



*Just Schools:*  
*closing the school-to-prison pipeline*

by closing and reversing racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps Pre-K to PhD

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# Just Schools:

## *Enabling a National Vision*

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**J**ust Schools, a theoretically grounded and research-based system of policies and practices, accelerate closures of racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps in reading, math, and science even in neighborhoods and communities with compelling histories of racial and socioeconomic oppression. These schools materialize our nation’s Pledge of Allegiance, which is read monthly if not daily by students, teachers, superintendents, administrative staff, school board members, children’s parents, and citizens at large. These normalized practices, solemnized by right hands raised or placed over the heart, issue from America’s 1776 founding document which stipulated liberty (freedom) and justice (equality) for **all**. Within the educational domain, *Just Schools* (a) materialize justice and freedom for **all**; (b) utterly clog the school-to-prison pipeline; and (c) enhance domestic and international confidence in our capacity to deliver justice and freedom, as premised in America’s constitution 244 years ago, *even in unjust and unfair places*. It is with a sense of urgency that we engage this challenge of converting just schools into *Just Schools*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Just Schools* is an example of what we now refer to as *analeptic interventions* which are expressly designed to overcome obvious and hidden costs of historical and ongoing oppression of any form—racism, classism, genderism, featurism, dialecticism, and so on [inspired by the Greek word *analeptikos* meaning to revive, repair, or restore].

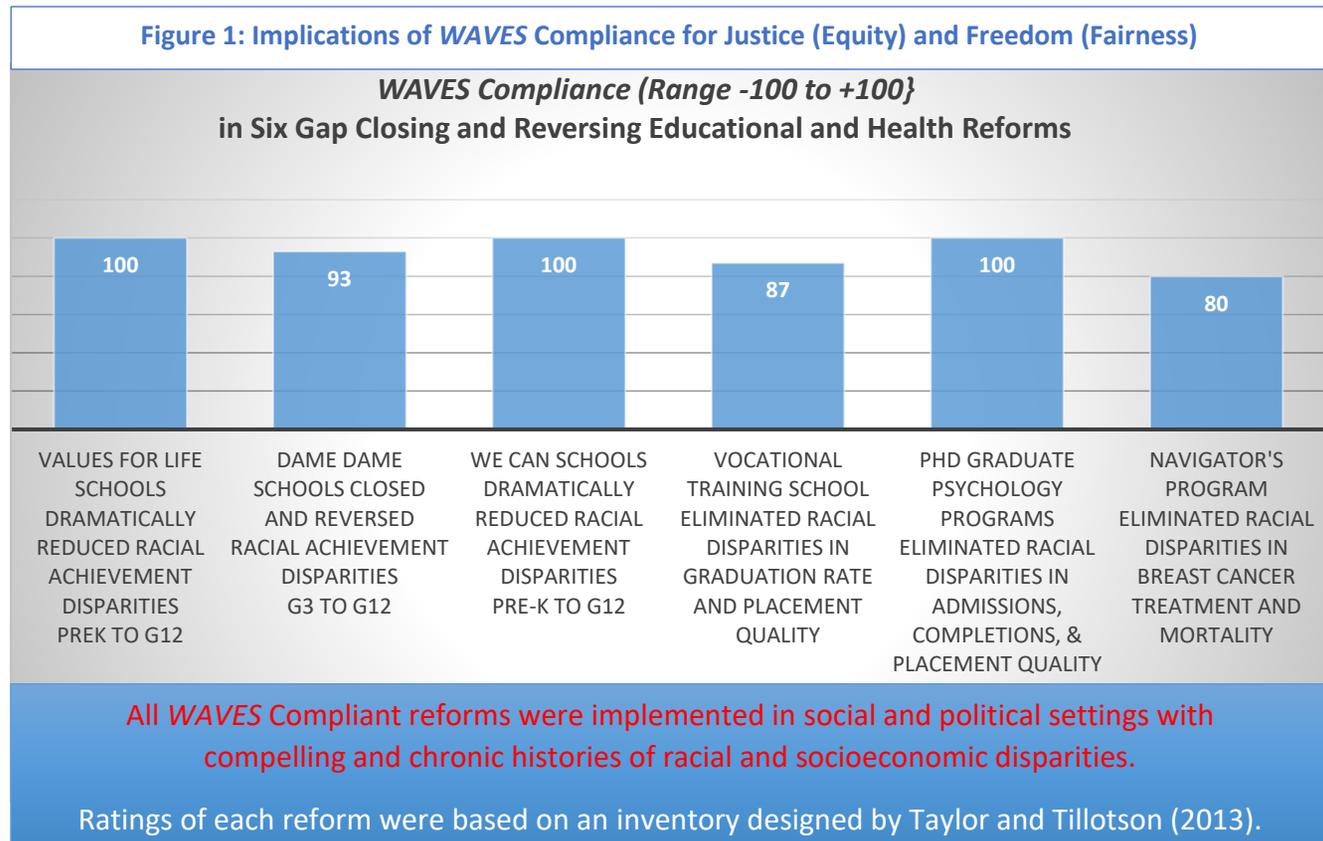
## Table 1. Introduction to WAVES Compliance (Based on 40+ Years of Lab and Field Research): Five Policies and Practices that Enable Justice and Freedom even in Unjust and Unfair Places

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1. **W: Allocentric: Worldview.** Embracement of the allocentric worldview that *I am my brother's (sister's) keeper* which stands in contrast to the idiocentric worldview that *every tub rests on its own bottom*. The aspirations and claims of justice are undermined if not abandoned by policies and practices growing out of an inflexibly embraced Idiocentric worldview. Here, racial, economic, and educational inequalities incubate and proliferate in neighborhoods, communities, and nations. The challenge here is in restoring regard for Other, *i.e.*, moving from an idiocentric toward an allocentric worldview to create a wiser and more reconciled and perfect union.
2. **A: Homeothermic-Like Adaptation.** In the field of education, we have advocated for a shift in paradigm from 'best practice' to 'just practice' reforms that require examining how more than 100 'just practice schools' have nearly closed or actually reversed racial, socioeconomic, and Black male achievement gaps in the least likely of places: predominately Black low-income urban schools located in highly challenged environments indexed by elevated levels of poverty, delinquency, crime, drugs, and teenage pregnancy. Nature provides instruction of relevance to understanding these exceptional schools. The core temperature of warm-blooded organisms remains the same even when stressed by extremities of environmental temperatures (transforming or homeothermically adaptive), whereas the core temperature of cold-blooded organisms is dependent on the temperature of their environments (conforming or poikilothermically adaptive). Analogous to the adaptation strategy of warm-blooded animals, these schools have been able to maintain achievement excellence even in the most challenged environments. Unlike cold-blooded organisms, these schools are not environmentally conformed—they do not mirror abject patterns of marginality or failure that characterize life in their neighborhoods, *i.e.*, these transcendent schools have not become what their neighborhoods are. In general, the call here is for understanding policies and practices that produce just outcomes in unjust places—an example of homeothermic-like adaptation. Why should we continue to settle for more primitive and less evolved poikilothermic-like adaptations where demography is destiny?
3. **V: Integrative Values.** Medial and behavioral commitment to values of love and respect, interpersonal skills, learning orientation, self-confidence, self-persistence, self-esteem, and self-reliance. Embracement of these values is associated with accelerated academic engagement and achievement in pre-school, Head Start, elementary school, high school, college, and graduate school. Interventions designed to promote these values are associated also with improved mental health in children, adolescents, and adults and with decreases in absenteeism, tardiness, and disciplinary problems in elementary and middle school settings.
4. **E: Cultural Emancipation.** Extrusion of chattel slavery stereotypes—*Blacks are animals which 'explains' why they are mentally defective and physically gifted*. Published studies show that American, Caribbean, and African Blacks who internalize these stereotypes are at higher risks of obesity, metabolic dysfunctions, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes along with elevated levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and hostility linked to problematic styles of coping—denial, avoidance, fatalism, and escapism. From research findings in the U.S., Blacks who identify with these stereotypes show higher risks of lower income, school incompleteness, Black-on-Black crime, alcohol consumption, and perhaps unprotected sex with multiple partners. The cultural emancipation of Blacks and Whites is therefore a critical marker along our journey toward recovery and transformation.
5. **S: Spiritual Integration.** A prevailing sense of hope, wholesome connectivity to past and present as well as future, and uncompromising capacity to make transcendent choices. Studies show that spiritual integration lowers symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, and hostility and confers mental and physical health protective effects by attenuating harmful effects of episodic, chronic, structural, and historical sources of stress.

Singularly and conjunctively we expect that these five interrelated norms are critically important for the Recovery and Transformation of African and African Diasporan communities and nations where they live. Further, we expect that creative adaptations of these norms may well provide a universal framework for the recovery and transformation of any group stigmatized and marginalized by race, ethnicity, religion, class, or gender (*e.g.*, Muslims in general, females in Bosnia-Herzegovina, American Indians or Latinos, and poor Whites in rural or urban America). We expect that these norms are primary instruments of **Justice** (outcome equities) and **Freedom** (fair access to opportunity and service structures that enable Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness) that enable Recovery and Transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities along with the cultural, spiritual, and political redemption of our nation at long last. As such, our theory of WAVES Compliance might represent a small step forward in clarifying foundational processes that affirm our destiny as *homo sapiens*—wise human beings—capable of surviving and thriving under adverse as well as favorable conditions.

Scores for WAVES were calculated for each of six policies and practices that actually accelerated closures and reversals of racial disparities in educational and health outcomes. For each of these six applications, we used a method still under development whereby we assigned a value -3 to +3 to estimate level of saturation of each application on each component of WAVES. For example, a value of -3 was assigned for the Worldview norm when the application was decidedly Idiocentric or a value of +3 if the application was decidedly Allocentric. A value of '0' was assigned when the Worldview construct was not at all a consideration. Finer gradations on either side of '0' (-1, -2, +1, +2) were assigned depending upon the relative absence or presence of the norm evaluated. This metrical procedure was followed for each of the remaining norms AVES. Recovery and Transformation Potential RTP scores were rescaled to fall within the range -100 to +100, *i.e.*, from negative to positive WAVES Compliance.



In our experience thus far, only policies and practices with RTP scores  $\geq 75$  have empirically accelerated the closure or reversal of racial disparities. Figure 1 is consistent with this cut-off standard for two application domains: **education** (Pre-K to PhD—samples examined from Baltimore, Dallas, New Haven, New York City, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh) and **health** (breast cancer—sample examined from St. Louis). At the moment, we expect that policies and practices meeting this standard will (a) enable Justice (Equity) and Freedom (Access) within targeted domains; (b) accelerate the Recovery and Transformation of challenged neighborhoods and communities; and (c) enhance the national and international regard for our American Experiment. *Although encouraged by these preliminary results, only future lab and field studies can establish more confidently that WAVES Compliance enables Black Flourishing which can counter and undo negative effects of systemic racism. These expectations can be achieved without invoking the spirit of destructive rage stemming from past wrongdoings (Shakespeare's Hamlet). Rather we summon the loving spirit of Julie Dash's ghost of the future (Daughter of the Dust) to inspire, nurture, and sustain our pursuit of Liberty and Justice for all without dilution, delay, derailment, or denial in America—an anticipated dénouement which would affirm at long last that Black Lives Matter.*