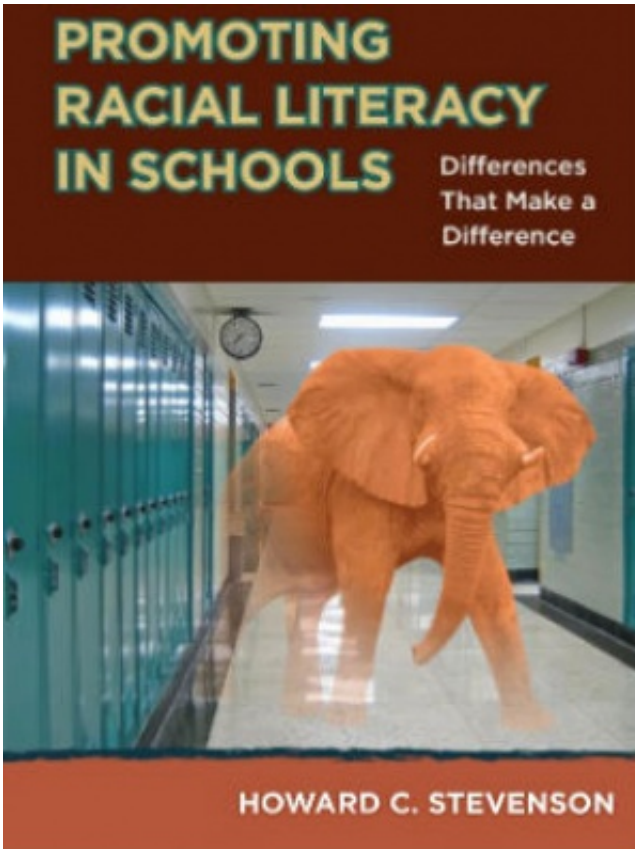


New book explores racial literacy in schools

May 20 2014, by Jill Disanto



Racism and racial stereotyping still haunt America's schools and foster academic underachievement, but "racial literacy" may pave the way toward better understanding and stronger, more successful students. That is the conclusion of Howard Stevenson, a professor and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

In his new book, *Promoting Racial Literacy in Schools: Differences That Make a Difference*, Stevenson focuses on how educators, community leaders and parents can resolve stressful face-to-face encounters that reflect [racial profiling](#) in public spaces, fuel disputes in neighborhoods, undermine students' emotional well-being and jeopardize academic success.

The book also advocates cultivating racial literacy and the skills to comprehend, explain and resolve racially stressful social interactions through storytelling, journaling, relaxation, debating and role playing.

"Racial storytelling is the first step toward racial literacy," Stevenson said, noting that, in the stories people tell, they are able to evaluate their own roles, examine the information they had at that time of the encounter and understand other details more clearly.

"As each person shares his or her own story of micro-aggressions, he or she can begin to recast the racial politics of avoidance from childhood," he said.

Because racial discourse is so stressful in many different ways, educators and school leaders often turn to avoidance coping strategies, failing to act on racial micro-aggressions because of the stress related to negotiating those kinds of conflicts, Stevenson added.

The book provides a model for culturally relevant behavioral management strategies to address racial stress in schools and offers workable solutions for school officials, students and parents. For teachers, it offers tips for developing racial literacy skills and integrating them into the K-12 curriculum, as well as professional development activities that will result in a more tolerant, supportive school environment.

Stevenson, who has more than 20 years of research experience in studying racial socialization, contends the problem with American race relations is not society's failure to have a deep, meaningful conversation about race. Rather, it is rooted in a lack of skill in managing the fears of what that conversation about race may ignite.

More information: store.tpress.com/0807755044.shtml

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