



Teacher Preparation Innovation
and Historically Black Colleges
and Universities (HBCUs)

Dr. Leslie Fenwick

Howard University School of
Education

TeachingWorks working papers are unpublished manuscripts that focus on the professional training of teachers. They involve analysis of data or literature and reflect “good thinking” – clear, systematic interrogation of issues critical in the field of teacher training.

These working papers are circulated to promote discussion. As such they are freely available to a broad audience interested in the study and improvement of ideas and practices in teacher education.

TeachingWorks working papers are subject to a blind review process that focuses on the relevance of the proposed work to pressing problems in teacher education, the transparency and relevance of the methods to the questions asked, as well as the quality of the writing. All submissions should be original.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Michigan and/or TeachingWorks.

Teacher Preparation Innovation and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Dr. Leslie Fenwick

Howard University School of Education

Leslie T. Fenwick, PhD is Dean of the Howard University School of Education and a professor of education policy who held consecutive terms as a presidentially-appointed visiting fellow and visiting scholar in education at Harvard University. For more than 20 years, Dr. Fenwick has served in administrative and tenured faculty posts at historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs). As a noted education policy scholar, Fenwick has been an appointed member of the National Academy of Sciences committee on the study of the impact of mayoral control on school districts and is regularly called upon to testify about educational equity and teacher quality to the U.S. Senate, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Congressional Black Caucus. Presently, she serves on the national advisory council for the George Lucas Education Foundation (GLEF) and is an immediate past member of the board of directors for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Recently, Dr. Fenwick was appointed to the Scholarly Advisory Council for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) which will open in 2015.

Dr. Fenwick is a contributor to the best-selling book, *The Last Word: Controversy and Commentary in American Education*, which boasts essays by former President Bill Clinton and noted historian Dr. John Hope Franklin among others. She is also author of the widely-cited policy monograph, *The Principal Shortage: Who Will Lead* (Harvard College of Fellows, 2001) and numerous published research articles and book chapters about the superintendency, principalship and urban school reform. Selected as the WEB DuBois Distinguished Lecturer for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and as recipient of the WEB DuBois Award for Higher Education Leadership from the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), Dr. Fenwick has been honored for her advocacy of educational equity and access for minority and poor children. Her opinion-editorial (OP-ED) articles have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe* and *Education Week*.

A former urban school teacher, school administrator and legislative aid to the State of Ohio Senate, Dr. Fenwick earned the PhD in educational policy at The Ohio State University where she was a Flesher Fellow and a bachelor's degree in education at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education.

Abstract:

This paper presents a framework for a discussion of the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that focuses on teachers and teaching for the new millennium. HBCUs are making a significant difference in solving one of the most intractable problems in K-12 education: how to recruit, retain, and develop teachers for high-need schools.

INTRODUCTION

Dean Ball, thank you for inviting me to share my reflections and detail the work being accomplished by the Howard University School of Education as we seek to improve teacher preparation and performance. Your vision to use practice-based research as the foundation for re-crafting teacher preparation is timely and important to the nation's goal of providing its neediest students with high quality teachers. We at Howard University are deeply concerned about the quality of the nation's schools, particularly those serving the urban poor. For this reason, the University and the School of Education have taken the following recent actions, each of which I will discuss in my presentation: (1) the University established and operates a high-performing public Charter School of Mathematics and Science which serves 312 students from DC's most impoverished southeast neighborhoods; (2) the University's Board of Trustees approved in 2012 a new and innovative bachelor's degree program in elementary education which is math, science and literacy rich; and (3) given our concern that the voices of HBCU scholars and African American K-12 practitioners were not sufficiently being called upon to inform the teacher preparation innovation and urban school reform dialogue, the School's seminal resource organ, *The Journal of Negro Education*, published a special issue (*Preparing Teachers to Teach Black Students; Preparing Black Students to Become Teachers*) devoted to highlighting these perspectives.

My presentation is divided into three sections: inputs make a difference, the teacher quality and diversity link, and the Howard University teacher preparation model.

INPUTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are some who would have us believe that the core accountability issue of the day is summarized in statistics about which students or subgroups of students are scoring higher on standardized tests. But the real issue before us is which states, districts, and schools are **enabling** student achievement. Some states, districts, and schools are enabling student achievement and some are not. There is a consistent pattern of **inputs** among those districts and schools which have high student outcomes and those that do not.

Empirical evidence is beginning to show that the fundamental assumption—that achievement-focused education systems incentivize improvement—is flawed. The slate of opportunity to learn (OTL) studies have found that test-driven systems don't incentivize improvement and that they hurt minority and high-poverty schools—often leaving these schools dramatically worse off.

We sit here knowing that in high-poverty schools (where 50 percent or more of the students are on free/reduced lunch), students are 70 percent more likely (than their more affluent peers) to have a teacher teaching them 4 subjects (math, science, English and social studies) who is not certified to teach these subjects (or does not have a college major or minor in these subjects). In addition to the large concentration of noncertified and untrained teachers, students in high-poverty schools experience:

- High turnover rates among teachers;
- High percentages of teachers with less than 3 years of classroom experience; and
- A revolving door of novice principals and short-tenured superintendents.

These realities make it near impossible for students to experience a cohesive and competitive academic program. Even still, 84% of African American students are in states that require a high stakes high school graduation test compared to 66% of White students (Center for Educational Progress, 2006). How can students pass these tests (and more importantly achieve levels of academic proficiency) without teachers who are adequately prepared and certified?

To clarify this question, let me invoke a comparison. We've all had the experience of shopping at a chain grocery store. Go in the store in the affluent community...at the meat counter you will likely find meat marked "fresh ground daily." Now, go to that same chain grocery store in a poor community. Here, when you approach the meat counter, you will likely find gray meat, wrapped in pink paper under an orange light.

In a similar vein, too many of the nation's black, brown and poor students are getting a "gray meat, wrapped in pink paper, under an orange light" kind of education. Continuing to educationally malnourish students and then test them will not yield much progress. Not surprisingly, until the inputs change, we will continue to find that students trapped in these schools will come up short.

I believe there are seven policy positions that policymakers can take to advance educational equity for the nation's schoolchildren. The first two directly reflect TeachingWorks mission:

1. Affirm that teacher quality is one of the most importance factors (that we can control) influencing student achievement.
2. Support the research findings indicating that teacher preparation, certification and tenure each dramatically impact student achievement.
3. Directly confront the injustice of having untrained teachers clustered in schools serving minority and poor students.
4. Say, "No, a teacher-in-training is not a highly qualified teacher."
5. And just say "No, Teach for America (TFA), you cannot microwave teachers in 6 week preparation programs and plop them in schools serving the nation's neediest students."
6. Support the 9th circuit court of appeals ruling that affirms the requirement that 'highly qualified teachers' have full state licensure as one condition for achieving HQT status. And do not support allowing uncertified candidates in alternative preparation programs to teach for up to three years while pursuing certification.
7. Encourage continued work in the state legislature to equalize state funding formula and look at the lessons learned from the Thornton decision in Maryland where equalizing state funding enabled poorer districts to recruit and retain higher percentages of certified teachers and accelerate student learning gains.

THE TEACHER QUALITY AND DIVERSITY LINK

The original purpose of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (NCLB's parent legislation) was to improve educational opportunity for poor children by providing them access to well-resourced schools. There was a moral intent to ESEA – to use education as a lever to lift innocent children out of poverty.

As we work to expand students' access to highly qualified teachers, Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) can help. HBCUs are about 3 percent of the nation's colleges/universities yet they prepare 50 percent of the nation's African American teachers ... (that's a strong and productive engine worthy of investment)! Also, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) reported that in 1998 more than half of all African American prospective teachers in Missouri, Maryland, Louisiana, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Delaware, Alabama, and the District of Columbia were trained at HBCUs (Freeman, 2001). In many urban and rural settings that have HBCUs, these institutions furnish high percentages of teachers to the local school district. Consequently, HBCUs have had a major role in diversifying America's mostly White teaching force.

Though progress has been made, the lack of teacher diversity continues to be an undeniable problem in the field. Currently, the majority (50.3%) of students in our nation's schools are students of color and in our largest school districts, at least half of the students are African American and Latino (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). However, African American teachers represented only 7.6% of the teaching force. The absence of a critical mass of teachers of color is an important matter. All students benefit from exposure to effective teachers of color who serve as role models and intellectual authority figures in the schools. As the

Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy asserted decades ago, “We cannot tolerate a future in which both white and minority children are confronted with almost exclusively white authority figures in their schools” (Economy, 1986, p. 32).

We know that there is a tremendous demographic mismatch between the public school student population and the school personnel who serve them. For the first time in the nation’s history, students of color comprise the majority of the public school population. Yet, approximately, 91 percent of urban school teachers are white (and 73 percent of inner city teachers are white). In 38% of American public schools, there is not a single teacher of color on the staff (Bireda and Chait, 2011). [Additionally, nearly 62 percent of inner-city principals are white and 88 percent of urban principals are white (Fenwick, 2001)..

Research shows that academic and social benefits accrue to African American and Hispanic/Latino students when they are in schools with high percentages of African American and Hispanic/Latino teachers. They are less likely to be misplaced in special education; more likely to graduate high school; less likely to be suspended or expelled. If we want to simultaneously increase the quality and diversity of the nation’s teachers, HBCUs have got to be a large part of the solution because data show that HBCU-prepared teachers are more likely than others to serve in urban schools and more likely to remain in schools as the minority student population increases.

Let me be clear, I am not arguing for race matching of teachers and students. However, I am sharing with you the case that has been made by numerous researchers about the academic and social benefits that accrue to K-12 students when they have access to teachers of color. There is clear evidence that a larger pool of effective teachers of color makes a difference in the lives of students of color as well as White students (Foster, 1998; King, 1993). Teachers of color do more than just teach content. They dispel myths of racial inferiority and incompetence and serve as surrogate parents, guides, and mentors to their students (Dilworth, 1992; Dilworth & Brown, 2007). Moreover, diversity among teachers increases teachers’ and students’ knowledge and understanding of different cultural groups, thereby enhancing the abilities of all involved to interact with each other. It is clear that diversifying the nation’s teaching force is essential to the racial and ethnic integration of American society, a goal that the majority of Americans support.

Dee (2004) reanalyzed data from Tennessee’s Project STAR and concluded that racial pairing of teachers and students significantly increased the reading and math achievement scores of both African American and White students by approximately three to four percentage points. Interestingly, Dee reported that the race effects were especially strong among poor African American children who attended segregated schools. The average African American child attends schools where 67% of students are African American and 75% are poor. This fact underscores the importance of research on race effects (Center for Educational Policy, 2006).

Clewell, Puma, and McKay (2001), using the Prospects database, raised the question: Does exposure to a same-race teacher increase the reading and mathematics achievement scores of African American and Hispanic students in elementary schools? The researchers found that Hispanic fourth- and sixth-grade students with a Hispanic teacher produced higher test score gains in math. In reading, the same effect was noted, but only in the fourth grade. This effect held for fourth-grade African American students who had significantly higher scores in mathematics when taught by an African American teacher.

Klopfenstein (2005) reported that the enrollment of African American students in algebra II increased significantly as the percentage of mathematics teachers who were African American increased. Other researchers have found that African American teachers, when compared to their White counterparts, are more successful in increasing student scores in vocabulary and reading comprehension (Hanushek, 1992) as well as economic literacy (Evans, 1992). Ehrenberg and Brewer (1995), using an econometric model that accounted for the non-random nature of teacher assignment to schools, found that an increase in the percentage of African American teachers resulted in scores gains on standardized tests for African American high school students.

Also of note are findings that African American teachers influenced African American students’ school attendance (Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990) and that these teachers had higher expectations for their African American students than their White counterparts did (Irvine, 1990). Other empirical works, such as a study by Hess and Leal (1997) suggested a

correlation between the number of teachers of color in a district and college matriculation rates among students of color.

Why are these research studies and data important? First, they speak to the positive impact of diversity in the classroom. All students need and respond positively to diverse models of intellectual authority. Second, half the nation's African American teachers are trained at historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs), and I believe these teachers may be replicating instructional models and strategies that they themselves experienced as HBCU college students in their K-12 classrooms.

THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY TEACHER PREPARATION MODEL

The Howard University School of Education is one HBCU (among many others) responsive to the charge to produce a qualified and diverse pool of teachers. Our *Ready to Teach Program* was funded with a \$2.1 million grant by the U.S. Department of Education in 2007. *Ready to Teach* is designed to recruit and prepare African American males and other underrepresented populations as classroom teachers. The HUSOE has partnered with 5 urban school districts and charter schools to deliver the program including: Washington DC, Prince George's County (MD), Chicago, Houston and Clayton County (outside of Atlanta, GA). Participants are recruited from these locales and pledge four years of service upon graduation. Already the program has produced four teachers of the year and two nominees for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. Over the five-year life of the program, were more than 1200 competitive applicants for 100 slots. *Ready to Teach* should be embraced as a national model and scaled-up to address the nation's need for a diverse, committed and qualified teaching corps. In his September 2013 speech about the enduring and evolving role of HBCUs, Secretary of Education Duncan lauded Ready to Teach when he said, "...we need to support and expand programs like Ready to Teach." And, HUSOE faculty have received research awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study the HBCU-model for producing African American math and science teachers and to examine increasing African American high school students' interest in physics, astronomy and cosmology (PAC) courses.

As TeachingWorks engages a national conversation about teaching and reaching a new cohort of K-12 students, I urge development of an effective equity model that clarifies the relationship between input variables and student outcomes data – an Equity Index. This Index would likely have high predictive value (providing data about the track record of districts and schools which enable student achievement). Policymakers, practitioners, and parents could use this Index to understand the robustness of the "opportunity to learn" engine in schools and districts. Most importantly, the Index could be used to hold states and districts accountable -- shifting the attention away from measuring students to measuring the commitment of policymakers and practitioners to expand access to quality educational opportunity.

Continuing to test **educationally malnourished** children will not yield much progress. Not surprisingly, until the inputs are changed, we will continue to find that these students come up short. Perhaps the most meaningful action that you can take as a body, I believe, is to affirm that more equitable distribution of core resources is needed to give students a fair and substantive opportunity to learn. After all, the original intent of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – NCLB's parent legislation -- was to improve educational opportunity for **poor** children. This was the original equity mandate, but how should we think about educational equity now? Who's measuring students' access to a quality teacher, or stability of principal leadership in their schools, or the availability of gifted education and AP classes in their schools?

THE EQUITY INDEX AND HOW IT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Educational equity can be thought of as students experiencing equal access to all of the school's available benefits and services; equal treatment within schools, in terms of the quality of social interaction; and, equal educational outcomes for both genders and all racial/ethnic sub-groups identified within the school population. In this regard, Opportunity to Learn (OTL) studies have emerged as a strong methodology for assessing educational equity.

OTL studies can be traced to Carroll's (1963) model of school learning. The model identifies five factors that affect students' success in school: aptitude, ability to understand instruction, perseverance, quality of instruction and time (opportunity) allowed for learning. Though not independent from one another, the first three factors represent student capacities while the last two reflect teacher and school practices and policies. The last factor, time allowed for learning, is the core component of OTL. Carroll originally defined OTL as the actual time available to individual students to learn, that is, whether students have had the opportunity to study a particular topic or learn how to solve a particular type of problem. Over the years, however, researchers have modified the definition of OTL to allocated time, content coverage and content overlap (Yu et al., 2008).

More recently, OTL studies have pushed beyond conventional notions of access to content, resources and instructional processes to examine interaction among learners and elements of their learning environments. Drawing on socio-cultural, situative and sociological perspectives, this re-conceptualization urges that OTL "not just advocate an *equal* opportunity to learn as a criterion for judging schools, but rather an *equalizing* opportunity to learn." According to Pullin et al. (2008):

Students differ in ways that require differentiated experiences if they are all to reach some real standard for what is required for adequate functioning in modern society. Within the limits of their capabilities, schools should adapt to these needs.

Despite these differences, educational researchers agree that "data on OTL can verify that all students have the opportunity to engage in the kinds of curricula and instruction that would prepare them to achieve expected standards" (Yu et al., 2006). Moreover, OTL should reflect the resources that students can access, curriculum that schools have implemented and instruction to which students have access all with mindfulness that "opportunities to learn do not exist for learners who cannot take advantage of them" (Pullin et al., 2008).

Most research about achievement gaps between racial/ethnic subgroups of students does not examine the reasons causing the group differences. In this regard, OTL studies are promising because they reveal underlying school causes for differences in academic achievement. For example, Ercikan's (2002) OTL study found that curricular differences across language groups was one of the reasons causing group differences on math and science achievement tests. Also, in their study of differences in OTL between urban and rural high students studying biology in China, Yu et al. (2006) found that rural students performed poorer than urban students on certain standardized test times because rural school teachers did not teach the same biology content as urban school teachers; teachers from rural high school were not familiar with certain biology content knowledge; and the rural high school biology curriculum did not include advanced topics. Yu et al. (2006) conclude:

OTL stands out as the major concern of biased testing and learning outcomes given the huge resource gap between rural and urban areas. For items measuring knowledge based on the resources that rural school students do not have, we cannot expect rural students to perform equally [as] well as urban students (p.19).

Do all students have an equitable opportunity to learn? What kinds of standards and measures should be used to determine a school's effectiveness as an equitable learning institution? In Washington DC, the 2007 Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) law encourages an analysis of district progress around academic achievement, school facilities and management. While serving on a National Academy of Science committee examining the impact of PERAA on the neediest students' opportunity to learn, I suggested that one way of integrating effectiveness measures of academic achievement, administrative infrastructure and management is utilization of an equity index. The equity index reflects the relationship between resource inputs (RI) and student outcomes (SO). While there is contested research about the impact of specific variables on student learning, it is incontrovertible that poor students and students of color are segregated in underperforming schools. Fifty-six years after the *Brown* decision, schools serving

these students still tend to be dilapidated and overcrowded, lacking contemporary instructional and technology equipment, and populated by high concentrations of uncertified teachers and novice principals who have short tenures.

Thirty years of effective schools research remain relevant and support the primacy of teacher quality (as measured by whether or not teachers are certified), principal tenure stability and years of experience, and students' access to upper-level mathematics, advanced placement and gifted education courses, science laboratories and instructional technology.

The association's organizing theme for this spring convening makes me think about President Lyndon Baines Johnson's March 15, 1965 speech (which I believe is relevant to your call-to-action, "All Learners, America's future). Those years ago, President Johnson reflected on opportunity and his time as a teacher:

All Americans must have the privileges of citizenship, regardless of race, and they are going to have those privileges of citizenship regardless of race.

But I would like to caution you and remind you that to exercise these privileges takes much more than just legal rights. It requires a trained mind and a healthy body. It requires a decent home and the chance to find a job and the opportunity to escape from the clutches of poverty.

Of course people cannot contribute to the nation if they are never taught to read or write; if their bodies are stunted from hunger; if their sickness goes untended; if their life is spent in hopeless poverty, just drawing a welfare check.

So we want to open the gates to opportunity. But we're also going to give all our people, black and white, the help that they need to walk through those gates. My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast and hungry. And they knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them, but they knew it was so because I saw it in their eyes.

I often walked home late in the afternoon after the classes were finished wishing there was more that I could do. But all I knew was to teach them the little that I knew, hoping that I might help them against the hardships that lay ahead. And somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child.

I never thought then, in 1928, that I would be standing here in 1965. It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students, and to help people like them all over this country. But now I do have that chance. And I'll let you in on a secret--I mean to use it.

President Johnson was correct – we have the power... we must intend to use it. And, Dean Ball, I believe that TeachingWorks represents that best intention to use this power.

Thank you for inviting me to be with you this afternoon!

References

- Bireda, S. and Chait, Robin. (2011). Increasing teacher diversity: Strategies to improve the teacher workforce. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- Carroll, J. (1963). A model of school learning. *The Teachers College Record*, 64(8), 723-723.
- Center for Educational Policy. (2006). *A public school primer*. Retrieved March 8, 2009, from <http://www.ctredpol.org/publiceducationprimer>
- Clewell, B. C., Puma, M. J., McKay, S. A., & Center, E. P. (2001). *Does it Matter If My Teacher Looks Like Me?: The Impact of Teacher Race and Ethnicity on Student Academic Achievement*: Urban Institute, Education Policy Center.
- Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195-210.
- Dilworth, M. E. (1992). *Diversity in teacher education: New expectations*: ERIC.
- Dilworth, M. E., & Brown, A. L. (2007). Teachers of color: Quality and effectiveness one way or another. In M. Cochran-Smith & S. Feiman-Nemser (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (Vol. 3, pp. 424-444). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Economy, C. F. o. E. a. t. (1986). *A nation prepared: teachers for the 21st century: the report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, May 1986*. Washington, D.C.: The Forum.
- Ehrenberg, R. G., & Brewer, D. J. (1995). Did teachers' verbal ability and race matter in the 1960s? Coleman revisited. *Economics of Education Review*, 14(1), 1-21.
- Ercikan, K. (2002). Disentangling sources of differential item functioning in utilanguage assessments. *International Journal of Testing*, 2(3&4), 199-215.
- Evans, M. O. (1992). An estimate of race and gender role-model effects in teaching high school. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 23(3), 209-217.
- Fenwick, L. (2001). Diversity in teaching and school leadership. Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation.
- Farkas, G., Grobe, R. P., Sheehan, D., & Shuan, Y. (1990). Cultural resources and school success: Gender, ethnicity, and poverty groups within an urban school district. *American Sociological Review*, 127-142.
- Foster, M. (1998). *Black teachers on teaching*: The New Press.
- Freeman, K. (2001). Just the facts: African American teachers for the new millennium. *Fairfax, VA: The Patterson Institute*.
- Hanushek, E. A. (1992). The trade-off between child quantity and quality. *Journal of Political Economy*, 84-117.
- Hess, F. M., & Leal, D. L. (1997). Minority teachers, minority students, and college matriculation: A new look at the role-modeling hypothesis. *Policy Studies Journal*, 25(2), 235-248.
- Irvine, J. J. (1990). *Black students and school failure. Policies, practices, and prescriptions*: ERIC.
- King, S. H. (1993). The limited presence of African-American teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 63(2), 115-149.
- Klopfenstein, K. (2005). Beyond test scores: The impact of black teacher role models on rigorous math taking. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 23(3), 416-428.
- National Center for Education Statistics (2014). The conditions of education report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Yu, L., Suen, H.K, and Pui-Wa Loi. (2008). Using a differential item functioning (DIF) procedure to detect differences in opportunity to learn (OTL): An extension of Winfield's approach. *Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 8(1), 1-22.
- Pullin, D. C., & Haertel, E. H. (2008). Assessment through the lens of 'opportunity to learn'. I In P. A. Moss, D. C. Pullin, J. P. Gee, E. H. Haertel, & L. Jones Young (Eds.), *Assessment, equity and opportunity to learn* (pp. 17-41). New York: Cambridge University Press.