EDITOR'S NOTE
Creating more diverse, equitable, and inclusive schools can help every student reach their full potential. This Spotlight will empower you with insights for promoting DE&I at both the macro and micro levels; an analysis of the challenges facing advancements in equity; updates on advocacy efforts supporting legal evidence for racially inclusive and culturally responsive teaching; professional development strategies to support equitable K-12 decision-making; and more.

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What do we mean when we talk about making schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive? Generally speaking, we’re talking about making sure all students—especially those who’ve been historically underserved by public schools—receive an education that will help them reach their full potential.

So, how do we achieve this?

Over the last few years, researchers and practitioners have increasingly turned to diversity, equity, and inclusion—or DEI—work, meaning designing and implementing policies, programs, and initiatives at the district or school level to resolve inequities. Educators might, for example, buy more classroom books with stories that better reflect students’ racial diversity. Or leaders might mandate anti-bias training to prevent stereotyping that can threaten student progress, such as setting lower expectations for students of color.

On the micro level, these initiatives can open educators’ eyes to just how inequitable schools can be and bring into focus how to start resolving inequities.

Here’s the catch: DEI work is just one step toward reaching the macro goal of making public education more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

You can do all the right training, buy all the right books, change all the right policies, and you’ll still be working within a system that wasn’t designed to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

Sometimes, schools call themselves a success because their students of color excel academically—yet, their courses are structured around a white, Eurocentric perspective that deprives them and their peers of opportunities to explore more cultural backgrounds.

Reaching that macro goal hinges on effectively carrying out DEI work at the micro level.

Now that more districts have committed to this work, even in the face of legislative hurdles, we’ve learned a thing or two about DEI best practices and pitfalls to avoid.

Before we get to those, though, let’s take a closer look at DEI work across the nation’s schools.

Taking stock of the diffuse DEI landscape

We don’t know the exact number of districts that are investing in DEI efforts because what districts actually call those initiatives vary so widely. But we do know they have made investments well before 2020, according to researchers.

We also know that in the summer of 2020, driven by the murder of George Floyd and the historic national outcry for a racial reckoning in public institutions, district leaders and teachers’ unions increasingly spoke of their commitment to DEI.

Today, there’s more anti-racist education literature of varying quality on district leaders’ bookshelves than ever before. More districts are looking inward to build out their own initiatives with local community support and rejecting third-party DEI consultants peddling quick fixes.

And district leaders are taking a closer look at internal data to determine the best course of action to manage disparities—such as whether students of color are being disproportionately harmed by discipline policies, said Decoteau Irby, an associate professor of educational policy studies and qualitative researcher at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Even educators have a strong sense that this work is coming along.

In a nationally representative EdWeek Research Center June survey of 1,897 educators, 78 percent agreed that in the past two years, their district or school has made progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

But there are caveats.

Between August 2020 and June 2022, the EdWeek Research Center found that educator respondents who felt comfortable running and/or prepared to run an anti-racist classroom, school, or district dropped by 10 percentage points.

That is a concern. Tremendous pushback against all things DEI began just under two years ago. Starting in January 2021, 42 states introduced bills or took other steps to limit classroom conversations and staff training on racism and sexism. And between July 2021 and March of this year, book bans—specifically books with LGBTQ characters, people of color, and those that address race and racism—were instituted in 86 school districts across the country, affecting 2 million students, according to PEN America.

Researchers and practitioners alike recognize how destructive this opposition can be toward meeting DEI goals. But they also believe it sends an urgent message to forge ahead.

“The acceleration, the increased effort, the increased interest and time and commitment into anti-racism and racial-justice work resulted in a [public and legislative] pushback,” Irby said. “The pushback is, in and of itself, a sign that we were on the verge of, and, in some cases, were making substantial progress in terms of addressing these issues.”

In spite of this opposition, if districts want to work to make schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, what exactly must they do?
I’ve talked to a lot of students about how they just don’t feel safe voicing their opinion, being truly who they are, because the teacher isn’t creating that conducive space for them.”

HANNAH PALMER
High school student, Pittsburgh, PA

Local data, in-house expertise

Daniel Bullock has led equity efforts for Durham public schools in North Carolina since 2017. He has found that mandatory districtwide workshops and professional-development sessions during which administrators and classroom teachers analyze district data produce concrete results. The educators become better equipped to identify disparities, which then opens up conversations on how to address disparity.

For example, the district’s student survey data presented at one of these sessions revealed that English-learners and special education students experienced lower levels of self-efficacy than any other student group. Teachers were then able to discuss whether those labels are what led students to feel less capable, because they imply a deficit. Or perhaps they contribute to lower expectations educators set for these students.

“Let’s understand how inequity is manifesting in the system and how we modify the system to be more equitable,” Bullock said of the data-driven DEI approach. “It brings people’s defenses down and serves as a starting point.”

He’s also been intentional about hearing from local community leaders, getting another look at students and families’ experiences with the school district, good and bad.

That sort of in-house, local approach as opposed to an over reliance on third-party outsiders is an effective way to strengthen DEI work and shield it from naysayers, the researchers said.

Bullock, who was recently promoted to executive director for equity and professional development for the entire district, said he received support from his district’s top leaders throughout his work.

And that’s critical. To engage in DEI work effectively at the micro level, the organizational resources and support need to be in place.

Real commitment requires real investment

Across the country, those who serve as equity officers or in similar roles are, anecdotally, experienced, credentialed people of color—in fact, they tend to be women of color. Despite their expertise, equity officers sometimes have their judgment questioned by district leaders, and it’s not uncommon for equity officers to face other forms of workplace hostility.

These leaders need continuous, intentional support from district leadership, said Zachary Casey, the chair of educational studies at Rhodes College in Tennessee.

Mentorship within and beyond the district, financial resources to support the initiatives, and the authority to launch innovative programs with specialized personnel, like data analysts, are all key to building a successful program, researchers say. Absent these guardrails, equity leaders can suffer burnout, and districts can fall prey to taking performative rather than substantive action.

At a school where he was hired to provide equity consulting, Casey’s team found Black students were disproportionately disciplined for tardiness. His research prompted the team to suggest modifying the school’s tardiness policy to account for students’ home responsibilities, such as having to drop off or pick up younger siblings because of family work schedules. Changing the tardiness policy would be a substantive action to resolve the disparity in question.

But the school’s principal didn’t feel they had the capacity to take on a tardiness policy change themselves. Instead, the principal requested training on stereotype threat from Casey’s team. Such training could be enlightening but in this instance is a misdiagnosis that doesn’t resolve the core problem.

Effective DEI work at the micro level requires substantive actions and organizational capacity, Irby said.

Designing with equity in mind

Now, let’s say best practices are in place, and you’re seeing results at the micro level: Black students are no longer disproportionately suspended compared with their peers. Or you’ve hired more teachers of color at your school. Or more students have access to high-quality tutoring programs.

The next step is for educators to then realize the larger systemic issue at play—how, even with these signs of progress, the very system they are trying to make equitable wasn’t designed with equity in mind.

In their research, Irby and Casey have found that a growing number of educators doing DEI work have come to recognize more deeply the flawed policy legacy of overemphasizing standardized-test scores.

Test scores might show patterns of academic achievement, but they can’t speak to students’ aspirations, to their sense of self, to their sense of community. Relying on them too much can cause district leaders to neglect other elements that contribute to equity when they’re budgeting—beautiful playgrounds, art and music classes, extracurriculars.

Instead, district policymaking should aim for a more holistic measure of success, such as how much students feel they belong in school and how well curriculum reflects students’ cultural backgrounds, they said.

Let’s put it all together with an example.

Say students of color are underrepresented in Advanced Placement classes. A micro-level DEI goal would be to remove systemic barriers these students face when trying to enroll in these classes, such as academic-course tracking and teacher recommendations. Remove such requirements, then ensure students get ample information and resources to enroll.

But a goal that gets at the macro question of how to make schools more diverse, equitable, and inclusive would be to make sure that regardless of whether students choose to take AP courses, they still have access to, rigorous coursework. That includes access to courses like ethnic studies where diverse cultural backgrounds are recognized as foundations of knowledge.

One way to measure how well you’re doing on these micro and macro goals is to ask the students. They know.

Hannah Palmer, a recent high school graduate from Pittsburgh, started a social-justice club at her high school. There, she led professional-development training for teachers to better understand what it takes to support students of color and called on her district to provide more training on how to address conversations around race and racism in class. Her goal was to avoid what she experienced in 9th grade, when her white peers felt it was
OK to use the N-word openly in class because the audio-book version of *To Kill a Mockingbird* they were listening to kept using it.

“I’ve talked to a lot of students about how they just don’t feel safe voicing their opinion, being truly who they are, because the teacher isn’t creating that conducive space for them,” Palmer said.

It’s one reason why she hopes to work in DEI leadership in K-12 schools in the future.

“I just want to diversify curriculum so that all students are heard and represented in school,” Palmer said. “I believe that every student has the right to a quality education where they feel safe. So, that’s kind of what’s keeping me going.”

As educators grapple with what it means to make schools diverse, equitable, and inclusive, they have to hold two truths in mind: Yes, DEI work at their local school or district is important. No, it’s not automatically going to overhaul the public education system.

That overhaul involves a whole new mindset for what public education is supposed to offer students.

So let’s get more educators, policymakers, and even researchers thinking about that macro-level goal and how to achieve it.
When Did Equity Become a ‘Trigger’ Word?

By Stephen Sawchuk

Do you know what the trigger word down here is? 'Equity,’” Joseph Cousins, a minister in Cherokee County, Ga., told me about a year ago. “To me, equity means fairness, compassion, goodness, honesty, decency.”

I had been reporting a story about school boards’ passing resolutions restricting how schools can teach about race, gender, and other topics. And, as Cousins predicted, hot on the heels of the “critical race theory” legislative wrecking ball, equity had suddenly become a code word for scary-sounding things: race-related trainings, quotas, “Marxist” theory.

A case in point: A school board member in Oregon told me a few days later that he understood equity as “trying to force the same set of outcomes for students,” which, he said, was different from giving them equal opportunities to succeed.

As someone with many years’ experience writing about schools, I found this distinction puzzling, as it surely must be for anyone working in schools so far this century. That’s because the notion that schools should get students to reach a basic level of academic mastery is not at all a foreign one. It has actually been baked into federal education law for years.

Two decades ago, the No Child Left Behind law took effect. It required states to ensure that, within a 12-year period, all students in grades 3-8 would attain grade-level proficiency in math and reading. It put significant pressure on school boards and educators to reach those goals. The law was enacted with huge bipartisan support.

I feel confident in asserting that President George W. Bush, the Republican president who proposed the outline for the law, would reject the idea that his signature domestic achievement was part and parcel of race absolutism or a redistribution scheme. And the core idea was renewed in 2015, again with large bipartisan support, when Congress replaced the law with the Every Student Succeeds Act.

What does it mean that a commitment that was eagerly embraced is now so suspect?

How data help us to see inequality

The brilliant insight that equity is built into the most consequential piece of K-12 education legislation since the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act is not my own. I first heard it mentioned by Luvelle Brown, the superintendent of New York’s Ithaca City school district, on a podcast hosted by the Education Trust.

Brown, a Black man, grew up in a central Virginia school district. There, he told me in a later conversation, he often felt invisible. “I was a young person who felt marginalized and felt oppressed. I’m one of a few people who look like me [back when I was a student] who even survived school,” he said.

That’s why, as an administrator, he found the NCLB law—with its explicit requirement that schools do right by Black students, students with disabilities, and other underserved groups of students—so revolutionary.

“It was the first time, from my perspective, that the law required school districts to see us, just to see us. And to begin to hold schools accountable for seeing us,” he said.

The law had plenty of well-documented problems. It never had popular buy-in. It relied heavily on testing, put scores of fussy rules in place, distrusted educators, and underemphasized how to empower teachers and administrators to meet its exacting requirements. All that engendered a lot of rage—some of it from advocates for Black students, not just from harried administrators. Such problems often distracted from the law’s core equity promise.

But what the law did do was force a conversation about disparate achievement patterns that had been long ignored, even in supposedly integrated schools. Under the law, districts and principals were supposed to analyze and investigate these patterns and evolve solutions to fix them.

That remains a very powerful way of analyzing how schools are doing, and it’s one that school district equity officers say they follow today. They look at the budget, examine how resources are allocated, and investigate patterns of which teachers, schools, and special programs students have access to. Then, they brainstorm how to rejigger resources and patterns to help more students achieve.

This data-informed approach can be used to examine policies that rarely attract much attention—like student lunch debt and bus routes—all the way up to the hottest of hot-button issues, like student-discipline patterns and enrollment in selective programs and high schools.

The Ithaca district starts off its conversations about equity with the data. The district has an extensive dashboard that crunches the numbers on graduation rates, test scores, attendance, and many more granular factors. (At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it even calculated how many days each school was forced back into remote learning.)

Data orient the conversations that principals have with their teams—and that Brown has with the community, too.

“We say we’re committing to use our data to learn, not judge; that shifts the conversation,” Brown said. “I know how to point to data to tell..."
a story about how schools are failing kids—but I also know how to look at it to know how to be better for people the next day.”

How much does terminology matter?

Given that using data to ask questions about obstacles to educational attainment isn’t new, why has its use in the pursuit of equity suddenly become so suspect? For one thing, political actors and think tanks have recently sought to redefine the idea of equity as somehow inconsistent with American principles.

In a recent nationally representative survey, the EdWeek Research Center queried educators on whether they saw “equality” as distinct from the term “equity.” The responses were telling. Almost 8 in 10 educators agreed with this definition: “Equality is about giving all students the same opportunities; equity is about outcomes and giving some students, who have tended to have lower performance or higher needs, additional resources.” About three-quarters of them said their districts had committed to one or both.

But the respondents were not as clear about what this meant in practice.

“Equity has turned into segregation and divides people,” one respondent said. Another offered this framing: “In my view, the right wing has created a false debate between equity and equality as a means to continue to deny the most needy the support and help they need.”

The definitional issue is part of the problem, one educator noted: “Districts need to define ‘equity’ and communicate this definition to our stakeholders, so that critics are not doing that.”

This is perhaps not surprising when you consider our culture’s larger problems trying to make these distinctions tangible. Internet memes trying to illustrate the difference between equality vs. equity usually feature kids standing on boxes or next to evergreens that look suspiciously like Shel Silverstein’s Giving Tree. But it’s much harder knowing what these concepts translate to when applied to real-world problems and policies.

This was always a problem with the NCLB law, too: In its focus on penalties, it set equity goals without defining equity—or without providing a language, vocabulary, or defined skill set on how educators were supposed to reach those goals.

Many years later, studies suggest the law did prompt some positive effects—especially on young students’ math scores. But the law didn’t fundamentally change the fact that we continue to fail to give students a “fair playing field”—whether we measure that on the front end or back end. Many of our state and local education funding formulas are regressive, for example. Districts’ boundary lines often exacerbate patterns of housing segregation. Low-income students continue to get more underprepared and out-of-field teachers.

In today’s political environment, system leaders who take on these challenges face not only the problem of designing new policies but also in trying to communicate them without setting off a firestorm.

Fabienne Doucet, a New York University associate professor who studies urban education in the context of equity, said most district leaders who prioritize equity are upfront about the work they’re doing. Given the current climate of mistrust activist groups are fomenting—like the recent, dangerous accusation that educators who support LGBTQ-inclusive policies are in fact “groomers”—that’s a best practice.

“It’s part of a broader ethos of trust,” said Doucet, who is also the executive director of the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. “Smart leaders say, I want you to know exactly what I mean, and what I’m talking about, and why I think it’s beneficial. They don’t want to be stealth.”

Superintendent Brown agrees. He doesn’t shy away from using the term “anti-racist.” But, he said, sometimes leaders do have to talk in what might be called different registers, so that people who aren’t familiar with the ideas have a starting place. For example, he said differentiating instruction—a concept most parents agree with—is actually one form of equity, of giving each student what they need to succeed.

Often, he said, his job also means meeting critics on their terms and showing them a different way of thinking.

He recounted how one parent, who objected to steps the district had taken to affirm gender-nonconforming students, marched into a public meeting quoting the Bible. Brown, who grew up attending Sunday services with his family like clockwork, met the challenge.

“So, I had to really value and affirm this person,” Brown said. “I had to say, ‘I see you and I, too, love that book. It was the first text that was ever given to me.’

“But I also know it was used to enslave people and my ancestors,” he continued. “And this person looked at me, and he had a hard time de-
bating that. I could see him starting to shift, to see that these young people are human, too, and want to be seen for who they are.”

**The fears that drive pushback to equity**

There’s one part of Rev. Cousin’s earlier quote that I haven’t yet mentioned. When I asked him why he thought people were afraid of equity, he said: “I think they have taken it to mean someone’s going to take something away.”

It’s a clear echo of what educators told EdWeek. And it’s born out of the idea that educating all students well is somehow a zero-sum game, in which some must fall behind so others can advance. Doucet told me those fears have deep roots in the U.S. racial and class structures that have dominated social organization.

“It’s one of those fundamental principles or tenets of the philosophy—there is scarcity and hierarchy, and order needs to be maintained for things to function as they should,” she said.

But I can see why such fears also occur among those who would otherwise consider themselves supportive of integration, fairness, and equity: Sometimes, doing so means discarding received wisdom about what “a good classroom” or “a good school” looks like.

Ithaca faced this when trying to rethink math classes a few years ago. The district decided to give all students access to a solid math sequence beginning in middle school, rather than splitting students into remedial and gifted tracks. (The difficult-to-pull-off idea hasn’t been empirically studied, and it has generated howls of criticism where it’s been tried—including in Ithaca, initially, though things have since settled down.) Embracing new ways of doing things, especially when they seem inconvenient or foreign, is uncomfortable and challenging.

There are ways to overcome this: Smart district leaders are clear about what the data mean, how they define equity, and how they build up supporters of the work in their school systems, creating a critical mass to counter the critics who will never buy in. Another strategy is more pragmatic: to make the case that the new policies benefit everyone, Doucet said.

“If your logic is there are winners and losers, then somehow, I have to compel you that you will be among the winners,” Doucet summarized. “I wish that weren’t the case, that we could just appeal to people’s better angels.”

**Mixed feelings about equity’s place in federal law**

As this suggests, the work of equity these days has largely fallen on the shoulders of committed and politically savvy leaders. The federal K-12 law was supposed to give them political cover to do hard things, but increasingly, it feels as though that shield is crumbling.

It’s not just the new state laws that seek to restrict conversations about race and gender and the chilling effect that will have on classrooms: It’s our federal commitment, too. The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, or ESSA, is much less heavy-handed about consequences than its predecessor, and its enforcement by the last two administrations, especially on data reporting and school improvement, has been uneven. It’s simply easier for districts and states to avoid the tough conversations.

What’s more, not many people appear to want to preserve the law’s equity features.

The EdWeek Research Center survey found that more than a quarter of educators said that there was nothing positive about the NCLB or ESSA—the most popular response of the possible choices. Thirty-eight percent of respondents cited the law’s annual testing requirement as its “most negative outcome.”

Interestingly, about 1 in 5 survey-takers cited the laws’ requirements to disaggregate student data as its most positive feature—and those data, of course, were only possible thanks to the annual testing. This dissonance is a clear sign for concern.

Perhaps the pandemic has exacerbated fatigue and dissatisfaction with our current federal accountability structure. Perhaps the explanation is simpler: an acknowledgement that the law was never enough to shore up the disparities in what kids bring to school. Perhaps, even in education, we truly are now less committed to equity.

Yet, we know that much of the work of equality or equity are things we can do now—things we still can control.

We can ensure that all students receive, for example, early reading instruction that aligns with what we know from scientific studies. We can give them a curriculum that affirms their backgrounds and traditions while also expanding their horizons. We can ensure that they receive an instructional program that avoids fads and instead reflects cognitive science about how kids learn. And we can take steps to make sure students are taught by well-prepared teachers who are ready to deliver that curriculum.

So, let’s get to work tackling those factors, one by one.

For now, after all, it’s the law.

**Additional Resource**

To view the full chart data that accompanies this article, click [here](#).
Censoring Race and Racism Lessons Defies Best Practice and May Be Unlawful, Report Argues

By Eesha Pendharkar

When students from all backgrounds, particularly historically marginalized ones, see their culture represented in curricula and feel a sense of belonging, their educational experience improves.

Taking away these opportunities may be running afoul of federal law.

That’s the case made by the National Education Association and the Law Firm Anti-Racism Alliance, a collaboration of about 300 law firms formed to promote racial equity, in a new report. The two groups reviewed academic papers, historical context, and federal laws to understand the legality and importance of culturally responsive and inclusive education.

The report amasses evidence of the positive academic and social emotional impacts of culturally responsive teaching and racially inclusive education and it contends that inclusive education is supported by the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment, the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The laws and regulations being passed across the country restricting certain conversations about race and racism in the classroom are most likely unlawful, the report says. Republican lawmakers in 17 states have imposed these restrictions through laws or department of education policies, and 42 states have introduced similar bills, according to an Education Week analysis.

“Policymakers and lawmakers across the country are really attempting to censor teachers, attempting to prohibit the kind of classroom instruction that we know is the best educational approach,” said Danielle Davis, staff counsel for the NEA. “They’re stoking unlawful discrimination or prohibiting honest conversations in the classroom about our history, I think, with the goal of undermining public education and our nation’s educators.”

She said she hopes the new report can be useful to members who want to “stand up for students’ rights to a full and complete education they need to thrive as citizens in our multi-racial democracy” or challenge efforts to “silence certain voices and histories in our schools.”

Proponents of these laws have held that certain conversations about race and racism “indoctrinate children.” A lawsuit filed by a parent group in Williamson County, Tenn., complains, for example, that the Wit and Wisdom curriculum the district is using is “replete with racial discrimination, age-inappropriate material that causes children guilt, anguish, and other forms of psychological harm, it discusses the United States as an irredeemably racist country, and is overall hyper-focused on racial indoctrination.”

Students in ethnic studies classes have better academic outcomes, report says

Students of color who participate in ethnic studies are “more academically engaged, develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and personal empowerment, perform better academically and graduate at higher rates,” according to the report, which quotes almost a dozen studies over the past three decades that analyzed the academic performance of different racial and ethnic groups when culturally responsive teaching was applied to literature, social studies, and even math curricula.

Culturally responsive education includes educational practices and curricula that promote all cultures, not just the dominant culture. For example, Mexican-American studies or Asian-American studies, which offer a different context as opposed to a general history class.

Culturally responsive education is not the same as critical race theory, which is an academic framework developed to explain the systemic nature of racism and how it impacts different aspects such as education, housing, and the criminal justice system. “Critical race theory” became a term co-opted by proponents of these laws in early 2021 to describe what they’re opposing despite the fact that a vast majority of schools don’t teach the academic framework directly to students.

In culturally responsive classes, studies show that students developed a stronger sense of personal empowerment and performed better academically and graduated at higher rates, the studies found.

“Of course, it has positive effects for students of color, but all students actually benefit in those ways,” Davis said. “It’s important to emphasize that this is something that educators have long known.”
Being culturally inclusive while teaching also helps all students develop critical thinking because they ask students to examine presuppositions, to be cognizant of social problems, and even to engage in action to address these issues, the report says. By doing this, the lessons also promote students viewing education as a tool that can be used to overcome societal issues that might be affecting them.

Some proponents of the laws that aim to restrict conversations about race and racism have claimed that these discussions make white students “hate themselves” or feel guilty about actions committed by other members of their race in the past.

But the report argues that anti-racist education is not based on making anyone feel discriminated against or guilty, but on fostering “an inclusive and equitable educational environment.”

The purpose of education that reflects perspectives and voices of people from different backgrounds, and particularly historically marginalized people, is “designed to enable students to remedy the effects of past discrimination against BIPOC communities, for [t]he history books do not tell stories of white children struggling to attend black schools,” the report says.

**Long legal roots for inclusive, culturally responsive education**

The First and Fourteenth Amendments and the Civil Rights Act all encourage access to diverse perspectives, freedom from discrimination based on race and ethnicity, and the right to an equitable classroom environment, the report says, based on analyses of court cases and the laws themselves.

Twenty-six states also have equal rights guaranteed in their constitutions that go above and beyond the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

“To the extent an argument is being made that inclusive education is unlawful, that is false,” Davis said.

The dozens of successful and unsuccessful legal attempts made over the past year to censor educators and create a chilling effect on any discussions of race and racism likely violate the same laws that protect culturally responsive and racially inclusive education, the report argues.

While K-12 educators have limited First Amendment rights while in the classroom because states and school boards generally control curriculum, students continue to have rights to “receive information and ideas” under the First Amendment and the right not to be treated differently because of their race under the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment, Davis said. These new state laws run the risk of violating those rights, she said.

Wisconsin Institute of Law and Liberty, a conservative law group, does not support the anti-CRT bills, but a group spokesperson took issue with some of the new report’s assertions. Cory Brewer, an associate counsel with the group, said the equal protection clause must be colorblind, so “any curriculum that teaches that people are substantially defined by their race, or that their perspectives are substantially formed by their race, would fail to treat children as unique individuals deserving of respect and dignity.”

Brewer also said she thought the report mischaracterizes the First Amendment protections.

“It’s a mischaracterization to say that the First Amendment and equal protection clause require that you either talk about the existence of slavery or not at all,” she said. “There’s a way to provide a full and honest education in a way that is reflective of all U.S. history.”

Some state laws explicitly ban The 1619 Project, an effort by the New York Times to reframe history and focus on the legacy of slavery.

While states can control curriculum, they can’t censor it for political reasons that oppose what’s best for students based on pedagogy, according to the NEA and lawyers group. That suggests a solid basis to argue that laws that ban specific curricula like the 1619 project “run afoul of this basic requirement,” they conclude.

Another common critique of the restrictive-speech laws, made in lawsuits filed against them in Arizona, Oklahoma, and other states, have called the laws vague and overbroad, with plaintiffs and legal experts claiming they’re often written that way by design. The report bolsters that objection, noting that the U.S. Supreme Court has set precedent that where laws invite “wholly subjective judgments” without well-defined meaning or boundaries, they run afoul of constitutional guarantees, the report says.

“It’s causing a lot of confusion and fear. And that’s kind of the point, right?” Davis said. “Fortunately for us, we know there’s a body of case law that says if a law is so vague, such that someone can’t determine whether or not their behavior is lawful, then that law is impermissible.”
How Carefully Tailored PD Can Help Principals Become Equity Leaders

By Denisa R. Superville

Principals don’t always get deep training on how to address inequities in schools before they start the job. And districts are still working out how to fill that gap.

Jennifer Clayton, an associate professor of educational leadership and administration at George Washington University, examined a professional development program to help principals become better equity leaders in five Virginia districts. The program was a partnership with the districts and a local university, none of which were named in the study.

The observations and responses from the principal-participants, published in the Journal of Educational Administration, give some insights into what can help principals become more skilled at identifying inequities in their schools and devising strategies to address them.

Focus on program design

The six-month PD program—the first cohort entered in 2019, before the pandemic—was designed by a team that included principals, district administrators, and university faculty, a cross section of stakeholders who brought important and diverse perspectives to the table in the development phase.

The design team’s makeup allowed people from different roles “to say, ‘This is what I think principals need to know,’” or “This is a way that we might design a particular activity for school leaders for this experience,” or “This might be too much for principals to have on their plates right now,” Clayton said.

The program included opportunities for personal reflection and practical strategies that principals could implement immediately—helping to address a common shortcoming in PD, which is that it can be heavily theoretical and far removed from the practical realities of educators’ daily lives.

The program also required that principals tackle an equity-related concern in their schools, and provided chances for them to get feedback from colleagues.

It also continually operated on feedback from participants which the administrators collected and used to make tweaks. The small scale—15 participants—also made it easier to respond to participants and make changes to improve the experience, Clayton said.

Personal reflection is a key component

Principals had to be vulnerable in the program, sharing personal stories of their first encounters with race.

That vulnerability helped school leaders to examine their personal experiences and how those experiences influence their leadership.

“You really need to help people begin with their own personal story,” Clayton said. “We found power in principals being able to share their stories, being able to share with each other the moments they began to understand race in their own lives.”

Vulnerability is also important, not just for the participants, but also the district leaders higher up in the hierarchy, said Clayton. If a superintendent, for example, is also open about their own personal stories that signals tremendous support for principals and those at the school-level who are working on equity initiatives.

“I think if we approach this with a toolkit mentality, we are missing the major ingredient, which is the humans who will do the work,” Clayton said.

Networks build support

Research on effective school leadership has touted the important role that peer networks play in helping school leaders deal with the isolation of the job.

That’s also the case with equity. Principals in the program highlighted how they relied on fellow participants for support and learning. Those relationships became even more vital during the pandemic, Clayton said.

While some principals said they had initial misgivings, the common themes, and, as one principal put it, “the authenticity” of the participants, helped their growth.

Surrounded by a group of like-minded colleagues, participants said they gained courage to approach issues they may have been hesitant to address even as they acknowledged those issues needed attention, Clayton said.

“I think the part that was perhaps unexpected was the way that the network actually helped bolster their confidence in speaking out and taking action toward equity,” Clayton said.

“The network, including principals from multiple school districts, began to give people this boost of confidence to go do the...
things they knew needed to be done, to actually be able to take that risk and be vulnerable in taking some of the steps that they did. That was a little bit surprising.”

Their circle of support also expanded beyond their individual schools to school and district leaders in other systems.

**Real-time practice strengthens learning**

The program included chances for principals to try out in their schools, in real time, what they were absorbing in their sessions. Participants didn’t just learn about testing for implicit bias in theory, for example. They were able to take that learning to their schools and conduct the tests with staff.

They were also asked to highlight an equity-focused undertaking, record it, and share the impact with their colleagues. Examples included an equity-focused book study, student-shadowing, and creating “equity-focused groups” on their campuses.

The practice-focused nature of the program is important, Clayton said.

“It has to really come from their own school’s data stories,” she said. “Principals—and teachers—are so short on time that to have them engage in these sort of hypothetical scenarios is less immediately useful to them than if you have them work with data, or work with students or issues that their particular schools face.”

How to maintain the success of an equity-focused professional learning program is still a question, said Clayton.

But a lot of things have changed in districts since the program started in 2019, she said. Many more districts have created positions or offices designed to address inequities, which has created greater opportunities for equity-related initiatives to take root.

The pandemic and the national reckoning on race have created additional challenges for school leaders.

Creating opportunities for “graduates” to continue to meet and share ideas can help principals in the long run.

The principals themselves offered suggestions, including creating teams of participants that would comprise teachers, assistant principals, and teacher-leaders—key players, in addition to principals, in developing and leading equitable practices on campus.

Clayton also stressed cross-departmental collaboration, which allows for “cross-pollination” of ideas and for new and different perspectives to emerge.
Dr. Betty Hill oversees an initiative at Columbus City Schools that focuses on developing innovative, relevant, and rewarding learning experiences that enable the skills and mindsets needed for the development of the whole child, including the arts.

"Integration of traditional academic learning and the arts are important to the educational development of students," says Dr. Hill. “It is essential to speak to our student’s needs, understand what is important to them, what’s relevant and rewarding, and engage that in educational spaces. The Guardrails for the Whole Child demonstrate the support of the initiative from the Board to the classroom.”

Dr. Hill also ensures that the new curriculum is inclusive and culturally responsive, integrating additional support for English Language Learners and the LGBTQ+ community. “We want to be inclusive of all students as we develop curriculum and resources. It is important to be inclusive and provide equitable access for all”.

The curriculum will also address the growing need for social-emotional learning (SEL). According to Dr. Hill, “It is equally important to speak to our student’s social and emotional development and understand that the arts are uniquely positioned to do just that.”

She has seen the importance of integration of traditional academic learning and the arts to support student well-being post-pandemic when a dance group who hadn’t been together for an entire year returned for their final concert and produced a documentary on the experience. “We interviewed the students to talk about what it meant to them. It spoke to their state of mind and emotions. I cried through the entire thing,” admits Dr. Hill. “It was beautiful, and it helps you understand why it is so important to enable students’ engagement in the arts. For some of them, the only way they could express themselves was to get up on the stage and perform, and it came out of every pore of their body.”
Portrait of a Graduate

This strategic overhaul of the curriculum to refocus on the whole child stems from the district’s larger initiative of painting a Portrait of a Graduate. CCS worked with more than 150 internal and external stakeholders with diverse perspectives to identify six key attributes. These attributes: Adaptability, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Global Empathy, and Technology, aim to prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

CCS has also identified four strategic priorities, each with individual goals and objectives, that will guide the various teams and stakeholders over the next five years to support the district’s integration of traditional academic learning and the arts, mission, vision, and Portrait of a Graduate.

To effectively paint the Portrait of a Graduate, Dr. Hill’s critical role in this initiative was to oversee the development of the curriculum writing and report on the progress pertaining to the implementation of the arts aligned to the six key attributes. “We have 7 to 8 meetings per week with curriculum writers and pilot teams,” says Dr. Hill.

The District piloted the PreK–5 curriculum in 5 of its 75 elementary schools in December 2021. In January 2022, a diverse team of 30 curriculum writers began to develop the content for grades 6–12.

“The District will implement a similar curricular model, however, with an increased focus on embedded technology, internships, community partnerships, and project-based learning,” explains Dr. Hill. “In addition, the writing team is tasked with completing a pilot model for implementation in the Fall of 2022–2023. The PreK–5 writing team is in Phase II of their project and completing the needed content for the full implementation in the Fall, which will have embedded technology.”
Technology is 21st Century Art

“Extensions of this curricular initiative include embedded and emerging technology,” shares Dr. Hill. “Traditionally, in the arts curriculum, reference to technology was an entity in itself. However, with the district’s strategic plan enabling equitable access, we are embedding technology into the curriculum and focusing on more profound learning experiences including technology versus the focus on technological devices.”

As the District continues to phase in the curriculum, Dr. Hill has ensured that some technology pieces are already in place, including 1:1 devices for all students and providing all 4th graders with the music program Soundtrap for when they begin their instrumental unit. “Technology was an elusive instructional tool in arts classrooms, that thing that we never had. We had our traditional tools but little technology.”

The implementation of Soundtrap has moved into the middle and high school traditional academic classes, opening up doors for students in a whole new way, allowing technology to truly become an art in CCS.

“Engagement Like We’ve Never Seen Before – Integration of traditional academic learning and the arts”

When you implement the arts, particularly technology, into the curriculum, the student outcome becomes more than just grades and accountability; it becomes ownership of a piece of art. Dr. Hill shares that when Soundtrap was first implemented at the high school level, the response was incredibly positive “because we started seeing engagement at a level that we had never seen before.”

Instead of avoiding classes, Dr. Hill states, “Now students are coming to the classroom with music they have created with their 1:1 device. They work on it at home and bring it to class to share with their teacher saying, ‘Listen to this.”

This engagement doesn’t stop in the classroom. Through Soundtrap, Dr. Hill was given the thumbs up to move ahead with implementing the development of a curriculum to support a student-led radio station.

“That is an innovative piece,” she says. “The District is developing a student-led radio broadcasting station that integrates pre-K through 12 curricular pathways focused on the Portrait of a Graduate attributes. We have an entire building that will focus on that.”

This innovation, this 21st-century thinking with arts leading the way through a whole-child approach, will set CCS apart from other districts as the world continues to move into a creative technological future. “If we’re going to enable students to be competitive when they leave our walls, or even while with us, we have to do this,” adds Dr. Hill. “I’m excited at this point in my career to see that we’ve created this visibility for the arts that will help all of our students excel.”
In a State With an Anti-CRT Law, A New Initiative Seeks to Coach Schools on Equity

By Eesha Pendharkar

Kentucky is one of the first states in the country to launch personalized coaching for district leaders and teachers through the department of education to further diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging in schools.

Starting this fall, 74 districts out of the state’s more than 170 will receive coaching over the next two years through engage2learn, an organization that offers personalized professional development that was contracted by the state education department. Typically, DEI training is offered at the district level. Education Week could not find examples of any other states offering this model of statewide, personalized training on equity issues.

The new program grows out of an anti-racism resolution passed by the state education department in 2020. It states that Kentucky’s public schools have a history of racial inequity and that people of color, particularly Black students and staff, “are often left out of the conversation and remain unheard.” Since then, the department has launched a range of tools housed within its equity toolkit to help districts and educators continue fostering equity in schools. One such tool is the coaching initiative through engage2learn, which begins next month with assessments of each district’s needs.

“The ultimate goal is for us to have more equity-minded, equity-literate teachers, support staff, administrative staff, and state level staff in Kentucky,” said Thomas Tucker, the deputy commissioner and chief equity officer for the department of education. “Different schools are going to have different areas of improvement and that’s why it’s important that we begin with the needs assessment, and we’re at this point ready to begin the needs assessment stage.”

The question is how the new initiative will fit with the state’s new law limiting lessons and conversations about race and racism in school. The legislature passed SB1, a 39-page, vaguely worded law that some free-speech advocates have labeled an “educational gag order.” But the state education department’s chief equity officer said the law would not impact the equity work that the agency is doing, including the personalized coaching.

“We’re not restricting what teachers say”

Kentucky’s law does not include any punishments for violating it, and it is worded slightly differently than most other laws of its kind: It leaves out some of the language that has been used in other states against teach-
ers; for example, it does not mandate that teachers are not allowed to make students feel "guilt or anguish" on the basis of their race and sex.

It also includes a long list of required teaching material including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, and requires teachers to teach that an individual "does not bear responsibility for actions committed by other members of the same race or sex," and that defining racial disparity solely on the legacy of slavery "is disruptive to the unification of our nation."

“These laws are as restrictive or as non-restrictive as the people enforcing them,” said Jeremy Young from PEN America, a free speech advocacy organization that has been tracking and studying these laws. Seventeen states have passed laws restricting conversations about race and racism since 2021. The state education department is "saying as the enforcers, they’re not going to enforce them in a restrictive way."

Young said that while districts and teachers who participate in coaching and applying what they have learned to make classrooms more equitable might be subject to complaints launched against them by parents or community members, that’s a risk worth taking, especially since the agency in charge of enforcing the law is offering the training.

“There’s a goal, because [the law] is on the books, to keep it from becoming something more than it is,” Young said, “to keep it from mushrooming into administrative censorship and self-censorship based on things that aren’t even mentioned in the text.”

Buerk said she has seen pushback in the form of political opposition to equity work in other districts engage2learn works in and that it’s important during the coaching to talk educators through how to deal with that stress.

“It’s the inflammatory current state of politics that’s causing distress to teachers,” she said. “Teachers have always been about, for the most part, equitable outcomes for learners. That is why you get into the profession if you’re an educator.”
Equity In Education

What One State’s Transgender Student Policy Could Mean for Students

By Eesha Pendharkar

A new Virginia model policy that rolls back freedoms for transgender students will be harmful for the mental health and safety of trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming students at school, as well as the broader LGBTQ student body, health experts warn.

The model policy introduced by Virginia’s Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin last week asks teachers and other school employees to only refer to students by their legal name and sex assigned at birth unless a parent files a written petition to allow their child to change their pronouns. Even in that case, the legal name and sex “shall not be changed” on school records, the model policy says.

The policy also says a school can’t instruct teachers to hide information about a student’s gender identity from their parents. Finally, it requires transgender students to use bathrooms and play on sports teams aligned with their sex assigned at birth as opposed to their gender identity.

A transgender student is defined by the policy as “a public school student whose parent has requested in writing, due to their child’s persistent and sincere belief that his or her gender differs with his or her sex, that their child be so identified while at school.”

“Probably to me, the most concerning piece of it also is that, you know, it requires almost a forced outing of students to their parents,” said Eden Heilman, Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia.

“So trans students, who potentially might be at risk of both physical and emotional abuse at home or homelessness, now potentially may be facing even more risk at home, because this policy requires that parents be made aware,” Heilman added.

The model policy delivers a message to transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming kids that they don’t matter, said Stephen ForsSELL, a professor in the psychological and brain sciences department at George Washington University and director of the university’s LGBT Health Policy and Practice Program.

“When things like this happen, they give license to violent acts, not just against trans kids, but [against] kids who are members of the broader community,” he said. “We do see increases in hate crimes and harassment of the members of the community when these sorts of bills are passed. And it basically says your state thinks you’re not worthy of being protected.”

Students were already concerned about anti-trans bills

The vast majority of transgender and nonbinary youth are concerned about the anti-trans bills and policies being proposed across the country, according to the Trevor Project’s 2022 Mental Health Survey. The nonprofit surveyed almost 34,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13 to 24 across the United States.

Because of state or local laws, 93 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth said that they have worried about access to gender-affirming medical care, 91 percent are worried about their ability to use bathrooms of their choice, and 83 percent about their ability to play sports, according to the survey.

Over the past year, Republican lawmakers in 18 states, including Arizona, Idaho, and Texas have passed laws banning trans students from participating in sports aligned with their gender identity, specifically trans boys wanting to play on girls’ teams. Three states—Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Alabama—also have bans on students using school facilities aligned with their gender identity.

Florida also passed legislation outlawing classroom discussions of gender and sexual identity, which prompted copycat bills across the country. In Alabama, offering gender-affirming care such as prescribing puberty-blocking medication or surgeries is a Class C felony, according to a law passed in 2022.

How Virginia’s proposal differs

But not many states have passed model policies through the department of education requiring districts to adopt guidelines that combine restrictions on sports teams, bathrooms, and pronoun use.

Earlier this month, the Grapevine-Colleyville district in Texas passed a broader version of Virginia’s model policy that includes a ban on discussion of “gender fluidity” in addition to all the other guidelines listed by Youngkin’s administration.

“I think one of the things that makes Virginia a little bit unique in this space is that we had a good policy, and now we’re rolling back a good policy,” Heilman said.

The 2022 model policy rolls back many of the provisions from the 2021 model policy, including the...
which was introduced by Youngkin’s predecessor, Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam, to comply with a 2020 state law. The prior model policy was much more inclusive and allowed transgender students to use bathrooms and play on teams of their choice.

“The previous policies implemented under the Northam administration did not uphold constitutional principles and parental rights, and will be replaced,” said Youngkin spokeswoman Macaulay Porter.

“It is not under a school’s or the government’s purview to impose a set of particular ideological beliefs on all students. Key decisions rest, first and foremost, with the parents.”

The “parental rights” angle has often been used by several right-wing advocacy groups and Republican lawmakers to promote anti-LGBTQ legislation, and groups such as The Family Foundation have welcomed Virginia’s proposed changes. Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill, for example, is formally titled the Parental Rights in Education bill.

“I think that that term has been co-opted to speak for a very small number of parents who want to impose their beliefs on other people,” Heilman said. “The reality of it is, the vast majority of parents want their children to be treated like humans and their peers to be treated like humans.”

Parental rights was a winning message during Youngkin’s gubernatorial campaign, according to Forssell of George Washington University.

“This is a very, very trite kind of thing compared with kids getting beaten up and abused and made to feel like, you know, subhuman people,” he said. “Parents’ rights to be bigoted or to enforce their religious views on other people, clearly is not as important as the mental health and, frankly, the safety of kids in these schools.”

State officials say that’s not so. The document makes it clear that “any kind of discrimination, any kind of harassment of students for any reason is something that is not to be tolerated in the public schools of Virginia,” said state department of education spokesman Charles Pyle.

However, there is not much wiggle room for interpretation in the guidelines to allow school boards to pass a version that doesn’t restrict the rights of transgender students, according to Forssell. The 2020 law requires all 132 Virginia districts to pass their own policies that are along the same lines or are even more comprehensive. However, there’s no enforcement mechanism outlined in the model policy so it’s unclear if districts will refuse to comply.

The ACLU of Virginia has been hearing from some districts that they’re concerned about implementing any version of the model policy.

“I think a lot of teachers and administrators and school boards are very concerned about the rights of their students,” Heilman said, “and also what might happen if they follow this, and then they could possibly be in conflict with federal law and how to deal with those issues.”

Virginia’s model policy comes as proposed changes to the federal Title IX law seek to broaden the definition of sex-based harassment and discrimination to include gender identity and sexual orientation.

People may submit public comments on the model policy for a month starting Sept. 26, and then Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow, appointed by Youngkin, may amend the final draft of the policy based on the comments, Pyle said. The state school board will not have to vote on the model policy.
I sense a profound disappointment these days among many political and educational progressives because, so far at least, the return to school after the pandemic has not resulted in a new paradigm of equity, diversity, and inclusion, as they had hoped. In a recent Education Week commentary, Renee Owen noted that, for a good number of educators, “optimistic images of not going back to normal have morphed into dystopian disarray.”

For other school folk, however, the post-pandemic attitude seems to be, if it worked before, at least for the majority of students, it is fine now. The argument is that keeping things stable is the best that can be done, considering all the unknowns.

Given this dynamic, superintendents and principals have a choice. They can either wallow in the frustration of missed opportunities to interrupt and replace inequitable practices on a grand scale or use every chance to move forward in smaller steps.

Such incremental change implies moving one step at a time, thereby allowing more opportunity for real-time data collection and analysis, unlearning skills and learning new ones, and reducing the emotional impact of change.

I am a realist but also a person of action. As a former district administrator, I’ve been responsible for designing and implementing changes for equity that some vehemently opposed. In the highly polarized environment of some communities, moving the needle slowly over time affords the best opportunity for leaders to successfully shepherd positive change. Leaders don’t have to make 180-degree changes but can right-size their moves school by school for long-term success.

This will probably not be what those working and living in communities that have suffered under decades of inattention, insufficient funding, and lack of culturally relevant programs want to hear. Many are justifiably fed up with deeply embedded systems that often have benefited affluent, white, and suburban children at the expense of children of color. More power to communities where bold actions for equity can now occur.

But, given the divisions in other American communities, the best that can happen, in the short term, might be incremental improvement.

This can mean revising the curriculum so that it is more relevant for students whose culture has been neglected in the past; changing school schedules so that all students, regardless of ZIP code, will receive enrichment and remediation during school; permitting teachers to deviate from the curriculum-pacing guide to address students’ needs; and recasting admission to gifted programs so it is not dependent solely on standardized-test scores.

In some communities, even some of these modest steps must be taken carefully and cautiously, lest educators be caught in political whiplash.

What approach should school-based leaders take to do the right thing for all students but not set off alarm bells of protest?

If leaders involve diverse stakeholders in program planning and implementation, cultivate allies, adjust their marketing strategies, and strategically use their understanding of the current political reality, every community can move toward greater fairness, even in these difficult times.

For example, before proposing replacing inequitable policies or procedures with more equitable ones, leaders should seek to understand the original purposes and goals of the current practices. Principals will want to ask lots of questions of their staff in a nonthreatening manner. “Help me to understand. What was this program intended to do? Why do we . . . ? Why do we . . . ?”

Digging deeply into the roots of inequitable practices and finding out which students are being hurt and in what specific ways will be invaluable in crafting reforms.

Armed with this information, school leaders will want to empower respected in-school influencers and community leaders as part of the guiding coalition for improvements.

Framing the changes matters a lot. One alternative is framing the initiative as addressing not achievement gaps between student groups that differ by race, ethnicity, or income, but gaps between all students and excellence. In this way, schools will not be setting up community and parental groups to believe that they are in competition with each other for special treatment or resources for their children. It is difficult to oppose an initiative focusing on all students learning more.

Skillful marketing is also essential. One
helpful tool is to craft a three- or four-sentence mission narrative for the upcoming reform, with perhaps a simple graph or table and including specific language that stakeholders could use as their "elevator" speech when asked by community members, "What is going on at that school?" The hard work of staff and community in the past should be acknowledged, even if it has not produced impressive results.

School-based leaders know not to use educational jargon in explaining initiatives to parents and others. But in particularly polarized communities, principals will also want to think carefully about the use of words such as “marginalized,” “anti-racist,” and “inclusivity." These are terms that segments of the public may not fully understand or incorrectly interpret as left-wing indoctrination that may also result in taking resources from their children or holding them back academically. Instead, savvy leaders will emphasize the connection of the new initiatives with academic goals and foundational skills that all students need.

These suggestions are not denying or perpetuating problems. It just makes sense, in the highly volatile political environment of some communities, to reduce possible upfront misunderstandings that can doom an initiative before it even gets started.

It is certainly justified to want immediate and substantive change to systems that never worked for those on the margins and give scant attention to diversity or inclusion. But given the current divisive political makeup of some communities, that might not be possible right now.

In some places, incrementalism just might succeed where other approaches will not. Rather than stand still, leaders can push forward step by step, with equity always the goal.

A former teacher and administrator in Maryland, Ronald S. Thomas is a faculty member of the instructional-leadership and professional-development department at Towson University.
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