

Students

The role of students in segregated, desegregated, and integrated schools.

Introduction and Background:

Students, in diverse and equitable schools are central to the work of bringing about desegregation in public education. Decades of research, collaborations, coaching, and professional development are aimed at increasing the conditions for optimal student learning. Students who attend genuinely integrated schools have advantages. In integrated schools, it is critical to address student demographics, feelings of inclusion and belonging and disaggregated performance data. Many schools now focus on the academic, social-emotional, cultural well-being of students, their families and educators in schools when seeking to build diverse and equitable schools.

Historical and Theoretical Overview:

Historically, teaching and learning largely took into consideration the content and strategies that teachers might use in their classrooms. This focus on teacher-centered practices where the teacher lectures and students passively sit in rows and all complete the same assignment pages from their textbook or worksheet is shifting from what is comfortable for the teacher, to what is called student-centered, learner-centered or personalized learning and what is most beneficial for the student's learning. A few considerations for the move from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogy include transfer of power, (B. Hara, 2009) the structure of the class, levels of engagement, teachers' beliefs about the capacity and role of the student, as well as the role of the teacher and focus of the content. As teachers consider which approach to take, many students prefer to take a more active role and enjoy opportunities to provide input into the decision-making regarding their learning.

Why is student voice important in education? Youth empowerment has accelerated desegregation and their commitment to equality and true integration has been a hallmark of civic engagement in the US. Prior to *Brown v. Board* (1954) students from Adkin High School in Kinston, North Carolina planned a student walkout to protest inequalities in their local schools. White schools had resources and materials to complete class assignments that Black schools were not given. Students took to the streets during the marches lead by Martin Luther King, Jr. to continue protesting for equal education, voting rights and more. Even today, students from all around the country gather to discuss issues of importance to them, and take an active role in improving their school. Throughout history, student led protests, such as the Albany Movement (1961), the Freedom Rides (1961), the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963), the Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965), the Orangeburg Massacre (1968), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sit-ins and voter registration drives in the South.²

<https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/resource/why-is-student-voice-important-in-education-video/>

In addition to these civic engagement activities, in schools, youth participate in student government, school improvement initiatives, after-school clubs and are involved in the life of their learning environments.

[An Equity Toolkit for Inclusive Schools: Centering Youth Voice in School Change](#)

Approaches and Strategies:

Our research highlights practices of student voice and involvement, which has made a difference in their local school, districts and communities. For teachers and students who want to develop student leadership and civic engagement, here are some tools and practices to activate students' voices and organize for equity.

Pedagogy to Activate Student Voices

- [Let's Talk About Race](#)
 - This is a video made by students sharing their perspectives about addressing race in conversation. Students share norms and approaches for having these conversations in a skillful and respectful manner.
- [Helping Whites Develop Anti-Racist Identities: Overcoming Their Resistance to Fighting Racism](#)
 - Dismantling racism is everyone's responsibility in schools and the larger community. Oftentimes, as whites start their individual and collective identity development, the process is rife with denial, resistance and conflicting emotions. This article addresses Whiteness as a strategy for the development of anti-racist identities and combating racism.
- [The Chinese Students Fighting Racism - BBC News](#)
 - Intolerance to students' race and background exists across multiple subgroups. In this video Chinese students at Columbia University fight racism by explaining the meaning behind their names when their school was vandalized and they decided to take action to educate others about their culture.

Student-centered learning

- [Student-Centered Learning How Four Schools Are Closing the Opportunity Gap](#)
 - Learning has shifted from teacher-centered and what is mostly convenient for educators to focusing primarily on what will actively engage students.
- [Lifting Up Our Kings: Developing Black Males in a Positive and Safe Space](#)
 - The African-American Male Achievement (AMA) is lifting up African-American male students in Oakland Unified School District and has received national attention for their success in improving the academic, social and emotional development of this subgroup of students. Read about their exemplary work in this Voices in Urban Education article.
- [Learn about Youth Participatory Action Research](#)
 - This resource provides a training to develop students' competency to conduct research to improve their lives, schools and communities. This practice is especially useful for students who are experiencing racial, classism, ableism and other forms of discrimination.

Systemic Focus:

Materials are available to support the pedagogical education of all stakeholders in schools. In addition to examining the kinds of practices used to improve learning across the school community, we encourage you to explore resources that differentiate and align with the ABCDs of the RIDES Systemic Map.

Stakeholder Groups in RIDES Systemic Map	Resources with a lens for diversity, equity and inclusion	A* B* C* D *A-academics *B-belongingness *C-commitment to dismantling racism *D-diversity
Teachers	Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching	A
Students	White Students Reflecting on Whiteness: Understanding Emotional Responses Youth and School Reform	A; B; C; D
Family and Community Partnerships	Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap among Elementary School Children	A; B; D
Leadership	Leadership Competencies for Learner-Centered, Personalized Education	A; C
Culture	How to Fight Racism in Your School	B; C; D
Systems & Structures	In Pursuit of Equality: A Framework for Equity Strategies in Competency-Based Education	A; B; C; D

Assessments:

The shift from a teacher-centered approach to student-centered requires assessments that determine not just what a teacher taught, but what the students learned. Attending to formative assessments enable teachers to determine misconceptions in student learning and provides feedback that help teachers make changes in instruction to ensure student learning. In [Student-Centered Classroom Assessment](#), Richard J. Stiggins introduces guiding principles, assessment targets, options and considerations for matching assessment methods with achievement targets.

Implications:

The goals of graduating students prepared to succeed in our global society requires critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. These [21st Century Skills](#) must be incorporated into classroom practice in order for students to develop the facility to actualize these concepts. As teachers create learning experiences that actively involve students in the planning, execution and assessment of their own learning, their position in schools will move from the periphery to the central core of what happens to, for and with our students in schools.

Conclusion:

Students who attend genuinely integrated schools have advantages. In integrated schools, there is increased focus on student demographics, feelings of inclusion and belonging and disaggregated performance data. The focus on the academic, social-emotional, cultural well-being of students, their families and educators is vital to build diverse and equitable schools. It is essential to use the tools described above and to build strategy to enable progress.

References

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