

Each Local Education Agency (LEA) and Institute of Higher Education (IHE) in the state has been assigned an RACG consultant.

SONJA ADGER KEN BABINEAUX STACY COSTELLO SONJA LEATHERS JOHANNA MAYNOR YVONNE PERRY SUSAN SILVER

LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS	LEA ASSIGNMENTS
Anson Bladen Brunswick Columbus Whiteville City Cumberland Duplin Hoke New Hanover Onslow Pender Richmond Robeson Sampson Clinton City Scotland	Buncombe Asheville City Cherokee Craven Greene Harnett Hyde Haywood Henderson Jackson Macon Madison McDowell Polk Rutherford Swain Transylvania Yancey	Beaufort Carteret Craven Greene Harnett Hyde Johnston Jones Lenoir Nash Pamlico Pitt Wayne Wilson	Bertie Camden Chowan Currituck Dare Edgecombe Gates Halifax Roanoke Rapids City Weldon City Hertford Martin Northampton Pasquotank Perquimans Tyrell Washington	Cabarrus Kannapolis City Davie Davidson Lexington City Thomas City Forsyth Guilford Iredell-Statesville Mooreville City Mecklenburg Randolph Asheboro City Rockingham Rowan Stanly Stokes Union Yadkin	Alamance- Burlington Caswell Chatham Durham Franklin Granville Lee Montgomery Moore Orange Chapel Hill/ Carrboro Person Vance Wake Warren	Alleghany Alexander Avery Ashe Burke Caldwell Catawba Hickory City Newton-Conover City Cleveland Gaston Lincoln Mitchell Surry Elkin City Mount Airy City Watauga Wilkes

IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS	IHE ASSIGNMENTS
Fayetteville State University Methodist College St. Andrews Presbyterian College UNC-Pembroke UNC-Wilmington	Brevard College Mars Hill College Montreat College UNC-Asheville Warren-Wilson College Western Carolina University	Barton College Campbell University East Carolina University Mount Olive College NC Wesleyan College	Chowan College Elizabeth City State University	Belmont Abbey College Bennett College Cabarrus College Catawba College Davidson College Greensboro College Guilford College Johnson C. Smith University Livingstone College NC A&T State University Pfeiffer University Queens University Salem College UNC-Greensboro UNC-Charlotte Wake Forest University Wingate University Winston-Salem State University	Duke University Elon College Meredith College NC Central University NC State University Peace College Shaw University St. Augustine's College UNC-Chapel Hill	Appalachian State University Gardner-Webb University Lees-McRae College Lenoir-Rhyne College



MEMBERS

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSING GAPS SECTION

INDIVIDUAL	TELEPHONE NUMBER	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Marvin R. Pittman, State Board of Education Community Liaison for Student Achievement	(919) 807-3911	mpittman@dpi.state.nc.us
Debora Sydnor, Section Chief	(919) 807-3925	dsydnor@dpi.state.nc.us
Angela Hopson, Program Assistant	(919) 807-3609	ahopson@dpi.state.nc.us
Sonja Adger	(919) 807-3694	sadger@dpi.state.nc.us
Ken Babineaux	(919) 807-3657	kbabineaux@dpi.state.nc.us
Stacy Costello	(919) 807-3617	scostello@dpi.state.nc.us
Sonja Leathers	(919) 807-3687	sleather@dpi.state.nc.us
Johannah Maynor	(919) 807-3637	jmaynor@dpi.state.nc.us
Yvonne Perry	(919) 807-3648	yperry@dpi.state.nc.us
Susan Silver	(919) 807-3676	ssilver@dpi.state.nc.us

RAISING ACHIEVEMENT CLOSING GAPS

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Curriculum and School Reform | Public Schools of North Carolina
301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601
Phone: 919.807.3609 Fax: 919.807.3677
www.ncpublicschools.org/closingthegap



SPRING 2007

CHANGING THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS IN THE VILLAGE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND CLOSING GAPS SECTION

Community Engagement: A Top Priority for Student Achievement

Raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps are two critical goals for all education stakeholders. There was a time in our public education history when schools did not engage communities...by design. Schooling was left to the schools only. While some parents and community members may have been in the school, they were reduced to fundraisers, cookie-baking, field trip chaperones, etc. The notion that these stakeholders would have a real place in the effort to improve schools and student outcomes was a foreign concept. Now, with an added focus on educating ALL students, schools are realizing that no longer can they leave our community partners behind.

The State Board of Education has spoken to this issue pretty boldly. The State Board is now seeking ways to empower and engage communities in powerful ways. Much time will be spent working with our many school partners such as parents, fraternities, sororities, chambers of commerce, local boards of education, county commissioners and faith-based organizations just to mention a few. The State Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction will provide information to these various groups as well as seek input from them. Another key partner will be the many Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps Community Task Forces across the state. The work of these committees will support the schools' efforts to address the myriad of issues surrounding student achievement initiatives. It is our hope that every school community will establish such a task force if not already formed. Then once established, it will be vital to explore ways to sustain these committees. The well-being of so many of our students depends on the support these groups might offer.

– Marvin Pittman, State Board of Education Community Liaison for Student Achievement

As individuals and as citizens of the United States of America, we do not live in isolation of each other. Rather, we coexist in a democracy based on the formation of a government created for the purpose of providing for our collective needs, such as safety from crime, poverty, and illiteracy. Without the combined forces of all citizens contributing to the greater good, it would be impossible to use purely individual means to provide for the services we take for granted. Services that meet basic needs such as roads, water and sewage systems, as well as, medical clinics, prisons, and perhaps most importantly, public education, would not exist.

Understanding the significance, importance, and variance in communities was the basis for creating at least two of the recommendations by the NC Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps. Recommendations 3 and 4 specifically address engaging parents and local communities in reducing and eradicating the achievement gap. On any topic, especially one as volatile as how best to close the achievement gap, positions and arguments for and against are taken on both sides of possible recommendations. In this case, however, this Commission member recalls no opposition voiced as to whether or not the community and parents had a role in closing the achievement gap.

On a personal note, as a Native American, my own educational experiences were greatly influenced by my family, teachers, preachers, community leaders, extended family, classmates, and by basically any other adult living in my community. I understood that my job was to be a good student. There was an expectation that I would do my best, which included attending classes, doing my homework, studying, earning good grades, and following the instructions of my teachers. I was constantly asked, or better stated, **told**, to do my best in school.

Although I did not fully understand the reasons why, I knew that I was a link in a long chain that included ancestors who were denied the opportunities that had been given to me and that there were many people in my life expecting and depending upon me to be successful. Those expectations can be a powerful motivational force, especially when seasoned with encouraging remarks, "ata boys", and pats on the back.

Each of my fellow commission members had similar stories of how the community and parents played an important role in their educational attainment and made a difference in their own lives. Each recognized the role parents and communities have in developing the whole child. This recognition included a belief that educating all of our students to their highest potential was the single best investment we can make for a brighter future for all children. Discussions were held on how the community benefits from an educated population and education's positive impact upon reducing crime, improving overall health, reducing the need for social programs and generally creating a work force that helps the community attract business and industry which fuels the economy. Political, economic, and moral imperatives were discussed and in the end, all agreed that education, supported by the community, was not a luxury in the future, but a necessity. Additionally, I believe that there was an unstated awareness that it is all of our duty to support, equip, and encourage our students and schools to achieve at the highest levels possible.

– Anthony Locklear, Original and Present Member, NC Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps



TASK FORCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN DURHAM

Durham Public Schools is proud to be home to a very successful Closing the Gap Task Force. The task force was created in 2001 as part of former Superintendent Ann Denlinger's initiatives to close the achievement gap. At the same time, an internal committee was formed to designate goals for the district and to carry forth the work of the Task Force.

The new task force was to be made up of a cross-section of the Durham community, as mandated by the state. An interest meeting was held and the committee was selected from those attending the meeting. Parents, community advocates, association and agency representatives, and school personnel all joined in to tackle this important work. Dr. Warren Herndon, local business leader and Task Force chairman, described the group's work this way, "Durham Public Schools has been very progressive in involving our total community with concerned individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including college professors, retired teachers, business leaders, youth advocacy organizations and others."

Affiliations of the task force members helped DPS to strengthen partnerships with higher education, the Ministerial Alliance, civic groups and more.

The community immediately embraced the task force, and the media reflected the community's warm welcome. Asa Spaulding Jr. wrote in the Triangle Tribune on September 29, 2002, "Denlinger is taking the right tack by giving the general public as much opportunity as possible to participate in the plan's implementation." An article in The (Durham) Herald-Sun on July 10, 2003 stated, "Durham Public Schools is showing what can be done with a good plan and hard work." The community was so pleased, and the results were equally as telling.

The committee has worked diligently to advocate for programs that encourage gap-closing results. Dr. Herndon said the group "believes that all students can achieve at an improved level given the total support of our community." By leveraging partnerships with area clergy and higher education institutions and community agencies, the group has helped expand the breadth of DPS' programs and activities. For example, the closing the gap task force established the initiative 'Clergy for Closing the Gap' which included church leaders from all over the district. Church leaders visit their member

students in school, hold education Sunday activities and reward students for their achievement.

In addition to strong community support for students, Durham also has higher education institutions that have stepped up their efforts to help close achievement gaps. The task force has encouraged Duke University, North Carolina Central University and Durham Technical Community College to expand tutoring and outreach to public schools. Two of the three institutions even host public schools on their campuses. Duke University, through the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership, coordinates enrichment programs, provides funding for numerous efforts and enriches teacher training and education. NCCU has allowed professors to teach classes in some DPS high schools, raising the caliber of expectations and education in our schools. These partnerships have really raised the bar of achievement.

Another area of impact for the task force involves advocating for achievement programs such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). The AVID program is available in elementary through high school. The program assists with studying, organization, writing and other skills that students need in order to manage their school-work. AVID also provides information about career and college options. AVID students in middle and high school participate in an

elective class offered for students who plan to attend a four-year college or university but need additional assistance. The Curriculum includes writing, inquiry, collaboration, reading, note-taking, study skills, career and college research, and preparation for standardized tests.

Superintendent Carl Harris believes that the task force is positioned to persevere in its important work in the coming years. Connecting more students with mentors, expanding the role of partners and supporting parental outreach are on the horizon in Durham Public Schools. Closing gaps is Job One for this group of involved, supportive advocates!

Closing the Achievement Gap Co-Chairs:

Warren Herndon, Ph.D.
Durham Business and Professional Chain Executive Director

Terri Mozingo, Ed.D.
Durham Public Schools Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services



GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL TASK FORCES ON CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Section 8.28 (d) of HB 1840 requires the State Board of Education to develop guidelines to enable the formation of a local task force in each local school administrative unit. The purpose of the task force is to advise and work with the local board of education and administration on closing the gap in academic achievement and on developing a collaborative plan for achieving that goal.

The following are guidelines for establishing and implementing a local task force:



Setting up a Task Force

- Establish the task force under the auspices of the Office of the Superintendent.**
- Identify key stakeholders in the community who should be contacted about serving on the task force. Stakeholders may be chosen from the groups listed below:**
 - parents;
 - school personnel (administrators, teachers, instructional support personnel, exceptional children personnel, second language specialists, etc.);
 - local board of education members;
 - Department of Social Services;
 - Department of Mental Health;
 - Health Department;
 - Juvenile Services;
 - Housing Authority;
 - Employment Security Commission;
 - law enforcement;
 - Communities in Schools (if present in the LEA);
 - Chamber of Commerce;
 - local businesses;
 - community organizations such as Civic Club, Lions' Club, Rotary Club, etc.;
 - communities of faith;
 - media representatives;
 - representatives of higher education (community colleges, colleges/universities in the area).
 - fraternities/sororities/community groups that provide services to children;
 - students; and
 - others as represented in the community.
- Select task force members that are representative of community demographics (race/ethnic, gender, and socio-economic diversity). Consider the following criteria for task force members. Candidates should be willing to:**
 - commit to improving the education of all children, especially those who are underachieving.
 - attend all task force meetings and take an active role in discussions and activities.
 - listen to the ideas, suggestions, and comments of other task force members as well as community members.
 - keep other members of the school/community informed of the work of the task force.
 - participate in any training for the task force members such as consensus building, problem-solving, and/or group dynamics.
 - seek actively data-driven solutions to improving the achievement of all students.
- Solicit a task force member to serve as chair of the group.**
- Appoint a secretary for the task force who will be responsible for recording all aspects of the meeting and distributing it to the Local Education Agency (LEA) public information officer for public dissemination.**
- Convene an organizational meeting of task force members.**
 - Define the charge to the task force.
 - Establish operational procedures.
 - Decide on roles and responsibilities of task force members.
 - Decide on training that may be needed for the task force.
 - Determine what information/data the task force will need.
 - Define the communication process and person(s) responsible.

Identify Need and Broker Community Support

- Present Task Force with National and State data on gap-related RACG issues to understand the urgency of the task at hand.**
 - RACG staff can present this information to your task force; service request form available at www.ncpublicschools.org/racg/
 - Download a sample PowerPoint presentation to use with your task force: www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/racg/resources/reports/guidelines.
- Establish a policy statement for the LEA on closing the achievement gap.**
- Establish a marketing strategy to broker community support. Address why closing the achievement gap is important to the entire community.**
- Gather data from the LEA. Plan and schedule presentations on information/data collected. Ensure that all data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. Examples may include, but are not limited to the following:**
 - state test data
 - discipline statistics
 - Exceptional Children statistics
 - teacher-student ratio
 - attendance data (both students and faculty)
 - faculty composition by race/gender/ethnicity
 - professional preparation of educators
 - other relevant information

Operational Task Force

- Analyze and synthesize data and information. Looking at all factors and using all perspectives, use this data to identify the problem(s) with student achievement.**
- Prioritize the problem(s) with student achievement and set goals with timelines.**
- Define critical questions needed to address the priority problems.**
 - Where are the gaps in services?
 - What programs/strategies are in place to address student achievement needs? What criteria are used to determine their effectiveness? Are they effective? If not, how can they be revised to be more effective?
 - What information is needed to determine research-based programs/strategies to address the gaps?
 - Which programs/strategies were implemented in other environments with similar needs and demographics?
 - What was/were the key(s) to the effectiveness of these programs/strategies?
 - What are the budgetary requirements of these programs?
 - Which programs/strategies can be implemented to impact student achievement? Prioritize.
 - How will program effectiveness be evaluated?
- Decide on subcommittees/task teams to research answers to the critical questions, and make assignments (with timelines).**
- Present findings of each subcommittee to the full task force.**
- Decide on an implementation plan, benchmarks and periodic monitoring process.**
- Develop a report to the school and community that includes the implementation plan, benchmarks and the monitoring process. Provide appropriate translations, as needed. Make the report available to the community by:**
 - posting on LEA website
 - submitting an article to local newspaper(s)
 - mailings to parents
 - presenting to community groups
 - broadcasting on local access cable and radio stations
 - hosting a community forum/summit
- Plan for continued operation and activities of the task force by:**
 - holding interim discussion groups,
 - monitoring status towards meeting benchmarks,
 - regularly collecting and analyzing new data to determine effectiveness,
 - revising implementation plan as needed, and
 - maintaining ongoing communication.