🍎 *New York Center for Teacher Development, Inc.*
In affiliation with University of Massachusetts Global

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

With or without NCLB, the achievement gap is something that we all, as educators committed to helping our children, have a tremendous role and responsibility in closing. Without an honest and open discourse, however, finding and addressing the major factors influencing the achievement gap within our own classrooms, schools, districts, and communities, it is difficult to implement change. Teachers enrolled in this course will be guided through a close and collaborative examination of the practices and needs particular to their places of work. We will collaborate in scrutinizing data, teaching trends, and student perception to arrive at an understanding of what we can do to help close the gap not only as educators within a given classroom, but as potential leaders among colleagues and students in setting standards of practice that promote achievement for all.

Course Goals

To Know
1. what the achievement gap is and which students "fall" into it.
2. all of the most important data and statistics regarding disparities in achievement in the United States.
3. what causes the achievement gap.

To Understand
1. how current practices may either intentionally or inadvertently isolate minority students and turn them away from education.
2. how effective teaching practices and positive school/district policy can affect student achievement.
3. how systemic discrimination results from hidden inequities in opportunity.

and To Be Able To
1. identify current practices within his or her district, school, and/or classroom that contribute to or help close the achievement gap.
2. handle / discuss ideas in closing the achievement gap with both honesty and sensitivity.
3. use student perception to guide change in their own classrooms and schools.
4. immediately implement a variety of teaching tools and strategies that can help close the achievement gap in their classrooms.

Course Outline

I. Identifying and Acknowledging the Achievement Gap
   a. What is the *achievement gap*? Which students are a part of it?
   b. What causes these gaps in achievement to occur? (ASCD Article: "The Achievement Gap: Causes")
   c. Obstacles in and tools for closing the achievement gap.
II. Addressing the sensitive issue of race and inequality: Getting beyond the hurdles in order to help students become successful.
III. What are the effects of these gaps in achievement? II. Reflecting on Trends and Data within Your Own Working Environment
IV. Download NYSED school report card for school data analysis
   a. Examine achievement data for state assessments across population cohorts
   b. Gather student discipline data from your school
V. Compare student discipline rate by race to population data for your school
VI. Systemic inequities that affect student achievement
   a. Discussion of and introduction to examples of systemic inequities, such as busing, extra help requirements and availability, allocation of resources, PTA and parent involvement, etc.
   b. Fact-finding within your school
      i. Which systemic policies and procedures may unintentionally create an inequality of opportunity for your students?
      ii. What practices or groups has your school or district implemented to promote and ensure equality of opportunity for all students?
   c. Student Scheduling
   d. To track or not to track?
VII. Support systems and intervention resources to promote student achievement
VIII. The Role of Student Perceptions in the Achievement Gap
   a. Administration of *Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN)*
IX. Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Closing the Gap at leading school, district, and classroom practices: What works?
X. Survey of student perceptions in your school
   a. Sharing and discussion of survey results
   b. Using student perception to guide change
XI. ASCD TEXT: "The Achievement Gap: Solutions"
XII. TEXT: "Inside the Black Box of High-Performing High-Poverty Schools"
   a. Share best practices in teaching to diversity
   b. The importance of multi-cultural professional development
XIII. Final Reflections: Roles and responsibilities in closing the gap.
   a. "How do we get started?" How to begin working together to close the gap if you are
      i. a teacher
      ii. an administrator
      iii. a parent
      iv. a student
      v. a counselor

Methods of Instruction

Teachers enrolled in this course will evaluate primary and secondary sources, presentations and surveys of student perception in order to better understand the factors that contribute to or reduce the gap in student achievement. They will communicate with other teachers around the state and country to share success stories and gain insights into best practices in instruction. They will complete assignments that assess their understanding of the achievement gap and be challenged to apply their learning immediately to their own classrooms, schools, districts and communities. They will complete thorough analyses of the performance data for their own schools, identify avenues for improving instruction in their classrooms, and create blueprints for financial, emotional and pedagogical change that they can bring back to their workplaces.

Students will connect with each other throughout the course within forums and various other types of online feedback options built into each class.

Methods of Assessment

All students will participate in online class discussions and complete assignments based on review of assigned readings and resources. Assignments will challenge students to activate learning content by applying it to their professional practices.

In order to earn an A in class, a student must complete all of the assigned readings and assignments, participate in all discussion forums, and compete all of the practicum tasks. This includes but is not limited to (1) contributions to a Best Practices in Multicultural Teaching database; (2) administration of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) Survey of student perceptions; and (3) researching systemic inequities within one's own school and/or district.

In order to earn a B in class, a student must complete all of the assigned readings and assignments, participate in all discussion forums, and compete two of the practicum tasks cited above.

Instructors are online each day of the course and correspond with students through the course itself, feedback on assignments, e-mail, and by phone.

Time Validation

Activity	Time (in hours)
Students will review resources on closing the achievement gap from the No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top legislation.	1.00
Students will analyze gap-closing school systems from around the country to identify patterns in obstacles and opportunities that affected their outcomes.	1.00
Students will read resources on and discuss the importance of strong role models and programs for young male students in urban school settings. Students will then research the web for example and characteristics of model programs aimed at transforming aspirations for young at-risk learners. These will be assembled collaboratively into a class-wide database.	2.00
Students will read and write to analyze factors contributing to social-class achievement gaps in mathematics, focusing insights on household patterns and questioning, assignment patterns teachers can address to mitigate the gap.	1.50
Students will seek to identify and discuss systemic inequities that often exist in how school systems are structured that exacerbate the gap.	1.50
Students will research and write to explore how social "contexts" defined by peer groups influence student self-perception.	1.00
Students will view and respond to resources exploring the role of homework in exacerbating the achievement gap.	1.00
Students will read and respond to sources that identify racial disparities in both high- and low- achieving school settings.	1.00
Students will review and analyze data from the MSAN (Minority Student Achievement Network) survey data. Based on available data, they will compare and contrast high and low wealth districts based on a number of home and school factors that influence student success.	5.00
Students will analyze national percentile rankings and statistics for many urban school systems.	0.50
Students will analyze the Nation's Report Card to identify cohorts for which the achievement gap is not closing.	1.00
Using texts provided, Students will compare and contrast public education's role as a great equalizer and a great divider.	1.00
Students will research and identify factors from early childhood that influence student achievement before they enter kindergarten.	1.00

Students will analyze the role of class size in early elementary grades and discuss the role of external drivers, such as school budget decisions, in widening or closing the gap.	**0.50**
Students will research the role professional development can play in closing the achievement gap, from strengthening content area expertise to the importance of teacher-student relationships, expectations and cultural sensitivity.	**2.00**
Students will obtain and perform a thorough analysis on school district report cards for their own districts.	**5.00**
Students will analyze patterns in instructional coherence cultivated by school and community leaders that can transform a system of education. They will identify which, of these qualities, exist in their own schools or districts, and seek to identify ways in which they can assume leadership roles in these areas.	**1.50**
Students will research and analyze the role of suspensions and expulsions, tracking, grouping and special education referrals in widening or closing the gap.	**1.25**
Students will research the importance of family and community engagement in helping students achieve. They will develop models for parent communication to promote a school-home partnership in support of students.	**2.50**
Students will read about the behaviors and programs high-achieving, high-poverty school systems. They will use these as a lens to analyze their current work environments and identify ways in which they can contribute to a successful learning culture.	**1.50**
Students will read about and come up with plans for implementing key instructional behaviors that they can incorporate into their daily classroom practice.	**1.50**
Students will analyze the importance of setting the bar high, and teaching higher order thinking to all students. They will explore techniques and develop plans incorporating rigorous classroom and questioning techniques.	**1.25**
Students will learn about the importance of reviewing, revisiting, and reteaching classroom content after formative assessments are delivered in order to ensure that students are making progress.	**1.00**
Students will explore the importance of fundamental and academic vocabularies in empowering students to be successful. They will learn several new techniques for improving these in their classrooms.	**1.50**
Students will review a thorough analysis of the New York State achievement gap conducted by The Education Trust. They will identify causes, effects, and things they can do or share with others in order to help close the gaps where they live and work.	**1.25**
Students will analyze gap-closing initiatives proposed and sponsored by the Board of Regents.	**0.75**

Students will synthesize learning for our course by assuming the role of a district leader, developing a budget of sample data that identifies gap closing priorities (early childhood, professional development, class size, mentor programs, etc.) they would implement in their districts. Each budgeting decision will be accompanied by a rationale that justifies its importance in terms of the impact it has on closing the achievement gap.	**5.00**
Total	**45.00**