

Equity-Centered Capacity Building:

Essential Approaches for Excellence & Sustainable School System Transformation

Transformational Pedagogy: Cashing The Promissory Note of Equity for All Students – Especially Those Who are Marginalized

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In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men [and women], yes, black ... as well as white ... would be guaranteed the "unalienable rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

(Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., March on Washington)

What makes equity so hard to achieve are its many facets, so numerous and complex they are hard to define. This inability to define equity handily is especially confounding for urban districts that reach out to our organization, the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUEA), for help in translating their commitment to "equity" into practices to stem the tide of unnecessary underperformance plaguing their schools. These districts are predominantly in cities where "urban" is a euphemism for "low-performing" students of color and their teachers (Jackson, 2011, p.1).

Martin Luther King understood the difficulty in defining complex concepts such as equity, so he employed metaphors to help people decipher and grasp the concept. In this context, equity is the promissory note he spoke about in his *I Have A Dream* speech: equity for all people to be free to pursue a life of happiness. In both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, this right to the pursuit of happiness was based on belief in the potential of Americans (at that time specifically male, land-owning Americans of European descent) to develop strengths and abilities for self-actualization. These strengths and abilities were valued for their currency ... for their worth in contributing to a developing society.

When people are valued for their potential, tools and opportunities are expressly created to mine for that potential and to eradicate hindrances. In education, believing in and valuing the innate potential of students is apparent in a school district's written vision and policies for students. These articulate and support an image similar to the one posed by Paulo Freire: students being engaged and supported to be self-actualizing so they can transform themselves to both thrive in as well as transform the world (Freire, 1970).

Neuroscience has demonstrated that all brains are predisposed for high intellectual performances and the imperative for self-actualization, yet in urban districts around the country, Freire's vision is still not applied to students of color. "Potential," "thriving," "flourishing" and "self-actualization" are actively absent from the lexicon of vision statements for urban schools. Without a district vision statement that clearly articulates genuine belief in the currency of the potential of students of color, equitable practices are hard to put in place. Staff is not inspired to believe in the potential of their students and is therefore unmotivated to search for, or even envision, possibilities for practices and opportunities that would surface the potential of these students (Jackson and McDermott, 2012). Students' innate potential remains elusive, unidentified and uncultivated. With this loss of potential, student engagement and achievement degenerate in response to low-level repetitive tasks, which stifles motivation and results in underperformance.

Osta and Perrow have provided a catalyst for a transformational vision to build deepened understanding of equity. They explicate equity as having three salient dimensions:

1. Removing the predictability of academic success or failure based on social, economic or cultural factors;
2. Interrupting inequitable practices, eliminating biases and oppression and creating inclusive school environments for adults and children;
3. And discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests that each human being possesses (Osta and Perrow, 2008, pp. 3-4).

The transformative part in this definition is the third element, yet this is the one that is rarely utilized to guide vision statements or equity efforts. For us, if discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests of students of color and other marginalized students fueled a district's vision and its resulting policies and practices, then predictability of academic success or failure based on social, economic or cultural factors would be removed and inequitable practices interrupted, eliminating biases and oppression.

Realizing the Third Element

The disregard for the third element is readily apparent to our organization during our intake discussions with districts. When asked what practices they have currently instituted to promote equity, the majority delineate a short list of "reform" procedures, the most frequent being increased offerings of Advanced Placement classes. Access to Advanced Placement courses alone does not result in the potential of students of color being identified or supported to flourish. In fact, most often the opposite happens — their success withers. Success in such courses depends on students being previously "gift-ed" with *exposure to conceptual understandings* that expand their frames of reference; *high-level thinking skills* that deepen how they construct, communicate and create meaning; and *supports* that motivate development of the habits of mind that build competence and confidence. Most underperforming students of color are school-dependent, i.e., they depend on schools for the promise of equity-driven pedagogy that "gifts" them with such exposure and support. Unfortunately, that promise most often goes unkept.

Pedagogy of Confidence: The Medium for Equity

Pedagogy and equity must work together. When we are truly committed to equity, we design pedagogy that achieves its original purpose: “to lead a child” for self-actualization and self-transcendence; self-actualization that enables students to thrive in society, and self-transcendence that motivates them to contribute to that society (Chen, 2014; Freire, 2012; Gladwell, 2008; Jackson, 2011).

One ideology that offers a concrete vision of what equity-driven pedagogy should be is “gifted education.” (As used here, gifted education is distinguished from programs for students “labeled as gifted.”) In this ideology, students are “gifted” with pedagogy in which: a) belief in and expectations for their ability drive the direction, instructional choices and opportunities that are made available to them; b) their education is actually designed as an invitation for them to explore the “frontier of their intelligence; their innate capital”; c) the practices, strategies and opportunities are designed to identify and cultivate their unique strengths, gifts and talents; and d) the invitations they receive through their education are complemented by guidance on how to apply the discoveries they make about their intelligence so they can better determine what they want to pursue to feel self-actualized and to experience agency and investment in society (Jackson, 2011, p. 86; Whyte, 2002).

Equity-driven pedagogy that generates practices and structures reflective of “gifted” education and the pursuit of excellence is what our organization describes as the Pedagogy of Confidence®. The Pedagogy of Confidence is based on the fearless expectation that all students are capable of high intellectual performances when provided High Operational Practices™ that motivate self-directed learning and self-actualization. High Operational Practices are actually labels for the categories of supports fundamental for eliciting high levels of engagement and intellectual processing. The practices can serve to guide teachers in choosing effective pedagogical strategies to optimize learning.

The High Operational Practices include (Jackson, 2011, p. 71):

- Identifying and activating student strengths
- Building relationships
- Eliciting high intellectual performances
- Providing enrichment
- Integrating prerequisites for academic learning
- Situating learning in the lives of students
- Amplifying student voice

These practices are the fulcrum around which our meaning of “gifted” education revolves, gearing the objectives for each practice to facilitate students’ exploration and action on their own potential to produce the high intellectual performances that can motivate self-directed learning, self-actualization and self-transcendence.

Three beliefs reflect the science behind the High Operational Practices:

- Intelligence is modifiable.
- All students benefit from a focus on high intellectual performance.
- Learning is influenced by the interaction of culture, language and cognition (Jackson, 2011, p. 71 and 89).

Neuroscience has substantiated the impact that “gifted” pedagogy has on reversing underachievement, stimulating motivation and activating self-determination.

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Neuroscience has substantiated the impact that “gifted” pedagogy has on reversing underachievement, stimulating motivation and activating self-determination. The strategies and practices inherent in “gifted education” serve to enhance how students construct meaning and comprehend the world, resulting in strengthened competence, confidence, resilience and high intellectual performances. *Confidence acquired from competence* causes an individual to become intensely stimulated. This stimulation causes a burning of glucose, which results in the brain being energized, making an individual feel stronger, increasing the sense of confidence. The sense of competence and confidence activates neurotransmitters of pleasure: The endorphin release that helps students enjoy learning more focuses their attention more deeply and motivates a desire for self-directed learning. When feelings of competence are increased, the sense of possible achievement catalyzes the quest for self-actualization, while decreasing the release of catecholamines, the body’s natural chemical response to stress (Jackson, 2011, p. 9).

Learning and teaching are reciprocal processes, so approaches such as the Pedagogy of Confidence have a positive effect on teachers as well. For teachers, demonstrations of student learning and competence resulting from their pedagogy provide affirming feedback about their teaching. This feedback is a great asset to teachers, for it catalyzes positive relationships with students, generating enjoyment in work and a deep sense of competence and being valued. These responses activate the release of endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin, which increase creativity in the pursuit and design of effective teaching strategies and inspire greater collaborative relationships with students and staff (Jackson, 2011, p. 9).

The evidence from this research is unequivocal. It substantiates the power and efficacy of an equity-driven pedagogy as a core medium for equity.

The Consequences of Inequitable Practices: The Science Behind It

Research that supports a pedagogy of “gifted” education shows that the philosophy of gifted education (i.e., assets-focused, enriching learning experiences for all students) has not been part of equity efforts for political and social, rather than genuinely scientific, reasons. The most pernicious of these reasons are beliefs that drive policies grounded in a degenerative focus on what are labeled as the weaknesses of our underperforming students of color. These policies not only translate into disenfranchising instruction, they also perpetuate debilitating myths and generate marginalizing or “otherizing” labels — “low-achiever,” “minority,” “subgroup” — which imply our students of color possess little intellectual potential. These myths become disenfranchising practices that echo disbelief in the potential of these students:

- Static, narrow testing;
- Remedial education;
- Tracking across all disciplines based on standardized test scores;
- Unsubstantiated referrals to special education; and
- Inequitable suspension practices.

Declaration of belief in the innate potential of students and commitment to equity are nullified when labels and practices that segregate, marginalize, prejudice and withhold “gifted” pedagogy are vetted and institutionalized in districts. The implication of these labels causes the capacities of these students to be devalued and unaddressed, resulting in predictable underachievement and disengagement.

The detrimental impact on achievement of inequitable, marginalizing practices and labels is also substantiated by cognitive and neuroscience. Research shows that *weakness-based approaches are the antithesis of what stimulates learning*. In the cognitive domain, the remedial, un-enriched, decontextualized instruction (often euphemistically labeled as “literacy programs”) that is implemented results in under-performance in reading (and, consequently, learning and achievement across the disciplines) for an inordinate number of students of color. Inequity that results in the absence of enrichment or contextualized instruction causes short-circuits to occur in the cultural anchors needed for cognitive functioning and comprehension. In the neurobiological domain, *lack of enrichment and instruction that connects to students’ life experiences or frames of reference, hinder the development of neural patterns that make the learning process more efficient and expansive* (Feuerstein, 1979; Holloway, 2003; Jackson, 2011, p. 48; Medina, 2008). There is also a damaging, neurobiological impact from inequity-producing “otherizing” labels (e.g., low-achiever, minority, subgroup) on learning and achievement. Such positional or marginalizing language associated with prejudice, degradation or stereotype threat incite high levels of stress (Steele and Aronson, 2004). This stress causes the emission of cortisol, which inhibits comprehension and causes regions of the brain associated with executive decision-making and goal-directed behaviors to degenerate.

The diminishment of achievement, executive decision making and self-directing behaviors incite a cascade of repressive, inhibiting repercussions for students *emotionally* (low self-esteem and self-confidence), *socially* (resistant behaviors provoked by low self-esteem and low self-confidence, often leading to dropping out either in-school or out of school, literally or figuratively), and *culturally* (lack of access and underrepresentation in programs that signify achievement or talent, ineligibility for higher education and limited career options). These repercussions are barriers to the development of the dispositions, habits of mind and growth-mindset upon which competence, confidence, self-actualization and positive contribution to society are built.

The effect inequitable practices and labels have is staggering but not irreversible. Neuroscience has substantiated the powerful findings of the eminent cognitive psychologist Reuven Feuerstein that when students are provided with the mediation of High Operational Practices, cognitive impairments can be mitigated and learning capacity optimized (Feuerstein, 1979; Feuerstein, et al, 2010).

The Common Core State Standards and Equity-Driven Pedagogy.

There is a value-added benefit of the equity-driven, Pedagogy of Confidence. The strategies and methodology of High Operational Practices are exactly what students need if they are to achieve the college- and career-ready goal of the Common Core State Standards. The conception of this goal is founded on six very specific assumptions:

1. Staff believe that all students have the innate potential to be college and career ready.
2. Teachers are knowledgeable about the learning process and the science behind that process.
3. Districts will guide and support teachers in creating pedagogy, practices and structures to elicit high levels of thinking and learning dispositions/habits of mind that motivate and enable self-directed learning.
4. Districts, schools and classrooms will address the barriers that inhibit high levels of learning.

5. Teachers will be guided to institute formative assessments that demonstrate growth of thinking and identify strengths.
6. And students will be provided opportunities and supports for authentic application of thinking and discipline-related concepts of learning that engage and encourage demonstration of high intellectual performances.

Ignoring these assumptions by propagating inequitable, marginalizing practices make the goal of the Common Core and other state standards a goal denied to students of color. Effectuation of these assumptions comes when districts provide a Pedagogy of Confidence — a pedagogy that fosters delivery of the practices and structures that enable students' innate capacities and motivation to flourish so they can develop into citizens who thrive in the world.

Mediative Equity-Driven Capacity Building

Helping districts develop and act on a vision based on the real, innate potential of all students comes about through effective, equity-driven capacity building: It is generative, inspiring and catalyzing. The key to equity-driven capacity building is *transformational mediation*.

Mediation, as developed by Reuven Feuerstein, is a process that highlights the quality of interaction a mediator (adult or youth) uses to intervene between a learner and his or her environment to inspire in the learner a personal motivation for learning (Feuertsein, 1979; Jackson, 2011, p. 157). In equity-driven capacity building, mediation is directed at transitioning staffs and the community from the repressive focus on weaknesses and narrow perceptions about the potential of students of color and other marginalized students to belief in and value of their innate potential. Mediators of equity-driven capacity building recognize that for many of the districts they assist, such transition necessitates reculturation that requires techniques for *second-order change* (Marzano, Walters and McNulty, 2005). That is, for many districts a new vision that reflects a belief in and the value of the potential students of color and other marginalized students possess will be outside staff's existing paradigm, conflicting with their prevailing values and norms, and requiring them to develop new knowledge and skills.

Mediators intervene by providing understanding, strategies and techniques they have honed from an epistemology informed by human dynamics as well as the cognitive and neuroscience research that substantiate the innate potential of all students to achieve high intellectual performances and the human imperative for self-actualization. Through strategic and mindful mediation, the district sheds its former perceptions to craft a transformational vision that reflects a belief in and the value of the potential their students of color and other marginalized students possess. Mediators assist districts in ensuring that this vision is effectively transmitted by guiding realignment of district functions to create the architecture of support needed to increase the capacity of its schools to implement an equity-driven pedagogy.

We have found that *effective mediators of equity-driven capacity building* are skilled in

- Demonstrating sensitivities that inspire, influence and cultivate trust in order to engage collaboration, involvement and action;
- Utilizing specialized competencies that guide reculturation of the awareness, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of staff about the innate potential of students of color, low-income students and students who speak languages other than English;
- Delivering professional learning that incorporates the science of learning to arm the staff with understandings and skills that build their competence and confidence to engage student learning and

motivate self-determination;

- Implementing strategies that create a shared culture of confidence — a culture that recognizes and capitalizes on the assets and values of the students, their teachers and their communities;
- Facilitating dialogue to garner productive community (<http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm>) investment and support;
- Employing techniques to engage the district, school staff and school board in shared responsibility for implementing equitable practices and eradicating inequitable, marginalizing practices that perpetuate prejudice and segregation; and
- Guiding the development of a system-wide vision that articulates belief in and the value of the strengths and potential of all students.

Manifestation of Equity-Driven Capacity Building

Inspiration and Direction from the Top

When districts embrace belief in and the value of the innate potential of all their students, these beliefs and values are clearly articulated in their vision and mission statements.

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When districts embrace belief in and the value of the innate potential of all their students, these beliefs and values are clearly articulated in their vision and mission statements. Mediators astutely recognize the power of language to broadcast a message of equity and excellence. They assist district leadership in affirming, inspiring and mediating equity by guiding them to reflect on how the current language in their vision and mission statements would change if they articulated the district's commitment to realizing the potential of *all* students (Jackson and McDermott, 2012). Mediators guide the introspection and search for appropriate language through a lens they craft from the strategic reordering of Osta and Perrow's dimensions of equity so the dominant focus is on the third dimension — discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests that each human being possesses (Osta and Perrow, 2008). This focus steers the identification of language that acutely conveys the message that all district goals will be aimed at enabling all students to thrive inside and outside of school. As districts develop the policies, practices and structures that emanate from these goals, mediators use the other two dimensions described by Osta and Perrow to navigate the identification of inequitable practices that perpetuate disbelief in the innate potential of students of color; practices they determine will no longer be permissible.

The bold vision statements of San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and the Robbinsdale Area Schools (Minnesota) provide two poignant examples of equity-driven approaches. The mission statement of the SFUSD, delivered through its strategic plan entitled "*Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now,*" states:

The mission of the San Francisco Unified School District is to provide each student with an equal opportunity to succeed by promoting intellectual growth, creativity, self-discipline, cultural and linguistic sensitivity, democratic responsibility, economic competence, and physical and mental health so that each student can achieve his/her maximum potential (SFUSD LEA Plan, 2008).

The goals and objectives of SFUSD's strategic plan ensure clarity about the expectations of the district.

Access and Equity: Make social justice a reality.

- Diminish the historic power of demographics.
- Center professional learning on equity.
- Create an environment for students to flourish.
- Provide the infrastructure for successful learning.

Student Achievement:

- Engage high-achieving and joyful learners.
- Ensure authentic learning for every student.
- Prepare citizens of tomorrow.
- Create learning beyond the classroom.

Accountability:

- Keep our promises to students and families.
- Provide direction and strategic leadership.
- Create a culture of service and support.

In Robbinsdale, the statement is delivered through its *Unified District Vision: High Intellectual Performance through Equity*. The vision states:

Robbinsdale Area Schools is committed to ensuring every student graduates career and college ready. We believe each student has limitless possibilities, and we strive to ignite the potential in every student. We expect high intellectual performance from all our students. We are committed to ensuring an equitable and respectful educational experience for every student, family and staff member, focusing on strengths related to:

- *Race*
- *Culture*
- *Ethnicity*
- *Home or first language*
- *National origin*
- *Socioeconomic status*
- *Gender*
- *Sexual orientation*
- *Age*
- *Ability*
- *Religion*
- *Physical appearance*

Clarity about Robbinsdales's expectations is delineated in four goals.

1. Implement policies and practices that open pathways to academic excellence for all students.
2. Utilize culturally relevant teaching and personalized learning for all students.

3. Engage family and community members as partners.
4. Engage and empower students by amplifying student voice.

The strategic plans of both districts are ambitious, but relentless ambition and unwavering direction from the top are what is needed for a systemic, cultural shift from the traditional focus on weaknesses that influences student expectations to outcome-directed belief in the intellectual capacities of *all* students (Jackson, 2011, p.139).

In just one year, the transformational impact of Robbinsdale's *Unified District Vision* and its goals is manifested in many policies, practices and structures, including:

- An Office of Integration and Equity with a District Equity Council and Equity Teams at the school level
- Recruitment and hiring are driven by what the district identifies as an "equity consciousness," resulting in one-third of the district leadership team (cabinet, school administrators and instructional coaches) now comprised of people of color.
- School Improvement Plans explicitly reflect the Unified District Vision, with schools specifically describing both practices to identify and develop student strengths and fortify underdeveloped skills, as well as practices identified and labeled as the *impermissibles*: those which will no longer be permitted.
- Cohorts of teachers from all 14 schools have participated in professional learning through equity-driven capacity-building (provided by NUA mentors or certified coaches) in the Pedagogy of Confidence, ensuring coherence and a shared vision for learning and teaching.
- All professional learning for the superintendent's leadership team (cabinet, school administrators and instructional coaches) is aligned with the Unified District Vision aimed at developing and supporting effective, equitable practices, opportunities and structures at all levels and across all schools.
- Data walks engage teams in collecting evidence about specific equity practices reflective of the Pedagogy of Confidence and the emphases set forth in the Unified District Vision. Classroom walk-throughs have been expanded to include students. Together, teachers and students identify examples of high engagement, discuss principles of engagement and exploring ways of developing strategies and practices to increase engagement.
- One high school has now de-tracked the ninth grade English program, making pre-AP classes available to all and providing ongoing support to students and teachers for the new arrangement. This process will extend to English 10, and discussions are underway for the redesign of the English programs in the middle schools.

These changes have demonstrated a new culture of learning and teaching in Robbinsdale; a culture that boldly articulates belief in and value for the innate potential of all the district's students; and a culture that portends equity-centered pedagogy throughout the district's schools.

Schools as Mediative Learning Communities

Mediators of equity-centered capacity building provide the mediation to transform schools into environments where the district's equity vision of belief in and the value of the innate potential of all students can be realized.

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Mediators of equity-centered capacity building provide the mediation to transform schools into *environments where the district's equity vision of belief in and the value of the innate potential of all students can be realized*. We at NUA call these environments *Mediative Learning Communities*. Just like a mediator, a Mediative Learning Community deliberately intervenes in the lives of its school-dependent students and teachers by creating an environment where equity-driven pedagogy can flourish, where strengths are the primary factors for cultivation, and where intellectual growth is optimized. Schools where staff engage in professional learning communities (PLCs) are primed for co-creating a Mediative Learning Community.

The driving intention of the Mediative Learning Community is to cultivate strengths and mitigate the impact of factors that are barriers to learning for many students of color and poverty: stereotype threats, feelings of failure, focus on weaknesses and remediation, absence of enrichment, and stigma associated with marginalizing labels (Jackson, 2011, p. 157; Jackson and McDermott, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Steele and Aronson, 2004). Mediators of equity-driven capacity building assist in creating Mediative Learning Communities by supporting staff in activating this intention for the students as well as mediating the considerations for the staff themselves. They appreciate that, *like students, teachers have emotional needs that have to be addressed in a safe, supportive environment where they can continually rejuvenate their spirits and energize their competence and confidence* so they can provide pedagogy that elicits the innate potential of their students while mitigating their needs.

Equity-driven capacity building is most effectively mediated in schools through professional learning that emanates from an equity-driven pedagogy such as the Pedagogy of Confidence. This professional learning

- Guides teachers in developing an *ecological perspective* that begins with a deep understanding and appreciation for the realities of students' lives that affect their ability to learn. It includes a strong belief in their potential and desire for excellence;
- Integrates the findings of *cognitive and neuroscience research* through training in High Operational Practices that build teachers' competence and confidence to elicit and optimize student potential for high intellectual performances and self-actualization; and
- Equips teachers with strategies to dynamically assess and increase their students' depth of conceptual understandings, facility with literacy, use of higher order thinking, and the capacity to learn how to learn and apply learnings.

A compelling metaphor for a Mediative Learning Community is an oasis in which students who have struggled and been marginalized feel they belong — they see themselves reflected in the culture of the school (Jackson, 2011). Mediators assist teachers in nurturing this culture by creating opportunities for student input through authentic collaboration in such things as professional learning sessions focused on the science of learning, student-led report card conferences, town hall meetings, teacher-student committees, co-created inquiry projects (students with staff) and participation in the design of school standards for academic and social behavior. NUA has codified these collaborative opportunities through a process we call *StudentVoicesNUA™*. These opportunities encourage student investment in creating a shared culture, facilitate bridges between students and teachers and develop the currency of academic language. They also strengthen the competencies of the Common Core and other state standards as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Reflection of Common Core State Standards in StudentVoicesNUA[1]

Common Core State Standards	StudentVoicesNUA
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<p>Students who are college and career ready in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language ...</p>	<p>How shared professional development, enrichment opportunities and student-led report card conferences correlate to the targets of the standards.</p>
<p>Demonstrate independence.</p>	<p>In student-led report card conferences, students select the work samples they wish to present and decide on their own learning goals. Initiating, executing and controlling processes that were formerly out of their hands gives students a pronounced sense of agency.</p>
<p>Build strong content knowledge.</p>	<p>Because students are responsible for following up on shared professional development by delivering lessons in a variety of subjects and grade levels, they not only learn about pedagogy, but also deepen their understanding of the content. As every beginning teacher knows, the best way to learn something is to teach it.</p>
<p>Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline.</p>	<p>Enrichment opportunities open up new venues for expression (video, radio, blogs and wikis) and target real audiences (fellow students, teachers and the community). Although the products vary, one purpose permeates StudentVoicesNUA projects: They provide a platform for students to investigate and express their insights, concerns and perspectives on subjects that matter to them. During a clean water project (for example), students took on many roles, from learning to expert. They faced multiple audiences, conducted different tasks for different purposes and negotiated the language and conventions of the various disciplines in which they worked.</p>

<p>Comprehend as well as critique.</p>	<p>Shared professional development is built on a foundation of engagement and open-mindedness. Students engage in activities that give them a profound understanding of the content and the learning process, teach them to express their learning needs in a language that teachers will understand and hear, and spur them to challenge assumptions with sound reasoning.</p>
<p>Value evidence.</p>	<p>As students who participated in the clean water project examined different aspects of the issues, they became experts on those aspects. They gathered and evaluated evidence, developed a point of view about what they researched, and presented their positions to colleagues on Skype.</p>
<p>Use technology and digital media strategically and capably.</p>	<p>StudentVoicesNUA enrichment activities are awash in the use of technology and digital applications. These, in turn, reflect the six areas of proficiency identified by the International Society for Technology in Education / National Educational Technology Standards (ISTE/NETS), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creativity and innovation ○ Communication and collaboration ○ Research and information fluency ○ Critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making ○ Digital citizenship ○ Technology operations and concepts

Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.	<p>One of the first reactions students have to shared professional development is empathy for teachers. Invariably, students will say, "I had no idea how hard it is to teach." This response is generally followed by self-reflection: "Now I will pay more attention in class."</p> <p>Teachers similarly see students in a different light as students provide insight into what makes learning work for them. This opportunity to shift their frames of reference is purposely orchestrated to bridge the divide between student culture and teacher culture.</p>
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Equity is contingent upon a transformation in how we as educators, capacity builders and systems change agents consider our students who have struggled and been marginalized, which are too often students of color and students living in poverty. Instead of students who only need access to address what they are lacking, they are students whose innate potential provides the capacity for developing strengths and abilities we have been privileged and entrusted to nurture. We can demonstrate the value and importance of this privilege by "gifting" our students with equity-driven pedagogy that elicits their innate potential so they can not only thrive and transform themselves to be self-actualized, but also self-transcend by contributing to transform our country and world to reach its highest potential. This "gifting" is the promissory note Martin Luther King Jr. described. Mediative, equity-driven capacity building facilitates the long overdue delivery on that note.

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NOTES

[1] Adapted from Y. Jackson and V. McDermott, *Aim High, Achieve More: How to Transform Urban Schools Through Fearless Leadership*, (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2012); p.95-96.

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About the Author

Yvette Jackson, CEO, [National Urban Alliance for Effective Education \(https://href.li/?http://www.nuatc.org\)](https://www.nuatc.org) (NUA)

Yvette Jackson is internationally recognized for her work in assessing the learning potential of disenfranchised urban students. Changing this reality for these students to one in which their intellectual potential is believed in, valued and optimized has been Yvette's calling for her entire career. She has applied her research in neuroscience, gifted education, literacy, and the cognitive mediation theory of Dr. Reuven Feuerstein to develop integrated processes that engage and elicit high intellectual performances from underachievers. She designed the New York City Board of Education's Gifted Programs Framework while serving as Director of Gifted Programs. As New York City's Executive Director of Instruction and Professional Development, she led the creation and implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan, which maximizes the delivery of all core curriculum and support services in the Public Schools of New York City.

Dr. Jackson currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, founded at the College Board and Teachers College, Columbia University. She works with school district superintendents, administrators, teachers, and students across the United States and

internationally to customize and deliver systemic approaches that enable students to demonstrate high intellectual performances. She bases her work on the principles and practices of the Pedagogy of Confidence, which she created to enable educators to accelerate the intellectual development and academic achievement of their students.

Yvette has been a visiting lecturer at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, Columbia University, and Stanford University. She has also served as a member of ASCD's (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Differentiated Instruction Cadre. She is a keynote presenter at national and international conferences including the Feuerstein Institute, Israel; the Conference of ANEIS – Associação Nacional para o Estudo e Intervenção na Sobredotação, Portugal; and Thinking Schools, United Kingdom.

She has been published in numerous educational journals. Her most recent book (co-authored with Dr. Veronica McDermott): "Aim High, Achieve More: How to Transform Urban Schools Through Fearless Leadership" follows her previous bestseller: "The Pedagogy of Confidence: Inspiring High Intellectual Performance in Urban Schools" which received the **2012 ForeWord Reviews' Silver Book Award**.

On September 15, 2012 the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences Educators Voice Awards honored Yvette for "**Education Policy/Researcher of the Year**."

Yvette's mission is to rekindle, in educators, the passion and beliefs that led them to choose education as their career. She is driven to provide and promote pedagogy that enables school dependent students to demonstrate their high intellectual potential, and to enable educators to fulfill their potential as outstanding teachers and administrators.

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