

Achievement Gap Action Group
March 2, 2007

Dr. Joseph Pika, the chair of the group, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Three presentations were made to the group as follows.

High School Balanced Assessment Project

Dr. Amelia Hodges presented the pilot program, funded by a grant from the US Department of Education. Delaware is the lead state and has several partners.

The program trains key people in the state, districts and schools on how to effectively use assessments. Particularly, the framework provides training in how to effectively use formative (where a student is now and what they need to work on) and summative (measuring the end result of learning) assessments and the different types of assessment formats. Three Delaware high schools will be participating in this pilot program. The schools will form voluntary learning teams to be trained in the implementation of the assessment framework. The Delaware Department of Education's role in this program will be to provide materials, training and technical assistance for the learning teams. The goal of the project is to have teachers use both formative and summative assessments effectively to inform their teaching so students will have a greater chance of succeeding and meeting the standards. The pilot will take place the coming school year and will be assessed for effectiveness. It was pointed out by members of the group that this program is different from the formative assessment RFP that is also beginning. While both deal with assessment, the RFP is providing, among other things, questions to be used in assessments that fit with state standards. The High School Balanced Assessment Project is providing a framework for teachers to be able to effectively use assessment in their classrooms.

Gap Report Presentation

Dr. Audrey Noble and Mrs. Kelly Sherretz presented the achievement gap report to the committee. They noted that this was the third year that they have done the report. Moving forward, the report will be compiled within the database and will be linked to the school profiles automatically. There is also interest in the gap information being included on the district balanced score cards.

Dr. Noble and Mrs. Sherretz gave an overview of the report and how it is arranged. The gap is calculated by taking the target group percentage that meets or exceeds the standards and subtract the reference group percentage that meets or exceeds the standards. If the number was negative, the target group was that percentage points below the reference group. If the number was positive, then the target group outperformed the reference group. It was noted that the cut scores had been revised before the 2006 data so the scores over time might show more of a difference than they would have otherwise.

State-wide data was presented to the group. Hispanic students are currently closing the gap at a faster rate across the state. The LEP population scores have been variable but

there has been a large influx of LEP students within the past year which could be affecting the numbers. The LEP population is difficult to calculate since once the students gain proficiency they no longer count as LEP. Grade 10 reading was pointed out as being different from the other grade levels. While the other grades had a general upward movement or were already high in reading, Grade 10 was fairly low and had remained level. Math gaps in Grade 3 and 5 have also been level while 8 and 10 are narrowing but have larger gaps between groups. It was noted that at the state level, aggregating data makes it hard to see that a number of schools actually do not have gaps and that many are making great strides in closing the gaps. The full report does point these schools out.

It was suggested that when this report is released to the public, a press release could be done to stress the positive findings that tend to get lost in the statewide picture.

This information will also be presented at the next State Board meeting.

Correlates of Achievement Update

Dr. Audrey Noble and Mrs. Kelly Sherretz updated the group on the progress of the Correlates of Achievement database. They are currently in the second phase of training and have been meeting with the district teams in each county. The goal of the correlates system is that it be available to principals and school team leaders so they can see the data on their school. Key people within districts will have access to district information.

The interface of the system is also being updated and changed as feedback is received from those that have seen and used the system. Work is now taking place on having the data available in different view formats such as graphs.

The current system has information from DSTP, DEEDS and eSchoolPlus. There has been some discussion on linking it with the Higher Education Data Cube that is currently in the works as well as with the Kids Count data. However, with Kids Count, the data collected are not identified at the student level which could make it difficult to connect it to schools.

Formation of a technical advisory group is now being discussed, a group that could periodically check on the state of the system and make sure that it is where it needs to be. It was stressed to the AGAG that this system is for school improvement rather than accountability. However, the type of information available to the schools should be widely known, just not the actual data. This way, School Improvement Teams and others can ask for the data that they know the schools have.

The next meeting for the Achievement Gap Action Group will be scheduled as needed.