

Introduction to the Manual

This Leadership Manual addresses the most persistent and problematic challenge facing American public education today: how to get the demographics of race and social class out of the business of predicting academic outcomes. In other words, how to create schools that do a better job with more students across more differences more of the time. The systemic professional development process provided here is based on the belief that real school improvement for equity and social justice is best generated at the building level, created and sustained by principals, teachers, and support staff and informed by the students and their families. In my four decades of working on school change efforts, I have found it is often difficult and usually ineffective to attempt to take “proven practices” from one school setting and export those practices to another setting. Why? Because the activities that were created and implemented in the original school grew from the unique struggles, collaborative energies, and localized real-life experiences of those educators and their students. We can mimic the practices in a new context, but it is almost impossible to export the sense of purpose and moral passion that went into creating them in the first place. Passion for change must be locally grown, rooted in specific school environments, and nurtured in the hearts and minds of the people actually doing the work.

The top-down, externally driven, test-centered approach to school reform that we have experienced over the past two decades, along with the punitive consequences for failure to comply, has significantly affected educators’ passion and enthusiasm for the work of real reform. Too many good teachers and leaders have been worn down, burnt out, discouraged, and often enraged by the imposition of countless scripted mandates impacting almost every dimension of professional life (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010). Whereas the required disaggregation of data has been effective in exposing long-term disparities in educational outcomes, the prescribed methods of addressing those inequities have often alienated the very people we need to

have most engaged. Ironically and too frequently, the externally imposed pressure for change has seriously depleted the internally generated passion for that change.

All of this has created a profound need for healing among teachers and school leaders. The professional development process provided in this manual is part of the healing response. It offers an approach and a strategy that has proven effective in reengaging educators in the real work of improving their schools, particularly in those settings with a high percentage of racially and economically marginalized students. At its heart, this process is about authentic educational change and bottom-up school reform. Despite all the time, money, and political and professional angst that have gone into top-down accountability and high-stakes testing, we are still not doing well by our nation's most vulnerable student populations (Casey Foundation, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Meier, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

In places where good things are happening for urban, racially diverse, poor, and other marginalized students, the focus has been on the core elements of quality schooling:

- Leaders who are collaborative, courageous, and visionary
- Teachers who are skilled, passionate, and culturally competent
- Students who are challenged, engaged, and culturally affirmed

The professional development activities, concepts, and strategies presented here are designed to support you as a school leader and your faculty and staff in strengthening each of these core elements of authentic school improvement.

KEY CONCEPTS

As you engage in the work outlined here, it is important to use language that frees both you and your faculty to think and act in refreshing and creative ways. I have found in my interactions with educators throughout the country that the old language of “diversity” and “multicultural education” has worn thin. When teachers hear these words, they think, “Here we go again.” Too often, their past experiences with “diversity workshops” have been negative, coming from a place of shame and blame rather than mutual exploration and genuine growth. This is not true for all educators or for all past approaches, but the baggage is significantly heavy and prevalent for us to find a different way.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus here on a different set of concepts: inclusion, equity, and excellence. Our schools are *diverse* and our

nation and world are *multicultural*, yes, but the critical thing is not the existence of these differences; the issue is what we *do* with them. Inclusion, equity, and excellence are about action, about our practices, about the kind of cultures that we create in our schools. Diversity is a given, but inclusion, equity, and excellence require focused intentionality and hard work. No leader and no teacher can do this alone—thus collaboration becomes our central guiding principle throughout the manual.

Each of these key concepts is defined and discussed in the **Orientation to the Professional Development Process** and the accompanying Video Introduction. I encourage leaders and facilitators of this process to familiarize yourselves with these materials and that section of the manual before engaging the work with your colleagues.

AFFIRMATION BEFORE REFORMATION

Two additional concepts that form the central focus for this professional development process are Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Teaching. As you begin the work, it is important to communicate to your staff that you are *not* assuming they are deficient in these capacities. This work is about good people doing hard work, not about bad people messing up. Too much of the politics and past rhetoric of school reform has been anti-teacher and anti-public education. As a result, teachers and school leaders are hungry for affirmation, for recognition of the difficulty and worth of their work. Many of the activities in this manual are designed to create a trusting environment where educators can talk with each other, not in overly scripted and controlled ways, but in an authentic environment of mutual respect and support. This affirmational tone makes it more likely that teachers will be willing to critically reflect on their practice, share their struggles and their strengths, and be more open to shifting their beliefs and behaviors in the service of their students. As Geneva Gay reminded me years ago, if we are serious about growing our people and transforming our schools, then it is critical that we put “affirmation before reformation” (personal communication, March 1997).

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

The professional development process provided here is designed to promote change in three dimensions: the personal, the professional, and the organizational (see Figure 1). We cannot transform our schools without transforming our practices, and we cannot transform our practices without transforming ourselves.

Figure 1 Levels of Engagement

Changing systems requires changing people, and changing people requires changing systems (Fullan, 2009). Thus, in relation to Figure 1, our work must flow across all three dimensions and in both directions, from the outside in and from the inside out. Achieving a greater degree of inclusion, equity, and excellence in our schools requires transformative work that is both multidimensional and multidirectional.

Herein lies one of the more dysfunctional aspects of the top-down approach to school reform. Both No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top were planned and executed from the sociopolitical arena (see the outer circle in Figure 1) and were heavily influenced by the business community, as well as major foundations and think tanks, without meaningful participation of actual teachers and school leaders. The resulting mandates were then imposed monodirectionally and monodimensionally on the schools. The assumption, based on a corporate business model, has been that these externally driven incentives and punitive consequences would lead to positive change in school outcomes, professional practices, and the personal buy-in and motivation of educators. This market-driven approach has clearly not worked (Gorski, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Schniedewind & Sapon-Shevin, 2012). With tragic predictability, race and poverty continue to determine dropout rates, discipline referrals, and learning outcomes for far too many of our nation's most marginalized students.

The professional development process presented in this manual turns this corporate dynamic on its head, starting from the inside out with actual school people doing their professional work in actual schools. As seen in Figure 1, the personhood of the educator is at the core of the transformative work. If we as teachers and school leaders are not willing to critically examine our own beliefs, personal behaviors, and professional practices, then nothing will significantly improve in the outcomes for our students. The truly courageous part of the work involves asking ourselves, “What might I be doing, or not doing, that is getting in the way of my students’ engagement and success?” Externally imposed mandates do not encourage this kind of courageous self-reflection.

Borrowing from the language of brain research, we want our teachers and ourselves as leaders to arrive at a place of *neuro-plasticity* (Wexler, 2006), which is a state of mental and emotional flexibility that allows us to examine how we think and act relative to our professional practices and to consider alternative approaches. The activities, discussion, and conceptual frameworks in this Leadership Manual have proven effective in inviting educators to willingly, not coercively, enter this courageous self-reflective space. This state of *self-generated neuro-plasticity* provides the productive foundation from which to critically assess how we relate to our students across the many dimensions of difference, including race, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and special needs. This manual offers many strategies for moving the work from the personal to the professional and from the professional to the organizational levels of engagement. As school leaders, our responsibility is not only to guide our faculties and staffs into the process of personal and professional growth but also to create the kind of school culture and organizational practices that will support and sustain them in their transformative work. And, as is suggested by the title of this manual, we cannot lead our colleagues into this new space without having the will and the courage to go there ourselves.

PHASES OF THE WORK

To support the multidimensional and multidirectional change described above, the Leadership Manual is organized around five Phases of the Work. These phases will be described in the Video Introduction, and once again, it is important for you as leaders and facilitators to get your own feel for the language and structure of the work before you lead others into the process.

Phase One: Tone and Trust. The activities and discussions offered in Phase One are designed to assuage the defensiveness and resistance people often bring to equity work, as well as to prevent the kind of “here we go again” responses that were discussed above. We want our participants to feel that the work is real, that it is not coming from a place of shame and blame, and that they can bring their truth to the conversations, rather than their cynicism or political correctness. We want the work to feel fresh, interesting, and both personally and professionally challenging. We want to create an environment that is safe enough for folks to risk moving past their edges. We want them to be intrigued without being overly threatened. Our goal is for participants to be able to say what I often hear in my workshops: “I look forward to these sessions because we get to talk honestly with each other about what’s really happening in our schools.”

Phase Two: Personal Culture and Personal Journey. This phase is closely related to the Tone and Trust work. Activities in this section of the manual are intended to recognize and honor the personal racial and cultural narratives of each member of your staff. Everybody has multiple and complex stories and experiences related to the many dimensions of difference. It is not only our students who bring diversity to our schools; every adult in the building also has a unique journey that deserves to be recognized and valued.

This phase of the work is particularly important for white folks, who often do not see themselves as racial or cultural beings. Since the overwhelming majority of teachers in American public schools are white, it is essential that white folks be engaged in exploring their own experiences of race and other differences, even if that story, like mine, involves periods of ignorance, bias, or dis-consciousness (G. R. Howard, 2006). One of the comments I hear most frequently from white educators who have been involved in this process: “This is the first time as a white person that my own story has been recognized, and that I haven’t felt blamed.”

For people of color and members of other marginalized groups, this phase of the work is also particularly significant. Because the activities in this section of the manual are invitational and not coercive, there is no pressure for people of color to share things they prefer to keep private. However, if we can establish the appropriate level of trust and safety, people will choose to share powerful stories about their own experiences of prejudice and discrimination, stories that many of their colleagues have never heard. In a recent workshop, an African American elementary school principal said, “After sharing here some of my own struggles

and tears of pain about race, I have been thinking more deeply about what my students are going through. It's not that it hasn't always been on my mind, it's just that it went to a more personal level.”

As the adults in your school grow in their capacity to share and hear each other's stories, they will be more able to attune their personal and professional attention to the many narratives that your students bring with them into the school experience. The more you and your faculty are attuned in this way, the greater will be your capacity to respond effectively to your students' needs. This is the power of Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Teaching; it is all about our capacity as adults to be real in the presence of our students.

Phase Three: From Social Dominance to Social Justice. The goal of our overall work is to create schools where more of our students, across more of their differences, are achieving at a higher level and engaging at a deeper level, without giving up who they are. In other words, our purpose is to eliminate educational inequities based on race, economics, and other dimensions of difference, without requiring that our students assimilate to a dominant cultural identity. In Phase Three of the work, we go deeply into those historical and contemporary dynamics that have created and sustained systems of oppression, marginalization, and inequity for far too many of our students and their families. We look at the roots of the so-called “achievement gap,” which would be more accurately described as an *opportunity gap*, a *social justice gap*, or a *privilege gap*.

The assumption underlying this part of the work is that we cannot eliminate inequities without first understanding the causes of those inequities. And we cannot understand the causes without talking about issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language diversity, and special needs, as well as racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism. It is not sufficient to provide teachers and leaders with a solid foundation of instructional strategies, powerful curriculum, and a Common Core focus on outcomes. Even with these interventions in place, systemic inequities will persist unless they are addressed consciously and directly. As James Comer (2013) states, “Even sincere efforts to close the academic achievement gap in education do not address the consequences of a difficult history; indeed, the latter is at the root of the former” (p. xii).

The strategies and activities in Phase Three are designed to engage you and your faculty in authentic conversations about issues of difference and discrimination, privilege and power, and social dominance and social justice that function at the structural and societal levels (see Figure 1). The work is not only theoretical but moves directly to the ways

these realities are functioning on a daily basis within the culture of your school, within classroom practices, and within individual belief systems. There is no comfortable way to have these conversations. In fact, if we are overly comfortable in the process, we're probably not having the necessary conversations (Singleton, 2013). Even though the real work requires some degree of unease, the discussions here are intentionally structured to avoid unnecessary levels of shame, blame, finger pointing, and guilt. The activities unfold gradually and lead to increasingly deeper levels of self-reflection and group interaction. As one white participant stated after participating in several Phase Three discussions, "I'm beginning to understand what white privilege is about, and I see it everywhere I look." Another teacher said, "I am going to pay a lot more attention to how my kids are experiencing pressures around their differences in my classroom."

Phase Four: Classroom Implications and Applications. This is where the work moves directly into professional practice, how we bring cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching into the classroom and the culture of the school. This is the largest section of the manual and will be the focus for most of your work. School leaders and teachers are understandably tempted to begin with this phase of the work, going directly into classroom practice and staying there, not taking the time to engage Phases One through Three as described above. My experience working in hundreds of schools, with thousands of educators, has taught me not to give in to this temptation. Teachers need a reason to reflect on their practice and a solid motivational foundation from which to consider changing their strategies and interactions with students. Phases One through Three are designed to build the *passion* for change, while Phase Four provides the *conceptual framework* and the *strategies* for that change.

At the center of the Phase Four content and process are the Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching, a set of professional guidelines and behaviors that your teachers can connect to the many research-based instructional practices you may already be implementing. Whether it is differentiation, Response to Intervention, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, guided reading, Charlotte Danielson's framework (2007), Robert Marzano's model (2007), Professional Learning Communities, or any of the other initiatives presently being implemented in your school and district, teachers need an integrative structure to bring these things together and make sense of their work. This integrative structure needs to account for the racial, cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, and other differences your students

bring to the classroom. The Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching provide that structure.

Most of the schools I have worked with around the country, particularly those with large populations of racially and economically marginalized students, are suffering from a particular disease brought on by school reform efforts. This disease I call MIS: multiple initiative syndrome. Although each of the many interventions named above can provide valuable instructional and classroom management resources and skills, teachers often experience these approaches as “one more thing” added to an already overwhelming set of mandated expectations. Refreshingly, I have not found this to be true for the Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching. The Principles serve as the connective tissue that allows teachers to make sense of their work and bring together all other classroom initiatives. When I ask my participants whether they find this set of teacher guidelines to be a helpful tool, their response is an overwhelming and almost universal “yes.” Some sample comments: “I think the Seven Principles provoke great reflection among teachers.” “They are practical and simple—teachers can understand them and apply them.” “They are a nonthreatening way to identify areas of strength and needed growth.” “They are directly applied to acknowledging and appreciating cultures.” “I love that these Principles make you realize you may not be doing as good a job as you think you are.” And, “They link to the other programs/interventions already taking place in our school.”

Phase Five: Systemic Transformation and Planning for Change. This section of the manual provides tools and strategies for reinforcing the growth of your school at the organizational level (see Figure 1). You are given a three-stage model for understanding and assessing the movement of your school culture toward greater inclusion, equity, and excellence, as well as a process for tracking your victories and struggles along the way. There are planning guides to support you and your leadership team in mapping out the multiyear implementation of this professional development process. And there are ideas for integrating the Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Teaching work with other instructional and school improvement initiatives you may already have in place. In addition, Phase Five offers strategies for engaging student voices as an integral part of your school improvement efforts. Finally, you are given a model research and evaluation design that demonstrates how this professional development process leads to positive student outcomes related to school engagement, academic achievement, and reduction of discipline referrals.

Team Building and School Improvement. As you engage your faculty in the discussions and activities related to Phases One through Five, one of the corollary benefits will be the team-building aspect of the work. Your people will be talking with each other in new and deeper ways, and they will be reflecting on their practices as individuals and as a school. Some of the comments made by educators related to this aspect of the work include the following: “We are moving forward and not afraid of taking risks as a staff.” “We are building cohorts within our school to begin to have the tough conversations.” “We have taken ownership of the achievement gap and have a plan for moving forward.” And, “I am proud of my team and my school for the work we are doing.”

This level of engagement and team building will naturally and positively reinforce your building level goal setting and school improvement processes. As leaders and facilitators, it is important to consciously use this opportunity for thoughtful input into your systemic change strategies. The entire professional development process outlined in this manual is designed to inform and support your collective school improvement efforts. For the greatest benefit, it needs to be intentionally and consistently linked to those efforts.

GUIDELINES FOR USING THE LEADERSHIP MANUAL AND VIDEOS

Organization of the Manual

The main body of the manual is divided into five sections, one for each Phase of the Work. The Introduction to each section provides an overview of the activities, discussion, and videos included in that Phase. Following the introduction, you are given the Facilitator Directions and Video Viewing Guide for each activity. This is where you will find the step-by-step detail for planning and implementing each piece in that Phase of the Work. The final section of the manual includes several articles by Gary Howard that can be used as group readings to support each Phase. Also included in this section is a Discussion Guide to support your group conversations.

Equity Leadership Institutes

Corwin Press offers Leadership Institutes and consulting services led by Gary Howard and his colleagues to support school districts in the use of these materials. You and your Facilitation Team could attend one of these Institutes in your region of the country, or you could commission

an Institute to be held specifically for your district or in collaboration with neighboring school systems. Whereas the Leadership Manual and accompanying videos provide sufficient support for you to implement the professional development process on your own, it would be optimal for your team to have an opportunity to work through the entire design in the Institute setting before leading others in the many activities and discussions included here. For information about the Corwin Institute process and supportive consulting services, please visit their website: <http://www.corwin.com/institutes/>.

Getting Started

Begin your work by either attending a Leadership Institute with Gary Howard or reading through the Leadership Manual with your Facilitation Team. Previewing the Introductory Videos for each Phase of the Work would be helpful as an overview for the entire process. As you are preparing to do this work, pay particular attention to the materials in the last half of Phase Five, beginning with the Video Introduction for Facilitators and continuing on with Video Segments 5:6 through 5:9. Here you are given the tools and ideas for planning your overall systemic professional development efforts. Your primary planning tool is the Implementation Planning Guide in Phase Five (see Handout ST-11). This guide provides an overview of all the materials, activities, and videos included in the manual. On this form, you are given space to plan the projected dates for each activity and to check off items as they are completed. The Video Segments in the last half of Phase Five are addressed particularly to your Facilitation Team. These are informal talks by Gary Howard engaging your team in reflective conversations about the process. These video clips ought to be viewed before you initiate the PD process with your staff.

Video Support

Every aspect of the work is supported by video presentations. In the video, “**Orientation to the Professional Development Process,**” you will hear from teachers, school leaders, and students in schools who have been engaged in the work for over 5 years. You will also hear Gary Howard describe the overall rationale and approach for the professional development process. Then, each Phase of the Work begins with an Introductory Video highlighting teacher, leader, and student experiences and perspectives related to the specific activities and content of that Phase. For each of the 33 activities and discussions included in the manual, your Facilitation Team will have video support from Gary

Howard, providing the key content and setting the context and process for each of your activities you facilitate with faculty and staff. Finally, interspersed throughout the manual, you are provided with School Video Segments featuring teachers, administrators, support staff, and students as they engage in conversations about the work and demonstrate Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Teaching practices in actual school settings.

Accessing the Video Segments, School Video Clips, and Handouts

All of the Video Segments and School Video Clips are available to you on the DVDs included with this manual. In addition, Corwin provides each manual owner with online access to the Handouts. Your purchase of the manual provides you with a license to show the videos and copy the handouts for use in your school building. For multiple sites or district-wide use of the materials, leaders should discuss with Corwin the purchase of a site license.

Selecting Your Facilitation Team

Although as school leaders, you could implement much of the professional development process on your own, it is highly recommended that you bring together a Facilitation Team to support you in the work and collaborate in planning and leading sessions with staff. Following are suggested guidelines for selecting members of your Facilitation Team:

- People who have demonstrated a strong commitment to equity and social justice
- People who have earned the respect of their colleagues—who are opinion leaders among their peers
- People who are good stand-up presenters and facilitators of reflective conversations
- People who represent the diversity of your school in terms of race, gender, age, grade level, role, department, specialty, classified and certificated, and other dimensions of diversity you feel are salient
- People who can help you connect with different constituencies or opinion groups within your staff, particularly those who could be resistant to the work
- People who will support you in the implementation of a systemic change process related to cultural competence and culturally responsive practice

Sequence and Customization

In most school districts using Gary Howard's approach, the materials in this manual have supported 3 to 5 years of professional development work. As you do your planning, it is important to keep in mind a long-term systemic perspective; this work is not something to be rushed or short-circuited. It is also important to customize your timing and sequencing of events to fit the unique needs, strengths, and culture of your school and district. You don't need to do every activity in the manual, but it is essential to engage each of the Phases. The tone and trust work in Phase One and the personal culture focus in Phase Two provide critical grounding and preparation for the analysis of social dominance in Phase Three and the transformation of professional practice in Phase Four. Having said this, it is not necessary to move through the Phases in a lock-step sequence. Once the professional development process is in place, you may choose to move back and forth between the Phases to address issues and concerns as they emerge in your actual work with faculty and staff.

Timing the Reflection

Each activity in the manual is accompanied by a suggested time frame for implementation, both for the entire activity as well as each step in the process. You can customize the amount of time given to each activity by either shortening or lengthening the number of minutes given to small-group conversations and large-group share-out sessions. At a minimum level, however, it is always important to allow people an opportunity to reflect on the video segments and make meaning of the different activities. The benefits from this professional development process flow primarily from the engagement of your people with each other, not merely from viewing the videos.

Thoughts on Grouping

For many of the conversations in the professional development process, it is best to organize your staff into max-mix small groups, which means that each group represents as much of a mix as possible of age, gender, race, grade level, specialty, department, political perspective, and other factors you deem important. In this way, you break up any cliques or pockets of ingrown cynicism or resistance to professional development in general, or to equity discussions in particular. Other activities and conversations in the process will be most productive in work-alike groups, where people are talking with colleagues who share the same

arena of professional responsibilities. At other times, your Facilitation Team can allow people to set with whomever they choose. The Facilitator Directions will often suggest the optimum grouping for each activity, but it is ultimately a matter of choice for your team.

Gathering Evaluation Feedback

As stated above, Phase Five includes a model district-wide research and assessment design for tracking outcomes resulting from the professional development process. (See Video Segment 5:9.) For gathering more immediate feedback from faculty and staff, Phase Five also includes a set of sample Evaluation/Reflection forms that can be adapted for use at selected times during your implementation (see Handouts ST-1 3a through 13c). These data will be valuable for you and your Facilitation Team, allowing you to check in from time to time with the feelings, thoughts, and responses of your faculty and make adjustments as needed.

Student Voices and Youth Equity Leadership

Phase Five of the manual also provides materials and strategies to include students in your school district's equity efforts. Student engagement is an integral part of any effective school change process. Video segments show high school students experiencing each of the five Phases of the Work and designing creative action strategies for addressing issues of bullying, discrimination, and oppression in their schools. (See Video Segment 5:8) Gary Howard strongly recommends that you review this section of the manual before implementation and consider how and when to empower your students as essential participants in the systemic change process.

Including Support Staff

It is also strongly suggested that you include your support staff in as much of the professional development work as possible. Your secretaries, instruction support people, custodians, food service workers, security personnel, bus drivers, and any other adults who connect with students and families are essential resources in creating a culture of inclusion, equity, and excellence. The more your support staff are included, the greater will be your impact.

Final Thought

No matter how the politics of school reform may change over the years, those of us working in schools know that our primary

accountability is to our students. Their rich diversity, amazing gifts, humor, resilience, and deep needs are always on our minds. The work of Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Teaching is at the heart of everything we do. It's not that we aren't already good at this work; it's just that we need to get better. The professional development process presented in this manual is offered in a spirit of deep respect for the good work you and your colleagues are presently doing and with an equally profound hope that, for the sake of our students, we will all continue to grow.