

No Longer Separate, but Equal?

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Introduction

From kindergarten to 12th grade in any U.S. city, there is one common element that occurs usually in the spring of each academic year. Whether it goes by the name Criterion Reference Test, Regents, End of Course test (EOCT), or End of Grade (EOG) test, nearly every young person has to take part in some form of standardized testing. Neither the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) nor the American College Test (ACT) are exempt from a shared element of all of these standardized tests. As an elementary student in the early 80's, on the front of every single header of every standardized test I took, I was forced to check one of the following descriptors: white, black or other. As America grew more diverse (or just more politically correct), by the time I became a senior in high school this short list had evolved into the following options: Caucasian (still white), African American (still black), and "other" had expanded to names such as Hispanic and Asian American. As a black student, we would sometimes check 'white' in hopes of having our tests scored fairly. Before you judge, consider this: we were only listening to what our educated and uneducated relatives alike have told us. You see, before any statistical data that exposed the bias of standardized tests such as the SAT were ever analyzed, we knew of the bias (or at least we thought we did). Now, imagine the psyche of a student taking an exam they already feel is unfair in the beginning. I'll leave that to another curriculum unit. Little did I know that this data of student performance by race would be at the forefront of a national debate.

As an educator who feels a certain way about the legislation No Child Left Behind (NCLB), I must concede that there is one good thing I think that came out of it. As far as I can remember, cumulatively, whites have always performed better on standardized tests than minorities. It was the great white elephant in the room. It was never spoken, but was just 'understood'. With No Child Left Behind, school systems with underperforming minority students, because of the adequate yearly progress (AYP), would be penalized for not increasing their performance. No longer could the African American male or Latina girl be allowed to sit in the back of the room. They, too, must be educated.

Closing the achievement gap among minority and socio-economically disadvantaged students has been at the forefront of educational debate. In this curriculum unit, students will develop a plan for closing the achievement gap in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Students will review the following initiatives:

Neighborhood Schools – Harlem's School Zone.
Socioeconomic Integration – Wake County North Carolina school system
Strategic Staffing – Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools

Rationale

The term “achievement gap” refers to the disparity of performance on a number of educational measures between groups of children. This curriculum unit will focus specifically on the achievement gap between Caucasian students and African American students. Being an African American teacher, my heart grows somber year after year as data is presented on the academic performance of all students. Having taught in Atlanta Public Schools (schools located in an urban setting with a homogenous black population in Georgia), Cobb County Schools (schools located in a suburban setting and diverse population in Georgia), and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (in a school located in an urban setting with a diverse population in North Carolina), each presentation ends up with the same summary. There is a huge gap in academic performance among African American students and Caucasian students. From national agendas to local initiatives, several strategies are being implemented across the country to address this achievement gap.

Here are the results for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools based on 2009-2010 data¹.

Test	African-American Vs White	Hispanic Vs White	Economically Disadvantaged Vs Not Economically Disadvantaged Students
Reading (grades 3 – 8)	38	37	35
Math (grades 3- 8)	30	21	25
English 1	22	22	20
Algebra 1	24	15	18

Objectives

Statistics is a branch of mathematics that offers many real world applications. It is the collection, organization, and interpretation of data. It involves statistical analysis and can be applied to a variety of academic fields. Students are first introduced to basic statistical concepts as early as elementary school. In this unit, students will use the following statistical applications:

1. Statistical analysis of three current initiatives to close the achievement gap
2. Collecting data through the creation of surveys
3. Synthesizing and interpreting findings from data collection
4. Using data to support a cause

This unit was designed for Advanced Placement students, but can be easily modified for standard level students. Students must possess strong critical thinking and writing skills. Because of the content, this curriculum unit can be taught cross-curricular in Math, English, and

History classes.

Each lesson contains appropriate rubrics students may use to guide them.

Time Period

This unit is designed for a block schedule AP Statistics class to be completed in one semester. The class blocks are 90 minutes long. The entire unit will take up to 15 days, including the final project.

Prior Knowledge

Students should have been introduced to the following:

Data collection methods in statistics

Census

Survey sampling methods

Observational method

Bias and Ethics in Statistics

Outcome

From this unit, students should be able to obtain the following:

Students will identify whether supporting charts and graphs are beneficial or harmful. They will be able to discern what information is pertinent.

Students will develop an understanding of ethics in statistics and bias. They will review presentations used to pitch certain initiatives and see how each used statistical data to persuade.

Students will present their findings to administrators.

DAY 1 Introduction (Buy-In) “Waiting for Superman”

View Documentary “Waiting for Superman” directed by Davis Guggenheim

Objective: Introduce education reform

Students are shown the documentary “Waiting for Superman”

For homework, they are to answer the following questions:

Question 1: What is your first reaction to the title?

Question 2: Is America's educational system in need of help?

Question 3: How would you describe the educational climate, academic rigor, and overall school environment?

Question 4: Define the following terms: socioeconomic integration, busing, achievement gap

Teacher Notes

Process for Assigning Groups

This curriculum unit requires strong analytical, writing, and technological skills. In order to obtain the highest quality work, careful consideration must be made ensuring a proper balance of student strengths. Here is a suggested technique for grouping:

1. I desired to have 5-person groups. Because my class size was 25, this made for an even number of students in each group.
2. Each student had to select 5 students they desired to serve as a leader. These were tallied.
3. Once the leaders were chosen, the remaining students had to rank their top three strengths.
 - A. Analytical / Computational Skills
 - B. Writing Skills
 - C. Computer literacy
 - D. Oratorical skills
4. I sorted lists of students with similar strengths.
5. Each leader blindly selected students from each area and one additional student from any remaining area.
6. Each group leader will be given a flash drive to keep all information. Every two weeks, group leaders will be responsible for transferring all pertinent files (not research) to a class flash drive which will be kept in the classroom as a back-up.
7. Each group leader will be given a binder to keep on information. The group leader or his/her assignee is responsible for writing a daily log of progress. Each student is responsible for submitting at least one reflection entry about the process.

DAYS 2 - 4: Analysis of Initiatives

1. Each group will be given a copy of overviews of the following plans.
 - A. Case Study of: Strategic staffing for successful schools: Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools
 - B. Socioeconomic Integration: Wake County Schools
 - C. Harlem School Zone
2. Students will be required to analyze is case using the following criteria.
3. Each group will compare/contrast each initiative according to the following guiding questions:
 - a. In a paragraph, describe the methodology of the plan.
 - b. Are there any documented results?
 - c. Is each initiative cost effective?
 - d. Identify at least three benefits of each initiative.
 - e. Identify at least three flaws of each initiative.
 - f. Students must create a comparison chart using this information.

Teacher Notes

For these days, I will reserve a computer lab for each student to have access to research.

Neighborhood schools Students will examine the highly publicized Harlem Children's Zone in New York, NY. This design, developed by Geoffrey Canada, focuses on a block in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in American.

Socioeconomic Integration. More than racial integration, proponents of socioeconomic integration advocate its effectiveness. Students will examine this model which was made effective in Wake County schools in North Carolina in 2000. They will also look at the uproar when this initiative was overturned in 2010.

Strategic Staffing. Students will examine Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools initiative of strategically placing high performing administrators in low performing schools.

DAY 5: Paideia Seminar

A Paideia Seminar is an intellectual discussion which is used to further enhance students understanding of concepts by using open-ended questions.

1. Each group will be given copies of all 5 comparison charts.
2. In each group, they will discuss how their peers analyzed the case studies and prepare two discussion questions.
3. Each group will have to develop two open ended questions they would like to discuss.
4. Each group 'leader' will conduct the paideia seminar.

Teacher Notes

Prior to the seminar, the teacher must teach students the purpose and process of conducting a Paideia seminar. Information about a Paideia seminar can be found on **HYPERLINK** "http://www.paideia.org" www.paideia.org.

DAYS 6 –9: Creating a Plan

Objectives: In their teams, students, using what they have learned, will create the 'perfect' initiative to close the academic achievement gap at East Mecklenburg High School.

Days 6 & 7

1. Students should be encouraged to use components of any initiative used to develop their own cohesive plan. They will use these days to brainstorm and develop a plan. Additional time will be required outside of class.
2. All individual tasks should be assigned to each member and approved by the teacher. Clear evidence of individual work must be presented.
3. By the end of day 7, students should have created a survey which must be teacher approved to determine student buy-in and teacher buy-in. Students will be graded using the following rubric.

Survey Rubric

Component	Exceeds Standards (5)	Meets Standard (3)	Does Not Meet Standard (1)
Purpose	Clearly Stated.	Stated vaguely.	Not stated.

Essential Questions	Questions are clear and concise, requiring	Questions are somewhat clear. They may require additional clarification.	Questions are ambiguous.
Grammar and Spelling	There are no errors	Minimal errors	Clearly no editing was done.
Ease of Use	Aesthetically appealing and easy to use.	Easy to follow but simple.	Difficult to follow.

Days 8: Conducting the Surveys

1. Prior administrative approval will be obtained permitting students to conduct random student and teacher surveys on key components of their proposed plan (i.e. Saturday school, high performing teachers teaching lower level classes, ability grouped classes). Students will be assessed on their calculation of sample size based on East Meck student and teacher populations.
2. A list of teachers willing to have their 2nd block classes surveys will be provided for students.
3. Once students have gathered and analyze surveys, they may decide to make adjustments. This will be reflected in their presentation.

Day 9-10: Preparing the Presentation

They must market their plan to their fellow classmates.

PowerPoint Guidelines

PowerPoint presentation which must include the following:

Initiative name

Projected Costs

Comparison of academic performance of Caucasian and Black students (using graduation rate as the indicator)

Methodology

Graphs / Charts

Data collected – results of surveys conducted

Evidence of where efforts have worked.

Current demographics of East Mecklenburg High School

Optional: Introductory video segment/commercial

Teacher Notes

1. Students must have internet access during this time. I will reserve the computer lab these days.
2. Students should be encouraged to use components of any initiative used to develop their own cohesive plan.
3. Specific tasks/roles should be identified for group members. Additional

Days 11-12 Presentations

4. A rubric for grading this PowerPoint presentation is provided below.

Rubric for PowerPoint

Component	Exceeds Standards (5)	Meets Standard (3)	Does Not Meet Standard (1)
Research	Cites more than 5 relevant sources that do strengthen the argument.	Cites 3 – 5 relevant sources that strengthen the argument.	Cites less than 3 sources. Cites sources that do not support the argument.
Graphs	Uses the best graphical representations to convey data. Articulates why each graph was used. Graphs are properly labeled and accurate.	1-2 graphical representations are not appropriate. Does not explain why each graph was used. 1-2 graphs are not properly labeled.	No supporting graphs to report findings are used.
Graphics and/or Animations	Graphics and/or animations enhance PowerPoint. There is consistency in	Graphics and/or animations are simple. While they don't necessarily enhance the	Graphics and/or animations are not edited. They distract from the overall presentation.

	visual theme.	presentation, they don't distract from it.	
Grammar and Spelling	There are no errors	Minimal errors	Clearly no editing was done.
Time	20-25 min	10-19 min	Less than 10 minutes or greater than 25 min
Teamwork	It was evident all members contributed. There were clearly defined roles.	It was evident most students contributed.	It was evident one or two students completed the major of the assignment.

DAYS 13-14 Best Plan

Day 13

1. After seeing the presentations, students will rank 1-5 all presentations.
2. Once the presentation with the highest score is revealed, as a class, students will make any modifications. They may use information from other presentations.

Day 14

1. They will use this time to practice, offering constructive criticism of their presentation.
2. Final approval must be granted by the teacher.

DAY 15 Final Exam: Presentation to Administration

Students will create a presentation pitching their plan to the principal and assistant principal of instruction.

Students will provide a copy of the plan to the administration for their further review.

Student will be encouraged to create a video/commercial/documentary in support of their plan.

Teacher Notes

The team leaders and no more than 2 other students should actually present.

Make sure students notify you of their audio-visual needs in order for you to make the necessary provisions.

Be sure to make appointments in advance for administrator(s) to be present.

Students will complete a peer evaluation form.

Peer/Self Evaluation Form

Group Member	Assigned Duty	Peer Post-Evaluation 3-Performed all duties satisfactorily. Required little direction., 2-Performed duties satisfactorily with prompting, 1-Performed duties using minimal effort, 0-Did not perform duties
1. Leader name		
2. Member #1		
3. Member #2		
4. Member #3		
5. Member #4		

Assessment – Final Exam 25% of final grade

Components	Possible Points
Survey	15
Presentation	30
Peer Evaluation	15
Total Points	60 points
Group Leaders	bonus 5
Winning Group	bonus 5

Conclusion

After this curriculum unit, students will self-reflect on their involvement with this project. As an educator, students often wonder the relevance of their curriculum. This curriculum unit provides a real-life application that is not just an isolated problem found on an exam, but it can provide a real solution that is plaguing our schools. Statistics is often referred to as the child of Mathematics and English. It is my desire to satisfy the math enthusiasts in the class, as well as

provide an opportunity for linguists a rare opportunity to shine.

Appendix A: Resources Used for Project (pdf)

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools – Strategic Staffing

HYPERLINK "http://erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/CMS_case_study_APR16.pdf"
http://erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/CMS_case_study_APR16.pdf

Socioeconomic Integration in Wake County Schools

HYPERLINK "<http://wakeedpartnership.org/publications/d/kahlenberg%2004.01.09.pdf>"
<http://wakeedpartnership.org/publications/d/kahlenberg%2004.01.09.pdf>

Harlem Children Zone Business Plan

HYPERLINK "http://www.hcz.org/images/stories/pdfs/business_plan.pdf"
http://www.hcz.org/images/stories/pdfs/business_plan.pdf

Appendix B – Implementing District Standards

The State of North Carolina has a Standard Course of Study, which may be viewed at the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction website. This Curriculum Unit using the following objectives for Advanced Placement Statistics.

Prerequisite Skill

Use logic and deductive reasoning to draw conclusions and solve problems

Competencies

3.02 Use and compare methods of data collection

3.03 Apply statistical principles and methods in sample surveys; identify difficulties

3.08 Simulate sampling distributions

3.08 Use simulations to develop an understanding the Central Limit Theorem and its importance in confidence intervals and tests of significance.

Appendix C – Extension Activities

1. Race vs. Socioeconomics: Which has a greater impact?

Students will analyze tests scores with various demographics to determine if race or being economically disadvantaged has a greater risk on academic achievement.

2. No Child Left Behind vs. Blueprint for America

Students can compare the No Child Left Behind of the Bush administration to the Blueprint for American of the Obama administration.

3. Is Integration to Blame?

Students can find any available statistics of African American students' performance prior to integration and compare the findings afterwards. Students can also conduct surveys to public opinion of its effect.

Notes

¹Statistics were received from Strategic Plan 2010: Our Progress. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Bibliography

Bibliography

Kahlenberg, Richard D.. *Rescuing Brown v. Board of Education: profiles of twelve school districts pursuing socioeconomic school integration : a report*. New York: Century Foundation , 2007.

Kahlenberg discusses many school systems' shifts from racial integration to socioeconomic integration. Among those are Wake County schools in North Carolina.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Crown Pub., 1991.

A required reading of our seminar, Kozol discusses in the disparities in America's educational system. He explores the daily struggles in some schools due to overcrowding, old buildings, and low budgets.

Lynch, Matthew, and Harry Carr. *Closing the racial academic achievement gap*. Chicago, Ill.: African American Images, 2006.

Lynch addresses failures within the social and pedagogical dynamics that cause achievement gaps among racial lines. He provides plausible solutions to each problem.

Roberts, Terry. "The National Paideia Center." The National Paideia Center.

<http://www.paideia.org> (accessed December 1, 2010).

Teachers will receive instructions on how to conduct Paideia seminars.

Travers, Jonathan, and Barbara Christansen. "Strategic Staffing for Successful Schools: Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools." ERS.

erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/CMS_case_study_APR16.pdf (accessed October 30, 2010).

This article details Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools plan to increase academic achievement by placing high performing administrators in low performing schools.

Waiting for Superman. Theater viewing. Directed by Davis Guggenheim. Los Angeles: Paramount Vantage, 2009.

This film captures a glimpse into the plight of American Schools and introduces pioneers who through various methods are making changes within their community.