

How Hyper-Accountability and Deficit Discourse Subvert Education: Critical Multicultural Voices for Social Justice Activism

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Roberta Ahlquist

Contemporary origins of deficit theory and standards movement; Eugenics movement, Taylorism; time & motion studies in industry applied to schools, IQ Testing.

USA: 1960's-1970's: Back to basics, 1989: Business Round Table: 300 CEOs organize to shape public school curriculum to meet corporate needs, demand accountability-Globalization- Increased competition- PIISA; EU, Every Child Matters; UK, No Child Left Behind; USA, Outcomes-based education; South Africa. Postcolonial responses

Ann Berlak

Teacher Performance Assessment in CA: PACT

How PACT overwhelms Credential Programs

How PACT marginalizes Social Justice curriculum and Pedagogy

Theresa Montaño

The socio-political theoretical and political underpinnings driving the hyper-accountability movement.

Its impact on Chican@ Studies and Chican@ students on one college campus

Organizing against the present framework of assessment and reconceptualizing assessment to serve our students and foster critical consciousness, reflection and social action.

How Hyper-Accountability and Deficit Discourse Subvert Education: Critical Multicultural Voices for Social Justice Activism

“Community Action Projects” – a counter deficit theory projects in an educational foundations course.

The impact of hyper-accountability mandates and neo-liberal socio-economic policy on teacher decisions and practices, and educational inequities and inequalities in two working class schools—one in California, and the other in England.

Virginia Lea

The educational system under G. W. Bush: The current corporate agenda:

- ◆ Hyper-accountability and deficit theory are ways in which corporate-governmental control is being exacted through public schools.
- ◆ A wing of the corporate elite (the U.S.A. Business Roundtable, 300 CEOs of biggest US corps in the USA) has mandated that schools must better serve market or corporate needs and interests.
- ◆ People like Ruby Payne (*A Framework for Understanding Poverty*), offer cultural deficit theory “solutions” to supposedly assist poor kids, especially kids in “generational poverty,” learn the dominant culture rules. U.S. Dept. of Ed. Spelling, and right-wing supporters assist in this enterprise.



The corporate mandate

- ◆ This corporate agenda is being promoted all over the world. (See later in this power point: The European Union, United Kingdom, and South Africa.)
- ◆ Schooling is now becoming more privatized, segregated, and corporatized than ever before.
- ◆ The implications are devastating: dropout rates are increasing, poor kids, new immigrants and English language learners are made accountable to a one-size-fits-all educational agenda, and are falling through manufactured “cracks” in the system.

Deficit theory and its origins

- ◆ Deficit theory assumes that there are some students who are inferior to or 'less than' others; typically these are new immigrants, children of color, poor students, English language learners, those often at the bottom of the racial and socio-economic class *and* cultural hierarchy.
- ◆ Deficit theory arises out of the dominant European cultural tradition that was transposed to this country at its inception. It was given more substance through, for example, Indian policy, slavery, Mexican conquest, Jim Crow laws, the 1920's IQ testing movement, and the Eugenics movement.



Examples of Counter Deficit Theory Projects in Educational Foundations Courses

- ◆ In the following projects, the focus is on the positive aspects of students' cultural backgrounds, rather than on "cultural deficit."
- ◆ The projects do not aim to eliminate the caring, meaningful relationships (see Payne) that students have built in their home backgrounds, but on affirming these relationships as seminal in students' identities, and valuable building blocks in the development of students' critical consciousness and wider learning.

Community Action Projects [Lea, forthcoming 2009)

- ◆ **Foundations courses are integrated with co-curricular, *Community Action Projects*.**
- ◆ **Working with community organizations, programs identify volunteer, low-income families that are home to students who would be empowered by tutoring through critical literacy learning activities.**
- ◆ **Student-teachers visit the families NOT as teachers but to LEARN about the rich cultural knowledge that resides in these families and communities.**
- ◆ **Student-teachers support the families by codifying* this knowledge through oral histories, interviews, and art experiences.**
- ◆ ***Codification in the process by which family knowledge is represented in a variety of forms—posters, books, art, collage, graphs, power points, spoken word, dance, etc.**



Community Action Projects [Lea, forthcoming 2009)

- ◆ **Student-teachers then scaffold critical literacy, learning activities on this rich knowledge.**
- ◆ **They then use these activities to engage in critical literacy experiences with one or more students from the family they have visited.**
- ◆ **Families may use the codifications to engage in *Community Scholars Programs* (see *Ishibashi*) set up with local schools districts, to interrupt the stereotypes some teachers have about the lack of knowledge low-income students bring to school. These experiences may be paid for by the schools districts, and/or supported by grants.**
- ◆ **Student-teachers finish the semester with a culminating session to which the families are invited, and in which they share the codifications they have developed with the families with their peers, department, and community organizations.**

How Hyper-accountability is framed by Deficit Theory

- ◆ The “hyper-accountability” movement ***ostensibly*** responded to a need to make sure the educational system was accountable for the learning of all students. From a critical multicultural perspective, there were other agenda at work.
- ◆ Under the guise of fixing the “achievement gap,” aka the “opportunity gap” (Epstein), and making schools accountable for the successful learning of their students, corporate heads and politicians responded with a massive pre-12, nationally-driven ‘account-ability’ plan, *No Child Left Behind*, followed by State-driven mandates for teacher credential programs in higher education. (*Teacher Performance Assessments—TPAs—or Performance Assessments for California Teachers—PACT—in California.*)

Hyper-Accountability in Practice

- ◆ The hyper-accountability system is punitive and includes corporate-driven mandates that focus on “basics.”
- ◆ Mandated hyper-accountable programs are test/performance-driven, and offer only Eurocentric, monolingual, script-oriented curricula & teaching methods, to push students to perform well on ‘high stakes’ standardized tests
- ◆ Hyper-accountability reduces opportunities for equity and social justice content, for creativity, deeper analysis, and critical thinking.

Why high-stakes tests?

- ◆ STANDARDIZED tests have served corporate capitalism well. Within the framework of corporate capitalism and globalization, a wing of the neoliberal corporate leadership believes that public schooling is too expensive for the masses. These high stakes tests serve as a sorting process for those who will and will not have access to higher education.
- ◆ High stakes tests (standardized testing) historically have been used to screen out poor students, new immigrants, and under-represented kids who don't do well on standardized tests framed within the newly developed standards, rubrics and tests of the dominant culture scripted curriculum.

No Child Left Behind?

- ◆ *No Child Left Behind* (2001) is Bush's accountability reform legislation that mandates standards, benchmarks, and tests –under-funded, and punitive for teachers and students.
- ◆ The “hyper-accountability” movement has become in practice a “reform” movement to ensure that education does what it was set up to do—prepare student as “human resources” to service the United States and global, neo-liberal, corporate economy.

Hyper-accountability is seen as “common sense”

- ◆ Since that economy is hierarchical, deficit theory shaped the assessment mechanisms at the heart of educational practices.
- ◆ To many people, given our cultural histories and current socialization, these mechanisms are “common sense” (Kumashiro).
- ◆ They are therefore actively challenged by only a minority of educators.

What is PACT?

- ◆ Performance Assessments for California Teachers (PACT) is an unfunded teacher-credential mandate. Public and private schools of education in CA are obliged to submit their teacher candidates to standardized teacher performance assessments (TPAs) in order for their schools to be accredited.
- ◆ At present unfunded, these TPAS require an increased level of technocratic, bureaucratic, technological packaging, as opposed to an assessment based on broader, authentic, ongoing ‘CHECKS,’ and critical, creative, and culturally-responsive principles that emphasize equity and social justice.

PACT :

Performance Assessment of California Teachers

- ◆ PACT is a high stakes, state-mandated test to disqualify credential candidates.
- ◆ PACT ASSESSMENT IS NOT RELIABLE, VALID OR USEFUL.
- ◆ IT IS DESTRUCTIVE.

PACT :

◆ **Performance Assessment of California Teachers**

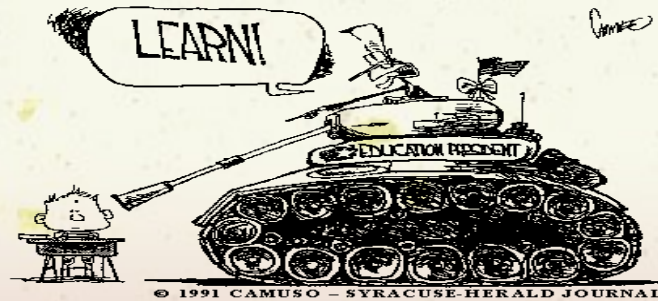
- ◆ Focuses on assessing fifteen minute video tapes of candidates teaching
- ◆ Assessors must use state-approved rubrics to rate the videos, discounting teaching complexity and artistry
- ◆ Assessors must rate candidates they do not know—de-contextualizing the videoed data
- ◆ Minimal to no feedback to candidates
- ◆ Rubric scores reduced to a single number used by the state to disqualify candidates from receiving credentials

PACT :

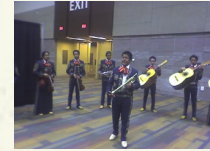
Performance Assessment of California Teachers

- ◆ Cost of scoring and administering PACT reduces funds for supervision, class size reduction, and other aspects of program quality
- ◆ Student, class and faculty time required for PACT overwhelms and is destructive to ongoing teacher preparation programs
- ◆ PACT rubrics marginalize or eliminate social justice goals and objectives
- ◆ In California we're facing additional mid-year budget cuts, yet PACT continues

Assessment and higher education
No Chican@ Student LEFT



Theresa Montaño
NAME
November, 2008



Since the passage of NCLB

- ◆ Student scores on a standardized exam has been collected as “most meaningful *evidence* of student learning”. (Popham, 2006)
- ◆ The test is everything. Every state must pick a test.-- any test. Every state must pick a pass score--any pass score. Virtually every student must take the test. And by the magical year 2014, virtually every student must pass the test. (Eskelsen, 2006)
- ◆ **Moreover**, Schools with an ELL “subgroup” are being labeled and punished for failure—not because of the quality of instruction they provide, but because existing tests are unable to measure what ELLs have learned.(Crawford, 2007)

Moving NCLB into higher education

Test-based accountability has become the cornerstone of K-12 educational policy in America, and the big push is to extend it to postsecondary education.

Chronicle of Higher Education



Spellings

- Consumer based-friendly information database on higher education with useful, reliable information on institutions, coupled with a search engine to enable students, parents and policymakers and others to weigh and rank comparative institutions
- Postsecondary institutions should measure and report meaningful student learning outcomes
- Establish a commission comprised corporate heads from IBM, Microsoft, EdTrust, Kaplan, Inc. Boeing, US Chamber, Dept of Labor/Defense—and presidents of several universities. *Where is the faculty?*



Ideology

Images or concepts and premises
which provide the frameworks
through which we
represent, interpret, understand
and
make sense of social existence.
(Lewis, 2003)

Positivism

- ◆ Positivist thinking emphasizes objectivity and that which can be expressed, measured, and calculated in precise mathematical formulas. It is seen as an amalgam of diverse traditions & based on the methodological tenets of sense observation and quantification. (Furumoto, 2006)
- ◆ Giroux (1997) noted that positivism represents “the major theoretical impetus that currently shapes educational theory and practice” (p. 38).

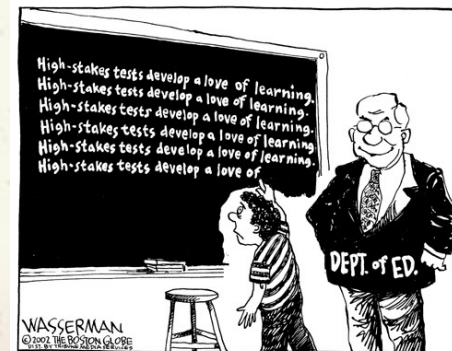


World wide testing

- ◆ PISA (Programme for International student assessment)
- ◆ TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)
- ◆ AHELO (Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes)

A child's experience in the US

- Reading tests, chapter tests, quizzes, criterion reference tests, essay tests, final exams (most in English on subject matter that reflects the “normed population”)
- STAR-API (In grades 2,3,4,5,6,7)
- CELDT (every year until transitioned)
- SHARP and WRITE
- CASHEE
- *AP tests*
- ENTRANCE EXAMS
 - SAT
 - Writing and Math tests (***more, if in remedial***)
- Criterion tests, Essay tests, final exams
- ***Teacher tests (CBEST, RICA, CSSET, TPA/PACT)***





California State University
Northridge



At
CSUN...

- ◆ Administrators decided to **“answer the public call for accountability, without sacrificing institutional autonomy to the standardizations of testing”**
- ◆ They sought to impose a pilot model of value added assessment by asking faculty to collect student writing samples to be analyzed and interpreted student work in their Freshman and Senior years.
- ◆ Moreover, they have established a committee to impose assessment models throughout the institution.
- ◆ Administrators have not committed additional resources to address student and faculty needs for support, staff development, etc.



Positivism Manifests as an Ahistorical Perspective

- ◆ Students of color are the recipients of remedial education and do not have equal access to the standards
- ◆ Do not have equal access to experienced teachers
- ◆ Or access to college preparation or advance placement classes
- ◆ They do not graduate from high school in equal numbers to middle class white or Asian students and have a 35-60 % drop out rate
- ◆ Attend segregated schools



What do we do?

- ◆ Resist
- ◆ Critique
- ◆ Educate
- ◆ Dialogue
- ◆ Create
- ◆ Legislate
- ◆ Prepare





How do we counter the trend towards standardization?

- ◆ Problematize (Freire, 2005) the situation in order to deepen our understanding of the trends.
- ◆ Critically analyze university documents and policies and contextualize them within state, national and int'l standardization trends.
- ◆ Develop alliances with students, community, progressive colleagues and faculty unions to challenge standardization and oppressive assessment trends.



CHS SLO's Authentic Progressive Assessment (Furumoto and Montaña)



- ◆ Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Chicana/o Experience
- ◆ Acquire leadership skills
- ◆ Chicano/a experience in local and global society: Student engagement in social and political struggles, such as organizing in unions, participation and creation of community service projects or working with families and children to experience and change the world.
- ◆ Competency in oral, written and research skills: Student reflections, interactive journals, portfolios, position papers, seminar, dialogue circles, qualitative and quantitative & qualitative studies of social institutions, political organizations, case studies and action research projects.
- ◆ Creative and performance arts: Products/processes that allow students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding and abilities in creative and meaningful ways. Art projects and performances, Musical recitals in communities, Creative writing projects, Coffee table books, Children's literature, Read Across America.

CHS Assessment

Under guidance of Rosa Furumoto

- ◆ Dept-based assessment committee
- ◆ Faculty voice and participation
- ◆ Communication with faculty
- ◆ Support Assessment Liaison
- ◆ Establish department SLOs and vision
- ◆ Work smarter, not harder
- ◆ Faculty workshops and individual support
- ◆ Collaboration



Views assessment as a method of *assisting student learning*

- ◆ Assessment is connected to learning.
- ◆ It is a process of self-reflection
- ◆ A tool that evaluate student development and performance, while simultaneously improving teaching
- ◆ There are multiple measures of student learning, such as: artifacts or portfolios.
- ◆ Assessment provides a a holistic look at student learning and allow teachers to make adjustments and reflect on their teaching



Framing the Hyper-Accountability Movement Across the World

- ◆ The language around this basics movement is Orwellian as BIG BROTHER takes hold;
- ◆ In the US we have *No Child Left Behind*;
- ◆ In England it's *Every Child Matters*.
- ◆ In South Africa and Australia it's called *Outcomes Based Education*.
- ◆ The EU uses PISA scores. The Bologna Accords in Italy also state that schools need to better serve the needs of the market economy.



There are always exceptions to the global pattern: Some EU countries counter this movement

- ◆ Finland is using test scores in much more humane ways.
- ◆ Rather than punishing and excluding students, assessment is being used to help students who are not doing well, assess teacher & student effectiveness in non-punitive ways.
- ◆ Other EU countries are wary of this approach.
- ◆ See article in Handout.



***One on-going research project:
The Many Faces of Multicultural Education in
California and England:
Hyper-accountability, Neo-liberalism, and Resistance***

- ◆ From a critical multicultural perspective, what has been the impact of hyper-accountability mandates and neo-liberal socio-economic policy on
 - 1) teacher decisions and practices related to race, class, linguistic, and assessment, and
 - 2) inequities and inequalities in two working class schools—one in California, and the other in England?



The Many Faces of Multicultural Education in California and England: Methodology

- ◆ Interviews with 10 teachers in 2 school districts with similar demographics. (10+10=20 interviewees)
- ◆ Detailed recording of events and social interactions in teachers' classrooms.
- ◆ Visual observations, informal conversations talks teachers.*
- ◆ Quantitative written documents, including demographic data, test scores, curricula, government mandates.
- ◆ Discourse analysis that attempts to get beneath the word to uncover the teachers' discourses.



The Many Faces of Multicultural Education in California and England: Preliminary findings

- ◆ In both communities, teacher practice reflected a standardization of curriculum content and pressure to teach to “high stakes tests.”
- ◆ Teacher rhetoric suggested an aversion to the increased lack of academic freedom as a result of No Child Left Behind (US) and Every Child Matters (GB), but in practice there was little resistance.
- ◆ A “heroes and holidays” and “celebrations” approach to multicultural education was visible.




The Many Faces of Multicultural Education in California and England: Preliminary findings

- ◆ Where race and class were issues in the classroom, the “new racism” defined the discourse—the ideology position that we have moved beyond racism. Race was not considered a dynamic *current* social issue; a race neutral, color-blind approach was in. Current race (and class) hierarchies, inequities, and inequalities were not being named or challenged.
- ◆ Both communities discouraged critical dialogue about controversial issues.
- ◆ In California, teachers avoided, in particular, a critical dialogue about race and racism in the U.S.
- ◆ In England, the Humanities curriculum did include a *Persecution and Prejudice Curriculum* but this did not include critical dialogue about colonial practices of relevance to U.K. students of color.



Our Response

- **Serve the subaltern;**
- **Engage in post-colonial, critical multicultural activism**



More Critical Multicultural Pedagogies of Empowerment

- 1. Engaging in powerful class/race dialogues, using critical multicultural and critical race theory methodologies.**
- 2. Cultural portfolio**
- 3. Whiteness artifacts exercise**
- 4. “Funds of Knowledge”/Strength-based research (resiliency and resourcefulness)**
- 5. Community Scholars**
- 6. Culture Shock**
- 7. Helping kids from low-income backgrounds and their families understand “the culture of power”**
- 8. Developing critical multicultural social justice learning plans**

POWERFUL CLASS/RACE/LANGUAGE DIALOGUES USING CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY METHODOLOGIES.

1. Recognizing class/race/language bias in education;
2. Understanding the nature and effects of the polarization of wealth;
3. Developing a political vision and the ability to organize the poor into resistance;
4. Developing the knowledge and skills to escape poverty; [Kincheloe & Steinberg, *The Importance of Class in Multiculturalism*]
5. Recognizing ways in which the law has historically supported whiteness/neo-colonial, social-economic and political structures and practices [Critical Race Theory].

Cultural Portfolio [Lea, 2004]

- ◆ Designed to help student teachers/students become more aware of how public cultural scripts, especially those that constitute the hegemony of whiteness, shape their private ways of thinking, feeling, believing and acting about students, their families and communities, and about what should go on in the classroom and wider society. New awareness is helped by peer insight.
- ◆ Student teachers/students write personal life stories that are associated with key multicultural scripts [e.g. culture, race]. Stories are posted to online discussion forum.
- ◆ Peers respond to each others stories with questions and comments influenced by rich classroom dialogue, associated with selected readings and theoretical frameworks.
- ◆ Student unpack/peel back the layers of meaning associated with their personal life stories. They are better able to look at their original experiences from new and critical (to them) perspectives. Life stories become life histories (Goodson).

Whiteness Artifact Exercise

[Lea & Sims, 2008]

- ◆ After a rich classroom dialogue about how what constitutes “hegemony” and “the hegemony of whiteness,,: and how the latter is put into practice through social and cultural institutions including school. Student teachers then articulate the ways in which whiteness as hegemony is practiced in their classrooms.
- ◆ Student teachers are then encouraged to identify an artifact associated with the *every day practice of whiteness as hegemony*. This artifact is photographed or scanned. The images are placed in a power point. Students write captions for their slide.
- ◆ Finally, the power point is played back to the students, and the class dialogues about the ways in which whiteness as hegemony is often invisible to teachers and students, but needs to be interrupted in the school and classroom.

Funds of Knowledge/Strength-Based Research

(Luis Moll & Norma Gonzalez)

- ◆ In *Funds of knowledge* research, student teachers visit students' homes and communities as *learners* with the goal of becoming informed about the rich knowledge, skills, and expertise that reside there.
- ◆ Through *Strength Based research*, teachers investigate and publish information about the strengths, resiliency, and resourcefulness of low-income people that make it possible for them to survive.
- ◆ Knowledge learned from these research projects is used as the basis for rich, culturally relevant learning experiences/curricula that engage K-12 students in learning in critical and creative ways.
- ◆ In both projects, the focus is on the positive aspects of students' cultural backgrounds, rather than on "cultural deficit."



Community Scholars

[Ishibashi]

- ◆ **In this project, low-income and homeless families volunteer to share with teachers and student-teachers their rich funds of cultural knowledge, the nature of their resiliency, and their views on how institutional change can accommodate equity and social justice.**
- ◆ **Presentations are followed by dialogue.**
- ◆ **Teachers/student teachers use this knowledge as the basis for rich learning experiences for the P-12 students in their classroom.**
- ◆ **This project represents an antidote to deficit theory about low-income and homeless families.**

Culture Shock

[Lea and Sims, 2008]

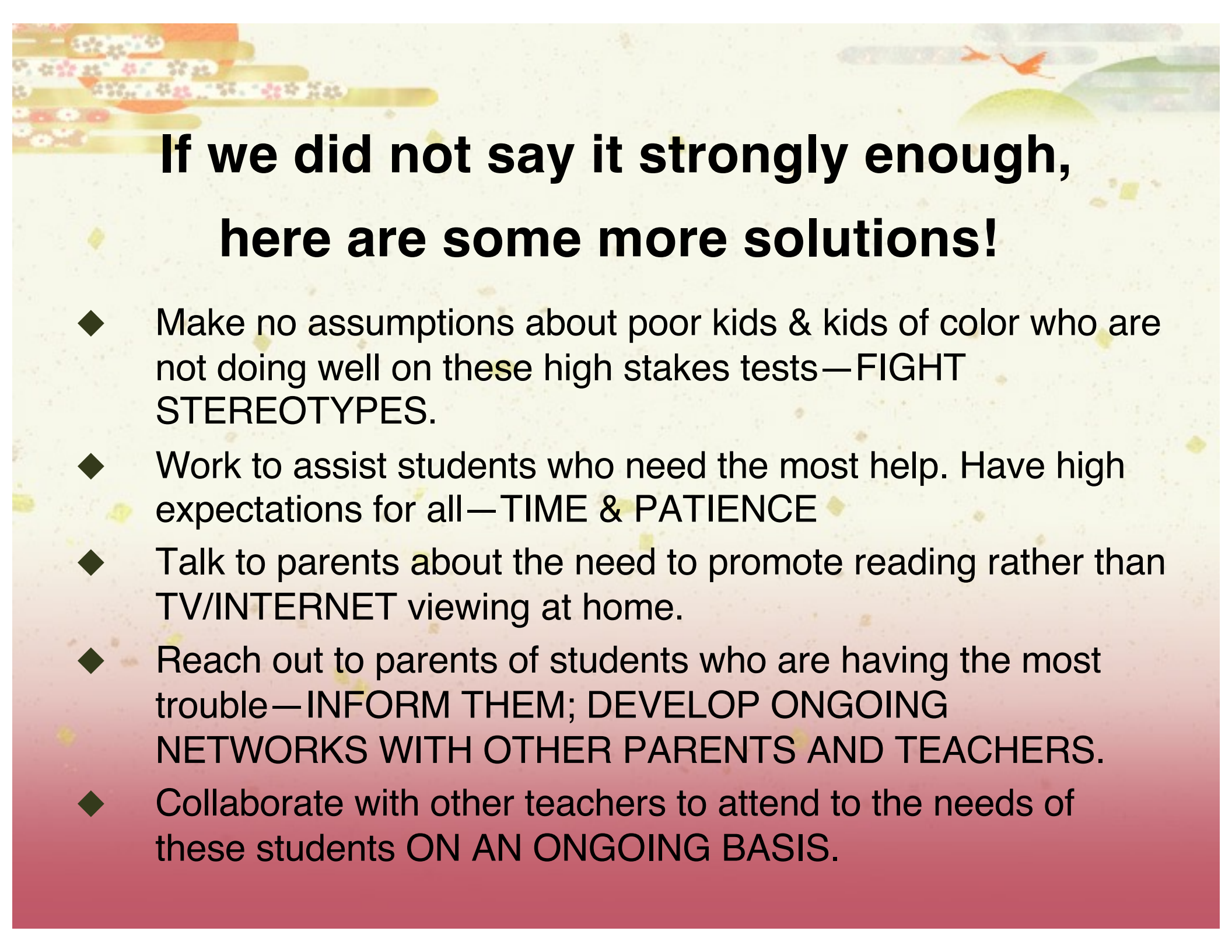
- ◆ **Designed for students teachers to experience and observe their reactions to the discomfoting feelings of disorientation to a new cultural world (i.e. many of the familiar cultural markers have moved or are absent)—*an experience familiar to many of their students.***
- ◆ **Student teachers place themselves in a culture shock situation.**
- ◆ **They describe their resulting emotions, and analyze the discourses/cultural scripts that influenced these emotions.**
- ◆ **If relevant, student teachers identify the practices of people in their culture shock situations that assuaged their discomfoting emotions.**
- ◆ **Finally, based on their experiences and critical multicultural, anti-racist theory, student teachers suggest ways in which they can mitigate the culture shock of their own students.**

Helping kids from low-income backgrounds and their families understand "the culture of power" [Delpit]

1. Understanding that issues of power are enacted in the classroom;
2. Recognizing that there are codes and rules for participating in the culture of power (ie. Standard English);
3. Understanding that the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of those who have power (ie. cultural scripts of whiteness hegemony & middle class value systems);
4. Being told explicitly the rules of the culture of power makes acquiring power easier;
5. Recognizing that those with less power are often most aware of the culture of power and its existence and implications.

Developing critical multicultural social justice learning plans

- ◆ Student teachers work within grade level groups to research critical multicultural teaching, learning and assessment strategies that address the needs of real children in classroom settings.
- ◆ They then develop social justice learning plans that meet state literacy and numeracy standards but use *culturally relevant and critical pedagogy and content*, including the discourses of culture and race/racism.
- ◆ Learning plans emphasize critical multicultural goals and assessments associated with critical multicultural teaching strategies.
- ◆ Student teachers integrate their learning plans into a mini-unit that teaches children about social justice, equity and caring.



**If we did not say it strongly enough,
here are some more solutions!**

- ◆ Make no assumptions about poor kids & kids of color who are not doing well on these high stakes tests—**FIGHT STEREOTYPES.**
- ◆ Work to assist students who need the most help. Have high expectations for all—**TIME & PATIENCE**
- ◆ Talk to parents about the need to promote reading rather than TV/INTERNET viewing at home.
- ◆ Reach out to parents of students who are having the most trouble—**INFORM THEM; DEVELOP ONGOING NETWORKS WITH OTHER PARENTS AND TEACHERS.**
- ◆ Collaborate with other teachers to attend to the needs of these students **ON AN ONGOING BASIS.**



More Solutions

- ◆ Turn the 'pyramid' upside down: In line with postcolonial theory, help those who are on the downside of power the most; the poor, the marginalized, new immigrants, and English Language learners,
- ◆ Take time to do ongoing, authentic, non-punitive assessment of those students in most need.
- ◆ Use a critical SOCIAL JUSTICE multicultural curriculum that speaks to the interests and needs of the students in most need.



And More.....

- ◆ Work with teacher's unions, parents, social justice organizations, others who are interested in providing a culturally relevant curriculum for ethnically, linguistically diverse, and poor students.
- ◆ Step-by-step we need to turn back this regressive hyper-accountability, deficit movement.