Collaborative Inquiry Model: Addressing Gender Equity in Education

Addressing Critical Issues

Disclaimer

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Since the passage of Title IX, enormous progress has been made to ensure equal educational opportunities on the basis of gender. Yet, gender bias in schools is still a largely invisible issue (ED, 2012, Ginsburg, 2005). Current models of school reform and program evaluations do not sufficiently capture the practices that perpetuate gender bias. For example, standardized test scores are unlikely to reveal whether teachers are giving boys and girls equal amounts of attention in the classrooms or the effects of gender based socialization on instruction (Ginsberg, 2005). Collection and analysis of gender data will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between instruction and evidence of student learning and its impact on classroom inequities. Accomplishing this goal also will require a higher level of collaboration among teachers, administrators, and districts (Robinson, 2010).

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) report for the Department of Education analyzed opportunities and success by gender in a variety of categories. In terms of Advanced Placement classes, girls outnumber boys in enrollment in AP science, AP foreign languages, and several other AP subjects. Boys consistently outnumber girls in AP Mathematics enrollment. Across the board, boys take and pass AP tests at a higher rate than girls. In terms of discipline rates, girls of all races are suspended out-of-school at lower rates than boys of the same race. However, African American girls are suspended at higher rates than Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and White boys. In terms of school climate, girls represent 55% of the nearly 62,000 students in the sample that reported having been bullied or harassed on the basis of sex. Boys represented 79.6% of the 92,000 students in the sample disciplined for bullying or harassment on the basis of sex (ED, 2012). Examining data (especially demographic, achievement, and disaggregated data) frequently reveals negative assumptions about what children of color, special needs students, students living in poverty, and students across gender lines are capable of learning and achieving (Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, 2008). For example, according to a recent study, young male rambunctiousness leads teachers to

underestimate their intellectual and academic abilities (Sommers, 2013). Lessons learned from the New York City Department of Education by The Consortium of Policy Research in Education (CPRE), show that Collaborative Inquiry strengthens teacher understanding and use of student assessment and performance to improve their instructional decision-making. Most importantly, the Collaborative Inquiry Model provides teachers with a framework for responding to a range of issues related to race, gender, and national origin (Love, et al., 2008).

Often times, teachers are constrained by time and expertise to fully manage, utilize, or even be aware of the complex web of contextual factors found in schools, districts, states, and other external initiatives and structures that affect learning (Nelson & Slavit, 2008). As a result, without a supportive and facilitated process that support teachers and data teams to engage in a reflective and constructive dialogue, analysis of data can be misinterpreted and lead to conflict (Love, et al., 2008). The process of facilitated dialogue enables teachers to enhance their inquiry stance and increase their ability to function as part of a collaborative. At the same time, this intentional facilitation process better positions teachers to negotiate outside influences that may support or hinder the inquiry process (Nelson & Slavit, 2008). Studies done by CPRE with the New York City Department of Education shows that the Collaborative Inquiry Model enables teachers to build evidence-based professional learning communities within their schools, and improve their professional work and relationships (Robinson, 2010). The Collaborative Inquiry Model is usually situated within the school context and utilizes the power of teacher-to-teacher collaboration, often with a facilitator, to analyze student data in relation to teaching practices (Nelson & Slavit, 2008). This model roots the professional development experience within the school environment and improves student achievement through targeted and informed instructional decision-making, with a culturally responsive process that is necessary to address gender equity in the education.

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