



A Meta-Analysis Designed to Identify the Factors that Most Reliably Reduce the Achievement Gap

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Abstract

For five decades, one of the most enduring debates in education has been on how to close the achievement gap between white students on the one hand and black and Hispanic students on the other [1] [2]. This scholastic gap exists in virtually every measure of educational progress, including, GPA, standardized tests, the dropout rate, and the extent to which students are left back a grade [3] [4] [5]. Olneck (2005) notes that by the “eighth grade” the achievement gap is usually “about two years.” [6] Equality is one of the most valued principles of the Western world. Consequently, Americans and Europeans do not feel at ease when unequal results emerge, and social scientists have frequently tried to reduce those inequalities. Ronald Roach (2001, p. 377) recently asserted that, “in the academic and think tank world, pondering achievement gap remedies takes center stage.” [7]

A meta-analysis was undertaken to determine the factors that are most related with reducing the achievement gap. The meta-analysis included 30 studies that examined attempts to bridge the achievement gap between white students on the one hand and black and Latino students on the other. The results indicate that several factors are associated with a reduced achievement gap, that could help bridge the gap. A number of these factors go beyond the bounds of the school. These findings suggest that social scientists may need a broad and multi-disciplinary approach to the achievement gap, in which they consider a variety of factors can potentially reduce the gap. In addition, the results suggest that social scientist may consider combining educational, psychological, and sociological factors in order to develop a more comprehensive approach to narrowing the achievement gap. The significance of these results is discussed, including significant ramifications for the future of education.

This paper should be presented in the “Studies in Education” section.

References

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