Action for Access: Do Your Students Have Access?

Todd Lacher, Center for Assessment and Policy Development

A major challenge for communities engaging in dialogue about achievement gaps in their schools is knowing where to start. One of the primary reasons it is so challenging is the simple fact that achievement is affected not just by one factor, but by many. The task for community dialogue is then to answer: what are the factors that are creating achievement gaps in our schools? While there will likely be no simple or single answer to this question, a helpful way to start is to reframe the question itself slightly. Instead of beginning with achievement gaps, communities can start by asking about access gaps. Are there gaps in access in our schools? Access to people? Access to resources? Access to information? Access to services? Reframing the dialogue in this way offers communities a more direct route to addressing the roots of the inequalities reflected in gaps in achievement.

Starting from this point, the following tool is meant to provide community groups with:

1) Research documenting common school-level gaps in access that are connected to gaps in achievement
2) Questions to ask to discern if certain access gaps exist in their schools
3) Additional information and resources that share the stories and approaches of other community groups, schools, districts, and states that are successfully addressing gaps in access in their schools

As acknowledged throughout the contents of this tool, gaps in access are deeply tied to broader societal inequities that exist along racial, ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic lines. Wherever available, the research and resources provided in this tool represent communities, schools, individuals and organizations that are advocating "race-conscious" approaches to addressing gaps in access for students of color and students of non-dominant ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

For additional resources and the research cited click on "resources" under each topic.

Topic	Access to _What_?	What Questions Can We Ask?
Teachers		
Teacher Recruitment & Retention Resources	**Access** to teachers that are committed to and invested in staying in their schools. What does the research tell us: • "[A]lmost a quarter of entering public-school teachers leave teaching within their first three years" (1) • Teachers who leave are more likely to have taught in schools that are low-performing, high poverty, and have large populations of students of color. (2-4) • Students of color and low income students are more likely to be in "hard to staff" schools (5)	What are our schools and districts already doing to _recruit_ teachers? What are the resources they need to improve or change these efforts? What are our schools and districts doing to _keep_ teachers? What are the resources they need to improve or change these efforts?
Teacher Distribution Resources	**Access** to the most _effective_ teachers. What does the research tell us: • The effectiveness of teachers is the single strongest predictor of student success. (1) • Students of color, students of lower economic status, and students in lower performing schools are more likely to taught by a less effective teacher. (2-4) • Teachers with stronger qualifications are overrepresented in schools that serve predominantly economically advantaged, racially dominant (White), and high performing students (5)	How do our _districts_ decide how to distribute teachers? How do they ensure that distribution is equitable? Do our states have standards for equitably distributing teachers? If they do, what are they, and are they being met in our schools?

Topic	Access to _What_?	What Questions Can We Ask?
Students		
Student Ability Grouping (also called "tracking" or "homogeneous grouping") Resources	**Access** to the most effective teachers and rigorous curriculum and instruction. What does the research tell us: • Students of color and low income students are overrepresented in low-tracked classes (1-2) • Students in low-tracked classes often experience lower expectations from their teachers, curriculum that has been watered-down, and inferior instructional materials. (3-4) • Students rarely move out of lower tracks into higher tracks (5) • Teachers with stronger qualifications are overrepresented in _classrooms_ that serve predominantly economically advantaged, racially dominant (White), and high performing students (6)	Do our schools "track" students? If so, what is their process for determining which students are grouped in which track? If our schools track students, how are they ensuring rigorous curriculum and instruction? Are students moving up tracks? If our schools track students, how do they decide which teachers teach which tracks?
Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students Resources	**Access** to regular education courses and teachers prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. What does the research tell us: • Culturally and linguistically diverse students and students of color are disproportionately placed in special education (1) • "While cultural diversity in the student population is increasing, the composition of the teaching or professional force is becoming less diverse" (2) • Teachers are often under-prepared and have little knowledge about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners." (3)	Are culturally and linguistically diverse students in the regular classroom in our schools? How do our schools make decisions about placements in special education? Do our schools provide teachers preparation for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse classroom? Do they provide teachers opportunities for training and support?

Topic	Access to _What_?	What Questions Can We Ask?
Parents		
Parent Involvement & Empowerment Resources	**Access** for parents to schools in ways that are empowering to themselves and to their children. What does the research tell us: • Families' relationship with schools impact their children's social and academic development (1) • Consistent and sustained parent involvement in schools can improve student achievement (2) • More family and parent involvement can lead to less disciplinary actions (3) • The level of "social trust" between schools and families is a strong predictor of school quality (4)	What are the existing ways parents and families are provided opportunities for involvement in our schools? What are the barriers to increasing parent and family involvement in our schools? What are the resources that schools need to provide to parents and families more opportunities for involvement?
College Ready		
Information and Advocates Resources	**Access** to school counselors and/or other advocates who can help make sure students are on track with the requirements (classes, credits, etc.) they need to get into college. What does the research tell us: • _Most_ high school students today (and their parents) have aspirations to and believe that they will graduate from high school and complete some form of postsecondary education (1-2) HOWEVER • Less than a third of high school students will complete a	How do our _schools_ make sure students know what requirements they need to meet to get into college? Who are the individuals responsible in our school for making sure students are on track to go to college? What information and supports does our state require schools to provide our students? Are our schools' graduation requirements aligned with our state college and universities'

Topic	Access to _What_?	What Questions Can We Ask?
	baccalaureate degree six years after graduating from high school. (3) • A staggeringly high percentage of students are unaware of prerequisite course requirements and relevant admissions policies for colleges and universities in their state (4) • Students of color, low income students, and students who have parents who did not go to college are significantly less likely to go to college (5-6) • Significantly fewer students of color attain bachelor's degrees. (7) • The courses that students take in high school are stronger predictors of their success in earning a college degree than their family income level or their race. (8) • Gaps in degree attainment between students of color and white students are halved when all students enter college having completed a rigorous curriculum in high school. (9)	admissions requirements?
College-Preparatory Curriculum Resources	**Access** to a curriculum that ensures they complete the courses they need to meet college entrance requirements What does the research tell us: • Students of color and low income students disproportionately graduate from high school un-qualified for admission to college and/or in need of remediation (1-2) • Of the high school graduates in 2000, almost half of white students and more than two-thirds of Asian students took a math course beyond Algebra II. Only about one-third of American Indian, one-third of Latino and one-third of African American students did. (3)	Do all students in our schools' receive a rigorous college preparatory curriculum? Can students graduate our high schools without being qualified to meet the admissions requirements for our state colleges and universities? What needs to change to make sure all students are completing the requirements they need to be eligible for college admissions?

Topic	Access to _What_?	What Questions Can We Ask?
Discipline & School Safety		
Discipline Resources	**Access** to a safe school environment where discipline practices are not discriminatory, and are built around prevention rather than punishment What does the research tell us: • The large majority of disruptive behaviors that schools face include minor things like "tardiness, class absence, disrespect, and noncompliance" (1) • "Zero Tolerance" discipline polices, where minor behavior problems receive the same punishments as major problems have consistently been found to be ineffective in producing safer school environments; and they have been shown to reinforce a cycle of suspension and expulsion that can often lead to students dropping out. (2) • Students of color, particularly African American males, are consistently overrepresented in the application of school discipline: office referrals, suspensions and expulsions. "African American students are referred for and subjected to more severe consequences for less serious and more subjective reasons." (3)	What are our school and district policies for discipline? Do our schools and district discipline policies focus on prevention or on punishment? What kinds of behavior most commonly result in disciplinary action?

Teacher Recruitment & Retention Resources

Grow Your Own Teacher Program

Description: The Grow Your Own Teacher Program began in 2003, when the Chicago Learning Campaign, a collaborative funded by the Ford and Hazen foundations, started working on a legislative campaign to secure state funding for an effort to identify and train school employees and other parents and community members active in education in their low- and moderate-income communities as fully certified teachers - based on the experiences of CLC member the Logan Square Neighborhood Association. Over time this collaborative developed into the Illinois Grow Your Own Task Force, made up of representatives from school districts, universities, community colleges, state agencies, school employee unions, education improvement groups, legislators, and citizens. Together, these representatives drafted the Grow Your Own Teachers Act and its was passed in 2004.
http://www.growyourownteachers.org/
http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/OrganizedCommunities.pdf

The New Teacher Project
Description: "*The New Teacher Project's eight-year partnership with the New York City schools is having a profound impact.. TNTP's flagship NYC Teaching Fellows program and its innovative Math Immersion track are leveling the playing field between students in low- and high-poverty schools by bringing thousands of high-quality teachers to high-need schools and subject areas. Today, one in 10 teachers in New York is a NYC Teaching Fellow. The direct impact of the NYC Teaching Fellows program has been complemented by TNTP's analyses of the policy barriers to effective school staffing in New York City, which have advanced the district's efforts to create a comprehensive human capital strategy focused on quality.*"

"Today, more than 8,600 active teachers—or about 11 percent of the city's total teaching faculty—were recruited and trained by The New Teacher Project's NYC Teaching Fellows program. TNTP has also analyzed barriers to effective teacher staffing and helped to implement critical policy reforms. The organization's work in New York City has led to measurable gains: A 2007 study published by the Urban Institute found that the NYC Teaching Fellows program substantially leveled the playing field between low- and high-poverty schools, bringing thousands of teachers with strong credentials to the schools that need them most."
www.tntp.org/ourimpact/impact_nyc.html

Teacher Residency Program
Description: The Academy for Urban School Leadership Teacher Residency "is one of only three not-for-profit Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) programs in the country. Our program design consists of a full-year campus-based residency in a CPS classroom that includes training, education, certification, and mentorship. AUSL provides a training salary of $32,000 to each Resident during the residency year.

The program requires a five-year commitment, one year of preparation followed by a "four-year, post-graduation commitment to teach in an underperforming CPS school."
Academy for Urban School Leadership. (2008). *About us*. Chicago: Author. Available: www.ausl-chicago.org/about.html

State and District Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining High Quality Teachers
Description: This resources provides examples of what strategies states and districts are using to recruit and retain teachers in low-performing schools. Strategies include partnerships with community colleges, creating district level teacher preparation programs, developing strong alternative routes to certification, and many more.

http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQBiennialChapters/NCCTQ%20Biennial%20Report_Ch5.pdf

Teacher Policy Research
Description: Teacher Policy Research is a "partnership between the University at Albany and Stanford University that examines the behavior of teachers and administrators with the goal of developing policies that will both attract and retain high-quality teachers and leaders, especially in low-performing schools." It provides a wide range of resources for communities and educators seeking the best strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators.
http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/ResearchPapers/tabid/103/Default.aspx
http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/Do%20Effective%20Teachers%20Leave.pdf

Research Cited:

1 U.S. Department of Education (2007). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey*.
2 Who Leaves? Teacher Attrition and Student Achievement. September 2007. Donald Boyd, Pam Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff.
3 U.S. Department of Education (2007). *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results from the 2004–05 Teacher Follow-up Survey*.
4 http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/publications/policybriefs/files/edureform/Research%20UpdateDec06.pdf
5 http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/centers/child/publications/policybriefs/files/edureform/Research%20UpdateDec06.pdf

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Teacher Distribution Resources

State-level "Equity Plans" for Distributing Teachers

Description: This resource looks at what state level efforts are being made to use state "equity plans" for distributing highly effective teachers. Also includes helpful summary of research for identifying gaps in access to highly effective teachers.
http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQBiennialChapters/NCCTQ%20Biennial%20Report_Ch4.pdf

Research Cited:

1 Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). *Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
2 Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). Teaching sorting and the plight of urban schools: A descriptive analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(1), 37–62.
3 Rockoff, Jonah (2004). "The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence
from Panel Data," *American Economic Review Proceedings* 94 (2): 247-252.

Rivkin, S., E. Hanushek, and J. Kain (2005) "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement"
Econometrica, 73(2), 417-458.

Kane, T., J. Rockoff and D. Staiger (2006) "What Does Certification Tell Us about Teacher
Effectiveness? Evidence from New York City" NBER Working Paper 12155, April 2006.
4 http://www.state.tn.us/education/nclb/doc/TeacherEffectiveness2007_03.pdf
5 http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/ea/23.pdf

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Student Ability Group Resources

Math Acceleration for All
Description: "A middle school in New York eliminated tracked math classes, adopted a universal accelerated math program, and instituted heterogeneous grouping, with dramatic results." This study tells the story of one school that implemented "detracking" reform in their school and found dramatic impacts beyond only improvements in achievement scores.

Burris, Carol Corbett; Heubert, Jay P.; Levin, Henry M.. *Educational Leadership*, Feb2004, Vol. 61 Issue 5, p68-71.

Research Cited:

1 Oakes, J. 1995. Two Cities' Tracking and Within-School Segregation. *Teachers College Record*, 96: 681-90.

2 Oakes, J. (1992). Detracking schools: Early lessons from the field. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73,* 448–454.

3 (Gamoran, 1992; Oakes, 1985; Page, 1987; Wheelock, 1992).

4 Nathan, J. (1991). An interview with Herb Kohl: Toward educational change and economic justice. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72* (9), 678-681.

Wheelock, A . (1992). *Crossing the tracks: How "untracking" can save America's schools*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Slavin, R. (1990). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1990). *Learning together and alone*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Ansalone, G. (2000). Keeping on track: A reassessment of tracking in the schools. *Race, Gender and Class*, 7 (3), 1-25.

5 Lucas, Samuel R. (1999). Tracking inequality: Stratification and mobility in American high schools. New York: Teachers College Press

6 http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1b/ea/23.pdf

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Teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students resources_____

Description:

http://www.nccrest.org/index.html

"Preventing Disproportionality by Strengthening District Policies and Procedures – An Assessment and Strategic Planning Process Description:
http://www.nccrest.org/PDFs/district_rubric.pdf?v_document_name=District%20Rubric

Equity in Special Education Placement: A Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice (Tool A & B)
Description:
http://www.nccrest.org/publications/assessment.TOOL.formA.pdf?v_document_name=Assessment%20Tool%20form%20A
http://www.nccrest.org/publications/assessment.TOOL.formB.pdf?v_document_name=Assessment%20Tool%20form%20B

"Living the Dream in the Promising Land: Features of highly successful schools serving students of color"
Description:

http://www.nccrest.org/Exemplars/living_the_dream.pdf?v_document_name=living%20the%20dream

¡Sí Se Puede!: An Example of an Exemplary Bilingual/ESL Program
Description:
http://www.nccrest.org/Exemplars/exemplar_si_se_puede.pdf?v_document_name=si%20se%20puede

Research Cited:

1 Citation: Klingner, J. K., Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., Durán, G. Z., & Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education through culturally responsive educational systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13*(38). Retrieved [date] from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v13n38/
2 (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1994; Snyder, 2002).
http://www.nccrest.org/PDFs/core_principles_EPAA.pdf?v_document_name=Core%20Principles%20EPAA
3 (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).
http://www.nccrest.org/PDFs/core_principles_EPAA.pdf?v_document_name=Core%20Principles%20EPAA

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Parental Involvement & Empowerment Resources_____

A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement (2002)
Description: The section of this report titled "Recommendations: Putting these Findings into Action" offers recommendations according to practices and guidelines used by successful parent and family involvement programs.
http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf

Co-Constructing Family Involvement
Description:
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue28/theory.html

Research Cited:
1 Christenson, S., & Sheridan, S. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning.* NY: The Guildford Press.
Phillips, M., Brooks-Gunn, J., Duncan, G., Klebanov, K., & Crane, J. (1998). Family background, parenting practices and the Black-White test score gap. In C. Jencks & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black-White test score gap* (pp. 103–145). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
2 A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement (2002)
http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf
3 Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with
family and community involvement. *Education and Urban Society, 35,* 4–26.
http://www.nccrest.org/PDFs/core_principles_EPAA.pdf?v_document_name=Core%20Principles%20EPAA
4 Payne, C. M., & Kaba, M. So much reform, so little change: Building-level obstacles
to urban school reform. *Northwestern Univertsity, 2.* http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf

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Information and Advocates Resources

Alignment of High School Graduation Requirements and State-Set College Admissions Requirements
Description: A growing number of states are aligning their high school graduation requirements with the college admissions requirements of their state colleges and universities. This resource provides side-by-side high school graduation and college admissions requirements for those states in which they are available.
http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/68/60/6860.pdf
Research Cited:

1 http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/70/37/7037.pdf
2 http://www.mdrc.org/publications/427/full.pdf
3 http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/70/37/7037.pdf
4 http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/70/37/7037.pdf
5 http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/70/37/7037.pdf

6 Monica Martinez, KnowledgeWorks Foundation and Shayna Klopott, Teachers College, Columbia University, "The Link between High School Reform and College Access and Success for Low-Income and Minority Youth," for the American Youth Policy Forum and Pathways to College Network, 2005.
7 7 National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education 2002,* 2002. http://www.achieve.org/files/ADPreport_7.pdf
8 U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement,
Answers in the Tool Box, 1999.
9 U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement,
Answers in the Tool Box, 1999.

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College-Preparatory Curriculum Resources_____

Ready or Not: Making a High School Diploma that Counts
Description: This report is a product of the American Diploma Project Network, a "coalition of 33 states dedicated to aligning standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability policies with the demands of college and careers." It provides a synthesis of information regarding state-level policies about graduation requirements.
http://www.achieve.org/
http://www.achieve.org/files/ADPreport_7.pdf

Research Cited:

1 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).
http://www.mdrc.org/publications/427/full.pdf
2 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2004. *The Condition of Education 2004*. (NCES 2004-077). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
http://www.mdrc.org/publications/427/full.pdf

3 http://www.achieve.org/node/332 National Center for Education Statistics

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Discipline and School Safety_____

Russell Skiba

"What Works in Preventing School Violence: The Safe and Responsive Fact Sheet Series"
Description:
http://www.indiana.edu/%7Esafeschl/publication.html

Proactive Culturally Responsive Discipline
http://www.nccrest.org/Exemplars/exemplar_culturally_responsive_discipline.pdf?v_document_name=culturally%20responsive%20discipline
Description:

Research Cited:

1 http://www.indiana.edu/%7Esafeschl/ztze.pdf
2 http://www.indiana.edu/%7Esafeschl/ztze.pdf
3 The Color of Discipline: http://www.indiana.edu/%7Esafeschl/cod.pdf

Anti-Racism_____

Mica Pollock – Everyday Anti-racism
http://www.understandingrace.org/resources/pdf/rethinking/pollock.pdf

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