George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development

EDUC 874
The Achievement Gap (3 credits) CRN: 74002
Fall, 2014
Thursdays, 4:30 – 7:10, Aquia 219

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Prerequisite: None

Course Description and Relationship to Program Goals: Focuses on achievement gap in schools. Students research and analyze gaps in student achievement related to race and ethnicity, limited English proficiency, family background, gender, poverty, and ableism, and practices designed to close the gap.

Course Objectives
The learner will:
- Develop an understanding of the achievement gap in schools today including, its causes, its effects, its solutions, and the implications for policy formation;
- Deconstruct and explore in detail one aspect of the achievement gap, e.g. poverty, race, gender, teacher quality, student assessment practices, etc.;
- Explore "gap-generated" school reform models for their promise and for the barriers that need to be addressed;
- Prepare an in-depth analysis of one aspect of the gap related to her/his local setting.

Required Readings

Achieve. (2012). *Closing the expectations gap*. Washington, DC: Author.

Aronson, J., Cohen, G., McColskey, W., Montrosse, B., Lewis, K., and Mooney, K. (2009). *Reducing stereotype threat in classrooms: a review of social-psychological intervention studies on improving the achievement of Black students* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2009–No. 076). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs

Bamat, D. (2012, October 9). Two lives diverged. *Education Week, 32*(7), 22-23.

Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2010). The Black and White achievement gap: When progress stopped. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. www.ets.org/research/pic

Berliner, D. C. (2009). Poverty and potential: Out-of-school factors and school success. Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved [date] from http://epicpolicy.org/publication/poverty-and-potential

Blais, D. (2006). Ivory tower: Lessons for a teacher. *Teaching Tolerance.* Retrieved from http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-30-fall-2006/ivory-tower-lessons-teacher, on July 8, 2011.

Brunner, H. (2013, January 29) Equal internet access is a K-12 must-have. *Education Week*, *32*(19), 24-25

Burrus, J., & Roberts, R. D. (2012, February). *Dropping out of high school: Prevalence, risk factors, and remediation strategies*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Butrymowicz, S. (2012, March 19). The little district that could: How one Kansas district keeps a near-perfect record on state exams. Retrieved from http://hechingerreport.org/content/the-little-district-that-could-how-one-district-keeps-a-near-perfect-record-on-state-exams_8164/

Cohen, G., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., and Master, A. (2006). Reducing the racial achievement gap: A social-psychological intervention. *Science, 313*, 1307-1310.

Cole. R., Kemple, J. J., Segeritz, M. D. (2012, June). Assessing the early impact of School of One: Evidence from three school-wide pilots. New York, NY: Research Alliance for New York dCity Schools, New York University.

Coleman, J. (1987). Families and schools. *Educational Researcher, 16*(6), 32-38.

Cookson, P. (2011). Madison was right: Why we urgently need a national vision for public education. *Teachers College Record.* http://www.tcrecord.org ID Number: 16392.

Christensen, C., Horn, M., & Johnson, C. (2008). *Disrupting class*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Desimone, L., & Long, D. A. (2010). Teacher effects and the achievement gap: Do teacher and teaching quality influence the achievement gap between Black and White and high- and low-SES students in the early grades? *Teachers College Record*, *112*(12), 3024-3073.

Ferguson, R. (2007). Parenting practices, teenage lifestyles, and academic achievement among African American children. *Focus*, *25*(1), 18-26.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *Urban Review*, *18*(3), 176-206.

Fryer, R. (2012). *Learning from the successes and failures of charter schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Galluzzo, G. R. (2011, March 1). For federal turnaround funds, think locally. *Education Week*, 28.

Greer, C. (August 7, 2012). *10 ways school reformers get it wrong*. Retrieved from
http://newwf.org/blog/2012-08-07-10-ways-school-reformers-get-it-wrong
on August 7, 2012.

Hagelskamp, C., & DiStasi, C. (2012). *Failure is not an option*. New York, NY: Public Agenda.

Hamilton, L., & Mackinnon, A. (2013). *Opportunity by design: New high school models for student success*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Hassel, B.C., & Hassel, E.A. (2010). *Opportunity at the top*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact.

Headden, S. (2006, February 20). Two guys…and a dream. *U.S. News and World Report*, *140*(6), 41-46.

Henig, J. R. (2008). *What do we know about the outcomes in KIPP schools?* Retrieved from
http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Henig_Kipp.pdf

Jaschik, S. (2009, August 10). The parent gap. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from
http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/08/10/parents

Kopp, W. (2005, November 13). Poor kids aren't dolts -- push them harder. Los Angeles, CA: *Los Angeles Times.*

Kristof, N. D. (2012, January 21). How Mrs. Grady transformed Olly Neal. *New York Times*.

Lareau, A. (2002, Oct). Invisible inequality: Social class and child rearing in black families and white families. *American Sociological Review*, *67*(5), 747-776.

Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parental involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal*, *43*, 193-218.

Lynn, M., Bacon, J. N., Totten, T. L. Bridges, T. L., and Jennings, M. E., (2010). Examining teachers' beliefs about African American male students in a low-performing high school in an African American school district. *Teachers College Record*, *112*(1), 37-51.

McLester, S. (2011, March). Learning gets personal. *District Administration*. Retrieved from
http://www.districtadministration.com/article/learning-gets-personal

National Center for Education Statistics (2013). *The nation's report card: Trends in academic progress 2012* (NCES 2013 456). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

National Research Council. (2012, July). *Education for life and work*. Washington, DC: Author.

Nelson, A. (2006, Fall). Overcoming the income gap. *Infobrief*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Neuman, S. B., & Celano, D. C. (2012, Fall). Worlds apart. *American Educator*, 13-23.

Plucker, J. A., Burroughs, N., & Song, R. (2010). *Mind the (other) gap: The growing excellence gap in K-12 education*. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy.

Public Agenda. (2013). *Failure is not an option*. New York, NY: Author.

Ramirez, G., & Beilock, S. (2011). Writing about testing worries boosts exam performance in the classroom. *Science*, *331*, 211-213. DOI: 10.1126/science.1199427

Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In G.J. Duncan & R.J. Murnane (Eds). *Whither opportunity? Rising inequality, schools, and children's life chances*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Schecter, S., & Sherri, D. (2009). Value added? Teachers' investments in and orientations toward parent involvement in education. *Urban Education*, *44*(1), 59-87.

Sparks, S. (2013, July 29). Drop out indicators found for 1st graders. *Education Week, 32*(22), 37.

Strauss, V. (2013, August 1). The problem with "the problem with problem teachers". *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/08/01/the-problem-with-the-problem-with-teachers/

Tanenbaum, C., Le Floch, K., & Boyle, A. (2013). *Are personalized learning environments the next wave of K–12 education reform?* Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

The New Teacher Project. (2012). *The irreplaceables*. Retrieved from http://tntp.org/irreplaceables

Theoharis, G. (2010). Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. *Teachers College Record*, *112*, 331-373

Tough, P. (2013). Teachers aren't the problem. *Salon*, Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2012/09/05/teachers_arent_the_problem/singleton/

Tuttle, C. C., Gill, B., Gleason, P., Knechtel, V., Nichols-Barrer, I., Resch, A. (2013, February). *KIPP middle schools: Impacts on achievement and other outcomes*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica.

Silva, E., & Headden, S. (2011). *Reimaging the school day: More time for learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

von Zastrow, C. (2009, September 30). *Parents as turnaround specialists: Ricardo LeBlanc-Esparza tells us how it's done*. Retrieved from http://www.learningfirst.org/parents-turnaround-specialists-ricardo-leblanc-esparza-tells-us-how-it-s-done

Ware, M., & Patel, R. (2012, March). Does more money matter? New York, NY: MDRC.

Welsh. P. (2009, October 18). *Making the grade isn't about Race. it's about parents*. Retrieved from

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/15/AR2009101503477_pf.html

Welsh, P. (2010, March 21). *At T.C. Williams High School, a 'low achieving' label is a wake-up call*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/19/AR2010031901362.html

Wildhagen, T. (2012). How teachers and schools contribute to racial differences in the realization of academic potential. *Teachers College Record, 114*, 1810-1831.

Yatvin, J. (2009, October 23). Rediscovering the 'Pygmalion Effect'. *Education Week*, *29*(9), 24-25.

Young, E. Y. (2011). The four personae of racism: Educators' (mis)understanding of individual vs. systemic racism. *Urban Education*, *46*, 1433-1460.

Zeller, T. (2012, March 1). *For America's least fortunate, the grip of poverty spans generations*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/01/american-poverty-rate_n_1304269.html

Suggested Readings *(and many more on blackboard "documents" and "weblinks")*

Barton, P. (2003). *Parsing the achievement gap*. Princeton: Educational Testing Service.

Borman, G., Hewes, C., Overman, L., Brown, S. (2003). *Comprehensive school reform and student achievement*. Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR, Johns Hopkins University.

Brunner, H. (January 31, 2013). Equal internet access is a K-12 must-have. Education Week, pp. 24-25. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/30/19brunner.h32.html.

Carter, P. (2007). *Keepin' it real*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chenoweth, K. (2007). *It's being done*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Chenoweth, K. (2009). *How it's being done*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Contreras, F. (2011). *Achieving equity for Latino students*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Education Commission of the States. (August, 2003). *Research sheds new light on Hispanic-White achievement gap*. Denver, CO: Author.

Education Trust. (2005). *Stalled in secondary*. Washington, DC: Author.

Gamoran, A. (ed.) (2007). *Standards-based reform and the poverty gap: Lessons from No Child Left Behind*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harris, A. (2011). *Kids don't want to fail: Oppositional culture and the Black-White achievement gap*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Jencks, C., & Philips, M. (1998). *The black-white test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Loveless, T., & Chubb, J. (2002). *Bridging the achievement gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings.

Perry, T., Steele, C. & Hilliard, A. (2004). *Young, gifted, and black*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Programme for International Student Assessment. (2005). *Learning for tomorrow's world*. Paris, France: Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development.

Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Thernstrom, A., & Thernstrom, S. (2004). *No excuses: Closing the racial gap in learning*. New York, NY: Simon & Shuster.

Wagner, T. (2010). *The global achievement gap*. New York, NY: Basic Books

Wiedeman, C. R. (2002). Teacher preparation, social justice, equity: A review of the literature. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *35*, 200-211. doi:10.1080/713845323

Recommended Text: Publication of the American Psychological Association. 6th ed. (2009).

Additional readings posted on https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

Additional Online Resources
The Center for Education Policy. http://www.cep-dc.org ; The Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center helps Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. It does not represent any special interest groups.

Childstats. http://childstats.gov; The website of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

Harvard Family Research Project. http://www.hfrp.org/ ; The Harvard Family Research Project is a very good source for information about "out of school" time and issues related to students and their families.

Kids Count. http://www.aecf.org/kidscount ; A report on the condition of children in the US from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov . This website is the home of the nation's report card. Most statistics on the condition of education can be found at NCES.

Great Teachers and Leaders. http://www.gtlcenter.org/; A service of the American Institute for Research concerning teacher quality, effectiveness, and evaluation.

REL Midwest: http://www.relmidwest.org/ ; Formerly the North Central Region Educational Laboratory, this is another very good site for school reform.

Many others are posted on blackboard for your perusal and information.

Supplies
Computer with Internet access and current GMU email account.

CEHD Course Expectations
The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) expects that all students abide by the following:

- **Attendance**: Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.

- **Tardiness**: Prompt arrival for the beginning of class is expected.

- **Participation**: Each student is expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions. It is expected that each student will be attuned to group dynamics in order to ensure the active participation of all in the class.

- **Absence**: If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.

- **Assignments**: All assignments must be completed in MSWord and sent to me as an attachment via email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

- **Honor Code**: Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/].

- **Exceptional Needs**: Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].

- **Computing**: Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor. Cell phones, pagers, and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Please keep them stowed away and out of sight. Laptops or tablets (e.g. iPads) are permitted for the purpose of taking notes only. Engaging in activities not related to the course (e.g. gaming, email, chat, etc.) will result in a significant reduction in your participation grade.

- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/].

- **Email**: Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check

it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.

- **Dispositions**: Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

- **Core Values Commitment**: The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.
  http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/

Campus Resources

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].

- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See http://gse.gmu.edu/].

Course Delivery

This course is a doctoral seminar, and my teaching style revolves around the concept of "learning via conversation." As such it is expected that you will read in advance of class and continue to try to find the bigger picture as you learn to sort through the findings of one study to the next. In addition to classroom attendance and participation, I expect you to participate fully in whole class and small group discussions, group, pair, and individual projects, internet research, analyses of case studies, and reflections on practice. I will use GMU's web-accessible Blackboard course (https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp) framework throughout the course; many of the examples are posted there for you to read in advance of our discussions.

Assignment (Due date: December 11)

There is only one assignment and that is to prepare a 15-20 page paper on one dimension of the achievement gap that is found in your own school or (if you're not working in a school) that is an area of interest for you and to explore:

1) the nature of that dimension e.g. LEP, inequitable access to knowledge, etc.;
2) how it contributes to the gap with data to support your case, e.g. performance of LEP students;
3) the policy debate surrounding it (what policies and practices have tried to help close this gap?);
4) a discussion of promising practices that might close this dimension of the gap with supporting evidence from research and evaluation studies.

Since this is a doctoral class, your entire grade rests on this paper. By no later than *October 16*, please provide me with a one-paragraph description of your topic and with an abbreviated reference list (no more than a page. This is just to I can find ways to assist you.)

All assignments must be completed in MSWord and sent to me as an attachment via regular email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

Evaluation and Grading

3 = highly accomplished (letter grade = A). The paper clearly delineates the nature of the area that the literature suggests "causes" the achievement gap. The discussion includes research studies in which the data clearly indicate the gap. The student also presents a deep discussion of the policies enacted that are intended to alter practice to close the gap, and lastly, there is a solid presentation and critique of the promising practices designed to close the gap and a judgment of their strengths and weaknesses.

2 = adequate (letter grade = B). The paper describes the nature of the area as a "cause." The student includes a general and abstract discussion of the research literature to date and identifies some policies enacted to close the gap, and lastly there is some discussion of the promising practices that is more perspective than critique.

1= needs rewriting (letter grade = C). The literature and reads more like a "thought" paper than an analysis of the research literature, the policies enacted, and the effects of those promising practices to date.

Tentative Schedule

August	*Topic*
28	Introduction to the course
	What causes the gaps? What is the best evidence?
	Why are so many people poor? Why are so many kids underperforming?
	Read Cookson on blackboard (course content)
	Read "10 Ways School Reformers Get it Wrong" (course content)
	Read "Demographic Change Amplifies…" (course content)

September

4	The Challenge
	Read "The Writing on the Hall" (weblinks)
	Read "Kid's Count 2014" (course content)
11	Race? Poverty? Yes? No?
	Read "The Income Gap" (course content)
	Read "The Black-White Achievement Gap: When Progress Stopped" (cc)
	Read "Education for Life and Work" (course content)

18   Race? Poverty? Yes? No?
            Read "Families and Schools" on blackboard (course content)
            Read "The Widening Achievement Gap between Rich and Poor" (cc)
            Read "The Excellence Gap" (course content)
            Read "Falling out of the lead" (course content)
            Read: "Race for Results: (course content)

25   Structured Inequality? Structuring Equality?
            Read "Two Lives Diverged" on blackboard course content
            Read "A Broader, Bolder Approach"
            http://www.boldapproach.org/bold_approach_full_statement.pdf (weblink)
            Read "Two Guys and a Dream" on blackboard (Course content)
            Read "KIPP Middle Schools: Impact…" Executive Summary (Course
            content)

October

2   It's the Parent's(s') fault!
            Read Schecter and Sherri on blackboard (course content)
            Read "The Parent Gap" (weblinks)
            Read "Invisible Inequality" (course content)
            Read "Parental Involvement, Cultural Capital and the Achievement Gap" (cc)
            Read "Family and School Social Capital" (course content)
            Read "Bronx Partnership…" (course content)
            Read New Hope Project
               (http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=269)

9   Thoughts on Overcoming Race and Poverty
            Read "Reducing Stereotype Threat…" (course content)
            Read Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master on blackboard (cc))
            Read "Poverty and Potential" (course content)
            Read "Parenting Practices, Teenage Lifestyles…" (course content)
            Read "The Word Gap" (weblinks)
            Read "Brookings: Improve Children's Life Chances" (course content)

16   Maybe it's the kids
            Read "Dropping out of High School…" (course content)
            Read "Drop out indicators…" (course content)
            Read "Fordham and Ogbu" (course content)
            Read "Early Warning Systems" fact sheet (course content)
            Read "Upending Stereotypes" (course content)
            http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H14bBuluwB8
            Due no later than today: Final Paper Topic

23   Maybe it's the teachers
            Read "The Problem with Problem Teachers"(weblinks)
            Read Welsh (2009) on blackboard (course content: "Parents")
            Read "Examining Teachers' Beliefs…" (course content)
            Read "Teacher Effects and the Achievement Gap" (course content)
            Read "Four Personae of Racism…" (course content)

30   Maybe it's the teachers
            Read Welsh (2010) on blackboard (course content: "Low-achieving")
            Read TFA and Teachers' Expectations on blackboard (course content)
            Read "The Irreplaceables" (Course content)
            Read "Opportunity at the Top…" (weblink)
            Read "Teachers Aren't the Problem" (course content)
            Read "How Mrs. Grady transformed Olly Neal" (course content)

November

6   An Expectations Gap?
            Read "Pygmalion Effect" (course content)
            Read "Expectations Gap" (weblink or course content)
            Read Blais, http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-30-fall-2006/ivory-tower-lessons-teacher (weblink)
            Read "How Teachers and Schools Contribute to the Racial Differences in the Realization of Academic Potential" (on course content)

13   Technology as a gap closer
            Read "Disrupting Class" on blackboard (course content)
            Read "Are Personalized Learning…" (course content)
            Read "An Issue with Technology as a Disruption" (course content)
            Read "School of One Research Report" (course content)

20   Failure is not an option
            Read "Failure is not an option" (course content)
            Read "Expanding Learning Enriching Learning" (course content)
            Read "100% in Kansas" (weblink)

27   *No class: Thanksgiving*

December

4   New Structures
            Read "Disrupting Injustice" (course content)
            Read "Small Schools = Good Results" (course content)
            Read Fryer "Learning from Charters" (course content)
            Opportunity by Design…(course content)
            NAACP report (course content)

11   Conclusions from our authors and from you
     Read "Is Expanded Learning Time an Idea whose Time has Come?" (cc)
     Read "Learning gets Personal" (weblink)
     Read "Let Kids Rule the School" (weblink)
     Read Neuman & Celano "Tip the Scales" (course content)
     Read Galluzzo (Course content)
     Read "Excellent Teachers for Every Child" (course countent)
     Read "Poverty and Education: The Way Forward" (course content)
     Read "Why have we fallen short?" (course content)
     Final Paper Due