

Closing the Achievement Gap

IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN FOR A CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION THAT BENEFITS AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AND ALL OTHER STUDENTS

A NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS

In June of 2000, the LAUSD Board of Education approved a resolution presented by Dr. Genethia Hudley-Hayes that called for an Action Plan to eliminate the disparities in educational outcomes for African American and other students. Following adoption of the resolution by the seven-member board with a vote of 6-1, the superintendent immediately authorized a steering committee to guide the development of that Action Plan. The Steering Committee headed by Dr. Ted Alexander, collected and analyzed data on African American student achievement in the Los Angeles Unified School District and developed a concept paper that defined the needs of African American students and “best practices” for addressing those needs. The committee recommended that the concepts of culturally relevant, responsive, and contextualized education umbrella the intervention.

Nine national experts were identified in areas critical to forging change in educational outcomes for African American students and in October of 2001, the steering committee hosted a conference, which featured the research of the experts and addressed the improvement of educational outcomes for African American students. Topic areas included, Culturally Relevant teaching, Language Variation, Behavior Management and Modification, and Learning.

In December of 2001, a second conference was held and stakeholders—community and district-wide—were invited to collaborate with the experts and participate in the development of the action steps necessary to improve educational outcomes for African American and other students. This work culminated in the development of The Action Plan for a Culturally Relevant Education that benefits African American students and all other Students

The Action Plan delineates the Steps necessary to improve Educational Outcomes for African American and all students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The Action Steps are incorporated under Five Tenets:

- Tenet 1 Students’ opportunity to learn
- Tenet 2 Students’ opportunity to learn (adult focused)
- Tenet 3 Professional development for teachers and administrators responsible for the education of African American students
- Tenet 4 Engage African American parents and the community in the education of African American students
- Tenet 5 Ongoing planning, systematic monitoring, and reporting.

The tenets and their recommendations are as follows:

TENET 1 – Students Opportunity to Learn

RECOMMENDATION 1

Central and Local District offices will provide comprehensive professional development for administrators, teachers, counselors, and coaches on Culturally Responsive and Culturally Contextualized Teaching to ensure that instruction for African American students is relevant and responsive to their learning needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Principals, counselors, and teachers in every high school in LAUSD must work closely with parents and students to ensure that all African American students –in magnets–know of, have access to, enroll in, and pass a college prep curriculum, including A-G course requirements, honors courses, and AP courses.

TENET 2 – Students’ Opportunity to Learn (Adult Focused)

RECOMMENDATION 1

Pursuant to its education of Standard English Language Learners (SELEs), the district will continue to implement its Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP), which provide professional development for teachers and other school staff aimed toward improving the ability of schools to promote language acquisition in African American SELEs. Moreover, the district will ensure that AEMP strategies are embedded in the district’s core curricular initiatives such as Open Court, Principals of Learning, etc..

RECOMMENDATION 2

The district must make every effort to ensure that African American children have equal access to the highest quality teachers and administrators within and across schools.

TENET 3 – Professional Development for Teachers and Staff Responsible for the Education of African American Students.

RECOMMENDATION

Where change is expected and needed to improve African American students opportunity to learn, the LAUSD must make every effort to ensure that its staff –Central, Local District, and School– and the external support providers responsible for change, are adequately trained, and have the pedagogical knowledge and skill to effectively enhance the academic achievement of African American students.

TENET 4 – Engage African American parents and community in education of African American students.

RECOMMENDATION

Parents should be given the opportunity and tools to be the most effective educational advocates for their children. To this end, the district should continue to support the efforts of its schools to engage parents in the education of their children through improved communications between schools-teachers and parents, and appropriate education for African American parents and the educators who interface with them.

TENET 5 – Ongoing planning, systematic monitoring, and reporting

RECOMMENDATIONS

The district should annually evaluate the actions taken by various parties (superintendents, local districts, schools, programs, administrators, teachers, and staff) to close the achievement gap for African American students. The evaluation should report on the status of all African American children in LAUSD on the performance indicators enumerated in this action plan, and should include case studies for a sample of schools and classrooms in all local districts.