

# CLOSING THE EDUCATION GAP FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS: A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HB 2722 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

15 September 2008

**The HB 2722 Advisory Committee** was appointed in accordance with its enabling legislation and is on track to complete a plan by December 30, 2008 to close the education gap for African-American students in Washington.

The Committee is staffed by the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning in the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

## **Meetings and workgroups**

The Advisory Committee met on May 19, June 26, July 17, August 21 and September 9.

In its initial meetings, the Committee approved a work plan and divided itself into three work groups on best practices, community engagement and communications, and data.

Each of the work groups has met and worked to develop material that will help the Advisory Committee make decisions about the content of the plan to close the education gap for African-American students.

The Advisory Committee has specified that the final product will be:

- A *call to action* that inspires people to change attitudes and behavior;
- A *plan* rather than a report or study, that will include recommendations of best and promising practices, phased implementation recommendations for the state and for school districts, schools, educators, families and communities, and projected fiscal impacts;
- Focused on *long-term, sustainable system change*; and
- Performance-oriented, with specific recommendations on *accountability measures and benchmarks*.

The plan will focus on five key areas that are critical to improving academic achievement:

- School, district, and state education leadership
- Teacher quality
- Curriculum and instruction
- Family and community engagement
- Student support

## **Best Practices Workgroup**

The best practices workgroup has heard presentations from eight exemplary programs and one school district (Federal Way) that serve significant numbers of African American students. Each of the eight program presenters described in detail how their programs work and their outcomes. At an Advisory Committee meeting in the Federal Way School District, a panel of district leaders, educators and students described Federal Way's equity initiatives, what they have learned, and how their efforts to close the gap are evolving. These presentations were followed by a discussion on what successful efforts have in common, and how their strengths could be integrated into all public schools.

The best practices workgroup also met with Dr. Geneva Gay, Professor of Education at the University of Washington, Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University, and Paul Ruiz, co-founder of the Education Trust. A wealth of national research, plans and programs from other states have been reviewed and discussed. (See Appendix B)

This work group is also collaborating with a writer, and has developed the outline for the final plan.

## **Community Outreach and Communications**

The community outreach and communications workgroup is planning a series of town hall meetings in October and November to solicit ideas and perspectives from communities around the state. It is also exploring the most effective methods for dissemination of the final plan. A contractor has been chosen to help organize the town hall events and to assist with other communications work.

## **Data**

The data workgroup has collaborated closely with researchers at the Washington Institute for Public Policy to refine what data is needed in order to fully understand the nature of the education gap for African American students, to set goals and benchmarks, and to identify and track trends. A sample data analysis set was approved by the committee. The data workgroup is also preparing statements for the final plan that outline the need for other critical data to be captured by the state.

## **The Work Ahead**

Meetings of the full Advisory Committee are scheduled for October 16, November 20 and December 11. There will be additional meetings and consultations of the workgroups, staff and co-chairs, and town hall meetings in several locations around the state.

Members of the Committee will also participate in the Race and Pedagogy Conference on October 18 at the University of Puget Sound, and the Washington Education Research Association conference on December 4.

The Committee anticipates approval of its final plan at the December 11 meeting.

This Progress Report was reviewed and approved at the September 9 meeting of the Advisory Committee.



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Mona Bailey, Co-chair



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Trish Millines Dziko, Co-chair

## **Appendix A**

### **HB 2722 Advisory Committee members**

Mona H. Bailey, former Deputy Superintendent, Seattle Public Schools

Delois Brown, retired Health Administrator, Tacoma Public Schools

Trish Millines Dziko, founder and Director, Technology Access Foundation

Dr. Dexter Gordon, Director, African American Studies Program and Professor of Communications Studies, University of Puget Sound

Dr. Thelma Jackson, President, Washington Alliance of Black School Educators and owner, Foresight Consultants

Rosalund Jenkins, Executive Director, Governor's Commission on African American Affairs

Calvin Lyons, Executive Director, Rainier Scholars

Nate Miles, Director of Public Affairs, Eli Lilly and Company

Lee Newgent, Assistant to the Executive Secretary, Seattle Building and Construction Trades Council

Sheley J. M. Secrest, Attorney at Law, and Vice President, Seattle NAACP

Adie Simmons, Director, Office of the Education Ombudsman, Office of the Governor

Dr. James Smith, retired corporate executive with a second career in public education; Adjunct Professor, City University, Consultant, Auburn School District

Diane Turner, Chief Communications Officer, Federal Way Public Schools

Doug Wheeler, recently retired Director, Zion Preparatory Academy

Dr. Deborah Wilds, President and Chief Operating Officer, College Success Foundation

## **Appendix B**

### **Research sources of the HB 2722 Advisory Committee to date:**

#### **Experts consulted:**

Dr. Geneva Gay, Professor of Education, University of Washington

Ronald F. Ferguson, Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard University, Economist and Senior Research Associate at the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy

Dr. Doris McEwen-Harris Distinguished P-12 Educator, College of Education, University of Washington

Paul Ruiz, Co-founder and Senior Advisor, Education Trust

Dr. Shirley McCune, OSPI

#### **Programs reviewed:**

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)  
College Success Foundation  
Math, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA)  
Navigation 101  
Rainier Scholars  
Technology Access Foundation  
Zion Preparatory Academy  
T. T. Minor School/New School Foundation Partnership  
OSPI School and District Improvement Program  
OSPI Parent, School and Community Partnership Projects

Pending:

African American Academy  
GEAR UP  
Anti-Bias Training Program  
Act Six  
Building Bridges Program

#### **Research reports, studies, and articles:**

African-American Quality of Life Task Force on Education, Findings and Recommendations, June 16, 2006, published by the Austin Independent School District and the City of Austin

Awareness to Action 2005: Tracking the Achievement Gap in Delaware Schools, published by the Delaware Education Research and Development Center

State Level Strategies and Policies for Closing the Achievement Gap, a Policy Brief published by the California Department of Education and the University of California Davis School of Education Center for Applied Policy in Education, April 2008

Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System, published by the American Diploma Project Network, Achieve, Inc.

In Their Own Words: Voices from the Field, published by the Education Trust-West

Breaking the Silence: Ushering in Courageous Conversations About the Impact of Race on Student Achievement, published by Pacific Educational Group, March 11, 2006

Leveling the Playing Field and Raising African American Students' Achievement in Twenty-nine Urban Classrooms by Johnnie McKinley, published by New Horizons for Learning

How Do You Get Black Kids to Learn? You Just Teach Them! – A conversation with Anitra Pinchback, by Jill Hearne, published by New Horizons for Learning

National Blueprint for Action IV, published by the National Council on Educating Black Children, 2007

Equity and Achievement Task Force Report to the Superintendent, Federal Way School District, November 2001

Closing the Achievement Gap: A Policy Action Guide for Washington State's School Directors, published by the Washington State School Directors' Association, November 2002