



Putting Diversity Research to Work by Overcoming Practical and Political Challenges

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Desegregation

- In the Seattle and Louisville cases...
- US Supreme Court affirmed the importance of diversity in schools.
- But it made creating diverse schools much more difficult.



What are possible race conscious strategies now?

- **SES balance**
- **Language balance***
- **Test scores balance**
 - **Wake County, NC**
- **Targeting teacher resources**
- **Theme magnets**
- **Strategic siting of new schools**



Detracking is a Diversity Tool

- **Detracking is the process of moving a school toward mixed ability classes**



Detracking

- **Requires holistic approach**
 - **Institutional--plan carefully**
 - **Instructional--equip educators**
 - **Normative--change beliefs**



Challenge Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Beliefs about Tracking

- When do we begin to group students?
- How do we rationalize sorting students?
- How does sorting affect later opportunities?
- On what assessments do we base placement decisions?
- How accurate/valid are assessments
- Do we assess effectiveness of placements?



Challenge Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Beliefs about Intelligence

- **What is human intelligence?**
- **Is it one dimensional, multidimensional?**
- **Is intelligence fixed at birth?**
- **Is aptitude or hard work more important for successful learning?**
- **Is it possible to make lessons more accessible to all students?**
- **In what track do you want YOUR children?**



Classroom Practices

- Many educators want to but don't know how to teach in heterogeneous settings. Provide training for...
 - Complex instruction
 - Multidimensional classrooms
 - Intellectual role playing



Institutional Arrangements

- **Detracking often meets resistance**
 - **Approach #1: Winning them over**
 - **Approach #2: Taking on critics**



Winning them over

- **Stable and committed district leaders**
- **Collect and disseminate data**
 - **Teachers, parents, community**
- **First: eliminate the lowest track**
- **Support, train, and encourage staff**
- **Support for struggling learners**
- **Earnest response to parents**



Taking On Critics

- Approach similar to “winning them over”
- Cultivation of Political Support
 - Build a political base for detracking among parents of low-track students
- Challenge Beliefs
 - Gifted, average, remedial are acquired, socially constructed labels



Acknowledge the 1000 lb. Elephants

- Elites like tracking because their children benefit from their privileged status in the tracked system
- Detracking opponents' fears of
 - Diluted quality of instruction
 - Undisciplined students
 - Cultural contamination
 - More competitors for top university seats



Navigating the Politics of Detracking

- **School board strategies**
- **Central office strategies**
- **Building level strategies**
- **Secondary school strategies**



School Board Strategies

- **Commit to principles underlying detracking**
- **Develop comprehensive reform plan**
- **Engage the community so all have effective voice**
- **Public engagement about equity and excellence**
- **Have reasonable and rigorous detracking standards**



Central Office Strategies

- **Emphasize basis of detracking:**
 - All children can learn,
 - All are entitled to high quality education
- **Ensure every school has necessary support**
- **Incentives for teachers working with heterogeneous groups**
- **Work with local media**
- **Augment public relations office with office of community & parent relations**



School-level strategies

- Provide teaching staff with knowledge and skills for heterogeneous classes
- Faculty study groups
- Parent advisory groups
- Disseminate information about detracking



Strategies for Secondary Schools

- **Create smaller, personalized learning environments**
- **Phase out all lower level classes**
- **Provide academic support for students ill prepared for rigorous classes**
- **Provide college counseling**



Practical Resources for Educators

- **Theory Into Practice**

2006 Special Issue devoted to

***Detracking and Heterogeneous
Grouping***

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Navigating the Politics of Detracking

By Kevin Welner & Jeannie Oakes

- Booklet available free
- [http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/
publications/detracking/index.html](http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/detracking/index.html)



Thank you!
