



## **N.J. State Board of Education Creates Task Force to Address State's Academic Achievement Gap**

**For Immediate Release**

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Princeton, N.J. – New Jersey State Board of Education President Arcelio Aponte today announced that the board's Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force has held initial meetings and soon will hold regional public hearings to gather input on how to best address the state's academic achievement gap.

The 10-member task force, which stems from the State Board's annual retreat in June, was created to examine why many poor and minority students in New Jersey do not score as well on state standardized tests as their more-affluent and white counterparts.

"It is the State Board of Education's mission to help provide every child in New Jersey with an excellent education regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic group or sex," President Aponte said. "I am confident that the State Board's Closing the Achievement Gap Task Force will produce proven and practical methods that school districts across the state can use to help all students achieve at high levels."

In 2010, black students in the fourth grade statewide scored approximately 30 percentage points lower on NJASK in language arts and mathematics than white students. The gap was slightly larger between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students on the grade four language arts NJASK, while the gap in math was approximately 25 percentage points.

The task force's charge is to provide the State Board and policymakers with recommendations for a statewide strategy to close the academic achievement gap by addressing proven correlates of poor academic achievement. It will examine the themes of access; culture/climate; expectations; and strategies.

"Closing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students, regardless of zip code, graduate from high school ready for college and career is a top priority of the Department," said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. "I commend the State Board for taking this challenge head on, and look forward to the results of this work."

The task force members include:

- James Boatwright - Former Director of Academic Support, The College of New Jersey;
- Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago - Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor; Director of the Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership; and Board Chair of the LEAP Academy University Charter School;
- Richard E. Constable III, Esq. -Deputy Commissioner, N.J. Department of Labor and Workforce Development;
- Robert L. Copeland - Superintendent, Piscataway School District;
- Silvia Correa-Abbato - Assistant Superintendent, Union City School District;
- Dr. Stephen Jose Hanson - Professor, Psychology Department, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey;
- Dr. Arnold G. Hyndman - Professor of Cell Biology and Neuroscience and Director of the Organizational Leadership Program of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University;
- Carlos R. Moreno - Director of School Reform & Innovation - New Jersey, Big Picture Learning;
- Dr. Michael Nettles - Senior Vice President and Edmund W. Gordon Chair of Policy Evaluation and Research Center, Educational Testing Service (ETS);
- Dr. Dorothy Strickland - Member, N.J. State Board of Education and Professor Emerita, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Support for the task force is being provided by ETS, the Department of Education and the Office of the Acting Secretary of Higher Education/Commission on Higher Education.

The task force expects to hold multiple public hearings around the state in the near future.