

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

A Project

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by

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education

Abstract
of
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This project addresses the issues contributing to the achievement gap and provides problem-solving solutions for early intervention. After investigating the issue of the achievement gap among culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse students, the presentation addresses the need to implement evidence-based interventions that are culturally appropriate and relevant to closing the achievement gap. The resulting professional development presentation includes research studies that examine promising approaches to effectively work with students, staff, and parents. Resources for implementing interventions are provided.

_____, Committee Chair
Catherine Christo, Ph.D.

Date

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SOFTWARE SPECIFICATIONS

The project appendices contain note pages within the presentation slides. The notes are provided as a guide, for use during a workshop presentation. Slides should be viewed using Microsoft PowerPoint software.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	vi
Software Specifications	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Project	3
Description of the Project	3
Definition of Terms	4
Limitations	6
Statement of Collaboration	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Overview	8
Social and Cultural Implications and Risk Factors	10
School to Prison Pipeline	12
Identifying Students at Risk	13
Early Intervention: Educational Interventions	15
Intervention for English Learners	17
Encouraging School Engagement	17
Early Intervention: Psychosocial and Mental Health Interventions	18
Addressing Student Health Risks	19
Parent Involvement, Training, and Awareness	22

A Social Justice Perspective	22
The School Psychologist’s Role	25
Professional Development and School Resource	29
Summary	30
3. METHODS	32
Research	32
Development of the Presentation	32
4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS	34
Workshop Objectives	34
Interpretation	35
Recommendations	36
Appendix A. Presenter’s Manual	37
Appendix B. Handouts	43
Appendix C. Presentation Slides: Workshop	55
References	93

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As school psychologists, an important aspect of our work includes having a thorough understanding of how we can meet the needs of the populations we serve. Our systemic role as school psychologists includes promoting student achievement. Achievement disparities continue to exist. In fact, the achievement gap is a persistent issue within our schools. The achievement gap can be seen as early as their first day of school and can have negative consequences in engagement and achievement in later years. Although many students may be considered underachieving, serious achievement gap differences exist primarily among ethnically and culturally diverse groups. According to the National Education Association (2015) the term, “achievement gap,” can be defined as “the differences between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers” (p. 1). These score differences can be attributed to “ethnic, racial, gender, disability and income” differences that can lead to “long-term gaps, including high school and college completion, and the kinds of jobs students secure as adults” (National Education Association, 2015, p. 1). Worrell (2014) estimates that 40% or more of Asian and Caucasian groups score proficient or advanced in reading and mathematics at 4th and 8th grade levels, whereas 20% or less of the other groups are performing as high.

Achievement gaps can be noted as early as the beginning of kindergarten. McLanahan and Haskins (2005) found that the achievement gap is evident even when students start school, noting that kindergarten teachers perceived their Black and

Hispanic students falling behind their White peers in both academic and self-regulatory components of school readiness. School readiness itself may begin as early as pregnancy and involves such things as: prenatal care, parental education and views toward education, nutrition, access to educationally stimulating environments, and daycare and/preschool access. In consequence, unequal access to such resources due to limitations (e.g., transportation issues, lack of knowledge, costs of programs) may further impact a child's school readiness. This unequal access begins to create the achievement gap early on for children and especially affects low Socioeconomic Status (SES) and culturally/socially diverse families. Anderson (2012) writes that the Black-White achievement gap "poses a persistent, if not an intractable problem" (p. 593) in that White students typically outperform Black students.

Proactive involvement is crucial. Steps toward addressing this achievement gap may help increase school performance, reduce social and cultural inequities, and may even reduce the amount of special education referrals as culturally and linguistically diverse students tend to be overrepresented in special education (Blanchett, 2006). Current research lends itself to the following inquiry and focus of this project: What interventions are needed at the preschool and early elementary school level to promote school readiness among disadvantaged families? Understanding the socio-political forces contributing to the achievement gap may provide a holistic approach to the intervention process.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide school personnel with awareness of the contributing factors that cause the achievement gap. A secondary goal is to inspire school psychologists, resource specialists, and teachers to critically examine the needs of the populations they serve in order to provide targeted early intervention for their at-risk students. These goals are met through a six-hour training workshop for school personnel. Handouts will be provided as part of the workshop in order to facilitate discussion and actively involve participants in addressing the achievement gap within their schools. A presentation guide and manual also accompany the project so that the workshops can be delivered by any trained school psychologist.

Description of the Project

Information in this project has been developed into a six-hour, full-day training workshop for school psychologists, resource specialists, and involved school personnel. The project also provides a presentation manual and guide to allow the training workshop to be delivered by any trained school psychologist. Training attendees, who will generally be school psychologists or program specialists, will become familiar with the current, best practice methods to address the achievement gap through early intervention. The methods will include the use of tools pertaining to response to intervention practices such as early screening methods and progress monitoring.

Definition of Terms

Achievement gap: The difference between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers (National Education Association, 2015).

School readiness: includes academic and self-regulatory components, which may include: prenatal care; parental education and views toward education, nutrition; access to educationally stimulating environments; and daycare and/preschool access (McLanahan & Haskins, 2005).

At-risk students: includes students who are members of an ethnic minority group, second-language learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (National Education Association, 2015).

Voluntary minorities: includes individuals who have chosen to come to the country, accept their position as a marginalized group and their limitations as minorities and believe that they can transcend it through hard work (Worrell, 2014).

Involuntary minorities: whose heritage has involved being forced to assimilate into an imperializing society or culture and who see themselves as victims to a system that will always endeavor to work against them (Worrell, 2014).

School to prison pipeline: involves “the policies and practices that push our nation’s school children, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008, p.1).

Toxic stress: refers to trauma and is unlike manageable stress, as it causes long-term changes to brain architecture and organ systems if extreme, prolonged and repeated stress goes untreated (Center for Youth Wellness, 2015).

Child Find: is under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 300.111, and requires states to find “all children with disabilities...who are in need of special education and related services.” After which, they are to be “identified, located, and evaluated,” so then a “practical method is developed and implemented to determine which children are currently receiving needed special education and related services” (IDEA 300.111, 2004, p. 1).

Multiplier processes: improved ability leads to more educationally stimulating environments and thus further improvements in one’s ability (McLanahan & Haskins, 2005).

English Learner (EL): includes students whose first language is a language other than English and who lack English language proficiency (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012).

English as a Second Language (ESL) license: a license teacher may earn which allow them to work with all levels of English learners and receive specific training and credentialing that enables them to work with these language- diverse populations (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012).

California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE): All California public school students must satisfy the CAHSEE requirement, as well as all other state and local requirements, in order to receive a high school diploma (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: includes five motivational needs, which can be divided into basic needs (e.g., physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization). The basic needs are thought to motivate people when they are unmet. The need to fulfil such needs will be stronger the longer the duration they are denied. One must satisfy the lower level needs before progressing on to meet higher-level growth needs (Maslow, 1943).

Restorative justice approach: is an alternative to harsh disciplinary procedures (e.g., suspension or expulsion) which may include restorative consequences such as community services, apologies and public acknowledge of bad behavior (Westervelt, 2014).

Response to Intervention (RTI): a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Referenced in IDEA, this is an approach that emphasizes functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Limitations

This project was developed in order to provide school psychologists, resource specialists and school personnel the knowledge and tools to appropriately identify precursors to the achievement gap in order to provide targeted and appropriate early intervention, and then progress monitor to ensure intervention effectiveness. The majority of the research used within this project highlights the contributing factors impacting the achievement gap and possible solutions in order to combat the negative effects which result in the achievement gap. Due to the multi-faceted nature of the

factors which contribute to the achievement gap, it is advised that careful consideration be taken when considering to adopt interventions from the case study examples given differences in diverse student and population needs. However, a best practices approach that address the importance of early intervention and also addresses intervention at the middle and high school levels will be presented.

Statement of Collaboration

This project was developed collaboratively by Michelle B. Esparza and Lillian A.Y. Onaka, both graduate students in the California State University, Sacramento School Psychology Program. Each co-author had equal responsibility in the research, collection, and data gathering. The subsequent title and subtitle were divided equally between the two individuals in order to create a comprehensive project. All tasks performed in the development of the project and training workshop were shared equally.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The achievement gap is a persistent issue within our schools. Factors that contribute to the achievement gap can be seen in children as early as their first day of school and can have negative consequences in engagement and achievement in later years. Although many students may be considered underachieving, serious achievement gap differences exist primarily among ethnically and culturally diverse groups. According to the National Education Association (2015), the term “achievement gap” can be defined as “the differences between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers” (p. 1). These score differences can be attributed to “ethnic, racial, gender, disability and income” differences that can lead to “long-term gaps, including high school and college completion, and the kinds of jobs students secure as adults” (National Education Association, 2015, p. 1). Worrell (2014) estimates that 40% or more of Asian and Caucasian groups score proficient or advanced in reading and mathematics at fourth and eighth grade level, whereas 20% or less of the other groups are performing at these levels.

Achievement gaps can be noted as early as the beginning of kindergarten. McLanahan and Haskins (2005) found that the achievement gap is evident even when students start school, noting that kindergarten teachers perceived their Black and Hispanic students falling behind their White peers in both academic and self-regulatory components of school readiness. School readiness may begin as early as pregnancy and

involves such things as: prenatal care; parental education and views toward education, nutrition; access to educationally stimulating environments; and daycare and/preschool access. In consequence, unequal access to such resources due to limitations (e.g., transportation issues, lack of knowledge, costs of programs) may further impact a child's school readiness. This unequal access begins to create the achievement gap early on for children and especially affects students of low Socioeconomic Status (SES) and from culturally/socially diverse families. Anderson (2012) writes that the Black-White achievement gap "poses a persistent, if not an intractable problem" (p. 593) in that White students typically outperform Black students.

Proactive involvement is crucial. Steps toward addressing this achievement gap may help increase school performance, reduce social and cultural inequities, and may even reduce the amount of special education referrals as culturally and linguistically diverse students tend to be overrepresented in special education (Blanchett, 2006). Current research lends itself to the following inquiry and focus of this project: What interventions are needed at the preschool and early elementary school level to promote school readiness among disadvantaged families? Understanding the socio-political forces contributing to the achievement gap may provide a holistic approach to the intervention process. It is important that we gain "a greater appreciation of structural forces at work that contribute to the persistent distress of the local, inner-city community and negatively impact local students, and indirectly, their schools" (Anderson, 2012, p. 593). This may be the holistic approach to improving school readiness among culturally and ethnically diverse students.

Social and Cultural Implications and Risk Factors

The contributing factors of the achievement gap have significant social, cultural, and political overlap. According to the National Education Association (2015), students most at risk of experiencing the achievement gap include students who are members of an ethnic minority group, second-language learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, gender differences in achievement may exist in specific academic subjects and at different points in education (National Education Association, 2015). For example, it is well documented that boys tend to perform better in mathematics and science, while girls tend to excel in subjects based on language and the humanities (Hansen & Jones, 2011). Research has also found other factors that may put students at an increased risk for experiencing the achievement gap, including teacher expectations of their students who are members of marginalized groups, and student gender identity and sexual orientation (Sorhagen, 2013; Kim, Sheridan, & Holcomb, 2009).

Socioeconomic status is an important factor in achievement, but the true shape of its influence is hard to understand. For example, research has shown that young children from high economic groups have a broader vocabulary than those from lower economic groups due to increased exposure to language, resulting in an estimated 30 million word gap by age four (Sorhagen, 2013; Hart & Risley, 2003). Other related influences include environmental stress, health, and styles of parenting, which can all affect a developing brain and contribute to the gap in school readiness (McLanahan & Haskins, 2005). Noble, Tottenham, and Casey (2005) report that chronic childhood stress and abuse can

inhibit brain development in the hippocampus, which is responsible for learning and memory. Similarly, research by Burchinal et al. (2011) found that the achievement gap was most predominately attributed to “distal factors including parental education, income, and partner status and school risk and child-teacher ratios, and in the proximal factors such as parenting beliefs and practices, and quality of instruction” (p. 1417). With so many outside factors contributing to the achievement gap, targeted and effective early interventions are all the more necessary.

Socially and culturally engrained thoughts and attitudes influence students’ achievement. Students raised in disenfranchised, powerless families fail to appreciate the value of academics, seeing it as unnecessary or as a social deterrent, a pointless chore or as socially lame or awkward (Anderson, 2012). As school practitioners, gaining an understanding of the perspectives and viewpoints of these families and working with them to mitigate negative assumptions about school and education may be a foundational step toward proactive intervention. Implementing positive cultural norms within schools can change opposing mindsets and foster school readiness in an effort to mitigate the achievement gap.

Levels of acculturation and self-identification influence the achievement gap among minorities. Studies suggest that voluntary minorities who have chosen to come to the country, who accept their position as a marginalized group and their limitations as minorities and believe that they can transcend it through hard work, achieve more. On the other hand, involuntary minorities, those whose heritage has involved being forced to assimilate into an imperializing society or culture and who see themselves as victims to a

system that will always endeavor to work against them, achieve less (Worrell, 2014). In another research study between minorities, those who nurtured connections both between their culture and to society at large had stronger connections to both their ethnic group and society compared to those who kept only cultural, in-group connections. This suggests the importance of tolerant, yet diverse school cultures in which individuals feel a sense of community and belongingness between their close peers and other dissimilar peer groups at large.

School to Prison Pipeline

Many of the risk factors described above, including social and cultural factors, also put students at risk for entering the “school-to-prison” pipeline. According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2008), “the ‘school-to-prison pipeline’ refers to the policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems” (p. 1). While many of the factors that put a student at-risk for experiencing the achievement gap are based on their social or ethnic background, students may be put at an increased risk of entering the “school-to-prison pipeline” due to extrinsic factors as well. These factors can include inadequate resources such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of adequate instruction, and lack of mental health supports; zero-tolerance and other non-empirically supported school disciplinary policies, such as being expelled or suspended for minor infractions; frequent use of on-campus policing agents to maintain discipline; and student referral to disciplinary alternative schools that are held to no legal educational accountability. Further, once a student finds him/herself involved in the justice system,

the student often experiences a lack of procedural safeguards in the courts, may be sent to juvenile detention facilities where there is a lack of educational services, and are likely to experience difficulty returning to school (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008). There are also long term effects post-incarceration. Former prisoners will likely find it “impossible to secure jobs, education, housing, and public assistance—and often to vote or serve on juries” (Rosenberg, Almeida, & Macdonald, 2012, p. 225).

Due to the profound consequences that at-risk children may face if they do not feel successful at school, it is important to address academic and behavioral concerns early on before students enter the pipeline. Therefore, this phenomenon further supports why early interventions are vital to closing the achievement gap and preventing students from entering the pipeline so that all students can develop positive academic self-concepts, positive associations with school and academics, engaged school behaviors, and are presented with equal opportunities for success.

Identifying Students at Risk

As discussed above, research shows that there are several risk factors related to the achievement gap. While many of these factors are predetermined or involve a student’s diverse cultural, racial, or linguistic background, students of all backgrounds should be monitored for any signs of forthcoming areas of academic weakness or struggles, especially in areas or school districts with a high population of these risk factors. Considering that the achievement gap is identifiable early on, several measures should be taken within early education to identify students who may be at an increased risk so that they can be offered adequate and increased academic, social, and family

support to quickly address their difficulties. Early intervention programs and day-care centers are encouraged to provide parents and guardians with resources, including at-home screening tools or information handouts on developmental milestones (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). These resources can help parents to identify red flags that can indicate whether a child needs more thorough assessment and screening for diagnosis. Early screening for possible trauma is crucial as “toxic stress, unlike manageable stress, causes long-term changes to brain architecture and organ systems that develop after extreme, prolonged and repeated stress goes untreated” (Center for Youth Wellness, 2015, p. 5). Identifying and intervening to possibly mitigate toxic stress is vital as toxic stress may put a child at higher risk for learning difficulties and social and emotional problems, in addition to development issues and long-term health problems (Andrabi, Das, & Khwaja, 2009). Early education programs are encouraged to collect children’s health and developmental histories so that teachers and caretakers can be aware of risks present in a student’s background in order to be vigilant of any academic or developmental difficulties that may arise in case further assessment is warranted (Britto, n.d.). Further, early education teachers should be trained in progress monitoring of age-appropriate academic skills being taught within their programs. Students should be assessed on a regular and frequent basis to allow educators to observe growth, decline, or stagnation in an academic area. If a child does not appear to be progressing at the same rate as same-age peers, this may indicate a learning disability that can affect long-term achievement if not addressed early on (Currie, J. 2005; National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), 2010). However, these suggestions are only effective

under the expectation that all students are enrolled in early education programs with adequate education and training in identifying warning signs for learning disabilities, which is often not the case in urban minority populations. Therefore, primary schools, pediatricians, clinicians, and community centers are advised to provide parents with information and directories on how parents can access these programs for their children.

Early identification not only helps mitigate the achievement gap but also is in accordance with the Child Find mandate. The Child Find mandate, which is under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 300.111, requires states to find “all children with disabilities...who are in need of special education and related services” (2004, p. 1). After which, they are to be “identified, located, and evaluated” so then a “practical method is developed and implemented to determine which children are currently receiving needed special education and related services” (IDEA 300.111, 2004, p. 1). Therefore, inquiry into one’s regions policies and practices that provide services to help identify children with possible disabilities is significant.

Early Intervention: Educational Interventions

Research from Burchinal et al. (2011) suggests that the academic achievement race gap is well established by age 3, indicating the importance of early childhood education to bridge the gap. While programs such as *Headstart* are recommended, the authors suggest that by that age it may be too late and instead recommend that “during the infant, toddler, and preschool years, programs should focus on parenting skills that promote cognitive and social skills as well as access to high-quality childcare” such as *Educare* or *Early Headstart* (Burchinal, et al., 2011, p. 1418). McLanahan and Haskins

(2005) explore targeted educational interventions, which have the potential to help mitigate the dangers of stressful environments, equalizing the quality of preschool programs across races. It is suggested such interventions could "close up to 26 percent of the gap between Hispanic and White children" (p. 10). In addition, engaging in preschool interventions designed to increase cognitive ability, could help set off "multiplier processes" wherein improved ability leads to more educationally stimulating environments and thus further improvements in ability (p. 11). McLanahan and Haskins (2005) suggest that it is easier to change cognition and behavior in early childhood than in adolescence. Areas that may prove responsive to effective therapeutic interventions and improve school readiness include but are not limited to: reducing effects of family economic disparities, parenting, child health, maternal health and behaviors, and preschool attendance (p. 12). It may be beneficial that such interventions are designed to teach the values and behaviors that will promote school readiness and success. Furthermore, they believe that the most important strategy is to "increase access to high-quality center-based early childhood education programs for all low-income three- and four-year-olds" (p. 12). These programs would have to have a strong focus on high quality education; a multifaceted approach, wherein a parent-training component reinforces what teachers are doing in school; provide the staff the resources to identify health problems in children; help parents get ongoing health care for their children; and facilitate integration with kindergarten programs (Huang, 2012).

Intervention for English Learners

Students who are English learners (EL) are at risk of experiencing the achievement gap and research suggests that acquiring English proficiency can help to mitigate this risk. EL students who reached English proficiency had higher academic performance than students who were native-English speakers and current EL students who have not yet mastered English (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012). Therefore, to help EL students reach English proficiency and perform better academically; academic and language supports that improve English proficiency may effectively help ELs attain high academic achievement. Therefore, schools are encouraged to provide incentives for teachers, including content teachers, to earn an English as a Second Language (ESL) license and to provide these academic and language support programs to help students meet English proficiency (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012).

Encouraging School Engagement

Besides preexisting factors such as family or developmental background, research suggests that the differences in educational achievement can be attributed to school participation as well. In a case study by Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2011), researchers found that students who were struggling the most academically “exhibited a pattern of absenteeism and lack of engagement at school” (p. 57). To remedy this school-wide concern, the researchers presented their findings to the school staff by taking notice of individual student absences, “reversing” or erasing unexcused absences, and finally by praising and rewarding improved attendance (p. 58). Once student attendance was addressed, student engagement was encouraged by using professional development

meetings to train teachers to employ more conversation-based and student-involved discussions in the classroom. By these measures, the researchers were able to address individual student achievement gaps as indicated by their school's increasing pass rates of the California High School Exit Exam over the course of three years (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011). While this case study concerned high school achievement instead of early intervention, this study stresses the importance of addressing student absences and engagement when trying to increase student achievement. Therefore, parents, teachers, early intervention programs, and schools are encouraged to stress the importance of consistent attendance to young students and their families and provide meaningful, engaging instruction to promote these positive academic habits early on.

Early Intervention: Psychosocial and Mental Health Interventions

McLanahan and Haskins (2005) suggest that we can work to close the gap by addressing other vital aspects of children's development and personal lives. This may involve promoting home-school connectedness and communication, identifying families in need of referrals for medical care, and providing parent-training programs with incentives for participation. For more academically proficient elementary students affected by the achievement gap, targeted interventions utilizing strength based techniques—in this case a writing activity that convinces students to internalize how they are succeeding in their most important values—can mitigate the damage of negative self-views and reduce the racial achievement gap by 40% (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006). Minority students who are aware of negative stereotypes about their group's intelligence may feel great pressure to not reveal their own intellectual shortcomings for

fear of reinforcing the stereotypes. The effects of stereotype threat can be avoided by profiting from education that shares and reinforces the important values of the students. Education practitioners can help by providing students with strategies to cope with this imbalance between self-concept, stereotyped group and potential. Strategies mentioned in the research reviewed include adaptive re-appraisals of students' situations, such as attributing stress from stereotypes to other more common sources such as the stress of transition or change, encouraging humor, and finally increasing awareness of stereotype threat and how it may be impacting performance (Johns, Schmader & Martens, 2005). For students affected by stereotype threat, those who learned that anxious feelings while taking a test could be the result of such stereotype threat performed better (Appel & Kronberger, 2012, p. 630). Further, Cohen et al. (2006) argue that encouraging students to utilize positive self-affirmations can help to alleviate stress during high-pressure situations, therefore inhibiting the consequences of stereotype threat.

Addressing Student Health Risks

When discussing student achievement, it is important to consider all aspects of a child's well being as described by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Therefore, before educational and psychosocial intervention and prevention programs are reviewed, student health and wellness should be a primary component to raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap. Identifying and addressing health concerns early in a child's life may positively influence gene function, neural connections, and organization of the mind (National Academy for State Health Policy, 2013).

Therefore, there are lifelong implications to addressing student health risks. According to research by Basch (2011d), the prevalence of specific medical complications, such as vision difficulties and asthma, is high among urban minority youth. The impacts on school from these conditions not only affect students educationally and physiologically, but have social and emotional implications as well. Vision difficulties that are not addressed can have negative effects on sensory perceptions, cognition, and school connectedness. Similarly, students with asthma may experience disadvantages in school readiness, disturbed sleep, impediments to their concentration and memory, increased absences from school, and increased anxious and shy behaviors, which can all impact school and academic performance. Due to these negative implications it is essential that all students be screened for hearing, vision, asthma, or other health-related difficulties early on before they begin to impact long-term achievement.

While school-wide vision screening programs are currently widely used, Basch (2011c) suggests that students may also benefit from increased follow-up, communication, and coordination between school, families, outside agencies, and community resources. Asthma treatment is an example of what schools can do. Schools involved in asthma treatment can provide asthma education for students with asthma and their families, provide social and emotional support, and assist with medications (Basch, 2011a). Therefore, schools are encouraged to help facilitate coordination and communication between school, family, and community efforts to help with symptom

management to reduce the impact of health issues on school attendance and performance (Basch, 2011c).

Basch (2011b) documented the detrimental effects of poor nutrition and impacts on student health. When considering student health, it is also vital to look at student diet and nutrition. Students who are not consuming adequate nutrition are at a disadvantage as research suggests that malnutrition may have negative impacts on physical and mental health, learning, academic achievement, and overall quality of life (Basch, 2011c).

Children who come from homes that are near or below the poverty level are at an increased risk of malnutrition due to a lack of nutritious food; especially in urban minority youth as they are reportedly more likely to skip breakfast due to lack of time, morning appetite, and household food scarcity (Basch, 2011c). Research has shown that breakfast is important for cognitive functioning and brain plasticity, which is important for the developing brain and learning (Basch, 2011b). To address this concern, Basch (2011b) suggests that offering breakfast to students who may not otherwise eat breakfast in the morning may help to improve learning and assessment outcomes. Educating parents on the importance of breakfast and good nutrition on student learning can encourage healthy and nutritious habits that can be carried on throughout the child's lifetime. Parents can also be provided with coupons and workshops on how to prepare and shop for nutritious food on a budget. Healthy and nutritious habits can help students to feel more physically and mentally prepared to learn. This is especially important for students who may not be provided with healthy or nutritious meals for the rest of the day (Basch, 2011b).

Parent Involvement, Training, and Awareness

Parenting styles and enrichment opportunities in the home are among the strongest predictors of school performance during primary school and beyond (Britto, n.d.). Homes that are verbally engaging, stimulating and provide supportive and responsive relationships create the building blocks for children's academic, social and emotional well being in later years. In addition, parental beliefs and expectations are possible explanations for the strong link between maternal education and child learning as studies show that children whose mothers had some education spent 75 minutes more per day engaged in educationally related activities at home than children whose mothers had no education at all (Andrabi et al, 2009). Parent involvement in their children's education is a crucial element for their future success and learning. In order to promote this connection, schools must provide numerous opportunities to communicate with families (Britto, n.d.). The more parents are involved, the more comfortable, confident, and empowered they will be in their role in their child's development.

A Social Justice Perspective.

The achievement gap may be more prevalent at the schools wherein social justice is not practiced. Social justice is defined as issues of equity, equality, and possibility for all (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Proponents of social justice hold that all people in the world are equally valuable, have human rights worth recognizing and respecting, and deserve to live in a just and democratic society of equal opportunity (Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). A social justice approach for closing the achievement gap may address and combat education inequities that create barriers for all students' academic

success (Cox & Lee, 2007).

Within the context of the achievement gap, social justice involves holistic reform with school personnel as agents of change. A school-family-community collaboration involves relationships in which school counselors, school personnel, students, families, community members and other school stakeholders work jointly to implement school based programs and activities that improve student academic achievement directly within schools, and indirectly by attending to the needs that may be hindering students and families from these accomplishments (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). Potential barriers to change are complex and include internalizing factors, such as: lack of confidence in leadership abilities; not wanting to work outside the boundaries of the institution; fear of confronting the status quo and not wanting to bend the rules feelings of frustration in taking on a social-justice approach when teachers are working in isolation or feeling as if they are fighting a never ending battle, and working with those that have linear, conservative, or mono-cultural perspective versus a more open, liberal, and inclusive perspective on meeting the needs of students and families. Also, potential barriers to change may include the following external factors: lack of funding to acquire necessary resources; minimal knowledge and understanding of cultural differences (i.e., SES, race, ethnicity); difficulty knowing what the population needs; and lack of adequate and effective communication skills and experience (Griffin & Steen, 2011).

Despite these significant barriers, potential solutions and examples of successful, practical social justice interventions exist. In general, Griffin & Steen (2011) suggests some strategies practitioners should consider such as: developing an understanding of the

cultural differences that exist within the population served; serving students and families from within their surrounding environments rather than in isolation from them; developing allies within the community; taking on a leadership role in establishing mutually beneficial collaborations; and facilitating and encouraging open, direct, and honest two-way communication between involved parties. To promote a collective voice, school personnel may lobby on issues that concern the students they serve. This encourages active participation in the political process as well as open, direct, two-way communications. Another social justice intervention to closing the achievement gap includes having students conduct an equity audit in which students assess the areas of inequities that exist and then discuss the findings with the school administrator and offer some potential solutions to these problems. This helps students be reflective, proactive, and learn how to openly communicate with those in charge and discuss those policies that are actually barriers to promoting school success (Griffin & Steen, 2011). This intervention may be tailored to students and parents/families. For example, elementary school students, parents, and families of students can report unfairness by writing their scenario on a piece of paper and placing it in a jar. At the end of the week, a staff member can facilitate group discussion and help them collectively decide which issues are most important to them. Finally, they present their concerns and solutions to an administrative staff member.

To facilitate open dialogue between involved parties, the use of restorative justice circles may prove effective. Some schools have adopted this intervention as an alternative discipline program. Rather than suspending or expelling students who get into

fighters or act out, these circles act to resolve conflicts and build school community through talking and group dialogue, and overall build trust and community. Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), is a leader in expanding the restorative justice approach and has seen very positive effects. According to Westervelt (2014), within OUSD the percentage of students suspended at schools that have fully adopted the program has dropped by half, from 34 percent in 2011-2012 to 14 percent in the following two years. In addition, the data shows that chronic absence is down dramatically, graduation rates are up at restorative justice schools, and at two school sites in OUSD the disproportionate discipline of African-American students was eliminated (Westervelt, 2014). Students are not off the hook for bad behavior, but rather; consequences as an alternative to suspension or expulsion include: community service, apologies, and public acknowledgement of their bad behavior. Further, Westervelt (2014) reports that widespread consequences can be seen in school climate and culture, as some students mention that peers are not as judgmental, there are fewer hurtful rumors, it is easier to make friends, and peers are less angry and defensive. The positive outcomes that result from restorative justice schools offer a solution to closing the school to prison pipeline and thereby closing the achievement gap among minority, urban, and low-income youth in our schools.

The School Psychologist's Role

As school practitioners, utilizing and refining interpersonal skills to build relationships with families and students undergoing challenges may help to increase intervention success and overall school buy-in. Rosenberg, Almeida, and Macdonald

(2012) believe a school psychologist can overcome cultural barriers by focusing on connecting to each student as an individual. Overall, they find that “bridging the wide gap between cultures and overcoming cultural mistrust starts with building the assessor–client relationship and taking both worldviews into account” in order to create meaningful assessment results (Rosenberg et al., 2012, p. 223). This is significant as strong assessor-client relationships may break down translation, language, culture, and race barriers that cannot be overcome without positive relations.

When determining our role as school psychologists, national standards and best practices should be utilized when providing services. Therefore, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010) standard model of practice can be used when determining the roles we play when closing the achievement gap. It is advised that school psychologists have adequate training in using measures that are normed to diverse populations including minorities and English learners. When assessing students for special education, practitioners need to take into account the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, developmental, and family background of the child to determine factors that may be contributing to student academic struggles. It would be beneficial for school psychologists to advocate for a tiered system of addressing student education that allows for academic screening and continuous progress monitoring at all academic levels (Hoff, 2013). Based on information gathered from screening and progress monitoring, students should be offered services targeting specific areas of need, while also utilizing student strengths. Services and interventions provided need to be research based and empirically supported and it is advised that they are modified according to regularly obtained student

progress monitoring data. Further, it is recommended that psychologists utilize their data-analysis skills to review school-wide collected data to determine problems that may be affecting the students at their specific sites. Using this data, psychologists can determine issues that need to be addressed school or district-wide at staff conferences, staff trainings, parent nights, assemblies, or other school wide-gatherings (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2011).

Another best practice consideration would be that school psychologists are involved in distributing information and literature to district families regarding community resources, academic intervention programs, and screening tools to address learning or developmental disabilities. This is especially helpful when working with families who are of minority or low-income backgrounds. Consultation with these families regarding concerns that they may have in regards to their child's services is of the utmost importance, so that both family and child will feel supported. Also it is advised school psychologists engage in teacher consultation regarding fair student expectations, the utilization of all student strengths, providing ethnically diverse instruction, teaching strategies for keeping students engaged, and encouraging cultural diversity and appreciation (NASP, 2010).

To best meet the needs of the students we service, school psychologists need to regularly review the literature to determine current social and cultural issues that may be influencing student academic performance, engagement, and participation. Further, practitioners ought to be aware of influences on academics and learning, which will help them to identify at-risk and resiliency factors when reviewing student records and to

guide teachers when determining appropriate interventions. Further, when determining appropriate supports and interventions for students, it is important school psychologists encourage teachers to use strategies that are empirically supported or standardized for the student based on their areas of strengths and weaknesses, in addition to their culture, ethnicity, language, income, and other demographic factors (Duncan, 2013). School psychologists can share the importance of these factors, their influences on academic learning, and strategies that are effective for students of diverse backgrounds by facilitating and coordinating teacher workshops and professional development training (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011).

Another way school psychologists can improve services is by reviewing empirically supported practices for supporting the social/emotional development and mental health of students who are of ethnically diverse or low-income populations (Benner, Kutash, Nelson, & Fisher, 2013). Practitioners should promote awareness of diversity, the negative effects of stereotypes, and their impacts on educational performance. Further, it would be beneficial that school psychologists provide counseling and other mental health services to students who may be experiencing social or emotional difficulties related to stereotypes, or other struggles related to minority or low-income populations (Appel & Kronberger, 2012). Practices as described in previous paragraphs could be helpful interventions when addressing the mental health of students who are at risk of experiencing the achievement gap.

School psychologists should encourage and advocate for programs that take student diversity into consideration. Addressing student academic and behavioral needs

through multi-tiered systems of support such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) can help to offer more personalized and effective interventions that take student's differences, strengths, and weaknesses into account. The school psychologist can encourage diversity appreciation days where students can be encouraged to celebrate their own and one another's culture. School clinicians are also encouraged to provide individualized, group, or school-wide training to students to train them in coping and resiliency strategies (Appel & Kronberger, 2012). Best practices encourage school psychologists to increase parent participation in their child's education by holding school and family events year round, including several awareness nights on current societal issues in schools (NASP, 2010).

Professional Development and School Resource

In this project, the achievement gap is addressed through a professional development session for school staff and administrators based on a cohesive, multi-faceted approach to addressing student achievement gaps through early intervention. Based on the literature reviewed, schools will be trained on empirically supported practices to address several factors that research has shown to have significant influences on student achievement. The professional development session will cover the importance of addressing and coordinating student health; review empirically supported academic, social, mental health, and language interventions that can be used for students pre-k through 1st grade; provide an overview of the role of the school psychologist; and provide information on the importance of parental training and involvement, covering important topics of interests and methods of providing parent training. Additionally, a school

handbook with the topics discussed, as well as resources and strategies to help encourage utilizing discussed practices, has been developed.

Summary

The achievement gap is a multifaceted problem with multiple viable solutions. Evidenced as appearing very early in an at-risk child's life, it is imperative to address the achievement gap and implement intervention as early as possible. Gaining understanding of the foundations of what and how certain factors influence the gap is worthwhile in order to begin change. Typically, the most at-risk students are those of racial and ethnic diversity, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families (National Education Association, 2015). While there are many distal and proximal factors contributing to the gap, it is important to proactively identify such students. Fostering communication between parents, students, outside agencies, and school personnel can help educators identify and provide needed resources and services to those in need. Closing the achievement gap is all the more crucial given the school to prison pipeline that at-risk students may fall into. It is important to work with school personnel and administration to identify risk factors within schools, which may contribute toward the pipeline. Such contributing factors may include non-empirically supported school disciplinary policies such as expulsion and suspension for minor infractions and zero-tolerance policies.

Possible solutions to addressing the achievement gap are multi-faceted. One such intervention may include a social justice approach wherein student expectations are high, and emphasis is placed on advocating on behalf of at-risk students and their families, thus

building community and trust between home and school, and increasing school engagement. Additionally, monitoring the progress of academic and behavioral interventions for our at-risk students provides measureable evidence to allow school practitioners to modify, change, and/ intensify the interventions as needed in an effort to close the achievement gap.

Chapter 3

METHODS

Research

The information for this project was gathered using several different sources, including electronic databases, books, and websites. Both qualitative and quantitative journal articles were researched on two databases: the Elton B. Stephens CO. (EBSCO) host and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Keywords used for the search included “Achievement Gap” in combination with other terms such as “early intervention,” “ethnic and minority students,” “best practices,” and others. Several websites were also searched for pertinent information on best practices, state and federal mandates, current terminology, and other case study examples of schools utilizing effective interventions. The websites included the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Development of the Presentation

The training workshop presentation was developed with the goals in mind: (a) to raise awareness among school psychologists and school personnel about the continuing struggle that is the achievement gap; and (b) promote the implementation of early intervention at all stages of student’s life in order to promote best practices especially among those students affected by the achievement gap. The presentation begins with a summary of the literature review that provides the audience with a brief overview of whom is affected and the implications of the achievement gap, discussion of the school to

prison pipeline, identifying and addressing risk factors, educational interventions, mental health and behavioral interventions, increasing parent knowledge and training, community activism and student advocacy, and then a wrap of learned material.

This workshop training was developed to be presented in six hours through the methods of direct instruction and group discussion. The PowerPoint presentation, handouts, and notes for presenters are located in the appendices section of this project.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The project, *A Multi-Faceted Approach to Addressing the Achievement Gap Through Early Intervention (RAMP)*, resulted in the creation of a PowerPoint presentation intended to be presented as a workshop, which will inform and educate school psychologists and school personnel on the challenges associated with early intervention and the achievement gap. This included an overview of the current research and current suggested best practice methods of early intervention efforts, which may help to ensure more appropriate intervention efforts to close the achievement gap, especially among those it negatively affects.

Workshop Objectives

The primary purpose of this project is to provide school psychologists and school personnel an awareness of the challenges that exist due to the achievement gap and the importance of early intervention as a successful method to mitigate the gap. The secondary goal is to help school psychologists and relevant school personnel to be active participants in the intervention process within the schools they serve. These goals will be met through a six-hour training workshop for school psychologists and school personnel. Handouts will be provided as part of the workshop in order to facilitate discussion and also in order to actively involve participants in identifying and addressing risk factors associated with the gap and consider and implement interventions that would suit their student population.

The presenter's manual and workshop are contained in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. The remaining documents include the handouts for the workshop, and can be found in Appendix C.

Interpretation

The achievement gap continues to affect students especially those of racial and/or ethnic diversity (National Education Association, 2015). It is estimated that the gap appears to be problematic at the start of a student's education (McLanahan & Haskins, 2005). Several factors contribute to the achievement gap, as such no one clear solution exists, rather, a multi-faceted and holistic approach is encouraged. Several factors can influence the gap prior to a student beginning school. School readiness may be determined as early as pregnancy and involves such things as prenatal care, parental education and view towards education, nutrition, access to educationally stimulating environments and daycare and preschool access. In addition, unequal access to such resources due to limitations (e.g., transportation issues, lack of knowledge, costs of programs) further impacts the achievement gap. Despite the seemingly uncontrollable factors associated with the achievement gap, targeted and empirically based interventions may help to mitigate the gap for at-risk students.

This review of the research supports a multifaceted approach to mitigating the gap, which involves considering social and cultural implications and risk factors. Understanding the student population backgrounds, including but not limited to Socio-Economic State (SES), racial and cultural make-up, and norms and values of such cultures will help provide a perspective on how to identify risk factors and how to close

the gap. In addition, research supports early academic and behavioral intervention, promoting school engaged, and fostering communication efforts between home and school.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as a result of the findings within this project. It is recommended that school psychologists and special education program specialists attend the workshop in order to become aware of the issues related to the achievement gap as well as current research and information related to best practice methods for early intervention. As a result of attending this training workshop, it is hoped that attendees will make use of the methods taught in order to apply appropriate interventions to the student population they serve. Additionally, it is recommended that the research community continues to evaluate early intervention implications on achievement for the betterment of improving the efficacy of such interventions. Lastly, school psychologists and school personnel should keep up to date on current research relating to this topic in order to align their own practice with the most current recommendations of best practice methods for early intervention efforts.

APPENDIX A
Presenter's Manual

Presenter's Manual

Introduction

The **RAMP** Approach has been developed to address the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students. As many school professionals are well aware, the global academic and occupational markets are becoming more and more competitive. However, many of our students are starting their academic careers on unequal footing, with racial, socio-economical, biological, and environmental factors influencing a student's success before they even start school, while having long-term impacts on their achievement. This phenomenon is widely known as the, achievement gap. Due to the many factors that contribute to the achievement gap, including ethnic, racial, gender, disability, and income differences, the **RAMP** is a proposed early intervention approach for addressing the achievement gap.

The Goal of the RAMP Model and Presentation

The **RAMP** Approach has been developed from extensive research, as a multi-faceted method for addressing the achievement gap through early intervention. It has been designed to train all credentialed school personnel including but not limited to teachers, administrators, psychologists, mental health practitioners, and school health providers on how they can utilize their individual roles to help close achievement gaps within their classrooms, schools, and districts. Further, there is also an emphasis on best practices according to the National Association of School Psychologists, as a basis for all school psychologists and mental health practitioners. While the **RAMP** has been designed for early intervention, secondary level staff may also find the approach and its methods applicable to older students as well, as the elements involved in the model are integrated

in all grade levels. The RAMP approach involves the collaboration of all school personnel in making a difference for our students to lessen the academic disparities that are due to ethnic, social-economical, or other pre-existing factors by addressing and utilizing the following components:

R - Risk Factors

A - Academic Interventions

M - Mental Health and Behavioral Interventions

P - Parent Training, Involvement, and Knowledge

The approach is built on knowledge obtained through literature review and empirical data as cited in *A Multi-Faceted Approach To Addressing the Achievement Gap Through Early Intervention, A Project* (Esparza & Onaka, 2015).

Presentation Guidelines

The presentation includes a PowerPoint Presentation composed of 37 slides resulting in a 6 hour-long workshop for all credentialed school personnel. In addition to a provided PowerPoint presentation CD, a handbook has been provided to allow any credentialed school professional to be able to facilitate the workshop. To allow for efficiency and fluidity of presentation material, it is recommended that two to three people facilitate the workshop. Before presenting on the **RAMP**, the facilitators should become familiar and well versed with the PowerPoint slides and notes so that they can deliver the information fluidly and efficiently. Instructions and sample scripts for presenting each slide are provided so that the presenters can have a basis to formulate their own discussion as needed. Audience participation is a key component to allow the progression of participant discussion and reflection. Therefore, several times throughout the workshop,

the facilitator will be queued to ask questions to the audience and encourage small and large group discussion. In preparing to deliver the presentation, the facilitator should have the following materials ready before the workshop begins:

Materials

- Computer with PowerPoint presentation
 - o Computer should be prepared for video/sound
- Projector / Projector Screen
- Presentation Handbook Packets
 - o PowerPoint Slide Handouts
 - o Supplemental Handouts, provided at the end of manual (Key Terms, Statistical Charts and Graphs, Resource Guide, Workshop Day Schedule, Survey Inserts)
- Name Tags
- Permanent Markers for Name Tags
- Sign-in Sheet, provided at the end of manual
- Pencils/Pens for each participant
- Large White Board/ White Board Markers

Take note that part of the presentation and handouts should be customized based on presenters and workshop schedule. For example, the presenters names on slide 1, should be changed to reflect the name of the facilitators running the workshop. Similarly, the first page on the handout packet should be modified, in addition to the workshop

schedule. At this time, it is suggested that the 6 hour long workshop span according to the following timeline:

Slides	Topic	Duration
1-9	Overview of the Achievement Gap, Importance of Early Intervention, Statistical Review	90 Minutes
<i>5 Minute Break</i>		
9-11	Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline	20 Minutes
12	Video on the School to Prison Pipeline	6 Minutes
13-14	Recognizing Student Risk Factors	20 Minutes
15	Addressing Risk Factors	20 Minutes
<i>10 Minute Break</i>		
16	Educational Interventions	30 Minutes
	Group Discussion #1	10 Minutes
17	Mental Health/ Behavioral Interventions	30 Minutes
	Group Discussion #2	10 Minutes
<i>45 Minute Lunch Break</i>		
	Increasing Parent Knowledge and Training	30 Minutes
	Community Activism & Student Advocacy (A Social Justice Perspective)	20 Minutes
	Wrap-Up	10 Minutes
Total:		6 Hours

About the Authors

Michelle B. Esparza and Lillian A. Y. Onaka are currently school psychologist interns in the Elk Grove Unified School District in Elk Grove, California. They are currently working toward earning the Pupil Personnel Services Credential and completing their Ed.S. degrees in Education, School Psychology. Both Michelle and Lillian have completed their Masters degrees in Education at California State University, Sacramento. Their research experiences and interests are specialized in topics including the autism spectrum, modern issues such as social media, grief and bereavement, cultural differences, and the achievement gap. This workshop was completed to satisfy part of the requirements of their Specialist in Education (Ed.S.) degrees.

APPENDIX B

Handouts



Graphics created by the Mary Lyon First Grade, Fall 2001

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

Presenters: Michelle E. Esparza,
Lillian A. Y. Onaka

Table of Contents

PRESENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

KEY TERMS

STATISTICAL CHARTS AND GRAPHS

RESOURCE GUIDE

WORKSHOP DAY SCHEDULE

POWERPOINT HANDOUT NOTES

OVERVIEW

ADDRESSING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

RECOGNIZING RISK FACTORS

ADDRESSING RISK FACTORS

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

MENTAL HEALTH & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS

INCREASING PARENT INVOLVEMENT, TRAINING, & KNOWLEDGE

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

April 1, 2015 (Date)

8:00AM-3:00PM (Time)

Presenters: _____

Introduction

8:00 – 9:30 Overview of the Achievement Gap, Importance of
Early Intervention, Statistical Review

(5 Minute Break)

9:35 – 11:00 Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline,
Recognizing Risk Factors, Addressing Risk
Factors

(10 Minute Break)

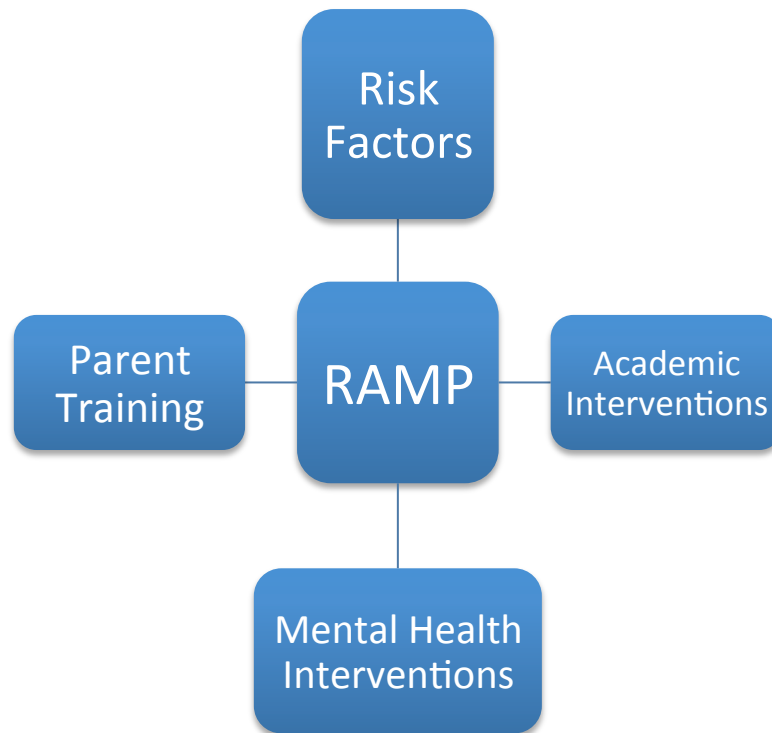
11:10 – 12:30 Educational Interventions, Mental Health &
Behavioral Interventions

(45 Minute Lunch Break)

1:15 – 3:00 Increasing Parent Knowledge and Training,
Community Activism & Student Advocacy (A
Social Justice Perspective), Wrap Up, Review of
Resources

Thank you for attending our presentation! We hope that the knowledge and information you have gained today will be valuable for you, your work, and the students you serve!

The RAMP Approach



R – Risk factor recognition and identification

A – Academic interventions

M – Mental health, social, and behavioral interventions

P – Parent training, knowledge, and involvement

Key Terms

- ***Achievement gap:*** The differences between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers. (National Education Association, 2015).”
- ***School to Prison Pipeline:*** “Refers to the policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008).”
- ***School readiness:*** Includes academic and self-regulatory components, which may include: prenatal care; parental education and views toward education, nutrition; access to educationally stimulating environments; and daycare and/preschool access (McLanahan and Haskins, 2005).
- ***At-risk students:*** includes students who are members of an ethnic minority group, second-language learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (National Education Association, 2015).
- ***Voluntary minorities:*** includes individuals who have chosen to come to the country, accept their position as a marginalized group and their limitations as minorities and believe that they can transcend it through hard work (Worrell, 2014).
- ***Involuntary minorities:*** whose heritage has involved being forced to assimilate into an imperializing society or culture and who see themselves as victims to a system that will always endeavor to work against them (Worrell, 2014).

- ***School to prison pipeline:*** involves “the policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems” (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008).
- ***Toxic stress:*** refers to trauma and is unlike manageable stress, as it causes long-term changes to brain architecture and organ systems if extreme, prolonged and repeated stress goes untreated (Center for Youth Wellness, 2015).
- ***Child Find:*** is under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 300.111, and requires states to find “all children with disabilities...who are in need of special education and related services.” After which, they are to be “identified, located, and evaluated” so then a “practical method is developed and implemented to determine which children are currently receiving needed special education and related services” (IDEA 300.111, 2004, p. 1).
- ***Multiplier processes:*** improved ability leads to more educationally stimulating environments and thus further improvements in one’s ability (McLanahan and Haskins, 2005).
- ***English Learner (EL):*** includes students whose first language is a language other than English and who lack English language proficiency (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012).
- ***English as a Second Language (ESL) license:*** a license teacher may earn which allow them to work with all levels of English learners and receive specific training

and credentialing that enables them to work with these language- diverse populations (Ardasheva, Tretter, & Kinny, 2012).

- ***California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)***: All California public school students must satisfy the CAHSEE requirement, as well as all other state and local requirements, in order to receive a high school diploma (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2011).
- ***Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs***: includes five motivational needs, which can be divided into basic needs (e.g., physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization). The basic needs are thought to motivate people when they are unmet. The need to fulfil such needs will be stronger the longer the duration they are denied. One must satisfy the lower level needs before progressing on to meet higher-level growth needs (Maslow, 1943).
- ***Restorative justice approach***: is an alternative to harsh disciplinary procedures (e.g., suspension or expulsion) which may include restorative consequences such as community services, apologies and public acknowledge of bad behavior (Westervelt, 2014).
- ***Response to Intervention (RTI)***: a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).
- ***Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)***: Referenced in IDEA, this is an approach that emphasizes functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Statistical Facts, Charts, and Graphs

Jurisdiction	Eligible		Not Eligible	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
National	207	230	236	254
National public	207	230	236	254
National Private	213	222	238	248
Large City	203	228	237	255

4th Grade Assessment Scores Comparing Students who are eligible for reduced/free lunch (lower household income) and students who are not eligible (higher income).

Ethnicity	Reading	Math
White	232	250
Black	206	224
Hispanic	207	231
Asian/Pacific Islander	235	258
American Indian/ Alaska Native	205	227

Statewide 4th grade reading assessment gaps based on income and race differences. Achievement gaps among both appear to be correlated, with the District of Columbia exhibiting the high achievement gap for both criteria. Race gap data was not provided for Idaho, Montana, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming.

RAMP Presentation Participant Survey

1. What is your position/role at your school? How many years/months of experience do you have working in the schools?

2.. What are some of the key points that you have taken from this presentation?

3. How do you plan to apply your overall knowledge gained here today in your school role?

4. Please rate the overall presentation experience on a scale from 1 to 5:

1	2	3	4	5
Not helpful		Decent		Very Helpful

5. Please rate the presenters/facilitators on their overall effectiveness (presentation flowed nicely, materials were properly prepared and presented):

1	2	3	4	5
Completely Inefficient		Decent		Very Efficient

6. Please rate the presenters/facilitators on their overall knowledge on the topics presented (familiarity with presentation, discussion topics, and elaboration on important ideas):

1	2	3	4	5
Unknowledgeable		Decent		Very Familiar

7. Please list any questions you still have regarding the achievement gap or how to address the achievement gap with early intervention (if any):


8. Please provide comments, critiques, and ideas to be considered for future workshops/trainings or for improvements on the RAMP model (if any):

Thank you so much for filling out this survey! We will carefully review and consider all critiques, comments, and questions you still have so that we can continue to build on our model and improve on future workshops and trainings!

APPENDIX C

Presentation Slides: Workshop

Slide 1



Graphics created by the Mary Lyon First Grade, Fall 2001

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH
TO ADDRESSING THE
ACHIEVEMENT GAP
THROUGH EARLY
INTERVENTION (RAMP)

Presenters: Michelle E. Esparza, Lillian A. Y. Onaka

1. Have slide displayed before beginning presentation.
2. Presenters/aids should greet attendants at door and direct them toward a table where they can sign in, fill out name tags, and pick up their presentation handouts.
3. Once all attendants have been seated, begin with presenter introductions. Remind attendants to retrieve a name tag and handouts.

Sample script: *“Good morning and thank you for attending our presentation on A Multi-Faceted Approach to Addressing the Achievement Gap Through Early Intervention. We are excited to present to you current research and applications on how we can best serve our diverse body of students, so that we can ensure that all of our students start their educational careers with academic equality. This material is designed to inform, enlighten, and involve all credentialed school personnel, including but not limited to teachers, administrators, psychologists, mental health professionals, and health providers. If you haven’t already, please feel free to sign in, and retrieve a name tag and handout from the back table. My/our name is _____ and we will be leading the discussion for the all day training, presenting information, and answering questions regarding the achievement gap. We’d like to first take the time to introduce ourselves, our experience with achievement gap research.” Continue by describing your expertise on the topic, and how you became interested in the topic.*

10 Minutes

Slide 2

Introductions

- Small Group- “Think, Pair, Share”
 - What experiences have you had/ currently have working with economically, culturally, physically, or socially diverse students? What did you learn from these experiences?
 - How many of you have had training for specifically working with diverse populations/ disadvantaged populations? What kind? How did you utilize this training in your work?
 - What are your experiences with early intervention /education?
- Large Group
 - What is something that a group member shared, that you felt was an interesting experience/training?

1. Present the audience with the above small group questions and ask them to engage in “think, pair, share”. Explain that you’d like them to engage in self reflection, before engaging in small group discussion with surrounding professionals. Inform them that some members from each group will be asked to share with the audience.
2. After five minutes have passed or it seems that most small group members have had a chance to share. Present the Large Group question to the whole audience.

10 Minutes

Slide 3

Topics of Discussion

- Overview of the Achievement Gap
- School to Prison Pipeline
- Recognizing Risk Factors
- Addressing Risk Factors
- Educational Interventions
- Mental Health/Behavioral Interventions
- Increasing Parent Knowledge and Training
- Community Activism & Student Advocacy (A Social Justice Perspective)
- Wrap Up

1. Read the list of topics that will be presented. Notify audience that the day's schedule is on Appendix B (last page) of the handout with times listed for points of discussion and allotted breaks.

4 Minutes

Slide 4

Presentation Guidance

- Terms in **BOLD** are key words defined throughout the presentation and can be found on the *Key Words* handout in your workshop handbook
- **Key Questions** are thoughts we want you to consider and main ideas we'd like to address
- Graphs and charts can be viewed in detail in your workshop handbook
- "Think Pair Share": Reflect on the question presented, pair with people next to you to discuss, and share your reflection with them.
- Large Group Question: Share what you learned about your small group with the audience

1. Explain the following points to provide the audience guidance on how to efficiently follow along with the presentation and take the most important knowledge from it.

3 Minutes

Slide 5

Overview

- What is the **Achievement Gap**?
 - “The differences between the test scores of minority and/or low-income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers. (National Education Association)”
- Attributed to:
 - Ethnic, racial, gender, disability, and income differences
- Resulting in:
 - Long-term gaps (high school, college completion, jobs etc)

1. Queue the text, “What is the achievement gap?”, and pose the question for the audience, so that they are able to volunteer answers.

Script: “Before beginning our discussion on the Achievement Gap, its important that we first establish a clear definition of what the achievement gap is. So let me first ask you, What is the achievement gap?”

1. On the Whiteboard, have co-presenter write audience definitions large enough for everyone to see.
2. Once answers have been provided, acknowledge the thoughtfulness of the answers and accurate points of each one.
3. Present the definition of the achievement gap, according to the National Education Association.
4. Point out differences and commonalities between written and NEA definitions.
 Note: Likely the audience will have suggested definitions that involve student differences beyond test scores. If so, acknowledge that while test scores allow us to measure differences, they are right. The achievement gap involves differences in academic performance, engagement, and social success that can have impacts beyond what can be seen in test scores.

10 Minutes

Slide 6

Importance of Early Intervention

- Achievement gaps can be observed as early as kindergarten
- Early gaps accounted by differences in **school readiness**
 - Prenatal care, parental education, nutrition, environment, access to resources
- **Key question:** What interventions are needed at the early, preschool, and early elementary school level to promote school readiness among disadvantaged families?

1. Talk about why this presentation will focus on early intervention, but can also be reflect on school personnel working with all ages.
2. Explain how students may start school on unequal footing, based on health and social factors preceding school entry.
3. Notify the audience that words written in bold

10 Minutes

Slide 7

National Income Differences

□ Based on data from U.S. Department of Education, 2013

Jurisdiction	Eligible		Not Eligible	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
National	207	230	236	254
National public	207	230	236	254
National Private	213	222	238	248
Large City	203	228	237	255

Average scale scores for reading, grade 4 by National School Lunch Program eligibility, 3 categories [SLUNCH3], year and jurisdiction: 2013
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013 Reading Assessment.

Explain chart to express the importance of addressing the achievement gap and explore prevalence. Refer audience to Appendix B in handout.

Script: “So just how prevalent is the achievement gap, and why are we having this training? If you refer to Appendix I in your handout, you can see in greater detail all of the charts and graphs presented here or you can follow along in your notes. Here we are showing you a table breakdown of academic gaps in math and reading among students who are eligible for reduced/free lunch and students who are not eligible. It is based on data obtained from the U.S. Department of Education. The reason we chose to compare this data is because as many of you are aware of, reduced lunch eligibility is based on the household income of student families. Therefore, this is a good way to visualize the academic differences between lower-income households and higher-income households. As you can see, overall in both reading and math, students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch (lower income) score lower than students who are not eligible (higher income.)”

10 Minutes

Slide 8

National Race/Ethnicity Differences

Ethnicity	Reading	Math
White	232	250
Black	206	224
Hispanic	207	231
Asian/Pacific Islander	235	258
American Indian/ Alaska Native	205	227
Two or More Races	227	245

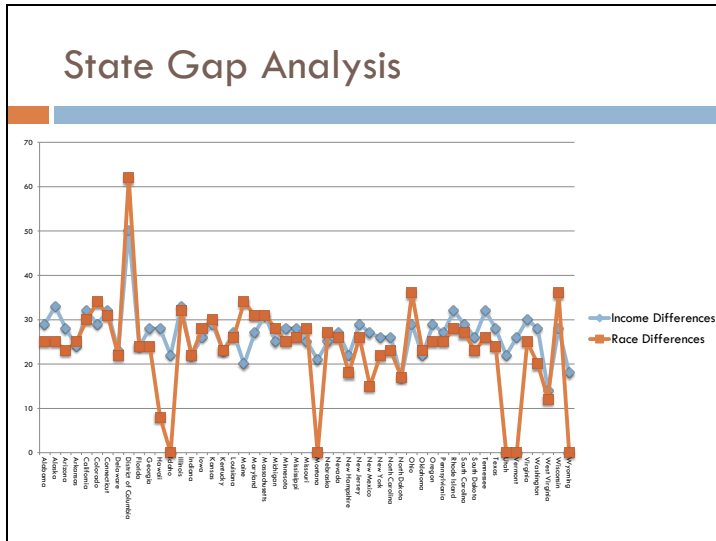
Average scale scores for reading and math, grade 4 by race/ethnicity used to report trends, school-reported [SDRACE], year and jurisdiction: 2013

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013 Reading Assessment.

Script: *“Here is another view of academic differences. Here we have the reading and math scores broken down by student race and ethnicity. We also see differences between groups in all areas, with Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students scoring lower than White, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Mixed Race groups.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 9

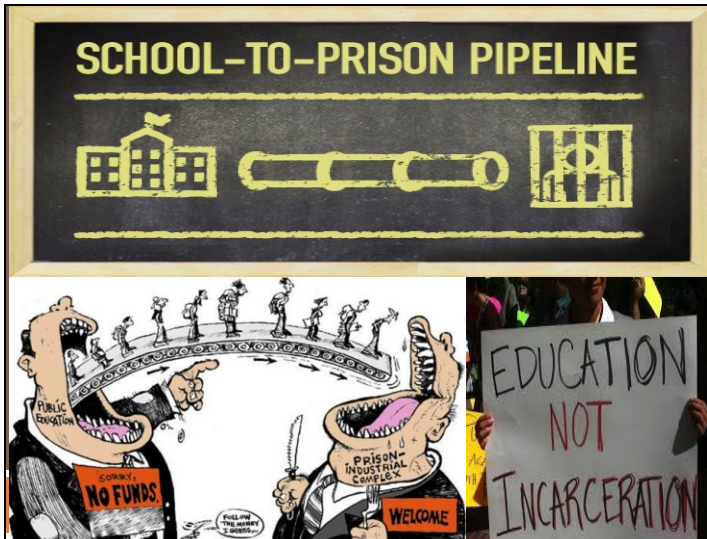


Script: “Here we wanted to present one final visual correlating reading achievement gaps from both income differences and between White/Black populations by state. As you can see, the score discrepancies between students who are low-income and higher-income, are highly correlated with the score discrepancies between White and Black students in 4th grade.”

1. Inform that states including Idaho, Montana, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming, are all missing data regarding race discrepancies.
2. Point out that the largest performance gap for both categories is in the District of Columbia.
3. Elaborate on your individual state/region.

10 Minutes

Slide 10



1. Introduce the topic of the “School to Prison Pipeline.”

Script: “You may be asking yourself, ‘Why do we bring up these statistics and why does it matter? What kind of long-term effects can these risk factors have anyways?’ Well, this brings us to our next topic, the School to Prison Pipeline which further reinforces the need for addressing academic inequality early on.”

2. Ask the audience to carefully examine the pictures and try to interpret what they mean.

Script: “I’d like you to take a minute to carefully examine the pictures here and try to interpret what they represent.” Provide 1 minute of silence, while a facilitator erases what was previously written on the Whiteboard and prepares to copy down the proceeding group discussion points.

10 Minutes

Slide 11

Group Discussion

- Large Group Questions
 - Based on your interpretation and experience, how would you explain the **School to Prison Pipeline**?
 - What factors do you think contribute to the School to Prison Pipeline?
 - How do you think this is related to the achievement gap?

1. Based on the images and previous experience, ask the audience the following questions, allowing 3-5 minutes per question for participants to answer. The facilitator should write main points of each participant response on the Whiteboard.

10 Minutes

Slide 12

School to Prison Pipeline

- “Refers to the policies and practices that push our nation’s schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. (American Civil Liberties Union)”
 - ▣ Risk factors can include social and cultural factors of students and their families
 - ▣ Risk factors also include school and societal policies and practices
 - ▣ **THINK, PAIR, SHARE:** What kind of policies and practices do you think contribute to the Pipeline?

1. Read out the definition from the American Civil Liberties Union.
2. Explain that the risk factors associated with the Pipeline are closely tied to the risk factors contributing to the achievement gap.
3. Ask the audience to once again engage in Think, Pair, Share to discuss the policies that they think contribute to the Pipeline.

10 Minutes

Slide 13

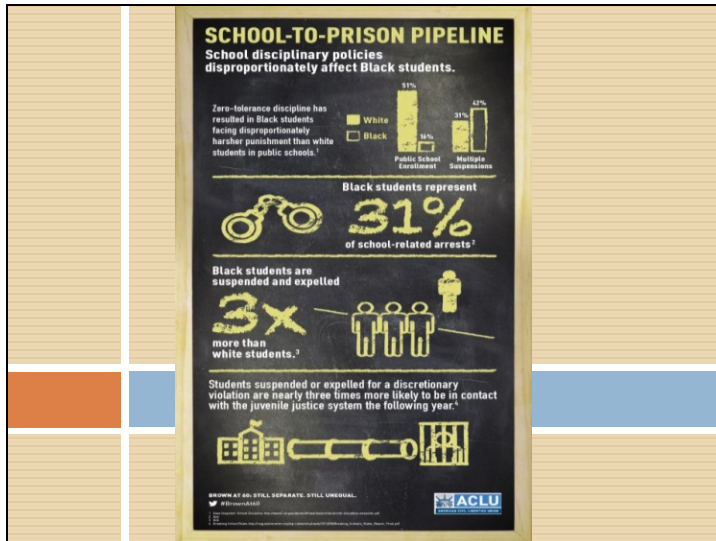
School to Prison Pipeline, Cont.

- School and Community Risk Factors
 - ▣ Inadequate school resources
 - ▣ Zero-tolerance and other non-empirically supported school disciplinary policies
 - ▣ Increasing use of on-campus policing agents
 - ▣ Increasing referrals to disciplinary alternative schools
- Once entering the justice system
 - ▣ Lack of procedural safeguards in the courts
 - ▣ Lack of educational services in juvenile detention facilities
 - ▣ Difficulty returning to school (American Civil Liberties Union)

Script: “According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the following practices put our students at greater risk of entering the school to prison pipeline. Inadequate school resources include lack of quality education, accessibility to textbooks, and large student to teacher ratios resulting in larger classroom sizes. Further, rather than utilizing empirically supported behavioral management strategies and programs, many schools have turned to zero-tolerance policies. Zero-tolerance policies involve harsh disciplinary measures such as suspension and expulsion extending into non-violent infractions such as behavioral disruption or defiance. Lastly, rather than teachers and administrators handling discipline, under resourced schools are relying on on-campus policing agents to manage discipline, leading to greater numbers of on-campus arrests. In other words, the very places that are suppose to foster student academic and social growth are the very places that are criminalizing them. Students are also being referred to disciplinary alternative schools, where the education they receive is provided by for-profit agencies who have no obligation to meet quality education standards. Upon reentry into their schools, they are at an academic disadvantage from having fallen behind, are referred to inferior education environments such as continuation schools, or are channeled directly to the juvenile justice system. Once they have entered the juvenile justice system, students may not be offered adequate procedural safeguards such as access to lawyer representation in the courts. If they assigned to a juvenile detention facility, may be offered scarce educational services, if any at all. It becomes difficult for students to the reenter the public education system, keeping a large majority of students from graduating high school.”

10 Minutes

Slide 14

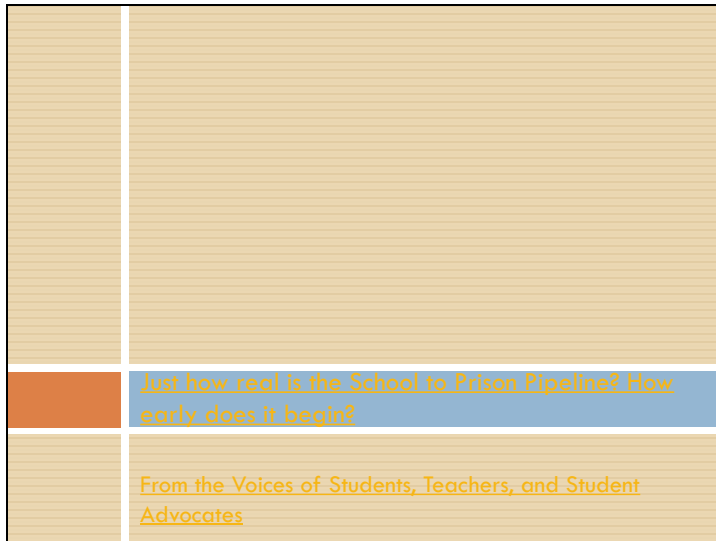


Explain and read the infographic

- Black students are being suspended at a disproportionate rate, compared to White students.
- Black students represent 31 % of school related arrests.
- Suspension and expulsion rates of Black students are 3 times higher than White students.
- Suspension or expulsion leaves students 3times more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system the following year.

10 Minutes

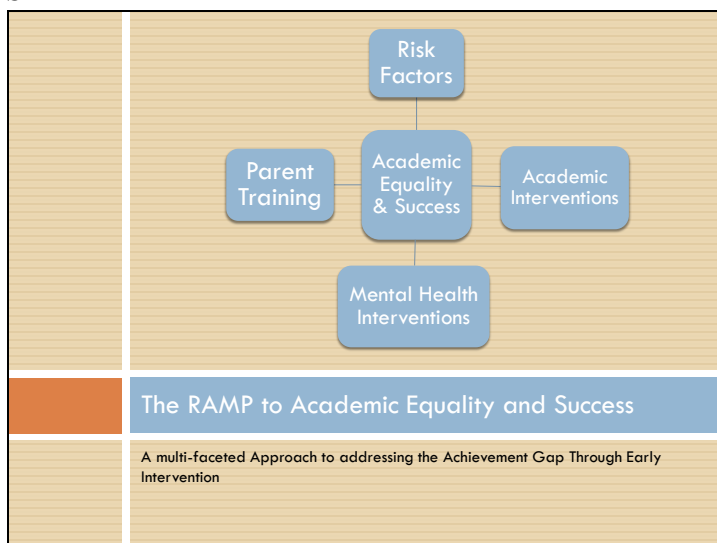
Slide 15



1. Make sure video/audio has been adjusted correctly and you have reliable internet access.
2. Read each line of text before clicking on the video links.
3. After both videos have ended, conclude this topic by reviewing how the risk factors involved in the achievement gap, also leave students more susceptible to entering the school to prison pipeline. By addressing student academic, social, and behavioral difficulties early on, we can help to mitigate and block the school to prison pipeline from reaching our students.

10 Minutes

Slide 16



Script: *“Now this is when we begin to talk about the RAMP to Academic Equality and Success, our Approach to Addressing the Achievement Gap Through Early Intervention. A handout with our diagram is included in your packet for you to refer to as well. After extensive literature review, the researchers who found this model determined that the achievement gap could be comprehensively addressed with an intervention involving four main components. The components include Identifying and addressing risk factors, using empirically supported academic interventions, applying empirically sound mental health and behavioral interventions, and providing parent training so that they can become empowered and more involved. For the next two hours, we will discuss each component in depth, so that you can apply this knowledge to your role in the school and advocate for others to do the same. Further, we will also provide specific examples and resources for each facet of the model, to get you started. A list of these resources can be found in your resource guide which can be found on page # of your handout.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 17

Recognizing Risk Factors

- “Students most at risk of experiencing the achievement gap include “racial and ethnic minorities, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low income families. (NEA)”
- In addition, gender differences in achievement may exist in specific academic subjects and in different points in education (National Education Association).

Script: “The first component we will discuss is Recognizing and Addressing Risk Factors. According to the National Education Association, students most At-Risk of experiencing the achievement gap include racial and ethnic minorities, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low income families. Further, we may also see achievement gaps among genders based on academic subjects and academic level. For example, females are found to achieve higher in academic subjects involving the humanities (reading, writing, language arts) while males perform higher in the sciences (math, biology, etc.). Females are also found to perform higher in the elementary grades, while males perform higher in the secondary grades. It is important to first recognize and acknowledge these risk factors, so that we can determine effective ways of addressing and targeting each risk factor involved.”

10 Minutes

Slide 18

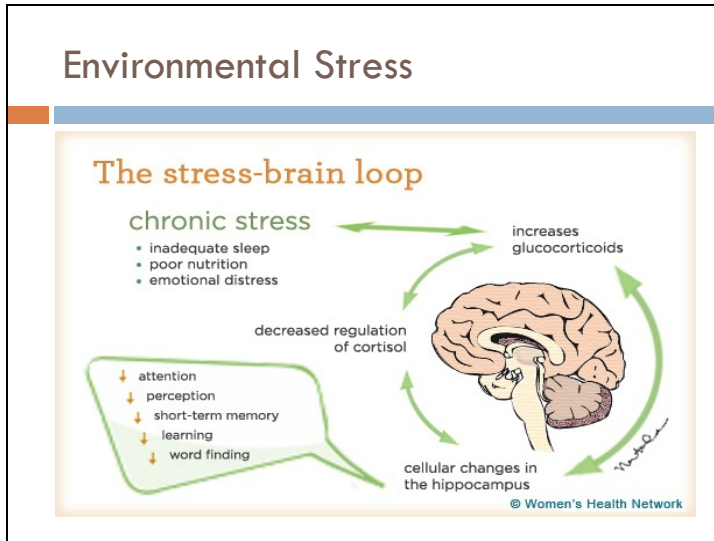
Recognizing Risk Factors

- Environmental stress
- Health
- Styles of parenting (McLanahan and Haskins, 2005)
- Parental Education
- Household income (Burchinal, 2011)
- School Risk (Child-teacher ratios, quality of instruction)
- Family views on education (Anderson, 2012)
- Acculturation and self-identification (Worrel, 2014)

Script: “Environmental or family stress may also contribute to a student’s academic success, as stress has been found to influence a child’s brain development. Further, undiagnosed health problems such as vision, hearing, asthma, or others, can impact a student’s ability to focus or engage in classroom activities. Styles of parenting can also make a difference, as parents who provide a cognitively stimulating environment early on may provide their children with resiliency factors and allow them to start school familiar with the learning environment. Parents who are educated and informed on how to best provide their young children with a stimulating learning environment can also help to mitigate risk factors. Being informed can also help them to be aware and watch for signs of any possible learning or behavioral disabilities. As we’ve previously discussed, students who come from households who earn lower income are also at risk, as they may lack basic resources needed for students to thrive, such as access to food, stable housing, health care, community resource, and reliable transportation to school. Similar to the policies and practices that contribute to the school to prison pipeline, student-teacher ratios, quality of instruction, school-wide programs, and other student resources are can all contribute to student risk as well. Family views on education can have an influence on student engagement and participation, as children refer to parents/guardians on the value of academics and learning. Students whose family is more focused on working to put food on the table, or other issues, may view education as secondary to other priorities. Finally, Students who are well assimilated or self-identify with the dominant culture have an advantage, compared to students who feel that their values are not recognized in the school culture or feel pressure from culture related stereotypes.”

10 Minutes

Slide 19



Script: “The term environmental stress is a catch-all phrase to really describe all the different types of stressors that don’t primarily have a biological basis, like asthma for example. I would also like to emphasize that stress is relative. What I mean by this is stress is neutral or “not bad” so-to-speak, really, what makes it negatively affect a child is how he/she perceives it, which in turn influences how the child will react biologically or chemically to the perceived stress. The image I am showing you is a simplified version of the affects of stress on learning. As you will notice, the term chronic stress is used. An important distinction to make is that not all stress is unwelcome, in fact, that would just be impractical, as we know at some point we ALL will experience stress. Beneficial or non-chronic stress can provide us with the energy to handle emergencies, make changes, meet challenges and excel. However, if stress is constant and unrelieved the body has little time to relax and recover which releases more stress hormones that we don’t need, putting the body into overdrive; thus, this results in chronic, debilitating stress. As we can see from this visual, some examples of chronic stress may include inadequate sleep, poor nutrition, and emotional distress to name a few. If children are not given the coping skills and tools to recognize and take action to overcome their perceived stress, then their learning may have catastrophic affects in the areas of attention, perception, short-term memory, learning, and word finding.”

10 Minutes

Slide 21

Environmental Stress, cont.

- Social/emotional interventions
 - Tier 2
 - Cognitive Behavior Therapy
 - Thoughts, feelings, and behavior
 - Mindfulness
 - Present moment, meditation, deep breathing
 - Bibliotherapy
 - *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine* by Julia Cook
 - *What does it Mean To Be Present?* By Rana Diorio
 - *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean
 - *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Kerry Lee MacLean

Script: *“If the environmental stressor cannot be easily changed and/or further investigation with involved parties suggests the student may benefit from learning coping strategies then it is advised that student begin receiving counseling services. These counseling services may vary depending on the specific referral concern. Some potential interventions to help with stress-reduction may include: cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness, and bibliotherapy.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 22

Student Health

- Vision, hearing, asthma
 - Baby-proof, UV protection
 - Universal screening
 - Consider family history

Script: “Student health is of extreme importance especially in communities wherein access to medical treatment is difficult and/or the family is in poverty and need community resources to help access such help for their child. Implications of poor vision, hearing, and asthma are great and may impact the students ability to access their environment, and stimulation needed for learning and growth. By age 3 both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academic of Pediatric Ophthalmologists recommend formal vision screen to help identify vision impairment. Efforts to help minimize a child’s vision loss include: baby-proofing: pad sharp edges on furniture, and keep sharp objects or toys away, wear sunglasses with UV protection. Hearing loss in infants is not uncommon, fortunately most states have mandatory hearing screening, if not it is advised to ask one’s medical provider.”

10 Minutes

Slide 23

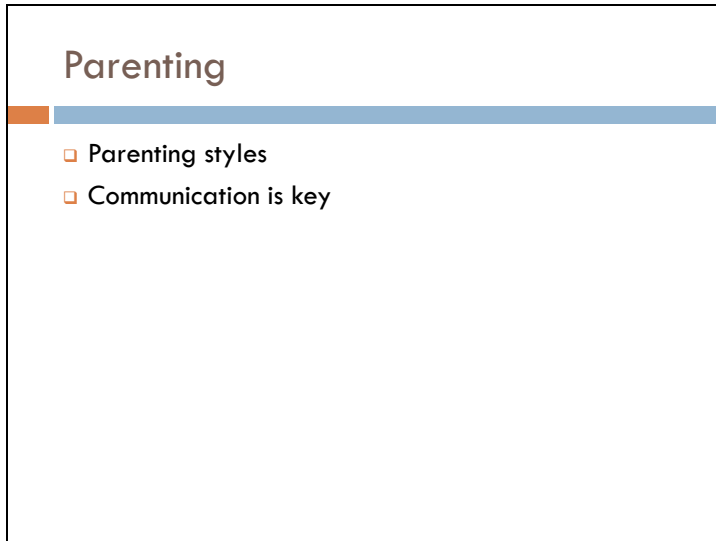
Student Health

- Early education programs
 - Screening
- Community resources

Script: “Student health is of extreme importance especially in communities wherein access to medical treatment is difficult and/or the family is in poverty and need community resources to help access such help for their child. Implications of poor vision, hearing, and asthma are great and may impact the students ability to access their environment, and stimulation needed for learning and growth. By age 3 both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academic of Pediatric Ophthalmologists recommend formal vision screen to help identify vision impairment. Efforts to help minimize a child’s vision loss include: baby-proofing: pad sharp edges on furniture, and keep sharp objects or toys away, wear sunglasses with UV protection. Hearing loss in infants is not uncommon, fortunately most states have mandatory hearing screening, if not it is advised to ask one’s medical provider.”

10 Minutes

Slide 24



The slide is titled "Parenting" and features a blue horizontal bar with an orange square on the left. Below the bar, there are two bullet points, each preceded by an orange square.

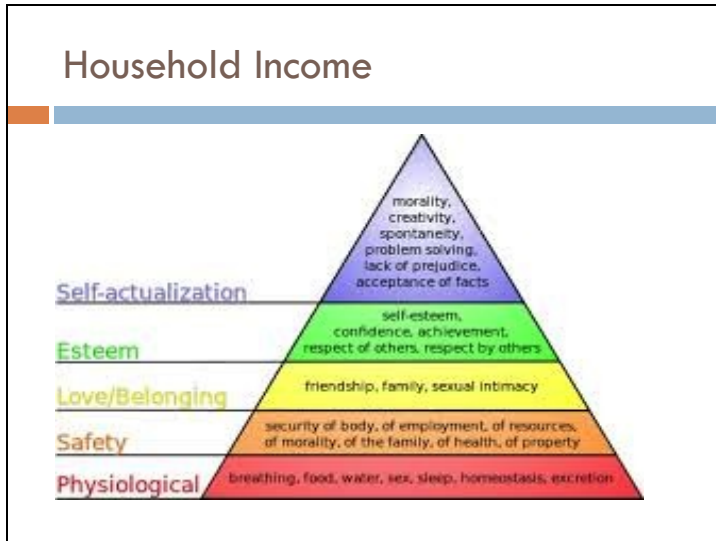
Parenting

- Parenting styles
- Communication is key

Script: "Parenting styles and enrichment opportunities are some of the strongest predictors of school performance. Homes that are verbally engaging, stimulating and provide supportive and responsive relationships create the building blocks for children's academic, social and emotional well-being in later years. Parent involvement is crucial to student success and learning. To help promote this, schools much provide opportunities to communicate with families. Its crucial that parents are involved, so they may take on a more confident and empowered role in their child's development. Further discussion on parent training and how to involve parents more in the lives of their children will be discussed later."

10 Minutes

Slide 25



Script: *“Household income is influenced Learning cannot take place until ones foundational needs are met. This can be explained by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. This visual shows us that at the base of the pyramid includes survival aspects such as food, water, sleep, and other physiological needs, and then safety for oneself. Next we notice that the ability for one to feel love or belongingness is important. Next esteem for ones self and respect for and by others is needed. Finally, once these needs have been met, Maslow asserts that one can then begin to engage in learning, problem solving, and being creative. With common core standards placing greater emphasis on student engagement and sharing of ideas, as schools it is important that we intervene at the foundational levels in order to access a student’s learning potential and ability.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 26

Household income

- Free or reduced breakfasts and lunches
- Provide school supplies
- Community resources

Script: “To ensure students from all socio-economic levels have access to education, schools offer free or reduced breakfasts and lunches. Another way to help students of low income households is to ensure you have extra school supplies for students’ families who cannot afford it. I would encourage a meeting with administration to ensure that monies can be given and/or supplies donated for such purposes. For students with significant social, emotional, or health concerns it is advised that you consult with colleagues to refer such a student and/ family to the appropriate agency accessible within their community.”

10 Minutes

Slide 27

School Risk

- Under-resourced schools
 - Overcrowded
 - Lack of qualified teachers
 - Insufficient funding
 - “Advocating”

Script: *“Public schools with inadequate resources may include schools with overcrowded classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient funding for ‘extras’ such as counselors , special education services and textbooks. These under-resourced schools trap students in sub-par educational environments. If schools fail to meet the educational needs, students are more likely to be disengaged and dropout which increases the risk of later court involvement. We will discuss the importance of advocating for students in situations wherein there is limited resources later.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 28

Acculturation and Self-Identification

- A student's acculturation or self-identification may influence performance may influence drive
- Nurturing connections between one's personal culture and society's culture
- Fostering community and belongingness

Script: *“Levels of acculturation and self-identification influence the achievement gap among minorities. Studies suggest that voluntary minorities who have chosen to come to the country, who accept their position and believe that they can transcend barriers through hard work, achieve more. On the other hand, involuntary minorities, those whose heritage has involved being forced to assimilate into a dominate culture, that may be seen as imperializing, and who see themselves as victims to a system that will always endeavor to work against them, achieve less (Worrell, 2014). In another research study between minorities, those who nurtured connections both between their culture and to society at large had stronger connections to both their ethnic group and society compared to those who kept only cultural, in-group connections (Worrell, 2014). This suggests the importance of tolerant, yet diverse school cultures in which individuals feel a sense of community and belongingness between their close peers and other dissimilar peer groups at large.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 29

Identifying Students at Risk

- Identifying Students at Risk
 - Providing parents with resources such as at-home developmental screening tools and handouts
 - Early screening for developmental disabilities in early education
 - Gathering health and developmental history
 - Teacher training in progress monitoring
 - Providing information and directories on how parents can access high-quality early education programs

Script: “Imperative to addressing the achievement gap is first identifying risk-factors. In doing so, this ensures the earliest intervention possible. Providing resources to parents that involve community referral contact information, websites, articles and tools such as developmental screening tests and handouts help to bridge home-school involvement as well as parent accountability. In accordance with Child Find Law, it is essential to screen for developmental disabilities early on. Efforts to identify the possibility of a disability involve gathering health and developmental history information and progress monitoring. If response to intervention is not provided at a school, it is advised to consult with school personnel with experience in implementing progress monitoring in an effort to create the foundation for early intervention services.”

10 Minutes

Slide 30

Screening

- Gathering health and developmental information
 - What information is necessary
 - How to design a comprehensive questionnaire
- Addressing Student Health Risks
 - Early screening for hearing or visual problems
 - Screening for chronic health problems such as asthma
 - Providing free breakfasts, diet and nutrition information for families

Script: “When gathering health and developmental information, consider a holistic approach. For example it is advised to have a conversation with the parent/guardian, review records and SISweb, as well as send home a questionnaire. Basic categories in which vital information may be gathered include: student strengths, parent/guardian background, socio-emotional history, developmental or health history, academic history, and family history. It is also advised to include your contact information, and instructions necessary. In addition, ensure that school health records are up to date to ensure adequate hearing and vision. It is advised to have information for families to access health care in the event serious chronic health concerns appear evident, such as asthma. Finally, considering the obesity epidemic and the importance and affect physical health and nutrition have on student achievement, it is advised to create a school culture of healthy eating habits while encourages students and families to take advantages of school nutrition efforts such as free or reduced breakfast and lunches.”

10 Minutes

Slide 31

Solutions

- Early Intervention: Educational Interventions
 - Teaching parenting skills
 - Teaching values and behaviors that promote school readiness and success
 - Reinforcing what teachers are doing in school
 - Access to high quality childcare and high quality education programs for 3-4 year olds
 - Academic and language support programs that lead to English proficiency for ELL students
 - Incentives for teachers to earn ESL license
 - Emphasize importance of attendance and student engagement

Script: “Early intervention efforts should be multi-faceted for maximum affect. Providing resources for parents to help themselves with their parenting efforts will help promote parent accountability and reinforce what teachers are doing in class. Also, it is advised to have familiarity and knowledge about the quality of childcare programs within the community in order to refer and/ advocate for change to help promote early education efforts. For student populations high in English Language Learners, it is encouraged to advocate for district resources to supply training for teachers to earn their ESL licensure to better serve the needs. These efforts in conjunction with one another, will help improve attendance as it promotes school engagement. In situations where attendance is a chronic concern, it is advised to make several efforts to contact the parent to understand attendance issues which may be due to a health impairment or transportation issues to name a few.”

10 Minutes

Slide 32

Solutions

- Early Interventions: Psychosocial/Mental Health Interventions
 - Promoting home-school connectedness
 - Addressing stereotype threat
 - Raising awareness
 - Teaching coping strategies

Script: “Early intervention efforts, as stated previously, involves a holistic and multifaceted approach. As such, it is advised that students be appropriately screened when social, emotional or behavioral concerns are present. Considering a students’ cultural background and other familial factors will help to promote an understanding of the presenting mental health concerns in addition to promoting home-school connectedness. Possible strategies to use in counseling sessions with students affected by the achievement gap involve promoting and teaching coping strategies to help mitigate possible stereotype threats, or the idea that minority students who are aware of negative stereotypes about their group’s intelligence may feel great pressure to not reveal their own intellectual shortcomings for fear of reinforcing the stereotypes. The effects of stereotype threat can be avoided by profiting from education that shares and reinforces the important values of the students. Strategies mentioned in the research to help students with this imbalance between self-concept and stereotyped group and potential, include adaptive re-appraisals of student’s situations, such as attributing stress from stereotypes to other more common sources such as the stress of transition or change, encouraging humor, and finally increasing awareness of stereotype threat and how it may be impacting performance.”

10 Minutes

Slide 33

Parent Training

- Parent Involvement, Training, and Awareness
 - Encouraging parents to provide verbally engaging and stimulating environments at home
 - Encouraging parents to provide supportive, responsive relationships with their children
 - Schools providing opportunities to communicate with families and increase involvement
 - Provide families with training in these areas and get them involved to help them feel more comfortable, confident, and empowered

Script: “Parent involvement is a crucial aspect of mitigating the achievement gap. By providing access to parent training programs and/ facilitating a ‘bring your parent to school day,’ or another similar activity can simultaneously involve parents and in a fun and engaging manner while involving the parent in the child’s learning environment. During these times wherein parents are present at the school site, it is advised to organize with administrators, teachers, and other relevant staff to help disseminate the importance of parent involvement.”

10 Minutes

Slide 34

The School Psychologist's Role

- Utilizing consultation and interpersonal skills with families and students undergoing challenges to increase intervention success
- Culturally sensitive assessments that consider all aspects of the child's background
- Advocating tiered academic and behavior interventions and academic screening
- Consulting and distributing information, literature and resources to families
- Regularly reviewing literature to determine current cultural issues

Script: *“The school psychologists’ role involves many approaches. First off, it is important to utilize our consultation and interpersonal skills with families and students undergoing challenges to increase intervention success. It is also imperative that we use culturally sensitive assessments that consider all aspects of the child’s background, advocate for tiered academic and behavior interventions and academic screening, consult and distribute information, provide literature and resources to families, and regularly review the literature to determine current cultural issues.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 35

The School Psychologist's Role, cont.

- Advocating empirically supported interventions for student based on areas of strengths and weaknesses
- Consult with teachers regarding student diversity and differences, their influences on learning and strategies
- Promote diversity awareness
- Provide counseling and mental health services for students related to stereotypes of other struggles related to minority or low-income population (Appel & Kronberger, 2012)
- Provide training to students for coping and resiliency strategies and techniques (Appel & Kronberger, 2012).

Script: "In addition the school psychologist should advocate for empirically supported interventions for students based on areas of strengths and weaknesses. During this process it is important to consult with teachers regarding student diversity and differences and how that influences learning and strategies or accommodations provided. School psychologists can also promote diversity awareness by proposing cultural celebrations that honor students of diversity including special needs population, and racial and/ethnic minorities. Furthermore facilitating the pre-referral process for mental health services will help ensure students affected by the achievement gap are provided with coping and resiliency strategies and techniques."

10 Minutes

Slide 36

A Social Justice Perspective

- What is social justice?
 - ▣ Issues of equity, equality, and possibility for all (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007)
- Solutions based on social justice
 - ▣ Social justice involves holistic reform and school personnel to be agents of change
 - ▣ School-family-community collaboration is key
 - ▣ Developing understanding of cultural differences of population served
 - ▣ Encouraging school policy activism for both staff, students, and families

Script: *“Another possible solution to such a situation may include a social justice approach wherein student expectations are high, and emphasis is placed on advocating on behalf of at-risk students and their families, thus building community and trust between home and school, and increasing school engagement.”*

10 Minutes

Slide 37

Thank you for attending!

Questions?
Comments?

3 Minutes

REFERENCES

- American Civil Liberties Union. (2008). What is the school-to-prison pipeline? Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/racial-justice/what-school-prison-pipeline>
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