

Creating High-Performing Middle Schools in Segregated Settings: 50 Years After Brown

By Donna M. Davis & Sue C. Thompson

*“There are words like Freedom
Sweet and wonderful to say
On my heartstrings freedom sings
All day everyday...”*

(Langston Hughes, 1995)

Langston Hughes reminds us in his poem, “Words Like Freedom,” that human beings thrive on the ability to determine their own destiny. The fact that Hughes wrote this poem in 1943 when African Americans were denied certain freedoms makes his declaration more astonishing and, in a way, tragic. But Hughes, ever the dreamer, saw possibilities where none seemingly existed and envisioned a world where freedom—in all its forms—would come to everyone. Indeed, Hughes firmly believed exclusionary practices such as segregation would one day end and that children, particularly, would be allowed to flourish in a world of equality and social justice.

In 1954 the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) brought about the kind of legal victory of which Hughes and millions of other African Americans dreamed. But has the dream been deferred? Have the important goals that *Brown* sought been met? If we measure the success of *Brown* against the benchmark of social equity for all, where do things stand? Fifty years after the *Brown* decision, it is timely to examine whether society has supported middle level educators in creating schools where young adolescents living in poor communities do indeed attend schools that are socially just,

diverse, democratic, and culturally relevant. Further, as we explore the significance of race and identity in the development of young adolescents, it is also vital to understand the impact of attending middle level schools with little or no diversity on the development of students.

We will look specifically at the demographic shifts in student population post-*Brown* and determine how these shifts have affected the creation of high-performing middle schools. Furthermore, we will explore the issues surrounding identity development in young adolescents who attend *de facto* segregated middle schools. We will explore ways that middle level educators in one segregated middle school are



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Where there is the will, segregated schools can be among the very best.

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helping students develop positive self-identities and resiliency in order to be able to reach their dreams. Ultimately, the goal is to think about how to create middle schools that truly are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and *socially equitable*.

The Reality of *de facto* Segregation

Current trends in student demographics suggest that schools are becoming more racially segregated. While many schools experienced increasingly integrated student populations in the decades following the *Brown* decision, today because of recent Supreme Court decisions, housing patterns, white flight, and other economic factors, schools in many urban cores have resegregated themselves, offering little hope for children to learn in a diverse setting. Orfield and Eaton (2003) noted:

It's true that the Supreme Court decisions and the enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that followed the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling forced the South to desegregate. The region went, between 1964 and 1970, from almost complete segregation to becoming the most integrated region. After 1974, however, school integration efforts outside the South were stymied by the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision in *Milliken v. Bradley*, which prohibited heavily minority urban systems from including nearby suburbs in desegregation plans. School districts in the North usually run coterminous with municipal borders. Thus, Northern school districts usually reflect housing segregation rates, which are highest there. In the 1990s, a new set of decisions by a more conservative Supreme Court required that many large (and successful) desegregation plans be dismantled across the country. (p. 1)

Frankenburg, Lee, and Orfield (2003) suggested that the dismantling of desegregation plans has led to the creation of "apartheid schools," or schools that are virtually all non-white. Fifty years after *Brown*, the performance of African American students continues to lag behind that of their white counterparts. The cover of *U.S. News & World Report* (March 22, 2004) pointed out the inequity in education for children of color with a headline that read "50 Years After *Brown v. Board of Education*, Unequal Education: Why So Many Kids are Still Being Cheated."

This article explores whether the middle school can truly provide an educational experience where young adolescents in *de facto* segregated schools can have their social-emotional, moral, psychological, physical, and cognitive-intellectual needs met.

Middle school educators know that young adolescents cannot and will not learn if they do not have a nurturing, supportive environment with caring adults who have their best interests at heart. Can segregated middle schools, with the challenges of high stakes testing and limited resources, provide that kind of supportive and academically oriented environment?

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1997), it is during the 10- to 14-year-old stage of development that young adolescents struggle with, among other things, a sense of identity. What can middle school educators do to be sure that young adolescents receive a meaningful education while developing a positive sense of identity that is critical for their success?

If we define education to include student culture and identity development, it is imperative that the structures we develop support and strengthen young adolescent knowledge and abilities. For this article, education is defined as "the entire process by which human beings develop a sense of self and formulate an identity, learn the ways of society so that they may function within it, and define and transmit their culture from one generation to the next" (Hiner, 1990, p. 138). This definition recognizes an educational process involving far more than traditional schooling, including individual experiences playing a role in how a person comes to be "educated." Thus, if we accept that the transmission of culture and the development of self and identity are critical to one's education, we should look at the aspects of each in determining whether meaningful educational experiences can occur in "apartheid schools."

The challenge is to create high-performing middle schools in segregated settings that deliver educational programs that reflect the recommendations of *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), meet the standards set by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (2002), and support the goals of the National Middle School Association's (2003) *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*. Jackson and Davis (2000) stated, "Along with intellectual development, at the heart of our definition of 'middle grades education' is the requirement for equity in outcomes for all groups of students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, family income, or linguistic background." They further stated that "schools grounded in the *Turning Points* design are dedicated to excellence and equity and to being responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents" (p. 11).

The National Forum's (2002) three part vision statement includes a belief that youth in the middle grades are capable of learning and achieving at high levels. The statement further asserts a sense of urgency that high-performing schools with middle grades become the norm, not the exception.

Essentially, the National Forum stresses that high-performing middle schools must be academically excellent, developmentally appropriate, and socially equitable. To be socially equitable, middle school educators must seek to keep their students' future options open and have high expectations. They must be sure that the work that is produced is of high quality and that teachers are experienced and expertly prepared. Further, teachers in segregated middle schools, who may be white or may have different life experiences from their students, must honor their students' histories and cultures. These educators have the responsibility to overcome systematic variation in resources and outcomes related to race, class, gender, and ability.

This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents (National Middle School Association, 2003) states that, "it is vitally important to recognize that the areas of development—intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral—are inexorably intertwined. With young adolescents, achieving academic success is highly dependent upon their other developmental needs being met" (p. 3). In fact, while there are many developmental characteristics that have serious implications for all young adolescents, the following developmental characteristics may become more pronounced for young adolescents in increasingly segregated settings:

In the area of *cognitive-intellectual development*, young adolescents

- Display a wide range of individual intellectual development.
- Are intensely curious and have a wide range of intellectual pursuits, although few are—or need to be—sustained.
- Prefer active over passive learning experiences.
- Prefer interaction with peers during learning activities.

In the area of *moral development*, young adolescents

- Are in transition from moral reasoning that focuses on "what's in it for me" to that which considers

the feelings and rights of others; self-centered moral reasoning may be in evidence at the same time as other-or-principle-oriented reasoning, depending on the situation.

- Are often interested in exploring spiritual matters, even as they may become distant from formal religious organizations; for many youth, however, especially African Americans, connection to religious organizations may continue to be a vital part of early adolescence.
- Rely on parents and significant adults for advice, especially when facing major decisions.
- Owing to their lack of experience are often impatient with the pace of change, underestimating the difficulties in making desired social changes.

In the area of psychological development, young adolescents

- May experience a significant increase in their awareness of, and the importance they give to, their ethnic identity.
- Desire recognition for their positive efforts and achievements.
- Exhibit intense concern about physical growth and maturity as profound physical changes occur.
- Are psychologically vulnerable, because at no other stage in development are they more likely to encounter and be aware of so many differences between themselves and others.
- Are also psychologically resilient; across diversities in race/ethnicity, residence, or socioeconomic status, young adolescents tend to be optimistic and have a generally positive view of their personal future.

In the area of *social-emotional development*, young adolescents

- Have a strong need for approval and may be easily discouraged.
- Are increasingly concerned about peer acceptance.
- Often overreact to ridicule, embarrassment, and rejection.
- Can gravitate toward affiliation with disruptive peers or membership in gangs in order to feel part of a group and to protect their physical safety.

In the area of *physical development*, young adolescents

- Have varying maturity rates, with girls tending to begin puberty one and one-half to two years earlier than boys, and young adolescents in some cultural groups, such as African Americans, tend to begin puberty earlier than those in other groups.
- Have an increased need for comprehensive, medically accurate education about sexuality and health issues that responds to these increased concerns.
- Need to release energy, often resulting in sudden, apparently meaningless outbursts of activity.
- Are physically vulnerable because they may adopt poor health habits or engage in experimentation with alcohol and other drugs and high-risk sexual behaviors. (pp. 43-51)

How can these developmental characteristics be addressed in a segregated middle school? Indeed, young adolescents in middle schools with student populations that are monoracial or which are overwhelmingly poor feel the burdens of racism and classism as they attempt to reconcile a need for a strong sense of self with the realities of middle schools that are sorely lacking in resources, including highly qualified professionals to work with them. According to MacIver, Young, Balfanz, Shaw, Garriott, & Cohen (2001),

The plain truth is that urban middle schools that enroll large numbers of low-income students and poor rural middle schools that have little tax base are often weak learning institutions staffed by inexperienced and under-prepared people who have had inadequate opportunities to learn about teaching, young adolescents, or the content area(s) that they are assigned to teach. (p. 156)

As we acknowledge the anniversary of the *Brown* decision, it is apparent that some of the important goals of the case remain elusive. However, young adolescents now—50 years after the legal victory—need schools that are high-performing, whether they happen to be racially diverse or not. With this reality, the questions become: Can educators create high-performing middle schools in segregated settings? Since ethically they must, how can educators begin to tackle this important task?

Central Middle School: A Case Study

Central Middle School in the Kansas City, Missouri, School District is located in the heart of the urban core. The school was built in 1924, 30 years before *Brown*. The neighborhood, at that time, was a mixture of white middle and upper class families. Some of the most prominent citizens in Kansas City were educated at Central Middle School and Central High School, including Walt Disney. As in other urban centers across the country in the 1960s, many African Americans moved into the Central neighborhood as whites moved (fled) to the suburbs. Thus, the student populations of both Central Middle School and Central High School shifted dramatically. During the 1980s and 1990s, more than 95% of the student population was African American. Today, Central Middle School, a Title I school, has 550 students; 99% are African American and more than 89% receive free or reduced lunch. It is noteworthy that the Kansas City, Missouri, School District endured a decades-long desegregation case, *Jenkins v. Missouri*, that resulted in a two-billion-dollar magnet school remedy designed to attract white and middle class African American students back into the district. The case was filed in 1977 specifically because true integration had not been achieved and because the students were attending schools that were dilapidated and low-performing. In 2003, however, the case was quietly dismissed with little fanfare, and the schools are currently more racially segregated than before it was filed (Davis, in press). The failure of the magnet school remedy to bring about significant improvement has been the basis for ongoing controversy among residents statewide, and so it is against this backdrop that we present the Central Middle School case study.

In 1998 a new principal, Earlene McKelvy, was named at Central Middle School. McKelvy had a long history of commitment and involvement with middle level education. When she was asked to become principal, she had only heard negative things about the school, the students, and the staff. Central Middle School had been reconstituted, but only 20% of the faculty could be replaced, leaving 19 vacancies three weeks before the start of the school year. Although the task was daunting, McKelvy took the position with an open mind and an open heart. Last year she ended her sixth year as principal of Central Middle School where she and her staff have transformed and recultured the school to be a welcoming, warm, and educationally focused

middle school that meets the needs of the young adolescents who attend. When one special education student was asked, "Whose school is Central Middle School?" he replied, "This is our school because Mrs. McKelvy probably bought the school from the district. Everyone is welcome at our school so it's everyone's school" (personal communication, April 19, 2004).

In *Turning Points 2000*, Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that "no single individual is more important to initiating and sustaining improvement in middle grades school students' performance than the school principal" (p. 157). And with the reality of demographic shifts in student populations, it is critical that schools have leaders who can create a culture that fosters both adult and student learning and expands the definition of leadership to include all stakeholders. Since this applies to urban middle schools, one of the goals for McKelvy has been to make connections to the community so that the school becomes a part of it. Her belief is that parents can also learn and she works hard to build and strengthen family ties to the school.

Once a month on a Saturday morning, McKelvy and several of her staff members prepare coffee, juice, and donuts and invite parents, grandparents, and guardians to come to a town meeting where current issues are addressed and the participants are given face-to-face information about what is happening in the school. The students are invited to attend as well. At a recent Saturday morning meeting, McKelvy addressed the death of a former student and the impact that the young person's death had on the school. Since the incident occurred at 1:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning through an act of violence and with some students present, McKelvy's question to the group was, "Where were the parents of these young adolescents and why didn't they know where their children were?" Her concern and willingness to address tough issues is evident in her conversations with staff, parents, and community members.

When McKelvy was asked what she enjoyed most about the students at Central, she said that some of them try to be tough but they just want to be kids. She told the parent group that when they come into the school in the morning they might hear music playing and see kids talking and some of them may even be dancing to the music along with some of their teachers. Again, she emphasized that they are still kids and they want to feel safe and see school as a fun place to be, even though they are working

hard academically. They want to have choices. They want to be a part of the decisions that are being made at the school. She also said they are very sensitive and come into the school as sixth graders lacking confidence and are often slow to get into the groove. Once they become a part of the school and have positive experiences, they are much more confident and self-assured but continue to deal with all of the changes and challenges that young adolescents face during this time in their lives.

Many educators use rhetoric to talk about the importance of democratic schools, but at Central students know they are critical stakeholders at their school and in the educational process. At the beginning of her first year, McKelvy started whole-school meetings at the opening of the school day where she talked with students about their role as leaders. Three years ago, her assistant principal, Derald Davis identified 10 sixth grade boys that seemed to be having the most difficulty in school, academically and behaviorally. He personally started working with these boys, and eventually, they became positive role models and school leaders for the whole school. Davis also works with all the eighth grade boys every year in a program called *The Greatest* (Guiding, Respecting, Educating, Attaining, Teaching, Empowering, Striving, and Togetherness), where they are able to visit successful African American men in various professions. These men take a special interest in the eighth grade boys and the school. Similar programs are in place for the girls in the school.

For more than five years, McKelvy has involved students in improving instruction in the school. She shares with students the kinds of staff development teachers are engaged in and the kind of teaching and learning environments they should experience during their three years at Central. She is in and out of classrooms all day, stopping students in the hall during breaks to ask them what they are learning and if their objectives are on the board so they know what the teacher is covering in class. She challenges them to do their best work and talks about work that is displayed on the walls throughout the school.

The positive regard that the principal has for the young adolescents at Central resonates through the faculty. Focus groups with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers were asked what they enjoyed most about their students. The following words were often used: energetic, imaginative, curious, affectionate, eager to learn, helpful, active, playful, sensitive, the way they solve problems, the closeness they as

teachers were able to have with their students, creativity, ability to bond among themselves and with the adults in the school, their individuality, sense of humor, and their truthfulness. The teachers were positive and obviously enjoyed working with their students.

Students at Central are on interdisciplinary teams. Students and adults alike benefit from the team structure. At a recent seventh grade team meeting (held in a different team member's room every week) teachers talked about what they saw in the classroom that indicated that learning was occurring. Teachers mentioned the Word Wall (for vocabulary enrichment), the display of standards, the objectives on the board so that students would know what they were studying, and student work. The principal asked the teachers to sum up the room in one or two words and teachers said that the room was very pleasant and "brain-compatible" (personal communication, April 19, 2004).

While middle schools that are organized into interdisciplinary teams and small learning communities have the structure to support team learning, this is not enough. Team learning must focus on group interaction through dialogue and skillful discussion (Senge, 2000). According to Erb (1997), "Teams where teachers engage in dialogue about matters of mutual concern do reflect new levels of teacher interaction leading to the creation of novel solutions to educational problems" (p. 39). Senge (1990) stated that "when teams are truly learning, not only are they producing extraordinary results, but the individual members are growing more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise" (p. 10). Teachers and administrators at Central Middle School are engaged in an ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning and what is best for their students. Administrators distribute a newsletter every week that is written by all of the administrative staff. In one article to the faculty, McKelvy asked the question: *How well do you know your students?* She went on to write:

When you read the title, someone was thinking, "What a dumb question to ask at the end of the year. Of course, I know my students—it's the end of the year. I've had the entire year to get to know them." My rationale for asking this question is that from years of experience in urban schools, I have found that many teachers in the last weeks of school plan lessons that are designed to keep the students busy and quiet while they complete their end of the year tasks." Students are expected to keep out of the

teacher's hair. That is faulty thinking, especially at the middle school level. It is diametrically opposed to everything that we know about middle level students. It results in increased disciplinary incidents and frustrated teachers and students. To avoid this frustration, keep in mind some of the characteristics of young adolescents (and unique urban issues) as you plan your final lessons. Remember Stephen Covey's (1989) admonition from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Seek first to understand." If we understand our students we will plan according to their needs, how they think, and what is important to them. (personal communication, April 16, 2004)

One of the concerns that urban schools face is that teachers with less than three years of experience are twice as likely to work in predominantly minority schools as they are in predominantly white schools. According to Crosby, as cited in Brown (2002):

The teacher turnover rate in the urban schools is much higher than in the suburban schools. ... The result is that urban schools, especially those in the inner cities, are often staffed largely by newly hired or uncertified teachers. These teachers, who were trained to teach students from middle class families and who often come from middle class families themselves, now find themselves engulfed by minority students, immigrants, and other students from low income families—students whose values and experiences are very different from their own. (p. 1)

Middle school principals can either give up on these teachers or start aggressive professional development programs that not only focus on academics



PHOTO BY DONNA DAVIS

Teachers who see undeveloped talent can assist resilient students.

but, more importantly, on helping all teachers understand the students in the school. Teachers can either view their students as

- deprived or culturally different
- failing and low achieving or having unrecognized or underdeveloped abilities
- unmotivated or engaged and self-motivated
- and at-risk or resilient (Williams, 1996).

Cultural stereotyping must be challenged and urban schools must create a culture of possibilities. Central Middle School is a school of possibilities, where students are trusted, respected, and their voices are heard.

High-performing middle schools are developmentally responsive in the way that they are organized. Small learning communities of adults and students in which stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships support all students' intellectual, ethical, and social growth, are critical in segregated middle schools. According to McDaniel, Necochea, Rios, Stowel, & Kritzer (2001), "One aspect of identity of particular salience to early adolescents is their own understanding of themselves as members of an ethnic group (p. 159). Quaintant (1998), as cited in McDaniel and associates (2001) stated that "for ethnic minority middle level students, experiences (both overt and subtle) of prejudice make them painfully aware of their differences from the mainstream" (p. 160).

Banks (2001) asserted that cultural identity development occurs in stages, and that it is significant to note that while a school may be comprised of a single racial group, its students may be in various stages of identity development. Thus, it becomes incumbent upon educators in monoracial schools to avoid making assumptions about their students. Indeed, Banks' cultural identity typology outlines six stages of development of cultural identity:

1. Cultural Psychology Captivity, where the individual absorbs the negative ideologies and beliefs about his or her cultural groups.
2. Cultural Encapsulation, where individuals voluntarily participate primarily within their own cultural community and believe that their cultural group is superior to other groups.

3. Cultural Identity Clarification, where the individual learns self-acceptance and the ability to respond more positively to outside individuals and groups.

4. Biculturalism, where individuals have a healthy sense of cultural identity and a desire to function effectively in two cultures.

5. Multiculturalism and Reflective Nationalism, where the individual has positive attitudes toward other cultural, ethnic, and racial groups and is able to function within several cultures.

6. Globalism and Global Competency, where the individual has the ideal delicate balance of cultural, national and global entities, commitments, literacy, and behaviors. This individual has internalized the universalistic ethical values and principals of humankind. (p. 135-137)

Clearly, educators in monoracial schools like Central must be cognizant of the nature of cultural identity development, and in particular, middle school educators must acknowledge the complexities of this development along with all of the other forms of social development occurring in adolescence. One strategy is focusing on relationship building among all participants in the school. Because of the positive relationships between adults and students at Central, most students are in the Cultural Identity Clarification stage and beginning to move into the Biculturalism stage.

Dewey (1915) believed strongly in the power of relationships because of the underlying notion that social interaction leads to democratic education. He stressed the importance of school being a genuine form of active community life, not just a place one went to learn lessons. Cunat (1996) defined democratic education as "the vital and dynamic process of a learning community that recognizes the individuality and responsibility of each participant" (p. 30). According to Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004)

With all of the challenges facing schools today and the emphasis on increased accountability for student learning, the idea of a school where people working together can create the results they truly desire, is especially attractive. The idea that adults in schools must be learners in order for students to learn sounds simplistic but, in fact, this has often not been the norm in many schools.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform's vision statement (2002) emphasizes the importance of academically excellent middle schools that challenge all students to use their minds well by constructing their own meaning and understanding of important concepts, and applying what they learn to real-world problems. According to George (2002), in order to raise student achievement, as it is called for in *No Child Left Behind* legislation, "this is an excellent time to incorporate those elements that successful middle schools have used for a long time: active, hands-on instruction that is varied to individual needs, integrated curriculum, and assessment that is both summative and formative" (p. 10).

Teachers at Central Middle School understand the need to make learning active and engaging for their young adolescents. In focus groups with the eighth grade teachers they talked about the importance of making connections across the disciplines of science, math, language arts, and social studies. In fact, the social studies team was planning a simulation of the beginning of the Cold War where students would be involved in role playing. The students would be able to visit the Harry S. Truman Museum in Independence, Missouri, and see the actual room that would be the setting for their simulation. These teachers want their students to enjoy reading. The math teacher talked about the power of manipulatives and how the concreteness of manipulatives helps students understand the math concepts she is teaching. She went on to say that young adolescents love to build things. Similar conversations were held with sixth and seventh grade teachers as they explained projects and hands-on activities they used in their classes.

Equally important to listening to teachers' voices is listening to the voices of students. In focus groups with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, they talked about their dreams and hopes for the future. Careers mentioned by students were lawyer, pediatrician, veterinarian, actress, psychologist, astronaut, chef, and architect. When asked how teachers were helping them to attain their goals, they said that teachers talked with them, took the time to explain things in class that they did not understand, slowed down so that they could understand what was being taught, let them use technology to do research papers and projects, let them create things (i.e., invent a toy), and work in groups. One student summed it up by saying that the teachers liked the students at Central and were willing to spend one-on-one time with them. A strong sense of self for young adolescents can be attained more easily in

middle schools that value respectful, close relationships between students and adults in learning communities. These relationships, in turn, give more power to both students and adults as they strengthen the learning process and a democratic way of life.

Returning to the issue of segregation, it becomes even more challenging to create systems that are democratic and inclusive. Segregated middle schools *must be* focused on creating social equity for young adolescents. Students *must have* the educational experiences that leave future options open. High expectations for not only students, but educators, *must be* part of the school culture. "High-performing middle schools work to educate every child well and to overcome systematic variation in resources and outcomes related to race, class, gender, and ability. They engage their community in supporting all students' learning and growth" (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002).

If the primary aim of education is to enable the individual to function in a democratic society, middle school educators must ask hard questions: Whose school is it? Are students, staff, and patrons actually experiencing democracy in their middle school? Do students, staff, and patrons have a meaningful voice in the way their middle school is governed, in learning experiences, in assessments, and in community relations? Do students experience school life in the context of a democratic learning community? Are students able to have an active role in determining the curriculum and finding answers to their questions about themselves and the world they live in? Are the voices of staff members valued, and is leadership a responsibility of all constituents, not just the principal or the superintendent?

An expanded definition of leadership truly reflects a democratic structure that, unfortunately, is not found in many middle schools today. Yet, according to Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, and Walker (2002)

There is a definite advantage to thinking about leadership in this broad-based way when it comes to making schools more inclusive of diversity. By making room in leadership for more people with different talents and interests, greater possibilities open up for people of color and others whose voices have been relatively silent in school leadership, to step into the foreground. (p. 1-2)

In segregated middle schools there is an urgent need for collective responsibility for the well-being of young adolescents. This is too important a job for any one group of people, whether they are teachers, administrators, community members, or parents.

The Demise of *Brown*: Should We Give Up the Dream?

Langston Hughes would be saddened by the notion that we must somehow “muddle through” the current reality of school resegregation and that, with creative instruction and unique programs, we can hide the existence of the new apartheid school. Indeed, the America Hughes dreamed about would have fully embraced the goals of *Brown*, and the citizens of this country simply would not accept the dual system of education of young people that is in place today. While we offer ideas on how to create high-performing monoracial middle schools that are socially equitable, we do not suggest that the unfortunate shifts in demographics that have resulted in apartheid schools is by any means desirable or just. It remains unclear as to how we might achieve a significant level of integration and diversity, but the young adolescents whom we serve at this moment need educational experiences that strengthen their ability to develop strong senses of self and coherent identities, as well as academic skills and knowledge to find a meaningful place in today’s society. Only through their growth, can we begin to dream, as Hughes did, of a society where everyone is free.

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