

Brief report on initial conversations with OAGTF national advisors: Dr. Pedro Noguera and Dr. John Jackson

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Pedro Noguera

<https://youtu.be/uSehZPz2NoY> "Are we failing our children?"

<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/noguera.html>

Dr. Noguera has a distinguished career of more than 30 years working in education as a researcher, classroom teacher, school board member, university professor, consultant and most importantly, the parent of 5 children. He has worked at Harvard, New York and currently works and resides in CA.

He is very familiar with Boston and the work that has gone on here. After our introductions and update, his major question for us, boiled down to- Is this just another exercise, or what is Boston really committed to doing this time? We basically have the know-how, a city filled with resources, but where are the will and the resources?

Dr. Noguera has written widely on the topics of education equity, opportunity and achievements gaps, etc. We asked him to share resources, as well as to point us in the direction of programs, school districts across the country we could learn from and will share that info, as we have more time to discuss this with the Task Force. For a quick intro to Dr. Noguera, I suggest folks view and 8 minute Ted Talk, entitled, "Are we failing our students? In it he asks-

"Why is it so hard to educate America's children? We have made it much more difficult than it should be. Much of the problem lies not in the children, because we have proven that we know how to educate all types of children, special needs, ELL, the problem is the way we treat the children. The problem is the kind of schools we have created, and more importantly, the kinds of policies we have relied upon, to drive education in this country. We have lots of evidence to show what we've been doing isn't working. We've relied on the wrong kinds of questions to drive our policies. We've been asking about how to raise achievement, when we should have been asking, "How do we get our kids excited about learning. We ask how to we hold teachers accountable, when we should be asking "How do we hold everyone accountable- parents, students, politicians. Instead of focusing on the achievement gap, and what will it take to close the gap, we should be asking, "How do we create schools, where a child's race or class, does not predict how well they will do." If you ask different questions, you'll get different answers. He goes on to talk about what really makes the difference is the relationships between the educators and the students that make learning possible. I hope you will watch this and any number of his tapes, to get a feel for his work.

He also shared a short paper entitled "The Essential Supports" that identifies key components to turning around the neediest schools. These essential support include: school leadership, parent and community ties, professional capacity of faculty, student-centered learning climate and instructional guidance. Their research showed that schools that measured strong in all 5 supports were at least 10 times more

likely than schools with just one or two strengths to achieve substantial gains in reading and math. Moreover, a sustained weakness in just one of these areas undermined virtually all attempts at improving student learning. I think this is something we can easily share with all school leaders and teachers, allow them to engage in their own self-study to identify their own areas of strength and places for growth.

We had an equally productive phone conversation, with Dr. John Jackson of the Schott Foundation. His work brings him to Boston for 5-7 days of each month and we hope he will be able to join us for both a conversation with the task force and the broader community to share some of his research.

Our biggest take away, was the comment, which I paraphrase here- "Boston -- with the relatively accessible size of its school district, with its ring of respected higher education institutions, with the depth and diversity of its philanthropic community, and with the academic success that its black and Latino students have already achieved as compared to their peers nationally -- is probably in a better position to close the Opportunity and Achievement Gap than any major city in America. If Boston cannot do it, who can?"