Report of the Achievement Gap Advisory Panel

Montclair, NJ

June 2015

Executive Summary
The Montclair, NJ Achievement Gap Advisory Panel Report
June 2015

The Achievement Gap Advisory Panel—an independent group of concerned parents, educators, District employees and psychologist volunteers—presents our findings of the achievement gap in the Montclair Public School District and our recommendations for reform after approximately eighteen months of study. Our members view the achievement gap as an opportunity gap—i.e., the accumulation of disparities in learning outcomes that lead to racially disparate life chances by the time a child graduates high school. The report shows that the racially distinctive picture of college and career readiness visible when children leave the District is the product of many missteps and lost opportunities along the way. The cracks many black children fall into are visible as early as third grade; at each subsequent transition point, too many are falling behind.

The data are striking. In 2014, the proficiency gap between white and black third graders was *30 percentage points* on the ELA section of the NJ ASK. Stunningly, this was a considerable improvement over 2010 when the gap was 40 percentage points. (Asian and Hispanic numbers are smaller, but not insignificant and show that Asians performed slightly better than whites while Hispanic children performed somewhat better than blacks.) Few of us would consider the current 30 percent achievement gap between blacks and whites acceptable. Note that proficiency on the NJ ASK ELA is widely regarded by educators as a low bar. Typically, a strong start requires more than mere proficiency.

A sample of unacceptable disparities:

- For 2014, two-thirds of eighth-grade white students scored in the top 50 percent of test takers on both ELA and math. For black students, the results were almost flipped. That year, three-quarters of eighth-grade black students scored in the bottom 50 percent.

- The 118 white students enrolled in Algebra I/II High Honors and Algebra II High Honors in 2014-2015 (over half the white students in the grade) sat in classrooms with only a total of 20 black classmates, fewer than the number of Asian students (23) who make up a much smaller percentage of all students at MHS.

- In the ten-year period from 2002-2012, almost half of MHS black students were in the bottom quarter of the GPA distribution, about three quarters in the bottom 50 percent. The numbers for white students are almost exactly opposite.

- White students make up 49 percent of MHS students and 72 percent of students enrolled in AP courses. Black students make up 35 percent yet only 11 percent of students in AP.

Suspensions

The district data show that the trend in disproportionate suspensions by race begins early. In the period 2009-2013, African-American boys comprised about half of all suspensions of elementary-school students (79 out of 164). More black girls were suspended than white boys. The overall trend is improving; suspensions have been declining, and 2012-13 saw less than half the suspensions as 2009-10. However, the significantly disproportionate suspension of black boys and girls remains. Many students are now subject to in-school suspensions that still deny them critical time in the classroom.

Over all, the quantitative and qualitative findings show that Montclair school students have vastly different experiences in our classrooms based on race, a gap that begins as early as third grade, a gap that has persisted for decades.

We have desegregated our schools. We have not integrated our outcomes.

Recommendation Highlights

The AGAP recommendations are divided into five categories (the report concludes with a complete list). We begin with a single, overarching recommendation to ensure continuity of focus and accountability for results:

Our mission-critical recommendation is the appointment of an Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Achievement to serve in the Montclair Superintendent's cabinet. This full-time educator-official will have as their sole responsibility the task of overseeing the implementation of these and other reforms, the authority to monitor compliance at the school level and the institutional capacity to coordinate best practices across the District.

I. Promoting Effective District and School Leadership

1. **Reviewing Longitudinal Achievement Data.** Review three years of *longitudinal* student achievement data for teachers and principals to identify student trends in their students or school performance and to enhance the constructive feedback that is given to aid improvement.
2. **Supporting Marshall Rubric Teacher Evaluations.** The District Office will provide support to principals to effectively evaluate faculty and staff and institute a formal action plan to remediate any deficiencies, per the *Marshall Rubric*, a tool that is currently used in Montclair Public Schools to make teacher evaluations.
3. **Principal Town Halls for School Performance Reports.** Require all principals to hold an annual Town Hall with caregivers to review in a plain, parent-friendly manner, the entire *school performance report* produced by the State for their school within 30-days of the release; principals should also be prepared to present these findings at Board

of Education meetings so the Township will have access and an understanding of individual school performance.

4. **Quarterly Progress Monitoring for Schools with Large Gaps.** Schools with achievement gaps (to be defined by a partnership between the Achievement Team, see Section III.1 for a definition and the AGAP) will submit updated quarterly reports on student progress; narrowing the achievement gap will be an annual goal of every school and will be measured, tracked and reported.

5. **Standardizing the Process for New Academic Programs.** Ensure that MPS has a standardized process for reviewing and implementing any new academic programs in the District or at a specific school.

6. **Reviewing RTI Policy.** Review of the District's policy on when the *Response to Intervention (RTI)* process should begin for an identified student to ensure that a student does not have to wait until the end of the first grading cycle to receive a RTI.

II. Establishing High Standards and Expectations for All Students

1. **Smart Assessment.** Have teachers and administrators assess all students (including Kindergarten); optimally, the assessments should happen during the summer before school, otherwise, these assessments should occur within the first three weeks of the school year to ensure an understanding of where the child is academically; this is particularly important for K, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th grade students. Notify caregivers in a timely manner if their student is not proficient and protocols in accordance with the RTI process will be followed.

2. **Immediate Communication with Caregivers.** Shorten the feedback loop of communication with caregivers to 48 hours related to academic performance and/or behavior.

3. **Algebra.** Administer the algebra readiness exam to all fifth grade students; allow 5th grade teachers or caregivers to recommend a student for Algebra in 6th grade.

4. **Math Readiness.** Provide a year of Algebra instruction to all students by the end of 8th grade.

5. **Reaching for Advanced Placement.** Increase the numbers of students from populations who are underrepresented in Honors, High Honors (HH) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes with appropriate support identified, scaled, and funded, e.g. tutoring services through community partners; require any student from a population that is underrepresented in a higher level course, who receives an "A" or "B" in a lower level course to have a timely meeting with a staff member and caregiver about upgrading to a higher level course in that subject area.

III. Ensuring a Supportive Learning Environment

1. **Integrated Achievement Teams at Each School.** Form an Achievement team, consisting of a principal, SAC(s), head of guidance, general education and special education teachers at each school.

2. **Extended Learning Time.** Offer extended learning time by 60-90 minutes after school 3-5 days a week at all schools with a focus on students who are not proficient, proficient and/or not on target. MPS could possibly partner with some of the established after school enrichment programs in Montclair or create a program utilizing carefully selected current or retired teachers. The primary focus would be on

ensuring students have mastery of academic content by providing additional instruction and then homework assistance.

3. **Sensible Universal Suspension Policies.** Develop a universal suspension policy related to non-violent offenses; ensure that disciplinary policies are implemented consistently District-wide and are followed; ensure that an intervention process is adhered to before any suspension decisions are made.

4. **Buses Home After School.** Develop and implement an after-school bus service that will provide transportation for students who are staying for extended learning time, enrichment programs or sports activities.

IV. Developing High Levels of Family and Community Engagement

1. **Academic Roadmaps for All.** Develop a clear academic roadmap for caregivers that is easily accessible via the web and through the District office, outlining the academic progressions from the 4th to the 12th grade; these pathways should provide clarity on how course selection impacts future readiness for higher level classes.

2. **Family Advocacy Mentoring Program.** Develop and implement a Family Advocacy Mentoring Program, which will include but not be limited to, providing guidance for caregivers on academic planning and transition support, summer slide strategies and resources, and at-home study techniques; this program can be managed and led by the SATP at each school and will be available to support any parent, but especially those with children who are partially proficient.

3. **No Language Barriers.** Ensure that all communication to caregivers reflects language differences and acknowledges varying degrees of computer access.

V. Providing Ongoing, Focused Professional Development

1. **Teacher-directed Professional Development Resources.** Teachers, counselors and other academic staff must be able to formally suggest professional development topics and shape training opportunities; Special Education teachers should also have supplemental professional development to ensure they are exposed to most current techniques and developments in their specialized field of expertise.

2. **Independent Race Bias and Cultural Competency Assessments.** Conduct a search process to identify a provider of racial, unconscious bias, equity and cultural competency assessment and embed these elements into the professional development requirements for all staff; ensure the provider embeds the historical and contemporary impacts that racism has had on student outcomes and student success.

3. **Help with Differentiated Instruction.** Conduct a search process to identify a provider of differentiated instruction training; the objective of the vendor will be to design a training program for the MPS school district and the provider will be required to provide an outline of desired behaviors and knowledge transfer as a result of the training.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

The Achievement Gap Advisory Panel (AGAP) was formed in January 2014 to address an urgent reality in the Montclair Public Schools District (MPSD): Too many black and increasingly Latino kids are falling behind their white and increasingly Asian counterparts in terms of college and career readiness. The data are striking. Disparities that are already significant by the third grade—*an average of 30 points between black and white students on the ELA (English and Language Arts) of the NJ ASK*—widen into distinct and unacceptable paths of learning, reaching a crescendo of inequality at the most critical moment of opportunity in a young person's life: high school graduation. We found that disparate educational outcomes in the MPSD are too often, but not only, based on race; lower-income children underperform relative to their higher-income, often affluent, peers. For too long, the Township has accepted this stubborn reality as a fact of life, perhaps caught in the erroneous belief that preparedness gaps are the inevitable result of so much economic diversity. At least we had desegregated our schools, the thinking went, even if we had not yet integrated them. This report is not the first attempt to challenge that mindset with evidence and comprehensive recommendations. We sincerely hope it is the last.

The members of the AGAP empaneled by then-superintendent Dr. Penny MacCormack are now pleased to release our findings and recommendations to the public. We are a diverse group of educators, parents, psychologists and Montclair residents with strong attachments to the MPSD. The AGAP's independence was assured throughout; even MPSD employee members served in their individual capacities. Our charge is to "offer advice to the Superintendent of Schools for supporting all students in reaching the district vision." Before and after Dr. MacCormack's tenure, that vision has always demanded educational excellence along with equity.

Ours is a community blessed with the resources and participation of a broad range of students from different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Therefore, the quest for the strongest possible educational environments has entailed a demand for learning and organizational strategies that support *all* children in achieving excellence despite their differences. The AGAP was formed in response to what many across the country call "the achievement gap"—meaning, chronic disparities in standardized test performance by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status that correlate into vastly unequal opportunities in life. Test scores hardly tell the full story of a child's abilities. As the text will show, other indicators of educational stratification include enrollment in higher-level classes and huge differences in median GPAs. In the aggregate they point to important trends and fault lines that must be addressed in comprehensive fashion. Disparate learning outcomes challenge many school districts; similar districts to ours—such as South Orange-Maplewood School District—have been the recent targets of costly litigation over the failure to understand and close chronic gaps. This document represents the considered work of informed community members, working with the best interests of all of our children in mind, to finally close these gaps at every school in Montclair. We can and must do better.

The methodology behind our findings and the framework for our recommendations are straightforward. The AGAP met regularly to study MPSD school data, discussed an ex-

tensive bibliography, organized into subcommittees, held community forums for input from various Montclair constituencies, held meetings with the MEA (Montclair Education Association) and began the lengthy process of drafting. Both the study process and the recommendations followed the general framework of the Correlates of Effective Schools Research (Edmunds, Brookover, Lezotte) and the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools (Darling-Hammond, DuFour, Elmore, et al.). We also evaluated the Montclair Two-Year Strategic Operating Plan which recently expired. Our findings encompass both goals and the specific reforms to achieve them. Therefore, we divide the recommendations into the following five categories, spreading reforms among all necessary groups and engaging the full resources of the learning community:

1. Promoting Effective District and School Leadership.
2. Establishing High Standards and Expectations for All Students.
3. Ensuring A Supportive Learning Environment.
4. Developing High Levels of Family and Community Engagement.
5. Providing Ongoing, Focused Professional Development.

Our district-wide set of reforms is designed to address a district-wide crisis, which entails accountability at every point in the MPSD but especially the top. **Therefore, our mission-crittical recommendation is the appointment of an Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Achievement to serve in the Montclair Superintendent's cabinet.** This full-time educator-official will, as his or her sole responsibility, oversee the implementation of these and other reforms. He or she will have (i)the authority to monitor compliance at the school level and (ii) the institutional capacity to coordinate best practices across the District. The AGAP therefore recommends that the Acting Superintendent immediately launch a nationwide search for this position in order to ensure the broadest possible candidate pool, actively competing to demonstrate to the Montclair community his or her capacity and expertise in evaluation and assessment tools, K-12 management experience and the many components specific to addressing and eliminating racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps. (Please see the Appendix for the full job description, pgs 80-82)

As even the highlights show, the remainder of our recommendations follow the themes of the five categories listed above.

1. It begins with effective leadership—at the district *and* school level—being fully accountable for making the end of the achievement gap a coordinated goal carried out by *all* the education professionals in the MPSD. In addition to the new district-wide position of Assistant Superintendent for Equity and Achievement, principals are the keys to changing the disappointing patterns of the past.

2. Setting high standards and expectations requires constant monitoring and assessing where students are, expecting at least proficiency and putting active plans in place to meet proficiency and more. Often assessments will show that better targeting of teaching time—for instance, after-school sessions to immediately address evidence of falling behind—can prevent a problem from becoming a prolonged crisis. We pay particular attention to caregivers' and students' needs for better information roadmaps that connect the expectations at different stages of learning to important outcomes. Many parents simply do not

have the information to navigate transitions more easily, prepare their children for milestones or deal with a behavior problem.

3. Student success is a shared responsibility that begins with supportive learning environments. Supportive learning environments require better communication. They also demand more effective methods of discipline. So we focus, for instance, on the counterproductive and inequitable role of disproportionate suspensions. Troubled students need to be in school most of all.

4. To develop higher levels of family and community engagement we recommend several reforms, including creating a Family Advocacy Mentoring group; an Achievement Team based in each school; an Inter-Community Council and an improved Skyward campaign.

5. Finally, the AGAP recognized the importance of meeting teachers' needs for ongoing quality, focused professional development, especially as it impacts their ability to actively engage the type of differentiated and culturally competent instruction necessary to close this gap once and for all.

Our recommendations include many areas of common focus in achievement gap work. For instance, we believe in the ample research that shows how building a strong capacity for learning begins early, and that all children should have access to free or reduced-rate pre-kindergarten through publicly subsidized programs such as the highly effective Montclair Community Pre-K. We also believe that Special Education rules and practices present a fertile area for effective reform, and we propose various changes in its administration in the District. Disparate student discipline—especially the counterproductive use of excessive suspensions—is a third area commonly targeted by advocates for equitable change, and our recommendations address this too.

We understand that Montclair residents care about the success of all the students in our schools—a deep-seated caring that is part of the core identity of this special community. What is clear, however, is that even the best intentions may not be sufficient to overcome patterns of inequality that run to the core of our community's disparate and diverse experiences. Like inequality everywhere, most Montclair residents understand its corrosive effect. They understand that educational inequalities represent inequalities of life chances that should never break down along racial lines. The challenge then is to invest in equitable solutions. We may not have all of them in these recommendations, but we have many. Critically important to their effectiveness, however, is ensuring expert and professional stewardship of these goals. This, we believe, can only be done with the combination of a new Assistant Superintendent and a collective push from all of us—parents, teachers, students and administrators—to make success for all a defining characteristic of our wonderful home.
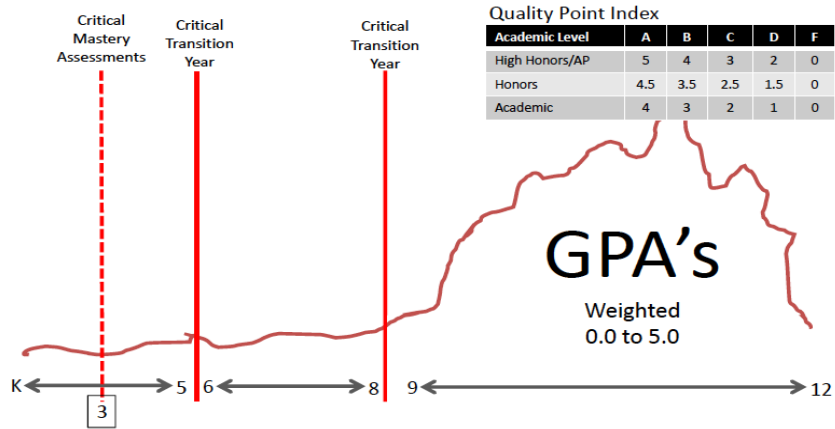
I. Understanding Achievement as Opportunity

Joshua and Tamir, two fictitious kindergartners, are fortunate to grow up in the town of Montclair. They live in a beautiful community, with lovely places to play, learn and develop into productive men. As a white boy and a black boy, they are fortunate to live in a place that has consciously desegregated itself socially. The adults around them give generously of their time and resources to ensure that the key institutions outside their homes enrich and protect them—especially the Montclair Schools. Their families are similar, too. Each has loving parents who want them to achieve academically, hope for their personal empowerment and work hard. They may not have all the same resources—Joshua is the upper middle-class child of professional parents with advanced degrees, Tamir the lower middle-class son of employed parents who attended some college—but they should both be able to avail themselves of the collective abundance the town offers and seek out similar paths to opportunity.

Unfortunately, Joshua and Tamir—statistically speaking—face very different prospects for a life of opportunity. When they graduate from Montclair High School in a dozen years, Joshua will have a GPA that puts him in the top 50% of the class, like 70% of his white peers. Tamir will be in the bottom half, like 77% of his African-American classmates. Joshua is many times more likely than Tamir to enroll in at least one Advanced Placement class. (He will also have been the beneficiary of a lot more private tutoring along the way.) In the school year 2012-13, Tamir was also five times more likely to be suspended from high school than Joshua—an improvement over 2009-10 when the gap was *ten times* more likely. What these simple facts indicate is that the value of a Montclair School District education will be much greater for Joshua and his sister than for Tamir and his.

Grade points are weighted according to a "quality point index", meaning that the more challenging (and comprehensive) the class, the more the grade counts toward overall GPA. This is why Joshua and Tamir—friends now for kindergarten play dates—will not sit in most of the same Montclair High classrooms once they hit puberty. At each crucial transition point—third grade, sixth grade, ninth grade—they will most likely grow farther and farther apart in proficiency, exposure and readiness. The cumulative result of these disparities means that by senior year in high school they will not apply to nor attend the same colleges, enjoy the same social and information networks, make the same incomes, acquire the same wealth or, in all probability, live as long. The boys and their female classmates will also have endured the tug and the pull of social pressures to belong in one segregated group or another. All of these measures of opportunity are connected to early school performance.

Navigating the Quality Point Index

The top things colleges and universities are looking for:
- GPA (Grade Point Average)
- Rigor (High Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses)
- Standardized Test Scores (SAT / ACT)

Critical Mastery Assessments

Critical Transition Year

Critical Transition Year

Quality Point Index

Academic Level	A	B	C	D	F
High Honors/AP	5	4	3	2	0
Honors	4.5	3.5	2.5	1.5	0
Academic	4	3	2	1	0

GPA's

Weighted 0.0 to 5.0

K ←→ 3 ←→ 5 6 ←→ 8 9 ←→ 12

8

There are many ways to define a racial achievement gap in education, but the inequality in life chances based on high school learning disparities and college readiness is a good place to start. Of course, college readiness measures the cumulative effects of 12 years of differences between white and black students in Montclair. Some parents in town, perhaps most of us, might assume that what is really reflected here are somewhat inevitable inequalities of resources between poor black children and wealthy white ones. Many members of the AGAP themselves assumed as much when we began our research eighteen months ago. We were half wrong. Our data analyses were granular, but not enough to indicate exactly where low-income black children performed relative to all of their peers (and the district has low-income white children, too). But the data show that even such a break out could never account for all or even most of the racial achievement gap between white and black students—of any economic background. **Montclair students have vastly different experiences in our classrooms based on race, a gap that begins as early as third grade, a gap that has persisted for decades.**

GPA's: Disproportionality of African American vs. White students

Class of:	2013		2014	
Gr 12	AA	W	AA	W
TOTAL:	178	255	196	235
Top 5%	1	21	1	20
Top 10%	4	39	3	49
Top 25%	10	98	12	90
Top 50%	30	190	45	163
Bottom 25%	94	17	90	20
Bottom 50%	148	65	151	72

Class of 2014
TOP 50%: 163 of 235 **or** 70% of white students had GPA's in the top 50% of the class; 23% or 45 out of 196 of AA students were in the top 50% of the class

BOTTOM 50%: 72 of 235 or 31% of white students; 151 of 196 or 77% of AA students

- This has been a consistent pattern for over a decade

AA=African American (Black), W=White

10

We have desegregated our public institutions. We have not integrated our outcomes. We are overdue and must get it done.

What causes the racial achievement gap?

The answer to this basic question is complicated and contested. Achievement gaps are measured in crude outcomes that encompass a wide variety of factors, obvious and nuanced, objective and subjective. As parents and educators explained to us during community forums and separate meetings with teachers, the quantitative disparities we measure as gaps reflect differences in communication styles, unconscious cultural assumptions, hunger, fear and stress levels, the presence or lack of tutoring supports, disparities in information and many other qualitative conditions that we don't necessarily equate with classroom teaching. However, in a carefully researched 2008 report by Washington State's House Advisory Committee and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, researchers found the following causes:

- Inequitable distribution of skilled, experienced teachers;
- Insufficient and inequitable school funding;
- Inadequate, obsolete, and unbalanced distribution of facilities, technology, and, instructional materials;
- Inequitable access to demanding, rigorous pre-college coursework;
- Institutional racism;
- Lack of cultural competence among teachers, school staff, administrators, curriculum and assessment developers, and the school system itself.

Secondary causes of the achievement gap are:

- Intergenerational poverty;
- Families/communities not able (and often not welcomed by the education system) to support or advocate for children;
- A lack of supplemental services such as mentoring and tutoring for young people whose backgrounds subject them to the inequities and risk factors listed above.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to reach from this is that an achievement gap becomes an opportunity gap in the life of an independent adult. Since the smaller achievement deficits that often lead up to that larger opportunity gap represent the accumulation of lost opportunities—the lost opportunity to get the right help, to know the sequence, to be presumed capable, to be pushed, to be properly engaged—the "achievement gap" is really the sum of lost opportunities to nurture excellence in a young person's life.

What causes the opportunity gap in diverse, progressive districts like Montclair with all of its many resources?

Often when we hear of the achievement gap, it comes in the context of statewide comparisons of segregated districts—for instance, a poor city's test scores and school rankings versus a wealthy, racially homogenous suburb. Montclair would appear then to simply be a microcosm of both.

It is and it isn't. It is true that Montclair has an exemplary diversity of people in one town—a truly gorgeous mosaic of families from different racial, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. Some are traditionally defined high achievers and some are not. What makes Montclair different, however, is that most families enjoy the same access to the institutional resources that promote opportunity. Unlike poor families in a poor city, low-income families in Montclair not only attend the same schools as their wealthier peers, but enjoy the same libraries, recreational outlets, YMCA programs and camps, civic events, elected officials, tax base, nonprofit organizations, religious institutions and museum. Parents may not always have the same educational backgrounds, jobs or money for private tutoring, but they have access to many of the same helpful resources—a fact that sharply distinguishes Montclair from the vast majority of other places in the United States.

This is one of the most important reasons why the AGAP does not succumb to the belief that our children's disparities are the inevitable result of historic and societal inequalities. And even if they are, we have the resources to overcome them. In fact, we believe that our opportunity gap is an important indicator of problems in the MPSD that should concern everyone: Inconsistency.

We identified inconsistency as a key problem. The District has experienced significant turnover in leadership over the last decade or so and the introduction and abandonment of many programs. A principal whose school showed progress in closing gaps might be promoted into District administration, leaving the school to work through a transition.

Costly programs such as the Lucy Calkins Writing Program became the new curricular thing just a few years ago, occupying a lot of focus, preparation and the abandonment of other programs only to be discontinued a year or two later. Successful teaching practices aimed at addressing achievement gap issues such as the AVID program were abandoned without an adequate replacement or incorporation of its most helpful elements into the existing curriculum. Instability among superintendents has been a major source of inconsistency in leadership styles, priorities and results. Lastly, inconsistency among schools in terms of academic programs, policies and practices also attribute to these opportunity gaps.

Inconsistency is never a solid foundation for strong learning environments, but who is hurt most by inconsistency? Families without the independent resources to compensate for the deficiencies and weather these transitions. Inconsistency should concern all families in Montclair. But the students with some of the greatest needs become the canary in the coal mine for many of the worst repercussions. They are the students at greatest risk of falling through cracks and getting left behind. As programs and requirements change, their (often working) parents may have the most difficult time getting information about how best to navigate the changes. Understanding this, the AGAP was not surprised to learn from so many parents how confused they were about certain basic rules and pipelines to success in the MPSD.

Special concerns about Special Education classifications. A common concern in our community and in all discussions of the achievement gap is the role of special education. In particular, many people concerned with persistent gaps point to the over-classification of black males in special education as a marginalizing factor—and Montclair's rates are higher than most (see the Appendix for rates). The AGAP was specifically *not* charged with taking into account the effect of special education dynamics. Last year, the Montclair Board of Education formed a Disproportionality Committee in order to study the evidence and issue a report. We will not intrude upon that mandate. However, the data suggest a few important observations about special education relevant to achievement in Montclair's schools.

Special education means dramatically different outcomes for white students than black students here. Although white special education students are behind their white peers in general education on testing measures, they are ahead of their African-American special education classmates—by substantial margins. The charts below were chosen to illustrate the disparities with respect to only two transition points: 3rd and 8th grade proficiency testing on the NJASK English and Language Arts (ELA) portion and Math for just two years, 2013 and 2014.

Although the chart breaks down white and black students into general and special ed as well as students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not, looking only at non-economically disadvantaged special education-classified students by race says a lot. On the ELA, 67.4 percent of white third graders scored proficient or above on the NJASK in 2013, compared to just 26.7 percent of their black special education peers—an achievement gap of 40 percentage points. In 2014, *the gap was 58 percentage points*, a stunning divide. (The numbers are relatively small, but the pattern holds from year to year.)

Gap Analysis: NJASK ELA W/AA Non-Econ Dis v. Econ Dis by Gen Ed and Sp Ed
Percent Proficient+Adv Proficient

Looking at eighth graders and turning to NJASK math proficiency for the same years, white special education-classified students were about 14 percentage points ahead of their black special ed classmates in 2013. The gap grew to 20.5 percentage points in 2014. The issues are complex and bear much closer scrutiny. However, one conclusion is undeniable: white and black students *who are not economically disadvantaged* experience radically disparate achievement outcomes in special education in the MPSD.

Gap Analysis: NJASK MATH W/AA Non-Econ Dis v. Econ Dis by Gen Ed and Sp Ed
Percent Proficient+Adv Proficient

Gr8

13

Why should Montclair act to transform the District into a place where all are expected to achieve and achieve with excellence?

The AGAP considered several reasons. First, we are a community of people who tend to care very deeply about civic cohesion and equal opportunity. It's in our values and our work, requiring great investments of time and energy to maintain. A racial achievement gap is inconsistent with those values. Moreover, strong values foster great expectations. *All of our children can succeed at a high level.*

Second, because we can. The AGAP estimates that the achievement gap reflects the performance of about 100 school children per grade across the entire MPSD. Divided among the schools and classrooms, the number of children who need to be reached differently is manageable. This is not a "societal" problem, as some would say. The number of kids affected can fit on a few school buses.

Third, we are vulnerable to a civil rights lawsuit. Our sister towns of Maplewood and South Orange were recently sued at great expense for tracking at the high school level and racially disproportionate suspension rates. A racial achievement gap in Montclair is not immune from legal attack, and an adverse decision will take away our ability to reach solutions independent of a court. We can do this ourselves.

Fourth, gross educational disparities by race indict the hard work of our teachers and the overall reputation of our school district. People move to municipalities for the quality of their schools—and pay high taxes on the assurance that the schools remain excellent. We are no different. Sure, we want to protect our property values. We also want to protect our reputation for excellence. A racial achievement gap in Montclair is a damaging secret that will eventually get out.

Lastly, we love Tamir as much as we love Joshua. And their sisters. We love them as children so that they can be strong, capable, productive and free-thinking adults. We want each of their success when they are little so that we can enjoy each of their successes when they go on to represent us in adulthood. To achieve that will require all of us—parents, teachers, administrators, students—committing to them in order to get each what he and she needs for maximum growth. That difficult work is equity work to which we must commit ourselves in the name of excellence and our shared values.

This report seeks to demonstrate through the data just how the disparate paths traveled by Joshua and Tamir are laid—from the early grades to high school graduation. We will see what a maze it can be and how important access to information can be. That information takes many forms. Some information is what many enterprising parents learn and share with their friends, who then act to put necessary resources in place. As we will see, there are roadmaps to success that require careful monitoring of student progress and anticipation of the steps ahead. Not every parent knows this. Some information is what teachers can be aware of in a timely way—assessments of problems that can be acted on *before* students fall too far behind to catch up. Teachers need the tools to know precisely where all

students are, with enough time to implement appropriate help strategies when problems arise. Some information is what effective district leadership must know in order to lead. Coordinating equity and excellence is ultimately the responsibility of principals and the superintendent's office, who must seek and act upon disparity data in order to be accountable for reducing them.

The remainder of this report details the evidence of opportunity disparities known as the achievement gap. Along with the data, we include a small sample of recommendations that address some of the problems we describe. Next, we offer a long detailed list of recommendations based on both the problems and the solutions discussed in the relevant academic literature and employed successfully in other districts.

Sources, key terms and additional information are contained in the Appendices.

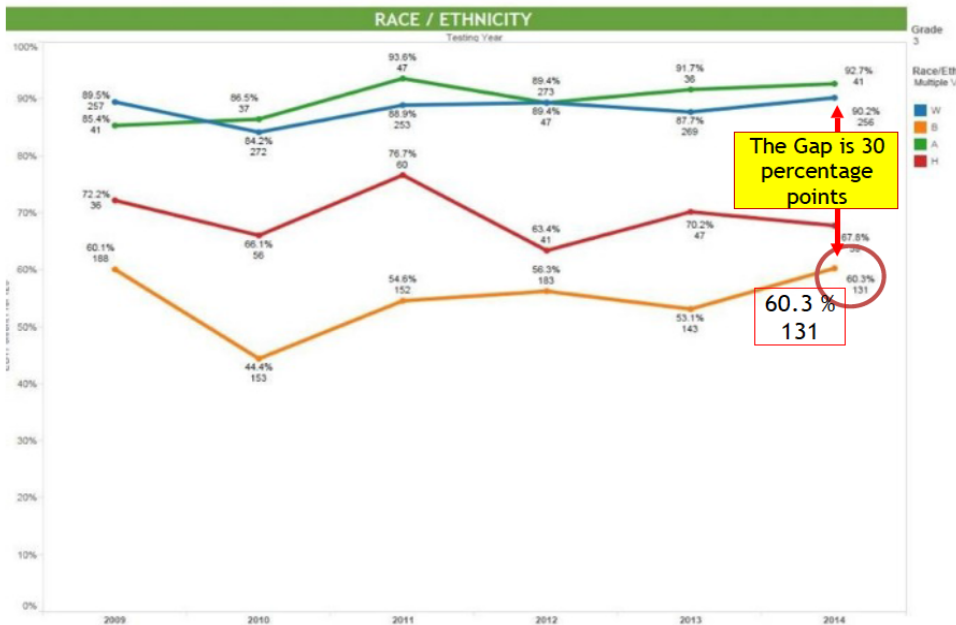# I. 100 Kids a Year, per grade: The Importance of a Strong Start in Literacy and Math in Elementary School

Data from the MPSD shows that the number of students falling behind is approximately 100 kids per grade, per year. The cracks they fall into begin to open in kindergarten but reach the first tipping point by third grade.

Research has repeatedly shown that third grade is pivotal for mastering literacy and critical math skills. As the Center for Public Education notes, "Because reading is the gateway skill to further learning, children who cannot read proficiently seldom catch up academically and often fail to graduate on time from high school or drop out altogether." Insights like these led Montgomery County, Maryland to focus their achievement gap efforts on two ends of the "value chain"—early grades literacy and AP classes in high school. The two were strongly linked. According to *Leading for Equity*, the top readers in Grade 3 eventually enrolled in the most rigorous classes in high school and went on to be successful in college and in life. As we learned from parent testimony at the AGAP community sharing forums, programs like STARS can really make a difference in developing early mastery.

However, parents of elementary school students consistently pointed out that problems are evident early, but that remedies fall short. District data clearly supports them. As the chart below shows, the ELA disparities in NJ ASK Grade 3 proficiency rates by race— one measure of an achievement gap—demonstrate a history of yawning gaps in reading ability among Montclair children. In 2014, the proficiency gap between white and black students was *30 percentage points*. Stunningly, this was a considerable improvement over 2010 when the gap was 40 percentage points. (Asian and Hispanic numbers are smaller, but not insignificant and show that Asians performed slightly better than whites while Hispanic children performed somewhat better than blacks.) Few of us would consider the current 30 percent achievement gap between blacks and whites acceptable. And keep in mind that proficiency on the NJ ASK ELA is widely regarded by educators as a low bar. Typically, a strong start requires more than mere proficiency.

Montclair NJ ASK ELA Race / Eth
Percent Proficient   Gr 3

In math, the district data is similar. The 2014 gap is about 21 percentage points. Here, whites and Asians performed about the same in one cohort, and blacks and Hispanics shared another.

Montclair NJ ASK MATH Race / Eth
Percent Proficient   Gr 3

What is important to take away from these data alone is that cumulative disadvantages in basic reading and math have already to take hold in students by third grade. This hold translates into deficits that, without the appropriate and effective interventions, deter-

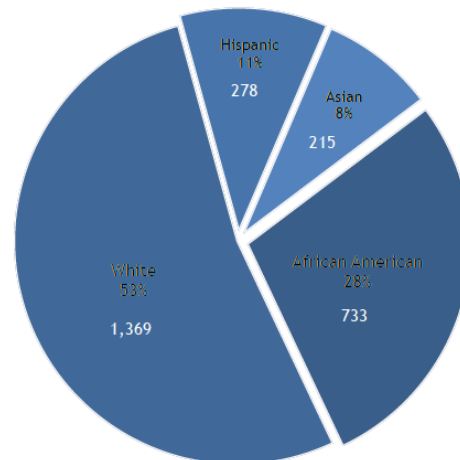mine later outcomes in a de facto system of tracking. While the AGAP found no evidence that tracking was deliberate in the MPSD, the trends here and in other data have been well known for years. In fact, we strongly recommend that readers carefully examine the individual school reports to see how their particular schools fare. While the achievement gap is a district-wide crisis, it is more pronounced in some settings.

Elementary School Observations

- Only **60% of Black and 67% of Hispanic students are proficient by the end of 3rd grade; 90% of white students are proficient at 3rd grade.**
  - These are pivotal statistics because of the **implications for access to a rigorous curriculum beyond 3rd grade.** This underscores the need for an **explicit, urgent approach to early literacy**, particularly for students in this population."
- Teachers need the support of all parents/caregivers
- Parents shared that teachers in some elementary schools are recommending tutoring to supplement classroom learning
- A clear understanding of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process is key for teachers and parents in the K-5 experience

Grades 1-5 Ethnic Breakdown

Hispanic 11% — 278
Asian 8% — 215
African American 28% — 733
White 53% — 1,369

2014-2015	Total Black Students	Percentage Ec Dis	Percentage Sp Ed	Percentage Ec Dis+Sp Ed
Gr 5	147	70/147 = 48%	50/147 = 34%	33/147 = 22%
Gr 3	149	72/149 = 48%	30/149 = 20%	18/149 = 12%

27

Falling Behind: Assessments and Response to Intervention (RTI)

The above data clearly show that gaps begin early and persist for many kids until it becomes unlikely to close. That is, many students who fall behind are left behind. There are many approaches that educators can and should take to address this reality, and the AGAP recognizes the discretion of district leadership and teaching professionals to determine ultimate best practices. However, two important observations are warranted by the trends in Montclair: Assessment is critical and greater use should be made of Response to Intervention—or RTI.

Although the district has seen controversy over the issue of "assessments" in the recent past, Montclair teachers have been doing assessments for a long time and continue to do so. Logically, there is no way to know that a student needs help without assessing their comprehension at various points along the curriculum. Assessments, therefore, should not be a dirty word. When assessments are used to determine student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of particular aspects of the curriculum, they offer an indispensable tool in preventing gaps from widening. But the assessments must be timely in order to ensure that students in need receive the appropriate intervention in time. Many Montclair teachers we

spoke to complained, for instance, that by the time the results of some assessments came back, the school year was practically lost.

Response to Intervention offers a multi-level approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. RTI is not new and is used in various forms by school districts across the nation, including ours. According to the RTI Action Network, it is a three-step model of school supports that uses research-based academic and/or behavioral interventions. The steps begin with scientific, research-based classroom instruction, screening and group interventions for all students. Students identified as being in need of supports receive supplemental instruction during the school day inside the classroom. The second step is for those students who do not make adequate progress. They receive targeted interventions, matched to their needs, often in small groups. For those who continue to make inadequate progress, step three offers students individualized, intensive instruction. Students who continue to struggle may be referred for special education evaluation, however, RTI is by no means the same thing as special education. Two key features of RTI worth underscoring here is the necessity of parent involvement at each step along the way and monitoring—or assessment—of how well the child responds to various interventions.

For example, as the name implies, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) approaches student assessment in a developmentally appropriate way, based on a child's age and grade. Students are assessed in a one-on-one setting with their teacher, as opposed to under more regimented, traditional testing circumstances. The data derived from this assessment allows teachers and administrators to immediately understand precisely where a student's reading strengths and deficits lie, so that, if warranted, the RTI process can immediately begin.

Parent Concerns

In AGAP's community forums, parents spoke about their experiences with RTI, some favorably, some not so favorably. Of greatest concern with how RTI is currently implemented in the District are questions about whether it has enough aides to support the differentiated needs of larger classrooms. We heard several comments in which parents expressed either confusion or suspicion about how differentiated learning works. Some parents expressed concern that RTI in some cases replaces electives. Going forward, it will be important to distinguish between the District's use of RTI and its commitment to differentiated learning.

Parents offered longstanding impressions about other classroom dynamics, too. Some felt that unofficial tracking occurs early, based on lower expectations or teachers' unwillingness to recognize the different paces at which some children grasp some material. Unofficially tracked students are then "locked in", a status that is inadvertently worsened by the "parent-driven" pressure of more informed and aggressive parents to advocate for their own kids. Parents described a separation that occurs gradually through elementary school—characterized largely, but not entirely, by racial difference—which can ossify into outright racial segregation by 5th grade. This racial segregation is internalized by many students, who by middle school may come to identify higher academic performance with white students and mediocrity with being black.

The growing divides may play out in casual language. For instance, one parent re-told a daughter's experience at Hillside. The 5th grader came upon a group of students observing some boisterous play fighting during lunchtime. "What's going on?" asked the daughter to another student. "Oh, we're watching the ghettos," he said, referring to black boys roughhousing.

Several parents were adamant that teachers' lack of cultural training was a distinct problem. They often expressed this concern in connection with the different ways that black children were treated. While a few recommended greater diversity among teachers, many acknowledged that the problem of differential treatment by race and a lack of cultural competency was not an issue only for white teachers. Black teachers demonstrated bias, as well.

Finally, one of the most uniform complaints made by parents motivated enough to come out to a forum on a late-evening weekday was a lack of information about academic paths and requirements. Many simply did not feel that they had the information about their child's academic status, options and the requirements for success. If they found out, it was often too late. The problem can be acute when a child would qualify for academic supports and special services. According to one parent, "No MPS parent should ever be able to say, 'I did not know that…'" when it comes to the availability of resources in the community." Latino parents were especially aggrieved at the lack of information in Spanish. Single parents expressed frustration at scheduling constraints, such as last-minute teacher requests for conferences. Working parents in particular repeated their exasperation with PTA meetings and other school-related events held at 3 pm on workdays. Many also complained that their children get the short end of lay-offs and program cancellations, for instance in music, because wealthier parents will compensate with private lessons and tutoring while they cannot.
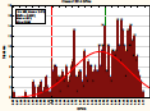
Disproportionate Discipline

Earlier we noted the disproportionate suspension rates by race at Montclair High School. National research consistently demonstrates the relationship between school suspension and the "school-to-prison pipeline"—that is, the correlation between suspension, dropping out and involvement in criminal activity. While suspensions may be the only appropriate remedy to certain extreme transgressions, suspensions have little to do with promoting educational opportunity for disciplined students.

The district data show that the trend in disproportionate suspensions by race begins early. In the period 2009-2013, African-American boys comprised about half of all suspensions of elementary-school students (79 out of 164). More black girls were suspended than white boys. The overall trend is improving; suspensions have been declining, and 2012-13 saw less than half the suspensions as 2009-10. However, the significantly disproportionate suspensions of black boys and girls remain. Additionally, the decrease of reported suspensions ignores the fact that schools still employ in-school suspension policies that remove students from the classroom, yet go unreported.

4-year Elem School Suspension Data

Elementary Schools					
RACE/GENDER	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total Elem
Asian Male	1	0	1	3	4
Asian Female	0	0	0	0	0
African American Male	26	42	19	9	79
African American Female	5	8	3	6	17
Hispanic Male	10	5	1	1	11
Hispanic Female	0	1	0	1	1
White Male	4	7	9	1	14
White Female	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	47	63	33	21	164
General Ed	35	35	21	16	107
Special Ed	12	28	12	5	57

24

Key Recommendations to Address Disparities in Elementary School

1. Administer diagnostic tests within the first 20 days of school to identify students' gaps and tailor remediation accordingly.

    1a. Administer school readiness and informal reading assessments (in small groups) for all kindergarten students within the first 15 days of the school year.

    1b. Administer a formal diagnostic assessment within the first 10 days of school to students in grades 1-3 who ended the previous school year below grade level in reading. This will enable the schools and teachers to identify students' reading growth or loss over the summer, and accelerate the process of matching students with the appropriate level of support to ensure their success.

     1c. Administer informal assessments for all students in grades 1 - 3 within the first 20 days of the school year.

2. Provide summer programming that provides targeted instruction for students in grades 1 - 5 who end the school year below grade level.

   1a. Identify students who are not proficient in ELA and/or MATH during the critical transition years, especially during the summer after the 3rd grade, and provide a District-sponsored summer enrichment program in collaboration with local community providers

3. Identify gap-closing strategies, programs and approaches to use in Montclair Public Schools (e.g. approaches that emphasize that even in the youngest grades, reading comprehension is as important as phonics, or word calling), to ensure that students are reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade

4. Pilot a program that will focus on enhancing student life skills, including but not limited to, time management, study skills, organizational skills, executive functioning skills and communication skills.

5. Develop a clear academic roadmap for caregivers outlining the academic progressions from the 4th to the 12th grade that correlate best to career and college readiness.

II. Independence and Separation:
Evidence from the Middle School Years

As all parents of middle schoolers know, sixth grade can be a challenging transition. Indeed, all the middle school years are important stepping stones for securing a sense of academic independence, separating from childhood and acquiring key skills for more challenging subjects in high school. If sixth grade is a critical transition year, so is eighth grade, particularly in math.

Unfortunately, Montclair's middle schools do not provide the opportunity for closing gaps that begin to widen toward the latter years of elementary school. Rather middle school is where the achievement gap is exacerbated. As the charts below clearly show, black and white students have diametrically opposite experiences on the NJASK. For 2014, two-thirds of eighth-grade white students scored in the top 50 percent of test takers on both ELA and math. For black students, the results were almost flipped. That year, three-quarters of eighth-grade black students scored in the bottom 50 percent.

NJASK 8 by the Numbers

25% of AA students (42/167) in Gr8 in 2014 had NJASK8 ELA scores in the top 50% of the class.

64% of W students (160 of 251) in Gr8 in 2014 had NJASK8 ELA scores in the top 50% of the class.

NJASK 8 2014	ELA		MATH	
RACE / ETH	AA	W	AA	W
TOTAL:	167	251	164	251
Top 5%	2	16	1	15
Top 10%	5	35	4	32
Top 25%	19	81	11	94
Top 50%	42	160	39	161
Bottom 25%	84	28	79	35
Bottom 50%	125	91	125	90

39 of 164 (24%) AA students in Gr8 in 2014 had NJASK8 Math scores in the top 50% of the class.

161 of 251 (64%) W students in Gr8 in 2014 had NJASK8 Math scores in the top 50% of the class.

Note how similar the numbers on the chart below resemble the numbers on the GPA charts earlier.   21

Disproportionate Discipline by Race

Once again, suspensions tell a destructively lop-sided story. Over the four years from 2009-2013, black students—boys and girls—made up 70 percent of all suspensions (256 out of 354). While the trend has been to steadily decrease the number of suspensions overall, the disparity in proportions remains. In 2013, black students comprised 37 out of 42 students.

4-year Middle School Suspension Data

Middle Schools					
Race/Gender	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Total MS
Asian Male	3	0	1	0	4
Asian Female	0	0	0	0	0
African American Male	**37**	**71**	**59**	**23**	**190**
African American Female	**10**	**13**	**29**	**14**	**66**
Hispanic Male	4	4	3	1	12
Hispanic Female	0	2	1	0	3
White Male	15	25	26	3	69
White Female	2	4	3	1	10
Total	71	119	122	42	354
General Ed	46	90	69	22	227
Special Ed	25	29	53	20	127

Key Takeaway: Consistently African American students represent approx. 70+% of school suspensions, while representing only 32% of the total middle school population; Special Ed students show disproportionality relative to general ed students

Key Recommendations to Address Disparities in Middle School

1. Provide a year of Algebra instruction to all students by the end of 8th grade.

2. Provide in-school and out-of-school extended learning time of 60-90 minutes with a focus on students who are not grade-level proficient in Language Arts or Mathematics. Partner deliberately with local service providers of after-school programs to ensure academic content alignment with school-based curricula.

III. Points of No Return:
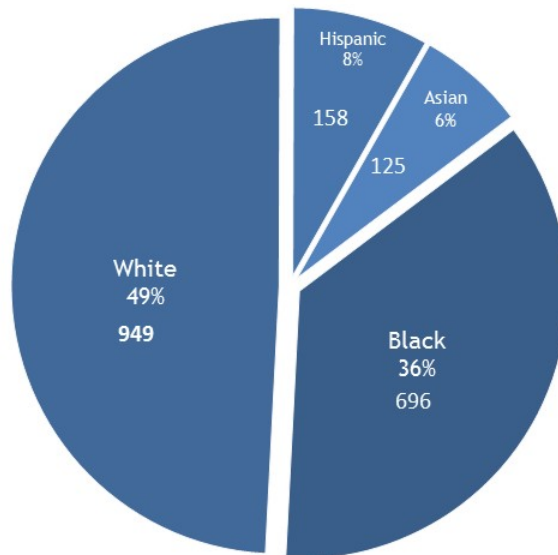# High School Disparities

We return to the beginning—high school performance and college readiness. The preceding has shown the cumulative effects of many factors that produce a racial achievement gap by 9th grade that is very difficult to reverse during high school. Failures to assess student progress against curriculum in a timely and meaningful way during elementary school may mean help comes too late. Lack of timely information or/and family resources may prevent the right amount of help from being secured in time. Low expectations or implicitly biased perceptions may produce unconscious patterns that individual parents—if they learn of them—are forced to fight to change. Labeling and undue discipline may reinforce messages that a child doesn't belong. These and other factors contribute to patterns of slippage that, come high school, are unmistakable in their racial composition.

By the time a Joshua and Tamir enter high school, their cumulative experiences will dictate where they will fall on the Quality Point Index. In turn, their GPAs will determine a lot about their life chances, beginning with whether they attend college and which one.

High School Observations

- Disparities have existed within GPA outcomes and AP class composition for over a decade
- Due to the Quality Point Index, many parents have figured out how to manage course selection to achieve higher GPAs
- It seems there is an inordinate amount of subjectivity being applied to determine who gets to take higher level courses
- Perceptions that certain small learning communities (SLC) are more rigorous than others; SLC's should represent the diversity of the school and be equally resourced
- A strong commitment to sports and the arts is a core competency of MHS and creates a culture of pride

MHS Ethnic Breakdown

Hispanic 8% — 158
Asian 6% — 125
White 49% — 949
Black 36% — 696

Grade	Total Black Students	Economically Disadv.	Special Education	Ec Dis+Sp Ed
12	196	87/196 (44%)	53/196 (27%)	20/196= 10%

5

The Past is Prologue to Eventual Success

A closer look at high school performance demonstrates how seemingly small differences in achievement during the early years multiply over time and magnify in high school classroom placement—and GPA. Remember that navigating the Quality Point Index is important because college admissions officers recognize that GPAs are weighted by the difficulty of classes students take, not simply the grades they receive. Montclair High School uses a somewhat misleading trio of terms to designate the three levels of classes students can be placed in: High Honors/AP (the highest), Honors (the middle) and Academic (the lowest). Calling the lowest level "academic" is misleading enough; calling the least proficient classes "college prep" may be worse. A grade of 'B' in a High Honors or AP course is the equivalent of an 'A' grade in an Academic class. Each grade receives weighted points—between 1 and 5—and the total is combined to produce the GPA.

As the chart below indicates, the racial achievement gap in GPAs is a long and unfortunate tradition in Montclair. Two facts stand out. First, throughout the ten-year history shown (2002-2012) the black student population at Montclair High has steadily gone down while the number of white students has steadily risen. Second, during the same period *almost half the black students are in the bottom quarter of the GPA distribution, about three quarters in the bottom 50 percent.* The numbers for white students are almost exactly opposite.

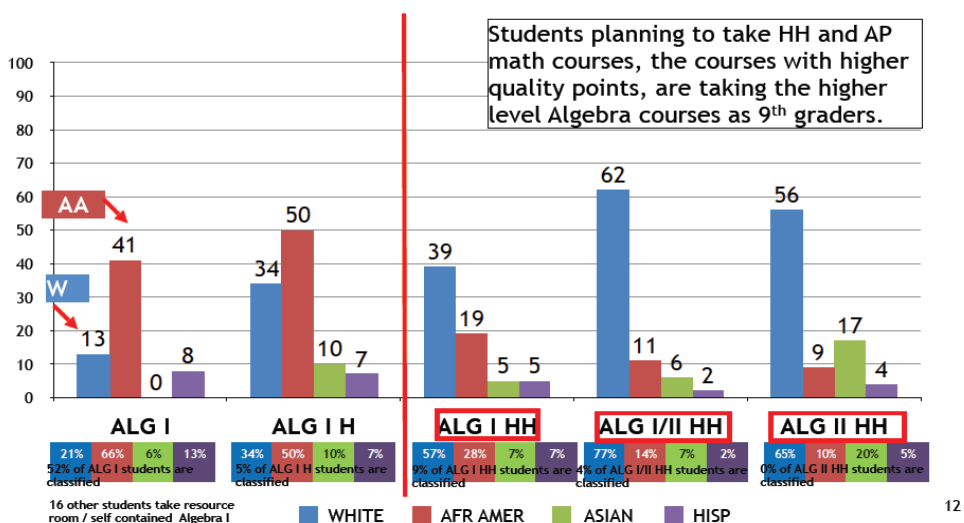## Number of AA and Number of W students in selected GPA ranks

Gr 12	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012	
	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W	B	W
Total	196	171	173	163	193	202	207	225	190	229	179	219	231	238	197	233	158	237	194	215
Top 5%	2	20	4	15	4	16	1	21	1	20	1	20	1	21	3	15	1	17	2	19
Top 10%	6	33	4	31	14	36	2	40	0	43	3	39	4	43	8	34	2	34	5	33
Top 25%	18	74	10	66	14	93	9	95	6	103	14	87	15	100	19	87	8	92	15	86
Top 50%	56	124	39	121	44	158	43	172	46	171	42	154	54	182	48	168	32	166	45	158
Bottom 25%	82	16	79	10	80	19	95	15	85	17	81	19	107	13	91	21	108	29	93	10
Bottom 50%	142	48	135	42	149	45	164	54	144	58	137	65	177	56	149	65	126	71	149	57

Note: Totals may not be exact due to rounding

If this is the final result of students' high school performance—and has been for several generations of high school students—one might ask if the disparities revealed themselves earlier. Of course they did. The racial segregation illustrated by this achievement chart has clear correlates in who takes which classes. With the exception of 9th grade English and electives, white and black high school students are accustomed to learning in racially separate classrooms by the time they're 13 or 14 years old.
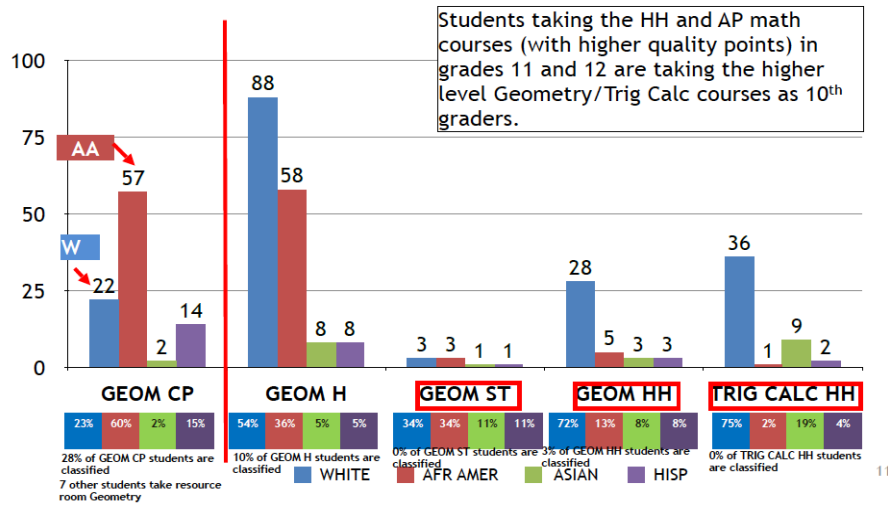
For example, here's the racial distribution of students in 9th grade math classes. Remember, subjects in math are generally cumulative, so that students cannot advance to harder courses without mastering prerequisites. The 118 white students enrolled in Algebra I/II High Honors and Algebra II High Honors in 2014-2015 (over half the white students in the grade) sat in classrooms with only a total of 20 black classmates, fewer than the number of Asian students (23) who make up a much smaller percentage of all students at MHS.

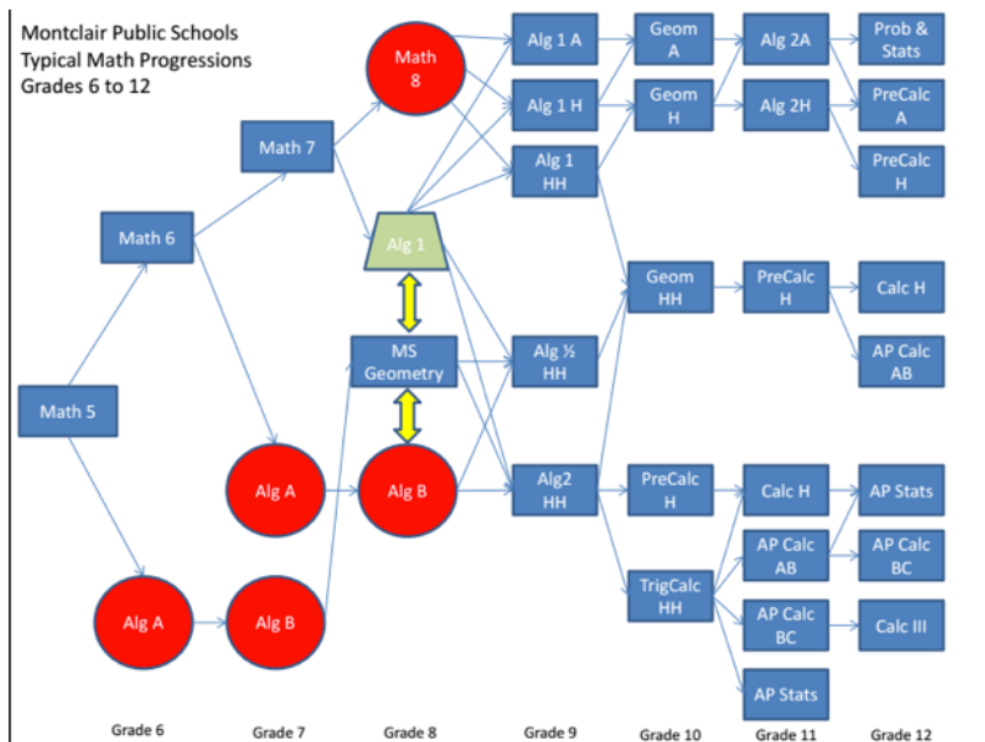

Class Distribution for 2014-2015: 9th Grade Math Courses

While many educators believe that math is an area where the achievement gap is most susceptible to effective remedies, Montclair high school students sadly lag. What is evident in 9th grade continues in 10th grade, as the chart below shows. In 10th grade, not all students take geometry. Half of the black students who do are in the lowest sections—euphemistically called "college prep." However, the vast majority of their white counterparts are enrolled in the four higher geometry courses that are prerequisites for taking High Honors and Advanced Placement courses in 11th and 12th grades.

Class Distribution for 2014-2015: 10th Grade Geometry Courses

Students taking the HH and AP math courses (with higher quality points) in grades 11 and 12 are taking the higher level Geometry/Trig Calc courses as 10th graders.

	GEOM CP	GEOM H	GEOM ST	GEOM HH	TRIG CALC HH
WHITE	23%	54%	34%	72%	75%
AFR AMER	60%	36%	34%	13%	2%
ASIAN	2%	5%	11%	8%	19%
HISP	15%	5%	11%	8%	4%

28% of GEOM CP students are classified
7 other students take resource room Geometry

10% of GEOM H students are classified

0% of GEOM ST students are classified

3% of GEOM HH students are classified

0% of TRIG CALC HH students are classified

WHITE   AFR AMER   ASIAN   HISP

11

We wondered if parents understood the path to highest math success at Montclair High School. Not surprisingly, many we talked to during our listening forums did not. Some talked about how a few parents received information and advice from system veterans. Others cobbled together pipeline information from different District sources. Here—for the brave parent—is the path to placement in the most rigorous math classes at which college admissions officers are looking during the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) revolution.

The Complexity of Navigating the Maze of Math

In other subjects, a similarly bifurcated racial trajectory occurs and leads to the same racially distinct classroom enrollments. Montclair High School has a striking number of AP course offerings—a testament to the overall quality of education in our town. However, as the chart below demonstrates, black—and Hispanic—students are simply not participating in these challenging classes at a rate anywhere near their numbers. This leads to segregated classroom experiences, segregated impressions of talent and segregated college attendance outcomes—all, ironically, in an intensely diverse building.

Racial Composition for AP Courses: 2014-2015

AP COURSE (#) 2014-2015	W	B	H	A	TOTAL
AP ART HISTORY	6	1	0	2	9
AP STUDIO ART	9	4	0	0	13
AP ENG 12	92	17	5	8	122
AP ENG LANG & COMP	20	0	0	5	25
AP FRENCH LANGUAGE	10	2	0	1	13
AP GERMAN	0	0	0	0	0
AP LAT V VERGIL	0	0	0	1	1
AP SPANISH V	26	7	15	0	48
AP SPANISH LIT	16	2	4	2	24
AP CALC AB	33	0	5	10	48
AP CALC BC	37	2	2	6	48
AP STATS	20	5	1	2	28
AP BIOLOGY	38	10	2	3	53
AP CHEMISTRY	17	2	1	5	25
AP PHYSICS B	29	7	1	6	43
AP PHYSICS C MECH	38	3	3	6	50
AP PHYSICS C ELEC/MAG	14	0	0	1	15
AP ENVIRONMENTAL SCI	36	2	5	4	47
TOTAL	**441**	**64**	**44**	**62**	**612**

W=White B=Black H=Hispanic A=Asian

Quality Point Index (Point Value)

Academic Level	A	B	C	D	F
High Honors/ AP	5	4	3	2	0
Honors	4.5	3.5	2.5	1.5	0
Academic	4	3	2	1	0

Clearly, Black students are under-represented in AP Courses, but the preparation for these classes starts very early in the academic pipeline

- White students make up 72% of enrolled AP students, yet are 49% of the total population
- Black students are 11% of AP classes and 35% of the total population
- Asian students are 10% of AP classes and are 7% of the total population; 50% of Asian students take AP classes
- Hispanic students are 7% of AP classes and are 10% of the total population

9

Disparities in the Use of Small Learning Communities

Finally, another of the strengths of MHS is the existence of small learning communities, the most prominent of which are CGI (Civics and Government Institute) and CSJ (Center for Social Justice). Not all students can take advantage of these opportunities, and those who do, wind up on different sides of a racial fence.

- White students make up 72% of all enrolled AP students in 2014-2015; AA students only make up 11% of all enrolled AP students in 2014-2015; Approx. 50% of Asian students take AP classes..
- Disparities also exist within our small learning communities: CGI (Civics & Government Institute) is 78% white, while CSJ is 65% black
- While data on the number of students benefiting from paid tutors remains anecdotal, it is important to highlight the inordinate number of reports of tutoring happening for students enrolled in challenging courses, which potentially has unintended consequences for students to participate in these classes.

Key Recommendations to Address High School Disparities

1. Set specific, quantitative goals for incrementally increasing AP enrollment in populations with historically low enrollment in these courses.

2. Use the College Board PSAT report recommendations as a determinant and trigger for course selection and student enrollment in High Honors or AP classes.

3. Require any "A" or "B" student from a population that is underrepresented in higher level courses to have a timely meeting with a staff member and caregiver about upgrading to a higher level course in that subject area.

4. Disallow students from unilaterally making decisions about course selection without parental input.

5. Structure standard course sequences in Small Learning Communities with disproportionately high numbers of African American students, to increase High Honors and AP course enrollment.

6. Simplify the design of the Montclair High School curriculum flowchart, and align classes across disciplines more uniformly by grade. It is imperative for MHS to simplify labeling and differentiate among general-education, honors and Advanced Placement courses. (e.g. Geometry College Prep).

IV. Full Recommendations of the Montclair Achievement Gap Advisory Panel

The foregoing should be disturbing. We have chronicled the stubborn and debilitating gap in achievement and opportunity, mostly on the basis of race, that is inconsistent with the ideals of such a special community and unacceptable for our children's future lives. The story is revealed most clearly when it is already over—at the point of college and career readiness in high school. But the data clearly show that readiness is cumulative. Readiness for high school rigor requires readiness in middle school. Readiness to tackle the challenges of middle school requires readiness at each transition point in elementary school. Addressing the gaps and missed opportunities is a collective responsibility.

It is time to move from disturbance to transcendence, from illuminating the problems to formulating the solutions. In this final section of the report, we do our best as a group of concerned citizens, parents and educators to offer a workable plan for excellence and equity. The six sections that unfold here relate to each of the component parts of the opportunity gap—from leadership to expectations, from learning environments to monitoring protocols, from parental engagement strategy to professional development for the people we must rely on to produce change: Montclair's beloved teachers.

I. Effective District and School Leadership:

"MPS is not helping people and disseminating information like it should. No one in our system should ever be able to say, 'I didn't know that'." (Comment from Parent at Community Sharing Forum)

Goals:
A. MPS will commit the appropriate resources (financial and staff) to closing the *achievement gap,* which will include a sustainable funding strategy and a District-wide commitment from the Mayor, the Town Council, the Board of Education, and the Superintendent; this strategy must contemplate that closing the achievement gap is a multi-year commitment and a strategic imperative for MPS, which requires the full endorsement of the Township.
B. Accountability for the execution of the goals to close the achievement gap must be embedded within the standard performance review process for each employee that engages or has student contact, especially at the school leadership level (Principals, Assistant Principals and Counselors).
C. MPS administrators must demonstrate a knowledge of race, bias, privilege, equity and *cultural competence.*
D. MPS administrators must utilize research-based effective leadership practices, which will include feedback from faculty and staff.
E. MPS administrators must effectively evaluate faculty, administrators, and staff to allow feedback for improving job performance.
F. Demand consistency in the maintenance, design and implementation of new academic programs while retaining what has worked in the past.

G. Reduce disproportionality of overrepresented student populations being designated as special needs (special education) over the next 2-3 years; ensure this goal remains a District priority.

The recommendations that follow start with the single most important one in order to ensure accountability for all: an Assistant Superintendent in charge of Student Equity and Achievement. In order to meet the goals above, we note how leadership can promote a district-wide commitment to quality pre-K. We then move on to the meat of leadership: connecting parents with information, designing for achievement, ensuring academic program consistency, supporting principals in the evaluation, training and hiring of teachers, transparency around achievement gap data and regular monitoring of progress.

Recommendations:

1. **Strong, Cabinet-Level Accountability.** Hire an <u>Assistant Superintendent of Student Equity and Achievement</u> with the primary responsibility of leading, implementing, measuring and supervising all efforts related to closing the Achievement Gap (Detailed Job Description included).

2. **Pre-K Support and Collaboration.** While the AGAP's charge has been focused on K-12 populations, we believe that a high-quality pre-K educational experience is a valuable step in a child's educational development, so we strongly support access to an affordable pre-K for all Montclair students; promoting and facilitating access to early care and education must be a priority of the Township with involvement from city leaders, and the Superintendent.
   - Establish consistent year-long collaboration between MPS and early childcare providers which include visits and frequent meetings to establish standards of high quality and to communicate scheduling norms, e.g., for naps, to facilitate transition from preschool to kindergarten.
   - Provide an intentional, sequenced summer transition plan for caregivers with kids entering Kindergarten, especially targeted to those without Pre-K experience
   - Provide a toolkit of resources focused on skill and behavioral expectations to caregivers with children who are 0-5 years of age.
   - Create a developmentally appropriate report card for each child leaving pre-K and going into Kindergarten, which will provide insight for the Kindergarten teacher on child-specific skills and behavioral themes.
3. **Informing Parents of Transition Framework.** Design, implement, and communicate an intentional, sequenced transition framework for District-wide distribution to caregivers in the 5th to 6th grades, as well as 8th to the 9th grades (Context: These populations have been identified as the most critical for coursework planning and selection, particularly with respect to Math, Science and Language Arts).
4. **Professional Development for Administrators.** All MPS administrators will receive ongoing professional development with an explicit focus on establishing and supporting a school culture and climate of cultural respect and high expectations for all students; all MPS administrators will receive race, bias, privilege, equity and culturally responsive professional development; all MPS administrators will receive professional development on providing timely and constructive feedback and support to teachers; this effort will be a

multi-year commitment with ongoing, established objectives, milestones and defined outcomes.

5. **Addressing Overrepresentation in Special Education** MPS will develop a comprehensive plan, along with appropriate community constituents, to address the overrepresentation of any group in special needs/special education; there will be a formal meeting to reveal the plan to the Montclair community by January 2016 and annual meetings will be held to update the community on the progress.

6. **Reviewing Longitudinal Achievement Data.** Review three years of *longitudinal* student achievement data for teachers and principals to identify student trends in their students or school performance and to enhance the constructive feedback that is given to aid improvement.

7. **Supporting Marshall Rubric Teacher Evaluations.** The District Office will provide support to principals to effectively evaluate faculty and staff with a track record of poor performance and institute a formal action plan to remediate any deficiencies, per the *Marshall Rubric*, a tool that is currently used in Montclair Public Schools to make teacher evaluations.

8. **Principal Town Halls for School Performance Reports.** Require all principals to hold an annual Town Hall with caregivers to review in a plain, parent-friendly manner, the entire *school performance report* produced by the State for their school within 30-days of the release; this meeting will include, but will not be limited to, an overview of student demographics, academic performance, suspensions, and absenteeism metrics; Principals should also be prepared to present these findings at Board of Education meetings so the Township will have access and an understanding of individual school performance.

9. **Quarterly Progress Monitoring for Schools with Large Gaps.** Schools with achievement gaps (to be defined by a partnership between the Achievement Team, see Section III.1 for a definition and the AGAP) will submit updated quarterly reports on student progress; narrowing the achievement gap will be an annual goal of every school and will be measured, tracked and reported.

10. **Standardizing the Process for New Academic Programs.** Ensure that MPS has a standardized process for reviewing and implementing any new academic programs in the District or at a specific school; the objective of this approach is to ensure that all programs are:
    - Fully funded for implementation
    - Designed and managed to produce specific academic outcomes
    - Provided the required resource allocation, which will include training for all facilitators; all programs will be measured for effectiveness and results will be shared with school leadership, Achievement Team, the AGAP, and caregivers, as appropriate; The school SATP team will be involved in the program review process and the annual assessment of program efficacy.

11. **Reviewing All Discontinued Programs that Demonstrated Effectiveness.** Perform a review of all academic and support programs that have been discontinued over the last 15 years to learn which are effective and need to be reinstated, (e.g., AVID and STARS); develop a sustainable funding strategy and assessment of which programs need to be implemented to narrow the achievement gap; the AGAP along with SATP leadership will convene a workshop(s) to identify and inventory those programs with recommendations to be considered for implementation in the 2016-2017 budget.

12. **Emotional Disturbance Classification Procedure.**   Create a procedure to ensure the *emotional disturbance* identification under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Section 300.8* is properly applied and children are not inappropriately assessed or classified.
13. **Reviewing RTI Policy.**   Review of the District's policy on when the *Response to Intervention (RTI)* process should begin for an identified student to ensure that a student does not have to wait until the end of the first grading cycle to receive a RTI.
14. **Managing Class Size.**   Management of class size should remain a key focus of the Superintendent and the Board of Education to ensure that our classes are sized to achieve and promote the best learning environment for MPS students; conduct District-wide analysis of optimal student/staff ratio to ensure greater student outcomes.
15. **Hiring for Diversity and Cultural Competency.** Ensure that District hiring practices emphasize the need to attract a more racially diverse and culturally-competent workforce; as part of the hiring process, a diverse slate requirement should be implemented, especially for every student-facing role (teachers, counselors, aides, et al); ensure that any Search Firms hired to conduct searches for a position in the District understands the mandate to attract ethnically diverse staff to MPS and these firms will be measured on their efforts in this regard.
16. **Supporting Principals in Teacher Evaluation Regarding the Gap.**   The District Office will provide support to principals to effectively evaluate and support new faculty and staff; ensure that new District staff understands our commitment and efforts to close the achievement gap and represent the different cultural and linguistic experiences of our District.
17. **Institutionalizing AGAP.**   Embed and formalize the Achievement Gap Advisory Panel (AGAP) as a permanent District resource; composition, membership and terms of service will be determined and guided by the Superintendent.

II. High Standards & Expectations for All Students

"When my African American son was struggling, I was only given the option of having him tested and classified….no other options were presented." (Comments from caregivers at a Community Sharing Forum)

Goals:

A. Teachers and principals will frequently monitor students on a variety of assessments such as quick quizzes, test scores, student developed products, performances, and other evidence of learning to enhance student learning.

B. Teachers will be observed by supervisors to allow feedback primarily for the purposes of improving instruction.

C. Supervisors will provide formal support to teachers for improving instruction.

D. All 3rd graders are proficient in Language Arts.

E. All 3rd graders are proficient in Math.

F. All 8th graders are proficient in Language Arts.

G. All 8rd graders are proficient in Math.

H. Increase the number of underrepresented students taking HH and AP.

I. Teachers will monitor themselves as they reflect on their practices.

The education literature on achievement gaps universally emphasizes the need for high standards and expectations as well as solid assessment protocols to assure progress toward meeting them. This set of recommendations sets out chronologically, some of the most important steps in setting expectations, assessing students, teachers and curriculum and pushing all students to achieve excellence. These recommendations also provide a bridge between learning climates and teaching needs. No one should fall through the cracks—not students *or* teachers and administrators—in the work of equity and excellence.

Recommendations:
1. **Early Assessment of Math and English in K-5.** Identify a best-in-class math assessment that can be implemented to deliver to all elementary and middle school students in the beginning of the school year; it is imperative that Language Arts and Math assessments are valued equally.
    - Create and execute a pilot program to assess potential assessment tools for implementation; This process should be led by the Chief Academic Office.
    - **Smart Assessment.** Have teachers and administrators assess all students (including Kindergarten); Optimally, the assessments should happen during the summer before school, otherwise, these assessments should occur within the first three weeks of the school year to ensure an understanding of where the child is academically; this is particularly important for K, 2nd, 3rd, and 6th grade students. Notify caregivers in a timely manner if their student is not proficient and protocols in accordance with the RTI process will be followed.
2. **Immediate Communication with Caregivers.** Shorten the feedback loop of communication with caregivers to 48 hours related to academic performance and/or behavior.
3. **Algebra.** Administer the algebra readiness exam to all fifth grade students; allow 5th grade teachers or caregivers to recommend a student for Algebra in 6th grade.
4. **Math Readiness.** Provide a year of Algebra instruction to all students by the end of 8th grade.
5. **Uniform Class Alignment at MHS and Clear Labeling.** Establish uniformity of how classes at MHS are aligned across discipline by grade and ensure the design of the curriculum flowchart is simplified.
    - Simplify the labeling of curriculum, i.e., clarify and differentiate basic level courses versus college prep versus Honors and AP.
7. **Training for Differentiated Instruction at MHS.** Identify expert resources to develop and implement a training module(s) for MPS teachers on how to differentiate instruction and provide ongoing support to our teachers to achieve this objective; this training will also include a focus on culturally responsive teaching.
8. **Class Consolidation at MHS.** Limit the 9th grade offerings in Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies to Honors or High Honors sections only, by the 2018-2019 school year.

9. **Reaching for Advanced Placement.**   Increase the numbers of students from populations who are underrepresented in Honors, High Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes with appropriate support identified, scaled, and funded, e.g. tutoring services through community partners.
   - Require any student from a population that is underrepresented in a higher level course, who receives an "A" or "B" in a lower level courses to have a timely meeting with a staff member and caregiver about upgrading to a higher level course in that subject area; This conversation should be documented and reflect the teacher, caregiver and student's consent to upgrade to the higher level course.
   - Use the College Board PSAT report recommendation as a determinant for student enrollment in High Honors or AP classes
10. **I AM AP Campaign.**   Coordinate with the MHS SATP to develop and promote an "I AM AP" campaign to de-mystify perceptions about Advanced Placement classes and encourage broader participation of students who are currently underrepresented; resources are available through the College Board on how to actively promote and engage students on the benefits of AP curriculum.
11. **Promoting Small Learning Communities.**   Coordinate with the MHS SATP to develop and promote a Small Learning Community Open House to educate caregivers and students on each community, in an effort to encourage broad acceptance and participation of all student groups; provide examples of student outcomes who have participated in the different tracks; clearly articulate the pros/cons of each community, so all caregivers are well-informed; implement for Fall 2015.
12. **Monitor Tutoring Expectations.**   AGAP and Montclair High School SATP to further research and assess why tutoring services are needed for higher level classes; additional tutoring and associated expense(s) creates an unintended deterrent for children with limited resources; it is the view of the committee that higher level courses should not necessarily require students to enlist tutorial support to be successful in those classes.
13. **Promote Teacher Collaboration.**   Encourage teachers to participate in peer-to-peer observations and coaching, and engage teachers demonstrating mastery with specific areas of pedagogy; make this a non-evaluative and low stakes process.

III. A Supportive Learning Environment

"There's a culture of superiority in the school and segregation in high performing classes. The environment is calling for students to rebel."

Goals:

   A. Foster a climate and culture with consistent and fair application of rules and regulations, and caring responsive relationships among adults and students across MPS.
   B. Create learning environments that increase positive relationships among students and between students and their teachers.

C. Help students feel that they belong in and are valued by the school community.
D. See each student's heritage and background as assets, not deficiencies.
E. Reduce suspensions in all Montclair Public Schools to no more than 1.5% by the end of the 2016-2017 school year.
F. Reduce chronic absenteeism in the Montclair Public Schools to below 5% by the end of the 2016-2017 school year.

Creating and maintaining a supportive learning environment is central to educational excellence, but it is the work of all members of the community. Chronic achievement gap contributing causes such as summer learning loss, disproportionate discipline and uneven rates and types of parental participation require strategies that harness the resources of school administrators, teachers, parents and Montclair's many wonderful non-profit agencies and organizations. Our recommendations here emphasize the creation of teams to coordinate these supports, supplementing what already occurs in some schools. Here we also address the need for extended learning time at school for students who desperately need it as well as at home. Supportive learning environments also recognize where children are, and many face extraordinary stressors for which they need extraordinary counseling. We also recognize the need to educate the whole child and endorse a number of educational priorities, such as art and technology to engage students and prepare them for the challenges ahead.

Recommendations:

1. **Integrated Achievement Teams at Each School.** Form an Achievement team, consisting of a principal, SAC(s), head of guidance, general education and special education teachers at each school; the Achievement Team will coordinate directly with the Assistant Superintendent of Student Achievement and Equity; the Achievement Team will work closely with the Chief Academic Officer, SATP and the Parent Corp, as needed; the Achievement Team will also ensure that each school is living up to its full potential as a magnate of a certain discipline, i.e., the technology magnate should be a place where kids are exposed, challenged, and engaged with technology throughout the learning day - above and beyond schools without this focus.

2. **Extended Learning Time.** Offer extended learning time by 60-90 minutes after school 3-5 days a week at all schools with a focus on students who are not proficient, proficient and/or not on target. MPS could possibly partner with some of the established after school enrichment programs in Montclair or create a program utilizing carefully selected current or retired teachers. The primary focus would be on ensuring students have mastery of academic content by providing additional instruction and then homework assistance.

3. **Sensible Universal Suspension Policies.** Develop a universal suspension policy related to non-violent offenses; ensure that disciplinary policies are implemented consistently District-wide and are followed; ensure that an intervention process is adhered to before any suspension decisions are made.

4. **Inter-community Councils to Coordinate Help Resources.** Create and implement an Inter-community council which will consist of community organizations that will be aligned on approach, rigor, strategy, and outcomes to serve MPS students; this council will be charged with delivering services to MPS students and the

outcomes of each organization will be measured on an annual basis; this council will work closely with the MPS Assistant Superintendent for Student Equity and Achievement as well as the Chief Academic Officer, who will be responsible for setting the goals and standards for measurement; each organization will be given an annual report card on execution of goals and quality of service delivery; the scope of the council will primarily be focused on tutoring and *summer learning loss.*

- Leverage existing programs that provide summer learning opportunities provided that these programs are utilizing the *nine characteristics of effective summer learning programs*, and scale those programs to serve the needs of MPS students, as appropriate.

5. **Dealing with Student Stress.** Ensure SAC counselors are meeting with groups of students with similar emotional stressors to work on strategies to alleviate any emotional distress.

6. **Buses Home After School.** Develop and implement an after-school bus service that will provide transportation for students who are staying for extended learning time, enrichment programs or sports activities; at a minimum, this program should be piloted in the middle school grades and then rolled out District-wide, as financially feasible.

7. **Assess School Climate.** Effectively assess school climate and culture, then adopt a plan for improvement; the progress of the school climate and culture plan will be shared annually with caregivers during the Annual Town Hall meetings at each school, as referenced in I.8.

8. **Clearly Identify At-Risk Cues and Plan to Address Them.** Identify students who frequently come to school late, consistently miss assignments, have difficulty understanding schoolwork, and may have attention challenges or alternative learning styles, as these students are potentially high-risk for chronic absenteeism and disciplinary problems; once identified, develop a plan with caregiver involvement to assist these students with the identified issue.

9. **Diverse and Responsive Counseling.** Ensure that counseling staff at each MPS school is diverse, responsive and reflective of the student population that it serves.

10. **Teach Equity.** Design and embed lessons in the K-12 curriculum (each grade level) to teach students to consider the needs of all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, class, equity, entitlement and privilege.

11. **Encourage Creative Minds.** Ensure that creative arts is a core part of the learning experience in MPS; conduct an inventory of the music and arts programs at each school and develop a plan to expand those opportunities across the District.

12. **Experiment with Life Skills Study.** Pilot a program that will focus on enhancing student life-skills, including but not limited to, time management, study skills, organizational skills, executive functioning skills and communication skills; ideally, the program will rolled out as a District-wide effort.

13. **Promote Tech Education.** Engage the MPS Chief Technology Officer to develop a campaign to promote usage of online tools, including webinars and videos; those without computer access can leverage Montclair Public Library resources, which will be provided to support MPS/AGAP initiatives.

14. **Consider Social Psychological Interventions.** Require teachers and Student Assistant Counselors (SAC) to utilize *Social-Psychological Interventions* to improve stu-

dent achievement; Social-Psychological inventions are brief academic exercises that target a student's psychological understanding of learning which is incredibly beneficial to improving academic outcomes.

_IV._ High Levels of Family & Community Engagement

"As a parent, I went to the school but I was treated like I was ignorant; I was treated like an outsider." I became a single parent suddenly and that's when I learned about how difficult it is to navigate the school system, especially when you have other issues you're dealing with. I once got a meeting note the morning of the meeting; if I wasn't self-employed, I wouldn't have been able to make it."

Goals:

- A. Improve ways to increase family involvement through the School Action Teams for Partnerships (SATP).
- B. Ensure collaborative relationships among teachers, caregivers and the community exists.
- C. Expect all MPS administrators, faculty and staff to be responsible for fostering positive partnerships with families and community organizations.
- D. Establish communication norms between home and school that are regular, two-way, respectful and meaningful.

These recommendations recognize the disparity in information and advocacy among Montclair parents. Parents must have access to the same information about academic pipelines as well as how to advocate for their child. Information systems have to be reliable.

Recommendations:

1. **Academic Roadmaps for All.**   Develop a clear academic roadmap for caregivers that is easily accessible via the web and through the District office, outlining the academic progressions from the 4th to the 12th grade; these pathways should provide clarity on how course selection impacts future readiness for higher level classes.
2. **Family Advocacy Mentoring Program**.   Develop and implement a Family Advocacy Mentoring Program, which will include but not be limited to, providing guidance for caregivers on academic planning and transition support, summer slide strategies and resources, and at-home study techniques; this program can be managed and led by the SATP at each school and will be available to support any parent, but especially those with children who are partially proficient.
3. **No Language Barriers.**   Ensure that all communication to caregivers reflects language differences and acknowledges varying degrees of computer access; also ensure caregivers are given advanced notice (at least 72 hours) before meetings are scheduled or caregivers should be consulted about their schedule and the best times to schedule conference or meetings

4. **Assist Caregivers.** Identify opportunities to assist caregivers with extending learning in their homes; resources will be provided by the Family Advocacy Mentoring Program.
5. **Parent Contact Planning for Proficiency.** Have teachers and administrators establish a schedule for maintaining frequent contact with caregivers of children who have a proficiency plan. Students will be given a summer proficiency plan.
6. **Improve Skyward Montclair.** Develop a Skyward Montclair campaign to encourage District-wide usage of the tool, beginning in the Fall of 2015; this campaign should be a priority for each school SATP.
   - Provide a series of training workshops (either in-person, online or webinars) that will teach caregivers how to access the site online or via the Skyward app
   - Provide access through the Montclair Public Library (MPL).
   - Establish Skyward protocols that will require teachers to input grades within a certain period of time, especially for exams, essays, and other activities that significantly impact a student's overall grade.
   - Highlight the efficiency and eco-friendly nature of going digital and the benefits of reducing the use of paper report cards.
   - Implement greater use of text messages capabilities as an alternate means to communicate with caregivers; this can be embedded in the partnership with the Chief Technology to promote communication tools with caregivers.

V. Ongoing Quality Focused Professional Development:

"I've been teaching for 10 years in the District and no one has ever asked me about the professional development I want or need." (Heard from a teacher at the 2nd MEA Representatives meeting)

Goal:

A. All MPS employees should have the resources they need to promote equity and excellence in the learning environment.
B. All MPS Employees must demonstrate race, bias, privilege, equity and cultural competency.
C. All MPS teachers and administrators must utilize culturally responsive instruction.
D. All MPS teachers must demonstrate the ability to differentiate instruction.

Closing decades-old achievement gaps requires professional development resources that help educators gain the tools they need to help effectuate transformative institutional change. Responsibly addressing issues of racial bias and cultural competency in the classroom demands care and expertise. These recommendations address these needs with proposals that are not cost neutral but critical resources for change.

Recommendations:

1. **Teacher-directed Professional Development Resources.** Teachers, counselors and other academic staff must be able to formally suggest professional

development topics and shape training opportunities; Special Education teachers should also have supplemental professional development to ensure they are exposed to most current techniques and developments in their specialized field of expertise.

2. **Independent Race Bias and Cultural Competency Assessments.** Conduct a search process to identify a provider of racial, unconscious bias, equity and cultural competency assessment and embed these elements into the professional development requirements for all staff; ensure the provider embeds the historical and contemporary impacts that racism has had on student outcomes and student success.

3. **Help with Differentiated Instruction.** Conduct a search process to identify a provider of differentiated instruction training; the objective of the vendor will be to design a training program for the MPS school district and the provider will be required to provide an outline of desired behaviors and knowledge transfer as a result of the training.

4. **Help with Cultural Competency Training.** Conduct a search process to identify a provider of culturally-responsive instruction training; the objective of the vendor will be to design a training program for the MPS school district and the provider will be required to provide an outline of desired behaviors and knowledge transfer as a result of the training.

Key Terms

Achievement Gap

Better classified as an opportunity gap is focused on any disparities, particularly among the most marginalized populations; narrowing or closing the achievement gap refers to changing the structural inequities within the District, including the development of policies and practices that are intentionally focused on this vision.

Bias:

- **Explicit bias** is overt intolerance based on social, religious or political views that cause some people antipathy toward others.
- **Implicit bias** is an understood, implied and otherwise unspoken prejudice. While implicit bias can and does operate at the level of individual actors, it often occurs at the systems level through practices and policies applied to classifications of people.
- **Unconscious bias** is prejudice born from personal experiences, perceptions and attitudes that is unrecognized by the perpetrator. In this sense, unconscious bias is a byproduct of experience in which an absence of clear prejudicial intention nonetheless results in bigotry. Less about right and wrong than intolerant perspectives, unconscious bias occurs at the level of individual agency rather than systems, as people hold views that inform systems, whose biases are either explicit or implicit.
- **Internalized bias** is an acceptance of external bias by those against whom it is perpetrated. It is a belief in the validity of one's own degradation -- a submission to negative messages about oneself, such as when a child is told that he's no good and then comes to believe in that assessment of his value. Internalized bias is a form of self-hatred that can extend to hatred of one's race, family, social groups or national identity.
- **Externalized bias** is the externalization of hate onto the systems, tenets and actors of one's perceived oppression. Operating on the fringe of society, externalized bias is associated with mental illness, rage, substance abuse and violence (see "Institutionalized Racism: National Security Threat and Mental Health Crisis" in The Huffington Post).

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. Cultural competency is the ability to work effectively and sensitively across cultural contexts. It involves learning, communicating and connecting respectfully with others regardless of differences. Culture can refer to an individual's race, social class, gender, and sexual orientation, among other things. All these factors strongly influence student's lives and experiences. Teachers regardless of background or identity must bring both cultural understanding and self-awareness to their classrooms. This understanding informs and expands teaching practices in the culturally competent educator's classroom. Teachers view their student's different backgrounds as a strength.

Culturally responsive instruction
Culturally Responsive Instruction is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.

Differentiated instruction
Differentiated Instruction is customizing instruction to meet individual student needs by giving students various options for taking in and demonstrating an understanding of information.

Emotional disturbance
Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Sec. 300.8 Child with a disability.
(4)
    (i) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:
        (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
        (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
        (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
        (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
        (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
    (ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.

Equity
Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is fairness, which basically means making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential.
The second is inclusion, in other words ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic.

- *Taken from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) website*

Educational equity is dependent on two main factors. The first is fairness, which implies that factors specific to one's personal conditions should not interfere with the potential of academic success. The second important factor is inclusion, which refers to a comprehensive standard that applies to everyone in a certain education system. These two factors are closely related and are dependent on each other for true academic success of an educational system.[1]

The growing importance of education equity is based on the premise that now, more than ever before, an individual's level of education is directly correlated to the quality of life he or she will live in the future.[1] Therefore, an academic system that practices educational equity is a strong foundation of a society that is fair and thriving. However, inequity in education is challenging to avoid, and can be broken down into inequity due to socioeconomic standing, race, gender or disability.

- *Taken from Wikipedia*

Focus Schools
Focus Schools comprise about 10% of schools with the overall lowest subgroup perfor- mance, a graduation rate below 75% and the widest gaps in achievement between different subgroups of students. Focus Schools receive targeted and tailored solutions to meet the school's unique needs.

There are 3 possible ways that a school gets identified for Focus school status. Schools be- come identified for Focus status based on disparities in subgroup performance - either low subgroup performance in a school, or low subgroup performance when compared to the performance of other student subgroups in the school. The third category of identification relates specifically to high schools, based on a graduation rate of less than 75%. Focus school criteria is as follows:
- the widest gaps in achievement between different subgroups of students, i.e. a signif- icant gap between the highest achieving subgroup in the school, and the two lowest- achieving subgroups in the school. (1)
- overall lowest subgroup performance, i.e. subgroups in a school population that have persistently low achievement
- a graduation rate below 75%, i.e. for high schools only

This is the category by which schools in Montclair (Bullock and Glenfield) have become identified for status.

- Taken from: http://www.state.nj.us/education/rac/meet/

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
IDEA is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and re- lated services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with dis- abilities.

Longitudinal
A longitudinal survey is a correlational research study that involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time — often many decades. It is a type of observa- tional study. Longitudinal studies are often used in psychology to study developmental trends across the life span, and in sociology to study life events throughout lifetimes or gen- erations. The reason for this is that, unlike cross-sectional studies, in which different individ- uals with same characteristics are compared,[1] longitudinal studies track the same people, and therefore the differences observed in those people are less likely to be the result of cultural differences across generations. Because of this benefit, longitudinal studies make observing changes more accurate, and they are applied in various other fields.

Low Socio-Economic Status (Low SES)
Low SES refers to students who receive free and reduced lunch.

Marshall Rubric
The tool that is currently used in Montclair Public Schools to make teacher evaluations. The rubric is based on six domains, covering all aspects of teaching and it uses a four-level rating system, 4- Highly Effective down to 1- Does Not meet Standards.

Six Domains:
2. Planning and preparation for learning.
3. Classroom Management.
4. Delivery of Instruction.
5. Monitoring, Assessment, and Following.
6. Family & Community Outreach.
7. Professional Responsibilities.

http://www.ouboces.org/Personnel/Instruction/2013_marshalteacherevaluationrubrics.pdf

Median
The middle value in a list of numbers.

Mean
The average of a set of numbers.

Nine characteristics of effective summer learning programs
The characteristics are (1) accelerating learning, (2) youth development, (3) proactive approach to summer learning, (4) leadership, (5) advanced planning, (6) staff development, (7) strategic partnerships, (8) evaluation and commitment to program improvement, and (9) sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

Psycho-educational groups
Psycho-educational groups concentrate on developing skills to prevent problems. This group format utilizes group-centered educational and developmental strategies, including activities such as "roleplaying, problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills training, to teach specific skills and coping strategies in an effort to prevent problems i.e., anger management, social skills, self-esteem, assertiveness and making friends.

Response to intervention (RTI)
RTI is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers, special educators, and specialists. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction. RTI is designed for use when making decisions in both general education and special education,

creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by child outcome data.

School performance reports
New Jersey Department of Education releases annuals School Performance reports for every school in New Jersey. These reports provide school-level demographics as well as performance indicators. The performance reports are separated into three major areas: Academic Achievement, College and Career Readiness, and Student Growth. Academic Achievement includes measures of the school's proficiency rate on both the Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and Mathematics (M) sections of the NJ ASK, administered to students in grades three to eight. College and Career Readiness is measured in elementary and middle schools based on chronic absenteeism rates. Student Growth measures student performance from one year to the next on the NJ ASK when compared to students with a similar history of performance on this assessment.

Social-psychological interventions
Social-psychological interventions in education are brief exercises that target students' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in and about school—can lead to large gains in student achievement and sharply reduce achievement gaps even months and years later. These interventions do not teach students academic content but instead target students' psychology, such as their beliefs that they have the potential to improve their intelligence or that they belong and are valued in school.

Summer Learning Loss
Summer learning loss is the loss of learned school material during the summer months while a child is not attending school.

Title I (Taken from the US Department of Education website)
The act is an extensive statute that funds primary and secondary education.[1] It also emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability.[2] In addition, the bill aims to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing each child with fair and equal opportunities to achieve an exceptional education. As mandated in the act, the funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, for resources to support educational programs, and for parental involvement promotion. The act was originally authorized through 1965; however, the government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment.
- The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by —
    (1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, caregivers, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;
    (2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children,

children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance;

(3) closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;

(4) holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education;

(5) distributing and targeting resources sufficiently to make a difference to local educational agencies and schools where needs are greatest;

(6) improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged;

(7) providing greater decision making authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance;

(8) providing children an enriched and accelerated educational program, including the use of school wide programs or additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time;

(9) promoting school wide reform and ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content;

(10) significantly elevating the quality of instruction by providing staff in participating schools with substantial opportunities for professional development;

(11) coordinating services under all parts of this title with each other, with other educational services, and, to the extent feasible, with other agencies providing services to youth, children, and families; and

(12) affording caregivers substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apple, M.W. (2006). Understanding and interrupting neoliberalism and neoconservatism in education. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 1(1), 21-26.

Artiles, A., Kozleski E., Trent S., Osher D. & Oriz A. (2010). Justifying and explaining disproportionality, 1968-2008: A critique of underlying views of culture. *Exceptional Children*, 76, 279-299.

Banks J. A. (2007). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. In Banks J. A., Banks C. A. (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 247-269). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Barton, P. E., & Coley, R. J. (2010). The black-white achievement gap: When progress stopped. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service [ETS].

Boykin, W. & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn: Moving from research to practice to close the achievement gap.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Brennan, J. F. (2013). New York City student achievement on national tests during mayoral control: A comparative perspective 2003 to 2011. Albany, NY.

Brown, A. B. & Clift, J. W. (2010). The unequal effect of adequate yearly progress evidence from school visits. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47, 774-798.

Burchinal, M., McCartney, K., Steinberg, L., Crosnoe, R., Friedman, S. L., McLoyd, V., & Pianta, R. (2011). Examining the Black–White Achievement gap among low income children using the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. *Child Development, 82*(5), 1404-1420.

Carter, P.L. (2005). *Keepin' it real: School success beyond black and white.* Oxford University Press.

Carter, P. L. (2012). *Stubborn roots: Race, culture, and inequality in U.S. and South African schools.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Coca, V., Johnson, D., Kelley-Kemple, T., Roderick, M., Moeller, E., Williams, N. & Moragne, K. (2012). Working to my potential: The postsecondary experiences of CPS students in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher Education.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cohen, D. K. (1990). A revolution in one classroom: The case of Mrs. Oublier. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12, 311-329.

Collins, P. H. (2009). *Another kind of public education: Race, schools, the media, and democratic possibilities.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Cross, B. (2003). Learning or unlearning racism: Transferring teacher education curriculum to classroom practices. *Theory into Practice*, 42, 203-209.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Davis, E. A. & Krajcik, J. S. (2005). Designing educative curriculum materials to promote teacher learning. *Educational Researcher*, 34(3), 3-14.

Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Dobbie, W., & Fryer, R. G. (2011). Are high-quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor? Evidence from the Harlem Children's Zone. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 3*(3), 158-187.

Duncan-Andrade, J. & Morrell E. (2005). Turn up that radio teacher: Popular cultural pedagogy in new century urban schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 15, 284-308.

Fiedler, C. R., Chiang B., Van Haren B., Jorgensen J., Halberg S. & Bereson L. (2008). Culturally responsive practices in schools: A checklist to address disproportionality in special education. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(5), 52-59.

Foster, M. (1999). Race, class, and gender in education research: Surveying the political terrain. *Educational Policy*, 13(1/2), 77-85.

Fryer, R. G., & Levitt, S. D. (2004). Understanding the black-white test score gap in the first two years of school. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 86*(2), 447-464.

Gardner, D. (2007). Confronting the achievement gap. In Ryan K., Cooper J. M. (Eds.), *Kaleidoscope: Contemporary and classic readings in education* (pp. 154-159). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Gates, J. F. (2015, May 27). 5 Steps to Understanding Racial Bias. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-fitzgerald-gates-phd/5-steps-to-understanding-racial-bias_b_7446510.html

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Greenwald, R., Hedges, L. V., & Laine, R. D. (1996). The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement. *Review of Educational Research, 66*(3), 361-396. doi: 10.3102/00346543066003361

Gutiérrez, R. (2008). A "gap-gazing" fetish in mathematics education? Problematizing research on the achievement gap. *Journal of Research in Mathematics Education*, 39, 357-364.

Gutiérrez, R., Dixon-Román E. (2011). Beyond gap gazing: How can thinking about education comprehensively help us (re)envision mathematics education? In Atweh B., Graven M., Secada W., Valero P. (Eds.), *Mapping equity and quality in mathematics education* (pp. 21-34). New York, NY: Springer.

Hanushek, E. A. (1997). Assessing the effects of school resources on student performance: An update. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 19*(2), 141-164.

Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2006). *School quality and the black-white achievement gap*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Haberman M. (2000, November). Urban schools: Day camps or custodial centers? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(3), 203-208.

Harris A. (2011). *Kids don't want to fail: Oppositional culture and the Black-White achievement gap*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hemphill, F. C., & Vanneman, A. (2010). Achievement gaps: How Hispanic and White students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Hilliard A. III. (2003). No mystery: Closing the achievement gap between Africans and excellence. In Perry T., Steele C., Hilliard A. G. III (Eds.), *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*(pp. 131-166). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hoffman, P., Dahlman A. & Zierdt G. (2009). Professional learning communities in

partnership: A 3-year journey of action and advocacy to bridge the achievement gap. *School-University Partnerships: The Journal of the National Association of Professional Development Schools*, 3(1), 28-42.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools: Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Illinois high school shrinks its achievement gap for minority students by setting a high bar. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/illinois-high-school-shrinks-achievement-gap-minority-students-setting-high-bar/#.VXG2uFHwlKg.mailto

Irvine, J.J. (2010). Foreword. In Milner's H.R. (Ed.). *Culture, curriculum, and identity in* education. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

James, C. E. (2012). Students "at risk": Stereotypes and the schooling of Black boys. *Urban Education*, 47, 464-494.

Jay, M. (2003). Critical race theory, multicultural education, and the hidden curriculum of hegemony. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5(4), 3-9.

Jencks, C. (1992). *Rethinking social policy: Race, poverty, and the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Jencks, C. & Phillips M. (Eds.). (1998). *The Black-White test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). Religion, Intact Families, and the Achievement Gap. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion, 3*, 1-24.

Jeynes, W. H., & Beuttler, F. (2012). What Private and Public Schools Can Learn From Each Other. *Peabody Journal of Education, 87*(3), 285-304. doi: 10.1080/0161956x.2012.679538

Kemple, J. J. (2013). The condition of New York City high schools: Examining trends and looking toward the future. New York: The Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

Kim, J. S. & Sunderman G. L. (2005). Measuring academic proficiency under the No Child Left Behind Act: Implications for educational equity. *Educational Researcher*, 34(8), 3-13.

Konstantopoulos, S. (2008). Do small classes reduce the achievement gap between low and high achievers? Evidence from Project STAR. *The Elementary School Journal, 108*(4), 275-291.

Kraft, M. (2007). Toward a school-wide model of teaching for social justice: An examination of the best practices of two small public schools. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 40, 77-86.

Krueger, A. B., & Whitmore, D. M. (2001). *Would smaller classes help close the black-white achievement gap?* Princeton, NJ: Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2012). *Bad teacher! How blaming teachers distorts the bigger picture*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dream-keepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51, (3), 206-214.

Lalas, J. (2007). Teaching for social justice in multicultural urban schools:

Conceptualization and classroom implication. *Multicultural Education*, 14(3), 17-21.

Lee, J. (2002). Racial and ethnic achievement gap trends: Reversing the progress toward equity? *Educational Researcher*, 31(1), 3-12.

Lee, S. J. (2005). *Up against whiteness: Race, school and immigrant youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Horwitz, A. & Casserly, M. (2010). *A call for change: The social and educational factors contributing to the outcomes of Black males in urban schools*. Washington, DC: The Council of Great City Schools.

Lidwell, W., Holden, K. & Butler, J. (2010). *Universal principles of design*. Beverly, MA: Rockport.

Lieber, C.M. (2014) *Conditions and Considerations for Effective Development and Implementation of Personal Opportunity Plans* by the Commonwealth, Districts, and Schools. Educators for Social Responsibility. Cambridge, MA

Loucks-Horsley S. (1996). Professional development for science education: A critical and immediate challenge in Bybee R. (Ed.), *National standards and the science curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Lue Stewart, M. S. (2009). *Creating culturally responsive learning environments in classrooms serving Haitian and Haitian American students*. Unpublished manuscript.

Massey D. S. & Denton N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Meece J. (2003). Applying learner-centered principles to middle school education. *Theory into Practice*, 42(2), 109-116.

Milner, H.R. (2012). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. *Journal of Black Studies* 43(6), 693-718.

Milner, H.R. (in press). Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a critical race theory lens. *Review of Research in Education*.

Milner, H.R. & Williams S.M. (2008). Analyzing education policy and reform with attention to race and socio-economic status. *Journal of Public Management and Social Policy* 14(2), 33-50.

Montgomery, W. (2001). Creating culturally, responsive inclusive classrooms. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(4), 4-9.

National Education Association. (2007). *Truth in labeling: Disproportionality in special education*. Washington, DC: Author.

Nettles, M., Millett, C., & Ready D. (2003). Attacking the African American–White achievement gap on college admissions tests. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, 2003, 215-238.

Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Nye, B., Hedges, L. V., & Konstantopoulos, S. (2002). Do Low-Achieving Students Benefit More from Small Classes? Evidence from the Tennessee Class Size Experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(3), 201-217. doi: 10.3102/01623737024003201

Olneck, M. (2005). Economic consequences of the academic achievement gap for African Americans. *Marquette Law Review, 89*, 95-104.

Perry T. (2003). Up from the parched earth: Toward a theory of African American achievement. In Perry T., Steele C., Hilliard A. G. III (Eds.), *Young, gifted and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students* (pp. 1-108). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Phuntsog, N. (2001, April). Culturally responsive teaching: What do selected United States elementary school teachers think? *Intercultural Education*, 12(1), 51-64.

Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. In R. Murnane & G. Duncan (Eds.), *Wither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation Press.

Risko, V. & Walker-Dalhouse D. (2008). Tapping students' cultural funds of knowledge to address the achievement gap. *Reading Teacher*, 61(1), 98-100.

Rothstein R. (2004). A wider lens on the Black–White achievement gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86, 105-110.

Ryan W. (1971). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Random House.

Sackler M. (Director). (2010). *The lottery* [Motion picture]. United States: Variance Films.

Secada, W.G. (1989). Agenda setting, enlightened self-interest, and equity in mathematics education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 66(2), 22-56.

Shealey M. W. (2006). The promises and perils of "scientifically based" research for urban schools. *Urban Education*, 41, 5-19.

Slattery, P. (2006). Gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity in a multicultural and diverse milieu. In P. Slattery, *Curriculum development in the postmodern* (2nd ed., pp. 143-186). New York, NY: Routledge.

Sleeter, C. (2001a). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.

Sleeter, C. E. (2001b). An analysis of the critiques of multicultural education. In Banks J. A., Banks C. A. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 81-94). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Starratt R. J. (2003). Opportunity to learn and the accountability agenda. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85, 298-303.

Tate, W.F. (2008). "Geography of opportunity": Poverty, place, and educational outcomes. *Educational Researcher* 37(7), 397-411.

Thernstrom, A., & Thernstrom, S. (2003). *No excuses: Closing the racial gap in learning*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, F.D. (2010). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Fluency Oriented Reading Instruction with Increasing Black and Latino, As Compared to Asian and White Second-Grade Students' Reading Fluency. *Journal of Negro Education 79(2) 112-124*.

Turner, F.D. (2014). The Educational Achievement Gap and Poverty: Lessons of ESEA and Head Start. In Farmbry, K. W. (Ed.) *The War of Poverty a Retrospective* (pp. 281-295). Lanham, MD: Lexington.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (January 2010). Head Start Impact Study: Final report. Washington DC.

Valli, L., Croninger, R., Chamblis, M., Graeber, A. & Buese D. (2008). *Test driven: High-stakes accountability in elementary schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Varenne, H. & McDermott R. (1998). *Successful failure: The school America builds*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Winfield, A. G. (2007). *Eugenics and education in America: Institutionalized racism and the implications of history, ideology, and memory* (Vol. 18). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

<center>**Additional Articles and Reports**</center>

General Achievement Gap

- "Spreading the AP Gospel," by Kenneth Chang.
- "Once racially troubled, a district shrinks the achievement gap," Jackie Mader.
- "Closing the Achievement Gap: Identifying Social, Societal, Familial and Psychological Factors Affecting Black Students' Academic Performance," Chanon M. Bell.
- "Economic Benefits of Closing Academic Achievement Gaps," by The Center for American Progress.
- "Getting It Done: Raising Achievement And Closing Gaps In Whole School Systems: Recent Advances In Research and Practice, 2008 Conference Report," published by The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.
- "Kids, defined by income," by Christina Pazzanese.
- "It's Time to Act: Let's focus on the well-being of African-American male youth," by Sandra Hughes-Hassell and Casey Rawson.
- "The Threat of Stereotype," Joshua Aronson.
- "Mismatches in Race to the Top Limit Educational Improvement," (report) Elaine Weiss.
- "Educating for the 21st Century: Data Report for the New York Performance Standards Consortium."
- Challenge the Status Quo--Academic Success Among School Age African-American Males by Ivory Toldson and Chance Lewis, produced by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Center for Policy Analysis and Research, in association with Howard University School of Education and the Urban Education Collaborative at University of North Carolina-Charlotte.
- The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University. (January, 2015). Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males. Revised Report. Cambridge, MA.

Early Childhood
- "Preschool is important, but it's more important to preschool children," by Bruce Fuller .
- "Why Pre K is Critical to Closing the Achievement Gap," Ellen Frede and W. Steven Barnett.
- "Oklahoma! Where the Kids Learn Early," Nicholas D. Kristof.
- "Learning to Read, Reading to Learn," by The Center for Public Education.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (January 2010). Head Start Impact Study: Final report. Washington DC.

High School
- "How one high school is tackling the achievement gap," by Shannon Prather.
- "STEM Gaps Start in High School," by Albert Lin.
- "White High School Dropouts are Wealthier than Black and Hispanic College Graduates," Washington Post Editorial.
- "4,100 Massachusettes Students Prove 'Small is Better' Rule Wrong," Sam Dillon.

Students with Special Needs

- Closing the Gap for Children with Special Needs.
- Improving College & Career Readiness for Special Needs Students, published by the College and Career Readiness and Success Center, American Institute for Research.
- Case Study - Closing The Gap for Students Receiving Special Education Services, Camanche Elementary School.

School Policies: Discipline, Homework, Counseling, Instruction, etc.
- "Holder and Duncan Reform Outdated School Discipline Policies," by Marc H. Morial, Pres. & CEO National Urban League.
- "ARE WE CLOSING THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE GAP?" by The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.
- "Homework Policy Still Going Strong," by Lory Hough.
- "Intensive Small-Group Tutoring and Counseling Helps Struggling Students," Motoko Rich.
- "Reform of the Reform: How Not to Fix our Schools," Jackson Lear.
- "Solving the Problem of Summer Reading Loss," James S. Kim and Thomas G. White.
- "The Civil Rights of Children," NY Times Editorial.
- "Working Within Constraints to Transform Schools," Pedro Noguera.
- Case Study - Good to Great, Madison Simis Elementary School.
- "All Along," by Katie Bacon.
- "A School on the Move -- Literally," by Christine Junge.
- "Education Suspended: The Use of High School Disciplinary Records in College Admissions" by Marsha Weissman, Ph.D., Executive Director and Emily NaPier, M.A., Senior Associate of Research and Public Affairs. http://www.communityalternatives.org/fb/education-suspended.html.

Videos
- NEW: "Summer Learning Loss," Brian Williams, NBC.
- "Here and Now," ABC Interview.
- "A Vision of K-12 Students."

Power Point Presentations
- Response to Intervention.
- Principles of Culturally Responsive Education.
- In Pursuit of Equity and Excellence in Education.

Reference Material written by Ronald W. Brown
- Perspective and Prospects from Lincoln West to 2001.
- Star Treking an Educational Experience from 1963-1967 Rutgers."
- Remembrance, Reconciliation and, Renewal.
- Remarks of Ronald Wellington Brown.

Achievement Gap Advisory Panel

CURRENT

Dr. Kaili Baucum
Roberta Bernhard
Sylvia Bryant
Barry Devone
Paula Donaldson
George Glass
Kimberly Griffiths
James Harris
Adele Katz
Peter Keating
Steve Knox
Grace Ko
Marcia Marley

Lisa Sedita
Jonathan Simon
Jane Susswein
David Troutt
Franklin Turner
Roosevelt Weaver
Sue Weintraub
Lois Whipple
Paula White
Jenna Williams
Amillah Williamson

FORMER

Wil Adkins
Kabir Baber
Dr. Renee Baskerville
Ron Brown
Twana Davisson
James Earle, Ex Oficio
Helen Fallon
Dan Gill
Laura Hertzog
Jamil Jannah
Julianne Jones

Anne Mernin
Veronica Nicholson
Dr. Clement Price, In Memoriam
Michelle Russell, Ex Oficio
Tom Reynolds
Chris Swenson
Regina Tuma
Gayl Shepard
Shameekqa Warren
Peter Zorich

Elementary – October 13, 2014 at Nishuane Elementary School

1. **How has the Montclair Public School (MPS) District helped your child/children achieve their goals? Please give examples.**

- Respondent #1 (Afr Am female, multigenerational Montclair family history): has a son who is a freshman at the high school and a daughter in college who graduated from the high school; IMANI program bolstered her children's academics, study skills and test prep skills, Brother to Brother helped her son social-emotional development.

- Respondent #2 (female, multigenerational Montclair family history): has a Hillside student and a Montclair PreK student); the Montclair PreK - though not an MPS school - helped her daughter at Hillside make a smooth transition into kindergarten.

- Respondent #3 (Afr Am male, 6 year resident): has a 2nd grade daughter and a daughter at Hillside; felt that the SAIL program has enriched his children's learning and that MPS has fostered a strong sense of self for his child as well as an appreciation for diversity.

- Respondent #4 (Afr Am female): parent of a 3rd grader at Hillside; appreciates the SAIL program as well as the practice of pulling advanced learners to be challenged outside of the classroom

- Respondent #5 (Afr Am male): parent of 2 elementary school boys; the opportunities for parents to plug into the school system and engage (as his wife has done), is a big plus.

- Respondent # 6 (Caucasian female): parent of 4 children; MPS gave her children an appreciation of diversity, an awareness of discrimination and a concern for discrimination and the language to discuss diversity.

- Respondent #7 (Afr Am male): parent of 2 children who graduated from the high school; children have succeeded academically - one has a master's degree, the other is currently pursuing one.

- Respondent #8 (Afr Am male): parent of adult children who have gone through the system; it's not just the schools but the community itself that has driven success; a key word is "relationships" - the creation of a dialogue of expectations allowed him to articulate what he expected from the school and the school communicated what they expected of him.

- Respondent #9 (Caucasian female): children benefited from the "what", the "how" and the teachers - teachers truly loved her children and helped them achieve. They also taught using project-based learning and interdisciplinary activities that made learning come alive. She also appreciated the reading & writing workshop environment that her children learned in.

- Respondent #10 (teenaged Afr Am male): HS student; said that becoming a part of the STEM small learning community and engaging in project-based learning with real-life applications was compelling and sparked a love for science.

- Respondent #11 (Caucasian female): parent of 2 boys who matriculated through the system; most appreciated the teacher-generated experiences & teacher-generated curriculum that her children benefited from. Rand School and engagement in the local Civil Rights community were cited as examples.

- Respondent #12 (Afr Am male): no mention of children or whether or not he was a parent; believed that the panel was preaching to the choir and that the majority of parents with kids in the gap were not present.

- Respondent #13 (Caucasian female, representing Marcia Marley; director of development): no mention of whether or not she was a parent; said the gap affects people differently and is more pronounced for people who have limited financial means to remediate or enrich their children.

- Community –based service organizations have been instrumental: Brother to Brother, IMANI< Sister to Sister, MC Pre-K, etc.

- Sense of Self imparted to the students.

- SAIL-set standards high

- Parent opportunities for participation good role model

- Awareness of discrimination/sharing of perspectives

- Community interrelationships support student's success

- Positive teacher attributes

- Project –based Learning

- Teacher-initialed/generated pedagogy

- Speaker loves Montclair for its diversity, an alumnus, returned to Mtc. once he started a family and feels many alum do the same because of the diversity.
- Meet all different kinds of people

Middle/High School—October 22, 2014 at Glenfield Middle School

- Educators addressed my needs

- How can we address how kid do things differently?

- Kids are so very different-the system adapted to meet the needs of all 3 of my kids

- Ask and receive help-my experience was very positive

- Schools have enable parents to be involved.

- My child doesn't know color- school helps to contribute to that and allows her to be her-self. So much diversity in this town/melting pot.

- AAMom –principals and teachers respectful and responsive at G&T schools
- AAMom –love the magnet system, allows kids to think differently
- AAMom -Kids at Bradford and MHS. One has special needs, other an athlete, each is re-sponded to appropriately. Welcoming across the board
- WMom -4 kids, Nishuane, Hillside.. schools caring and flexible responding to childrens' in-terests. There's the opportunity for parents to get involved, helps kids achieve goals.
- AAMom –Montclair a melting pot. Child has friends of different races. Concerned that her first-grader doesn't know her colors yet

2. How has MPS prevented your child/children from achieving their goals? Please give examples.

Elementary—October 13, 2014 @ Nishuane

- Respondent #1 from Q1: warned that her statements would make people feel uncomforta-ble; her son was not always an honor student - he was very social and this led to him being pigeonholed as possibly having ADD. As a single mother going through personal transitions of moving and ushering her daughter into college she was temporarily distracted from being able to optimally support her child; said that the school was condescending in their ap-proach to her, "they treated me like I was ignorant but I am very well educated", and they only gave her the option of having her son tested and classified - no other options were presented.

- Respondent #14 (Caucasian female): single parent of a son; became acutely aware that MPS is difficult to navigate when you are a single parent which she found out because she be-came recently widowed. Felt that teachers and guidance counselor were insensitive. Gave example of son having a panic attack and her request to exempt him from homework dur-ing that time not being honored. Mentioned that teacher scheduled a meeting with her with only hours notice and in the morning; mentioned that as a single parent this could have been potentially difficult if it were not for her self-employed status making her sched-ule more flexible.

- Respondent #15 (Afr Am female): adult children who matriculated in MPS & grandson cur-rently in the system; identified race as a discriminatory factor for disproportionate discipline negatively impacting black boys. Stated globally that many parents have 3 jobs and when PTA meetings are held at 3pm, working parents are unable to attend.

- Respondent #16 (Latino/Hispanic male): relocated from Passaic about 15 years ago): parent of 3 children - one in PreK, one in Renaissance and one at the HS; identified extra support classes as ineffective due to classroom management issues and lack of a personalized approach to addressing learning gaps; also mentioned that there is a growing Latino population for which language and advocacy are significant barriers.

- Respondent #3 from Q1: ensuring that his high performing children are challenged to learn at their level is a problem so he is filling the gaps out of his own pocket with various academic and enrichment tutoring classes. He also mentioned that the overlap scheduling of in-school enrichment or high level classes makes it impossible for a child to sign up for all of the classes of interest.

- Respondent #17 (Caucasian female): has 2 kids seven years apart who were very different kinds of learners; felt that her son benefited greatly from an instrumental music program that was short lived and that no one is mentioning bringing back to the district. She believes it is not raised as an issue because certain parents can afford to pay for private lessons. She also mentioned that laying off paraprofessionals in the district has diminished the quality of the learning environment because there are less resources available to help struggling students.

- Respondent #18 (Caucasian female): mentioned a daughter in MPS - said that she experienced a problem with her daughter early on when her daughter was in CI Math in Nishuane but the school raised the cutoff score for participation in the program resulting in her daughter being no longer eligible. Also mentioned that there is segregation and a culture of superiority in high performing classes, i.e. mostly white and that the environment in the lower level classes is calling for students to rebel. Also stated that you can take any class at the HS but without preparedness, students are not able to succeed.

- Respondent #19 (Caucasian female): had 3 (?) children who attended Nishuane, Hillside & Renaissance. Said that divisions are created at Hillside when children have to audition for the arts programs so many children get left out. She suggested expanding these programs so that all interested students can participate. She also mentioned that it was evident in the K, Grade 1 and Grade 2 classrooms the students who are at risk and that we should go into their homes and provide help immediately before they get older.

- Respondent #20 (Caucasian female and MPS teacher): parent of 2 kids that matriculated through the system - a son in college and a daughter in the HS. She mentioned that there was a problem with SAIL because it is a program that offers extra opportunities to only a specific group of kids and mentioned that, "SAIL is a way of tracking without saying it's tracking".

- Respondent #8 from Q1: Code language is the 'elephant in the room' because teachers of students in the younger grades have a level of discretion that goes unchecked and can be discriminatory. He provided a personal anecdote about his son being dismissed by the teacher when his money was stolen in class but there was a white student who lost money in class whose case was addressed immediately upon reporting it. Stated that parents have to care about children other than just their own personal children.

- Respondent #10 from Q1: Stated globally that students need to be poised for academic success at the high school beginning with responding to early warning signs of children in elementary and middle school; kids should be challenged to meet a high standard early on and MPS should educate them about the need to take challenging courses.

- Respondent #5 from Q1: Stated that communication - dissemination of information is very problematic - not providing families with information unless they ask for it. Said that no MPS parent should ever be able to say, "I did not know that...", when it comes to the availability of resources in the community.

- Respondent #21 (Afr Am female who is the leader of an ad hoc parent group advocating for students in Special Ed): She stated that sometimes families are afraid to tell SEPAC about their issues which is why the ad hoc group was founded.

- Respondent #22 (Afr Am female): Stated that the district is not thinking enough about providing opportunities for intervention with struggling students, especially those with working parents.

- Discussion about African-American student 4-yr college outcomes.

- Someone presumed that that majority of the participants at the forum were not parents of students 'in the gap."

- Need more access to information about resources.

- Minority students treated differently by some teachers.

- Single parenthood has its own inherent challenges..

- Stats on African American male students are troubling.

- Lack of voice for the Latino community.

- Inconsistent orchestral music program.

- Paraprofessional /student ratio.

I.   Unofficial tracking.

- Parent of a 7th grader: Classroom sizes. Has now enrolled in private school. Daughter "got lost" in the 26+ class sizes. "Had no real voice". Attention to quite students needed.
- A PTA President: "Son gravitates to the Middle" believes in public education however looking to private schools as a possibility. Class sizes and rigor a part of the private school interest.
- MHS parent: Jr. yr. student moved down in math because high level classes were full. Also, stated tracking done earlier now, not a good thing.
- Hillside Parent: Daughter qualifies for CI dance but conflicts with academic CI classes. Works on a CI level in math. But CI classes only offered at the same time.
- MHS graduate parent: No cultural education for teachers. More teacher diversity is needed.

- Tracking once done you're "locked in". No diversity as year progressed. Lots of "parent driven" pressure. Tracking for higher level classes not always equal across races.
- Watchung parent: No early support for possible ADHD students. Transferred to hillside. CI classes only offered at the same time as other CI <u>and</u> extra help classes. IEP help offered for same grade level help not next year grade level.
- "Differentiated" learning not what it should be or was told it would be. No aide support in larger classrooms. RTI replaces electives. If places in RTI no options for students without the need for help, other than read in the back of the class "teach yourself something". Parental time and money a factor, how do we equal this playing field?
- PreK parent: Finding information for help is not easy. ID early what is needed.
- Parental Outreach.
- "Racism in the system" needs to be spoken and addressed. AGAP late to open to community.
- Tracking. Teachers need cultural awareness.
- Classroom size too large: not enough attention to individuals; too easy for kids to float. Not enough rigor in large classes. [Tracks affected by crowding in HS classes]
- Can kids tracked in 7th grade move up?
- Availability of classes—scheduling locks kids out of opportunities.
- Teacher training – culturally sensitivity; social behavior.
- Segregated classes.
- Differentiated learning – elusive. Problems—classes too large, not enough aides.
- CI courses limited –not enough time (periods) to take all CI courses.
- Discipline issues arrive due to boredom.
- Labs in back of room with teacher's aides.
- Not enough technology.
- Racism not being addressed.

Middle & High School – October 22, 2014 @ Glenfield

- (stated by an attorney); she sues schools to compel them to provide the necessary services to children.

- black boys in 3rd grade start to be treated differently. Not purposely done but depends on the teacher and their comfort. Girls are more compliant and not treated differently.

- I had to compel the district to keep my child integrated.

- because black boys are treated differently, they are not so successful.

- parents may not be aware of services offered.

- even out of district placements are discriminatory.

- need "colored people" at SEPAC meetings.

- How can the schools welcome older youth who move to the area?

- If educators are not held accountable (price to be paid for not raising all boats) then I don't see the AGAP as being successful.

- engage parents from the beginning of their child's schooling.

- Organization and communication differ from a parents perspective and a child's perspective.

- Parent of 3 black children said his kids are not valued like white children.

- one parent stated that a parent was told to get a tutor when her child failed tests. She said she couldn't afford one. She recently found out he isn't reading on grade level but was still advanced grades. No one offered her extra support or support for him academically.

- one parent said he child asked too many questions so the school said he should be "evaluated". Same mom has limited access to teachers to discuss progress, etc. The aides were not included in the IEP. AGAP needs people with special education experience.

- Behavioral and special needs youth are a much larger issue in Montclair and AGAP needs to look into it.

- question: who is assessing the teachers biases?

- there seems to be a lack of urgency when it comes to race issues.

- there seems to be a level of hostility when dealing with black kids issues and their families.

- one parent stated "rather than fight the system, I pulled my kids out."

- AAMom –director of a Law Center that sues districts. Her son and other black kids starting in 2nd and 3rd grade aren't recognized or called on. She's observes classes, sometimes for a week. Teacher white. Son classified with behavior issues. She forced the district to provide aides so he could be mainstreamed. Black boys not given services or respected. Parents in her church don't know what they are entitled to aides and special services. Out of district placements biased –placements for behavior problems not academically challenging.
- WMom – member of Special Ed Parents Council. Works with NAACP. Had a child in a self-contained class. Couldn't get him out.
- AAMom –she found the experience for her children depended on when they entered the Montclair schools. It was hard for her older child to break into groups moving in at a later grade.
- AAMom – grew up in Montclair, feels well-educated, has a HS junior and a middle schooler who has 2 prolonged absences for health reasons. The services offered this child were inadequate and uninformed, not coordinated with teacher.
- AAMom-Went to SW school, teachers were neighbors. Encountered tracking at the HS. Other ways are found to separate kids. Teachers didn't communicate with her about child's skill development
- AAMom – 2nd grade Nishuane student with special needs. Aide assigned only at the first day of school. No chance for the child, anxious, to meet him and get adjusted. The aide talked to the Mom in the hallway! –not appropriate.
- WMom – has 3 black kids, all treated differently from the white kids –not valued.

- AAMom- Moved when her son was in 2nd grade to Hillside. Conferences told her nothing about child's reading levels. Only communication in 5th grade was when child failed a test. Teacher suggested a tutor but didn't ask if they could afford one.
- AAMom – teacher asked that her child be evaluated in K because he asked too many questions. She had her older child transferred back to Bradford from an out-of-district placement. Special services she finds understaffed. She claims she's being kept out of the building because she advocated for her kid. Aide didn't read IEP. She asked whether they are trained. When she visited the school, she had to beg to see the self-contained classrooms.
- AAMom – has a freshman at MHS–who is assessing teacher biases? Principals need to know (about teacher biases)? and /or IEPs and communicate to parents.
- AAMom –has 3 boys. Pulled 7th grader (to where?) because she felt there was an expectation of failure in special ed class. There should be a pathway for children who improve in these classes.
- AAMom – talked about institutional racism. Finds a major level of hostility to black parents. It's psychologically dangerous for kids to be dealt with by police rather than by security guards.
- WTeacher at MHS in a small learning community. Blacks disproportionally in lower levels. He's a fan of delevelling –benefits to all, including empathy. South-Orange-Maplewood's attempts to delevel have been met with resistance. Kids asked not to be fully themselves. Finds disparate enforcement of dress code. Racial concerns become secondary to pressure about Common Core and PARCC. Wants more professional development.

3. What would it look like for you to consider MPS a "real partner" toward helping your child meet his/her goals?

Elementary – October 13, 2014 @ Nishuane

- Don't just advocate for your own child.

- Frequent positive opportunities for intervention.

- SEPAC.

- Shrink classroom size.
- Offer AP African American history classes.
- Teacher training.
- "prevention model" for minority students.
- De-tracking.
- Anti-Racism workshops for teachers. Some teachers may not be aware they are racist.
- More transparency with AGAP and other panels. Time sensitive data disclosure. Community suggestions produce quicker actions.
- Common core testing results from last year… results… whatever happened to them.
- Extend school hours. Homework help in the mornings before school.
- Teacher and administrative staff accountability.
- Foreign Language NEEDED….2-3 times a week.
- Testing done on PC vs written.

- Teachers assist students unable to afford private tutors.
- Getting away from discipline taken on entire class as a result of 1 or 2 students' misconduct. This practice makes it easy for kids to dislike that particular group of students if it only seems to be the same individuals causing problems. For instance 2 african-american students misbehave during class the teacher may take recess from the entire class vs just those two students. Causing the class to label African-American students as "trouble makers".
- Bringing back more enrichment to schools.
- Safety nets in place for C & D students.
- After school support classes need resources to continue.
- Labs in classroom to help fight boredom. Computers need to be integrated more.
- Cultural competency training.
- African American History on AP level.
- Smaller classes.
- Better teaching pool (great teacher, but could be better)—more sensitive and inspirational.
- Prevention model for behavior issues.
- "de-tracking."
- Anti-racism workshop.
- Homework Club—set aside time during school day for kids to do homework, extended day?
- Foreign language encouragement—all schools. Not as electives; requirement.
- Technology instruction.
- Why do we have backdowns in AP classes?
- Mandatory Pre-K.
- Stigma problems—should be addressed, kids who receive discipline are treated like speckled birds.
- More after school enrichment.
- More SACs.

Middle & High School – October 22, 2014 @ Glenfield

- "rate my teacher: capture feedback from a student's perspective.

- "late buses"- the lack of them keeps kids from participating in activities and the likes (clubs)

- AAMom –lauds Center for Social Justice community. It has made her son an honor student. At Renaissance, they asked if he was learning disabled, explored tutoring and counseling.
- AAMom –has 2 sons. Oldest always an honor student-but has never been pushed by the school to take AP. He's not confident in his writing skills. 2nd son doesn't care about school, also has no writing skills. Mentioned to his Mom that he was concerned that all the kids in his class were black as was the teacher.
- Hispanic Dad- 3 special needs kids. Afraid of being disappointed by this process. Thinks class size and lack of adequate school funding are issues. We need to examine the causes of racism, quoted MLKing's Letter from a Birmingham Jail. We may not be special in Montclair, but if we are able to do something, we will be special.
- AAMom –Here 17 years from NYC. 2 kids. Freshman HS daughter. Doing well, but doesn't credit the schools. Black kids yelled at for things that white kids do without consequence. By 3rd grade, black boys are bullied by teachers. They tried to push her child into special ed,

parent refused. Said son needed an aide but didn't explain why. Teacher at one of our middle schools called her a wacko –she moved to another of our mddle schools. There are not enough black teachers.

- WDad –has 2 daughters. One in 10th grade, one DYFS adoptee at one of our middle schools. She won a regional cross-country competition. It was hard getting her services. He's afraid to send her to HS. Disagrees with busy work homework.
- AAMom – Has 8th grade son and HS Jr. daughter. Guidance dept understaffed. Wonderful people but need 3 times as many. Bad decision making for kids can be the root of many problems. Not enough time to meet with counselors, and meetings are too infrequent. Her daughter is one of 2 black girls in a class. Teacher asked –'How am I going to tell you apart?" Notes that all kids have either smart phone or iPads, but there's no feedback from teachers to kids or parents to help the kids improve. Also no way to capture the feedback from kids about school and teachers that they are sharing with one another.
- WMom -5th grader at one of our elementary and 7th at one of our middle schools. A late bus is needed so kids can take advantage of learning opportunities after school.

Please Note:

a) The race of respondents was assumed based on physical appearance, and may have been wrong in some instances.

b) People are identified based on how they publicly identified themselves before elaborating, not based on any prior knowledge of who the people were.

*A*dditional Feedback

The following comments were sent to the AGAP email address.

In light of the ongoing and upcoming discussions on African American boys in self-contained classrooms in Montclair, and the achievement gap, I am writing this letter on behalf of my child, a student in the self-contained class at Watchung School in Montclair New Jersey.   My son is a _-year old African American boy. His biological mother was addicted to street drugs including PCP. Nothing is known of his biological father. Our family fostered him through DYFS (Division of Youth and Family Services) and adopted him when he was 2.5 years old.

While our son was our foster baby, we were able to work with doctors and fix physical problems, and early intervention was extremely beneficial. Our son is social and personable and he is learning. However our son is a child with developmental delays including HAADD and he will need the full benefit of a self-contained class and a full month of ESY (Extended School Year). If he does not receive a full month of ESY services from a fully qualified special education teacher, he will regress over the summer.   3 hours a day for 4 days a week is not enough for a child such as our son who needs a far reaching program encompassing social, emotional, physical, and enrichment therapies that only early childhood educators can teach during those proven years when kids minds are developing the most.

I know that the NAACP, SEPAC and The Montclair Board of Education are all in discussion about how to bring African American and other special needs children's academic achievement closer to the same level as their peers. Three years ago, ESY was cut back from five to four days per week with five hours per day. Last year, it was cut again, and our son was only able to receive four days per week for only three hours per day. Please restore the ESY program fully for all special needs children in Montclair, who will regress over the summer if they do not receive these services.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Dear Mr. Simon,

I hope this email finds you doing well. I am emailing you & the AGAP today with a heavy heart and perplexed conscious - especially after watching last night's live broadcast of the Montclair BOE Meeting.

I am at a place of frustration and serious concern; more so than ever. First I ask you and the AGAP to really ponder and discuss "what worth your valuable efforts **is**, and will render?" Seriously. This is not a rhetorical, theoretical question. Valuable minds of children and parents, and educators are at high risk for being taken for granted, not to mention your own. Pun intended.

Certainly I absolutely appreciate each of your willingness, intelligence and passion to make a difference; and to find out the "why" of the districts "issues". However, I am beginning to see a larger picture that may be so obvious, it's being overlooked.

Event at the behest to advocate and of the countless hours, months and years I have personally dedicated to the "why" of the districts "issues".

Skkkkrrr...kkkkk,skkkurrr...Houston, skkkkrrrr...we have a problem! The Rocket appears to have been wired to explode publicly. What? Excuse me!? You may be thinking? Yes, I did go there. I will explain when next we meet. Although almost every parent, and educator and community advocate articulated this to the BOE at last night's meeting - publicly.

Please share the attached with your AGAP panel. If you have questions, I'll be happy to give an overview of why I've sent these particular attachments. Although, with the intelligence level of each of you, I'm sure the picture will be clear.

Attached is:
1. Focus and Priority Schools list for 2014, Bullock and Glenfield are on the list.

1.1: "DFG" = DFGs, a State designation of district wealth ranging from the poorest ("A")

to wealthiest ("J") districts. Montclair is an "I".

2. Also attached are a few laws (P.L. 2007, c.53 (A5 1R) www.njleg.state.nj.us, a few requirements of Board Members, Administration Procedure Act, vs ESEA a/k/a, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and some other information. If it is too much to digest, call me when you have a second and I will briefly explain. Otherwise, include this with your conversations of the "why" the district has "issues" still?!

As a former Y2K Business Systems Analyst, and Multi Functional Project Manager of one of our country's largest healthcare business merger and acquisition deals, research, internal and external audits approvals are just how my mind works. In other words, I was always assigned to find out what the problem or issue is and make recommendations with the tam to fix/repair them. I personally see no reason "why" our district still has the same decades old "issues". Although there are still reasons for the decades old outcomes.

I have NO clue how much each of you has studied nor realizes, but we have a significant issue that is incredibly obvious.

I could go on forever, but won't. Thank you for taking the valuable time out of your schedule to read my thoughts, and again, if you would like to hear what my discoveries are, feel free to contact me.

As a parent in the district, I have some thoughts on achievement gap related issues that I thought I should bring to your attention. I understand that it common practice at Watchung School (maybe others) for not only teachers, but also administrators, to offer private /pay tutoring to students, not only within the school, but even within their own classes. One administrator puts pressure on parents (if it's perceived they can afford it) whose students are not keeping up to par to seek more tutoring.

While I appreciate the fact that these folks, sadly, need additional income to supplement their full time jobs (and I really wish this wasn't so), I think that this can have serious impact on issues of fairness and equity, including:

-who can afford to pay for tutoring?

-does the teacher involved feel any obligation or commitment to keep that paying parent happy?

-is it possible that this implied pressure may lead to differential treatment of children who bring extra income into the teacher's pocket?

-when an administrator who makes decisions about classroom placements, discipline, and staff development takes money from any parent, are there serious concerns about conflict of interest?

-can some financially benefit from the failure of the school to meet the child's educational needs?

-is it appropriate for a teacher to spend time in a student's home, and does doing so set up a hierarchy of power among families?

As I alluded to before, I think it's shameful that our hard working teachers and administrators need to work more than one job to meet their families' needs. This is a serious problem that I think need to be acknowledged. I certainly do not want to penalize these hard working folks for trying to help our children. However, I believe that we need to have policies in place that prevent the possibility of differential/preferential treatment which further fuel our achievement gap.

This may be one of the difficult conversations that the committee should have. I wish I felt comfortable putting my name to this information, but I don't, as there are many pressures to keep the status quo and not point out problems. None of us want repercussions that will harm our teachers or our children.

I hope that you take this information and discuss it, knowing that it's with the best intentions.

Rolling up our Sleeves for Student Performance

Here we are again facing the issue of low student performance in our schools. The achievement gap should be of concern to us all since it is a reflection of how well we are doing as a community with academic success for all children. How well we know our township and use both the information and resources at hand is important.

A child in this township once said that the reason we (adults) sometimes don't get very far accomplishing our goals is because we spend too much time meeting and identifying the problem and not enough time working on it. And how true he is, for we've failed as a community to work continuously on student progress and don't know seem to know where to pick up again each time we address it.

Stakeholders in the Education Process

We need to keep in mind that all of us stakeholders have room for improvement: students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and government officials. With this type of structure, we should all think that it is unacceptable for so many students to fall behind.

SUGGESTIONS and CONSIDERATIONS (as WE work towards common goals):

Our diverse demographics should be considered when implementing any plan of action that would help narrow the achievement gap. We have to view it as it is. Low scores are predom-

inantly in the lower income population, but low performance can happen to anyone, let's not forget. It only takes one of the stakeholders to drop the ball and student failure can happen.

We should take another look at the community attitude towards education and accountability. Some may think there is no problem with education in this town since after all, this is Montclair, right? Our past success happened as a result of hard work and collaboration. It was no accident. In the past few years I have heard us described several times as "resting on our laurels" when it comes to education by outside educators. Those who are productive here may not be experiencing this since they're busy working toward educational excellence. It could not hurt, however, to take another look at ourselves to see if this is beginning to happen.

Supportive out-of-school programs can (and should) help families help themselves. This is especially so if they remain in direct interaction with the school district and/ or classroom. In fact, it would seem that the more effective the communication and interaction between us around education, the more progress we can make.

There needs to be change in the way we help those who need it most, academically, and maybe even socially. Again, the idea should be to help families do their part to help themselves. Also, stakeholders need to remain well-informed about academic trends and patterns. Patterns are discerned over time. Progress may not happen as quickly as we think. To do this takes ongoing attention, patience, and consistency. We have to stay on this.

It is true we do not need another educational campaign or program on our town. Although we can make good use of more teachers for better control of classroom sizes, we have the resources (both inside of the schools and outside) to find better ways to keep everyone actively engaged around academics.

It's time. What are we waiting for?

1) It was astonishing to me to listen to so many parents talk about their kids and the special needs services they were getting.

When my daughter, who we had evaluated at Montclair State for learning issues, needed services, she was denied, despite corroborating diagnoses from an extensive Montclair State evaluation and a pediatric neurologist. And yet, so many people at the meeting on Wed. talked about their kids being FORCED into special needs program, even when they believed there was no reason.

My white daughter, who was getting a lot of support at home, was denied support at school, when so many African-American students are getting support at school, some of whose parents think they don't need it. We were told that we should just put our daughter on drugs. That was the solution offered by Montclair High School's child study team.

2) Tutors….Especially for the upper level classes at MHS, it seem the teachers can't teach the material during class time and students need to either get private tutors, or work with the teachers before or after school for extra help. Why, I wonder, can't even the top students in the HH and AP classes excel without this extra teaching time? Why can't the material be mastered during the school day? And what disadvantage does that put kids (like mine) whose families cannot afford private tutors? This, in my opinion, is a huge contributor to the achievement gap, which I believe is more of an economic gap than a color gap.

I want to extend my congratulations to a successful forum. I know that we would love to see "standing room only" crowds, but all change starts with a small group. (I think Marcus shared this quote) Anyway, I want to share my thoughts after leaving the forum.

1. It was very interesting to hear from families that are not from economically disadvantaged homes, share about their experiences within our district.

2. We REALLY have to improve our Special Education services and communication.

3. If all roads lead to our High School, which is segregated, then we understand why the elementary schools and middle schools have an underground leveled system as well.

4. It is interesting to hear people say "I moved to Montclair for the diversity", and try to stay as far away from South End and 4th Ward as possible. Both Black and White residents. We need to improve on connecting the polar ends of the town.

5. I strongly suggest a forum for teachers to discuss this issue. The teacher that spoke from the HS shared some very interesting and insightful information.

I know that I was rambling last night, but to say that Montclair doesn't make us...is a not true. We have allowed the culture of Montclair to change with the new residents that have moved her. The increase in taxes, moved so many "blue collar" workers out. Over the past 10+ years, our district has changed to cater to those with financial means. This includes the PTA's, SAT, our YMCA, and even sports. Growing up in Montclair did in fact make you who you are. The history of this town includes deep roots of African American achievers. We grew up with the first African American in the FBI, Artists like Donald Miller, Tuskegee Airmen, Buffalo Soldiers, The first African American to play in the American Baseball League, Judges, Teachers, Senators, and the list goes on and on. Many of our Board of Education members were black. We were always expected to do great things. I think it would be great to talk to Alumni from MHS to hear their stories.

I am a substitute teacher in Montclair and the resource classes for children that need extra help, are "dummed" down. The expectations from these students is very low. Many times they are watching non educational movies, having snacks, or playing games. This is where the rigorous curriculum needs to be in place.

Last night, so many people celebrated their children attending HBCU's and our Superintendent never mentions one HBCU in the report of colleges that our students attend. It was embarrassing to hear Michelle Russell say that she didn't reach out to HBCU's to recruit teachers. As you can tell, I am a proud graduate of an HBCU.

We have 2 black sons who have learned a lot attending school in Montclair, both socially, and educationally. Our oldest son went to private school because we were not happy with MHS at the time, watching the black males and how they represented the school. One of our sons is currently in Montclair Public Schools and we hope to send him to MHS. Montclair has great teachers and administrators, and I am hopeful that we continue to be concerned about our black and Latino children.

I want to close saying, thank you for the opportunity for the community to have open and honest conversations...its a great start.

I can't tell you how disappointed I was attending your forum on the racial achievement gap tonight.

I didn't speak out because I felt the structure for conversation and input was set-up not to begin to really identify the true causes and potential solutions for our achievement gap. Instead process of questions created only a venting sessions for that segment of the population who are part of the gap, but come at it from an entirely different area of difficulty within the mainstream -- special education.

The majority of speakers this evening were parents of special needs kids. So the conversation was not really about the population of low SES and African American kids who do not have special needs issues but still underperform compared to white kids with higher SES. That is the main problem we face here as I see it-- not special education. Special ed has its own issues.

And yet, 'institutionalized racism' and 'teacher bias' became the fall back public blame game for everything wrong once again -- even for these special needs parents getting help. It was no different than conversations back in the 1960's pre magnet schools -- when segregation really was an issue.

Instead, the racism focus today just ignores our core issue which dominates all: the underlying effect of low socio- economic status. Sure there is still some racism and bias. But this is not the core issue as asserted.

The fact is most of our lower SES population happen to be black is why there is a racial achievement gap here. It's not racism as many alleged. For upscale African-Americans in Montclair – there is no achievement gap as Board member David Cummings wrote in an op ed some months ago.

We know that low SES, African American children hear ten million less words by the early grades -- already putting them behind in comprehension. This was not caused by the 'institutionalized racism' in Montclair schools. And the fact that low SES black parents attend far less parent meetings for school processes where after school help and other information is conveyed for paths to success -- is not caused by teacher bias – another buss word used to blame all this evening.

These issues are due to the education and economic status of parents themselves who may not know how best to advocate for their family, or don't have the time to do so. And yet, this underlying view is given no voice. It's still all about racism.

Addressing the real issue… socio economic status – providing more help for kids at an early age whose parents themselves are potentially not well-educated with some kind of additional, in-home help and outreach for dysfunctional family situations -- is the only way to make real change and actually begin to have an impact.

That's what all the successful model programs show.   I had previously forwarded two of these models to you from NY Times stories.

We will just go nowhere as a community if we just continue to blame our "system" in the same way we did tonight. Been there, done that.

FYI…I had two special needs kids…one who was pulled out of class a lot in grade school. And unlike many of the speakers tonight, I'm glad she was removed from class. Her <u>learning</u> issues were such that she could not have kept up back then. But as a result of those small classes and extra help received early on…she was able to stay on grade and succeed later on in middle and HS within the regular classes.   But this guest ion….being pulled from class or getting more aids with in class support…is not a core achievement gap problem. It's a special ed and budget issue.

Until we accept that low SES kids start off without a full deck and begin to address those ramifications at the preschool and earliest grades with different kind of help for them and their families …we will continue to throw our money away and spin wheels listening only to redundant social change rhetoric like was heard this evening.

Therefore, unfortunately, in my view, tonight's focus was a misdirection.
I have one more concern to add to our conversation surrounding creating a meaningful partnership with MPS. I think it is important to create an environment in which African-American families feel secure in reaching out to Child Study Teams when they have a legitimate concern. Many families often feel suspicious when they are approached by the CST. Or many don't reach out because they feel there is a true bias amongst team members. Is there a way to create more trust between the two communities?
Dear Mr. Simon: I will be unable to attend your forums, but have some concerns re achievement in Montclair Public Schools.

I recommend the following article from Dr. Andre Perry for your thoughts as whole community involvement in student success, not just test/curriculum/teacher. To continue that thought, I profess to being concerned with the introduction of less than nutritious foods for the current breakfast program and the affect on students. The district has a Health & Wellness Committee that in past has been very involved with the nutritional well being of our students. It is my understanding that H&W had very little if any part in the student choices, which contain high amounts of sugar. Another community issue is the loss of Physical Education time on the elementary level to one 40 min. class weekly when I believe state mandate is at least 3x that. These are substandard practices that can affect student achievement.

How is the district prepared to address the non-traditional student vis a vis common core/PARCC who is interested in the arts, self-employment, or creativity? Are we just recognizing achievement based on testing? How much intervention will teachers have who are

able to recognize the writer/poet, chef, dancer, artist, class clown (such as the founder of Pay Pal), and how to assist in their achievement?

Is Montclair looking to bring back some level of small group vocational training and business expertise at Montclair High School as a measure of achievement? We have very successful young entrepreneurs in Montclair who have owned their businesses since graduating from high school, particularly in service professions, as well as public safety.

Thank you for your time.

http://magazine.good.is/articles/education-reform-starts-with-community-reform

I just wanted to send a note to say that I was able to attend the last 45 minutes or so of yesterday's session and I thought the structure of the dialogue was productive and several of the comments were particularly salient.

I am a Montclair resident with a daughter enrolled in Kindergarten. I work for the NYC Dept. of Education and was fortunate to spend the last year as a School Design Fellow creating a new model for high school through the Expanded Success Initiative, part of the broader Young Men's Initiative. Our new school design has a particular focus on dramatically increasing graduation rates for young black and Latino men. We opened three schools in September (EPIC HS North, EPIC HS South and the Nelson Mandela School for Social Justice) using this new model and I thought I would share some of the major elements of our design:

Competency-based Framework (both Social/Emotional and Academic)

Culturally Responsive Education

Rites of Passage experiences

Youth Development staff working alongside Resident Teachers

I'd be interested in getting more involved in the work you are doing as it is closely aligned with what I am working on the the NYCDOE. The links below also provide more detail about the work we are doing. Let me know if there might be an opportunity to share more formally.

Children who are black not low SES are still in the gap

Okay...but they have the same options obviously that white parents have of kids who are having learning issues: after school help from the schools, private tutors, special ed designation or going to another educational setting if the problems are either severe enough or they need individual attention. If those parents do not take advantage of these situations but could then they are the issue. If they do and the kids still underperform, they would fall into what I suspect is the general category of naturally under-performing until remediated. My daughter or son, when they didn't hit achievement test proficiency on some tests in grade school early on would have been in this category..until help received started to pay off.

Addressing the real issue… socio economic status – providing more help for kids at an early age whose parents themselves are potentially not well-educated with some kind of additional, in-home help and outreach for dysfunctional family situations -- is the only way to make real change and actually begin to have an impact.

What does this early outreach look like to you?

Especially for kids in dysfunctional situations, this needs to be a comprehensive program. We need to get these kids into a good pre-k early on...with after care..so their language and social/behavior skills are enhanced to start - helping contrast what they see and hear at home. The successful and diverse Montclair Community Pre-k Program should be used, expanded and made as accessible as possible. Maybe they need more sites around town for easier home access for families without a car. The BOE should stop worrying about only supporting this school. It was set up specifically to be the primary pre-k school for our Montclair kids - but to still keep prek out of the BOE budget directly -- both to reduce costs and enhance programming. Instead, more access at an early age through this program would be the first thing to start to turn things around.

Then in grade school...low SES kids who already show signs of issues (yes from testing) need to get into more small class help with a family component tied in conveying goals, education for parents and expectations if there is a behavior problem connected. We need to stop pointing fingers at the school saying disruptive black kids are being unfairly targeted and in-stead get these kids and their parents help why they are being disruptive.

The call it "racism" mindset needs to change. It needs to be publicly disputed. Low SES Black kids have more issues. They need more help to address them and this needs to be said openly and accepted. The parents within this "class" need to internalize they need help. Publicly disputing the bias and racism calls will help end the victimization mindset inhibiting many from getting real help.

In the middle and H.S. - we need 'Joe White' type figures to interact with this low SES popu-lation - particularly black males who need a positive authority figure concerned about their success. To start, where are the HS principal & his assistants in the morning greeting the kids at the door...knowing their names etc. Similarly we need more small group learning communities which operate like charter schools within the schools. The town needs to set up a community center to keep these kids off the streets at nights and have adult mentors connected there to help convey a feeling they can achieve and create a sense of the larger community concerned about them...not just they are being thrown to the wolves and the deck is stacked against them. Really by then, you are too late. The deal goes down by the earliest grades and this is where the program focus needs to be. But that doesn't mean help, of the kind described, should not be included for those in middle and HS now.

I can't fully design the early intervention program piece of this. There are education experts who have already created models that work. There is an abundance of research in this field. It's not my area of social science expertise. The best of these programs need to evaluated, reviewed and one or more adapted for our setting. I sent you two models before.

Our low SES population needs more help, early on at a smaller scale...with family outreach and demands for performance and expectations conveyed -- not empowering more victimization feelings.... with continued communication of caring and involvement by the community.

Those are the kinds of ingredients which need to be included in programs and services that will have an effect.

Just getting a place for the older kids to play basket ball indoors afterschool...with some adult involvement...will help some kids to start. We know this and yet, don't even use the facilities we already have around town to make this happen...nor do we tap into the state and federal grant money available to set up these types of combined help and recreational programs. I know that money is there for this because I use to be a professional development consultant/ fund-raiser. I received a NYS grant for a gang prevention program I designed in NYC for the lower east side:

Project PERT

Prevention, Education, Recreation & Training.

It was not a bad framework and could work here for some of our kids now wandering the streets after school. Rather than suspend them again for another incident, force them to attend something like this as an example. They go to 3 hours after school....homework gets done, basketball/recreation....some one on one mentoring/therapy/counseling with a role model volunteer. Bring in Roger our former police deputy chief and others retired like him: lawyers/doctors etc who've done well. Let the kids talk with them...see there is hope and they can make something of themselves.

Both the community and the BOE need to work this or it won't happen.

Once established: make one knowledgeable player responsible for setting up and running these programs. Let them work.

I am determined to help our community of parents learn that they are not alone.

Especially that all families have basic civil rights as it relates to information; the treatment - and - fair-and equitable education of their children; as well as all available resources to them.

The issues we've heard and most have experienced are decades old. The challenge is these issues have been hidden, AND, there is a cluster of protection of and in small circles that continues to feed the violators or excuse them.

I've been told that some parents are fearful of retaliation and/or they are simply unaware of support. Clearly we've heard this time and time again, when asking for support and information people are denied.

I am an optimist and it seems by divine order, I have concluded, this is a matter I can speak to from experiences, and that I cannot ignore.

I get my encouragement from the thousands of our ancestors, you and the AGAP Panel, many others…and my grandmother whose shoulders I stand upon.

First of all, thank you for your effort and the time spent in organizing this achievement gap panel. It's gratifying to find caring parents determined to fight the good fight for all children. I'd like to join the panel.

My adult daughters both attended Montclair schools, but we removed our younger daughter in third grade because she was bright, underachieving, and we were concerned about the low expectations of her teachers. I'm disturbed to hear that little has changed. The problems that plagued the system thirty-five years ago—the under achievement and misclassification of black kids, the subtle tracking of boys, the paucity of black teenagers in AP classes--are the same. My grandson is a second grader at Bullock. My family is determined that he will reach his full potential.
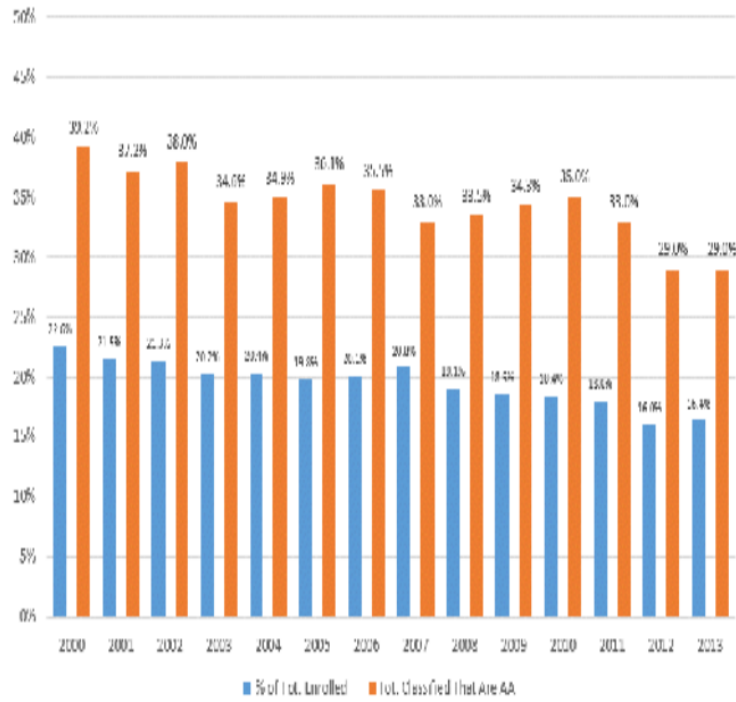
I was pleased to see on the website that a professional development seminar on high expectations had been held, yet many of the parents who spoke at the meetings expressed other concerns. Has the district considered holding seminars dealing specifically with institutional racism and its impact on education? How about ones that make teachers aware of their personal biases and offers strategies for teaching children of different ethnicities? Should the district consult with experts such as Pedro A. Noguera (Steinhardt School of Education) who has studied race and equity in the public school system and could provide answers? The graphs on the website offered little information about academic gaps that begin before 6th grade. Statistics and anecdotal evidence indicate that third grade is the point when black children, particularly boys, begin to fall behind. Middle school is too late for effective intervention; academic paths have already been determined.

As was the case thirty-five years ago, many parents don't know how to successfully navigate the system. Too often, a black child is misclassified and ends up in useless classes that undermine his potential for success. The district should simplify and effectively disseminate information so all¬ parents, including those for whom English is a second language, can easily understand that seemingly unimportant decisions made in the primary grades will determine a child's path in high school and ultimately his future.

As a young parent in the 1980s, I often feared that the old bait and switch con game was being played on black kids, that the price paid for "diversity" and the comfort of white parents uncomfortable with fully integrated schools was de facto segregation by the time kids reached high school. Sadly, the continuing gaps between the academic success of black and white youngsters gives credence to that fear.
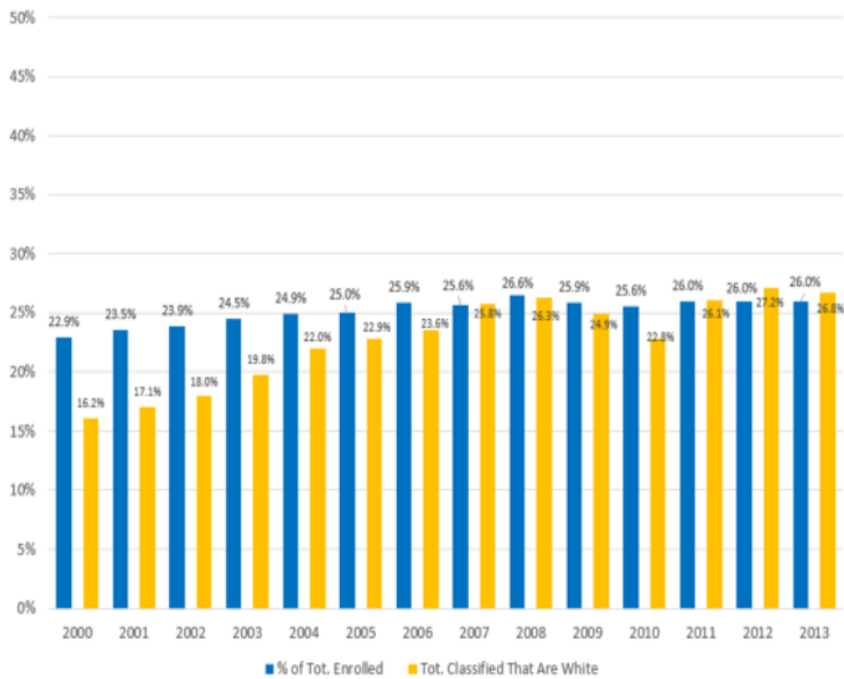
APPENDIX

Percentages of AA Males in Special Education

Legend: % of Tot. Enrolled | Tot. Classified That Are AA

60

Percentages of White Males in Special Education

Legend: % of Tot. Enrolled | Tot. Classified That Are White

61

81

Job Description for Proposed Assistant Superintendent for Equity and Achievement

TITLE: Assistant Superintendent for Equity and Achievement

SALARY: Administrative Salary Schedule

REPORTS TO: Superintendent

SUPERVISES: Supervisor of Professional Development; Parent
Coordinator

DESCRIPTION: The Assistant Superintendent works with central administrators, supervisors, principals, teachers and staff to ensure research based and best practice educational programs and services are utilized in order to increase student achievement. The Assistant Superintendent is responsible for coordinating all efforts to reduce achievement gaps in the district. The Assistant Superintendent will assist the Superintendent in developing and maintaining a plan to ensure equity for all students, enabling them to become college, career, and workforce ready.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS:
• Master's degree or higher
• Teacher Certification
• School Administrator Certification or the ability to obtain certification
• Proven experience with assessment data and responsive interventions
• Proven experience with supporting diverse population of students
• Proven experience with increasing parent engagement and engaging community partners
• Central Office experience preferred
• Successful experience in teaching and/or administration at all K-12 levels preferred

A FIRM UNDERSTANDING OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE REGARDING CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS, KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND ABILITIES:
• Pre-K - 12 curriculum
• Supervision of certified staff
• Building management practices that support improved achievement
• Best practices in leadership and instruction
• Federal, State and local school law and the regulations of the New Jersey State Board of Education
• Public school organizations, administrative practices, curriculum, instructional materials and pedagogy
• Best practices in instructing diverse groups of students
• Cultural Competency
• Creating equity amongst students, administrators, teachers and staff
• Procurement of grants

Ability to:

- Analyze instructional data and recommend responsive interventions.
- Communicate effectively orally and in writing with all stakeholders.
- Work effectively with all learners and maintain successful, cooperative relationships with staff, students, and community.
- Identify, coordinate and deliver effective professional development.
- Supervise certified staff/principals in a manner that results in improved student achievement.
- Evaluate programs, practices, and personnel in a manner that supports student achievement

DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES: (*May not include all duties performed*)

1. Ensure equity for all students, enabling them to become college, career, and workforce ready
2. Assists Superintendent in development, implementation and evaluation of a rigorous, aligned curriculum Pre-K-12
3. Is accountable to the Superintendent and holds administrators, teachers, and students accountable for increasing student achievement; holds all assigned employees accountable for working collaboratively with divisions, departments, and school sites
4. Regularly visits schools and other appropriate program sites to observe programs in operation, and assist principals and other administrators to serve most effectively as leaders; empower school sites to make decisions that directly serve their students' needs
5. Analyzes district wide and school level data and recommends responsive interventions to principals and staff as appropriate
6. Focuses services to schools on student achievement
7. Focuses the District's Title I funds on student achievement and monitors compliance of this federal program, as well as other assigned grant programs
8. Recommends programs and program modifications as needed and evaluates the effectiveness of all programs in a systemic manner
9. Supervises the director of professional development with creating high quality and focused professional development for all faculty and staff that is focused on improving student achievement and customer service
10. Resolves and addresses problems related to student achievement in individual schools
11. Presides over the design, development, and implementation of the district's strategic plans to increase student achievement; assures that the district's strategic plan to increase student achievement is implemented, monitored and updated
12. Communicates and collaborates with other administrators, district personnel, and contractors to coordinate activities and programs, and exchanges information; encourage and promote increased communication and collaboration among all staff members; model district standards of ethics and professionalism
13. Plays a significant leadership role in fostering professional growth and building of staff morale throughout the district
14. Works effectively with social, professional, civic, volunteer, and other community agencies and groups having an interest in the school
15. Attends Board meetings and prepares such reports for the Board as the Superin-

tendent may request

16. Participates in administrative meetings with principals, curriculum department and leadership team and others as needed
17. Attends Board meetings and prepares such reports for the Board as the Superintendent may request
18. Participates in the budgeting and planning activities of the District in cooperation with the Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer
19. Assists in the identification and procurement of grant funding
20. Ensures compliance with local, state, and federal regulations
21. Researches and reviews current trends in education and makes recommendations
22. Serves as a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet in order to resolve systemic issues in a manner that supports student achievement
23. Interprets the programs, philosophy and policies of the District to staff, students, and the community at large
24. Supervises the school achievement teams
25. Other duties as assigned