

## Round 2 Application Recommendations for Race to the Top

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**Purpose:** Closing the achievement gap with the strength of all stakeholders: Reaching equity and excellence in Minnesota

**Developed in coalition by:** Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP), Chicano Latino Affairs Council, Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Education Work Group of the African American Leadership Forum

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### Background

Several leaders in communities of color and American Indian leadership have convened with *urgency* since the news that Minnesota did not make it to the list of state finalists for the first round of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top federal grants competition.

**There are 2 key reasons why our groups believe a *new approach* to a re-application is necessary.**

1. **African American, Latino, Asian, immigrant-led, and American Indian organizations have long been working on strategies and, given the significance of divergent cultural perspectives in globalization, these strategies can now be pivotal as we drive excellence moving forward.** For reform to take hold, communities of color and American Indian communities must be able to own and help sustain new practices towards closing the achievement gap. In particular, community organizations from minority groups partnering with schools to support closing the achievement gap are fundamental to this work.

*According to Undersecretary of Education James Shelton on April 13, 2010, the Obama Administration in its competitive education funding is sending the message, "The answers are in the community! Through Race to the Top, we want you to show us your best!"*

**We believe that the experience in our communities can make key contributions for a successful re-application.** One great example is represented by the solutions set forth by the Latino Higher Education Network, Hmong College student group, etc. Also, MMEP, Hamline University's School of Education (Dr. Sheila Wright), African American Leadership Forum, Chicano Latino Affairs Council, and the Council of Black Minnesotans met several times since November 2009 to develop innovations derived from what is working in community.

2. **A global economy, the shifting local landscape of economic opportunity, and urgency for innovative talent development requires education reform that is truly transformative.**

*"When I compare our high schools to what I see when I'm traveling abroad, I am terrified for our work force of tomorrow," Bill Gates during conference of U.S. governors*

Current systems have proven ill-equipped to address key issues related to closing achievement gaps for all youth in our system, especially those relating to low-performing, high poverty schools and disparities among minority and American Indian students. These minority and American Indian students can become resources in producing solutions because of their diverse cultures, yet, they have been marginalized in the current system.

To prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy, Minnesota should:

- a) Improve instruction, **which requires redefining what is an effective teacher**, adopting better standards and assessments, and turning around our lowest-achieving schools
- b) Challenge the educational status quo with new thinking, develop partnerships among all stakeholders to accelerate and democratize student achievement
- c) Redefine the sets of skills necessary for a global economy. Educators, schools and programs, in addition to providing knowledge of mathematics, science, English and other essential subjects, **would develop in students a new set of inter-cultural and culturally competent skills**. Greater emphasis on teamwork and cooperation, critical and creative thinking, intercultural communication including foreign languages, and an openness to others, which can reduce perceptual biases and generate interests other than self

<b>We offer the following overall recommendations on a new application</b>
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❖ **Draft up a strong Vision Statement**

We suggest a strong vision statement be included as part of the next application. The following language is drawn from MMEP's Covenant for Education Equity with Excellence:

"We commit to working together to establish and carry out a statewide agenda that ends ethnic disparities in educational outcomes in Minnesota by dramatically increasing educational attainment of minority and American Indian students to world-leading standards and achieving higher levels of excellence for all students."

This vision statement will include signatures from the community groups and all stakeholders that have assisted with the reapplication and strategies for success.

❖ **State Success Factors: (A)(3) Set up Strong “Closing the Gap” Goals**

In partnership with the aforementioned groups, the reapplication should set new goals for high school graduation, closing NAEP score gaps, and access to higher education goals. The recommendations below will show target high school graduation rates per sub-group as a start of the conversation for a new application.

**A. NAEP or other Measurement Indicators of Proficiency**

According to NAEP 2007 math scores for eighth grade, disparities – overall averages mask underlying patterns and trends for different sub-group of students (Education Trust). **The new application will have to give more detail on target rates for improvement by sub-groups.**

**Current Rates of Achievement based on NAEP 2007 math results**

- 35% of European-American students were proficient
- 13% of African American students were proficient
- 25% of Asian American students were proficient
- 15% of Latino students were proficient
- 17% of Native American were proficient (Education Trust)

**B. Graduation Rates of Minority and American Indian Students**

According to MDE data, graduation rates in 2006-2007, these are the current graduation rates:

- African American: 41%
- American Latino: 41%
- Native American: 41%
- Asian American: 66%
- European American: 80%

**Proposed new rates within four years**

*An increase per sub-group of 20 points in year one, 30 points in year two and 40 points in year three.*

By 2013, graduation rates per sub-group would be:

- African American 81%
- American Latino 81%
- Native American 81%

***These goals are set specifically for underperforming schools, or low-performing, or Turn-Around schools.*** (“Seven years ago, the superintendent and Gates Foundation agreed that within five years, the district would aim for 75% graduation rate and cut the racial gap in half. Both ambitious goals were exceeded.” *Star Tribune*, “The Cincinnati Example,” Oct. 30, 2007)

### **C. College Enrollment Goals**

**Increase the number of minority and American Indian students who enroll in postsecondary**, so that 80% of all high school graduates from these communities are pursuing higher learning by 2013.

*Increase the number of transfer rates from two-year to four-year postsecondary schools of minority and American Indian students to be equal to the rate of transfer to European American students by year 2013.*

**Expectations & Progress:** Set high expectations for students and provide support from instructional coaches and teachers towards these college attainment goals. Measure progress through motivational testing; single, endpoint testing will reinforce the idea that those who are not yet performing at grade level are still failures, no matter how much progress they have made.

#### **KEY Strategies to Close the Gap:**

(“Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps in Whole School Systems: Recent Advances in Research and Practice”, AGI 2008 conference summary, p.2)

#### **Seven Strategic Propositions from Research and Practice**

1. Leadership that combines passion with competence
2. Clear, shared conceptions of effective instruction
3. Streamlined and coherent curriculum
4. Organizational Structures and personnel that embody capacity to teach and motivate adults
5. Patient but tough accountability
6. Data-Driven decision making and transparency
7. **Community involvement and resources**

#### **Community Partners as Core of Strategy**

**Community partners are important to support academic achievement of our students.** Stakeholders need to be engaged in the design, planning, and implementation of the model. Academic, social, and health services partnerships would work with the schools with a child centered focus. An example of what this might look like is taken from the wraparound model. The terminology of the model needs to be thought of broadly and it is not a framework for defining each child because each child may not have an emotional or behavioral disability.

“Wraparound is a philosophy of care with defined planning process used to build constructive relationships and support networks among students and youth with emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD) and their families. It is community based, culturally relevant, individualized, strength based, and family centered. Wraparound plans are comprehensive and address multiple life domains across home, school, and community, including living environment; basic needs; safety; and social, emotional, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs. Another defining feature of wraparound is that it is unconditional; if interventions are not achieving the outcomes desired

by the team; the team regroups to rethink the configuration of supports, services, and interventions to ensure success in natural home, school, and community settings. In other words, students do not fail, but plans can fail. Rather than forcing a student to fit into existing program structures, wraparound is based on the belief that services and supports should be flexibly arranged to meet the unique needs of the students and their families” ( Chapter 27: Completing the Continuum of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support: Wraparound as a Tertiary-Level Intervention’ by Eber, L., Hyde, K., Rose, J., Breen, K., McDonald, D., & Lewandowski, H. (in press) in W. Sailor, G. Dunlap, G. Sugai, R. Horner, (Eds.) *Handbook of Positive Behavior Supports* & ‘Wraparound: Description and Case Example’ by Eber, L. (2005) in George Sugai & Rob Horner (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Behavior Modification and Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Educational Applications*, pp. 1601-1605.)

**The African American Leadership Forum urges a strong focus on these key areas [these areas are still in progress as of 4/29/10, per education work group of AALF]**

Five Key Areas to Close the Gap	Strategies
<b>Preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Prenatal to Pre-K health education</li> <li>-Early Childhood Education</li> <li>-Parent education/training</li> <li>-Youth Development</li> <li>-College Access</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Longer School Year</li> <li>-Longer School Day</li> <li>-Additional Time on Task</li> </ul>
<b>Belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Student/Parent/Teacher Perception</li> <li>-High Expectations</li> <li>-Effective Effort vs. Innate Ability</li> </ul>

**Innovation on Closing Gaps (extra points!)**

Increase public messages statewide by 2011, which strongly state Minnesota’s expectations of high academic and career-achievement for all students inclusive of minority and American Indian students. **Communication on the goals and results should be done in multiple languages to support cross-cultural understanding of progress.**

❖ **Show What is Working Already to Turn-Around Schools—Set Up “Zones” of Turn-Around Schools and Model Successful Methods**

Reviewers of the first application note that Minnesota was not strong in *showing which elements helped turn-around schools that were improving w/NCLB* (i.e. Dayton’s Bluff).

**Develop an Office of Turn-Around Schools which would not be a separate entity, but would have a strong director of this department** in MDE. This director, with community groups, would go through a planning process to determine “Turn-Around Zones” or “Opportunity Zones.” State zones would be developed in order to structure “Opportunity Zones” where achievement can accelerate for greater improvement. Key indicators of a “Zone” are the low-performing school districts **or those on AYP list**. The director of the Turn-Around strategy will require closing achievement gap plans must be based on best practices in collaboration with **community partners and parent outreach as core strategy** (e.g. Parent Engagement model(s) currently in Minnesota: CPEO, Minneapolis, Parent Bootcamp, Parent Academy, Way to Grow).

### **MDE-Community-Business Coalition Partnered to Turn-Around Schools and Communities**

Through RTTT, a **consortium of community-based groups, think tanks and schools would develop the first “Consortium for Closing Achievement Gaps” in Minnesota**. This consortium would document case studies of effective methods in closing gaps, inform the public on what is working, and present locally and nationally those strategies and successes. An annual conference organized by this consortium in conjunction with the Office of Turn-Around Schools would share “what is working.”

**As part of the Coalition strategy--convene business leaders (e.g. ITASCA Group), legislators and executives (e.g. mayors), educators, union representatives, and philanthropic organizations to develop a “system-wide” coordinated approach to close the achievement gap. [1]**

[1] Similar to the STRIVE Initiative in Cincinnati, Ohio

**Model What is Working:** Minnesota will not only identify low-performing schools – to identify schools which need to change—but also identify **3 models of community school partnerships that would receive additional resources to develop a framework and unique model: urban, rural and suburban community-school partnership models**. These models must demonstrate key qualities of effective community schools (as identified by research).

#### **❖ Defining & Retaining a Highly Effective Teacher**

*We believe that great, highly effective teachers, include those both currently in the field and aspiring to-be teachers—willing and ready to respond to the unique and global needs of learners. Great teachers know no boundaries and are capable regardless of the path they enter. Both traditional and alternative programs have much to offer Minnesota in addressing the achievement gap. The key here is not whether or not alternative licensure is better than or replaces traditional education programs, but rather, who is willing, capable and strong enough to handle the unique challenges of diverse learners. We know for example that there are many outstanding teachers working in conventional school settings, yet, we also know some of them are without sufficient understanding of key social inequity issues as: immigrant backgrounds of children in rural Minnesota, factors related to high expulsion rate of African American males in Minnesota schools.*

*This is evident in the fact that Minnesota rates near the top nationally in white student academic achievement, **and at the very bottom in the gap between white and black student achievement.***  
[African American Leadership Forum letter]

**According to research by the New Leaders for New Schools, The Urban Excellence Framework: Leadership Actions to Drive Breakthrough Student Learning Gains and Teacher Effectiveness ([www.nhls.org](http://www.nhls.org))**

**The following competencies are identified:**

1. Cultural competence, speaking one of the foreign languages of the students' families, and the capacity to embrace international perspectives and divergent cultures.
2. Genuine connection to and interest in all students
3. Deep commitment to the principle that every student is capable of academic success.
4. A track record of achieving effectiveness of measurable student-learning gains.
5. Essential personal attributes such as a willingness to ***make teaching practice public***, constant learning and improvement, team work, and leadership—(How? By testing a teacher's ability to learn, working in a team, and receiving constructive feedback after a demo lesson)
6. Require 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences with good translators available.

Tie teacher evaluation to student achievement and measure that achievement as progress and improvement over time. Rather than planning to motivate these teachers with exceptional salaries, offer them a fair compensation for their hours and commitment as well as the “light at the end of the tunnel” of viable long term plans.