

Eliminating Gaps

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



District
Administrator

December 2010

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

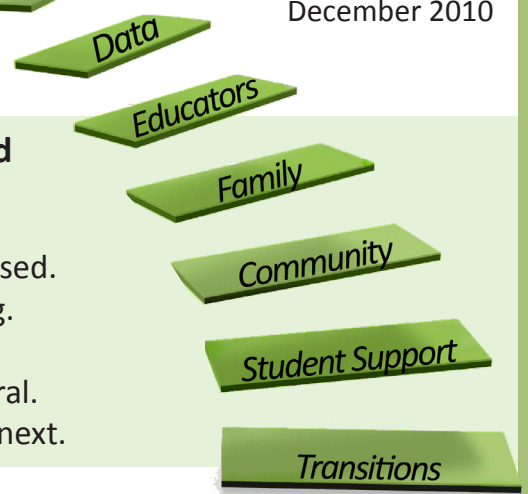
Data — what and how data is collected; who sees it and how it is used.

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.



As a district administrator, what I do makes a difference!

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

- **Data systems:** How do I use student performance data to evaluate programs? Do I have a data system that allows me identify patterns in my district for placement in special programs — ELL, special education, honors, AP/IB, LAP, AVID? Do I have a policy to ensure equity in placement of students that reflects the demographics of my schools? Do I have a data system that allows me and administrators in my district to disaggregate data not only into ethnic categories but into ethnic subgroups to see patterns (i.e. not only “Asian” but also “Vietnamese”, “Cambodian”, etc.)?
- **Targeting resources:** Do district staff take responsibility for the success of all schools and the performance of all student groups? How does the district provide resources and technical assistance to schools with significant gaps? How does the district use student data to assign educators and support staff?
- **Social-emotional data:** Does the district have a dropout early warning system to look at attendance data, grades and other non-academic factors (foster care, parental absence, trauma, prolonged illness) to determine which students are most in danger of dropping out? Who is the person at the district/building who manages this data? What support do I provide to schools to make this data available and usable to building administrators and teachers? How are resources directed to address these gaps?

Educator: I need to hire, place, train and retain more effective educators.

- **Leadership:** Are my actions and beliefs consistent when it comes to talking about the performance of students of color in my district? How do I demonstrate cultural sensitivity? Do my colleagues believe I have “fire in my gut” for really doing what I know works to close opportunity and access gaps? Do my colleagues believe I really care about equity and social justice? What motivates my passion for an equitable education for all children?
- **Recruitment:** Do I intentionally seek out qualified educators who reflect the diversity of the students in my district? How does my district encourage students of color to enter the education profession? How does my district support new educators and retain high-quality educators?
- **Placement:** Do I have a policy that supports the intentional placement of educators and administrators? Are educators who have demonstrated effectiveness over time placed with students in the greatest need? Do the “best” educators want to be placed in the most challenging situations OR are the best educators consistently placed with the highest performing students/schools? How does my district support educators early in their careers to ensure professional success and high student performance? How does my district provide support and professional development for administrators, particularly those who lead buildings “in improvement”?
- **Professional Development:** Am I willing to have and facilitate courageous (or difficult) conversations about race, class, gender? Do I have the same high expectations across my district for all educators (classified and certificated)? Do I have a district plan for professional development that provides all educators with access to the training they need to be successful with all students (e.g. training in cultural competence, differentiated instruction, language acquisition strategies, supporting SPED in all classes, recognizing highly capable)?

As a district administrator, what I do makes a difference!

Family/community: I need to engage families and communities.

- **Leadership:** How does my district define family, community, school partnerships or engagement? What is my plan for family and community engagement at the district and building level? How do I hold building administrators accountable for their schools' level of engagement with family and community? How do I use that data to improve practice?
- **Welcoming climate:** How do I encourage building leaders to invite parents, family members and other supporting adults to be regularly involved in school life? How do I know that families and community members in my district feel welcome in buildings? How do I know that families are given opportunities to participate in school life beyond parent conferences and PTA?
- **Decision-making:** How do I ensure that decision-making bodies represent the demographics of my district's student population? Who are my local contacts from underrepresented communities? How are families involved in decision-making?

Student support: I need to provide students with the support they need to be successful.

- **Community resources:** Has my district catalogued the resources— academic, physical, social, and cultural—that are available to families beyond the school community? How do families learn about these resources? How do I ensure that all families have access to these resources, particularly those who may not speak English or have access to technology?
- **Support systems:** How are my schools expected to connect students to resources? What systems do schools have in place to determine what resources (academic, physical, social-emotional, cultural) students may need? Do I communicate to building leaders the importance of helping students and families overcome challenges that hinder academic success?

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

- **Transition plans:** Do we have a district plan to partner with early childhood providers to create a plan for students to transition smoothly into elementary school? Does our district have a plan to transition students smoothly from elementary to middle and from middle to high school? How does our district create opportunities for collaboration between high schools and institutions of higher learning in your community?
- **Curriculum alignment:** How do I provide time for teachers across the district and across buildings to align curriculum from building to building and grade level to grade level? How do I ensure that curriculum is aligned in all content areas?
- **Inner preparedness:** How am I helping educators prepare the students in my district to become more responsible, to take initiative and persevere in solving problems, and to care about and work cooperatively with others?



For more information about addressing opportunity gaps:

www.yourlearningcenter.org
360-725-6503

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