

Task Force for African American Student Achievement FINAL REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS



PREPARED FOR THE SAN BERNARDINO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT | JUNE 2014

Submitted on behalf of the African American Education Collaborative:

Black Voice Foundation

Boys and Girls Club of San Bernardino

BLU Educational Foundation

Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE)

Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches (IECAAC)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of San Bernardino

Youth Action Project (YAP)

Young Visionaries Leadership Academy

Young Women's Empowerment Foundation

Westside Action Group (WAG)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



We are grateful for the courage and transparency of students, parents, and staff in order to deepen our understanding.

The San Bernardino City Unified School District and the African American Education Collaborative would like to thank everyone who shared their insights during the task force study effort. For expert and candid contributions that shaped the focus of

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INTRODUCTION



A COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGY

One of the greatest challenges facing public education is improving outcomes for African American students. The literature documenting the under-achievement of African American students has both illustrated the prevalence

of school failure among African American students, as well as identified the causes of school failure among African American students from a variety of perspectives (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010)². This research has produced many useful theoretical models for creating intervention programs, more effective teaching pedagogy, and alternative school settings committed to counteracting school failure among African American students (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2014)³. In summary of the trends related to the schooling experiences of African American students, school systems across the nation report the following data: Significant and sustained racial achievement gaps across key academic measures; disproportionately higher school exclusionary practices; and disproportionate enrollment in remedial and accelerated coursework and programs (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014)⁴.

Parents, educators, philanthropic organizations, and community-based organizations throughout the nation have developed and implemented a wide range of efforts in response to these alarming trends. As a result, many promising programs and strategies have emerged throughout the country. However, many of these efforts have done little to improve outcomes for African American students on a large scale (Payne, 2011)⁵. In fact, the persistence of the racial achievement gap has been generally accepted by

educators, parents, and the community as an unfortunate, but expected artifact of public education. Moreover, analysis and discussion of the issue in schools and in the public arena has become a perfunctory exercise that has resulted in normalizing the under-achievement of African American students, rather than to foster deep analysis and effective response (Noguera, 2008)⁶.

Measures taken by schools and communities to improve outcomes for African American students have been largely unsuccessful at scale for the following reasons:

1. Inadequate identification, analysis, and response to causal, correlation, and/or compounding factors.
2. Insufficient study and responsiveness to input from students, parents, and community members.
3. Insufficient professional development and collaboration time for leaders and teachers to observe, identify, and replicate effective classroom pedagogy.
4. Over-reliance on strategies to ‘fix’ students, resulting in quick-fix intervention programs that are often short-lived, poorly resourced, and fail to build internal capacity and long-term sustainability.
5. Misalignment between the organization’s espoused core values and beliefs, and the organization’s practices and systems.
6. Inadequate Response-to-Intervention (RTI) systems that provide early and systemic intervention for academic and behavioral under-performance.
7. Insufficient engagement of key stakeholders in the development of collective solutions.

Given the many causal, correlational, and/or compounding factors related

to the under-achievement of African American students—which includes family, community, and school factors—the need to re-frame the discourse and response to this issue using a different approach is clear. In order to achieve accelerated, sustained outcomes for African American students, and improved practices for the adults who serve them; a collective approach which leverages broad-based support and coordination from school leaders and teachers, parents, business leaders, higher education leaders, government agencies, and community-based organizations is required. As such, community leaders, parents, students, and staff in the San Bernardino community have collaborated in the creation of a task force to design a “Collective Impact Strategy” focused on accelerating African American student achievement throughout the San Bernardino City Unified School District.

¹Ellison, R. (1947). *Invisible Man*. Random House

²Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Horwitz, A., & Casserly, M. (2010). *A Call for Change: The Social and*

³Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools. The Council of the Great City Schools.

⁴Center for Law and Social Policy. (2014). *Improving Education Outcomes for African American Youth: Issues for Consideration and Discussion*.

⁵U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *Civil Rights Data Collection-Data Snapshot: School Discipline*.

⁶Payne, C. M. (2011). *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Harvard Education Press

⁷Noguera, P. A. (2008). *The Trouble with Black Boys...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education*. Jossey-Bass.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE TASK FORCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Children spend the majority of their day inside of a classroom. The remainder of their day is spent at home and in their communities. Therefore, a collaborative effort between parents, educators, higher education leaders, community-based organizations, and businesses is critical to the large-scale success of African American youth. The success of African American youth depends solely on our ability as a community of concerned adults to engage in meaningful, regular, collaborative dialogue, planning, and actions that place African American students at the center of our efforts; as African American students serve as both beneficiaries and partners in improved outcomes. The Task Force’s efforts are anchored and guided by the following principals:

- a) **A Presumption of Positive Intent.** In other words, we engage with each other with an unwavering belief and trust in each other’s deep commitment to the success of African American students.
- b) **We are responsible and accountable for creating the conditions necessary for all African American students to achieve at high levels.**
- c) **We believe that barriers to large-scale success for African American students are rooted in ineffective, non-existent, and/or poorly aligned systems, and are not rooted in the people operating in those systems.**

Operating from these guiding principles, we believe an important shift will occur in the dialogue on this issue from one largely defined by deficits between racial sub-groups, to one that focuses on scaling and replicating successful practice that can be learned from effective programs, teachers, and parents of African American students within the District.

“I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”

– *Invisible Man* by
Ralph Ellison, 1947¹

BACKGROUND

San Bernardino City Unified School District's focus on African American student achievement through a collective impact study serves as a model for other school districts across the state seeking to improve academic outcomes for the many under-performing African American students.

GEOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

The Inland Empire Counties of San Bernardino and Riverside combined serve the second largest population of African American students in the state of California. Individually, San Bernardino County ranks second and Riverside County ranks fourth according to enrollment data from the California Department of Education (CDE 2014). The migration of African Americans to the Inland Empire Region between 1980 and 1990, was due in part to the growing number of failing schools, coupled with rise in gang violence and rising cost of housing in the inner cities of Los Angeles, Compton, Watts, and other neighboring communities.

In search of affordable housing, greater public safety, and quality schools, African American migration during this period placed San Bernardino County as the highest in the nation for counties with more than 50,000 African American residents. A majority of the growth was in an area identified by a local researcher as the Ebony Triangle (NewHawk 1996).

Historically, between 30% and 35% of all African Americans in San Bernardino County lived in the Ebony Triangle. This geographic area is bounded one mile around the I-10 on the South, the I-215 on the East, and the I-15 on the West. This concentration of African American families in San Bernardino, Muscoy, Rialto, and North Fontana was primarily a residual effect of residential segregation. Over the past fifteen years, a greater number of African American families have migrated to the Victor Valley and the West-end of San Bernardino County. This pattern of mobility has resulted in a higher concentration of low-income families in the Central Valley between Muscoy and Highland, communities served by the San Bernardino City Unified School District.

San Bernardino City Unified School District's focus on African American student achievement through a collective impact study serves as a model for other school districts across the state seeking to improve academic outcomes for the many under-performing African American students.

California Public School Enrollment African American Top 10 Counties		
COUNTY	AY 2013-14	PERCENT TOP 10
State Total:	384,291	
Los Angeles	128,333	33.39
San Bernardino	37,286	9.70
Sacramento	31,197	8.12
Riverside	27,817	7.24
Alameda	27,233	7.09
San Diego	26,402	6.87
Contra Costa	17,886	4.65
San Joaquin	12,179	3.17
Fresno	10,729	2.79
Solano	10,434	2.72

Targeted Instructional Improvement Policy

In response to the persistently low achievement of African American students, community advocacy groups such as the Inland Empire Black Community Coalition led by A. Majadi, the Westside Action Group Education Committee (Walter Hawkins), Tehuti Educational Services (Dr. Lawson Bush, Dr. Ed Bush, Dr. Tonia Bush, Jensen Bush, and Dr. Kennon Mitchell), and BLU Educational Foundation (Dina Walker) spearheaded a district-wide initiative to close the achievement gap for African American students. This group of influential leaders, galvanized broad based support from the community to advocate for the passage of Board Policy 6012.1 in 2005 which established the **Targeted Instructional Improvement Policy (TIIP)**, one of few policies in the region charged with supporting the academic needs of African American students throughout the district.

African American educational leaders such as Dr. Len Cooper, Dr. Kennon Mitchell, and Dr. Judy White worked alongside community groups to craft the policy. The board policy outlines measurable outcomes for African American students in the target areas of instructional, professional growth, parent/community involvement, funding and evaluation and accountability, and district accountability. Additionally, the policy resulted in the formation of the Equity and Targeted Student Achievement Department, with a dedicated staff, professional development training in culturally relevant pedagogy, district and site level African American parent advisory committees, and implementation of the Sankofa Project in selected schools.

Nearly 10 years after the adoption of the **Targeted Instructional Improvement Policy (TIIP)**, the need for targeted interventions to increase academic achievement among African American students and other historically under-served sub-groups of students persists as evidence by the current realities of how African American students fare in the San Bernardino City Unified School district:

- **Only 67% of African American students graduate from high school in four years**
- **School suspension rates are upwards of 57% for African American males , three times greater than other subgroups of students**
- **Less than 11% complete their courses required for UC/CSU college entrance**
- **Upwards of 65% of African American students experience chronic school absenteeism at evidenced 15 or more days absent in a school year**

A quality education is perhaps the greatest predictor of future economic stability of African American families and communities.



BACKGROUND

In November 2013, the task force was convened through a community led coalition, the African American Education Collaborative, seeking greater accountability for the district's **Targeted Instructional Improvement Policy (TIIP)**. This report highlights the collective efforts of community stakeholders and educational leaders in San Bernardino City Unified School District to address the under achievement of African American students.

A Focus on Under-served Students: A Statewide and Local Priority

Policymakers across the state have placed greater emphasis on the achievement gap of historically under-served students. At the state level, the Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color report published in 2011 noted that "African American youth face unique challenges

and have worse outcomes on critical indicators of quality of life including health, education, and employment." The Local Control Formula Funding (LCFF) is intended to improve educational outcomes for traditionally under-served groups by providing more funding to schools serving high concentrations of low-income, English Learner, and foster care sub-groups of students. The new funding formula provides schools with the flexibility to implement innovative and targeted strategies that aid in closing the achievement/opportunity gap for the students of color in the district. The local realities of under-achievement among sub-groups of students in San Bernardino City Unified School District, coupled with the redirection and flexibility of school funding to raise achievement, creates a unique opportunity for the District to accelerate performance among all students and ensure that they are on a path to college and career success.

The Task Force has incorporated insights learned from the Strive Initiative in Cincinnati—a highly successful citywide education initiative that utilized a collective impact model (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The Task Force for African American Student Achievement engaged the education community in deep analysis of the schooling experiences of African American students in the San Bernardino City Unified School District. At the conclusion of the study, the Task Force findings and recommendations will be utilized for goal setting, strategy development, program design, and performance management aligned with the Targeted Instructional Improvement Policy.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report highlights the study methodology, key findings, and recommendations and strategies to raise African American student achievement throughout the district. The report starts with an examination of academic performance data to understand trends and patterns among African American students. Secondly, the report highlights instructional practices through observations of African American students in the classroom and school campus and from the perspectives of administrators, teachers, school staff, and students. Additionally, the experiences and perceptions about parent involvement in homes, schools, and classrooms and as how they are engaged in the school community is highlighted in the report. Finally, the report will conclude with recommendations and strategies that are informed by the effective practices researched and observed as well as those gathered through direct feedback from educators, students, and parents.

Task Force Composition: The task force consisted of a diverse stakeholder group of nearly 100 individuals that include community organizations, district cabinet members, principals, teachers, counselors, parents, and students. Each task force member agreed to work in one of three study teams to analyze data and trends, assess challenges, vet promising strategies, and help to shape the final recommendations.

Study Team Structure: The Task Force was segmented into three study teams. Members self-selected into the study team of their choice. Each study team was made up of 30 to 40 stakeholders per team and included at least two study team leads. Team leads were responsible for coordination of group activities which included data review and analysis, development of tools and

instruments for collection of qualitative data, coordination of focus groups, interviews, and survey collection. Team leads also provided input into the final report.

Meeting Structure and Timeline:

Task Force members were convened four times in a general session. General meetings included presentations highlighting academic performance data and promising practice as well as break-out sessions for study team planning time. In addition to general meetings, study teams convened four additional times to conduct study team activities. The Task Force convened over a 5-month period between January 2014 and May 2014 with the final report and recommendation presented to the San Bernardino City Unified School District School Board on June 3, 2014.



The District needs to accelerate performance among all students to ensure that they are on a path to college and career success.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations worth noting. The scale of the study was limited by the timeline as well as small sample of schools and participants. This study serves as an initial examination of the data, instructional practices, and parent/student engagement and warrants further study. In some instances achievement rates and percentages of students calculated varied greatly with the loss or gain of only a few students. A look at the district-wide achievement data by elementary, middle or high school levels, as well as by ethnicity and race were appropriate for identifying disparities. The tools and instruments were appropriate given the timeline and scale of the study, however the classroom observation tool did not allow for immediate dialogue with teachers and students based on what was observed. The survey tool used to collect parent feedback assumed broad understanding of terms and did not provide any descriptive information for terms such as "school climate," and "A – G", etc.

We need to close the achievement gap for African American students.



STUDY OF STUDENT ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

GUIDING STUDY QUESTION:

What are the current academic and non-academic data trends among African American students in the district?

The purpose of Study Team A was to analyze student performance outcomes in key academic and non-academic indicators. After analysis of multiple data sets, the following performance indicators were prioritized for deeper analysis: Reading and Math proficiency levels at 3rd, 6th, and 9th grade; Algebra pass rates at 8th and 9th grade, A-G course completion rates; California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) pass rates; graduation rates; suspension incidents; and absenteeism rates.

Third grade reading can be used as a predictor of performance on other educational outcome measures.

METHODOLOGY

Study Team A was represented by school principals, directors, teachers, community members and parents. The study team was provided with student academic data over a three-year period based on a review of District and school level reports for elementary, middle, or high school levels. The SBCUSD Assessment, Accountability, and Educational Technology prepared a series of disaggregated data reports. The team met during general task force meetings and two additional meetings to classify information, analyze, draw conclusions, and generate questions for additional analysis. This process helped to prioritize data sets for review and dialogue during the general task force meetings. The analysis supported the task force in setting academic and non-academic measurements for improvement.

ACADEMIC/NON ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AT A GLANCE

The following provides a look at academic performance data and non-academic data (suspension/attendance) reviewed over a three year period by school level and gender:

Elementary School

Third Grade, English Language Arts

The three year average in proficiency shows that approximately 28% of African American girls and 20% of African American boys were proficient in reading. Third grade reading can be used as a predictor of performance on other educational outcome measures. The low proficiency rates among subgroups and district wide suggest a need for emphasis on early literacy.

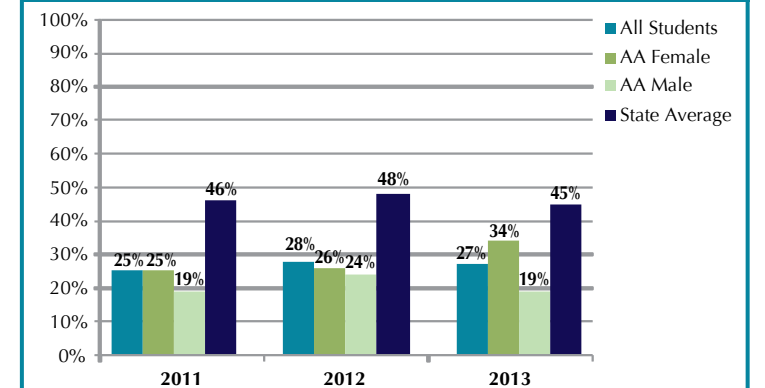
Third Grade, Math

The three year average in math proficiency shows that approximately 43% of African American females and 42% of African American males were proficient in math.

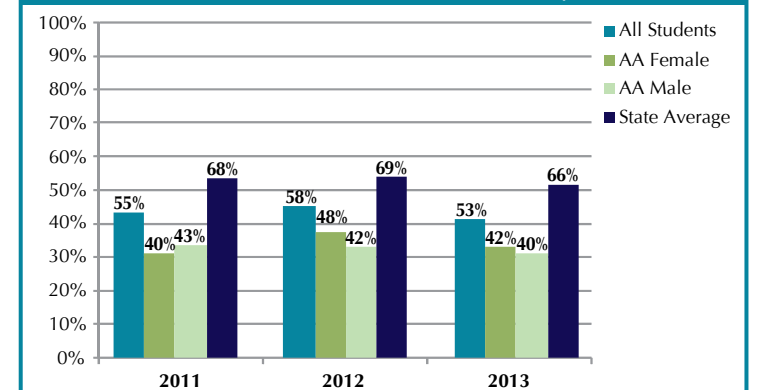
Six Grade, Math

The three year average in math proficiency shows that approximately 34% of African American females and 29% of African American males were proficient in math.

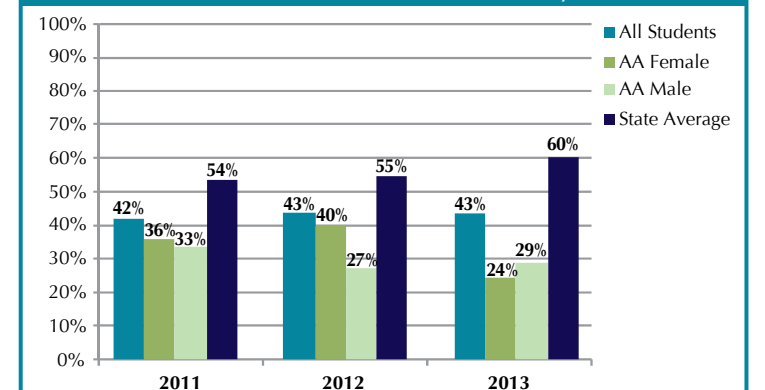
3rd Grade English-Language Arts Proficiency



3rd Grade Math Proficiency



6th Grade Math Proficiency



STUDY TEAM A

Middle School

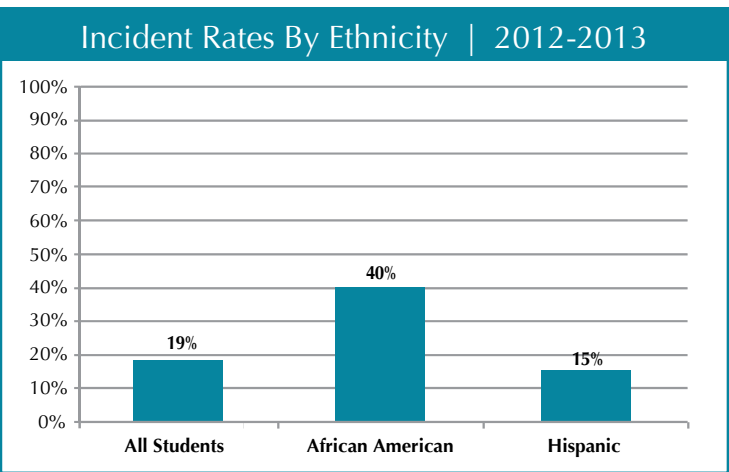
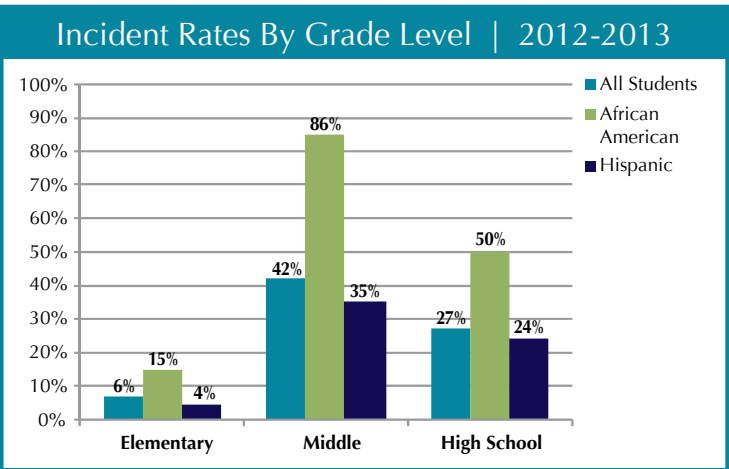
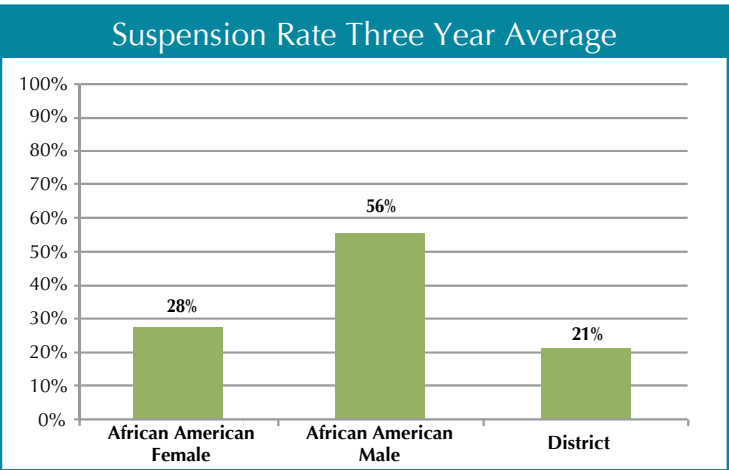
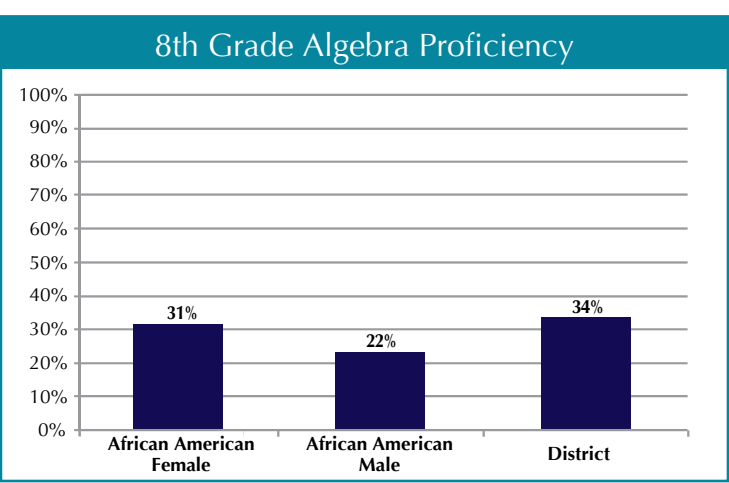
Eighth Grade Algebra One Proficiency

The three year average in math proficiency shows that approximately 31% of African American females and 22% of African American males were proficient in Algebra 1.

Middle School Suspension by Incident Rate

The three year average suspension rates by incident among African American females was 28% and 57% among males.

Student suspension and incident rates for males are significantly larger (approximately 3x-4x times larger) than corresponding female rates no matter what race/ethnicity.



STUDY TEAM A

High School

Ninth Grade Algebra 1

Over the past three years, grade 9 African American females have only slightly increased in Algebra I proficiency while African American male proficiency rates have remained flat. This is a similar trend to that of Hispanic students.

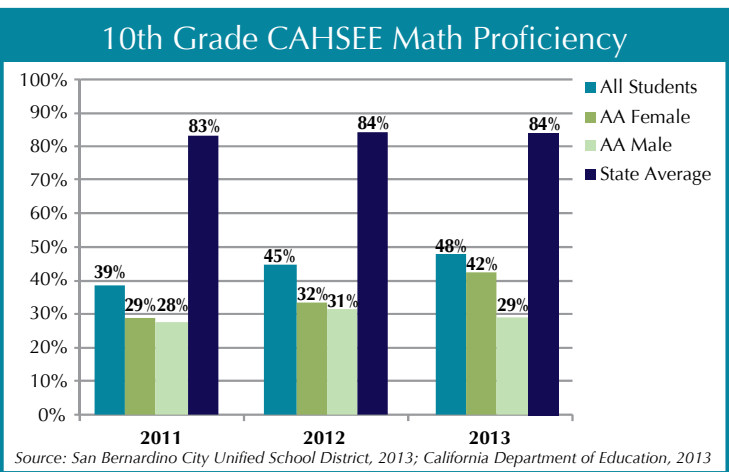
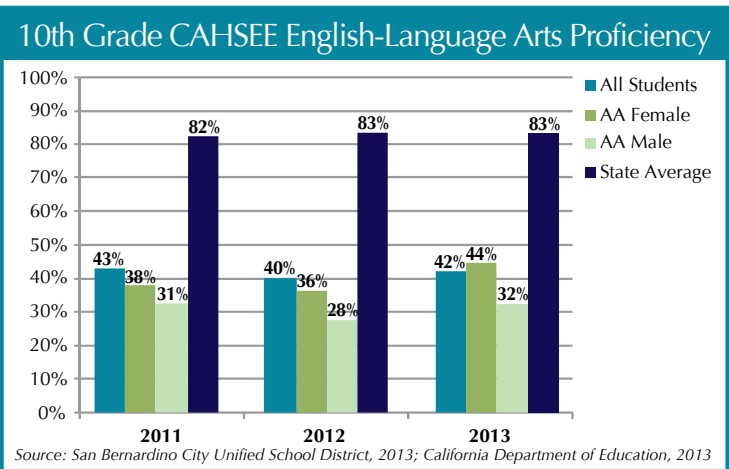
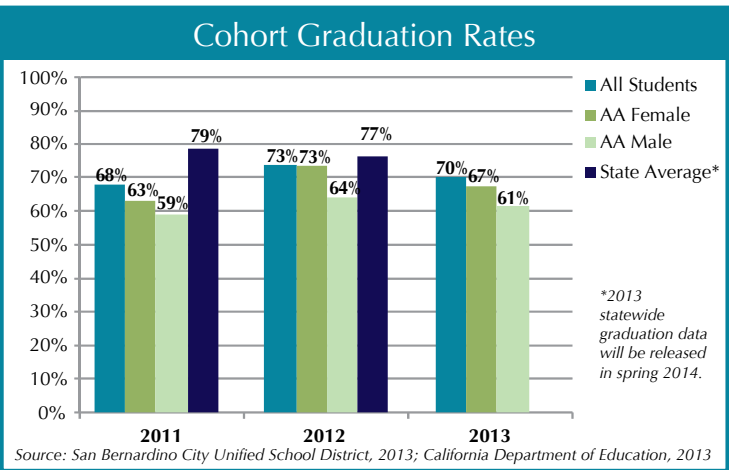
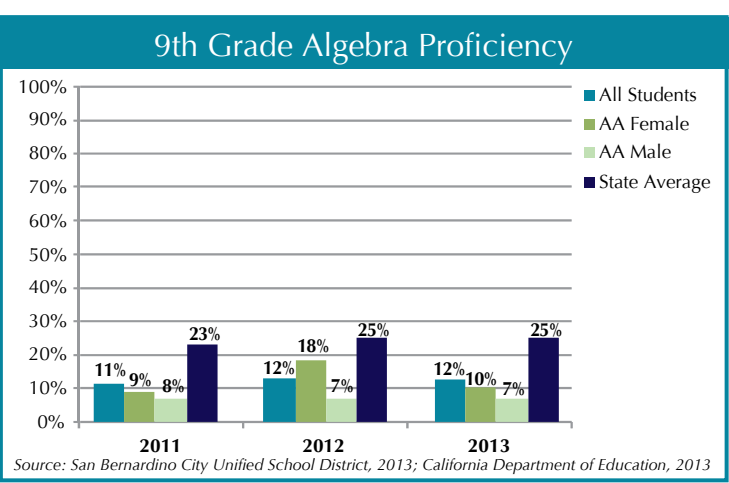
Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate

The three year average of African American students who entered 9th grade and graduated within four years is 67% for females and 60% for males. African American students are among the highest sub-groups of students at-risk for high school drop-out as early as 9th grade.

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Proficiency

The three year average proficiency rate in English Language Arts among African American female is 39% and 30% for males. The proficiency and in math 34% among females and 29% among males.

**CAHSEE is a requirement for graduation in California.*



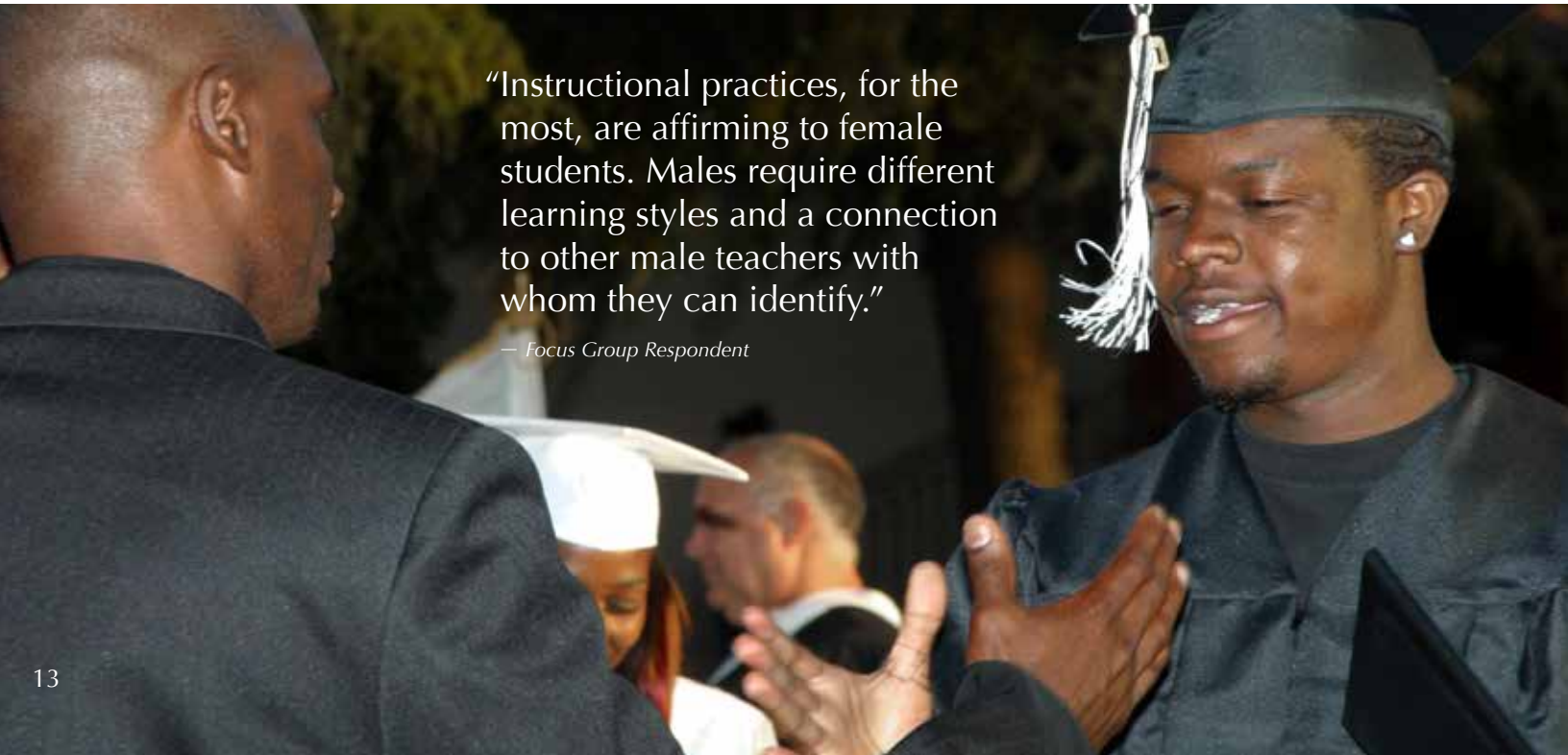
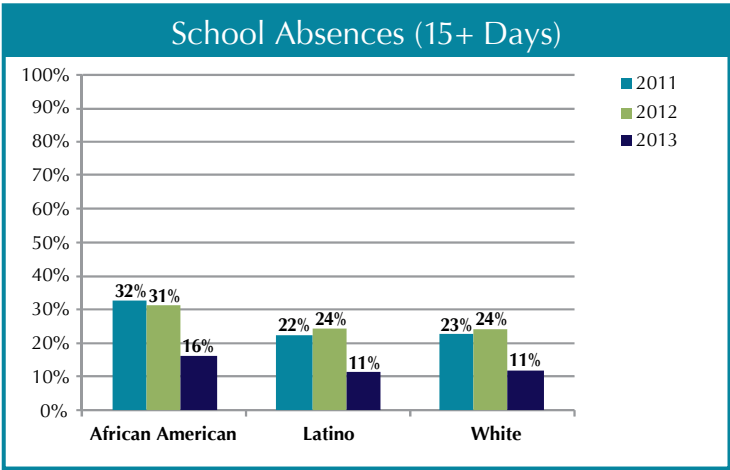
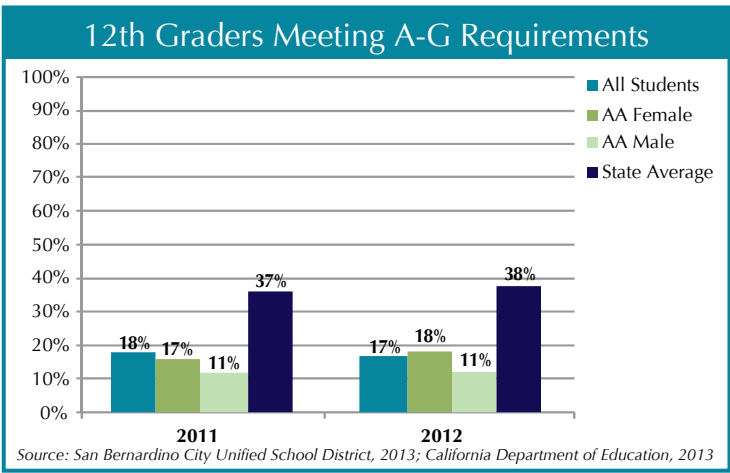
High School A-G Course Completion

This data gives an estimate of high school grade 9-12 students’ on-track for meeting A-G course completion, the minimum courses required for entrance into the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems. The data shows the percentage of enrolled students at the end of each school year who met the minimum targets for UC-CSU/A-G course completion. African American males fall well below the state and district averages.

*An informal review of schedules at 12th grade indicates that many students are not taking qualifying mathematics, science and foreign language courses.

School Attendance

The data chart shows the percentage of students with 15 or more absences over a three year period. African Americans consistently experience higher rates of school absence. *Note: 2013 rates cover only half the school year through January 2014.



“Instructional practices, for the most, are affirming to female students. Males require different learning styles and a connection to other male teachers with whom they can identify.”

— Focus Group Respondent

KEY FINDINGS

- Persistently low proficiency rates in English Language Arts among African American males, in particular suggest a need for emphasis on early learning literacy development. Some studies suggest a focus on literary text that connect larger ideals, cultural uplift, economic advancement, resistance to oppression, and intellectual development as central elements in literacy development of African American males. An understanding of the roles reading and writing played for African-American males historically may serve as a productive starting point for conceptualizing teaching practices, selecting texts, and structuring instructional contexts to support literacy development of males.¹⁰
- Math skills such as patterns, measurements, and advanced number sense become more important over time. There is an even greater need to support early math skills development at home and in school.
- Math proficiency declines at sixth grade for African American students, a critical indicator of Algebra readiness. A further decline in proficiency among African American students in Algebra during 8th and 9th grade suggest the need for early math development and a particular focus on intervention between 5th and 7th grade, during pivotal transition years for students. To support students with a weak math foundation, one study suggests a two-year pre-algebra course, with an extended learning period, leading up to Algebra in ninth grade, the first four years of high school math.¹¹
- For students who do end up struggling in Algebra in eighth grade, alternative approaches to a straight repetition of the course can be considered such as: focusing on particular content areas, using a tutor or other support services, or assigning a teacher with different instructional approaches.
- Highest suspension rates occur during middle school with nearly 22% of incident attributed to Willful Defiance. **Disproportionate numbers of African American students are suspended from school**, and students who are suspended even once in ninth grade are twice as likely to drop out of high school as students who have not been suspended, according to studies. (SBCUSD Data)
- Chronic school absence is defined by 15 or more days absent from school. African American students in this district experience the highest rates of chronic school absenteeism which has a negative impact on academic and other outcomes. For example, students who experience chronic school absence have lower test scores in reading and math, experience higher grade retention, are more likely to drop out of high school, and have higher rates of criminalization.¹²
- A review of school attendance data among African American students by school show that upwards of 65% of students in elementary school and high school students experience chronic school absence. Absenteeism has implications during early years when students are building foundational skills and knowledge in reading and math and during later years when their academic performance determine high school graduation and college and career readiness.



Early mathematics knowledge and skills are important indicators for later math achievement and for success in other academic content areas.

¹⁰Tatum, Alfred. *Literacy Practices for African American Male Adolescent. Students at the Center Series.* March 2012.

¹¹Festerwalkd, John. *Many Students Are Failing Repeating Courses Without Success.* Ed Source. December 2012.

¹²Jackson, D. & Moral, D. *Prison data, court files show link between school truancy and crime.* Retrieved from http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-02-19/news/ct-met-prison-truancy-20130219_1_much-school-public-schools-grades. February 2013.

STUDY TEAM B



STUDY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

GUIDING STUDY QUESTION:

What are the experiences of African American students in the classroom and in schools from the

perspective of teachers, students, and administrators?

This study team conducted school site visits and collected anecdotal/qualitative data through classroom observations and interviews with key informants to determine trends in instructional approaches that seek to engage African American students as well as the individual perspectives of school staff and students.

METHODOLOGY

Study Team B participants included school principals, district directors, teachers, community members and parents. These participants were divided into 6 teams with 3-4 members who visited 2-3 school sites. These teams conducted classroom observations and interviews with key informants at 9 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 2 high schools in SBCUSD. Schools were selected based on the significant number of African American students enrolled in the school. The team conducted 174 classroom observations that lasted approximately 20 minutes each, interviews with 45 students, 33 administrators, 47 certificated and 45 classified/non-classified staff members which lasted approximately 15-20 minutes. The following schools agreed to participate: **Elementary Schools;** Barton, Bing Wong, Bonnie Oehl, Del Rosa,

Emmert, Ingham, Little Mountain, North Verdemont, Rodriguez; **Middle Schools;** Chavez, Curtis, Del Vallejo, King; **High Schools;** Cajon and San Bernardino High School.

Data Collection/Tools: A modified **Instructional Rounds** observation tool was utilized to conduct classroom observations that included agreed-upon indicators of what high quality instruction looks like and provided a focus among observers with a common purpose. Team members were briefed on the importance of writing nonjudgmental descriptions of what was observed in the classroom; specifically writing the evidence of what they saw. During instructional rounds the teams observed and took notes focused specifically on instructional strategies related to African American student engagement. The identified Problem of Practice: *To what extent are African American students actively engaged in the classroom, and what strategies were observed that aided their engagement?*

Interview protocol questions were designed to gain the perspective of the interviewees on the experiences of African American students in their school. Interview questions were asked to ensure open-ended responses and allow the interviewees to choose their own vocabulary and phrasing when responding. The approximate length of the interviews was 15-20 minutes and interviewees were assured that every attempt would be made to ensure that their comments would remain confidential. All administrators, certificated and classified/non-classified staff members were asked about their length of employment with the district and in the field of education as well as the programs or strategies, instructional or otherwise, which had been instituted at their school in an effort to narrow the achievement gap among African American students.

STUDY TEAM B

Additionally, administrators were asked about their relationships with African American parents and the challenges and opportunities African American students face on their campuses, and to describe how African American students interact with other students. Certificated staff members were asked what effective support they needed to successfully teach African American students. Classified/Non-Classified staff members were asked about the relationships they have with African American parents at their school and the challenges/opportunities they felt African American students faced on their campus.

KEY FINDINGS

The data from classroom observations and interviews with key informants was reviewed by principal contributors and study team leads to identify themes and patterns that emerged. The results are presented as a lens to understand strategies that aided the engagement of African American students in the classroom and the perspectives and experiences of key informants with African American students in their school setting.

Best Practices Observed

During classroom observations, students were observed to be highly engaged when there were a wide variety of instructional techniques and methods utilized by teachers. Effective teacher practices include:

- Use of heterogeneous groups and pairs to complete tasks, activities, and assignments.
- Teachers provided corrections and acknowledgments using Positive Behavior Support language with students and used technology to engage students

in learning to increase the relevancy of the material.

- Frequent opportunities were established for students to successfully demonstrate knowledge, receive praise, have fun during the lessons, and to be challenged and use their imaginations while learning. Use of a variety of visual prompts and charts to provide a reference for students.

Teachers used a variety of visual prompts and charts to provide a reference for students.

Student Engagement Observed

Student engagement takes into consideration conditions in the classroom that motivate and help them experience success. In order for this to take place, students must understand the criteria for success and be provided immediate and constructive feedback. Additionally, the skills they need to be successful must be modeled and the need to be able to see success as valuable.

African American students are more engaged when teachers provide opportunities for students to successfully demonstrate knowledge, receive praise, have fun during the lessons, and to be challenged using their imaginations while learning.





Students are engaged when they are required to think critically, reason, synthesize, make judgments and solve problems.

During classroom observations, students were observed to be highly engaged when the following was evident:

- Students were on task and actively engaged in the lesson (asking/answering questions, discussing the lesson and working in groups).
- Students were engaged in rigorous learning that required them to think critically, reason, synthesize, make judgments and solve problems.
- Opportunities were established for students to successfully demonstrate knowledge, to receive rewards and praise, to have fun during lessons and to be challenged and use their imaginations while learning.
- Scaffolding content to individual students' abilities and making each student "gets it" before the teacher moves on.
- Frequent checks for understanding using a variety of methods.
- Use of cooperative learning and one-on-one tutoring for students who have the most difficulty completing the in-class assignment.

Interviews with Staff

Interviewees identified the following programs/strategies they felt were instituted at their school sites that make an impact on African American student achievement included:

- Positive Behavior Support framework
- Use of technology
- AVID program & GLAD strategies

- Enrichment activities (field trips, talent shows, sports)
- Male academies and mentoring
- Working in collaborative groups
- Group counseling

Relationships with parents were described as:

- Strong, effective and respectful
- Parents appreciated home visits
- Parents who were contacted about discipline were usually upset when they came to school

Effective support needed by teachers was described as:

- Relationship building/effective outreach and communication with parents
- Parent education programs to support academic achievement
- Equity & diversity training to understand the culture of African American students
- Collaborate with other teachers on effective instructional and engagement strategies
- Learning how to respond to disruption by redirecting behaviors rather than being confrontational

Challenges/Opportunities were described as:

- Need to improve relationships and communication between teachers and students
- Impact of environment, particularly incidents of violence in neighborhood
- Teacher attitudes and expectations of students
- Academic gaps, students don't often ask for help
- Structure, rules and discipline

Students described their ideal teacher as:

- Patient and caring, one who took the time to get to know and believe in them
- Able to explain the information and is enthusiastic about teaching
- Provided incentives/rewards and made learning fun
- Race and gender doesn't really matter
- Goes to any length to help you be successful

Students described how they learn best as:

- Working in groups and having projects
- Learning how to take notes to remember important information
- Having a teacher who really believes in them
- When the teachers uses visual, PowerPoint, technology and hands on activities

Students described their greatest challenges faced at school as:

- Not understanding what the teacher is teaching
- Getting referrals and suspensions
- Making sacrifices during lunch time to get extra help
- Distractions in the classroom, when the teacher has to stop teaching because students are acting out

What students look forward to when they come to school:

- Learning something new
- Being with my friends and part of a group, club or sports activity
- Earning incentives for good grades and behavior
- Doing work that I can be proud of

What students say about their preparedness for college:

In focus groups of 23 African American students from two high schools, they shared the following responses regarding their preparedness for college:

- Some students expressed that they were working to catch up on credits in which they were deficient.
- The majority of students did not have a four year plan, many were unaware of A-G course requirements and felt that counselors could do more to support them, particularly when student are transitioning to college.
- Some students felt that some school counselors play "favorites" and show bias towards International Baccalaureate (IB) students, in particular.
- Some students were trying to challenge themselves by taking harder classes but needed more support and guidance from school counselors.

Students want to challenge themselves by taking harder classes but they need more support and guidance from school counselors.



Students attend Black College Fair.

STUDY OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

GUIDING STUDY QUESTION:

What are the experiences of parents and caregivers of African American students on the challenges and opportunities for engagement in their children's education?

Study Team C activities were aimed at building understanding of the experiences of parent and caregivers of African American children. The team committed to listening to parents as a central aspect of the work. The findings, therefore draw on information collected from focus groups and parent surveys.

Study Team C – Study of Parent/Community Engagement Practices

Study Team C collected anecdotal/qualitative data through surveys and focus group sessions to discover their perceptions about parent involvement in homes, the classroom, and school community. Study Team C was comprised of community leaders, parents, district, directors, and teachers, who worked in teams to develop survey questions, develop a plan to disseminate, collect, and input survey responses and analyze responses. The study team convened parent focus groups and distributed parent surveys over a 4-week period collecting 652 survey responses and convening 47 parents in focus groups at 2

high-school sites. The following schools agreed to participate disseminate and collect parent surveys: Elementary

Schools: Barton, Bing Wong, Bonnie Oehl, Del Rosa, Emmerton, Inghram, Little Mountain, North Verdemont, Rodriguez; Middle Schools: Chavez, Curtis, Del Vallejo, King; High Schools: Cajon and San Bernardino High School.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The team conducted 5 parent focus group sessions with 47 parents/caregivers of children in varying grades levels. Parents were invited to share their perspective on parent involvement and engagement using these questions:

- What do parents do that demonstrate involvement in their children's education?
- What challenges do you believe African American parents/caregivers face in being involved in their children's education?
- Describe a time when you experienced strong parent/teacher partnerships. What made that partnership possible?

All focus groups were convened solely with parents of African American students. This environment created a climate for open and honest dialogue. While there are limits to generalized nature of the focus group questions, the responses provide powerful and authentic insights into parents' experiences and their engagement at home and in the school community as a contributor to student success.

Parents expressed a range of views and what they do to demonstrate their involvement and how they support their children's education:

Parents instill a value for education. They believed that their role was to instill a value for education in their children by supporting their children at home and school. Parents felt that they instilled a value for education by encouraging them,

providing structure at home, and being an advocate for their children. They believed that having courage to advocate on their child's behalf to ensure their academic success, demonstrated to their children that education is important. They also believed by setting high expectations for their children, such as doing well on assignments, monitoring homework, having self-discipline, setting goals for the future are among the many ways in which they instill a value for education. They also believed that when they are actively involved in academic activities they show their children they care about their education.

Strong communication between parents, teachers, and administrators help parents feel like a partner in their child's education.

Many parents shared their appreciation for teachers and principals who communicated with them regularly and responded to them in a timely manner. When teachers or school staff responded back through phone calls, emails, or text messages, parents felt as if the school is authentically concerned about their child's academic success. They also appreciated when teachers or school staff communicated with them about positive things that happened and not just negative.

When parents are informed they can support their children better at home and at school. When parents were more informed about school activities and priorities, they were better equipped to support their children. For example, when parents understand the importance of school attendance, they are able to ensure that their children are in school on time. Incentive programs and rewards are among the ways schools and parents can partner to reinforce good practices. Additionally, when administrators invited them to provide input, parents felt more included in the school community. Serving on advisory committees and school site



council helped them to be more informed to support important school decisions.

Parents also shared the following challenges they believe parents faced in supporting their children's education:

- Parents do not feel like they have adequate resources to support their children. Some of those resources include things like transportation to school, housing, child care, and Internet access among other things.
- When parents are not visible at the school on a regular basis, parents believed that school staff feel like they are not concerned or engaged.
- Parents expressed feeling about not being able to get responses without expressing frustration which alienates them from the school staff.
- Parents experience their own hurdles in navigating the school system when trying to access information. This was expressed as particularly challenging for grandparents and relatives who are the student's primary caregiver.

Parents shared the following ways in which schools could better engage them:

Parent engagement at home and in the school community contributes to student success.



STUDY TEAM C

91% of parents polled said they wanted their children to attend college.



KEY FINDINGS

The team developed a survey tool focused on three core areas: a) Welcoming Environment; b) Knowledge and Tools to Support Children; and c) Graduation and College Readiness. A total of 652 survey responses were collected. Of the respondents:

- Parents need opportunities to be made aware of their rights and critical information, such as early notification about their child's academic progress so that they can adequately support their children.
- Schools can create a more welcoming environment by not making assumptions about parents based on their physical appearance or their tone/communication style.
- Parents believe that positive communication and conflict resolution will restore relationships among parents and school staff.
- School could provide parents of students with behavior problems an opportunity to work with school staff on a solution to resolve problems or correct behavior.

- 86% were identified as parents and 10% as relative caregivers.

- Highest percentages of respondents had children in the 2nd, 8th, and 11th grades.
- The majority of respondents had some level of college (30%), high school (22%) and Bachelor's Degree (13%).

The following provides a synopsis of survey responses in each focus area:

Student Climate/Welcoming Environment

- 92% of respondents said their children like school.
- 86.5% feel supported by the staff at their child's school.
- 90.8% feel welcomed at their schools.

Knowledge and Tools to Support Children

- 28.9% of respondents did not know what their children need to be proficient in math and over 40% had not reviewed their child's math performance with a teacher.
- 82.5% reported that their children received help with homework. The top three sources for homework help were Home (64.1%), School with peers or teachers (37.2) and CAPS or After-School Programs (25.9%).

**Note multiple responses could be selected.*

High School Graduation and College Readiness

- 91% of parents polled said they wanted their children to attend college.
- 48% of respondents were not familiar with A-G college courses.
- 56% of respondents did not know that high school graduation and A-G requirements were different.
- 65% of respondents did not have an educational plan for their students to attend a college or university and 12% of those with a plan had never revised the plan.

FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE

EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

The following are direct quotes from interviewees on expectations and perceptions:



TEACHERS

"When we go on home visits it gives us a sense of community."

"African American students need books they can relate to such as the Sharon Flake, Payton Skky, Bluford series."

"There has not been a paradigm shift in the punitive process in our approaches to manage discipline with African American and minority students."

ADMINISTRATORS

"There were programs that were effective but because of funding we weren't able to continue them."

"We need to continue to create an atmosphere that encourages parents/administrators/teachers and the community to dialogue."

SCHOOL STAFF

"We need good relationships with parents and we need to listen to them."

"Parents need to get more involved and students would probably have better behavior at school."

STUDENTS

"My teacher sees things in me."

"My teacher kept pushing me even when I didn't accept the help at first."

"My teacher encourages and supports me so I don't fail."

"I like it when the teacher relates the lesson to real life and makes it interesting."

RECOMMENDATIONS



There are many ways we can help African American students succeed in school so that they can go on to college and have successful careers.

The study presents recommendations and strategies as a starting point for addressing African American student achievement in San Bernardino City Unified School District. The following recommendations conclude the study and offer the education community strategies for goal setting, strategy development, program design, and performance management:

Improve proficiency in math and English Language Arts among 3rd grade students.

- Strengthen early language development by focusing on instructional practices aimed at increasing listening and speaking, phonological awareness and standard grammar instruction. Students also benefit from exposure to literature in a variety of genres that connect to larger ideals and cultural experiences from which they can self-identify. Finally, sustaining parent involvement at various stages of literacy development helps to reinforce learning in school and home.
- Strengthen math knowledge and skills through instructional support for interactive classroom activities using patterns, measurements, and more advance number sense to build math knowledge early. Create opportunities for parents to support math development at home by providing them with tools and strategies to reinforce classroom instruction.

Improve Algebra One proficiency rates among African American students in 8th and 9th grade

- Improve Algebra One proficiency through focus activities to strengthen math foundation during pivotal transition grades such as 5th through

7th grade. The provision of extended learning opportunities either through in-school instructional support in content areas, or during after-school tutorial support may support student with weak foundation in math. Additional instructional considerations may include using differentiated instruction for various content areas, or assignment instructional support aids to work one-on-one or in group setting with struggling students. Utilizing technology to support math instruction and create opportunities for students to connect and apply math lessons with real life situations may help to support student engagement.

Increase the percentage of African American Students who are on track and complete UC/CSU courses by 12th grade.

- Increase African American student enrollment in college preparatory programs such as AVID and ensure greater access to UC/CSU courses through regular engagement with counselors or case manager.
- Promote a culture of evidence by using assessments and monitoring reports that determine whether students are on track academically for college and strengthen early warning systems for students who are struggling or deficient in particular courses for timely remediation.
- Help students build college-going networks by linking students to college-educated mentors, encouraging students to form academically oriented peer groups, and allowing students to explore a variety of careers. These activities can build a college-going identity and support students' aspirations.
- Engage and assist students and families in planning and preparing for college entrance by ensuring timely completion

and updates to students four-year high school plan. Families can be further supported with critical steps of college entry such as financial aid awareness and admission applications among others.

Address chronic absenteeism among African American students by improving school attendance.

- Communicate with students and parents about how attendance impacts student achievement. Celebrate and reward good attendance with certificates for good and improving attendance and raffling off prizes for students and families.
- Provide case management support for families and students experiencing high absenteeism to assess needs and areas of support.
- Implement positive behavior supports to minimize absenteeism related to out of school suspensions.
- Develop school site and district wide attendance goals. Engage communities through community-based incentive programs like discounts at local events, restaurants, etc. for students who exhibit good attendance.

Reduce suspensions through effective implementation of positive behavior support systems.

- Strengthen student engagement strategies during classroom instruction. Increase staff support to effectively utilize Response to Intervention and other positive behavior system to address and correct behavior. Strengthen parent involvement in positive behavior support efforts

by creating vehicles for them to be informed of their parental rights and opportunities for joint planning, communication, and monitoring associate with child behavior.

- Create mentoring opportunities for African American students to build positive self-identity and promote pro-social behavior.

Strengthen engagement among parents/caregivers of African American students.

- Support ongoing cultural competence among school community to foster a welcoming environment for families.
- Create learning opportunities for parents in various subjects such as strategies to support student learning in school and home, building positive family/school partnerships, among others.
- Support family/school communication by strengthening systems for timely communication using text message, email, phone calls, and classroom visits.
- Engage community partners to create parent portals at local churches, community centers, etc. to increase parent accessibility to school related resources and information.

INVESTING IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The San Bernardino City Unified School District should consider making investments to strengthen achievement among African American Students and other sub-groups of students:

- Hire additional program support and case management staff to provide district-wide support to African American students.
- Invest in partnership with community-based entities for provision of wrap-around support such as mentoring, academic and cultural enrichment, and college/career readiness.
- Invest in incentive/reward programs to encourage and motivate students and families.
- Invest in parent training and opportunities for family/ community center learning activities.
- Invest in technology, communication and outreach systems that support student and parent engagement.
- Invest in efforts to sustain a collective impact strategy by convening implementation teams with educators, parents, and community members to support ongoing planning and evaluation.

SPECIAL THANKS



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Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE) is a 501c3 faith-based organization, established in 2000 by a core group of pastors, with a mission to train and develop the capacity of religious and lay leaders in congregations and across the Inland Empire to protect and revitalize the communities in which they live, work, and worship. COPE achieves its leveraging the collective goodwill of congregates to address critical issues relating to poverty, education, and health.