Handout 6
Action Steps for Educators and School Administrators

Disproportionality in special education based on race or ethnicity is of obvious concern to anyone who cares about education. We are all stakeholders in what our children learn, how they behave at school and how they are treated there, and what they achieve now and in the future. Yet, far too often, children with disabilities experience different treatment in school and achieve disproportionately lower outcomes. This is especially true for those from racial or ethnic minority groups.

What can educators and school administrators, as stakeholders, do to help address, reduce, and (best case!) eliminate this decades-old problem? Here are suggestions and possible action steps to consider.

1—Become Informed about Disproportionality, in General

For a crash-course intro to the subject, read 5 *Things to Know about Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Special Education*, online at: https://www.childtrends.org/child-trends-5/5-things-know-racial-ethnic-disparities-special-education/

2—Learn about Disproportionality in Your State, District, or School

Is it present? To what degree? Which students with disabilities are primarily affected? What data exist to shed light on specific dimensions of the problem?

Answers to these questions can usually be found in the annual public reporting that your state or district is required to do, as well as in the information that states must report annually to the U.S. Department of Education. Search online by entering a phrase such as "disproportionality in *(name of your state)* special education" and see what resources pop up.

3—Raise Your Own Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness

Attend a racial equity workshop and other trainings designed to raise trainees' cultural competence. Take a cultural self-assessment; engage others in your school system to do the same as a group. Many such self-assessments exist. Explore what may already be in use in your system, or take advantage of the *Diversity Toolkit: Cultural Competence for Educators*, available online at the National Education Association, at: http://www.nea.org/tools/30402.htm

4—Be Culturally Aware and Responsive When Engaging with Students and Parents

Recognize and respect diversity across student ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status. Diversity is real, and it *matters*.

5—Actively Seek Out Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents

Encourage them to become active in the school community. Facilitate their involvement as needed—for example, providing an interpreter, providing child care during meetings, offering stipends for travel to and from meetings.

6—Develop School Staff's Knowledge of UDL

Universal Design for Learning—or UDL, for short—can help educators address the needs and learning styles of all students. Find tools at: http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XmklzahKiUk

7—Form District or School Teams to Address Disproportionality

Include all stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, advocacy groups, your state's Parent Center). The *Success Gaps Toolkit* can provide a useful structured approach to this undertaking. Make sure you share the 2½-minute video called *What are Success Gaps?*

Watch the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkWzVp4pldk&feature=youtu.be

Check out the toolkit: https://ideadata.org/toolkits/

8—Infuse Your School System with Learner-Centered Supports

Learner-centered supports include approaches such as personalized learning or differentiated instruction. Multi-tiered systems of support are, too. Don't forget about the benefits of providing non-academic supports such as social-emotional training for educators and students. And definitely, definitely, definitely learn everything you can about how to provide schoolwide positive behavioral supports.

9—Build Strategic Partnerships

Think "family-school-community." You may find the IDEA Partnership's *Dialogue Guides* especially helpful in starting and continuing the process of working together to address sensitive issues. http://www.ideapartnership.org/using-tools/dialogue-guides/topical-guides.html?id=1693:family-school-and-community-collaboration