Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to the production of this resource. Through the vision, support, and guidance of Nancy Larson and Elizabeth Watkins of the Minnesota Department of Education, the project was completed with the collaboration of parent representatives, education specialists representing a variety of disciplines, school district administrators, and faculty from the program in Counseling and School Psychology from the University of Wisconsin - River Falls (UWRF), St. Scholastica in Duluth, St. Mary's University in Minneapolis and Winona State.

Many other persons, professionals, and advocates for the needs of children, parents, and caregivers contributed recommendations and strategies to the materials contained in this document. Parents shared stories and cultural liaisons added their perspectives. Multiple perspectives were considered in defining the issues and reviewing the literature on disproportionate representation of American Indian and African American students.

Debate about the issues and content was passionate, rich, and all focused on improving outcomes for American Indian and African American students. The issues considered were broad in scope, necessitating difficult decisions about content to include and content to exclude. Frank conversations about race, culture and class were necessary. Conversations were difficult but necessary to truly define and understand the issues impacting placement decisions involving American Indian and African American students.

With discussions of race and culture, definitions about racial identity are confusing. The focus of this manual is on the needs of American Indian and African American students. For American Indian students, tribal affiliation and tribal attachments are often used as a key determinant for heritage.

Most definitions of African Americans include a descendant of slaves component, or that one ancestor was born in America. The term Black is often used to globally refer to students of color, but the term Black students can include students who are descendants of slaves and those who are immigrants to the United States and those who are English Language Learners (ELL), typically from African countries. Therefore, analyzing data on African American students who are descendants of slaves is difficult.

For White students, connection to ancestry from Europe is often a key component. In some literature some persons refer to European American. As a foundation of references to race for the purposes of this manual, the US Census definitions are a starting point. Even this foundation is imperfect. In recognition of our multi-cultural society many individuals claim identification to more than one race, which is allowed by the US Census.

In discussing issues where race is a considered different terms are applied to refer to the reference group often used as the foundation for assessment in areas such as academic achievement or measurement of intelligence. These terms include White peers, mainstream population, or predominant culture. In many respects these comparisons are specific to the school community. In a school with 90% or more of the students identifying as white, phrases
such as mainstream and predominant culture apply. In a setting where the student population is 70% African American, 15% White, 10% Asian and 5% other racial groups. References to mainstream or predominant culture then need to be re-defined.

US Census Categories

The categories used by the United States Census Bureau are based on self-identification, utilizing a social definition of race rather than one that is biologically, anthropologically, or genetically defined.

White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Decisions on content for the manual were guided by a focus on positive expectations and positive outcomes for American Indian and African American students. Following a review of literature, participants working on the project affirmed beliefs in the capacity of educators, staff, and administrators to work collaboratively with caregivers, parents, and other advocates, to enhance strategies, procedures, or decision-making rubrics that contribute to the success of American Indian and African American students within in Minnesota public schools.

Success is defined as a combination of reduction in disproportionate representation in special education programs, combined with improvement in the academic achievement of American Indian and African American students. The maintenance of American Indian and African American students in traditional classroom settings versus use of exclusion placements is also a marker of change. In the long term success is shown by an increase in the number of American Indian and African American students completing high school and continuing on to higher education and other post-secondary options than what current data shows.

A systemic perspective was adopted early in the revision process. Many complex factors converge to contribute to the disproportionate representation of American Indian and African American students in special education settings. Solutions to the concern of disproportionate

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1 http://www.census.gov/population/race/
placement involve multi-prong approaches. A systemic approach combined with individual responsibility, founded on professional ethics, is necessary to address factors that contribute to disproportionate placement of African American and American Indian students in special education programs.

Amidst the several the goals in producing the material was the confirmation that there is a path to change that reduces inappropriate placement of American Indian and African American students. The path to change for improved services for American Indian and African American students is based on several steps.

**Steps to Change**

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<tr>
<th>(1) Commitment to the promotion of an inclusive and positive school climate while using system resources to monitor school climate and outcomes for American Indian and African American students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) Recognition of any problems based on self-study and on-going data collection and review.</td>
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<td>(3) Identification of sources of error within the school system that contribute to any concerns.</td>
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<td>(4) Development of a response plan to correct errors or flaws in the system.</td>
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<td>(5) Implementation of a plan of improvement.</td>
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<td>(6) Training educators and administrators on issues of culture and the impact of culture on assessment or assessment decision-making.</td>
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<td>(7) Collaboration with caregivers.</td>
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<td>(7) Continuation of self-monitoring.</td>
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All of us working on the revision of the Promising Practices – Reducing Bias manual were saddened by the sudden passing of our friend,

Jacqueline Crowe Fraedrich
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
July 19, 1942 – March 19, 2014

Jackie was an advocate for improving the quality of education for American Indian – Alaska native students in Minnesota. For those of us who had the opportunity to collaborate with Jackie, we will use her example to remain inspired to work in the best interest of all students to produce inclusive and culturally sensitive educational environments