

**THE NORTH CAROLINA ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON
RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSING GAPS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS
(Abbreviated Form)***

RECOMMENDATION ONE

That the state takes steps to reduce, then to eliminate the disproportionate number of minority students assigned to special education programs. As a part of the ABCs reporting process, require that schools provide descriptive data, in table format, that will allow for comparisons between the percentage of students assigned to the various categorical special education programs in school districts with state averages in those same categories, and with rates of incidence of the various handicapping conditions in the general populations of our nation.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

That the state recognize its obligation to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to learn by promoting, encouraging, and funding instructional approaches that expose minority students currently functioning at or near grade level to advanced content, challenging strategies, and quality work, thus increasing the number of minority students who perform at the highest levels on standardized and end-of-grade tests.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

That a professionally designed public information campaign be initiated statewide to get the attention of parents (especially those with consistently underachieving students) and local communities.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

That each LEA be directed to request the following from each school in its district:

- ♣ An annual action plan for creatively seeking to improve the school's image with parents and to raise the level of connectedness to parents in general but specifically to those not usually involved with school.
- ♣ Parent involvement records should be kept identifying parents who come to school to assist and support the school and the child in the teaching and learning process.
- ♣ Voluntary home visits by teachers and administrators should be considered for the simple purpose of building a trusting relationship between home and school.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

That the State Board of Education and the Superintendent immediately make a public commitment to design and fund a required, but flexible, professional development initiative that will ensure that classroom teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in teaching a diverse population of students.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

That the state provide the substantial TIME that classroom teachers need to update their skills and gain new skills in working with diverse populations by requiring that veteran classroom teachers accept paid 11-month contracts once during every four-year period.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

That the state create, fund, and support special seminars and course development for existing university teacher education faculty designed to ensure that they command and model the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to prepare pre-service teachers to be successful in teaching diverse student populations.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

That the State Board of Education seek the support of the President of the University of North Carolina and the various chancellors to require all search committees for new teacher education faculty members to assess and rate applicants as to the knowledge, skills, and disposition they will need to teach pre-service teachers to work successfully with diverse student populations.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

That the state demonstrates seriousness about resolving the shortage of qualified classroom teachers in North Carolina who are prepared to be successful with diverse populations. Design and implement a specific preparation delivery system that provides monetary incentives then identifies high school and community college graduates who want to teach; preparing, graduating, and placing them in high need schools and teaching areas.

RECOMMENDATION TEN

That the State Board of Education adopt a closing the gap component to the accountability system that sets a universal standard and sets measures and incentives at the school district level. More specifically, the Commission recommends that the State Board explore setting a “universal standard” by which to measure the performance of racial/ethnic populations and socioeconomic groups. This is accomplished by setting a goal and a timeframe for meeting that goal. For example, the one standard studied by the Commission is for 95% of all ethnic/racial and socioeconomic groups to reach grade level proficiency by the year 2010.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

That a study be commissioned by the state to examine and profile the history of organized education for American Indians and African Americans in North Carolina. A document should be generated that factually tracks the formal academic training of these two cultures from the onset of public schooling to present practice. Specific attention should be given to the state’s assumption of responsibility for education these two groups within the public schooling system. The results from this study will hopefully contribute to what should become a broader effort to build a credible body of knowledge about minority cultures that can be used to prepare professionals, especially teachers, to more comfortably exchange or interact across ethnic/cultural lines in the classroom and beyond.

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE

Conduct formal studies of best practices in the education of major racial/ethnic groups, in particular Hispanic/Latino and Asian students, including research from countries of origin. Most teaching practices in North Carolina classrooms do not reflect knowledge of cultural, social, and learning factors represented by the full range of the racial and ethnic composition of the students being taught. As with the recommendation to document the history and educational practices of African American and American Indian students, the purpose of these studies is “to build a credible body of knowledge about minority cultures that can be used to prepare educators, especially teachers, to more comfortably exchange or interact across ethnic/cultural lines in the classroom and beyond”.

** The North Carolina Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, First Report to the State Board of Education, December 2001, can be viewed at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/racg/commission/reports/>*