NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK™
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www.inclusiveschools.org
DECEMBER 5-9, 2005

Bridging the Gap:
ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL



Introduction

In 2003, only 29 percent of 4th grade students with disabilities in the United States scored at or above "basic" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, compared to 67 percent of their counterparts without disabilities. A similar disparity exists when looking at the performance of students with limited English proficiency; only 28 percent score at or above basic, compared to 66 percent of students who are not classified as limited English proficient. Differences also persist between students of different racial-ethnic groups and of different socioeconomic status. Seventy-five percent of White and 70 percent of Asian students scored at or above basic, compared to only 40 percent of Black students and 44 percent of Hispanic students. Forty-five percent of students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch scored at or above basic, compared to 76 percent of those who were not eligible.

These gaps in academic achievement between different groups of students are not inevitable or unchangeable. Inclusive schools and communities across the country are bridging the gap. This supplement to our annual National Inclusive Schools Week Celebration Kit is designed to help educators, families, and community members to better understand the causes of the achievement gap and what they can do to help narrow it.

As you plan your celebration of the *5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week*—December 5, 2005—you will discover ideas here as simple as implementing a 15-minute classroom lesson and as ambitious as changing your school's structure. An annotated resource list includes reports and articles that take an in-depth look at the problem of the achievement gap and provide examples of schools that are making progress; organizations and Web sites that focus on study skills, culturally responsive education, learning-styles assessments, and student self-determination; and other materials that challenge us to broaden our definition of student achievement.

The Achievement Gap

What Is It?

In this era of standards-based educational reform and accountability, much attention has been paid to the achievement gap in academic performance. Federal legislation demands not only that students achieve at high levels but that all students achieve at those high levels. To monitor progress toward this goal, policy makers, researchers, educators, and parents look for differences in achievement between subgroups of students. For example, we compare the achievement of students with disabilities to the achievement of students without disabilities. We look at how students of different racial and socioeconomic groups perform in relation to one another. We look at how students whose native language is not English perform compared to their English-speaking peers. Any difference in academic achievement between such groups is called an achievement gap.

Disparate educational opportunities and outcomes are not a new phenomenon; in fact, public education has moved great distances to close achievement gaps between groups of students. It was only a little more than 30 years ago that all students, in fact, were afforded the right to attend public schools. Public schools once educated only boys. Before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, public schools were segregated by race. Not until the 1975 passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, in 1993), did students with disabilities have the right to a public education.

By law, all children now have the right to attend public schools, and the policy focus of the last several decades has shifted to educational achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 focus on establishing high educational standards for all students and on holding schools responsible for students attaining these standards. State accountability systems take many forms; all, however, include the use of standardized tests. Although there are many different ways to gauge achievement, performance on standardized tests has become the most widely accepted measure of the achievement gap. Current strategies to close the gap emphasize ways to improve standardized test performance for particular subgroups of students, including those with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

What Causes It?

Ultimately, differences in achievement between groups reflect ways in which traditional schooling practices have not benefited some groups as much as others. The disparities are caused both by differences in students' particular learning needs and by differences in their experiences in school. Among the factors contributing to the achievement gap are the following:

- ***Learning differences.*** As decades of research in special education have shown, students learn in different ways and need different supports to reach their academic potential. For example, students with learning disabilities may learn some skills better through explicit, direct instruction than through open-ended, constructive inquiry. Students with emotional disabilities may learn most effectively in predictable and structured environments. When schools have the ability to meet the diverse learning needs present in classrooms, instruction becomes stronger and academic achievement improves. Conversely, when diverse learning needs are not taken into consideration, the needs of some students go unmet and the achievement gap widens.
- ***Language.*** Students who are English-language learners are at a distinct disadvantage in schools, partly because many educators and policy makers do not have access to sufficient information on just how such students best learn. This lack of information is evident in the disparate state policies and district models of bilingual education. It is also apparent in the inconsistent acknowledgment that for many students who are deaf, American Sign Language (ASL) is the first language and English is the second language. Research confirms that students who are English-language learners typically process information in their second language more slowly than in their first language. Current special-education assessment processes also do not easily help us distinguish bilingualism from disability. A lack of knowledge about bilingualism may be contributing to the lower achievement levels of English-language learners.
- ***Culture.*** Culture can also play a role in how students learn and how they respond to school. Research demonstrates that differences between the education-related values students learn at home and the educational values that are promoted in schools play an important role in shaping students' experiences in school. Values about education can include, for example, norms around how to respond appropriately to authority figures, how to communicate with adults and other students, and how to give and receive criticism and praise. A mismatch in educational values and norms between the home and school can result in poor academic achievement. Students whose home cultures differ from those of their teachers and school often face the burden of adapting to their schools' values in order to excel. This additional challenge can lead these students to perform worse than students who do not need to adapt their cultural norms for school.
- ***Exposure to early education.*** The link between early exposure to education and later academic achievement is well documented. Unfortunately, however, not all children receive sufficient exposure to education early in their lives. This is especially true for students who come from impoverished backgrounds and are simply not able to take advantage of as many quality preschool educational opportunities as their more affluent peers. Furthermore, for some students with disabilities, early intervention is critical to ensuring that they develop the language, sensory, motor, cognitive, and social skills that are essential for gaining access to learning.
- ***Quality of teachers and instruction.*** High-quality teachers and instruction are key ingredients of good schools and high student performance. However, not all students have access to the same level of these resources. Poorer students, for example, often have to attend schools where teachers have fewer resources. Teachers who are highly qualified to teach rigorous content in math and science and those with expertise in teaching students with disabilities are in high demand. Unfortunately, there are not enough highly qualified teachers to go around, and poorer schools often suffer the consequences. Furthermore, many schools lack sufficient resources to train teachers in the most effective ways to teach a diverse student body.

What Are the Myths about the Gap?

All the factors listed in the previous section widen the achievement gap, but research on how they contribute to the gap is limited. Without a solid understanding of the role these factors play, many educators, parents, and policymakers continue to believe and rely on certain myths about the achievement gap.

- ***Myth #1: Equity and excellence are mutually exclusive goals.*** Many people believe that achieving excellence means sacrificing equity, and vice versa. A common question is, How can schools demonstrate high overall average achievement while simultaneously catering to students who need extra support in order to achieve? Will

focusing on the "hard-to-teach" students limit a school's ability to teach its high-achieving students? The truth is, schools can attain both equity and excellence. Inclusive schools are most likely to achieve these dual goals, because they employ strategies that meet the needs of all students.

- ***Myth #2: "Equal" means "same."*** In an attempt to provide equal access to high standards for all students, many educators work hard to provide the same opportunities to all their students. However, offering the "same" opportunities does not necessarily mean that access will be "equal." Because students learn in different ways, some students may actually need different opportunities in order to have equal access to achieving high standards. The most effective inclusive schools employ multiple strategies, including instructional accommodations and curricular modifications, to ensure that all students benefit from their educational experience and can achieve to their maximum potential.
- ***Myth #3: Segregated placements are best.*** To make sure that students with disabilities get the specialized instruction they need, many schools and districts continue to educate a considerable percentage of their students with disabilities in separate classrooms and schools. However, research continues to show that students with disabilities who are educated in inclusive settings outperform their peers who are taught in separate settings. History has shown us that segregating students by race was not only antithetical to basic civil rights, but also immoral educationally undesirable; the same can be said for segregating students by disability. Again, inclusive schools demonstrate the effectiveness of educating students of many different backgrounds and with many different needs together.

What Broad Strategies Narrow the Gap?

Although the original impetus behind the inclusive schools movement was the desire to increase access and raise achievement for students with disabilities, the philosophy that drives inclusive schools works for all students. Proponents of inclusive schooling argue that by meeting the needs of students who are considered more challenging to teach (such as students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students from diverse cultural backgrounds), schools can effectively teach all students to high standards.

Many effective inclusive schools embody the philosophy of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL grew out of the field of architecture, where "universal design" theory advocated that structures be designed, from their very conception, to accommodate people of all abilities, thus precluding the need for any special architectural adaptations for those with disabilities. Schools that incorporate UDL understand that diversity—racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and ability-related—is positive. In such a school, there is no place for either racism or ableism.[1] Rather, these schools are built on the beliefs that all students can achieve high academic standards and that there is also room for individual differences. The most successful inclusive schools design curriculum and instruction to accommodate all students, including those with disabilities, those learning English, and those from a variety of cultures, races, ethnicities, and past educational experiences. Such schools base their structure and teaching on research about effective practices. In inclusive schools, teachers—both general and special educators—work collaboratively to meet the needs of all their students. When schools are designed to accommodate and address the needs of any group of nontraditional learners, all students benefit.

In addition, inclusive schools that have high rates of student achievement are often immersed in professional development that is based on the most current research. Research can give, for example, a deeper understanding of how children learn to read, how to effectively teach them the literacy skills they need, and how to identify a learning disability. A successful inclusive school might use such research to plan professional development to support the development of strong literacy programs in early years for struggling readers, who may or may not have learning disabilities, to ensure that all students can read. Another effective inclusive school might rely on research to plan professional development on the use of ASL in teaching students who are deaf or hearing impaired. A third school might investigate the latest studies on instructional and testing accommodations and implement them to level the playing field between students with and without disabilities. The most effective inclusive schools support teachers in appropriately planning instruction and in using accommodations to meet the needs of individual students.

[1] Ableism refers to "societal attitudes that uncritically assert that it is better for a child to walk than roll, speak than sign, read print than read Braille, spell independently than use a spell-check, and hang out with nondisabled kids as opposed to the disabled kids. In short, in the eyes of many educators and society, it is preferable for disabled students to do things in the same manner as nondisabled kids" (Hehir, 2002).

These schools give teachers the tools to develop a safe, structured, and predictable environment and positive behavioral support systems that operate schoolwide, thereby including students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities.

Inclusive schools commonly employ the following strategies:

- Students with high- and low-incidence disabilities are included in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible.
- Special-education supports are integrated into the curriculum.
- Special education and general education staff collaborate to meet the needs of all the students in the school.
- Teachers help students to further develop their first languages as they learn to speak, read, and write English.
- Students' diverse cultures are valued and viewed as enriching the schools' learning environment.

Many of the highest-performing schools in the country have these very characteristics.

What Do We Need to Do Next?

Despite the existence of new and emerging research, professional development, and evidence of the effectiveness of inclusive schools, we still have much to learn about how to narrow the achievement gap between different populations of students. Among the questions we need to answer are the following:

- What methods of differentiated instruction are most effective in teaching students to high levels?
- How can technology be used to better support student achievement?
- What instructional strategies are most effective in specific school settings?
- What types of professional development support special and general education teachers in helping all students access the curriculum?

Strategic Initiatives For Bridging the Gap

This section offers initiatives related to the theme of increasing achievement for all students. Consult the resources section for information to support your understanding and implementation of these various strategies and ideas.

Initiatives for Teachers

Achievement is closely linked to a student's ability to learn in a classroom setting. You have the challenge of ensuring that all children in your classroom can access learning despite differences in their abilities, languages, and learning styles. You can use the ideas and strategies listed here to create an environment in which all students can learn optimally.

Achievement is also linked to students' knowledge and perceptions of their own abilities and strengths. When students are able and willing to communicate their needs related to learning, they are more likely to be successful. You can use the ideas listed here to build students' awareness of their own learning styles and enhance your own understanding of individual students' needs.

- Ask students to complete a learning-style assessment. Have each student complete a "How I Need to Learn" list of specific items that help him or her learn new information. They can keep this information with them during class both to guide their learning and to help them advocate for their needs. You can also use the results to plan and implement lessons. Hold a classroom discussion to emphasize that everyone learns in different ways.
- Use a self-advocacy/self-determination curriculum to help students communicate their needs related to learning and higher achievement. If the student has a disability, help him/her to understand both the strengths and struggles that come along with it and use this to develop self-advocacy skills.
- Assign high school students a project focused on the concepts of UDL and how this theory applies to inclusive schools.
- Incorporate study-skills lessons into the curriculum.
- Infuse principles of culturally responsive educational practice into your teaching.
- Incorporate a "study buddy" system that pairs students to support each other's learning.
- Keep a folder of positive examples of each student's work. Bring out this folder when parents come to visit or when a student is struggling. You will always have a positive example

of students' potential for achievement.

- Videotape the class during times when all students are actively engaged in learning together (in cooperative learning groups, literacy circles, etc.). Show clips of these videos throughout *National Inclusive Schools Week* to celebrate the learning and collaboration that goes on in the classroom.
- Make a video titled "Achievement for All Students" to highlight the variety of achievements and learning styles in your classroom. Interview students and ask them to explain one of their major achievements for the year and what helped them succeed in that endeavor.
- Highlight students who are making progress in certain areas along with those students who are always high achievers.

Initiatives for Building-Level Administrators

Principals need to set a tone that promotes high expectations for all students among general and special education staff. Several articles in the resources section outline the innovations that schools across the nation are implementing—with some impressive results. Here are some ideas for you to try:

- Raise your expectations of faculty. Set goals and provide incentives for teachers to meet them. Provide time for collaboration among instructional staff, and make this part of the regular schedule.
- Create a culture of respect for the students in the school (e.g., establish rules for how students are talked about in the teachers' lounge).
- Survey students about their school experience. Assess how student perceptions affect achievement throughout the district. Develop a plan to make the overall school experience more positive for all students.
- Interview family members about the educational experiences of their children. Gather ideas about how the school and/or district can better support families in guiding their children's academic development.
- Give teachers and support staff information about culturally responsive educational practices.
- Ensure that classroom teachers have adequate staff support (e.g., paraprofessionals, special educators, speech and language pathologists).
- Develop coaching partnerships between master and novice teachers. Provide opportunities for partners to meet and plan.
- Expose students to information about post-school opportunities early in their secondary education experience. Provide a broad range of postsecondary options that might stimulate those who are not interested in a college or university experience.
- Offer before- and after-school literacy groups for struggling readers. Invite volunteers—such as college students, parents, and other community partners, including those who may have struggled with reading—to serve as coaches.
- Research and develop a "community assets map" that gives families details about community resources. This map might include information about the local food pantry, food stamp programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, and so on, and can be distributed during the first week of school. You can gather such information by interviewing families and community leaders.
- Encourage your student population to take advantage of the local public library's resources, materials, activities, and quiet study spaces. Collaborate with the library system and organize student tours of the library. Ask the librarians to showcase books, periodicals, and multimedia that will enhance the topics that are being covered across the various grade levels.

Initiatives for District-Level Administrators

It is the responsibility of school districts to set clear priorities for achieving and maintaining high performance from all students and to provide adequate resources to those who work closely with students. Several articles in the resources section outline the innovations that districts and schools across the nation are implementing—with some amazing results. Here are some ideas for you to try:

- Collect data on targeted areas related to discipline and achievement, including suspension/expulsion rates, student learning and attitudes, teacher satisfaction and placement, class size, and tracking protocols and procedures. Analyze and use this data to develop a district and/or school plan for improvement. Share summaries of your surveys and all the data you collected with the entire district faculty. This sends a clear message that the district is committed to improving based on the unique needs of the school or district.

- Support strong literacy development across schools.
- Implement school- and/or districtwide "achievement probes" throughout the school year. These can be quick assessments and informal "check-ins" to ensure that all students are learning the required material. Those who are falling behind can receive intervention earlier in the school year.
- Develop partnerships with local colleges and universities. Offer to participate in research studies and other higher-education initiatives related to understanding and improving current effective practices in teaching and learning.
- Involve the school board in your commitment to improvement. Create a slogan, such as "Choose to Improve," to establish a unified message throughout the community.
- Institute support systems for positive student behavior throughout the district. These systems can help create a positive learning environment for all students.
- Examine your school policies and disciplinary procedures for their adherence to culturally responsive educational practice. Modify your systems as needed so that they are aligned with the cultural norms of your community.
- Develop a high-school mentoring program to support elementary and middle school students who are struggling academically and socially.
- Look at teacher assignment at schools in your district. Are less experienced teachers typically paired with the most challenging students? Develop a plan to allow more experienced teachers to work with students who need more academic support.
- Focus professional development opportunities on effective research-based practices that improve achievement.
- Revise your district's mission statement so that it emphasizes inclusive education and achievement for all students. Hire school administrators who are committed to using inclusive practices. Review the mission statement during school board, faculty, and community meetings.
- Start a district-to-district network of schools that are working to raise achievement for all students.
- Develop a task force of district personnel and community leaders to identify goals and strategies that will narrow the achievement gap.

Initiatives for Family and Community Members

A student's potential for learning and achievement extends beyond the classroom and school. School-community partnerships can provide rich opportunities for all students to display their abilities to achieve in different ways. Community-based programs can offer students opportunities to participate and excel in sports, art, science, language study, theater, music, and other extracurricular activities. These experiences can increase students' self-esteem while providing a basis for learning essential knowledge and skills. And, the community can also help families foster home environments that support high academic achievement. Be certain to consult the resources section for specific resources for family and community members. Following are ideas you can use to help strengthen your school-community partnership to support student achievement:

- Get to know your child's learning style and talk to him or her about your own learning strengths and weaknesses.
- Connect with families and teachers in your child's school.
- Increase your awareness of how your local school is performing on district- and state-wide assessments.
- Reach out to your local school PTA or district PTA council to ensure that any after-school, extra-curricular, or community activities they sponsor or support provide the accommodations needed to ensure that students with disabilities can participate.
- If your district does not have a Special Education Parent Advisory Council, work with your PTA and district Director of Special Education to start a local parent support group. Your local parent support group can advocate to ensure that educational and recreational opportunities for students include students with disabilities with needed supports.
- Meet with local clergy to discuss ways that they can include children and youth with disabilities in religious education and other church, synagogue, mosque, or temple-sponsored activities.
- Contact your local public library to see what types of academic enrichment or study opportunities they provide for students in your community. Investigate with them how to make these opportunities more welcoming to and inclusive of students with disabilities.
- Investigate outside funding opportunities to support programs that increase student achievement. Collaborate with the school board, local elected officials, and neighborhood businesses to raise money for specific programs.

- Become familiar with NCLB and its impact on students with disabilities. Get together with parents of students with and without disabilities who are struggling on state and districtwide achievement tests. Work together to help your school or district plan and implement activities to improve achievement of students who are not showing adequate yearly progress under NCLB. Be sure that your school or district is aware of federally funded initiatives focusing on improving achievement for students with disabilities (e.g., National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, The Access Center, Reading Rockets, among many others).
- Contact local, county, and state disability centers (e.g., Centers for Independent Living, disability specific organizations) and connect them with child- and youth-serving agencies and other community organizations. Disability organizations can help support these organizations as they learn how to become more inclusive and effective at serving students with disabilities.
- Investigate outside funding opportunities to support programs that increase student achievement. Collaborate with the school board, local elected officials, and neighborhood businesses to raise money for specific programs.
- Develop new and/or use existing mentoring programs that pair adults in the business community with students.
- Expand school volunteer programs that provide extra tutorial and classroom support.
- Partner with local theatre and film groups, museums, businesses, chambers of commerce, and sports teams to provide community-based experiences for students.

References

Hehir, T. (2001). Ableist assumptions. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(1), 1–32.

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Resources

Achievement Gap Articles and Reports

Following is a selection of on-line articles and reports that provide an in-depth look at the achievement gap and strategies for addressing it.

Achievement in America

This series of documents contains data on the achievement patterns of minorities in the United States. They examine how the achievement gap can be closed, "identifying high performing schools with large minority populations, listing steps school districts and local schools must take to close the achievement gap, and citing ways that the No Child Left Behind Act can help parents advocate for their children."

http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/achievement+in+america.htm

All Students Reaching the Top: Strategies for Closing Academic Achievement Gaps

This report from the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability describes one systemic approach to addressing achievement gaps. Taking into account the nature and extent of the gaps, this approach seeks to improve "teaching and learning for knowledge acquisition"; "the psychological processes, especially trust, associated with minority academic achievement"; and "the environmental supports necessary for the development of intellective competence and character."

http://www.ncrel.org/gap/studies/allstudents.pdf

Beyond Conventional Testing to Ensure Academic Success for Students and Improve Accountability for Educators

This research brief from Project LASER (Linking Academic Scholars to Educational Resources) addresses the critical issue of assessment and accountability in urban schools.

http://www.coedu.usf.edu/LASER/RTP/RTP_Beyond_Testing.pdf

Choosing to Make a Difference: How Schools and Districts Are Beating the Odds and Narrowing the Achievement Gap

This article from the American School Board Journal includes examples of several districts that have made significant progress in narrowing the gap.

http://www.asbj.com/achievement/0405asbjhaycock.pdf

Closing the Achievement Gap: A Public Broadcasting Station Video

"Clarence Page serves as a reporter and writer for this film that looks at Amistad Academy, a public charter school that serves about 250 students in grades five through eight. The school's mostly minority, mostly poor student body often arrive performing two years below grade level but leave scoring as well as their white peers in wealthy suburban towns."

http://www.shoppbs.org/searchHandler/index.jsp?searchId=104298009 18&keywords=closing+the+achievement+gap

Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Public Schools

This U.S. Department of Education report looks at how the No Child Left Behind Act seeks to improve accountability and results in our nation's schools.

http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/welcome/closing/edlite-slide001.html

Closing the Achievement Gap: Focus on Latino Students

This policy brief from the American Federation of Teachers "provides a snapshot of the current demographic and achievement trends of Latinos, [discusses] some of the specific barriers to closing the achievement gap, and presents a set of recommendations to improve educational opportunities for Latino children."

http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/downloads/teachers/PolBrief17.pdf

Closing the Achievement Gap: How Schools Are Making It Happen

This article discusses the successful approaches that several schools across the nation are taking to close the achievement gap.

http://www.annenberginstitute.org/Challenge/pubs/cj/gap_cj.htm

Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning

Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for learning (EIC) "is about using a school's surroundings and community as a framework within which students can construct their own learning, guided by teachers and administrators using proven educational practices. . . . This report, prepared by the State Education and Environment Roundtable, is the story of the schools, teachers, and students who are involved in implementing EIC.

http://www.seer.org/extras/execsum.pdf

Closing the Gap One School at a Time

This Harvard Education Letter article focuses on the role of teachers and administrators in narrowing the black/white achievement gap. The article highlights examples of districts that are working to close the achievement gap through research and collaboration.

http://www.edletter.org/past/issues/2001-mj/abstracts.shtml#a1

Driven to Succeed: High-Performing, High-Poverty, Turnaround Middle Schools

These case studies "describe how seven high-poverty middle schools managed to demonstrate strong academic improvement from at least the 1997–1998 school year to the 1999–2000 school year. These portraits seek to capture procedural knowledge that will be useful to other schools with similar student populations, school sizes, and community types. These case studies focus on what practices, policies, and belief systems led to improved student performance in these middle school settings."

http://www.utdanacenter.org/downloads/products/driven/ms_vol2.pdf

Focus on Early Childhood Education

"A growing body of research demonstrates the critical role high-quality early childhood education plays in students' success, not only in the elementary grades but throughout their lives." This Harvard Graduate School of Education publication offers the full text of a Harvard Education Letter article series on pre-K–3 education, along with links to the latest research and other resources on early childhood education. Several articles focus on the potential for preschool education programs to narrow achievement gaps before children begin school.

http://www.edletter.org/fcd/index.shtml

Full-Day Kindergarten: Expanding Learning Opportunities

"Research points to early childhood as a potent time for preventing the [achievement] gap before it becomes established. Many policymakers are turning to an extended kindergarten program as part of the solution. This brief summarizes the most recent research available on full-day kindergarten, provides information on state and local reform efforts, and identifies policy implications..."

http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/771

It Takes More than Testing: Closing the Achievement Gap

This report from the Center on Educational Policy discusses causes of and trends in the achievement gap and offers strategies for closing it.

http://www.ctredpol.org/studentachievement/closingachievementgap.pdf

Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education

This widely disseminated 2002 report from the National Research Council discusses the over- and underrepresentation of minority students in special education.

http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10128.html

A Shared Responsibility: Staffing All High-Poverty, Low-Performing Schools with Effective Teachers and Administrators; A Framework for Action

"This Framework offers a systemic set of actions for addressing a long-standing problem: Our most vulnerable students, those in high-poverty, low-performing schools, are far less likely than their wealthier peers to attend schools with the most qualified teachers, administrators, and other school staff. ...[The] Framework is intended to guide the efforts of LFA organizations and their affiliates as they work together to ensure all students access to highly effective educators."

http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/staffing

Strategies for Closing Achievement Gaps

This "new guide from the National Education Association provides a multi-themed approach to closing the achievement gaps—focusing on Culture, Abilities, Resilience, and Effort (C.A.R.E.). . . . [The guide] helps educators reflect on the causes of disparity in student achievement and explore ways to improve academic success by using innovative, research-based instructional strategies."

http://www.nea.org/teachexperience/careguide.html

Turnaround Schools

This on-line publication from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development features articles focused on improving achievement in classrooms and schools, including "A Case of Closing the Achievement Gap" which deals with a low-performing school in Georgia that has dramatically raised student achievement.

http://www.ascd.org (see Publications link and then select *Educational Leadership Magazine*, Summer 2005, Volume 62)

What Doesn't Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High-Achieving Suburban Schools

This paper focuses on racial and ethnic achievement gaps in school districts that have a reputation for excellence.

http://www.ncrel.org/gap/ferg

Learning-Style Assessment and Study-Skills Curriculum Resources

Two of the most effective strategies for raising student achievement are helping students identify their own learning needs and teaching them the skills to overcome their learning challenges. Several good learning-style assessments and study-skills curricula are available for purchase from a variety of educational publishers and companies. Here you will find some resources that are accessible on-line at no cost.

Center for Literacy Studies Learning Skills Curriculum

This extensive curriculum includes topics such as learning styles, teamwork, personality components, test-taking skills, and goal setting. Its modular design allows users to modify the curriculum to meet a variety of needs and situations.

http://cls.coe.utk.edu/curriculum/learning_skills.html

General Learning Strategies Database

This Muskingum College Center for Advancement of Learning database "features 22 topic areas and approximately 200 Web pages related to learning styles and strategies," as well as a bibliography of additional resources.

http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/general/

HowtoStudy.com

This site for high school students provides links to information about study skills and strategies, and tips for effective studying.

http://www.howtostudy.com

LdPride.net

This Web site explains what learning styles and multiple intelligence are, allows students to assess their own learning styles and multiple-intelligence types, and offers practical tips for making an individual's learning style work for him or her.

http://www.ldpride.net

Maryville High School's Study Skills Help Web

This site is "a self-help tool to assist students in making the most of their high school years." It guides students in evaluating their current skills, learning new skills, and applying what they learn to study more effectively.

http://www.ci.maryville.tn.us/mhs/studyskills/index.htm

Study Guides and Strategies

This site provides information about learning styles, study skills, and other topics useful to teachers and learners.

http://www.studygs.net/index.htm

Learning Styles Resource Page

This California State University resource provides information about learning styles, an on-line learning-style assessment, a bibliography, and links to other sites that deal with learning styles.

http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/teaching/lstyle.htm

Study Skills Self-Help Information

This resource from Virginia Polytechnic Institute is geared toward college students but can also be used by high school students. Included are on-line study-skills workshops, time management strategies, ways to improve test performance, a study-skills inventory, and other valuable resources.

http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html

Self-Determination Resources

Skills in self-determination and self-advocacy help students succeed and pursue their own goals. When students are encouraged to think about the future and plan for their post-school experience, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to achieve. The following curricula can be implemented in their entirety; you can also select specific components for infusion in an established curriculum.

Kids as Self Advocates

This Web site is for kids with disabilities, their siblings, and their friends. Developed primarily for middle and high school students, it encourages students with disabilities to be their own best advocates, with links to information about school, college, advocacy, organizations, and peers who share their stories about living with disabilities.

http://www.fvkasa.org/

A Practical Guide for Teaching Self-Determination

This guide "addresses the legislative and research foundation for self-determination; assessment; and relationships among career development, transition, and self-determination. [It] offers detailed reviews of more than 30 curriculum materials and transition plans, . . . provides a discussion of topics related to self-advocacy and empowerment, and examines the role of self-help groups."

http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/self.html

Steps to Self-Determination: A Curriculum to Help Adolescents Learn to Achieve Their Goals

"Designed to be delivered as either a course or workshop, this teacher-directed self-determination curriculum helps secondary students learn to define and achieve important goals." The program includes: 1) Instructor's Guide, 2) Student Activity Book, 3) the Self-Determination Knowledge Scale, Forms A and B, and a pretest and posttest for the curriculum."

http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/self.html

Student-Led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement

This publication provides suggestions for "starting a student-led IEP [Individualized Education Program] program, helping students understand their IEPs, engaging students in developing IEPs, preparing students to participate in or lead an IEP meeting, and monitoring ongoing self-advocacy."

http://www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog/iep.html

Self-Determination for Youth with Disabilities: A Family Education Curriculum

This curriculum from the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota is facilitator led and designed for use with families.

http://ici.umn.edu/products/curricula.html#self

Additional Resources

The Algebra Project

"The Algebra Project is a national network of sites striving to improve mathematics achievement for African American and other minority students who have not been reached by existing efforts at education reform through materials development, teacher training, peer education, and school-community partnerships."

http://www.algebra.org

Center for Applied Special Technology

This site offers information about research on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). http://www.cast.org

Celebrating Students: Schools Recognize Achievement in Many Ways

Education World offers this compilation of ways in which schools celebrate students' accomplishments. Principals from schools across the nation share ideas and practical strategies for recognizing and celebrating student success.

http://www.education-world.com

Elizabeth Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities

The center houses the Coalition on Inclusive Ministries, which has a periodic newsletter, That All May Worship, and many other resources.

http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/

Statistical Summaries of Regions

The Education Trust offers this collection of tables and graphs that depict state-by-state achievement data based on standardized test scores.

http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2004/states.html

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Assistance and Supports (PBIS)

A project of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, the mission of PBIS is "to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices."

http://www.pbis.org

Organizations and Web Sites

The following organizations and Web sites provide information on topics related to the achievement gap, including information about culturally responsive educational practices.

Advancement Via Individual Determination: http://www.avidonline.org

American Federation of Teachers: http://www.aft.org

Achievement Alliance: http://www.achievementalliance.org

Annenberg Institute for School Reform: http://www.annenberginstitute.org

Center for Applied Special Technology: http://www.cast.org

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence: http://www.crede.org

Center for Social Organization of Schools: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/

The Education Trust: http://www.edtrust.org

The Knowledge Loom: http://www.knowledgeloom.org

The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University:
http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/

Harvard Education Letter: http:///www.edletter.org

Institute for Student Achievement: http://www.studentachievement.org/

Minority Student Achievement Network: http://www.msanetwork.org

Multicultural Pavilion: http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/index.html

National PTA: http://www.pta.org

National Association of Multicultural Education: http://www.nameorg.org/

National Association of School Psychologists:
http://www.nasponline.org/culturalcompetence/

National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems:
http://www.nccrest.org

National Center on Educational Outcomes: http://www.education.umn.edu/nceo/

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition:
http://www.ncset.org

National Education Association: http://www.nea.org

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory: http://www.ncrel.org/gap/

Reading Rockets: http://www.readingrockets.org

Teaching Diverse Learners: http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/



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