

Bias-Based Beliefs in Schools and its Impact on Disproportionality in Special Education, Suspension and Gifted Programs

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Educational Leadership and Policy

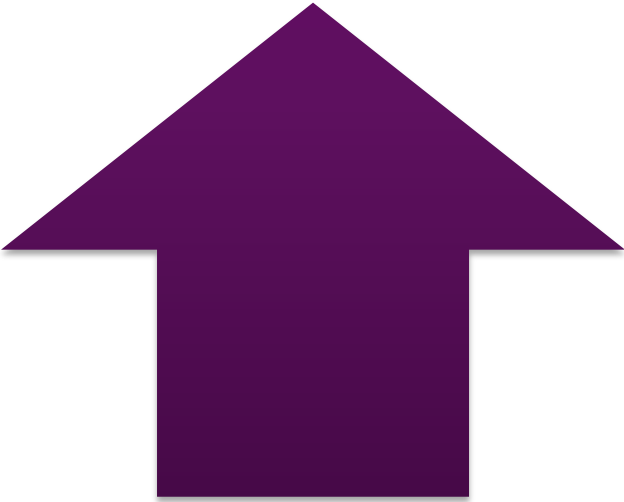
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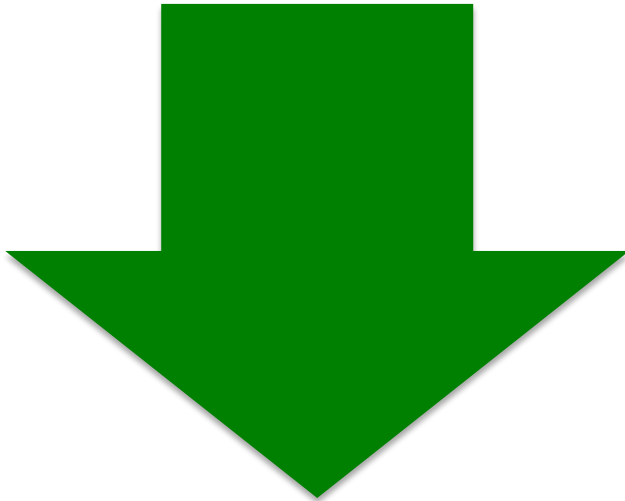
Objectives

- Discuss the persistence of educational inequality
- Understand the bias-based beliefs that disrupt strategies for achieving equity

DEFINING DISPROPORTIONALITY



Over-
representation



Under-
representation

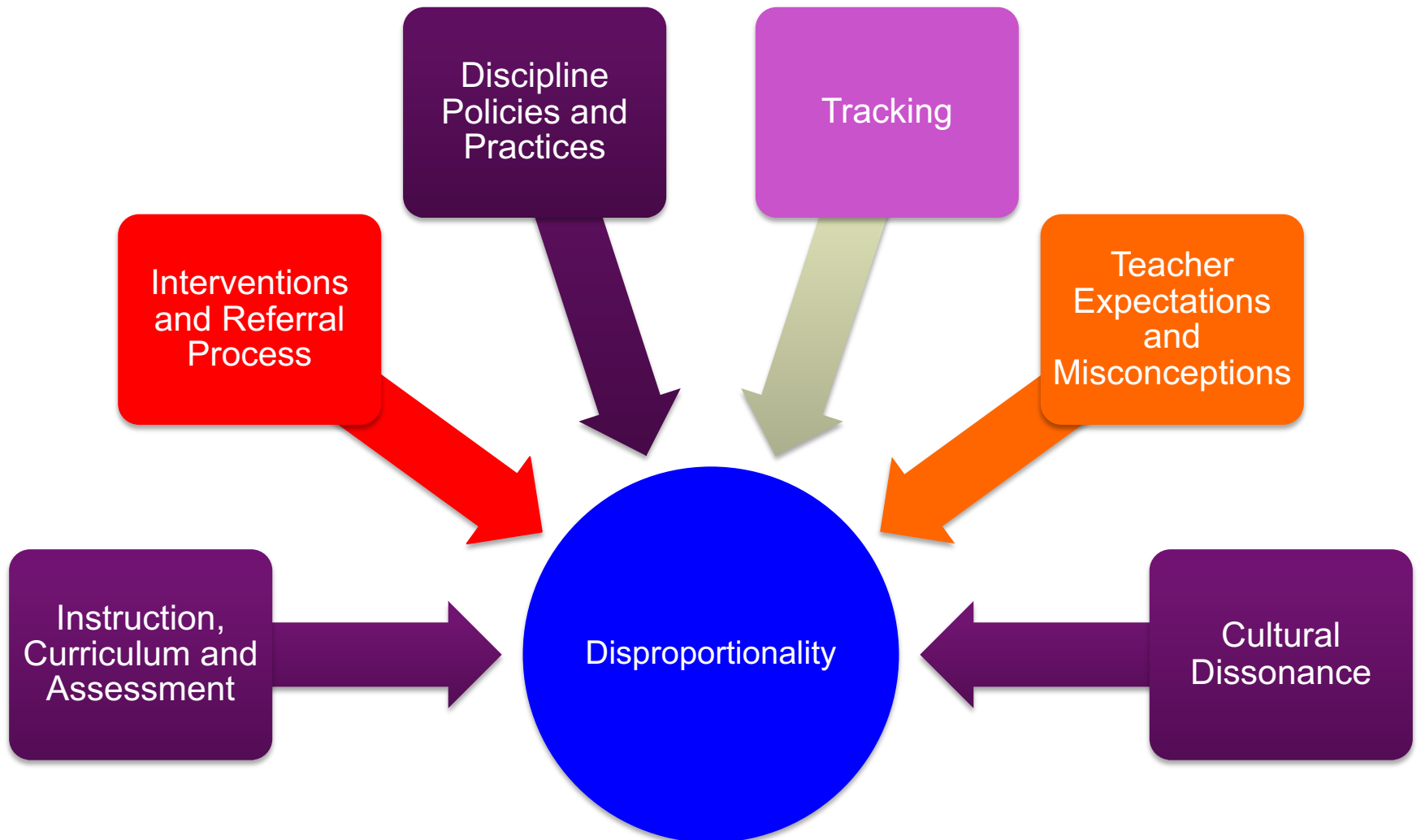
NEW REGULATIONS, DECEMBER 2016

Major Components of Significant Disproportionality Regulations

- USDOE –OSEP establish formula for calculating significant disproportionality
- Flexibility in Methodology
 - States set thresholds across 14 categories of analysis
 - States set cell size and N size
 - States establish number of years for formula
 - States set reasonableness of progress when making determination
 - States have flexibility start on or before 7/1/2018
- Comprehensive CEIS
 - Expanded to include students with disabilities
 - Must be targeted to address root cause factors

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF DISPROPORTIONALITY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION, SUSPENSION, AND GIFTED/AP?

There are common causes of disproportionality



FOCUS OF DISPROPORTIONALITY REMEDY:

- 1. FIX GAPS IN SYSTEM
THROUGH...ADDING MORE
SERVICES, STAFF, TRAINING, ETC.*
- 2. FIX KIDS'...*

*PERSIST CONCERN: ARE THESE
REMEDIES DRIVEN BY EQUITY-
BASED BELIEFS?*

Inter-disciplinary research exploration of disproportionality

- **Propensity of disproportionality in SpEd and Suspension**
 - Students of color (i.e., Black, Latino and Native American populations) are more likely to be classified with a disability compared to all other students (e.g., Coutinho and Oswald, 2000; Fabelo, et.al., 2012; Fierros and Conroy, 2002; Oswald, Coutinho and Best, 2002; Parrish, 2002; Skiba, et.al., 2011; Zhang, et.al., 2014)
- **School level factors interacting with rates of disproportionality**
 - Limited interventions, procedures and teams for implementing interventions (Gravois and Rosenfield, 2006); differential implementation of referral processes (Harry and Klingner, 2006); inappropriate approaches to behavior management (Milner, 2006; Skiba, et.al., 1997; Weinstein, et.al., 2003); inadequate framing of zero tolerance and other behavior management policies (Hoffman, 2014; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, et.al., 2002); and beliefs about poverty and race in student learning and behavior (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Fergus, 2016; Skiba, Simmons, & Ritter, 2006).
- **Student level factors interacting with rates of disproportionality**
 - Student level demographic factors (i.e., gender, race, parent educational level, eligibility for free or reduced lunch program) and/or teacher race and gender operate as explanatory variables of disciplinary infractions (e.g., Beck & Muschkin, 2012; Bryan, 2012; McElderry and Cheng, 2014) and special education classification rates (Morgan, et.al., 2015).

Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera. (2011). Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: Case Studies of Suburban School Districts. *Teachers College Record*, Volume 113 Number 10, 2011, p. 2233-2266

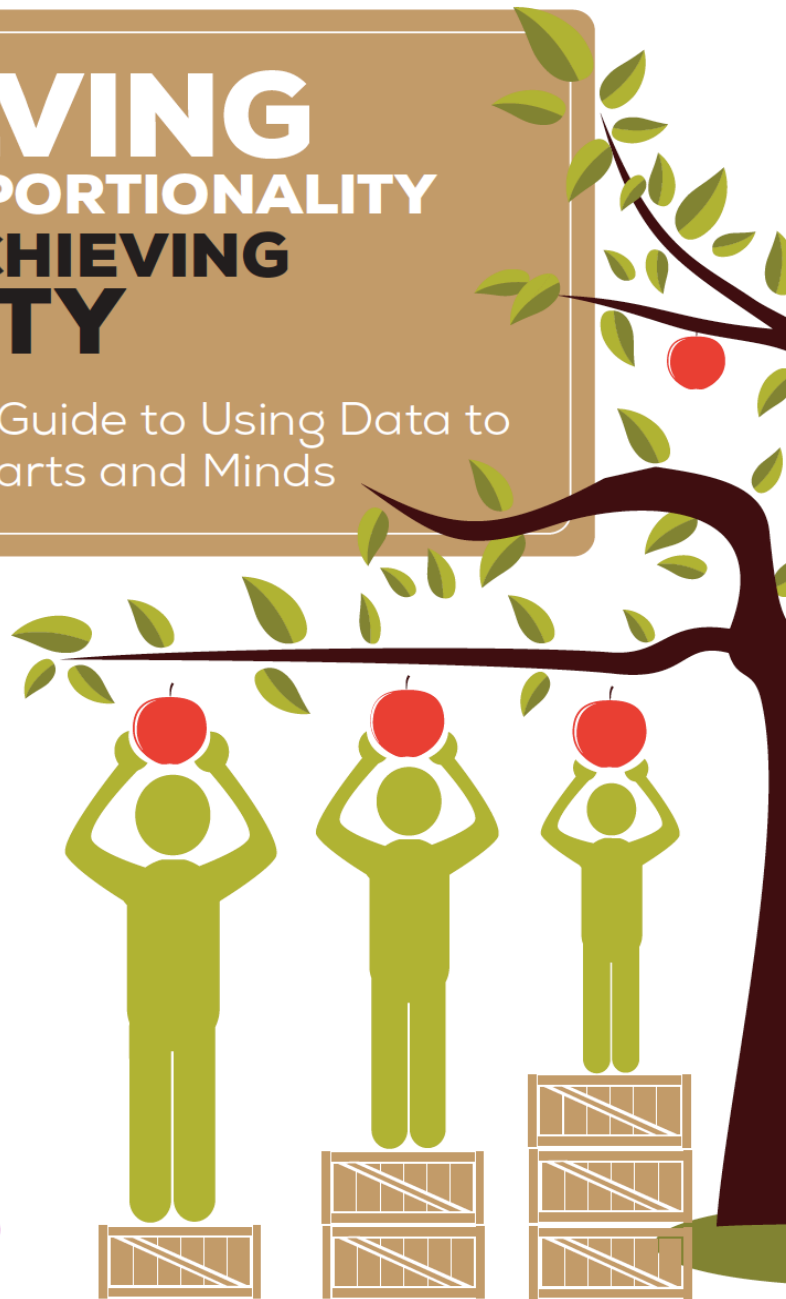
- RQ: What sociocultural notions do practitioners attach to disability and non-disability?
- Methods:
 - Participants
 - Two school districts
 - 44 school district personnel – principals, teachers, parents, superintendent, assistant superintendent, special education director, curriculum director, intervention coordinators
 - Post-session evaluations; focus groups and interviews; climate surveys; session activity notes; and policy/practice documents
 - Deductive and inductive analysis of interview and focus group transcripts; discourse analysis of session notes and post-session evaluations

Deficit thinking and Poverty Disciplining (Soss & Fording, 2011) in explanations of special education status

- Cultural deficit thinking in ability construction: The belief that poverty influences cognitive ability
 - *“Low-income status”*
 - *“Lack of books at home”*
 - *“Lack of belief in education among the students and parents”*
 - *“Connections in achievement gap between lower socio-economic and higher groups”*
 - *“Correlation of Head Start students and special ed. classified. Correlation of poverty to classification”*
 - *“Hispanic people listen to music too loudly”*
 - *“They bring ghetto to the school”*
 - *“They don’t speak English”*

SOLVING DISPROPORTIONALITY AND ACHIEVING EQUITY

A Leader's Guide to Using Data to
Change Hearts and Minds



**EDWARD
FERGUS**

Post-1954 Brown v. Board: Two Integration Projects began



1. Integration of Black and White children.
2. Integration of Black children with White teachers!

We need to address our social understanding of each other and why it frames our practice!

March 13, 1953, Topeka, Kansas

Dear Miss Buchanan:

Due to the present uncertainty about enrollment next year in schools for negro children, it is not possible at this time to offer you employment for next year. If the Supreme Court should rule that segregation in the elementary grades is unconstitutional our Board will proceed on the assumption that the majority of people in Topeka will not want to employ negro teachers next year for White children. It is necessary for me to notify you now that your services will not be needed for next year. This is in compliance with the continuing contract law...I believe that whatever happens will ultimately turn out to be best for everybody concerned.

- Sincerely,
- Wendell Godwin, Superintendent of Schools

**WE SERVE
WHITE'S *only*
NO
SPANISH *or* MEXICANS**

Though we've removed the legal frameworks of our bias, it does not mean we have not stop drinking from that same water fountain...



**DESPITE 60 YEARS OF
INTEGRATION, WE LEAD**

Public Religion Research Institute (2014) Racial Homogeneity of Social Networks

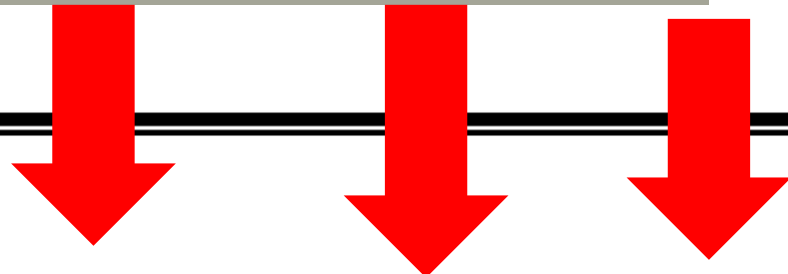


Table 3. Racial Homogeneity of Social Networks Among...

Percent of network that is entirely composed of people who are...	Among...			
	<u>All Americans</u>	<u>White Americans</u>	<u>Black Americans</u>	<u>Hispanic Americans</u>
All White	53	75	2	9
All Black	8	*	65	1
All Hispanic	7	*	1	46
Racially Mixed	24	15	23	34
No members named	8	8	9	10

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, American Values Survey, October 2013

**ABSENCE OF CROSS
CULTURAL EXPERIENCES
MINIMIZES OPPORTUNITIES
TO REDUCE THE
STEREOTYPES THAT FUEL
BIAS-BASED BELIEFS**

Who is the convicted felon?



Which one had a 2.35 GPA in undergrad?



**THESE SEGREGATED SOCIAL
LIVES ASSIST IN
DEVELOPING BELIEFS
ABOUT EACH OTHER...**

Fergus, E. (2016). “Teacher Beliefs about Race in School Districts with Overrepresentation of Black and Latino Students in Special Education and Behavioral Referrals.”

1. **Colorblindness:** operates from the stance that removing racism is to omit race and other social identities. It involves interacting with individuals as individuals not considerate of their social identity and focuses on discussing and framing the commonalities between individuals.
2. **Deficit-thinking:** used within education to explain academic performance as a result of deficiencies within an individual and/or group.
3. **Poverty-disciplining:** suggests to low-income individuals their behaviors are at fault and only through actions that focus on changing behavioral and psychological dispositions can low-income conditions be fixed.

SETTING THE STAGE OF DISPROPORTIONALITY



COLORBLINDNESS

Why does colorblindness emerge?

- Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that though viewing individuals' commonality is a desired state of humanity, colorblindness has led to a pattern of rationalizing racial inequality as due to market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks' imputed cultural limitations.
- DiAngelo (2014) describes several components:
 1. Living in which there is minimal feelings of loss when there are no racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse populations, this limits experiences to draw from to understand racism
 2. Ascribing to the idea of an "American" common culture encourages the idea of this experience as universal
- Overtime colorblindness is treated and discussed as a more culturally-evolved concept

NYU Steinhardt

Name:

IN YOUR OPINION-Slavery in the South

Statement: *By the mid 1700's, slavery was legal in every colony. If slavery was LEGAL back then, can you blame plantation owners for having slaves? Wasn't it just "the way things were?"*

In other words, if you were a plantation owner who didn't have slaves, and your neighbor had slaves and was making tons of money off of his crops, wouldn't you purchase slaves as well?



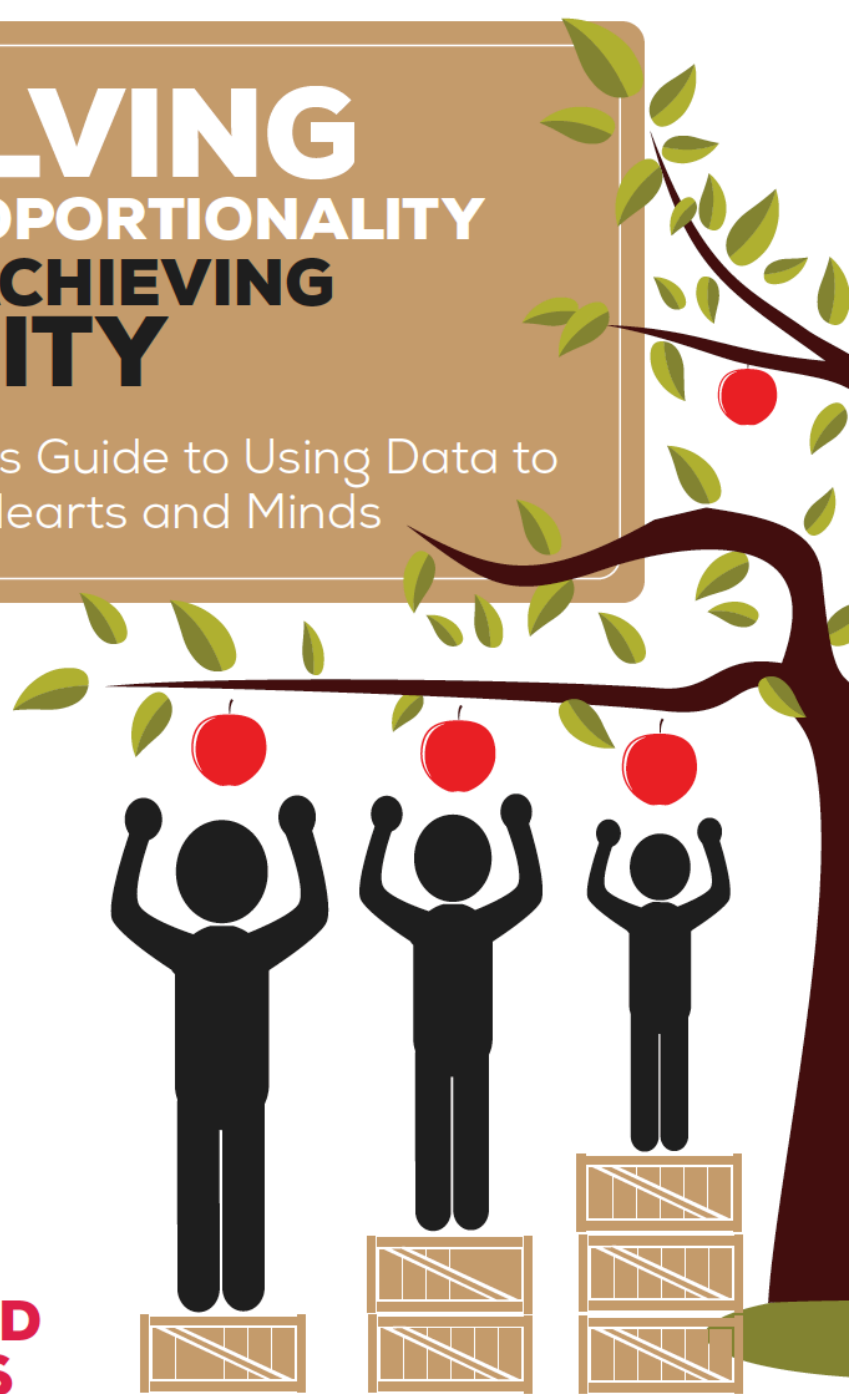
2014 American Red Cross Pool Safety Campaign: Find the Colorblindness



A cross-cultural lens requires constant attention to how we normalize specific ideas!

SOLVING DISPROPORTIONALITY AND ACHIEVING EQUITY

A Leader's Guide to Using Data to Change Hearts and Minds



**EDWARD
FERGUS**

POVERTY DISCIPLINING BELIEF

Why does poverty disciplining emerge?

- Soss et.al. (2011) describe poverty disciplining as premised on two conditions:
 - Theory of compromised human development (TCHD) suggests that poverty minimizes human development which in turns lowers potential
 - Theory of “good citizenship” suggests that individuals living in low-income and extreme poverty conditions require a level of disciplining in which they learn ways of being “good citizens” in order for them to help themselves.
- The combination of these two components create the justification for poverty disciplining belief. In other words, low-income kids need to be strictly managed because their class condition has compromised their thinking and behavioral potential.



GOT GRIT? REPORT CARD

Student Name _____ Teacher _____

Grade _____ School _____ School Year (date) _____

Teacher grades student on each of the following four components: G: Getting along with others, R: Responsibility, I: Integrity, T: Tenacity, using a scale of 1-5 with 1 being “not so good” to 5 being “very good.”

COMPONENT		GRADING PERIOD			
		1	2	3	4
G	Works well in groups (shares, takes turns, not bossy)				
	Tries to handle conflicts in a positive manner (no arguing, yelling)				
	Is polite (says please, thank you)				
	Refrains from tattling, bullying, teasing, blaming others, hitting				
	Follows school and class rules and has good manners				
R	Student is prompt (on time to class, very few tardies or missed days)				
	Is prepared (has homework, supplies, permission slips, parent notes)				
	Is able to control emotions, especially anger				
	Gives good effort when doing school work (not careless or sloppy)				
	Takes good care of body (exercises, gets enough sleep, eats well)				
I	Student is honest (tells the truth, doesn't cheat, steal)				
	Shows good sportsmanship				
	Makes valid attempts to always do the right thing				
	Is respectful to all adults in school				
	Is helpful to others (students and adults), often volunteers				
T	Student is willing to take positive risks (learn new things)				
	Seldom uses excuses or blames others				
	Tries hard to solve problems by him/herself before asking for help				
	Rarely quits or gives up				
	Sets goals and works hard to accomplish them				
TOTAL POINTS					

Scoring

- 90-100 Student has grit! Student is on the road to success!
- 80-89 Student is almost there; needs to work on a few items.
- 70-79 Student has a lot of work to do to acquire enough grit to be successful.
- Below 70 Student needs to seek help from teacher, counselor or parents to come up with a plan to address the lack of grit.

2015 state legislations focused on poverty disciplining...

- At least 18 states introduced proposals that would require **drug screening or testing for public assistance applicants** and/or recipients in 2015. The states include: Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.
- Beginning July 1, the lifetime limit on receiving TANF in Kansas will be reduced to 36 months; recipients will only be able to withdraw \$25 a day; and families will no longer be permitted to use or withdraw cash assistance at a wide array of establishments, including movie theaters, jewelry stores, cruise lines, lingerie stores, and nail salons.

DEFICIT THINKING

Why does deficit thinking emerge?

- Richard Valencia (1997) discuss two paradigms of thought that support deficit thinking: 1) genetic pathology model and 2) culture of poverty model.
 - Genetic pathology popularized in the early 1900s argued genetic traits (e.g., cranial size) are associated with “superior” genetic traits (e.g., intelligence).
 - Culture of poverty model argues cultural **attributes or practices have prevented racial/ethnic groups from assimilating and attaining social mobility** within U.S. society. For example, limited attitudes and outlooks of the future, failure to internalize work value ethics, instant gratification behavior, lack of parent involvement in schools, etc.
- The combination of these two concepts provide the foundation for deficit thinking. In other words, thinking of racial/ethnic minority groups as genetically inferior and culturally deficient supports deficit ideas of groups.

Classroom Observation of a compare and contrast lesson (9/24/08); 7th grade English

US Citizen

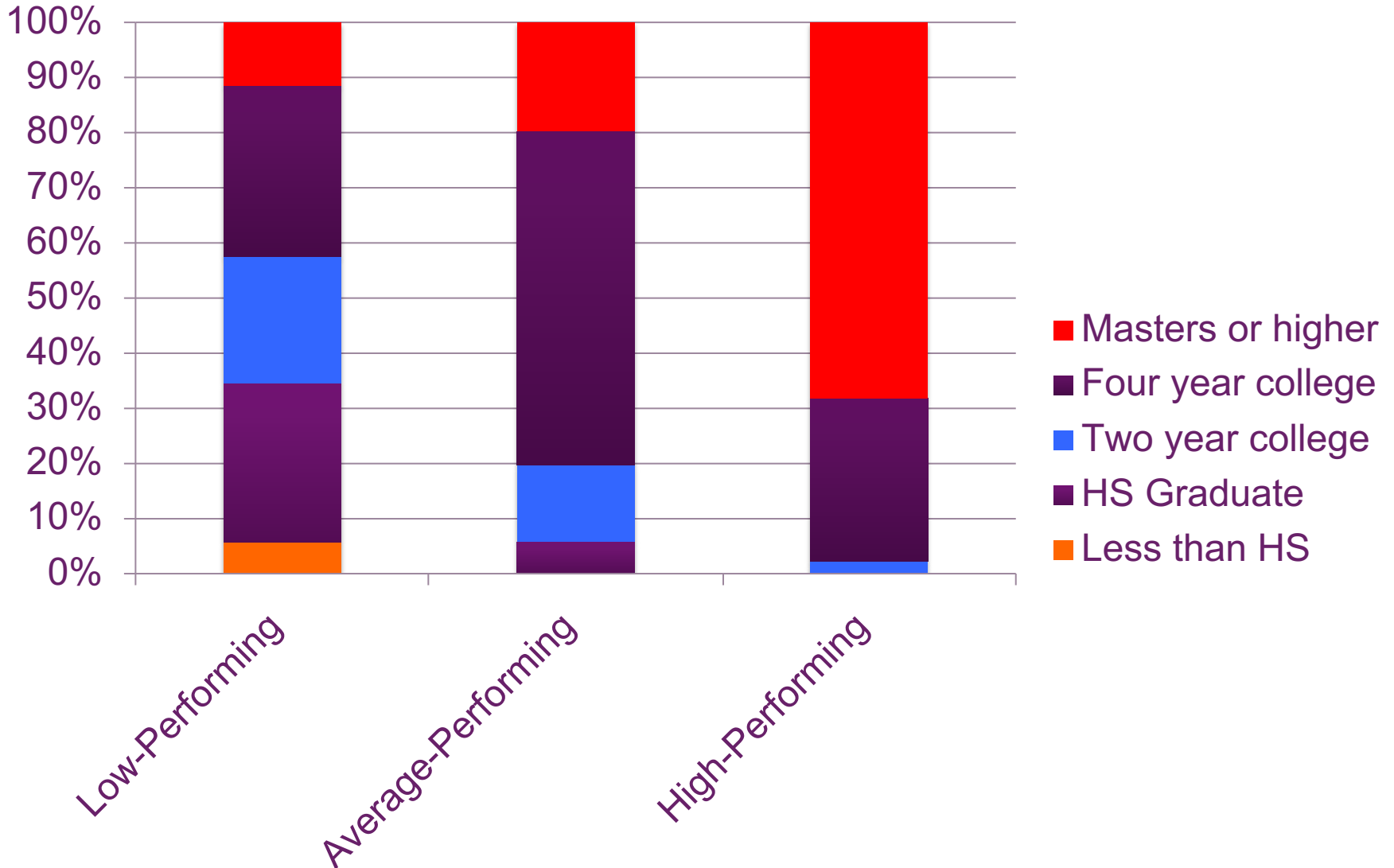
- Belongs here
- Born here
- Speaks English
- Gets help from government
- Birth certificate
- Nice neighbors

Illegal Immigrants

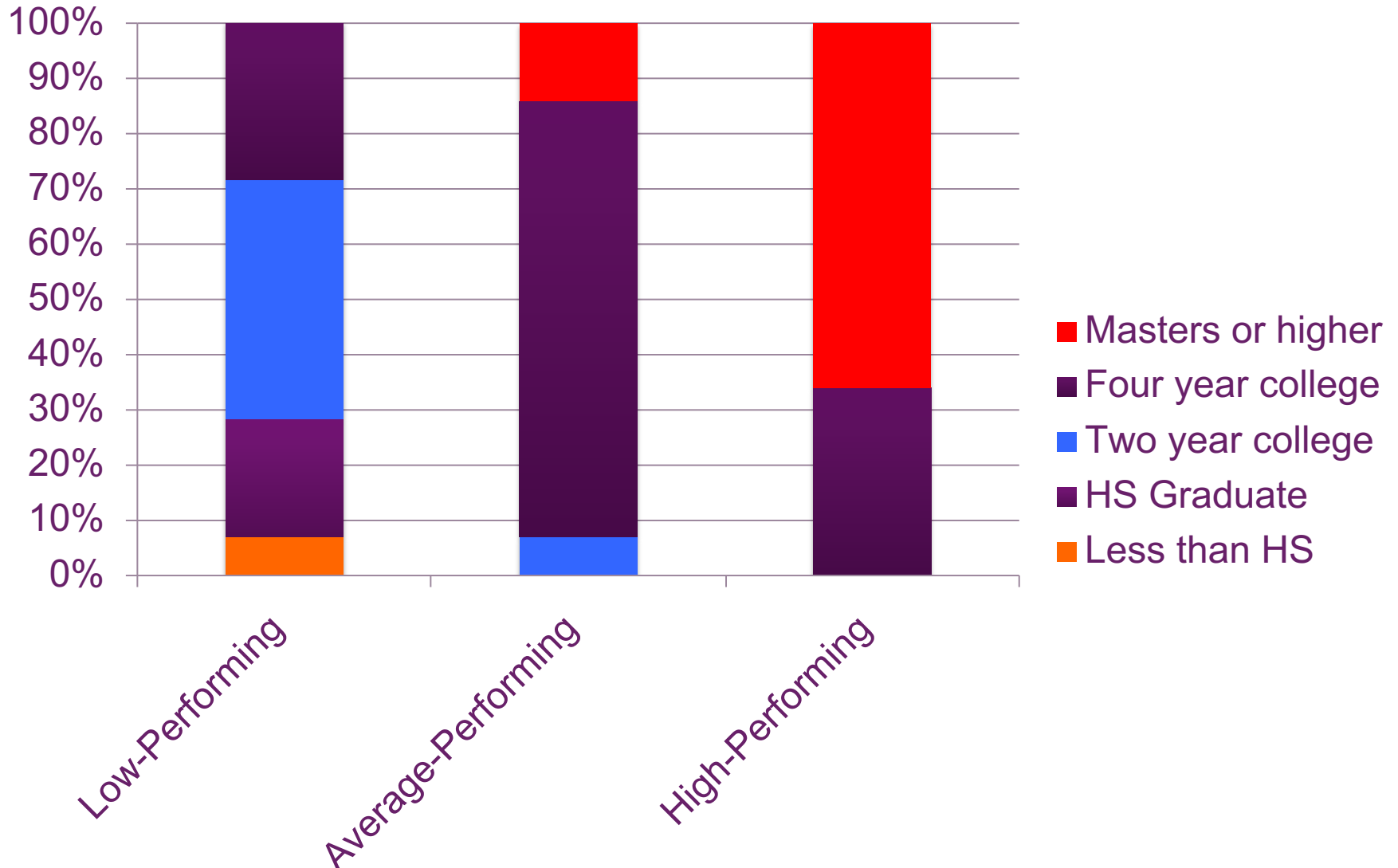
- Doesn't belong here
- Born in DR – another country
- Speaks Spanish
- Can't get help from the government
- No papers
- Sometime not nice neighbors
- Your family helps you alot

**ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS
SURVEY QUESTION – *HOW
FAR DO YOU EXPECT YOUR
LOW, MODERATE AND HIGH
PERFORMING STUDENTS TO
ACHIEVE?***

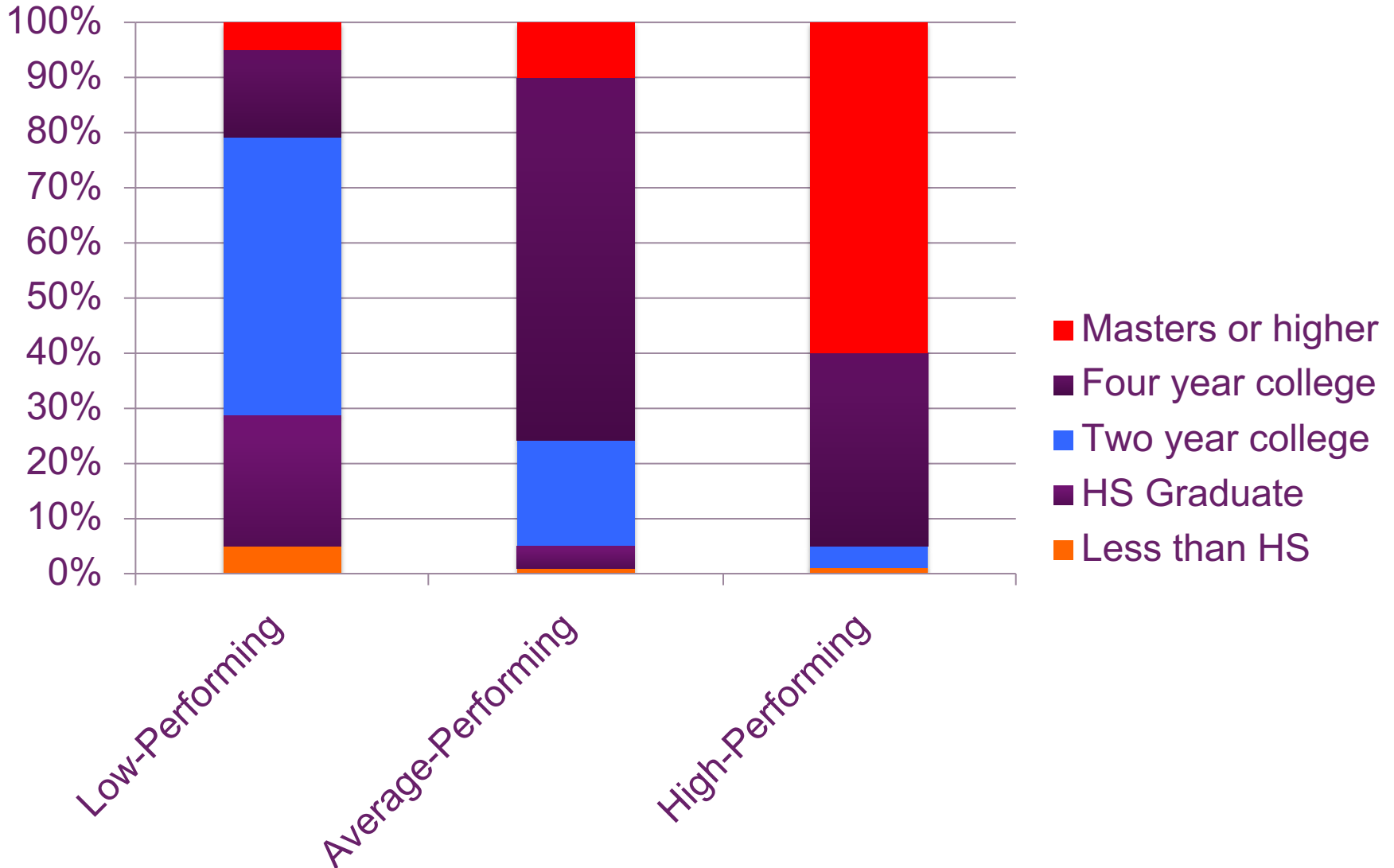
Kindergarten Teachers



8th Grade Teachers



12th Grade Teachers

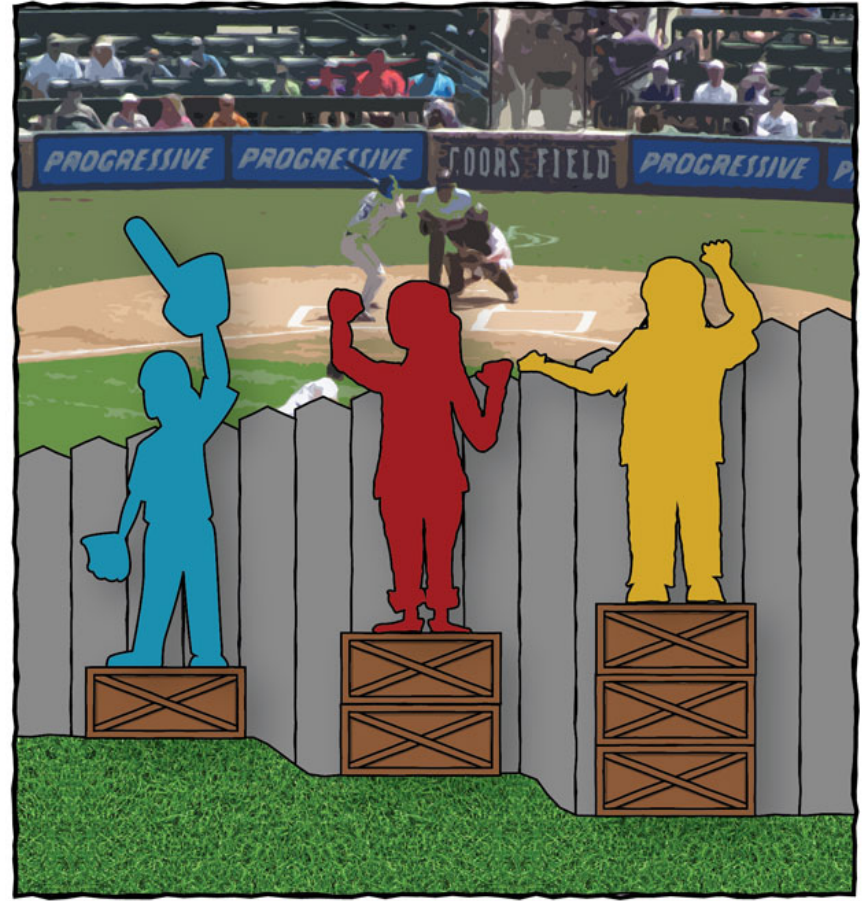


WHAT TO DO NEXT?

We need to institute equity first before getting to equality in order to address inequality!



EQUALITY



EQUITY

Root Cause Processes

- SEAs are already conducting root causes as component of significant disproportionality identification.
- Numerous tools available for conducting root cause analyses on disproportionality:
 - Disproportionality book: <https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/book/solving-disproportionality-and-achieving-equity>
 - Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/center/technical_assistance/program/disproportionality/resources/publications
 - IDC IDEA Data Center: <https://ideadata.org/resource-library/57ae50ea140ba0532a8b459e/>
 - AIR: <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/addressing-root-causes-disparities-school-discipline>

Comprehensive CEIS Plans

- SEAs are already requiring school districts to develop comprehensive CEIS Plans closely connected to root cause analysis.
 - California:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/disproguidance112011.asp>
- SEAs should also consider infusing into the outline of these comprehensive CEIS plans the framework from the National Implementation Research Network (<http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>).

Thank you!

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