

Education News & Notes

Closing In on the Achievement Gap

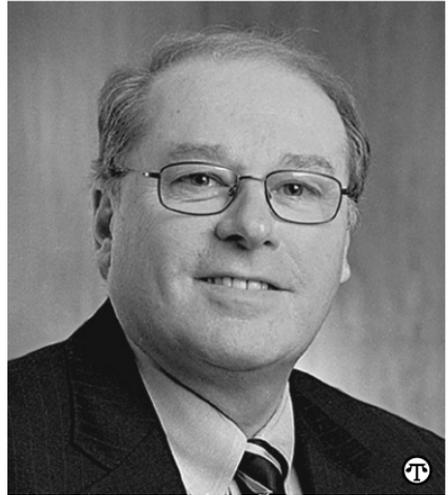
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(NAPSA)—The achievement gap—the difference in school performance among students of different backgrounds—is a serious and persistent problem. Through the No Child Left Behind Act, the federal government has made a commitment to address the problem. ETS is dedicated to doing its part in this vital effort also.

A new ETS report, *Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress*, clarifies fourteen factors in the challenge, from birth weight, nutrition, parental support, and pupil mobility, to class size, school safety, teacher preparation, and curriculum rigor. The ETS report found minority and low-income students are at a disadvantage relative to white and more affluent students in these conditions and experiences conducive to student achievement.

Our research confirms that what happens in the classroom is key to educational excellence. A teacher's skills have an enormous impact on how well a child learns, as do class size, school safety and curriculum. Nothing that occurs before, or after, school should be a basis—or an excuse—for lowering expectations for what teachers and schools can accomplish. And schools must be held accountable for their performance. Yet total responsibility for a child's education cannot be placed solely on the schools. As U.S. Rep. John Boehner, Chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, recently noted, "Parents play a pivotal role by reinforcing daily academic lessons with their children at home at night."



Closing the achievement gap will take time, resources, and the commitment of families, schools and communities. Such commitment pays off. Recently, school officials in Montgomery County, Maryland, reported significant gains in reading for lower-income minority students in full-day kindergarten programs. Beyond increasing the number of hours children spend in kindergarten, the county revised its kindergarten program to provide more teacher training, a revamped curriculum, and smaller classes.

The achievement gap can be closed and we must use this historic moment to see that it is. Nothing we can do will contribute more to equality, opportunity, a strong economy and a healthy democracy. ETS is committed to the cause. We will continue to listen to and learn from the education community and from research, and we will do our part to lead the way in advocating informed public policy and informed educational practice.

You can learn more online at www.ets.org/letstalk1.html.