# Program Evaluation of High Operational Practices (HOPs) with Six Osseo Area Elementary Schools

**Robert Seth Price, Senior Scholar, Interviewer**
**Regina Seabrook, Senior Scholar, Data Analysis**
**Eric Cooper, Ed.D., Founder NUA**
**Yvette Jackson, Ed.D., Pedagogy of Confidence Author, Researcher**
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# Note from NUA Founder and President

All students need good and caring teachers. The diverse students in classrooms today have a greater need for teachers who see them, care for them, and want to teach them. They need teachers who are consummate learners and who are supported in their learning by school leaders guided by a vision that seeks to empower them with forward-thinking and equity-focused professional development. Both teacher educators and school leaders must be ensuring that preservice and inservice teachers of children are prepared with the knowledge needed to engage in high-leverage practices that ensure success for the diversity of the underserved children living in poverty.

The effect and impact of socioeconomic disparities (framed and supported by racism) on children is well-researched and documented (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). But as captured in this volume, educators have worked tirelessly and valiantly to mitigate the trauma, stereotypes, and beliefs about their students' intelligence and capacity to learn. For those students challenged by family and financial circumstances (whom I have referred to as "school-dependent" for academic success), educational opportunities are a salient intervention for improving their academic and social trajectories (Cooper, 2004). Children who come to school hungry, who have suffered trauma, who feel unloved, who have internalized a belief that they are cognitively inferior to their wealthier classmates, who act out their frustrations through disruptive behavior, who have been relegated to the basement of a school where, in many school buildings, they are wrongly placed in dead-end special education programs, and who tearfully share deleterious experiences outside or inside the classroom, await the educational empathy and leadership their teachers can provide (Degruy, 2005; Steele, 1997).

Dr. Eric Cooper

Pursuing education transformation with an equity lens requires renewed belief in the capacity of all children to write better life stories for themselves when enabled by educators who enhance their teaching abilities with a deep concern for justice.

# Lead Consultants

**Regina Seabrook** has a vision for how we must live and learn together in our multiracial and culturally diverse society and how we can prosper together. Regina became an educator because she believes in the power of education to transform lives and uplift society. Like many educators, she finds great joy in seeing students experience "aha" moments as they connect their learning to their lives, find community with one another, and see possibilities for the future. As a biracial Black Finnish educator, Regina draws upon her life, classroom, and leadership experiences to inform her thought and practice as a culturally responsive and culturally validating American educator.

During Regina's years as a classroom teacher and district level leader, she led teams and collaborated with cross-sector partners like Mayo Clinic and United Way Olmsted County to create vigorous learning experiences and environments centering culture, identity, and relationships. Through use of culturally responsive and culturally validating approaches, Regina has helped to facilitate shifts in educator mindsets and practices. These shifts have not only resulted in student growth and achievement, but have also energized educators!
Since founding American Dialogue Company in 2021, Regina has been collaborating with instructional leaders from across the state of Minnesota and nationally and at all levels of the school system.
Regina's professional website: www.americandialoguecompany.com

**Yvette Jackson, Ed.D.** is internationally recognized for her work in assessing the learning potential of disenfranchised urban students. Her research is in literacy, gifted education, and the cognitive mediation theory of Reuven Feuerstein, PhD. She has applied her research to develop an integrated process to motivate and elicit potential in underachievers. This research was the basis for her design of the New York City Gifted Programs Framework when she was the director of gifted programs. As executive director of instruction and professional development for the New York City Board of Education, she led the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Education Plan, which optimizes the delivery of all core curriculum and support services in the public schools of New York City. Jackson has served as the chief executive officer of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, founded at the College Board and Teachers College, Columbia University. She works with school district administrators and teachers across the country to customize and deliver systemic approaches to literacy development through instructional practices that integrate culture, language, and cognition to expand and accelerate student learning and achievement. She is a visiting lecturer at Harvard University, a member of ASCD's Differentiated Instruction Cadre, and a keynote presenter at national and international conferences. Jackson received a BA from Queens College of the City University of New York with a double major in education and French. At Columbia University's Teachers College, she was awarded an MA in curriculum, an EdM in educational administration, and a doctorate in educational administration.
More about Pedagogy of Confidence may be found at www.pedagogyofconfidence.net

# Lead Consultants

**Robert Seth Price** is an independent consultant with a focus on teaching critical thinking methods and the design of whole school/organization thinking with innovative change. Robert's breadth and depth of experiences and projects, nationally and internationally, inform his wide ranging personal interests and professional approaches with all collaborations. His professional collaborations past and present include pre-k, elementary, middle, secondary, and college levels. Additionally he has collaborated with foundations, non-profit organizations and NGOs.

Robert's *Mobile Critical Thinking Tools* is currently used as a foundational practitioner's guide in multiple projects. His collaborations present and past include: The *Pedagogy of Confidence online Action Guide* for equity consciousness with Yvette Jackson; co-authoring with David Hyerle *Growing Thinking Schools from the Inside Out* and co-producing the documentary film *Minds of Mississippi* with The Thinking Foundation; The CLEAR Model and Intercultural Innovations Inc. (I³) online with Rev Hillstrom; Senior Scholar with The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education; grass roots design and implementation of Thinking Schools Ethiopia and Thinking Design Healthcare Ethiopia; ELA development for high school students with autonomous learners for Learning 1 to 1 Foundation; teaching over ten years in K-5 urban schools and a public arts high school; and critical thinking training modules on health and respect for textile workers in East Africa. Robert's many Amplifying Student Voice collaborations deeply inform his schema and frame of reference with situating learning in the lives of students.

Robert has taught and is licensed to teach in California, Connecticut and Indiana. He has facilitated whole school professional development in many urban US school districts. Robert has facilitated trainings internationally in Sri Lanka, Japan, UK, Denmark, and Ethiopia. Robert's professional website: www.eggplant.org.

# Thank You

Thank you to the six participating schools, the Osseo Equity Department and the Osseo research department for supporting the collaboration in support of culturally validating pedagogy for each student. Thank you to Sharla Foster and Maureen Araya with the Equity Department for organizing the interviews with each of the schools. Thank you to Dr. Bryan Bass, Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Achievement and Jenna Johnshoy-Aarestad, Coordinator of Data & Assessment with Osseo Area Schools.

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| **Birch Grove Elementary**<br>431 students |  |
| **Crest View Elementary**<br>250 students |  |
| **Fair Oaks Elementary**<br>360 students |  |
| **Garden City Elementary**<br>335 students |  |
| **Oak View Elementary**<br>486 students |  |
| **Rush Creek**<br>774 students |  |

# Introduction and Overview

The National Urban Alliance conducted a total of 100 interviews with students and educators at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the effectiveness of schoolwide use of High Operational Practices (HOPs) for the purpose of eliciting student High Intellectual Performance (HIP). Interview participants represented the following elementary schools: Birch Grove, Crestview, Fair Oaks, Garden City, Oak View, and Rush Creek.

## Interview Questions

### Student Questions

1. How has your teacher supported your learning?
2. How has your school respected your lived experiences at home and with your community?
3. What does 'Amplifying Student Voice' mean to you?
4. How can the school better support you as a student?

### Educator Questions

1. How has your understanding of High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported students?
2. How has High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported the bridging of between your lived experiences and your students' lived experiences?
3. What shifts have you made in your teaching practices as you've incorporated High Operational Practices (HOPs) this year?
4. How has the whole school model supported you with implementing the High Operational Practices (HOPS)?
   *Prompts:  mentor visits, coaching, PLTs virtually, professional learning sessions at staff meetings*

## Methodology

We sought to understand the effectiveness and impact of High Operational Practices on student learning and teaching efficiency. This program evaluation is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research involves focusing on the views of the participants by capturing their voices (Cresswell, 2022). In this program evaluation, we utilized the focus group interview methods and analyzed the data.

## Introduction *continued*

## Timeline

NUA involvement with the six Osseo elementary schools for the academic year (August 2023 to May 2024) included the following activities as illustrated in Figure 1. These activities are the grounding for this program evaluation. With the exception of Activity A, all activities were carried out during the academic year.

**Figure 1**
- Activity A
  5 of 6 schools were provided whole staff professional development in August 2023
- Activity B
  4 of 6 schools received 8 on-site visits preceded by a virtual meeting with staff by grade level (K-5).
- Activity C
  2 of 6 schools received 4 on-site visits preceded by a virtual meeting with staff by grade level (K-5).
- Activity D
  5 of 6 schools sent site leadership (i.e., principals, vice principals, school coach) teams to 5-half day trainings held at rotating school sites
- Activity E
  Approximately 40 academic coaches who represented the six schools as well as the remaining all elementary schools and/or across the district attended 5-half day trainings. The trainings were held at rotating school sites. (Of the six primary schools participating in this evaluation, one sent an academic coach to the last of five sessions only.)

## Participating Schools

**Birch Grove Elementary**
431 students
*85.4% Minority Enrollment*

**Crest View Elementary**
250 students
*94.0% Minority Enrollment*

**Fair Oaks Elementary**
360 students
*94.6% Minority Enrollment*

**Garden City Elementary**
335 students
*94.0% Minority Enrollment*

**Oak View Elementary**
486 students
*49.6% Minority Enrollment*

**Rush Creek**
774 students
*31.3% Minority Enrollment*

## Introduction *continued*

## Participants

Six schools participated in this program evaluation. They included Birch Grove Elementary, Crest View Elementary, Fair Oaks Elementary, Garden City Elementary, Oak View Elementary, and Rush Creek Elementary.

To participate in this program evaluation, students, paraprofessionals, and teachers had to be situated in one of the National Urban Alliance (NUA) contracted schools as previously indicated. Students, paraprofessionals, and teachers were all chosen by school leadership (e.g., principals and vice principals) and coaches at each school.

## Procedures

Between April 2024 and May 2024, several in-person focus groups were conducted with students, paraprofessionals, and teachers in their respective schools. The focus group method is used to ask about attitudes or feelings towards a service, idea, or project. They are conversational in nature and small in size (i.e., 3-8 participants at a time). They are often used when there is a need to gain a large of amount of information in a short time span (Johns Hopkins University, 2024). In this program evaluation, students were segregated into focus groups based on their grade levels in the home school, while adults were segregated into focus groups based on their positions (e.g., paraprofessional teachers vs certificated teachers) and place of employment (one of the six schools). All focus groups were audiotaped with a hand recorder as well as videotaped with a video recorder. Focus groups ranged between 30 and 40 minutes each. All audio recordings were later transcribed using *MacWhisper* software to ensure 100% accuracy. Transcriptions were carried out by the NUA researcher who conducted all the focus groups.

## Method of Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed to identify patterns of responses based on the questions asked. Similar ideas, key words, and phrases or responses were grouped and given a code. Each code summarized the main idea or theme of a group of responses. A number was assigned to each code based on the number of responses that were grouped together. For example, if a code represented five responses reflecting the same ideas/theme, then it was assigned the number five.

Some codes were combined because it was determined that, although slightly different, the responses reflected the same main idea or theme. Major themes were identified by the number or responses under a particular code and/or combination of codes. This evaluation report provides an identification of major themes. Interview data from both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) was used to identify educator themes.
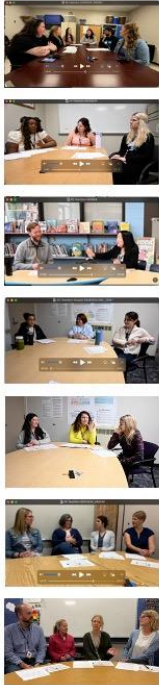
## Introduction *continued*

## Recommendations

We recommend that district leaders, school leaders, educators, families, and students continue to further their goals of eliciting student high intellectual performance (HIP) through the use of high operational practices (HOPs). The meaning they bring to their understanding of this evaluation through shared learning will likely support, sustain, and enhance their pedagogical practices in support of success for each student.
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# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 1: How has your teacher supported your learning?**

## Themes from Students K-2
**Teacher Challenges Me:** Students shared that they believed that their teachers supported their learning by challenging them as learners and believing that they could meet the challenge. Several students shared that their teachers helped them by giving them tests.

> *"My teacher has supported my learning. It's great. She lets us have time to think about. the questions. When we get it wrong, she says just go back and [do] it over."*

> *"She gives us hard stuff and if we can't do it, she gives us clues so we can figure it out. And sometimes we have spelling tests that help us think more [about] how to spell stuff."*

**Teacher Breaks Learning Into Smaller Tasks**: K-2 students also shared that their teachers supported their learning in the areas of language arts and math by scaffolding the learning into manageable tasks.

> *"Well, if we can't do a word, she says to segment the word."*

> *"When she gives us an equation to solve, she breaks it up into little parts so we can solve it. Or she'll just do the basics first and then add it up."*
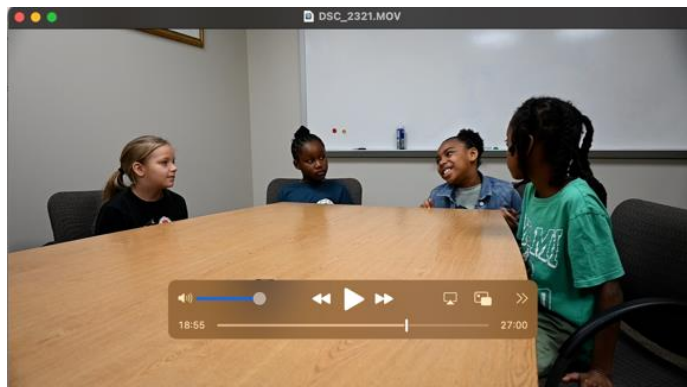
# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 1: How has your teacher supported your learning?** *continued*

## Themes from Students 3-5

**Teacher Helps Me Learn:** Students identified specific things that teachers did to help them individually as learners. Such practices included explaining subject matter, modeling learning, working one-on-one with students, repeating a learning process, guiding students on how to solve a problem, providing many opportunities to complete assignments, and being responsive to student questions.

> *"A way that my teacher has helped. Instead of being like, 'This is wrong,' she tells me what is wrong and how to fix it."*

**Teacher is Supportive/Affirming:** Students also shared that their teachers supported their learning by providing both affirmation and high expectations. Many shared that they felt encouraged by their teachers and/or received the message to never give up.

> *"She makes us like not feel stressed like if we're stuck on a question. She'll tell us to come back to it and then when we do she'll help us."*

> *"And she has big goals for us."*

**Teacher Facilitates Collaborative Learning:**  Students also indicated that teachers provided opportunities for them to learn with peers and to build friendships.

- *"So when our teacher pairs up the students together in groups of two or three, it helps us [learn] by putting different minds together and seeing how different ways to work it out."*
- *"She always makes sure that every day we get to go with a new partner so we can make more friendships in our class. And she's not saying that we have to be friends with everyone. She's just saying that you have to be nice to everyone."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 2: How has your school respected your lived experience at home and with community?**

## Themes from Students K-2
**Culturally Inclusive School Climates:** In response to this question, K-2 students identified different national holidays, culture specific holidays, and birthdays. They shared how they celebrated holidays at school and/or at home. Culture specific holidays included Cinco de Mayo and Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos) as well as a school specific celebration called  "It's Your Culture Day" at school. Students also identified examples of how they were helpful at home.  Although many responses did not directly answer the question, they might reveal that students at some schools are comfortable sharing their lived experiences during the school day. Although an outlier response, one student shared that at their school, culture was not talked about.

> *"It's a day when you dress [for your] culture and my culture is Hmong. I dressed up in Hmong clothes last year."*

> *"We sometimes celebrate Day of the Dead because our four pets died."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 2: How has your school respected your lived experience at home and with community?** *continued*

## Themes from Students 3-5:

**Culturally Inclusive School Climates:** Similar to responses from K-2 students, 3-5 students shared about their cultures and cultural identities. This again, might be reflective of school cultures where students feel comfortable talking about their cultures.

> *"My stepdad, he's Liberian and my grandma, she's Liberian too. She speaks a different language than us so I ask my mom what…that language means."*

**Culturally Inclusive Teachers:** Students also shared how teachers modeled respect for different cultures, which more directly answers the question. Examples students provided of teachers such respect included displaying cultural flags, verbally expressing interest in different cultures, and expressing a desire to be inclusive of all cultures by not favoring one culture.

> *"My teacher appreciates also Hmong, Hispanic, and a lot of different cultures."*

**Culturally Affirming Programs/Actions:** Students also identified evidence of respect for culture in education programming like American Indian education and use of a culturally affirming alphabet. A few students thought the school respected their lived experiences at home and with the community by getting to know them, by caring about them and how they are feeling, and by ensuring that students did not feel alone.

> *"If you're Indian, there's something called Indian Ed, so you can learn more about your heritage. So a way that respects it is so that younger people who are from indigenous descent learn about their heritage and what their heritage has gone through."*

> *"They are kind when we are feeling in the blue zone or red zone. They help us get back to the green zone."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 3: What does 'amplifying student voice' mean to you?**

## Themes from Students K-2:

**Technical Response:** K-2 students mostly gave technical answers to this question. They thought 'amplifying student voice' had to do with volume of speech, the language one spoke, and the act of speaking.

**Being Heard:** Some students connected 'amplifying student voice' to listening and being heard.

> *"It's mostly just about hearing [and] noticing that people hear you."*

> *"What it means, like you're making your voice higher so everybody can hear."*

**Being Helpful and Kind:** A few students associated 'amplifying student voice' with being helpful and kind.

> *"Like, somebody could help you."*

> *"Helping somebody is kind."*

## Themes from Students 3-5

**Putting Voice into Space/Being Heard:** 3-5 students associated 'amplifying student voice' with opportunities to be heard, to give an opinion, or to share a truth. They also associated this High Operational Practice (HOP) with hearing other's perspectives. Some students indicated that people *should* be able to share their opinions. One student provided a response to this question that captures the intention of 'amplifying student voice' to support student agency in learning. They thought it meant, *"pushing what students want, what questions students have..."*

> *"Because everybody has their own unique voice. And they should...be able to speak their truth."*

> *"It encourages me to keep my voice louder because my teacher always says everyone's voice is important. And some people want to know about your experience of learning or what your life is [like] because it is unique to everyone."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 3: What does 'amplifying student voice' mean to you?** *continued*

## Themes from Students 3-5 *continued*

**Collaboration/Connection:** Students also associated 'amplifying student voice' with collaborative learning processes to support each student in being part of a community or team. A few students explicitly made the point that no one is excluded.

> *"So amplifying student voice would also be like sharing what you think in a workspace basically. So when you're working in the group, not one person has to talk and do all the work. You both have to work together and try [to] get it done like a project."*

> *"Like you're in a group. You're working together to help each other."*

> *"And include everyone. No one's left out. You are sure that one understands it and guides everyone through it through the group"*

**Technical Response:** Similar to students in grades K-2, a few 3-5 students gave technical responses which reflected an understanding of 'amplifying student voice' as being related to volume and clarity of speech.

> *"I think it means [that] my voice is being heard right now. People are listening to my voice now."*

> *"It means projecting your voice so that the teacher can hear you and everybody can hear you."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 4: How can the school better support you as a student?**

## Themes from Students K-2

**Provide More Food Options:** Most responses to this question had to do with students wanting different foods to eat at school.

> *"I am going to say lasagna. I'd say different kinds of pizza. Some green grapes. Yeah, it's green grapes. Maybe. Like grape juice."*

> *"Yeah. Maybe they could make some different food. Like sushi rice."*

> *"It would be cool if we got more cereal..."*

**Kindness & Social-Emotional Learning Support:** Students answered this question by discussing the importance of kindness and also requested support in addressing bullying.

> *"By helping others people to be kind. And also helping people up."*

> *"Sometimes my friends push me, and the teachers never see it. And I would think that if there's more teachers watching, that would be better support."*

> *"When someone gets bullied, you can tell the teacher."*

**More Time:** Another major theme was that the school could better support students by giving students more time. Students wanted more time to talk so that they could learn about each other. They also wanted more time for things like taking tests, having snacks, and recess. A few students also requested more support in the form of more bathrooms, larger classrooms, and more books in the libraries.

> *"Yeah, a little more time with our tests because we only get five minutes to do each problem."*

> *"Maybe give me more time to talk to other people. Give me time to talk to other people so that we can learn about each other."*

# Student Themes:  Grades K-2 and 3-5

**Question 4: How can the school better support you as a student?** *continued*

## Themes from Students 3-5

**Support with Problem Solving:** *3-5 students* thought that the school could better support them with problem solving and by understanding their perspectives. They wanted help solving both academic and relational problems.

> *"Why don't you situate most problems with students?  Why don't you talk through the situation with the students?"*

> *"I think a way that they could better support us is to think how we would think and realize that there is more than one way to solve a problem. They should take from what we know and ltry to figure out a different way to help us if we don't understand."*

> *"Why can't you just talk with the people that are fighting one-on-one? Why can't you just talk to them face-to-face?"*

**Give Students Confidence & Encouragement:** They also wanted school staff to give them encouragement and support them in becoming more confident and for teachers to be able to support them with their different learning needs.

> *"I feel like other ways the school could probably help us is by giving us confidence."*

> *"Like putting up a sign in every room saying, Don't give up. Keep trying."*

> *"Every time we walk in the hall, teachers can support us and tell us that we're doing a great job. For example, [Teacher] might say, 'You're doing great. Maybe I should give you a classroom point.'  And she might give me a SWIM ticket."*

## Educator Themes

**Question 1: How has your understanding of High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported students?**

**Helped Give Students More Voice:** Educators shared that through use of the HOP-'amplifying student voice', they were more inclusive and student-centered in their teaching practices which they thought allowed their students "to see and hear themselves in the conversation in class" and become more confident. They thought this also allowed their quieter students to "shine."

> *"It's given them more of a voice in the classroom, in their own education."*

> *"I think that I now have a better understanding of the HOPs. I'm intentionally working to have my classroom more student-led, especially during discussions or presentations…"*

> *"HOPs really helped me as a teacher to plan for the lessons and making sure that the students can again amplify their voices, show their strengths and how we as the teachers using the HOPs can make the lessons more engaging for them and show themselves and their personal, like connecting to their personal lives and also providing enrichment and also help them to build relationship with each other during the lessons."*

> *It's allowed me to get involved more in understanding where the kids are coming from, as to get their voice and their input on the learning itself. So it's not just me teaching, they're teaching themselves as well as myself and everybody else." (ESP)*

**Helped Build Accountability Through Relationships:** Educators made the connection between knowing their students and the impact that their relationships with students had on their students' motivation for learning. They felt that their intentional work to build relationships helped students to understand that they were seen and that the work relationship building also set the tone in their buildings. Educators also shared that their understanding of HOPs helped students to become more accountable for their learning and more accountable to each other for learning.

> *"I think when they feel valued and they know that their strengths are being brought out and that those matter, then they just have way more motivation to do well or to be there. Or when they know they're part of that community and they have a teacher that's going to support what they need instead of just what the teacher wants them to do."*

> *"There's this maybe the dialogue of the HOPs that we've had kind of in our coaching sessions and among teachers has I think has shifted in a sense where we're having discussions about how we are empowering the students to be in charge of their learning or to take ownership of their learning."*

# Educator Themes

**Question 1: How has your understanding of High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported students?** *continued*

**Deeper Understanding = Better Teaching:** Furthermore, educators stated that a deeper understanding of HOPs led to better teaching and that it created more opportunities for students to engage in learning.

> *All the different HOPs are just embedded within my teaching and that was a big understanding shift for me this year versus last year. I think I've just gained a bigger understanding of what they are."*

> *"I feel like my knowledge of the HOPs has given me sort of a guideline to look for and to use as I'm planning. And it's giving me a way to hold myself accountable, to check in with my students and just to make sure that everyone is being seen, being heard and feeling really like a part of their learning, like they're taking the lead. So like I said, I've learned a lot of teaching practices, but the HOPs has definitely given me some guidelines and some values that I can really dig into in my classroom."*

> *"It helps with identifying where they have their strengths and finding ways for them to show they're learning in a way that is beneficial for them."*

# Educator Themes

**Question 2: How has High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported the bridging between your lived experiences and your students' lived experiences?**

**Helped Develop Stronger Classroom Relationships:** Educators identified HOPs, like 'situating learning in the lives of students' and 'amplifying student voice' as having supported shared learning in their classrooms and has facilitated more meaningful connections with and among their students.

> *"I think there's a lot of shared learning going on. They're learning from us, but we're also learning from them. So it's kind of a two-way street a little bit more now than maybe a one-way street it's been in the past. It allows us to just, like I said before, just get the better picture of who they are."*

> *"So I think that by doing that and focusing on that has helped create this connection between myself and the kids so I can see a little bit where they're coming from, they can see where I'm coming from and then again it goes to building that relationship and then you know things just move on from there."*

> *So you're like building relationships as you're teaching, building community as you're teaching just in a natural way it feels."*

> *"I've seen so many students make connections to other students lived experiences and they don't realize that, oh I have that connection too. And that's what I was thinking or oh I wasn't thinking that that's a good idea so allowing that student voice has allowed them to learn from each other without having that like let's just talk about ourselves. They're learning through just natural conversations. It's also being able to have the adults in the room find out more about our students too. And where they're coming from." (ESP)*

> *"I think in our building especially with the rich cultural diversity we have in our building it's phenomenal to see our students who are new to country feel like they can take pride as we honor their lived experience. You can see it's almost like a deep breath sometimes when we show the interest and hold space for them. To do it they then are louder about it. They're able to share more and they realize they don't have to be quiet about their lived experience and that's beautiful to see." (ESP)*

> *"When you have connection in relationships,...You can elicit higher performance, you speak to academics, you can get to their strengths. They might share with you something from home, so you get to know them more in their other world and you have more opportunities and they're more willing to share their voice." (ESP)*

> *"Even with my 15-minute groups, if I take five minutes to ask about how Hmong village field trip was or something like that, then you're building relationships. You're amplifying the voice, you know, so that you can move forward with all these other things." (ESP)*

# Educator Themes

**Question 2: How has High Operational Practices (HOPs) supported the bridging between your lived experiences and your students' lived experiences?** *continued*

**Supported Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices:** Educators also felt that they have been able to better leverage students' frames of reference and voice to support learning. In addition, educators shared that as a result of creating classrooms where student experiences are validated, students are taking more ownership of their learning.

> *I flipped the script. And now the kids, they get to use a microphone and they have to be the one to talk, they have to be the one, because especially for some of my students, you know, if I'm the one pushing them, then they can easily resist. But if their classmate is the one pushing them to speak and to do that, oh, they love it. And now they all want the microphone, they all, they want to be the teacher, and I'm coaching."*

> *"And even with Socratic seminar with all of us coaching, finally the last time, you know, [student] was able to say one thing and that was a huge win. And then in a smaller setting, like within my classroom, she's still as resistant. But now we are, you know, keeping record of, okay, two, three, two, three, right? And even the ESPa in a different classroom, they're like, 'Oh, this is so exciting.' Like-- and one of them told me, 'Why didn't you start this right at the beginning?' "*

> *"Yeah, well I think when we bring in our lived experiences and our frame of reference, it helps our students relate to us more as human beings and not just see us as their teacher. And then they're building those relationships and then they're able to connect with their lives, with their learnings and really finding the why behind it and taking ownership and more meaning in what they're doing."*

> *"So we as teachers are learning from [students] and we are then building around our lessons like what topics really interest them. Like for example different cultures have different perspectives ...working around my lessons or lesson plans I'm mindful about what my students know, what they don't know, and have to make the lessons more comprehensible to them."*

> *"And now when I see the bridge where when you add the student voice and then give the student the writing tool, they are seeing their work among ours so your voice is always a part of teaching because that's what we do. But I think when we've added the students in and we give them the tools to add to our work we're showing that as an example of bridging that between the teacher and the students and the students and the students."*

# Educator Themes

**Question 3: What are shifts you've made in your teaching practices as you've incorporated High Operational Practices (HOPs) this year?**

**Shift From Teacher-Centered to Student-Centered:** Educators talked about how they've let go of some of the "control" when teaching and made shifts in how they approached their curriculum such as changes in how they used classroom time to support student agency in learning. They noted that the shift they made led to more meaningful and vigorous learning. Some educators also felt that practicing the HOP 'amplifying student voice,' resulted in students taking more ownership of their learning. One teacher also shared that their use of HOPs helped them to learn and teach a new curriculum.

> *"I think I've been encouraged to think back to the foundational work of Yvette Jackson and this idea that all kids are gifted… It's my job to see how they're gifted and to find that. I feel like the shift is - the onus is on me to look for it." (ESP)*

> *"Yes, I know we've had conversations with my team like do we just not believe our students can handle it or are we just not willing to let go and let them try? And then when we do let them try, we're like, "Crap, we should have been doing this months ago because they can do it and they can rise to that." But like I know how I like things, I know how I want it done and it all has to be from point A to point B the way I think. But realizing that these students can still get to point A to point B in such amazing, different, creative ways and then learn from their peers. You know, I'm like, 'Oh, I've never thought of it that way." And like just letting go of that control, you've seen so much."*

> *"Coming from the perspective of a kindergarten teacher, high intellectual performance has really pushed me as an educator because I'm working with five and six year olds and so you think you need to teach them how to do everything which in some ways is true but it's really pushed me in some of our planning meetings to think about they can do more than we think they can and sometimes we're holding them back."*

> *"So I think a shift that I've made is like within my teaching trying to get through all of this curriculum. Sometimes it's good to take a step back. Try something connected to the HOPs and let it just go deep and let the students really drive where the discussion goes or where the lesson goes and  when you take a step back and it's like 'Oh I didn't quite get through all of that curriculum I wanted to, but look at what we covered today.' I think that kind of goes to what you were saying too of just like rather than students receiving information from me, the shift to like letting the students drive the conversation and the learning in that way."*
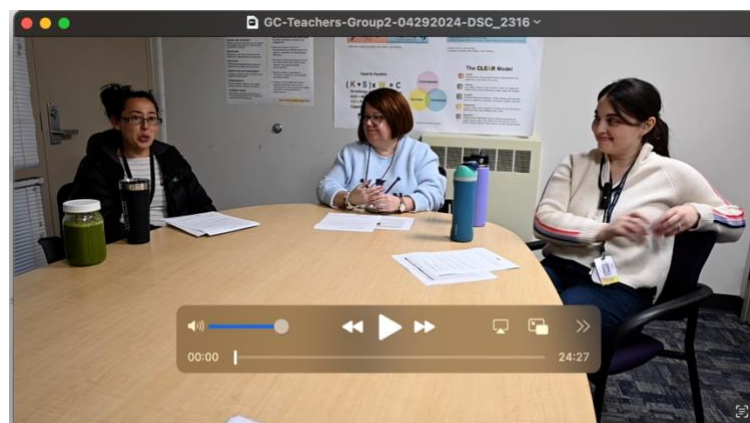
# Educator Themes

**Question 3: What are shifts you've made in your teaching practices as you've incorporated High Operational Practices (HOPs) this year?** *Continued*

> *"I was piloting reading with a new literacy this year, using some of the high operational practices, which were familiar to me that I'd used before, but trying them with new curriculum made it less frightening. You know, because using new curriculum can be overwhelming. But when I was using something that I already knew to try a new curriculum, made it more familiar, like, oh, well, I have this new curriculum, but I can use something that I already know to make it less threatening."*

> *"I always thought that when I do my book talks with all my students that that's me talking about a book to get those students encouraged about reading. But seeing different ways you can do book talks of just saying this is a mystery book what do you guys know about mystery, and them talking about what they know about a mystery book or how it connects to other books they've read has really changed how I do book talks. Which is amazing because that's not me leading for them. Even if it is me introducing them to a brand new book. So that's really inspiring to see that." (ESP)*

> *"Yeah, for me, it's really, it comes to mind the productive struggle. It's so hard for me to demonstrate that and do that. So I've had to really coach myself to be more patient. And then I see the kids, not necessarily, I mean, they see all of us do that productive struggle, but the kids are really good about that too. They recognize what's happening. Oh, we're giving this person more time to come to this, to find a solution. So that's my biggest thing that I have to work on." (ESP).*

# Educator Themes

**Question 4: How has the whole school model supported you with implementing High Operational Practices (HOPs)?**

**Coaching/Mentoring/Peer Observation Supported Teacher Practice:** Educators felt that the whole school model format, which allowed for NUA mentors, coaches, and peers to demo lessons, was helpful as they implemented HOPs. They appreciated the opportunity to observe lessons, share ideas, practice HOPs, and get feedback.

> *"Sometimes we think, "Oh, our kids can't do that." But to have [the NUA Mentor] come in [and model], [and] to see it with our own kids, I feel like that's been helpful. Then we're able to go back and keep trying it."*

> *"As a new teacher like this is very immensely helpful right being able to see other people and not just when we have like the mentors come in and you know do a sample lesson, but also being able to see another teacher and going into the other fourth grade class and seeing how the other fourth grade teacher does it. Or all those fourth grade teachers watching and being able to discuss that I mean that's extremely helpful because it's not just watching it, but then*
> *actually like processing it and you pull so much more out of it when you can talk about it, because I think I did one of everything I think I think I did planning and then I did the mentor and then I also did the observation."*

> *"Being able to watch [NUA mentor] do it or whoever was first like the "I do, we do, you do." Just helping me see, "Okay, you did do it with my students, it can happen, and I can do it with my students." I feel like I needed that. Otherwise, I maybe would have been a little too scared to relinquish some of that control or my current strategies."*

# Educator Themes

**Question 4: How has the whole school model supported you with implementing High Operational Practices (HOPs)?** *continued*

**Moving Forward as One School:** Educators appreciated how the whole school model created a sense of cohesiveness whereby they were part of a school that was moving forward.

> *"It's top down. It's down up. I mean, our ESP support. Our teachers. Our custodians. Everybody on board, everyone in the building is on board with the game plan."*

> *"As [the principal] amplifies who we are as educators, we now have new respect in the building. We're doing this in our classrooms. We want to do this, but training has not historically never been provided for us. So when I did the NUA training for that week, it was on my own time for an entire week. So I think our supervisor has caused our administrators to understand we're the people that are with K-5 all day in intervention. We're the ones that should be getting this training. So I feel good about that. A shift has started to happen in how important it is for our ESPs to receive this training. (ESP)*

> *"I feel like we kind of spoke to this. I mean it it takes the whole school buy, like the whole school buy-in. Like it, it, like I said, it's been sort of internalized through the whole year. And I think because we've been learning about it as well as licensed staff, classroom teachers." (ESP)*

**Normalized Learning With and From Colleagues:** Educators also appreciated being able to learn with and from colleagues. They felt that the whole school model normalized a culture of learning with and from colleagues.

> *"I think visiting other classrooms and for me being new to all this this year, this was a really good way for me to actually see it in action and write down on those sheets like specific HOPs that we're seeing and talk about examples of it in the classroom. That's been really helpful for me to go around and see other teachers and learn that way, especially after doing the whole group discussions."*

> *"I see teachers learning from each other. I think everybody in the room just got goosebumps. I just did. Yeah, right? But I think, especially at our school, with most of the staff, there's just this vulnerability of "I might fall flat on my face, but it could also be really cool."*

## Limitations

This evaluation process was initiated by people outside of the organization. This analysis is not disaggregated by school, but rather reflects comments made by members of all school communities. Although this evaluation includes the voices of teachers and Education Support Professionals (ESPs), it contains more teacher voice because most interviews were done with teachers. ESP voices are specifically identified in the quotes. This analysis is in no way conclusive. It provides a starting point for further reflection by students, families, educators, school leaders and district leaders.

## Recommendations

Education evaluation is for the purpose of organizational learning. Educators at each site and district educators would benefit from dialogue about these initial findings. Such dialogue could support system wide learning. For instance, dialogue might:

1. Help to identify high leverage ways to implement HOPs to elicit student High Intellectual Performance (HIP).
2. Provide an opportunity for educators to reflect on their strengths and areas of growth in both understanding and use of High Operational Practices (HOPs) to elicit student High Intellectual Performance (HIP).
3. Determine and/or confirm areas of focus for schoolwide HOPs implementation.
4. Continue to identify explicit ways for using HOPs to teach the academic and SEL standards.
5. Include ESPs in educational evaluation. They provide needed insight regarding how to elicit student intellectual performance through use of HOPs.

## Reflection Questions

1. Based on your reading of this evaluation, how do you think the use of HOPs has specifically impacted your students and educators?
2. In your role, how can the information from this evaluation be used to support instructional goals?

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# Photos

All the photos in this document are from the participating Osseo Area Schools.

# Websites

The following websites provide further information about the collaboration including the consulting organization, the school district, and the lead consultants:

National Urban Alliance
https://www.nuatc.org

The Pedagogy of Confidence
https://pedagogyofconfidence.net

American Dialogue Company (Regina Seabrook)
https://www.americandialoguecompany.com

Robert Seth Price
https://eggplant.org

Osseo Area Schools
https://www.district279.org

# Contact Information for Authors and Participating Leadership

Eric Cooper, Founder and President
nua4556@aim.com

Regina Seabrook, Senior Scholar, NUA
regina@adc-mn.com

Robert Seth Price, Senior Scholar, NUA
robert@eggplant.org

Yvette Jackson, Author Pedagogy of Confidence, Researcher
drjnua@gmail.com

Bryan Bass, Assistant Superintendent of Equity & Achievement, Osseo Area Schools
BassB@District279.org

Sharla Foster, Equity Department, Osseo Area Schools
fosters@district279.org

Maureen Araya, Equity Department, Osseo Area Schools
ArayaM@district279.org

Jenna Johnshoy-Aarestad, Coordinator of Data & Assessment with Osseo Area Schools
Johnshoy-AarestadJ@District279.org

**Appendix A**

# National Urban Alliance (NUA) and The Pedagogy of Confidence

- NUA's work
- Description of The Pedagogy of Confidence and HOPs
- Activities that took place during the year
- Description of each school (i.e., leadership, student body, location, etc.)
- Program Evaluation

## National Urban Alliance (NUA) Overview

The National Urban Alliance (NUA) was founded by The College Board and Columbia University's Teachers College in response to persistent underperformance by students of color and those challenged by poverty. We worked closely with the Advanced Placement Program as well as Equity programs we initiated at the College Board. A targeted focus was placed on improving literacy, civic instruction, student leadership and critical thinking in content-areas. Additionally, we work with great success with boards of education and community leadership with the focus on educational improvement, parental support and community engagement.

We believe that improving teacher effectiveness is the key to eliminating the achievement and opportunity gaps. The NUA approach, which builds on neuroscience and culturally validating learning and teaching, are described in detail in the award-winning book, "The Pedagogy of Confidence," written by NUA's Dr. Yvette Jackson. The Pedagogy of Confidence details the 7 High Operational Practices that are fundamental for the achievement and opportunity gaps to be eliminated.

We are passionate in striving toward a world in which barriers to high levels of learning borne of racism, sexism and economic disadvantage are eliminated for all children.

We focus on three core beliefs:

- Intelligence is modifiable;
- All students benefit from a focus on high intellectual performance;
- Learning is influenced by the interaction of culture, language and cognition.

NUA has education experts who work with teachers, students, school administrators and communities to identify strengths to address the needs and break down barriers that inhibit achievement. We are values-directed and data-driven. We are hands on modeling with students and focus on whole school transformation through collaborative school communities. NUA partners with school districts across the country to accelerate and raise student achievement through professional development based on the Pedagogy of Confidence and designed to promote students' high intellectual performances. Our efforts have resulted in tangible results for the educators and students we serve and we have contributed to the knowledge base of how to transform schools settings.

# The Pedagogy of Confidence - High Operational Practices

The Pedagogy of Confidence® seven High Operational Practices™: All students have an innate desire for engagement, challenge, developing strengths, belonging and feeling valued. The Pedagogy of Confidence® addresses this desire through its High Operational Practices ™ (HOPs) that guide culturally responsive pedagogy for equity through excellence, eliciting and nurturing high intellectual performances for self-actualization and personal contribution from ALL students.

The Pedagogy of Confidence is an approach to learning and teaching that is based on the fearless expectation that all students are capable of high intellectual performances when provided High Operational Practices™ that motivate self-directed learning and self-actualization. These High Operational Practices are:

- Identifying and activating student strengths
- Building relationships
- Eliciting high intellectual performances
- Providing enrichment
- Integrating prerequisites for academic learning
- Situating learning in the lives of students
- Amplifying student voice (Jackson, 2011, p. 71).

These seven High Operational Practices are the fulcrum around which the "gifted" education of the Pedagogy of Confidence revolves, gearing the objectives for each practice to facilitate students exploring and acting on their potential to produce the high intellectual performances that can motivate self-directed learning, self-actualization, and self-transcendence.   The inherent strategies and actions used to identify and build on strengths, provide enrichment and create schema that connects to a student's cultural frame of reference inherent in "gifted education" serve to enhance comprehension that results in strengthened competence, confidence, resilience and high intellectual performances (Jackson, 2017).

# The Pedagogy of Confidence™ High Operational Practices
# For High Intellectual Performance

### Identifying And Activating Student Strengths
Teaching that encourages students to recognize and apply their strengths releases neurotransmitters of pleasure, motivating students to actively participate and invest in a learning experience, set goals for their learning, and follow through with their learning for meaningful application and deeper development of strengths for personal agency.

### Building Relationships
Students fare best cognitively, socially and emotionally when they know they are liked, appreciated, valued as part of a vibrant, caring community. Positive relationships stimulate oxytocin, positively impacting both the motivation and the memory capacity critical for learning.

### Eliciting High Intellectual Performance
Students crave challenges. Their intelligence flourishes when they are asked to think at high levels about complex issues, demonstrate what they know in creative ways, and develop useful habits of mind such as reflection, raising substantive questions for deeper understanding and thinking flexibly and innovatively.
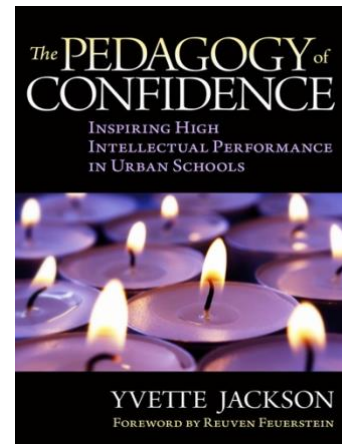
### Providing Enrichment
Enrichment taps students' interests, generates strengths, expands their cognitive capacity, and guides them to apply what they know in novel situations for self-actualization.

### Integrating Prerequisites For Academic Learning
Foundation schema building activities are critical so that students have the right foundations for learning new information and acquiring new skills. This foundation heightens students' understanding, competence, confidence, and motivation.

### Situating Learning In The Lives Of Students
Students perform most effectively when they can connect new learnings to what is relevant and meaningful to them. These connections validate their lived experiences activating the focusing of the brain through its Reticular Activating System (RAS). Without such personal connections, the new learnings are not likely to be retained and used effectively.

### Amplifying Student Voice
Encouraging students to voice their interests, perspectives, reflections, opinions and enabling them to make personal contributions is not only motivating but also builds the confidence, agency, academic language, investment, and skill students need to join wider communities of learners and doers in the world outside of school.