

Our Nation, Our Schools, Our Students

In a time of increasing diversity, we must ensure that *all* students get a great education

By L. Earl Franks, Ed.D., CAE



In the fascinating and compelling book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Robert D. Putnam, Harvard professor of public policy and bestselling author of *Bowling Alone*, presents a thorough account of why Americans now have fewer prospects for upward mobility. Through storytelling about students in various

community types, Putnam addresses the growing class gap and its impact on opportunity. As a lifelong educator and association executive who has been trained to create inclusive climates, I am left with the question: What can be done about these inequities and this major crisis?

The opportunity gap is exacerbated by continuing demographic shifts, and by the forecast that by the year 2020, the majority of the nation's children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group. This is according to a 2014 report released by the U.S. Census Bureau, predicting that by 2060, "just 36 percent of all children (people under age 18) will be single-race non-Hispanic white, compared with 52 percent today."

Despite this trend of growing diversity, schools in some parts of the country are more segregated today than they were 20 years ago. So, while the overall student population is growing more diverse, individual schools' racial makeup is becoming more concentrated. This fact is important because black and Hispanic students are now more likely to attend schools with high levels of poverty than white students.

As you can see from these forecasts—and no doubt are experiencing in your own school community—student diversity, along with poverty, class, and race, will continue to impact learning outcomes. School administrators—across the nation and in every school type—must be culturally competent to serve the students of the present and future. This is the case in urban, suburban, rural, and frontier communities alike. Not only will the students in many schools and districts look different, they will learn differently, too. I hope you will ponder this thought as you work to plan for and provide a quality education for *all* students. **P**

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NAESP on Diversity

NAESP has long supported the educational equity of all students. For example, since the inception of NAESP's Platform Statements, which is a collection of resolutions or belief statements that are updated annually and adopted by the Association, educational equity has played a prominent role in many key resolutions, such as these:

- NAESP supports the right of every child to access fair and equitable educational opportunities.
- NAESP believes that the rights of all students should be protected.
- NAESP believes school culture, climate, and social-emotional development should support equity and diversity for all students.
- NAESP believes educational opportunities should recognize and respect all people within our local, state, national, and global communities.
- NAESP values diversity in our culture and believes discrimination must be eliminated.
- NAESP believes that each child must receive a free and appropriate public education.
- NAESP believes federal, state, and local governments must assume accountability and take aggressive action to address social and economic issues arising from such factors as unemployment, immigration, poverty, drugs and alcohol, and other challenges facing the American family.
- NAESP believes sufficient and equitable funding for public education is necessary to support an educated, skilled workforce that can compete in a global economy.