

ABSTRACT

Equal educational opportunity and access for students of color remains elusive as evidenced by the longstanding systemic racial inequities in our public school system. School districts of necessity adopted policies and practices aimed at correcting persistent academic and social disparities between students of color and their White counterparts. This research study addressed the following problem: In what ways are high achieving public school districts adopting race-conscious policy agenda as a means to advance equal educational opportunity and access for students of color? This study explored the problem by addressing four major purposes:

- 1) to describe and critique current policy, practices, and procedures intended to achieve equal educational opportunity and access for students of color.
- 2) to examine the implementation of race-conscious policies used by public school districts in light of federal and state legal authority regarding race-conscious policy.
- 3) to describe what, if any, challenges district leaders face in adopting race-conscious policy within the local context.
- 4) to explore the ways district leadership borrows strength from federal and state legal authority and employs forms of interest convergence to advance such an agenda.

To that end, this study revealed that district leaders relied little on federal and state legislative authority in adopting a race-conscious policy agenda. Utilizing a positioned subject approach within a multi-case study design, participants indicated that actual advancement of EEO largely hinged on the interests of local entities, such as the board of education, parents, and teachers. Their policy efforts were documented through an in-depth interview process. Data analysis was informed by a review of legal resources and district documentation while providing for constant comparative analysis. Purposeful sampling in tandem with snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) guided selection of the four districts that participated. Manna's (2009) borrowing strength

model for agenda setting and the Critical Race Theory concept of interest convergence was the analytical lens.