

# Eliminating Gaps

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

**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.



School Board  
Director

Data

Educators

Family

Community

Student Support

Transitions

## As a school board director, what I do makes a difference!

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

- **Data systems:** Do the data systems in my district allow administrators to disaggregate data by racial subgroups and by socio-economic status? How do I and others on the board hold schools accountable for gaps in achievement at individual schools? How do we evaluate special programs, like honors, AP/IB, LAP, AVID, and special education in our district based on student achievement, particularly for students of color and students from low socio-economic backgrounds? At the district level, do we ensure that all special programs equitably represent the demographics of our student population?
- **Targeting resources:** Do I and others on the school board take responsibility for the success of each and every school and the performance of all students? How do we use school improvement plans to ensure that schools with gaps in achievement, particularly for students of color, are given the resources and technical assistance they need to eliminate those gaps? How do we use student data to assign educators and support staff?
- **Social-emotional data:** Does our district have a drop-out early warning system or some way to look at attendance data, grades and other non-academic factors (foster care, parental absence, physical or emotional trauma, health issues) to determine which students are most in danger of dropping out? Is there a person at the district/building who manages this data?

**Educators: We need to hire, place, train and retain effective staff.**

- **Leadership:** Are my actions and beliefs consistent when it comes to discussing the performance of students of color in my district? How do I believe the elimination of gaps and barriers for groups of students is critical for the success of my district as a whole? Do the other members of the school board and the district superintendent know this is a priority for me based on the decisions I make? Does the board explicitly use achievement data for all groups of students when evaluating staff performance?
- **Recruitment:** Is it a priority for us to recruit quality educators who represent the demographics of the student population? How do we as a district encourage students of color to enter the teaching profession? What mechanisms are in place in our district to support teachers of color once they are in our buildings, so they will stay?
- **Professional development:** Do we have the same high expectations across our district for all educators (classified and certificated)? Is there a district plan for professional development that provides all educators with access to the training they need to be successful with each and every student (e.g. training in cultural competence, differentiated instruction, language acquisition strategies, supporting SPED in regular education classes,)? As school board members, are we willing to participate in that training as well, so we are better able to understand and provide for the needs of students and families who may have different values and experiences than our own?

# As a school board director, what I do makes a difference!

## **Family/community: We need to engage families and communities.**

- **Leadership:** How does our district define family, community, school partnerships or engagement? What is our plan for family-community engagement at the district and building levels? How do we hold building administrators accountable for keeping analyzing data about their school's level of engagement with school and community? How do we use that data to improve practice?
- **Welcoming environment:** How do we know if families and community members in our district feel welcome in buildings? How do we know that families are given opportunities to participate in school life beyond parent conferences and PTA?
- **Decision-making:** How do we ensure that decision-making bodies represent the demographics of our district's student population? Who are our local contacts from underrepresented communities? How do we involve them intentionally in conversations about curriculum, pedagogy, data, and school improvement planning?

## **Student support: We need to provide students with the support they need to be successful.**

- **Community resources:** How has our district catalogued the resources— academic, physical, social, and cultural—that are available to families beyond the school community? How do families know about these resources? How do we ensure that all families have access to these resources, particularly those who may not speak English or have access to technology?
- **Support systems:** How do our schools connect students to resources? What systems do schools have in place to determine what resources (academic, physical, social-emotional, cultural) students may need? How do we communicate the importance of schools meeting the needs, when possible, of students that may hinder academic success?

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

- **Transition plans:** How do schools in our district 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:** Is curriculum alignment a priority in our district? Do we provide time for educators to do the planning required to complete this process effectively across all content areas?



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addressing opportunity gaps:**

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