Davis Joint Unified School District
Achievement Gap Task Force
May 2007

Appointed Task Force Members

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Ex-officio Members

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Kitty Hudson Cawley, Manager of Student Achievement
Mary Khan, English Learner Coordinator
Mel Lewis, Climate Coordinator
Deanne Quinn, GATE Coordinator

Board of Education Liaisons

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<u>Achievement Gap Task Force Process</u>

In spring 2006 the DJSUD Board of Education established educational priorities for the school district. Listed first among the Board's priorities was the closing of the achievement gap. The Board determined that it would appoint a task force that would involve appropriate school staff, parents and community members to 1) establish a clear, concise statement defining what closing the achievement gap specifically means to the district and 2) advise the Board regarding strategic goals to close this gap. The Board intended that a draft plan of action would then be developed by the district, extending across the next few years to close the achievement gap. The plan of action would include task force recommendations to the Board with measurable objectives, timelines for activities and progress checkpoints.

In October 2006 a subcommittee selected by the Board reviewed the task force applications and recommended a slate of applicants to the Board for appointment to the Achievement Gap Task Force. The task force first met in December 2006, then continued meeting twice a month from January through April 2007. Over the four month period, the task force clarified the work before the group, reviewed student achievement and other pertinent district data, reviewed achievement gap research literature, and reviewed DJUSD 2006-07 school site plans, including goals and actions chosen by sites to close the achievement gap.

Committee members organized into grade level work groups. The work of the grade level committees included selecting recommended measurable objectives for monitoring the effectiveness of intervention strategies and recommending district funding priorities based on district data, school site plans, and achievement gap research literature. The high school committee members additionally spoke with school administration and staff about site ideas for addressing the achievement gap. Task force member Anne Driscoll worked on behalf of all the committees to provide data reports as requested.

Findings from the Review of DJUSD Student Achievement Data

The Achievement Gap Task Force found that the overall academic achievement of students in the Davis Joint Unified School District is exceptionally high. California Standards Test (CST) results show 74 % of Davis students in grades 2 through 6 score proficient or advanced in mathematics, and 71 % of Davis students in grades 2 through 6 score proficient or advanced in English Language Arts. At the secondary level, 61 % of Davis students in grades 7 through 11 score proficient or advanced in mathematics, and 72 % of Davis students in grades 7 through 11 score proficient or advanced in English Language Arts. Using the measures of academic proficiency that are required by the federal legislation No Child Left Behind, the majority of students in Davis are being well-served by the school system.

Davis students who are doing well academically generally have parents who have completed college programs and post-graduate or professional programs. They also tend to have high income levels. With the University of California, Davis, being the major employer in the local economy, the Davis community naturally places a high value on academic achievement. Additionally, most parents have significant educational experience which allows them to give academic support to their children at home.

However, when the Davis school district data is disaggregated, several pockets of disparity in academic achievement emerge between groups of students. CST data shows that disproportionately high percentages of the following groups of students in the Davis School District grades 2 – 11 are not performing to their academic potential. They include, but are not limited to:

- Latinos
- African-Americans
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- English Language Learners, specifically those with Spanish as their home language

Additionally, although most white and Asian students are academically successful, a significant number of white and Asian students are not reaching the state-determined benchmarks. (Figures 2 & 3 and Table 1). Some Davis students with Special Education Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 plans are also underperforming academically. The task force decided not to include specific recommendations about Special Education students and students with 504 plans in this report because data is unavailable due to lack of consistent computer input which is related to the variety of ways these students are assessed. Other groups of students that the task force did not have time to adequately investigate in the achievement gap research include students with substance abuse problems, students who are homeless, students with family problems, and gender-related discrepancies in academic achievement. Students from Families First are not included in the data.

Racial/ethnic demographics of Davis students, as self-identified by parents, in kindergarten through 12th grade are represented in Figure 1. Approximately 65% of Davis students are white, 16% Asian, 14% Latino, 4% African American, and 1.9% other.
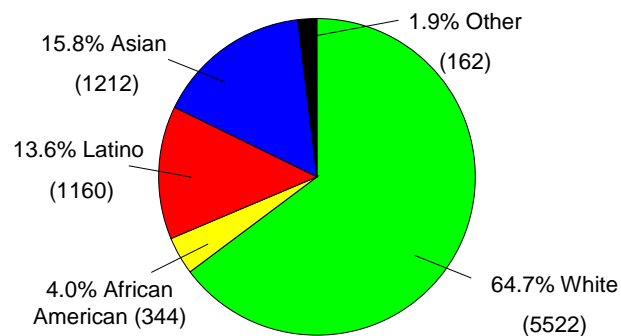

15.8% Asian (1212)

1.9% Other (162)

13.6% Latino (1160)

64.7% White (5522)

4.0% African American (344)

Figure 1 – Davis Students by Race/Ethnicity

Disparity in the academic achievement of Davis students, identified in educational literature as "the achievement gap," is seen in multiple academic achievement measures, but most easily in the California Standards Tests (CST) in both Mathematics and English Language Arts across all grade levels (Figure 2, 3 & Table 1). The CSTs show that white and Asian students in Davis are achieving at higher rates of proficiency than African American and Latino students.
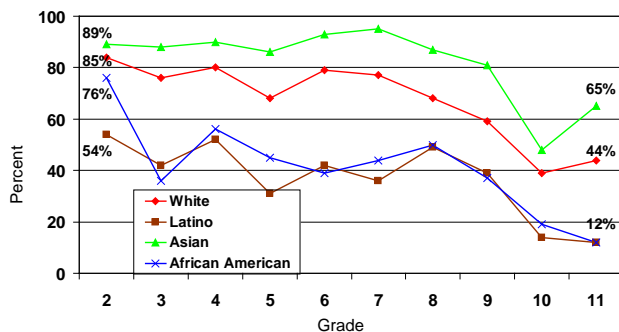

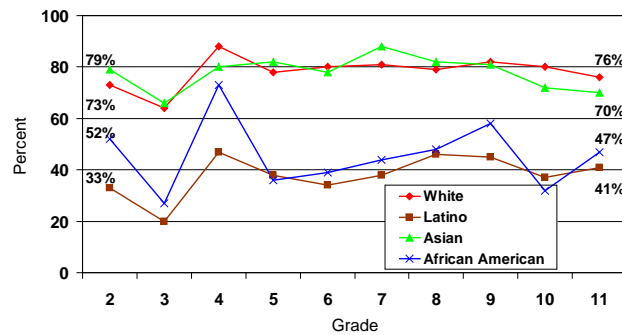**Figure 2 - Percent Proficient/Advanced on <u>Math CST</u> by Race/Ethnicity, 2005**

Figure 3 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on <u>English Language Arts CST</u> by Race/Ethnicity, 2005

Table 1 – Number of Students Who Took CST Math and ELA by Race/Ethnicity

Mathematics

Grade	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
White	358	421	370	423	409	435	489	502	477	368
African American	15	25	21	25	20	25	28	32	19	19
Latino	97	92	85	96	83	87	91	103	83	87
Asian	77	91	83	97	96	121	117	125	140	114
Other	36	18	17	20	19	13	14	14	16	16
Total	585	650	580	666	633	688	747	785	745	615

English Language Arts

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
White	358	423	370	425	411	435	495	508	518	422
African American	15	25	21	25	20	25	29	33	23	23
Latino	97	90	85	96	83	88	96	105	95	107
Asian	77	90	83	97	97	121	116	127	142	120
Other	36	18	17	20	19	13	14	14	18	17
Total	583	646	576	663	630	682	750	787	796	689

When analyzing data in this report, it is important to be aware of exact numbers of students in the testing subgroups. In order for a number to be considered "statistically significant" in test reporting, the state requires that each subgroup have a minimum number of 100 students or 15% of a school's population. Some of the data about subgroup achievement by grade level that is shown in this report is generated from a smaller numerical size than can be considered statistically significant.

Socio-economic status can be determined through the highly correlated measures of parental education level and enrollment in the free/reduced lunch program. Free/reduced lunch data is underestimated among older students; therefore, in this report only parental education is used as the indicator of socio-economic status. A small proportion of students has highly educated parents as well as eligibility for free/reduced lunch (3.6%). Given the population of Davis, it is assumed that most children of highly educated but low income parents are the children of graduate students and similar positions who are, for the most part, only temporarily low income. On the following page in Figures 4 & 5 and Table 2, parental education levels are labeled as:

- >BA = beyond 4 years of college
- BA = bachelors degree
- Some PSE = some post-secondary education
- HS = high school graduate
- <HS = less than high school graduation

In the mathematics CST by parent education (Figure 4), the cause of the drop in all students' achievement in grades 9 – 11 is not known and deserves further study.
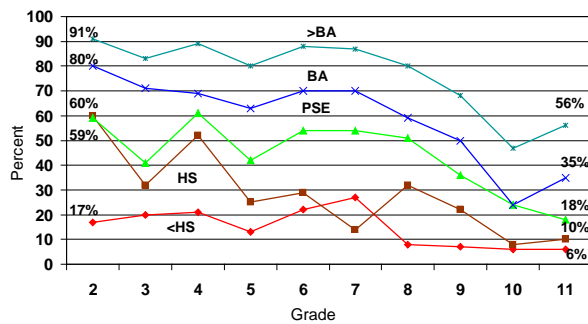

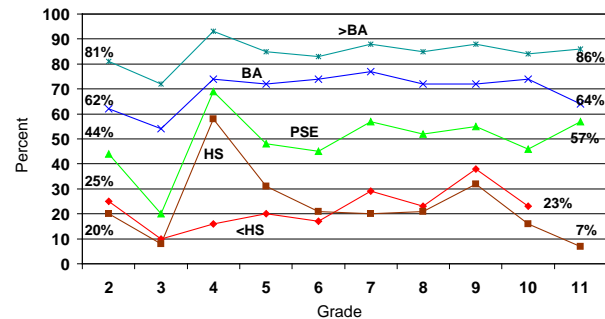**Figure 4 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on Math CST by Parent Education, 2005**

Figure 5 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on English Language Arts CST by Parent Education, 2005

Table 2 – Number of Students Who Took CST Math and ELA by Parental Education

Mathematics

Grade	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<HS	11	12	10	17	17	14	22	21	8	14
HS	10	15	24	27	29	25	25	27	14	10
PSE	55	48	51	68	58	72	73	84	66	50
BA	92	104	96	163	132	133	160	155	160	121
>BA	241	227	253	292	301	360	373	398	409	259
Total	409	406	434	567	537	604	653	685	657	454

English Language Arts

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<HS	11	12	11	17	17	14	24	23	11	15
HS	10	15	23	27	29	25	26	28	23	16
PSE	54	47	51	68	59	72	75	86	73	61
BA	92	104	96	163	132	134	166	157	166	130
>BA	241	229	253	294	303	360	373	401	430	288
Total	408	407	434	569	540	605	664	695	703	510

In mathematics, English Only students (EO) and non-Spanish speaking English Learners (Non-Spanish EL) are achieving at higher levels than students who are Spanish speaking English Learners (Spanish EL) (Figure 6). In English Language Arts, EO students consistently achieve at higher levels than all English Learners, but the achievement differential is wider for Spanish-speaking English Learners (Figure 7). In Davis, the four largest groups of English Learners have primary languages of Spanish, Mandarin, Korean or Japanese.
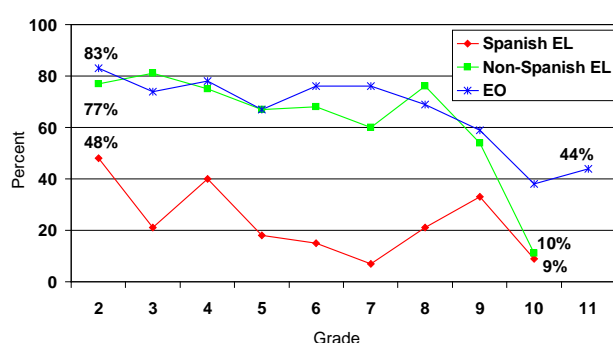

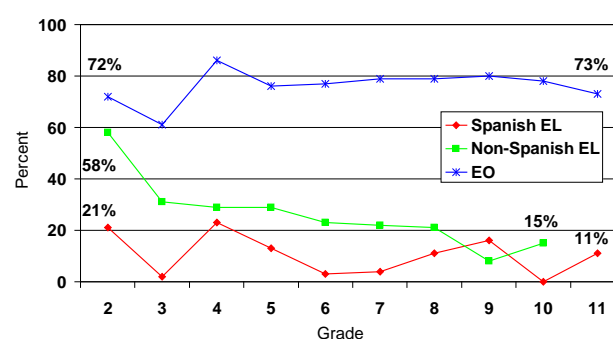**Figure 6 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on Math CST by Language Category, 2005**

Figure 7 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on English Language Arts CST by Language Category, 2005

The UC Davis study, Meeting the Needs of English Learners in the DJUSD, found that reclassified English Learners, designated as Reclassified Fully English Proficient (RFEP), especially Spanish speakers, tend to show good academic progress initially, but demonstrate an overall decline in achievement later in the upper grades, especially Spanish-speakers (Figure 8). Therefore, RFEP students need careful monitoring and support for a period longer than the two years required by the state.
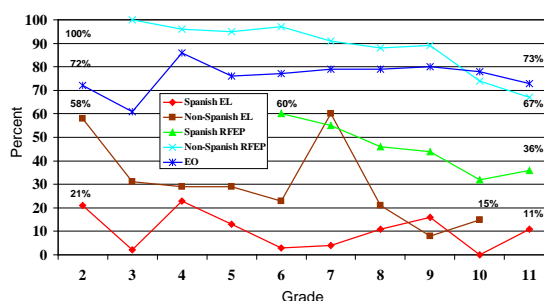

Figure 8 – Percent Proficient/Advanced on English Language Arts CST by Language Category, 2005

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Closing the Achievement Gap in the Davis Joint Unified School District

Goal of Educational System

The goal of DJUSD is to ensure all Davis students the educational program that will

provide them the opportunity to attain their fullest educational and career potential. The

Achievement Gap Task Force reviewed data to determine the critical competencies that students

need to have mastered to be ready for each level of learning. Mastery must be accomplished by

critical points in time. Falling behind in competency development at critical points in the

educational process reduces students' educational options and leads to diminished employment and

economic options later in life.

Critical Competencies in the K-12 Educational System

The task force decided to focus on the following critical academic competencies in the K-12

educational system:

- o Phonemic awareness, breadth of vocabulary, and knowledge of letters and sounds in Kindergarten
- o Grade level reading fluency and comprehension by the end of third grade
- o Grade level writing fluency by the end of fourth grade
- o Grade level mathematics skills at the end of sixth grade, which determine math and later science placement throughout junior high and high school
- o Acquisition of algebra skills necessary for passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), a requirement for graduation from high school
- o Completion of college preparatory courses (a-g requirements) with a grade of "C" or better
- o Completion of honors and advanced placement courses

Direct Measures of Academic Achievement

Academic success at each grade level results in each student seeing him/herself as a competent learner with a well-developed set of academic skills. Among the main competency skills that need to be developed in the elementary school curriculum are reading, writing and mathematics. In the secondary school curriculum these skills are applied to develop competencies in the sciences, social sciences, liberal arts, fine arts, foreign languages, and mathematics. It is of utmost importance that district educational program decisions take into consideration the level of impact each educational program will have toward helping all students successfully acquire important academic competencies.

For the purpose of measuring over time the closing of the local achievement gap, the task force has identified specific measures which lend themselves to data analysis. Several measurable objectives are targeted at each specific grade level that focus solely on academic achievement and preparation for the next level of academics.

Suggested Academic Measures by Grade Level

Elementary School Measures
- Phonemic awareness, breadth of vocabulary, and knowledge of letters and sounds in Kindergarten
- 3rd grade reading measures
- 4th grade writing measures
- 6th grade mathematics measures, 7th grade math placements

Junior High School Measures
- Math level placement in 7th grade at grade level Transitions or higher
- Math level placement in 9th grade at grade level Geometry or higher
- English level placement in 7th grade at English 7 or higher
- English level placement in 9th grade at English 9 or higher
- GPA
- CST scores for 7th and 9th graders in English Language Arts and Math
- 9th graders enrolled and successfully completing UC/CSU a-g courses
- California English Language Development Test scores for EL students

High School Measures
o Completion rate of UC/CSU a-g courses
o Number of students earning lower than "C" grades
o Completion of honors and advanced placement courses

Indirect Measures – School Climate

School climate is an important factor that affects students' academic performance. If students experience a safe, welcoming and caring environment when they walk onto campus and into classrooms, they are more likely to attend school regularly and perform to their best academic ability. A student-led research group at Davis High School, Catalysts for Social Justice, conducted a survey of students in 2005-06 to explore how different ethnic groups felt about the school climate. Of the 1750 students at Davis High, 397 students (23%) completed a written survey; including 203 white students, 18 African American students, 72 Latino students, 34 Asian students, and 66 students from other or mixed racial/ethnic groups. The survey found that students who are African-American often feel less welcome in school than their peers (Figure 9). Some students also expressed that as a racial/ethnic minority they felt that school staff have lower academic and behavioral expectations of them (p. 11, Figures 10 & 11). See Appendix C for the full study as it was presented at CSU Sacramento in November 2006.
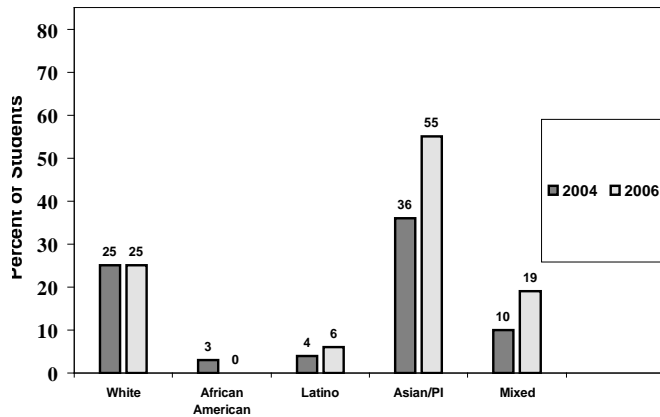

Figure 9 - Percent of DHS Students Who Said They Have Felt Unwelcome at DHS, 2006
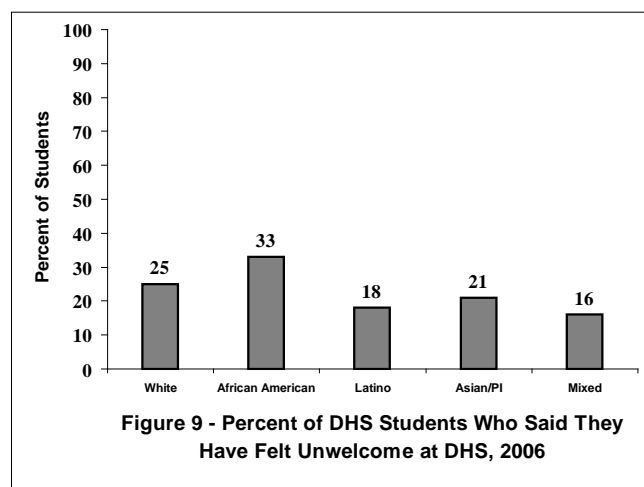
Figure 9 - Percent of Students Who Believe That <u>Teachers</u> Expect Students of Their Race To Perform <u>Above Average</u>, 2004 vs. 2006
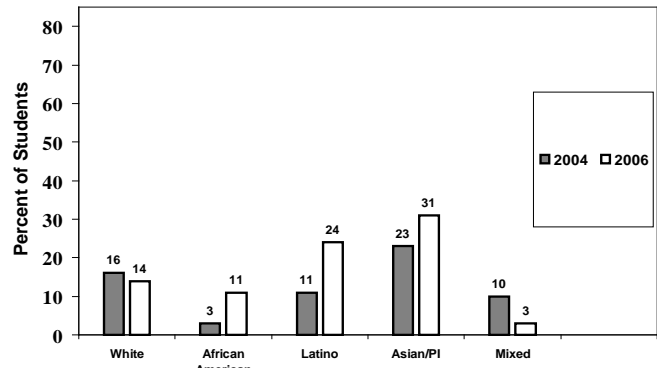

Figure 10 - Percent of Students Who Believe That <u>Counselors</u> Expect Students of Their Race To Perform <u>Above Average</u>, 2004 vs. 2006

In 2005-06 the leadership of the Davis Teachers Association (DTA) began to address how our schools could create a more welcoming environment for all students in Davis. DTA brought to the Davis school district a pilot professional development program called the Unconscious Bias Project (UBP). Through interactive activities and self-reflection, participants in the training had the opportunity to begin to understand and identify their own tendencies toward unconscious bias, learn about the impact those biases have in the school environment, and then develop understanding of and alternative responses to those for whom they may have felt bias. This personal, transformative professional development program in which participants grow increasingly self-aware of behaviors and attitudes which may result in differential expectations toward people of a different race or ethnicity is very important for increasing the effectiveness of teachers. It is believed that UBP, or a similar program recommended by staff, will make Davis schools more conducive to higher levels of academic learning for all students. The Achievement Gap Task Force supports the effort to bring unconscious bias training to all Davis school employees, including administrators and certificated and classified staff.

Daily attendance is a strong predictor of academic success. At every grade level, student attendance needs to be monitored and systems for helping families maintain high student attendance need to be in place. School attendance policies and clear enforcement procedures are important for the community to understand and support. Equally important is the effort to foster a school climate that attracts students through a variety of avenues, including relevant and meaningful curriculum; to create a classroom environment where students are certain they are welcome; to establish a place for English Learners to comfortably meet with friends who share the same primary language; and to provide classes, clubs, teams and activities that allow students to develop their interests.

Suggested School Climate Measures for K-12
- Continued surveys of student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate
- Attendance data
- Discipline data

Grade-Level Committee Reports

Elementary School Committee

Committee Members

Martha Beetley, Tim Benson, Jorge Carrillo, Suzanne Coutchie, Judy Davis, Rick Gonzales,

Charles Judson, Genene Kluck

Introduction

The members of the elementary school subcommittee recognize that the achievement gap is

not only a school issue but is also an important issue for the community at large to address.

Although each member brought a variety of experiences and expertise to the meetings, we believe

that information to all stakeholders and input from all stakeholders will be necessary before real

changes can be made in the educational successes for our at- risk young people. We believe that

our brief tenure as a committee did not provide time for adequate investigation of the community's

concerns or interests in meeting the challenges of the topic of our achievement gap. We suggest

that the continued focus on the achievement gap should include a process that seeks participation

from all segments of our community – school staffs, parent and community organizations, the city

and University, churches, and especially the families of affected students and the students

themselves. We would like to clarify that by suggesting several "pilot programs" our intention is

to initiate certain improvements at particular school sites, in order to study the various program

designs on a small scale, to attend to all details, and to collect data before replication. These

"pilot" proposals are not meant to imply that all schools do not need the additional resources

suggested. Furthermore, benchmarks and measurable goals need to be developed to show the

effect of all our recommendations. For this reason, we submit our suggestions to the Board of

Education as Preliminary Recommendations, which will require follow-through and determined communication to be successful.

Preliminary Recommendations

The Board of Education should:

A. Take a leadership role to educate the community as a whole that we are all responsible to, and accountable for, the education of all students and to forge school and community partnerships that bring resources and support needed to close the achievement gap.

B. Make the hiring of people of color a top priority throughout the district. All students deserve to have credentialed teachers of color represented on each school staff.

C. Direct the staff of DJUSD, in collaboration with DTA, to develop an implementation plan for professional development programs, such as CTA's UBP. We strongly encourage the continuation of GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) and the LANGUAGE! program training, for the purposes of improving instruction in literacy, math and staff cultural awareness.

D. Support the experimental project at Marguerite Montgomery Elementary, so that the at-risk student population in that school will have opportunities to participate in research-based education that will be monitored for measurable gains.

E. Fund a credentialed English Language Specialist position at Patwin Elementary as a pilot program to provide direct services to English Learners and to model and coach instructional strategies for the school staff. Marguerite Montgomery is undertaking a pilot program for English Learners and Valley Oak has a credentialed English Learners' Resource Teacher position. Patwin has the third largest population of English Learners, with minimal hours allocated to a para-educator, so we believe that such a support position would make a

significant difference in the English Language Development (ELD) curriculum for at-risk students at that school.

F. Fund a credentialed Math Specialist for grades 4 – 6 at one elementary school as a pilot program to provide direct services to students and to model and coach instructional strategies for the school staff because currently not all students are prepared to enter the rigorous math classes at the junior high schools. If our students are not prepared to take Algebra in the 8th grade, their career options are limited at an early age.

G. Fund a minimum of three days of collaboration time for teachers to meet in grade level teams to focus on strategies to serve underperforming students. The three collaboration days would occur in the beginning, middle and end of the year.

H. Increase the student-contact hours for speech therapists. The current allocation of hours is not sufficient to meet the needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities, many of whom are part of the achievement gap. We recommend that the Board meet with the Director of Special Education to determine the specific need for speech therapists at each school site.

I. Support a grant proposal to Yolo County First Five Commission that would offer entering kindergarteners an intensive preparation experience just before school starts in the fall.

J. Implement a pilot, extended-day kindergarten at one elementary school to study the effects of the extended school day for students who are less prepared for school. Recent studies underscore previous findings that full-day kindergarten students show faster gains on literacy and language measures than those without such added instructional time.

K. Reduce intermediate (grade 4 – 6) class size to 24 students.

Conclusion

  The committee's charge has been broad and we have had neither the time nor resources to fully investigate other areas of need or levels of support needed by the district as a whole or at individual schools that may have an impact of closing the achievement gap. Some positions that we have identified for further exploration are Family Liaisons to assist with attendance and health issues; Community Liaisons to connect schools with community resources and organizations; Parent Educators; Counselors; and additional school personnel for extended day education.

Junior High School Committee

Committee Members

Marla Cook, Diane Gubatayao, Mary Kahn, Karen Naliboff

Introduction

After reviewing the initial data provided by the district staff, the high school students, and the UCD researcher, the junior high school subcommittee decided that additional data from the junior high schools needed to be obtained. The committee took a closer look at student enrollment in Math and English Language Arts by ethnicity, GPA by ethnicity and English Learner proficiency level summary reports. Even though we feel, because of our time restrictions, that we have only touched the tip of the iceberg, and there is much more underneath which needs to be researched, the data reviewed has strongly confirmed the existence of an achievement gap in our schools among races, ethnicities, and socio-economic groups. Substantial research has been done to try to explain this test score gap. We know that solutions must include and target both academic achievement and social expectations of students "at risk", and we have not explored many of the underlying causes. For this reason, this committee now requests the Board of Education to grant continuance of the Achievement Gap Task Force to allow sufficient time to uncover the roots of these disparities and work with staff and the community to search for solutions.

- In 7th grade math, African American and Latino students are **overrepresented in lower level math classes** and **underrepresented in grade level and above classes.** Out of 20 African American and 84 Latino students enrolled in junior high, over **50%** of each group was enrolled in below grade level math classes (Table 3a & 3b).

- In 7th grade English, out of the same population, only **16 %** African American and **17%** Latino students were enrolled in advance level English courses (Table 4a & 4b)

- In the 9th grade **no more than 30%** of Latinos are enrolled in math classes of Geometry or above (Table 5a & 5b).

Table 3a – Percent of Students Enrolled in 7th grade Math by Ethnicity, 2006-07

	Total # Students	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Building Math Skills 7	8	0	4 (50%)	3 (37%)	0	1 (13%)
Jr. High Math	136	11 (8%)	40 (29%)	75 (55%)	6 (4%)	4 (3%)
Transition to HS Math	366	7 (2%)	36 (10%)	259 (71%)	59 (16%)	5 (1%)
Algebra	129	2 (2%)	4 (3%)	71 (55%)	52 (40%)	0
Geometry	3	0	0	0	3 (100%)	0

Table 3b – Percent of Students by Ethnicity Enrolled in 7th grade Math Levels, 2006-07

	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Below Grade Level	11 (55%)	44 (54%)	78 (23%)	6 (4%)	5 (50%)
At Grade Level (Transition to HS Math)	7 (35%)	36 (44%)	259 (76%)	59 (44%)	5 (50%)
Advanced	2 (10%)	2 (2%)	4 (1%)	71 (52%)	0
# Students by Ethnicity	20	341	136	65	10

Table 4a – Percent of Students Enrolled in 7ᵗʰ grade English by Ethnicity, 2006-07

	Total # Students	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Read/English ESL	5	0	1 (20 %)	0	4 (80%)	0
English 7	330	21 (6%)	67 (20%)	187 (57%)	49 (15%)	6 (2%)
English 7 Literature	160	3 (2%)	12 (8%)	121 (75%)	23 (14%)	1 (1%)
English 7 GATE	161	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	113 (70%)	44 (27%)	1 (1%)

Table 4b – Percent of Students by Ethnicity Enrolled in 7ᵗʰ grade English Levels, 2006-07

	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Below Grade Level	0	1 (1%)	0	4 (3%)	0
At Grade Level (English 7)	21 (84%)	67 (82%)	187 (44%)	49 (41%)	6 (75%)
Advanced	4 (16%)	14 (17%)	234 (56%)	67 (56%)	2 (25%)
# Students by Ethnicity	25	82	421	120	8

Table 5a – Percent of Students Enrolled in 9ᵗʰ grade Math by Ethnicity, 2006-07

	Total # Students	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Algebra 1	112	5 (4%)	18 (16%)	80 (71%)	7 (6%)	2 (4%)
Geometry	303	10 (3%)	19 (6%)	233 (77%)	37 (12%)	4 (1%)
Algebra II /Trig	123	3 (3%)	4 (3%)	70 (57%)	46 (37%)	0

Table 5b – Percent of Students by Ethnicity Enrolled in 9ᵗʰ grade Math Levels, 2006-07

	African American	Latino	White	Asian	Other
Below Grade Level	5 (28%)	18 (44%)	80 (21%)	7 (8%)	2 (33%)
At Grade Level (Geometry)	10 (55%)	19 (46%)	233 (61%)	37 (41%)	4 (67%)
Advanced	3 (17%)	4 (10%)	70 (18%)	46 (51%)	0
# Students by Ethnicity	18	41	383	90	6

We are not alone in our findings at DJUSD; the American Educational Research Association has also found that across the nation many students lack access to higher-level mathematics courses. We did see some progress by the district by changing the math pathway and placing students in higher math levels; for example, we found that at two of the school sites the low level Basic Math Skills is no longer offered. As we can see from the data presented above, the schools may still be tracking students in hidden forms. Student placement in appropriate classes is critical to allow students adequate time to achieve the courses required to prepare for college.

- GPA trends from 1998-2000 show that African American and Latinos average **below a 3.0** as compared to whites and Asians who averaged **well over a 3.0.** This trend merits further exploration as to the intricacies of the disparity.

- In the Math CST and ELA CST scores in 2005 there is a disparity by race and ethnicity with white and Asians scoring **20-40% higher** than black and Latino students in grades 7-9

- In 2005-06, 82% of the EL students were identified at English proficiency levels at Intermediate, Early Advanced and Advanced. On the California English Language Development Test, which is used to measure EL students language skills, **75% of students show no gain or loss** in grade level scores and this pattern is consistent among all junior high schools. Annual gains in EL students' language skills are required under No Child Left Behind legislation.

Preliminary Recommendations

The committee, in addition to requesting the continuance of the Achievement Gap Task Force, recommends that the Board of Education should:

A. Engage the entire school/district community in creating welcoming and equitable learning environments for diverse students and families. The district should pursue professional development that will develop new competencies and pedagogies on how to successfully address the needs of the diverse population, such as Unconscious Bias Project training for all school district personnel.

B. Continue to provide professional development, for site EL junior high leadership teams (principal, counselor, and teachers), in the program "Secondary School Leadership for English Learners Success". The five day training will offer the opportunity for the site educational leaders to gain knowledge and understanding in: Knowing our English Learners Students, Supporting Effective Instruction for English learners, Designing Effective Comprehensive Programs, Understanding Data, and Leadership and Infrastructure for English Learner Success.

C. Continue the efforts to actively recruit teachers, counselors and administrators from underrepresented ethnic/racial groups

D. Fund the AVID classes at each junior high, which will provide the necessary early preparation for college or university.

E. Institute curriculum policies that broaden course-taking options and set high expectations for traditionally underserved students. This will require an increase in math support classes at all junior high schools

Other areas we would like the district to explore include:

A. CAHSEE preparation courses for math and English Language Arts for ninth graders

B. Parent education programs to improve parent involvement in student education such as Parent Institute for Quality Education.

Conclusion

As mentioned before, with the time allotted, the committee has just touched the tip of the iceberg. We did not have the real opportunity to involve and survey all the aspects of the achievement gap. However, we have identified a few things for the Board to consider for the following year. These are only our first steps that we have taken in reaching our goals of narrowing the Achievement Gap. As a committee, if you so wish, we are committed to continue to work and expand our efforts and be more inclusive in engaging all segments of our community.

High School Committee

Committee Members

Tom McHale, Bob Ross, Courtenay Tessler

Introduction

The High School Subcommittee of the Achievement Gap Task Force would like to commend the Board of Education for providing vision and leadership in tackling this extremely important issue. The very fact that the Board created the Achievement Gap Task Force is evidence that closing the gap is a high priority in the Davis Joint Unified School District. The attendance by two members of the Board, including the President of the Board, at almost all of our meetings is evidence of sincere commitment. Further evidence of this commitment is the rich and varied choices the Davis Joint Unified School District offers its students. In addition to Davis High School, the District provides three alternative paths for students to complete high school; DaVinci HS, Martin Luther King Jr. High School, and Davis School for Independent Study. Parents and students can choose between a large, comprehensive high school, a small learning community providing project based learning, a small continuation high school with personalized instruction, and a school for independent study. Parental and student choice is important in providing the appropriate learning environment to match our students learning styles and goals. A member of the task force met with the principals of all four sites and discussed programs that would help each site address the needs of at-risk students.

The staff and School Site Councils at the four sites have prepared a "Single Plan For Student Achievement" which identify specific efforts and programs designed to address the needs of at-risk students at their schools. It is impressive to see the efforts that are currently under way.

In addition, the School Site Council budgets for 2007-2008 reflect each site's commitment to closing the achievement gap. The administrators and staff at each site know their students, their resources, and their needs far better than the members of the Achievement Gap Task Force. Therefore, our recommendations are largely based on their priorities, and we urge the Board to continue to support their programs. Based on our interviews with site administrators and the research we have done in the limited time available, we make the following recommendations.

DaVinci High School

Based on a small learning community model, teachers at DaVinci make maximum use of problem-based assignments, cooperative learning, and a technology assisted curricula. They provide differentiated curriculum for 236 high school students in grades 10-12 who are part of the DaVinci "family". The principal and staff know the names of all of their students and know how each student is doing academically. Students have a high sense of connectedness to each other, to the school, and to the staff. The staff and/or substitute teachers are available to provide individual help for students or tutoring when needed. DaVinci is an excellent alternative to Davis High School, and it provides an important choice for Davis students entering high school. The strong connection DaVinci students have to their school is evidenced by their excellent attendance record. Students enjoy learning as shown by the quality of their work. They have high expectations for themselves, just as their teachers have high expectations of them. From the first graduating class (2006), 98% went on to post-secondary education. The second graduating class (2007) is on track for a similar percentage, with students already admitted to some of the most competitive schools including UC Berkeley and Stanford University. Schools throughout the nation, which have been the most successful in closing the achievement gap, are pursuing programs that are currently in

practice at DaVinci. Therefore, the Task Force recommends continued District support for

DaVinci, its staff, and program. Furthermore, we recommend the Board do everything within its

power to ensure that the University of California, Davis fulfills its pledge to provide a site on the

UCD campus to house DaVinci High School. The Davis community cannot afford to lose this

valuable and important alternative form of education.

Martin Luther King Jr. High School

As the District's continuation high school, King provides a second alternative to Davis

students in the 11th and 12th grades. Staffed to meet the needs of 75 at-risk students, King currently

has 84 students, with a disproportionately high number of Special Education and EL students

compared to Davis High School. With a highly individualized curriculum and smaller student-

teacher ratio, King provides the opportunity for students to progress at their own pace. They

receive individual help as needed in addition to group instruction. As is the case at DaVinci,

students at King have a sense of connectedness to the school and to the staff. The flexibility of the

morning and afternoon schedule allows students to work in the job force if their circumstances

warrant it, while simultaneously completing their graduation requirements. Many students who

might otherwise drop out of school gain confidence in their own ability and are successful at King.

The administration and staff at King are indeed closing the achievement gap for many at-risk

students, and they are preparing their students for a variety of post-secondary options. The need for

this important alternative path to graduation is evidenced by the existing waiting list of students.

Therefore, the Task Force commends the Board for providing King with a larger, permanent site,

and recommends the Board continue to support King, its staff, and program. Furthermore, we

recommend the District maintain the current size of the King High staff and existing ratio of Davis

High School students. While 100% of the King staff are CLAD credentialed, we recommend that additional EL and Special Education aides be provided in order to better serve students with special needs. We also recommend that their traditional counselor-student ratio be maintained for the same reason.

Davis School for Independent Study

DSIS is a model for Independent Study Programs in the State of California. It provides a third high school alternative for Davis students in response to parental requests and student needs. DSIS students can fulfill their a-g requirements by utilizing the split-site option, taking some classes at Davis High School while taking most of their classes through DSIS. Students have the benefits of one-on-one instruction and independent study. Teachers provide the ultimate "differentiated instruction", and they can follow the academic progress of their students very closely. There are currently 101 high school students at DSIS who prefer their individualized program to the environment of a large comprehensive high school like Davis High School. The popularity of this program is evidenced by the waiting list for admissions. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the Board continue to support the Davis School for Independent Study, its staff, and program. Furthermore, we recommend DSIS be provided a permanent site with added space and additional FTEs. This would allow DSIS to accommodate more students, and it would facilitate providing more on-site instruction in the form of small group classes and workshops. With additional staff, DSIS could offer more electives and foreign language classes designed to fulfill the a-g requirements. More on-site small group instruction would also provide students with the opportunity for needed socialization, an important part of all of their students' education.

Davis Senior High School

DHS is a high performing, comprehensive high school with 1770 students in grades 10-12. Most students are on the college-bound track, fulfill their a-g requirements, and avail themselves of a wide variety of elective, honors, and Advanced Placement classes. However, partly because of the size and diversity of the Davis High student body, a significant achievement gap exists between the higher performing students and the lower achieving students. The administration and the staff at Davis High are committed to closing this gap. Based on the Davis High School 2006-2007 Single Plan for Student Achievement, the Task Force identified more than 35 actions and programs that are currently underway at the school to close the gap. Also, the administration has organized the staff into ten study groups which are discussing ways they can help at-risk and underachieving students achieve their full academic potential. Members of the Task Force met with Davis High administrators, Leadership Team, representatives of most departments, members of the Transition Academy staff, and teachers of sheltered instruction classes. Task Force representatives made a presentation to the entire staff at a faculty meeting, and conducted a survey of staff priorities of programs designed to close the achievement gap. The results of this survey are included with this report. The Task Force commends the administration and staff for the efforts currently being made to close the achievement gap. Based on our research, interviews with staff members, survey results, and the October, 2006 report by UCD on "Meeting the Needs of English Learners in the DJUSD", the Task Force recommends the Board consider funding the following programs:

A. <u>An EL Learning Center, with an EL Coordinator, credentialed staff, and aides</u>. Staff could provide counseling, assessment, tutoring, mentoring, "extra learning opportunities", and a "home base" to develop a sense of connectedness for EL students. A small computer lab could

be included in the EL Learning Center to provide technology training to those students who do not have home access to computers, and students could work with *Rosetta Stone* software. A possible future location for this Learning Center might be in the newly designed Multipurpose Room.

B. <u>An increase in teaching staff FTEs</u>. This would provide for class size reduction in Basic Skills and Sheltered classes including Writing Lab, Reading classes, Math A and B, Algebra 1, Geometry, World History, Economics Survey, CAHSEE intervention classes, and Science and Social Studies Sheltered classes. Research shows that a student/teacher ratio of 20:1 or less is effective in closing the achievement gap for at-risk students. In such a setting teachers are able to provide more "differentiated instruction" and individual help. A part time Reading Specialist should be provided to work with the Transition Academy and EL Learning Center students. This person could administer diagnostic tests and prescribe appropriate remediation. Educators know that students who have difficulty reading also have difficulty learning subject matter from textbooks. A 9th grade AVID feeder program for the Davis High AVID program would help targeted under-achieving students enter Davis High with the basic study skills and organizational skills necessary to be successful in Davis High college prep classes. Both study skills and reading skills must be improved in order to close the achievement gap.

C. <u>Additional counseling time.</u> This would reduce student/counselor ratio, and it would allow counselors to spend more time working with at-risk and "below C" students, arrange more Student Study Teams with parents, students and teachers, and initiate more parental contacts. At-risk students need a confidant and/or advocate helping them work out their problems, both personal and academic. Greater access to a counselor can provide a sense of connectedness,

which often is lacking in a large comprehensive high school. Some counseling time could be allocated to the EL Learning Center.

D. <u>High quality, researched-based staff development programs, workshops, and conferences.</u> Quality teachers who are well trained and experienced have been found to be the single most important factor in closing the achievement gap. The more teachers know their subject, know how to teach <u>ALL</u> students, appreciate diversity, and are sensitive to racial, cultural, and gender differences, the more effective their teaching will be, and the more successful their students will be. Therefore, we urge you to continue to offer staff training/professional development designed to improve teaching methods in general, the teaching of "at-risk" and EL students, and the teaching of students of color. If we are to come to terms with the causes of the achievement gap, we must make every effort to understand the racial and cultural backgrounds of the students we teach. Teachers should be encouraged to complete CLAD certification and GESA training, and release time should be provided for follow-up peer observations and discussions. The District might consider programs similar to the CTA sponsored UBP, or the "Tripod Project" out of Harvard University. Site administrators and staff should be involved in the selection of the staff development programs which best fulfill their needs. However, the actual training is only the first step. The implementation, assessment, refining, and reassessment all must be part of an on-going process, if the staff development programs are to be successful in closing the achievement gap.

E. <u>Resources necessary to address the problem of tardies and absences.</u> Academic achievement is directly related to attendance. Students who are not in class cannot learn. If there is not sufficient staff to strictly enforce attendance policies, to establish meaningful consequences, and to notify parents when students are tardy or absent, students gain the impression that the

school does not care whether they learn or not. The culture of the school must convey the message that <u>ALL</u> students can and will learn, and that all teachers and administrators want and expect them to learn. Research shows that schools that are the most successful in closing the achievement gap maintain high standards and expectations. <u>ALL</u> teachers must enforce the same standards and share the same expectations in regards to tardy and absence policies. Only when the staff and the administration work together will they be able to improve the rate of attendance for at-risk students.

F. <u>Increased funding for the Career Technical Education (CTE) Program</u>. Davis High School must have a viable CTE, Regional Occupational Program (ROP), and Work Experience program if it is to remain a truly comprehensive high school. Each of the other high schools in the District is organized to meet the special needs of their students. The CTE program at Davis High offers students another important option and meets the needs of many at-risk students. Unfortunately, after many years of under funding and a heavy emphasis on increasing the number of students completing the a-g requirements, the CTE program is in the process of rebuilding. Much of their equipment is outdated or in disrepair. There is a need to rewrite and update the curricula .in order to keep it current and relevant. There is a need for a long term commitment by the Board for this program and the feeder programs at the three junior highs. Therefore, the committee recommends funds be allocated for staff members to write curricula, repair and order supplies and equipment, and plan new courses. The District administration should aggressively pursue CTE grants to help fund this program. A viable and well funded CTE program will facilitate the hiring and retention of a highly qualified teaching staff. Research shows that many at-risk students have more success in classes that are project-based and that provide student-centered learning. Academic success enhances self esteem and builds

a sense of connectedness to the school. When students choose a class based on their interests, their attendance improves and their drop-out rate declines. The career technical education program provides the hands-on learning many at-risk students need, and it prepares our students for the world of work as well as post secondary education.

Conclusions

The high school committee of the Achievement Gap Task Force is confident that with a professionally staffed EL Center, lowered class size in sheltered and remedial classes, greater access to counselors for at-risk students, teachers who are more skilled in teaching underachieving students and more sensitive to the racial and cultural differences of their students, and with uniformly enforced attendance procedures combined with meaningful consequences, Davis High School will make significant strides in closing the achievement gap. We expect to see improved attendance rates, fewer students on the "below C" list, a higher percentage of students completing their a-g requirements, an increase in the number of students entering and completing post-secondary education, and an improved school climate and culture which provides <u>ALL</u> students with a welcoming, caring, and safe environment. Students of color, students from lower socio-economic families, and under-achieving students can easily become marginalized on a campus comprised primarily of white, affluent, and high achieving students. It is imperative that we make every effort to ensure <u>ALL</u> our students are achieving to their full potential.

The Achievement Gap Task Force understands that the money to fund the programs we have recommended is limited, and that the School Board must set its own priorities for District programs. We also realize that to fund any or all of these recommendations might require a redistribution of resources from existing programs. For these reasons, we have limited our

recommendations for this year. Hopefully, these will be on-going programs, and the district will add additional programs each year designed to close the achievement gap. One area we would hope they would examine carefully in the future is the development of small learning communities to increase student connectedness and to improve academic skills. We are confident that site administrators and staffs will continue the research and work we have begun this year, and that they will provide the same vision and leadership that the Board has demonstrated in addressing this important issue.

Achievement Gap Research Literature

The task force reviewed literature written about educational research that has been conducted to identify and reduce the Achievement Gap. Recommendations by the task force reflect many of the factors mentioned in the literature and listed below.

Direct Instructional Factors

- Hiring and keeping experienced, well-qualified teachers who have excellent teaching skills and thorough subject knowledge
- Provision of high quality professional development
- Development of rigorous curriculum
- Use of formative assessment
- Fostering teaching that promotes challenging and meaningful classroom participation
- Development of relevant curriculum and the cultural competence of teachers
- Providing access to technology
- Extra learning opportunities, such as after-school and summer enrichment programs

School Climate-Related Factors

- Expectation of high achievement for all students
- Student connectedness
- Development of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-discipline
- Integration of school, family and community resources
- Encouragement of parent participation in schools and educational experiences
- Safe and orderly schools with clear codes of conduct

Elementary-Specific Factors

- High quality preschool programs
- Extended day kindergarten
- Smaller class sizes K-3 grades