

10 Ways Districts Perpetuate the Gap

(adapted from a presentation by Dr. Teresa D. Hill, South Holland School District 151 at AASA, March 2015)

1. **Accepting the students' disadvantage.** Setting lower expectations based on who the students are. Communicating that there is no sense of urgency. Defining schools by their population (e.g. a Title school).
2. **Being satisfied by achievement that is "better than predicted."** Accepting any level of achievement. Celebrating low achievement and seeing it as good enough.
3. **Treating learning to read like magic.** Expecting students to come to school with phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Making families responsible for teaching reading at home. Putting students who come in behind on a different trajectory. Making comprehension and critical thinking activities dependent on decoding skills. Treating lack of early reading skills as a sign of low intelligence.
4. **Neglecting to establish a complete, coherent, and consistently taught curriculum.** Teaching the student only what is tested. Failing to identify the non-negotiables. Acting as though what the teacher does is ALL that matters. (What the student does matters, too.) Removing the students from the curriculum (purposefully or inadvertently).
5. **Focusing the student's energy on things with little or no educational benefit.** Placing students in "remedial" classes or tracks with a parallel curriculum. Presenting a unit on a topic, solely because the teacher likes it. Doing worksheets.
6. **Promoting high aspirations without what it takes to realize them.** Talking about going to college, but don't address the requirements and the process.
7. **Convincing the student that educational success is incompatible with his or her identity.** Showing no examples of educational success. Ensuring that the student is alone if he or she tries a high level program. Failing to dispute claims of what it means to "act white," "be black," etc.
8. **Imagining the worst of the student and treating him or her as though what you have imagined is truth.**
9. **Exposing the student to or immersing him or her in chaotic or abusive environments.** Using sarcasm, shaming, and/or intimidation in everyday interactions. Letting anger guide disciplinary actions.
10. **Assigning the student to teachers who cannot or will not ensure his or her success.** Placing the student with teachers who lack skill, knowledge, talent, dedication, or desire. Establishing low expectations for teachers. Cultivating the belief that teaching doesn't matter. Failing to see teaching as an intellectual pursuit and providing little training.