Addressing the Achievement Gap

SUMMIT REPORT AND ANALYSIS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON
Summit: Addressing the Achievement Gap

October 2, 2009
Titan Student Union at Cal State Fullerton
Summary and Analysis of Event
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December 2009

For more information, please visit www.ocachieves.org
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The purpose of the “Addressing the Achievement Gap Summit” held at California State University, Fullerton on October 2, 2009 was to bring the Orange County community together to discuss the achievement gap. The achievement gap reflects the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. For example, the performance gaps between many African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic white peers and similar academic disparity between students from low-income and well-off families. The Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center (2004) reports that the achievement gap has become a focal point of education reform efforts. The summit was planned and sponsored by a group of elected officials in Orange County and officials of California State University, Fullerton, and specifically examined its impact on the educational system, the workforce and our communities.

The intent of this program was to demonstrate a commitment to closing this gap over the next ten years according to Milton Gordon, President of Cal State Fullerton. Fullerton City Councilwoman Sharon Quirk-Silva opened the day asking members of the audience to pledge to solve this problem by finding solutions. The Summit was designed to examine the causes of the achievement gap and identify solutions to address this gap considering the resources, challenges, and models of success available through local, state and federal resources.

Approximately 286 people attended the summit, including elected officials, school district, college and university leaders, business leaders, and representatives from nonprofit education-related organizations. Many representatives from Orange County, city of Fullerton and city of Anaheim organizations and offices, as well as parents and community members participated.

Since California ranks 10th in the world in economic power, it is critical that the human potential of its citizens is developed so that it can remain competitive and meet the challenges of this century. The achievement gap is an indicator of major challenges to California’s future success in that a gap exists between students who achieve and those who do not. This gap in achievement was examined at this summit and the following guiding questions framed the discussion:

- What is the achievement gap and where are the most serious gaps?
- What problems are most serious, and how do we prioritize and develop solutions?
- How do we hold schools accountable for teaching and students accountable for learning the necessary skills and curriculum to ensure academic success?
- How can families, communities and schools work together to successfully address the achievement gap?
- What are some promising practices that have been successful in addressing the achievement gap?
- What policy and infrastructure changes are needed to ensure equitable learning opportunities?
- Considering today’s economic realities, what redistribution of time and/or resources are necessary to improve student learning?
- How do we work together to address this issue in Orange County?
The achievement gap was described in many ways, but three comments that captured the tone of the day included:

“The achievement gap is a civil rights issue.” (Legislative leader)

“The achievement gap is connected to the developing gap in the world of work.” (Business and Workforce Specialist)

“The achievement gap as described here today is not an achievement gap but an opportunity gap. Using that terminology and paradigm shifts the responsibility from the child to the adults.” (Educational Leader)

This report is based on the summit program guide that included the program schedule, speakers, participant observations of the day, and notes recorded for each session. All of these data were then analyzed, summarized, and written in this final report by the staff of the Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership, College of Education at Cal State Fullerton.

There were seven findings that emerged from the data concerning participants’ perceptions of factors that should be considered in effectively addressing the achievement gap. These included:

- The critical role and responsibility of educational leaders/institutions
- Adjusting teachers’ expectations of students
- Relevant, culturally engaging curricular design/offerings that promote college readiness
- Improved student achievement
- Increased parental involvement
- Accessibility of academic assistance/tutoring programs
- Community engagement and resource usage

The role of federal, state and local government and public policies were highlighted, and vigorous discussion ensued specific to the direct impact of federal and state policies on public schools, educational structures and processes. A key point that emerged relative to closing the achievement gap was the importance of appointed and elected officials to aid in this process.
Participants identified critical and necessary steps to address the achievement gap contained in the following:

- The role and responsibility of school administrators/educational institutions in supporting teacher quality, program and curricular relevancy, and student achievement;
- Individual/personal responsibility and action needed through engaging in activities such as early outreach, mentoring, and service in support of education by all.

Participants identified clear indicators about what could and should be done to close the achievement gap ranging from increased financial resources to effective communications and relationships between all the stakeholders involved in schools at all levels of PreK-12 and higher education and the communities they serve.

In conclusion, the overall challenge was for participants to produce legitimate outcomes for closing the achievement gap relative to the empowerment of students, their families and communities. It is up to the whole community to engage in the education of students. We are all accountable!
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This report is based on the summit program guide that included the program schedule, speakers, participant observations of the day, and notes recorded for each session. Evaluator document analysis of the program schedule book, and synthesis of the recorded notes for each session served as the basis for these data. A summary of the content offered by presenters and their response to questions posed and records of the small and large group interactions and discussions were also included.

The Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership staff then reviewed and analyzed materials using both document analysis of the actual summit conference book, and open coding of data from conference notes. From these data, emergent themes were identified and a summary of participants’ evaluation of the day were included. All of these data were then analyzed, summarized and written in this final report.
Program Overview

The content of this report begins with an overview of the day, summation of key points offered in each session, identified issues in addressing the achievement gap and those aspects yet to be addressed. Finally, best practices for closing the achievement gap were identified as well as recommendations for next steps in addressing this issue.

Program Overview
Over the course of this past year, the Steering Committee for this program consisting of Fullerton City Councilwoman Sharon Quirk-Silva (chair), California State Senator Lou Correa, U.S. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (honorary member), California State Assemblyman Jose Solorio, and Santa Ana City Councilman Sal Tinajero convened a Planning Committee of twenty-six leaders representing educational institutions, business, non-profit, and city/county agencies. This group worked tirelessly to bring together local, state and national representatives to focus on the achievement gap in Orange County.

The purpose of the summit was to bring the Orange County community together to discuss the achievement gap specific to the impact on students, their families and communities, as well as our local schools and workforce. The intent was to demonstrate a commitment to closing this gap over the next 10 years using this summit as a critical step in the process to ensure a long-term countywide commitment to this issue, according to Milton Gordon, president of Cal State Fullerton. The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, city of Fullerton, opened the day asking members of the audience to pledge to solve this problem by finding solutions. She stated that the achievement gap is persistent, and we must address it.

The guiding questions:

• What is the achievement gap and where are the most serious gaps?
• What problems are most serious, and how do we prioritize and develop solutions?
• How do we hold schools accountable for teaching and students accountable for learning the necessary skills and curriculum to ensure academic success?
• How can families, communities and schools work together to successfully address the achievement gap?
• What are some promising practices that have been successful in addressing the achievement gap?
• What policy and infrastructure changes are needed to ensure equitable learning opportunities?

Considering today’s economic realities, what redistribution of time and/or resources are necessary to improve student learning?

• How do we work together to address this issue in Orange County?
Summation of Presentations/Panel Sessions

Approximately 286 participants attended the summit, with most attendees from the educational sectors of higher education (two- and four-year), local school districts, and nonprofit education-related organizations. Many representatives from Orange County, city of Fullerton and city of Anaheim organizations and offices were present, as well as parents and community members (a list of participants is included in the appendix).

Mayor Bankhead, city of Fullerton, opened the summit, inviting participants to not shy away from the challenges of addressing the achievement gap despite the budget crisis. He concluded that we must create a workforce that will support our overall society. President Gordon, Cal State Fullerton, indicated that the achievement gap threatens to undermine the social and economic fabric of our society and the summit is one step in an ongoing preventive process. He also suggested that another step is needed, in that all high schools should have the A-G course requirements.

Superintendent O’Connell, California state superintendent of public instruction called for the achievement gap to be viewed as an economic imperative. “It is more important than the moral imperative for now.” O’Connell stated that over half of California students are from a low socio-economic background, and educators, legislators and everyone should address the low achievement of these students.

Orange County Business Council Vice President for Economic Development and Research, Dr. Wallace Walrod, offered key points for closing the achievement gap within the workforce development and education arenas. His comments connected the achievement gap to the developing gap in the workforce for the state of California and the nation.

U.S. Congressman Royce, California State Senator Correa, California State Assembly Member Solorio and Santa Ana Council Member Tinajero suggested that mentoring programs and community leaders can help to motivate students to improve their academic achievement. Everyone is responsible for closing the achievement gap: role models, Gear Up programs, parent involvement, after-school programs, and local communities are indispensable in responding to the achievement gap.

Discussion about the critical need for federal leadership emerged. Immigration reform, the No Child Left Behind Act and Dream Act legislation must be considered. Juan Sepulveda, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, reported that President Obama believes no student should be allowed to drop out of school; everyone needs to assist our children to let them have at least one year of postsecondary school education. We can solicit help from community colleges in this matter, according to President Obama.

He reported that the statistics for Latino students are quite devastating. They are the least likely to attend college and are in the worst situation compared to other groups, nationally. Sepulveda reported that the bulk of federal funding would be for serving at-risk groups and the federal government is challenging states to focus on at-risk students.

He discussed four pillars for K-12 education that included: 1) standards/assessment 2) teachers and leadership, 3) data and, 4) turn-around schools. He reported that we need stronger, better and universal assessments for student learning based on standards. Teacher quality and training is essential and finding ways to reward teachers, moving ineffective teachers out, and attracting and retaining Latino teachers is necessary. The use of data systems to help families understand what is expected and needed for their child to succeed will assist in this process. And, the idea of taking low-performing schools
and working with the stakeholders of the community to determine what strategies will turn them into high-performing schools is a valuable best practice model.

Sepulveda discussed the significant role of community colleges in supporting the education of Latinos since so many Latinos begin their post-secondary studies there. He pointed to the multiple challenges of meeting the complex problems of student success considering financial barriers for higher education, as well as the rate of fade out students and drop out students. He concluded with the fact that we need to rely on the community to help us improve and better utilize the available resources. He offered two examples, Share Our Strength and Unlikely Allies.

The KIVA Panel activities afforded participants the opportunity to engage in a traditional Native American practice. This practice guided interactive discussions focused on identifying issues and seeking solutions relative to the achievement gap. Summit participants worked in small groups responding to specific questions posed by the facilitator, Juan Sepulveda, who formed panels of volunteers to share their responses to the questions under consideration. The questions posed included:

1. What three things would you change to close the achievement gap?
2. Is it possible to close the achievement gap without additional resources? If yes, how? If no, then what can be done?

The KIVA panel included members of the audience and summit program speakers. The discussions ranged from different strategies to create revenue to fund educational programs to the types of issues that affect children’s learning in the classroom and at home. KIVA panel responses indicated the need to:

• Raise children’s aspirations and improve the educational process
• Address inequity and increase educational awareness about the achievement gap
• Expect excellence in teacher quality
• Reallocate existing funds and grow local business investments in education

All of these issues should be considered in order to close the achievement gap.

The Community Conversation on the Gap panelists reported that early interventions and supplemental instruction help students. The use of effective evaluation and assessment supports student success in education. Parental involvement, local control, teacher quality, seeing the gap as an opportunity gap with adults taking responsibility in this process, and using the community as a resource are all critical in improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap.

The day concluded with Dean Claire Cavallaro, College of Education at Cal State Fullerton, offering closing remarks. She pointed out that addressing the achievement gap is going to take more than excellent teachers. It is up to the whole community to engage in the education of students. We are all accountable!
Summit: Emergent Themes

The notes reflecting the summit were categorized into identified emerging themes and then examples were offered to explain each category. There were seven categories that emerged from the data analysis of the session notes. The overall themes included:

- The critical role and responsibility of educational leaders/institutions
- Adjusting teachers’ expectations of students
- Relevant, culturally engaging curricular design/offerings that promote college readiness
- Improved student achievement
- Increased parental involvement
- Accessibility of academic assistance/tutoring programs
- Community engagement and resource usage

Each of these themes are described below with direct quotes from participants describing specific issues and action steps for responding to the achievement gap.

The Critical Role and Responsibility of Educational Leaders/Institutions
The participants discussed issues concerning school environment, equity, bilingual education, professional development of teachers and teacher expectations of students. The critical role of educational institutions in being responsive to students’ needs was the other theme that emerged.

School Environment
Administrators should first research and identify realities at the school, and then evaluate all areas of need and list key methods to improve them. While implementing new changes, administrators should base those changes on school structure, staff support, special education intervention and other instruction that supports modifying the school system to be responsive to all learners.

Equity
Every student should have equal access in the academic environment. Equity means that all students have access to college readiness and advanced classes, but also develop cultural competence to compete in a global society. Therefore, administrators should be aware of this matter and provide/create school environments for all students that are inclusive and embrace equity and diversity, which is fundamental to the mission of the institution.

Bilingual Curriculum
In Orange County, many students and parents are immigrants and have poor English proficiency, so culturally and linguistically competent teachers will be needed to help students develop their English abilities. Developing and implementing a bilingual/bi-cultural philosophy in the K-12 curriculum could enhance the English skills of students and their parents. Hiring bilingual teachers and developing a bilingual curriculum would be an improvement.

Professional Development
Administrators should encourage teachers to participate in professional development programs that raise their awareness of the achievement gap, and administrators should provide training for teachers to utilize data to make appropriate instructional decisions. This instruction should go beyond subject matter to
include other issues that are central to student learning and development. Teachers should also develop effective approaches to work with diverse populations, and be encouraged to expect more from students.

**Administrator and Teacher Expectations**

Administrators should hold teachers and counselors accountable by instilling higher standards and expectations, rewarding teachers for achieving goals and successful practices (merit pay).

Administrators should create a learning community with teachers being consistent across grades 2-4 to close the achievement gap. Moreover, require teachers to be 100 percent committed to make school a place where students want to be involved.

**Divergent Themes**

Another item that emerged relative to the role and responsibilities of administrators and educational institutions was a different perspective/paradigm for viewing the achievement gap as an “opportunity gap.” There should be discussions involving the community about teaching and learning, and efforts made to engage middle school students in the educational process.

Administrators should seek ways to fill the “opportunity gap” and knowledge gap to ameliorate the achievement gap symptom and require local school boards to use a professional panel to help select superintendents.

Administrators should hold regular meetings or discussions with faculty/staff or community members to reaffirm the importance of teaching and learning for children.

 Administrators should connect and engage junior high school students in school and education because they need to feel as though they are part of schools and communities.

**Adjusting Teachers’ Expectations of Students**

Teachers were viewed as having an essential role in resolving the achievement gap. It was reported that teachers were key because they can recognize quality teaching, engage in self assessment, use model programs in the classroom, be student-centered, provide academic advice and monitor students’ academic success.

- Teachers should evaluate their ability to teach, and incorporate effective practices from high-achieving schools to make low-achieving schools culturally relevant.
- Teachers should learn to listen to children; target interventions to student learning needs; eliminate restrictive, prescriptive teaching; and respond to students’ different learning styles.
- Teachers should want to teach, continue to learn and believe all children can learn.
- Teachers should build better student-teacher relationships.
- Counselors and teachers should be trained to provide advice about high school graduation requirements and college admission.
Relevant, Culturally Engaging Curricular Design/Offerings That Promote College Readiness

Curriculum design and offerings are important. Diverse learning styles must be accommodated, and subject matter should be broad-based. Consideration must be given to the development and use of English skills and critical thinking skills. It is important to incorporate meaningful classroom activities to support the learning process. Curricular decisions, especially pedagogical approaches, should be based on data. Additionally, engaging local businesses and other educational agencies may aid in effective curricular action to meet the multiple, comprehensive needs of learners. Teachers and administrators, as well as local businesses, can take an active role in closing the gap.

In the curriculum, administrators and teachers should focus on engaging and meaningful activities and programs instead of “back to basics” (e.g., critical engagement with history, social science, career and bilingual education focused on building students’ skills).

Provide English language development classes for students and parents who are English learners.

Coordinate and use data to drive pedagogy and interventions to reach students struggling in math and language courses.

The participation of local businesses in extracurricular activities and teaching will stimulate student interest and help students to find meaning in the education process.

Curriculum should be reevaluated to determine what is the best fit and approach for specific students.

Improved Student Achievement

Strategies for improving student achievement include increasing students’ self-knowledge, identifying behaviors that support learning, and encouraging their positive attitudes and high aspirations toward education. These actions will motivate students to learn effectively, and schools should make explicit the expected standards and benchmarks of academic achievement to and for students. The approaches reported tend to suggest that students need to be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and they should not be punished, but rather supported in the learning process.

Help students develop a positive attitude and self-perception as a learner.

Raise students’ expectations and aspirations.

Test students in more than one way.

Encourage students to share and discuss their needs and the barriers that widen the gap.

Help students invest time and energy in achieving their goals.

Hold students to higher standards.

Support students by telling them that they can do it, they are smart.

Facilitate effective study skills/habits with students.
Don’t “punish” students by placing them in remedial classes; provide students with motivation by placing them in mainstream courses.

Identify at-risk students and provide an intervention that leads to a change for them from at-risk to thriving.

**Increased Parental Involvement**
Since parents are the first teachers of their children, parent involvement is critical. Their involvement can increase students’ motivation to learn and encourage improved academic achievement. This will lead to more positive student attitudes and behaviors in school and encourage higher academic achievement. Administrators should offer parent institutes and other educational programs to help parents understand their students’ educational needs. Parents can help design these programs and use these opportunities to share their expertise and skills.

Develop parent education programs to improve awareness of the basic educational needs of students, and the critical role of parents in their child’s education. Empower and encourage parents to become involved in school and school activities.

Provide valuable support for parents to help them navigate the educational process and academic challenges of their children, and eliminate language barriers.

Educate parents on what to expect from their children, and invite them to share their strengths with the school community.

**Accessibility of Academic Assistance/Tutoring Programs**
Academic assistance/tutoring programs are another valuable tool for closing the achievement gap. These programs can enrich students’ learning experiences, offer valuable support and assistance to help students deal with academic challenges and life obstacles, and strengthen student achievement. These programs can offer a range of assistance, and when well constructed, the student can benefit as the recipient of the service and may grow into the role of peer tutor/mentor.

Provide tools to help the child, and hold parents accountable.

Provide programs such as advance prep courses, life training courses and cultural enrichment programs, events and workshops.

Provide someone (college volunteers, community leaders) to assist students with their homework and teach them different types of learning strategies.

Enable students to learn new life skills, such as gardening, house cleaning, etc.

Help students have higher high school completion rates and prevent school drop-outs.
Community Engagement and Resource Usage

The idea of community was described and defined in a broad inclusive manner by summit participants. Community engagement and community resources can serve as a hub for improved academic achievement for schools and students. This idea is not only about financial contributions but also engagement of the community in developing courses, offering equipment and technology tools to support the learning process, and providing opportunities for students to experience the real world.

- Use local control and guidance to influence students’ academic achievement.
- Have community tutors or local leaders who can assist children with their homework or give them guidance.
- Contribute money to develop school career technology courses so students can learn new technological skills before attending college.
- Provide work opportunities for students to experience the real world and help them grow intellectually, physically and socially.
- Educate the public about best parenting, teaching, and learning practices.
- Expose students to local leaders as role models. Create a community culture that values schools and the education system.
- Build effective partnerships such as the Long Beach Promise (strategic partnership to develop college pathways from the high school to the community college and the university).
Points of Departure

There were some ideas that emerged throughout the day that were divergent in nature, yet relevant to the discussion. Issues concerning the involvement and interaction of the federal and state governments with local communities were mentioned and vigorous discussion ensued specific to the direct impact of federal and state policies on public schools, educational structures and processes.

- Pass the Dream Act, because all kids should be educated.
- Start preschool early.
- Invite experts or professionals to share their academic experience with students.
- Provide affordable health care for all students.
- Reduce taxes to benefit parents so that they can support their children in college.
Participants’ Evaluation of Summit

At the end of the program 45 participants completed a paper and pencil evaluation of their experience at the Achievement Gap Summit. Participants were asked to indicate whether the program met their expectations, which program aspects were least and most useful, and their desire to participate in follow-up activities. Participants were also asked to indicate what the next steps should be in this process of addressing the achievement gap. What follows is a summary of the evaluation.

Approximately 66% of the respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the program met their expectations while 24.7% did not feel that program expectations were met.

Table 1: Program Expectation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree/disagree</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (no answer 3.5)</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 45

About one third of the participants found the panel presentations most helpful/useful followed by 28% who found the speakers most helpful/useful. About 20% believed the KIVA session was the most useful/helpful.

Table 2: Most Helpful/Useful Program Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel presentations</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussions</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker presentations</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIVA Session</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses = 87

Forty-six percent of respondents found the panel presentations were least helpful/useful while twenty-seven percent of workshop attendees felt the small group discussions were least helpful/useful. About 12% agreed that the speaker presentations were least helpful/useful. It is important to note that 42% of the participants did not respond to this question.

Table 3: Least Helpful/Useful Program Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel presentations</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group discussions</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker presentations</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIVA Session</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses = 26
Approximately 84% of the respondents were interested in participating in follow-up activities or programs related to addressing the achievement gap and 6% of the respondents did not indicate any interest in participating in follow-up activities.

**Next Steps**

Participants were asked to identify next steps that they were interested in and willing to take to address the achievement gap. Data revealed two themes:

1) The role and responsibility of school administrators and educational institutions; and

2) Personal responsibility and action.

**Role and Responsibility of School Administration and Educational Institutions**

School administration and educational institutions can do more to help close the achievement gap, wrote many of the respondents. Many hoped that administrators and institutional leaders would help by creating new initiatives, such as dual immersion programs, partnership programs, and outreach programs for at-risk youth. All of these ideas will aid in re-orienting schools toward equity of opportunities for all learners.

Moreover, many participants are very willing to have regular discussions and conversations about addressing the achievement gap with school leaders and others. Utilizing the resources, educating parents on the education system, and encouraging parent participation are essential to the work of school administrators.

**Personal Actions**

In addition to the suggestions for administrators and school leaders, participants reported personal action that they would consider in addressing the achievement gap. Examples of these actions are provided below:

**Volunteer**
- Give personal input and expertise to help educate students, parents or community.
- Be part of community initiatives.
- Work and become involved in the community.
- Volunteer in the K-12 system.
- Share one’s personal life story in navigating the educational system.

**Advocacy**
- Speak to local and national representatives.

**Funding**
- Attract more funds to schools and students who are most at-risk.

**Educator**
- Become an educator in low-income schools or in schools in need.
**Design**
- Build leadership programs.
- Create education-oriented museum programs.
- Develop community programs.

**Outreach**
- Speak to church or nonprofit organizations.

**Build capacity**
- Help students by exposing them to opportunities to broaden their interests.
- Give hope to children and help pass the Dream Act.
- Empower youth to demand their educational needs.
- Promote the quality of preschool to address the school readiness group.
- Facilitate field trips for students, where they can see role models.

**Partnerships**
- Collaborate with nonprofit organizations and school districts, colleges, universities, parents and youth.
- Improve parent-teacher and school relationships.
- Build a stronger network within the community.
- Be part of steering committees, conferences and programs.
- Work with the OC Educational Roundtable to find more resources and funds to address the problem.

**Resource person**
- Share materials with business and community members.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**
While next steps for recommendations consisted of work initiated and executed by school administrators, educational institutions, community agencies, parents, and personal actions, through the examples provided above, creating/developing programs and involving the community are the significant actions that people identified to further this process. Finding better ways to empower students and build relationships between the schools, students and parents, with the involvement of businesses, and community agencies are substantial and significant for effective future actions.
The goals for "Addressing the Achievement Gap Summit" were realized based on the data presented in this document as reflected by the presentations, speakers, panel sessions, KIVA outcomes, and participant evaluations. The opportunity for a broad spectrum of the community to come together to focus on this issue for a day and the structure of the day allowed many voices to be heard and understood.

The challenge of addressing the achievement gap has begun simply through this summit, but this is the beginning of what will be an ongoing process for all to engage in and contribute to over time. Leadership in this endeavor must come from many arenas and directions, as the tasks outlined in this report call for community engagement on the broadest levels from schools to universities to businesses, to nonprofit agencies.

The desire to meet the challenges outlined seems evident from this day, as was demonstrated expertise from the federal, state and local levels. Now, the call for a unified plan of action that harnesses the momentum of the summit, and focused efforts leading to legitimate outcomes relative to the empowerment of students, their families and our communities through our schools on all levels is necessary.

Reference

Addressing the Achievement Gap Summit (2009). Unpublished document, California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, California, U.S.A.

Education Research Center 2004
Appendix A: Summit Agenda

8:30 a.m.  Morning Session
Welcome and Pledge, The Honorable Don Bankhead, Mayor, City of Fullerton
Opening Remarks, The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, Summit Chair and Fullerton City Councilmember
Welcome Message, Milton A. Gordon, President, Cal State Fullerton
Closing the Achievement Gap in California, The Honorable Jack O’Connell, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Workforce Trends 2009, Wallace Walrod, Vice President of Economic Development and Research, Orange County Business Council

9:45 a.m.  Legislative Panel
Moderated by Lucy Dunn, President and CEO of the Orange County Business Council
The Honorable Loretta Sanchez, U.S. Congresswoman. The Honorable Lou Correa, California State Senator. The Honorable Jose Solorio, California State Assemblymember; and The Honorable Sal Tinajero, Santa Ana City Councilmember.
The Honorable Ed Royce, U.S. Congressman, participated via videoconference.

Question-and-Answer Session
Lucy Dunn will moderate a question-and-answer session featuring elected officials.

11:30 a.m.  Luncheon
Performance by a student from the Fullerton High School Speech and Debate Team
Introduction by Al Mijares, Vice President, Western Region, The College Board
Keynote Address, Juan Sepúlveda, The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans

1:00 p.m.  Kiva Panel
Born out of Native-American tradition, Kiva is a dynamic and interactive discussion format for communities to come together and respond/react to proposals seeking to resolve issues of the day. Using this method, Summit participants will be asked to volunteer and join a panel of respondents reacting to a statement or question by the moderator. Each respondent has one minute to give a reaction/response. Once all respondents give their response, they return to their seats. The moderator will then repeat the process for the next discussion item.

2:15 p.m.  Break

2:30 p.m.  Community Conversations on the Gap
Moderated by Jack Bedell, Vice President, Orange County Board of Education / Chair, Anthropology Department, Cal State Fullerton
Alicia Berhow, Director, Workforce Development, Orange County Business Council; The Honorable William M. Habermehl, County Superintendent of Schools, Orange County Department of Education; Rosa Harrizon, Padres Promotores de la Educación; Pablo Jasis, Assistant Professor, Elementary and Bilingual Education, Cal State Fullerton; Kim-Oanh Nguyen-Lam, Board Member, Garden Grove Unified School District Board of Education; Dawn Person, Professor, Educational Leadership, Cal State Fullerton; Debbie Schroeder, Principal, Melbourne A. Gauer Elementary, Anaheim City School District; Laura Schwalm, Superintendent, Garden Grove Unified School District; Michael Stone, California Teachers Association

Is it possible to close the gap without additional resources? What is being done or can be done to close the gap? What is missing in these conversations and how can we work together to close the gaps? This panel brings leaders from various sectors together to discuss these key questions embedded in the central theme of the Summit. The panel will provide a dynamic and candid conversation in a seminar-style format that seeks to invoke a critical conversation about the achievement gap in Orange County and what needs to be done to close it.

3:30 p.m.  Closing Remarks
The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, Summit Chair and Fullerton City Councilmember
Claire Cavallaro, Dean of the College of Education, Cal State Fullerton

4:00 p.m.  Reception
Appendix B: Summation of Session Notes

Superintendent O’Connell reported that the achievement gap is a civil rights issue. Over half of California’s students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. While this is true, O’Connell provided data to show that one cannot attribute the achievement gap exclusively to this issue. The P-16 Council, which works with O’Connell, recommended that access as an issue, a focus on school culture and climate, high student expectations and effective learning strategies should be at work in all schools. He reported that over half of the P-16 Council recommendations had been implemented, including strategies for partnerships with business, faith-based organizations and other nonprofits. He concluded that there is no “quick fix” and that the achievement gap must be a priority for the entire community. Identifying model programs and continued collaborations between Deans of Education from the CSU, UC and others will continue to support gains in the right direction. O’Connell believes that we have a bright future for our state if we continue to work hard and smart.

Dr. Walrod presented a PowerPoint linking the achievement gap and economics. His presentation showed local demographic trends, language acquisition trends, dropout prevention, student achievement, college preparation and the STEM focus with limited Latino representation as critical factors for consideration. He offered the top five reasons that students leave school: 1) classes are not interesting; 2) missed too many days and can’t catch up; 3) spent time with people who were not interested in school; 4) had too much fun, too much freedom; and, 5) were failing in school. Walrod outlined some of the strengths of Orange County in terms of trends such as a lower dropout rate than the overall state rate, more diversity, API scores have made good progress in most schools and the California High School Exit Examination passing rate is better in Orange County than the state average with two exceptions. He went on to discuss the Orange County Business Council mission and core initiatives and how these are aligned with addressing achievement gap issues to ensure a strong and vital economic future for the county, students and their families, community members and businesses.

The Legislative Panel

Each panelist gave opening comments and then addressed specific questions posed by the moderator and audience. A summary of their opening comments followed by responses to questions posed follows.

Royce discussed the importance of funding programs such as Gear Up, and the need for mentors to motivate students to focus on educational goals.

Correa encouraged the audience to always consider the progress we are making. It is important to know exactly what is compelling students to achieve and what obstacles are preventing their achievement. “I have discovered that this is not going to be a sprint; it is going to be a marathon.”

Solorio commented on the need for there to be more done for English language learners. We should have the best books, best practices and we do not. We need to look at other ways to analyze students. He suggested that what is needed is the development of a new growth model to assess how cohorts are doing from year to year.

Tinajero reported that we need to help people increase their expectations for our students and put resources toward programs that demonstrate high expectations. We must close the gap if we want to compete.
Who is responsible for education in the state? Where does the buck stop? Who is responsible for the achievement gap?

O’Connell responded that we are all responsible for education. We are all accountable. We need accelerated improvement. Three or four years ago, we had to persuade people to realize that the achievement gap was a real problem.

Royce responded that the teachers, parents, students and legislators are all responsible. President Obama challenged students, and students then need to connect with individuals who are from the community and have succeeded. This is the model—the Gear Up Program. It requires an immense amount of mentoring that starts early, in the 7th grade, and continues.

Sanchez responded to the question of who is responsible for the achievement gap by adding to the dialogue that the first educator of the child is the parent. She went on to share that families are under a lot of stress, which impacts our students. She used Santa Ana as an example of a transition city with many Latinos who are new immigrants from Latin nations. She believes that immigration reform is very important in addressing the achievement gap. This was echoed by other panelists as well. Sanchez also commented that we need to improve the No Child Left Behind Act. She referenced teacher expectation as critical, citing an example with Asian and Latino students.

Should education be locally controlled?

Tinajero shared a story of a young man who is an undocumented student with a high grade point average and high SAT scores but feels he will not be able to go to college. We have a responsibility to our government to create immigration reform to help the students achieve their American dream. Solorio argued that we need to do more to change our school system, and be aware of how important local school boards are to this issue as well as state boards. Superintendents and principals feel that if they had less red tape they could do more. Correa believes that we must increase local control and that parent participation and local participation are critical. “We need a scenario where parents and local communities get angry and generate a will to improve the school system.” Parental involvement is crucial in order for improvements to occur. O’Connell suggested that we must use information to push our schools to achieve. He reported that we need to make very crucial decisions that may cause some discomfort in the process.

Sanchez responded that No Child Left Behind afforded insight into who is and is not learning in school. She emphasized the how important the quality of the teacher was to student achievement. Correa said that the need for accountability and flexibility creates conflicts. There are roadblocks when policy change occurs because people do not want change. He agreed that the quality of a teacher makes the difference. O’Connell felt that the Race to the Top funding will help close the achievement gap. Linking the evaluation of teachers to data is going to cause policy-makers to step on toes. Funding is critical as is the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind.

There was a question posed concerning the Dream Act and other federal mandates—where will funds come from? Representative Royce commented that moving resources to local levels can help to alleviate micromanagement by the federal government. He offered no position relative to the Dream Act. Correa stated that we need to train these students in the fields that are crucial to our socio-economic state and that these students will be paying into the system and supporting society. They are right here in our neighborhoods.
What is one thing that you would change in the state of California? What about funding and programs in the future?

Solorio believes that weighted funding should be considered so that additional dollars are placed in areas with particular needs relative to the students served. He suggested that we need to think regionally rather than depending on state/federal money. Correa proposed that we need to come up with economic packages that stimulate jobs/growth. The current situation could be an opportunity for the local level to gain more control over how money is allocated. There needs to be more transparency and accountability at the local level. Sanchez pointed out that without the economic stimulus package, many schools in Orange County would have had to close. She is a proponent of teachers being compensated well and an advocate for making teaching a competitive field where potential teachers would fight to get into the profession.

Royce said that one of the ways that we could develop revenue for the state would be to allow for a hundred miles off-shore oil drilling supporting more funds for schools. He pointed out that this could be an enormous revenue source for the state. Correa commented that this is important and that we must consider that after-school funding is needed. Parents are now being asked to pay for educational programs that were once state-supported.

Tinajero offered that the state should bring back oral communication as a method of creating greater vocabulary for students and reduce the achievement gap from that perspective as well. Additionally, he offered that we think about what would be included in an extended day of school rather than focusing solely on the extra work and pay. Correa reminded the audience of how critical preschool is to students’ success, however, contextually; parents who are both working may find it hard to send their child to preschool.

Solorio pointed out that superintendents would need to be more flexible, and Royce commented that after-school programs are very important for mentoring kids. These decisions are made at the district level. He warned that we cannot make generic decisions of cutting subsidized items to all schools. Local districts need to make decisions based on local needs.

Finally, panelists were asked what they thought about using tax dollars for classroom education only and cutting all other non-educational expenditures such as transportation, meals, and after school sports.

Correa responded that it is exactly those few hours after school when students are out experimenting and at-risk. These activities are important to the development of the child in body and mind. Shifting cost from the school to the parent is occurring. Royce feels that these decisions should be made at each district and local levels. Solorio also stated that these “extras” are important. “Nino’s son bien educados. When we say that in Spanish we don’t just mean academically; it’s about being good throughout.”

Luncheon Speaker: Juan Sepulveda

The keynote address focused on three events relative to the topic and concerns of the current leadership of this nation: college, career and community/civic engagement of young people. Sepulveda reported that the statistics for Latino students are quite devastating. They are the least likely to attend college and are in the worst situation compared to other groups, nationally. Sepulveda reported that the bulk of federal funding would be for serving at-risk groups and the federal government is challenging states to focus on at-risk students.
He discussed four pillars for K-12 education that included: 1) standards/assessment 2) teachers and leadership, 3) data and, 4) turn-around schools. He reported that we need stronger, better and universal assessments for student learning based on standards. Teacher quality and training are essential and finding ways to reward teachers and move ineffective teachers out. Attracting and retaining Latino teachers is necessary. The use of data systems to help families understand what is expected and needed for their child to succeed will assist in this process. And, the idea of taking low-performing schools and working with the stakeholders of the community to determine what best strategies will turn them into high-performing schools is the practice behind the turn-around school approach.

Sepulveda discussed the significant role of community colleges in supporting the education of Latinos, since so many Latinos begin their post-secondary studies there. He pointed to the multiple challenges of meeting the complex problems of student success considering financial barriers for higher education, as well as the rate of fade out students and drop out students. He concluded with the fact that we need to rely on the community to help us improve or know how to use our resources better. He offered two examples, Share Our Strength and Unlikely Allies.

**KIVA Panel Outcomes**

Seven volunteers were asked to share their thoughts on the question of what three things would you change to close the achievement gap? The responses were based on discussions between peers at table sessions before coming on stage and sharing their thoughts and ideas. The comments ranged from ideas that were student-centered, parent-centered, resource-related, teacher-centered, the curriculum, communication/partnerships, to philosophical in nature.

**Student-centered responses**

- Raise aspirations of our children.
- Delay school-going age by a year.
- We put too much pressure on students, and we need to treat them as individuals.

**Parent-centered responses**

- Parents need to be involved in the education of their children.
- Parents need to fight for their children’s rights for a competent education.
- Empower parents.

**Resource-related responses**

- Fight to reallocate where we spend money in schools.
- Put money in schools that need the resource.
- Local business investment.
- We need to tax ourselves to give to our children’s education.
- We need to shift our resources and give them skills for the 21st century in order to prepare students for college, for the workforce, and life in general.
- It’s two-fold. We need to look at where our resources are being used. This relates to engaging students into finding a support groups. It’s not stagnant—we need more research.
• Public education is debunked. Middle-class California abandoned public education.
• This all comes down to money.
• Reallocate funding and get creative. This will help empower our students.

Teacher-related responses
• Work with our unions to improve teacher quality.
• Teachers need to be culturally and linguistically educated to address the issues their students face.
• Teachers need to learn about the diversity and specific culture (and barriers) Latinos face.

Curriculum and instruction
• Saturday instruction.
• Less test preparation time.
• Focus on skills for the 21st century–critical thinking.
• Student should take critical thinking classes that will help guide them when deciding their careers.

Communications/Partnership responses
• Partnerships between business and schools in order for students to experience the realities they might potentially face.
• We need communication between students and teachers on an individual level.
• Relationship-building between students and teachers and parents is necessary to achieve the outcomes we want for students to be successful.

Philosophy-related
• Education is a civil rights issue.
• Address inequity.
• Educational awareness about the achievement gap.

The second question: Is it possible to close the achievement gap without additional resources? If yes, how? If no, then what can be done?

Most panelists felt that there was a strong need for resources to support closing the gap. Whether participants answered yes or no, or both, there were clear indicators as to what could and should be done to address the problems identified. The responses ranged from a focus on finance to relationships as sources for closing the gap.

• Yes. We can close the gap by declaring that there is going to be change and making it happen with enough power and commitment. It starts now.
• Yes. It requires communication between parents, teachers and students.
• Yes. Through vigilant attention and focus on the problems.
• No, not without the financial resources.
• No, the educational system is defunct. The governor is to blame. It all comes down to money.
• No, not without the resources. In what other area would we even ask the question “can we do better with less resources?”
• We cannot close the gap without the necessary money; we are cutting courses and without resources we cannot provide students with the necessary education they deserve.
• With less resources, we cannot close the achievement gap. We would need to reduce regulations; otherwise public schools can become privatized.

Other
• Yes and no. Resources are important; community dialogue is needed so that we know what the community can offer to this process.
• Relationship-building between students and teachers and teachers and parents leads to student success.

All in all, the KIVA Panel session allowed many people to share their insights and perspectives about the challenges of addressing the achievement gap and the possible approaches and methods to consider. The views were diverse as were the approaches and solutions. Collectively, the child, teacher, parents, educational leaders, funding and program and services all matter. The community is important to the process and the ability to engage in collective action is critical.

Community Panel

This panel focused on critical themes of what can and should be done to close the achievement gap. Panelists also were asked to reveal other factors that had not been mentioned throughout the day. Highlights of the session are offered. Person mentioned that we need to work with policy makers and help them understand what the community needs in order to improve the education of students. Early interventions and supplemental instruction help students better understand the subject matter, leading to more success in A-G requirements. Effective evaluation and assessment will help make educational programs more effective. In addition, Person also commented that we should carefully examine where we get funds and how we sustain projects when the funds are exhausted.

Jasis stated that the achievement gap is a systemic problem affected by individual schools and communities. Parents, community and educators should work together to propose clear ideas about what children need and help children achieve success in schools. Teachers and parents should constantly prepare students for specific skills in their education careers. He proposed the idea of an Orange County Educational Roundtable to continue this dialogue and move into an action plan for the future.

Habermehl pointed out that money, parents and the local community should all be involved in addressing the achievement gap. Nguyen-Lam stated that a paradigm shift is needed, in that it is not an achievement gap but an opportunity gap that will shift the responsibility from the child to the adults. There are other factors affecting the education of students such as community resources. Community leaders will help students to overcome the challenges they face in schools by using community resources such as tutors to support students. She challenged us to ask hard, concrete questions specific to institutional racism in order for educators to face the challenge of answering these hard questions. Data is important as it provides evidence as to what the teacher is doing and could do to educate the child differently.
Schwalm supported the idea that parental involvement is important in the education system. Schroeder suggested that we need to have greater faith in practitioners. Support teachers, give credit to them and do not discredit their work. Educators should have the right and the autonomy for decision-making relative to creativity that helps the student as they are the ones who spend time with students and know them and their needs, not the government. We need to know the community in depth and be responsible in educating ourselves by removing our cultural barriers. Stone reported that money, community resources, qualified teachers and parental involvement could make schools better. There is a great deal of angst about funding cuts, however, we need to go back to the community and look at what schools in this community need in order to improve. The school should be the center of the community. Harrizon expressed that parents are the first teachers of the students. Parents and teachers should be on the same page about students’ needs in the learning environment. Encourage parent involvement in the children’s education. Parents should be involved in the student’s education from “day one.”

Best practices and recommendations that emerged from this panel include the following:

Planning, Resource Management and Leadership
- Lack of funding can be used as an impetus to become more creative; no money has led to opportunities to be flexible.
- Parcel taxes are needed to reverse the increasing class size trend.
- Local control is paramount, both in terms of financing and autonomy.
- Administrative leadership (the principal) as the biggest factor in making a difference.
- Stronger partnerships between schools and universities are necessary.
- Proposed ‘OC Educational Roundtable’ to continue this dialogue into an action plan.

Teacher Support and Development
- Professional growth opportunities for teachers
- Hard questions about the role of institutional racism as a contributor to the opportunity gap

Student Support
- Supplemental education
- The longer school day coupled with later start times
- Increased educational audio/video technology use in schools
- Role models and mentors
- College outreach to young students (Upward Bound)
- Increased parent involvement
- Make the school the focus of the community
### Appendix C: Summit Participants

- **Silas Abrego**  
  Associate Vice President, Student Affairs, California State University, Fullerton
- **Patricia Adelekan**  
  Los Amigos
- **Ana Aguayo-Bryant**  
  Director, GEAR UP, California State University, Fullerton
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- **John Albert**  
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  Superintendent, Anaheim City School District
- **Don Bankhead**  
  Mayor, City of Fullerton
- **Gloria Banks**  
  First Vice President, Orange County NAACP
- **Rueben Barron**  
  Retired Superintendent, Los Amigos Education Committee
- **Laura Barron-Lopez**  
  Daily Titan, California State University, Fullerton
- **Jack Bedell**  
  Vice President, Orange County Board of Education
- **Kerry Belvill**  
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- **Alicia Berhow**  
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- **Seema Bhakta**  
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- **Charlie Bialowas**  
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- **Francisco Bravo**  
  Orange County Dream Team
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- **Danette Brown**  
  California Teachers Association
- **Gerald Bryant**  
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  Executive Assistant to the President, California State University, Fullerton
- **Javiera Cartagena**  
  Field Representative, Office of Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez
- **Mia Castillo**  
  Think Together
- **Claire Cavallaro**  
  Dean, College of Education, California State University, Fullerton
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  Street Light Church
- **Ashley Cheri**  
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- **Lynn Christian**  
  Director, Education and Outreach, KCET
- **Rob Coghlan**  
  Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, Anaheim City School District
- **Leticia Collins**  
  California State University, Long Beach
- **Lou Correa**  
  Senator, District 34, California State Senate
- **Victor Cota**  
  Service Chief, County of Orange Health Care Agency
- **Jackie Counts**  
  Anaheim Union High School District
- **Omar Cova**  
  After School Program Director, KidWorks
- **Duane Cox**  
  Administrator, School and Community Services Division, Orange County Department of Education
- **Kristin Crellin**  
  Executive Director, School and Community Relations, Schools First Federal Credit Union
- **Lourdes Cruz**  
  Volunteer Coordinator, THINK Together
- **Alicia Cuevas**  
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  Orange County Clerk-Recorder
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  Orange County Dream Team
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  Senior Educational Manager, The College Board, Western Regional Office
- **Benny Diaz**  
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- **Ned Doffoney**  
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Don Ham Youth Leadership Coordinator, OC Human Relations
Veronica Harlan Orange County Therapeutic Arts
Rosa Harrizon Co-Founder, Padres Promotores de la Educación
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Mike Limon Orange County Hispanic Chamber
Thomas Linnert Director of Volunteer Development, THINK Together
Appendix D: Acknowledgements

With gratitude we acknowledge the following individuals for their work on the Addressing the Achievement Gap Summit and their commitment to creating a brighter and more prosperous Orange County:

**Steering Committee**
The Honorable Lou Correa, California State Senator
The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, Fullerton City Councilmember (Chair)
The Honorable Loretta Sanchez, U.S. Congresswoman (Honorary Member)
The Honorable Jose Solorio, California State Assemblyman
The Honorable Sal Tinajero, Santa Ana City Councilmember

**Committee**
Dr. Silas Abrego – California State University, Fullerton
Adriana Badillo – California State University, Fullerton
Alicia Berhow – Orange County Business Council
Javiera Cartagena – Office of Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez
Mia Castillo – Think Together
Pat Carroll – California State University, Fullerton
Dr. Claire Cavallaro – California State University, Fullerton
Minard Duncan – Fullerton School District Board of Trustees
Dr. Carmen Zuniga-Dunlap – California State University, Fullerton
Dr. Ned Doffoney – North Orange County Community College District
Jessica Gutierrez – Office of Assemblyman Jose Solorio
The Honorable Pam Keller – Fullerton City Council
Barbara Kilponen – Fullerton Joint Union High School District Board of Trustees
Michael Limon – Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Martha Lopez – Office of Senator Lou Correa
Priscilla Lopez – Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Michael Matsuda – North Orange County Community College District Board of Trustees
Mayela Montenegro – Office of Assemblyman Jose Solorio
Andy Montoya – California Teachers Association
Dr. Jose Moreno – Anaheim City School District Board of Education
Paula Negrete – Office of Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez
Dr. Kim-Oahn Nguyen-Lam – Garden Grove Unified School District Board of Education
Claudia Ornelas – Office of State Senator Lou Correa
Jesus Silva – Fullerton School District
Tammy Tran – Office of State Senator Lou Correa
Ray Verches – Verches Associates

Special thanks to Owen Holmes, Mimi Ko Cruz, Heather Morales, Raffaela Sansone, Frances Teves and the Dept. of Strategic Communications.
The Addressing the Achievement Gap Summit was made possible through the generous contributions of:

- CollegeBoard
- Walt Disney Company
- Wells Fargo
- City of Fullerton
- SchoolsFirst
- Chevron
- CTA
- California State University Fullerton