

BAAWG Community Forums  
REPORT  
April, 2011

A group of over 40 community members, representing students, parents, staff, administrators and school board members deliberated over the important issue of “How do we close the achievement gap in Valley View School District?” at two community forums held this Spring. The following is a summary of the positive and negative aspects of each approach, individual participant reflections and the group’s ideas for next possible steps to address the issue.

**APPROACH 1 - Raise Expectations and Demand Accountability**

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Teachers need to communicate with parents for reinforcement	May eliminate potential teachers from going into field
Teachers responsibility to make sure students succeed	Teach to the test
Kids will rise to level of expectation - expectations will be met	Accountability only measures test scores
Teachers have to be alright with wearing many hats	Needs a social shift - parent, student, teacher
Not just passing the test - teachers need to connect with ALL students	Raise accountability for all stake holders - students, parents, community
Culture in the school	How do we only blame the teacher?
Implement Common Core Standards	Some teachers fall to apathy
Encourage all parent’s participation - redefine parent involvement	There needs to be transparency
Make community safe - all look out for good of all	When expectations are raised, there will be an initial drop in achievement
Targeted impact on issues/individuals	Cannot address all outside factors - social/emotional
Start at early grades	How to prepare for and define systemic approach
Meet parents where they are - don’t judge	Making parents come to us - difficult
	Teachers open to parent observation?

**APPROACH 2 - Close the Spending Gap**

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Get residents involved in school board meetings	Spend more \$ to increase counselors
Utilize existing resources to assess students, help teachers	Mismanagement of funds
Parent volunteers	Getting everyone on board with the direction is hard
Have to decide we will invest	Feel safer letting “others” who we vote for take care of it
Vote for school board members	Poor utilization of available resources (books, materials, etc.) to match potential
Need to have a big picture look - state to local	Summer school for primary level - enrichment/enhancement
District currently spends well	Full day Kindergarten
Analyze current spending, redistribute funds	Support for continuing education of teachers
Enhance student-teacher relationship	
Early identification and intervention of “at risk” students so don’t have to spend so much later on	
Teachers need a mind-set for change	
Team teach	

## APPROACH 3 - Address the Root Causes

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Lack of English proficiency - we need to embrace Spanish speaking students	Money on resources to fix problems
This is child focused	Money to get to college - undocumented students
This does impact student achievement	Partisan politics
Students that lack readiness become angry at school when they cannot perform as well as others	Failed to make strides with the money that we have been given
Students lack support at home	When are we overstepping bounds
Some students/parents do not feel accepted in community - can lead to isolation	Some food provided to students (breakfast, lunch) is not healthy
Broken system - not meant for minorities and poor students	In broken system, what really are our values?
Need more diversity in the people that are involved	Need to incorporate literature and textbooks that reflect the cultures of our students
Need to be more accepting and respectful of all races, religions - teachers need to be culturally competent	
Social - emotional needs need to be addressed early on and in our system.	

### Reflections

#### Individual

- Frustrating,
- Didn't know there was a gap
- The gap is a perception
- Overwhelming - "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few"
- We haven't moved forward - we must find ways to move forward
- We need to change mindset
- Now, we ARE trying to change the system - it will require great work from ALL (students, parents, district, community)
- This community wants change, but then are they satisfied?
- Future district changes will be imbedded in research-based data
- District needs support of the community
- Individuals each have power, but we can each reach one at a time
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#### Next Steps

- BAAWG begin to tout what individual actions that they are doing that are working toward the same goal
- Bringing what is happening into the school system - into the community
- Keep expectations behind all that we do
- Pair up with other parents - for community
- Parenting Mentor - church
- Work on how to meet needs of immigrant children
- Improve environment for volunteers
- Meet parents where they are and not judge
- Teacher preparation piece
- Making sure that all resources in the school are used
- Implement full day Kindergarten/Summer School
- Bring others to the BAAWG meetings from various groups that include ALL education stakeholders (parents, community members, business members, seniors, etc.)
- Continue to stretch our thought processes