

## MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT GAP

### ▪ **Priority: Enhance the pursuit of excellence**

- *We have one of the best districts in the state, but there are areas we can do better*
- *We can better engage, challenge, and equip all students to achieve their potential for excellence*
  - *including students across the academic spectrum—from currently struggling to gifted*
- *In this effort, I believe our first priority has to be to accelerate the closing of the minority achievement gap.*
  - *While proficiency is just the starting point that we want all of our children to achieve to help launch them on to successful paths, proficiency is a starting point that our African-American and Latino students fail to achieve in highly disproportionate numbers*
  - *We are very pleased that test results from last school year indicate that 95% or more of our white students achieved proficiency in end of grade and end of course tests. However, among African-Americans and Latinos typically only 50-60% achieved proficiency in Reading (elementary – middle school), 70-80% achieved proficiency in Math (elementary – middle school), and 50-70% achieved proficiency for high school classes.*
  - *As African-Americans and Latinos together comprise about 25% our students, we are failing to adequately serve a very significant portion of our population*
  - *There are many examples of public schools serving African-American and Latino students with much greater success, so we know that the disadvantages that these students often face need not keep them from achieving excellence in their education*
    - *One example: Harlem Village Academy charter school in NY (in which students are selected based on a lottery, 100% minority, 74% free & reduced lunch, students generally enter school significantly below grade level), 97% of high school students passed NY regents algebra exam, 100% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders passed NY science test, 96% passed social studies test, etc...*
  - *The strategies that can help ensure success for our minority students can help others who are not being effectively reached by current approaches as well*
  - *Moreover, when all students are proficient, all students will benefit from higher levels of learning and interaction and engagement*
  - *When we all achieve, we all succeed*
- **What steps, if any, would you advocate to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students? How can the district close the achievement gap?**
  - *Fundamentally, evidence makes clear that there are a number of different strategies that can lead to improved educational outcomes for at-risk students. But evidence also makes clear that there are no 'silver bullet' solutions that are unambiguously effective in all situations.*
  - *I believe that the key is to take the position that failure is not considered an option. When all of our teachers and staff know that success in their jobs depend on helping all of their children learn and grow – independent of the children's family background or past educational experience – our community of teaching professionals will find and deploy*

*the strategies that make the most sense for them and their situations. Moreover, we should reward those teachers who are particularly successful, and ask them to be coaches and mentors for others.*

- *Teaching strategies I would expect to be put to more consistent use would include*
  - *teaching using culturally relevant material*
  - *deploying approaches designed to engage students*
    1. *for example, integrating motion, music, and art in curriculum*
    2. *for example, teaching through thematic subject matter recognized by students as relevant to their lives*
  - *using frequent assessments in class to understand student needs and provide tailored/supplementary instruction to meet those needs*
  - *communicating with parents regularly when students are missing assignments or who struggle with work, to ensure that parents know what they can do to assist*
  - *using assistants and specialists to assist with students with differential needs*
- *Of course, this also requires that as a district we provide ready access to the tools, techniques, and professional development necessary for our teachers to know how to meet their students' various needs.*
- *In addition I advocate*
  - *expanding our work with local universities, churches, and community organizations to identify tutors*
  - *establishing a database of parents who are willing to assist other parents with school-related issues*