

DIVERSE LEARNERS

SPRING 2020 | BRIEF 3

WHY ARE BLACK CHILDREN (STUDENTS) EXPERIENCING AN ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY GAP?

Young black males spend more time in special education and less time in advanced placement or college prep courses. They also receive more disciplinary suspensions and expulsions than any other group in U.S. schools today.¹

“We don’t tend to have an achievement gap when it comes to black males; we have an opportunity gap,” said Dr. Bryant Marks, associate professor of psychology and executive director of the Morehouse Research Institute.

Marks defined the opportunity gap as a failure to provide the resources and exposure students need to be successful. When race, class, English proficiency, and other factors perpetuate lower achievement and access, an opportunity gap exists.

Disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, social promotion and high rates of special education labeling contribute to an inability to learn content knowledge black male students need to thrive academically, as do disparities in advanced level course offerings.²

¹ Council of the Great City Schools. (October 2012) *A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement. Executive Summary.*

² *Opportunity Gap? Key Impediment for Black Male Academic Achievement.*

WHY IT MATTERS

- Black students represent 8.39% of Oklahoma’s student population and 3.9% of the gifted and talented population.³
- Black male students in Oklahoma are 2.56 times more likely to be suspended than white students.³
- Black male students in Oklahoma are 1.21 times more likely to be identified for special education services than any other race of males.³
- Black students are four times as likely to be suspended than white peers.⁴
- Black children account for almost 50% of public preschool suspensions but less than one-fifth of all preschoolers.⁴
- Black children are twice as likely to be expelled as Latino and White children.⁴

³ *Oklahoma State Department of Education Data.*

⁴ *Council of the Great City Schools. (October 2012) A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement. Executive Summary.*

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Listen and learn from families and students.
- Engage students in authentic, relevant learning experiences to help students envision their futures and foster hope.
- Personalize learning to support learner needs, interests and aspirations.
- Improve literacy instruction.
- Provide data and set goals for closing achievement and opportunity gaps
- Set high expectations.
- Build student self-esteem and racial/ethnic pride.
- Develop a task force that identifies goals and strategies around diversity.
- Develop classroom systems that ensure all voices are heard.
- Create alternatives to suspension.

*Council of the Great City Schools. (October 2012)
A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male
Achievement. Executive Summary.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do we understand the inequitable education practices that impact our black students?

How can we address stereotypes related to our students of color?

What resources are available in our school, district and community to support our efforts to understand and confront inequities our students face?

How can a predominantly white educator workforce develop relationships with families of students of color?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

- Intervene to support students of color academically, behaviorally, emotionally and socially.
- Identify students of color in gifted and talented areas of creativity, visual and performing arts, leadership, academics and intellectual ability.
- Address disproportionality of black students identified as students with disabilities.
- Prioritize the recruitment and retention of educators of color.
- Invest in culturally relevant curriculum.
- Provide race and equity training for teachers to lead culturally relevant classrooms.
- Provide personalized support for successful completion of college preparatory classes.
- Promote early childhood education to nurture and sustain academic, social and financial supports for children.
- Establish effective mentoring programs.

Hardy, David M., Kincaid, Matthew & King, India. (2018). How to Achieve Equity in Education. Kickboard.

DIVERSE LEARNER TEAM
(405) 522-6369
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