

Developed by Gary Howard

# DEEP EQUITY

Carving new pathways to personal, professional,  
and organizational transformation



The Story of  
Jefferson County  
Public School

.....  
A DEEP EQUITY  
CASE STUDY

**DEEP EQUITY**

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# About Deep Equity



**GARY R. HOWARD** has more than 40 years of experience working with issues of civil rights, social justice, equity, education, and diversity, including 25 years as the Founder of the REACH Center for Multicultural Education. The central focus of Howard's current work is leading intensive Equity Leadership Institutes that provide educational organizations with the internal capacity to deliver high quality professional development for social justice and systemic change.

## Carving a path for deep, systemic reform from the bottom up

**D**eep Equity is a systemic, long-term professional development process aimed at producing the deep transformations that are necessary to create equitable places of learning for all of our nation's children. This entire program is built around the Five Foundational Phases of Deep Equity:

- **Phase 1: Tone and Trust**
- **Phase 2: Personal Culture and Personal Journey**
- **Phase 3: Social Dominance to Social Justice**
- **Phase 4: Classroom Implications and Applications**
- **Phase 5: Systemic Transformation/Planning for Change**

For more information about Deep Equity, visit [www.corwin.com/deep-equity](http://www.corwin.com/deep-equity), or contact a Corwin representative at (800) 831-6640.

# Deep Equity in Jefferson County Public Schools

## The Context: About the School/District

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is one of the largest most diverse districts in the United States currently led by Superintendent Dr. Donna Hargens. JCPS is the 27th largest school system in U.S. located in Jefferson County, Louisville, KY and serves 100,600 students from early childhood to 12th grade. Reflecting local and national demographic changes, the JCPS student population continues to grow with respect to racial, linguistic and cultural diversity, and poverty. Over 120 different languages are represented by the student body, 51% are students of color, and 64% of students receive free/reduced lunch, and over 6,000 JCPS students are considered homeless. JCPS has a nationally recognized longstanding commitment to maintain diversity in their schools through a robust student assignment and transportation systems.

## Demographics

- 6,400 teachers (84% of teachers have a master's degree; 22% are National Board Certified)
- 100,600 students
- 172 schools
- 124 languages spoken by JCPS students
- 64% of students are on free or reduced-price meal
- 13% Special Education Students
- 7% Limited English Proficient
- 46% White
- 37% African-American
- 9% Hispanic
- 8% Other Ethnicity

## The Challenge

Similar to trends across the nation, the racial and socio-economic gaps in student achievement and disciplinary outcomes in JCPS were found to be persistent and troubling. Having a primarily White middle class teaching force and



**8%**  
**increase**  
**in Student**  
**Proficiency**  
**on Annual State**  
**Math Assessment**  
**Among Students**  
**Who Receive**  
**Free/Reduced**  
**Lunch**

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increasing diversity and poverty reflected in the student population was identified as an important reality to be addressed. In a district-wide survey 70% of JCPS teachers reported that they needed more professional development to help address the achievement gap to teach students more effectively. Another JCPS staff survey indicated that prior to coming to JCPS, almost one in four had zero prior course work or training in cultural competence, and nearly half (49%) had between 0 – 1. There was a clear need to provide supports and services that will arm teachers with the knowledge and tools to teach all students effectively and in a culturally responsive manner. Understanding that the interpersonal and cultural context of learning powerfully impacts teaching and learning in every classroom and responding to the need expressed by people and in data, JCPS set ambitious goals in reshaping the district's culture through the systematic promotion and practice of cultural competence district-wide (*JCPS Vision 2015 strategic goal 3: strengthening organizational cultural, strategy 2: Enhancing cultural competency; JCPS Vision 2020, Excellence with Equity*).

The JCPS department of Diversity, Equity & Poverty, partnered with national expert Gary Howard and adopted an approach to promote cultural competency district-wide through the institute for cultural competence/Deep Equity. The primary goal of the cultural competence/Deep Equity institute was to strengthen the internal capacity of schools to deliver high-quality PD that is essential to true inclusion, equity, and excellence. The expected outcomes of this work was to train school teams to develop strategies and implement activities within their school that would increase their teachers' knowledge, awareness and skills to improve school and classroom climate and culture and to maximize instruction and learning within the social, academic and disciplinary practices.

Additionally, under the leadership of Dr. John Marshall, JCPS extended the reach of the cultural competence/Deep Equity work to ensure that 100% of JCPS staff – from the custodians and bus drivers to teachers to central office administrators received training on the core principles of cultural competence and Deep Equity.



*“I had the privilege of learning from and working with Gary Howard for three years. The beauty of studying cultural competence is that everyone, regardless of age, race or role, had an entry point and everyone had valuable experiences to share. Those experiences shape our very being, helping us make meaning of the world for ourselves and our students. The sharing of those experiences helped foster a deep understanding and appreciation of others in my schools.”*

—Christel Todd-Lanier,  
JCPS Assistant Principal

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## Implementation

The cultural competence/Deep Equity institutes included a four-day training commitment by at least three school staff that constitutes the core cultural competence leadership team in each participating school. It was required that the teams included a principal or assistant principal to serve as to ensure administrator support of the cultural competence capacity building activities and professional development within their school. Each leadership team received the *Leadership Manual for Inclusion, Equity, and Excellence*, which served as the foundation for building the internal capacity and knowledge within each school. The manual provided the PD materials and guided a four-year implementation plan to support schools in creating a process that fit their school's culture and specific needs. Once the leadership teams completed the four-day institute, follow up sessions were provided to support the schools as they moved through each phase, specifically helping address challenges, analyze disaggregated data, and receive additional technical assistance with Gary Howard.

The institute sessions were organized around Five Phases of engagement, growth, and change: (1) Tone and Trust, (2) Personal Culture and Personal Journey (3) From Social Dominance to Social Justice, (4) Classroom and Job-Related Implications and Applications and , (5) Systemic Transformation and Planning for Change. A total of 41 JCPS schools (representing 45% of JCPS high schools, 56% of JCPS middle schools, 18% of JCPS elementary schools, and 10% of JCPS alternative schools) participated in the *Institute for Cultural Competence/Deep Equity* with Gary Howard.

Following the three year intensive leadership team cohort work, the cultural competence/Deep Equity video modules were rolled out across the entire district to approximately 15,000 employees. The modules along with a facilitator guide and participant workbook provided flexibility for schools to complete the training in a manner that suited their schedules. All school principals attended a training session on how to facilitate the training with their staff. While the video modules were the primary mechanism, the training incorporated many interactive exercises



“As a staff we continue to focus on, and have meaningful conversations regarding our diverse population.”

—JCPS teacher

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to guide courageous group conversations as well as help schools devise individual and school specific action plans for the year. The participation workbooks also included guiding questions for each section, a glossary, and resources on various topics.

## Successes

The cultural competence leadership team cohorts shared substantive successes including (1) significant increases in understanding of culturally responsive issues and practices, (2) strengthening of relationships among staff, (3) increases in honest discussions around sensitive topics, and (4) development of authentic/effective relationships with students. Importantly, some of the trained leaders that left cohort schools took the lead in their new school and continued participation, illustrating the district-wide capacity building.

Key successes of the district-wide video modules were (1) the Classified staff (e.g., Instructional assistants, cafeteria and clerical staff, bus drivers) were engaged in PD and discussions as they were typically left out of, (2) teachers took time to do action plan within classroom and will revisit their action plan throughout the year to assess progress, and (3) there was common language for all employees around cultural competence/equity issues and practices.

## Challenges

The four primary, and interrelated challenges that the cultural competence/Deep Equity leadership team cohorts faced include (1) finding the time to implement activities with the whole staff due to diminished time devoted in the school calendar for teacher professional development, (2) competing agendas and a myriad of initiatives that increase pressure and scatter efforts, (3) teacher resistance and belief that “this doesn’t apply to me,” and (4) the mobility of core team members within the school year. While these challenges relate to larger district system dynamics, Gary Howard was careful to address each particular challenge around implementation raised by participants between institute sessions through the evaluation feedback process.



“Working with the cultural competence team provided me with a deeper understanding of how to impact change to bring about more equitable learning experiences for my students. The work also gave me the skills and strategies I needed to better engage my peer teacher in critical dialogue necessary to move us towards collaborative, engaged, and hopeful improvements in our daily practice.”

—Petia Edison,  
JCPS teacher

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With the implementation of the video modules, the primary challenges were (1) some principals did not facilitate the training and chose other people in their building to do so indicating low commitment by the school leadership to cultural competence and related (2) some facilitators simply played the video modules and did not implement the interactive group discussion activities and exercises.

## Key Outcomes

**A**nalyses of student outcomes were conducted on the cohort schools that met the criteria of high implementation teams compared with control schools that did not participate. While direct causality between outcomes and participation cannot be determined as there is no random assignment, the results revealed that these schools have made greater gains with student connectedness, discipline, and achievement.

*Student Achievement* — In the analysis of academic achievement and student perceptions, the cohort schools that met the criteria for full participation and active implementation were compared to similarly situated schools with respect to free/reduced lunch previous achievement as shown in the chart below.

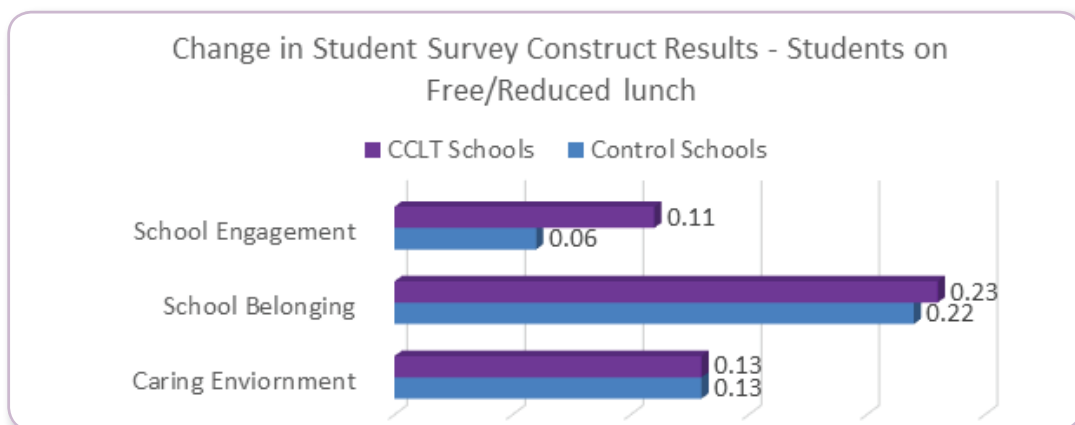
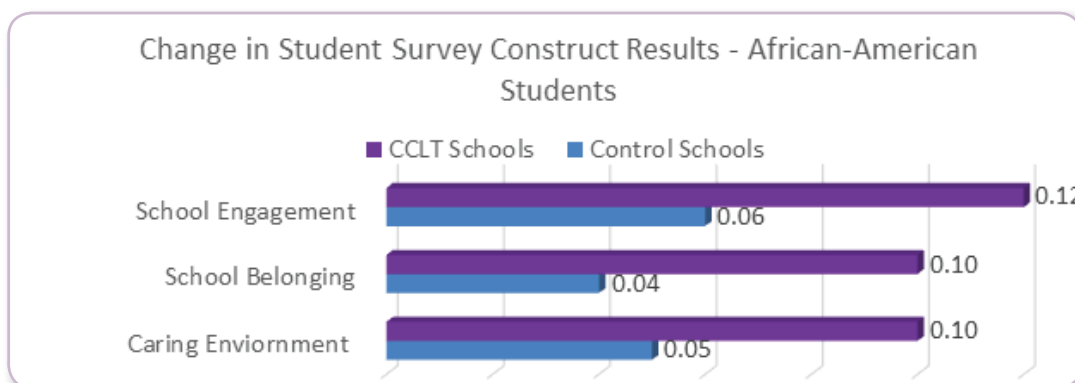
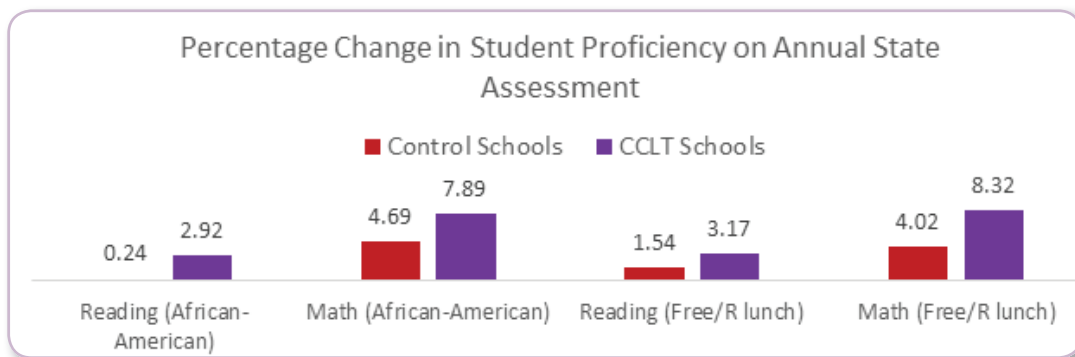
*Student Experiences* — An analysis of the district's comprehensive student survey data revealed that the cohort schools experienced greater gains than the control group on the survey constructs related to their perceptions of (a) caring environment, (b) school engagement, and (c) school belonging for minority students and students receiving free/reduced lunch.



*Participating schools experienced a decrease in the percent of students receiving disciplinary referrals for disruptive behavior overall, and an even greater reduction in the percent of minority students and free/reduced lunch students receiving disruptive behavior referrals by 3.6% and 3.9% respectively.*

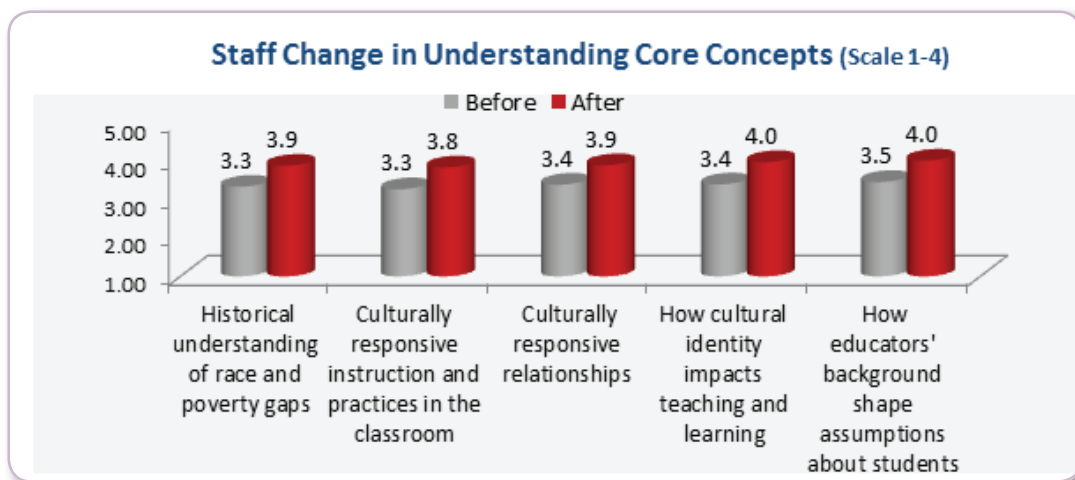
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The analysis showed that the participating cultural competence schools increased proficiency in math and reading for their African-American students, students on free/reduced lunch at a statistically significant higher rate than the control schools as shown below:



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Key outcomes from the video module training to 100% of JCPS school staff was an increased level of understanding of various facets of cultural competence both before and after their training. Survey data revealed significant gains in all areas, with the largest gains in “how cultural identity impacts teaching and learning” and “culturally responsive relationships.”



## Next Steps

JCPS has made equity a core value in their new strategic plan (vision 2020) and through strong internal capacity of the Diversity, Equity & Poverty department continues to provide high quality professional development to support sustainability of cultural competence and ensure equity across the entire district. JCPS understands that implementation of cultural competence should not be a compartmentalized activity. It must permeate the entire system in order to have a lasting impact on equitable school environments, teaching, and student learning.



# Put Deep Equity into action!



INSTITUTES

## Deep Equity Institute

During this two-day institute, participants will explore issues of privilege, identify organizational barriers to equity, and build a climate of constructive collaboration where all students can thrive.



CONSULTING

## School Leadership Series

This three-stage partnership allows for customized, deep organizational work. This series includes a launch meeting with the district leadership team to frame the work and build capacity, four non-consecutive workshop days with school-based equity teams, and tools to sustain and deepen the work.

## The Youth Equity Stewardship Series (YESS!)

This proven, arts-based workshop series increases student engagement and transforms youths into advocates for culturally responsive learning environments.



ONLINE  
PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING

## Culturally Responsive Teaching eCourse

This course introduces the Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching. Participants will identify opportunities and barriers to integrating these principles in their classrooms.

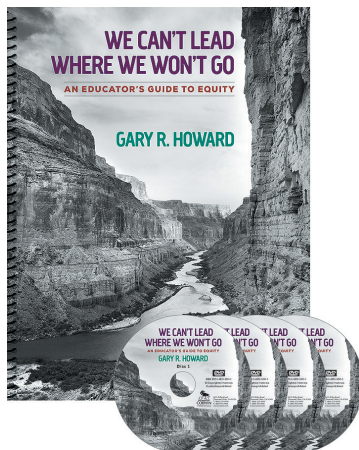
## Deep Equity PD Resource Center

Based on Gary Howard's *We Can't Lead Where We Won't Go* manual, the Deep Equity PD Resource Center provides online access to all the materials you need to promote culturally responsive teaching practices.

## Your implementation plan workbook



BOOKS



Preview sample  
chapters at  
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