

Chapel Hill — Carrboro City Schools

A Summary of:

“Fifth Annual Status Report on the Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendations, 1998-1999” (October 1999) Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. By Josephine Harris.

Focus

- Early Childhood
- ✓ Primary School
- ✓ Middle School
- ✓ Secondary School
- Postsecondary
- ✓ Extended Learning

Overview

In 1993, the School Board in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS) began to implement curriculum and program reforms recommended by a Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) on the Education of African American Students. Comprised of 70 parents, students, teachers, administrators and university professors, the Task Force recommended multiple strategies to heighten sensitivity to the cultural needs of minority students, motivate struggling learners, maintain high educational expectations and increase parent involvement. Since 1999, the district has expanded the scope of its efforts to address the needs of Latino youth and other minorities. The Fifth

POPULATION

In 2000, CHCCS served just under 9000 students. The CHCCS high schools serve over 2600 students, 75% of whom are white, 15% African American, 10% Asian, Latino, and other. The BRTF recommendations focus exclusively on African American students.

Annual Report compares the effect of the BRTF recommendations in the School Year 1998-99, with student achievement data from the 1992 baseline year. CHCCS is a member of the Minority Student Achievement Network, a group of 15 urban and suburban high school districts first organized in 1999 to raise minority academic achievement.

Key Findings

Overall, between 1992 and 1999, more African American students in grades 3-8 at the CHCCS earned proficient scores in reading and mathematics.

- ◆ Reading: The proportion of African American students proficient in reading rose from 45% in 1992-93 to 64% in 1998-99.
- ◆ Math: The proportion of African American students proficient in mathematics rose from 40% to 65% from 1992 to 1999.

Between 1996 and 1999, the proportion of African American CHCCS high school students who earned proficient scores in math:

- ◆ Increased from 42% to 45% in algebra I.
- ◆ Increased from 48% to 53% in geometry.
- ◆ Increased from 40% to 61% in algebra II.

However, relative to African American students across the state, proficiency in writing has declined for most African American CHCCS students (except tenth graders). When compared to the average writing scores of African Americans statewide:

- ◆ African American fourth graders in CHCCS scored on average 5% lower.
- ◆ African American seventh graders in the district scored on average 11% lower.

- ♦ African American tenth graders in the district scored on average 2% higher,

Between 1992 and 1999 the proportion of African American students in the gifted and talented program increased from 1.8% to 7.8%.

An achievement gap remained between African Americans and white high school students in CHCCS. In 1999:

- ♦ 43% of African American tenth graders in CHCCS earned proficient reading scores versus 94% of white tenth graders in the district.
- ♦ 47% of African American tenth graders in CHCCS earned proficient math scores versus 92% of white tenth graders in the district.

Program Components

The CHCCS strategy to improve minority academic achievement used special programs, mentors, scholarships, as well as data collection and assessment:

- ♦ The district uses several programmatic initiatives such as Reading Recovery for first graders, Attitude Changes Everything (ACE) for African American males, pre-college programs for minority students interested in math and science careers, and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) to improve the academic success of minority students (for the summary of AVID, see page 49). In 1999, for instance, 56% of the AVID students were African Americans and 94% of AVID's first graduating class entered four-year colleges.
- ♦ Mentoring programs with minority students from the University of North Carolina (UNC) serve elementary, middle and high schools in CHCCS. For example, the Sister to Sister program pairs African American females in the ninth grade with African American female mentors from the UNC School of Medicine.
- ♦ Local community organizations and support from the Blue Ribbon Task Force matched 150 students with summer enrichment programs at the Museum of Life and Science, Arts Center, Orange County 4-H, Outward Bound and numerous residential camps.
- ♦ Four different scholarship programs support more than 25 minority graduates from CHCCS, who continue their education in two- and four-year colleges or universities.
- ♦ CHCCS uses student portfolio assessment, as well as traditional grades to determine promotion or retention of students in fifth and eighth grades across the district.

Contributing Factors

Focus on Minority Achievement

By focusing time, resources and public will on minority student success over a five-year period, an entire school district made considerable progress on several measures of minority academic achievement.

Comprehensive Approach

The district did not rely on one program initiative or reform model to raise academic achievement. Administrators, teachers and university officials

came up with a system-wide program that gave numerous academic supports to minority students at every age and achievement level.

Professional Development

All new school staff participate in ten hours of multicultural education workshops that cover issues of cultural diversity, multicultural communication styles, African American history, gender discrimination, physical disabilities and sexual orientation.

Parent Involvement

Increasing parent involvement was a major thrust of CHCCS minority achievement initiative from the outset when parents participated in the BRTF that set the reform agenda. Special activities such as “Family Nights Out” bring minority parents and school officials together. A concerted effort is made by the teachers and advisors to meet with all minority parents between August and November either at school or in parents’ homes or workplaces.

Community Involvement/Partnerships

Partnering with community-based organizations allowed CHCCS to provide services not available to the district such as a variety of after-school and summer camp activities. In addition, CHCCS provided financial and staff support to community-based organizations with academic enrichment activities.

High Standards

All high school students in the CHCCS must take two years of a second language as well as the math and science curriculum that meets the requirements for admission to state universities. CHCCS keeps track of minority student participation and completion of these advanced classes.

Mentoring

Mentors from the university community, especially minority college students, serve as role models for minority youth in the district.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The CHCCS District mandates that “every African American student will be personally encouraged by the faculty and the administrators to participate in at least one extracurricular activity.” Support for this mandate comes in the form of free transportation, Minority Support Groups, the Prudential Youth Leadership Initiative and other initiatives.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The annual report analyzed school data, pre- and post-tests and a longitudinal analysis of standardized test scores. The evaluators used the Metropolitan Achievement Tests and High School Comprehensive Reading and Math Tests to get quantitative measures of academic achievement across the district. They compared African American student achievement to white student achievement in CHCCS and to average district and state scores. Scores for other racial/ethnic subgroups were not reported in the evaluation. The report does not address potential causes for the drop in writing scores for African American students in the district.

EVALUATION & PROGRAM FUNDING

CHCCS funded the evaluations and the programs suggested by the BRTF. Schools

were allocated \$25,000 in 1998-99 to implement or supplement programs that addressed BRTF goals. The evaluation did not report the allocations for the first four years of the BRTF implementation.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Chapel Hill and Carrboro, North Carolina.

CONTACT INFORMATION**Research Contacts**

Josephine Harris,
 Director of Special Programs
 Chapel Hill—Carrboro City Schools
 Lincoln Center, Merritt Mill Road
 Chapel Hill, NC 27516
 Phone: 919.967.8211
 Fax: 919.933.4560
jharris@chccs.k12.nc.us
www.chccs.k12.nc.us/