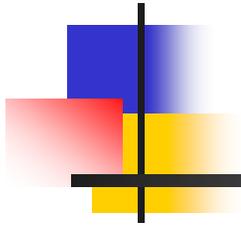


The Achievement Gap in the Lexington Public Schools . . .



Documentation, Research, &
Recommendations

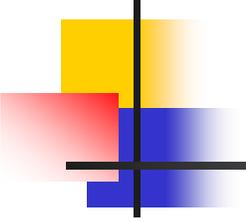
Mr. Vito LaMura
January 29, 2008

METCO's History in Lexington

. . . . 41 years

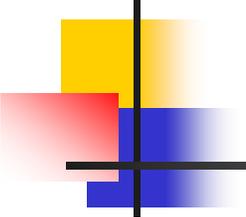
- Efficacy Training
- EMI Training
- School Improvement Plans
- Diversity Committees

ALL efforts have been well-intentioned, but insufficient or unsuccessful. The achievement gap persists.



Critical Underlying Assumptions & Beliefs

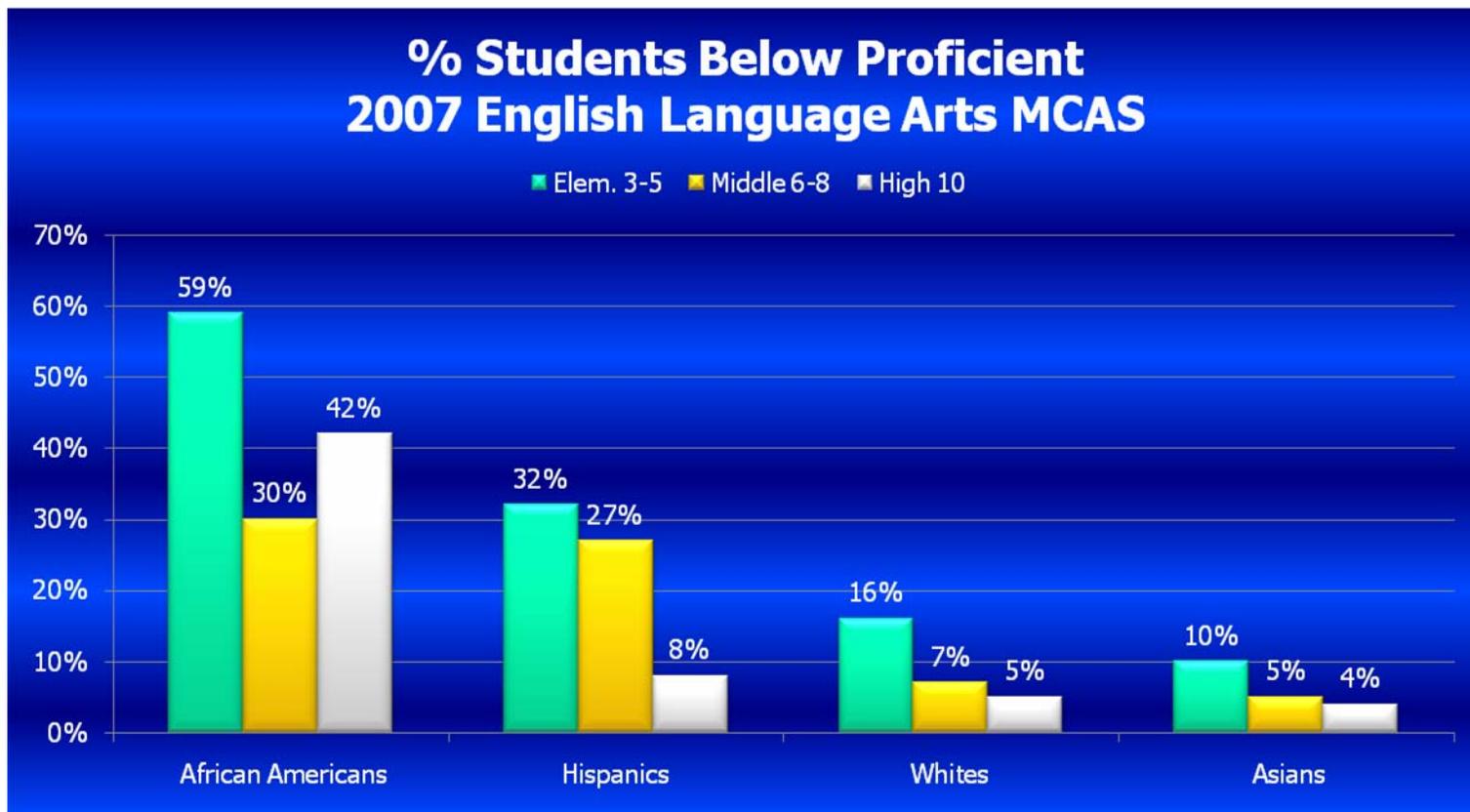
- Academic Ability is a developed (and developable) ability, one that is not simply a function of biological endowment or a fixed aptitude.
- All educators and their students **MUST** internalize the message that “low” achievement does **NOT** equal “low” ability.
- Strong, trusting, and encouraging teacher-student relationships will contribute to improving achievement for all students.



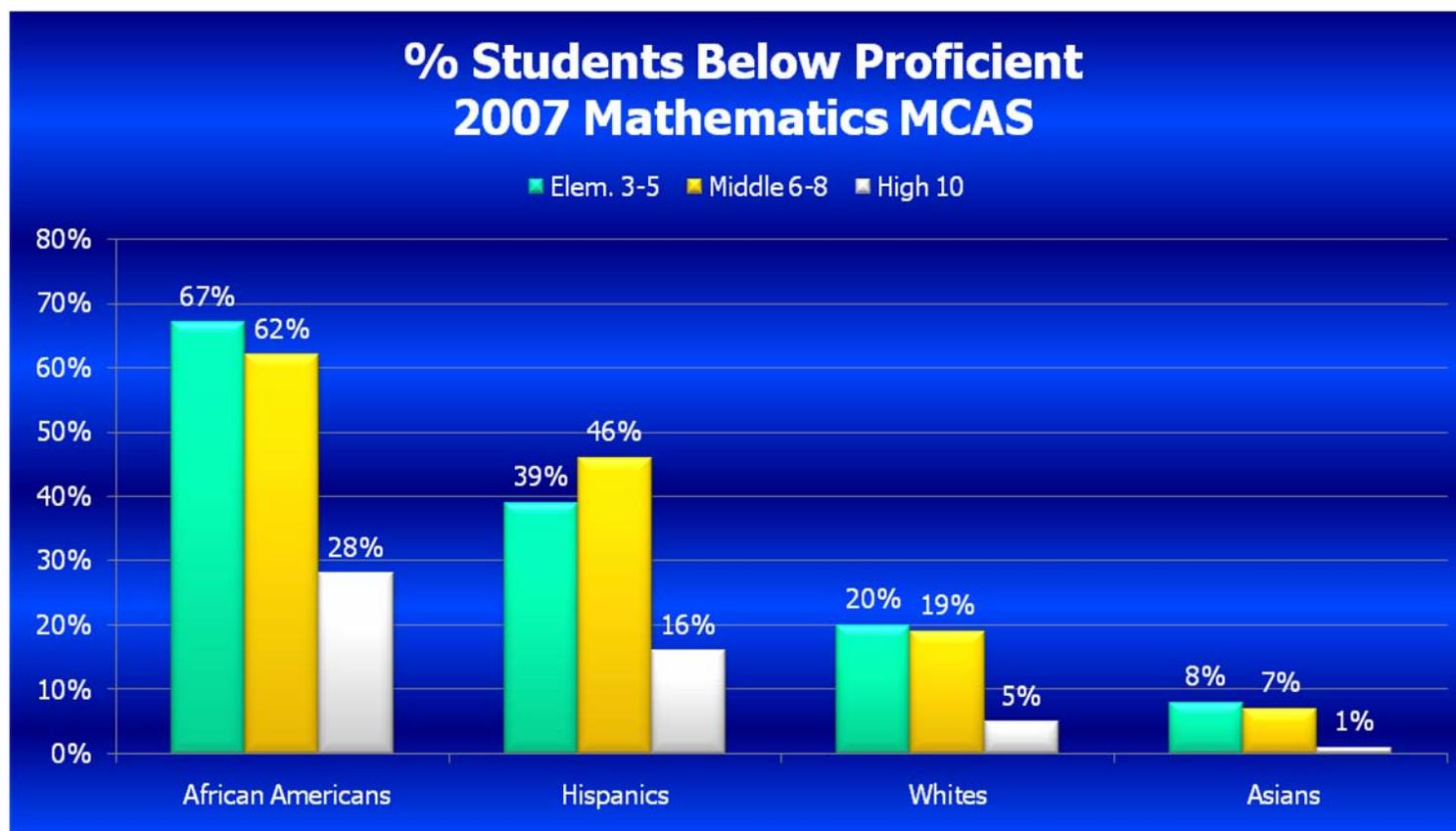
Critical Underlying Assumptions & Beliefs

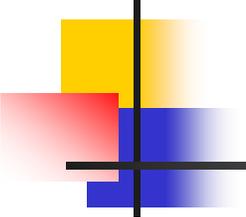
- Schools that concentrate on how their practices affect all students will be more productive and successful than those which blame students, families, poverty, cultural differences, or race for underachievement.
- We must all continually examine our beliefs and change our practices to counteract the contemporary and historic impacts of racism and discrimination, and we must identify and change those aspects of our school that impede our gap-closing work.

MCAS Results: English Language Arts 2007



MCAS Results: Mathematics 2007

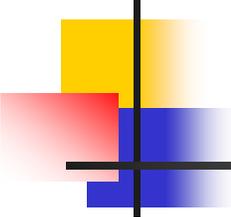




High School Course Selection Information

Student Course Selections at LHS 2006-2007

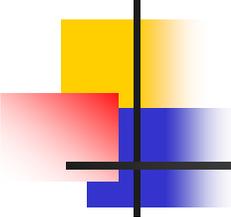
METCO		Non-METCO
74.6%	Unleveled	63.6%
1.3%	Honors	14.8%
19.7%	Level 1	20.6%
5.9%	Level 2	1.0%



Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

39 METCO Parents' Responses in Order of Frequency

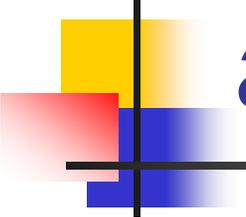
1. Insufficient or lack of parental involvement
2. Some parents' lack of expertise/strategies to provide effective academic support
3. Students' lack of sufficient time to do schoolwork
4. Ineffective teaching styles and strategies
5. Homework issues: incomplete, undone, misunderstood, no help
6. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations
7. Poor study habits and skills
8. Lack of awareness and/or ineffective response to cultural differences
9. Students' lack of confidence in academic pursuits
10. Peer pressures: social relationships over academic pursuits, high achievement not valued



Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

31 LPS Staff Members' Responses in Order of Frequency

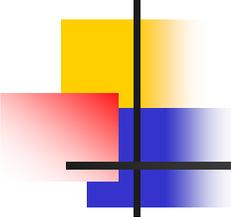
1. Inadequate system supports for struggling students
2. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations
3. Insufficient teacher communication with parents
4. Students' and parents' low expectations
5. Students' attitudes: academics undervalued, intelligence is fixed
6. Ineffective/insufficient use of data to drive instruction
7. LPS over-reliance on SPED
8. Weak literacy skills, especially vocabulary & comprehension
9. Lack of mentors/role models for students
10. LPS curriculum with excessively high expectations



Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

22 METCO Students' Responses in Order of Frequency

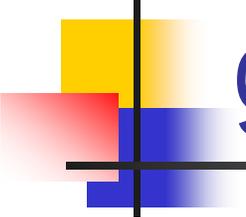
1. Student lack of effort and attentiveness
2. Student belief that school is not a number one priority
3. Insufficient time to do schoolwork
4. Ineffective teaching styles and strategies
5. Student embarrassment in asking questions
6. Inadequate access to academic help and resources
7. Lack of in-school support
8. Student attitudes: high achievement is not cool; place friendship obligations over schoolwork
9. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations
10. Insufficient MCAS preparation



Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

39 METCO Parents' Responses in Order of Frequency

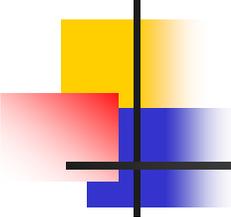
1. Increase parent communication and involvement with teachers and the schools
2. Provide many more embedded programs for struggling students
3. Provide more tutoring options for students
4. Provide in-school and after-school homework support for students
5. Maintain and regularly communicate high standards
6. Provide a mentoring program for METCO students
7. Provide training for interested parents in study skills/academic support
8. Develop on-going systemic encouragements for high achievement
9. Provide more test preparation/skill instruction
10. Parents must increase their own supportive and informational networking



Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

31 LPS Staff Members' Responses in Order of Frequency

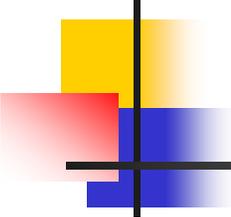
1. Develop and implement additional academic assistance, as needed
2. Use data-driven intervention strategies
3. Develop a mentor program for METCO students
4. Provide clear, consistent feedback to students much more frequently
5. Provide early and extensive literacy interventions for all struggling students
6. Develop strategies to increase parent involvement
7. Continue to train staff in a variety of teaching styles & strategies
8. Implement full-day Kindergarten as soon as possible
9. Provide more professional development to embed best practices
10. Provide more study skills instruction



Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

22 METCO Students' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Provide many more in-school tutoring options
2. Provide more test preparation courses / sessions
3. Provide after-school academic support programs
4. Provide in-school and after-school homework support
5. Develop more teacher sensitivity to different learning styles
6. Push students harder and into more high level courses
7. Provide more study skills and time management instruction

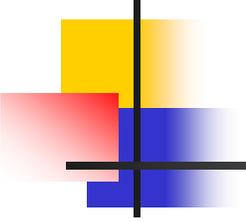


What the RESEARCH says . . .

- Achievement gaps are, in fact, being closed with some rapidity in many schools all across the country.

Chenoweth, Karin. It's Being Done: Academic Success in Unexpected Schools.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2007.

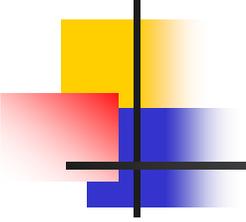
- An examination of the most current research reveals the common characteristics of successful, “gap-closing” schools:



Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

Administration

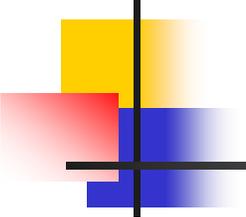
- Focused, deep implementation of a limited number of achievable goals
- Accountability defined in terms of student learning
- Revision of scheduling practices to maximize extended learning
- Policy of pairing most effective teachers with most challenging underachievers



Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

Curriculum

- Primacy of early intervention for underachievers in literacy and math
- Enrollment in higher-level courses with the necessary supports for success
- Frequent, common assessment of underachievers as drivers of academic interventions

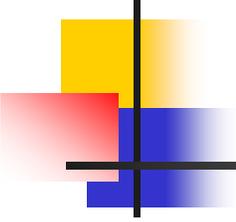


Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

Teaching and Learning

- Abundant extended learning opportunities
- Collaboration exclusively on student learning and development in Professional Learning Communities
- Professional development for teachers, particularly in data-driven instruction and intervention
- Programs for developing strong, trusting, and encouraging adult-student relationships

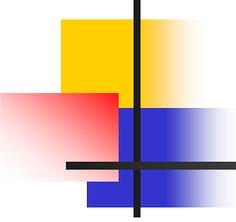
Recommendations



Administration

- Adopt an Action Plan and constitute an Achievement Gap Task Force
- Institute full-day Kindergarten
- Provide an elementary METCO late bus on Thursday afternoons
- Hire more staff of color
- Improve data gathering capacity, analysis, and dissemination
- Revise scheduling practices to maximize extended learning
- Address the issue of over-referral to special education

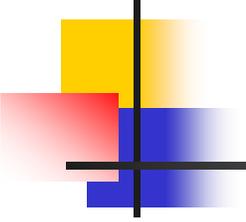
Recommendations



Curriculum

- Develop data-driven intervention strategies for underachievers at all schools
- Ensure enrollment of METCO students in higher-level courses with supports for success
- Develop effective, comprehensive, common assessments
- Develop additional courses in literacy and mathematics for significantly underachieving 6th and 9th graders
- Institute mandatory, Lexington-supported and staffed, rigorous, summer school

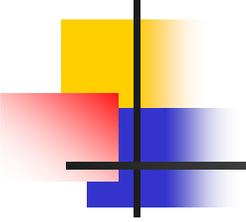
Recommendations



Teaching and Learning

- Intervene early with 2 hours of daily literacy instruction and 1 hour of daily mathematics instruction in elementary schools
- Institute a system-wide METCO mentoring program
- Increase counselors' and METCO social workers' collaboration around the tracking of student achievement
- Increase tutoring support before, during, and after school
- Develop a plan to address survey concerns: teacher/METCO parent communication, persistence of low expectations, student attitudes and confidence, parents' request for effective learning strategies to use at home

Next Steps...

- 
-
- Form the A.G. Task Force
 - Meet with ALL LPS faculty members to present and discuss the A.G. report
 - Meet with all LPS Principals to discuss short and long-term goals
 - Develop an implementation plan