

Equity and Excellence

Dr. C. Spence



It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning.

Claude Bernard



You will get the most out of today if:

- You allow yourself to be challenged.
- You acknowledge your own great expertise.
- You acknowledge your need for even greater expertise.
- You challenge yourself to think deeply and critically.



A few things...

- Leader of Learning
- Moral purpose
- Learning for All



- Is it **TIMELY**? How quickly are we able to identify the kids who need extra time and support? Is our focus prompt intervention rather than remediation?

- Is it **DIRECTIVE** rather than invitational? Are kids invited to put in extra time or does the system ensure they put in extra time?

Is it SYSTEMATIC?

Do kids receive this intervention according to a school-wide plan rather than at the discretion of individual teachers?



High Expectations

- High expectations for success include expectations in terms of attitudes and beliefs that characterize how the teacher approaches the teaching-learning situation and how these dispositions shape the teacher's delivery of the lesson..



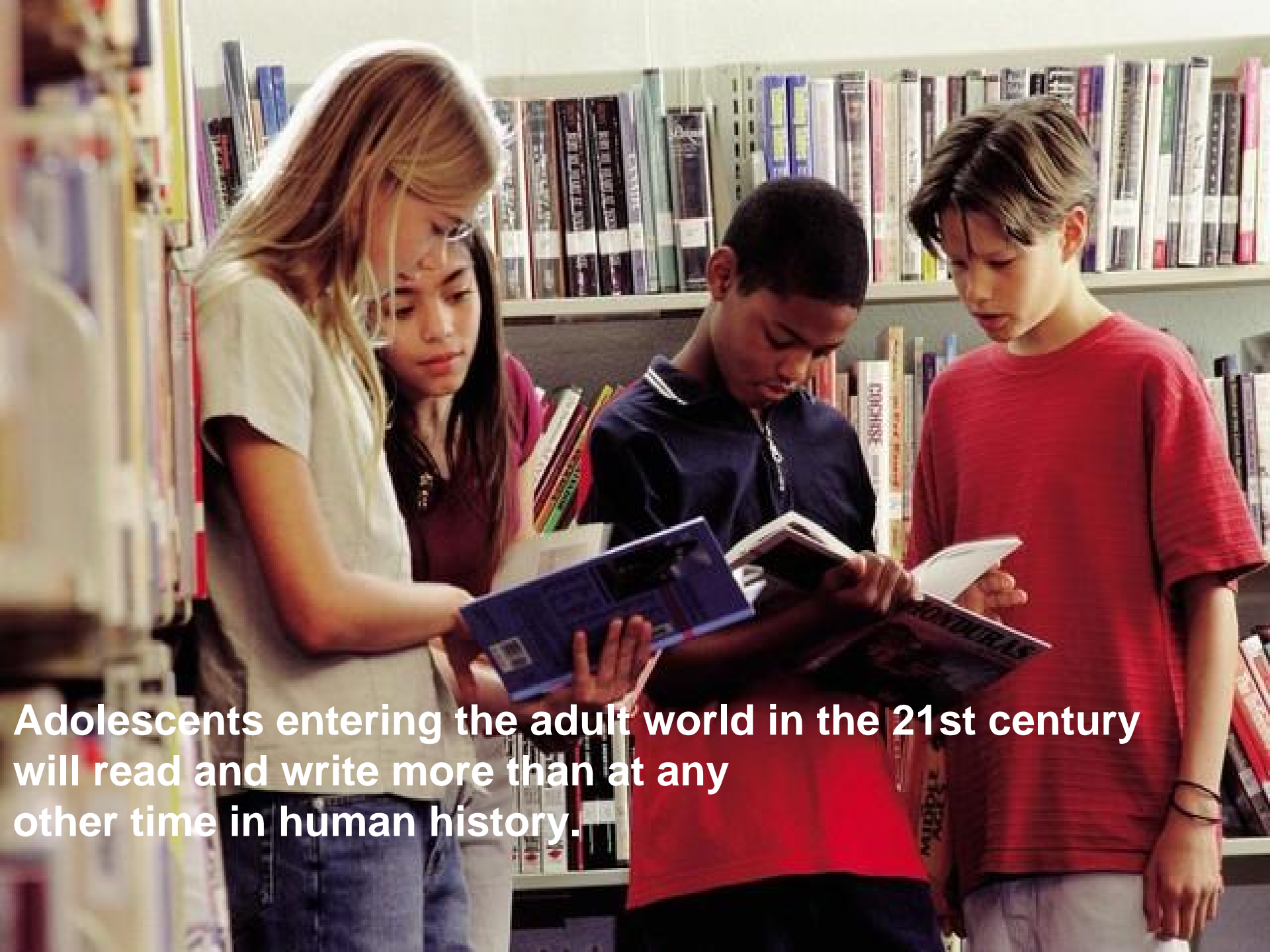
Literacy for Life



- Listen attentively.
- Speak persuasively.
- Read with understanding.
- Write with command.

- Underdeveloped literacy skills are the number one reason why students are retained, assigned to special education, and why they fail to graduate from high school.



A photograph of four adolescents in a library. A young woman with long blonde hair in a white t-shirt is on the left, holding a blue book. Behind her, a young woman with long dark hair in a maroon top is looking at the book. In the center, a young man in a dark blue polo shirt is reading an open book. On the right, a young man in a red t-shirt is also reading an open book. The background is filled with bookshelves containing many books.

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history.

What do we know about those who are illiterate:

- .50% of the unemployed are functionally illiterate
- .More than half of Canadians lack the literacy skills to make appropriate health care decisions on their own*
- .Those who are functionally illiterate earn 5 times less than those that are literate
- .50% of those with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty*
- .Children in poverty are more likely to be illiterate

Improving Achievement

- ***Belief*** in their abilities to master a rigorous curriculum.
- ***Time*** tailored to specific student needs.
- ***Understanding*** that not all students learn the same way and at the same rate.

Ruby Payne's Poverty Research

- Kindergarten children come to school with one half of the listening and speaking vocabulary that other classmates possess.
- Children in poverty have a huge deficit in the area of background knowledge.
- Relationships, not material goods or grades, motivate children in poverty.

Social Justice

The path to social justice begins with ***gaining passion*** for the plight of disadvantaged students.

- We need to ask ourselves:
 - **Who tends to be privileged?**
 - **Who tends to be marginalized?**
 - **How can we take action in the classroom to interrupt these cycles of oppression?**

Richard A. McCormick, S.J. (1999). *Blueprint for Social Justice*
LII(11), 1.]

Pedagogy

- Focus on critical, complex thinking and asking critical questions (hot bed for the basics and the crayola curriculum)
- Paying attention to inequity in classroom *processes*
- Attending to sociopolitical relationships (power and privilege) in the classroom
- Acknowledging student knowledge through problem-posing, dialogue, and general student-centeredness
- Using authentic assessment techniques



The Achievement Gap

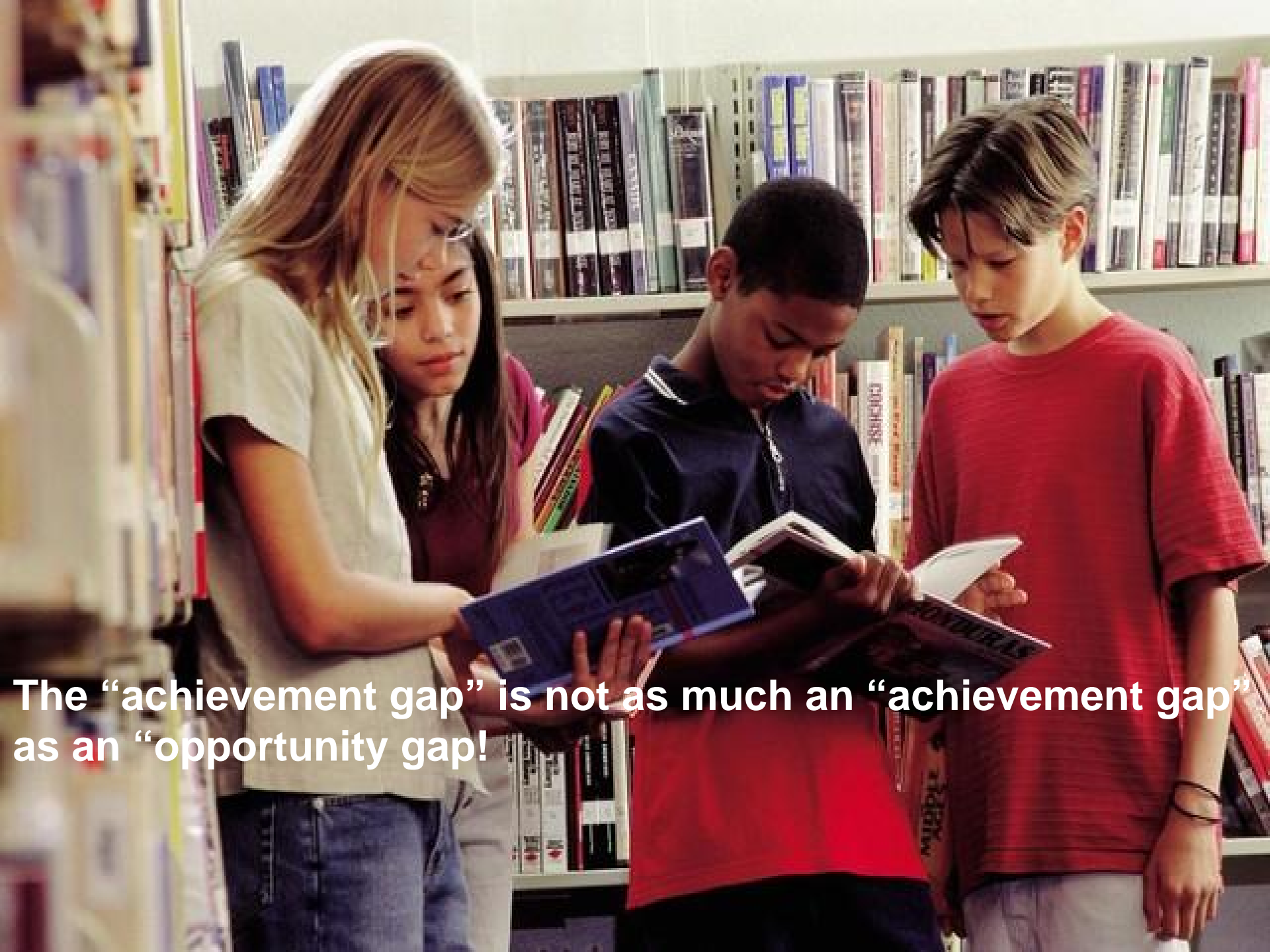
- Exists when specific groups of students do not achieve in school at the same level. Achievement gaps may correlate with race, ethnicity, family income level, language background, ability\disability status, and gender.



Compare and despair....

- *Gaps* in achievement exist across the country and within our communities, school districts, and schools.
 - **Race/ethnicity**
 - **Income levels**
 - **Language background**
 - **Disability status**
 - **Gender.**

Correlation Is Not Causation!



The “achievement gap” is not as much an “achievement gap” as an “opportunity gap!”

What we hear people say:

- They're poor
- It's their parents' fault
- They don't know the language
- No books in the home
- Look where they live
- They come to school hungry

It's always about the kids and their families!

What if....

- What if students were not underperforming?
- What if the problem was that they were underserved?





- How would our conversations, attitudes, policies, practices and approaches change if we were to ask the second question?

The Knowing and Doing Gap

- If we know what we know for as long as we have known, why do these gaps persist?
- What do we not know?
- What are we not yet willing to do?

This We Believe!

To Achieve Equity of Outcome We Must...

- Believe all children can learn given proper supports.
- Reject negative stereotypes about student's potential and ability.
- Believe there are no limitations based on factors such as race, gender, SES, etc
- Assume responsibility for creating conditions to ensure success.
- The quality of curriculum *"What we teach"*
- The quality of instruction *"How we teach"*
- The effectiveness of schools *"Where we teach"*
- The unique characteristics and background of the student *"Who we teach"*
- An equitable system empowers all children to achieve.
- Differentiate the Instruction.

Results rather Intentions!

It doesn't take a superstar teacher to do differentiated instruction, just a teacher who thinks the kids are superstars.



CREDIT INTERVENTION STRATEGIES



**Effective
A&E**

**Custom
Timetables**

**Peer
Tutors**

**Credit
Rescue**

**After
School
Programs**

**Effective
DI**

eLearning

**½ credit
Programs**

**Tracking
Monitoring**

**Extra Time
During
Exams**

**Caring
Adult**

**Homework
Club**

**Remedial
Literacy/
Numeracy**

**Continuous
Entry
Co-op**

- A single teacher cannot undo systemic inequities in the school system or larger society.
 - But at the very least we can make sure we're not replicating those inequities in our own curricula and pedagogies

The Reality

The achievement gap, will not be eliminated by Taco Night, the International Fair, or other activities that, do not ***address racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism,*** and other oppressions in educational policy and practice.

- Our job is to reach and teach the kids we have, not the kids we used to have, not the kids we wish we had, not the kids who exist only in our dreams.



Jackie Robinson

