

The Educational Achievement Gap as a Social Justice Issue for Teacher Educators

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The educational achievement gap is a critical social justice issue. Catholic and Marianist conceptions of social justice in particular call people to work with others in their spheres of life to transform institutions in order to further human rights while promoting the common good. Drawing on key elements of Catholic teaching on social justice, we argue that the achievement gap constitutes a social injustice. We then offer a case illustrating collaboration between university-based teacher educators and school faculty to address the achievement gap through transforming the institutions of school and of teacher preparation. The Dayton Early College Academy (DECA), founded on the University of Dayton's campus to prepare seventh through 12th graders to become first-generation college graduates, has become an essential site for preparing University of Dayton teacher candidates to become effective teachers of traditionally underachieving students. Our collaboration has resulted in the ongoing transformation of a school and a university's teacher education program to address the social injustice of the educational achievement gap.

Persistent disparities in the United States' educational system call out for social justice. As teacher educators in a Catholic, Marianist university, we draw on the Catholic and Marianist traditions of social justice to frame our response to the educational achievement gap—i.e., the educational attainment of low-income students and students of color compared to their more affluent, White peers. The Catholic conception of social justice is rooted in the idea of universal human dignity and human rights. It calls every person to work with others for the common good from her or his own position and role in society. Marianist writers describe the fruits of social justice at both the individual and societal level. Social justice empowers individuals “to improve their own capacity to maintain their dignity and to claim their rightful place in the social order” (Bordano, Cavanaugh, & Cada, 1997, pp.4-5). In addition, acts of social justice contribute to a gradual process of transformation of social institutions for the common good (Ferree, 1948/1997).

In this article, we apply Catholic teaching on social justice in response to the educational achievement gap. We offer a response to the call for social justice shaped by collaboration between university-based teacher educators and staff at a school serving students in grades 7 through 12. We detail three intertwined initiatives undertaken on the University of Dayton's campus to increase habitually marginalized students' access to a quality education. These initiatives illustrate the incremental transformation of a school and the university's teacher education program to address the social injustice of the educational achievement gap.

Social Justice in the Marianist and Catholic Tradition

The early Marianists are a model for addressing social injustice in education. They engaged in the gradual process of both empowering individuals and transforming the institutions of schooling and teacher preparation. In the chaotic wake of the French Revolution and before universal education was the norm, early Marianists established schools primarily for the middle and lower classes. Schools offering "real education," they argued, were the swiftest means of transforming the "minds and morals of the greater part of France" (Chaminade, 1830 in Albano, 1994).

Marianists insisted that providing a quality education was more important than quickly founding a multitude of deficient schools (Lackner, 1999). However, teachers with sufficient and appropriate training were in short supply. In France during the 1830s, teachers were typically ill-prepared and teaching was considered a low-paying job of last resort (Lackner, 1999). In response, the Marianists created normal schools that diverged from prevailing practices by emphasizing subject matter and pedagogy in addition to religion and practical skills (Lackner, 1999).

The early Marianists' work in education echoes three foundational ideas in Catholic teaching on social justice. First, the Marianists joined with others in their sphere of life on problems that were too onerous for individuals acting alone, namely social class disparity in access to quality education. Second, Marianists strove to transform social institutions to better serve the common good through reformulations of the structures of schooling and teacher education. Third, the Marianists' actions furthered human rights. Marianists' strengthening of normal school curricula for teachers and creation of schools for the middle and lower classes afforded a quality education to people denied that basic, inalienable human right.

Joining with others. Catholic teaching on social justice calls people as members of social groups to reorganize unjust social, political, and economic institutions in service of the common good (Ferree, 1948; Pius XI, 1931). Social justice is distinguished from charity (Ferree, 1948/1997; Vogt, 2008). A key difference is the social nature of social justice. Charity and individual morality encompass personal acts of justice and works of mercy, including treating others respectfully, being honest and truthful, honoring commitments, caring for the poor, and giving direct aid to alleviate immediate needs or problems (Himes, 2001; Vogt, 2008). Because human beings live within socially constructed structures, individual acts of charity are not always enough to ensure justice. Unjust institutions can prevent people, acting individually, from bringing about social justice. However, when people work in collaboration with others, they may be able to transform unjust social structures.

The common good. Every individual, regardless of position and role in society, is called to organize with others in her or his own sphere of life to work for the common good of the greater society. The common good is the collection of social conditions that allow people, as both groups and individuals, to reach their potential and flourish (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; Vatican Council II, 1965). The common good is the responsibility of every member and every sector of society (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986).

The common good, and consequently social justice, is rooted in the concept of human dignity and the natural rights stemming from human dignity. Human beings intrinsically possess God-given dignity and worth (John Paul II, 1991, 11). Dignity is not granted to people by society based on their actions, abilities, accomplishments, or even their beliefs, religious or otherwise. Likewise, dignity cannot be taken away or forfeited. All people possess dignity equally and regardless of race, nation, origin, gender, culture, or class (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). Due to the social nature of human beings, the representation of dignity will always be in the context of community (Himes, 2001). Specifically, human dignity is manifested as human rights.

Human rights. Human rights support individuals' ability to participate in the life of community and include "rights to fulfillment of material needs, a guarantee of fundamental freedoms, and the protection of relationships that are essential to participation in the life of society" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986, p. 79). Education is a basic, inalienable human right because it gives people tools to better their lives and to participate more fully in society (Vial, 1994). When persons or groups are denied human rights, in-

cluding sufficient, quality education, they are effectively marginalized in society, not able to participate in the economic, political, and social life of the community. Such marginalization constitutes injustice and violates the common good (DeBerri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003; Himes, 2001). Moreover, because we are all interconnected, the denial of human rights harms both the privileged and marginalized in society.

The Educational Achievement Gap as a Social Justice Issue

In the contemporary United States, universal schooling is available for all students regardless of socioeconomic class, race, or ethnicity. However, substantial disparities in educational achievement by both socioeconomic class and race exist. These disparities deny the common good by significantly undermining the ability of individuals to participate in American society, to fulfill their potential, or to work and thereby have their material needs met. The employment rate, for example, rises with educational attainment (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). In addition, the mean earnings of young adults with bachelor's degrees (\$48,445) are 71% higher than those with a high school diploma (\$28,224) and 137% higher than those without a high school diploma (\$20,471) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). College graduates also enjoy better health and are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors than other adults (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). In short, the educational achievement gap violates the common good because it systemically impedes classes of people from reaching their potential and flourishing as part of the greater society.

Socioeconomic Achievement Gap

The evidence of a socioeconomic achievement gap is overwhelming. Socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to a number of factors associated with the achievement gap, including reading and mathematics scores, high school graduation rates, college attendance, and college graduation. Family income is associated with achievement in both reading and mathematics. Fourth, eighth, and 12th graders eligible for free or reduced school lunch scored significantly lower on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) than their noneligible peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). By fourth grade 83% of low-income children have below proficient reading scores compared to 55% of moderate- and high-income students (Annie E. Casey Foun-

dation, 2010).

Family income is associated with high school graduation rates. In a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students, Hernandez (2011) found that 38% of children experiencing poverty for at least one year accounted for 70% of children not graduating from high school by age 19. Hernandez also found that experiencing one or more years of poverty diminishes the effects of high achievement in the early grades and intensifies the effects of low achievement. Eleven percent of proficient third grade readers who experienced poverty for one or more years did not graduate from high school by age 19, compared to 2% of proficient readers who had not lived in poverty. Of children with low third grade reading scores, 26% who had experienced poverty did not graduate from high school by age 19 compared to just 9% of low scorers who had never been poor (Hernandez, 2011).

Family income is also linked to college attendance and graduation. College enrollment within 12 months of graduating high school varied substantially (80% for highest quintile, 61% for middle income, and 55% for lowest quintile; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Fox, Connelly, and Snyder (2005) found similar results in their analysis of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study. High SES eighth graders with high mathematics scores were twice as likely to attain bachelor's degrees as their low SES counterparts (74% v. 29%) and 10 times more likely to graduate. Moreover, Fox et al. (2005) found nearly the same percentage of high-income socioeconomic students with low eighth-grade mathematics scores (30%) earned a bachelor's degree as low socioeconomic status students with high scores (29%).

Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gap

Parallel educational achievement gaps are found between White students and African-American and Latino students. Achievement levels are higher for White students than for African-American and Latino students throughout their formal educational career. During elementary and high school, African-American and Latino students' achievement lags behind that of their White peers. White students ages nine, 13, and 17 score persistently higher on the NAEP in math and reading than African-American and Latino students since the test began in the early 1970s (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). In high school, the average dropout rate among 16- to 24-year-olds in 2008 was 6.5% for Whites, 8.6% for Blacks, and 15% for Hispanics, compared to the national average of 6.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b).

In college, earned bachelor degree rate varies by race in spite of the fact that White, Black, and Hispanic 10th graders similarly aspire to graduate from college: 39.6%, 40.8%, and 40.2%, respectively (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). College entrance rates vary for 18- to 21-year-old youth (Whites 50%; Blacks 36%; and Hispanics 31%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). The net result is that a higher percentage of Whites between the ages of 25 to 29 hold a bachelor's degree than their Black or Hispanic peers (37%, 19%, and 12%, respectively; Aud, Husar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, & Drake, 2010).

Social Justice in Teacher Education at the University of Dayton

Like other social justice conundrums, the achievement gap is dauntingly complex, and too overwhelming for individuals acting alone to address. Factors contributing to the achievement gap are vast and varied, including health disparities, substandard housing, less adequate early childhood preparation, disproportionate school funding, lack of high quality after-school and summer experiences, absence of peer and community role models, and racism and classism. Nevertheless, we must do what we can in Catholic education to not only address this gap, but to seek remedy for it.

The complexity of the achievement gap is a call to action. Catholic and Marianist traditions of social justice bid us to act with others in our own sphere of life. We educators—in schools and in teacher preparation programs—are natural partners to reduce the achievement gap by preparing teachers to work in schools with underachieving populations. We can create partnerships between Catholic universities and K-12 schools in order to advance social justice through transformative educational practices leading to excellence and equity (Carrithers & Peterson, 2010; Doyle & Connelly, 2011; Heft, 2006; Jessop, 2001; McQuillan et al., 2009).

The remainder of this article describes three intertwined initiatives undertaken at the University of Dayton to increase educational achievement and access for youth from traditionally underachieving groups. First, the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) is a seventh through 12th grade school housed on the University of Dayton's campus. DECA was created to prepare potential first-generation college students and currently serves approximately 425 students. DECA is the nation's only public, charter school operated by a Catholic university. DECA provides an example of social justice both as the empowerment of traditionally marginalized individuals via education and as the transformation of a social institution, the school. Collaboration between

DECA faculty and the University's Department of Teacher Education has resulted in incremental but important transformations of another social institution: the teacher education programs for middle school and high school teacher candidates.

The second initiative we describe involved substantial changes to a required sophomore year development course. Through coordinated readings, assignments, and 20 hours of field experiences at DECA, teacher candidates examine their preconceptions about students from a variety of racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds and their own role and responsibility as educators in fostering resiliency and academic success.

As a third initiative, we describe the practice of clinic rounds during senior year methods courses. DECA teachers, university methods instructors, and teacher candidates participate in this communal practice of making pedagogical thinking explicit. Through these initiatives we are seeking to increase future teachers' capacity to provide a quality education for habitually marginalized populations. In the remainder of this article we describe each of these three initiatives, the specific goals of each, and preliminary evidence of efficacy.

Dayton Early College Academy

When DECA opened its doors in 2003, the Dayton, Ohio, public schools were ranked the worst in the state. The Dayton public school district had met none of the 22 performance indicators and claimed a dismal 54% graduation rate (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). All but one of its high schools was rated "academic emergency" by the state's accountability system (Ohio Department of Education, 2012). Students' lack of access to quality education was a systemic denial of the basic human right to fully participate in the economic, political, and social life of the community.

DECA was created as a partnership between the Dayton Public Schools and the University of Dayton with a singular focus on preparing urban students to become college graduates. In the early planning stages, concerned university faculty and school district personnel collaborated to develop curriculum, design of the school day, and support systems for students and faculty at DECA. Teams met monthly with DECA faculty and administration to work on problems that arose. Start-up funding came from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Early College High School Initiative and the Cincinnati-based KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

As a public charter school, DECA is tuition-free and open to all students

living in Dayton. When applications outnumber available slots, students are selected by lottery. In the 2011–2012 school year, 73.7% of DECA's students were low income while 79% were African American, 12% were White, and 2% were Hispanic. The remaining 7% included students of Middle Eastern, Asian, and multiracial descent. Over 87% of DECA's students are potentially first-generation college students. In short, DECA serves a population that achievement gap statistics would portray as at-risk for relatively low achievement scores, high dropout rates, and few college graduates.

While DECA's mission has stayed steady, its structure has evolved. In its early years, the school was jointly operated by the University of Dayton and the Dayton Public Schools. When a school district levy failed in spring 2007, DECA retained its teachers by converting to a community school, which in Ohio is the term used for charter schools. Recognizing that many students needed more than four years to close skill gaps and accelerate along a college prep track, DECA added a seventh and eighth grade in 2009 and 2010. Today DECA remains a unique partnership of the DECA Board, the Dayton Public Schools (as sponsor), the University of Dayton (as operator), and Sinclair Community College (where most DECA students earn college credits during high school).

For the University of Dayton, DECA is a multidisciplinary endeavor drawing faculty from a variety of departments. For example, UD's School of Law coaches students on debate skills for competitions, the School of Business develops students' financial skills, the School of Engineering works with students on robotics, and Teacher Education collaborates on pedagogy, tutoring, and student teaching. The Department of Teacher Education has also continued a concerted effort to recruit faculty who have worked with diverse school populations and who may have an interest in collaborating with DECA. Though DECA is not a Catholic school, its mission and philosophy reflect the Catholic, Marianist ideals of working for the common good.

DECA's school culture supports gathering data, identifying problem areas, and changing approaches to better serve the students. Over the years, the DECA faculty developed an array of practices to provide students with both the academic and social supports needed to become college students and graduates. First, as an early college academy, students take college classes before graduating from high school, building familiarity with college and easing the transition from high school to college. Since the school's inception students have earned over 5,000 college credit hours. Second, the faculty incorporated a common set of effective instructional strategies across the school, including,

for example, Socratic seminars to develop students' speaking skills, ability to defend claims, perspective taking, and academic voices. Third, in addition to course work, students are required to pass six "gateways," competency-based assessments. These successively rigorous exhibitions in front of a panel of teachers and community members demonstrate oral and written communication, organization, academic accomplishments, and time management. Fourth, DECA fosters students' college-going identity through means ranging from autobiographies and hallway mirrors emblazoned with "I'm going to college" to job shadows and classes taken at local colleges. Finally, DECA faculty are hired as teacher/advisors. Advisors develop supportive relationships with their advisees, meeting with them daily, making home visits to get to know families, and providing high expectations and necessary scaffolding as advisees plan and follow through on learning goals.

Evidence of impact. DECA is highly successful on many measures. In 2010–2011, DECA 11th grade pass rate on the Ohio Graduation Tests was 97.1% for science and 100% in writing, reading, social studies, and mathematics (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). By comparison the overall 2010–2011 pass rate for Dayton high schools ranged from 64.3% in science to 85.5% in writing (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). In the past 5 years, all but two of DECA's 180 graduates have immediately gone on to college. DECA's first year to sophomore year college retention rates continue to rise from 78% in 2007 to 82% in 2008, 92% in 2009, and 91% in 2010. The national sophomore year retention rate for all students is 67.1% (ACT, 2011). In addition, DECA was a bronze medalist in *U.S. News and World Report's* 2009 and 2012 national lists of America's best high schools, has had two students win prestigious Gates Millennium scholarships, and earned the state's highest rating of "excellence with distinction" for the 2010–2011 school year.

At the core of DECA's success are teachers who passionately believe in their students' potential and cultivate the pedagogical skills to coax the potential into reality. Nationally, the need for effective teachers to work with traditionally low-achieving populations is great (Urban Teacher Collaborative, 2000). Early Marianists' believed that teacher preparation was essential to providing quality education for students. However, they warned education can compound injustice if it only replicates social class (Vial, 1994). We heed this warning when we realize that teacher education must consciously attend to the poor and marginalized, engage teacher candidates in social analysis, and prepare future teachers to work effectively with traditionally underperforming populations.

Next we turn to the second and third initiatives, significant alterations to the secondary teacher education program at the University of Dayton. Collaborations between DECA's faculty and university teacher educators led to critical changes in required second- and fourth-year courses that scaffold teacher candidates' development of the dispositions, conceptual frames of reference, and pedagogical skills needed to promote equity.

Sophomore-level Course in Child and Adolescent Development

Changes to a sophomore-level course in child and adolescent development started with an informal survey. We found juniors in our seventh through 12th grade licensure program held predominately negative views of urban schools and students. The findings were disheartening but, in light of previous research, not unexpected (Deering & Stanutz, 1995; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997).

Next we surveyed our sophomore teacher candidates more extensively. In addition to predominately low expectations for poor, African-American, and Latino students, we found they had had little previous experience with students from poverty or urban settings. Like the national population of teacher candidates (Follo, Hoerr, & Vorheis-Sargent, 2002; Proctor, Rentz, & Jackson, 2001; Terrill & Mark, 2000), the majority of our students were female, White, and middle or upper-middle class, of traditional college age, and described their school experience as exclusively suburban (Collopy, Bowman, & Dinneen, 2010). We suspect that lack of contact with other groups, not simply demographic differences, engendered the stereotypes and lower expectations of unfamiliar populations. Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that,

The first problem teachers confront is believing that successful teaching for poor students of color is primarily about “what to do.” Instead I suggest that the problem is rooted in how we think—about the social context, about the students, about the curriculum, and about instruction. (p. 30)

In response, we integrated issues of social class and race throughout an existing child and adolescent development course. We leveraged elements common to such courses—readings, course assignments, and field experiences—to encourage students to unearth their assumptions, broaden their knowledge base, and engage in social analysis. Social analysis “does not assume that ‘the way things are’ is the way they must be, but projects a vision of ways in which

society can and should be improved” (Chaminade University et al., 1999, p. 34). Because introducing teacher candidates to unfamiliar populations through readings or field experiences alone can reinforce stereotypes, we purposefully integrated readings, course assignments, and field experiences at DECA. Our aim was to connect academic knowledge and theoretical frames with focused observations and personal interactions. We continue to modify and refine the course in collaboration with colleagues at DECA.

Readings. For students, the most obvious change came with the replacement of the textbook with a course pack of readings. The readings include both textbook excerpts and articles to address developmental domains (such as cognitive, physical, and linguistic) with an infusion of readings on diversity in development. Linguistic development, for example, includes readings on dialects, code switching, and sociolinguistic behaviors. Instead of broad and standalone textbook sections on culture, community, or society, students read articles on the magnitude, distribution, and impact of poverty on development and the social construction of race and privilege. Students also labor through Bronfenbrenner’s description of ecological systems theory. Throughout the course the theory serves as a touchstone for considering the many layers of environmental influences on development and educational achievement. Toward the end of the semester, students consider the assumptions of at-risk and resiliency paradigms. They read research on affluent students’ risk factors, critique and compare various authors’ recommendations for school level solutions for narrowing the achievement gap, and consider how schools and teachers can foster resiliency in all students.

Assignments. Three major course assignments require students to draw together course readings with their field experiences in the community and at DECA. These include an “environmental exploration” project, a developmentally appropriate classroom project, and a case study. Each assignment asks teacher candidates to look anew at what they assume about diverse populations, community resources, and schooling. Assignments also ask candidates to practice skills in collecting data, to analyze data in light of readings, to reflect on their assumptions based on their own backgrounds, and to articulate their responsibility as teachers for promoting resiliency and student success.

Early in the semester, teacher candidates participate in an “environmental exploration.” Many of our candidates have only been in low-income or African-American neighborhoods to do service work or to drive through on the way to something else. The explorations are intended to push candidates beyond the normal social and physical boundaries of their daily life and collect data

that make them take notice of the environment in ways they may not have considered. Teams, for example, tally the prevalence of types of businesses and signs of blight in urban and suburban neighborhoods, compare the availability, quality, and cost of food in different neighborhoods, or participate in a simulation of a month living in poverty. In another exploration candidates reflect on the experience of being in the minority as, for example, a White worshiper at a predominately African-American church service. Each group analyzes and presents data from their project in light of readings on the impact of the environment on child and adolescent development.

Toward the end of the semester, candidates collaborate to design developmentally appropriate classrooms for a particular grade level, subject area, and high-poverty, urban school. They draw on course readings and observations of students and teaching practices at DECA to develop plans that include communication with families and fostering resiliency.

Analysis of observation notes from field placements are the basis for a developmental case study report on an individual student. Cooperating teachers match each teacher candidate with a partner student from DECA. Before beginning field observations, University of Dayton teacher candidates are trained to take detailed observation notes, separating descriptions from interpretations and remaining mindful of their own assumptions. The case studies report on partner students' development in four domains: physical, cognitive, linguistic, and either social, emotional, or identity development. Each claim in the case study must be supported by sufficient evidence from field notes in light of research they have studied on child and adolescent development. Case studies end with recommendations for what the teacher (not the student or a parent) can do to support the partner student's ongoing development.

Field experiences. DECA and university faculty collaborated extensively to redesign the field experience and couple it more tightly to the goals of the development course. Traditionally teacher candidates used the field experience to gather data for a case study of an individual student—a major assignment in their development class. However, of the 20 hours teacher candidates spent observing in their cooperating teacher's classroom each semester, they typically saw their case study student for only one 45-minute period each week.

Three concerns stemmed from the mismatch between teacher candidates' focus and the structure of the field experience. First, candidates struggled to get enough data for their case study when their student was absent or taking a test on an observation day. Second, cooperating teachers noted that some candidates settled into being passive observers at the back of the classroom.

Finally, the field experience afforded only haphazard opportunities for candidates to interact individually with students. As a result observations related to development were often superficial and the reinforcement of racial and class stereotypes more likely. For many candidates the field experience afforded limited opportunities for learning to distinguish objective observations from subjective interpretations, to analyze data in light of research on child and adolescent development, to recognize the strengths and potential of diverse students, and to observe how teachers might promote resiliency and student success. In short, the field experience often did not encourage candidates to consider alternative perspectives for understanding students and their social context.

Years of collaboration led to changes to the structure of the field experience. First, we bookended the experience with an introduction to the school and its student population and a debriefing session with DECA's principal. Second, we divided the 20 hours into 5 hours of one-on-one tutoring and 15 hours of classroom observations. Candidates tutored at after-school study tables, during school-organized events such as "edit night" and "nerd night," or as arranged with their cooperating teacher. Teacher candidates now give back to DECA by providing over 500 hours of tutoring each year. Tutoring also affords opportunities for candidates to work closely with individual students, learn how to develop rapport with students, and identify strengths in students whose backgrounds are different from their own.

Third, we restructured 15 hours of classroom observations so the focus was on the case study student, rather than time in the cooperating teacher's classroom. Rather than staying put in one classroom, candidates follow a partner student's schedule. This model allows more extensive observations of development in a variety of contexts and a richer foundation for the case study assignment. Teacher candidates, no longer passive observers, are responsible for developing rapport with their students and observe multiple models of how teachers foster resiliency and achievement.

Evidence of impact. Analyses of pre- and postsemester surveys suggest that the child and adolescent development course altered candidates' thinking (Collopy & Bowman, 2008). Teacher candidates' attitudes toward and perceptions of urban, of high-poverty, and of majority African-American schools and student populations became significantly more positive and they were significantly more open to working in urban schools or a school in which the majority of students are racial or ethnic minorities. Moreover, over half the teacher candidates reported that at the posttest the combination of readings,

assignments, and field experiences had debunked their negative stereotypes. For example, candidates wrote, “It changed my stereotypes about black people being ‘scary’ or dangerous” and,

Stereotypes that were debunked were that parents do not care about their students if they don’t show up in the classroom. Also, that high poverty schools don’t have students that can succeed or care to go to college.

Clinical Rounds

Teacher candidates seeking seventh through 12th grade licensure in language arts, mathematics, or social studies return to DECA during their senior year methods course to participate in clinical rounds. The term “rounds” was drafted into the teacher education lexicon from medical education. As in medical training, variations of rounds are currently in practice in education (cf. City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Rallis, Tedder, Lachman, & Elmore, 2006). Each rounds model strives to develop professional knowledge through analysis of data from specific clinical cases. During rounds, novice and expert teachers engage in evidence-based discussions of classroom practice and pedagogical decision making.

We patterned our clinical rounds model on work by Del Prete (1997, 2006) at Clark University. The model includes a prerounds discussion of the planned lesson, a lesson observation, and a postobservation discussion among teacher candidates, teachers, and college faculty. The model employed by this study involved teacher candidates participating in two sets of rounds. The first set occurred in the beginning of their methods course while the second followed the completion of a 7-week clinical experience in a school teaching 5 days a week.

During the preobservation conference, the participating teachers discuss their lesson plan and request teacher candidates to observe one specific dimension of the teaching episode to assist in the teacher’s own professional growth. Their discussions address such questions as “Are the students engaged in the activity? How do you know? What is the time on task for each student and the class collectively?” Following the prerounds session, candidates observe a 55-minute class during which they collect data related to the dimension specified by the teacher. In addition, methods instructors divide teacher candidates into teams to record additional data using ethnographic observation

techniques (e.g., interaction analysis, time on task, question levels, verbal flow, and class traffic).

Postconferences involve teachers, teacher candidates, and content methods instructors meeting immediately following the observation. During the postconferences, the teachers describe what they perceived worked well or did not work well and why. The candidates share data, engage in discussion, and pose questions about instructional strategies used and the rationale behind their use. Following the postconferences, teacher candidates complete reflective essays using prompts given by the faculty.

The practice of rounds has the potential to contribute to social justice work by increasing teachers' awareness of their roles in providing a quality education for underserved students. Rounds serve as professional development for teachers, methods instructors, and teacher candidates, increasing the capacity of all to transform education (Thompson & Cooner, 2001; Virtue, 2010). Rounds in themselves are a transformation of the often isolated practice of teaching into a communal examination of pedagogical practice. Rounds make pedagogical thinking explicit, addressing both what to do and how to think about social context, students, curriculum, and instruction. Second, rounds also support greater coherence between teacher candidates' experience of content area methods courses and the practices encountered during student teaching. Often, teacher education is characterized by a separation between university-based classes and school-based student teaching (Grossman, Hammerness, & Macdonald, 2009). The practice of rounds strengthens the reciprocal partnership between the DECA and UD faculty and the link between the academic and clinic education of teachers.

Evidence of impact. During our pilot year of instructional rounds, 12 teacher candidates in the Adolescent Young Adult English Language Arts program, all females, participated in four round sessions during the semester. The teachers who were observed each had more than 5 years of teaching practice.

The data collected for rounds consisted of three points: discourse analysis of pre- and postconference, candidates' reflections, and candidates' observational data. From the discourse analysis in the preclinical experience, candidates' questions focused on the "what" and the "how" of teaching. It was found that 95% of the candidates' questions dealt with implementation issues and procedural deliverance of instruction, and 5% focused on planning of instruction.

Three categories emerged from candidates' reflection papers: classroom

management (100%), instructional strategies (75%) and assessment (1%). Every student commented on classroom management either based on observational data or questions posed in the reflection paper. Instructional strategies were the second category with candidates' identifying methods and strategies presented from the methods class or previous university classes, but with no elaboration of the strategy's effectiveness in the class. The third category, assessment, was identified by one person relating to a formative assessment technique.

The candidates' observational data included measures of student engagement and time on task. Teachers were impressed at the amount of time students were involved in active engagement with the activities as well as the on-task time. During the 55-minute time frame, the range of active involvement ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. This involved student-led discussions, debates, and cooperative work. The time on task per student range was 10 to 20 minutes.

The same data points were collected for the postclinical rounds: discourse analysis of pre- and postconference, candidates' reflections, and candidates' observational data. From the discourse analysis in the preconference, teacher candidates asked many questions focusing on teaching new content and differentiation of instruction.

The candidates' reflection papers presented a broader view of the observed classrooms. They identified methods and strategies while elaborating on how these supported student learning. In addition, they added rationales for using these as well as personal experience from their teaching experience. The responses given also had explanations of how they would use the strategies as well as the "why." The reflection papers had three themes that emerged: teaching strategies, classroom management, and assessment. It was interesting to note that the teaching strategies moved from second place during the first set of rounds to first place, and that classroom management moved from first to second. After the clinical experience, students commented that classroom management was manageable through the use of teaching methods and strategies that engaged students, and being prepared from the beginning to the ending of class.

In postconference discussions, the teacher candidates were more at ease with the teachers. They identified difficult elements of the lesson and the use of scaffolding to assist students with developing new content and connecting to prior knowledge. Teacher candidates were making suggestions and using personal scenarios from their teaching to expand upon the conversation.

Rounds give the candidates an opportunity to discuss the "thinking" of the

teacher in planning and delivering lessons and find that it is not only content that goes into the planning, but also students' lives, experiences, and context. Following the second session of rounds, the teacher candidates are asking questions about students they observed and what the teacher is doing to create opportunities for student learning and achievement. Reflection and dialogue develop the practice of working with and as a community of teachers.

We believe that the experiences at DECA are an essential part of our teacher preparation program for future junior and senior high teachers. As teachers, they will most likely work with students whose backgrounds differ from their own. While approximately 20% of our predominately White, suburban, and middle-class teacher candidates express a preference for teaching in urban schools at the beginning of their sophomore year, 75% accept positions in urban schools after graduation. In addition, many of the approximately 20 students apply to join the University of Dayton's Urban Teachers' Academy (UTA) each year cite their sophomore experience at DECA as sparking their desire to teach in urban schools. UTA accepts undergraduate preservice teachers with a strong desire to work with high-poverty urban populations and pairs them with a highly qualified veteran teacher for junior and senior year field placements. Upon graduation, students receive priority on job placements within the Dayton Public Schools. A number of UD graduates apply to the University of Dayton's Lalanne program upon graduation each year. Lalanne teachers make a 2-year commitment to teach in an underresourced Catholic school, live together in a faith-based community, and pursue professional and spiritual and personal development. All UD participants in Lalanne had their initial sustain field experience with urban schools in their sophomore year.

Discussion

This article offered both an argument that the educational achievement gap is a social justice issue and a case illustrating collaborative efforts of university-based teacher educators and school faculty to address it. The achievement gap undermines the common good by leaving people socially and economically marginalized, hampering their ability to participate in society fully and meet their material needs through work. Through transforming the institutions of school and of teacher preparation, we are raising the achievement of traditionally low-performing students and the efficacy of their future teachers.

The Catholic and Marianist conception of social justice can serve as a framework for teacher educators to address injustice in educational settings

and other social institutions. First, working for social justice in the Catholic tradition focuses teacher educators on promoting the common good and human rights. The goal of social justice is the common good and the flourishing of human life (Ferree, 1948/1997). Human rights assure the common good. A long roster of rights have been put forth (cf., John Paul II, 1979). Among these rights, the right to education is most obviously relevant to the work of teacher educators. However, teacher educators may contribute to the advancement of other rights, including, for example, the right to freedom of expression, to culture, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to choose a state of life, and the right to have sufficient material goods to support oneself and one's family.

Second, doing nothing is not an option. Catholic social justice tradition simultaneously releases us from the burden of addressing all aspects of an injustice and insists that we join with others and take action. Our work, for example, does not address all possible contributions to the educational achievement gap. Instead, we have concentrated on our own domain of influence as university- and school-based educators.

Third, working for the common good requires working with others to transform social institutions. The initiatives we describe were only possible through the collaboration of university teacher educators and DECA faculty. Because the prospect of change creates excitement and renewed energy as well as anxiety and discomfort, taking time to develop relationships is important. A common passion, complementary missions, and mutual respect undergirded our joint critique and change of teacher education.

Fourth, like all acts of social justice, the initiatives described here are in some ways unique to their time and place. For example, early Marianists faced a postrevolutionary France in which universal education was not available. In early 21st-century America, in contrast, access to education is universal, but quality is not. Each place may have unique resources available for social justice work as well. For example, the University of Dayton houses DECA, the nation's only charter school supervised by a Catholic university. Other teacher education programs may find partners in communities, agencies, or local schools.

Finally, social justice is a continuing and imperfect endeavor. While evidence suggests that our efforts are heading in the right direction, we are continuing to refine the structure of our programs as we analyze data from our teacher candidates and graduates, collaborate with colleagues, respond to needs of current students, and learn from the research and experiences of others. The

social justice work of transforming the institution of schooling and empowering individuals continues at DECA and within University of Dayton's teacher education programs, as Ferree (1948/1997) described, with incremental changes by people acting within their sphere of life.

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