

ALL for ALL

Edina Public Schools Task Force Report

April 2013

BACKGROUND:

The Edina Public Schools led a Strategic Planning and Revision process from January through May of 2012. Community members and school staff joined together in studying the current state of the district and discussing suggestions/recommendations for improvement. One particular outcome of those conversations was a clear message from the community that achievement gaps predictable by race and income are unacceptable.

We reviewed two particular graphs of data depicting math and reading achievement respectively over the past five years disaggregated by student groups (i.e., race/ethnicity and socio-economic status). A striking conclusion one can make from the data is that the gap between our highest- and lowest-performing student groups has narrowed slightly in reading from 43% to 28% over the course of the most recent five years, but has held steady in math, averaging 41% across those same five years.

Development of a comprehensive plan to address these achievement gaps was logically assigned to the Educational Delivery Committee, formerly the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI) Steering Committee co-led by the Directors of Research & Evaluation, Special Services and Teaching & Learning.

CHARGE:

To advance strategic initiatives and ensure high levels of learning for all, including *measured growth and high achievement for each and every student without predictable links to race or income.*

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP:

FACILITATORS:

Penny Kodrich, Director of Special Services

Mary Manderfeld, Director of Enrollment & School Improvement

Chad Schmidt, Director of Research & Evaluation

Randy Smasal, Director of Teaching & Learning

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE:

Steve Buettner, Director of Media & Tech Services

Kathryn Hagen, Asst Director of Special Services

Karen Bergman, Principal, Countryside

Kari Dahlquist, Principal, Creek Valley

Shawn Dudley, Principal, Valley View

Peter Hodne, Principal, Highlands

Chris Holden, Principal, Cornelia

Bruce Locklear, Principal, Edina High School

Gerry Lukaska, Principal, Normandale

Beth Russell, Principal, South View

Rick Sansted, Principal, Concord

Laurie Denn, Coordinator, ECFE

Lisa Hawthorne, Coordinator, ECSE

Mary Kirchhof, Coordinator, K-12 Literacy

Mark Laven, Coordinator, Secondary Curriculum

Tiffany Ley, K-12 Data Coach

Jacob Mathiason, School Psych, Countryside

Isabelle Punchard, Coordinator, Elem Curriculum

Debra Richards, Coordinator, Gifted Ed Services

Debra Stortz, Elementary RtI Specialist

Susan Tennyson, Strategic Data Analyst

Scott Woelber, Coordinator, K-12 Mathematics

MEETINGS:

The Educational Delivery Committee received its charge to create a plan and develop recommendations for “closing the gap” in September 2012. The large group met monthly throughout the school year, while the facilitators and other small working groups met more frequently to focus on specific tasks as the plan developed. Agendas, meeting minutes and various supporting documents detail the progress of the committee.

Committee accomplishments:

September – October 2012

- Defined goals
- Built common vocabulary
- Reviewed current efforts
- Developed “Close the Gap NOW” recommendations

November – December 2012

- Reviewed data
- Conducted literature review

January – February 2013

- Created draft ALL for ALL recommendations
- Designed draft action plan steps

March – April 2013

- Revised ALL for ALL plan

DATA COLLECTIONS:

The Educational Delivery Committee collected and studied the following data:

- Academic Achievement Gaps
 - Math and Reading achievement, measured by Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and Measures of Academic Progress (MAPs)
 - Multi-year trends
- Access and Opportunity Gaps
 - Gaps exist: Gifted Education Services identification/participation, 504 Plans, Extra-curricular participation, AP enrollment, college applications
 - Gaps do NOT exist: Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) enrollment, student attendance/absences, Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) participation
- Research Literature Review
 - Twenty-four articles or books
- Current efforts
 - Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI) models
 - 2012-13 School Improvement Plans
 - Principal and Ed Delivery Committee input
- Partner with University of Minnesota

FINDINGS:

The findings of our work made clear that an “achievement gap” exists, particularly for students of color and those of low socio-economic means. However, the achievement gap is simply a lagging indicator of other gaps in our system. A conversation with a local educational consultant guided us to think and look beyond achievement toward both “access” and “opportunity” gaps. Analysis of student participation rates in various Edina programs, including but not limited to Gifted Education Services, Advanced Placement, and extra-curricular activities, shows varying levels of involvement such that we also recognized these as gap areas.

Educational Delivery Committee members developed a common understanding of **equity** and **closing the gap** as evidenced by the following statements.

- Equity is raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students **and** eliminating the racial/economic predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.
- We will consider achievement, access and opportunity gaps as “closed” when there is no more than a 5% difference in *student performance on achievement measures and/or participation in educational programs* that is different than the general population.

A key theme that emerged from the literature review pointed overwhelmingly to the notion of teacher quality and its related impact on student learning (i.e., teachers have the single largest school influence on student achievement (Leithwood, et al., 2004)). Additional conclusions from our collective study of two dozen research articles or books point to the need for a multi-faceted approach that:

- creates a proactive system in which “prevention trumps remediation” (Murphy, 2009),
- confirms the important role of leadership (i.e., principals have the second largest school influence on student achievement (Leithwood, et al., 2004)),
- addresses the need for high-quality early childhood and pre-school education (Ferguson, 2008),
- holds high academic expectations for all students (Dubner, 2008),
- requires teachers who believe in their students and are responsive to the needs of each student (Ferguson, 2008),
- utilizes rigorous and relevant content in which students are prepared for post-secondary study (Haycock, 2012),
- develops student engagement and motivation (Nolan, et al., 2012), and
- unlocks the barrier of time, providing learning opportunities beyond the school day and year (Hassan & Mahmoud, 2011).

The recommendations are based on five general themes, adapted from *A Crisis in Our Community* (Hassan & Mahmoud, 2011), that were identified through the literature review and data collection:

- ❖ Closing the **Leadership** Gap
- ❖ Closing the **Belief** Gap
- ❖ Closing the **Preparation** Gap
- ❖ Closing the **Teaching & Learning** Gap
- ❖ Closing the **Time** Gap

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS:

LEADERSHIP

- Implement PreK-12 Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI) with fidelity
- Recruit, hire and retain high-quality, racially conscious teachers and administrators
- Maintain a comprehensive program of co- and extracurricular activities that meets the needs of our students

BELIEFS

- Train and educate all staff in supporting academic achievement for all learners from diverse cultures, incomes and ability levels
- Identify and clarify beliefs about learning expectations for each and every student

PREPARATION

- Implement a screening tool to assess developmental milestones and social/emotional development for infants and toddlers
- Outreach to parents and families with a focus on race, lower socio-economic status and cultural diversity
- Develop coherent and comprehensive preschool program encompassing all Early Childhood services and programs that aligns with K-5

TEACHING & LEARNING

- Grow and support effective professional learning communities (PLCs)
- Enhance student engagement to augment their ownership of learning

TIME

- Provide more time for learning during the school day, outside the school day, during the school year and beyond the school year
- Utilize technology to extend student opportunities to learn with anytime, anywhere learning modules available year-round

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NOTE: More than twenty books and/or articles were reviewed by the Educational Delivery team in the development of our ALL for ALL plan.