
Introduction

The names on the desks tell the story of the changing face of public education. In previous years, James sat next to Eddie. Now, Mohan and Malik sit in those desks. Furthermore, Susie and Mary are sitting next to Mariana and Zari. Our classrooms are continuing to change. The education community must both face and respond to this reality. The public education system in the United States serves the majority of all school-aged children—49.5 million of 55.3 million children—but the majority of those children are no longer white, middle-class, suburban and rural students (Aud et al., 2012). The following data illustrate this point:

- Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of white students in the nation’s public schools decreased from 29 percent to 27.7 percent and has been decreasing steadily since (Aud et al., 2012).
- In 2010, 20 percent of students attended high-poverty elementary and secondary schools (Aud et al., 2012).
- In 2009, 21 percent of students spoke a language other than English at home (Aud et al., 2011).
- In 2010, approximately 13 percent of public school students received educational supports authorized by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA; Aud et al., 2012).
- One in four public school students is from a home headed by a single parent (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2013).

These data suggest significant cultural implications for teaching and learning. They also suggest that educators must immediately and continually examine whether each student has equitable access to daily quality instruction. The critical questions are: What does it mean to create a culturally responsive learning environment that makes access to high academic outcomes a possibility for each student? And, as leaders, how do we move our school communities forward in ways that respond to these changes? The answers to these questions require us to think differently about how we conduct the process of schooling. The reality is that we must address

the changes needed in public education. Our student population is not simply *going to* become more diverse; that diversity is already here! As educators, we must find the lens and perspective that allow us to make instructional decisions that reflect the learning needs of our students. We were inspired to write this book with that imperative in mind.

WHY READ THIS BOOK?

We break with the conventional wisdom that numbers rule and technical solutions (those that are quick, known, and finite) are sufficient. Effective teaching can be assessed only insofar as it is described by students' demonstrated learning. Therefore, we embrace adaptive, process-oriented thinking as the blueprint for addressing challenges in educational equity and access. We embrace synthesizing findings from both research-based and evidence-based practice as the beginning points for school transformation toward equity. Engaging in equity-focused leadership is, in part, a commitment to personal transformation. It requires each of us to reflect on personal beliefs and behaviors that drive the outcomes. Because a major part of this work is personal, we do not rely solely on empirical practice. We believe that transformation toward equity requires the leader to accept the challenge to change and then become a change agent. This book is a synthesis of educational research on topics ranging from scheduling theory to change management and change leadership, from addressing educational equity as practice to developing transformed school practice. Since we aim to equip the users of this book with a framework and a process to defy the predictable patterns of underperformance of diverse student groups, we emphasize *leadership for equity that ensures students have access to daily quality instruction*.

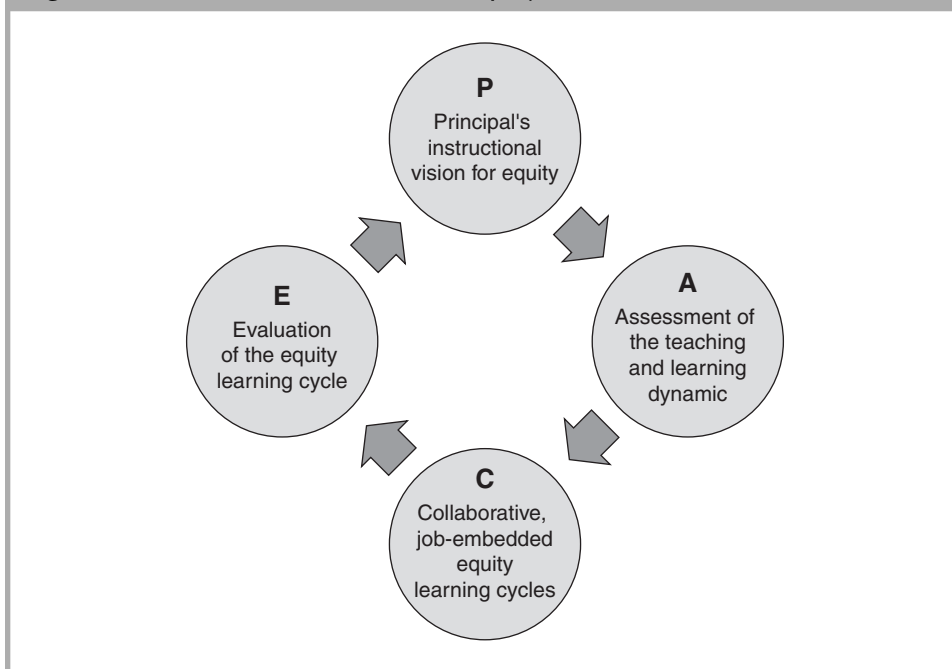
According to Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow (2009), "adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (p. 14). It involves understanding what about an organization should be maintained and what should be changed. The skill of adaptive leadership is precisely what is needed to lead schools and organizations serving large populations of diverse students when the goal is high achievement outcomes for each learner. Adaptive challenges, like those characterizing the disparities in student outcomes, can be tackled only as we change our priorities, beliefs, and practices (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leadership requires passion, persistence, and process—all of which we examine in this book through the lens of our collective experience at all levels of the public school system organization. It is the combination of passion, persistence, and process that can transform outcomes; possessing one without the others is insufficient to unearth and address the reasons for

the stubborn gaps in outcomes that plague the public education system (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Our current educational culture is rife with strategies, initiatives, and programs aimed at our diverse student groups. However, through this book, we want to suggest that a fundamentally different course of action is needed. The cultural implications of demographic changes in the public school population are significant. Diversity in the student and community population means, in part, that they will offer varied ways of understanding and experiencing the world. These differences should influence how we organize for teaching and learning. Responding practically to the challenges in serving a diverse population (within an institution not designed with diversity in mind) means that we as educators must focus on equity and the process we use must examine outcomes, not intentions. In this book, we urge readers to gain entry points to this work through the PACE Framework (Figure 0.1).

PACE represents the process component of the passion, persistence, and process trifecta. Through PACE, we ask the leader to begin with his or her instructional vision for equity. We ask, “What do you personally believe about educational equity, and what does it look like to you when it’s happening in teaching and learning?” and “What do data and research for your school population tell you?”

Figure 0.1 PACE Framework for Equity



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The answers to these questions must use specific and intentional language. From that instructional vision for equity, the leader then assesses teaching and learning; that assessment combined with ongoing equity cycles helps to determine growth and development opportunities, which are analyzed against student outcomes and the vision for equity. The PACE Framework allows for both the depth and the breadth of analysis that leaders need to employ to eliminate gaps in student outcomes. Naming, confronting, embracing, and then addressing the “truth” as revealed by data are integral pieces of this work. No longer can we explain away the inequities in access to high-quality instruction by saying, “we are doing our best,” or “these data are good, considering our demographics,” or “we just do not have enough materials [books/people, etc.]”

Consider how the diversity of your student population influences the teaching and learning in your organization. What can you identify? Without a framework that (a) uses equity as the lens and (b) includes a process that evaluates outcomes, how many strategies are you implementing that are truly moving your school community away from the predictability of demographics?

EMBRACING A NEW FRAMEWORK: MOVING AWAY FROM *MINORITY* STUDENT CONSIDERATIONS

Changes in our public school population require our collective, strategic reconsideration and reorganization in service of all students. As in the larger society, the idea of *minority* takes on a full range of meaning and is complex. In the field of education, the term *minority* includes but is not limited to numerical, racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic connotations. More important, as we seek to understand the needs of the learners we have traditionally considered *minority*, what are the implications of the operational definition we choose? In education, we often use that term as a code for black and brown children, poor children, city children. The term itself suggests that marginalizing these populations is reasonable simply because they are not high in number. However, as students with these characteristics become the majority groups in public schools around the country, we need to replace the coded language. Race and ethnicity are two major factors of diversity, but they intersect with myriad other factors that, as culturally competent educators, we should understand.

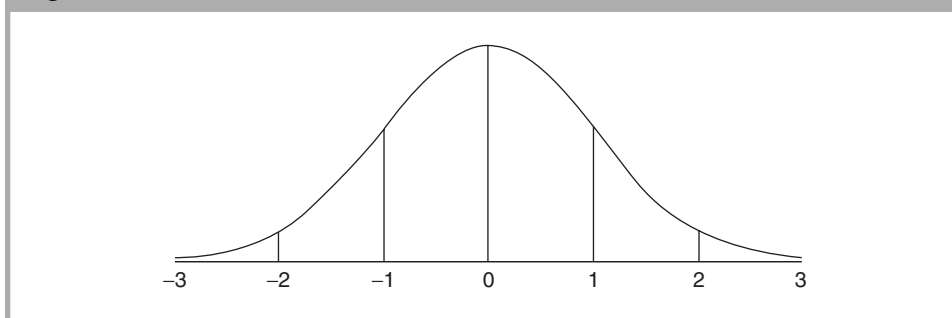
Perhaps the more useful descriptors going forward into the twenty-first century are those that describe more accurately the teaching and learning challenges for the learners we serve today. One thing is clear—we need to describe accurately and know clearly who our clients are. Consider how this plays out in practice for one elementary school principal.

In creating her staffing plan, an elementary school principal was struggling with how to allocate one position between two areas of need. She wanted to involve all stakeholders, so she had planning conversations with teachers, parents, and student representatives. She reviewed the data and shared the results with the stakeholders. The dilemma was whether to add a teacher to fourth grade and decrease class sizes in that grade, which would open on the first day of school with twenty-seven students, or to fund an additional reading specialist to work on acceleration because reading achievement was stagnant. The parents and teachers advocated for hiring an additional fourth-grade teacher because they believed that the reading achievement stagnation was due to a lack of parental involvement. The principal, however, knew that the demographic changes in the student population were creating challenges for teachers who relied on past practice rather than on culturally responsive practice. The data from her analysis were clear: As the population was becoming more diverse racially, economically, and linguistically, reading achievement had become flat. The principal was concerned that if this academic performance trend was not addressed aggressively, student achievement would start to decline. The school would then be dealing with a whole host of different issues. The principal clearly saw the benefit of hiring a teacher to work on accelerating achievement for struggling students and building capacity for all teachers, even if the parents—and other educators—did not.

When we continue to use terms like *minority* without challenging our thinking and assumptions, we are less critical of standing policies, practices, and procedures. As a result, “too often, attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the normalization of failure are unchallenged, and when failure is normalized, educators often grow comfortable seeing minority students underperform and fail in large number” (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. 31).

Most educators—even most people generally—probably are familiar with the bell curve. Figure 0.2 displays graphically our collective expectation for the “normal” distribution of performance most often associated with test performance in public education.

Figure 0.2 The Bell Curve



The figure predicts that the majority of students (70 percent of them) will perform in the average range, while approximately 15 percent of students will score in each of the high and low ends of an assessment (Warne, Godwin, & Smith, 2013). This predictive model has powerful implications for how we respond to performance patterns in public schools.

The bell curve, by its very nature, accepts the fact that some students will achieve at a higher rate and allows us to accept that some students will not achieve. It seems natural, even logical, to accept that not all students will succeed at everything they try. The insidious nature of this belief, though, is that in the minds of many in our society, there is a strong pairing of *minority* students and underachievement. As a result, the bell curve takes on a different meaning. The demographic predictability of low achievement, as well as bell-curve thinking, gives us license to shrug our shoulders and say that there are just *those* students—the ones in the left-hand tail of the curve—who will underachieve no matter what we do. The central work of the twenty-first-century educator is to transform the public school into an institution that defies the typical presumptions of achievement present in the bell curve. Assessing student performance at quarterly benchmarks or during yearly accountability testing is not sufficient to eliminate gaps and prepare students. Bringing about high outcomes for each student requires daily consideration and assessment. The critical question is: How does a school leader create conditions that allow underserved students to defy historical demographic predictability?

Leaders who seek to achieve educational equity begin by recognizing that many public education practices (including those done out of habit, those carried out in the belief that they are “best practice,” or those that are simply district or school policies) do not meet the needs of students attending our schools today. Serving a diverse student population requires leaders to seek answers and processes in nontraditional places.

Students themselves are the most powerful source of information. Seeking information from students may seem simple, but the legacy of marginalization and low expectations makes it difficult for adults to truly consider students’ voices. Responding to the learning needs of *each* student through effective instructional practice is the challenge. Daily instructional practices in teaching and learning are critical influencers in eliminating achievement gaps and in ensuring that students are prepared for life beyond K–12. Creating a school culture in which school leaders use real-time data to determine the effectiveness of daily teaching and learning practices is the means to serving a diverse student population. Forward-thinking leaders create a paradigm to develop classroom practices that can be used to educate each student.

Leaders do this work by creating conditions that enable school staff to assess students' access to daily quality instruction. The PACE Framework is the structure through which a school community or school district can realize the goal of quality daily instruction for each student. PACE is a thinking map that guides school leaders through their daily work while allowing them to prioritize equity. The PACE Framework was named in a deliberate attempt to maintain focus on the critical importance of equity-focused instructional leadership in advancing schools in the work of transformed practice.

We wrote this book with this data-driven, student-centered, and equity-focused objective in mind. Demographic changes in our student population require each of us to reconsider and reconceive daily teaching and learning practices in a manner that will help each student to achieve high outcomes. We want our readers to ask, "What course of action do *I* need to take to meet the learning needs of a significantly changed public school population?"

THE URGENCY TO CONFRONT THE DILEMMAS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

As career educators working in public school districts that serve large and diverse populations, we know that managing difference in an educational culture of increasing standardization is especially difficult. Identifying effective instructional strategies for diverse groups of students is also challenging. Educators who want to improve outcomes for marginalized students in such an environment must ask themselves critical questions, including "*Whom* are we talking about when we describe a policy, a practice, a strategy, or an intervention as effective?" and "What factors must we consider about our students, today and in the future, before we adjust our instructional practices?"

The first question creates a powerful focal point for school leaders who are addressing the challenges of the demographic shift and its impact on teaching and learning. One need only examine the achievement patterns of rural and urban students, poor students, students receiving special education services, English language learners, and/or racially diverse students across the country to see that traditional assumptions about teaching and learning fail to address the needs of every group of students.

In response to the second question, school leaders who create environments in which the chronic underperformance of diverse students is not an accepted norm deliberately challenge the instructional environment. Instead they ask, "Is what we are doing working for *each student*?" If the answer to that question is no, then these leaders adjust instructional practices to get

to yes. Therein lies their strength and value as equity-focused instructional leaders. Creating the necessary changes in systems, structures, practices, and policies is central to these educators' daily work.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

We wrote this book with six readers in mind: principals; aspiring principals; educational leaders charged with building principals' capacity; educational leaders who write policy; educational leaders who write curriculum and support the implementation of the curriculum with fidelity; and other educational leaders charged with supporting the work of school communities. In this book, we explore the leadership challenges of responding to America's changing public school population. More specifically, we address the equity-focused instructional leadership necessary to ensure that each student has access to high-quality teaching and learning. In short, we examine the leadership imperative for those pursuing educational equity. Education stakeholders at all levels may find this book informative, but those who guide and direct school operations will find it most useful. This book is based on literature describing the principal as the greatest influence on teaching and learning in a school (Louis et al., 2010). What gets done in a school is what the leader sets as a priority. School leaders can translate quality instructional *priorities* into quality instructional *practices*. The transformation to quality instruction for each student begins once the school leader has decided to make this transformation the school's top priority.

We wrote this book with the practitioner in mind. As such, the chapters describe the narrative critical in transforming a school or district from the very first engagement with the topic to advanced engagement in institutionalizing practices, policies, and procedures that support equitable achievement outcomes. We examine the imperative to pursue equity in the beginning of the book. Why? Experience has shown us that intellectual knowledge of the achievement gap is not enough to convince a community to pursue equity, so early on we examine the moral imperative and the complexity of social issues related to the under-preparation of young people. We then examine past practice (school reform) to offer perspective on the limitations of our constant pursuit of technical solutions (those that are quick and known) as we endeavor to respond in practice to achievement disparities. In the rest of the book, we describe the process and adaptive practice. We examine adaptive practice in situations that occur in schools across the country every day to offer insights into how one might advance an equity agenda. Reading the chapters in order will allow the leader to move his or her team methodically into deep engagement with educational equity work.

HOW IS THE BOOK ORGANIZED?

This book is divided into three parts. Part I gives readers the context for understanding why we need to change the paradigm that guides teaching and learning and leadership to better address each student's learning needs. We explain how the traditional organization of schooling excludes consideration of factors that are central when serving a diverse student body. This section equips leaders with the explanation they need to help their school communities understand why school *transformation* and not school improvement is necessary. The section concludes with a description of the PACE Framework, our research- and evidence-based process designed to guide efforts toward high, equitable academic outcomes.

Part II examines how a leader might apply the PACE Framework to advance equity-focused instructional leadership to ensure students' access to daily, high-quality teaching and learning. What makes the PACE Framework unique is that we offer a means for addressing equity and teaching and learning as a natural part of the decisions that leaders make in schools every day. Far too often, "equity work" is an add-on, a supplement. In those instances, we make decisions about the whole school and then we consider equity—if equity is considered at all. We know from experience that the frenetic pace of activity in the schoolhouse is only heightening and that add-on equity does not work. In response to this, in Part II, we provide practical examples of how PACE can be applied in typical situations and decisions. We take readers through the PACE implementation process, identifying the critical elements that keep staff focused on equity. We call these critical elements *Principled Practices*. In working on educational equity at all levels of the public school organization—classroom, school, central office, and senior leadership—we try to help leaders to maintain their focus on practices that will make a difference.

Finally, Part III examines how schools and districts can institutionalize the PACE Framework so that they are able to respond to twenty-first-century learning changes. The changing student demographic serves as the focal point of why we need a dynamic framework guiding teaching and learning. It is just as important to recognize that the changing global marketplace, the changing sociocultural structure, and the influence of technology will affect our ability to achieve equitable outcomes. Institutionalizing PACE is about institutionalizing both lens and process to keep the school in productive motion.

In writing *When Treating All the Kids the SAME Is the REAL Problem*, we hoped to invoke intense thought, reflection, and action regarding equity-focused instructional leadership. Accordingly, we wrote this book to assist readers in considering their own contexts as they lead their schools

toward high academic outcomes for each student. Data across the country, from school to school, and from district to district, reveal that we can no longer treat all kids the same but expect different outcomes for students who have day after day, month after month, and year and year consistently underperformed. Each chapter includes features designed to enable internal examination of the inputs that are driving the outcomes in a school or school system. The subtlety of the decisions and actions that maintains and perpetuates inequity cannot be understood, identified, or responded to without reflection, analysis, and perspective seeking. As a result, we provide reflective questions, discussion questions, practical implementation tools, and guiding questions and statements to prompt the examination of school practices. These embedded resources are designed to guide readers through the deep consideration or, in some cases, deliberate action critical to the transformation process. Leadership teams may use these tools to guide discussions, or leaders may find them useful for professional development. Although partnering with other schools or districts that are pursuing educational equity can be useful, simply adopting practices that are working on other campuses is not sufficient to interrupt patterns of demographically predictable underperformance.

Data show that we can no longer follow traditional ways of teaching and learning, particularly when what we have been doing for *all* is failing *some* of our students. For those committed to the moral, social, and economic imperatives of serving each student at a high level, this book provides a responsive, systematic guide for data-driven decision making that will help meet the needs of the *some* as well as the *all*.