

Expectations, Equity, and Excellence

Dr. Pedro Noguera is the Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education at New York University and the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. His research focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions, as well as demographic trends in local, regional, and global contexts.

“*When we combine excellence and equity, what we are focused on is how do we make sure that all kids are exposed to high standards and quality teachers.*”

Dr. Pedro Noguera

Noguera is passionate about the deep need in the nation’s educational system for equity and excellence for all students. He acknowledges that the pursuit of excellence is often seen as being at odds with equity, but challenges school systems to ensure that the academic needs of diverse students are met and that all students receive equitable educations. Therefore, schools must advocate for equity in resources and educational opportunities for all students by recognizing that not all students are the same, and those with less will need more in terms of time, attention, and support. This thinking requires systemic change for effective practices to occur and produce results.

In a presentation entitled “Racial Inequality and American Education: Policies, Practices and Politics,” Noguera addressed the segregation by race and social class within the education system. He asserted, “We cannot separate students’ learning needs from their non-academic needs. The achievement gap is a manifestation of social inequality. We must invest in children of color: They are the future.” He also encouraged schools to build support systems in the community so that schools aren’t expected to do this work alone.

In his writings and presentations, Noguera speaks of the core value of educator and student relationships and the power of teacher expectations in influencing student performance. Skilled teachers build students’ strengths into confidence and competence. Using his own research and that of the University of Chicago, which identified five proven components of school-improvement efforts, Noguera developed 10 practices to promote achievement for all students.

- 1. Challenge the normalization of failure.** Race and class should not predict achievement.
- 2. Stand up and speak out for equity.** Schools must confront the ways in which some students are denied learning opportunities.
- 3. Embrace immigrant students and their culture.**
- 4. Provide students with clear guidance on what it takes to succeed, including such things as study skills, “code-switching,” and seeing models of excellent work.**



- 5. Build partnerships with parents based on shared interests.** Faculties must be trained to communicate respectfully and effectively across race and class differences and work with parents to help reinforce school objectives at home.
- 6. Align discipline practices to educational goals.** Get buy-in from all staff on expectations, values, and norms that reconnect students to learning, rather than exclude them from learning. Teachers must make education matter to students.
- 7. Rethink remediation and focus on acceleration.** Monitor learning and provide access to enriched, rigorous curriculum with needed support and personalized interventions.
- 8. Implement evidence-based practices and evaluate for effectiveness.** Consider such things as block scheduling, peer study groups, content literacy, extracurricular activities, and mentoring.
- 9. Build partnerships within the community to address student needs.**
- 10. Teach to the way that students learn, rather than expecting them to adjust their learning to a rigid, set way of teaching.** Teachers should focus on evidence of mastery and performance, viewing the work produced as a reflection of their teaching.

Noguera's 10 practices support culturally relevant pedagogy, as well as AVID's mission and practices, as they focus on creating an environment in which students feel connected to each other and to the teacher, empowering students as learners, affirming the heritage and culture of students, and closing the achievement gap through high expectations and opportunities for all students.