

CASE STUDIES OF THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

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Los Angeles Unified School District
Program Evaluation and Research Branch
Planning, Assessment and Research Division Report No. 213

September 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all of the principals, teachers and school staff members who collaborated in this research by providing their insight and information and giving their time. We also appreciate the significant support and assistance we received from our team of researchers and contributing members.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study Focus

This study looks at how Narrowing Achievement Gap (NG) schools differ from Widening Achievement Gap (WG) schools on important instructional and pedagogical issues related to student achievement. We looked at eight purposively selected LAUSD elementary schools. Four of these schools were selected because the achievement gap between white students and their Black counterparts had narrowed by 6 or more NCE points, and four comparable schools were selected because the achievement gap between Black and white students had widened by 6 or more NCE points. The study design, based on a theoretical model of school effectiveness, uses case study methodology to highlight salient differences between schools at either extreme of the Achievement Gap continuum.

Results

Teaching and Administrative Experience

Although the difference between administrators' years of experience in the two groups of schools was not significant, there was a significant difference between the two groups with regard to administrators' years of service at their current schools. The average number of administrator years of service in NG schools was significantly smaller than the average for WG schools administrators (5.5 years vs. 10 years).

The average years of teaching experience for teachers in NG schools was 16.4 years compared to 8.8 years for teachers in WG schools. Furthermore, teachers at NG schools are more stable. There was a significant difference between the two groups in the average number

of years teachers had been associated with their current school. NG teachers had more years of service in their current location than did teachers in WG schools (10.4 years vs. 5.8 years).

Instructional Leadership

There was ample evidence of instructional monitoring by the principals and literacy coaches at NG schools such as learning walks and “observes teachers during instruction” compared to WG schools where only one “learning walk” was observed. More administrators at NG schools said they offered instructional support to teachers than administrators at WG schools (69% vs. 58%). NG administrators expressed deep understanding of teacher effectiveness citing “use of concrete lessons,” “utilization of differentiation and constructivist approaches,” “employing theme based learning,” and “teaching critical thinking skills.” Only one WG school administrator mentioned a specific instructional strategy (differentiation) when discussing teacher effectiveness.

Teachers in NG schools frequently and collaboratively made instructional decisions, whereas in WG schools most of the instructional decisions seemed to come from district mandated guidelines. More teachers in NG schools were enthusiastic about their school principal, using descriptive words such as “wonderful,” “like a mother figure,” and “extremely supportive” than teachers in WG schools.

Quality of Teaching and Instructional Services

In comparing pedagogy in NG versus WG classrooms, NG teachers revisited topics more often (93% vs. 69%); delivered lessons in more than one way to clarify content more often (77% vs. 56%); and more frequently asked their students questions about how much they know about a topic before introducing new concepts. When asked about appropriateness of instructional programs NG teachers were generally more positive than WG teachers.

Teacher support was very strong in NG schools where. “team teaching” was prevalent, and teachers received ongoing support from literacy and math coaches and special education resource teachers. NG teachers and administrators both attended to students who misbehaved. Paraprofessionals also played an important role in the NG classroom. NG teachers and staff were seen helping orient new teachers to the school.

School Climate and Culture

Parental involvement and school-parent communication in NG schools were geared more toward instruction than in WG schools. Parents help teachers monitor student attendance, collect and grade homework, and engage in other academic classroom activities more often than in WG schools. Similarly, teachers and administrators in NG schools spend more time in instructional versus extracurricular activities compared to WG schools. Overall, administrators in WG schools were involved in 11 more extracurricular activities than NG school administrators.

NG school administrators expressed a more positive attitude toward their staff than WG school administrators. Administrators at NG schools believed that their teachers were effective and did not refer to any weaknesses, in contrast to some administrators at WG schools who mentioned weaknesses in effectiveness among their teachers (0% vs. 17%).

Both groups identified a number of elements that they believed have an impact on student success. Teachers in NG schools more often identified school-related factors, whereas, WG teachers who more often emphasized home elements and parent involvement as determinants of student success. Few NG teachers made negative comments about students, as compared to teachers in WG schools (“needy in discipline and structure,” “below grade level,” “problems with motivation”). Furthermore, more NG teachers believed that their curriculum materials helped students compared to only a third of WG teachers. Teachers at WG schools expressed

more need for resources such as paraprofessionals, books and materials, and training in areas other than reading and mathematics compared to teachers in NG schools.

There was a strong and affectionate professional relationship among staff at NG schools. When asked to talk about teacher collaboration, NG teachers gave the following answers: “I consider them my family,” “Everybody gets along,” “...excellent cooperation” and “We have a good time working together.” Three WG school administrators said that there were “no formal collaborative efforts among their teachers.”

Appropriate Use of Assessment

NG students were more often assessed at an individual level, based on their homework and teacher-made tests. More administrators at NG schools said they also used a mix of standardized and alternative assessment results to guide instruction than did administrators at WG schools. When asked how instructional programs were evaluated, administrators at NG schools cited a variety of subjective evaluation approaches including teacher self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher feedback, student feedback, program evaluation and survey results. Administrators at WG schools mentioned only teacher observations and surveys. When asked how often they reviewed assessment data, two WG administrators said they received test data too late to make immediate decisions in instruction.

While there was no significant difference between the NG and WG teachers with regard to assessment approaches, teachers at NG schools more often reported using the mix of formal and informal assessment approaches to assess student progress. The most frequent approaches used by NG teachers included formal assessment data, teacher-made assessments, and daily communication with students about instructional materials. Similarly, our qualitative analyses of teacher interviews indicated that more teachers in NG teachers said they generally used formal

assessment strategies such as textbook quizzes, quarterly math assessments, teacher-made exams, etc. than teachers in WG schools.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education

Teachers included student's life experiences and/or prior knowledge into instructional lessons in about the same number of classrooms in NG and WG schools. Much of the content concerning cultural and language issues came from Open Court stories dealing with different cultures. Administrators from both groups considered use of student's prior knowledge as essential to their learning. About one-third of the NG administrators stated that they encouraged their teachers to incorporate their students' prior life experience as well as their prior academic knowledge in their daily instruction. Conversely, administrators at WG schools encouraged teachers to incorporate their students' prior academic knowledge in the classroom three times as frequently as compared to their life experiences (58% vs. 17%).

More NG school administrators said that their schools addressed diversity by integrating it into the curriculum than did WG school administrators (23% vs. 0%). In fact, one administrator from a WG school stated that teachers had not received any training in dealing with diversity issues. When school administrators were asked to "name the resources they would need to address issues of diversity," the most common occurring answer given by WG administrators was that they did not need any training on this issue (43%).

WG school administrators incorporated cultural issues into their school programs more frequently than NG school administrators (30% vs. 19%); however, NG school administrators mentioned more incidents of showing "acceptance" and "respect" for students' culture and language than did WG school administrators (15% vs. 8%). NG teachers were less likely to

address diversity by recognizing and celebrating cultural events and holidays, and more likely to emphasize similarities, equality and equity among students.

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Introduction

Background

The concept of achievement gap as defined by Black/white test score differences has been studied in a variety of settings with a range of goals (Jencks & Philips, 1998; Allen & Boykin, 1991, Boykin & Allen, 1997; Porter, 2003). African Americans have historically scored lower than European Americans on vocabulary, reading, and mathematics tests (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). According to Haycock (2000) by the end of high school, most Black students are drastically behind white students in reading, math, and science. Johnson and Viadero (2000a) argued that if the current trend in the achievement gap between white and Black students continues, the chance of Black students going to college will be half that of their white counterparts. This disparity in student performance tied to race and ethnicity is found in grades, test scores, course selections, and college graduation rates, especially in urban districts with large numbers of students of color.

Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), significant progress was made in narrowing the achievement gap between African American and white students in the 1970s and 1980s. Since 1971, the Black/white reading gap has narrowed from 1.25 standard deviations (SD) in 1971 to 0.69 SD in 1996 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Since the early 1980s the achievement gap has been fairly stable but still significant (Porter, (2003).

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) longitudinal data also indicates a persistent pattern of the achievement gap. Appendix A presents data from four continuous years of test data for reading, mathematics, and language achievement for LAUSD students as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test Ninth Edition (SAT/9), and one year of their performance based on the California Achievement Test Sixth Edition (CAT/6). Mathematics and reading are vital

elements of students' achievement, as a student's reading and mathematics ability significantly influences learning any other subject matter. Test data from the SAT/9 clearly indicate that:

1. There is a positive trend in student performance over time. This upward trend may be due to confounding effects of students' progress and repeated use of the SAT/9.
2. Asian and white students outperform all other students in reading, mathematics, and language. Additionally, Asian and white students' performance is above the national average, ranging from 54 to 62 on a Normal Curve Equivalent¹ (NCE) scale.
3. African American and Hispanic students' performances are significantly below that of all other groups. Their performance levels are below the national average (50 NCE) ranging from 33 to 44 NCE.
4. These graphs clearly indicate that the achievement level of the two major ethnic groups, Black and Hispanic, comprising four-fifths of the district population, remains far below the national level. Furthermore, the graphs indicate that achievement gap among all ethnic groups in LAUSD has remained constant over time.

The achievement gap remained persistently constant even when the district changed from the SAT/9 to the California Achievement Test (CAT/6) in spring of 2003, a test more closely aligned to the state standards. Figure 4 (in Appendix A) depicts the gap among different ethnic groups on the three major tests of reading, mathematics, and language. There is about a 20 NCE point difference between white and Asian students compared to African American and Hispanic students in reading. The average scores for African American and Hispanic students in reading are 39 and 36 NCE, respectively. The gap remains relatively the same for mathematics and language achievement.

¹ Normal Curve Equivalent is a normalized percentile scale score ranging from 1 to 99 with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 21.

Causes of the Achievement Gap

Ogbu (2003) asserted that the achievement gap could be explained by four general elements of community, parents, schools, and students, but Johnson and Viadero (2000a) believe that there is not enough research on theories explaining what really causes the achievement gap.

Educational and behavioral studies cite a host of elements impacting the achieving gap including but not limited to:

1. *Poverty and low level of parent education.* In LAUSD 91% of Hispanic and 80% of African American elementary students are recipients of Title I benefits compared to 57% of Asian and 39% of white students. Also, 82% of African American and 91% of Hispanic elementary students receive free lunch compared to 18% of Asian and 32% of white elementary students.
2. *Lack of quality instruction.* Inequity persists in the schooling of minority students and is one of the major factors impacting their education and achievement. Minority students are more likely to have non-certificated and inexperienced teachers, and are less likely to have the opportunity to enroll in advanced courses (Johnson & Viadero; 2000a).
3. *Low level of academic expectation.* A teacher with low expectations for his/her students' academic performance negatively impacts that performance. As Ferguson (1980) concluded, "Teacher's perceptions, expectations, and behaviors probably do help to sustain, and perhaps even to expand, the Black-white test score gap. The magnitude of the effect is uncertain, but it may be quite substantial if effects accumulate from kindergarten through high school" (p. 313).
4. *Lack of quality teachers.* African American students are nearly twice as likely to be assigned to the most ineffective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). In LAUSD

elementary schools with less than 50% African American students, two-thirds of teachers (66%) are permanent, while a smaller percentage (58%) of teachers are permanent in elementary schools with more than 50% African American students.

5. *Lack of parent involvement.* It is widely believed that low-income urban parents may be reluctant to be involved in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) report that the family perceptions of their role and responsibility in their children's education is the most important factor predicting parental involvement. Middle class parents, for example, feel that they should collaborate with school efforts. But low-income families often perceive themselves as outside the school system and feel it is the school's responsibility to do the teaching. Second, parental feelings of efficacy can also contribute to their involvement in their children's school. Parents who believe they can make a difference in their children's education are more likely to visit and participate in school activities than those who feel ineffective. Furthermore, some schools are more welcoming than others; when schools make parents feel comfortable and valued, they are more likely to play an active school-based role in their children's education. Schools serving low income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods, must make greater efforts to welcome families, because those are the parents who often feel excluded because of differences in their ethnicity, income, and culture. Based on a survey of more than 14,000 students (12,311 white and 1,742 Black students), Cook and Ludwig (1980) found that, "African-American parents are as involved in their children's education as are white parents with similar socioeconomic characteristics."
6. *Cultural differences.* Many teachers and school administrators have difficulty in creating a school environment that incorporates students' diverse cultural orientations or learning

styles. Teachers who are not responsive to diverse learning styles of students may also limit their students' potential.

7. *Tracking system.* Teachers view students in special education programs or in the lower-academic tracks as having less intellectual ability. Students of color are over-represented in these types of classrooms. Tracking has been severely criticized. It restricts student opportunity to learn because lower-level classes have different (lower-level) course content, poorer resources, and weaker motivational environments (Oakes, 1985).
8. *Language barriers.* Degree of fluency in English or Standard English affects student achievement because it limits a student's ability to demonstrate his/her potential.
9. Other factors such as "reduction in social programs," "negative attitudes," "peer pressure," "the refusal to act white by excelling in school," "parenting styles," and "family structure" also have been mentioned as influences leading to low achievement.

Focus of the Study

This study involves an in-depth investigation of instructional activities and pedagogical approaches in 8 purposively selected LAUSD elementary schools. Four of these were selected because the achievement gap between white students and their Black counterparts narrowed 6 or more NCE points over a three year period, and four schools were selected where the achievement gap between Black and white students widened 6 or more NCE points. This study focuses on how narrowing achievement gap schools are different from widening achievement gap schools on important aspects related to students' achievement. It also identifies the extent to which research-based instructional and pedagogical elements are present in one group of schools compared to the other.

Methodology

School Selection Criteria

The following approaches were used to identify schools in which the gap narrowed or widened between white and Black students:

1. Four years of test data from 1999 to 2002 were aggregated at the school level for reading, mathematics and language arts tests for two ethnic groups (Blacks and whites).
2. Actual school averages for each group were included only for those schools with 50 or more Black or white students. For schools with fewer than 50 white students, the district average for white students was used as the comparison group score.
3. The school average differences between white students and African American students were calculated for reading, mathematics, and language art tests.
4. **Narrowing Gap** (NG) schools were selected if the gap between Black and white students in the first year (1999) and last year (2002) decreased by 6 or more NCE points and both groups were improving overall.
5. **Widening Gap** (WG) schools were selected if the Black and white achievement gap for the first year (1999) and last year (2002) increased by 6 or more NCE points. A difference of 6 NCE is equivalent to a 0.30 effect size, which is considered a substantively meaningful difference in educational and behavioral science research.

Example:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Test</u>	<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>Average</u>
1999	Reading	Black	41.6
	Reading	White	53.9
	Difference		12.3
2002	Reading	Black	57.1
	Reading	White	58.1
	Difference		1.0

The gap reduction is equal to (12.3-1.0) or 11.3 NCE points.²

Study Design

The two sets of schools were matched on demographic variables including ethnic breakdown of the students, number of students on free lunch and in Title I, the number of English learners at the school, and general neighborhood socioeconomic status. Altogether, 32 classrooms, 4 at each school (two second and two fourth grade teachers) were selected for two consecutive days of observation during the late Fall of 2003. Following the classroom observations, the teachers were all interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with the principal, the reading and math coaches, and any other administrator deemed to have a key position special to that school. Three meetings (e.g., grade-level, parent/teacher, and faculty meetings) were also observed at each school. In addition archival data and other background information were collected extending up to Spring 2004.

Theoretical Framework

Observation and interview data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively based on a comprehensive model of school effectiveness. This model includes major components suggested by meta-analysis of the school effectiveness literature, including:

² This school significantly narrowed the achievement gap between white and Black students in reading as measured by SAT/9.

- Administration and Teaching Experience
- Instructional Leadership
- Quality of Teaching and Instructional Services
- School Climate and Culture
- Appropriate Use of Assessment
- Commitment to School Improvement
- Professional Development
- Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education

Analyses

Approximately 420 hours of detailed classroom observations and 57 individual interviews with 32 teachers, 8 school principals and 17 school instructional administrators were coded using Atlas-TI software for qualitative analyses and SPSS software for quantitative analyses. The following sections present a summary of our findings. Findings from observation data are presented first, followed by school administrator and teacher interviews.

Results

The following section presents the case study results, highlighting the important differences between NG schools and WG schools. Findings for each component will be offered in a tabular format followed by a review of salient points from three sources: classroom observations, administrator interviews, and teacher interviews.

Administration and Teaching Experience

For the entire sample, administrator experience (overall years of service as administrator) ranged from less than one year to 27 years. It is noteworthy that four or 31% of the administrators at NG schools were newly placed in their positions. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of schools with regard to administrators' years of experience overall. There were four (31%) new administrators and nine (69%) administrators who had been in their current position at NG schools for 2-6 years. In contrast, all the

administrators that were interviewed at WG schools had been in their current positions for 2-27 years.

Table 1. Administration and Teaching Experience

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Administrator Experience at their Schools</i>	NG administrators had an average of 5.5 years of service at their schools.	WG administrators had an average of 10 years of service at their schools.
<i>2. Teacher Experience Overall</i>	NG teachers had an average of 16.4 years of teaching overall.	WG teachers had an average of 8.8 years of teaching overall.
<i>3. Teacher Experience at their Schools</i>	NG teachers had an average of 10.4 years of teaching at their schools	WG teachers had an average of 5.8 years of teaching at their schools.
<i>4. Percent Credentialed</i>	94%, 86%, 85%, 66%	90%, 84%, 74%, 70%

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the teachers' overall years of experience. The average years of teaching experience for teachers in NG schools was 16.4 years compared to 8.8 years for teachers in WG schools. There was also a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the two groups of schools with regard to the number of years teachers had been associated with their school. Narrowing achievement gap teachers had more years of service than teachers in WG schools (10.4 years vs. 5.8 years). Although teachers in WG schools were more engaged with non-instructional school activities than in NG schools, such as the school beautification committee and the emergency committee, the total number of activities between the two groups of teachers was not significantly different. No important differences were found in the proportion of teachers who were credentialed at these two sets of schools.

Instructional Leadership

Principals who believe they affect achievement actually engage in a number of behaviors that are clearly linked to student learning and performance. Kathleen Cotton (2003) has conducted the most comprehensive review to date of research findings about how principals influence

student achievement. According to Cotton, principals who positively influence student achievement are visible and accessible to students and staff throughout the school, particularly in instructional settings, such as classrooms, labs, and performance sites. There was evidence of more instructional monitoring by the principals and literacy coaches at NG schools compared to WG schools where only one instance of a learning walk was observed. Principals in NG schools were observed frequently visiting the classrooms and interacting with students. More administrators at NG schools indicated that their staff members supported them than did WG administrators (32% vs. 6%). NG administrators also more often said they offered instructional support to teachers than did WG administrators (69% vs. 58%).

Teachers at NG schools cited support from administrators via supplemental math materials, moral support, conducting classroom demonstrations, and mentoring. When administrators were asked to name instructional factors impacting student's achievement, NG administrators cited "using concrete lessons," "utilizing differentiation," "following a constructivist approach," "employing theme-based learning," and "teaching critical thinking skills" as major contributing factors. Only one WG administrator discussed their teachers' effectiveness in terms of a specific instructional strategy (differentiation).

Slightly more administrators in NG schools used meetings to communicate instructional decisions to staff than did administrators at WG schools (67% vs. 63%). More importantly, only one administrator at a NG school was unsure of the level of communication between administrators and staff as compared to four administrators at WG schools (6% vs. 25%). Also, more administrators at NG schools were involved in alignment of instructional programs with standards than administrators at WG schools (25% vs. 14%).

Table 2. Instructional Leadership

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Monitoring instructional activities</i>	Monitoring of instructional activities and programs occurred regularly and systematically in these schools.	Monitoring of instructional activities and programs were less frequently observed in these schools.
<i>2. Providing instructional support</i>	69% of administrators at these schools said they offered instructional support to teachers.	58% of WG administrators said they offered instructional support to teachers.
<i>3. Direct and frequent communication between school administrators and teachers</i>	Only one of 12 administrators at these schools was unsure of the level of communication between administrators and staff.	25% of WG administrators were unsure of the level of communication between administrators and staff.
<i>5. Cooperation among school staff</i>	32% of administrators indicated receiving high levels of staff support.	6% of administrators indicated receiving some level of staff support.
<i>4. Shared decision making</i>	Teachers made instructional program decisions frequently and collaboratively.	Teachers mostly made instructional program decisions based on district guidelines.
<i>5. Collective School Management</i>	Teachers deal with disciplinary issues and school management collaboratively.	Teachers deal with disciplinary issues and school management on an individual basis
<i>6. Trust and Acceptance</i>	Greater teacher enthusiasm about their principal found in NG schools.	Lower teacher enthusiasm about their principal found in WG schools.

There was ample evidence of an atmosphere of acceptance and respect in most of the NG schools where a large number of teachers were enthusiastic about their school principal. Phrases such as “wonderful,” “like a mother figure,” and “extremely supportive” described the relationship between NG principals and their teachers. In NG schools, teachers made instructional program decisions frequently and collaboratively, whereas in WG schools, most of the instructional decisions were made based on the district’s mandated guidelines. Instructional decisions were communicated to NG teachers in group meetings devoted solely to instruction,

whereas in WG schools, instructional decisions were communicated to teachers mostly in general school meetings.

Each of the differences discussed in the previous paragraphs such as communicating and interacting effectively with all groups in the school community, sharing leadership and decision-making, and empowering staff to participate in significant improvement efforts have been shown by Cotton (2003) to be factors critical to a principal's success in improving the achievement of all student groups.

Quality of Teaching and Instructional Services

Ferguson (1991) quoted in Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998), has documented that investment in teacher quality, more than any other use of school resources, leads to greater improvement in student achievement. The best classroom teachers are masterful classroom managers, skillful managers of human resources, and they provide a quantity of engaging, academically rich and connected activities for their students. They have high expectations and faith in their students' abilities and they reinforce students' achievements (Pressley, 1998). At NG schools, there was strong evidence of mutual teacher support in the form of team teaching. Teachers helped other teachers at grade level meetings and received support from literacy and math coaches. There were many instances where special education resource teachers were observed coming into the classroom to support teachers and provide services. Teachers, and administrators collaboratively attended to students who misbehaved. Paraprofessionals played an important role in the classroom, and teachers and staff were seen helping orient new teachers to the school.

Table 3. Quality of Teaching and Instructional Services

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Team Teaching</i>	On-going grade level meetings, special education resources, as well as collaboration between literacy and math coaches with teachers was found in these schools	Less collaboration with instructional coaches, special education resources and fewer grade level meetings were observed in these schools.
<i>2. Monitoring Student Learning</i>	90% teachers checked for understanding.	53% of teachers checked for understanding.
<i>3. Re-teaching</i>	77% of teachers used various techniques to clarify same lessons	56% of teachers used various techniques to clarify same lessons
<i>4. Use of differentiated instructional strategies</i>	80% of teachers used differentiated teaching strategies	50% of teachers used differentiated teaching strategies

Teachers revised their lesson plans more frequently to fit their students' ability levels in NG schools than in WG schools (93% vs. 69%). NG teachers were more frequently found to ask their students questions and include their life experiences in their daily lessons before they presented new material. For example, one NG teacher was observed to announce that before she hands out an activity, she wants them to know and understand why in a circular track, starting points must be adjusted. *Ms. Stevens sketches a circular track and draws a line from the inside out and across all lanes and explains that in a race, everyone must begin from a different point. She asks if anyone knows why. Kevin says, "Because the person inside has a better chance of winning." Students begin to chat among themselves: "That's why I always want the middle lane during PE." Ms. Stevens asks Kevin, "Why?" Kevin: "Because the person outside has a better chance of losing." The teacher probes, "But why?" Kevin explains that the outside is longer. She approves Kevin's answer and says that when they all race their cars, all cars will need to*

start from a different point around the track. Ms. Stevens draws different starting points all around the track she drew on the board earlier.

Teachers' use of various techniques to clarify lessons was observed more often at NG schools than at WG schools (77% vs. 56%). NG teachers used media to present lessons ("Visual maps," "overhead transparencies," "drawings on the board," "posters," and even a "power point presentation") were common in NG classrooms to help interpret or reinforce main points.

Verbal clarifications through questions, repetition and additional instructions were also observed in most NG classrooms.

Teachers checked student understanding of lessons and assignments at NG schools more often than at WG schools (90% vs. 53%). NG teachers frequently checked student understanding by asking pupils about the task at hand to make sure they understood what is expected of them. For example, NG teachers asked questions such as, "What did I just ask you to do?" "What kind of writing are we doing?" "What will I be looking for in your work?" "Can someone tell me how we are going to fold the papers?"

NG teachers used a variety of instructional strategies with different students in order to ensure that they understood the lessons being taught. If the current teaching strategy was not helpful for particular students, the teachers realigned their teaching strategies to help students internalize what was being taught. The use of differentiated teaching strategies was much more prevalent at NG schools than WG schools (80% vs. 50%) where teachers delivered a lesson in more than one way especially when a group of students did not understand a given lesson.

There was a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the two groups of teachers in their opinions regarding the level of appropriateness of the instructional programs implemented in the 8 schools. NG teachers were generally more positive than WG teachers (2.0 vs. 0.7) on a 3-point

scale about the appropriateness of the instructional program. Fewer teachers in NG schools complained about the pace of the instructional plan such as “Open Court” and the “District Math Program” than did teachers in WG schools.

As presented in this section, many teachers in schools in which the achievement gap had narrowed exhibited higher quality instructional strategies than did their counterparts at schools in which the gap had widened over the past three years, such as differentiating their instructional style to meet the needs of the students, drawing from student experiences to enrich the lessons, frequently checking for comprehension, and understanding how to implement the instructional programs adopted by the District.

School Climate and Culture

Cotton (2003) calls for creating and maintaining a positive and supportive school climate that has, as its central tenet, high achievement for every child. In a positive school environment teachers and students feel valued and safe; they are better able to focus on learning and are more motivated to succeed. Research (e.g., Comer & Haynes, 1992; Epstein & Dauber, 1993) suggests a connection between school climate and the extent to which parents and families are involved in their children's education. When schools create a positive school climate by reaching out to families and providing structures for them to become involved, the result is effective school-family partnerships.

According to Epstein and Dauber (1993), children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home. Clark (1993) demonstrated that parent involvement, especially parental attitudes toward homework contributed positively to students' mathematics and literacy skills. Three out of four NG schools had parents who were very active at their school sites. Some of these parents volunteered in the

classroom and helped the teachers on student’s homework. Other parents organized classroom parties, helped on field trips, brought donated goods, were present during “student of the month” assemblies, and picked up homework for their absent children.

Table 4. School Climate and Culture

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Display of student’s work and progress</i>	4 out of 4 schools had student work displayed in the classrooms and office.	2 out of 4 schools displayed student work in the classroom and office.
<i>2. Parent and community involvement</i>	3 out of 4 schools had parents who were active at these school sites. 2 out of 4 schools had community involvement.	Low levels of parent involvement were found at these schools. No evidence of community involvement found.
<i>3. School and parent communication</i>	4 schools had a newsletter to parents.	2 schools had a newsletter to parents.
<i>4. Prevalence of support for teachers</i>	No administrator indicated teacher weakness and 31% offered teachers moral support.	17% of administrators indicated teacher weakness and 8% offered teachers moral support.
<i>5. Extent of extracurricular activities</i>	NG administrators were engaged in 18 extracurricular activities.	WG administrators were engaged in 29 extracurricular activities.

Ames, et al. (1995) found children's motivation, attitudes toward parent involvement, and perceptions of their parents' level of involvement to be more positive when their parents receive frequent communications from the teacher. Therefore, two-way communication between parents and teachers whereby they share common expectations and responsibility for the child's learning is a key contributor to children’s academic performance. The parent supports the learning of the child in the home and the teacher provides high expectations and support for learning at school. (Epstein, 1995; Chavkin, 1993; Ames, et al, 1995).

All four NG schools had a school newsletter that was sent home to inform parents of school activities. One school communicated with parents twice a week via newsletter and one school

had a weekly planner for the lessons their children would be learning during the week. Two of the four NG schools also boasted strong community involvement and received donations from local businesses. In all four schools, students' work was displayed in the classroom and in the office. Most of teachers shared lessons, instructional resources, and all teachers worked closely to create curriculum. In WG schools there was some evidence of communication with parents at two of these schools, such as parent involvement with students' homework and communicating with teachers after school; however, only two WG schools sent parents weekly newsletters focusing on homework and other school-related issues. Parents attended a school assembly in only one WG school. The types of support that were generally provided by NG versus WG school parents included attending meetings/conferences (18% vs. 5%), fund raising (14% vs. 10%), and volunteering (29% vs. 18%), respectively. There was no evidence of community involvement in any of the WG schools.

Another aspect of a positive school climate is a school in which administrators and their staffs learn, plan and work together to improve their schools. More administrators at NG schools offered moral support to teachers than administrators in WG schools (31% vs. 8%). Mentoring was cited as one of the primary means of moral support. Teacher collaboration came across as being quite strong among more NG schools than WG schools (3 schools vs. 1 school). In fact, three administrators from two different WG schools said that there were "no formal collaborative efforts among their teachers" and that "teacher collaboration was not strong."

Although no significant differences were found between the opinions of the two groups of teachers regarding teachers' professional relationships and cohesiveness, there seemed to be a more positive relationship among teachers in NG schools. More NG teachers than WG teachers said there was a strong relationship among staff at their school. When asked what teacher

collaboration was like, teachers at NG schools gave the following answers: “I consider them my family,” “Everybody gets along,” “excellent cooperation” and “We have a good time working together.” Furthermore, a majority of NG teachers strongly believed that their curriculum materials helped students while only a third of WG teachers shared that belief. When the administrators were asked how they felt about the changes that had been made in their schools, the views stated by the NG school administrators were significantly more positive than WG school administrators ($p < 0.01$).

Teachers who set and communicate high expectations for all their students obtain greater academic performance from those students than teachers who set low expectations. Students tend to learn as much (or as little) as their teachers expect. Teachers with high expectations for all students can structure and guide behavior and can challenge students beyond what students themselves believe they can do. They highlight their strengths. They are student-centered. They use the students’ own strengths, interests, goals, and dreams as the beginning point for learning and they tap into the students’ natural curiosity and desire to learn.

When interviewed, NG teachers indicated a higher level of expectation for their students than did WG teachers. This fact was also supported by our observational findings that showed more narrowing achievement gap teachers holding higher academic expectations for their students (“expects students to acquire grade-level standards and above,” “expects students to think deeply, to question, and to be curious”) than widening achievement gap teachers. However, teachers in WG schools believed they communicated their expectations more often to parents and students than teachers in NG schools.

Teachers in both groups identified a large number of elements that they believe have an impact on students’ success. Teachers in NG schools identified more school-based factors,

whereas teachers in WG schools listed home elements and parent involvement as those critical for student success. Fewer teachers in NG schools made strictly negative comments about students with regard to their achievement, ability, and behavior (“needy in discipline and structure,” “below grade level,” “problems with motivation”).

Similarly, administrators need to convey high expectations for their teachers. NG administrators found their teachers effective and did not cite any weaknesses. On the other hand, two administrators at WG schools talked about their less effective teachers (17%). Three administrators at WG schools (25%) said that teachers were more effective when they established an affective relationship with students (caring, respecting students, being close with students, establishing a relationship with students, etc.). Administrators at NG schools did not mention any of these factors.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that teachers at WG schools believed they needed more resources compared to NG schools. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). According to teachers, the most frequently needed resources in WG schools were paraprofessionals and training in areas other than reading and mathematics.

As has been discussed, the school climate in NG schools was more positive than it was in WG schools. NG parent involvement not only occurred more frequently and focused more on academics, but the NG schools seemed to communicate more frequently and more effectively with parents. NG schools were more collaborative and teachers and administrators alike seemed more positive about the schools and the students, while WG school staff felt they were short on resources. NG teachers had higher expectations for their students and NG administrators seemed to have higher expectations for their staff.

Appropriate Use of Assessment

Effective urban educators use data to improve instruction, as well as their students’ academic skills, competence, learning, and performance. The *No Child Left Behind Act* mandates that state accountability systems hold schools and districts responsible for sufficient levels of achievement by each student group, including poor, African American, and Latino students. At the very least, educators must begin to use student data more aggressively to investigate the things that matter most for student learning—qualified teachers, a rigorous curriculum, challenging courses, effective instruction, adequate time, and sufficient resources.

Table 5. Appropriate Use of Assessment

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Individual assessment and realignment of instruction</i>	All schools realigned their lessons to facilitate student learning.	2 schools realigned lessons to facilitate student learning.
<i>2. Use of assessment data to guide instruction</i>	Three schools used standardized tests to determine student progress. Two schools used six-week unit tests.	Limited use of standardized tests data in three schools.
<i>3. Ways to monitor student mastery (Administrator interviews) *</i>	Formal assessment 85% Informal assessment 23% Classroom observation 31% Other approaches 61%	Formal assessment 42% Informal assessment 83% Classroom observation 0% Other approaches 41%.
<i>4. Types of assessment data used to monitor student progress (Administrator interviews) *</i>	CAT/6 15% Chapter unit test 23% Open Court data 45% Math test data 46% Other approaches 70%	CAT/6 18% Chapter unit test 46% Open Court data 27% Math test data 9% Other approaches 36%
<i>5. Ways to monitor student mastery (Teacher interviews)*</i>	Formal assessment 94%. Informal assessment 69% Other approaches 25%	Formal assessment 87%. Informal assessment 60% Other approaches 47%

* These percentages represent the administrators or teachers who cited a particular assessment or means of monitoring student learning. As they may have cited more than one approach, the percentages do not necessarily total 100.

NG students were more often assessed at an individual level, based on their homework and teacher-made tests. More administrators at NG schools said they also used a mix of standardized

and alternative assessment results to guide instruction than did administrators at WG schools. When asked how instructional programs were evaluated, administrators at NG schools cited a variety of subjective evaluation approaches including teacher self-evaluation, peer evaluation, teacher feedback, student feedback, program evaluation and survey results. Administrators at WG schools mentioned only teacher observations and surveys. When asked how often they reviewed assessment data, two WG administrators said they received test data too late to make immediate decisions in instruction.

While there was no significant difference between the NG and WG teachers with regard to assessment approaches, teachers at NG schools more often reported using the mix of formal and informal assessment approaches to assess student progress. The most frequent approaches used by NG teachers included formal assessment data, teacher-made assessments, and daily communication with students about instructional materials. Similarly, our qualitative analyses of teacher interviews indicated that more teachers in NG schools said they generally used formal assessment strategies such as textbook quizzes, quarterly math assessments, teacher-made exams, etc. than teachers in WG schools. However, fewer NG teachers said they used non-verbal assessment strategies (“thumbs up if you understand,” “wave your hands across your face if you don’t”) than WG teachers.

Both groups made equal use of informal assessment strategies (performance assessments, quick verbal assessment, and observation) to determine whether students have learned what they have been taught. However, slightly more teachers in NG schools than in WG schools said they used performance. When asked what approaches they used to assess students’ mastery of content, more NG teachers gave examples of how they differentiated instruction than WG

teachers (“units must be re-done on an individual basis if students do not pass,” “I have gifted and talented education students whom I challenge with extra work,” etc.).

All tests and lessons were aligned to district standards in all four NG schools. Realignment of teaching to standards was present at two schools in which teachers created more advanced lessons when needed, or realigned their lessons until students understood the concepts being taught. At one school the issue of the achievement gap was discussed during a professional development session. In only two of the WG schools were students assessed on homework and were lessons aligned to the standards. Realignment of teaching was observed at only two schools where teachers changed lessons until students understood the concept being taught.

Commitment to School Improvement and Professional Development

School improvement efforts over the last few decades call for teachers to study, implement, and assess learner outcomes outlined in local, state, and national educational standards as well as to provide meaningful, engaged learning (cognitively, socially, and culturally) for a very diverse student population. Teachers are expected to understand emerging standards—such as those in math and science—and views of learning, and to change their roles and practice accordingly. In working toward change, teachers need to be continually supported with professional development. Teaching is a complex task, and substantial time will be required for teachers and other educators to test out new ideas, assess their effects, adjust their strategies and approaches, and assess again in an effort to reach all students and make learning meaningful.

A high level of commitment to school improvement was evidence in two of the four NG schools where principals conducted “learning walks” and resource specialists were found in the classrooms providing assistance and guidance to teachers. Open Court coaches were noted in classrooms in two of the four NG schools and in one school, teachers were observed by other

teachers. Parents were involved in three NG schools helping teachers in grading, organizing, or taking care of the sandbox and green house. A learning walk was observed in only one WG school.

Table 6. Commitment to School Improvement and Professional Development

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Setting instructional school goals</i>	69% of administrators set academic goals for higher levels of student learning.	50% of administrators set academic goals for higher levels of student learning.
<i>2. Presence of instructional monitoring system</i>	All schools had observation as a component, all schools were monitored, two regularly. Three schools used test data.	Three schools had observation as a component, all schools were monitored, one regularly. Two schools used test data
<i>3. Parents involvement in classroom activities</i>	High level of parent involvement in classroom activities.	Little parent involvement was noted.
<i>4. Awareness of what impacts student's progress</i>	Administrators more aware of current theories and practices supported by research.	Fewer Administrators aware of current theories and practices supported by research.
<i>5. Motivation to learn</i>	Administrators strongly believed in District provided professional development for their teachers to be more effective.	Administrators did not believe in District-provided professional development

More administrators at NG schools said they conducted classroom observations to determine students' overall progress than in WG schools (23% vs. 17%). When asked what changes in the past five years had affected students at school, NG school administrators tended to list fewer changes than WG school administrators (an average of 4.2 vs. 7.8 changes). In response to the question of major improvement goals for higher levels of student learning, NG school administrators listed more purely academic goals (i.e. improving fluency among 2nd and 3rd

graders; improving math scores among 4th grade students) than did WG school administrators (69% vs. 50%). Two WG school administrators said there were no set goals.

Administrators at both WG and NG schools believed that teacher support was the most important factor in student success. However, administrators at NG schools also identified more “cognitive” strategies than did WG school administrators (22% vs. 13%). Additionally, NG school administrators gave significantly more research-based reasons to account for student success than WG school administrators. Examples given by NG administrators included, “accountable talk,” applied learning,” “cooperative learning,” “differentiation,” “encouragement,” “engaging lessons,” “school environment,” and “teacher support.” Items listed by WG school administrators included attention to culture, economic status, home environment, innate motivation, and self-confidence.

Teachers' professional development in a climate of educational reform must address the additional challenges of implementing educational standards, working with diverse populations, and changing forms of student assessment. Clearly, teachers "need more time to work with colleagues, to critically examine the new standards being proposed, and to revise curriculum. They need opportunities to develop, master, and reflect on new approaches to working with children" (Corcoran, 1995). McDiarmid (1995) emphasizes the connection between new expectations for teachers and the element of time: "The changes teachers must make to meet the goals of reform entail much more than learning new techniques. They go to the core of what it means to teach. Because these changes are so momentous, most teachers will require considerable time to achieve them" (p. 2). Professional development can no longer be viewed as an event that occurs on a particular day of the school year; rather, it must become part of the daily work life of educators. Teachers, administrators, and other school system employees need

time to work in study groups, conduct action research, participate in seminars, coach one another, plan lessons together, and meet for other purposes. Fine (1994) states, "School change is the result of both individual and organizational development" (p. 2).

More NG school administrators said their teachers have been effective by educating themselves in addition to the training provided in school-site professional development than did administrators at WG schools (15% vs. 0%). On the other hand, administrators in WG schools said they did not specifically need any professional development resources to address cultural issues. Additionally, 46% of the respondents indicated that they did not need any additional resources. Some of the NG schools administrators said they needed extra professional development resources (20%). Administrators in NG schools indicated that availability of professional development improved the school, whereas WG school administrators did not mention availability of professional development for improvement (18% vs. 0%).

Student Diversity and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education (CRRE)

In the words of Stenberg (2004), "When cultural context is taken into account, (a) individuals are better recognized for, and are better able to make use of, their talents, (b) schools teach and access children better, and (c) society utilizes rather than wastes the talents of its members." The definition of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education (CRRE) (Maddahian and Bird, 2003) states that CRRE educates all students by incorporating their cultural experiences (emotional, social, and cognitive) into the teaching and learning process. The major underlying elements of the cultural dimension of CRRE are defined here. This list is not exhaustive by any means:

- Respect every student's culture and identity
- Build on students' emotional, physical, and intellectual strengths
- Address each student's total development (cultural, social, emotional and cognitive)

- Transform school organizations to give equal status to all students
- Develop positive attitudes toward different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups
- Encourage, educate, and empower parents to be involved in their children's education
- Focus on the adaptive assets each child brings to school by building a dynamic/ synergic relationship between the cultures of home and school
- Provide positive role-models who represent students' cultural and ethnic groups
- Develop schools as learning communities where all students feel a sense of belonging
- Promote an educational environment where all actors play an integral role in instruction
- Implement proven alternatives to instructional approaches that bore and alienate many students
- Know about the learning styles of students from different cultural and ethnic groups
- Modify teaching styles to be consistent with the cultural characteristics of diverse students so as to facilitate their academic achievement and promote equity
- Connect new learning materials with students' prior knowledge
- Include examples and content from a variety of cultures into instructional approaches
- Identify forms of knowledge that students construct through their participation in routine cultural events outside school environment
- Address the linguistic needs of each group of students
- Allow the use of home language or dialect in small group discussions
- Provide opportunities for a diverse group of students to work together
- Provide opportunities for students and teachers to celebrate significant cultural events
- Encourage students to bring culturally familiar topics and artifacts into the classroom

Evidence of student experiences and/or prior knowledge incorporated into lessons was observed in six out of the sixteen classroom observations in NG schools. There were 11 instances of various cultural and language issues being discussed in daily lessons, some related to Open Court stories that dealt with different cultures versus only four instances in WG schools.

In WG schools, it was observed that all students seemed to have an equal opportunity to participate in class. There were no barriers to student participation except when a child was removed as a result of his or her behavior, which for the African American children was not infrequent. In two classroom observations, students were grouped according to their level of ability. Student experiences and/or prior knowledge were incorporated into lessons in half of the classrooms observation in WG schools. The various culture and language issues that were discussed in daily lessons were mostly from Open Court stories that dealt with different cultures.

Table 7. Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education

Component	NG Schools	WG Schools
<i>1. Attention to culture and language</i>	11 instances of culture and language discussed in daily lessons.	Four instances of culture and languages issues discussed.
<i>2. Incorporating students experience and knowledge</i>	6 out of 16 classrooms showed evidence of student experiences and knowledge incorporated. 38% of administrators considered this issue an essential part of learning.	Student experiences and knowledge were incorporated in half of classrooms observed. 33% of administrators considered this issue an essential part of learning.
<i>3. Tracking</i>	Students were grouped by level of ability in 3 of 16 days of classroom observation.	Students were grouped by level of ability in 8 of 16 days of classroom observations.
<i>4. Attention to student's diversity</i>	23% of administrators stated that their school addressed diversity by integrating it into the curriculum.	None of the administrators stated that their school addressed diversity by integrating it into the curriculum.
<i>5. Acceptance and respect for student's culture and heritage.</i>	15% of administrators mentioned incidents of showing acceptance and respect for student's culture and heritage.	8% of administrators mentioned incidents of showing acceptance and respect for student's culture and heritage.

Slightly more NG administrators considered student's prior knowledge an essential part of learning than WG administrators (38% vs. 33%). In addition, more NG administrators said that their schools addressed diversity by integrating it into the curriculum than did WG administrators (23% vs. 0%). In fact, one administrator from a WG school indicated that teachers had not received any training in dealing with diversity issues.

About one-third of the administrators at NG schools stated that they encouraged their teachers to incorporate their students' prior life and academic experience equally into their daily instruction. But administrators at WG schools encouraged teachers to incorporate their students' prior academic knowledge in the classroom three times as frequently as their life experiences

(58% vs. 17%). WG administrators incorporated purely multicultural events more frequently than NG administrators (30% vs. 19%) such as celebrating holidays and other cultural ceremonies than NG administrators (30% vs. 14%). However, NG administrators mentioned more incidents of showing “acceptance” and “respect” for student’s culture and language than WG administrators (15% vs. 8%).

When WG administrators were asked to name the resources they would need to address issues of diversity, the most frequently occurring answer was that they did not need any training on this issue (43%). However, some administrators mentioned they needed some external cultural resources (14%). Some NG administrators, however, indicated that they needed both extra training (20%) as well as cultural resources (13%). Some administrators in WG schools mentioned the importance of culturally relevant education, whereas administrators in NG schools did not mention it.

Although teachers in WG schools celebrated cultural events more frequently to show their appreciation of student diversity, teachers in NG schools expressed more concern about issues of equality and fairness in their classrooms. NG schools were less likely to deal with diversity by recognizing and celebrating cultural events and holidays, and more likely to emphasize similarities, equality and equity among students. Teachers in NG schools considered students and their family members experts on cultural issues and were more likely to invite them to share their traditions in class than did WG teachers. They also expressed a deeper understanding of cultural and historical issues from the perspectives of various racial, and ethnic groups than did WG teachers.

Conclusions and Discussion

There are a number of important conclusions that can be drawn by comparing and contrasting schools that have made marked advances in narrowing the achievement gap, and schools in which the converse is true and the gap is widening rather than narrowing. Our analyses centered around variables shown through the school effectiveness literature to have a strong impact on student achievement, including teaching experience, ongoing and systematic monitoring of instructional activities, the existence of a school learning community, the provision of continuous support for teachers, instructional collaboration and shared decision making, a focus on instructional over extra-curricular issues, the use of data to drive instruction, and culturally relevant and responsive education.

Teaching Experience

There is strong evidence that both teacher experience and stability contribute significantly to reduce the achievement gap. A clear policy option is to assign more experienced teachers to schools where pronounced differences exist between the performances of diverse group of students. However, teacher satisfaction and motivation as well as other political and logistic issues make this action difficult for decision makers. Providing financial or other social and moral incentives may attract highly qualified teachers to serve these students.

Ongoing and Systematic Monitoring of Instructional Activities

In all schools that reduced the achievement gap there was evidence of continuous monitoring of instructional process and program fidelity. Many school principals are too busy or too reluctant to monitor instructional practices. The principals either need to be motivated to spend a

sizeable amount of their time on instructional activities or to assign other strong school administrators to support, monitor and guide teachers' classroom activities.

School as a Learning Community For All

Schools effective at reducing the achievement gap are schools that house a “learning community for all.” There are ample scientific, research supported, and proven effective strategies to help teachers educate their diverse groups of students. Schools need motivated and technically oriented teachers with up-to-date knowledge about educational theory and practice. Administrators in NG schools attributed their teachers' effectiveness to the relatively large number of instructional and pedagogical approaches used by their teachers.

Providing Continuous Support for Teachers

Teaching is a time consuming and difficult task especially, in contemporary urban schools serving a very diverse and mostly disadvantaged group of children. Schools that were effective in reducing the achievement gap provided more support for teachers in the form of leadership, collegiality, and hands-on professional development, as well as a cadre of parents who were involved in instructional aspects of their children.

Instructional Collaboration and Shared Decision Making

Teachers who share ideas, lesson plans and face school issues as a group take part in collective decision making about school curriculum and instruction process. This not only motivates teachers to work harder, but also gives them a deep understanding of school objectives. It provides a teacher with a vision of how his/her work is related to other teachers, and what is her/his role in moving the whole school toward a higher level of learning.

More Focus on Instructional Issues and Less on Extracurricular Activities

The schools in our study pay a lot of attention and spend a large amount of time on non-instructional activities. Teachers in NG schools were less involved in non-instructional activities than WG teachers.

Use of Assessment Data and Data-Driven Decision Making

With the advancement of technology, we can analyze assessment data more economically in a short period of time. School administrators should continuously use formal and informal data to guide their teachers and to align their instructional activities. In-depth analysis of student's assessment data will provide insight not only about student progress but also about how schools can align their instructional activities and school curriculum with the district standards and school vision.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education

These case studies have demonstrated that there is much more to CRRE than occasional cultural celebrations or trappings on the classroom wall. Although there was more evidence of ceremonial/cultural events in WG schools, there was more emphasis on “acceptance,” “respect,” and “fair treatment” in NG schools. Other aspects of CRRE more prevalent in NG than WG schools included: positive attitudes by teachers toward students and their families; the development of learning communities in which students, parents, administrators and teachers all played a role and the ‘funds of knowledge’ from the community contributed to the school curriculum; greater opportunities for ethnically, economically and academically diverse groups of students to work and thrive together; and the inclusion of the life experiences of students into the daily process of teaching and learning.

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Appendix A

Los Angeles Unified School District Student Test Data

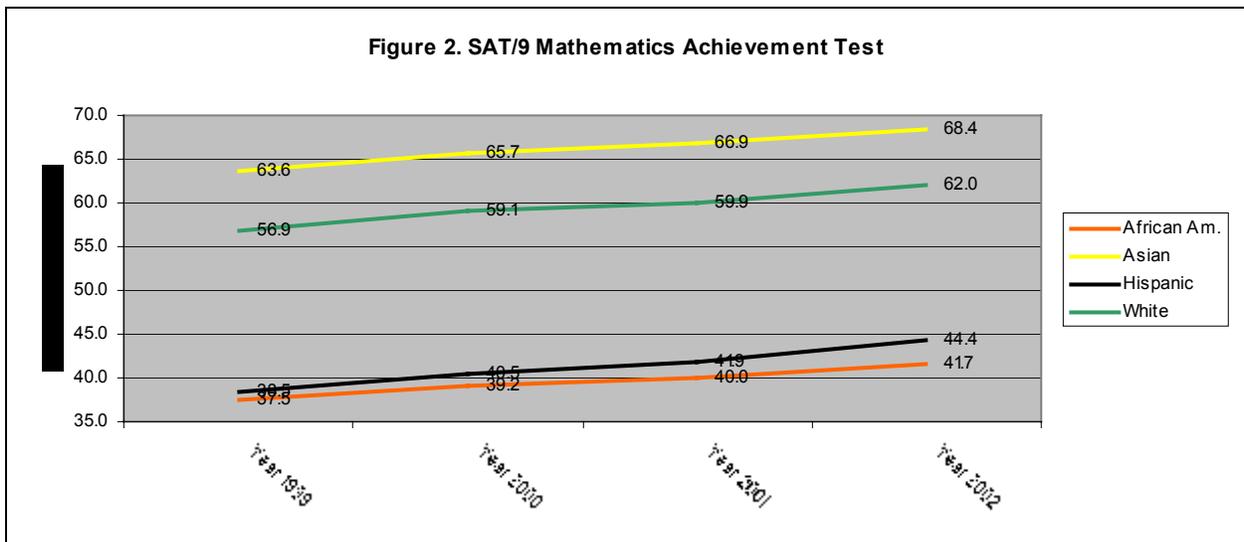
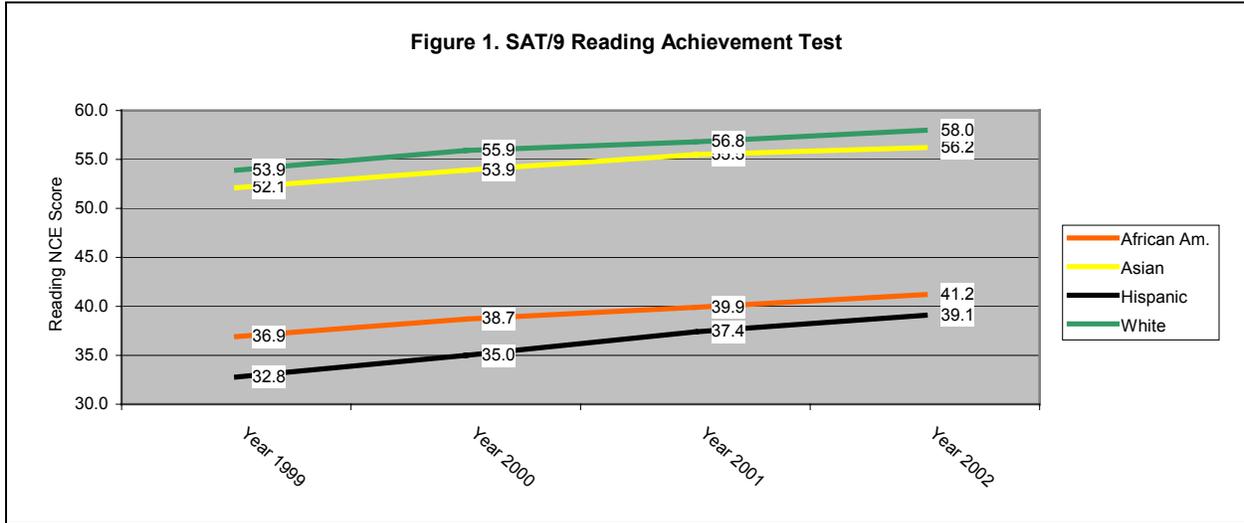


Figure 3. SAT/9 Language Arts Achievement Test

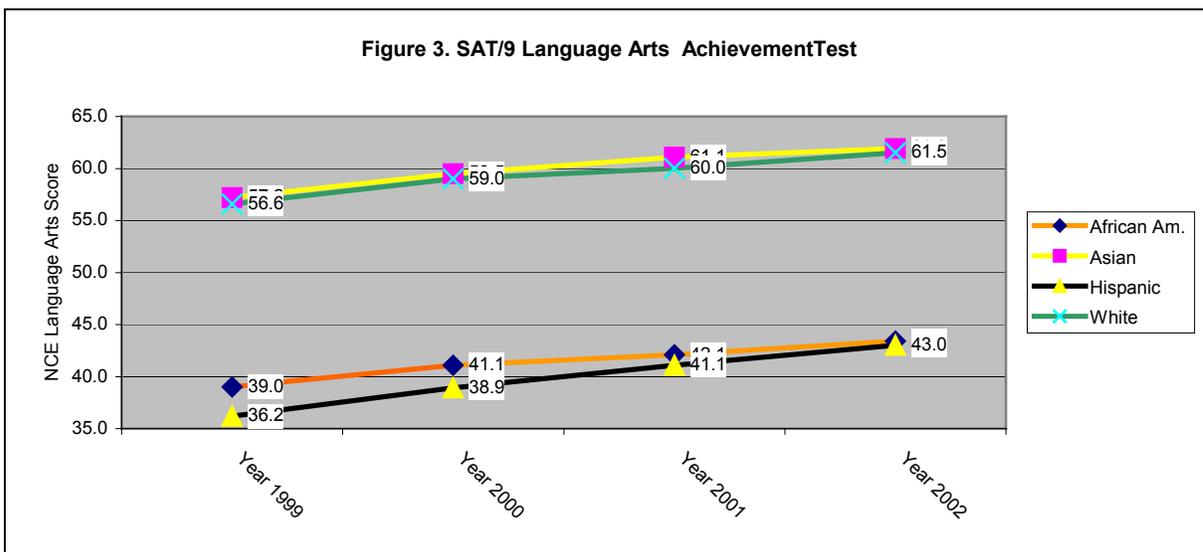


Figure 4. 2003 CAT/6 Achievement Tests

