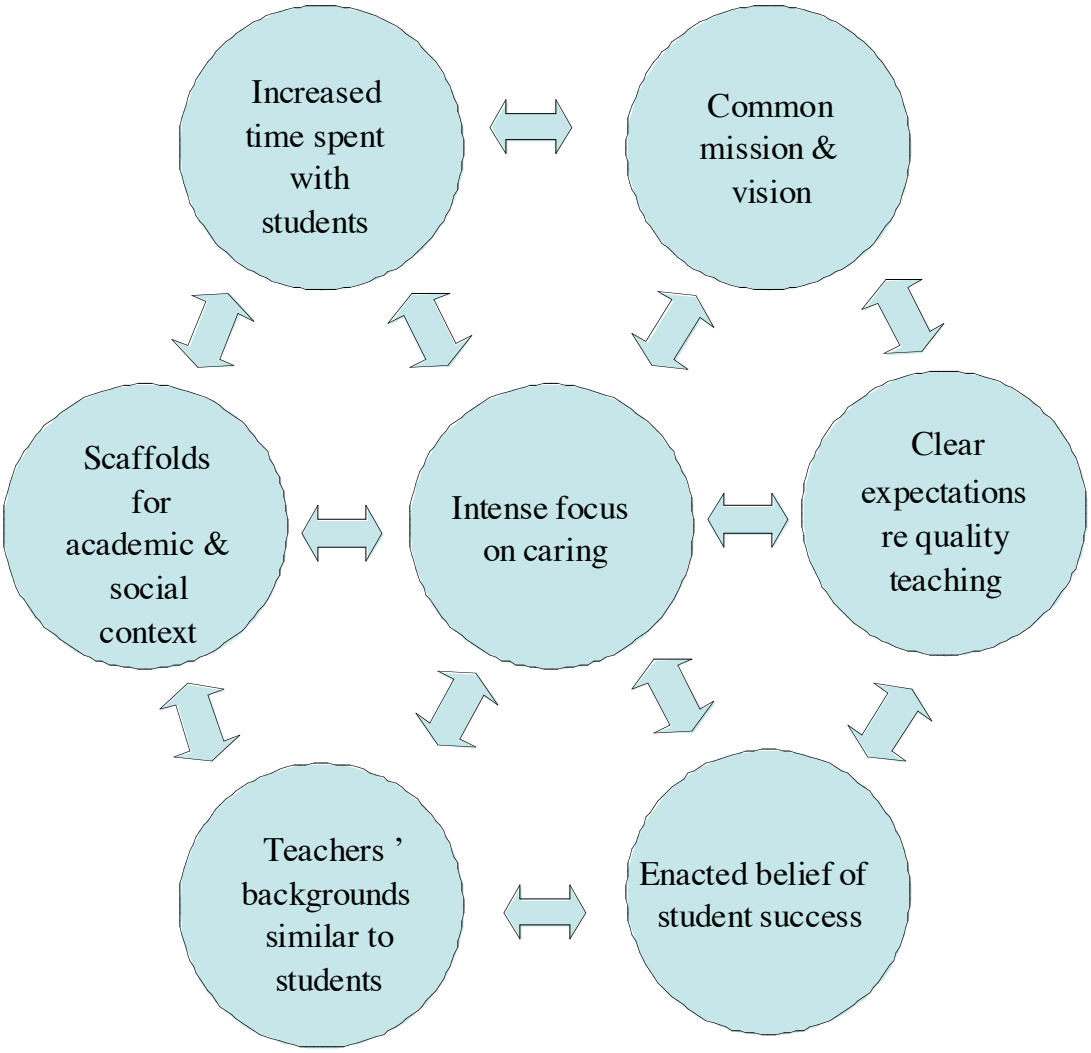

Figure 1. Interaction of elements in schools and classrooms effective in supporting academic success of students from low income and culturally diverse backgrounds.

CHAPTER 2: Method

To more fully understand schools and classrooms that support academic engagement and success among low economic students of color, it is important to explore the interactions between students and their environments. The National Research Council (2002) proposes that: (a) a wide range of contextual factors in students' lives impact their school performance, (b) those factors include activities and interactions within the environment where the student is expected to learn, and (c) students make meaning as they interact with their environments and the interactions create new contexts for learning. The Council also notes that while factors such as class size, teacher quality, and school resources are associated with learning and behavior outcomes, the influence they have takes place through student-teacher interactions. A goal of this study was to better understand a variety of contexts in which low income students of color seek to achieve a level of school success beyond that which might be predicted by their ethnic and economic status. Because individuals assign meaning as they interact with the dynamic elements in their environments, the study lends itself to naturalistic inquiry.

Naturalistic Inquiry

Naturalistic inquiry accepts the premise that realities are multiple and constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). A naturalistic inquirer seeks to understand those realities by being non-obtrusive, non-manipulative—letting events unfold naturally (Patton, 1990). Thus this study uses both naturalistic inquiry and emergent design.

Emergent Design

The design of a qualitative study needs to be emergent, flexible, and responsive to changing conditions of the study. Such a study assumes that realities are context-sensitive and that participants construct multiple realities (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Unlike quantitative research that tests existing theory, qualitative research attempts to find a theory that explains data (Merriam, 1998). Although conceptual areas of interest are determined prior to conducting the research, because participants, researchers, and contexts will interact in unpredictable ways, qualitative research does not seek to devise a theory in advance of the research (Erickson, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus in this study, researchers examined existing research in relevant areas prior to entering research sites and developed semi-structured observation and interview protocols based on existing knowledge, but also allowed for inevitable changes in direction of the inquiry with variance in research sites, participants, and interactions between them.

Case Study

Case study research is a tool for investigating complex social units that contain multiple variables that are potentially important in understanding a phenomenon. This study employs case study design to understand settings in which low economic students

of color seek to find support for academic success at higher levels than they might have achieved based on their ethnicity, race, and economic status.

A case study is a kind of empirical inquiry that explores current phenomena in their real-life context—particularly when the phenomena and context are difficult to separate (Yin, 1994). Case study is the preferred approach to research when "how" or "why" questions are at the heart of the inquiry, when the study's focus is on contemporary events in a real-life context, and when researchers have little control over events being studied. Case studies of this sort may include explanatory, exploratory, illustrative and/or descriptive elements (Yin, 1994).

The current study is a multiple-case design examined classrooms in three school sites, in three states, and involving a range of grade levels from primary through high school. The multiple case approach allowed for both independent investigation of a phenomenon (in this case, support for academic success in low economic, minority students) within a site, and for examination of the phenomenon across sites. Such an approach uses a sort of replication logic, with each individual site feeding both questions and understanding of subsequent sites. Multiple case study method thus results in a study generally considered more robust than one employing a single case design (Yin, 1994). In this particular study, the site known as Sunnydale High School was the focus of Years 1 and 2 of the 4-year research cycle. The site known as Flagstaff (a pre-K grade 8 school), was the focus of Years 2 and 3, and the site known as Lionel Elementary was the focus of Years 3 and 4. The overlapping time periods enabled researchers to learn from one site to sharpen inquiry in subsequent sites.

Sites

This study took place in three schools: Sunnydale, Flagstaff, and Lionel. All site and participant names are pseudonyms.

Sunnydale High School is located in a college town in the Southeastern United States. Its community is predominately White and middle/upper middle class. There is some racial and ethnic diversity in the community. At the time of the study, Sunnydale High School was 69% White, 16% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 12% Asian or other racial/ethnic groups. According to information provided by the school district, African American students at Sunnydale were making gains on standardized tests larger than the gains made by Asian and White students, with the percentage of African American students scoring higher than the national median on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in grades 3, 6, and 9 having risen from 37% to 48% since the 1997-1998 school year. Despite occasional fluctuation, scores achieved by Hispanic students remained largely unchanged with 53% scoring higher than the national median. In 2000, the district developed an action plan to reduce the achievement gap between Caucasian students and students of color. The plan included 21 goals to be achieved by 2008, among them meeting with parents of minority students, training staff about all school populations and practices needed to support equity for all students, aligning curriculum and developing curriculum maps and guides, providing test preparation and tutoring for

minority students, increasing minority participation in advanced classes, reviewing grading practices, expanding co-curricular and extra-curricular practices to attract a more diverse group of students, and raising staff expectations of all students.

Sunnydale also offers the AVID program. AVID (Achievement Via Individual Determination) is a national program that offers personal and academic support to middle and high school students—largely low economic and/or minority who possess the potential for achievement in advanced classes but who have been overlooked using conventional measures of achievement (AVID, 2000). The program originated in California in 1980 and has now spread across the country. The Sunnydale AVID program targets students with at least average test scores and grades who also have the motivation and determination to enroll in rigorous coursework and who ultimately hope to attend a 4-year college. AVID students at Sunnydale are also encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities. AVID provides general academic support, preparation for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), college planning, and study skills and tutorial sessions as well as a social network and support system including an academic peer group. While district documents indicated that 63% of AVID students district wide were African American, 50% of Sunnydale AVID students were African American with most of the remaining students Caucasian.

Flagstaff, located in a heavily populated area of the Mid-Atlantic United States, is a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school that serves approximately 800 students, over 95% of whom are African American and virtually all of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch. Flagstaff is considered a public school that is part of the school district that surrounds it, but it also has a private foundation that supports the school in offering an extended day and extended year, a tennis academy, and some additional materials and supplies for the school. One of many evidences of the quality of teacher and student work in this urban setting is that Flagstaff students consistently earn very high pass rates on state mandated standardized test—scores that routinely far outstrip the performance of African American students in other public schools in the district and that match or exceed the pass rates of the district as a whole.

Lionel is an elementary school located in a sprawling metropolitan area in the northern Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and serves approximately 350 students in grade pre-kindergarten through six. Lionel students are approximately 51% Hispanic, 33% African American, and 16% Caucasian and "other," with many in the latter group being second language learners from Asia and Africa. Lionel is in a school district that is largely affluent and widely recognized for high achievement. Lionel, however, is neither affluent nor high scoring. Most of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Most of its scores on state-mandated standardized test scores are below benchmark levels specified for competence.

Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study varied across sites based on the nature of the site and access to teachers and classrooms within the site. In each instance, however, focus

was on teacher thinking, planning, and teaching. In the Sunnydale site, the unit of analysis was three teachers who evidenced skill and will necessary to support the academic success of low economic students of color who were entering advanced level classes for the first time. The school does not function from a common philosophy and practice regarding these students and thus it was most useful to examine the three classrooms in which teachers—working largely as "soloists" to enable the students to succeed at a new level of challenge. In the Flagstaff site, the unit of analysis is the school. In this site, the staff does work from a common philosophy and agreed upon practices to support the success of low economic minority students and thus it was most useful to examine those practices at the school level with examples from various facets of the school. In the Lionel Elementary site, not only was there a lack of common philosophy and agreed upon practices regarding support for the success of low economic students of color, but access to the site became difficult as the study progressed and a new principal assumed leadership of the school. For that reason—quite different from the Flagstaff rationale—it once again made sense to establish the school as the unit of study and to seek data from a variety of personnel and classrooms as that was possible.

Participants

Purposive sampling assumes that the researcher wants to gain maximum insight from the research and therefore should select a sample from which the maximum can be learned (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research study employed purposive sampling for that reason. Because the goal of the study is to describe contexts in which low economic students of color find adequate support for academic success, researchers ultimately focused on those teachers whose classrooms provided consistent examples of such support.

In all three sites, at least some teachers gave evidence of both a desire to create classrooms supportive of academic success for low economic students of color and a level of competence in doing so. Teacher selection began with recommendations of knowledgeable school personnel and proceeded with verification through preliminary observation and interview by the researchers. As site visits continued, researchers ultimately focused on classrooms and teachers that proved to be the richest sources of illustrative data. At Sunnydale High, researchers also identified a group of 11 low economic students (also called target students) whom researchers interviewed over the course of 2 years and whom researches also sometimes shadowed during their school day. All of the target students were participants in the AVID program, all had a past record of at least average test scores and grades, all were currently enrolled in one or more advanced level classes, and all were evidenced at least satisfactory performance in their advanced classes during the duration of the study. At Flagstaff and Lionel, researchers had conversations with a range of students as opportunities occurred and conducted group interviews with some students. In all three sites, researchers conducted interviews with administrators.

Researchers

The Principal Investigator throughout the study is a Professor of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Policy at the University of Virginia. She has 21 years experience as a classroom teacher and 15 years at the university level. Her past research has been largely qualitative in nature. The focus of her work—both in research and practice—has been on developing and supporting learning opportunities for academically diverse student populations. She served as an on-site observer and interviewer in two of the study sites (Sunnydale and Flagstaff). She also coordinated the work of all other researchers involved in the study.

Four other researchers played key roles in the project. Two hold doctoral degrees (one was a long time school administrator and university instructor and the other a faculty member at the University of Virginia), and two were doctoral students nearing the end of their degree programs at the University of Virginia. Both doctoral students have coursework in and site experience with qualitative methods. The study's Principal Investigator and one doctoral student conducted the research at Sunnydale. The study's Principal Investigator and the administrator conducted the research at Flagstaff. The administrator, university professor, and second doctoral student conducted the research at Lionel. In keeping with the goal of having research in one site inform research in the others, every site involved at least two of the senior researchers. The Principal Investigator met individually with each of the researchers and with the research team as a whole on a regular schedule throughout the research cycle.

Data Collection Methods

In an attempt to understand the experiences of low economic students of color and the teachers who taught them in the three sites, the study relied heavily on classroom observations and interviews as well as analysis of some documents (i.e., school handbooks, teacher lesson plans, student materials, published standardized test scores). In each site, researchers spent the equivalent of 3 and 5 weeks of school days visiting classrooms and conducting interviews over a 2-year research span in each site. Observations allow researchers to develop a sense of environments in which activities take place, see what goes on as individuals react and interact in shared environments, and develop a sense of the multiple perspectives of individuals in the environments (Patton, 1990). Interviews enable researchers to ascertain from individuals things they cannot directly observe (Patton, 1990).

All researchers in the case study projected used semi-structured observation and interview protocols (Patton, 1990) to ensure focus on the study's questions within and across sites. In addition, however, because of the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, researchers also developed and pursued additional questions as the research progressed. Each researcher took notes during observations, tape recorded interviews for later transcription, and maintained observer notes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted following Patton's (1990) guidelines for effective analysis of case study data. After transcription of observation notes and tape recorded interviews, researchers assembled the raw data, including available documents. Next, researchers constructed a case record using content analysis. In this stage, researchers condensed the raw data by organizing, classifying, and editing it into a form that is more easily read and managed. Content analysis calls on researchers to identify, code, recode, and categorize patterns in the raw data. Researchers in this project conducted content analysis by hand rather than with the use of computer programs. Notebooks of raw data, categories, and codes were developed by doctoral students who, in regular consultation with the Principal Investigator, used the materials to develop initial case study narratives. The Principal Investigator then reviewed the raw data, case records, and case narratives for each of the three sites, developed individual case reports, and wrote the cross case analysis. On-going conversations among the researchers throughout the 4 year research cycle facilitated immersion of all researchers in the study's questions as well as emergent issues and potential findings. Teaming in data analysis not only ensures stability of research methods across sites and builds trustworthiness, but also contribute to building cross-site understandings.

Doctoral students who developed case reports and initial case records used broad guidelines for their work developed by the research team, but had the freedom to develop coding systems, informant names, and case record logic based on the nature of the site and information available in the raw data

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is a means of ensuring that findings are worthy of the attention of those who make use of them. Trustworthiness in qualitative research relies on the skill and integrity of researchers who conduct it. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four characteristics of trustworthy or reliable qualitative research: credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability.

These case studies sought credibility through prolonged fieldwork in each of the three sites and use of source (teacher, administrator, student) and method (observation, interview, document analysis) triangulation. Credibility is also influenced by researcher credentials, noted earlier in this chapter.

To increase dependability, researchers used a code/re-code process as well as peer examination both within and across sites. Further, an audit trail of raw data, coded data, and case reports have been established and will be maintained for a minimum of 5 years following publication of the project's technical report.

While the study does not seek generalizability, it addresses transferability via purposeful sampling and use of thick description within case reports. This allows readers to move beyond facts to the voices and perspectives of the teachers, students, and

administrators who took part in the study. It provides representations of their voices, feelings, actions, and meanings (Dentin, 1989).

Finally, conformability exists to the extent that data and interpretations of data are grounded in events rather than in the researcher's personal biases and constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of data, use of observer notes and reflexive journals, the project's audit trail, collaboration of two researchers in each site, and review of documents and findings by the project's research team support conformability of findings in this research project.

CHAPTER 3: Sunnydale High—Where Good Is Good Enough

The Setting

Sunnydale High School sits among the rolling hills of an historic town in the southeastern United States. According to the district's website, the Sunnydale School District contains eight elementary, four middle, and two high schools that serve more than 10,000 students. It is noted to be one of the top 50 school districts in the United States and one of the top performing school districts in the southeast, based on SAT scores, student participation in AP classes, the number of National Merit Scholars, and similar data.

Sunnydale High School houses approximately 1,400 students in grades 9-12, who are slightly more ethnically diverse than the general population of Sunnydale. The average class size is 23 and the average teacher load is 115 students. Of the student population, 69% are White, 16% are African American, 3% are Hispanic, 12% are Asian or from other ethnic groups. Of the 129 staff members, approximately 16% are African American, and 4% are from other ethnic/minority groups. The remaining staff members are White.

Despite the accolades the district has earned, its leaders recognize that a Black/White achievement gap exists among students K-12. As a result, the district has formed a local Minority Student Achievement Team committed to addressing this problem and closing the achievement gap. Initiatives undertaken to address the issue include curricular realignment, additional transportation to before-school classes, SAT preparation courses targeting African American and Latino participants, minority parent meetings, clustering minority students in certain classes, and institution of an AVID Program. The AVID Program serves as a bridge between students who have not seen themselves as "academically successful" and who have not generally been a part of advanced learning opportunities—and those opportunities themselves. In other words, it is a mechanism for helping students whose prior academic performance has not looked "excellent" gain access to excellence and find support for learning to achieve as they make the transition.

The Students

The students interviewed and observed in at Sunnydale (also referred to as "high potential low economic and minority students" or "target students") all qualified for the AVID Program that provides academic and personal support to middle and high school students, predominantly low economic and minority, who possess the potential for academic success in advanced classes (AVID, 2000), but who may have been previously overlooked for placement in such classes using conventional measures of potential or achievement. The Sunnydale AVID Program targets students with at least average standardized test scores and grades who possess academic potential, motivation, and determination to enroll in rigorous coursework, including honors and AP classes, and

plan to enroll in a 4-year higher educational institution. AVID provides academic supports, in the form of SAT preparation, guidance in college planning, tutorial sessions, and study skills practice. AVID also provides a network of social supports including academic peer groups and an AVID teacher who monitors progress, advocates on students' behalf, and communicates with other adults about student progress. According to district documents, the majority of AVID students district-wide are Black (63%); yet at Sunnydale High School, the AVID classes are approximately 50/50, minority to non-minority. At the time of the Sunnydale study, all of the target students were enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement class, were deemed "successful" in those classes by their teachers in terms of their capacity to meet course expectations, and were in the process of college application.

The Case Studies at Sunnydale

Three case studies developed at Sunnydale and presented here provide glimpses into the classrooms of three teachers who appear effective in helping the study's high potential low economic and minority students engage with high level academics and succeed academically. Each teacher has particular beliefs and approaches related to engaging target students in his/her classes. Isabel Merle teaches English 11 and Honors English 11, American Literature. Barbara Ladd teaches Biology I and Biology II. Biology II is considered to be an honors class. Although in the final year of the study Barbara has taken over the senior AVID class previously taught by Kurt Steiner, the focus of her case study is the Biology II class. Kurt Steiner has taught the German III, German IV, AP German, and AVID juniors and seniors until the last year of the study when he took a sabbatical to finish his Ph.D. The case study on Kurt focuses on his AVID classes. All of the three case study teachers are White.

To explore student perceptions about the journey of low economic and minority students toward academic success at Sunnydale, 11 high potential, poor and minority students were interviewed, most more than once. All target students are African American juniors and seniors who qualify for SAT waivers based on financial circumstances and all of the students have had Isabel and Kurt as teachers. Several of the target students have also had Barbara, but Barbara's Biology II class is an elective, so not all of the students have taken the class. All of the target students have been AVID participants for at least 3 years. The early interviews asked students to describe their school experiences. As the study progressed, students were asked specifically to describe their experience in target teachers' classes. In addition, four of the students were shadowed throughout the school day to better understand their total school experiences.

Within the case studies, quotes have been assigned codes according to whether the source is an observation (O) or an interview (I). Preceding the "O" or the "I," are the initials of the teacher (e.g. Barbara Ladd is BL) or the student's alias. Some of the students were interviewed on more than one occasion and an "I" followed by a number indicates which interview with the student the quote represents, for example, Monique I2 indicates the quotation is from the second interview with Monique. This allows the case

study narrative to flow while at the same time signaling that the quote comes directly from an interview or an observation.

Isabel Merle and Her American Literature Class

The Classroom

Isabel Merle is a 52 year-old White woman who has been teaching since 1979, missing one year for maternity leave. She stands about five feet two inches tall and wears eyeglasses that frame her dark brown eyes. Her face is framed by long, wavy, black hair. She speaks quickly and enthusiastically.

During any given period, whether honors or regular—or "irregular" or "regular" as Isabel calls them—approximately 20 students participate in the American literature class and most classes are predominantly White. School documents note that parents of African American students have expressed concern that their child is often the only or one of a few African Americans in many of their advanced classes. As a result, the school is piloting an honors English class with a cluster of minority students, which Isabel teaches. This cluster class contains 12 White, eight African American, and two Latino students.

Isabel Merle's classroom is a feast for the eyes. Barely any area of wall is visible. Movie posters and student-made projects hang from the wall, including quotes from books the class has read, such as *Song of Solomon*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Invisible Man*, *Harrison Bergeron*, *Animal Dreams*, and *The Crucible*. Student-made posters of vocabulary words evidence considerable creativity and aid students in remembering definitions of complex words. Similar to the student-made posters on the wall, student-made mobiles hang from the ceiling with quotes and definitions. In addition to student made posters are paintings, quilts, and other projects created by students. The physical environment signals the reality that student input is a priority in this classroom.

Consciously or unconsciously, Isabel has created a classroom environment that is welcoming. Her minority students note that many of the posters have been created by their minority peers in previous years. While discussing a vocabulary word with her current English classes, she may point out a poster that was created by a target student from a previous year. Isabel knows that her current students know the previous students, and recognize that she is drawing attention to the work as a model for both White and minority students in her class. She is aware that many of the posters represent books written by non-White authors and that sends a message to her students as well. The physical environment blends with the affective environment to indicate both the value of student work and Isabel's attitude toward diversity.

All of the target students interviewed stated unequivocally that Isabel's classroom was a safe venue in which they could express their opinions without judgment from Isabel or the other students. As Sharon comments, "Like you can express your opinion;

you just can't down anybody else's opinion" (Sharon I2, p. 4). Isabel also fosters a sense of community and trust in her classes. As Monique says, "Anything that comes out, stays in the room" (Monique I2, p. 13). She also describes Isabel as affording a kind of "protection. Like when we're in the class, it's like her class is a class that may be open to people. Like I was this shy kind of person, whatever. But now I can stand up, ask questions, and not be too shy" (Monique I2, p. 11). The learning environment enabled this student to develop enough confidence to risk greater classroom participation. Students were able to feel safe to express their opinions in no small part to Isabel's personality. "I mean, she just brings warmth to the classroom. She doesn't make you feel bad in any kind of way" (Monique I2, p. 11).

Isabel believes the target students perceive her positively and this perception is corroborated by student interviews. She comments, "I'd like to think they don't see any difference in my treatment of students" (IMI3, p. 12). She relates a comment from an African American parent whose daughter was in Isabel's class. The parent said, "You were so fair to everyone in the class. You're never too hard or too soft" (IMI3, p. 12). The students echo this sentiment. Every student interviewed noted that she is fair. "She treats everyone fairly, yes, she does. I can't say enough about Ms. Merle" (MoniqueI2, p. 13). Without exception, the target students respect her and like her.

Isabel makes a point to be "aware of the whole student, not just judging the person's academic success. I mean knowing other things that the kids like, what's going on, extracurricular [activities] at school, work, family" (IMI2, p. 13). At the beginning of the school year, Isabel distributes an interest inventory designed to help her know her students better and to find ways to make connections with them.

In an effort to connect with her students, she makes herself available to students beyond the time she spends in their class. Students come in before school, during lunch, and after school to make up quizzes and tests, for extra help, to work on projects, and "sometimes just to come by" (IMI3, p. 19). She encourages this. "Come by. Let me get to know you. Make an effort so we can have a relationship sooner rather than later [so] I can know you as an individual" (IMI3, p. 19). When she knows her students personally, she feels she can more effectively engage and appropriately challenge them in her class.

In addition to engaging and connecting with her students, Isabel maintains high expectations for all of her students, including her poor and minority students. Jared, one of the target students, comments on how Isabel has treated him as a high potential poor and minority student in her class:

> Ms. Merle, she expects more. Like she sees how I'm doing, and she expects more from me. Instead of expecting less, she seems to work with all students. Like she'll say, "You're not doing so well, come talk to me at lunch" not "I don't know what the problem is, you're doing bad, I don't really care." (Jared, p. 9)

Isabel goes out of her way to ensure her students' success, which according to Jared, is different than other teachers he has encountered. Sharon, another target student, says,

"She tells you that you can do it. And when you do it, she gives you a lot of praise for it and makes you feel like, 'I can do this. I'll try to keep doing it' " (Sharon I2, p. 2). Telling students they can accomplish their goal contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Isabel is helping to build students' sense of self-efficacy.

Isabel's primary concern is that students work up to their potential, not necessarily that they all receive A's. However, if a student starts to slip, she will let that student know. As Jared comments:

> Ms. Merle, she's like, "I want you to work more and harder. And I see [this work] isn't [the good work] you've done [in the past]. Show me you have improved in your work and your quizzes. I would like to see [the high quality work] you've done before happen again." [Then she will say,] "Good job. You're picking up your pace." (Jared, pp. 9-10)

Isabel keeps track of student progress and makes it a priority to report to students about their improvement from one assignment, test, or quiz to the next.

Because Isabel strives to support her students academically and personally, she also attends student activities outside of the classroom. During lunch on the day of an interview, she attended the Quiz Bowl in which many of her former and current target students were involved.

> Today at lunch time I went [to the] Quiz Bowl. It was good, and I think that kind of support from the teachers to be at things for all students, but especially African American [students], they notice more, they appreciate more. Their activities are not as widely attended, and it gives them validation. (IMI3, p. 26)

Attendance at an extracurricular event clearly and overtly demonstrates to the students she is interested in their lives beyond the classroom walls. Not only does she take time from her day to attend student functions, but makes certain to select those that primarily involve low economic and minority students, and it makes the students feel particularly valuable and affirmed.

Content and Pedagogy

The target students in her class who were interviewed describe Isabel as a good teacher who gets really excited about teaching in her subject area. In general, her students believe she loves the content she teaches and loves teaching.

Isabel sees content as a vehicle to connect with her students. She chooses books with themes that will interest her students and because she knows the content well, she can connect the literature to students' lives. Isabel is a firm believer that "the material matters" (IMI2, p. 13) and that "American literature is a powerful route" to engage students in the content (IMI2, p. 19). When a teacher attempts to select literature for its appeal to students, the students perceive that as opening a door between them.

Isabel purposefully selects books with themes relevant to her students' lives. When asked to name a favorite class, one of the target students names Isabel's and says, "I enjoy English because she teaches about racism, sexism, drugs, alcohol. We read a lot" (Monique I1, p. 3). In fact, Isabel understands the need to select works that raise issues likely to appeal to adolescents—including minority learners—as a means of building student engagement in content. One student said that the books that they read are interesting, and admitted that it is the only English class in high school where she hasn't read Cliff's Notes instead of the book itself. Isabel tells the students that every novel they read "is on somebody's hit list, whether it is for language, sexuality, [or] violence. [The students] like the controversy" (IMI2, p. 23). She believes many adults do not engage in conversations with the students about controversial topics.

Isabel feels that the prevalence of African American literature in her class has connected her to some students who may not have otherwise sought her out because she is White. She says she uses powerful works by Black authors because of their worth, not as "token" coverage of African American literature.

Isabel is not afraid to confront difficult issues in her classroom. One student discusses the appeal that controversial issues have for teenagers. She explains that they read a lot of books "but it was good and I felt that, I mean a majority of it was like hatred, power hungry, sex, religion, so those were things and that is what teenagers probably need to hear about [to] get engaged. They have a lot to say about those certain things" (Monique I2, p. 12). Monique reveals that milder themes do not always hold the same appeal for a teen audience, that grapples with confusing and conflicting issues every day. These are issues the student says would not be appropriate for younger students, "but us, it's different because we have our own minds now" (Monique I2, p. 13). Monique believes that by allowing them to engage in discussions of controversial and relevant issues, Isabel sees her and her classmates as mature enough to handle that type of dialogue.

In addition, Isabel is passionate about her content and knows it well enough to make connections to other books, history, pop culture, and issues of interest to students. As Monique explains,

> One day we'll do a project or something, just around the world, it doesn't have to do with the English book. Then she as a teacher will try to interpret it to literature and things like that . . . . You're not [aware that you are] learning but you are actually learning. Like from something that you've done, she can convert it, literature and authors and things like that. I just feel like she knows what she's doing. (Monique I2, pp. 11-12)

Further, students appreciate seeing a purpose for the activities in Isabel's class. Even vocabulary study connects with their goals. Sharon remarks, "I think what you learn has to be useful . . . like in English we learn a lot of vocab that will help you for the SATs" (Sharon I1, p. 7). Isabel helps her students see vocabulary practice as a bridge to

higher SAT scores and thus directly connected to an opportunity to pursue a college education—an important goal for the target students.

Isabel herself admits to being easily bored and therefore tries to make her classroom engaging for herself as well as her students. As a result, she rarely does the same thing two days in a row. Classroom discussions are lively, relying heavily on student input. Isabel says she loves it when the students get so involved in a discussion that she can just become a bystander. While classroom discussions are the meat and potatoes of Isabel's classroom, there is enough variety in her teaching processes to keep things interesting.

Isabel incorporates student choice as part of her teaching repertoire. She offers students regular opportunities to choose books and projects they will complete in class. The choice adds to student interest and engagement. "It's like basically doing it all [ourselves] but having a set [of] guidelines. But we could do anything we wanted" (Sharon I2, p. 4). Monique excitedly describes a project that the class did at the end of the year:

> The last book we read we as students got to pick . . . . One day she picked a time to talk to the group of *Native Son* and we discussed it with her. Then the next day she'll go out in the hallway and discuss *Snow Falling on Cedars* while we're reading the next chapter in the book, but we have to keep up and we have to know what's going on because when it's our day to discuss, we have a quiz. So I mean that is good and sometimes she'll let the group have one quiz [and] we'll all get the same grade because we are supposed to be helping each other out and up to the same point. [That's] a technique I haven't seen anyone in the school [use]." (Monique I2, pp. 10-11)

Monique mentions that there are other approaches to learning that she finds appealing in Isabel's class. For example, Isabel uses a variety of techniques for assessing students. She assigns projects with rubrics attached, as was the case with a "literary valentine project." Sometimes Isabel administers one quiz to an entire group and records the same grade for each group member. Sometimes she reads quiz questions orally, asking students to record answers on a sheet of paper. Some tests and quizzes are open-book and open-notes, some are closed-book and no-notes. If the task has been to memorize a poem, sometimes she has them write the poem out and other times she goes around the room asking each student to recite one line from the poem, and if they can say the entire poem without an error, she will give the entire class 100%. One "test" she assigns is the Living *Invisible Man* test in which she asks students to choose a character from the book. They then have to create a situation where all of these characters might appear in the same place, such as a party. Characters interact with each other, and Isabel moves around and eavesdrops on conversations, asks questions and takes notes.

Knowing her subject area well also gives her the ability to tie historical facts and trivia into the discussion. While reading *The Crucible*, one of the students asks what happened to Tituba in real life. Isabel says she stayed in jail until after the Salem witch

trials and was eventually bought, reminding the class that Blacks were enslaved at that time.

Isabel also sees the relevance in connecting literature to pop culture. She relates the way Elizabeth Proctor was feeling about John's dalliance with Abigail in *The Crucible* to the way Cameron Diaz's character responded to Tom Cruise in *Vanilla Sky*. She says, "See how sick I am guys? I go to see Tom Cruise and think of *The Crucible*" (IMO2, p. 5). Her students appreciate a teacher who can connect what they are studying with things that interest them.

Isabel's pedagogy reflects a philosophy that is in harmony with her beliefs about the value of each learner and a teacher's need to support individual development. *How* she teaches is a response to *who* she teaches. Isabel describes her classroom as teacher-centered; however, while it may be considered teacher-directed or teacher-led, students do not sit passively. They are, for the most part, lively and engaged in the activities of the day, as is Isabel. She is passionate about her subject area, and her passion is contagious. Sharon says, "She's been teaching a long time. I think that the way she teaches is what's keeping her in teaching for a long time, besides the fact that she loves teaching. But her ability to be able to help students and be involved with the students, I think, is kind of or it rubs off on the students" (Sharon I2, p. 5).

An Evolving Understanding of the Target Students

It is important to note that Isabel's effective work with the target students was not grounded in a deep sense of the challenges the students faced as they began working at a more challenging academic level. In fact, her understanding of the target students evolved somewhat slowly as the year progressed.

In her second interview, Isabel reflected that she didn't believe the target students had any more obstacles to overcome in advanced classes than other students—although she did voice concern about the writing skills of one or two of the target students. Later she reflects that the target students feel a sense of pride in being a part of AVID, but also feel that being an AVID student indicates that they are not as able as the other students in the advanced classes. Still later in the year, she begins to talk about challenges she now realizes exist for the target students, including particular conflicts for African American males who struggle with simultaneous desires to be achievers and not to be seen as acting White. She talks about a double consciousness that her Black students seem to have—different persona they "put on" at school and at home. Late in the year she also shares a recent epiphany about a link between socioeconomic status and school achievement. As she watched a student bring a large project for another class into the building, it occurred to her that students who can come to school in cars have an advantage over students who must ride the bus. That caused her also to think about student access to materials that she had previously taken for granted and suddenly realized was a problem for many target students.

> But that's something I think you don't realize, we're not conscious enough, it isn't that these poor kids . . . don't want to produce, they just don't have the money, wouldn't think of getting money or asking parents . . . to go [to the craft store] to pay for seven tubes of glitter. Whereas the student who does better has all the resources, so I'm becoming a little more aware of that in projects. (IMI3, p. 6)

Thus late in the school year, Isabel seems just to be developing an awareness of fundamental challenges her target students experience as a result of their status as low economic students of color in a majority White high school. Nonetheless, she was able to connect with the students and to proactively support their success in an advanced academic setting.

A Final Word About Isabel Merle's Classroom

Isabel's energy and passion "rub off" on her students. She knows individual students and makes a point of attending their extracurricular activities, especially those of her target students. She is organized, yet not rigid. She can appear to digress and then make meaningful connections to instruction, much to her students' surprise. As the parent of teenagers, she can relate elements of pop culture to instruction to engage students. Isabel has a varied approach to assessment, which is fresh and exciting to her students. The physical and affective environment bespeaks of the value she places on student's work as well as the emphasis on culturally diverse literature. It is not coincidence that before, during, and after school as well as between classes, Isabel has target students "hanging out" in her classroom, whether they have work to do or not (IMI3, p. 18). She has helped to create a safe haven of academic engagement.

Isabel has done many things to support the success of her low economic students of color. Nonetheless, this positive—and according to the students, effective—support system is not rooted in a deep understanding of the economic and racial implications of attempting to navigate advanced academic expectations. Rather, she began her work with the students more from a willingness to accept that they belonged in her class and needed her attention. Certainly as she got to know the students as individuals, she grew in awareness of the challenges they faced. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that she was able to foster academic engagement of the target students in an advanced learning setting and to be a part of their support network for negotiating that new and complex role even in the absence of a deep understanding of the role that ethnicity, race, and economics play in the lives of the students.

Barbara Ladd and Her Biology II Class

The Classroom

Barbara is a 59 year-old White female with a slim build who stands six feet tall. Barbara has straight, dark brown hair laced with grey that falls just below her shoulders. Despite her white skin, one of her African American students refers to Barbara as one of the "Blackest teachers in the school" (BLO1, p. 1), meaning that she relates well to the

African American students in her classes. They like and respect her. Students also refer to her as the "snake lady" (BLO1, p. 1) since she has such a large assortment of reptiles in her classroom. Her demeanor is easygoing and calm, yet she exudes a certain palpable energy.

Students entering this laboratory classroom are greeted by the distinct odor of rodents, which soon will become breakfast for a variety of snakes. This classroom is a herpetologist's dream. Snakes in a variety of sizes and colors, some purchased and some donated, fill fish tank after fish tank. Two fish tanks actually contain fish and three others contain frogs and lizards. Sitting on an adjacent lab table are two fish tanks, one with hamsters and one with a large rat, which will be empty by the afternoon. Next to the incubator is a 3-foot display case containing a variety of bony relics. Directly above the display cabinet sits a corkboard with quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr. While the room is full of live and dead creatures, resources, stuffed animals, and posters, it seems orderly rather than cluttered.

Barbara has many ideas about how her class engages target students, ranging from her "sense of humor which is bizarre at times" (BLI2, p. 15) to interesting content and a variety of classroom activities. She feels students like "somebody who makes class interesting and it keeps you off guard a little bit because you're not quite sure where it is going to go at any moment" (BLI2, p. 16). She also believes it is because she is "willing to say anything, basically. I think they like that they are accepted, that whatever they say—it may not be appropriate for the moment or right—but [they have] a right to say it" (BLI2, p. 15). This helps to set a tone conducive to risk taking and acceptance, making the classroom a challenging yet safe place. These things, she feels, are important for all learners and may be particularly so for her minority students.

All of target students who have Barbara for a biology class indicate that her class is a safe place, both physically and emotionally. There is a feeling of comfort and acceptance in Barbara's domain; anything a student says will be heard. Although she invites students to relate stories of broken bones as they study the skeletal system, not all of Barbara's students interviewed enjoy hearing the comments of others. "It's kind of distracting, not on Ms. Ladd's part, but on other students because ideas they have nobody else in the class wants to learn. And they just continuously blab all the time, but I think Ms. Ladd kind of blocks them out and just really wants [us] to learn" (Sharon I2, p. 11). Sharon affirms that Barbara does not degrade student comments, whether appropriate or not. While this may be frustrating and interfere with the flow of the lesson in the eyes of some, it helps those who have a contribution to feel that they are valued.

Unlike English II which is a required class, Biology II is an elective course, and because it covers advanced content is considered an honors class. Most of the students are seniors. In a given Biology II class, there are approximately 20 students, a handful of whom are minority.

Students believe that she treats them fairly. Monique says, "Well, the way I see it, she doesn't treat anybody differently and sometimes at the school, I see people treating

others differently, like by their race or something like that" (Monique I2, p. 1). She later adds, "I think she sees everyone as an individual, not the color of . . . [his/her] skin, not the height, the weight, or anything like that. And that really helps" (Monique I2, p. 6). The students believe that Barbara makes a point to know people based on their individual merits rather than on assumptions linked to skin color or external appearance. Sharon also believes Barbara focuses more of her attention on the minorities in the class. "There are a few of the other minority [groups] in our class, but not many. And I think she kind of focuses on us so we don't get distracted" (Sharon I2, p. 12). Monique detects this too. "Yeah, she really reacts with everyone . . . . Like when we're doing things in the classroom where we, like everyone has to participate, if the minorities in the class are not participating, she will get them involved. Like other teachers, they won't do that" (Monique I2, pp. 6-7). Barbara makes engaging her target students a priority and does not let them slip through the cracks. Other teachers may let these students slide, but Barbara assumes an active role in assuring they participate and engage in her class and the students are aware of it.

Barbara challenges her Biology II students and has high expectations for all of them. As Sharon says, "Like she always comes to talk to me . . . . She'll ask me to go and try harder. She just cares" (Sharon I2, p. 10). When she asks a student to try harder, she nonverbally communicates to the student that she has faith in his or her ability.

Barbara will not accept inferior work from any of her students. When asked how Barbara relates to high potential poor and minority students, Monique comments,

> She thinks above the realm for us. Like if we have one of her classes, like I have Bio, well I can't say that I've done slum work, but if we were to do slum work, she would notice that and she would want more from us than slum work . . . . We know not to do slum work, so we don't do it. And that will help us in college and all. (Monique I2, p. 4)

When asked what Ms. Ladd would do if a student turned in "slum work," Monique adds, "She'll make us redo it. Like if we're not up to the high standards that we are expected of, she'll make us do it over" (Monique I2, p. 4).

Barbara does not have different expectations for target students, but she does recognize that sometimes students have extenuating circumstances requiring her to work with them in varied ways. If a student has serious personal/family issues that are interfering with school, Barbara modifies assignments. She feels they recognize that she did not give them abridged assignments because of their minority status but because of the extenuating circumstances. As she says of a recent modification, "It didn't feel to those kids like they were getting less, they were simply getting different because of the circumstances" (BLI2, p. 14).

Barbara communicates caring by being available to students. Sharon says about Barbara, "I like a teacher who I can talk to so I can come and get some help" (Sharon I2, p. 11). Barbara makes herself available to her students before, during, and after school to

help them. Many of her students find Biology II to be challenging and she makes herself available to students who need extra help. As Monique explains,

> In Bio II, I could always go in and ask Ms. Ladd for help and she'd help me, like if she had something else probably more important, something already scheduled, she'd still help me first, so that really helped me out. Like any time I needed any help with anything, any questions answered, she'd do that for me. (Monique I2, p. 1).

Barbara does her best to make herself available to students, not only for extra help but also for student needs beyond biology. Monique says, "It's not like all in school. She takes it outside of school" (Monique I2, p. 3). This student explains that Barbara will go above and beyond the call of duty to meet student needs, such as writing recommendations, with little or no prior notice.

Barbara admits that, given a finite amount of time and many invitations to student activities, she will attend an event where most of the students participating are minority students. She doesn't feel that these events are as well attended and believes it is important for the students to see her supporting them. She illustrates this point when talking about the Unity Dinner, an event planned by African American groups to celebrate diversity,

> I am faithful about going to the Unity Dinners and stuff like that. If I can get to no other events, if the choice is the Sports Banquet or the Unity Dinner, I'll go to the Unity Dinner because I think it is really important for parents and kids to see that you are there and you are supporting them and you care. That's a message, it's a visual message and that you had a good time. (BLI2, p. 14)

By making a choice to be present at events in where there is heavy low economic and minority representation, she overtly demonstrates to those students that what they do outside of school is as important as the demanding list of events in her personal life. She confirms that she values their interests, talents, and products.

Content and Pedagogy

Barbara's knowledge of her content is wide and deep. When students raise content-related questions, she can offer stories and facts beyond what can be gleaned from the textbook. For example, when the class was studying the skeletal system, she revealed that cartilage grows faster outside the body. She had read an article about some soccer players who had injuries to cartilage, which was removed, grown in a Petrie dish, and then reinserted into the soccer players, greatly accelerating the healing process. Barbara has such an extensive knowledge in her content area that she can share examples that interest her students.

Barbara tries to offer topics of interest to teenagers. One option for a project was the effects of alcohol. She also offers topics to which students can personally relate. For

example, she says that some students choose to do research projects on Sickle-Cell Anemia or Alzheimer's Disease because they have an afflicted family member. Students appreciate the chance to investigate topics to which they feel personally connected. She admits, too, that the unit on reproduction is very popular with her class. Barbara knows for her classes, interesting content correlates with increased engagement.

Barbara asserts that education in general, and scientific research specifically, is skewed toward a White, middle-class perspective. Barbara tries to change this as much as possible through choices she makes for students in her classroom. "I've always felt I'm one of those people when they first started having discussions in the school system, my kids were still in the school system. They'd talk about how African American children need to have Black images, and I said, 'And so do my children' " (BLI2, p. 11). She believes everyone needs to have positive images of different ethnicities. She asserts that biology helps to level the playing field for all students because,

> We are all genes and we're all cells and you can't get into the inner workings of a body and, take the skin off, we're just all the same. We can talk about some ethnic differences through evolution and statistical stuff, but in the end we're all the same. (BL2, p. 16)

Barbara sees biology as a way to give all students a common ground on which to frame understandings of themselves and others.

Study of the sciences lends itself to hands-on activities such as lab experiments. In addition to labs, Barbara uses a variety of strategies, hands-on activities, and student-centered lessons to help students engage in the Biology II curriculum. Students in Barbara's Biology II class also enjoy field trips, visits from guest speakers, student presentations, and projects such as writing biology books for children, not to mention exposure to actual cadavers.

Barbara's target students say her class is both engaging and fun. When asked what makes the class engaging, a number of students pinpoint the variety of teaching strategies. Sharon comments, "Like when she teaches, it is always fun. It's like she doesn't teach in one specific way of teaching . . . like she has various different teaching styles which . . . goes with every single person in the classroom, because nobody learns the same and that helps everyone out" (Sharon I2, p. 2). Sharon recognizes that students are individuals with different learning preferences, and Barbara accommodates the different needs of students in her classroom.

Barbara also provides choices in her Biology II classroom. Students can choose whether they prefer to work alone or with a partner on many assignments. They can choose topics for class projects and for their presentations. By providing choice to her students, Barbara gives them some control over what they are learning and how they express what they learn. Students note that the choices enhance engagement across her classes.

In addition to labs, students do projects that help the material come alive for them. One activity involved student presentations on body systems. The students had to become experts on a particular body system of their choosing and present what they had learned to the class. Barbara set the expectations: they had to have a "hook" to get students interested, present the material clearly, and incorporate a review activity at the end. Students also wrote questions that would appear on the final test on body systems. By allowing students to choose their topics and teach the class, Barbara empowers them. During their presentations, she interacts with them as if they are the experts, and while students present Barbara listens and offers information or comments, if necessary.

Barbara uses a variety of techniques to assess students. The presentations are just one example of how she collects data to measure understanding. Barbara also gives what she calls "partner tests." Students study for a paper-and-pencil test, but then draw a name out of a hat and work with that student on the test. The partners get the same grade. Students are always allowed to work by themselves if they prefer, but they have to let her know before the name drawing. Since Biology II does not have a state test, Barbara eliminates the final exam and assigns a research paper instead. She believes that this has been beneficial to many of her students who do not score well on traditional tests, some of whom are bright, low economic, minority students:

> I discover that I've got African American kids who participate in labs, like to talk . . . . Give my first test and I go, what happened here? . . . I'm mind boggled because I know in interactions with these kids this doesn't represent what they can do. And that's when I started looking at, okay, I need to reapportion how I evaluate. Yes, I do need to have tests. I mean, that's the way of the world and I need to help them learn how to take tests . . . but mainly I try to put in for activities that allow for creativity. As I talk to the kids about it, it's like there are things that I give you to do, you have ultimate control over. Tests you don't. There's always a little unknown there. But some things I give you, you can get A's, and some of the kids learn that just, they get it. (BLI2, pp. 6-7)

Barbara's objective in developing assessments is to engage students in a way to promote their success. She feels this is particularly important for African American students, some of whom do not perform as well on her "traditional" tests as they do on alternative assessments. "I guess what I need to say is that it is crucial for African American students to be able to have a way to exhibit how they know what they know in more than one way" (BLI2, p. 9). Barbara recognizes that traditional tests might not reflect all students' true abilities.

She recognizes some students prefer to work alone and some students in groups as she looks for learning preferences. When presented with a choice of working alone or collaborating, she believes many of her African American students will choose to work with a partner, although this is not true for every African American student, she notes. Barbara sees a pattern in the preferences for collaboration with like peers among her African American students, yet sees her students as individual people with individual learning preferences. She continues actively to refine her views about best practices for

minority students. After many years of teaching, Barbara recognizes the need to treat students as individuals. "I thought you could just treat all kids the same and they'd succeed, but that's just not true. You have to respect what's going on in their family and accept that part of the culture" (BLI2, p. 18). Barbara recognizes different priorities in families and whether or not she agrees with the priorities, she respects the family's choices.

A Final Word About Barbara Ladd's Classroom

Barbara, one of the "Blackest teachers in the school (BLO1, p.1)," believes her rapport with target students stems from her "bizarre" sense of humor and acceptance of all students' ideas. On the one hand, her target students feel it is a positive that she does not "see" their race—and on the other hand, believe she understands race-related issues in their lives. The former comment appears to relate to the students' perception that Barbara does not have negative views about African American students and does not expect less of them because of their race. The latter comment appears to relate to the students' sense that she understands the challenges they face as low economic students of color in pursuit of a "White, middle class dream." Thus the target students seem to value a teacher for whom their race is not a negative but does signal a need for understanding and support. In that vein, Barbara's awareness of potential learning profile preferences in her low economic students of color and of the challenges in their home and school lives has influenced her to make some pedagogical changes in response to specific student needs. She also acknowledges the power of collaboration, making partner and group work a prominent feature in her classroom, even on assessments. Recognizing that not all students learn in the same way, she uses variety and choice to engage them. While some of her students indicate she is too lax about extraneous student input during lessons, Barbara's students do not feel afraid to express their thoughts or beliefs in her classroom.

In addition, however, Barbara's content area lends itself to the examination of what is common to all humans and she talks with the students about their core similarities. Nonetheless, she recognizes students as individuals, studies her students as individuals, and addresses their individual needs.

Mr. Steiner and the AVID Class

The Classroom

Kurt Steiner is White male in his mid-thirties. He has short dark blond hair and stands about five feet ten inches. He was in the military for seven years prior to assuming the role of high school teacher. He teaches AVID juniors and seniors as well as German III, German IV, and AP German. As was the case with Barbara, one student refers to him as the "Blackest teacher in the school," because she feels he really understands her. In addition, Kurt has been bestowed the honor of the "Bling-Bling Award" by some of his African American students, which he proudly displays in his classroom. It is a slang term for a person who is glamorous and wears flashy jewelry. One only has to look at Kurt in his worn khakis and Birkenstocks to know the award is a joke bestowed with affection on

a teacher who "gets it." Whether it is because of the nature of the AVID program or whether it is his personality, Kurt seems to understand the needs of his African American students and the students recognize this. His students describe him as fair and understanding. Kurt is always on the go. He speaks quickly and is usually doing two or three things at once, such as emailing a parent and talking to a student concurrently.

While Kurt's AVID classes have the same number of students as Isabel's and Barbara's, his classes have more minority students by design. At least 50% of the students in the AVID classes are members of a minority group. White students, some from low income families and some not, comprise the rest of the class. AVID is an optional class and to participate, students must assume the responsibilities that accompany the class, which include a commitment to perform to the best of their ability. While these students largely have average standardized test scores, they have a determination to go to college, and they are often the first in their family to do so. Most AVID students are enrolled in at least one honors or AP class.

The AVID classroom is where Kurt's German classes meet, as well as other world language classes in the afternoon. Tables and chairs rather than desks accommodate the students in this classroom. On the wall next to the computers are posters AVID students have made listing the colleges they have applied to and a place to check that they have completed various stages of the application process and met the deadlines. Next to these posters is a bulletin board entitled, "The Wall of Fame." On this bulletin board are acceptance letters from colleges written to various AVID students. Compared to Isabel's and Barbara's room, Kurt's room appears Spartan. Plenty of wall space is visible and resource materials are scant.

Kurt believes that school can be a bit uncomfortable for high potential, low economic and minority students. In many cases, they are the only minority students in class and are often asked to speak on behalf of their entire race. One reason he believes these students are comfortable in his classroom is that his class is 50/50, minority and White. He believes this creates an atmosphere where minority students feel comfortable sharing their feelings and opinions because they are not "alone."

Kurt believes that the "key to any teaching is knowing the kids" (KSI3, p. 7). The nature of AVID almost necessitates knowing more about the student than just who they are for the time they are in the AVID classroom. To know how to steer a child toward specific scholarships based on financial need or specific talent, Kurt must really know his students' situations. Not only is this important for the students in terms of his or her future, it communicates a sense of caring. "There are teachers who don't know what kids play what sports or which kids are in drama and they don't ask, 'How was the game?' or 'How was the play?' . . . If you don't do that, you are never going to get anywhere with these kids" (KSI1, p. 10). Part of knowing the student as a whole person extends beyond the school. Kurt admits to memorizing information about his students. He knows what each student's financial situation is, parent names, parent occupations, siblings' names, and anything else about the family that might be important to know to care for the whole student—things such as divorces, drug addictions, family illnesses, and so on. He knows

those parents who respond better to emails, to phone calls, or to written messages. This makes Kurt's job easier because he knows exactly how to communicate with parents and it sends a message to students that they are important to him. They know he has learned a lot about them because he cares.

Kurt sometimes talks to the students as one big monolithic group, but then consistently pulls them aside and communicates individually. He believes that one-on-one communication is necessary and carries more of an impact for students than addressing the entire group:

> A shotgun blast to the whole class about how you need to apply [for scholarships] isn't the same thing as one-on-one saying, "You've got to do this and you've got to do that. And here's you scholarship, and you need to apply and bring it to me by Friday and I'll look at the draft." (KSI3, pp. 4-5)

Kurt says that the one-on-one time with the student is what AVID is all about. "To an outside observer sometime to walk into AVID, it looks like there's not a lot going on because it will be me sitting down one-on-one, like I did today. They need that because they don't have an adult advocating for them" (KSI3, pp. 6-7). Kurt becomes their advocate, and as a result, becomes a key figure in their lives.

Student comments support the fact that Kurt is a positive force in their lives. Myka comments, "Mr. Steiner encouraged me that I could do better because he knows that I can do [it] but he says that I have low self-esteem and I don't want to do stuff" (Myka, p. 15). Kurt pushes his students to do their personal best. He says he doesn't expect all A's on their report cards, but he also does not expect to see any negative comments, such as being inattentive in class or missing assignments. Jared articulates Kurt's emphasis on progress, "Mr. Steiner, he wants to see progress, even if you're not making A's. He told us before, he'd rather have a student with C's who is working hard and improving than someone who has straight A's and doesn't do anything" (Jared, p. 6). Through this philosophy, Kurt emphasizes the importance of working to one's fullest potential and deemphasizes the supremacy of the letter grade.

Several of the students commented on how he pushes them to work to their potential. They say he makes sure they stay on top of their work and are trying their hardest. "Mr. Steiner be on you. Pushing you. Compliment you if you need it. He'll support you in any way" (Monica, p. 1). When asked about Steiner's relationship with African American students, Sharon says, "No slacking. If you are slacking, you are in trouble" (Sharon I2, p. 10). He sets and maintains high expectations for all of his students. Athena who describes Mr. Steiner as a motivator for her, adds that, "It matters to do well in school because of Mr. Steiner's expectations" (Athena, p. 2). Kurt and other teachers with whom he works recognize that students want to please him. He believes that one of the most important things to do for students is to communicate your high expectations and then convince them that they can "do it."

Kurt feels that perhaps the reason target students have not been as successful earlier in their school careers is that there was nobody in the school system pushing them and telling them that they can "do it." Kurt sees the importance of giving positive feedback when students meet his expectations and do a good job and pushing them harder if they lag behind:

> I'm not going to tell the kids that they are doing a great job if they are not doing a great job. And I think to some degree they appreciate that. They want to know when they are messing up or not messing up. And that goes into how you treat African Americans too. Some teachers . . . are so careful with it. They baby them or not grade them at the same standard and give them an easier grade and that's just as destructive as failing everybody. I mean it's really not good. Nobody should kid themselves that the kids don't recognize it. They recognize it from the get go and they will tell me about it all the time. (KSI3, p. 16)

Kurt's direct, honest, yet caring approach facilitates positive student/teacher interactions and helps students engage in school.

He makes it a priority to check regularly with teachers about each student's performance in his/her classes. He tries to talk to at least one of each student's teachers once a week, through emails or seeing them in meetings. Teachers respond by talking with him or emailing him about concerns or good news about progress. Other classroom teachers occasionally visit his AVID class to check in with students or give them extra help if time allows. Sometimes Kurt seeks out the teachers and talks with them on their own turf. As Russell relays, "Sometimes he'd come to my classrooms to check to see how you were doing and stuff to make sure you were paying attention, to make sure you had your homework done. He stayed in close contact with teachers and stuff like that" (Russell I2, p. 5).

Kurt concedes that he doesn't know everything about the students and that he is not what he considers to be a great listener. He says that the most important thing is that students *believe* that he is omniscient. And they do. Marcus, who considers Kurt to be a key encourager in his life, states:

> Well, it was weird because when I first got into AVID, I didn't like him because he knew everything. And my mother, she was like, "How was your day?" and I'm like, "Fine." She didn't [not] know anything that went on. She knew everything so I couldn't really get away from her. . . . [Mr. Steiner] was pushing me to do it for myself. (Marcus, p. 10)

Because Kurt is working full time and has no prep time before he leaves to go to his graduate classes, he makes himself available to students during lunch. Since Kurt teaches a class during "zero period," which is right before school officially begins, he is not available during that time either. He will, however, come back to school later in the day to attend extracurricular events in which students are involved, such as the Unity Dinner and sports-related events.

Kurt trusts his students know he cares because he has "gone to bat for each of them" with other adults on at least one occasion, even volunteering to mediate if they have personal difficulties with another teacher. Kurt's priority is to know each student's situation, academically and personally. If he feels that a student is slacking, he will become aggressive with him/her. If he senses a student is upset, he can be reassuring.

Content and Pedagogy

Kurt has a passion for what he teaches, whether it is in German or AVID. He is currently getting a Ph.D. in German literature, so his passion has taken him to a higher level of education himself. Kurt is passionate about what he teaches in AVID as well. He has read *Invisible Man*, a book AVID students read their senior year, at least eight times so he is current with the ideas his students are thinking about. Another asset in engaging his students is that he loves kids. "I just work well with kids and I love working with kids. I think it's a blast and I think they see that, too" (KSI2, p. 15). Students enjoy being around teachers who enjoy being around them.

While most of Kurt's AVID curriculum is prescribed, he is the first to say that his AVID class is not content driven. However, he counters with the argument in defense of AVID and maintains that there is nothing they do in his class that is not "real." They practice SAT skills and write college application essays, which are real. He admits that reading *Invisible Man* is not part of the prescribed AVID curriculum but says students have discussed racial issues all year so the book is a culminating activity. It is a scholarly endeavor in which his students readily engage and so he feels it has value for the class.

Despite the diffuse nature of his AVID content, Kurt fills his classroom with rich multicultural resources. For instance, students read an article about how SAT bias was designed to keep certain students, specifically Jewish students, out of the Ivy League colleges. Students find that Stanley Kaplan, the man who created an SAT preparation program that bears his name, demonstrates that test taking is a skill that anyone can master with appropriate coaching. Kurt shares current events, such as a *Newsweek* issue featuring three Black CEOs for students to peruse in their free time. They read *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Kurt also manages to show the movie *American History X* to his junior and senior AVID classes. He asks students to write essays on famous African Americans and write about race according to their own perspectives. He believes he is obligated to raise awareness of racial issues with his students and he brings in resources he thinks will help reach that goal:

> All they say in AVID training is you need to get them interested in issues and have them learn how to talk about issues and things like that. So what better issue in a class that's 50/50 roughly [minority/White] than that? And it makes for some great talk and writing. By far, though, *American History X* is the best thing I've ever shown. But I don't think in a lot of public schools you'd be able to show that." (KSI3, p. 2)

Kurt believes the power of that movie comes not just from the subject matter, but the shock value. Students are "not easily shocked any more and that movie shocks a 17-year-old" (KSI3, pp. 2-3). The movie is quite graphic in showing violence against African Americans at the hands of "skinheads" and the impetus for discussion is that the protagonist is a skinhead who changes his perspective by the end of the movie. Russell explains that some of the content, such as this movie, stirs deep emotions:

> Even though I don't like to read, we read *Tuesdays with Morrie*, which was pretty good. It was sad, but it was still good. We would have little discussions about the book. We watched the movie, *American History X* and we talked about issues from that. That movie was sad. I had a lot of emotions going about feelings we had. And that was good. (Russell I2, p. 7)

Students are able to deal with tough emotional issues significant to their lives in a safe and supportive environment.

Kurt also believes in connecting what students are studying to other things they have already learned. For example, when the students were reading *Invisible Man*, they were asked to draw parallels between the Invisible Man's trials and tribulations to the trials and tribulations of Blacks in American History. In addition, he often presents an idea and discusses multiple perspectives on it.

Kurt connects the content to student interests and prior knowledge, uses variety, and teaches students to think critically at the same time. Further, he acknowledges the role of addressing learning preferences in student success.

Kurt's description of a good class involves exchanges between the students and him. He recognizes boredom is a two way street, so a teacher's enthusiasm and positive attitude are necessities for an engaging classroom environment. He loves the racial mix of students in his AVID classes because he is trying to create an enlightened dialogue about race and "the discussion generated by the mix in there is perfect" (KSI3, p. 1).

Kurt is able, through his selection of materials and his pedagogical approach, to keep students interested in what they are learning. Russell says, "He makes us read. We don't like to read. I know I hate reading. But he makes you more interested in a book, so he is very, very good" (Russell I2, p. 11). Students explain that he makes them think hard about what they are learning.

Kurt believes in the efficacy of student choice. Students in AVID are given freedom to make some choices about topics for assignments and how to use their time. For example, students were allowed to choose between two books last year at the end of the senior year. They are given open-ended essays, such as selecting a famous African American to write about. They are given choices, within reason, of what to work on during tutorials, which they enjoy because it gives them some control.

Further, students comment on the importance to them of the variety of activities available in their AVID classroom. Students who also have Kurt for German echo the sentiment. "But I mean it's a twist and he has different things, he can do different things like that and be fun, in all my classes not just sit at a desk and do busy work" (Monique I2, p. 15). In AVID, students play vocabulary games on teams and the winning team gets pizza. Athena who has Kurt for both German and AVID says, "He makes things interesting. We do no two things the same two days in a row. He teaches for understanding. In other classes, it is like you are a factory worker in a daggone assembly line" (Athena, p. 3). Jared reports on Kurt's flexibility in recognizing that there are multiple ways of approaching material. "Instead of teaching us something and saying, 'You need to learn that,' I know other ways also" (Jared, p. 6). In terms of Kurt's use of instructional time, Jared adds,

> Sometimes he'll lecture, but not much. It would probably be a ten-minute lecture, and then we'll ask questions that we have and we'll tell him what we know and he'll tell us what he thinks about it and it's basically he'll tell us, but he won't say what we think is wrong. (SI11, p. 2)

Kurt describes his pedagogical approach as the difference between Black churches and White churches. In doing so, he reveals sensitivity to cultural influences on learning styles.

> I think that's where my classroom is pretty successful with African American students because there's a lot of talking back and forth, whereas in a White church, you're just supposed to sit. Like in a lecture class . . . Nobody talks in my church. Nobody. Nobody sings out of line. Nobody will say, "Jesus," out of line. But in a Black church, it's different. And I think we make the parallel with some of the classrooms that kids have to sit in. For example, [another teacher] sits there and lectures for the entire 57 minutes with no feedback, no nothing. That's bad teaching, but it's especially bad teaching for African American students. And that's a real difficult statement to make because that can be construed as, "Well, African American students need a little jazz combo in the background to help them learn." Some people will take it like that, but it's not true. You have to get the kids going back and forth, and I think that's probably the biggest choice I make that affects the classroom dynamic. (KSI3, pp. 3-4)

A Final Word About Kurt Steiner's Classroom

Kurt is a role model for his students, attending school, working full-time, and raising a family. He doesn't ask students to work harder than he works himself. Kurt's perspective on why his students respond so well to him is his willingness to advocate on their behalf. He communicates that he cares through high expectations; he can be somewhat demanding, yet gentle if the case warrants it. Students understand his motivation and have a need to please him. They know when they earn praise it is genuine. Because Kurt communicates with other adults about students, they believe he sees and knows everything, and they do not shirk their responsibilities. Kurt sees the

benefit of a racial balance in his AVID class because it creates an atmosphere conducive to open discussions about race. In terms of pedagogical choices, Kurt blends what AVID students need to know to successfully navigate through the college application process with student interests when planning instruction. He sees the value in providing emotionally charged curriculum to make students think. His instructional approach mirrors the give and take that is found in Black churches as opposed to the lecture approach found in White churches. All of these factors combined created a learning environment that students find engaging.

Kurt's understanding of the particular challenges of low economic students of color in high challenge settings is broad and deep. He is aware of the need those students have to explore issues related to race as well as to explore issues related to college attendance. He knows that target students who are left alone to navigate high academic aspirations are more often than not left alone to fail, but he also understands the imperative for those students to develop an understanding of the educational system and the tools for thriving in it so that they develop a sense of self-efficacy as individuals.

Kurt ensures that the topics and issues discussed in AVID include those related to race. While he knows this is important for adolescent students of color, he knows also that issues of race are not one-sided and thus involve all students in the program. In his classes, issues of race and economics are central to his thinking, his planning, and to the events that unfold daily. They are not tangential issues or afterthoughts in any way.

Findings

Upon first meeting Isabel, Barbara, and Kurt, it may appear that these three teachers could not be any more disparate in terms of content area, background, personality, and demeanor. They do, however, possess similarities in areas important to the engagement of target students. They pay particular attention to the needs of *who* they teach, *what* they teach, *how* they teach, and *where* they teach—and to the interconnectedness of those elements.

Three major themes emerged from the study of the three classrooms:

- All three teachers were extraordinary in the eyes of the target students. In repeated interviews and discussions, the students repeatedly noted that all three were "good teachers." While the Sunnydale observers concurred that the three teachers were "good teachers," the observers did not see the three as being truly remarkable in the way that the students did. Attempts at having the target students unpack that sentiment a bit more generally failed. "They really teach," the students said. Only at the point where observers followed target students through their school days did the students' meaning become clear. It was simply the case that these students were unaccustomed to "good teaching." Many of their teachers did not make an effort to engage them or connect with them on an individual basis. The students did not find high levels of positive expectation,

demand, and affirmation in many of their other classes. In many of those classes, there was a great deal of wasted time, little discussion of interesting topics, and few engaging approaches to teaching and learning. It was simply the case that there was so little "effective teaching" in the academic lives of the target students that what Isabel, Barbara, and Kurt did seemed extraordinary to them. Isabel, Barbara, and Kurt teach from a base of deep content knowledge, with passion for their subjects, with a sense of real-world purpose for what they ask students to learn, and with variety and enthusiasm. All three teachers are, in fact, very good teachers. For these students, however, very good teachers were so unusual as to seem extraordinary. Evident in this setting is the reality that good teaching is fundamentally necessary—if not completely sufficient—for students' academic engagement and success.

- These three teachers kept the target students in the forefront of their thinking as they planned instruction and as they taught. Isabel, Kurt, and Barbara all made a conscious effort to keep low economic, high potential minority students in mind as they created their classroom community and planned instruction. Each of the three teachers continually asked themselves in their own ways, "How do I make sure the class works for these students?" Target students were thus less likely to slip through the cracks in these teachers' classes than in many of their others because all three teachers intended to keep the students in the forefront of their thinking. Because of the sense of community fostered by the teachers, the target students felt safe and comfortable to explore academic possibilities and take risks. While the target students reported they felt invisible in many of their classes, they were never able to disappear from the "line of vision" of the three teachers. In addition to creating a welcoming and academically challenging classroom environment, these three teachers planned and implemented instruction with the explicit intent to connect the target students with the material—again, something of a rarity in the school experiences of the students.

- These three teachers overtly and explicitly invested their time beyond class hours in their high potential, low economic, and minority students. Not only did the teachers keep target students in the forefront of their thinking in regard to instruction, they demonstrated their belief and investment in the students through out-of-class actions with the students as well. Many teachers invest in their jobs through extensive planning and time spent grading, but students do not see the investment in students. All three of these teachers made themselves available for one-on-one conversations about progress, for extra help, for talking about issues that mattered to the students, and even to check on the progress of the students in other classes. While small gestures, they were visible evidence to the target students that the teachers found them worthy of time and attention. Further, the teachers ensured that these students joined others in their

classrooms during lunchtime to work on projects and at book club discussions held in the teacher's home. They regularly attended activities that the target students valued—when necessary foregoing attendance at activities in which more affluent and/or White students participated. Not only did the presence of the teachers communicate the teachers' interest in them, it also build bridges of common experience that, in turn, fostered shared communication and mutual understanding.

Implications

This study of three classrooms in which high potential poor and minority students were academically engaged examined contextual factors embedded in the classroom experience that supported academic engagement. Looking at the classrooms through the perspectives of students involved in the classrooms is particularly helpful in gaining an understanding of what makes teachers effective in engaging high potential, low economic and minority students. Based on the experience of the target students in the three Sunnydale classrooms, the following guidelines emerge.

1. Teachers need to develop an understanding of the role of race in the academic success of students of color and to be comfortable talking about race in a multiracial environment. These three teachers had varying degrees of understanding of the role that race played in the academic and personal lives of their students. Isabel, who likely had the least developed understanding as the Sunnydale study took place nonetheless accepted the premise that the target students needed her attention to succeed. Even though she did not understand their situations deeply, she "accepted responsibility" for their growth. All three teachers were at ease talking about race in their racially and ethnically diverse classrooms. Because they were comfortable discussing race and other issues important to teens, the target students reported feeling comfortable discussing those issues in class as well. The three teachers created a context for all students to deal with complex issues together, helping to foster a sense of community that included all students.

2. Teachers need to develop individual relationships with low economic minority students. The three teachers in the study focused on developing relationships with the students both within and beyond the confines of the class period. They made themselves available before and after school and during lunch hours for extra help or just to talk. They provided their home phone numbers so that students could call if they had questions. Additionally, they attended the students' extracurricular functions, affirming their interest in and care for the students. Even within the boundaries of the class period, the teachers fostered a sense of community in which these students felt safe and comfortable to explore academic possibilities and take academic risks. Within the frames of their own personal styles, each of the teachers built trust with the students, nurtured and maintained that trust, and demonstrated respect and affection for the students as individuals. Conversations with the students suggest that this may have been the most important precursor to their academic success.

3. Teachers should know subject matter deeply so they help students discover its purpose and meaning and can connect it to students' lives. Because they knew their content and their students well, the teachers were able to make connections among subject matter, prior learning, and students' lives. Students reported being able to see relevance in the content they were learning, whether it was because it was presented to them as culturally relevant, because it appealed to them based on their interests, or simply because it was lively.

4. Teachers should accommodate learning preferences and interests of low economic students of color. By varying their instructional techniques, the target teachers prevented students from becoming stuck in instructional ruts that might cause many of them to disengage. Variety in teaching strategies ensured that at least some of the instruction was being delivered in a manner that appealed to individual students' learning preferences. Giving students choices in their instruction gave the students a sense of ownership of learning that contributed to their engagement. By providing choice and variety in instruction, the teachers were able to encourage active student engagement in the learning process. In this way, students who had never seen themselves as high achievers began to identify with the achievement paradigm and engaged in school.

5. *Schools and programs should provide academic opportunity and support for high potential, low economic students*. At Sunnydale, the role of AVID in the success of the target students was critical. Through AVID, the students found a peer group that valued academic aspiration, a safe haven to discuss their experiences and feelings as they sought to develop a new academic identity, and the kind of day-to-day mentoring, coaching, and guidance for understanding and navigating "the school game" that more privileged students find at home. It is still the case at Sunnydale High School that advanced classes are largely populated by White, middle class students and lower level classes are largely populated by lower economic students and students of color. When students from low economic and minority groups seek to make the transition to advanced learning opportunities, they tend to lack the background and the confidence necessary for a smooth transition. Without AVID, it is likely that many of the target students would have failed in the attempt—and would even have failed to make the attempt in the first place.

Schools such as Sunnydale still need to develop an atmosphere that embraces diversity. Effective diversity training should be included in this plan so that every teacher understand the challenges faced by low economic students of color in achieving academic success and every teacher continues to develop increasingly sophisticated understandings of his/her roles in reversing negative patterns of achievement. One of the simple and profound lessons of Sunndydale is also that we cannot expect students to perform at high academic levels from the baseline of low academic classrooms. Said another way, students cannot become what they do not experience.

At Sunnydale, there is some support for increasing the achievement of low economic students. That is, while classes are still largely tracked and segregated by race and economics, the school instituted and provided leadership for AVID—a program to

encourage lower performing students with potential to take part in higher level learning opportunities. While AVID did not diminish the practice of tracking in the school, it offered an opportunity for access to the target students (and others). For those students, that was important.

While many of the target students had a school history of classes that ranged from forgettable to regrettable, some teachers were willing to accept students who were less than stellar performers into strong classes. That experience of participating in even a small number of memorable classes was critically important to the Sunnydale target students.

While the three teachers did not themselves have minority (or low economic) status, and while not all of them had a sophisticated understanding of the lives of the target students, they were all willing to acknowledge and accept a role in the academic success and personal development of the target students. When combined with AVID, that was enough for the students to make the transition from lower achievement to higher and from lower post high school aspirations to higher ones.

Sunnydale thus teaches an important lesson. Schools and classrooms don't have to be stellar to work for low economic students of color. The experiences of the Sunnydale target students suggest that giving such students access to good classes in the presence of good support and good attitudes about the students may be enough to make a life-altering difference.

CHAPTER 4: Flagstaff School—Where Structure Meets Caring

Introduction

At first glance, the red brick buildings of the Flagstaff School appear wholly unremarkable. They are neither irredeemably shabby nor distinctly modern; the kind of buildings that drivers everywhere pass daily without a thought. The school, however, looks better than its surroundings. It is framed on all sides by rundown boarding houses and the dull brown and green buildings of housing projects. If you zoom out beyond the Flagstaff neighborhood a little further along the treeless streets, the scene becomes one of shipyards, coal yards, cranes, and other architectural vestiges of industrial mid-Atlantic America.

Features that do distinguish the school from its neighbors are the distinct lack of graffiti on its red brick walls; the absence of broken windows, and lack surrounding debris. The buildings might be austere, but they are also impeccably clean and well-tended. It is not the outer walls of Flagstaff, however, that merits interest in this particular school in this particular neighborhood—although the obvious respect for property factors into the equation. Rather, it is what goes on inside the walls that makes Flagstaff stand out from a crowd of demographically similar schools across the country.

Inside, Flagstaff, there is nothing inconspicuous about the bold banners that line the foyer, announcing the importance of working hard, staying in school and being a good citizen. There is nothing predictable about the high student achievement scores that are regularly recorded here, or the high teacher retention rates and levels of parent and community involvement. Inside the school buildings, students are busy developing a sense of their own agency as competent, college-bound learners. Teachers are busy helping their students find the connections between the state mandated standards and their own modest life experiences. And administrators are busy constructing and maintaining the supports necessary to ensure that a shared vision of high achievement and good character permeates every aspect of school life.

With consistently high test scores and high rates of future college enrollment among its population of low income African American students, the Flagstaff School stands as an educational oddity. Just what is it about this seemingly modest elementary school that engenders student success in the context of such palpable risk factors? What is the moral of this school's story for the educational community with regard to reaching and teaching students who traditionally underachieve? The intensive case study of the Flagstaff School reported here, based on over 80 hours of observations, interviews and review of documents conducted over a period of two years, suggests that the answers to these questions are in a confluence of factors that consistently support teachers and students in defying the odds that should be stacked against them.

Codes for the case study are as follows: OS represents a school level observation, OT represents a teacher or classroom observation, IS represents a student interview, IT

represents a teacher interview, IA represents an administrator interview, D represents a document, and N represents an observer note. Numbers following an abbreviation indicate the order in the particular sequence, so that OT5 means that the information cited came from the fifth teacher observation at Flagstaff. For data sets longer than one page, the page number on which the information is located follows the abbreviation and sequence number.

Background and Setting

To open the door to the Flagstaff School is to enter a learning community of visual and social vibrancy. The school which serves students from pre-kindergarten through grade eight draws students from throughout the school district in which it is located. The walls are liberally decorated with displays of student work. The corridors, the classrooms, the gym, the offices, and every other feasible space are adorned with banners and printed slogans or quotes germane to the school's character education program. "I must learn to earn," says one. "I am someone special," and "Proud to be drug free" proclaim others (OS1, p. 1). The office is a hub of activity as the peripatetic principal, James Arnold, and the three assistant principals ceaselessly interact with students, teachers, parents, and community members. Teachers converse in the halls, while students clad in neat uniforms talk with each other or work on class assignments. An atmosphere of energy, purpose, and amiability radiates throughout the building.

There are often visitors in the building from the Flagstaff Foundation, the organization which founded the school and underwrites all costs above those covered by the local public school district. The foundation was established by a wealthy, local businessman, and in addition to providing financial support that allows Flagstaff to provide some services beyond those generally provided by local public schools, it also employs administrators who foster links between Flagstaff and the external business community. The benefactor's inspiration for the Flagstaff Foundation transpired on a trip to Israel when he was a young man. During that trip, he observed that the game of tennis seemed to function as a significant equalizer between traditionally divided cultural groups. Over time, he considered the possibility that opportunities for low economic, minority students to become skilled at tennis might open doors of opportunity for them in a wider world than the one framed by poverty. After he retired from business, the Flagstaff Tennis Center became the foundation's initial project and now serves both the physical education program of Flagstaff School and the local community. The foundation maintains an active presence in the running of the school. For example, it was business sponsors who insisted upon a strict teacher dress code, and, in consultation with teachers and administrators, developed guidelines for professional dress at Flagstaff. The Flagstaff benefactor—also in consultation with Flagstaff faculty and administrators—developed the slogans that are displayed throughout the school (OS1, p. 2).

Behind the Tennis Center stands the health clinic, where a school nurse and three health assistants support the school's parents in meeting their children's health needs. Although many of the families within the school community are covered by health

insurance, most do not regularly visit medical centers, and in some cases they are unaware of how to access the services available to them.

A prominent feature of the Flagstaff School is its favorable staff to student ratio. Along with the principal and three assistant principals, there are approximately 52 teachers who serve the school's 780 students, with an average of around 20 students per class. In addition, Flagstaff employs several retired personnel as part-time teaching assistants, and benefits from the support of numerous community volunteers. Included among the school's other support personnel are three technology specialists who provide curriculum support for teachers and supervise the school's computer lab and the school's television production studio. Part-time teaching assistants and technology specialists are funded through the Flagstaff Foundation (OS2, p. 9).

Unlike most schools in the state, Flagstaff operates on a year-round schedule, making the school year almost a third longer than for other students in the district. The eight and a half hour school day is also longer than that of other schools. Additional instruction is provided through Saturday classes that are held from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon each week to provide additional support to approximately 230 students functioning below grade level in a given area at a given time. Saturday classes are staffed by grade-level teachers, who receive an hourly wage for their weekend work. One of the three assistant principals is also present, on a rotating basis, and although not required to attend school on Saturdays, the principal is also there every week because he believes that his presence reinforces his interest in the work of his students and staff. The 27 mandatory intersession days built into the school year provide students with additional remediation, tutorial, and enrichment opportunities. The longer school day and school year are also made possible by the Flagstaff Foundation (OS2, pp. 9-10).

The overwhelming majority of students and the majority of teachers at Flagstaff are African American—as is the school's principal. All Flagstaff students qualify for free lunch based on the low income status of their families. Students from around the district may apply to come to Flagstaff, although the school does not accept students in the lowest performing quartile because the school does not have a special education program that might be important for some students at that achievement level and does not accept students in the highest performing quartile because the school district does not want to lose these students from its program for gifted learners (OS2, p. 1).

Despite a student population that would typically predict patterns of low achievement, the school prides itself on its record of achievement. School documents report that the African American population at Flagstaff consistently betters the standardized test scores of African Americans in the district, that approximately 80% of Flagstaff students pass the state-mandated standards tests each year—a figure that is 20-40% higher than the pass rate for students as a whole in the district, and that approaches or exceeds the average pass rates for White students in the district (D14, p. 211). Of the 35 former Flagstaff students who graduated from high school in the June prior to data collection for this study, the principal reports that 28 enrolled in four-year colleges, two

enrolled in two-year colleges, four enlisted in the military, and one had no firm plans (OS1, p. 12).

The School Day

For each Flagstaff student, the school day begins as they are greeted at the school door with a welcoming handshake from a staff member or a uniformed member of the military who volunteers time at the school. Thus the first school contact for every student every day is an adult who smiles at the student, makes eye contact, checks that the student's uniform is appropriate and neat, and asks about the status of homework. Following breakfast, which is provided in the cafeteria, students in grades 3 through 5 proceed to the gymnasium, where they are joined by local volunteer soldiers for the morning routine. Students there line up by grade level, and are called to attention while soldiers lead them in reciting the pledge of allegiance and singing the national anthem—both in full voice. One of the assistant principals then leads the students in shouting slogans that are displayed around the gymnasium walls, including, "I can go to college if I work hard!" "Be cool—Stay in school!" and "Believe in yourself!" Following the chanting of slogans, silence descends over the group. The students stand still as the soldiers begin their daily inspection. Each soldier refers to a checklist as he conducts his inspection—students are expected to have their shoes tied, shirt-tail tucked in, and to be wearing a belt. Any student who passes inspection earns ten points to be redeemed for prizes at the school store, another service made possible by the Foundation. While unknown to students, the inspection also provides adults the opportunity to ensure that students are dressed in clean clothes and are free from signs of physical injury. Soldiers also inspect students' school-issued notebooks to see that homework is complete (OS1- p. 2).

Middle school students in grades 6 through 8 report to their homerooms after breakfast. At the appropriate time, the pledge of allegiance and national anthem are led by selected students and broadcast to each classroom through the school's television station. Student reporters also update their peers each morning on national news and weather. The program concludes with a motivational quote and a challenge to work hard and have a good day (OS2, p. 10).

With the morning formalities behind them, some students proceed to one of the morning rotation courses taken by all students during their time at Flagstaff. These include a Living Healthy class that focuses on nutrition and making healthy food choices, an Etiquette course in situation-specific manners, and Conflict Resolution and Study Skills classes. Flagstaff students also take a course called Speaking Green. In these classes, students are taught "formal" English. The classes are called "Speaking Green" because green is the color of money—and thus of power. Students learn to speak the language that will give them access to money and power in the broader world. They are taught to switch between the language codes of their informal dialects and standard or business English. All of these courses are highly practical, offering students a chance to apply their emerging skills and receive feedback in the context of simulated real-world scenarios (OS1, p. 3).

As they enter their regular classrooms to prepare for academic work, students are routinely greeted by their teachers with a handshake at the door. They learn what to expect from the day by reading from the list of activities, often written as a letter, displayed clearly on the blackboard at the front of the room. The questions and tasks in this list almost invariably reflect the state mandated standards. For additional guidance students look to their teachers, who typically lead the class in a whole-group instructional format from the front of the room (OS1, p. 4). Students are reminded of expectations for appropriate personal conduct and quality academic work by the quotes around the room that reflect the school's pervasive character education program. Students see samples of their own work on the walls, along with colorful educational charts and posters. Their classes typically operate at a brisk pace with a minimum of behavioral interruptions.

In Mrs. Battersby's fourth grade classroom, students start the lesson with journal writing, often responding to a prompt based on the character trait that is the focus for that week. Students greet each other and their teacher according to a well-practiced format, and share and receive feedback from the group on their writing. Mrs. Battersby is both businesslike and warm with her students, keeping them firmly on task with their academic work at the same time that she sometimes pauses to share a brief personal anecdote or to openly praise an individual student's manners. She discreetly shares editorial advice with individual students as they work, and helps students relate their coursework to their personal experiences and to the character education program. Mrs. Battersby often talks with her students about making good decisions, whether it is choosing the right answer on a test or making good behavioral choices.

In her third grade classroom, Ms. Deronda begins the day by greeting her students sincerely, and when they ask in unison how she is doing, she often replies, "I am fine because I am here with you" (OT28, p. 73). Students listen carefully as Ms. Deronda instructs them in writing descriptive sentences, and very often the instruction is accompanied by a masterfully told personal story. Students then break into reading groups where they work through activities that are directly tied to goals identified in the state standards. They take the lead from their teacher's relaxed and positive—but clearly focused—manner and remain productively engaged in their work.

In Mrs. Page's kindergarten classroom, students frequently start their day in a group activity as they sit on the carpeted area at the front of the room and recite the day, the date and the weather. They clap out the syllables in each word of the recitation, and spell selected words aloud. Mrs. Page remains in clear control of the activity as she moves on to read, with great expression, a story about Thanksgiving (OT15, p. 49). The room is decorated with colorful posters such as those depicting enlarged book covers. Soul music plays quietly on a radio in the background. There are many craft supplies, and students will have a chance to use these throughout the day. Mrs. Page's students are engaged and well-behaved.

Mr. Hemmings' eighth grade students begin today's math lesson by preparing for an upcoming test. He presents and models problems and their solutions in a highly structured manner. Students watch and then practice what he has shown them. They

appear comfortable in the presence of their imposingly tall teacher who frequently peppers his methodical instruction with relaxed humor and encouragement. Students sometimes work in teams or play games in the format of popular quiz shows to reinforce key concepts in a fun way.

Later in the day, students might have the opportunity to relax somewhat during the slightly less structured environment of art class or physical education. In every class, however, structure, order, and productivity in conjunction with outward displays of caring from teachers are the norm (OS1, p. 4).

While students are busy in their classrooms, the principal, James Arnold, and the assistant principals respond to scattered student behavioral issues or impromptu parent visits, observe classes and plan for monthly faculty meetings. Most disciplinary cases are handled by the assistant principals, with the almost invariable backing of Mr. Arnold (OS2, p. 11). Arnold himself was an assistant principal at Flagstaff for four years, having come to education from a business and military background before his promotion to principal. He is an energetic presence who converses easily with students as they stop him in the hallways. He addresses all he meets with direct eye contact and genuine interest. Today, he checks in on his new and substitute teachers, recognizing that teachers are often insecure about working in urban schools that serve minority populations. Then he sits down with a pair of eighth grade students in response to a disciplinary incident. He carefully listens to each student's explanation of an incident and guides him/her to suggest appropriate solutions and disciplinary consequences (OS2, p. 11). Arnold works assiduously to curtail potential problems in their early stages and sets the tone of composure and respect that is evident throughout the school.

What Makes Flagstaff Work? Themes From the Data

Despite the fact that school demographics are predictive of low achievement and poor behavior, the Flagstaff School offers a program that helps their students experience success. Data from this case study suggest that it is not a single factor, but the interrelationships between a collection of factors that engender student success in this school context. The overarching themes that arise from the records of observations, interviews and focus groups are:

1. Flagstaff School provides what home cannot for many students—a sense of security derived from both structure and caring.
2. Expectations for academic achievement are uniformly high and center on mandated state proficiency tests.
3. A shared vision of academic achievement, good character, and community involvement drives all stakeholders.
4. Leadership is strong at all levels of the system.

These themes, their subcomponents, and their interrelationships are explored below.

I. School Provides What Home Cannot

A strong theme arising from the data is that the Flagstaff School functions as a cocoon of security for its students through the dual forces of structure and caring. These twin forces provide a kind of reliability that is not found in the homes of many of the students. At the same time, however, Flagstaff encourages involvement from parents to strengthen home-based supports. The sense of physical and emotional security cultivated in students is the solid and fertile ground from which academic success is able to grow. In a broader community plagued by poverty, drugs, school failure, and shootings (IA2, p. 185), the majority of Flagstaff students do not grow up in safe, predictable home environments. As they contribute to an environment simultaneously characterized by structure and caring, teachers and administrators at Flagstaff meet student needs that often cannot be met at home.

Structure and Predictability

The attempt to impose structure on students' school lives is calculated deliberately by teachers and administrators to address needs that may go unmet at home. One teacher explains, "Every day I have [students] write in journals, simply because they need structure . . . it gives them a sense of security. Think about the environment they are living in" (IT2, p. 158). In other cases, teachers simply recognize that structure creates a predictable setting that is conducive to student learning. Referring to a list of tasks written on the blackboard in her classroom, one teacher says,

> Those are the daily objectives. And that's to keep [students] abreast of what's going to happen for the day . . . and it's also to give them a focus for how the day is going to run, what the plans are. Because I feel that by them knowing what's expected of them as the day proceeds, it will help the day to run smoothly. (IT1, p. 145)

A number of factors combine to produce the experience of structure. One of these is the emphasis on routine. Each morning, students practice certain rituals that help set the tone for the day. The handshake from an adult at the school door is a daily occurrence. The morning formalities in the gym with the chanting of the slogans and the uniform inspection, and the television broadcast to the older students, do not deviate in format. Even the presence of the uniformed soldiers lends a standardized air to the morning, as do the students' neatly worn uniforms. Inside the classrooms, the great majority of instruction at Flagstaff follows a "stand and deliver" model, particularly during the beginning of each lesson as the teacher directs the learning process from the front of the classroom (N2, p. 188). Each day, the classes follow a predictable pattern as students work through the assignments written with the daily objectives on the board.

Across multiple observations, students show themselves to be well versed in the routines of the classroom. One observer notes, "As students finished the STARS (reading) assignment, each of them returned the workbook to the appropriate shelf . . . the students are thoroughly familiar with the routines of the classroom, and the designated

helpers automatically perform their chores to keep things running smoothly" (OT51, p. 131). Students themselves also recognize and articulate the value of this focus on routine:

> Student: Something that helps me in the classroom? There's a whole lot of stuff.
> Interviewer: Talk about all of it.
> Student: How [the teacher] writes stuff on the board. And when she greets us good morning, she says good morning and everything we're going to do today. And she has all the work on the board, so the people that are ahead, we can already finish the work instead of waiting for other people. (IS1, p. 134)

A related component of the structure is the highly consistent set of expectations for student behavior. Expectations for conduct are clear, with ten printed rules posted in each classroom and around the school, including "I will listen attentively to all my teachers and Flagstaff adults;" "I will line up and move in a quiet and orderly manner when I enter and exit all sites;" and "I will be respectful of others" (D12, p. 202). These rules are not simply words on a page. Observers note that in the majority of instances, teachers use the common language of these rules to address even minor behavioral infringements. Administrators, teachers, and students seem very clear about behavioral expectations at Flagstaff, through both language and action. Observers note that "teachers address any sign of misbehavior immediately. Misbehavior is not ignored" (N2, p. 188). Many students also mention behavioral expectations when describing Flagstaff's good points, exemplified by the following comment from an elementary school student:

> I think what makes this a good school is that they have signs everywhere reminding you not to do a bad thing. So if you're about to do something and then you see the sign, you know not to do it so you won't get in trouble or suspended. (IS1, p. 141)

In various focus groups, students also indicated that the few students who do not behave well represent a distraction to others and would be wise to check their behavior (e.g., IS1, p. 139).

The findings from multiple sources indicate that the Flagstaff school is characterized by highly structured and consistently applied classroom and school routines, and clear expectations for student behavior.

Caring and Respect for Students as Individuals

At the same time that structure prevails, students are held to high common expectations for personal conduct, and experience predominantly teacher-led instruction, there is an unmistakable sense of adults caring for students as individuals. Based on multiple observations and interviews with students, teachers, and administrators, it is evident that the teachers involved in this study care deeply for their students and feel an extraordinary commitment to applying their best efforts to help their students succeed.

While there is inevitable variation in the extent to which individual teachers display this commitment, its presence is well supported. Both teachers and students consistently point to the faculty as the primary reason why students are so successful at Flagstaff. The following interview response from a middle school teacher reflects this feeling:

> I really believe that the school is a success because of the teachers. There are some very dedicated teachers here, and we love what we do. And we love these students, and I think we love them so much that they frustrate us when they don't do well because we want to see them succeed. (IT3, p. 177)

The deep concern for students as individuals is manifest in the classroom through both the atmosphere of mutual respect fostered by many teachers and the opportunities that are provided for individualized instruction and feedback. Teachers make visible, deliberate attempts to express their care for students and demand that students show respect for themselves and each other. Teachers share stories or bring in personal items from their own lives, compliment individual students on their behavior or achievements, and routinely make themselves available to help students with their work outside of class times. Ms. Deronda's classroom provides a model illustration of caring. As she greets her class one morning, she says, "I [drive past] eight other elementary schools before I get here. I want to be here with you. I want you to become educated, responsible and productive students" (N8, p. 221). On another morning, Ms. Deronda begins her class by asking each student to make direct eye contact with a class member and say something nice to them (OT22, p. 59). When a student arrives late for his kindergarten class, Mrs. Page immediately asks him if he has had breakfast, and then arranges for him to get some food (OT47, p. 113).

In the fourth grade, Mrs. Battersby reveals her philosophy of caring as she expresses her goals for the atmosphere of her classroom:

> I like nurturing. I like calmness. I like for the kids to feel free to communicate, but I don't like loudness. I don't like disruptions. I just like a calm climate. I like a supporting one. And then I like collaborative. I like peer groups. I like kids working together as a team. I always tell them, you know . . . you're always into basketball, and you're always into football. But when you think about it, nobody wins by themselves. It takes a team. And that's how I operate in my classroom. I like for them to get along with each other and to help each other. If somebody's having a problem, I tell them not to laugh. We don't laugh. It's like a caring . . . . (IT1, p. 148)

Students in Mrs. Battersby's class respond to these cues from their teacher; they sometimes remind each other how to behave respectfully and work cooperatively during group learning activities. A similar picture is visible in most Flagstaff classrooms for most of the time. For their part, students articulate their awareness of the extent to which their teachers care for them. One student comments:

> The best thing that my teacher has done was that she helped us with things we need. Or if we have a problem with one of the students in the class, she'll make us go to a guidance counselor or she would try to help us with the problem and see if we could solve it without having to hurt somebody. And my teacher has done a lot of things for me personally, and she's kind. She has a good personality, and she tries to do her best to help me with the things I need. (IS2, p. 172)

This response is typical of the language used by students in focus groups when describing their teachers.

At the level of instruction, the respect for students as individuals is evident in the regular personal feedback that students receive on their work and the extra help that is available for struggling students. In most classrooms, teachers deliver whole-class instruction as they introduce or reinforce a concept or skill, and then have students work independently through the tasks listed on the board. While students work on these tasks, teachers typically either walk around the room and provide personal feedback to students, or work with small groups of students on a rotating basis. In Mr. Hemmings' math class for example, problems are modeled for students on the board, and then as they work independently through additional examples, he walks around the room to check individual students' work (OT8, p. 33). In Mrs. Battersby's class, an observer notes that "as [students] wrote in their journals, [the teacher] walked among them to edit and give corrective feedback, for example, 'A sentence needs a subject and a predicate, you need to elaborate on this sentence'. . . [The teacher] gave editorial comments quietly and privately." Similarly, Ms. Amato sets her eighth grade social studies class an assignment requiring computer research, and then spends the lesson moving from group to group to quietly ensure that students are on task and to offer extra guidance where necessary (OT26, p. 69). Where individual feedback is provided to students, it is consistently done so in an unassuming way that does not humiliate or draw undue attention to struggling students, but is woven into the routines of the classroom.

The consistent close monitoring of individual student work appears to arise from the teachers' desire to prevent any student from falling through the cracks. Flagstaff teachers do not wait for report card time to focus on who needs additional help. On Ms. Deronda's wall is an unassuming hand-printed sign declaring simply, "I will make it hard for you to fail here" (IT2, p. 162), which nicely captures the sentiment that is evident in teachers' interactions with their students. In a statement representative of other teachers' comments an elementary teacher explains, "There's no back-up plan for these kids. Either you use your brain and get ahead and get an education, or you succumb to the perils of your society, of your culture. I mean that's it. There are no other options" (IT2, p. 162).

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the strong sense of structure and predictability at Flagstaff operates in combination with a genuine sense of caring and respect for students, their work, and their futures. This is described by one observer as a "tough love" approach (N2, p. 216). The case of a particular third grade student, Shimina, illustrates the power of the combined forces of consistency and caring. This

heavy-set, African American girl began the school year as she had ended second grade—as a "busybody" and "tattletale" who regularly related the misdemeanors of her classmates to the teacher. The teacher, Ms. Deronda, responded to Shimina's tattling, tendency to wander about the room, and off-task behavior with consistent, calm redirection. "I need you in your seat," she would say in a matter-of-fact tone, or "Which is more important, your work or a petty matter?" Gradually, Shimina settled down, realizing that she would be treated with the same respect and high expectations as every other class member, and appeared more focused on her work by winter break (N5, p. 216). An observer relates that "shortly after winter break, the teacher received a private note from Shimina. The young girl thanked the teacher for "being tough" and for caring about her; she further explained that she, too, wanted to be a teacher . . . just like Ms. Deronda" (N5, p. 216).

Encouraging Parental Involvement

An interesting dimension of the Flagstaff program appears to be its simultaneous intent to compensate for some deficits of stressed homes and to strengthen the existing home supports. The impact of the school's approach on parents' feelings of efficacy and involvement is not a focus of this research, but would make an interesting topic for future study. That point aside, there is much in the data to suggest that the staff of Flagstaff actively encourage parental involvement.

When enrolling their children in the Flagstaff School, all parents and students must sign an "Education Contract" which indicates that enrolment is contingent upon the student maintaining higher than a C+ average, staying drug and crime free, and neither becoming pregnant nor fathering a child (D1, p. 6). The parent section of the contract explicates a list of attitudes and behaviors that parents are expected to embody as they support their child's education. These include "Discuss what was learned at school each day," "Make sure that school (schoolwork, homework, and study time) comes before television and playtime," and "Send my child to school on time, each day (Good attendance is crucial to my child's success in school)" (D1, p. 6). It is mandatory for parents to join the Parent/Teacher Association and to conference with teachers at least once each semester. Seminars are provided to educate parents about the state mandated tests and explain what parents can do to support their child's test performance (IT2, p. 162). The school also offers night school programs for parents, with courses in parenting skills, budgeting, job search, and GED preparation (D14, p. 213).

Beyond the formal mechanisms for parent involvement, there is a deliberate attempt on the part of administrators and teachers in the elementary school to encourage parents to see themselves as ongoing partners in the educational process. A parent volunteer takes attendance each day and maintains a database for the school (OS2, p. 11), and parents are encouraged to volunteer as tutors and in other supportive roles. Academic assignments are often designed to involve parents in a positive way. For example, Mrs. Battersby gives her students a homework assignment related to their math unit on budgeting in which they must interview an adult at home to get advice on

spending money wisely (OT10, p. 37). She often assigns take-home projects on which students will need help from parents or family members.

> I tell the kids to tell their parents, 'You can't learn it all in the amount of hours you are in school. One teacher can't do it all for 21 children.' You know, it takes all parents to work with children to be holistic, so we can get a full picture of what's going on with that particular child. (IT1, p. 149)

In another class, students are instructed to practice letter-writing by drafting a letter home to their parents about the consequences of poor behavior (OT51, p. 129). Homework is conceptualized by some teachers as a tool for encouraging parent involvement in student learning, "Homework is a way of contact because if you don't do your homework, then I will contact parents," says one teacher, "And then homework is a way for the parent and the child having quality time to sit down and review what was taught at school for the day" (IT1, p. 149). Teachers also refer to letters they send home to parents, informing them of upcoming events or thanking them for their involvement in special classroom events (IT1, p. 150). Regular phone contact keeps parents aware that a child is struggling or doing particularly well. Ms. Amato explains that although reports are due home at the end of each month, she sends bi-weekly reports so that parents can remain abreast of their child's progress in school and address problems early (IT3, p. 178). According to observers, the extent to which this strong emphasis on parental involvement is consistent across all teachers and continues into the later years of middle school is unclear (N2, p. 187).

As described above, the data suggest that at the same time as the school functions to provide the security and structure that is not always available in the home environment, there is also a deliberate effort to provide parents with the skills and supports they need to share in the learning process with their children. One teacher uses the analogy of a "three-legged stool" to describe the importance of involving parents with teachers and students to best support the education process (IT2, p. 162). In this way, it appears that Flagstaff School seeks to both provide for its students what home cannot always provide—a sense of security through consistency and caring—and to foster links between parents and the school so that success can spill over into the world of home.

II. Expectations for Academic Achievement Are High and Center on State Tests

Every aspect of the physical, curricular, and instructional environment at Flagstaff reinforces high academic expectations. Rule number 10 on the list posted in each classroom simply reads, "I will achieve." (D12, p. 202). Throughout the school, high expectations are evident in the extended school day and year, the curricular and instructional focus on state standards and test preparation, and the common language of achievement spoken by administrators, teachers, and students.

The Longer day, Week, and School Year

The most patent demonstration of commitment to student achievement at Flagstaff is the increased amount of time students are expected to attend school. The school day is two hours longer than average; the school week is extended for many students by the 3-hour Saturday session; and the school year comprises 210 days rather than the standard 181. Students who participate in the extended school day, school week, and school year accrue approximately 63 more school days than they would in a setting that did not offer the additional academic time (D1, p. 6).

Saturday classes provide extra instruction to students who struggle to master the concepts and skills introduced during the week. These classes focus on the reinforcement of reading skills, and in middle school on reading in the content areas (OS2, p. 9). Some teachers use the Saturday sessions to review material from previous units, where students might have performed poorly on sections of a test (IT3, p. 178). Thus, Saturday classes are designed to bring students up to standard on tested areas of skill and knowledge.

Intersessions provide a further opportunity to help struggling students bolster basic skills. Each student takes four content-area tests at the commencement of intersession, allowing teachers to target instruction to students' identified areas of weakness (OS2, p. 13). Although enrichment opportunities might be available to selected students during these periods, the core goal of intersession is to address skills deficits. In this way, the goals of Saturday classes and intersessions directly relate to improved student achievement, as measured by performance on tests that mirror the mandated state tests.

While observers note that in a few instances, time is used inefficiently during the school day, apparently based on a teacher's knowledge that material can be repeated during Saturday school (N1, p. 126), administrators, teachers, and students frequently mention the increased instructional time as an important factor in student success. The extended time is seen to offer increased opportunities to master basic skills and tested material, and allows students who struggle to benefit from repetition and to access tutorial assistance. One teacher's comment summarizes the perceived benefits of the extended school year:

> I came here because I really believe in . . . the concept of year-round. I really believe that when kids are out of school during the summer session that a lot of information is kind of forgot . . . I find that here at Flagstaff the kids are only out for about three weeks and then when they come back you do a quick review and then you can continue to teach them." (IT1, p. 144)

Language of High Expectations for Achievement

While the extended school year stands as a formal representation of the Flagstaff School's commitment to high student achievement, such a commitment is equally reflected in the language used by staff and students as they speak about learning and

achievement. This shared language signals the strong belief subscribed to by the Flagstaff community that students can and will attain high levels of academic achievement. As noted by one observer following a conversation with administrators, "James Arnold and [a foundation administrator] believe that the key to success is the appropriate belief system. They acknowledge that many people—Black and White—do not believe that these children can learn. They feel that this commitment (to achievement) is necessary to weather the issues of a social nature at the school" (IA2, p. 185). These comments suggest that from the top down there is a deliberate effort to engender in students a positive belief system related to achievement. Moreover, the commitment to achievement is not something abstract referred to only within the school's promotional literature, but something that is central in the discourse of everyday school life.

Teachers infuse their reinforcement of achievement-related attitudes and behaviors throughout classroom instruction. For example, teachers often end a lesson or activity by sharing their observations of positive student behavior or achievements. An observer notes the way Ms. Deronda ends a lesson by announcing to her students that she has good news, and then sharing her reflection that "students had enjoyed the activity, that they were enthusiastic, and that they had made wise decisions as they had talked with one another during the activity" (OT10, p. 37). On another day, the same teacher reinforces good attendance by announcing, "We have 100% attendance today! 100% of us are here to learn!" (OT28, p. 73). When a student compliments Ms. Deronda on her pretty dress, she first tells the students that she consciously dresses well to come to school because it is a way she can let the students know she thinks they are important. Then, she explains that as a child, she did not have nice clothes because her family was poor. She tells them that it was through her own hard work in school that she was able to secure a well-paying job and earn money to spend on nice clothes. She goes on to remind the students that their hard work will enable them to have nice things as adults (N8, p. 221). Mrs. Battersby talks with her students about never settling for a bad grade, and shares the story of one student who was unsure how to find research material on the internet, but was able to overcome this difficulty and produce an excellent project by accessing help from the teacher (OT20, p. 58). She also consistently reinforces positive learning attitudes and behavior, often stopping the lesson to share a comment such as, "You two (students) are caught being good. You are sitting up straight, have your pencils down on the desk, and are listening attentively" (OT51, p. 129). When a student in Ms. Amato's class expresses feeling afraid of giving an incorrect answer, the teacher takes a few minutes out of the activity to give a mini-lecture on risk taking. She suggests that if students know all the answers, then there is no point in attending school, and that making mistakes is the key to learning (OT54, p. 167).

The language of teachers at Flagstaff characterizes high achievement as both a good decision and an expectation. Achievement is presented as something that is clearly within the realm of students' control; it is not considered to result from innate ability, but from hard work and the right attitudes. These attitudes are explicitly communicated and modeled for students by their teachers. Teachers regularly seize on teachable moments during class to discuss achievement-oriented ways of thinking and behaving. In some

cases, this message is communicated through more formal channels. At a middle school assembly for example, James Arnold reinforces the need for students to commit themselves to schoolwork by drawing on an example involving rapper 50 Cent. He asks how many students know the lyrics to a particular rap, and nearly all hands go up. Then he tells them that the same brains that can memorize those lyrics can also be used to remember the information learned in school (IA1, p. 124).

The data indicate that students internalize the beliefs that achievement stems from hard work and positive attitudes. For example, when a teacher asks students to describe President James Madison, they share that he was "a leader," and then add that, "He finished four years of college in two years. He had good study habits" (OT30, p. 77). In other classes, students articulate the importance of good organization and developing and sticking to a study plan. In focus groups, students express the wish that all of their classmates would be studious and take their work seriously (IS2, p. 170). Overall, students' responses in class and during interviews suggest that they attribute high achievement to personal effort and good attitudes, and that they typically hold high expectations for their own achievement.

Curricular and Instructional Focus on State Standards and Test Preparation

While teachers' and students' language emphasizes habits of mind conducive to achievement, the achievement-related goal implied in these exchanges often equates to performance on state tests. The language of high achievement in Flagstaff classrooms is primarily the language of state standards. This reflects the close alignment of curriculum and instruction with state standards. Curriculum and instruction are the vehicles through which the longer school year and the positive language of achievement translate into measurable student outcomes. Perhaps because test scores provide the dominant external indicator of student success, performance on the state mandated tests is considered synonymous with academic achievement.

There is overwhelming evidence that state standards and the associated tests provide the chief framework for curriculum and instruction at Flagstaff. Teachers describe the development of curriculum around state standards, a process that often begins with an examination of likely tested material. An observer recounts a teacher's development of the eighth grade social studies curriculum:

> She first studied the standards for eighth grade social studies. She then studied the blueprints for the state assessment so that she could guarantee that she would address those standards given priority in the assessment. She then studied the resource guide for grade eight social studies. The resource guide elaborates each of the standards by elaborating what the students should know (content) and what they should be able to do (skills) in order to meet each standard; this know/do configuration translates the standards into the language of the teacher." (OT46, p. 110)

Activities in Ms. Amato's classroom are consistent with this articulated alignment with state standards. One teacher-designed activity is known as "[Standards] Scramble," and requires students to match index cards that show chunks of standards-based content to cards that display each standard, to produce a detailed outline of the section (OT46, p. 111). Ms. Amato often administers short tests based on the state standards to assess students' content knowledge, and she arranges tutorial assistance for struggling students based directly on these tests.

Mrs. Battersby similarly describes the way fourth grade curriculum is designed around standards. [The grade level teachers] get together and we look at the different subjects that are taught. And we look at social studies especially because there's a test in that area . . . we do a lot of integration because we look at social studies as our tested subject and . . . we integrate the other subject areas within that umbrella (IT1, p. 146).

The integration of curricular areas is neatly illustrated by an art class in which fourth graders learn about color as they create maps to depict the distribution of native language groups across the state; content directly related to the social studies standards (OT7, p. 26). Similarly, the computer teacher leads students to create slideshows of the natural resources and agricultural products of various regions of the state, also content likely to be tested in social studies (OT11, p. 42).

Ms. Deronda displays enlarged, colored copies of major standards around her desk. Parenthetical references to subject-area standards follow the daily objectives written on her blackboard (OT1, p. 15). Like his colleagues, Mr. Hemmings often explicitly refers to the standards. During an economics class for example, he explains that while the United States is variously interpreted as having a mixed economy and a market economy, the United States is a mixed economy for the purposes of the standards test (OT8, p. 29). The standards and the tests are salient for students in the visual and verbal practices of every Flagstaff classroom.

Standards are equally strongly reflected in the solid curricular focus on reading and writing. Students at Flagstaff engage in significant amounts of daily writing practice, and receive regular feedback based on standards. For instance, journal entries are assessed for sentence formation, the use of adjectives, and other standards-related competencies. Students are given multiple opportunities to practice writing well-structured paragraphs. Across grade levels, they engage in much silent reading. Students regularly read short passages "for meaning," and answering questions from workbooks or other sources that mirror the content of state tests. Often, reading for comprehension is practiced in small groups, allowing students to discuss their responses with peers and to work with others who read at a similar pace (e.g., OT51, p. 131).

Along with the standards alignment evident across the curriculum, instruction is also heavily weighted towards preparing students for state tests. In particular, there is a strong explicit focus on teaching test-taking skills and providing practice on assessments in the format of state tests. Although teachers emphasize their employment of multiple measures to assess students' understanding, including observations and informal

questioning (N2, p. 188), data indicate that instruction and more formal assessments are largely molded around the state tests. Learning activities often require students to work through comprehension questions in the format of these tests (OT30, p. 78), or to solve problems in multiple-choice format (e.g., OT15, p. 48). Activities and assessments emphasize factual recall of standards-based content (OT11, p. 41).

Test-taking strategies are consistently taught across classes. For example, a teacher presents a multiple choice question in social studies, and advises students to begin by eliminating two of the four answers that don't seem to fit. She labels this approach the "50-50" rule, and then models aloud for students how she would go about reasoning through such a question in a testing situation (OT11, p. 41). Later, the teacher characterizes personal decision-making in the same terms of ruling out inappropriate options and selecting from remaining choices. When another teacher introduces the skill of making predictions in reading, she suggests that making a prediction is similar to selecting the best answer on a test; you must rule out those answers unlikely to be correct (OT16, p .51). Ms. Amato teaches students to first read the questions following a section of text, and then highlight the sections of text that directly answer a question. She recommends that students apply the same approach in testing situations (OT38, p. 95). Even during the non-tested subject of art, when a student complains that she cannot draw eyes, the teacher responds by suggesting that drawing is like taking a test; if you can't do one part, you move on to another part (OT28, p. 75). It is evident that test-taking strategies are part of the daily vernacular at Flagstaff, and are reinforced through multiple opportunities for testing practice.

In sum, the concept of student achievement at the Flagstaff School is tightly aligned with the benchmark of state test performance. Curriculum and instruction, designed around state standards and state tests are perceived as the vehicle through which students are best prepared to perform. The extended instructional time offered by the schedule allows for additional test preparation. Students themselves recognize the importance of achieving to high levels on the tests, and espouse the belief that achievement can be attained through persistence and good study habits, which is in harmony with the values presented by teachers.

III. A Shared Vision Drives Teachers, Administrators, and Students

While the Flagstaff School is characterized by a strong emphasis on student achievement, particularly in relation to state test scores, this study suggests that achievement is part of a more comprehensive vision for student outcomes. Just as all members of the school community use a shared language of achievement, there is a common focus on the development of good character, and community-mindedness. One teacher explains her commitment to this vision:

> [I tell students] that we are all intelligent and we are all going somewhere. We have a goal. And I think that's very important . . . That we're all working towards something. And I'm not pushing [standards] tests. I'm thinking long term, graduate high school, go to college, be a productive, responsible citizen . . . I

> even had that outside my room . . . I said, "I come down here so that I can help you be responsible, productive citizens. That's why I'm here" . . . And I'm serious about that. (IT2, p. 161)

As reflected in these comments, the solid focus on improving student test scores and developing basic academic skills coexists with an equally strong commitment to develop students as good citizens. The shared vision emphasizes the role of education in building bridges between the classroom and the broader community. This vision of high achievement, good character, and community involvement is implemented via the strong character education program and efforts to foster links with the world outside the classroom.

The Character Education Program Is Pervasive Throughout the School

A crucial and highly visible aspect of the Flagstaff vision is the character education program. Beginning in kindergarten, the program aims to "promote solid values like honesty, respect, responsibility, loyalty, courage, self-discipline, integrity, and patriotism" (D14, p. 213). This goal is targeted through the formal morning classes mentioned in the introduction, including "speaking green," "etiquette," "study skills," and "conflict resolution;" and the informal reinforcement of character ideals throughout the school day. Tennis instruction also aims to foster values of discipline and fair play. Flagstaff's Community Report declares that "development of character is as important as development of the mind" (D14, p. 213).

As noted previously, mottos and quotes associated with the character education program are liberally displayed throughout the school. However, data from this study suggest that these sentiments are more than lifeless words; it is clear that students internalize the messages they see emblazoned across the walls and hear from their teachers. Themes of good character abound in students' discussions of positive aspects of school life, and in teachers' and administrators' descriptions of their goals for students. "What makes this a good school is the teachers and the character education program," says a student to an interviewer (IS1, p. 141). When asked what advice he would give to new teachers at Flagstaff, another student replies, "I would suggest that the teachers should keep up their good behavior. That way we could follow them and have good role models" (IS1, p. 138).

Classroom observations yield manifold examples of the character education program in action. In Mrs. Battersby's classroom, daily journal writing is based on prompts drawn directly from the character education program. For example, when the program focuses on community service students respond to the prompt, "If you could give a gift to your community, what might it be?" (OT31, p. 80). When the focus is on decision making, they write about choices for how to behave in the cafeteria. The teacher also weaves informal opportunities for teaching about decision making into classroom instruction. Thus, as a student dawdles in getting his materials ready she comments, "Jeffrey is not making good decisions. He is not organized and working as he should be" (OT16, p. 51). Later, Mrs. Battersby helps another student understand that wearing clogs

to school represents a poor decision, because they might lead to injury (OT27, p. 71). She frequently models thinking aloud through the steps of a decision-making process. In another classroom, a teacher comments on a student's good decision, and then says, "On the flipside of every decision is a _____?", to which the class replies in unison, "Consequence!" (OT53, p. 154). It is clear that students are familiar with this concept. In arranging the classroom for a pending class, an art teacher explains that a particular group of fourth graders has trouble working together, and he plans to create an opportunity for them to cooperatively solve the issue of positioning their desks (OT32, p. 82). Examples of teachers knitting the language and concepts of the character education program into their everyday teaching are rife throughout the data.

For their part, students are frequently found applying their understanding of good citizenship in the context of interactions with teachers and peers. One student corrects another who has slipped into his neighborhood dialect, providing a Standard English translation (OT17, p. 54). Students remind each other to maintain an appropriate noise level and to work diligently; they want their school to leave a good impression on a visitor (OT37, p. 92). A group of students show concern for their teacher as they ask whether she has remembered to bring her keys from the classroom. In turn, the teacher thanks her students for being thoughtful (OT37, p. 91). Although students are not perfect and do not adhere to exemplary values in every interaction, the evidence clearly suggests that the character education program is more than words on a wall; it is alive in the daily interactions of the school day.

The Vision of Education Extends Beyond the School Walls

A fundamental postulate of the school vision holds that education should extend beyond the information contained in books and on tests. A key goal of the Flagstaff School is to involve the community in the life of the school (D14, p. 213). In previous sections, the visiting soldiers, the health clinic, and ongoing efforts to empower and involve parents were highlighted as areas of strong community involvement. The data also suggest that teachers and administrators encourage community involvement through classroom-based learning activities. In particular, teachers often seek authentic audiences for student work as a means to connect schoolwork to the real world.

A fourth grade English class offers a pertinent example of an assignment with an authentic audience. As students learned letter writing, they drafted letters to a former student of Flagstaff who was then in basic training for the Marines. The young man wrote back, thanking the students for their letters and urging them to work hard, stay in school and be good citizens (OS1, p. 1). Students in another English class entered a community competition, with prizes, for writing letters to soldiers (OT24, p. 65). Others work on greeting cards that they will send to the sick through a local Baptist Church and convalescent center. In these and further examples, community service both supports character education and focuses students' attention outward to the broader community. Similar goals are achieved through attempts to introduce students to positive African American role models in the community, such as when eighth grade students are taken to a local careers fair (IA1, p. 185). Through the sponsorship of the foundation, students

also benefit from field trips and assemblies that provide a broader context for their classroom learning.

The focus on community involvement and authentic audiences for student work appears to be part of a greater objective to help students build connections between what they learn in school and the world outside the classroom. Several teachers in this study both describe and demonstrate a desire to connect the classroom content not only to the broader community, but also to students' own lives. An elementary school teacher explains:

> My teaching style has changed (since coming to Flagstaff) because I think in the beginning, I wanted to cover content. And now I want to create understanding and relevancy in what I teach. . . . Many times when I'm planning my lessons I say how can I relate this to something the kids can relate to in their lives? Because unfortunately these kids have limited background opportunities. (IT2, p. 157)

In the Flagstaff classrooms, teachers are often observed introducing new content using a link to something familiar to students. For example, in Ms. Amato's social studies class, the discussion of war is personalized when she shares that a student's aunt might be called up to go to Iraq, and that her own neighbor will be go to sea on the U.S.S. Roosevelt (OT38, p. 95). During economics, Mr. Hemmings asks students to give their definitions of a tall person, and then indicates that just as people differ in who they consider to be tall, so economists differ in their definitions of a mixed economy (OT6, p. 29). Ms. Deronda links math concepts to shopping (OT9, p. 36), while Mrs. Battersby opens a discussion of slavery by asking students what an auction is and what they might do if they found themselves being auctioned off (OT51, p. 131). The data reveal a consistent effort on the part of teachers to help students find a hook in their background knowledge upon which to "hang" unfamiliar concepts.

One teacher discusses the challenge inherent in identifying adequate background knowledge to help connect students to disciplinary content, noting that teachers at Flagstaff often have to develop a context for student learning rather than connecting to a past context.

> You may mention something, and [the students] have no idea what you're talking about. So you have to go back and build background. And so that's why I make myself vulnerable, and I talk a lot about my life . . . I build background memories because the bottom line is that we are our memories. And [the students] have such limited or such horrid memories. So I share mine. (IT2, p. 157)

These and other examples suggest that at the same time as curriculum and instruction is closely tailored to standards, teachers strive to connect academic content to students' experiences to help them derive personal meaning from disciplinary content. Teachers endeavor to build bridges between classroom learning and the broader community in one direction and students' own experiences in the other. These efforts

embody the shared vision of student development through academic achievement, character education and community involvement. That is, it appears that teachers at Flagstaff aspire to meet the goals of high student achievement based on a fairly regimented and standardized curriculum at the same time that they are concerned with the individual student's search for meaning in the curriculum and development as a community-minded citizen. In this way, students' achievement on tests is conceptualized as a gateway to future opportunities, rather than as an end in itself. Although there is expected variation in the extent to which teachers achieve these lofty ideals, the data support their espousal. A teacher's interview response neatly conveys this position:

> Interviewer: If the principal asked you to recruit students and parents to come here, why would you tell parents to send their children to this school?
> Teacher: I would tell them to send them to this school because their child would be in a classroom with dedicated, loving professionals who love their job, but will love their kids, too. And we'll be concerned and focused about their well-being, not because [the state] says you have to take the standards test, but their well-being for life—trying to prepare them for their future." (IT3, p. 178)

The shared vision of achievement and good citizenship is similarly captured with eloquence by three students sharing their advice for other schools on how to be successful:

> Student 1: Keep your head high.
> Student 2: Work together. Cooperation and check your behavior. If the first time somebody does something wrong, you tap them on the shoulder to let them know they are doing something wrong . . . .
> Student 3: I would say for other schools to be successful, they should always try to do their best and achieve what they want to achieve in their life. (IS1, p. 143)

IV. Leadership Is Strong at All Levels.

A consistent theme arising from the data is that the success of the Flagstaff School is shared by solid leadership at all levels of the school system. This leadership appears to play a critical role in mobilizing teachers and students with a clear sense of direction. There is evidence of strong leadership at the foundation level, in the principal's office and among teachers themselves.

Strong Administrative Leadership

Administrators of the Flagstaff Foundation play an active role in the daily running of the school. At the time of this research, the foundation had been involved in recent decisions concerning the teacher dress code, the classroom visitation checklist to guide observations of teachers, and classroom practices related to the character education program. For example, foundation representatives and the principal recently discussed the feeling that the character mottos might be becoming too passé because students are confronted with them every day. It was at the benefactor's suggestion that a single value

now act as the focus of character education for a short period before it is rotated along the list (OS2, pp. 10-11). The key foundation administrator in the school observes and assesses teachers to support the consistent implementation of the Flagstaff vision, and represents the school to visitors from the business community, including the researchers for this study. He works closely with the school principal, and observations suggest that the two men share similar educational ideas in terms of both philosophy and practice (IA2, p. 185). This foundation director is also involved in the summer staff development program. In the summer prior to this study, the 4-day program was devoted to instructional strategies and literacy; building operations and expectations; reviewing updates to morning rotation (character education) classes; technology training; and diversity (OS1, p. 5). Thus the intent of the founders of Flagstaff are consistently revisited in the school through involvement of key foundation personnel.

The principal himself is an authoritative presence in the school. James Arnold is highly visible around the building as he checks in on teachers and interacts with students and families. [Arnold] literally has an open door for students, for parents, for teachers, for staff members. [He], however, is more likely to be found in the halls, in classrooms, at the bus-loading zone. He constantly interacts with people; he constantly solves problems before they become major issues (OS2, p. 14).

The principal appears personally aware of staffing issues ranging from the experiences of substitute teachers to the supports required for teachers who struggle with classroom management or to work to achieve a sense of comfort and competence in the teaching profession (OS2, p. 13). He is a hands-on administrator willing to make decisions about scheduling or staffing in response to emerging needs. For example, an observer notes that Arnold altered the timing of the intersession to give his staff a week's vacation, in response to a sense of elevated stress among the faculty (OS2, p. 13). Arnold holds monthly faculty meetings devoted to problem solving and staff development. In addition, he attends both the monthly meetings with resource teachers facilitated by one of the assistant principals, and the meetings for teaching assistants run by a second assistant principal (OS2, p. 14). He holds direct instruction meetings with each of his teachers close to the end of the first marking period (IA2, p. 184). Although he is not required by his job description to attend Saturday school, the principal shows up each and every week, as he believes that it is important for him to visibly record his support for the work of faculty and students. He maintains an active interest in the former students of Flagstaff who now attend high school (IA2, p. 184). Observed interactions suggest that Arnold is well-regarded among teachers, students, families, and other administrators, although teachers and students were not asked directly about their opinions of the school leadership.

Teachers as Leaders

The collaborative leadership model characteristic of the Flagstaff School supports teachers themselves to emerge as educational leaders. In addition to serving as positive role models to their students and as highly dedicated, caring professionals, instances throughout the data suggest that faculty members are often involved in decision-making.

Faculty involvement in the development of the classroom visitation checklist provides one example of such involvement (D2, p. 7). In another example, teachers voiced the opinion that they needed to be more inclusive of the White teacher minority, and their advocacy resulted in a visit from a guest speaker on diversity (OS1, p. 5). Several teachers refer to both informal and formal teacher mentoring as ways that teachers act as leaders in the school (e.g., IT2, p. 161). Earlier sections described the high level of coordination between teachers in different subject areas, and there are other examples within the data of teachers acting as curriculum leaders in this way. One teacher describes an initiative that she developed and implemented along with other teachers in her grade level:

> Well, about two years ago I got the other third grade teachers together and asked if they would support me. What I wanted to do was start holding [standards] workshops. And they did . . . and what we'd do is we'd have parents come in . . . and we actually give the parents a [standard] practice test so they see what these kids have to go through . . . and this way a parent realizes you have to be a part in it. (IT2, p. 162)

This example is representative of teachers' willingness to take initiative and show leadership to introduce and implement improvements. It is acknowledged that this research focused on only a small number of teachers, and it is unclear to what extent their experiences of leadership are representative of other teachers at the school.

The Flagstaff schedule means that teachers already work longer hours than the average teacher, and although the Saturday sessions provide opportunities to earn extra money, several teachers acknowledge that the hours are long and they often purchase resources for the classroom out of their own pockets. One aspect of the school procedures that makes their lives easier is the open communication that appears to operate between teachers and administrators. Communication is facilitated through both technology and face-to-face contact. A weekly update of routine information is e-mailed to all teachers and posted on a staff intranet site. There are also hard copies of this information available in the office, where a large chalkboard adjacent to the mailboxes carries additional daily announcements (OS2, p. 14). Further communication is fostered through the monthly faculty meetings, and the principal's encouraging, open door style of leadership. This study did not examine the role of the assistant principals in the communication chain. Although not a specific focus of this study, the data suggest that good communication between administrators and faculty allows teachers to act as leaders and to implement the shared school vision with a high degree of consistency.

Discussion and Implications

The Flagstaff School stands as a case study of success in the face of economic and social adversity. A number of interrelated factors contribute to a school environment in which traditionally low-achieving students are given a chance to build personal resilience and develop belief in themselves as achievers. Chief among these is the recognition that school works best when it is synchronized with both the challenges and the strengths of

local community. Administrators and teachers at Flagstaff are fiercely aware of where they work and who they serve; they do not aspire to photocopy purported best practices from a contextually dissimilar program and apply them within their own setting. Rather, there is a strong sense that a good education should compensate for what students in this particular don't have and bolster what they do.

The awareness of locale manifests itself variously at Flagstaff, beginning with the very origins of the school. At its inception, the foundation represented a deliberate endeavor to address social problems in the local community. From the seeds of the character education program and the overwhelming belief in the social importance of academic achievement, the school grew up around the personality of local place. In current practice, the capacity to provide students with a home-like experience presents as one of the foremost success factors of the school, and this too emerges from an awareness of community-specific need. Teachers acknowledge that their students often lack access to safe, predictable homes full of positive academic role models. They undertake to create a home away from home by maintaining highly consistent expectations and practices, by making students feel that they are cared for, and by acting as role models as they share their own stories of success through hard work and self-belief. They help students connect academic content to the broader community and to frame learning in terms of their own experiences, efforts that recognize the paucity of academic background knowledge with which students arrive at the school door. At the same time as school provides what home cannot, parents are acknowledged for their own needs and potential strengths, and are encouraged to become partners in the educational lives of their children. An interesting question raised by this study is that of the racial background of teachers. While the administrators express the belief that race is not a factor in good teaching at Flagstaff, the role of teacher race in helping students connect to content, feel at home in the classroom, and develop perceptions of themselves as achievers could be an important area for future research. Data from Flagstaff suggest that in this school, teachers who were African American and female played particularly powerful roles in the students' lives.

Like the attempts to make school meaningful and positive for students, the tight alignment of curriculum and instruction with state standards is similarly predicated upon an acknowledgement of students' context-specific needs. Performance on state tests, and presumably on future standardized assessments, is conceptualized as a gateway for students to future educational opportunities, presenting as it does a measure of student achievement to external parties. Education is clearly seen by teachers and administrators as a "way out" for students; a chance to rise above limited economic and social circumstances. The focus on preparation for tests—the neatly tangible evidence of achievement—is a reflection of this belief.

This research revealed a reliable adherence among stakeholders at the Flagstaff School to a shared vision of high achievement, solid citizenship, and community involvement. Administrators, teachers, and students speak the same language of academic and personal success, and live by consistently-applied rules. In part, this might be attributed to the strong leadership apparent at all levels of the system. The highly

collaborative and open style of communication among teachers and administrators begins at the top and filters down to the classroom, ensuring consistent implementation of school mores. However, the vision itself might give cause for consistency; that is, because the goals for the program are so unequivocally targeted at the particular community in which the school operates, the vision is accepted as a genuine, good-sense attempt to occasion the best education for students.

The Journey Ahead

As is likely the case in all schools, the picture of the Flagstaff is not unanimously rosy. Administrators and teachers are realistic in characterizing the success of their program, describing it as a "journey" rather than an end point. Not every teacher maintains the extraordinary level of commitment described in this report. Not every parent accepts the invitation to take an active role in the life of the school. Social problems persist, students fail to live up to their potentials and outcomes are not always encouraging. Flagstaff administrators and faculty voice a desire to continue developing their capacity to support student engagement and success at Flagstaff and beyond. Despite heavy work loads, they continue to be reflective, introspective and to seek additional avenues for professional growth.

Of particular concern is the fate of students after they leave the program and go on to high school. It appears to be the case that while the "top" students typically go on to succeed within the district's International Baccalaureate program, and those interested in aviation do well within a small, tightly-focused local program, some Flagstaff students who attend the large local high school find themselves often "lost" in a sea of diminished expectations and decreased personal attention. These problems persist despite the fact that the Flagstaff Foundation now provides two full-time high school counselors whose role is to support Flagstaff students in a successful transition to high school (IA1, p. 124). It is clear that the structured setting and alignment with standards are fundamental to the school's efforts to provide a home-like sanctuary while simultaneously preparing students to achieve on state tests. While Flagstaff's structure could be perceived as rigidity for students from more secure home backgrounds, it works effectively for these students as they build confidence in their early years of schooling. At the same time though, the experiences of students transitioning to the local high school suggest that once students leave the "cocoon" of teacher-led education, they might struggle to recreate that clear sense of direction for themselves—signaling a need to move from more extrinsically driven to more intrinsically driven sources of motivation.

An additional area of potential exploration for the Flagstaff School might be increased services for students who evidence very high potential and performance. Study data contain numerous examples of teachers providing additional tutorial opportunities for students who struggle and also provide evidence of students who work at advanced levels in their classes. There are, however, few clear examples of such students being challenged to work at higher levels of complexity. There is some opportunity for students to work at different paces, such as when they are allowed to move ahead on the list of daily activities, and when they work in reading groups with peers who have read to

a similar place in the required text. There is also subtle differentiation in the individual feedback teachers provide to students as they work. However, aside from the out-of-class enrichment opportunities to which students might have access during intersessions, there is little evidence of a concerted focus on the needs of Flagstaff's highest performing students. Since test preparation is such a central focus of instructional time, it is no surprise that students likely to perform well on the tests do not stand out as being educationally needy. However, it is very possible that the "ceiling" of student achievement built into the standards-based curriculum and test-based instruction at Flagstaff might be an artificial one. There are very likely Flagstaff students capable of achieving well beyond the school's current definitions of grade level competence. In fact, the teachers' deep knowledge of students as individuals provides them with a strong foundation for developing classroom routines that systematically attend to the inevitably variable readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences of all Flagstaff learners.

Closely related to this issue is a need to help all students access more content-rich, meaning-making learning opportunities during their time at Flagstaff. The strong emphasis on test preparation at Flagstaff leaves little time for students to experience and explore the disciplines in ways that are authentic to the disciplines. Such opportunities would likely help students develop a sense of purpose for their studies beyond success on a test. Such experiences would also help students develop understandings, habits of mind, and competencies that would serve them well in making sense of, retaining and applying what they learn. Curriculum that calls on students to understand the essential principles of important content would not displace required standards, but would rather develop proficiencies as thinkers and reasoners. There is a carefully orchestrated plan at Flagstaff to provide high structure, teacher direction, and background-building that are imperative for the success of most Flagstaff students as they enter Flagstaff. It might well benefit students for teachers and administrators to plan with equal care an evolution to a more student-centered, background expanding set of learning opportunities that are likely imperative for the success of Flagstaff students as they depart from the school.

Opportunities for growth notwithstanding, however, Flagstaff is a remarkable place. Its administrators and teachers embrace the opportunity to work in a high stress environment for longer hours to work with students whose lives are riddled with challenges. The staff works with a common mission that is in no way limited to words on paper. They live out a shared belief that virtually any student can achieve in the presence of persistent adult guidance and support. They give validity to the belief year after year as students who—according to statistics and demographics—should not succeed in school equal or exceed the achievement record of their far more privileged peers in the school district. And in the context of demonstrating to their students that they are capable of anything other students can achieve, they never miss the opportunity to convey to their students the message that they—as all human beings—are also worthy of investment and love.

CHAPTER 5: Lionel Elementary—A Tale of Two Principals

The Setting

The last of the three sites examined in the study is Lionel Elementary School. It was at the time of the study in transition between principals. Perhaps because of the transition, it was the most difficult site in which to gain access to teachers, students, and administrators. Transition- and access-related issues shaped the nature of both data gathering and the case study itself. Codes used in the case study indicate the page number in the Lionel case record that categories raw data by theme. The case record contains the original source information from the raw data.

Lionel Elementary School is located in a high-performing school district located in a largely affluent suburban neighborhood of a large metropolitan area. A drive into the area of the school reflects an odd combination of landmarks. One side of the road hosts modern, tall office buildings with an impeccably groomed golf course behind them. On the other side of the road are plush looking high rise condominiums with excellent views of the city skyline. Interspersed amid the upscale are seedy looking motels that would have been the pride of the 1940s and 1950s. Entering the school neighborhood, there were small houses, many with trucks parked in yards, a few ranch houses reminiscent of the 1950, and a few modern and commodious houses likely built on lots overlooked during the area's boom time 5 or 6 decades ago (p. 1).

Mornings in the neighborhood suggested a commuter area with people in a hurry to get somewhere. One observer noted that most of the drivers were White and well-dressed; most pedestrians were African American or Hispanic (p. 1).

Somewhat out of character with the neighborhood, Lionel's physical plant is modern and well-appointed. Upkeep of the school seems a priority, and "the school sparkles because of care in cleaning. Hallways are wide and bright. There is no evidence of trash, graffiti, or dirt" (p. 2). Most students live in the homes and apartments immediately adjacent to the school; the school uses only one bus and all other students walk to school. Although Lionel students demonstrated a high transience rate, the faculty was mostly veteran—most with ten to twenty years of teaching experience—and stable.

The school is more than outwardly well-maintained. Inside, "hallways and classrooms are awash in color" (p. 2). There is abundant evidence of student work. Student work is often displayed in combination with commercial posters to create aesthetically pleasing displays. The school's administration encourages such displays, as evidenced by a large map of [the state] in the library. The map was approximately six feet long and four feet wide. It was a relief map showing the different geographic terrains in the state and also used three-dimensional objects to depict the different natural resources of the state. Displays of student artwork and student writing fill Lionel's hallways and classrooms. Some of the displays also contain commercial posters. Fourth graders from a previous year had created the map, which is on permanent display in the

library, a graceful room with windows in a curving wall overlooking the school's lawn (p. 2). Classrooms are well-appointed and inviting. A typical sixth grade classroom, for example, had 6 computers to serve the 17 students in the class, with bulletin boards that were especially colorful and related to a variety of subjects. Such bulletin boards included charts of geographic terms, science terms, economic terms and Indian tribes (pp. 2-3).

Although the school is in a neighborhood that contains houses that sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars, it does not serve the children who live in these houses, many of whom attend private or magnet schools. Approximately half of Lionel's 345 students are Hispanic, a percentage that is increasing each year. Approximately one third are African American. The remaining students are Asian or African immigrants, children who enter Lionel speaking little or no English, and Caucasian students. Slightly more than half of the students qualify for the federally-funded lunch program and the Lionel also qualifies for Title I funds. Supplemental programs exist for English speakers of other languages (ESOL), gifted and talented students (G/T), and special education resource assistance (Resource) (p. 7). A district initiative limits class size in grades 1 through 3 to 15 students per teacher and 22.5 students per teacher in grades 4 through 6. Lionel employs 2 administrators, 37.6 teachers and resource specialists, and 13 instructional aides (p. 7). Certain of these individuals were responsible for much of the direction, curriculum, and tone of the school during the study.

The Case Study at Lionel

The case study developed at Lionel and presented here offers an indication of the efforts of one school to provide an appropriate and challenging education to diverse students. At Lionel during the span of the study, three individuals greatly influenced the schooling students received. These were the two principals in place at Lionel over the course of the study—Mrs. Fine and Ms. Middler—and the reading teacher—Mrs. Reed. In many ways, the story of Lionel through the duration of the study is a story of transition and uncertainty. In that way, it reflects the ambiguity that surrounds change in many schools around the country at any given time. It is a tale of a school in search of a shared direction.

The Reading Teacher—Rachel Reed

Rachel Reed is an attractive, well-dressed White woman who is in her late fifties. At the beginning of the study, Mrs. Reed had taught at Lionel for 6 years, and had taught for the school district where Lionel is located for a total of 14 years. She had also taught three years before joining the district. Those three years were accumulated in a variety of places since, as an "army wife" she would teach a year or a half a year, and then move, and then teach another half a year, and then move again (p. 6). Mrs. Reed had been seen by many Lionel staffers as "a mom for a good number of years" (p. 6) of the school's reading program. In that role, she had fashioned not only the reading program, but the engine that fueled much of the school's day and much of its curricular focus as well.

Lionel's teachers, under the leadership of Mrs. Reed, devised their own system of teaching reading, based loosely upon the *Success for All* program (see, e.g., Gutierrez & Slavin, 1992; Slavin, 1987; Slavin, 1990). Mrs. Reed earned her master's degree from one of the preeminent research universities in the United States (p. 46). During her tenure at Lionel, she worked hard to gather instructional resources in a central place so they would be available to teachers when needed. In the bookroom, books were stored in prearranged sets organized by reading level (p. 3). The reading specialist mentioned that during her

> . . . first year here when we came up with this [reading program] idea, and it wasn't my idea. It was a collective plan. I went to every classroom, and said, "Give me all your books." I was so popular [laughing]. We went in and we pulled every book that we could identify as belonging to Lionel. All the classrooms, and we made class sets of them. And I had this room filled with titles. And then Carla [the principal] said, "We'll build every set up to a total of six." So if there were four titles, I had to order two. And if there were five titles, I ordered one. (p. 47)

The program proved popular with administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Large sums of money were spent to improve the quality of resources, such as leveled series with phonetic components so that word study can be addressed as part of the reading instead of through a separate phonics workbook (pp. 47-48). Resources were thus pulled together and put into sets so that teachers could use them as a guided reading activity (p. 48). All of these materials were stored in an expanded bookroom, and systems were put into place that automated the inventory and check-out procedures (p. 48). These steps resulted in the materials being available in complete sets to those teachers who needed them in their classrooms (p. 48).

To participate in the program, students were assessed and then divided into readiness groups for reading instruction. Different grades used the system daily for different amounts of time: kindergarten spent 45 minutes with the system each day; first and second grades increased reading program time to 60 minutes a day; and third through sixth grades spent 90 minutes using the system each day (p. 40). The reading system called for students to be taught in flexible groups that were constituted based upon students' reading scores on standardized tests (p. 42). Each day, classroom teachers asked students to line up so that they could form their groups for the reading block (p. 42). This often required students to change classes, as they received instruction from a teacher other than their "home" teacher (p. 42). These students took their reading folders with them to the other classroom (p. 42). A kindergarten teacher mentions that, "the students go all over [i.e., to several different classrooms]" (p. 43). As students entered the room where they receive reading instruction, the teachers greeted them each by name and directed them to sit where they sat during the previous session (p. 43).

In addition to the replenished bookroom, Lionel used other resources to maximize student learning. During reading instruction administrators, instructional aides, and other specialists also worked with individual groups of students. This added manpower

allowed the individual groups to be quite small. As students were regrouped and changed classes, the out-of-the-classroom reading teachers taught some of the students, especially those below grade level (p. 30). The remaining students were divided among the various classroom teachers, augmented by administrators and others (pp. 30-31). Kindergarten students, who were not part of the regrouping process at the beginning of the year, began regrouping for reading instruction following the second quarter of school (p. 30). At the time of observations, the school had been using this approach to teaching reading for seven years (p. 31). At the time of the change of principals at Lionel, the reading program seemed to be the common rallying point of Carla Fine and the faculty to boost the academic achievement of the largely low economic, minority population of the school.

The First Principal—Carla Fine

Lionel had two principals during the study, Carla Fine and Julie Middler. Mrs. Fine was a long-time administrator in her mid-sixties. A motherly figure, she was well-liked by Lionel's faculty and supportive of Mrs. Reed's reading program innovations. Mrs. Fine was noted for her caring, nurturing personality, which affected the way in which she interacted with students, teachers, and parents. The veteran principal had held a principal's coffee weekly for parents, and personally served students, teachers, and parents at community functions (p. 4). The atmosphere in the school was one of openness and friendliness.

Observers noted that Mrs. Fine was usually in the hallway greeting the children as they entered the building. Students shared thoughts with Mrs. Fine without hesitation and she was all smiles and listened attentively. At points, she would give children a "high five." She was consistently visible, present, and engaged. Both students and faculty generally seemed comfortable with her vision and leadership.

Student comments also generally reflected a sense of comfort in their school. For example, Lionel students noted the following:

1. I wouldn't change my friends or my teacher 'cause uh my teacher is really fun and everything, and my friends they help me out with my work;
2 I wouldn't change my teacher because she is fun and at the same time she makes us learn a lot;
3 They [teachers] always, since I started in kindergarten they've always helped me with my work; and
4 It's that like when we're having trouble on the problems or something our teachers can help us with it (pp. 90, 97).

After Mrs. Fine retired, much at the school seemed to change.

The "New" Principal—Julie Middler

Ms. Middler, by contrast, was in her mid-forties at the time of her appointment as principal of Lionel. Ms. Middler was a large, fast talking, typically dressed in business suits. She was seen by staff as ambitious and energetic. Mrs. Reed believed that the former principal, Mrs. Fine, "was visionary and that she was willing to break ranks with the school district if it were in the best interests of the students" (p. 52). The reading teacher felt that the new principal—an assistant principal in two other local schools before she was assigned to Lionel—had been directed to bring Lionel, "back into line with county procedures" (p. 52). Ms. Middler did not yet have clear goals for Lionel. When asked, she stated that she was focusing her efforts on improving, "(a) school achievement, (b) collaboration, (c) parent involvement, and (d) technology [usage]" (p. 53). Ms. Middler also stressed that her motto for the year was that, "Everyone is included" (p. 53). To that end, Ms. Middler had hired a parental outreach specialist, had all mailings from the school sent home in both English and Spanish, and increased the use of translators at school functions (p. 53).

The Early Impacts of the Change of Principals

The effects of the change in principals at Lionel were considerable. Many teachers who were quite comfortable with Mrs. Fine suddenly felt unable to implement practices that supported their beliefs. During the principalship of Mrs. Fine, certain administrative practices, such as schoolwide assessments and readiness grouping for reading and mathematics, were solidly in place and generally in favor with teachers particularly at the primary level. Those teachers believed the practices had a positive effect on student performance. Once Ms. Middler assumed the Lionel principalship, however, teachers were allowed to make decisions to jettison the some of the practices, including schoolwide readiness groupings for reading and co-teaching. Since there were no new strategies to replace the old, a state of ennui ensued.

Even early morning procedures in the school were altered after the change, and those changes, while not directly instructional, seemed to the faculty to be symptomatic of larger shifts. On an early observation at Lionel, the observer noted:

> As I walk through the halls with the principal, everyone greets everyone. The children chorus, "Good morning, Mrs. Fine." Mrs. Fine offers to bring a throat lozenge to one of the teachers who is not feeling well. She says mothering is a part of her job. School has a general atmosphere of warmth and caring for staff and students. Later, in the teachers' lounge, I notice a bulletin board of pictures and notes about the staff. They tell things like favorite food, favorite book, what they do special at Lionel, family, personal motto. This is perhaps an indication of community among staff as well. (p. 5)

The feelings of community extended beyond corridor deportment during the initial phases of the study. The reading specialist said,

> Carla has been so good at listening to what we feel will work. And she still guides us. And she's got a real strong guidance right now because our standardized test scores are not improving the way we'd like them to . . . . Oh, yeah [re happiness]. When Carla was going to retire and not be here . . . . I'm kind of a person who likes to have some empowerment with what's going on. And my fear is that the next principal to come in is one that maintains the power. (p. 6)

After Ms. Middler took over as principal, however, the tone of the school seemed transformed. In the mornings before classes began, for example, the halls no longer bustled with a sense of community; rather, they were free of all but a few people (p. 42). The students were held in the front hall until a bell marked the formal beginning of the school day (p. 70). Teachers were invisible prior to the start of the day (p. 70). The only people in the halls were safety patrols stationed at intersections and stairways (p. 70). They stood in twos, wearing their patrol sashes and looking businesslike (p. 70). Observers noticed three or four teachers scurrying through the back door just as the school day began (p. 42). Organization and communication—always strengths of Lionel—were less consistent. Despite confirming telephone calls and e-mails to Ms. Middler, observers arrived at the school to find no one expecting them (p. 40). Ms. Middler, unlike Mrs. Fine, was frequently in meetings and unavailable to meet with observers or teachers (p. 40). Although described by office staff as, "energetic, a go-getter, and even a leader whose changes were needed," teachers felt "nervous" in her presence (p. 41). Ms. Middler *was* friendly and pleasant when she provided observers a quick tour of the school the first day they met her (p. 42). Despite this initial treatment, observers, "never saw the new principal except for that whirlwind tour [the first day]" during their subsequent visitations (p. 42).

Even with the change in leadership, many teachers continued to believe that Lionel's intense caring for students was in tact. Individuals mentioned that, "this is a very caring place," and "I [a teacher] spend a lot of time at home preparing and cutting and sorting and changing what I do. I don't like to do the same things all the time. I try to respond to what the kids are interested in," and "I tell students, 'You're doing a good job.' Because sometimes they compare themselves to other children." (p. 71).

Teachers also make special note of their interest and investment in low economic students of color with high potential. Said one teacher,

> I believe so much in the fact that . . . we have so many children who have potential that is never tapped. And I do what I do because I love seeing children succeed. I love seeing them proud of themselves. I love to see them believe in themselves . . . . In [the district], we're just beginning to look at . . . how we can find the children and the ability. (p. 55)

Curriculum and Instruction

Lionel's classrooms were well-stocked with instructional materials and resources. In one first grade classroom, for example, books were spread throughout the room. A sign over window reading, "Reading is everywhere," buttressed the importance of literacy. Materials that were used for reading and math instruction and practice were abundantly arranged on the walls and the shelves. In addition to the many books, there were manipulative materials available for counting in jars and other containers (p. 5). Precisely what should be the focus of using the store of materials to benefit Lionel's diverse student population, however, seemed unclear.

Under Mrs. Fine, the Lionel-created reading program was applied to all grades from kindergarten through sixth grade (p. 30). With the tenure of Ms. Middler, this changed (p. 31). Ms. Middler allowed the teachers to vote on whether they wanted to continue with the reading program and while teachers in the lower grades opted to do so, the teachers in grades 4 through 6 elected to withdraw from the program (p. 31). Teachers in the upper grades said they made this choice because they did not like their students leaving their rooms (p. 31). The reading specialist, when asked about this change, believed that reading instruction was now not as successful at those grade levels as it had previously been (p. 31). Mrs. Reed noted that, "When the new principal arrived, she gave staff members the option of keeping on or bailing out. Teachers in grades 4 through 6 bailed out. They now do their own thing and, quite candidly, it is a hodgepodge" (p. 42). One of the observers noted that he,

> . . . saw far better reading instruction at the lower grade levels. I don't think I saw any differentiation per se at any grades. At the upper grades, I saw no differentiation of any type; everything was whole group instruction. It was primarily teacher talk and review of information. The differentiation at the primary level is the result of grouping, but each student in the small group does the same tasks as the other students in that small group. It probably is differentiation to a degree. (p. 24)

Ms. Middler's reaction to any changes in quality of reading instruction was unclear. Although she made few explicit statements about curriculum and instruction, Ms. Middler did disclose plans she had for improving student performance. She shared with the Lionel teachers some materials [for test taking] that she developed for her previous school (p. 43). These materials consisted of released state-standards test items which Ms. Middler had developed into a series of daily warm-ups for students (p. 43). Each day, students were given two or three of the released items with which to practice, displayed on a transparency with an overhead projector (p. 43). Ms. Middler was proud that she had trained teachers to use one or two questions per day; show students one item at a time; use some system, such as index cards with a letter on each to see how all students respond, confer with students individually to see why they chose that incorrect answer and model the answer seeking for the students (p. 43). She viewed these activities as having good potential to raise student performance. Asked about the decision to abandon the school-developed language arts program for older students, Ms.

Middling stated that, " . . . the upper grade teachers are designing a new language arts program" (p. 53).

For math, another program had been devised by the school's teachers. A feature of the program was that math specialists came to the classrooms and co-taught lessons with the regular classroom teachers. Specialists also worked at the school and handled subjects such as music, art, and physical education. During math, students were grouped by math achievement within the class (p. 34). The math program was premised on classroom teachers working in tandem with math specialists. Teachers were sometimes critical about the implementation of the program, especially after Ms. Middler became principal. One teacher, for example, noted that

> The math cooperating teacher *hasn't* been working with me because we have, we broke out, we had two second grades and we broke our two second grades into a third. And it's a new teacher so she asked if she could work with her which is great, but I have a needy class and sometimes I need the help too. But I get through. (p. 46)

Such problems were not uncommon during the observation period. Another teacher observed, "[My co-teacher] is one of the instructional assistants who have been coming in from 11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. But they're giving her more groups in reading so, you know [she's not coming as often as she is supposed to]" (p. 46).

All other subjects, such as science and social studies, were the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Materials existed for the teaching of science and social studies, at least in the form of trade books related to those subjects. When she reorganized the bookroom, the reading teacher, in addition to gathering books, also spent a great deal of time organizing instructional materials organized in a variety of ways. The bookroom contained texts organized in a variety of ways—author/genre shelf; language arts; content areas (e.g., science: plants, trees, rock, fish, reptile, mammal); interest themes (genre, picture books)—organized by level; leveled books for three stages: independent reading, instructional, frustration (p. 50). The book levels corresponded to grade level expectations for both basal readers and students' Reading Recovery levels. All of the books were also listed on a computer database for teachers (p. 49). Despite the reading teacher's efforts, classroom teachers expressed uncertainty about how to teach science and social studies. It may be that the heavy emphasis on reading and math drained both teacher time and attention from these subjects.

Ms. Middler stated that she wanted to do more in the area of science, but she added, "My teachers are overwhelmed" (p. 53). Lionel's school district's central office offered numerous staff development sessions for teachers, which Ms. Middler believed were one way to improve instruction (p. 53). Ms. Middler planned to begin staff development in science, "In a week or so" (p. 53). This training was to be done with the assistance of the instructional staff from the central office (p. 53).

In addition to ambiguity about science and social studies instruction, there often seemed to be a sense of casualness in planning curriculum and instruction in general at Lionel. A teacher used part of her 50-minute reading/language arts block for sustained silent reading. When asked about how she planned for her lessons, the teacher stated,

> It just kinda happens! I've been doing this a long time. Um, well, I usually see which students are getting done and how quickly they're getting done and in the past weeks what was happening was I had too many kids sitting and waiting. And they were done. And I didn't have a game for them and I needed something simple that they could all do at whatever level they're at. Some days I have more help than other days and so then I can divide them into little groups (p. 35).

When asked about an anchor activity some students completed after they finished required math work, a teacher explained,

> We've been doing that for a few days now. I had actually planned on doing little groups before, um, starting the math lesson because the other teacher was going to come but she hadn't been. I kinda had to rethink what I was going to do because I have some who just need to count some more. They're not, I mean, they're doing the addition but they're still have some problems with numbers, so then I was going to have her work with a little group who would do that. I have to see if she's gonna come in next week because I had it all planned out and then I was gonna have a medium group and then a high group that was gonna do some enrichment. (p. 36)

A second grade teacher read to her students about Christopher Columbus. After reading about the man and his explorations, she asked several low-level questions, such as: "Who was the king?" "Who was the queen?" and "What were the names of the three ships?" The students were unable to answer these questions. The teacher then altered her plans and told the students that they would do a web on Columbus. This can be an excellent choice to help activate and organize student knowledge if the teacher is for the process. She drew a web on the board and again asked questions, such as, "Where did Columbus want to go?" and "Why?" These questions were met with silence. She next asked the children where Columbus landed, and they weren't certain. She said he landed in San Salvador and tried to find it on a map. The map was so small the children could barely see it. After looking at the map a bit longer, the teacher said that the San Salvador on the map was the wrong San Salvador; she needed the San Salvador near Florida. The teacher told the children that she would need to use the other map, but it was too tall for her to pull down. She then asked the children if Columbus discovered gold. The students did not know the answer to this question. Unfortunately, neither did the teacher. She said she needed a student (second grade) to do research, and a young girl volunteered. The teacher asked the girl to go on the Internet and find out where Columbus landed, if he discovered gold, and when he died. The student did not find the answers. After a snack break (during which the teacher did not look up the information herself), the students were directed to open their writing folders and to take out their webs on Christopher Columbus. They were to use the web as a starter to write a paragraph or two

about Columbus. Such episodes suggesting a lack of clarity about curricular goals and a lack of preparation to teach were not isolated incidents.

While there was an emphasis on collaborative teaching in the school, those lessons also seem somewhat less than effectively (or collaboratively) planned and executed, as the regular classroom teachers sometimes leave the room rather than assisting with the lesson (p. 44). For example, during a push-in lesson the gifted education specialist conducted, the classroom teacher left the room and the observer noted,

> [T]he teacher is not back and it appears that [the gifted specialist] expects to be done. She has seemed to be drawing things out for a bit to wait for him. He still is not back, so she has [students] read their texts while they wait. There is lots of [student] fidgeting, playing with erasers and pencils. The gifted specialist is clearly frustrated that the regular classroom teacher is not back. The gifted specialist tells them to take out a book and DEAR [Drop Everything and Read] read. The teacher finally returns (after 12 minute absence). She (gifted specialist) tells him what they did. He says this was a good lesson—it "stretches their minds." (p. 44)

Also contributing to a "loose" sense of curriculum and instruction was the reality that teachers and other staff engaged in many duties outside their job descriptions. These duties, too, sometimes seemed diffusely targeted. The gifted/talented teacher, for example, mentioned that she and the permanent substitute teacher together designed a unit on explorers. They are taught the unit to the fifth graders. These two also developed a unit on economics, wherein the children become "stockholders" and form a "corporation." This unit was developed because the staff just discovered they were not covering economics as required by the state content standards (p. 84).

Another area in which there seemed to be a lack of clear focus related to a school initiative on differentiated instruction. Lionel's school district supplied the school with reduced teacher/student ratios in part so teachers could offer additional attention to Lionel students who came to school with differing and often acute learning needs. The staffing ratio was set at kindergarten (with instructional aide) full day: 22 to 1; first and second grades were staffed at a 15.0 to 1; second and third grades were staffed at 21 to 1; and fourth through sixth grades were staffed at 22.5 to 1 (p. 7). A variety of curriculum specialists were on hand to provide teachers with support and instructional strategies to serve all learners. The specialists' areas of expertise included reading, math, gifted education, and ESOL. In keeping with school district policies, these services were provided using a push-in approach as much as possible.

Lionel's teachers quickly asserted that, "[W]e have differentiated groups," (p. 25) and administrators emphasized that, ". . . awareness [of differentiation] is a goal and [the entire faculty] have done one course on Differentiated Instruction" (p. 34). Administrators spoke of teachers being, "revved up and encouraged to do more with differentiated instruction" (p. 34). Teachers, when surveyed to ascertain their needs,

frequently mentioned a desire for more training in differentiation, especially with regard to science and social studies.

Mrs. Reed, for example, felt it was important to provide students with instruction geared to their readiness needs. However, her vision of differentiation was to have students leave their classrooms to be placed in cross-grade groups (kindergarten with first grade and second grade with third grade) that are small in size. As a result, differentiation existed at the primary level only because of out-of-class regrouping; each student in the small group did the same tasks as the other students in that small group. In a typical Lionel first grade classroom, for example, 14 students studied three letters as a group with the teacher. After about a half hour of this, two teaching assistants (TAs) entered the room and the students divide up into three groups. The first TA began reviewing sounds with her group, which she kept together longer than the other two. The second TA began individual coaching right away, while the teacher pulled tables apart so she could sit between her students. All students, in groups of four or five, worked diligently and seemed focused on what was going on their own group. All three of the groups were working on exactly the same thing, simply in smaller groups. The students in each group were cutting pictures from a worksheet and gluing the pictures into the correct column of another worksheet (3 columns, one for each letter studied that day) (p. 34).

Not only did there seem to be little attention to student variance *within* reading groups/classes, but the pattern held *across* the groups/classes as well. For example, late in their second grade year, the teacher who was assigned to work with the "high" second and third grade students, had the students working on a set of 20 vocabulary words. All of the vocabulary words were one-syllable words.

When asked about books displayed in her classroom for students to read, a teacher responded,

> Yeah, I have a lot. I usually teach a 2.0 reading group. So I have cabinets full of 2.0 reading books. So I change them every few weeks. But, like, remember I told them if they were reading a book, put a bookmark in it. Because if they are reading one, I don't want to take one away. I limit the number of books so they can quickly make a choice for something to read and they don't spend a long time pondering over what to read. (p. 26)

Perhaps related to the school's purported emphasis on differentiation, posters displayed in classrooms and corridors extolled the virtues of Gardner's multiple intelligences (p. 4). Here, too, there seemed a disjuncture between words and actions. Virtually nowhere were observers able to find evidence of any type of instruction that incorporated this theory. In reality, Lionel teachers used very traditional instructional methods, with an emphasis on teacher talk and paper and pencil activities. Observers noted the following teacher behaviors during site visits:

1. [Teacher] was questioning students on topics they had studied [in health], including abuse and addiction. Most questions asked for students to recall information from the lesson, such as "What are the kinds of abuse?" "What is physical abuse?" "What is mental abuse?"
2. Two teachers put problems involving rounding on the chalkboard. One teacher explained the first problem, and students would do other worksheet problems at their desk. When finished students would take turns writing an answer on the board and the teacher would review how the student solved the problem;
3. No use was made of manipulatives or models in a math class. All students did the same work, and there was no effort to differentiate or have students work in pairs or groups;
4. Students worked almost exclusively on worksheets or problems teachers placed on the board or displayed with an overhead projector for math and grammar;
5. Students were each given a handout with rules for forming the plurals of nouns, such as adding -s, adding ies, drop the y and add -ies, etc. they were given a few minutes to read the list of rules;
6. A teacher [third grade reading] stood at the chalkboard and the students were seated on the floor in front of her. They were completing two word webs to describe the characteristics of birds versus bats. If students named a dubious characteristic, the teacher would open the book, show pictures, and ask them if they were correct; and
7. Twenty students in a kindergarten class entered the classroom and were given identical worksheets asking them to select and mark pictures of words beginning with "s." (pp. 10-12)

These examples were culled from literally hundreds of examples of such teaching. If multiple intelligences were being celebrated, that did not appear to transfer into classroom use.

In general, both curriculum and instruction at Lionel—especially during the second year of the study—seemed to be in search of a compass. There appeared to be no common sense of either what students should learn or how they should be taught. In the absence of an articulated direction, teachers were tentative at best. Lionel had a veteran and stable staff. Most teachers possessed Masters' degrees and the requisite training and experience to be successful. Yet the chasm between preparation and practice was great.

Addressing Needs of Low Economic Students of Color

Lionel's official mission statement was not evident to observers as they visited the public areas of the school or individual classrooms. In school documents, however, the official mission statement asserted that, " . . . irrespective of cultural, economic, social, and learning differences, every child can learn" (p. 60).

To ensure that this goal was met, official documents proclaimed:

> . . . every staff member will relentlessly pursue instructional methods that provide challenging educational programs that match student needs and engage students in meaningful and relevant learning that fosters critical thinking and higher level learning. (p. 60)

In reality, however, there was ambiguity in this area as well. If differentiation and multiple intelligences were not evident as means of addressing student learning needs, what was the plan for ensuring that they were met? When asked how they tailored instruction for their students of color, English language learners, and students from low income homes, teachers had differing opinions and viewpoints. One classroom teacher, for example, stated,

> Well, probably starting back at the beginning of the week when we first do a sort. I put the words on little pieces of paper strips. So they do their sort, and I hand out their words, and we do the sort together. And then we go and do a word block, and we go through the words, and we talk about the words and the structure. The structure they mostly talk about because they bring their word up and tell me where it goes and why it goes there. Then we go through and really talk about the words and the meaning. Because what I think is a common word isn't necessarily a common word in their experience. And I think that this particular unit with relatives is great because they all have some kind of relatives, so it helps them to see if their family is a little different, all families are a little different. Nobody has the same family. (p. 56)

Another classroom teacher, when asked the same question, responded,

> Probably nothing [special for diverse students] I can verbalize. I mean, I work with these kids the same kind of kids all day long, so you do a lot of things throughout your day. I think this population, they're very aware. I mean, there are pencils on my desk, there are erasers. When they do their homework, I always ask them if they need paper. So I hand out paper for them to do their homework on because you cannot be sure they have paper at home. (p. 56)

For many Lionel teachers, the specialized reading program, and math taught via a co-teaching model, were the primary vehicles that would deliver appropriate instruction to their diverse students. Upon arriving at Lionel, Ms. Middler allowed discontinuation of the reading program for the upper grade students. In mathematics, she noted that, "co-teaching was dependent on planning," between math specialists and classroom teachers (p. 97). Planning at Lionel, however, occurred three times per year at quarterly grade-level planning meetings (p. 48). As an observer explained that in lieu of regular planning time, there is, "A lot of one-on-one help in the hallway. A lot of the planning happens on the run. There is not enough time for in-depth planning. The [new] principal does let grade levels meet together once a quarter to go over assessments and discuss plans, [and at those times] the specialists must split their time amongst the various groups" (p. 44).

Thus the reading program which had been a sort of glue that gave the school a common direction for addressing the needs of diverse learners had become fragmented and the math program suffered from a lack of coordination and planning.

One characteristic of Lionel that virtually all staff reported to be important in addressing the needs of its low economic students of color was its pervasive atmosphere of caring about students. These comments were especially common during the first year of the study when Mrs. Fine was principal. The reading teacher, for example, described Lionel under Mrs. Fine as

> [A] very caring environment from the minute the kids walk in the door. Kids don't like to go home at night. They'd come on Saturday if we opened the doors because that's the tone Carla [principal] sets. She cares. And hers isn't rhetoric. We're here for the children. What we're doing is for the child. And you hear that a lot but not everybody really does it. (p. 6)

Many teachers and staff reflected the same beliefs about the caring nature of the Lionel staff. It was difficult, however, for the study's observers to find the sense of deep caring translated into teacher/student interactions in the classroom—at least insofar as instruction played out. This was especially disturbing in the upper grades. For example, throughout an hour-long observation a sixth grade teacher sat behind his desk. He was articulate, but he never moved (p. 69). Indeed, in many of the upper-grade classrooms, much of the talking was done by the teacher (p. 69). Across classrooms, teachers taught while sitting at (or on) their desks, working problems on the board, and giving students answers (pp. 69-70). Observers noted little dialogue between students and teachers but a heavy dose of "teacher talk" (p. 69). In many of these classrooms observers also noted that this teaching style led to a lethargic student reaction—students were complacent and quiet but there was little evidence of engagement. Although such occurrences seemingly undermined some of the stated goals at Lionel, there appeared to be little in the way of supervision to ameliorate the situations.

Assessment of Learning

Essential in addressing the learning needs of diverse student populations is a strong link between assessment and instruction so that on-going assessment that closely links with curricular goals informs teacher planning. Lionel teachers stated a belief that assessment drives instruction in their school. For instance, one teacher stated, "We know our kids. We watch them. We know where they are" (p. 34). When asked about how they used assessment, many teachers stated that when beginning a unit they gave students pre-assessment and then taught students what they needed to learn. Some teachers were observed checking writing on spot, and were able to indicate that certain students were working on words based on the students' needs. Teachers also called on individual students for specific reasons and communicated those reasons to the students.

Perhaps contributing to some of the confusion at Lionel, however, was a hefty emphasis on standardized or pre-fabricated assessments (vs. classroom assessments

closely tied to curricular content) and an overload in that area. Lionel's school district required end of year and quarterly standardized assessments, which were administered at the school and sent to the central office. The reading series in place at Lionel included end-of-unit tests, which were also administered. Students also took the DSA (Developmental Spelling Analogies), which checks word recognition in context. Several teachers conducted running records of students' reading to check for a match between a given text and student skill. All kindergarten teachers administered the PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) assessment to their students. First and second grade teachers also administered the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment). ESOL students were initially grouped for reading by such scores, with some latitude based on teacher observation and knowledge. Other teachers report that they used PSI (Project for School Innovation assessment), QRI (Qualitative Reading Inventory-4), DRA, and PALS, whether required or not. To these were added quarterly retests, practice tests based on previous years' released state content standards tests, and teacher created rubrics indicating grade-level mastery with regard to writing (p. 89).

It is certainly possible that the sheer volume of assessment data contributed to the teachers' sense of teaching in multiple directions—not to mention contributing to a feeling of overload. Perhaps, too, is it possible that the tests became the curriculum rather than providing feedback on curriculum developed to achieve clearly articulated content goals. It is also possible that the amount of time spent on testing contributed to a misperception among students about achievement levels at Lionel. One student comment reflected similar remarks made to observers by a number of Lionel students. He maintained, "I think this is a good place because we have great test scores." This despite the fact that Lionel's test scores were among the lowest in the school district (p. 94).

Findings

As the study began, initial conversations, observations, and interviews—as well as recommendations from knowledgeable educational leaders—suggested Lionel would be a site in which teachers and administrators actively and knowledgeably support the academic success of its low economic students of color. More intensive site visits in the second year of the study at Lionel provided reason to question the early indications. Because the study at Lionel spanned a transition between principals, it not possible fully to assess the effectiveness of the school and its staff in supporting academic success of diverse learners under the leadership of either principal. What is useful to reflect upon is the state of the school during the transition and implications of that for supporting the academic success of its low economic students of color. In the transition were factors that likely exist in other schools during transitions—or in general. It is those conditions and their impact on students that is instructive.

Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student work samples tell a great deal about what occurred at Lionel. Simply stated, Lionel's faculty and staff were adept talking about their pursuit of effective practices with their students. Among frequently mentioned practices that should bode well for diverse student populations were: creating a caring environment, using differentiated instruction, using assessment to guide

instruction, and curriculum and instruction focused on building student achievement. Actions to support these goals were not witnessed consistently—perhaps because of the transition in leadership, perhaps because of misunderstanding about the nature of the practices, perhaps both. In any case, study data suggest four pervasive conditions at Lionel during the tenure of the study.

- Hollow Caring—Lionel teachers repeatedly stated their high level of concern for their students caused them to work extra hours on the children's behalf. At least in year one of the study, observers found evidence to support this assertion. After the principal transition, conversations about caring continued, but many Lionel teachers did not appear to be devoting extra time to their students, and were sometimes actually failing to provide baseline requirements for teachers such as time of arrival at school and careful instructional planning. This dichotomy of espousing caring, concern, and affection for students without translating those attitudes into observable behaviors, was present throughout the grade levels, but was most evident in the upper grades. By all accounts, an atmosphere of caring was a hallmark of Lionel during the principalship of Carla Fine. However, the generalized low quality of instructional planning under the new principal suggests that "caring" may have had more to do with tone than substance even during the "good old days." In any case, "caring" that does not extend to high quality classroom practice may help students feel safe and welcomed in a school but will likely not transport students to academic success. In fact, despite student assertions that Lionel students made great test scores, evidence suggests otherwise. State mandated test scores published in the summer after the transition year at the school indicated that while math and reading scores met benchmarks for growth, they did not reach the level required for accreditation. In math and science, scores did not reach levels necessary for accreditation; scores fell dramatically in both areas (p. 19).

- Surface Differentiation—While Lionel staff spoke about the importance of attending to the individual needs of its diverse student population, examination of teaching at Lionel indicated only rudimentary application of the practices of differentiation. Lionel's most successful example of differentiated instruction was the reading program that grouped children by readiness levels and sent them to various classrooms so that they could learn with children whose standardized test scores suggested had the same reading skills. Segregation of students by "reading ability" runs counter to a fundamental tenet of differentiation—flexible grouping. Data from the study suggest that, at most, students would have changed reading groups three times a year. Further, once a student was assigned to a reading group, that student was assumed to be fundamentally like all other students in the group and received whole-group instruction almost exclusively. While there were often multiple adults in the rooms so that the children could work in smaller groups, each small group almost

invariably did the same work as all the others. To maximize the growth of students—including those from low economic and culturally diverse backgrounds—differentiation must attend to a student's evolving readiness, interests, and modes of learning. What minimal differentiation was observed at Lionel in year two of the study typically fell far short of that standard.

- Assessment Addiction—While teaching (and differentiation) depends upon an accurate and consistent sources of data, at Lionel multiple assessments were given that provided essentially the same information. As a result, valuable instructional time was lost and test information was of questionable value in the classroom. Further, while Lionel's teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists all spoke of the large variety of assessment instruments that were employed, there was little evidence of data from them being utilized for instructional planning. In addition, there was no clear evidence that the standardized instruments were selected for match to curriculum goals so much as that they may have become the curriculum goals.

- Inadequate Curriculum and Instruction—Lionel, like most public schools, was under pressure to teach the state's content standards and demonstrate through tests that students had mastered required content. Such standards were intended, in part, to assure that all students, regardless of where they attended school, had access to the same academic content. Ms. Middler demonstrated both why such standards were needed and the necessity of rigorous school-site administration and implementation of those standards. Through the duration of the study, Lionel's teachers and administrators were focused on improving their reading/language arts and mathematics test scores. While they achieved a modicum of success in these areas, the emphasis came at the expense of other content areas, especially science and social studies. The result seems to have been a student body that read and computed at a level of minimum competency but who had little content depth in science, social studies—and arguably in literature and mathematics as well. Students who come to school with deficits in opportunities to learn are not likely to be prepared to compete with more privileged peers if their curriculum consists of minimal skills devoid of meaningful content and reasoning about content.

Implications

Initial indications in the study pointed to Lionel as a school whose administrators and teachers were doggedly devoted to improving the academic success of the largely low economic students of color who attended the school. Teachers and principal spoke with enthusiasm about a environment schoolwide, an effective reading program targeted to addressing students' particular literacy needs, a math program co-taught with classroom teachers and specialists to ensure that students received high quality math

content, quality instructional materials and supplies, common training in differentiation as a means of ensuring the academic growth of students at every achievement level, and assessment that provided teachers with precise knowledge about their students so that instruction could be focused on important learning goals and adjusted for learner variance.

By the second year of the study—a year of transition to a new principal—observations suggested an atmosphere of uncertainty in the school. Teachers often came to school late and left early. The reading program was dropped by half the school. The co-taught math program lacked coordination. Differentiation was absent in most classrooms. And even the school's hallmark "caring" seemed to be more a matter of rhetoric than action.

Certainly there were examples of negatives at Lionel during year one of the study and examples of positives at Lionel during year two. Nonetheless, things changed at the school, and—at least for the final of the two years of school visits—did not seem to change for the better.

It is not possible to conclude whether a school on the brink of something good came rapidly unglued or whether what appeared to be "successful teaching" was merely a veneer. In either case, at the time of the study, key elements were lacking in many classrooms that would likely be necessary to support the academic success of low economic students of color.

1. Teachers generally lacked a common language of student success. In other words, there was no shared sense of what would constitute academic success for Lionel students. Conversation centered more on the nature of the reading program, co-teaching in math, teacher training in differentiation, materials and supplies, and other "tools" than on what the educators believed their students needed to know, understand, and do as a result of their time at the school. Lacking clarity about goals, action became a substitute for direction.

2. Teachers generally lacked key pedagogical skills and content knowledge necessary to accurately assess student achievement and design curriculum and instruction to support students in reaching successively higher level of academic performance. In reading, classroom teachers followed (at least in year one of the study) a prescribed and inflexible reading program. In math, they depended upon specialists for math content knowledge. In science and social studies, they felt uncertain and deficient. In differentiation, they talked about, but did not apply, fundamental elements. Virtually all classes were taught for the purpose of skills practice and conveyance of right answers. Simply said, it is difficult to expect student success in the absence of teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical efficacy.

3. School administrators generally lacked specific and concrete steps for supporting faculty competence and confidence in improving student performance. While rhetoric aimed at improved student performance is initially alluring, it does little to assist

children. Administrators must determine specific areas of student performance they wish to improve and then ensure that teachers master and use viable instructional approaches to accomplish the improvement. Administrators must be willing and able to provide this vision as well as the professional development, support for planning, and instructional materials necessary for its implementation, and the supervisory oversight to ensure translation into effective classroom practice. The path toward this sort of schoolwide improvement is neither linear nor simple. Nonetheless, it is unlikely to occur at all in the absence of goal clarity and persistent, insistent direction from the school's leader.

In Meredith Wilson's musical, *The Music Man*, Harold Hill is a fast-talking salesman who pretends to be a musician extraordinaire. He convinces an entire town that he will be the band director who will guide its young people to musical stardom if the townspeople will just buy the uniforms and instruments he sells.

Absent musical knowledge, he asks the young people to use the "Harold Hill Think System." That is, if they envision themselves in a marching band and hear themselves playing rousing marches, they will be musically ready when the instruments and uniforms arrive in town.

In theater, the "Harold Hill Think System" works. In schools—particularly in schools where many students lack the necessary out-of-school-support to think their way to success—the prospects of such an approach are scant. At Lionel, at least for the limited period of the study, there seemed to have been more envisioning than action—and no shared musical score, at that.

CHAPTER 6: Cross Case Discussion and Implications

Key Indicators From Across Sites

This case study research examined three school sites in which at least some staff had a reputation for supporting the academic success of low economic students of color—including those with high academic potential. In each instance, exploratory visits to the school by researchers affirmed assertion for at least some teachers in the school. Subsequent visits to classrooms in the schools helped researchers select those classrooms that seemed most useful in understanding what teachers do to help students placed at risk for low school achievement select and maintain an academic success orientation. Researchers developed case studies for each site as circumstances in the site indicated.

The overarching study question was: How do teachers contribute to and support the academic success of high potential low economic students of color in their classrooms? More specifically, researchers sought to understand how these teachers come to understand the academic and affective needs of their low economic students of color, how and why such teachers think about both curriculum and instruction related to their low economic students of color, what personal and contextual factors contribute to teacher skill and will in contributing to the academic success of their low economic students of color, and how the students experience and contribute to their transition to academic success.

The three case study school sites differed in multiple ways demographically. Sunnydale is a large high school in a largely affluent college town in the southern United States that also has a significant low economic, largely African American population. At Sunnydale High School, approximately 69% of students were White and from middle to upper middle class families. Approximately 16% were African American and from low income families, approximately 3% were Hispanic and from low income families, and approximately 12% were Asian representing a range of family income.

Flagstaff is a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school in a metropolitan area of the Mid-Atlantic United States. Its student population was approximately 95% African American and 100% low income.

Lionel Elementary School is located in a large suburban area adjacent to a major city on the East Coast of the United States. Its student population was approximately 51% Hispanic, 33% African American, and 16% White and other ethnic groups, including many second language learners.

In addition to differences in grade level, setting, and ethnic and economic composition, the three schools differ in other significant ways. It is these differences that are most instructive to educators who seek to support the academic achievement of low economic students of color—including those with high academic potential who have not yet established equivalent achievement patterns in school. A comparative examination of

six key indicators establishes the teachers and schools on a continuum with positions that remain relatively stable across categories with regard to factors that contribute to the success of low economic students of color. That is, in general, Flagstaff seemed to have the most depth and breadth of scope in supporting the academic success of these students in a particularly complex and demanding setting. The three Sunnydale teachers were also successful in helping target students move toward academic success, but sometimes with less depth of focus and understanding of the effort. Lionel, at least at the time of the study, appeared least able to harness its efforts on behalf of its students. In each instance, both school and teacher factors and the interaction of those factors worked in concert to contribute to—or not contribute to—the success of low economic students of color. Following is a discussion of the factors as they appeared in each of the sites.

The Organization and Its Vision for Low Economic Students of Color

Teachers and administrators at Flagstaff were of one accord in their mission on behalf of the students they served. It was their goal to do whatever it took to provide personal acceptance and both personal and academic structure to ensure that their students would achieve competence as measured by the state mandated standards test. Thus at Flagstaff, there was a universal or group sense of mission. That is, staff discussed student needs and teachers responses to those needs on an on-going basis. School personnel worked together as a team with a common game plan and a common vocabulary. The school itself was a "tight ship" in regard to purpose and process for teaches—just as it was for students.

Two of the three target teachers at Sunnydale (Isabel and Barbara) had the goal of supporting the low economic students of color who enrolled in their advanced classes so that the students would be able to handle the demands of those classes. The third teacher (Kurt) had a more extensive goal of providing a support system that enabled the high school students be successful in advanced coursework, see themselves as successful, aspire to attend college, and navigate the college application process.

At Sunnydale, the teachers' sense of purpose was more personal than universal. That is, while there was a district conversation about the need to support academic success of low economic students of color—and to a lesser degree a school level acknowledgement of the need—there was no chorus of intent to ensure support. School structures such as tracking spoke of comfort with the status quo. The three teachers in the Sunnydale site did what they did because they chose individually to do so. They did not have the collegial support system that was a hallmark of Flagstaff. Again, Kurt was something of an exception in that he was part of a strong district-wide AVID team that did provide awareness, conversation, and support—as well as a clearly articulated direction and strategies for achieving it. In regard to addressing the needs of low economic students of color, Sunnydale was a "loosely coupled" organization.

The Lionel teachers and administrators appeared to care about their students on an affective level, but that did not seem to translate into, or even stem from, a clearly articulated and enacted vision for them. Lionel teachers appeared to function somewhat

randomly. While there was a group consensus about the importance of "caring," there was little group conversation or agreement about how that should translate into classroom practice. In this way, Lionel was neither a tight ship nor a loosely coupled organization. It functioned in a more diffuse fashion—at least during the second year of the study.

Understanding of Students' Backgrounds and Needs

Teachers in the various sites varied in what Storti (1995) would call "cultural competence." That is, they had varying degrees of sophistication regarding the lives their students lived outside of school—including, but not limited to, the roles of economics, culture, and race played in their students' academic and non-school lives. Storti suggests four levels of ascending cultural competence. In the lowest stage, which he calls unconscious incompetence, educators would be generally ignorant of cultural differences; they don't know what they don't know. They have no reason not to "do what comes naturally" in interacting with members of other cultures. In the next stage—Conscious Incompetence—teachers would realize that there are differences among cultures. They are troubled by the fact that they know they don't know; and they are now less certain of their intuitive interactions with members of other cultures. In the third stage—or Conscious Competence—teachers would know some differences in cultures and try to modify their behaviors in ways that demonstrate sensitivity. At this stage, however, actions are not natural as the individual tries to replace old intuitions with new ones. Finally, in the stage of Unconscious Competence, the teacher would be spontaneously sensitive to cultural differences and can once again trust his or her intuition, at least in regard to cultures the individual understands.

Many of the educators at Flagstaff were in the fourth stage of Unconscious Competence regarding their low economic African American students. This was particularly evident among African American teachers whose backgrounds gave them a direct window into the students' worlds. Even some Caucasian teachers at Flagstaff, however, appeared to have deep understanding of and sensitivity to their students' cultures—no doubt both because of past experience at Flagstaff and because the Flagstaff culture supports staff in knowing and understanding their students at a deep level of awareness. At Sunnydale, Kurt was at the Unconscious Competence stage of cultural awareness. It is likely that Isabel and Barbara vacillated between Conscious Incompetence and Conscious Competence. It is more difficult to categorize the Lionel staff with confidence, but the mostly likely generalization for the staff would place them—like Isabel and Barbara—between Conscious Incompetence and Conscious Competence.

It is the case that teachers in all three settings at least accepted—and to varying degrees understood—that their students came to them with cultural profiles that differ in some ways from majority, Caucasian profiles, that these profiles can negatively impact learning if not taken into account in instructional planning, and that can facilitate learning and enrich the classroom if they are regarded positively. Variance in degree of understanding likely related to teachers' own backgrounds and mindsets, teaching experience, and degree of school support for extending their understanding.

Attitudes About Teacher Role in Supporting Student Success

Teachers and administrators at Flagstaff—almost without exception—absolutely "owned" responsibility for seeing that their students became achievers. Teachers were proxy parents as well as educators. They provided safety and structure that were often absent at home. They commended citizenship, morality, self-discipline, responsibility, and informed decision-making to the students. They taught the students etiquette, the language of power, and principles of healthy living. They saw to it that students had food, clean clothes, and notebooks for their schoolwork. The administrators and teachers also accepted responsibility for understanding precisely what would be required for success as measured by the state-mandated tests and for ensuring that students knew precisely what to do to satisfy the requirements of the test. The teachers had a deep understanding of their students' very difficult lives. They had a deep affection for their students as well. However, they understood two realities that are as easy to overlook as they are important to student success. First, they knew that blaming students and/or parents for "shortcomings" is counterproductive. Second, they knew that excusing students from today's demands because of last night's tragedies guarantees a tomorrow that will replicate the worst of the child's life. If students at Flagstaff lacked the prerequisites for school success, the Flagstaff educators stood ready to fill the void—whether it was academic or affective.

At Sunnydale, Kurt did rise to the level of "owning" responsibility for success of the AVID students. Isabel and Barbara likely did not understand the range of their target students' needs well enough to "own" them. They did, however, invest in the students. That is, they thought about the students both in and out of class time, asking themselves what they could do to make their classes work for the students. They ensured that the target students were full participants in co-curricular opportunities such as study groups, project work, and book club discussions. And they ensured that they entered the students' worlds—at least at the level of extracurricular activities. These actions, as the students saw them, were personal—acts of caring that provided affirmation and built trust.

The Lionel teachers—especially in the lower grades—clearly felt affection for their students. Students knew they were cared for. School was safe and inviting to them, and they translated the teachers' articulated belief in them to belief in themselves. In the end, however, the Lionel educators did not move from affection to action. It is perhaps diagnostic that students believed their test scores were very good, even as they failed to indicate competence—let alone excellence.

The Nature of Curriculum

In this one area, Flagstaff may have something to learn from one of the other study schools. The three Sunnydale teachers balanced the students' need for baseline content and fundamental skills with their need to engage with issues and see themselves as thinkers and problem solvers. Thus the Sunnydale curriculum emphasized the meaning of the disciplines the students studied and ensured that students developed the background knowledge and skills necessary to engage in authentic debate and production

in the disciplines. While it would be easy to argue that the focus on substantive issues of the disciplines is possible because Sunnydale is a high school, it is likely that much younger students would (and should) also be engaged by the stories, dilemmas, ideas, and applications that are at the core of meaningful content—that they would (and should) benefit from seeing themselves as developing thinkers who use reasoning in increasingly powerful ways. Curriculum in two of the Sunnydale classes had to account for both state mandated tests and Advanced Placement tests. Nonetheless, the classes were not focused on test preparation but rather on the kind of understanding and problem solving that prepares students for life—and for tests.

At Flagstaff, curriculum was unapologetically focused on the state mandated tests. Much of the learning landscape at the school is dotted with facts, skills, and specific guidelines for test-taking. Given the level of success achieved by the Flagstaff teachers and students in this regard, it is stunning to imagine what they could accomplish if there were a focus on developing minds equal to the focus on developing memory.

Nonetheless, a close look at the Flagstaff classrooms suggests something more substantive than a drill and memorization focus. Teachers did generally ensure that they helped students develop a context for learning. That is, they made certain to connect what they were asking students to learn with the students' frames of reference—or in the absence of frames for meaning, they made certain to help students develop the frames. In that way, they laid a foundation for future learning. In addition, the teachers (to varying degrees) called on students to use what they practiced to reach out beyond the classroom. Sometimes that took the form of writing to members of the community. Sometimes it took the form of shared stories and experiences. At the very least, teachers often reminded students of uses for what they learned as they continued to develop into successful citizens. The curriculum at Flagstaff was not as rich as it might have been—or as rich as it should be—to support the intellectual development of low economic students of color. On the other hand, it was frequently not without context and purpose.

At Lionel, the curriculum was diffuse. The reading program which, for better or worse, was once the anchor of the curriculum began to lose its hold. The math curriculum was, at least in part, the responsibility of specialists with whom the teachers increasingly lost contact. Social studies and science had taken such a back seat to math and reading skills, which the Lionel teachers believed were more important for raising test scores, that teachers felt they didn't know how to teach the subjects. Curriculum at Lionel did not have close alignment with the state required tests that typified the Flagstaff curriculum. Nor did it evidence the context-building and expectation for long range student success that was the case at Flagstaff.

The Nature of Instruction

Instruction in all three sites was relatively more teacher-centered than student-centered. That is, teacher-talk was central. Students practiced what they heard. In keeping with the nature of the curriculum, Sunnydale students had more latitude and expectation for creative and critical thinking as well as for production of meaning-driven

work. Even there, however, the teachers were at the core of most of what took place in the classroom. In no setting was there a broad repertoire of instructional strategies in play. What tended to distinguish the sites from one another instructionally was the nature of the teachers' roles. At Flagstaff, teachers were quite formal in their interactions with students and very directive. All of this was part of the structure-building central to the Flagstaff mission. At Sunnydale, the two content teachers functioned more as experts than as authority figures. Their interactions with students were semi-formal. There was room for joking and sparring—although in these classes, the tone of the humor was invariably positive and respectful. As personal illustrations and admonitions helped link students and teachers at Flagstaff, repartee played that role at Sunnydale. At Lionel, the role of the teacher was more that of dispenser. Much of the time, teachers showed or told, students replicated. The roles of the teachers in each case were reflective of the nature of curriculum in their schools.

The Role of Assessment

In this category, the role of assessment seemed something less than it should be in all three sites. Lionel invested most heavily in administration of formal assessments. However, the efforts seemed duplicative, did not appear to help teachers focus effectively on individual differences (except insofar as it supported "homogeneous" grouping for reading), and may have made the nature and purpose of curriculum more ambiguous to the staff. While Flagstaff was laser-sharp in ensuring that what students learned in class would prepare them for state testing, there did not seem to be much use of on-going assessment to address individual differences. Students simply practiced what was required of them until they mastered it—and then moved on. At Sunnydale, assessment appeared to be more reflective of the curriculum than a driver of curriculum, but it also appeared to be more for the purpose of filling grade books than guiding instruction. In very few instances in any of the sites was assessment a tool for understanding or responding to students' interests or learning preferences, and seldom was it a signal that a student needed to move beyond the prescribed curriculum.

Implications

While the intent of the study was to examine three sites in which teachers were effective in supporting the academic success of low economic students of color, the reality is that it studies two successful sites and one that, at least temporarily, was far less successful. The contrast between the two successful sites and between the two successful sites and the less successful one suggest several implications.

First, no site was "strongest" in each of the six indicators of success discussed in the previous section. While Flagstaff certainly has much to teach educators who seek to turn the tide for low economic students of color from one of underachievement to one of academic success, even there curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the interaction among the three have room for growth if success is to be defined to include making meaning of content, exercise of reasoning, facility with problem solving, and authentic production. Sunnydale students submit that the three case study teachers in their schools

were life-changing for them, and yet there was no schoolwide mission to change achievement patterns, the teachers' cultural awareness was sometimes naïve, and instruction and assessment were less than robust. Even at Lionel where most of the indicators were weak, students came to school with enthusiasm and felt safe and welcomed there. There was, they said, not much about their school they'd want to change.

The implication here seems to be that teachers do not have to be perfect to support students in reversing underachievement. Certainly at Sunnydale, teachers who were willing to invest modestly but overtly and consistently in the target students exercised noteworthy and positive power to help their students embark upon and succeed in a new and more promising academic direction.

Second, a best case scenario for ensuring that students of color from low economic backgrounds become academic achievers arises when a school is on an unambiguous mission to do so, and the intent is translated into robust and consistent action. There is no doubt that the student population at Flagstaff was by far the most challenging of the three settings in which to be architects of student success. It is highly unlikely the success the Flagstaff students and staff repeatedly achieve would happen in a place that is less focused. High structure, extended school time, parental contact, clarity about curricular goals, and a workaholic staff all seem indispensable in what the school accomplishes. They do no less than consistently take a group of young people highly predictive of school failure, gather them together in a setting that should compound the considerable difficulties in their individual lives, establish discipline (first at the school and classroom levels and then at the level of the individual), and teach the content and skills necessary to distinguish themselves on measures that typically reserve "success" for more privileged learners.

The implication here is that individual teachers may bring about increased achievement for individual students, but if educators want to reverse underachievement for large groups of low economic students, they will have to be willing to work as teams as hard as they want their students to work—and to risk with their students each day the possibility of failure that comes at the hand of a society that sends its young to school with vastly different levels of preparation and support for the journey ahead. In other words, good can be good enough on a small scale, but large scale reversal of underachievement requires focus and effort at a different level of magnitude.

Third, our definitions of success likely have long-term consequences that we may not explore as fully as possible as we embrace them. At Lionel, success may have been defined as caring. Teacher caring is a precursor to academic achievement, but it is not enough. Students can neither understand the concept of high expectations nor learn to aspire to reach them in the absence of clarity about what they should learn and why. At Sunnydale, it is no surprise that few low economic students of color enter advanced classes. Students have been segregated by achievement (which equates to segregation by race and economics) for so many years that they enter high school with neither the vision of themselves as achievers nor the precursor skills to achieve. Success in Sunnydale has

often been curiously defined as working up to one's current level of performance. This circular approach happens when students are sorted by group and taught according to expectations for the group in which they are placed. Even at Flagstaff that undeniably merits the commendations it receives for doing what few other schools are able to do in setting a new course toward achievement for the poorest of our nation's students, definitions of success can be inhibiting. If success at Flagstaff included movement from baseline knowledge and skill to meaning making, and from meaning making to application of understanding and skill, and from application of knowledge and skill to creation of new ideas the power of the school would be not just impressive, but atomic in its scope.

Fourth, to work more effectively to develop the capacity of high potential students of color from low economic groups, schools and classrooms will have to be more effective in working with virtually all low income students of color. Flagstaff did not even accept as students African Americans who scored in the top quartile on standardized tests because the district in which it was located did not want to lose those students in its formal gifted program. Nonetheless, in the second and third quartile students the school did accept were many students who, given the right support, began to look more and more like gifted learners. When they graduate from Flagstaff, many of them are accepted into and succeed at a local International Baccalaureate magnet high school or at a local magnet school for aviation studies. None of the target students at Sunnydale had been identified as gifted. In fact, until they were recruited for participation in AVID, none had been considered for advanced classes of any kind.

The implication of this reality is that for many low economic students of color, high quality curriculum and instruction will have to be a precursor to high performance, not a reward that the student accrues only after high performance. High quality curriculum—such as that experienced by the Sunnydale target students—engages the mind, activates motivation, and stirs the soul in ways no drill and skill class is able to do. At Sunnydale, the target students insisted that the three study teachers were life-altering for them. The study's researchers, while in full agreement that the teachers and their classes were good, could not see them as so remarkable as to be legendary. They were the kinds of teachers the researchers had in high school—the kinds of teachers we remembered and for whom we are grateful, but all of the researchers had some of those teachers every year. The African American students whom we shadowed in the study, it turns out, found the teachers to be so extraordinary because they had never had such teachers before. They had never participated in invigorating academic discussions. They had never had their feet held to the fire academically. They had never had someone assert that they could, should, and would do work of high demand and high quality. To use an analogy, it was as though they had eaten a steady diet of cold food from fast food restaurants at picnic tables throughout their academic lives. Suddenly, they were invited into a real dining room where the table was set with linens and good tableware. Asked to sit at the table and partake of excellent food, they first doubted that they belonged. In the presence of such fare, however, it did not take long for the students to develop a taste for the experience. Nonetheless, they remained surprised to see themselves included among

the dinner guests that had always seemed to them to be an exclusive group. The experience was at once affirming, remarkable, and terrifying.

Fifth, in addition to the opportunity to study high quality curriculum, low economic students of color will need instruction that allows them simultaneously to move backward and forward. In other words, they require teachers who are willing to uncover deficiencies in their prior learning and address those deficiencies even as they continue to support the students in moving forward as their more privileged and academically experienced classmates do.

To extend the analogy, there was much the students needed to learn about excellent food and the rules of fine dining. To have excluded them from the very table at which they would have best learned the precursor knowledge and skills they needed to "fit in" around the table would have amounted to barring most of them from the table indefinitely. In other words, as was the case at both Flagstaff and Sunnydale, these students need teachers systematically help students fill in gaps as they help the students extend their vision and reach. Remediation alone is highly unlikely to evoke high potential, and opportunities to enroll in coursework where teachers assume someone else should have taught the students prerequisite knowledge for the course is a hollow opportunity—almost guaranteed to reinforce negative stereotypes teachers hold about low economic students of color and that many of them hold about themselves.

Finally, educators in this study who made the most dramatic difference in the lives of low economic students of color affirmed the culture and experiences of the students even as they were pointing the way to participation in a new culture and set of experiences. These teachers did not ask the students to displace the familiar with "something better," but rather to learn to live in two worlds—to become multicultural. They taught students to "speak green" and when to "speak green," but they also made sure there was ample time in the day for students to speak their own dialects. They asked students to come to their homes to participate in book clubs, but they also went to students' after school activities. They asked students to consider their vision of a successful life and also helped them find examples of people from their cultures and economic backgrounds who had lived and even shaped the dream.

The implication is that we honor others not only by inviting them into our scheme of things but also by entering theirs. We honor others by learning from them with an investment equal to the one we ask that they make in learning from us. Much of what was potent in the case study schools and classrooms began when teachers built two-way streets between cultures, races, and economic strata that both they and their students would traverse.

In the St. Exupery book, *The Little Prince*, the fox says to the prince that the sound of many footsteps send him scurrying underground, back into his burrow. The sound of the footsteps that belong to those who bond with him draw him out of his hole, like music. In the case study settings that worked—and many of them did—the sound of

the footsteps of teachers and administrators drew the students out of deep holes. The satisfaction of learning encouraged them to stay above ground.

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