



URBAN EDUCATION RESEARCH AND POLICY ANNUALS

Epilogue

Where Do We Go from Here?

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The articles in this special issue investigate critical facets of educational equity in urban spaces in the southern United States, revealing both promising practices and persistent challenges within the field. The collective research underscores the profound impact of teacher experience and diversity on student outcomes, particularly for students of color. The findings in this special issue provide a top-down analysis of urban education to provide recommendations for systemic change toward more equitable and just educational practices and policies.

Equitable Distribution of Experienced Teachers. Research highlighted the positive correlation between experienced teachers and the academic achievement of students of color, while simultaneously revealing the inequitable concentration of these educators in more affluent, predominantly White neighborhoods. This segregation of suggests that marginalized neighborhoods are persistently underserved (Saparito, 2017). The inequitable distribution of teachers is attributed to administrative support (e.g., principals), professional autonomy in curricula decisions, and voice in campus decisions. Thus, to support the achievement of all students, specifically students of color who are more likely to have a less experienced teacher, it is imperative for schools and districts to utilize practices that empower their teachers as professionals and leaders in their schools.

Diversity in the Teaching Workforce. While simply increasing the number of Black science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers in urban schools does not guarantee improved STEM achievement for Black students, this study highlights the complex interplay of factors influencing student success. The weak negative correlation observed between the percentage of Black STEM teachers and Black student achievement in mathematics and science underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond mere representation. However, the presence of Black teachers remains crucial. They serve as powerful role models, mentors, and advocates, fostering inclusive learning environments where all students feel seen

and supported. Increasing diversity within the STEM teaching workforce is essential, not as a singular solution, but as a vital step towards creating equitable and empowering educational experiences that inspire Black students to thrive in STEM fields.

Fugitive Pedagogy and Teacher Preparation. This issue underscored the importance of integrating culturally relevant pedagogical practices into teacher preparation programs. More specifically, the role that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) play in preparing Black teachers is pivotal to preparing Black teachers (Givens, 2021). Despite oppressive legislation and regulatory bodies in higher education, teacher preparation programs in HBCUs may provide culturally responsive training through sequenced courses that include case studies, games, and self-reflection that utilize oral mediums such as counter storytelling and music.

Supporting Black Women Teachers. Black women teachers in urban schools navigate a complex landscape of challenges, often feeling undervalued, held to unfair standards, and lacking adequate administrative support. These interconnected issues contribute to a stressful work environment, leading to burnout and high attrition rates. Yet, despite these adversities, these educators persevere, driven by an unwavering commitment to their students' well-being and academic success. To retain and support Black women teachers, education stake holders may: 1) prepare school leaders with cultural competence, 2) develop peer mentoring programs for Black women teachers, 3) address systemic bias within teacher evaluation criteria, and 4) invest in the pipeline with targeted scholarships, professional development and leadership opportunities to attract and retain Black women teachers.

Critical Examination of School Vouchers. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) analysis of school vouchers in Texas problematizes the objectivity and post-racial ideologies (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015) that underpin the discourse on school choice policy in the 88th legislative session (i.e., Education Savings Account debate; ESA). Moreover, this analysis highlights the pervasive nature of racism that has been rebranded in this moment in time as “parental rights”. Ultimately, strong local advocacy successfully resisted the ESA program, highlighting the need to critically examine polarizing discourses employing emotionally charged rhetoric.

Impact of Urban School-Level Factors. The influence of student and school-level factors, as well as state policies for curriculum and instruction, on student achievement, particularly in mathematics and science, was highlighted. Findings suggest that policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize addressing issues like school discipline practices, acceleration placement criteria, and teacher retention to effectively bolster mathematics and science outcomes in urban schools.

The research presented in this special issue serves as a call to action for policymakers, educators, researchers, and community members to collaboratively address the systemic inequities that persist within urban education in southern states. By prioritizing equitable

resource allocation, culturally responsive teaching practices, and the recruitment and retention of a diverse and well-supported teaching workforce, we can cultivate learning environments in urban spaces that support the professional growth of teachers and the academic growth of students.

References

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