

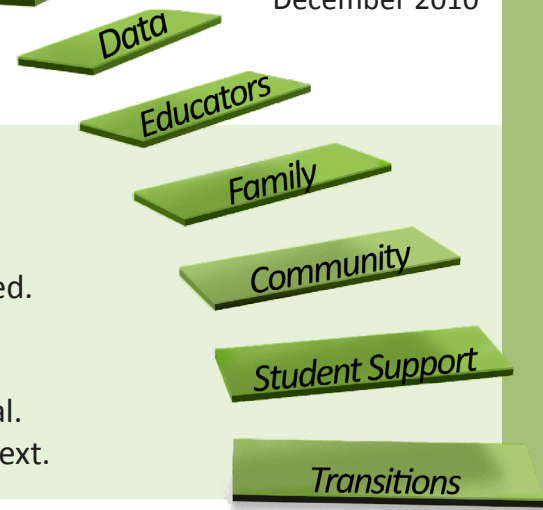
Eliminating Gaps

Eliminating gaps will require the collaboration of all members of a community, not just staff in a school building and students' families.



Community-based
Organization

December 2010



Eliminating gaps will require changes in how I think about and work in the following areas:

Data — what and how data is collected; who sees it and how it is used.

Educators — recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, and training.

Family/community — engagement in students' education.

Student support — academic, physical, social-emotional, and cultural.

Transitions — students' transitions from one academic level to the next.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) make a difference!

Data: We need to consider multiple data elements and use data differently.

- **School data:** How do we gather information and data about the schools in our communities? How can we determine if a school is performing well or not, as compared to other schools in our region? See the Washington State Reportcard on www.k12.wa.us.
- **Student data:** How do we determine which data is important for us to know as a community-based organization—grades, attendance, discipline referrals, high school graduation rates, demographics, primary languages? How do we match the skills and experience of our organization with the needs expressed in the data of the schools in the area?
- **Community data:** Do we have access to other data or information about the community that could be useful for school personnel to know? Do we have information about our interactions with students and the interactions of other local agencies that may be useful to schools? How could we share this information with schools?

Educators: We must help schools locate promising educators (particularly people of color), support them and provide training, when appropriate.

- **Promoting education as a profession:** How can this organization utilize its position to promote education as a profession, particularly among people of color? How do we assist those members of the community who may have promise but don't have the resources or access to information? How can we find information about teacher education programs in our local area, particularly those that serve adults pursuing education as a second career?
- **Making connections:** How can we help the school connect with people who could provide expertise in a classroom as assistants, guest speakers, or interpreters?
- **Providing training:** Does our organization provide training that would be beneficial for educators, such as cultural competence, budgeting or goal-setting? Would we be willing to donate this service to schools for free or at a minimal cost?

Community-based organizations (CBOs) make a difference!

Family/community: We need to be a bridge between school and community.

- **Representing the community:** Which community or set of communities does our CBO represent/serve? Is our organization welcoming to members of diverse communities? Do we see ourselves as “saviors” in the community or as “partners with” the community? How can we use what we have learned about communicating with diverse populations to help schools communicate more effectively? Are there other ways we can serve students or families in the community?
- **Welcoming environment:** Do the members of my CBO and other agencies who work with students feel welcome in the school building? Can my organization play a role in making others feel welcome?
- **Supporting students:** Are there ways our organization would like to participate in the education of the students in the community? Do our members have skills, experiences, or resources that would be helpful to the students—facilities, access to clothing, supplies, job-shadowing or volunteer opportunities? Is our organization willing to mentor, tutor, volunteer to serve in the lunchroom or on the playground, supervise an afterschool activity, or coach a team?
- **Supporting educators:** Are we able to provide breakfast or occasional small tokens of appreciation to the staff? Are there skills you have that would be helpful for teachers?

Student support: We need to help provide students with access to the resources they need.

- **Resources:** Does our CBO have access to resources that students or families need—housing, clothing, food, counseling, tutoring, mentoring, interpretation services? Would our members be willing to serve as mentors for a student? Can our members be counted on to show up on a consistent basis? Does our CBO help to create an environment in our community that values education and believes all students are capable of success?
- **Career exploration:** Do members of our CBO have expertise in an area that could be used to help students or educators? Are members of our organization willing to allow students to job shadow to determine if they would be interested in working in a particular profession?

Transitions: We need to help students make seamless transitions from one academic level to the next.

- **Using my connections:** Does our CBO have connections to technical schools, community colleges or 4-year institutions that would be interested in working with students to help them prepare for college (important for students at every level—from kindergarten to 12th grade)?
- **Summer opportunities:** Does our CBO provide opportunities during the summer to keep students engaged in academic work? Would we be willing to allow students to volunteer or complete an internship with our organization? Would members of our CBO be willing to volunteer at the school if summer programming was offered?



**For more information about
addressing opportunity gaps:**

www.yourlearningcenter.org
360-725-6503

Washington State Report Card:
www.k12.wa.us