**Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force – October 24, 2012**

Members Present:

* Diane DeBacker, KSDE
* Brad Neuenswander, KSDE
* Tom Foster, KSDE
* Mildred Edwards, Kansas African American Affairs Commission
* Adrienne Foster, Kansas Hispanic & Latino American Affairs Commission
* Chester Daniel, Urban League of Kansas
* Jean Schodorf, Senator
* Charles Rankin, Midwest Equity Assistance Center

Location: Kansas State Department of Education

The inaugural meeting of the Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force began with introductions of each of the members.

Brad reviewed the statewide assessment data from the September 2012 State Board of Education meeting as well as the October data. The September data was recalculated due to three districts (McPherson, Clifton-Clyde, Kansas City) taking the EXPLORE at the 8th grade and ACT at the high school level. The State Board voted in October to have separate statewide reporting for those districts taking the state assessments from those taking a different assessment. The PowerPoint Brad presented can be found at the Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force website at: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1646>

The statewide assessment results for 2012 show a persistent achievement gap among the following subgroups: paid lunch, reduced lunch, free lunch, whites, Hispanics and African Americans. Acknowledgement was given to the work that has been done in schools since 2000 in closing the gaps that have ranged anywhere from 14% to over 36%. However, the task force members were concerned that a gap continues to persist and has widened in some cases over the past year. Specifically, the following chart illustrates the gap in the subgroups for the 2012 state assessment results.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Paid Lunch** | **Reduced Lunch** | **Free Lunch** | **Whites** | **Hispanics** | **African-Americans** |
| **Reading** | 94.0% | 87.7%  Gap 6.3% | 77.1%  Gap 16.9% | 91.3% | 76.9%  Gap 14.4% | 70.5%  Gap 20.8% |
| **Math** | 92.2% | 85.3%  Gap 6.9% | 74.9%  Gap 17.3% | 89.1% | 76.4%  Gap 12.7% | 66.2%  Gap 22.9% |

Upon examination of the state assessment results and the discussion, many questions emerged as to how the following contribute to the gap:

1. Teacher preparation
2. Teacher recruitment (cultural diversity; minority teachers)
3. Student absences
4. Suspensions and expulsions
5. Preschool experiences
6. Foster care placement
7. Teacher effectiveness
8. Class size

The task force members had considerable discussion about areas we need to keep in mind as we continue our work. These include:

1. Closing the achievement gap does NOT mean bringing down the top.
2. Parents and communities can play an important role in closing the gap.
3. The practice of placing the newest teachers in the most challenging classrooms should be examined. Is this a best practice? It was suggested we may want to examine some negotiated agreements to see how prevalent this practice is across Kansas.
4. High expectations is key to the success of all students.
5. The state should seriously consider alternatives to getting minority students into the teaching profession. Programs that could be explored include Teach for America and Future Teachers of America. The Missouri program that recruits minority students could be a model for Kansas. Diane also mentioned that Kansas does have a teaching pathway in the Career Clusters model.
6. Programs such as AVID should be expanded where possible.

Information requested for our next meeting included:

1. Actual number of students in the gap; i.e. a gap of 6.3% in the reduced lunch is how many students.
2. Location of students in the gap; i.e. where are these students located in Kansas?
3. What data is in our early warning system that may be helpful in reducing the gaps?
4. Are there other states with similar demographics and similar gaps?

The next meeting of the task force will be held in early December. Penny Rice will communicate with the task force members about a date. Agenda items for the next meeting include asking someone from a district that has closed the achievement gap to present to the members what strategies have worked. Suggested districts: Kansas City, Topeka, Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal, Wichita. The task force members are particularly interested in evidence-based best practices.

It was agreed to keep the task force membership to those individuals included in the initial meeting. Individuals who can contribute to the conversation will be invited to participate as deemed necessary by the members.

Two documents were distributed for task for member review. The documents were: ECS Selected State Policies; and ECS Student Achievement –Closing the Achievement Gap Articles. Both can be found at the webpage at. <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1646>