

Abstract

We are failing too many students. The achievement gap between students of color and their White peers still exists. Although the numbers of students of color entering our public schools each day increases, the students continue to be served by a predominately White teaching force. Many principals and teachers will attest to not seeing color and will claim to treat all students the same, however the statistics prove otherwise. Dropout rates, suspension rates and expulsion rates are still higher for Latino and African American students than they are for White students. Treating all students the same, disregarding their culture, has not closed the gap. Not until the awareness gap between educators is closed will the achievement gap between students be closed. Administrators and teachers cannot continue to ignore culture as a key factor in education; they must become aware of the role culture plays in their lives and in the lives of their students. Culturally responsive leaders can inspire teachers to develop cultural proficiency and use culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Leaders must be intentional in their work and create spaces for the process of self reflection and transformation to begin. Key words: cultural competence, cultural proficiency, cultural responsiveness and culture.

