

Achievement Gap Action Group
Thursday, September 21, 2006
Notes

Dr. Pika welcomed the members of the Group and asked each to introduce themselves as some new members were present.

Updates:

- Ms Case updated the Group on the progress of the goals identified in March 2006.
 1. Establish a technical committee to work with the Department to create a data plan and secure the technical expertise: The Department has addressed this objective without creating a committee.
 2. Conduct case studies to examine how to develop school cultures that can make a real difference in student learning: This is under development through a contract with the R& D Center.
 3. Determine what funding would be required at the school level to build and support a cultural shift: This objective is dependent on completing #2.
 4. Determine if there is a way to capture and analyze meaningful data for special populations such as LEP and ILC students. The PL 1 Study conducted by the R&D Center provides a new way to look at DSTP data longitudinally for subsets of students. This report was released to the State Board of Education on the day of the AGAG meeting.
 5. Determine how the longitudinal gap data can be added to school profiles. These data will be added with a link to the profiles this fall.
 6. Begin a larger effort to discuss the Educational Testing Service report on the full list of 14 Correlates of Achievement and their significance in closing the achievement gap. Initial efforts started at the Policies and Practices Conference held in late June 2005. From that point, individual professional groups would be encouraged to continue the conversation with their members for a sustained focus. Paul Barton, the ETS guru attended and presented at the SAELP Conference in June 2005. Professional Development is also being provided through SAELP training and DASL.
 7. Request the State Board of Education require consistent course content, titles and numbers across districts: This has not been taken to the State Board but discussions around this topic are taking place in the Department.
- Dr. Pika distributed copies of a draft brochure from the University of Delaware entitled *Commitment to Delawareans* geared for students and their parents regarding the kinds of courses that they should be taking and passing with good grades in high school if they want to be admitted to and be successful at the University of Delaware. The same requirements will

serve students well at a number of other higher education institutions in Delaware as well as higher education institutions in other states. The target population is middle school aged students and the rollout should occur in late October to early November. This is a direct product of the evaluation of secondary education conducted by ACHIEVE that also factored heavily into the revision of graduation requirements. Both efforts were coordinated under auspices of the P-20 Council.

Presentations: PL 1 Study

- Dr. Audrey Noble presented a summary of the findings in the PL 1 Study conducted by the R&D Center at the University of Delaware. This study was commissioned by the State Board of Education last fall and its objective was to determine whether students scoring at PL (Performance Level) 1 in grade 3 were able to perform at PL 3 by grade 8 in reading and mathematics. The report was also shared with the State Board of Education later in the day.
 - The findings are as follows:
 - The longer a student stays at PL 1, the less likely they are to move to PL 2 or PL 3
 - It is more likely for a school to move a student from PL 1 to PL 3 in the elementary grades than it is to move the student to PL 3 in middle or high school
 - The majority of students who start out in PL 1 are still at PL 1 by grade 8 and grade 10
 - School districts differ in their success in moving students. These results were distributed to district superintendents.
 - Race and income status, though observable, are not an overwhelming factor distinguishing students at PL 1. The gap between those subgroups was 10% to 15%, much lower than many studies would lead one to expect.
 - Special education as a subgroup was not pulled out in the analysis.
 - The policy implications are as follows:
 - Access to quality instruction may be the most important factor in whether students improve
 - Emphasis needs to be added to math performance in the early grades where the emphasis has been on reading literacy.
 - Schools need to look at their data and identify the students and determine what resources they are receiving and when those resources are made available.

- Title 1 resources need to be more available at the middle and high school levels. Alternate ways of identifying Title 1 students need to be determined.

Discussion was held about the implications of the study. A special presentation will be made to the school Chiefs the week of September 25th for more analysis.

The next meeting of the Group will be scheduled for late winter in conjunction with the completion of the 2005-06 Achievement Gap Report.