Contemporary Perspectives on Access, Equity, and Achievement

School Turnaround in Large Urban K-12 Metropolitan Areas

Solutions for Key Stakeholders



Edited by
Debora Saavedra-Winch
Chance W. Lewis

School Turnaround in Large Urban K-12 Metropolitan Areas

Contemporary Perspectives on Access, Equity, and Achievement

Series Editor: Chance W. Lewis

Contemporary Perspectives on Access, Equity, and Achievement is an established academic book series that brings together the latest research, theory, and practice on issues of educational equity. The series explores the challenges and opportunities related to ensuring equitable access and achievement across all educational levels—early childhood through higher education. Topics include, but are not limited to: racial and ethnic equity, culturally responsive pedagogy, disproportionality in discipline and achievement, policy analysis, community engagement, and leadership for equity.

Each volume features scholars and practitioners who bring interdisciplinary perspectives and innovative approaches to solving educational disparities. The aim is to provide actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers committed to dismantling systemic inequities and promoting inclusive educational systems.

This series is ideal for audiences across education, sociology, policy, and leadership disciplines who are dedicated to transforming education for all learners.

OTHER TITLES IN THE SERIES

Transformative Teacher Education: Disrupting Pedagogy, Practice, and Ideology to Forge Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education

Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education

Preparing to Lead: Narratives of Aspiring School Leaders in a "Post"-COVID World

Advancing Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education: Practical Approaches to Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Post-Secondary Planning for All: Approaches to College and Career Readiness Counseling for Special Populations

Unveiling the Cloak of Invisibility: Why Black Males are Absent in STEM Disciplines

Economic, Political and Legal Solutions to Critical Issues in Urban Education and Implications for Teacher Preparation

Imagining the Future: Historically Black Colleges and Universities - A Matter of Survival

School Turnaround in Large Urban K-12 Metropolitan Areas

Solutions for Key Stakeholders

Edited by

Debora Saavedra-Winch

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA

And

Chance W. Lewis

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2027

Editorial matter and selection © 2027 Debora Saavedra-Winch and Chance W. Lewis.
Individual chapters © 2027 The authors.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Cover photo: iStock and Wirestock

Reprints and permissions service
Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80791-527-8 (Print hardback)
ISBN: 978-1-80791-529-2 (Print paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-80791-526-1 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-1-80791-528-5 (Epub)

Typeset by TNQ Tech
Cover design by TNQ Tech

CONTENTS

About the Editors vii

About the Contributors ix

Foreword: The Schools that Build Us xvii

Introduction: What We Know in Our Bones xxi

SECTION I

FOUNDATIONS OF TURNAROUND AND EQUITY

1 Developing Culturally Responsive School Counselors to Work in Turnaround Schools 3
Erik M. Hines, Donna Y. Ford, Renae D. Mayes, Tanya J. Middleton, Desmond McGlone and James L. Moore III

2 Changing the Narrative: Bold Discipline Reforms Driving School Turnaround 19
John A. Williams III, Emily Holtz, Miriam Sanders, Aminah Crawford and Virginia Redwine Johnson

3 The Power of AI Amidst the Digital Divide: The Potential for PK-12 School Turnaround 47
Nia E. Brown and Stephen D. Hancock

SECTION II

CENTERING STUDENT AND TEACHER VOICES

4 Blackgirl Dreaming: Visions for Urban School Transformation Through the Eyes of Blackgirls in an Urban Alternative School 63
Cathryn A. Devereaux and Stephen D. Hancock

5 School Turnaround Centered on Teacher Perceptions of Equity in a Teacher Preparation Program 83
Stephanie Thomas-Woodard

6 Reclaiming Hope: Multilingual Learners and Latinx Leadership in School Turnaround Efforts 109
Debora Saavedra-Winch

SECTION III

LEADERSHIP, POLICY, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

7 Beyond Labels: Building Equitable Excellence in Urban School Turnaround 131
Esrom Pitre

8 Successful Principal Strategies for Urban Schools: A Metasynthesis of Case Studies From 12 Countries 151
Rong Zhang, Jingping Sun, David E. Hardy, and Bob L. Johnson, Jr.

9 Teacher Expectations and African American Males: A Noncognitive Factor Affecting the Learning Experience 187
Brian Keith Williams

10 Empowering Urban K-12 School Turnaround: A Call to Action for Major Research Universities in Large Metropolitan Cities 201
Chance W. Lewis and Debora Saavedra-Winch

Epilogue 227

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Debora Saavedra-Winch is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, specializing in Curriculum and Educational Development with a focus on social studies education, civic engagement, and intercultural pedagogy. She holds a Master's degree in Latin American History and a Post MA Certificate in Qualitative Research from UNC Charlotte, where she also serves as a graduate instructor, researcher, and journal editor. Debora's research centers on how social studies education can foster civic engagement among Latino and Indigenous students. Her work draws from testimonio and decolonial frameworks to explore the intersections of culture, identity, and education. She collaborates with Kuna educators in Panama to document Indigenous pedagogies and advocate for culturally sustaining curriculum reform in both local and international contexts. Through her work, Debora aims to bridge the gap between research and practice, advocating for inclusive, justice-oriented educational spaces that affirm the cultural identities and lived experiences of historically marginalized students and teachers.

Chance W. Lewis is the Carol Grotnes Belk Distinguished Professor of Urban Education and serves as Director of The Urban Education Collaborative at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He completed his PhD at Colorado State University in 2001 and joined the faculty in 2011. He leads the urban concentration of the PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. Dr Lewis' special areas of interests are academic achievement of students of color in K-12 settings, recruitment and retention of Black male teachers and urban education. Dr Lewis has over 100 refereed publications and over $7 million in external research funding. Dr Lewis has been awarded the Texas A&M University, Legacy of Excellence and Equity, Outstanding Research Award (2021), Spencer Foundation Outstanding Mentor Award Winner (2020), Profound Gentlemen Impact on Education Award Winner (2019)and the Harshini de Silva Graduate Mentor Award (2015)at UNC Charlotte for outstanding graduate student mentoring.

This page intentionally left blank

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Nia E. Brown is a graduate of the EdD program (20′) in the Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership at St. John's University. She was also a 2018-2020 University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Barbara Jackson Scholar, 2019–2020 NYU Faculty First-Look Scholar, and a 2019 William L. Boyd Emerging Scholar. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Affairs (12′) from Baruch College-City University of New York and a Master of Science degree in Mathematics Education from St. John's University. Having studied and interned abroad in Ghana, China, and India, her doctoral research study focused on culturally responsive school leadership in response to the changing demographics in US schools. She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses for the City University of New York (CUNY), coached math and science teachers in NY and internationally, and is currently a mathematics educator for NYC Public Schools.

Aminah Crawford serves at Texas A&M University as a research assistant and Program Coordinator, specializing in teacher professional growth and student success pathways. Driven by her own background as a first-generation college graduate, TRIO alumna, and her professional experience as an paraprofessional and AVID tutor, her research evaluates how instructional quality, institutional processes, and educational policy impact the matriculation of underserved students through higher education. Her work examines the historical construction of personhood and highlights the lived experiences of students and teachers of color in urban environments. She has contributed significant research to leading publications such as the *Harvard Educational Review*, *Science Education*, and the *NASPA Journal of First-Generation Student Success.*

Cathryn A. Devereaux is an Assistant Professor of Education at Drew University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses focused on equity and justice in education, advocacy and community partnerships, and

educational inquiry and research. Her research examines Blackgirlhood, urban education, student voice, identity development, liberatory educational practices, and the transformative potential of travel experiences as healing-centered spaces for critical reflection, identity exploration, and endarkened ways of knowing. As an artist-scholar, she employs ethnographic, arts-based, and multimodal methodologies, including ethnodrama and documentary and narrative filmmaking, to illuminate lived experiences and imagine more just educational futures. She is the principal investigator of "The 'I' in Africa," a Spencer Foundation-funded study examining how critical race travel pedagogy in Ghana shapes African-American adolescents' racial and academic identities through student-created short documentaries. Through her scholarship and creative practice, Dr Devereaux centers storytelling as a means of inquiry, meaning-making, and social transformation.

Donna Y. Ford is a Distinguished Professor within the college specializing in special education at The Ohio State University. She is known for her research on gifted and talented education and culturally responsive, multicultural, urban education; specifically on (1) the achievement gap, (2) recruiting and retaining culturally different students into gifted education, (3) multicultural curriculum and instruction, (4) culturally competent teacher training and development, (5) Black racial identity and (6) Black family involvement in children's schooling. She consults with school districts and educational and legal organizations on these topics. Ford has given more than 2,000 presentations and has published more than 370 articles and book chapters; she has authored 15 books. Professor Ford is ranked by EdWeek as one of the top 200 influential scholars in the nation; is ranked as one of the top 2% of scientists in the world by Stanford study; and ranked by Research.com as 2106 in world and 1057 in US. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2669-4162

Stephen D. Hancock is a distinguished educator, scholar, and leader in curriculum studies, leadership, and qualitative research. He teaches qualitative research methods and leadership, supporting students' intellectual and scholarly development. An internationally recognised scholar, he has published widely on educational leadership, curriculum studies, autoethnography, identity, and curriculum trauma, shaping discussions on curriculum, student well-being, and leadership. His work has earned international recognition through lectures, appointments, and awards across Europe, the United Kingdom, and Africa. He also serves as Director of the International Conference on Urban Education and Director of the Center of Excellence on Educational Engagement & Research, where he advances global scholarship, undergraduate research, and international learning opportunities.

David E. Hardy is Associate Dean for Research & Service and Associate Professor in the Higher Education Program in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies at the University of Alabama's College of Education. He has thirty-two years of experience as an educational administrator. His research focuses on community colleges, student transfer pathways, higher education policy, faculty development, ethics in teaching, and student experiences. Dr Hardy has published extensively on topics such as rural community colleges, faculty ethics, and institutional typologies, with work appearing in journals including *New Directions for Community Colleges, Community College Review, Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, Journal of Women and minorities in Science and Engineering, Journal of Student Financial Aid, Enrollment Management Journal: Student Access, Finance and Success in Higher Education,* and the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice.*

Erik M. Hines, PhD, is a Professor of Counseling at George Mason University. Dr Hines prepares graduate students to be counselors in a clinical or school setting. His research agenda revolves around: (a)postsecondary readiness for Black males and other vulnerable populations; (b)academic and career outcomes of Black males; and (c)career exploration for students of color in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). He has secured over $12.5 million dollars in external and internal funding. Additionally, Dr Hines has accumulated over 100 publications. Dr Hines is on the top 200 education scholars in the 2025 RHSU Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings in Education Week. Last, Dr Hines is a proud American Counseling Association (ACA)Fellow, an International Colloquium on Black Males in Education Warrior Awardee, and recipient of the Al Dye Award from the Association for Specialists in Group Work. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6025-0779

Emily Holtz is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at the University of Tennessee—Knoxville. Emily worked as an elementary teacher and literacy coach for over a decade before earning her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on multicultural and urban education from Texas A&M University. Emily's research interests include equity and access within educational programming, the role of power and privilege within the public schools, and the preparation of highly qualified, culturally and linguistically responsive educators. She is published in *Multicultural Education Review, The Teacher Educator, The New Educator, Education and Urban Society*, and several other peer-reviewed journals.

Bob L. Johnson, Jr. is a professor of educational leadership and policy at the University of Alabama. His research interests focus on leadership, leadership development, leader thinking, executive decision making, the politics of education, micro-politics, education policy, the defining features of schools as organizations, and the work of Karl Weick. His theological interests focus on spiritual theology, spiritual formation, leadership for spiritual formation and ethics. His has published in such journals as *Educational Administration Quarterly, Journal of Educational Administration, Journal of School Leadership, Journal of Organization Theory in Education, Education Policy, Pneuma,* and the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology.* For the first 20 years of his career in higher education Bob was professor of educational leadership and policy and director of graduate studies in the College of Education at the University of Utah. For four of these years he was editor of *Educational Administration Quarterly,* the leading academic journal in the field.

Virginia Redwine Johnson is a PhD candidate in Curriculum and Instruction (Urban Education) at Texas A&M University and a former lead principal with two decades of PK–12 teaching and leadership experience. Her research centers on affirming teacher dispositions, culturally inclusive practices, and equity-centered school reform. She is a co-author of Standing on Business: Black Women Educators' Struggles and Triumphs in Academic Settings (*Educational Justice Journal*, 2025), a piece that reflects her commitment to justice-driven leadership and educator preparation. She brings a practitioner-scholar lens to her work, drawing from her experiences in Texas urban and rural school systems to inform research on teacher retention, school reform, and educational equity. Through both research and practice, she aims to cultivate more reflective, relationship-driven, and equity-centered educators prepared to serve diverse learning communities.

Renae D. Mayes, PhD, NCC, is a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Arizona. Mayes's research agenda centers around the creation of Black joy and homeplace for Black students including, Black boys, girls, and gifted Black students with dis/abilities. Mayes' research details the experience of students and families navigating schools, while also providing recommendations for dismantling systems of oppression through policy and antiracist practice. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7999-456X

Desmond McGlone is a doctoral candidate at George Mason University in Mathematics Education Leadership with a secondary specialization in Educational Leadership & Supervision. He currently serves as an experienced mathematics educator and administrator, working to advance equity and excellence in K–12 education. His research and professional practice center on the experiences of Black students and girls in mathematics,

particularly within elite academic settings. Desmond's work emphasizes school reform strategies that expand access to advanced mathematics and STEM pathways, while addressing systemic barriers that perpetuate inequities in urban and independent school contexts. With extensive experience supporting teachers and school leaders, he is dedicated to fostering inclusive learning environments that recognize and nurture the gifts of historically marginalized students in mathematics education.

Tanya J. Middleton, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies, Counselor Education at The Ohio State University. Dr Middleton published book chapters and refereed journal articles on racial battle fatigue and mental health of Black men. She is also the Coordinator and the Director of Field Placement for the Clinical Mental Health Program. Dr Middleton has authored/co-authored book chapters and numerous refereed journal articles on access, equity, and inclusion in counselor education, higher education, gifted and talented education, addictions, social justice, and clinical supervision. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0815-4293

James L. Moore III is the inaugural EHE Distinguished Professor of Urban Education and professor of counselor education at The Ohio State University. He formerly served as inaugural executive director and first director of the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male and has held senior leadership roles including vice provost for diversity and inclusion, chief diversity officer, and associate provost for diversity and inclusion. His scholarship focuses on school counseling, gifted education, urban and higher education, multicultural education and counseling, and STEM education. Moore has authored or edited seven books, produced more than 180 publications, secured nearly $50 million in grants, contracts, and gifts, and delivered over 200 scholarly presentations and lectures worldwide. He is a fellow of the Association for the Advancement of Science, American Educational Research Association, American Counseling Association, and Oxford Symposium in School-Based Family Counseling, and has received awards from major education, counseling, gifted education, and multicultural organizations.

Esrom Pitre serves as District Attendance Intervention Specialist for the St. Landry Parish School Board in Louisiana and is the founder of Educational Koncepts, a school turnaround consulting firm. A former turnaround principal, he led three documented Louisiana high school transformations that produced significant gains in graduation rates, School Performance Scores, attendance outcomes, and campus culture. He has also served as Assistant and Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at multiple universities, and as Coordinator of Educational

Leadership and Coordinator of Principal Interns at two universities. His research agenda centers on transformational leadership in school turnaround, leadership preparation for equity, culturally responsive leadership, special education equity, and attendance intervention systems. His current scholarship examines equity centered leadership practices in high need schools, leadership development pipelines, and the sustainable systems that drive student engagement, accountability, and school improvement.

Miriam Sanders, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Wyoming in the School of Teacher Education. She is a former high school mathematics teacher. Her research focuses on developing and replicating best practices in mathematics education to address inequitable student outcomes.

Jingping Sun is a Professor in Educational Leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy and Technology Studies at the College of Education, University of Alabama. Her research is about educational leadership, policy evaluation and improvement, and research synthesis. Prior to becoming a professor, her leadership and policy experiences at the Ontario Ministry of Education in Canada focused on the large-scale development of school and district leaders. She published reviews of research on transformational school leadership and successful school leadership in Elsevier's International Encyclopedia of Education. She has also published in top-tier journals in educational leadership, including several papers in the leading journal, *Educational Administration Quarterly*. Her co-edited book with Drs Kenneth Leithwood and Katina Pollock, *"How School Leaders Contribute to Student Success: The Four Paths"* has been widely cited and is the 22nd volume of the longest-running book series in educational leadership, Studies in Educational Leadership by Springer.

Stephanie Thomas-Woodard has had an amazing journey in education as a teacher, teacher coach, and teacher educator. As a writer, scholar, and educator, Dr Thomas-Woodard has over 20 years of experience in educating, coaching, and training teachers. Dr Woodard's research has been featured in top journals such as the *Journal of Negro Education*, the *Journal of Multicultural Education*, and the *Journal of African American Males in Education*. She has also co-authored several book chapters and books and is excited to present her latest book entitled *Political, Legislative, and Economic Solutions to Urban Education and the Implications on Teacher Preparation*, released in Spring 2022. Dr Thomas-Woodard combines her years of classroom experience with years of research and collaboration with practitioners around ways to support new teachers and teacher educators. She is an Assistant Professor

and MAT Coordinator at Lenoir-Rhyne University and Assistant Director of The Urban Education Collaborative at UNC Charlotte.

Brian Keith Williams, PhD is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educator Preparation at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. He has a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Urban Literacy from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research focuses on teacher preparation, content area literacy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. He has held leadership positions with Future Teachers of North Carolina, North Carolina's New Teacher Support Program, the North Carolina Association of Colleges for Teacher Educators, Freedom Schools, and the American Educational Research Association. He has worked to advance the educational outcomes and social mobility of students of color within K-12 settings. His scholarship, concentrated on diversity, equity, and inclusion, includes 45 publications, over two million dollars in extramural funding, 63 peer-reviewed conference presentations, and over 50 service commitments at the university, community, and professional levels.

John A. Williams III received his PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Born and raised in East St. Louis, IL, Dr Williams has a distinct focus on establishing affirming practices, policies, and procedures to eradicate exclusionary school disciplinary measures for Black children. Finally, Dr Williams is the Director and Founder of the Urban Lab for Transformative Research and Assessment (ULTRA), an innovative and transformative collective of emerging scholars who support and cultivate research, that investigates solutions to effectively support students, educators, and communities in urban environments.

Rong Zhang earned a PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama. Her research is rooted in educational leadership, successful school leadership, and education policy. Currently, she is involved in the International Successful School Principalship Project, founded by Dr Christopher Day, one of the world's largest projects since 2001. She has contributed to the field through publications in *Educational Administration Quarterly* and other leading academic journals.

This page intentionally left blank

FOREWORD: THE SCHOOLS THAT BUILD US

Debora Saavedra-Winch

I remember the first time someone apologized after I told them where I went to school. It was a casual conversation. A conference. A hallway. A smile that faded too quickly.

"Oh… you went there? I'm sorry."

It wasn't just the words. It was the way they looked at me after. Like they'd just learned something tragic. Like I was a survivor of a place no one expected people to come out of.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

What they didn't know—what people rarely know about schools like mine—is that there was love in those classrooms. Joy, too. And resistance. We learned how to make do with less. We made magic out of scarcity. We learned not just to read books, but to read systems. And more than anything else, we learned to believe in one another when the world didn't.

The truth is that schools are never only what outsiders imagine. A hallway that looks bleak to one person might hold a 100 memories of laughter to another. A test score that looks low to a policymaker might represent a student who stayed up all night caring for siblings but still showed up the next morning. To reduce a school to numbers on a page is to erase the life pulsing through it.

THE STORIES WE CARRY

This book is full of those kinds of stories. They come from educators who returned to the very schools that raised them, determined to give back what was given to them. They come from scholars who carry the weight of inequity and the fire to dismantle it. They come from students whose brilliance has never fit inside test scores.

They come from counselors who know the language of silence, principals who step into chaos with open arms, teachers who refuse to leave when leaving might have been easier, and youth who refuse to be labeled as failures by a system that never saw them fully to begin with. These are not stories of rescue. They are stories of resistance, restoration, and renewal.

BEYOND LABELS

School Turnaround in Large Urban K-12 Metropolitan Areas isn't just a collection of strategies; it's a declaration. A declaration that we've had enough of reform that strips communities of voice. Enough of policy without people. Enough of data without dignity.

When we say "solutions for key stakeholders," we mean solutions rooted in lived experience, in the collective wisdom of educators, families, and students who know these schools from the inside out. We mean solutions that reach beyond labels like "failing" or "at risk," and toward equity and excellence that are sustainable, just, and humanizing.

A LOVE LETTER

And yet this book is also something softer: a love letter. A love letter to every school that's ever been underestimated. To every teacher who stayed when the odds said they shouldn't. To every counselor who carried hope for a child too tired to carry it themselves. To every child who walked through the doors of a "turnaround school" and dared to dream anyway.

It is a love letter to the resilience that cannot be captured on a state report card. To the laughter that erupts in classrooms, others call broken. To the brilliance that grows in soil outsiders deemed barren. To the belief that another way is possible—and that it begins not with policy alone, but with people.

FOR YOU

If you've ever been that child or taught that child, this book is for you. If you've ever had someone apologize when you named your school, this book is for you. If you've ever felt the sting of low expectations, the weight of inequity, or the pressure of systems that were not built with you in mind, this book is for you.

And if you've ever believed—even for a moment—that schools can be more than the labels attached to them, then you already know what this book is about. You know it in your bones.

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION: WHAT WE KNOW IN OUR BONES

Debora Saavedra-Winch

If you ask most people where they learned resilience, they won't name a textbook. They'll tell you about a place. A person. A hallway. A moment.

For many of us, those places were schools—schools others had given up on. The ones with peeling paint, tired teachers, and more security guards than counselors. On paper, they looked like a failure. But paper never tells the whole story.

I remember walking into one of those schools myself. The fluorescent lights flickered overhead, the floor tiles were chipped, and the walls held posters that seemed older than the students who passed them every day. You could almost hear the outside world whispering its judgment: *this school won't make it*. And yet, inside, I witnessed students debate politics with a fire most senators would envy. I saw teachers holding space for grief and laughter in the same hour. I listened to counselors translate silence into meaning, knowing when a quiet child was carrying more than homework in their backpack. That is where resilience lives. Not in glossy reports or strategic plans, but in the hallways of schools everyone else had written off.

THE THIN LINE BETWEEN LABELS AND LIVES

The system calls them turnaround schools, a term born from policy manuals and grant requirements, a promise that if we replaced enough principals, rewrote enough curricula, and raised enough test scores, schools labeled as failing could be saved. But when you walk the halls, you realize how much more is at stake.

To call a school "failing" is not just a label—it is a judgment on a community. It follows children into job interviews and college applications. It

shadows parents at the grocery store when they hear, *Oh, your child goes there?* It lingers in the way a teacher is introduced at family gatherings, as if their very vocation has been diminished by their school's reputation.

And yet, in these same schools, brilliance refuses to be extinguished. A Black girl in an alternative program writes poetry that slices through stereotypes, as Cathryn A. Devereaux and Stephen Hancock remind us. A group of boys, often underestimated, rise to the expectations of a teacher who dares to see them as scholars, not statistics, as Sherrita Woodard shows. A counselor sits with a student on the edge of giving up and says, *You belong here. You are not invisible*—the kind of presence Erik Hines, Donna Ford, Renae Mayes, Tanya Middleton, Desmond McGlone, and James Moore insist schools cannot ignore.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The authors in this volume know these tensions in their bones. They are scholars who taught, teachers who led, and students whose voices echo long after the bell rings.

Chance W. Lewis begins by challenging major research universities to stop standing on the sidelines and instead partner deeply with school districts, arguing that systemic change requires systemic allies. Devereaux and Hancock center the voices of Black girls, revealing how deeply the colonization of the mind can restrict imagination—and how urgent it is to create spaces where students can dream without restraint. Jessica Bryan and her colleagues describe a principal in southeast Texas who redefined discipline not as exclusion but as relationship-building, reshaping the culture of an entire school.

We also hear from Hines, Ford, Mayes, Middleton, McGlone, and Moore, who highlight the overlooked role of school counselors, whose culturally responsive practices often determine whether students not only survive but thrive. William Owusu-Agyeman and colleagues then take us beyond US borders, synthesizing lessons from 12 countries, showing that while contexts vary, the work of visionary leadership is universal. Keith Wright compels us to confront how teacher expectations shape the trajectories of African American males, urging educators to see students not as problems but as scholars with limitless potential. Nia Brown and Stephen Hancock push us to imagine the implications of artificial intelligence in schools, warning that without equity, new technologies could widen divides even as they promise innovation. And finally, I draw from my own research to argue that dual language and intercultural education are not supplemental but central to justice-centered turnaround, where bilingualism is recognized as a strength and cultural identity as a cornerstone.

FROM SAVING TO RESTORING

Too many reform efforts start with the idea of *saving*—saving children from their families, saving schools from themselves. But this language is heavy with deficit thinking. It suggests that something essential is missing, when in fact what is missing is recognition.

This book begins from another truth: students are not broken. Communities are not empty. Culture is not an obstacle. What has been stolen—through racism, neglect, underfunding, and exclusion—can be restored.

Restoration looks like teachers who listen more than they lecture. It looks like parents treated not as problems but as partners. It looks like counselors who honor silence as deeply as speech. It looks like schools that hang murals of joy alongside charts of progress. Turnaround, then, is less about flipping a switch and more about turning toward one another.

WHAT WE KNOW IN OUR BONES

Every contributor to this book knows what it feels like to have a school dismissed as "not enough"—and yet to see with their own eyes that the opposite is true. We know in our bones that the measure of a school cannot be captured in a single test score, nor can the worth of a child be reduced to a data point.

What we know in our bones is that schools are sacred spaces of possibility. Transformation happens not in spreadsheets but in the quiet choices of educators who refuse to give up, in the loud laughter of students who dare to belong, in the collective vision of communities that have been told too many times to wait their turn.

This book is about that knowing. It is about remembering what should never have been taken: dignity, joy, language, identity, and community. It is about the long, unfinished work of restoring schools not just to functionality but to wholeness. And it is about a question that echoes in every hallway, whispered by students, teachers, and families alike: *What do we owe one another?* Because in the end, turning around schools is not about turning away from failure. It is about turning toward each other.

This page intentionally left blank

SECTION I

FOUNDATIONS OF TURNAROUND AND EQUITY

This page intentionally left blank

CHAPTER 1

DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO WORK IN TURNAROUND SCHOOLS[1]

Erik M. Hines
George Mason University, USA

Donna Y. Ford
The Ohio State University, USA

Renae D. Mayes
University of Arizona, USA

Tanya J. Middleton
The Ohio State University, USA

Desmond McGlone
George Mason University, USA

James L. Moore III
The Ohio State University, USA

School Turnaround in Large Urban K-12 Metropolitan Areas, pages 3–17
© 2027 Erik M. Hines, Donna Y. Ford, Renae D. Mayes, Tanya J. Middleton, Desmond McGlone and James L. Moore III
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited
doi:10.1108/978-1-80791-526-120261001

ABSTRACT

The conversation of turnaround schools often involves best practices for teachers and administrators in order to produce effective student outcomes, in particular for Black and other marginalized students (Hines et al., 2020). The discussion is centered around closing opportunity gaps, preparing students for academic success, and advocating for resources to improve the school culture/climate. However, more research is needed on the role of preparing school counselors who are culturally responsive to the needs of students in turnaround schools and the communities they serve given that school counselors contribute to improve student achievement. This chapter will focus on how school counselor training programs, as well as P-12 professional development can prepare culturally responsive school counselors to work in turnaround schools to aid in producing positive student outcomes and addressing needed school-wide challenges. Recommendations for research, practice, and policy will be provided.

Keywords: Turnaround schools; culturally responsive; school counselors; opportunity gaps; Black students

DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO WORK IN TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Turnaround schools are low-performing schools that are expected to have a quick and expedient transformation toward the academic improvement of students (Herman et al., 2008; Hines et al., 2020; Public Impact for the Center on Innovation & Improvement, 2007; Rhim & Redding, 2014). Specifically, turnaround schools are focused on immediate gains based on data-driven reforms and interventions to address the low performance that has been sustained over time (Herman, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

Teachers and administrators are rightfully the focused professionals designated to transform failing and under-performing schools. However, school counselors are in a position to address many of the issues that embody a turnaround school. Specifically, school counselors are trained to address the academic concerns, mental health and wellness, and preparing students for postsecondary opportunities. Moreover, they are trained with counseling skills, awareness of student needs, and the knowledge to address psychological and social issues that often contribute to the underperformance of students, particularly those who are Black.

In the following chapter, we present an overview of turnaround schools, with concentrated attention to school counselors. Again, these school professionals have been a neglected resource in scholarship in such schools, despite being a vital part of student success. Moreover, we discuss why it is important to have school counselors who are culturally responsive to the

needs and issues of Black students. We share the Hines et al. (in press) culturally responsive Bronfenbrenner-Boykin model which we adopt herein for school counselors to use with Black students who attend turnaround school.

SCHOOL TURNAROUND

In recent years, educational reform has focused significantly on school turnaround, where efforts are targeted on "rapid and significant improvement in the achievement in low-performing schools" (Peck & Reitzug, 2014, p. 9). As such, school turnaround typically occurs in a two to three-year window, where substantial gains become apparent followed by sustainable and continuous improvement (Calkins et al., 2007; Herman et al., 2008). Through the school turnaround process, transformations in organizational structure (e.g., administration and school staff) are permissible as a part of shifting school culture, removing systemic barriers, and promoting student success (Herman, 2012; Herman et al., 2008). Further, this process requires data-driven decision making in addition to evidenced-informed practices to support academic improvement and demonstrate effectiveness.

The nature and background of turnaround schools have historically utilized organizational, leadership, and change theories as the basis of their functioning (Murphy, 2009). The function of these business-based theories applied in education practitioner spaces served to rapidly increase the overall improvement of failing schools—especially in urban areas. Thus, turnaround schools were actually the objects of school reform policy (Peck & Reitzug, 2014) birthed from the accountability measures of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002. Peck and Reitzug argued that the nature of quantitative measurement and assessment culture from NCLB allured and welcomed the application of business practice and theory in the education space (Peck & Reitzug, 2014, p. 8). Moreover, during the Obama administration, the emergence of school reform was a novel idea that former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan set into motion by "… the administration's approach to education reform when he announced a US $3.5 billion federal Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) program to 'turn around' the persistently lowest-performing schools" (Peck & Reitzug, 2014) Thus, during this emergence, the school reform process for transforming a consistently low-performing school took the form of the turnaround model. This model specifically involved (and required) replacing the principal, at least 50% of the staff, and implementing a new instructional program (Peck & Reitzug, 2014, p. 8) if school districts wanted to apply and potentially receive grant funding. Thus, a typical turnaround school is one that has undergone iterations (sometimes many) of replacing leadership, staff, and instructional programming for the sake of increased funding and resources as granted by the federal government.

Turnaround schools are characterized by low achievement and typically enroll high concentrations of students from low-income backgrounds, which often indicate substantial barriers to educational opportunities like overcrowded classrooms, teachers with less experience, challenging school climates, and higher drop-out rates (Calkins et al., 2007). These schools are often located in urban environments where resources and supports for staff and students may be limited.

Demographics of Turnaround Schools

Turnaround schools comprise students from low-income backgrounds who must deal with educational and non-educational barriers that impede success (Calkins et al., 2007). These schools are consistently low performing, meaning more than 20% of the student population fails to meet state requirements (Herman, 2012). There is also a propensity for students to: (a) have higher special education needs; (b) have experienced or witnessed violence; (c) require extensive academic remediation; and (d) have higher prevalence rates of mental health issues (Kutash et al., 2010). Students behind other students in reading (Haycock, 2001) and are prone to have higher absenteeism, behavioral challenges, and lower parent involvement (Calkins et al.). Further, these schools experience higher student transition (school changing), along with greater teacher turnover, higher percentages of new and under-prepared teachers, and a prevailing culture of low expectations for achievement. All of this contributes to economic and racial achievement gaps.

Many of these schools exist in urban environments which are proxies for schools with cultures that center Black, Latinx, and immigrant population identity markers. Thus, as these markers reflect historically marginalized American populations, turnaround schools function to serve students who must continually embrace enumerable educational inequities in both policy and practice (such as the aforementioned teacher turnover rates and the over-labeling and placement of students as needing special education services) in a myriad of social issue areas (Banks, 2017; Hernandez-Saca & Cannon, 2019).

THE NEED FOR AND ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS

The need for more school counselors is dire across the nation. In far too many schools there is a shortage of school counselors with the counselor-to-student ratio being largest in urban settings. Schools are experiencing an ongoing nationwide school counselor shortage. Per the Solis (2024):

> Forty-eight states are above the recommended students to school counselor ratio of 250:1. Recognizing the crucial services school counselors provide, the ASCA recommends that for every 250 students there is at least one school counselor. However, according to recent research by ASCA, the national average ratio is 385-to-1. (https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/schools-need-more-counselors).

Further, public schools across the nation are still nowhere near the desired ratio. Data from the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reveals that 17% of high schools do not have a school counselor, amounting to 653,700 high school students without this critical service (https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-educational-opportunities-report.pdf).

In consideration of the school-wide transformation related to school turnaround, there is limited discussion of the role of professional school counselors. However, their roles can be critical in helping to bring a whole child focus with the great emphasis on student achievement in turnaround schools (Ford et al., 2023). Toward that end, professional school counselors work in P-12 schools as leaders, change agents, and student advocates across academic, socioemotional, and career development (American School Counseling Association [ASCA], 2019; Dekruyf et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2021). School counselors must be collaborative with students, families, community members, and school staff in creating an inclusive, antiracist, culturally responsive school environment to support holistic growth of *all* students (ASCA; Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022). As such, school counselors provide preventative and responsive services directly to students, typically as a part of a multi-tiered systems of support frameworks that are implemented in schools (Edirmanasinghe et al.). Additionally, professional school counselors engage in system advocacy to remove barriers that impede student success (ASCA). For these reasons, it is essential that they be included in all school improvement efforts.

This professional call in school counseling requires a lens and framework that not only understands individual student needs, but also sees the ways that school practices and policies harm students, especially those with minoritized identities who have already been made vulnerable by U.S. society writ large. School counseling practice, thus, engages in antiracist actions to dismantle these policies and practices while building new systems and structures that love and protect students (Mayes & Byrd, 2022). It should be noted that as school counselors are dismantling oppressive systems, they are simultaneously working *with* students and families to create what is needed rather than simply implementing other supports of their choosing. In this way, school counselors are centering the voice of students and families who are experts in what they need.

School Counselors in the School Turnaround Process

Hines et al. (2020) have characterized the role of school counselors in the turnaround process as involving five distinct characteristics in alignment with transformed school counseling. These include leadership, advocacy and systemic change, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and assessment and use of data. In discussion of such, Hines et al. maintained that to fulfill this role in turnaround schools, school counselors must have a strong relationship with school principals. Mayes et al. (2018) found that school counselors are engaged in the school turnaround process in a variety of different ways. First, school counselors view school turnaround as an opportunity to grow the comprehensive school counseling program to be in greater alignment with the ASCA National Model through data-driven practices. Through this process, school counselors readily engaged in leadership practices to enhance the school counseling program and build greater relationships with educational stakeholders including staff, administrators, families, and community members (Ford et al., 2023; Mayes et al., 2018). However, efforts toward implementing this more transformed school counseling role in turnaround schools can be heavily influenced by school principals.

BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the environment can shape a child's development. Five systems compose his Ecological Systems Theory, as depicted in Fig. 1.1. Black students interacting with their families and

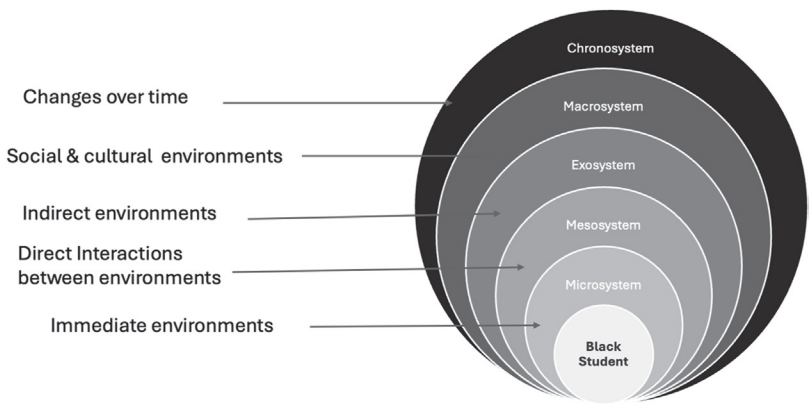


Fig. 1.1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model.