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NARROWING ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS OF HIGH SCHOOL AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC STUDENTS: POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Limaris Pueyo

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NARROWING ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS OF HIGH SCHOOL
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC STUDENTS:
POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Limaris Pueyo

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

June, 2019

Document Origination Statement Digital Commons @ NLU

This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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A THREE PART DISSERTATION:

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A HIGH SCHOOL INTERVENTION PROGRAM
DURING LUNCH PERIODS: A PROGRAM EVALUATION

EXPANDING AP ENROLLMENT FOR HISPANIC AND AFRICAN AMERICAN
STUDENTS: CHANGE LEADERSHIP PLAN

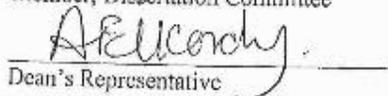
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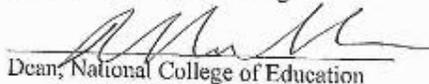
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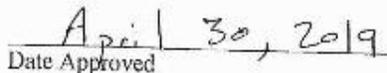

Chair, Dissertation Committee


Member, Dissertation Committee


Dean's Representative


Director, EDL Doctoral Program


Dean, National College of Education


Date Approved

ABSTRACT

School districts have focused reform efforts on increasing the participation of African American, Hispanic, and low-income students in advanced courses to narrow achievement and attainment gaps. Suburban School District adopted these areas in its strategic plan and invested significant resources to address patterns of achievement and course enrollment of these students. This study examined the district's policy and practices that impact these students' participation in Advanced Placement courses. Based on its findings, this study recommends revisions to school board policy regarding gifted programs and includes disaggregated metrics for the reporting of board goals based on race and socioeconomic status. The goal is to establish transparency and increase the enrollment and academic performance of low-income, African American, and Hispanic students in advanced programs.

PREFACE

Suburban School District is a pseudonym for a high school district committed to ensuring all students experience academic success regardless of their racial or economic backgrounds. I have served as an administrator in this school district for over seven years and as an advocate for African American and Hispanic students through participation in the district Equity and Inclusion Committee. Through this work, I was able to examine district policies that directly impacted access to advanced programs and to make recommendations to the school district that would positively impact Hispanic and African American students' access to advanced coursework. The purpose of this study was to examine how the district's policies supported the increased participation of these students in advanced courses, an endeavor taken on by the district in 2015 and solidified with a partnership with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS). Furthermore, I recommended that the school district revise policy 6:190, *Programs for the Gifted Policy*, to include language that clearly states the districts' intentions to support African American and Hispanic students and their parents through resource commitments. I also recommended the reporting of student achievement data to the school board by race and socioeconomic status. These recommendations were aimed at increasing the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students and ensuring they have access to a curriculum that will challenge them to the fullest of their academic potential. I highlighted how these board policy revisions and the reporting of data are necessary to ensure that traditionally marginalized groups of students have full access to challenging academic courses and receive the appropriate supports they need to be successful.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

This proposed policy addresses the issue of African American, Hispanic, and low-income students' access to accelerated and gifted programming in the Suburban School District (pseudonym). The vision of the district is to provide all students, regardless of race and socioeconomic background, an appropriately challenging and equitable educational experience that will prepare them for college and the workforce. However, to meet that vision, the district must understand and address the barriers students of color and low-income students face in accessing accelerated and gifted curriculum. This paper provides an example of a local district-level policy that aligns with district goals and seeks to provide needed revision to previous district policies as a result of demographic changes and new data analysis. Furthermore, the proposed policy aligns with a new Illinois education law, the Accelerated Placement Act, which was put into place because of the recognition of the need for districts to be proactive in providing equal access to accelerated programming. In this section, I describe the Illinois state context first, and then I provide a detailed illustration of the local district's current policies. I then discuss three specific issues within the district that necessitate a need for updating the existing policy. I end this introduction by outlining the policy I propose that grows directly out of the current district context and aligns with state policy and local district structures. Following this discussion of the context of the proposed policy and introduction of the policy, I provide a detailed analysis of the need for the policy, more detail about the policy, a policy argument, an implementation plan, an assessment plan, and an impact statement.

Illinois State Policy: Accelerated Placement Act

Many school districts across the nation allocate significant resources to help students who are not meeting academic standards. However, according to Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, & Olszewski-Kubilius (2016), new research suggests that districts fail to adequately invest in their gifted and enrichment programs. In an effort to address this concern, effective July 1, 2018, Illinois Public Act 100-0421, short named, the “Accelerated Placement Act,” established an acceleration policy intended to “to provide encouragement, assistance, and guidance to school districts . . . for gifted and talented children and children eligible for accelerated placement” (Accelerated Placement Act, PA 100-0421, Art. 14A-15).

The Accelerated Placement Act amended Article 14A of the School Code, adding new provisions for accelerated placement. The act defines accelerated placement as “placement in an educational setting with curriculum usually reserved for children who are older or in higher grades” (Accelerated Placement Act, PA 100-0421, Art. 14A-17). The act requires that all school districts adopt a policy that allows for accelerated placement. The policy must allow open participation in accelerated programs for students who demonstrate high ability or may benefit from the program. In addition, school districts must form an acceleration committee including multiple individuals from the school and local community who are aware of the student’s academic strengths, including the student’s parents. The acceleration committee must use a process that incorporates multiple, valid, reliable indicators for determining if students should be accelerated. The act also mandates procedures for notifying parents and the community of accelerated placement programs along with the processes used to identify students. Districts are also

required to provide in writing to students and parents the details of the accelerated program and available supports. Last, the act authorizes the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to adopt procedures for collecting data from school districts on their accelerated programs.

This act also intends to ensure that students from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds have access to participating in accelerated programs so that they can perform to their maximum potential. According to Steenbergen-Hu et al. (2016), acceleration could increase academic achievement in school systems across the United States and significantly impact millions of students. The authors stressed that minority students and those from low-income households greatly benefit from accelerated programs because they serve as a step toward gaining access to post-secondary education and graduating college. Considering the state-level Accelerated Placement Act and research findings about the impact of acceleration on minority and low-income students, it is vital to examine the current policies of SSD in order understand what is working and what needs to be done to ensure that minority and low-income students have equitable access to accelerated programs.

Local Context: SSD's Equity and Inclusion Policies

The mission of SSD is to foster a community committed to inspiring and empowering all learners to succeed. To achieve this mission, the district adopted seven board goals with indicators of success during the 2018–2019 school year that are measured annually and are a part of the district's strategic plan. The seven board goals are: (a) 94% of students will pass all of their 1st semester classes; (b) 75% of students will earn a composite score of 1010 or higher on the SAT; (c) 80% of juniors will be

enrolled in Algebra II with Trigonometry (or more advanced math); (d) 80% of juniors will be enrolled in physics (or more advanced science); (e) 60% of seniors will pass one or more AP exams during their four years; (f) 80% of students will be engaged in athletics or activities outside of the classroom; and (g) to maintain or exceed the ISBE bar of 180 days cash on hand.

These board goals are directly tied to six different work plan areas that detail beliefs and convictions, objectives, vital behaviors, and process goals that guide the work to achieve the board goals. During the 2018–2019 school year, there were six work plan areas: (a) Curriculum Alignment & Student Preparation; (b) Assessment Literacy, (c) Response to Intervention; (d) Equity & Inclusion, formerly known as Minority Student Achievement Committee (MSAC); (e) Instructional Technology; and (f) Student Engagement. These work plan areas were created to provide focus and monitoring for the district to help it meet its board goals. These work plans are divided into six different committees comprised of school and district-level administrators, and each committee has a different focus tied to board goals.

The Equity and Inclusion work plan area solely focused on the performance of Hispanic and African American students. The beliefs and convictions of the 2018–2019 Equity and Inclusion work plan area included a commitment to eliminating the racial achievement disparities through courageous conversations, embracing a growth mindset, encouraging all students to “level up” to more challenging coursework in an area of interest, and having a staff that reflected the diversity of school. The objectives of this work plan area include increasing African American and Hispanic participation in the Advanced Placement program, co-curricular activities, and mentoring and leadership

programs. The objectives also call for increasing the passing rates, enlarging enrollment in physics and Algebra II by junior year, hiring minorities in the administrative and teaching staff, developing multi-tiered options for African American and Hispanic family engagement within the school community, and preparing all African American and Hispanic students to be college and or career ready upon graduation.

The Equity and Inclusion work area includes a metric aligned to two of the board goals that are specific for Hispanic and African American students by fall 2018–2019, 80% of African American and Hispanic juniors will enroll in Algebra II with Trigonometry or higher course in mathematics and physics or higher course in science. The work area includes a secondary goal to increase the passing rate of Hispanic and African American students by 5% by the end of the 2018–2019 school year, toward the goal of reaching at least 94% to close the achievement gap. These two goals are specific to minority students and are necessary to create a more equitable learning environment for students of color. The next section highlights some of the district’s policy issues that need revision and expansion.

Local Policy: Problematic Issues with SSD’s Policy on Programs for the Gifted

There are several issues within SSD that need to be examined and ameliorated with updated policies: the lack of specific focus on socioeconomic status (SES) and race in current policy, changing demographics, participation patterns in advanced placement, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Lack of Focus on SES and Race

To begin with, the SSD’s board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, has not explicitly specified how it will ensure minority and low-income students’ access to gifted

and accelerated programs. The district's *Programs for the Gifted* policy, originally adopted in 1999 and last revised in 2006, states that all gifted and talented students, if resources are available, can participate in appropriate educational programs. The policy states that the district will provide gifted programs that are responsive to the needs of the community and follow Section 14A-30 of the school code. The policy tangentially addresses minority students by including a reference to federally recognized protected categories, one of which is race. Specifically, the policy states that it is prohibited to limit the participation of students in these programs based on race, religion, sex, disability, or any factor other than the student's identification as being gifted or talented. Although board policy 6:130 complied with the revised Illinois School Code Article 14A, it did not provide language to remedy the fact that minority and low-income students were consistently underrepresented in SSD's gifted programming.

Changing Demographics

The backgrounds of students in SSD have changed over the past 13 years. The number of low-income students has increased dramatically; the racial demographics of minority students have also changed, which makes it even more vital to ensure socioeconomic and racial equity in access to gifted programming. The district experienced significant demographic changes since the policy was last revised in 2006. In that year, the district's low-income enrollment was 12.8% and by 2016, the enrollment rate for low-income students more than doubled to 33.8%. Over the five-year span from 2013–2017, there were slight shifts in the racial demographics of White, Asian, and Hispanic groups in Suburban School District. Over this five year period, the enrollment of White students decreased from 55% in 2013 to 50% in 2017, while the enrollment of

Hispanic students increased from 21% to 23%, the enrollment of Asian students increased from 14% to 15%, and the African American student population remained the same at 8%. During the years 2013–2015, the district’s low-income population increased from 32% to 34%.

Advanced Placement Participation Patterns

The diversity of the district’s student population and its demographic changes has not been reflected in participation rates in the district’s advanced placement coursework. The College Board’s Advanced Placement (AP) courses are considered some of the most challenging and rigorous courses available to students at SSD. The AP program at SSD has significantly expanded. In 2007, the student enrollment was 8,971 and of those students, 1,217 had taken at least one AP exam; in 2016, the enrollment was 8,150, and 2,438 students took at least one AP exam, which was a 123% increase. Although, the program has significantly grown, the number of low-income, African American, and Hispanic students who participate in the program is limited when compared to White and Asian student participation. As a result, Suburban School District’s 6:130 board policy should not only be revised to address concerns of equity and access, but also revised to reflect the current needs of its student populations.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection and analysis procedures need to be scrutinized. The administrators of the four Suburban School District high schools annually present attainment data relative to the board goals to school board members and discuss the strategies implemented at each school to meet the metric of the goals. The data presented to the school board members focus on the district’s entire student population, as written in the

board goals. For example, SSD’s board goal for the passing rate by 2017–2018 was to have 94% of all students pass their first semester courses. Figure 1 displays the school-wide data indicated as “all” for the passing rate at Suburban North High School, one of four high schools in the district, from the 2012–2013 through 2016–2017 school years, as reported to the school board in October 2017. The problem with the data in Figure 1 is that these data mainly represent the achievement of two student racial groups, White and Asian students. African American, Hispanic, and low-income students consistently failed to meet the goal, which means their data were not reported. The data reported in Figure 1 fail to reveal important historical information on the achievement gaps that exist for low-income and minority students and spark important conversations about the role of race and socioeconomic status in the school and the district.

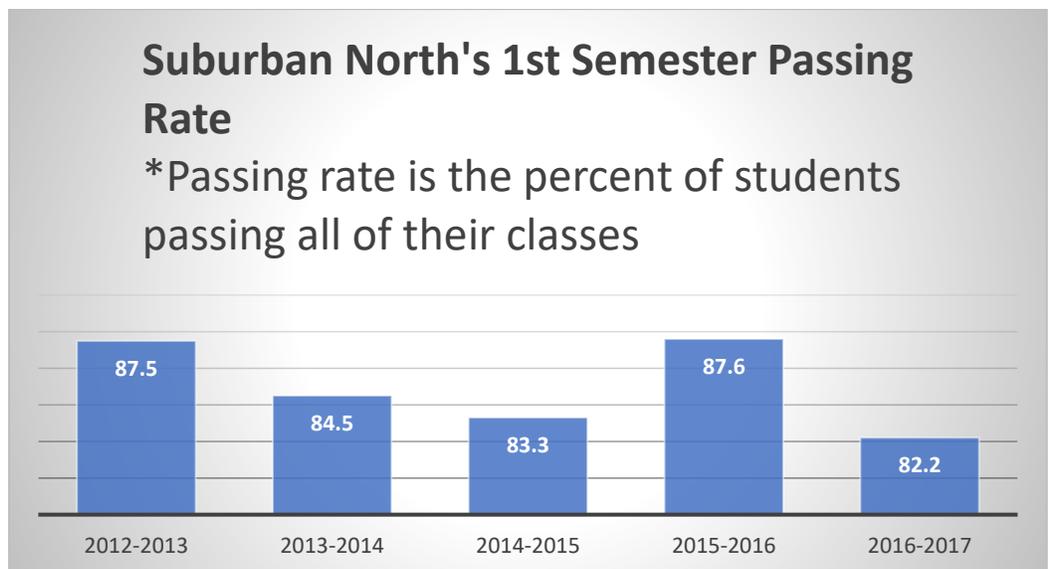


Figure 1. Suburban North semester 1 passing rate: 2012–2017.

In comparison, if we analyze the passing rate by race for students at Suburban North, from 2012–2013 through 2016–2017 (see Figure 2), the consistent academic underperformance of African American, Hispanic, and low-income students when compared to the entire school population, “all” is visible. While the data presented in Figure 1 indicate that 82% to 87% of White and Asian students at Suburban North over a five-year period passed all of their first semester classes, suggesting a relatively high-achieving school district, this was not true for all racial groups as Figure 2 shows. Clearly, the reporting of disaggregated data based on race and socioeconomic status is detrimental for monitoring the achievement gaps and educating stakeholders on the academic attainments of all the students at Suburban School District. Given these data, I recommended that the district revise its board goals to include data measures for Hispanic, African American, and low-income students so that these data are collected and constantly monitored and reviewed against the school board’s goals. This, in turn, will lead to in-depth reporting to the school board that highlights progress or areas where growth is needed to narrow achievement gaps.

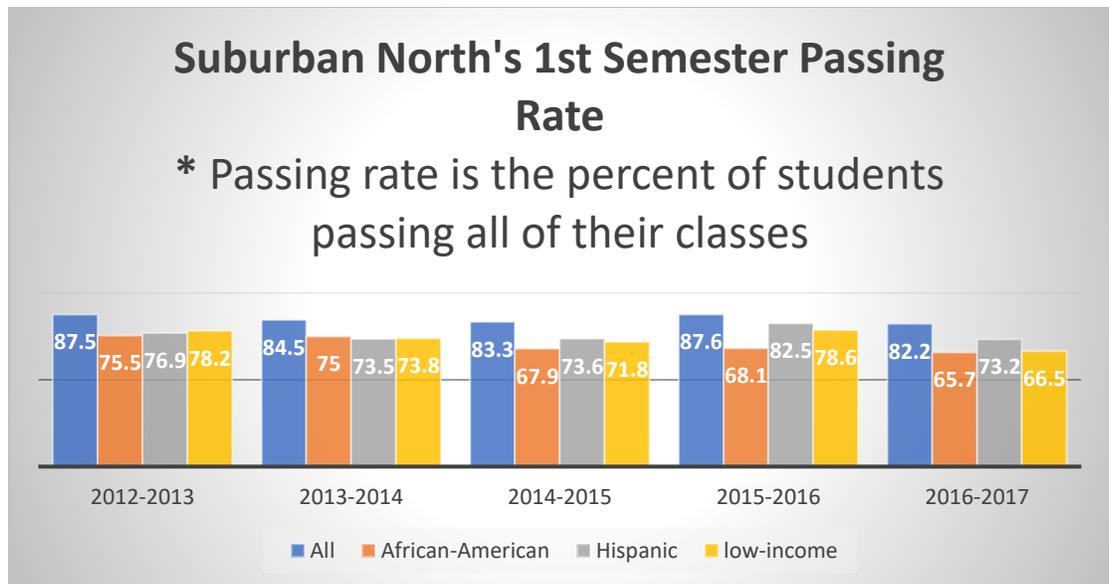


Figure 2. Suburban North semester 1 passing rate by race: 2012–2017.

Similarly, when the two current district board goals of reaching 80% student enrollment in Algebra II with Trigonometry or higher math course and physics or higher science course by junior year by race are examined, participation gaps for Hispanic and African American students are evident. While several schools met and even surpassed their goal for students enrolled in either Algebra II with Trigonometry or physics or higher science course, not one of the four schools met this target for its African American and Hispanic students. For example, data from 2017–2018 for Suburban East show that 80% of students were enrolled in Algebra II with Trigonometry or higher math course, but only 44% of African American and 59% of Hispanic students were enrolled in advanced math courses. At Suburban South, 81% of students were enrolled in physics or higher science course, but only 41% of African American and 68% of Hispanics participated in advanced science courses. Suburban West had 87% of students enrolled in physics or higher science course, but only 53% of African American and 61% Hispanic students participated in advanced science courses.

It is clear from these data that African American and Hispanic students are not participating in courses considered rigorous by the district and important for students to enroll in to be college and career ready at the same rate as White and Asian students. This negatively impacts the school culture and creates inequitable learning that can negatively affect the academic performance of students of color. Shifting to the reporting of data disaggregated by race allows SSD schools to become more transparent and focus on strategies to close achievement gaps because these gaps will be exposed in the reporting of data. The next section of this paper focuses on the examination of the educational, economic, social, political and moral and ethical contexts that support the policy changes advocated in this paper for the Suburban School District.

Recommended Policy

The policy recommended in this section is aligned with Illinois state policy, previous district policies, and district goals. The goal of the policy is to explicitly address the four key issues outlined in the previous section: (a) the absence of specific focus on SES and race in current policy, (b) changing demographics, (c) participation patterns in advanced placement, and (d) data collection/analysis procedures.

I recommend that SSD revise board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*. First, this revised policy should state that it is the intention of the SSD to use multiple measures to identify all students who are academically capable of taking advanced courses. This process should specifically target low-income, African American, and Hispanic students in an effort to increase their participation in advanced courses and reduce the enrollment gaps for these traditionally underrepresented students. In addition, the revised policy should state that SSD will appropriately allocate available resources to provide all

students, including low-income, African American, and Hispanic students, with appropriate academic and social-emotional supports so they can experience success in advanced courses. To this end, strategies such as targeted outreach will be provided to academically capable African American, Hispanic, and low-income students (and their families) who are identified for participation in Advanced Placement and Honors courses. The purpose of the targeted outreach is to inform and educate students and families on the various advanced programs and courses offered in the district, the benefits of participating in these programs and/or courses, and the resources and supports available to students in these programs or courses.

The recommended revisions to Suburban School District's board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, align with two of the Equity and Inclusion work plan objectives, increasing participation rates in Advanced Placement courses for Hispanic and African American students and increasing the participation of Hispanic and African Americans in physics and Algebra II with Trigonometry. The revised language will convert these two objectives into board policies and will stipulate a commitment of resources to achieving them.

I additionally recommend that SSD revise its student achievement goals in each area (first semester passing rate, participation in algebra or another more advanced math course, participation in physics or another more advanced science course, and SAT or ACT attainment) to include specific metrics for Hispanic, African American, and low-income students, as modeled by the Equity and Inclusion goals previously mentioned. The suggested student achievement board goals for Suburban School District are:

- District-wide, we expect 94% of students to pass their first semester classes, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 94% goal.
- We expect 75% of our students to earn a college and career ready score on the SAT or ACT (score of 1010 on the SAT or 20 on the ACT), and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 75% goal.
- We are committed to encouraging students to take rigorous courses and expect 80% of student to enroll in Algebra II with Trigonometry or another higher math course by junior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 80% goal.
- We are committed to encouraging students to take rigorous courses and expect 80% of student to enroll in physics or another higher science course by junior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 80% goal.
- We are committed to challenging students to take rigorous coursework and expect 60% of students to pass (score of 3 or higher) one or more AP exams by the end of senior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps

for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 60% goal.

The purpose of these recommendations is to intentionally maintain at the forefront, the academic progress of Hispanic, African American, and low-income students, and to call for the adoption of board metrics that include race and socioeconomic status. These revised board goals support one of SSD's beliefs and convictions approved by the school board: "we are committed to closing achievement gaps of all of our students."

To implement this policy, it is recommended that Suburban School District amend board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, to include the following commitments:

- a commitment to identifying all academically capable students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who have been traditionally underrepresented, to enroll in advanced courses using multiple measures;
- a commitment to allocating available resources to provide all students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports needed to be successful in advanced courses;
- a commitment to closing achievement and enrollment gaps between African American, Hispanic, and low-income students when compared to White and Asian students in advanced courses;
- a commitment to providing African American, Hispanic, and low-income students and their families with targeted outreach to educate them on

advanced course offerings, the benefits of enrollment, and the available supports.

I believe these changes will further help to solidify SSD's and the school board's commitment to closing the achievement gaps of all students. The next section examines why these policy changes are needed in SSD to raise academic achievement for all students.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

This section analyses the historical problem faced in the American school system of limited participation of low-income, Hispanic, and African American students in advanced and gifted programs from educational, economic, social, political, and moral and ethical perspectives. A rationale is provided for the need to revise the current district policies to ensure all students have equitable learning opportunities.

Educational Analysis

It is vital to challenge students with high abilities through accelerated programs so that they can continue to progress in school. According to the Work group on Acceleration (2009), many high-achieving students were not being academically challenged in schools, and large numbers of states and school districts lacked formal policies that addressed intentions to accelerate students or an outline of procedures. The absence of such policies allowed for inconsistent practices that could discourage acceleration. Additionally, acceleration policies and programs are needed in districts and schools because they serve as effective and validated intervention methods for advanced students (Work Group on Acceleration, 2009). Clearly, school districts need effective policies that state the rationale for advancing students and include procedures for advancing gifted and talented students.

Overview and Benefits of Advanced Placement

SSD's accelerated program consists of the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program. The AP program allows participants to take college level coursework while in high school, and students can potentially earn college credit and/or placement depending on their performance on the AP end-of-course exam.

According to College Board Research Reports, students who score a 3 or higher on the AP Exam experience better outcomes in college courses (College Board, 2015). *The 10th Annual AP Report to the Nation* (College Board, 2014) highlights that students who take an AP Exam and earn a 3 or higher, when compared to their matched peers, have higher Grade Point Averages (GPA's) in college. In addition, they perform better in college introductory courses taken later in the same discipline than non-AP students, enroll in more college coursework in the same discipline, are more likely to graduate within five years, and have higher graduation rates. The National Center for Educational Accountability reported supporting findings based on data from Texas schools. The Center's data show that students who scored less than 3 on AP examinations in high school were twice as likely to graduate from college within five years as were students who had not taken an AP course (Mathews, 2004). These results confirm earlier findings by Adelman (1999) of a relationship between AP course taking and bachelor's degree completion.

The significant implications for students who enroll in AP courses in high school are important considerations for students, parents, and educators. This is especially true for Hispanic and African American students given they experience lower rates of college graduation. Across the country, 54.8% of students who began any type of college or university in fall 2010 (two- and four-year institutions) completed a degree or certificate within six years. A breakdown of these data by race and ethnicity reveals Asian and White students had higher completion rates (63.2% and 62.0%, respectively) than Hispanic and African American students (45.8% and 38.0%, respectively). These rates included students who graduated after a transfer and both-full time and part-time students

(Shapiro et al., 2017). If we only examine data from four-year public institutions, African American students had the lowest six-year completion rate (45.9%). The completion rate of Hispanic students was almost 10 percentage points greater than that of African American students (55.0%). Over two-thirds of White and Asian students completed a degree within the same period (67.2% and 71.7%, respectively). Nationally, 62.4% of students finished a degree from a four-year institution within six years (Shapiro et al., 2017). These data highlight the need to provide students of color with an advanced curriculum in high school that can directly impact their success in college, such as Advanced Placement.

The recommendations I make for revisions of board policy 6:190, *Programs for the Gifted*, propose a mandate for the adoption of practices that have the potential to expose capable African American, Hispanic, and low-income students to Advanced Placement courses so as to ensure they are academically prepared for post-secondary education. This policy can have far reaching effects and result in more students of color enrolling and graduating from college because they were appropriately prepared for college through participation in Advanced Placement courses.

Underrepresentation in AP

According to Klopfenstein (2004), minority and low-income students have historically been underrepresented in AP course enrollments in schools throughout the nation when compared to White, Asian, and middle-class students. This disparity can be attributed to the racial and class barriers experienced by minority and low-income students that serve to limit their opportunities to participate in AP programs. Klopfenstein (2004) suggested that the lack of parental higher education attainment and inexperience

navigating higher education, and the lack of academic role models in the household, coupled with poor academic history and limited or unrealistic expectations about college are contributing factors that reduce the likelihood the student will pursue a college curriculum like AP. According to research conducted by Theokas and Saaris (2013), over half a million low-income students and students of color are being left out from participating in advanced courses like AP and those offered in International Baccalaureate programs. Theokas & Saaris (2013), also pointed out that

adding more than half a million low-income, American-Indian, black, and Hispanic students to AP programs may raise concerns. Some fear, for instance, that course content may be watered down and harm students who are “truly ready” for the rigorous work. Such sentiments are based on the common misperception that low AP participation rates among poor students and students of color simply reflect a lack of AP readiness—that these gaps in enrollment represent gaps in preparation and achievement. Certainly, there are many low-income students and students of color in our high schools who may not yet have the skills to be successful in AP coursework. But new research conducted by the College Board calls into question the assumption that poor preparation is the primary barrier. (p. 6)

Although, progress has been made toward closing enrollment gaps for Hispanic and African American students in advanced coursework, it still remains a problem for districts across the nation.

Implications for students

The revisions to SSD's board policy 6:130 and the board's goals can serve to improve educational outcomes for all students and remedy the enrollment and achievement gaps that exist for low-income and minority students. The revised policies can help the district's high schools eliminate barriers that prevent certain students from accessing a rigorous curriculum that will better prepare them for college.

The proposed revisions to SSD's 6:130 board policy will ensure that all students, including low-income and minority students, are appropriately challenged and aim to increase their participation; these intentions were clearly mentioned in the proposed revisions, along with the procedures to achieve the goal. The proposed revisions to the policy will have a positive impact on students and help to raise achievement levels because participation in an accelerated program leads to increased academic performance and improvements in self-efficacy, motivation, engagement with learning, non-academic self-concept, and stress (Woods, 2016).

Economic Analysis

The Suburban School District allocated significant resources to identify underrepresented students who are capable of enrolling in Advanced Placement courses and to provide these students and their teachers with the supports needed for success. This was accomplished through a partnership with the non-profit organization called Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS), an organization that works with school districts to increase enrollment of underrepresented students in Advanced Placement courses. In 2015, SSD spent about \$29,000 per school in the first year of this partnership and about

\$14,500 per school in subsequent school years. This commitment led to the identification of 483 underrepresented students over the course of two school years, 2016–2018.

Policy Alignment and Spending

The initiative that SSD engaged in with EOS fulfills the new provision proposed for board policy 6:190 that calls for a commitment to identifying all academically capable students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who have been traditionally underrepresented, to enroll in advanced courses using multiple measures.

The district has invested significant levels of funding to ensure that African American, Hispanic, and low-income students have access to AP classes. Given this, it becomes important that the school board adopt the revisions proposed in this paper for the board goals to include measures by student subgroups because doing so will serve as a tool to measure the district's success in this area. Additionally, the policy recommendations have the potential to aid in determining whether the amount of money invested in the EOS program is an effective use of financial resources.

The revisions proposed to board policy 6:190, *Programs for the Gifted*, will make commitments to identifying low-income, African American, and Hispanic students and will provide resources and outreach for families that are aimed at closing enrollment and achievement gaps in advanced courses. The inclusion of these strategies as part of a board policy can be an aide that ensures the district continues to provide funding for the advancement of underrepresented students because, if it is a board goal, resources will be prioritized to that area.

Financial Implications

The proposed changes to the to board policy 6:130 support the acceleration of academically capable students at SSD and are low-cost effective interventions for meeting the needs of gifted students while addressing issues of equity and access gaps for low income, Hispanic, and African American students. The potential costs associated with the goals of the recommendations, which are to expand access to Advanced Placement courses for students in the district include: student exam fees, training for teachers, College Board costs to approve AP syllabi, certifying teachers, and preparing students for the exam. In addition, there can also be costs associated with hiring more qualified teachers to provide students with instruction (Assouline, Colangelo, & VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

Resource Allocation

SSD will have to allocate resources for student interventions and funding for additional staff to provide academic and social-emotional supports to students. This cost is due to the recommendation for board policy 6:190 that includes a commitment to allocating available resources to provide all students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports needed to be successful in advanced courses. SSD will also have to allocate resources for professional development opportunities that provide teachers with training on developing culturally relevant and inclusive curriculums and classrooms. This development for staff is critical because implementation of these policies is expected to result in more diverse classrooms at the higher levels of courses which tend to be made

up of White and Asian students and are taught mainly by White teachers who have had limited experiences with diversity.

In summary, the proposed board policy 6:190 includes commitments to African American, Hispanic, and low-income students that include allocating available resources to provide all students with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports to be successful in advanced courses. The language suggested for board policy 6:190 deliberately includes the “allocating of available resources” for the purposes of expanding AP participation for low-income, Hispanic, and African American students and closing enrollment and achievement gaps. I understand that honoring this commitment of resources will have its challenges to achieving the goals of the proposed policy changes because SSD will be required to strategically reallocate resources from other areas to meet the aforementioned commitments once adopted. However, without this specific language, the advocated policies could be left without the resources needed for successful implementation.

Social Analysis

The proposed revisions to SSD’s 6:130 board policy are intended to increase academic participation and identify high-achieving students capable of more rigorous courses. Students who are considered to be high achieving possess several socioeconomic advantages and have access to better schools and teachers (Loveless, Farkas, & Duffett, 2008). Additionally, high-achieving students take more advanced mathematics courses and are provided instruction by more experienced teachers who have majored or minored in mathematic in college (Loveless et al., 2008).

Data analyzed from high-achieving African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who performed well on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show a different set of characteristics for this student group. The students tended to be from less privileged, socioeconomic backgrounds and attended schools that had more challenges. These schools serviced large numbers of poor, urban students and offered limited advanced mathematics courses (Loveless et al., 2008).

Social Issues

Research data reveal the social and economic factors surrounding low-income and minority students. Given the circumstances experienced by African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, there is a need for school districts to provide additional supports and resources to these students. As a result, it is necessary that SSD explicitly revise its board policy 6:130 to include a statement of its intentions to increase the participation of African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who are underrepresented in advanced programs and to make a commitment to provide these students with the necessary resources given their social and economic realities. Although, these conditions do not necessarily mean a student will not be successful, it becomes essential to take these conditions into account when analyzing the problem through an equity lens.

Student Labeling

The concept of gifted is perceived exclusively as a trait that is manifested through high performance on ability tests and as something that is inborn, fixed, and unchangeable (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Students are typically identified as gifted or high achieving through testing and then their abilities and talents are

developed through programs in schools. This process fails to identify capable students from disadvantaged households and communities because they would less likely demonstrate mastery on exams due their limited socioeconomic conditions (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012).

The labeling of students as gifted carries many connotations and some are not welcomed in the same manner by all students and their families. For some students, the identification of gifted affirmed their abilities, achievement, and hard work by others such as teachers and family members. However, this label also has negative consequences among peers and can cause bullying and isolation. Many students reject this label because of fears of no longer fitting in with their peer group. Some students also refuse opportunities to participate in accelerated or gifted classes because they realize they will be one of the few minorities in the courses or program (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012).

To remedy this issue, the family outreach component of this advocated policy would be used to educate and support families, which is included in the proposed changes to board policy 6:190, and to address this negative connotation that can potentially be experienced by students. Findings in research also support the revision to board policy 6:190 that calls for a commitment to allocating available resources to provide all students including, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports needed to be successful in advanced courses because the research suggests that students may experience social-emotional pressures. Additionally, teachers would be provided with the necessary resources and training to create welcoming classrooms for students from diverse backgrounds.

Political Analysis

Federal Legislation

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed by Congress during former President George W. Bush's administration and created a system of accountability through standardized testing and placed emphasis on the performance of the lowest achieving students. According to Plucker, Burroughs, and Song (2010), "due to the law's focus on underperforming students, effects on the level of gifted education funding, the lack of gifted education language in the law, and a concentration on standardized testing that discourages investment in services to gifted children" (p. 24), gifted education programs were negatively affected. Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, (2012) claimed that this "basic-level focus" failed to advance the growth and achievement of talented students. Plucker, Burroughs, and Song (2010) found that success made in closing achievement gaps for low-achieving students did not appear to affect the achievement gaps among groups of top-performing students, which further widened during the NCLB era. The federal and state governments were focused on making sure all students achieved certain proficiency levels, but they ignored maximizing the talents of the high-achieving students and allocated most of their resources to low-achieving students. This was not the case for SSD which has been able to allocate significant resources to expanding its Advanced Placement program and has received recognition from *The Washington Post* as a result.

National Recognition

In 2018, all four SSD high schools ranked in *The Washington Post's* Most Challenging High Schools list in the U.S. for the eighth consecutive year. *The*

Washington Post generates this list using what it calls the Challenge Index. To calculate the Challenge Index, data are collected from schools on the total number of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge tests given at a school each year and dividing by the number of seniors who graduated in May or June. In the case of SSD, *The Washington Post* collected test data on Advanced Placement courses because the other programs are not offered in the district. A school will make this list if it has a Challenge Index of 1.0 or higher, meaning that the number of exams taken in a particular school year was equal to or greater than the number of graduating seniors. The policies advocated in this paper will further ensure that the district's schools will continue to gain national recognition for their students' participation in advanced classes and should help the school earn higher rankings because the proposed policy changes are expected to increase enrollment in the courses measured in the Challenge Index.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

Underrepresentation of Minority Students

A study conducted by Woods (2016) suggested that low-income and minority students are less likely to be identified as high achieving or participants in acceleration programs, and they make up the majority of struggling learners. Another study conducted by Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, (2012) found that very few low-income students who receive free and reduced lunch were among the top performers on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams. Data from 1998 to 2007 show the number of low-income students performing at advanced levels was extremely low in the areas of math (1.7%), civics (1%), and writing (1%) (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). This disparity raises questions of equity and access and serves as a basis for the

adoption of school board policies aimed at closing enrollment and achievement gaps like the ones proposed in this paper. The aforementioned data make clear that low-income and minority students are not being successful under the existing educational policies and further support the proposed policy changes addressed in this paper that are expected to increase the participation rates for minority and low-income students in advanced courses.

Related to participation rate in advanced courses, in Olszewski-Kupilius and Clrenbach's (2012) study, the findings reveal numerous factors that prevent low-income students from participating in accelerated programs. Many of these students are dependent on public schools for their educational needs and were sometimes overlooked for inclusion in accelerated programs because they failed to score high enough on qualifying performance ability or achievement exams. In addition, research from Woods (2016) revealed that African American students are less likely to attend schools that offer accelerated programs; this could be possible because they attend schools in poor districts that lack the resources to do this. Another disadvantage was that low-income and minority students were more likely to be taught by less qualified and less effective teachers (Woods, 2016). These barriers found by Olszewski-Kupilius & Clrenbach's (2012) research and that of Woods (2016) are not factors that apply to SSD, but nonetheless, the district's Hispanic, African American, and low-income students remain underrepresented in Advanced Placement courses.

Woods (2016) also found that there were additional racial disparities that prevented low-income and minority students from being identified for gifted education. Some of these disadvantaged families were not aware of the processes in schools for

identification and had limited access to resources outside of the school that could identify the student as gifted.

Addressing Barriers Through Policy

The proposed change to board policy 6:190 that calls for a commitment to providing African American, Hispanic, and low-income students and their families with targeted outreach to educate them on advanced course offerings, the benefits of enrollment, and available supports is recommended to address this information barrier. These students also experience additional barriers that include teacher biases, differences in students' backgrounds, prejudgments concerning the abilities of minority students, and expectations that can be linked to unequal identification. In addition, African American students who are taught by non-African American teachers are less likely to be placed in accelerated programs (Woods, 2016). For these reasons, I strongly suggest that board policy 6:190 state its commitment to identifying low income, African American, and Hispanic students of color so as to ensure they are not dismissed from consideration for placement into advanced courses due to these barriers.

The findings of Olszewski-Kupilius & Clrenbach's (2012) and Woods (2016) confirm that institutionalized racism is evident in the American educational system, and failure to provide inclusive advanced programs for minority student populations further perpetuates the problem. Singleton (2015) pointed out that

when White students enter advanced placement classrooms and see few if any students of color, they are unconsciously indoctrinated into White intellectual supremacy. These notions are typically unchallenged by educators, even as students of color learn about these classes made up of mostly White students and

labeled as the “smart,” “honors,” “gifted,” “advanced,” “GATE,” or “best” class. Not seeing others who look like them in these classes, many students of color and indigenous students will see themselves as being incapable of performing at equally high levels and feel unwanted in such classes or unworthy of taking them.

(p. 54)

These adverse consequences require the attention of educators because they have a moral responsibility to eliminate inequities and practices that stigmatize and or marginalize students. As a result, SSD needs to adopt the specific board policies suggested in this paper to change the school culture.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

This section provides an explanation of the goals and objectives for the proposed revision to Suburban School District's board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, and the recommendation to rewrite the district's board goals that include student metrics that capture the performance of traditionally underrepresented subgroups. To analyze the current policies the following questions were explored:

1. What are the policies' goals and objectives?
2. Whose needs, values, and preferences are being represented by the advocated policy?
3. On what bases are the goals and objectives validated to be appropriate and good?

The goal of the revision to Suburban School District's 6:130 board policy is to expand advanced placement access by supporting the following strategies: educating students and families on course offerings, on the benefits of participation, and providing resources to students and families. To achieve these goals, it is recommended that SSD amend board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, to include the following commitments:

- identifying all academically capable students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who have been traditionally underrepresented, to enroll in advanced courses using multiple measures;
- allocating available resources to provide all students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports needed to be successful in advanced courses;

- closing achievement and enrollment gaps between African American, Hispanic, and low-income students when compared to White and Asian students in advanced courses; and
- providing African American, Hispanic, and low-income students and their families with targeted outreach to educate them on advanced course offerings, the benefits of enrollment, and the available supports.

These recommendations aim to expand opportunities for traditionally underrepresented students to enroll in advanced courses such as Honors and Advanced Placement. Expanding access is important because African American and Hispanic students are less likely to be identified for gifted programs than their White and Asian counterparts as revealed in a study by Yaluma & Tyner (2018). Data reported in 2018 show White students comprised 48% of the students in schools nationally, and an exceedingly 55% of these students were enrolled in advanced programs. Hispanics made up 28% of the national student population but accounted for only 21% of the students in advanced programs. Black students made up 15% of the national student enrollment but only accounted for 10% of the students advanced programs. (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). These data from Yaluma & Tyner (2018) are significant because they clearly highlight the limited number of students who are being pushed to actualize their academic potential.

The need for advanced programs in Illinois is even greater when compared to national averages. According to data reported in 2018, only 35.2% of Illinois schools had gifted programs in their schools while the national average was 68.3% (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). These data further support the necessity of providing students with access to

challenging learning opportunities and establishing provisions to ensure the academic needs of high-ability students are addressed, including the academic needs of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The recommended changes to SSD's 6:190 policy support addressing the educational needs of low-income students and students of color.

My recommendation is to rewrite SSD's five student achievement board goals to promote the reporting of data to the school board that are disaggregated by race. The re-framed board goals are:

- District-wide, we expect 94% of students to pass their first semester classes, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 94% goal.
- We expect 75% of our students to earn a college and career ready score on the SAT or ACT (score of 1010 on the SAT or 20 on the ACT), and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 75% goal.
- We are committed to encouraging students to take rigorous courses and expect 80% of student to enroll in course Algebra II with Trigonometry or another more advanced math course by junior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 80% goal.
- We are committed to encouraging students to take rigorous courses and expect 80% of student to enroll in physics, or a more advanced science course by

junior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 80% goal.

- We are committed to challenging students to take rigorous coursework and expect 60% of students to pass (score of 3 or higher) on one or more AP exams by the end of their senior year, and as a commitment to closing achievement gaps for African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, we expect each of these subgroups to meet the 60% goal.

The rewriting of the metrics used in measuring the board goals is proposed to facilitate establishing a system of accountability and transparency for SSD around the academic achievement of its African American, Hispanic, and low-income students. The National Forum on Education Statistics (2016) supports the use of disaggregated data by race as suggested SSD's board goals and reporting. This allows school districts to use racial and ethnic data to inform their decision making and target instructional and support services to meet the needs of the school community. In addition, the disaggregated data can be used to more efficiently allocate resources and monitor the equity in terms of resources and outcomes.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

This section examines the pros of the argument for the proposed policies; these include equitable learning experiences for students that will better prepared them for college and the workforce and a policy that aligns with the beliefs and convictions adopted by the school board. The cons of this policy argument are also explored and include the need for additional spending on gifted programs and or the reallocation of resources to implement the provisions of the policy.

Pros

Equitable Learning Experiences

The adoption of the revised 6.130 board policy will provide students with access to gifted programs and challenging coursework such as Honors and AP classes. This revised policy will eliminate some barriers that traditionally tracked students into a low-rigor curriculum. Additionally, this proposed policy attempts to create an equitable educational system wherein all students, regardless of color or socioeconomic background, can access gifted programming, which they have been historically marginalized from. Participation in gifted programs could positively change the trajectory of students by better preparing them for college or the workforce, thus ending the cycle of poverty for many families. According to the research of Ndura, Robinson, and Ochs (2003), students are not being prepared for college and careers; 70% of high school graduates enroll in college but only one-half of the students at four-year schools complete their degrees. However, college graduation rates could be raised if students took more challenging courses, like AP courses, in high school. These data on college completion make clear another benefit for all students having access to more rigorous coursework.

Policy Alignment

The proposed changes to policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, support the following beliefs and convictions of SSD: (a) ensuring a course sequence that prepares students for college, the global workforce, and personal success regardless of their academic preparedness upon entering the 9th grade; (b) closing achievement gaps with all of our students; (c) encouraging all students to “level up” to more challenging coursework in an area of interest; and (d) investing in resources and programs that support the educational success of our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The adoption of these policy changes will ensure alignment between board priorities and district policies. In addition, many of Suburban School District’s policies and procedures for placement into AP or Honors courses align with the requirements of the Accelerated Placement Act. However, even though the language of the district policy 6:130 complies with the act, it does not address issues of equity because it fails to target traditionally underrepresented low income, African American, and Hispanic students.

Cons

Spending and or Reallocation of Resources

The proposed changes to board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, will force the district to make reallocations to their budget, or increase the amount of funds it is spending on identifying and providing outreach and support services to students traditionally underrepresented in advanced courses. Reallocation of financial resources is a delicate matter that has its challenges due to the fact that programs and personnel tend to equate financial spending with perceived worth and when this is decreased, morale could be negatively impacted. Therefore, depending upon the availability of its financial

resources, the district may need to seek additional sources of revenue if it cannot creatively reallocate financial resources to provide students and teachers with the additional educational resources needed to have increased access to advanced courses.

Needed Supports for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Supports need to be created that provide students with additional tutoring and/or access to their teachers during the school day or after school. Students will also need additional support from social workers or counselors because they may begin to experience some school-related stress due to the challenging curriculum. It is important that the schools in the district have the appropriate staff available to students who can help them manage social-emotional concerns. Additionally, parents may experience some of this pressure as well because they may not be equipped to provide their students with additional resources at home. The district must develop programs that provide parents with parenting strategies and resources to help their students manage their schooling.

The school personnel working directly with students will need additional resources and professional development. The revised 6:130 board policy will expand gifted options and advanced coursework to traditionally underrepresented students of color. The result of this change could surface the issue that some staff members and teachers may have certain negative biases about these groups of students. Proactively combatting potential biases creates a need for teacher professional development in this area to ensure that service offices and the classrooms are inviting to all students and that the curriculum includes various multi-cultural perspectives. The district and its high schools will have to assess their cultures, identify existing biases, and examine

institutional racism to ensure that all students feel they belong in accelerated programs, are encouraged to succeed, and are treated with respect.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The first step in the implementation of policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, is to present the proposed changes to the district's Policy Committee for review and approval. Once the Policy Committee reviews and approves the revisions to the policy, they are then presented to the school board for discussion. At this time, the superintendent provides a briefing on the revised policy and includes a recommendation to the school board on the policy at a subsequent board meeting. The school board will then adopt or send the policy back to the Policy Committee for revision.

Once approved, the school district will have to educate all administrators on the policy changes and assist in performing an assessment of the district's current practices to determine what is needed to be in compliance with the changes. The assessment will include (a) examinations of the practices in place to identify students for advanced courses, (b) an analysis of how resources and supports are allocated for students taking advanced courses, (c) an analysis of the enrollment gaps in advanced courses, and (d) an evaluation of the practices used to provide outreach to low-income and minority students for participation in advanced courses.

This proposed policy also advocates for a revision of the board goals to include metrics disaggregated by race and low income. This policy change will require the previously enumerated board approval process, but the recommended changes should come from the Equity and Inclusion Work Plan Committee. As a result, a presentation will be made to this committee to garner its support for this change. With the support of this committee, the suggestions could be included as a strategy in the Equity and Inclusion Work Plan. This committee is responsible for presenting the new strategy to all

administrators district wide and addressing the achievement gaps; the committee will also lend its support to the revision that the proposed board goals focus on reporting and monitoring these gaps. The Equity and Inclusion Committee could then move to present the proposed changes to school board for adoption.

Once approved, the advocated Suburban School District board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, will require the commitment of resources for new programs and committees to ensure the policy is followed. The new board policy requires the identification of all academically capable students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students who have been traditionally underrepresented, to enroll in advanced courses using multiple measures. To fulfill this, the district is expected to continue its partnership with EOS to continue to identify more underrepresented students for enrollment in AP courses. This strategy is one of several recommended to achieve the goal of the proposed policies to close the enrollment and attainment gaps in the district. Additionally, it will be necessary that the district expand its Equity and Inclusion Committee membership by soliciting more participation from various staff members to become leaders in the schools and the district in the areas of equity and inclusion.

Under this new policy, the district will also be required to allocate available resources to provide all students, including African American, Hispanic, and low-income students, with the appropriate academic and social-emotional supports needed to be successful in advanced courses. It is recommended that SSD increase the number of staff members in student support services, specifically increasing the number of school counselors and social workers. The district is encouraged to adopt a formula that

calculates Full Time Employment (FTE) for school counselors and social workers based on the number of low-income students at each school. The rationale for this is that additional resources are needed to educate and provide the necessary supports to low-income populations to ensure their success.

Another important strategy in the proposed district policy focuses on the parental education that is pivotal in serving minority student populations. The recommended policy commits to providing African American, Hispanic, and low-income students and their families with targeted outreach to educate them on advanced course offerings, the benefits of enrollment, and the available supports. To this end, I recommend that throughout each school year the district host monthly workshops for families in Spanish and English to educate parents on topics like; Advanced Placement courses, college readiness, financial aid, and parenting strategies. These workshops would be offered at each of the campuses and community centers in the district during times and days that are feasible for parents. Even though the district currently holds many similar workshops throughout the year, these workshops are to be designed specifically around the needs of our low-income and minority families. To determine the needs of these families, the district will send an electronic survey to parents via e-mail as well as a paper survey through postal service mail to solicit feedback on topics of interest and days, times, and locations for these workshops. A new position will be created at each school that will be filled by a parent facilitator who is bilingual (English and Spanish) and can provide parents with support on how to navigate the school and its resources and thus help to build a supportive relationship with families and the schools.

This proposed policy additionally advocates for a board policy that reports the attainment of the district's board goals using student demographic data. The implementation of this policy will require the district to modify all the reports generated and shared and the way the schools report to the school board to include data broken down by race and low-income status. It is important that this information is shared, analyzed, and discussed if the district is to continue to make progress towards ending achievement gaps in the district. It is expected that the proposed policy changes will position SSD to challenge how race and socioeconomic status have established predictable patterns of achievement in the district's high schools. Pedro Noguera (as cited in Reborá, 2013) suggested that districts can obtain sustained improvement in overcoming achievement gaps "by countering low expectations and complacency and using data to generate tough questions about students' performance and needs" (para. 9), which is what the proposed policy changes in this paper address.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT

Data will be used to determine the effectiveness of the revised 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, district policy. The following student data will be collected and provided to school administrators each semester: (a) the academic grades received by low-income and minority students compared to their White and Asian counterparts in Advanced Placement and Honors courses, (b) the enrollment data for Honors and Advanced Placement courses by race, and (c) participation rates for families in school sponsored events. The parental participation data will be collected at AP informational meetings designed to orientate parents and students on the AP courses and available supports, at the schools' Open House event that provides parents with an opportunity to meet their student's teachers and learn about the student's courses, and at parent teacher conferences.

The revised board goals will serve as another assessment measure. The proposed board goals will highlight the academic performance of students based on race and low-income status in the following areas: the passing rate, SAT and or ACT scores, enrollment in Algebra II with Trigonometry, enrollment in physics or a higher science course, and the passing rate for AP exams. These data will continuously be monitored by each high school and district wide administrators. In addition, these revised board goals will serve as an additional accountability measure for the proposed revised board policy 6:130 through the reporting measures.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed changes to Suburban School District's board policy 6:130, *Programs for the Gifted*, are recommended to ensure that all students in the district can achieve their academic potential and to remove barriers that have historically prevented students from participating in advanced programs. The proposed revisions to board policy 6:190 in conjunction with the inclusion of disaggregated metrics in the board goals can potentially help the district achieve equity by closing enrollment gaps based on race and socioeconomic status. These recommendations can serve to establish a transparent system of reporting. The implementation of the proposed policy changes is expected to increase the enrollment and academic performance of the district's low-income students and students of color. I strongly believe that this advocated policy will result in advanced placement and honors classrooms that reflect the student body, offering students the valuable experiences of diversity, and the alignment of resources for low-income and minority students that supports board policies and objectives.

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