Discussion Questions for Educators (prospective and practicing teachers, counselors, coaches, principals, and teacher educators)

Book Title: *Rac(e)ing to Class: Confronting Poverty and Race in Schools and Classrooms*

**Introduction**

- Why do young children too often lose interest and motivation in schools even though they begin their schooling excited about education?
- Why is it important to understand students’ experiences outside of school?
- What are some of the out-of-school experiences that educators should know about, seek to understand, and respond to?
- How does Darling-Hammond conceptualize the decline in narrowing achievement gaps? Why did progress stop? (page 5)
- What is race and why does it matter in the work of educators in schools?
- In what ways is race about more than skin color? (page 8)
- What is poverty? Why is it essential for educators to understand poverty among students and families?
- What is the difference between “schooling” and “education”?
- What is social class?
- What is social/racial stratification?
- Why should educators develop tools to address the intersections of race and poverty?
- Read and react to the suppositions that guide *Rac(e)ing to Class* on pages 24–26.

**Chapter 1**

- Identify the four recommendations on page 33 for school and district-level reform.
- What roles do educators (in the classroom) play in helping districts realize and reach these recommendations?
- Define equity.
- Why is an increase in school and district resources insufficient for the kinds of reform necessary to meet the needs of students living in poverty?
- How do educators identify and respond to neighborhood conditions? (page 39)
- What role do social contexts (the environment) play on the effects of race and poverty?
- What are some of the realities of homeless students and families?
- Outline some of the educational barriers of homeless students according to Mawhinney-Rhoads and Stahler (page 45).
- What six recommendations does Milner discuss on pages 47–48 for state, district, and school reform?
• What does it mean for students to be “school dependent”?
• Which pedagogical shifts are essential for educators when class sizes are reduced among students?
• What are some benefits to reducing class size among students?
• What is the curriculum? How does Eisner define the various forms of the curriculum? (page 57)
• What are pros and cons to narrowing and standardizing the curriculum?
• How do schools and districts cultivate cultural and organizational shifts to meet the needs of students living in poverty?

Chapter 2

• How does listening to the voices of students influence teachers’ instructional practices? (pages 69–74)
• What are some critiques of Ruby Payne’s framework on the “culture of poverty”?
• What are the four recommendations Milner makes for reforming instructional practices to better meet the needs of students living in poverty? (page 78)
• How do teachers build the capacity to teach English Language arts across the curriculum?
• Read and react to the knowledge and skills teachers need to develop beyond academic content (pages 102–103).
• How do educators build the capacity to build the summative instructional practices on pages 110–111?

Chapter 3

Preschool Educators:
• Read the case study of Jamal on pages 114–115. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

Elementary Educators:
• Read the case study of Lawrence on pages 115–116. What are the central issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

Middle School Educators:
• Read the case study about math and motivation on pages 117–119. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

High School Educators:
• Read the case study about black girls on pages 119–121. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?
• What does the research show about objective and subjective office referral patterns?
• Discuss and critique the reasons for exclusionary office referral practices of educators on pages 124–127.

**Middle and High School Educators:**
• Read the case study about “A Robbery in the Perry Community” on pages 129–137. What are the reasons educators give for avoiding a discussion of the robbery with their students?
• What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty? What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

**Elementary and Middle School Educators:**
• Read the case study about shoes on pages 137–138. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?
• Read the case study about a notebook on pages 138–139. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

**Principals and Leaders:**
• Read the case study about a principal on pages 139–140. What are the essential issues related to race and/or poverty?
• What strategies and recommendations would you draw from throughout earlier chapters to address the issues you determined to be essential?

**ALL EDUCATORS:**
• What are some of the broad lessons embedded in the case studies in chapter 3? What did you think about that you may not have considered much in the past?

**Chapter 4**
• What are the three focal areas Milner discusses as necessary to reform teacher education?
• Milner identifies fifteen thematic areas necessary to prepare and support teachers to meet the needs of students living in poverty on pages 146–149. Which of these recommendations appear to be the most essential and why? How can teacher education programs be redirected to construct these recommendations?
• What elements of curriculum reform does Milner explain as necessary to meet the needs of students living in poverty?
• What is a racial microaggression? How might teachers support students who have experienced them?
• What can teacher education courses do (on a micro level) to better support teacher development in meeting the complex needs of students in PreK–12 classrooms? (pages 159–169)
• Identify some specific tools and activities in which teachers can engage in order to build their knowledge.
• What does Milner explain as essential to improve our research, theory, and practice in teacher education regarding race and poverty? (pp.169–173)

Chapter 5

• Read the vignette on pages 177–180 about Jeffrey. How would you as an educator or future educator respond to the situation/classroom episode with Jeffrey?
• Consider the recommendations from the Children’s Defense Fund on page 181. Which of these reforms appear to be most salient for students of color and those living in poverty? Why?
• Reflect on the six key reform recommendations on page 182. What would you add to the list based on what is and is not covered in this book?
• What are some implications of a focus on race and poverty for young children? What does the research show regarding young children, white bias, and racial identity (page 183), and why should we be concerned in education?
• Based on the information in this book, what are some collective and immediate actions that you can and will take to better meet the needs of all of your students?
• How will you build human and resource capacity to create and sustain practices to better meet the needs of all of your students?
• What focal area did you learn most about and what do you want to focus on in the future to improve your practices?