



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,
NY 12234

TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: James A. Kadamus *James A. Kadamus*

COMMITTEE: Full Board

TITLE OF ITEM: Review of Report of Subcommittee on Communication, Advocacy and Support/Statewide Gap Implementation Advisory Committee

DATE OF SUBMISSION: December 27, 2002

PROPOSED HANDLING: Discussion

RATIONALE FOR ITEM: Review of Subcommittee Recommendations

STRATEGIC GOAL: Goal

AUTHORIZATION(S): *Robert P. Mills*

SUMMARY:

In January 2002, the Statewide Gap Implementation Advisory Committee was established with two subcommittees: one focusing on strengthening instruction; and the other focusing on communication, advocacy and support. Both subcommittees were charged to develop recommendations to implement the Regents strategies to close the gaps in student performance.

In October, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction, Linda Mann, met with the Task Force on Closing the Performance Gap to discuss the Subcommittee's recommendations. For the January Regents meeting, we have invited William Baker and Monte Trammer, Chair and Vice Chair of the Subcommittee on Communication, Advocacy and Support, to discuss the recommendations of their Subcommittee. The Subcommittee's report is provided in Attachment A. (For your information, also attached is the report of the Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction -- Attachment B.)

Together, the two reports provide key strategies for the Regents and the Department to pursue in order to close the gaps.

Attachments

ATTACHMENT A

**REPORT TO THE NEW YORK STATE BOARD OF
REGENTS AND THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
ON
COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT
IN CLOSING THE GAPS IN STUDENT ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE**

**STATEWIDE GAP IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Subcommittee on Communication, Advocacy and Support**

**MEMBERSHIP OF
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT
OF
STATEWIDE GAP IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Chair: William Baker, President, WNET
Vice Chair: Monte Trammer, Publisher, Elmira Star Gazette

David Bloomfield, Professor, Brooklyn College
Eric Brettschneider, Executive Director, Agenda for Children
William Casey, Acting Deputy Chancellor, New York City Board of Education
Ernest Clayton, President, United Parents Association of New York City
Newell Eaton, Director, Strategic Planning, NYS Office of Children and Families
Mauricio Fernandez, Chief Executive Officer, M & M Enterprises
Bettye Fletcher, President, Fletcher Assets Management
Paula Gavin, Executive Director, YMCA/Greater New York
L. Priscilla Hall, Judge, Kings County Supreme Court
William Johnson, President, New York State Council of School Superintendents
Dominic Mascara, Chief Executive Director, Health Plus
Ernest Prince, Executive Director, Westchester Urban League
Karen Schimke, Executive Director, Communities Aid Association
Esmeralda Simmons, Director of the Center for Law and Social Justice, Medgar Evers
College
Jean Smith, Vice President, Stanley Morgan Chase Bank
Alana Sweeny, Executive Director, Council on Children and Families
Rev. Elgin Watkins, Pastor, Naccarene Congregational UCC Church
Thomas Weibrecht, President, Big Five City School Districts
Randi Weingarten, President, United Federation of Teachers
Lester Young, Superintendent, Community School District 13

Department Support to the Subcommittee

James A. Kadamus, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary
and Continuing Education

Shelia Evans-Tranumn, Associate Commissioner, New York City School and
Community Services, Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing
Education

Raymond H. Kesper, Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner, Office of Elementary,
Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education

CLOSING THE GAPS IN STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

As part of its reform agenda, the New York State Board of Regents has established two major goals for education in the State: to raise the academic achievement of all students; and to close the gaps in student performance where they exist. While schools have been successful in raising the achievement for most students, there are still gaps in student performance, particularly in the large urban areas of the State, but also in many suburban and rural school districts. At the same time, out-of-school socio-economic conditions are often at the root of poor academic performance. Improvement in out-of-school conditions is as crucial to the academic success of students in high poverty areas as the improvement of in-school conditions.

In December 1998, an advisory group was empanelled to help the Board of Regents develop strategies to close the gaps in student performance. As a result of the advisory group's deliberations and a series of regional meetings, the Regents approved ten key strategies, including –

- ❑ *stay the course on the standards and reach beyond;*
- ❑ *strengthen teaching;*
- ❑ *improve classroom instruction by using technology to give teachers access to better curricula, materials and exemplary practices;*
- ❑ *retain and recruit effective school leaders; ensure success by giving students the extra time and extra help they need and by removing barriers to learning;*
- ❑ *give students a strong, successful start in education;*
- ❑ *help schools be accountable for student success; commit resources;*
- ❑ *build partnerships with those who can help; and*
- ❑ *communicate the need to close the gaps and the consequences for not succeeding.*

In January 2002, the advisory committee was reconstituted to assist the Regents and the Department in implementing the ten strategies. The reconstituted advisory committee has two distinct, but complementary, focuses -- **communication, advocacy and support** and **strengthening instruction**.

Following are the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Communication, Advocacy and Support:

Communication, Advocacy and Support

Message

The message to create public awareness of the gaps in student academic performance must encompass a four-pronged approach –

- All children can learn.
- There are gaps in student academic performance, particularly for minority and high-poverty students, which are intolerable.
- The gaps can be closed, as demonstrated in a number of schools throughout the State. (Examples of schools/school districts that have closed the gaps should be provided.)
- Closing the gaps is everyone's business.

Fundamentals of a Media Plan

To engage the public successfully, the media plan must adhere to fundamental principles. It must be ongoing, using a single, simple theme. It should be uplifting, stressing what works and identify schools that can serve as models for replication. It should emphasize that closing the gaps cannot be addressed solely by education alone, but requires a host of services (e.g., health, mental health, social services) that must be provided concurrently. It should address basic questions, e.g., "What's in it for me?" and "Why should I care?" It must be concrete, practical and immediate – e.g., how to get the best teachers and administrators to the most challenged schools. In addition, it should be powerful enough to appeal to a broad constituency, representing the diversity of the State.

Tactics in Developing a Media Plan

As the primary stakeholders in closing the gaps, students and parents must be involved in crafting the message and developing the media plan. In addition, local organizations are key to helping groups communicate with each other (e.g., YMCAs, United Way, labor unions, chambers of commerce, faith-based organizations or other groups concerned with the gap), and must engage key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, media, business people, etc.). It is important to identify successes in closing the gaps in similar communities. Small communities, for example, cherish their smallness and would be more likely to adopt programs and solutions that come from similar places. Above all, the media plan must stay true to the fundamental, overall message and make it clear, short, memorable and repeat it often. The tactics should be given sufficient time to work. However, "foot-dragging" should not be tolerated.

Other Factors

Broadcast media are key players in signaling what is important to the public and creating the community's agenda. The public must be convinced that closing the gaps is a soluble problem and should be connected to the economic health of the State and nation. The Regents must look at their own policies and regulations in terms of focusing them better on closing the gaps.

Others must be actively engaged in closing the gaps, especially higher education institutions. Incentives must be created to get the best teachers to the most challenged schools and to interest promising teaching candidates to work in these schools. Such incentives could include additional salary, housing allowances, income tax deductions, forgiveness of student loans, internships and mentoring programs.

Issues and Directions

In addressing the communication, advocacy and support dimensions of the closing the gaps, three key issues emerged and recommendations were offered on each issue.

ISSUE: ***Increasing the awareness of policymakers and the public of the gaps in student achievement***

HOW TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

Message

There needs to be a sustained, long-term strategy with a clear message to improve urban education, with an emphasis on closing the gaps. The message should be engaging and not be confrontational nor place blame, but focus on creating a consensus to close the gaps. It should be crafted to educate the public that there is effective instruction in every classroom of the State and that there should be high expectations for all students. It should be powerful enough to capture the attention of the public within 30 seconds (e.g., "Fight crime by investing in kids" with sheriffs, district attorneys, police chiefs, etc.) Television and radio are essential, as direct outreach, to promote the message.

To further the message, school leaders should encourage and organize community discussions of the data, using television to model this approach. High profile New Yorkers (e.g., entertainers, newscasters, sports figures) need to be enlisted to deliver the message. The business community should be actively involved and foundation support should be sought.

A powerful mechanism to promote the message is through a dedicated website displaying achievement levels of every school in the State with comparisons to other schools, statewide trends, and resources to help parents get help for their children. It should use a multi-layered approach that encompasses the need of parents at varying levels of literacy, including parents who are English language learners. Commercial television and radio should advertise the website and it should be available in libraries using dedicated computers. In addition, the website should include strategic maps of localities and the names and telephone

numbers of key service providers and others who can help or need to be engaged.

ISSUE: ***Increasing the awareness of policymakers and the public of the consequences of not closing the gaps***

HOW TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

By bringing the issue of the gaps in student performance to public attention, there will be increased awareness of low-performing students; and of students displaying only minimal competence who will be at a disadvantage on entering college where higher competencies will be required. Also, the public should begin to understand the negative consequences of not closing the gaps. By not closing the gaps, students in the gap will have little opportunity for productive employment, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty with continued reliance on public assistance and the "street economy."

ISSUE: ***Engaging policymakers, organizations, the public and the media in supporting policies that will close the gaps***

HOW TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE:

The Regents, both as a Board and individually, should advance the message that "all students can learn" with access to essential resources. In crafting the message, care must be exercised to emphasize that closing the gaps can be achieved. There should be examples of schools that are closing/have closed the gaps to show that the system can be changed. The message should focus on identifying the gaps and giving hope that the gaps can be closed if we work together.

Target groups should be identified, particularly the gatekeepers for each group, and the message should be tailored to their needs, i.e., health and human service providers and agencies. Attention should be brought to schools that have exemplary results.

Focusing on a few key strategies would strengthen the message, e.g., giving extra help to each failing student with emphasis on improving reading skills. An important part of the message would be the creation of a strong middle school strategy and publicizing it.

Educational organizations and advocates should work with the Regents and the Department to develop a common strategy to advance the message. Faith-based networks and community organizations could help deliver the message,

especially in minority communities. "Controversy" can sometimes be an effective tool to attract attention to the message.

How can this be done?

To implement the directions for communication, advocacy and support to close the gaps in student achievement, the Subcommittee suggests that the Board of Regents engage the services of a public relations firm. It is the Subcommittee's assessment that such an approach would ensure that the message is polished, clear and powerful, is effectively communicated to various audiences and is accompanied by a media plan that addresses the short- and long-term objectives of the Regents and the Department in closing the gaps.

ATTACHMENT B

**CLOSING THE GAPS IN STUDENT ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE**

Recommendations of:

**Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction
of the
STATEWIDE GAP IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

Membership of Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction

Chair: Linda Mann, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Instructional Leadership, Poughkeepsie City School District (retired)

Vice Chair: Antonia Cortese, First Vice President, New York State United Teachers

Arthur Applebee, Professor, SUNY/Albany

Margaret Boorady, Principal, PS 28 Triangle Academy, Buffalo City School District

Rose Mary Cover, Education Chair, New York State PTA

Katherine DeForge, Teacher, Marcellus Central School District/President of the New York State Association of Social Studies Teachers

Donna DeSiato, Assistant Superintendent, Syracuse City School District

Yvonne Hargrave, Deputy Superintendent, Buffalo City School District

Sr. Mary Jane Herb, Superintendent, Catholic Diocese of Albany

Anna Hunderfund, Assistant Superintendent, Jericho UFSD

Howard Johnson, Professor, Syracuse University

Judith Johnson, Superintendent, Peekskill City School District

Corliss Kaiser, Assistant Superintendent, Syracuse City School District

Donna Kemp, Teacher, Peru Central School District/President of the New York State English Council

Ernest Logan, Vice President, Council of School Supervisors and Administrators

Sandra Lockwood, President, New York State School Boards Association

John Nuttall, Assistant Commissioner, New York State Department of Correctional Services

Donald Ogilvie, District Superintendent, Erie 1 BOCES

Sharon Ripley, United Federation of Teachers

Isabel Cid Sirgado, Professor, Baruch College

Bruce Tulloch, Teacher, Bethlehem Central School District/President of the New York State Association of Science Teachers

Robert Winchester, Teacher, Niskayuna Central School District/President of the New York State Council of Education Associations

Ronald Woo, New York City Board of Education

Irma Zardoya, Superintendent, Community School District 10

Department Staff Support

James A. Kadamus, Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education

Raymond H. Kesper, Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education

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In December 1998, an advisory group was empanelled to help the Board of Regents develop strategies to close the gaps in student performance. As a result of the advisory group's deliberations and a series of regional meetings, the Regents approved ten key strategies, including --

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In January 2002, the advisory group was reconstituted to assist the Regents and the Department in implementing the ten strategies to close the gaps. The reconstituted advisory group, Statewide Gap Implementation Advisory Committee, has two distinct, but complementary, focuses -- **communication, advocacy and support** and **strengthening instruction**.

Following are the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction:

Recommendations of the Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction

The Subcommittee on Strengthening Instruction was charged with -- *developing a framework for closing gaps in student performance where they exist*. During the course of its work, the Subcommittee determined that closing the gaps required more specific definition to reflect the cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity of our children. To both close student achievement gaps and raise the level of achievement for all students require the collaboration and

commitment of educators at all levels of the educational system, from the Board of Regents to the classroom teacher, and partnerships with other State and local agencies and community organizations.

The recommendations that follow reflect significant Subcommittee discussion about the critical challenges confronting the current educational environment as well as the recognition that resources, priorities and approaches vary at the State and local levels. It is a starting point for action, not an exhaustive list of options.

1. Establish communication and uniform accountability at the State, regional and local levels, including --

- Linking higher education and schools to improve the quality of teacher preparation programs and professional development for practitioners.
- Facilitating and collaborating between/among elementary, middle and high school principals and teachers to encourage coherence of instruction -- prekindergarten through grade12.
- Disseminating and facilitating, through the State Education Department, information on research practices which address the needs of specific student populations
- Accessing websites with peer-reviewed instruction materials and strategies through websites and other means.
- Sharing information on effective classroom instruction and focusing on every level, from superintendent to classroom teacher through ongoing professional development activities, offered by experts and skilled practitioners,
- Communicating the range of resources and opportunities available under the federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation.
- Establishing technical assistance standards to ensure a consistent quality of services provided by BOCES and other regional structures.
- Reporting test data on a timely basis (within one month of testing) and ensuring that the data be rich enough to inform AIS instruction.

2. Provide ongoing, coherent professional development¹ especially in the areas of instruction, learning standards, curriculum development and data analysis, including --

- Requiring the integration of research-based professional development programs into the educational system.
- Restructuring teacher and paraprofessional preparation programs to reflect the standard-based classroom needs of all students.

¹ There is a range of providers of professional development services, including the BOCES, district specialists, professional organizations, postsecondary institutions, consultants and regional entities.

- Expanding professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators in scientifically-based approaches to curriculum development, instruction and data analysis.
- Providing training to teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators in effective community involvement.
- Training teachers and administrators to use data to both inform classroom practice and monitor individual student progress.
- Developing a culture of “on-the-job” professional development, including encouraging inter-district/inter-school/inter-class visits and focusing on student work as a means to improvement.

3. Provide the resources/time necessary for all students to successfully complete high school, including --

- Establishing alternative educational programs, leading to a high school or high school equivalency diploma, to meet the diverse needs of learners.
- Developing alternative education options, including vocational education.
- Providing students who are falling behind with enriched curriculum, effective support services or other relevant material.
- Establishing school-business partnerships to provide students with options for career and postsecondary experiences.
- Engaging students in discussions about what works in the classroom and what does not, and what catalysts/relationships/experiences make a difference.
- Ensuring appropriate resources, including fiscal resources, to bridge the gaps to promote excellence for all students, particularly for middle level education.
- Changing the length and structure of the school day to be consistent with students’ developmental needs.
- Targeting funds to close the gaps under the NCLB legislation at the State and local levels.

4. Promote parental involvement in all schools, including --

- Providing training in early reading and mathematics literacy to parents and other caregivers to improve their skills and to help their children.
- Providing parents with printed materials at various literacy levels.
- Developing strategies to encourage parents and other caregivers to be partners with schools, especially at the middle level.

5. Provide physical and mental health services, including --

- Implementing comprehensive health screening procedures for all students, including those in prekindergarten programs.

- Developing partnerships and seeking the involvement of appropriate local agencies to provide resources and services to address the physical and mental health needs of all students.
- Aligning State testing procedures and practices with the developmental needs of all students.
- Using existing mental health professionals (e.g., psychologists, social workers, counselors), collaborating with outside agencies to provide needed mental health services to schools and increasing the number of mental health professionals employed by school districts, as appropriate.

6. Establish scientifically-based instructional practices, including --

- Developing comprehensive, research-based approaches to the implementation of academic programs with annual evaluation of effectiveness.
- Making early reading a priority for funding.
- Developing and providing culturally-relevant/connected reading materials.
- Providing all students with enriched programs and experiences.
- Reducing class size in early grades.
- Linking practitioners to other schools and other districts that are closing the gaps and providing opportunities for reflection.
- Identifying student needs by analyzing student performance and other relevant data.
- Improving prekindergarten educational opportunities for all students.
- Providing ongoing and timely assessment of the effectiveness of early reading programs.
- Evaluating the impact of middle level education on dropout rates.