

Introduction

It is my firm belief that the achievement gap is one of the biggest crises affecting our youth today. The persistent disparity in measures of educational attainment and achievement are vastly different between socioeconomic classes, races, and even genders. This widespread disparity does not bode well for the future of society as a whole given that educational achievement is strongly correlated with future success. This community engagement plan seeks to bridge this divide and align all groups in a manner that ensures mutual success in the future.

Literature Review

Nuttall and Doherty (2014) discuss the achievement gap within the context of adolescent boys' disaffection. The article examines how the social context of schooling and a diverse range of lived experiences counteract to affect academic performance. Nuttall and Doherty (2014) examine the difficulties in achieving success in a school in a disadvantaged area due to the unavailability of resources. Nuttall and Doherty (2014) recommend a tailored approach that combines high quality teaching with a support framework to motivate academic success.

Appel and Kronberger (2012) examine the role that stereotypes play in the perpetuation of the achievement gap. Appel and Kronberger (2012) define stereotype threat as, "a situational predicament that prevents members of negatively stereotyped groups to perform up to their full ability." Appel and Kronberger (2012) go on to note that stereotype threat not only affects academic performance but it affects the ability of the

individual to build knowledge and abilities in the first place. This leads to disidentification and prohibits effective learning. Appel and Kronberger (2012) suggest a focus on eliminating stereotype threat prior to test taking.

Kaupp (2012) discusses the effect of online course delivery on the achievement gap. Kaupp (2012) notes the overrepresentation of Latino students in community colleges and the underrepresentation of Latino students in four-year institutions. In California's community colleges, students enrolled in online classes had both lower completion rates and lower success rates. Kaupp (2012) found this disparity to be a result of the absence of a strong instructor-student relationship.

Simms (2012) focused on the immigrant versus nonimmigrant achievement gap. Simms (2012) found that nationality plays a bigger role in the achievement gap than race and that immigrants that had been in the US since preschool performed lower than their nonimmigrant counterparts in kindergarten. Simms (2012) believes that this could be a product of educational selectivity and encourages further research within this realm.

Strategies for Community Engagement

For my community, I chose Antioch, Tennessee. I chose this population after visiting a school called Cole Elementary. Cole Elementary is a Title I school with over 800 students. The teachers speak over 23 languages and many of the families live in poverty. Cole Elementary is not unique in Antioch. Many of the schools are Title I and/or have a large percentage of the population that are immigrants or refugees. I believe that

this affects the way in which in which the students learn and illustrates the importance of community engagement in ensuring this population is set up for success.

Based on my research, I would like to include the following focus areas in my Community Engagement Plan:

- High Quality Teaching
- Support Framework
- Eliminating Stereotype Threat
- Developing Strong Student-Instructor Relationships
- Educational Selectivity

Though it is harder for schools with a shortage of resources to attract high-quality teachers, I believe we can implement a training program that will help reframe the way that these teachers approach the students in this area of Nashville. These students need, more than anything, to feel supported and empowered to act. Providing the support that they may be lacking in their home life is crucial to ensuring their success. Additionally, providing training to ensure that teachers can provide an individualized experience tailored to the unique needs of each students is essential. Both parents and instructors can contribute to eliminating stereotype threat.

Through our training and through one-on-one meetings between the parents and faculty, we can ensure that each student feels confident in their own abilities prior to test-taking. Finally, it is my hope that through this training and encouraging a more individualized approach, we will foster strong student-instructor relationships thus further strengthening opportunities for educational achievement.

This Community Engagement Plan will require cooperation of both faculty and parents for all schools in the Antioch area. We will rely on faculty and staff to serve as translators for any language barriers. We will employ a team of five instructors to facilitate these trainings. This will require some fiscal support which we can hopefully partner with the schools and community stakeholders to secure.

Evaluation

We will evaluate our success through pre and post-test measures of academic achievement for all students in the Antioch area. We will separate by school to determine any barriers based on institution. We will also assess parent beliefs regarding academic achievement to see if there are any unique observations through home life that have not been taken into consideration. The trial period will span a full academic year. Our training facilitators will check in with their assigned schools once a month to ensure that faculty continue to progress with the community engagement plan. If all is successful, we will see a significant increase in academic achievement over the span of the academic year.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we will utilize a team of five trainers to do community outreach to the schools in the Antioch community. These trainers will focus on high quality teaching, individualized instruction, providing a support framework, eliminating stereotype threat, developing strong student-instructor relationships, and educational selectivity. After completing the training, faculty will set up one-on-one meetings with parents to create an individualized approach to ensure each student's success. Successful community

engagement will be assessed through pre and post measures of both the students and the parents. Continual support of the community engagement plan will occur through monthly facilitator check-ins at each school. This community engagement plan seeks a community-wide increase in academic achievement.

References

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