

MINNESOTA P-20 EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

*2012 Report
to the
Legislature*

Submitted by:
Steven J. Rosenstone, Chancellor
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Chair, Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership

Purpose

In 2009, legislation was enacted to formally codify the P-20 Education Partnership (formerly called the P-16 Education Council); to add four legislators to the membership; and to require an annual report be submitted to the Governor and Legislature each January. The report is to “summarize the partnership’s progress in meeting its goals and identifies the need for any draft legislation when necessary to further the goals of the partnership to maximize student achievement while promoting efficient use of resources.”

2010-11 Partnership Goals

The Partnership, under the leadership of Education Commissioner Alice Seagren and Commissioner Brenda Cassellius, January – August 2010, focused on the following goals:

- Communicate the importance of college and career readiness to Minnesota students, families, educators and communities across the state
- Ensure that all middle school and high school students take rigorous courses that prepare them for college and careers
- Close achievement gaps among elementary student groups in the STEM disciplines

These ambitious goals required the development of plans and strategies. The Partnership created working groups to conduct research, develop plans of action and make recommendations for consideration by the Partners. The Partnership developed a charge for each work group to guide its deliberations. Those charges were as follows:

1. *The College and Career Readiness Communications Campaign work group was charged to develop a communications campaign to make college and career readiness information accessible to Minnesota students, families, educators and communities across the state. The plan should ensure that the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership’s broad definition of “Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness” is widely understood by the public.*
2. *The work group on Rigorous Course Taking was charged to develop a statewide plan to ensure that all middle school and high school students take rigorous courses that prepare them for college and careers. The plan should analyze the number, type and quality of courses that secondary students currently take and how this relates to achievement patterns of student subgroups and students overall.*
3. *The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) work group was charged to develop a statewide plan to close achievement gaps among elementary student groups in the STEM disciplines.*

The working groups met regularly from September 2010 through November 2011. Each group provided regular updates on its work to the partnership during that time. In December, final reports and recommendations were presented to the P-20 Partnership. The recommendations are listed below. Copies of the complete reports can be found at www.mnp20.org.

Findings and Recommendations

College and Career Readiness Communications Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Address and engage several audiences — not just students, their families and educators — but also policy, business and community leaders.
2. Create and share new information to help all students be college and career ready through P-20 partner collaboration.
3. Plan and implement an ambitious statewide campaign.
4. Reach out to policy, business and community leaders — and the general public — on college and career readiness.
5. Fill gaps in existing research to ensure we target new communications efforts.

Committee on Rigorous Course Taking

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Communicate the importance of rigorous course taking.
2. Establish viable pathways for students.
3. Ensure adequate resources in schools to support rigorous course taking for all students.
4. Ensure that the content suggested by course titles in secondary schools is sufficiently challenging and rigorous.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Committee (STEM)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The P-20 Education Partnership should organize an achievement gap strategic planning process in which the major stakeholders are involved in goal setting and the other activities of strategic planning.
2. Minnesota needs to have/develop web-based common assessments for all STEM disciplines and all grade levels 2-8.
3. In some cases, potential solutions to reducing the STEM achievement gap are inexpensive or have no cost associated with them; those solutions should be implemented statewide. However, in cases where the solution costs are high and budgets are strained, it may make good economic sense to concentrate funding in the districts with the greatest risk factors.
4. Research should be done in Minnesota K-12 education to clearly identify the most significant contributing factors to the STEM achievement gap and the relative magnitude of each of their contributions to the gap.
5. Incorporate cultural competency and effort-based intelligence into professional development for teachers, administrators and pre-service teachers.
6. In order to address the needs of the future workforce, greater emphasis needs to be placed on successfully equipping ALL students with knowledge and skills in the STEM fields.
7. All schools should be encouraged to partner with local businesses, organizations and higher education institutions to support STEM programs, provide role models/mentors and increase student engagement toward career goals. This process could be greatly enhanced through state-wide/regional coordination.
8. Models of exemplary school leadership relative to reducing the achievement gap should be identified and included as a basis for professional development of school leaders (principals, curriculum coordinators, board members, etc.).
9. Adopt state standards for technology education so that Minnesota standards exist in all STEM content areas.
10. Identify, disseminate and replicate best practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment related to reducing the STEM achievement gap.
11. Teacher preparation programs should recruit, support and retain persons of color and diverse backgrounds, including STEM professionals, for K-8 teaching, with a goal of matching staff demographics to student demographics.

12. Improve teacher preparation through more content and pedagogy in STEM subjects, integrated STEM.
13. Teacher professional development should be focused on deeper STEM content as well as pedagogy specific to addressing the achievement gap.

Work plan for FY 2012 and FY 2013

In September 2011, Steven Rosenstone, chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities became chair of the P-20 Education Partnership. MnSCU staff interviewed 21 of the members or designees to learn what partners believed to be the strengths and accomplishments of the partnership, what could be done to strengthen the partnership and what issues or topics the partnership is uniquely positioned to address.

Members overwhelmingly cited the opportunity to meet and dialog with a diverse group of leaders representing all facets of education to be important and significant. They believed the trust and better mutual understanding that resulted to be powerful and suggested that collective power be focused on one or two key issues. Those issues, they suggested, should be ones where the collective wisdom, resources and interests of the partners could be leveraged to make significant progress in the goal set forth in the legislation, ***to maximize student achievement while promoting efficient use of resources***. The most pressing topic that meets these criteria is reducing or eliminating the achievement gap that exists between low income and students of color versus their white middle and upper class peers.

The Achievement Gap; A pernicious problem

Minnesota's achievement gap is among the worst in the nation; it is a significant problem in all parts of the state – it's not just an "urban problem." The economic future of our state is in peril if the achievement gap is not addressed. Members agreed that working to eliminate the achievement gap was the singular most important goal they should work on collectively. At this time more research on the extent of the problem, its causes and possible remedies is underway. Using that information, the partnership will establish a concrete measureable goal and develop strategies to meet that goal in the first quarter of 2012. Partnership members know this will require a long-term commitment, strategic planning and systemic change. For those reasons, this goal will be the focus for the next 2-4 years.

Recommendations to the Governor and Legislature

The partnership is not recommending legislation at this time. However as our work on the achievement gap proceeds, we expect that some of the solutions will involve policies and practices that may require legislative attention in the 2013 legislative session. We look forward to sharing those recommendations with you in the coming year.

