Culture and Poverty 1

Caring teachers everywhere are working harder to improve student achievement—attending more meetings, analyzing more data, testing students more often, focusing on more scripted curriculum, responding to pacing guides, encouraging students to stay in school—and yet they tell us that they continue to be overwhelmed and frustrated, especially in low-performing, high-poverty schools. Whether they teach six-year-olds or sixteen-year-olds, teachers recognize that there are students whose needs they are supposed to meet but for whom none of the strategies they know work. Teachers are pressured to "accept the responsibility" for every student's learning, with the accompanying rewards for success and punishments for failure. Given the extent of teachers' efforts, why do the problems of low achievement persist for some children? Why are there still gaps in achievement between groups of students?

This chapter will (a) identify the achievement gaps based on culture and poverty, (b) review the approaches that education has used in the past to address the achievement gaps for students living in poverty and for students from diverse cultures, (c) identify what is missing from these approaches, and (d) identify the research-based components of a new approach that will meet the needs of the millions of students who are falling through the cracks of an educational system that has been extremely successful in improving achievement for white, middle-class children.

What Is the Achievement Gap for Culture and Poverty?

Sometimes it helps to "see" the issues that we are attempting to address. To provide you with a visual representation of the concern, Figure 1.1 shows the results of California's state test results from 2006.

The graph is from Closing the Achievement Gap: Report of Superintendent Jack O'Connell's California P–16 Council (2008, p. 3). In California, an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 800 is considered an acceptable level of performance, and it is the goal of most schools. According to the information

in Figure 1.1, children for all grades achieve an API score of 801—acceptable achievement. African American students for all grades score 166 points below that of white children. American Indian students for all grades score 110 points below that of white children. Hispanic/Latino students for all grades score 145 points below that of white children. Pacific Islander children for all grades score 87 points below that of white children. Only children of Filipino and Asian ancestry score above white children. Economically disadvantaged children score 33 percentile points below white children in language arts and 23 percentile points below white children in mathematics (California Standardized Testing and Reporting [STAR] Program; P-16 Council, 2008, p. 3). According to the P-16 Council, "California's educational system suffers from a racial/ethnic achievement gap that causes students of color to be *consistently outperformed by their white peers even when controlling for poverty*" (p. 17, emphasis in original). This means that children from diverse cultures who are *not* poor are performing below their white classmates who are poor.

Lest we believe the issues are limited to California, let's look at the other side of the United States, at North Carolina. Figure 1.2 represents a picture of North Carolina's fourth graders.

Based on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian children are scoring 21 to 27 points below white children in achievement. As reported in California,
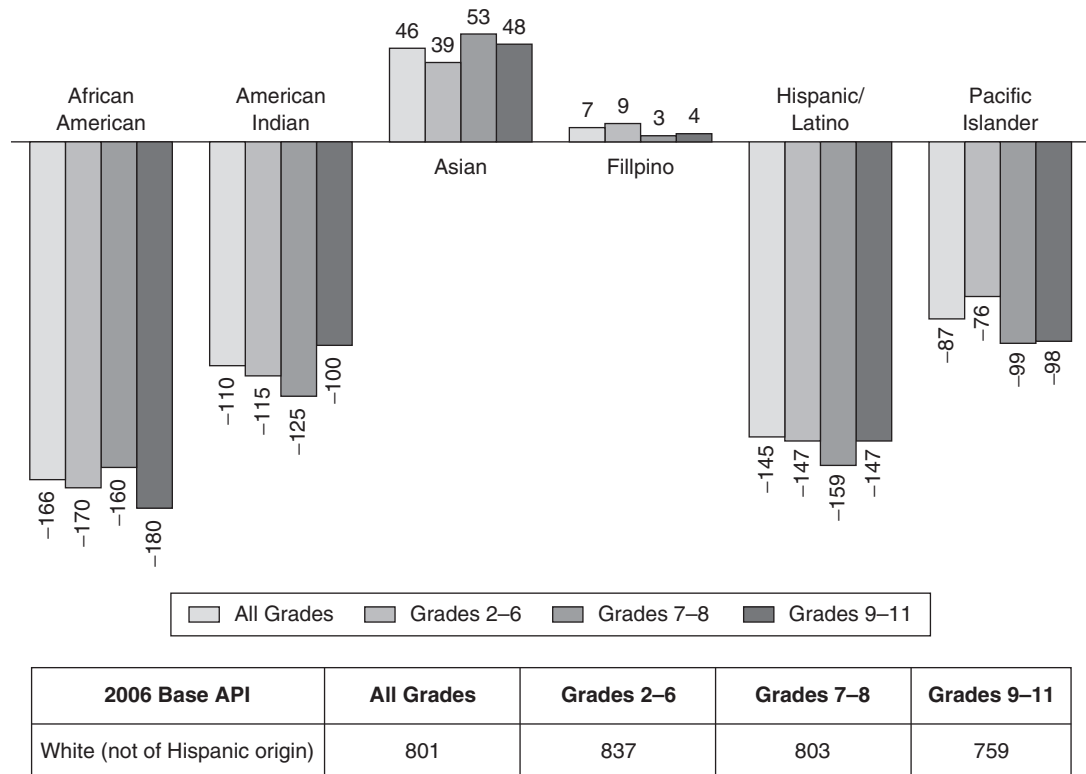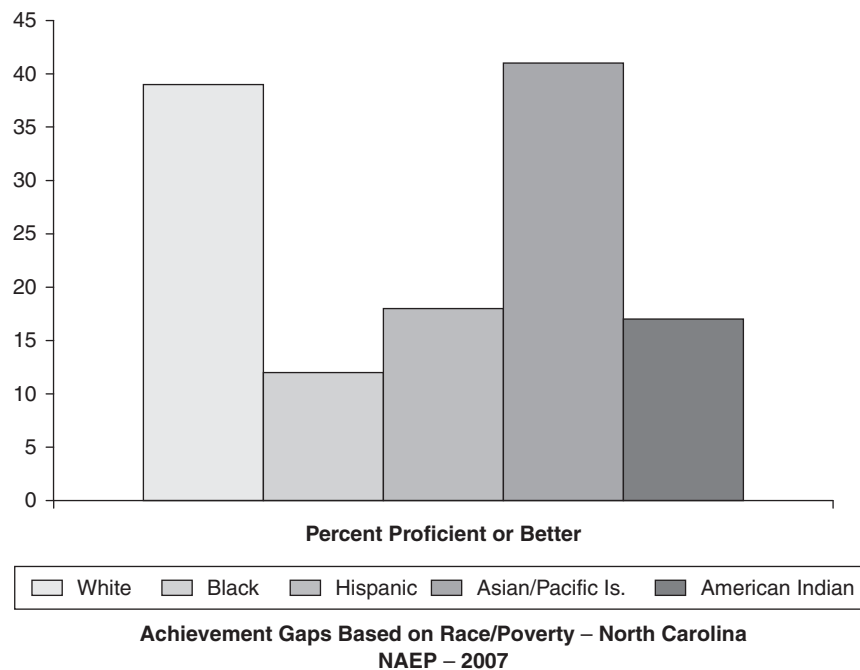

2006 Base API	All Grades	Grades 2–6	Grades 7–8	Grades 9–11
White (not of Hispanic origin)	801	837	803	759

Base: 2006 Academic Performance Index (API) for White Students

Figure 1.1   California Achievement Gap by Race

Percent Proficient or Better

| White | Black | Hispanic | Asian/Pacific Is. | American Indian |

**Achievement Gaps Based on Race/Poverty – North Carolina
NAEP – 2007**

Impact of Culture

White	**39% Proficient or Better – 61% Not at Proficiency**
Black	27 points below white – 12% Proficient or Better – 88% Not
Hispanic	21 points below white – 18% Proficient or Better – 82% Not
Asian/Pacific Is.	2 points above white – 41% Proficient or Better – 59% Not
American Indian	22 points below white – 17% Proficient or Better – 83% Not

Impact of Poverty

Students in Poverty – 16% Proficient or Better – 23 points below white
Students NOT in Poverty – 41% Proficient or Better – 2 points above white

Impact of Poverty – 25 points Discrepancy

Figure 1.2   North Carolina Achievement Gaps for Race and Poverty Based on NAEP

SOURCE: Darling, 2008

Asian/Pacific Islander children score above their white classmates. Students living in poverty score 23 points below white children. Middle-class or affluent students score *slightly above* their classmates who live in poverty. The difference in achievement based on poverty is 25 points.

Whether we examine state tests or national tests, the results are consistent. There exists a gap in achievement between white students and students from diverse cultures. There exists a gap in achievement between middle-class and affluent students and students living in poverty. Therefore, educators who are interested in improving academic achievement must address the issues of culture and poverty in order to accomplish that goal.

≋   What Models/Approaches Have Been Tried

As we have learned over the last decade, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to the issues around closing the gaps in achievement. Various programs

such as compensatory education, Title I, English as a second language, various pull-out programs, and a range of other initiatives have left us with the same gaps and a great deal of frustration. Why have we failed so miserably with these well-meaning programs?

Focusing on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment to Improve Achievement

In the last decade, achievement improvement efforts have strongly focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment—the key processes in education. Districts that have the fiscal and human resources have spent thousands of hours making sure that their district curriculum is aligned to state standards. Districts without those resources depend on the textbook publishers to ensure that alignment exists with state standards and view the textbook as their curriculum. In many elementary schools, teachers are mandated to cover curriculum detailed by pacing guides that prescribe what should be taught on any given day. The intent here is to ensure that all children are provided an opportunity to learn the curriculum, presumably resulting in increased student performance on tests. Never mind that students do not have the prerequisite skills for learning what is taught on a specific day. The thinking is that the curriculum will "spiral back," and the student will learn it the next time. The theory is that if students don't learn the curriculum to mastery—meaning well enough to retain the learning and to build upon it (Guskey & Gates, 1986; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 1990)—they will have another opportunity to learn it. The focus here is on teaching, not learning, and certainly not on the learner. This approach is grounded in the belief that if we focus clearly on the expectations for learning, achievement will increase for all students.

Another focus for improving achievement for all children is increasing assessment. Districts and states in which we have worked have examined summative, end-of-class or end-of-grade assessments; formative, benchmark assessments; textbooks assessments; teacher-made classroom assessments; performance-based assessments; and a host of other ways to find out if students are learning what they are expected to learn. More and more time is spent on assessment—both the teacher's time and the students' time. Most assessments focus on measuring whether or not students have grasped the information, or declarative knowledge, of the curriculum being taught. We know that 80–90% of what state assessments measure is the vocabulary and concepts of the state standards (Marzano, Kendall, & Gaddy, 1999). Vocabulary and concepts are declarative knowledge. Very little assessment is performed on procedural knowledge—what students should be able to demonstrate or do— measuring whether the student can apply or use that information in a real-life situation. The reasons for this are that skills and processes are difficult to assess and performance assessments are very time consuming to administer and score accurately, are expensive, and require more class time.

The focus on assessment to improve achievement is grounded in the belief that having assessment data will focus improvement efforts and will inform instruction (Tomlinson, 2008). Rarely does that happen in real life. Guskey

(2008) states, "Assessments alone do little to improve student learning or teaching quality. What really counts is what happens *after* the assessments. Just as regularly checking your blood pressure does little to improve your health if you do nothing with the information gained, what matters most with formative assessments is how students and teachers use the results. Unfortunately, many educators today overlook this vital aspect of formative assessment" (p. 28). Principals and teachers get assessment results. Principals, whose job it is to focus school improvement efforts on achievement, tell us they examine assessment results but are not sure which school improvement solutions at their disposal will make a difference in achievement. Teachers, whose job it is to focus on instruction, do not know which instructional strategies will make a difference in achievement for the low scores reported on assessment results for their students.

Teachers know different instructional strategies (the more experienced a teacher, the more strategies he or she knows), but most teachers are unaware of which instructional strategies work best (or have the greatest impact on student achievement) for specific grade-level standards. Although research-based instructional strategies have been aligned to grade-level standards in all states for two content areas (Darling, 1999), that information is not widely known. In addition, teachers that we work with tell us that they are unsure what to do differently for their students of poverty and from diverse cultures. On the bright side, schools are beginning to engage their teachers in learning communities. One of the ways for teachers to change what happens in classrooms is to meet regularly to focus on instructional practice.

Both principals and teachers know that something *must* happen in the classroom between teachers and students to make a difference in learning. Wenglinsky (2002) measured the impact of effective classroom practice on achievement. His results indicate that the highest predictor of academic achievement is the proficiency of teachers on effective instructional practice. When combined with professional development on effective instruction (ES = .98), teachers have the power to override poverty (ES = .76).

What do these measures mean? An effect size (shown as ES) is a statistical measure of the impact on achievement of a "treatment" (in this case, effective instructional practice, professional development on effective practice, and poverty). Effect size is a measure designed to quantify the effectiveness of a specific intervention as compared with another intervention. Effect sizes between .2 and .5 are generally considered small, those between .5 and .8 are considered medium, and those .8 and greater are considered large. Effect size is a significant measure because it can be translated into percentile points gained or lost in achievement. An ES of .98 for professional development means that it will impact academic achievement by .98 (of 1.0) standard deviation, which equates to 34 percentile points. If student achievement was at the 50th percentile *without* the professional development on effective instruction, the "treatment" of incorporating professional development would increase achievement 34 points (to the 84th percentile)—a significant impact on learning.

Which instructional strategies make the most difference in learning (have the highest ES) for their curriculum is not known by most teachers. Generally, they use those strategies that they know how to deliver in the classroom. In later

chapters, we provide effective instructional strategies for the two categories of knowledge that are represented by curriculum and state standards. We have selected those strategies that, when delivered appropriately, will make a difference in learning for students of poverty as well as those from diverse cultures.

Deficit Thinking Does Not Work

There have been approaches proposed that are grounded in a deficit model of thinking. These approaches start from the assumption that students of poverty and diverse cultures have deficits that teachers need to "fix" to improve achievement. Teachers are provided with lists of deficit characteristics that their students bring to school, for example, poor vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, being unmotivated, being inattentive, dysfunctional families, being involved with gangs and drugs, refusal to complete assignments (and sometimes refusal to even start them), and the list goes on. Programs have evolved that are intended to increase the awareness of these characteristics, grounded in classroom observations of students living in poverty and from diverse cultures. There is rarely a mention of the assets that these students bring to the learning experience. Most of the deficit programs are not supported by research.

The most prominent approach that represents "a classic example of what has been identified as deficit thinking" (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Simington, 2007) is that of Ruby Payne's teacher education program, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 2005). The authors Bomer and colleagues examined the professional development based on Payne's program in order to analyze the relationship between Payne's claims and the existing research about low-income individuals and families. Though this was the first study to explore the content basis of Payne's inservice teacher education program, the authors reported that "others who have reviewed the book have been in accord with our analysis" (Gorski, 2006; Ng & Rury, 2006; Osei-Kofi, 2005). Their research centered on two research questions: What patterns are detectable in Payne's truth claims about children's lives in poverty? To what extent are those truth claims supported by existing research? The study did not examine the instructional strategies that Payne recommends in her book.

Bomer et al. (2007) concluded that

> her work represents a classic example of what has been identified as deficit thinking. We found that her truth claims, offered without any supporting evidence, are contradicted by anthropological, sociological and other research on poverty. We have demonstrated through our analysis that teachers may be misinformed by Payne's claims. As a consequence of low teacher expectations, poor students are more likely to be in lower tracks or lower ability groups and their educational experience is more often dominated by rote drill and practice. (p. 1)

Valencia (1997) writes that deficit thinking is an explanation of school failure among individuals linked to group membership (typically, the combination of racial/ethnic minority status and economic disadvantage). It holds that poor

schooling performance is rooted in the children's alleged cognitive and motivational deficits. In this thinking, schools' structure and inequitable schooling arrangements that exclude students from learning are not to blame for the failure. Payne refers to a culture of poverty, with its accompanying attributes of the poor (e.g., family structure, orientation, dysfunctionality, violence, lack of morals, and "hidden rules").

Paul Gorski (2008) in "The Myth of the 'Culture of Poverty,'" suggests that instead of accepting myths that harm low-income students, we need to eradicate the systemwide inequities that stand in their way. He reports that researchers around the world tested the culture of poverty concept empirically. They raised a variety of questions and came to several conclusions about poverty. "But on this they all agree: *There is no such thing as a culture of poverty. Differences in values and behaviors among poor people are just as great as those between poor and wealthy people*" (p. 33).

The appeal of deficit thinking is dependent on a set of values that exist beyond our school doors. It has permeated middle-class U.S. society. When policy constructs poverty as a problem by creating a category for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) called "children of poverty," as a subgroup for assessment accountability, an industry is created to respond to "the problem." As Bomer et al. (2007) state, the industry "consists of many more businesses than just Payne's. Her success indicts us all in education, indeed most of the American public, as it reveals the degree to which we use the education system to protect our own sense of entitlement to privilege." Deficit thinking and the resulting deficit models for improving achievement have been unsuccessful in closing the achievement gaps for children who are economically, culturally, or linguistically diverse. In subsequent chapters, we present an *asset model* of instruction that addresses the achievement gaps and that is responsive to the needs of diverse learners.

Race and Poverty

Looking at the most recent data on students of poverty, we find that although poverty impacts achievement (ES = .76) (Wenglinsky, 2002), there are other factors that have an even greater impact on learning. We know from research (Wenglinsky, 2002) that the effect size of poverty (ES = .76), or the impact on learning of poverty, is 25 percentile points. However, the recent Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) results from California (Mangaliman, 2007) indicate that white students who live in poverty are outperforming African American and Latino students who are not poor but who are middle class or affluent. Mangaliman reports that Jack O'Connell, California state superintendent, identified these as "racial gaps," not poverty gaps. This same phenomenon was reported in Pittsburgh (Wereschagin, 2007). Linda Lane, deputy superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, has responded to a new study led by Robert Strauss of Carnegie Mellon University on the achievement gap. Dr. Lane writes: "Poverty is a factor that affects achievement; however, *race is a larger factor*" (p. 1). This means that something besides poverty is having an even greater impact on learning in our schools.

A recent study by Richard Coley of the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) policy information center (Winerip, 2007), titled "The Family: America's Smallest School," suggests that children of poverty come to kindergarten with a gap. The ETS researchers identified four variables: the percentage of students living with one parent, the percentage of eighth graders absent from school at least three times a month, the percentage of students age five or younger whose parents read to them every day, and the percentage of eighth graders who watch five or more hours of television a day. Using these four variables, they are able to predict state results on the NAEP eighth-grade reading test with impressive accuracy. These four variables account for two-thirds of the large differences among states. Coley suggests that if we're really interested in raising overall levels of achievement and in closing the achievement gap, we need to pay as much attention to the starting line as we do the finish line. For poor children of color, the gaps are even wider. These variables are beyond the control of schools and describe the "deficits" with which children of poverty come to school.

≫ Title I Funding

NCLB has continued to fund a program known as Title I of NCLB to serve students of poverty. Funds are provided to schools based on the number of students who receive free and reduced lunch—an indicator of poverty because it is based on family income. Those students receive additional instruction in reading and mathematics outside the classroom by teachers and assistants paid for by Title I. The program has a parent involvement component that usually involves having parents attend meetings in the evening to learn how to support their children in school. If the percentage of students of poverty is high enough, and the school is not making adequate gains in achievement for their students of poverty, then the school is also required to provide professional development for teachers with a portion of their funds. The emphasis on learning has always been reading and mathematics.

One of the issues for students receiving Title I services has been the lack of coordination between the instructional approach provided by classroom teachers and that provided by Title I teachers. Students who have difficulty mastering reading and mathematics need the most consistency in the approach to instruction, not conflicting ways to learn. Title I should provide additional time to learn, not a time to learn something else. Some districts use their Title I funds to provide literacy coaches and math coaches to support teachers, who in turn are better able to teach their students.

EPE Research Center, *Education Week*'s online newsletter, reports,

> Although Title I is the largest federal elementary and secondary education program, findings about its impact on student achievement have been mixed. Part of the problem has been that Title I is not a specific intervention that can be easily evaluated, but rather a significant funding stream with a large number of requirements that cut across such areas as teacher quality, comprehensive school reform, and curriculum and instruction. Nonetheless, by some accounts, Title I has been credited

with closing the achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students. From 1970 through the mid-1980s, the learning gap between white students and minority students closed by almost one-third. It is important to note, however, that most of these gains were made in the mastery of basic skills rather than in the mastery of rigorous curricula outlined by state standards. (p. 2)

Another issue is that professional development for teachers does not necessarily focus on research-based, effective instruction that targets the specific standards that are in need of improvement based on low test scores. Training is provided on generic instructional practice. However, the learning needs of the students are specific. For example, in schools we have observed, teachers are provided with training on how to put up a word wall in a primary classroom to help decoding or how to better use the textbook manuals and student workbooks. In these same schools the greatest learning need of students, based on low test scores, is how to summarize and paraphrase what they've read and how to make inferences when reading. The effectiveness (based on research) of the strategies being trained is most often ignored or unknown. Training for Title I teachers is typically a one-size-fits-all workshop. We sometimes refer to them as "shake and bake" solutions. The same information is provided on an instructional practice for everyone, and it is hoped that it has *some* relevancy for all teachers.

Highly Qualified Teachers

High poverty schools that receive funding for Title I are mandated to have "highly qualified teachers" to increase student achievement. The intent of this mandate was good. Peske and Haycock (2006) document that districts and schools often have placed their most inexperienced and weakest teachers in the highest poverty schools.

Children in the highest-poverty schools are assigned to novice teachers almost twice as often as children in low-poverty schools. Similarly, students in high-minority schools are assigned to novice teachers at twice the rate as students in schools without many minority students. Students in high-poverty and high minority schools also are shortchanged when it comes to getting teachers with a strong background in the subjects they are teaching. Classes in high-poverty and high minority secondary schools are more likely to be taught by "out-of-field teachers"—those without a major or minor in the subject they teach. (p. 2)

Teachers begin their work in the district in the poor schools, and when they have enough experience or tenure, they transfer to higher performing schools where teaching is easier.

"Highly qualified teachers" means that these teachers hold a teaching credential and are teaching in the areas in which they are licensed. It is assumed that teachers, by having a credential in the subject area in which they are teaching, have the content knowledge required for that subject. Many state licensing agencies require a subject area test before they will grant a teaching

license in a specific subject. There is rarely a requirement that the teachers demonstrate knowledge and skill with effective instruction. There is no requirement that the teacher demonstrate ability to improve achievement. We know that experience with teaching and content knowledge and skill are critical. Even though these are imperfect criteria for defining teachers as highly qualified, there is a body of research that indicates that experience and knowledge of basic subject matter and basic skills do impact student learning. Consequently, when teachers with the least amount of experience and content knowledge are placed with the students in most need of the best teachers, the system "enlarges the achievement gap" (Peske & Haycock, 2006, p. 3). There is no requirement in the definition of "highly qualified" that the teacher demonstrate knowledge and skills with students of poverty or students from diverse cultures.

◈   Afterschool Programs

The bell rings, signaling the end of the school day, and eager students loaded with backpacks head to the row of waiting school buses. However, Marcus (a first grader) and a significant number of his classmates haul their backpacks loaded with homework, notes to parents, permission slips, and schoolwork to another classroom in the school. Marcus and his buddies are heading to programs provided after school.

Marcus is greeted at the door as he enters the double classroom and is asked by his PM teacher how the school day went for him. Students know to respond with a thumbs-up, thumbs-down, or thumbs-sideways signal. Marcus gives her a smile and a thumbs-up. His afterschool program separates students into two groups by grade levels: kindergarten through grade 3 in one room, grades 4–6 in the other room. Marcus knows where to put his backpack so he can go get his afterschool snack and something to drink. "All right! Finally we get chocolate milk!" Marcus picks out a banana, a granola bar, and his favorite—chocolate milk—and joins his study buddies at a table. Music is playing in the background as students talk at their tables with children from several classrooms. This is where they meet to learn and play for up to 20 hours a week.

After everyone has finished their snack, their PM teacher has every child tell something that they have learned more about today. It doesn't have to be about school, and every child has a turn. "I scored in soccer!" "I can now write my last name." "I only missed one spelling word today." "I remembered to feed the kitty this morning." "I learned the *or* sound like in *sword* today." When every child has made his or her contribution, the teacher leads the class in a group cheer for whatever accomplishment that was shared—both personal accomplishments and those as learners. This begins the PM session on a positive tone for the afternoon.

The PM teacher then lays out the agenda for the afternoon. Each task on the agenda is assigned a different color. Groups are established for the afternoon based on tasks to be accomplished by individuals. There is a mix homework, coaching, and practice on needed skills; physical activities; story time; relaxation; art; and music. Children start at different places on the agenda (e.g., homework is blue, story time is yellow, etc.) and rotate through activities in small groups, led by the PM teacher and an assistant. Marcus's group is red

today, so he begins his PM class with coaching and practice on skills he has not yet mastered. His classroom teacher provides this information to the PM teacher weekly. Marcus groans. He wanted to work with the Legos first, but he goes with his team to the Coaching and Practice table. He knows that the "third thing" on his agenda will allow him to choose to build with the Legos. He thinks he can wait that long.

This approach has seen some success, depending on how it is structured and staffed. It provides additional instructional time and some guidance and support with homework. Because both parents work in many families, often their children are in afterschool programs. When these programs are staffed with teachers who know for each child what is to be learned, what homework needs to be done, and the individual needs of the students, the time can be used effectively for student learning. When any or all of three elements are missing, the afterschool programs have virtually no effect on the achievement gap.

However, afterschool programs promote a greater commitment to homework, and there is a positive relationship between homework and reading achievement at the national level (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Tutoring

When students are in a school that is not making "adequate yearly progress" year after year, they must be provided with an opportunity to learn through additional tutoring. Many private companies have emerged to fill this gap. They have their own curriculum, their own instructional methodology, and their own assessments. Students are confronted with curriculum, instruction, and assessment that may or may not be connected to their learning needs at school. In some districts, classroom teachers are recruited to do additional tutoring after school. However, already burdened teachers find it difficult to add to their full days. Existing data regarding the effectiveness of tutoring for elementary students are limited and inconclusive.

What's Missing in These Approaches?

None of the approaches (e.g., focusing on curriculum, instruction, and assessment; highly qualified teachers; special funding for students of poverty; tutoring; afterschool programs) have focused on the *learner* and the *learner's culture.* The focus has been on those components of the educational system that historically have been successful in improving achievement for white, middle-class children. And yes, teachers have been incredibly successful with increasing achievement for *white, middle-class children.* Remember the graph showing the California achievement gap by race earlier in the chapter? White children for all grades scored an API index of 801 (an API index of 800 is the goal for proficiency).

The 2006 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA; U.S. Department of Education, 2007) shows U.S. students lagging behind a majority of participating developed nations in both science and mathematics. What

is really amazing is another peculiarity of the U.S. education system—a system that, in theory, seeks to provide equal opportunity for all of its children, regardless of economic circumstance. The PISA results (testing 15-year-olds in 57 countries) show that about 18% of the variation in Americans' science scores was related to students' socioeconomic status. This variation was more than twice as high as that of several of the highest-performing countries (e.g., Finland and Canada at 8%). Poverty is less of a factor in higher-scoring nations than in the United States. The PISA results suggest that efforts to maximize performance for all students, even those of poverty, *can* be achieved simultaneously. It should be noted, however, that the top performing countries, while they have fairly diverse economic backgrounds represented by their students, have relatively homogeneous racial and ethnic compositions. In other words, they have similar cultures, and assimilation into the dominant culture by those new to their countries is the norm.

The research shows that American schools tend "to provide students of poverty with less demanding curriculum, poorer-quality teachers, and fewer educational resources than their peers in wealthier U.S. communities," according to Ross Wiener, the vice president of program and policy for the Education Trust, a research and advocacy group in Washington, D.C. (Cavanaugh, 2007, p. 13). This perspective reflects solutions focused on curriculum and instruction to improve achievement.

Culture Trumps Poverty

American schools have not attended to the culture of the learner. Yet it is largely cultural factors that determine what is valued in education, what is motivating to the learner, where the learner will focus his or her attention, what education should accomplish for the learner in his or her context, and the conditions under which the learner best acquires information. Culture trumps poverty in terms of its impact on achievement (Daniels, 2002; Wang & Kovach, 1996; Wang & Reynolds, 1995; Williams 1996, 2003). Achievement data from recent state tests document that culture has a greater impact on the gaps in achievement than does poverty.

Attending to the Collectivist Culture of 70% of the World's Population

What does it mean to address the culture of students? Which cultures do we attend to in our classrooms? When creating a new approach for addressing students of poverty and diverse cultures, how should we change our focus?

Triandis (1990) observed that the emphasis on individualist versus collectivist value systems in schools is probably the most important cultural difference in social behavior that can be identified and suggests that we should be mindful that 70% of the world's population lives in a collective culture. If teachers pay close attention to both the culture of the classroom and incorporating important culture elements of the children, the school becomes more comfortable to both students and teachers. It will also accomplish two goals—focus on

increasing achievement and close the achievement gap between white, middle-class students and those living in poverty and from diverse cultures.

Trumbull, Greenfield, and Quiroz (Williams, 2003, pp. 67–93) describe the difference between these two ways of thinking, or value systems—called individualistic and collectivistic—about knowledge, learning, and teaching (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) as they impact learning in classrooms.

First, individualistic classrooms reflect the values of northern European Americans and an Anglo-Saxon heritage. They encourage students to work independently and to do their own work. They reward and recognize individual achievement and show that it is therefore valued. Intelligence is viewed as competitive and aggressive. Students gain knowledge in order to become more competent and able to construct knowledge—which is viewed as power—about the world around them. Valued communication is through linguistic means such as reading and writing. U.S. schools and most European Americans support cognitive development in terms of their knowledge of the physical world and linguistic communication skills. Communication involves talking about the substance, or content, first; relationships to people are second in communications. In other words, when teachers pose a question to their students, the children with northern European ancestry respond with a direct answer to the question related to the content.

Second, collectivist classrooms reflect the value systems of nonmainstream cultures and peoples: Native American Indians, Native Hawaiians, Native Alaskans, Latin Americans, African Americans, Asians, and Arabs. They emphasize the interdependence, as opposed to independence, among the students. There is an emphasis on maintaining relationships that are hierarchically structured around family roles and multiple generations. This means that the family, or community, and a student's place in it supersedes the individual. A child's intelligence is measured by how well he or she knows how to successfully do his or her part in the family and/or community. There is a great deal of value placed on sharing and the ability to participate in social relationships. Knowledge of social responsibility is greatly valued. Communication in collectivist classrooms involves many nonverbal means, such as touching and holding. These classrooms support the child's social intelligence and emphasize interpersonal relationships, respect for elders and tradition, responsibility for others, and cooperation. Communication involves talking about the relationships first, and the content second. In other words, when teachers pose a question to the students, children may respond with the context or relationships affiliated with the content first, and then include the answer to the content the teacher was asking. An example of this might be when Mrs. Telfair, whose class is studying the major food groups, asks her students if they can tell her from which food groups their breakfast that morning came from. Consuelo raises her hand. "My grandma and I always make breakfast. She lets me mix up the eggs and put in some milk and whatever special things I like. Today I picked out some peppers and cheese. We made that with some of Grandma's chorizo. We used the dairy and vegetables and fruit group. We also had some of the meat group and the grain group this morning because we had tortillas, too." Teachers, who

often expect the direct answer to their question based on an individualist value system, might get impatient with the long story response. Sometimes they cut the story short because they don't believe the child knows the "correct" response and move on to another student's response. When that happens, do you think the student feels valued? What does that communicate in terms of the teacher's expectations to that child as a learner?

Attending to culture means not making children in our classroom choose between the culture of the home and community and the culture of the classroom. It does not mean that we totally abandon the way we manage our classrooms or deliver instruction. We can honor and provide experiences in our classroom that reflect the cultures of all of our students. We can both provide ample opportunities for students to work together cooperatively (collectivist) and explain that a specific activity is to be done on your own and why (individualistic). We can honor students who answer our curriculum questions by starting to explain the family context in which they learned it before they get to the substance of their answer (collectivist). We can both provide ways for students to share community classroom materials (collectivist) and teach respect for the individual property of a student's desk (individualist). We can both provide times where students respond as a group, such as choral reading, call-and-response techniques, and literature circles (collectivist), and provide opportunities for an individual to respond (individualistic). We can both provide opportunities for movement and touching (collectivist) and provide times where stillness and quiet need to be observed (individualist).

We create culturally responsive classrooms by providing opportunities for different value systems to influence and be incorporated into what is happening in the classroom. This will create classrooms that value, honor, and respect various cultures, and, implicitly, your practices will provide value, honor, and respect to your students.

◈ Contextualizing Curriculum and Instruction

If we want to meet the needs of our students of poverty and diverse cultures, we will want to contextualize, or provide a multicultural context, for the curriculum we are teaching. Haberman (1991) examined classroom instruction for students of poverty. He found that there is an overreliance on a direct instructional model, where teachers teach to the whole class at the same time and control all the classroom discussion and decision making. He calls this approach a "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman, 1991, p. 290) that leads to complacency, passive resentment, and teacher burnout. What can we do to contextualize our curriculum and instruction?

When choosing instructional practice to improve achievement for students of poverty, we need to attend to five recommendations (Waxman, Padron, & Arnold, 2001)—important because of the differences in background knowledge and experience for children in poverty:

1. We need to guide the thinking process with attention to meaning making. This notion is supported by the work of Brown and DeLoache (1990) in their

work on metacognitive skills. They looked at the application of metacognitive skills for (1) extracting basic information, or the main idea, from texts; (2) visual scanning; and (3) retrieval processes. Teaching children the critical characteristics of different kinds of texts, for example, how informational texts are patterned versus how literary texts are patterned, helps them to strengthen their metacognitive skills for finding the main idea of what they are reading. Explicitly teaching children how to read different kinds of texts, for example, the use of highlighting and underlining for noting significant information, strengthens their metacognitive skills. Both of these—knowledge about the elements of texts and knowledge about how to study different texts—will increase students' ability to make meaning from what they are reading. Visual scanning is another application of metacognitive skills that begins in infancy. It is refined over time to allow students to focus on the more relevant information. Scanning a passage for information requires a strategic action—focusing on the most informative areas, that is, the headers, boldfaced words, to quickly gain information. Using cues to retrieve information, or to remember it, is also an application of metacognitive skills. Initially teachers can provide the cues to remember things and explicitly teach the metacognitive strategy. As students mature, they learn to create their own retrieval cues. Sometimes these are mnemonics like "Every Good Boy Does Fine" (EGBDF) for the names of the lines on a music staff; sometimes they are a hand signal. Vygotsky (1990) reminds us that to support higher level thinking in students, we need to address each child's cultural development if we are to capture the richness of children's thinking and behavior because "the child develops and changes in his/her active adaptation to the external world" (p. 65). He emphasizes that children, in the process of development, use the same forms of behavior in relation to themselves that others initially used in relation to them. That means that where children focus their attention, what they value as a focus for learning, how they learn to express themselves, how they expect to learn, and so on is determined by their socialization in the culture of their family. As teachers guide their students in meaning making, they will want to attend to the cultural values of their children to build better bridges between known (from background knowledge and experience) and new information and learning experiences (presented in school). A child's culture will determine what is relevant in what is learned in school.

2. We need to attend to the context and culture of our students of poverty. This principle is supported by Williams (1996, 2003) and by Zeichner (2003) in *Closing the Achievement Gap*. Zeichner suggests that we "incorporate aspects of our students' languages, cultures, and daily experiences into the academic and social context of schooling" (2003, p. 101) as well as teaching the culture of the classroom so that students can participate fully in the learning process. Both Williams and Zeichner support the concept of cultural responsiveness in instruction, which includes contextualizing and pluralizing the curriculum for culture, providing opportunities for students to work together (i.e., turn taking, peer learning, choral response), and finding ways to bridge the cultures of home and school.

3. We need to use technology at the point of instruction and for demonstrating learning for our digital students. An interesting study was conducted by Derry, Tookey, and Roth (1993), in which they examined the effects on

problem-solving processes with a computer tool called TAPS (which enhances metacognitive activity) with students who worked alone or in groups. The results indicated that students will work four times longer in solving problems collaboratively than alone. Also, when students were allowed to work together, they spent more time in planning and monitoring their learning.

4. We need to provide opportunities for small-group work with individual accountability built into it. The most effective process is that of Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1991) in their cooperative learning approach. There are five basic elements of cooperative learning: (a) positive interdependence (students have mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources, and assigned roles such as summarizer, encourager), (b) face-to-face interaction (students promote each other's learning by helping, sharing, and encouraging face-to-face), (c) individual accountability (where each student's performance is frequently assessed), (d) interpersonal and small-group skills (where students use collaborative skills, such as decision making, communication, and conflict management), and (e) group processing (where groups take time to discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining their relationships). This strategy can be combined with many other learning strategies and can increase achievement by as much as 28 percentile points (Johnson et al., 1991).

5. We need to use strategies that allow students to "think aloud" and to process their thinking together to make meaning. Verbalization is an extremely effective strategy, with an ES of 1.78. In terms of an impact on academic achievement, this means that verbalization will increase achievement by as much as 46 percentile points (Darling, 1999). Verbalization is the practice of encouraging the learners to express the learning and connection-making process to themselves and others through self-talk, voicing thoughts, discussion, thinking, and writing about what is being experienced in the learning process.

The rewards will be increased academic achievement that will close the gap in achievement for our students of poverty—well worth the effort it takes for a paradigm shift.

⚜ Critical Elements of an Asset Model

A new model for improving achievement and closing the gaps for students of poverty and diverse cultures will need to address the following elements:

- Collectivist value system
- Motivation and relevance
- Culturally responsive classrooms and context for learning
- Culturally proficient teaching instructional modifications—declarative and procedural knowledge
- Building resilience
- Leadership

Each of these elements will be addressed in subsequent chapters. We will identify specific, research-based instructional strategies that increase learning

for children who live in poverty, who are new to this country, and who come from cultures different from our own.

⑅ Ignoring the Problem—Implications

American education is at a crossroads. We can continue to make changes that address the needs of white, middle-class students to improve achievement but that do not address the needs of our increasingly diverse population. However, the consequences for ignoring the educational differences and needs of children of poverty will impact all of us.

For America to maintain its place in a global economy we need all of our children to be productive, contributing members. They not only need to graduate from high school but also need training and education beyond in order to compete. We must create the conditions in our K–12 schools to allow entry into postsecondary institutions—a means of entry to the middle class for our students of poverty. We need an educated citizenry, with a substantial middle class, to sustain a democracy. We must meet the different needs of our students of poverty in order for them to acquire the knowledge and skills required in a digital society. We can no longer accept the old paradigm model that holds low expectations for students of poverty. We can no longer blame the students, the system, or the educators. We know what works; we need the moral courage to implement it.

Students of poverty who are not provided an education that builds resilience to overcome the circumstances of their birth are not given the opportunity to contribute the assets that they bring—economically, politically, and socially—to this country. We need to invest in them, learn from them, and we will all benefit. Students of poverty who do not achieve in school drain our social services and our health care system and fill our prisons. In the country with the most abundance and wealth, we can no longer educationally address only the needs of middle-class, European-American students. Our educational system needs to provide equal access to a quality education for all of its children. We all deserve no less.

Subsequent chapters will provide you with the knowledge and tools to answer this teacher's plea described in the following scenario.

"I got a new student after the holidays. He's adorable, and I think he's pretty bright because of the speed with which he assesses a situation. I also think he's very street-wise. He is African American and Puerto Rican, and while he speaks English, it's not the English we read, write, and speak in our school. His speech is laced with swearing and foul language. I've tried to indicate that we don't talk like that in class, but he ignores me. I'm worried that other students will pick it up, or worse, tell their parents. He seems to be observing and sizing me and his classmates up since he got here last week. He comes into the classroom loudly every morning. He

(Continued)