

Educational Leaders' Challenges in Creating Equitable Opportunities for English Language Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this position paper was to explore the challenges faced by principals in creating equitable opportunities for English language learners (ELLs) in the United States. We questioned "To what extent are educational leaders encouraged to create environments that value cultural diversity and the promotion of English language learners?" Our inquiry was prompted by the dearth of research in the U.S. supporting multicultural programs, coupled with the resistance of and minimal efforts by legislators to support policies that promote the improvement of ELLs. Using a review of literature, and informed by scholars who have examined the "Americanization" phenomenon, we analyzed state and federal educational policies focused on the promotion of ELLs. We considered whether these policies, intended to help students, are not in fact hindering educational leaders' efforts to create environments in which multiculturalism is valued.

Educational Leaders' Challenges in Creating Equitable Opportunities for English Language Learners

Introduction

One of the important roles of educational leaders in public school systems is establishing inclusive practices. Educational leaders such as superintendents, principals, and other leading educators set the tone, expectations, and direction for a school. Teachers, students, parents, and community members follow the guidance of an educational leader and are inspired and influenced by a school administrator's beliefs, values, and attitudes. Recently, much focus has been placed on the importance of school leaders' establishing an educational environment in which cultural diversity is valued (Banks, 2001; Chen & Goldring, 1992; Met, 2001; Williams-Carter, 1999). The greatest task for a leader who wants to advocate for cultural-diversity practices is to transform political liabilities into "scholarly assets" (Banks, 1996).

Embracing cultural diversity in the public school system, however, is politically dangerous, especially if central office administrators are hesitant to support innovative ideas that do not directly correlate with increased standardized test scores (Sleeter, 2004; Sunderman & Kim, 2004; Tatum, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this position paper was to explore the challenges faced by educational leaders in creating equitable opportunities for cultural diversity through an examination of policies focused on the promotion of English language learners (ELLs)¹ in the U.S. We asked, "To what extent are educational leaders encouraged to create environments that value cultural diversity and the promotion of English language learners?"

Noticeably absent from U.S. policy is legislation on multiculturalism. Historically, many leaders in positions of power in the U.S. have supported the philosophy that a system of education with American values (and one language) works best (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, &

¹ See Appendix A for a definition of this and other terms used in this article.

Kamenski, 2005; Tyack, 1974). In contrast, multiculturalism has been adopted in Canada (www.canada.gc.ca) to benefit students and society. Even though questioned (Bickmore, 2006), the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 was designed to preserve the economic, political, social, and cultural heritage of that nation's citizens (Boone & Chan, 2005). In addition, Canadian schools place less emphasis on standardized test scores than do those in the U.S. (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). This enables Canadian schools to focus on social and political issues such as multiculturalism.

So, the U.S., with its rich diversity of races, cultures, and political affiliations has not yet valued the importance of such a statute and programs. Programs are validated only if they increase standardized test scores—meaning that success in the U.S. rarely is viewed in qualitative terms. We concede that although improvements have been made in the recognition of segregation and services for ELLs, the divide between developing “American” values and embracing cultural-diversity values still limits principals’ autonomy to adopt equitable opportunities for ELLs in public schools.

Methods

In this article, we begin by exploring the divide between developing “American” values and embracing cultural-diversity values (i.e., multiculturalism) (Gorski, 2007; Pedersen, 1998). We reviewed literature on state and federal educational policies focused on the promotion of ELLs, and how effective these policies have been in affecting the improvement of these students. Second, we considered whether conflicting policies or those policies intended to help ELLs are not in fact hindering educational leaders’ efforts to create environments in which multiculturalism is valued. The reviewed literature was informed by scholars who examined the

“Americanization” phenomenon, and an analysis of legislative movements for social justice and multiculturalism (Banks, 1995; Harris, 1995; Hidalgo, Chavez-Chavez, & Ramage, 1996; Magsino, 2002; Moss, 2003; Sleeter, 1996). Our inquiry was prompted primarily by the dearth of empirical evidence in the U.S. supporting multicultural programs, coupled with the resistance of and minimal efforts by legislators to create or support policies that promote the improvement of ELLs, and ultimately encourage schools to adopt multicultural approaches. Significant in this study is the growing ethnic diversity in the U.S., and how it is often perceived as a *problem* for the implementation of programs.

Diversity issues can be perceived as positive or negative, depending on how they are presented. For example, even though Derlin and Martinez (2000) were promoters of diversity, they indicated that in the U.S., “Hispanics have increased at a rate five times that of non-Hispanic whites, African Americans and Asians combined” (p. 1), as if these numbers were threatening ideological goals. Although census figures and language are not necessarily correlated, it is true that Hispanics in the U.S. comprise primarily first-generation immigrants, and demographers have indicated that 1 in 12 U.S. citizens can trace his or her heritage to a Hispanic family. With the recognition of the growing number of Hispanics in U.S. schools, one would assume that public school systems would allocate more resources for the preparation of these students. Ironically, though, many public institutions offer only limited programs to address these students’ needs. In fact, some school districts fail to offer any language support programs. This lack of support causes a plethora of barriers for the improvement of ELLs (Nieto, 2000; Villaseñor, 2005; Villenas, 1996).

Interestingly, public school systems rarely take into account these statistics. Thus, due to the degree of freedom districts have to implement programs, in some cases, educators can be

found without any preparation to help ELLs (Tong, Huang, & McIntyre, 2006). In the current system, students still are encouraged by teachers and administrators to reject their native language and adopt the English language as the only way to be part of the “American” culture (Torres, 2004; Tsianina Lomawaima, 1994; Valencia, 2002). The ramifications of this practice are far reaching. There are academic, emotional, physical, social, and political implications when students are denied their cultural heritage (Bazron, Osher, & Fleischman, 2005). As Met (2001) affirmed, “Not only does the omission of language and cultural education leave U.S. students behind their peers in other countries, but also it exacerbates the achievement gap within the United States” (p. 37).

Our review of policies and practices indicated that privilege still affects the position educational leaders take in adopting policies, programs, and procedures for inclusive practices (Lesaux, 2006). Educational leaders, especially those at middle-management levels, seem to be bound by white-privilege structures that limit their motivation and impetus to implement culturally diverse practices in schools (Gorski, 2006; Howard, 1999; Paley, 2000). As leaders in the 21st century, it is critical that we ensure the success of all—not just some students (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). By embracing students’ cultural and racial heritages, educational leaders will be able to establish learning environments in which teachers are encouraged to respect students’ individual backgrounds (Gilliom, 1993; Thomas-El, 2003; Thomas & Willinsky, 1997). Most important, even though educational leaders are bound by powers that make them conform to school districts’ established expectations and policies, embracing diversity creates tension between what educational leaders are expected to do and what is best in preparing students for a successful future in society.

Legislation and Litigation

Policy dictates practice, and practice affects students' success (Butin, 2005). Hence, the importance of examining current issues affecting ELLs and the exploration of federal and state educational policies. Our examination revealed that many of these policies had negative effects on ELLs (Soto, Smrekar, & Nekkovei, 1999). Tyack and Cuban (1995), in fact, recognized that "many people outside the magic circle of the politics of progress are excluded, segregated, or given an inferior education despite the rhetoric of democracy and equality of educational opportunity" (p. 22).

As far back as the 1800s, the first movement to "Americanize" immigrants in the educational process took place (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). This practice was employed to ensure that students would quickly become responsible citizens and be acculturated to the English-only schooling system. This "subtractive schooling" philosophy required that students relinquish their native culture and adopt the mainstream language, ideals, and beliefs (Valenzuela, 1999). Opponents of the Americanization process contended, "As the argument for multiculturalism goes, equality in the U.S. cannot be achieved by surrendering one's cultural linguistic heritage, but rather by building upon these and adding English. Instead of a subtractive view of acculturation, an additive view [should] be promoted" (Wiese & Garcia, 2001, p. 230).

Supreme Court decisions set the stage for equitable treatment of minority students in the educational system. The Supreme Court landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 established that segregated education for blacks and minorities was unconstitutional (Johnson, 2003; Valenzuela, 2005; Wiese & Garcia, 2001; Wraga, 2006). *Brown v. Board of Education* changed education in that separate but equal facilities in public institutions were no

² Additional information about this landmark decision can be found at <http://www.brownvboard.org/research/opinions/347us483.htm>.

longer adequate. People of color and whites would be required to be intermixed in the school system². Thus, all students were to receive equal education, and this equality needed to begin with the physical accommodations in public schools. Previously, students of color had been educated in dilapidated buildings with insufficient resources. Unfortunately, however, equality was never adequately defined, and uneven practices were not alleviated.

Another ruling, in 1974, ascertained that language-minority status was a justifiable claim for discrimination. In *Lau v. Nichols*, strides in affirmative action were necessitated to remedy language deficiencies. This civil case was initiated by Chinese students in San Francisco who contended that the school system did not provide additional support for them as non-English speakers. Although the Chinese students received the same textbooks and resources as English students, they had a distinct disadvantage because they did not speak English. (Additional information about this landmark decision can be found at http://www.nabe.org/documents/policy_legislation/LauvNichols.pdf). Thus, school districts were required to provide services to limited English proficient (LEP) students. *Aspira of New York, Inc. v. Board of Education* (1975) established procedures for examining students in English and Spanish to determine their need for a Spanish-language program (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). This court case ensured students an opportunity to be assessed in their native language.

The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA) (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division) mandated that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act be applied to all educational establishments. This act mandated equal educational opportunities for students regardless of race, color, gender, or national origin (Adam, 2004; Wiese & Garcia, 2001). This policy was intended to provide a foundation for language-minority students in the public school system. Once again, however, “equal” was not clearly defined. Thus, local school districts

² Additional information about this landmark decision can be found at <http://www.brownvboard.org/research/opinions/347us483.htm>.

interpreted “equality” to meet their individual needs and often failed to comply with the intent of the law. In *LULAC v. the State of Texas* (2006), the courts ruled that public schools must *monitor* the equality of programs for ELLs so as to confirm compliance with the EEOA.

The U.S. Congress passed legislation that addresses the education of language-minority students on six occasions in the past four decades: in 1968, 1974, 1978, 1984, 1988, and most recently in 1994 (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). The BEA of 1968 was the principal federal legislative endeavor to offer equal educational opportunities for minority students (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). Multiple laws were necessary to address the wording employed in previous Bilingual Education Act (BEA) legislation. In addition, changes were made to contend with public outcry. For example, in the BEA reauthorizations of 1978, 1984, and 1988, the public opposed using federal funds for the preservation of minority cultures (Crawford, 1999). According to August and Hakuta (1997), “Since its inception, the primary aim of the BEA has been ‘providing meaningful and equitable access for English language learners to the curriculum rather than serving as an instrument of language policy for the nation through the development of their native languages’” (p. 16). This guiding principle has evolved as a language policy to increase educational opportunities for language- minority students.

The BEA was reauthorized in 1974 and correlated with bilingual educational programs. “The Congress declares it the policy of the United States to establish equal educational opportunity for all children to encourage the establishment and operation . . . of education programs using bilingual education practices, techniques, and methods” (*Bilingual Education Act*, 1974, Sec. 702[a]). For the first time in the letter of the law, bilingual education was defined as “instruction given in, and study of, English, and to the extent necessary to allow a child to

progress effectively through the educational system, the native language” (Sec. 703[a] [4] [A] [i]). This legislation provided a glimmer of hope for ELLs. It was the first time that bilingual education was accepted in the public education school system. ELLs were given the opportunity to embrace their cultural heritage while learning English. Unfortunately, eventually this developed into an espoused goal for public schools. In reality, school administrators were most comfortable simply processing ELL students through the traditional, factory-like assembly line from the past.

Ironically, the BEA reauthorizations of 1978, 1984, and 1988 reflected society’s aversion to the preservation of minority cultures. Federal funds were used to support assimilation and English-language acquisition (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). The thrust of this legislation was to focus on the need for minority students to adopt an English-only lifestyle. After the reauthorization of 1988, bilingual programs no longer were encouraged (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). Students now could participate in a transitional bilingual program for no longer than three years (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). Wiese and Garcia stated that negative feelings about bilingual programs included the perception that “new immigrants were here to stay, which precipitated the danger of separation. Preservation of minority languages could very possibly lead to the fragmentation of American society” (p. 235). Ignorance and fear of the unknown forced legislation that ultimately mainstreamed all students.

Finally, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 created radical legislation that negatively affects ELLs in the educational system. NCLB mandates that students with limited English proficiency must perform at the same level as English-speaking students. “No Child Left Behind uses race as one variable when judging schools on test score performance, but otherwise is silent about race and school contexts” (Sleeter, 2004, p. 132). The law makes the assumption

that school districts can bring about high levels of achievement for all students, suggesting that closer observance should be given to subpopulations (which in this case means Hispanics, blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged). Furthermore, the law assumes that sanctions and threats of punishment will improve test scores (Bigelow, 1999; Sunderman & Kim, 2004; Tatum, 2007).

According to Sunderman and Kim (2004), “one-size-fits-all accountability model[s] do not work in all conditions, sharply constrain state policy and undercut the capacity to make needed changes” (p. 5). ELLs, now under the label *Limited English Proficient* (LEP), according to NCLB, are expected to perform at the same level as students who have mastery of the English language as quickly as possible. The goals for programs designed to LEP students are “simply to mainstream the students as soon as possible and to teach them the content of the state standardized exams,” reports Wright (2005) in a Language Policy Research Unit from Arizona State University.

Of greatest concern, however, is that NCLB superseded all civil rights lessons learned from a half-century of growing pains. NCLB dictated that school districts needed to get results. Funding for ELL programs were available, however, these federal funds were “spread more thinly, resulting in less dollars per eligible LEP student” (Wright, 2005, p. 21). However, educational leaders concluded that results could be attained by adopting policies that inadvertently accentuated segregation and privilege (Leithwood & Earl, 2000; Sunderman & Kim, 2004) because providing supplemental services for LEP students was no longer a priority for receiving federal tax dollars. Rather, all expenditures were focused on meeting the demands of NCLB’s test-driven results.

Proponents of NCLB contended, “For the first time, in 1994, the U.S. Congress said that federal money must not simply be spent on poor kids, as it had been since the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, but that it be used to bring poor kids up to state standards” (Chenoweth, 2004, p. 41). However, the mandate was never funded. Rather than seeing it as an unfunded mandate, however, supporters of NCLB stated it was a civil rights statute (Chenoweth, 2004). ELLs were expected to perform up to state standards even though providing access to programs to support ELLs was no longer an option.

It is important to pause at this point and acknowledge that the majority of reformers in the 20th century were white males (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) who supported ideas that were aligned with their own personal beliefs. Tyack and Cuban contended, “The people who suffered the most from inequalities—the poor, blacks, working-class immigrants, the disabled, females—had little influence over educational policy” (p. 22). Each of the new state and federal laws and regulations failed to provide additional support for ELLs (Table 1). Increased pressure for ELLs to perform without language programs’ support forced campus administrators to find loopholes in each court ruling. Thus, the pendulum swing of policy rulings, in the end, furnished evidence that no substantial change had occurred in the school system since the 1800s.

Table 1. Legislative efforts to support ELLs’ instruction

Policy	School Adaptation	Student Impact in Schools
Brown v. Board of Education	Equality ill defined and sporadic	Equality not present
Lau v. Nichols	Students are assessed in native language	Failure to provide support based upon assessments
EEOA	School defines equality	Equality not fully exercised
BEA	Federal funds support English-only lifestyle	No additional support was provided
NCLB	Sanctions fail to motivate change in policy	Schools manipulate assessments in the name of accountability

In addition, injustices in compliance with and observation of policies usually were focused on race. Tyack (1974) noted, “The issues were not normally phrased in class terms but in the cross-cutting cultural categories of race, religion, ethnicity, neighborhood loyalties and partisan politics” (p. 78). These educational policies and legal cases create the political landscape that defines the context in which public schools function. Educational leaders’ actions correlate to the expectations outlined in these policies.

Educational Leaders Limited by White Privilege

To fully understand the plight of ELLs and whom the U.S. society classifies as minority students, one must begin by understanding the unearned, politically charged advantages associated with being white in the U.S., referred to as white privilege (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006; McIntosh, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Singleton, & Linton, 2006; Spencer & Harpalani, 2006; Tatum, 2007; Valadez, 2004). Singleton and Linton defined white privilege as referring to “advantages that White people receive simply by virtue of their appearance and, to a lesser degree, the privilege lighter-skinned people of color garner as compared to darker members of the same or different non-White racial groups” (p. 183). “White privilege,” completed McIntosh, “is like an invisible knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (p. 188). This benefit opens doors for a limited group of people in society. Unfortunately, it inadvertently closes doors for minority groups (Hilliard, 1988).

For the past five decades, numerous reform strategies have been institutionalized in public schools (Leithwood, Fullan, & Watson, 2003). However, most were not successful because they failed to overcome obstacles related to privilege and power (Cuban, 2007b). For many schools, these reform failures translate into failures to address the needs of students. When American schools continue to practice Eurocentric ideals, this suppresses multiculturalism and

promotes institutionalized racism (Sleeter, 2003), which leads to a discrepancy in the purpose to create socially just opportunities for students. Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack (2001) summarized the discrepancy, stating: “As we see it, these differences between schools [goals] and students [needs] are based on a mismatch between the structure of schools and the social, cultural, or economic backgrounds of students identified as problems” (p. 526).

In addition, “it is common knowledge that the great majority of preservice teachers are white, while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse” (Laughlin, Sleeter, & Torres, 2004, p. 81). “Of the more than 3 million teachers in the United States, only 15.6 percent are teachers of color, 7.5 percent African American, specifically” (Tatum, 2007, p. 25). Students need to see teachers who reflect their own race. “In all likelihood, [minority students] are not seeing themselves among the teachers and they are not seeing themselves in the administration” (Tatum, 2007, p. 29). Ironically, in public institutions, just as in the U.S. Congress, white males are overrepresented and minorities and females are underrepresented. In 2007, the U.S. Congress comprised 459 whites, 42 blacks, 27 Hispanics, and a sprinkling of other ethnicities; there were 448 males versus 90 females (Capital Advantage, 2007). Similarly, the Council of Great City Schools conducted a survey in 2003 and determined that 56% of superintendents were white, 33% were black, and 10% were Hispanic (Urban Indicator, 2003).

This overrepresentation of whites in positions of power has led to an unbalanced educational organization (Cox, 1994), especially in high administrative ranks. “Since the 1970s, a distinction between power holders and the constituent base of multicultural education has become highly blurred, if not lost,” affirmed Sleeter (1996, p. 242). In public school systems, white male former coaches are stereotypically the principals of area high schools. Traditionally, the “good old boy system” has perpetuated a hiring philosophy that places disproportionate

numbers of white males in top positions. Inadvertently, this practice discourages diversity at top management levels and eventually trickles down to the staff and students. The danger in this practice is that hegemonic structures ignite personal interests in protecting white supremacy (as a privilege that provides social, political, and emotional advantage).

As a consequence, an overwhelming number of educational leaders have negative perceptions associated with multiculturalism (McCrary, Wright, & Beachum, 2004). Especially with NCLB's increasing demands for quantifiable results, many principals view multiculturalism as one issue they can dismiss. Furthermore, they do not see the relevance of multiculturalism if their student population is homogeneous (Gay, 1995, 2004). "If there are no African American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian American students enrolled in their schools, [educators] find it difficult to see the relevance of doing multicultural education" (Gay, 1995, p. 55).

A prerequisite of Americanization is that immigrants (these might include future educational leaders) must abandon their own identities when growing up (Villaseñor, 2005). If and when these immigrants become educational leaders, they might also believe they are expected to prepare teachers to help reproduce the Americanization behavior of "cultural cleansing" in the classroom (Cleghorn & Genesee, 1984; Cuban, 2007a; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006) and thus ask students to (again) abandon their identities (Lew, 2006; Noel, 2002; Ogbu, 2003). Genesee and Gandara (1999), in fact highlighted the importance creating improved intergroup interactions, which include teachers' attitudes, to "counteract the centrifugal societal forces that act to maintain prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping in school" (p. 681). Therefore, even though, as educators, we intellectually know that all students are different, we create policies and mechanisms that make learning homogeneous and homogenic, based on Eurocentric traditions (Tucker, 1998).

Unfortunately, campus administrators walk the tightrope of accountability. So, as educational leaders, we want teachers to be culturally sensitive to ELL students, but only to the extent that it does not disrupt our efficient process of education.

NCLB requirements track students' test scores by race. However, little guidance is provided on how to formulate teaching strategies to provide equity in the classroom (Sleeter, 2004). "In this regard, the new federal policy encourages a colorblind and context-blind approach to education" (Sleeter, 2004, p. 132). Unfortunately, administrators are held accountable not only for the overall scores for their campus. Students are placed into subpopulation categories and must perform well in order to meet the standards for their particular group. Race and socioeconomic status are two of these categories.

These unrealistic expectations in accountability standards force some educational leaders to circumvent national policies like NCLB so that their schools might gain one or two percentage points on standardized tests. For example, Hispanic ELLs in low socioeconomic conditions may affect three standardized scores: race, socioeconomic status, and a category defined as *all students*. Educational leaders then may manipulate the system by moving these students to special education, thereby forcing them to take different accountability tests. Although their progress is still assessed, these students will be given an "easier" test and thus bring up the overall school scores.

Another tactic is to increase the number of white students in the low socioeconomic subgroup. By increasing the number of whites in this pool, leaders are able to dilute the weight of minority students' scores in the subpopulation. In addition, recent immigrants to the U.S. are pressured to gain command of the English language, become accustomed to the public schooling process, and perform at grade level, all within a three-year time frame.

ELLs are expected to quickly become part of the “machinelike” process and churn out superior data for the school district, campus, and educational leaders. So, even if we, as educational leaders, espouse the goal of having multiculturalism initiatives in public schools, in reality, we want ELLs to quickly assimilate the rules, policies, and procedures of public schools so that they can generate high test scores. We are not seeking to integrate students; rather, we are encouraging students to surrender their identity (Baez, 2002) so that we can process them through our Eurocentric factory called public education. In order to standardize production, schools are homogenizing all aspects of students—their education, culture, critical-thinking strategies, family backgrounds, and so forth (Bohn & Sleeter, 2001).

A prerequisite for change is the acknowledgement that privilege is alive and well in the U.S. public school system. Educational leaders must first recognize privilege—specifically, white privilege—for what it is, before they can create an empathetic environment that respects multiple cultures and allows for the implementation of pedagogies that include multiculturalism (Banks, 1995; Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006; Delpit, 1988; Freire, 2001). Ironically, improving the preparation of ELLs does not require mandates or monetary resources—it just requires common sense.

Affirming students’ identity and building their social (Stanton Salazar, 2004) and cultural capital is a challenge educational leaders confront even without implementing policies, procedures, and programs for inclusive practices. To facilitate the improvement of ELLs, one must begin by affirming students’ cultural, racial, and social identities (Singleton, 1996; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Tatum, 2007). “Affirming identity is not just about being nice—it is about being knowledgeable about who our students are, and reflecting a story that resonates with their best hope for themselves” (Tatum, 2007, p. 31). When students’ cultural heritages are

appreciated, they are prone to taking educational risks in the classroom. This ultimately enables them to grasp the curriculum in depth (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992; Nieto, 1996).

Conclusion

“Without question, great strides have been made to establish equality through politics and law, but true racial equality in our habits of heart and mind remains elusive,” affirmed Singleton and Linton (2006, p. 27). However, educational laws and policies are valid only if educational leaders apply them. The most debilitating stress arises just from discussing standardized test scores. “With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2000 and related accountability legislation, educators are now held to a higher standard—that all children must learn”(Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 211). However, to increase students’ performance, administrators are finding loopholes in well-intentioned laws. “State-mandated curriculum standards are clearly the order of the day,” recognized Bohn and Sleeter (2001, p. 17). Thus, with all of these external demands, even the best intentioned administrators are not able to address the social and political challenges for ELLs.

As we acknowledged earlier, multiculturalism requires a change of mind before necessitating resources (Jackson, 2003). As change agents, educational leaders may need to engage in productive discourses that include uncomfortable discussions about race and privilege, engage in conversations with other educational leaders and campus staff, and establish a forum to discuss change, address conflict, and diminish fears (Fairclough, 1995; Henze, 2005). We highlighted white privilege as an impediment to educational leaders’ adopting multiculturalism. Furthermore, white privilege allows people an additional advantage: Whites are able to walk

away from uncomfortable conversations about race whereas, in contrast, people of color are forced to confront injustices on a daily basis (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Verhaag, 1996).

Political and policy constraints always will exist. However, acting upon one's passion for and commitment to students is not a weakness, it is a strength that illustrates one's ability to strike a delicate balance between the organization's expectations and one's own moral and ethical beliefs. All of this comes at a price, however. Embracing multiculturalism may label educational leaders as radicals, and they could be shunned by the organization (Ingle, 2005). The possibility of being promoted might also be derailed. Movers and shakers are tolerated only if their ideas align with the district's compliance. Thus, embracing multiculturalism is a risky and potentially career-halting decision. Are you up to the challenge?

Appendix A. Definition of Terms

Cultural Diversity. Diversity includes acceptance and value of other people's race, ethnicity, gender, and religion. "It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences" (Oregon State Website, n.d.).

English Language Learners (ELL). Include students who were born somewhere other than the U.S. or do not speak English as they enter public schools. One in three students in the U.S. is a member of an ethnic or racial minority group, and one in seven speaks a language other than English at home (Patrick & Reinhartz, 1999; Wiese & Garcia, 2001;). In addition, 1 in 15 students was born somewhere other than the U.S. (Wiese & Garcia, 2001). More than 3.5 million children in the U.S. today are categorized as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Chamness & Endo, 2004). According to the 2004 Census data, 67.4% of the U.S. population is white, 14% is Hispanic, 12.8% is black, and 4.2% is Asian American (Tatum, 2007). Thus, about a third of the population consists of minorities.

Equity. Is defined here as "increasing educational achievement for all students while reducing the gaps of students on both ends of a spectrum. Additionally, equity eradicates racial inexorableness" (Singleton, 2006, p. 46).

Multiculturalism. We used a number of sources to define multiculturalism. We used Pedersen's (1998) definition of multiculturalism in psychology, which combines universal and relativist approaches to explain behavior, both in terms of "culturally learned perspectives that are unique to our particular background, and our search for common-ground universals that are shared across cultures" (p. xxii)—an inclusive recognition of both similarities and differences. In education, we also considered Gorski's (2007) working definition of "multicultural education as a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses

current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education” (www.edchange.org). This critical approach helped in framing this study, as it is grounded in ideals of “social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally” (Gorski, 2007, section II, para. 1). We also observed that, in Canada, multiculturalism is defined as the belief that all citizens are equal, which includes the maintenance of people’s identities, pride in their ancestry, and a sense of belonging. “Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures” (www.canada.gc.ca), encouraging “racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence” (www.canada.gc.ca).

Race. We utilized Singleton’s (2006) definition of race. He stated, “We refer to *race* as the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere” (p. 39).

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