Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: Case Studies of Suburban School Districts

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Background/Context: *The last two reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act established a policy mandate for districts to take action to reduce high rates of minority overrepresentation in special education.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *The overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in special education suggests a convergence of two distinct processes: (1) assumptions of cultural deficit that result in unclear or misguided conceptualizations of disability and (2) the subsequent labeling of students in special education through a pseudoscientific placement process. This article explores how the social construct of the "normal child" became racialized through the special education referral and classification process, and subsequently produces disproportionality.*

Setting: *This research was conducted in two multiracial suburban school districts in New York State that were identified as having an overrepresentation of students of color.*

Population/Participants/Subjects: *Participants in the study consist of teachers and administrators within the two identified districts.*

Intervention/Program/Practice: *Intensive technical assistance was provided to these districts to identify the root causes of disproportionality and was subsequently followed by customized professional development. Three overarching activities of technical assistance were: observing in classrooms in each of the school districts; providing root cause analyses of disproportionality; and providing culturally responsive professional development.*

Research Design: *This research used mixed methods in collating district data, conducting technical assistance sessions with districts to identify the factors contributing to disproportionality, and creating 3-year professional development plans to address overrepresentation.*

In addition, researchers facilitated culturally responsive professional development to targeted groups of practitioners on topics related to improving teacher and district effectiveness in meeting the academic needs of children of color.
Findings/Results: *Findings were: (1) cultural deficit thinking in educators' construction of student abilities; (2) the existence of inadequate institutional safeguards for struggling students; and (3) attempts at addressing disproportionality often result in institutional "fixes" but not necessarily changes in the beliefs of education professionals.*
Conclusions/Recommendations: *The implementation of a culturally responsive framework can produce a shift in the special education placement process and lead to a reduction in disproportionality rates. Of note is confirmation that teacher–student interactions that begin the procedures triggering disproportionality are mired in teachers' cultural deficit thinking. However, although teachers' beliefs about students may change extremely slowly, effective school practices can interrupt the influence of deficit thinking.*

The educational phenomenon now widely referred to as "disproportionality"— overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in special education or discipline referrals—is not new. In 1968, Lloyd Dunn's seminal article, "Special Education for the Mildly Mentally Retarded: Is Much of It Justifiable?" highlighted the fact that students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were overrepresented in special classes for children deemed to have mild mental retardation. Since the enactment of Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975, the issue of disproportionality has been raised and identified by civil rights advocates, education researchers, and policy makers as a potential violation of educational opportunity and an obstacle to educational equity for all students. EHA required all public schools accepting federal funds to ensure equal access to education for children with physical and mental disabilities. Over the past four decades, Dunn's research has been expanded upon by several researchers who have used a variety of research strategies and data sources, including the national school database (compiled by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights), to demonstrate that disproportionality continues to be a nationwide phenomenon and, in some cases, a violation of civil rights (e.g., Finn, 1982; Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982; National Research Council, 2002). To address the tendency toward racial imbalances in special education placements in school districts throughout the country, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs has placed three indicators in the State Performance Plan, which requires every state to identify districts where disproportionality may be occurring and to devise a strategy for remedying this issue.

In terms of long-term outcomes, the disproportionate tendency for Black and Latino students to be classified as students with disabilities is

associated with a variety of detrimental effects. In many cases, students affected by disproportionality are less likely to receive access to rigorous and full curriculum and are therefore less likely to be eligible for admissions to a postsecondary institution (Fierros & Conroy, 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2006). Research also shows that many of these students face diminished employment and postsecondary opportunities over the course of their lifetimes (Harry & Klingner; National Research Council, 2002). From a social-emotional perspective, students receiving special education services typically have limited interactions with academically mainstreamed peers and often face a social stigmatization associated with being labeled intellectually, physically, or emotionally disabled (Gartner & Lipsky, 1999; National Research Council). To compound these issues, once students are placed in special education classes, there is a high probability that they will continue to be in special education classes for the remainder of their elementary and secondary career (Harry & Klingner).[1] Marginalization from their peers often has negative effects on self-esteem and may reduce the likelihood that special education students will be able to successfully integrate into the larger society as adults.

Given that special education is supposed to result in access to enhanced educational services, the reason that disproportionality has increasingly been regarded as a problem and potential civil rights violation requires explanation. After all, each student who has been identified for special education services undergoes a diagnostic learning assessment and is required by law to have an individualized educational plan. With such careful attention to their learning needs, it is reasonable to expect that that a special education classification would provide some amount of advantage. In some (but not all) instances, however, special education results in little more than ability segregation, with minimal benefits for students who are excluded from general education because of "disabilities." Available evidence indicates that students who enter special education typically make only small (if any) gains in academic proficiency (Gottlieb & Alter, 1994). At the same time, students who are classified as disabled are more likely to be socially and academically isolated from nonclassified peers (National Research Council, 2002) and are more likely to report feelings of loneliness and concerns about being disliked by nonclassified students (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2007). Moreover, classified students receive limited access to rigorous academic curriculum and consequently experience diminished chances for secondary and postsecondary school completions (Harry & Klingner, 2006; National Research Council). For Black and Latino students, these effects are even greater given that they are more likely to be placed in more restrictive classroom environments—effectively isolating

them from their peers in general education classrooms (Fierros & Conroy, 2002). Losen (2002) described the harmful effects of racial imbalances in special education. He argued that disproportionality places Black and Latino students in triple jeopardy—first in their increased likelihood of being misclassified as disabled, then in their greater likelihood of being placed in the most restrictive settings (classroom settings with little or no interaction with general education students), and then in their greater likelihood of receiving poor-quality services within those settings.

It is important to note that there is no compelling "objective" explanation for the overrepresentation of minority students in special education. Research suggests that if schools implemented practices that were fair and free of bias, the overall representation of minority students in special education would be proportional to their representation in the larger student population. When this is not the case, research suggests that disproportionality may be related to social and political inequalities that operate in school districts and in society as a whole (Artiles, 1998; Blanchett, 2006; Patton, 1998). In this respect, the artificial boundaries that separate "normal" students from their disabled peers are in effect gerrymandered boundaries that effectively favor White students and serve as yet another means through which schools promote the interests of the most privileged students while undermining the interests of culturally and linguistically diverse students. For this reason, civil rights advocates have argued for several years that the mere presence of disproportionality in the educational landscape poses concerns about the relationship between race and judgments about student ability, and, more broadly, school equity (Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989), and thus represents a critical issue in the field of disability studies.

CURRENT DISPROPORTIONALITY PATTERNS

Using a relative risk ratio analysis of current data[2] shows that disproportionality is still a real problem. Overall, Native American and African American students have a slightly higher risk of being classified as having a disability; moreover, this risk increases drastically when looking at specific disability categories (see Table 1), as well as when comparing the risk of being classified with a soft (or judgmental) disability compared with a hard disability category that is tied more closely to a medical diagnosis. Native American students are nearly 1 1/2 times more likely to be classified as having specific learning disabilities (SLDs) as compared with all other students. African American students are more than twice as likely to be classified as being emotionally disturbed (ED) as compared with all

other students, and nearly 2 1/3 times more likely to be classified as being mentally retarded (MR) as compared with all other students. At the same time, White students are more than 1 1/2 times more likely to be classified autistic as compared with all other students. It should also be noted that all racial and ethnic groups have similar risks of being classified as having a visual impairment or hearing impairment.

Table 1. Relative Risk of Being Classified as Disabled, 2007

Disability Category	National				State			
	Native American	African American	Latino	White	Native American	African American	Latino	White
All Special education classifications	1.30	1.28	0.84	1.12	1.31	1.29	1.12	0.93
Specific learning disabilities	1.48	1.29	1.08	0.95	1.52	1.31	1.21	0.89
Emotional disturbance	1.36	2.02	0.50	1.08	1.72	2.74	1.04	0.54
Mental retardation	1.11	2.33	0.67	0.81	1.09	2.05	1.27	0.55
Speech and language	1.15	0.89	0.92	1.27	1.12	1.16	1.77	0.66
Autism	0.62	0.82	0.54	1.68	1.07	0.93	0.64	1.50

   In different geographic regions of the United States, racial and ethnic groups experience disproportionality at varying rates (Parish, 2002). Thus, variations in patterns of identification and placement have compelled researchers to localize their work to specific geographic contexts in order to apprehend the particular dynamics at play between policy and practice. Looking specifically at New York State, African American and Native American students are at greater risk of being classified as having a disability, and both groups of students have increased risks of being classified as having a specific learning disability. African American students in New York State are more than 2 1/2 times as likely to be classified as being ED compared with all other students, and twice as likely to be classified as being MR compared with all other students. Additionally, Latino students are more than 1 1/2 times more likely to be classified as having a speech or language disability as compared with all other students.

Several studies have pointed out that although the process of placement is shrouded in scientific practice and procedure, given that students are tested and the results are generally carefully documented, ethnographic research carried out in schools has shown that the placement of students in special education is based on the assumptions and beliefs of several individuals who, in their formal and informal evaluation of students, construct notions of student ability. The ways in which these individuals conceptualize disability maintains an inherently divisive conception of normality—equating it with ability. As such, the disproportionate representation of Black and Latino students in special education in school districts suggests a convergence of two distinct conceptualizations that occur in school districts, whereby cultural deficit thinking and unclear or misguided conceptualization of disability become driving forces in this process. In this respect, cultural deficit thinking has the effect of pathologizing academic and behavioral discrepancies of low-income and minority students relative to White middle-class students—labeling them as disabled—which are reaffirmed by the special education placement process.

This study is based on a statewide project on disproportionality funded by the New York State Department of Education (2004–2009). This study highlights the root causes of disproportionality in two suburban school districts in different geographic regions of New York state, providing a cross-case analysis of the processes underlying special education disproportionality. Moreover, this study provides a particular focus on the confluence of concepts of race/ethnicity and ability in demarcating the constructed boundary that separates normalcy from disability. In doing so, this study highlights the role of cultural deficit thinking in the construct of student ability and the resulting disproportionality. This study also discusses how, in implementing a culturally responsive framework within these districts, there was a shift toward creating institutional safeguards for struggling learners that have resulted in the reduction of disproportionality but that have been relatively ineffective in the seemingly implacable deficit thinking that underlies the referral of Black and Latino students to special education.

Harry and Klingner (2006) outlined a broad and thorough explanation of the causes of disproportionality, locating the problem within three phases of the special education process— "children's opportunity to learn prior to referral, the decision making processes that led to special education placement, and the quality of the special education placement" (p. 173). This study focuses on the first of these phases of the referral process; it demonstrates how children's opportunities to learn are affected by teachers' perceptions of their students' ability, particularly

Black and Latino struggling learners, and how schools structure support services and programs to meet the needs of their struggling learners—more specifically, how perceptions of race/class/culture are superimposed onto ideas about ability and disability and how school structures can interrupt this process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW YORK STATE PROJECT

In response to the large number of districts experiencing disproportionality, the New York State Education Department (NYSED), under Chapter 405 Laws of 1999 of the New York State education law, began to cite public school districts in New York for having an overrepresentation of Black or Latino students classified as disabled. As part of this law, districts were given the opportunity to take part in a 5-year project conducted by the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality (TACD) at New York University's Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (Metro Center). TACD provided intensive technical assistance to these districts to identify the root causes of disproportionality in the districts, followed by professional development and additional technical assistance to address the districts' identified root causes.

   Through the course of the project, TACD maintained three overarching activities of technical assistance: (1) observing in classrooms in each of the school districts, (2) providing root cause analyses of disproportionality, and (3) providing culturally responsive professional development. Organizing school districts' activities involved receiving achievement, special education, and district enrollment data by race/ethnicity from the NYSED and school districts in order to generate an initial data report for each district. Providing root cause analyses involved conducting six technical assistance sessions with each district to identify the factors contributing to disproportionality and to help create a 3-year professional development plan for addressing their disproportionality rates. Finally, providing culturally responsive professional development modules involved conducting professional development sessions with targeted groups of practitioners on topics related to improving teacher and district effectiveness in meeting the academic needs of children of color.

METHODS

This article focuses on the root causes of disproportionality identified in two suburban school districts, the strategies they employed to address their root causes, and the implications of those strategies on the discourse of disability in education. Quantitatively, the TACD project

compiled district demographic data, special education classification data, and referral data yearly, starting with the 2003–2004 school year. These data were reported to the Metro Center by participating districts and from NYSED and consisted of the following: (1) the total district enrollment by race/ethnicity, (2) the total enrollment of students classified as disabled by race/ethnicity, (3) the total enrollment of students classified in each Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) disability category by race/ethnicity, (4) the total number of students referred to the school's committee on special education (CSE) by race/ethnicity, and (5) the total number of students recommended for special education classification by the CSE by race/ethnicity.

In addition to the quantitative data, a large amount of qualitative data was collected over 4 years (2005–2009). These data consisted of postsession evaluations collected from more than 40 hours of training sessions provided per year; focus group and individual interviews with individuals from a 20-member district team; surveys of teachers and administrators; and analyses of documents related to district policies and practices.

Postsession evaluations. Data were collected after each technical assistance and professional development session from session participants via postsession evaluations. The evaluations contained open- and closed-ended questions regarding session satisfaction. This allowed the participants to respond directly to information presented or discussed in each session and to provide anonymous feedback.

Focus groups and interviews. At the end of each school year, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with key district personnel. The focus group and interview protocols contained open-ended questions regarding session satisfaction and what challenges they faced in identifying and addressing the root causes of disproportionality, and we wanted to obtain feedback for enhancing sessions.

Surveys. The end-of-year surveys captured a retrospective on policy, practice, and belief changes. The surveys contained open- and closed-ended questions and were administered to every participant—nearly 300 individuals.

Document evidence of district policies and practices. The project collected evidence of policy and practice changes related to disproportionality. The documents included new board policies regarding Response to Intervention (RtI), adopted referral forms, approved interventions, and so on.

Process activity notes. The project conducted at least one process activity during each training session and collected information regarding district processes and the beliefs surrounding these processes.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CASES: TWO SUBURBAN DISTRICTS WITH DISPROPORTIONALITY

In examining the root causes of disproportionality, this article focuses on two suburban school districts in New York State: Carroll School District and Hannover School District (pseudonyms). Although the problem of disproportionality is ubiquitous, several school districts experience acute levels of disproportionality, and in New York State, it is primarily in suburban districts. Between the 2004–2005 and 2006–2007 school years, Black or Latino students in 90 school districts were twice as likely as all other students to be classified as disabled, and Black and Latino students in 44 school districts were more than 4 times as likely as all other students to be classified in a specific disability category (ED, SLD, SI [speech or language impairment], OHI [other health impairment], MR). During the 2006–2007 school year in New York State, Black or Latino students in 31 school districts were twice as likely as all other students to be classified as disabled, and Black and Latino students in 18 school districts were more than 4 times as likely as all other students to be classified in a specific disability category (ED, SLD, SI, OHI, MR). The majority of these school districts are located in inner-ring suburban communities surrounding medium to large urban centers. It is important to note that none of New York State's large cities (New York City, Yonkers, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany) was ever cited for the overrepresentation of Black or Latino students in special education or the overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in a specific disability category.[3] This, of course, does not imply that urban districts are immune from other issues of normalization; these school districts often highly segregated by school, and even within schools, through tracking.

Both Carroll and Hannover are located in suburban communities outside large cities in New York State, making them typical of the school districts that were cited by NYSED for disproportionality. Each district was cited under New York State's Chapter 405 law, which used chi-square analyses to determine whether the predicted levels of Black or Latino students in special education were statistically significant from the actual levels of Black or Latino students.[4]

In examining these two school districts, looking at both how they understood disproportionality (how they initially explained its occurrence) and how they successfully reduced the extent of disproportionality in their districts, this article aims to provide a more textured understanding of why it occurs and, in doing so, provide additional insights into how policies, practices, and beliefs interact to cause disproportionality. Moreover, through a close examination of how these

districts sought to address disproportionality, we hope to better define the role of culturally responsive educational practices in reducing disproportionality.

Carroll

The Carroll School District is a small school district, serving 2,500 students. The district comprises predominantly White students, who, at the start of the project (2004–2005), constituted nearly 75% of the student population. Black students were the next largest demographic group (20%), followed by Asian and Pacific Islander students (3%) and Latino students (2%). In the 1998–1999 school year, however, White students constituted more than 90% of the student enrollment, whereas the Black student population constituted less than 7%. Thus, in the time leading up to their involvement in the project, Carroll experienced a significant demographic shift, with a decline in their White student enrollment, coupled with increases in their Black and Latino student enrollment.

In the 2004–2005 school year, Carroll began the project with an overall classification rate of 13.56%, meaning that more than 13% of their overall district population was classified as disabled (see Appendix A). Comparatively, more than 16% of Black students and more than 23% of Latino students were classified as disabled (see Appendixes B and C). This meant that Black students were 1 1/4 (1.24) times more likely to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix E), and Latino students were nearly 1 3/4 (1.70) times more likely to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix F).

Looking specifically at the judgmental categories, more than 9% of their overall district population was classified as ED, LD, or SI (see Appendix H). Comparatively, 12% of the Black student population and more than 21% of the Latino students were classified as ED, LD, or SI (see Appendixes I and J). This meant that Black students were more than 1 1/4 (1.31) times as likely to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix L), and Latino students were nearly 2 1/4 (2.23) times as likely to be classified as ED, LD, or SI as compared with all other students (see Appendix M).

Over the course of 5 years working with the TACD project, their rates of disproportionality were reduced. Carroll decreased their overall classification rate from the 2005–2006 school year to the 2008–2009 school year, falling from 14.95% to 12.83% (see Appendix A). When looking at the classification rate disaggregated by race and ethnicity from 2003 to 2008–2009, it was apparent that to some extent, their overall classification rate decreases were due to decreases in the classification of minority

students. During this period, Carroll had a modest decrease in the classification rate of Black students (-14.46%; see Appendix B) and a significant decrease in the classification of Latino students (-25.33%; see Appendix C). Between the 2005–2006 school year and the 2008–2009 school year, there was little change in the relative risk of Black students in the district being classified as students with disabilities (see Appendix E) and a slight decrease in the relative risk of Latino students in the district being classified as students with disabilities (see Appendix F).

In looking solely at judgmental categories—ED, LD, and SI—between 2005–2006 and 2008–2009, Carroll had both an overall reduction in their classification of students in these areas (see Appendix H) and large reductions in the rates at which Black and Latino students were classified as ED, LD, or SI (see Appendixes I and J). In 2005–2006, Black students in Carroll had more than a 1 1/2 times greater risk of being classified as ED, LD, or SI as compared with all other students. From 2005–2006 to 2008–2009, Carroll showed a nearly 10% reduction in the relative risk of Black students being classified as ED, LD, and SI (see Appendix L).

Hannover

The Hannover School District is a medium-sized school district serving 8,500 students. The district comprises predominantly White students, who, at the start of the project (2004–2005), constituted nearly 50% of the student population. Latino students were the next largest demographic group (35%), followed by Black students (12%) and Asian students (3%). Although their district demographics were relatively stable over the previous school years, the relative stability of the district enrollment masked a larger community demographic shift in the town of Hannover—that is, a significant growth in the Latino population, from 7,000 residents in 1990 to an estimated 12,000 in 2006.

From a disproportionality perspective, Hannover began the project in the 2004–2005 school year with an overall classification rate of 15.74%—significantly higher than New York State's average classification (see Appendix A). Comparatively, nearly 18% of Black students and nearly 17% of Latino students were classified as disabled (see Appendixes B and C). This meant that Black students were more than 1 1/4 (1.29) times more likely to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix E), and Latino students were only slightly more likely (1.11) to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix F).

Looking specifically at the judgmental categories, more than 12.78% of their overall district population was classified as ED, LD, or SI (see

Appendix H). Comparatively, more than 16% of Black students and more than 14% of Latino students were classified as ED, LD, or SI (see Appendixes I and J). This meant that Black students were more than 1 1/4 (1.34) times more likely to be classified as disabled as compared with all other students (see Appendix L), and Latino students were nearly 1 1/4 (1.21) times more likely to classified as ED, LD, or SI as compared with all other students (Appendix M).

During the 5 years involved with the TACD project, Hannover decreased in their overall classification rate from the 2005–2006 school year to the 2008–2009 school year, falling from 16.31% to 11.99% (see Appendix A). When looking at the classification rate disaggregated by race and ethnicity from 2003 to 2008–2009, it was apparent that the overall classification rate decreases were due in part to significant decreases in the classification of minority students. During this time, Hannover had a significant decrease in the classification rate of Black students (-29.64%) (see Appendix B) and a significant decrease in the classification of Latino students (-23.86%) (see Appendix C). Between the 2005–2006 school year and the 2008–2009 school year, there was little change in the relative risk of Black students or Latino students in the districts being classified as students with disabilities (see Appendixes E and F).

Examining judgmental categories—ED, LD, and SI—between 2005–2006 and 2008–2009, Hannover had made significant reductions in their overall classification rate of ED, LD, and SI students (see Appendix H) and in their classification of Black students, Latino students, and White students in these areas (see Appendixes I, J, and K). Nevertheless, from 2005–2006 to 2008–2009, they demonstrated no real change in the relative risk of Black or Latino students in the districts being classified as ED, LD, or SI (see Appendixes L, M, and N). This was most likely because each group experienced declines in the individual risk.[5]

ROOT CAUSE PATTERNS IN DISPROPORTIONALITY BETWEEN CASE STUDY DISTRICTS

As noted, the TACD project involved a yearlong root cause data analysis process in which districts participated in training sessions focused on reviewing various data related to critical policy and practice areas. The key areas of data collected involved the following: referral to classification rates by race/ethnicity and gender, referral process steps, list of approved interventions, referral forms (by school buildings), core reading and math group outlines, and instructional support team membership list and process activities. Our examination of these data, as well as the project implementation data noted in the methods section, revealed

various root causes of disproportionality, with two key causes across both districts. (1) Deficit thinking related to conceptions of race and socioeconomic status serves as a driving force behind the decision to refer. In many cases, disability is a socially constructed category, and the decision to refer to special education is informed by biases related to race and class (i.e., racism and classism). (2) There are inadequate institutional safeguards to prevent referrals and to provide teachers with assistance in meeting the needs of struggling learners.

Cultural deficit thinking in ability construction: The belief that poverty influences cognitive ability

It is no surprise that disproportionality begins with the initial teacher referral (Andrews, Wisniewski, & Mulick, 1997). Research on the social construction of academic ability has demonstrated that teachers form judgments about student ability through their interactions with students, rather than by relying on analyses of their academic work (e.g., Mehan, 1980; Rist, 1970). This research highlights the importance of the how teachers come to view student ability and how these views are mediated by interpretations. Mehan explained that to be considered competent, students must have both academic knowledge and engage in appropriate behaviors—what he called "interactional form"—to demonstrate their academic knowledge. In this sense, teachers interpret students' interactional forms, and these interpretations are predicated on each teacher's cultural beliefs related to what he or she regards as appropriate interactional forms. These interpretations of interactional forms, however, are by no means a neutral or objective assessment. Rather, the judgments teachers make about students are informed by their own perceptions of what they regard as appropriate classroom behavior. The cultural significance of these interpretations is inherent in both the formal and informal aspects of the assessment process and invariably has an influence on how teachers perceive students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Cooper, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999). A substantial body of research has shown that teachers can easily misinterpret their students' interactional forms, form inappropriate and incomplete judgments, and not recognize the funds of knowledge that students possess. As a result of this incongruence, Black and Latino students who possess academic knowledge and ability but are unable to display it in the manner deemed appropriate by their teacher may be more likely to be viewed as incompetent, incorrigible, or learning disabled. This does not mean that teachers are either overtly racist (though there may be instances in which this is indeed the case); rather, bias may be operative

at a less overt, less conscious level. Nevertheless, the mere fact that the race and class of students are often predictors of the likelihood that they will be referred to special education to remedy a perceived cognitive or behavioral problem suggests that subjective judgments related to the race and class of teachers may be a factor informing perceptions.

When asked about why Black and Latino students perform academically at lower levels, teachers often espouse cultural deficit thinking (see Fine, 1991; Lipman, 1998)—citing deficiencies in students' home lives, socioeconomic status, or culture that they believe impede the ability of those students to learn. Similarly, when looking at how students enter the special education system, teachers explain disproportionality through cultural deficit thinking. This cultural deficit thinking is evident in how districts talk about the root causes of disproportionality.

As Table 2 illustrates, when first presented with the news that the district had been cited by NYSED because of the presence of disproportionality, a vast majority of district team members in each case reacted by expressing a version of cultural deficit theory. In September 2005, during an opening session on disproportionality, the district personnel in attendance were asked to write down the factors they felt contributed to the disproportionality citation—we labeled these as their district "hunches." In Carroll and Hannover, practitioners overwhelmingly identified poverty or conditions related to poverty as underlying causes of the patterns of disproportionality. These "hunches" are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Explanations of Disproportionality by School Personnel in District Case Studies

"Low-income status."
"Lack of books at home."
"Lack of belief in education among the students and parents."
"Connections in achievement gap between lower socioeconomic and higher groups."
"Correlation of Head Start students and special ed. classified. Correlation of poverty to classification."
"The federal statistics of programs given through the administration for the disenfranchised poor. When the Bush administration funds programs for poor and children, some issues will disappear."
"They bring ghetto to the school."
"They don't speak English."

Other researchers studying this phenomenon have obtained similar findings (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Kohler, Henderson, & Wu, 2006). The teachers in both Carroll and Hannover and the teachers in the Skiba et al. study explained student ability and disability in much the same way: by attributing students' failure to presumed deficiencies in their socioeconomic status, families, and cultures.

It is also important to note that although the educators in the two districts where this work was carried out were typically unable to explain how poverty might cause a learning disability, they nonetheless readily cited it as a cause. This indicates that the cultural deficit thinking may be grounded in broader and previously unchallenged or unexplored cultural conceptions.

It is also worth noting that staff members were typically reluctant to attribute the cause of disabilities to race, and instead used socioeconomics and culture. Undoubtedly this may be related to a fear that such an argument might lead one to be called a racist, and the heightened sensitivity related to the notion of inherent biological differences related to race and intelligence. Despite the sensitivity, the overwhelming majority of those who had been referred to special education were low-income children of color. The conflation of race and class therefore made it nearly impossible to avoid the question of race. As one Carroll staff member explained, the majority of the barriers associated with recognizing and addressing disproportionality had to do with the attitudes of staff, because there was "a lot of resistance to acknowledging that there was a race issue."

This tangled combination of cultural bias, racial stereotyping, confused logic concerning the relationship between poverty and learning disabilities, and fear about being accused of racism contributed to the difficulties that each district experienced in confronting the issue of disproportionality. The relationships between these beliefs, education policy, and teacher practice are central to unpacking how notions of academic ability are constructed and how these in turn contribute to the overrepresentation of racial/ethnic minority students in special education. In other words, every district constructs and employs notions of what it means to be academically successful in their district; however, these notions are also rooted in cultural frameworks that are based on the experiences of the dominant group. In Carroll and Hannover, the presence of bias in constructed notions of ability was not problematic until the presence of Black and Latino students increased substantially. In Carroll, this "othering" was continual and at times driven by the overriding and growing presence of Black students. In a focus group with teachers, several teachers commented about the fear that developed as a result of the mere presence of Black students:

> Teacher: And I think the fear is still there. I mean, you have to figure the kids are just as big a fear. I mean, that's—
> Researcher: So teachers are fearful?
> Teacher: Exactly, the teachers.

Researcher: Okay.
Teacher: There's a fear. There's a fear of an overload of Black people at one time, too. You know, if there's too many in one setting, the fear sets in. I mean, it's like—and then I'm the only Black teacher. So it's oh, my God, what do we do?

Many of these fears are tied to practitioners, particularly White practitioners who have not previously engaged in conversations about race and class. In Hannover, during a focus group at the end of the first year of implementing their action plan (2006–2007), members of the district team described the frustration with some of the fear espoused by their colleagues.

I think, one thing, I mean obviously, poverty is a big issue in America, it's not just Hannover, it's America, and it's getting worse and we all know that. So, these issues are not going to go away, and I think what has happened, to sort of answer your question, yes, what has happened is, the school environments like this where you used to get good kids with good parents and a few losers here and there. And the teachers can do their thing on the board and the groups get along, and everybody kind of. So now, you kind of can't be that same type of teacher, and so that's one issue. The other issue is, the racism issue. Which, I have never heard anyone bring that up, but um, that is something that the 405 [the original New York State law that required school districts to examine special education disproportionality] has kind of brought up. What is racism play into it? And I think that is something that is difficult for a White person to stand in front of a White staff and say, "Are any of ya'll racists?" when we know people to this day use the N word still. I saw a girl crying in the hallway. I've seen situations at my high school because I'm in that hallway, and I guess my point is, that, inside of all this where teachers can't teach, there is still that resentment of what's going on today. I do believe that if 405 weren't here, it would just grow, the resentment.

The prevalence of this fear and inability to talk about race made the presence of our project welcome news for staff members who struggled with the elephant in the room.

Black parents, poor Black people are frustrated with [Branch] schools.[6] They know their kids aren't educated, they weren't

educated, their kids aren't educated. When I look into the class-rooms at Hannover, and I see Black kids working, I am like "praise the lord!" So, I know people are frustrated, but at the same time, as a community, isn't it better to have them educated than robbing you? So how do you create a system—and it's not just Black kids, there a lot of poor White kids who are unedu-cated here too and poor White parents who don't do the right thing and aren't available. So how do we, as middle-class edu-cated people, create a system for people we are not really famil-iar with? And I don't think that discussion would be had in that way without 405 here.

These notions of fear about racial/ethnic minority students and class also appeared in the ways in which district personnel assigned the cause of disproportionality to parental involvement. In Hannover and Carroll, there was a continual blaming of parents of struggling students as key cul-prits in the minimal academic ability of their children. In a focus group with teachers, one teacher talked about "getting caught up" in the blam-ing of parents:

They probably don't—the one thing I will say that we talk at the elementary building. . . . And I'm even, you know, I get caught up in it. And it is what to do with them at home? You know, that's the problem that we have. . . if education is a priority at home, I mean, that's your most important resource. And if they're not buying into it, if they're not telling them at home, you need to do this, you need to do that, how are you going to make that—? That's one thing we do hear from our teachers in the elementary level. So they're not taking ownership of their child's education.

This teacher goes on to state that some of these parents have also had bad schooling experiences or "ghosts from the classroom" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003), and it is their job as teachers to make them believe in education.

I still say that's a huge important part. Because my whole thing is that I think some of these students that have difficulty in school, I'm not saying all of them, but some their parents come from that type of situation themselves. They're not coming in because school's a bad place. They don't want to go back to a bad mem-ory. That wasn't a good memory for them. And they do not want to go back to something like that. To try to get them to under-

stand that you know what? You know, it's not a bad place. We're here to help you. We're not here to judge you, say that you're doing wrong. We want to show you what you can do to make it better for your child, because we always sit there and say God, you know, why wouldn't you want your child to have a better life than you, right? Wrap your brain around that, can't understand it, but it's sometimes—it's not the easy yes or no, like they're trying to do this on purpose or they don't care. They just don't have the avenue or the way to get the job done. And how to get them into school is the big thing.

Such beliefs also maintained an *us* and *them* dynamic. In other words, the presence or arrival of racial/ethnic minority families was also framed as a need to adopt the culture of the district; otherwise, they were not seen as an "us." One teacher exemplified this notion:

African American parents have a trust issue with the school district, which, I think is kind of hypocritical, because you're thinking, why would you move out here if you're afraid or don't trust, you know, administrators or just the teachers. Or, if you don't have the trust there, why would you go to their district? However, I think that we have to really try to do more things to get, um, the parents here. And in and on a positive note, instead of when they're coming to pick up their child because their child is in trouble or, um. Cause it's very unfortunate, like I know for the high school, most of our behavior, um, you know, maybe violent attitude it's from our African American population. So it's like, you would love to try to keep doing things to get the parents involved so that they're not coming to pick them up that day. You know.

These beliefs about race and class play out in the way these districts construct ability. This is clearly demonstrated in Ray Rist's (1970) analysis of elementary school classrooms in which he highlighted how students were grouped into different leveled reading groups based on their teacher's perceptions of their dress, behavior, verbal ability, and social status, relative to her normal reference. Although some of these beliefs have academic implications, several of them provide no real grounding for understanding academic knowledge or interactional form. Rist further explained that the process of grouping begins with teachers having preconceived notions of what characteristics a student must possess in order to be successful.

Similarly, benign student characteristics appear to be used in teachers' decisions to refer students to special education; physical characteristics such as being big for one's age (Andrews, Wisniewski, & Mulick, 1997) can increase a student's likelihood of being thought of as having lower academic performance, and cultural affects, such as the way that a student walks, influence the extent to which observers perceive students as aggressive (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). With this in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that teachers' initial belief that poverty is a primary contributor to disproportionality may be part of a self-fulfilling prophecy—that is, the belief that poor students are more likely to be disabled may contribute to teachers' lower perceptions of those students' potential and ability.

Thus, even though Harry and Klingner (2006) "could not document a pattern of individual ethnic bias" (p. 178), there is evidence that in Hannover and Carroll, ethnic bias in the form of teachers' collective cultural deficit thinking is apparent in schools; based on research on the outcomes of deficit thinking, this thinking may significantly contribute to formation of disproportionality. The cases of Carroll and Hannover demonstrate that cultural deficit thinking around students can preempt or overshadow ability construction. In this regard, the construction of disability that begins the special education process (prompts teacher referrals to special education) takes on a more pernicious racial and socioeconomic bent, thus resulting in disproportionality.

Moreover, the evidence of cultural deficit thinking as present in these cases informs how Blanchett's (2006) "subsystems of American public education" (p. 25), as discussed in the opening article, are mirrored within school districts, through a translation of race into ability. Within these districts, normalization of ability around White middle-class interactional forms creates systems in schools whereby being non-White (often also viewed as poor) precludes a student from being "normal," and he or she is thus not as "able" as his or her White peers. Coupled with lower academic knowledge, these students are thus situated even further from the norm—toward a disability classification. This creates de jure racial segregation in these districts, masked in a more palatable (though at times equally troublesome) ability segregation.

Poor institutional safeguards for struggling students

Apparent across most of the school districts are the inconsistent practices in the implementation of intervention systems for struggling learners. These inconsistencies involve basic safeguards and structures, such as common referral forms within a district, a range of interventions for

struggling learners, misaligned or lack of core reading programs, and so on. Such inadequacies in programming tended to be framed as unintentional. In spring 2006, after examining the achievement data regarding all special education students, the Carroll team realized that the overwhelming majority of students with disabilities were attaining a level 1 (below proficiency) on the New York State English language arts exams. It was during this analysis that the coordinator of Academic Intervention Services, a program outlined by the NYSED to provide academic services to struggling students, stated, "Our training is focused on moving level 2 students into level 3 (proficiency); we haven't been trained to move level 1 students to level 2." Though intentionally focused on supporting the academic growth of students below proficiency at level 2, the school system had been operating in such a way that it did not know how to structure itself to serve the neediest learners. These "level 1 students" become expendable or beyond the pale of help, and, in the case of students in Carroll, end up classified as disabled. It is also relevant to note that such an instructional focus is not uncommon among school districts in the current climate of accountability; districts have recognized the importance of raising the performance of particular subgroups in efforts to demonstrate adequate yearly progress. Figlio and Getzler (2002) offered evidence that the use of high-stakes testing such as state performance exams increases the likelihood that low-performing students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds will be placed in special education. Moreover, they suggested that these placements are often made by school districts to "game the system"—manipulate student classification to achieve the best possible accountability standing for the school district. This gaming is often in the guise of helping students meet established state and national performance standards but at the same time perpetuates artificial notions of ability and disability.

The presence and function of the instructional support team (IST) was also a pivotal institutional factor in maintaining disproportionality. ISTs can significantly reduce the overall number of referrals to special education (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006; Kovaleski, 2002) and have been shown to diminish levels of disproportionality in a school district (Gravois & Rosenfield). In Hannover and Carroll, the ISTs were present in each school building and served a critical population—struggling learners. Still, the inconsistencies in IST operation and membership within and across these districts also demonstrated the lack of institutional safeguards. In 2005–2006 in both districts, we gathered from each building the list of interventions provided to struggling readers, sample referral forms, types of benchmarks and assessments used to identify struggling learners, and the number of students referred to the IST. The interventions list

included some of the following: Read 180, Reading Recovery, move child seat, small-group instruction with reading specialist, reading book series, peer-to-peer tutoring, after-school services, graphic organizer, and so on. In closer examination, these interventions varied in application. For example, in one elementary building in Hannover, struggling readers in Grades 2–4 would receive small-group instruction as a pull-out service, and yet in another building, the same population would receive a push-in service. When asked about the differences between the buildings, district levels cited the "comfort level" of the staff in determining which type of service would be offered. Meanwhile, the IST referral forms differed from building to building within the district. In Hannover, in our review of the academic records of a random sample of 86 students with disabilities, not one record contained IST referral forms with complete information. For example, in our review of files in Hannover, the following are examples of interventions noted by teachers and IST members: "moved child seat to front so they can behave better"; "told parent to read more books at home"; "paired child with a stronger reader." Although such strategies may provide some benefit in conjunction with more prescriptive interventions, these tended to be listed singularly, implying that these interventions were all the teachers tried with the student. Finally, in 2005–2006, both districts varied in the number of students being referred to the IST; the rates ranged from 5% to 20% across similar school levels within a district. And in some buildings, the IST members described being overwhelmed by the sheer number of students. In the aggregate, the inconsistent framework surrounding what the districts considered to be reasonable interventions, the referral forms, and the differential patterns of students being referred to IST demonstrated how this one element of the special education referral process without the proper safeguards operated as a tipping point in causing disproportionality in these districts.

Additionally, the ISTs in both districts had common patterns of operation that included an unbalanced membership team comprising members of the CSE, poorly maintained records of interventions and their effectiveness, and a failure to use benchmarks or screening tools to identify students in need of interventions.

It should be noted that that although the flaws and failures of the ISTs in Carroll and Hannover clearly showed the capricious nature of special education classifications, they did not appear to be affected by the race or ethnicity of the students involved in them. Rather, the failure of the ISTs proved to be a compounding factor that added to the perception that the racial outcomes of special education classification were legitimate. Overall, then, the provision of academic intervention services and

instructional support teams were critical institutional elements perpetuating disproportionality in these districts.

Addressing Disproportionality: Institutional Fixes But Not Beliefs

As noted earlier, Hannover and Carroll began this process of examining their policies, practices, and beliefs in 2004–2005, and along the way, we jointly identified root causes and, concurrently, policy and practice remedies. The majority of the remedies focused on institutional fixes and limited attention to shifting beliefs. The institutional changes tended to involve the following mechanisms for implementing the remedies: development of a team, an action plan, and new programs.

After a year of planning and reviewing possibilities, both districts began the process of making these institutional changes. In 2006–2007, both districts' superintendents presented to their school board members a plan for improving the academic outcomes of all students. These plans contained some of the following new policies and practices: use of research-based instructional practices in Tier 1 RtI; utilization of a social and emotional development framework; implementation of positive behavior intervention and supports at middle and high schools; reexamination of the process of student assignment to honors and AP courses; improvement of the professional development regarding English language learners in monolingual classrooms; development of a bank of research-based interventions for Tier 2 RtI; improvement of the effectiveness of a coteaching model; reduction of the number of self-contained classrooms; improved communication between home and school environments; development of a multicultural team to examine the culturally responsive nature of the curriculum; development of a community collaborative to bring in parents; development of transition programs at the middle and high school levels; support for and encouragement of culturally responsive instructional professional development; and development of alternatives to suspensions. Additionally, in Carroll, the board approved the development of an African American history course at the high school.

These institutional changes were meaningful because they provided an equity safeguard for racial/ethnic minority students at risk of being classified—that is, they disrupted the latent inequities expressed through deficit thinking. The assistant superintendent in Carroll, when describing the adoption of a board policy on an alternative program for suspension, exemplified the significance of having such a safeguard:

> We—one of the things that we are doing, and I think although it's not explicitly stated, it's implicit in the message, is we have an alternative program that we have created. And the policy is that when kids are suspended, they come to this program. And we provide transportation. And they still continue to get their education. And one of the reasons we did that is so that all kids, regardless of how old they are, regardless of what their ethnic background is, or their academic background, all of our kids will always have an opportunity to learn and catch up and to stay—to prevent them from dropping out. And I would say that's a policy because it's a—it's something the board had to adopt this after school alternative program, where we provide—where we don't let any kid who's suspended not get their education. And I think that's been a key thing that we've done.

Some of these institutional changes were also about giving voice to racial/ethnic minority families. A principal in Carroll commented on the importance of this change:

> And another practice is having a parent advisory group in making sure that they're purposeful and that the composition of the group is perfect that we get a voice from all of our families, regardless—it's specifically, especially I guess is what I want to say, for students of color.

The most substantive area of institutional change involved the redevelopment of the IST forms, membership, and systematic collection and usage of data. A district director commented on the various changes involved in ISTs:

> Everything's electronic. We have referral forms and tracking forms. Everything related to the IST process and so we know when a student's first having trouble, what happens, you know they do have that strong team that reviews them in advance. And we're much keener about making sure everyone gets intervention no matter what color. No matter what language they speak.

Many of these IST redevelopments are closely tied to each district's development of an RtI framework. This represents a major change for these districts because prior to the development of this process, some schools did not have any policies concerning referrals or types of interventions.

CONCLUSION

The research literature on the disproportionate representation of Black and Latino students in special education tends to view the phenomenon from three distinct but interrelated vantage points—the classroom, the school, and the school context. This article highlights some of the root causes of disproportionality that are located in each, while at the same time demonstrating two key findings. First, the teacher and student interactions that begin the processes that lead to disproportionality are mired in teachers' cultural deficit thinking. Second, although teachers' beliefs about students may change at rates that are slightly slower than a glacial pace, effective school practices can interrupt the influence of deficit thinking.

By looking at the classroom and with an attentive eye toward student and teacher interactions, research has demonstrated that teachers' judgments about their students' behavior, actions, and even looks influence their judgments about their students' ability. These judgments can become the trigger to turn a struggling student into a disabled student. What we do know about the placement of students in special education is that it begins with the practices and beliefs of several individuals who, in informal evaluation of students, construct notions of student ability. In examining teachers' beliefs around the causes of disproportionality within the context of teachers' perceptions of Black and Latino students, it becomes apparent that teachers' perceptions of student ability (and disability) are mediated by racial and cultural factors—specifically, cultural deficit thinking. This does not mean that teachers are either overtly racist (though there may be instances in which this is indeed the case); rather, bias may be operative at a less overt, less conscious (and even institutional) level. The mere fact that the race and class of students are often predictors of the likelihood that they will be referred to special education to remedy a perceived cognitive or behavioral problem suggests that subjective judgments related to the race and class of teachers may be a factor informing perceptions. Moreover, as the cases presented in this article show, these constructions of ability cannot simply be defined as misalignments between teachers' cultures (and schools' cultures) and those of their students—that is, the misinterpretation of interactional forms. Rather, the disproportionate representation of Black and Latino students in special education in these school districts suggests a convergence of two distinct conceptualizations that occur in school districts—cultural deficit thinking and an unclear or misguided conceptualization of providing academic services for struggling learners. Through their use of cultural deficit thinking, teachers begin to attribute their students' aca-

demic troubles to the students' socioeconomic status, family, and culture. In this respect, cultural deficit thinking has the effect of pathologizing academic and behavioral discrepancies of low-income and minority students relative to White middle-class students—labeling them as disabled.

The use of cultural deficit thinking also highlights teachers' unclear and misguided conceptualizations of disability and their application in providing academic services for struggling learners. This is most evident when viewed through the lens of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (2004), which clearly states that children who have learning problems that are the result of "cultural or economic disadvantage" do not have learning disabilities, yet cultural and socioeconomic reasons are often given by teachers in explaining the root causes of disproportionality (Skiba et al., 2006). Moreover, for teachers working with struggling learners, special education becomes a safety valve that teachers can pull to get students additional services (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Nevertheless, the confluence of deficit thinking and misuse of special education placements can have a detrimental impact on students; to some extent, this impact can be ameliorated by school processes.

School processes such as intervention services and committees on special education can either serve to echo teachers' initial judgments about student ability, or guard against them. Echoing is often the result of inefficient or relaxed student support services, essentially allowing struggling kids to remain struggling until they are eventually classified. Once district leaders began to take an active role in shaping district programs to address the needs of their struggling learners, they were able to transform form the passive echoing to a more active role supporting student growth. To this end, both districts reported intensifying their efforts to provide academic support for their struggling learners—including new program and program models such as RtI and ISTs—to provide early and effective interventions for struggling learners, staff training to develop their professional capacity to raise the achievement of struggling learners, and data monitoring to ensure program fidelity and track student progress.

Ultimately, these programs demonstrate the fuzzy and socially constructed line that separates ability from disability, showing that the position and shape of this line is not fixed, but determined by school professionals, and therefore can be moved and reshaped to create a genuinely more inclusive education for all students. Nevertheless, although the presence of these programs and procedures did appear at the very least to ameliorate the effects of teachers' beliefs around student ability, they were not able to change teachers' beliefs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

In many ways, disproportionality is a modern form of segregation, separating Black and Latino students from educational opportunities and outcomes afforded to their White peers. Nevertheless, solely focusing on the outcome of disproportionality will not address the greater equity issues that underlie it. Given that successful interventions can be implemented to reduce the overrepresentation of Black and Latino students in special education—but these interventions have not been shown to change cultural deficit thinking in the classroom—more attention should be given to how teachers develop and act on notions of student ability.

Irvine (1990) noted that low academic and behavioral expectations are predicated on deficit model thinking. Moreover, these low expectations are often the root cause for low student achievement and behavior (see Ferguson, 2003; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), which research has shown to have a disproportionate negative impact on Black students (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; McKown & Weinstein, 2002). Thus, without a focus on addressing teachers' beliefs, disproportionality may simply morph, and new and more insidious forms of segregation may take its place.

Notes

1.   These outcomes, in and of themselves, are troublesome enough without the compounded issue of disproportionality.

2.   These data were collected by the Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey, 2007–2008 and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0043: "Children With Disabilities Receiving Special Education Under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," 2007.

3.   Failure to cite the large urban districts is attributable to the fact that these districts overwhelmingly comprise minority students, thus rendering the ratios used to determine disproportionality meaningless.

4.   New York State now uses relative risk ratios with a set threshold value to determine whether school districts are considered disproportionate.

5.   See Appendixes D, G, K, and N for additional data on the classification rate of White students and relative risk of White students being classified as students with disabilities in Carroll and Hannover.

6.   Branch is a pseudonym for a neighboring urban school district.

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APPENDIX A

Overall Classification Rate of All Disabilities

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	12.63%	13.56%	14.95%	13.41%	13.48%	12.83%	- 14.18%	1.58%
Hannover	16.31%	15.74%	16.36%	14.93%	13.23%	11.99%	- 26.71%	- 26.49%

APPENDIX B

Classification Rate of Black Students (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	15.37%	16.05%	17.71%	15.86%	16.37%	15.15%	-14.46%	- 1.43%
Hannover	21.85%	19.70%	20.28%	18.16%	16.98%	14.27%	- 29.64%	- 34.69%

APPENDIX C

Classification Rate of Latino Students (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	16.67%	23.08%	23.53%	26.32%	22.73%	17.57%	- 25.33%	5.4%
Hannover	17.33%	16.78%	16.85%	14.56%	14.11%	12.83%	- 23.86%	- 25.97%

APPENDIX D

Classification Rate of White Students (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	12.22%	13.04%	14.31%	12.69%	12.37%	12.13%	- 15.23%	- 0.74%
Hannover	15.11%	14.62%	15.77%	14.92%	11.86%	11.02%	30.12%	- 27.07%

APPENDIX E

Relative Risk of Black Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	1.28	1.24	1.25	1.26	1.31	1.27	1.6%	- 0.78%
Hannover	1.4	1.29	1.28	1.25	1.34	1.23	-3.91 %	- 12.14%

APPENDIX F

Relative Risk of Latino Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	1.33	1.73	1.59	2.01	1.72	1.38	-13.21%	3.76%
Hannover	1.10	1.11	1.05	0.96	1.11	1.12	-6.67 %	- 1.82%

APPENDIX G

Relative Risk of White Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (All Disabilities)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	0.87	0.86	0.86	0.84	0.79	0.86	0.00%	- 1.15%
Hannover	0.86	0.87	0.93	1.00	0.83	0.87	- 6.45%	1.16%

APPENDIX H

Overall Classification Rate (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	9.25%	9.72%	10.63%	9.35%	9.04%	8.50%	- 20.04%	- 8.11%
Hannover	13.39%	12.78%	13.2%	11.69%	10.00%	8.79%	- 33.41 %	- 34.35%

APPENDIX I

Classification Rate of Black Students (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	12.69%	11.99%	14.94%	12.62%	12.16%	10.88%	- 27.18%	- 14.26%
Hannover	18.77%	16.52%	16.70%	14.37%	13.52%	11.31%	- 32.28 %	- 39.74%

APPENDIX J

Classification Rate of Latino Students (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	15.00%	21.15%	17.65%	17.54%	16.67%	10.81%	- 38.75%	- 27.93%
Hannover	14.84%	14.39%	14.37%	12.07%	11.44%	9.97%	- 30.62 %	- 32.82%

APPENDIX K

Classification Rate of White Students (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	8.54%	9.10%	9.46%	8.36%	7.83 %	7.81%	- 17.44%	- 8.55%
Hannover	11.94%	11.41%	12.21%	11.36%	8.41%	7.56%	- 38.08 %	- 36.68%

APPENDIX L

Relative Risk of Black Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	1.49	1.31	1.59	1.52	1.54	1.43	- 10.06%	- 4.03%
Hannover	1.48	1.34	1.31	1.27	1.42	1.34	2.29 %	- 9.46%

APPENDIX M

Relative Risk of Latino Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	1.65	2.23	1.68	1.92	1.89	1.28	- 23.81%	- 22.42%
Hannover	1.17	1.21	1.15	1.05	1.26	1.24	7.83%	5.98%

APPENDIX N

Relative Risk of White Students Being Classified as Students With Disabilities (ED, LD, SI)

Year	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	Change from 2005–06 to 2008–09	Change from 2003–04 to 2008–09
Carroll	0.74	0.79	0.69	0.72	0.69	0.8	15.94%	8.11%
Hannover	0.80	0.81	0.86	0.95	0.74	0.78	-9.30 %	- 2.5%

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