

## “The soft bigotry of low expectations”

Phrase coined by Michael Gerson

(Not expecting disadvantaged people or minorities to meet the same standard of behavior or achievement set for most people. It is called "soft bigotry " because it is a more subtle and subconscious form of prejudice.)

“..... pervasive among educational reformers is the stance of *benevolent pathology*. This is the notion that children from certain ethnic minority or low-income backgrounds have life experiences that hamper the possibility that they can learn or achieve well in school. These deficiencies or pathologies are viewed as unfortunate and must be compensated for through remediation, extra learning time, or other benevolent interventions so that the children can overcome the academic obstacles rooted in no fault of their own. Success is indexed by how well these children can then approximate the approaches displayed by their counterparts who have had more access to mainstream experiences and in turn comport themselves in mainstream educational ways. As long as talent sorting and identification, linked to benevolent pathology, privilege and entitlement prevail, the possibility of authentic, substantial and sustainable progress in closing achievement gaps will not occur.

However, a different stance on school reform is also available. It has been called in recent years the *human capacity building or human capital production position*. Rather than schools functioning to identify and sort talent, their chief responsibility would be to develop talent. This capacity promotion stance would discern diversity in students’ backgrounds and lived experiences not as reasons for their failure, but as sources from which to glean their assets. These assets would then be used to promote students to high-level academic outcomes. And when such assets are not readily available, the press is then to create assets for such students in the academic setting.”

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