

Closing the Achievement Gap



***Contra Costa County Achievement Gap Task Force:
Executive Summary and Recommendations for
School Districts and School Sites***



CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

During the fall of 2002 in Contra Costa County, the 18 school district superintendents and the county superintendent of schools unanimously agreed to address the student Achievement Gap, as measured by a four-year comparison by ethnicity of the Stanford 9 results. The results displayed a very disturbing profile of student achievement in a two-tier fashion for all grades. Asian and White students consistently achieved at a higher level than Hispanic and African American students in both math and reading. Roughly 75% of Asian and White students scored above the national average while approximately 33% of African American and Hispanic students do so. Please refer to the SAT9 data on the insert for the results. All ethnicities experienced achievement gains, however, the gap remained. Hispanic and African American students' achievement needed to increase at a rapid rate to equal or better the achievement level of the upper tier students. Ethnicity should not be an obstacle to learning and achievement as measured by the SAT9.

The county superintendent established an Achievement Gap task force of educators from across the county to study the gap. A summary of the task force's recommendations follows the SAT9 data.

Every responsible member of the community must be involved to eliminate the Achievement Gap: parents, families, senior citizens, business and labor leaders, as well as civic leaders. They must join together with local school boards and educators in a unified plan to rid the community of the Achievement Gap.

Within the school district, everyone must conscientiously address the issue and be very clear of specific responsibilities for all. It will require a systematic change of the dynamics of learning and teaching and the support required for success.

Every element of the school district must focus on ridding the district of the Achievement Gap. District board members and superintendents play significant roles. District office staff must be involved. At the school site level, the role of the principal as the instructional leader is key to the achievement gains of the students. The work of the teaching staff must be aligned to the strategies of eliminating the Achievement Gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the District Level

- The commitment must start with the superintendent.
- The superintendent must focus the board and district office staff on the primary goal of closing the gap.
- The superintendent must build community support.
- The superintendent must create a culture of support and expectations to close the Achievement Gap.
- Planning of resources and time is essential.
- Funding must be redirected to adopt and implement state recommended intensive programs for use during the school day and after the traditional school day.
- Recruiting plans need to be developed and implemented to recruit quality teachers.
- Staff development must be offered to principals to ensure their effectiveness to be instructional leaders at the site level with targeted technical assistance for supervision of standards-based classrooms.
- Secure appropriate standards aligned materials including common assessments aligned to standards.
- Secure appropriate learning materials and supplies for all classrooms.
- Data analysis of student learning must be ongoing.
- High expectations must be upheld for all students.

School Site Level

- The principal needs to actively guide the teachers.
- Closing the gap must be the focus of everyone on campus.
- Discuss regularly “when do students learn?” Make those moments available.
- Recruit and retain quality teachers.
- Create a school wide culture that fosters caring, respect and high expectations for all.
- Frequent use of formative assessment to shape instruction must be routine.
- Use action research to improve professional practice.
- Encourage sharing of best practices.
- Involve parents and community...develop a learning community
- Standards must be explicit.
- Teachers must use curriculum calibration and backward planning.
- Incorporate flexible scheduling based on student needs.
- Teachers must understand cultural differences and be comfortable with culturally relevant pedagogy.
- English Language Learner (ELL) students need a language rich environment
- For ELL students, daily writing and vocabulary development is critical.
- Everyone must be comfortable with differentiated instruction...remember to be explicit, provide direct instruction...use scaffolding when appropriate.



77 Santa Barbara Road
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
(925) 942-3330
www.cocoschools.org

Joseph A. Ovick, Ed.D.
*Contra Costa County
Superintendent of Schools*

**Contra Costa County
Board of Education**

Daniel L. Borsuk

Daniel A. Gomes

David T. Krapf, Ed.D.

Pamela M. Mirabella

Glenn A. Ruley