

Despite the United States' continuous rhetoric of equality, the educational experience of African Americans and other minority students remain separate and unequal. Due to our structurally unjust educational pipeline, students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their race and socio-economic status. However, by implementing behavior management strategies and challenging students with a quality curriculum that encourages higher-order learning, teachers are able to mitigate the contradiction of schools as a social good and our structurally unjust education system.

Although true solutions to the structural inequalities found in our education system require policy changes associated with school funding, resource allocations, and student tracking, teachers can adjust their teaching practices in the classroom to reduce the educational inequality in America. Since the novel tasks required for an active inquiry-based classroom instruction is more difficult to manage than the routine tasks associated with rote learning, teachers will often turn to passive strategies that “dumb down” the curriculum of their students. By implementing a preventive behavior intervention approach to classroom management, such as reinforcing correct behavior with praise rather than focusing on behavioral criticisms, teachers will have more time to focus on higher-order skills in the curriculum. In fact, the best behavior management strategy is an engaging curriculum. By focusing the curricula on higher-order problem solving, analytic, and writing skills, students will be able to confront the challenging expectations of the new standards and the assessments that accompany them.

Education is a social good; however, the structural injustices of America's education system continues to deliver dramatically different learning opportunities to students based on their race and socio-economic status. Teachers are faced with the challenge of mitigating this contradiction by implementing behavior management strategies and challenging students with a quality curriculum that encourages higher-order learning.