

## More...

Please email Jerome Taylor If you would like to receive...

- A complete copy of *A Gardening Metaphor* which we've only summarized in this brochure;
- information about the development and research agenda of the Educational Justice Project;
- A copy of our proposal *Pennsylvania CAN* – premised on *A Gardening Metaphor*—which we have designed to accelerate the closure of racial achievement gaps;
- A preliminary comparison of *Pennsylvania CAN* with two schools which have reversed racial achievement gaps;
- A copy of our paper *The ABC's of Educational Justice* which proposes methods for quantifying the level of educational justice attainment.
- Notification of presentations on how to accelerate closures of racial achievement gaps.

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## Educational Justice Project

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# Closing Racial Achievement Gaps

*If we are careless and unconcerned about our own rights and interests, it is not within the power of all the earth combined to raise us from our present ...condition (Frederick Douglass, July, 1884, The North Star)*

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# A Gardening Metaphor

**W**E CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY AND evaluate high poverty predominately black schools that are closing or reversing racial achievement gaps in America. Thus far we have identified elementary, middle, and secondary schools located in 23 cities North, South, East, and West that have achieved this standard. Curiously, these schools are seldom acknowledged and celebrated locally or nationally, and in this regard we hope to make a difference.

Based on formal research and observational experiences, we identify seven factors which may be critical in accelerating closures and reversals of racial achievement gaps in reading, math, and science. We use a gardening metaphor to introduce each of these factors.

**SOIL (student provisioning for excellence):** teachers (1) introduce and discuss life stories of famous black persons who overcame early obstacles to learning; (2) communicate to students that that they can overcome whatever learning challenges they face by working harder and putting in more time and effort; (3) communicate to students that learning is important to their future and to the future of their neighborhood and community; and (4) form student teams and structure team work so that students inspire one another in striving toward academic excellence.

**SEED (instructional provisioning for excellence):** Teachers (1) stimulate and sustain the curiosity of students at every level of performance—from high to low achievers; (2) planfully move students from the mastery of basic skills to an understanding of deeper concepts underlying basic skills; (3) use lesson plans aligned with state and national standards; (4) assign daily seatwork to consolidate mastery of learning at *all* levels—from basic to conceptual learning; and (5) assign daily homework to consolidate mastery of learning at *all* levels—from basic to conceptual learning.

**ROOT (cultural provisioning for excellence):** Teachers infuse cultural materials that (1) increase students' quest for new knowledge (e.g., self-confidence, learning orientation, and self-reliance); (2) improve students' emotional competence (e.g., self-persistence and self-esteem); (3) improve students' social competencies (e.g., love and respect and interpersonal skills); (4) improve students' appreciation of his or her culture; and (5) help students see how their culture can help them make good decision at and beyond school.

**ENVIRONMENT (communal provisioning for excellence):** (1) school implements plan to promote excellence in academic engagement and achievement outcomes with parents, peers, churches, organizations, and neighborhoods; (2) school monitors the extent to which parents, peers, churches, organizations, and neighborhoods are implementing this plan; (3) school recognizes and celebrates parents, peers, churches, organizations, and neighborhoods that are implementing this plan; (4) community implements plan that holds schools and school districts accountable for excellence in academic engagement and achievement outcomes; and (5) community recognizes and celebrates schools that are successfully accelerating the closure of racial achievement gaps.

**GARDNER (teacher provisioning for excellence):** Teachers (1) believe that with effort they can get through to

even the most difficult or unmotivated students; (2) promote and sustain high expectations of students in their classroom; (3) utilize feedback in ways that enhance their sense of efficacy and enjoyment of teaching; (4) work in collaborative teams which identify students' progress and methods for improving students' progress; and (5) participate in plans and activities that promote parent, peer, church, organization, and neighborhood norms supportive of academic excellence.

**GARDENER SUPPORT (administrator provisioning for excellence):** Principal (1) oversees training in methods and practices that accelerate closure in racial achievement gaps; (2) assigns master teachers or instructional leaders who support teachers' implementation of methods and practices that accelerate closure of racial achievement gaps; (3) oversees plan for teacher teams that share their work and develop *and* monitor collaborative strategies for accelerating closure of racial achievement gaps; (4) oversees plan for providing *timely* assessment driven feedback on the extent to which teacher methods and practices are accelerating closure of racial achievement gaps; and (5) oversees plan for recognizing teachers that have been successful in accelerating closures of racial achievement gaps.

**GARDENER SCHOOLS (educational provisioning for excellence):** Schools of education and para-educational institutes, centers, or departments collaborate in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and practices that promote glorious bloom—*accelerated closure of racial achievement gaps*. This includes (1) learning how to work productively with Soil, Seed, Root, Environment, Gardener, and Gardener Support components of our metaphor and (2) offering continuing educational opportunities that upgrade and sharpen teacher and administrator's conceptual knowledge and practical skills in 'working' the garden productively.