



JUSTICE WORKS IN THE HILL DISTRICT 2010-2017

How Well Have We Done?



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Justice Works:

A Plan for Closing Racial Achievement Gaps *How Well Have We Done over the Last Seven Years?*

Resolution of the Hill District Education Council¹ Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, Chair² June 22, 2010

WHEREAS 2008 national math proficiencies of black elementary, middle, and high school students was *less than* corresponding white student proficiencies in 1973;

WHEREAS 2008 national reading proficiencies of black elementary, middle, and high school students was *less than* corresponding white student proficiencies in 1973;

WHEREAS, even when blacks and whites possess comparable educational attainment, job experiences, and personal characteristics relative to their white counterparts, blacks are hired less often, earn less income, and receive fewer promotions; and

WHEREAS, in consequence, blacks may need to outperform their white counterparts just to achieve equal access to society's economic opportunity structures, the Hill District Education Council [Original text of HDEC Resolutions in 2010 is in italicized font; the record of actual achievement from 2010 to 2017 is in bold font]:

- A. *Supports Justice Works³—a value-added educational reform designed to close and reverse racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps by:*
1. *Networking local principals and teachers with **Dame-Dame Schools** that have nearly closed or actually reversed racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in predominately black low-income settings. **Two-year exposure to Dame-Dame principals in three Hill District Schools was associated with (a) accelerated reading and math scores within these schools; (b) rates of acceleration undocumented in the history of these schools; (c) proficiency growth in these schools that exceeded almost all other schools in the district with similar demographics; and (d) gains in reading and math achievement that exceeded gains for black and white students across the district. In the one Hill District School that chose not to participate in this initiative, there were no appreciable achievement gains. But even here, in this school, one student enrolled in our digital math intervention was one of six national winners for diligence and progress which was acknowledged with a \$1,500 check presented in a public assembly at the school which the principal was unable to attend. Moreover, we documented in this school (a) accelerated math achievement of digital math students in this school relative to nonparticipating students in this school;***

¹ We are grateful to Laurie Moser whose input was critical in rearranging the narrative of a prior document into the resolution language utilized here.

² We are pleased also to acknowledge the subsequent leadership of HDEC by Sala Udin, recently elected member of the Pittsburgh School Board.

³ Led by Jerome Taylor, PhD, *Justice Works* is based on local input from scholars affiliated with Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, and the University of Pittsburgh along with advisory input from more than 20 locally and nationally recognized administrators, teachers, scholars and policy and evaluation specialists. An introduction to *Justice Works* in educational settings may be obtained by emailing taylor@pitt.edu.

(b) math achievement acceleration of participants that exceeded district-wide gains for black and white students; and (c) major increments in Self-Confidence and Self-Persistence which we've found in other studies have positive impact on student engagement and academic outcomes in both reading and math. So even here, in this school which chose not to be part of our Dame-Dame intervention, we were able to demonstrate the efficacy of complementary *Justice Works* reforms. On reflection, we don't regret this experience which demonstrated the resiliency of *Justice Works* even in a setting where it was neither sought nor welcomed.

2. *Safeguarding through the intervention We CAN the march toward educational justice attainment and maintenance which often is threatened by policy or leadership changes at local, state, or national levels.* (a) **C**urricular Enhancements: Exposure to digital math and science initiatives accelerated growth in math and STEM proficiencies in Hill District and Homewood schools; (b) **A**xiological or Value Enhancements accelerated gap closures in math and reading; and (c) **N**ormative Enhancements which mobilize students, parents, schools, and communities in support of accelerated learning have received five local, state, and international awards. A report of this component was well received at a national conference convened at Harvard University.
 3. *Healing wounds created by racial stereotypes that otherwise undermine student engagement and achievement excellence.* For adolescent students exposed to our *Foundational Literacy I* protocol, we have found reductions in depression, anxiety, stress, and hostility; decreases in identification with racial stereotypes that undermine academic achievement; reductions in juvenile delinquency behaviors as reported by male participants; and elimination of teenage pregnancies as reported by female participants.
 4. *Preventing racial stereotypes that otherwise undermine student engagement and achievement excellence.* *Foundational Literacy II and III* are designed to prevent internalization of racist stereotyping and victimization by nine types of racial discrimination that together inflict cultural wounds that undermine gap closures. These protocols will be part of our roll out package going forward.
- B. Supports implementation of *each* component of *Justice Works* in all Hill District schools starting with the academic year 2010-2011. **As of this moment, the package of interventions has been implemented piecemeal only, that is, no one school has received all identified interventions at the same time. Can you imagine how our children might have benefited if ALL *Justice Works* interventions had been implemented in EACH Hill District school? Might this be a consideration going forward?**

HDEC is not only the oldest educational justice organization in the region but also the very first to support policies and practices that have actually demonstrated accelerated closures of racial achievement gaps within its political jurisdiction. As such, might it stand as a beacon of hope for the city or region and beyond?

In behalf of our children's future, kudos to HDEC!

We believe your cultural predecessors Doris Brevard, Jake Milliones, Margaret Milliones, Barbara Sizemore, and Lou Vinson would be proud of you.

Finally 

What are others saying about *Justice Works*?

- **Jake Wheatley, Jr.**, 9th Legislative District, House of Representatives, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. *While reviewing the theory, expectations, strategies, specifications and processes of the Justice Works initiative, I wholeheartedly agree that a holistic approach in our most vulnerable communities must occur. This initiative will work to close opportunity gaps for minority children, uncover new ways of potential growth for our children, and identify health and wellness practices that best target behaviors. The studies referenced within the Justice Works document also provide insight into how a holistic approach must be made to achieve academic engagement and excellence inside our lower income, predominantly black schools. While I am pleased to learn more about these issues through this Justice Works document; I truly believe we must act, take this opportunity to collaborate, and work towards a holistic approach for our most vulnerable children.*
- **R. Daniel Lavelle**, Councilman, City of Pittsburgh-District 6; Chair, Public Safety. *As the City Councilperson to District 6, I am reaching out to you to express my support of the Justice Works initiative for Hill District schools. It is my belief that the program will develop education reform that will deliver education justice to the children of the Hill District, in the process helping to eliminate racial, socio-economic and gender achievement gaps.*
- **Molefi Kete Asante, PhD**, Professor and Chair, Department of African American Studies, Temple University, where he created the first PhD program in African American Studies. *Your racial achievement work is excellent. It should become a standard for the state.*
- **James B. Stewart, PhD**, Former Chair of Black Studies, University of Notre Dame; Professor Emeritus and former Vice Provost at Penn State; Past President, Association for the Study of African American Life and History; Former President, National Council for Black Studies. *The term “Justice Works” is an easily understood construct for introducing the “Justice Attainment and Maintenance Strategies” presented in your submission. The Soundness of the model is evidenced by the fact that it is based on the scrutiny of schools that have been successful in significantly reducing or eliminating racial achievement gaps.*
- **The Late Asa Hilliard III, PhD**, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Studies and Professor of Educational Policy Studies, Georgia State University; author of more than 250 articles and books. *I have been in the game for a long time, and rarely expect to be impressed with the typical rhetoric and weak practices that pass for ‘school reform’. To say that your materials are impressive to me is an understatement. [They] set expectations, standards and goals at the highest levels. Conceptually, theoretically, and philosophically, the project has deep and valid roots. The reported results command attention and accolades. Congratulations on moving beyond the tired rhetoric!*
- **David C. Berliner, PhD**, Former President, American Educational Research Association which is the most prominent international professional organization in education; Regents' Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Arizona State University. *Your proposal is terrific. It hits all the issues and I can only wish you well.*
- **Rodney K. Hopson, PhD**, Former Hillman Distinguished Professor of Education at Duquesne University. *Brilliant. At a time when such excitement about closing and reducing the achievement gap in our schools, we need more of this type of effort focused on success and excellence of Black students rather than the continued focus on deficits.*
- **William Cross, PhD**, Retired Professor of Psychology, City University of New York, pioneer and renowned scholar in cultural identity theory. *This is a masterful piece of work, comprehensive yet realistic and practical. Your work has always had a ring of excellence.*
- **Karl Mack**, Former Executive Director, National Society of Black Engineers, 23,000+ members. *The National Society for Black Engineers is willing to work with you on this crisis facing all of us.*
- **Margaret Beale Spencer, PhD**, Board of Overseers Professor of Education and Psychology, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania; Fellow in four divisions of the American Psychological Association. *This is a wonderful accomplishment!*

We acknowledge the support of Pittsburgh Mayor Peduto, City Council Members Burgess, Lavelle, and O'Connor, the majority of Pittsburgh School Board Directors.

Finally, we thank the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus that years ago awarded a substantial grant which launched our journey of development and research that made this moment possible.

