

Eliminating the Achievement Gap

The Yakima School District Board of Directors is committed to achieving the district mission of meeting the needs of all students and ensuring that students reach their highest potential in academic achievement. While significant progress is documented, not all student groups are reaching higher levels of performance at the same rate, creating a gap in achievement.

This gap is the persistent and significant disparity in achievement among groups of students, which may be reflective of the following:

- **Student Factors**, such as attendance patterns, English-language competence, and student mobility;
- **Family Factors**, such as socioeconomic differences, parental educational attainment, racial/ethnic differences; and
- **School Factors**, such as low expectations for student achievement, lack of appropriate resource allocation, and failure to staff the highest need schools with the highest quality teachers.

The Board of Directors seeks to mitigate these inequities and, as much as possible, to eliminate the achievement gap that exists at all grade levels in our schools.

1. Guiding Principles

In order to stress the importance of this policy, the board has adopted the guiding principles of the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) Achievement Gap Task Force, as follows:

- 1.1 Closing the achievement gap is critical to preserving American democracy and providing all students with the skills for economic self-sufficiency and the opportunities to realize their potential.
- 1.2 District policies should improve student learning and ensure that all students meet the essential academic learning requirements.
- 1.3 Understanding the impact of race and poverty on student learning is essential to closing the achievement gap.
- 1.4 Schools cannot close the achievement gap alone. The responsibility is shared with schools, parents and the larger community.
- 1.5 All students can meet high standards when necessary opportunities, resources and support systems are provided.
- 1.6 All schools can close the achievement gap.
- 1.7 The achievement gap can be significantly diminished or eradicated without lowering academic standards for any student.
- 1.8 Students who have not achieved academic standards must have their academic progress accelerated to close the achievement gap.

2. Program Goals

Program goals will directly address student progress. The board directs the superintendent to incorporate the following broad goals into specific programs and responses to students' needs:

- 2.1 increased academic achievement of all students and a narrowed achievement gap

- between student groups, which is measured by establishment of specific growth targets at each school and by progress on standardized tests and performance assessments;
- 2.2 increased numbers and percentages of qualified teachers from diverse backgrounds, particularly at targeted schools which have a high number or percentage of low-performing students;
 - 2.3 increased collaboration among teachers and among schools for the purpose of widening the pool of resources, expertise, and activities available to extended programs;
 - 2.4 commitment of staff and resources to engaging parents in a full array of parental, school-related and learning-based activities;
 - 2.5 effective use of learning time through modified or year-round calendars and programs which clearly link extended time to the regular academic program, such as before and after school academically focused learning times, summer school, Saturday school programs, and intersessions;
 - 2.6 decreased suspension rates and more in-school options for all students for offenses for which students are not subject to expulsion;
 - 2.7 enhanced early childhood education and early remediation in or before kindergarten, so that children enrolled in kindergarten will possess the tools and skills necessary to be successful in K-12 education;
 - 2.8 increased graduation rates for all students and increased enrollment and success of students of all groups in honors-level courses;
 - 2.9 increased English language proficiency for ELL students;
 - 2.10 decreased over representation of students of color in some special education programs; and
 - 2.11 staff who are directed to continuously search for outside funding to support extended learning opportunities, including state, federal and private sources.

3. The Function of Data

Precise assessment, disaggregated for specific remedies to be utilized, is fundamental to the specific targeting of resources to student need. Early disaggregated assessment of student progress will prevent the disparate patterns that develop in attendance rates, drop-out rates, and participation in higher level school offerings, such as International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement and honors courses.

4. Board Direction

The board directs the superintendent to develop these broad goals into targeted programs and responses to student need. The superintendent shall direct district staff to identify and implement intervention strategies which address specific factors of chronic student under-performance. Reports of disaggregated assessment data shall be presented to the board annually to reflect the progress made in eliminating the achievement gap while raising academic achievement for all students.

The board directs the superintendent to prepare appropriate procedures to implement this policy.

Cross References:

- (cf.: 2001 – Academic Standards)
- (cf.: 2002 – Assessment of Academic Standards)
- (cf.: 2006 – Priority Schools)
- (cf.: 2215 – Small Schools Commitment)
- (cf.: 2168 – Categorical Programs)
- (cf.: 2170 – Alternative Schools/Enrichment Programs)
- (cf.: 2255 – Alternative Experience Learning Programs)

Legal References:

- WSSDA Closing the Achievement Gap, 2003
- OSPI Addressing the Achievement Gap, November 2002

Adoption Date:

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