



Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative

# Blueprint for Action


*A framework for understanding and improving academic achievement for African American students.*





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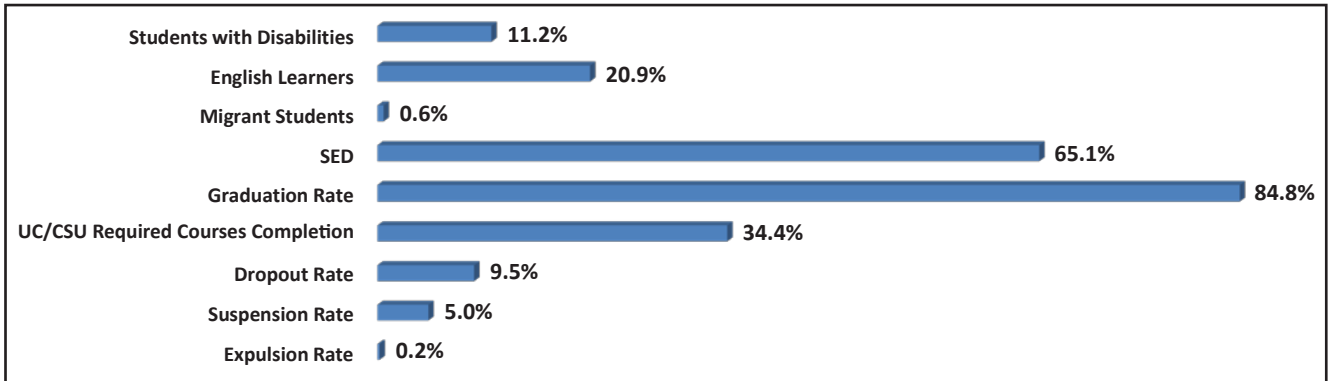
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# Riverside County K-12 Profile

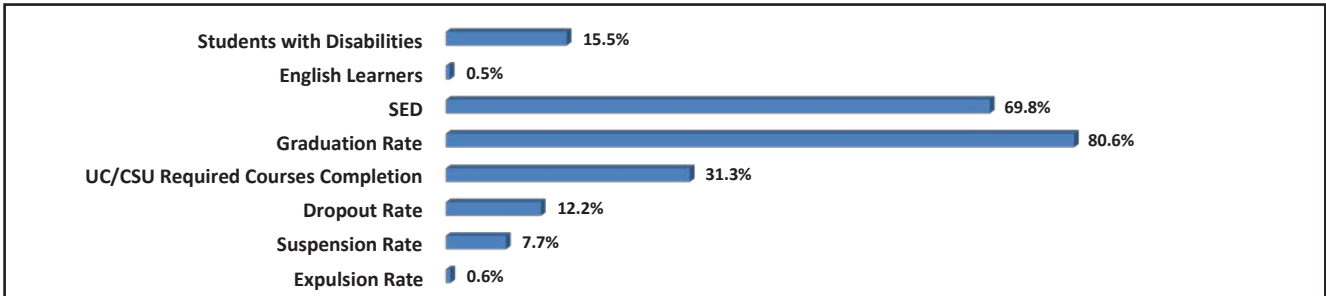
Riverside County, the 4<sup>th</sup> largest county in California, consists of 23 school districts and is home to a diverse population of over 420,000 students. Listed below is more detail about the county demographic data and student information.

**23 school districts:** Elementary (K-8) – 4      High School (9-12) – 1      Unified (K-12) – 18

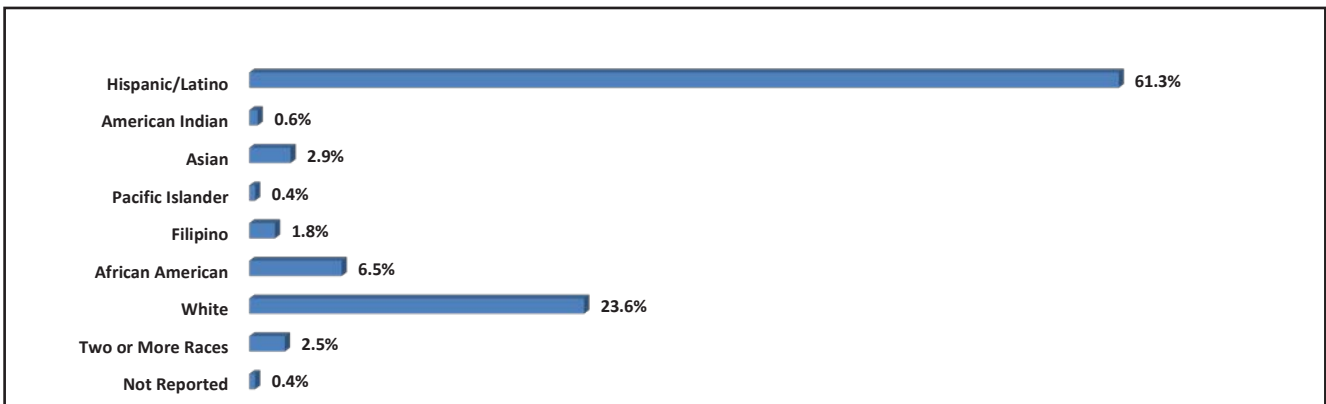
## Riverside County Student Profile



## African American Student Profile



## Riverside County Demographics





## A Message From Dr. Judy D. White, Ed.D. Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

**T**hank you for your interest in learning about the Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative. It warms my heart to know that the passion and progress of educators in our region has resulted in a second printing of this Blueprint for Action that is being utilized across the state and the nation to better serve the needs of all students.

The continued work of Riverside County educators has moved beyond constructing a framework for understanding and improving academic achievement for African American students. I can assure you that we are actively putting into action the full strength of our collaboration with school districts, community organizations, faith-based communities, and civic leaders.

Together, we are ensuring that all African American students in Riverside County achieve the educational outcomes needed to graduate from high school well prepared for college and the workforce. For more than half a century, I have had an up close and personal view of the full range of our educational system. From the seat of my elementary desk chair as a young girl to filling the role of first African American student body president of my high school, I remember the barriers and challenges that stood in the way of my success.

As a teacher and an administrator, I have heeded Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, imploratory statement that we should strive to be our best so that "neither the living, the dead, or unborn could do it any better." I'm thankful for the brave educators whose adoption of this mentality opened the doors for my success. As educators and community leaders, we owe it to the future generations to strive ever more to carry that mindset forward and address the lingering barriers for all students, so they can make history and break through to success in learning and in life.

Thank you for joining us in this journey to achieve excellence on purpose, with purpose, and for purposes far beyond education that will undoubtedly impact generation after generation.

## Overview of the Initiative

The mission of the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) is to ensure the success of all students through extraordinary service, support, and partnerships. In order to achieve this mission, it is critical that we continue to improve educational opportunities for all students. Historically, national and state data has shown that many African American students are not performing at high levels of academic achievement. The Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative (RCAAAI) was established in 2013-14

to ensure that all African American students in Riverside County achieve the educational outcomes needed to graduate from high school well prepared for college and the workforce.

To help achieve that goal, we have convened the RCAAAI Stakeholder Committee. This committee is a collaborative network comprised of representatives from school districts, higher education, faith-based communities, community organizations, and parents.

## Purpose of the Document

To truly increase college and career readiness rates, we must address the performance of all students and effectively engage in actions to support their success. For many years, educational data trends and educational research have illuminated the fact that there is a pervasive achievement gap. Historically, African American students have been at the lower end of that gap. While many actions and services have been implemented to provide remedial interventions to improve student achievement, actions related to addressing the systemic barriers, and causes related to those barriers, have been minimal.

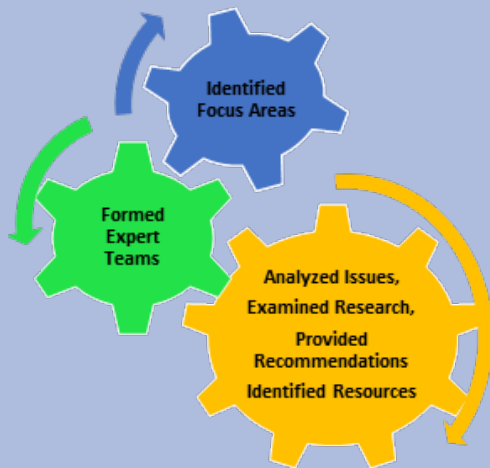
The rigor of the California Common Core Standards will result in a widening of the achievement gap if issues of equity are not addressed. Most importantly, a failure to address these issues will result in minimal numbers of African American students graduating from high school prepared to be successful in college and the workforce. This will have an impact on the students themselves, their families and larger societal issues.

After analyzing multiple data sources and reviewing research collected on best practices, the RCAAAI has identified three focus areas. These focus areas are aligned to the state priorities that must be addressed in the Local Control and Accountability Plans. The areas are:

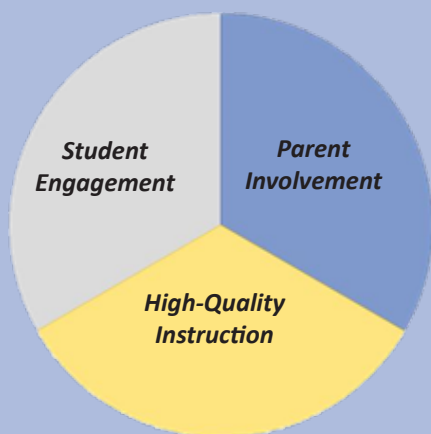
1. Increase student engagement and positive connection to school. (*State Priorities: Student Engagement, School Climate*)
2. Foster safe and supportive school environments that ensure high-quality instruction for all African American students. (*State Priorities: Student Achievement, Implementation of CCSS, Course Access*)
3. Increase the percentage of parents of African American students that participate in school programs, provide decision-making input, and actively participate on parent councils. (*State Priorities: Parental Involvement*)

The RCAAAI Blueprint for Action was developed to provide school districts with research-based actions that have shown evidence of effectiveness to improve the educational outcomes of African American students.

## Blueprint Development Process



## Blueprint Focus Areas



## Organization of the Blueprint



## Framework

**PROCESS:** The Blueprint for Action was informed by the work of the Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative and its Stakeholder Committee. Early in its work the Stakeholder Committee identified three main focus areas that are fundamental in promoting African American student achievement. Each area is aligned with one or more of the eight state priorities of the Local Control and Accountability Plan.

After the three main areas were identified, the Stakeholder Committee formed three expert teams aligned to each of the three focus areas. Expert teams met for monthly collaboration and discussion sessions to analyze issues specific to their focus area, examine research literature on each issue, provide research-driven recommendations and identify school and community-based resources to support the recommendations.

**ORGANIZATION:** This Blueprint is a compilation of the work produced by the expert teams in all three focus areas. The report is organized by the focus area. Under each focus area, we list specific issues that affect African American student achievement. For each issue we describe selected research on the topic, provide recommendations identified through research and offer resources to target the specific issue.

**DATA:** The data used in the report are from the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years and reflect the most recent data available. Quantitative data on enrollment, test scores, suspensions and expulsions and graduation rates were obtained from DataQuest. Qualitative data were obtained from the Riverside County African American Achievement Initiative focus groups and California Healthy Kids surveys conducted in various districts in the county in 2013-14.







# Focus Area #1

# Student Engagement

LCAP Priorities: Student Engagement, School Climate

# Student Engagement

## Importance

As widely discussed in research, positive school engagement is a critical factor in improving student achievement. Specifically, several studies have demonstrated that an engaging instructional environment, positive and supportive student-teacher relationships, and a positive school climate promote academic success (Akey, 2006; Loukas, 2007; Noonan, 2004). Adolescents that report feeling academically capable and socially integrated in the school environment are more committed to learning, demonstrate higher academic achievement, more successful transition to adulthood, and decreased participation in negative behaviors (e.g., substance use and delinquency) (Wang & Fredricks, 2014). One construct of school engagement includes three components: behavioral (participation in academic activities), emotional (enjoyment of learning, appreciation of school success and valuing school), and cognitive engagement (ability to self-regulate one's learning) (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Wang & Eccles, 2012). All three components interact and contribute to the way students feel and think about school, which in turn affects students' actions. Students that do not feel engaged and lack in any one of the engagement components are at a higher risk of failing academically, skipping classes, absenteeism, negative behaviors (violence and substance use) and ultimately dropping out (NRCIM, 2004).

## The Problem

Examining various qualitative and quantitative engagement data for African American students across Riverside County revealed multiple issues/reasons for lower school engagement among that population. Upon identifying the issues, the Stakeholder Committee reviewed research related to each of the issues and provided research-based recommendations and determined available resources to target each of the issues. The following pages in this section will outline the research, recommendations, and resources related to increasing student engagement and positive connection to school.



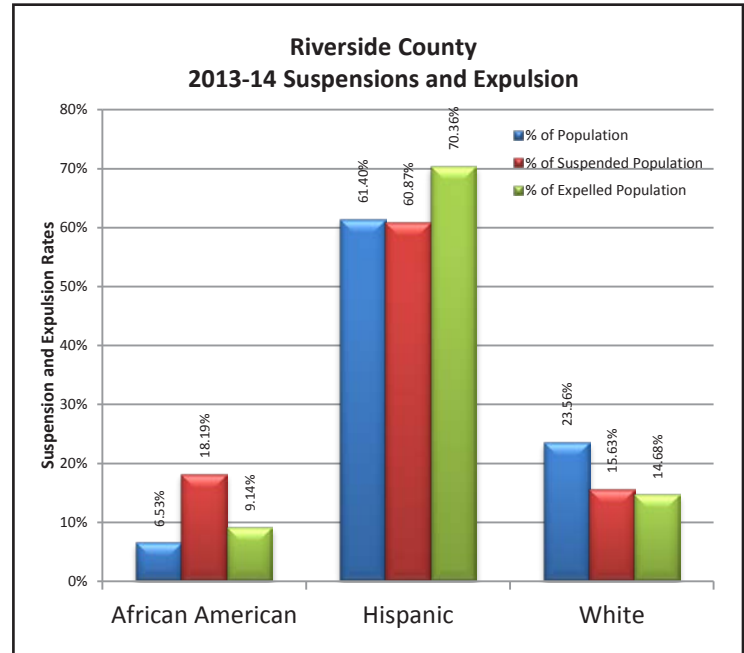
# Issue #1: Disproportionate Discipline

## Research & Results

African American students receive discipline referrals and are suspended and expelled at disproportionately higher rates compared to students of other ethnic groups.

## Data:

Analysis of county-wide discipline data revealed that, while accounting for 6.5% of the total enrolled population in the Riverside County, African American students accounted for 18.2% of suspensions and 9.14% of expulsions, revealing significant disproportionality in suspension and expulsion rates. Comparison data for Hispanic and white students showed that suspensions and expulsions for white and Hispanic students were comparable to their overall enrollment rates and no disproportionality existed for those groups.



## Recommendations:

1. Implement **fair and consistent discipline policies** and utilize **alternatives to out-of-school suspensions** (Tobin & Vincent, 2001). Suggested options are:
  - Restorative Justice Practices: resolving conflicts and building school community support through discussion and group dialogue.
  - On-site Suspensions: Saturday school, after school or lunch detention, community service around the school, or extra-curricular activity suspension.
2. Implement **classroom behavior management** techniques that ensure consistent use of consequences for rule violations (Culp, 2006). Focus should be placed on structuring classroom activities and differential instruction that actively engage students in the lesson content.
3. Fully implement school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in all schools.

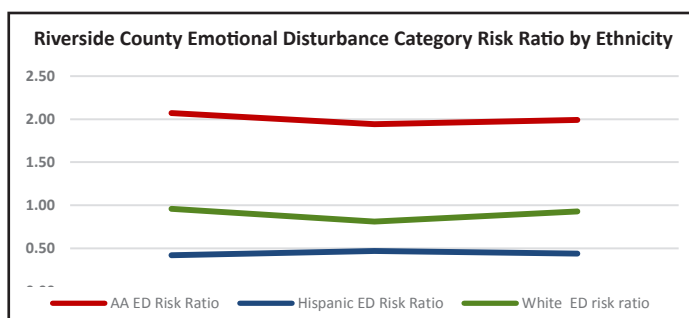
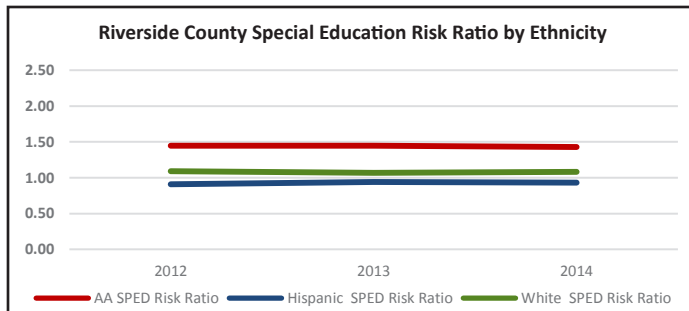
# Issue #2: Special Education Overrepresentation

## Research & Results

African American students are disproportionately overrepresented in special education programs (NRC, 2002), specifically in more “subjective” disability categories (e.g., emotional disturbance and intellectual disability) compared to students of all other ethnicities. No such disproportionality exists in more “objective” categories (e.g., physical disabilities, visual or hearing impairments). Additionally, African American students are more likely than students of other ethnicities to be placed in more restrictive settings (Skiba, 2008).

## Data:

While examining the Riverside County data on special education placement rates for the years of 2012-2014, similar disproportionality rates for African American students in special education were identified.



Risk Ratio analysis revealed that African American students were about:

**1.5 x** more likely than all other students to be identified for special education.

**2x** more likely to be identified under Emotional Disturbance category.

Risk ratios remained relatively unchanged in the last three years (2012, 2013 and 2014).

## Recommendations:

1. Monitor sources of referral to assure consistent evaluation and referral practices among students of all ethnicities, especially for “subjective” disability categories.
2. Involve parents/guardians in the initial assessment/evaluation process to ensure appropriate diagnosis. According to Harry (1992) “school psychologists and speech and language pathologists might not be familiar with the African American culture and, might have difficulty interpreting the meaning of children’s nonverbal, linguistic, and social behavior (p. 126).” Involving a parent in the assessment process might prove beneficial for decoding culture-specific child characteristics (Harry, 1992).
3. Conduct parent education workshops that focus on the special education referral process. Explaining rights, procedures, and the classification process has been proven to increase parental awareness of special education and willingness to collaborate (Harry & Klinger, 2006).
4. Use Universal screening, prevention and early intervention to detect and prevent problems in academic achievement and behavior before considering a special education referral. (Coyne et al., 2001; Donovan & Cross, 2006; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2001; Graham et al., 2001; NICHD, 2000).

# Issue #3: Low Expectations and Lack of Affirmation

## Research & Results

Many African American students do not consistently receive affirmation and recognition for themselves and their culture. They often experience interactions from adults on campus that convey low expectations for their performance and behavior. As a result, a positive connection to school is not established.

Research indicates that when teachers move away from identifying their students as “at-risk” and instead, use an “at-potential” perspective that supports nurturing each student’s unique strengths and potential, their interactions with students change, students become more engaged and thrive for success, which ultimately leads to increased student achievement (Harradine, Coleman & Winn, 2014).



## Student Voice:

*(RCOE African American Achievement Initiative student focus groups.)*

*“I have a D in my class and I asked my teacher if there is anything I could do to raise my grade. He said that I should be happy, that a D is passing.”*

*“Mostly what I see in my history class is slavery. I know there is more, but they don’t talk about it.”*

*“I learn more on Twitter and Instagram about my history than I do at school.”*

## Recommendations:

1. Implement and monitor programs that provide staff with the techniques needed to strengthen relationships with students (e.g., Capturing Kids Hearts, Developmental Assets®).
2. Partner with community and faith-based programs to provide “rites of passage” and mentoring programs on the school campus (Okwumabua et al., 2014; West-Olatunji et al., 2008) (Anderson, 2007; Grantham, 2004).
3. Ensure that students are involved with one or more school-based clubs and/or participate in extracurricular activities (Wiggin, 2008).
4. Establish cultural events and clubs (e.g., black student unions) that celebrate and affirm the culture and contributions of African Americans throughout the school year.

# Resources (Focus Area #1)

For a list of local resources and organizations providing services that support the recommendations related to student engagement, please go to <http://www.rcoe.us/leadership-institute/>.

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

1. The Technical Assistance Center on PBIS: [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
2. Teach Safe Schools: <http://www.teachsafeschools.org/>
3. Association for Positive Behavior Support: <http://www.apbs.org/>

## Restorative Justice

1. Restorative Justice Practices- International Institute for Restorative Justice Practices: <http://www.iirp.edu/>

## Fair and Equitable Discipline Policies

1. Effective School Discipline Policy and Practice (National Association of School Psychologists): [http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/School\\_Discipline\\_Congressional\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/School_Discipline_Congressional_Briefing.pdf)
2. Texans Care for Children: <http://texanscareforchildren.org/Images/Interior/reports/19-fair%20school%20discipline.pdf>
3. Discipline Policies, Successful Schools and Racial Justice: National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies>

## Effective Classroom and Behavior Management

1. The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (IY TCM) Intervention: <http://incredibleyears.com/programs/teacher/classroom-mgt-curriculum/>
2. Strategies for Improving Instruction for Black & Hispanic Male Students: <https://www.ocps.net/cs/services/initiatives/Documents/Strategies%20Document.pdf>

## Parent Training

1. Parent Advocacy Trainings – National Association for the Education of African American Children With Learning Differences: <http://www.aacld.org/thesolution/advocacytrainings.html>
2. Parent Handbook - National Association for the Education of African American Children With Learning Differences: [http://www.aacld.org/images/NAEAACLD\\_HANDBOOK\\_3RD\\_ED\\_IPDF3.pdf](http://www.aacld.org/images/NAEAACLD_HANDBOOK_3RD_ED_IPDF3.pdf)
3. Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT)

## Culturally-Responsive Assessment

1. Preventing Disproportionality: A Framework for Culturally Responsive Assessment: <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/mocq393PreventingDisproportionality.aspx>

## Recognizing Potential of Students of Color

1. Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students – Promoting Learning for Under-Represented Students <http://fpg.unc.edu/node/5362>
2. Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS)

## Regional Rites of Passage

1. National Rites of Passage Institute: <http://nropi.org/>
2. Rites of Passage During Adolescence: <http://ncsu.edu/ffci/publications/2007/v12-n2-2007-summer-fall/scheer.php>
3. A Rites of Passage Framework: <http://js.sagamorepub.com/jpra/article/view/23>

## Mentoring

1. National Mentoring Partnership: <http://www.mentoring.org/>
2. California Mentoring Partnership: <http://www.camentoringpartnership.org/>



## Focus Area #2

# High-Quality Instruction

LCAP Priorities: Basic Services, Student Achievement,  
Course Access, Implementation of State Standards

# High-Quality Instruction

## Importance

All children, regardless of race or socioeconomic level, enter school eager to learn. It is important that schools fuel this interest and eagerness with instructional strategies, materials, learning environments and assessment practices that reflect students' culture, build confidence and allow children to show what they know. The Common Core State Standards, recently adopted in the state of California, emphasize rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills to assure that all students graduate high school with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college or career. All students should receive high-quality, culturally responsive instruction that is differentiated based on specific student needs and aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts, mathematics, and other state standards. While all students receive Common Core aligned instruction, the pedagogical practices might not always consider cultural differences and specific learning styles of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Several studies on African American students' learning style preferences indicate that many African American students tend to prefer verbal tasks, perform better with materials and concepts that are directly related to their personal experiences, and are sensitive to the teacher's perceived confidence in their abilities (Durodoye & Hildreth, 1995; McDougal, 2009). Efforts to improve academic outcomes of African American students should focus on creating optimal learning environments for African American students based on culturally-specific learning styles.

## The Problem

Closing the achievement gap between African American students and their peers from other ethnic backgrounds has been a critical goal of the public school system for decades. Research studies suggest that several factors might be affecting the academic performance of African American students:

1. Curricular materials and instruction in all subject areas do not accurately reflect the full history and contributions of African Americans to the world in an integrated and ongoing way.
2. Instructional practices do not regularly incorporate techniques and strategies that are culturally responsive and consider diverse learning styles.
3. Teachers working with African American students and other culturally and linguistically-diverse students do not receive sufficient professional development in the areas of cultural sensitivity, cultural responsiveness, and unconscious bias.
4. African American students at all educational levels do not receive equitable opportunities to engage in authentic learning. Percentages of African American students enrolled in state-funded preschool programs are lower than that of students of all other ethnic backgrounds. African American students enroll in and complete advanced coursework at lower rates than students of other backgrounds (Johnson, & Kritsonis, 2006).



# Issue #1: Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Instruction

## Research & Results

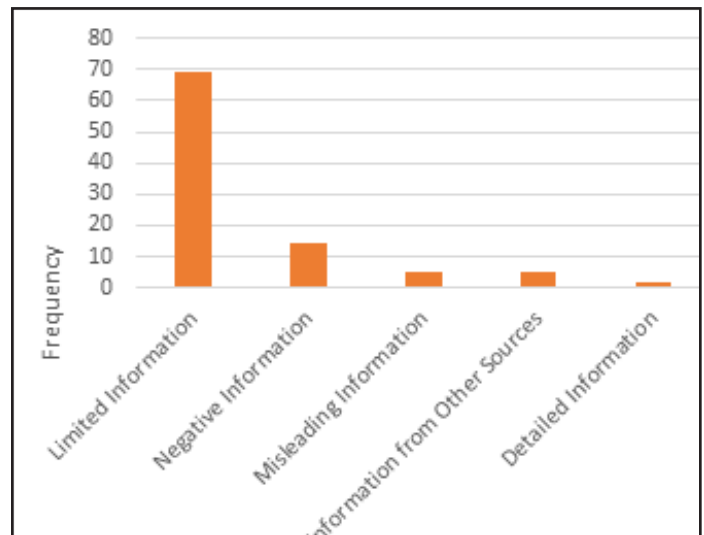
African American students are not provided access to curriculum, learning materials and instruction that reflect historical contribution of African Americans to the world.

During student focus group interviews, a considerable number of students mentioned that when the schools did focus on African American people, it was mostly negative and about slavery. African American students mentioned that there was very little coverage of African American contributions taught during the school year, with the exception of Martin Luther King, Jr.



Several qualitative and mixed methods studies have demonstrated African American students' preferences for culturally-relevant curricula (Brown, 2007; Giddings, 2001; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2010).

**Do you see African American people and their contributions to the world reflected in your textbooks, classwork and lessons?**



## Recommendations:

1. Adopt and implement curricular materials, with an emphasis on literacy and writing, that reflect African American historical traditions and contributions to the fields of science, art and literature. Issues that are relevant to African American experience across time should be incorporated into lessons.
2. Develop history-social science courses on African American history.
3. Encourage the State Board of Education to recommend culturally-responsive materials for adoption.

## Issue #2: Professional Development

### Research & Results

Due to insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators in the areas of cultural-responsiveness and unconscious bias, many teachers continue to demonstrate personal unconscious biases and low expectations for African American students.

Literature defines culturally-responsive teaching as using culture-specific knowledge, prior knowledge, and performance styles of students from diverse backgrounds to make learning more appropriate and effective for them (Gay, 2000). Multiple research studies on the effectiveness of culturally-responsive teaching demonstrated that such teaching practices were successful at motivating and engaging students (Cohen et al., 2009; Hurley, Allen & Boykin, 2009) as well as improving students' performance in various academic disciplines (Boykin & Ellison, 2008; Lee, 2006).



### Recommendations:

1. Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and district administrators on the learning styles and social practices of African American students and learn culturally-relevant teaching strategies that will promote success for African American students.
2. Provide ongoing professional development focused on cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias.
3. County offices of education should collaborate with institutions of higher education to advocate for the development of more preservice teacher training courses focused on cultural-responsiveness teaching and unconscious bias.
4. Embed culturally relevant and responsive instruction into professional growth opportunities in induction programs for first and second year teachers.

# Issue #3: Learning Opportunity Gaps

## Research & Results

African American students experience learning opportunity gaps at all educational levels (ECE, elementary, secondary and post-secondary).

The achievement gap between African American students and their white peers have been documented persistently in the research literature over the last several decades (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2014). Research suggests that this gap exists even before children enter school, widens by 3rd and 4th grade and persists throughout middle and high school. According to the findings presented in the Nation's Report Card, over the last 30 years African American students have demonstrated significantly lower scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Reading and Mathematics in 4th, 8th and 12th grades (NAEP, 2005).

Examination of various quantitative data revealed that, similar to the national trends reported by NAEP, African American students in Riverside County exhibited lower educational outcomes compared to students of other ethnic backgrounds in several areas: standardized tests scores, CAHSEE passing rates, graduation rates and a-g completion rates.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are disaggregated by grade span to offer suggestions for improving instruction for African American students at each educational level:

1. **Early Childhood** - Increase the **percentage of African American students enrolled in district or county preschool programs** and ensure that the programs are culturally relevant and academically appropriate.
2. **Elementary School** - Monitor to ensure African American student **proficiency in literacy by 3rd or 4th grade**. Implement high-quality evidence-based interventions to ensure 3rd and 4th grade proficiency in literacy.
3. **Middle School**
  - a. Ensure **successful transition from middle to high school** by providing comprehensive transition programs.
  - b. Begin **surveys of career interest** to begin career and professional pathways.
4. **High School**
  - a. Monitor to ensure that African American students have access to and support to succeed in advanced courses: advanced placement, honors classes and dual enrollment.
  - b. Establish support and frequent monitoring of college applications completion, essential testing and financial aid to meet college and career training applications.
  - c. Create programs that provide **school-to-college and school-to-career experiences** utilizing community stakeholders (career training, university shadowing, mentoring and internships).

1. Preschool enrollment of African American students in Riverside County.



**African American:** 7.8%  
**Hispanic:** 76.7%  
**White:** 37.5%

2. CAHSEE passing rates 2013-14.

**CAHSEE**

**African American:** 78%, Math, 77% ELA  
**Hispanic:** 82% Math, 79% ELA  
**White:** 92% Math, 91% ELA

3. a-g completion rates for African American students in Riverside County.

**a-g**

**African American:** 31.3%  
**Hispanic:** 29.3%  
**White:** 41.9%

4. Graduation rates for African American students in Riverside County.



**African American:** 80.2%  
**Hispanic:** 82.6%  
**White:** 89.2%

5. Dropout rates.



**African American:** 11.8%  
**Hispanic:** 10.8%  
**White:** 7.2%

## Resources (Focus Area #2)

*For a list of local resources and organizations providing services that support the recommendations related to high-quality instruction, please go to <http://www.rcoe.us/leadership-institute/>.*

### Curriculum and Instruction

1. African American History Curriculum Guide: Grades 9 to 12. New Jersey State Library:  
[http://www.njstatelib.org/research\\_library/new\\_jersey\\_resources/digital\\_collection/african\\_american\\_history\\_curriculum/](http://www.njstatelib.org/research_library/new_jersey_resources/digital_collection/african_american_history_curriculum/)
2. "Freedom's Song - 100 Years of African American Struggle and Triumph":  
[http://www.uccs.edu/~coegen/coeFaculty/WilliamsR/PDF/Pagesfrombhbvol69no2Finalw\\_cover.pdf](http://www.uccs.edu/~coegen/coeFaculty/WilliamsR/PDF/Pagesfrombhbvol69no2Finalw_cover.pdf)
3. Creating Seamless Educational Transitions for Urban African American and Hispanic Students:  
<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/2181.pdf>
4. Footsteps to Freedom: Educator's Tour of the Underground Railroad: Black Voice Foundation

### Books

1. Williams, M. The 10 Lenses: Your Guide to Living and Working in a Multicultural World.
2. Chartock, R. K. (2010). Strategies and Lessons for Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Primer for K–12 Teachers.
3. Gay, G. (2010). Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice.
4. Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.
5. Le, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (2008). Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K–12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development.
6. Lee, Carol D. Culture, Literacy, and Learning: Taking Bloom in the Midst of the Whirlwind.
7. Paul, D.G. (2000). Raising Black Children Who Love Reading And Writing: A Guide From Birth Through Age 6.
8. Tatum, A. (2005). Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males.



Focus Area #3

# Parent Engagement and Participation

LCAP Priorities: Parental Involvement

# Parent Participation

## Importance

Families play an important role in the education of their children. Effective collaboration between families and the school system support and enhance students' educational experiences. Additionally, parental school involvement has been specified as one of the eight state priorities in the Local Control and Accountability Plan, bringing an increased focus on involving parents of all children attending California schools to be equal participants in their children's school planning and decision-making.

Parental school involvement has consistently been linked to increased educational aspirations, positive school attitudes and academic success, as well as lower absenteeism and behavior problems (Hayes, 2011; Jeynes, 2005). Jeynes (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on the effects of parental involvement on the educational outcomes of high-school students in urban environments. The author concluded that parental involvement produced positive effects for both white and minority students and hypothesized that parental involvement can help reduce the academic achievement gap for minority students.

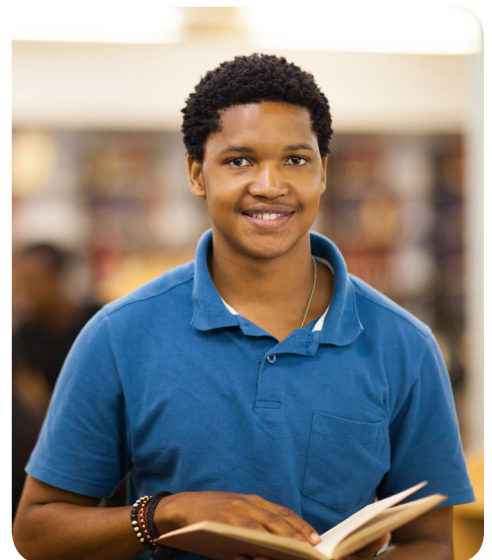
However, it is important to keep in mind that family compositions differ and so do the roles families play in their children's education and the type of home-school participation they prefer. Parental involvement can take different forms, from direct involvement such as volunteering in the classroom and school events and attending school conferences, to indirect participation that can include discussing school and conveying school-related expectations at home (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Some studies suggest that while direct involvement is an important part of home-school collaboration, it's the indirect involvement at home that has the most pronounced effect on academic achievement (VanVoorhis, 2003).

Considering the positive impact of parental school involvement, it is of paramount importance that schools focus on increasing parental involvement in planning and decision-making but do so in the ways that are culturally-specific to the particular parent groups.

## The Problem

Qualitative studies on educators' perceptions of African American parental school involvement demonstrate that educators frequently have stereotypic and deficit beliefs about African American parents as being uninvolved, disconnected, uncaring and even confrontational (Cooper, 2007; 2009; Thompson, 2003). On the other hand, studies that explored African American parent perceptions of school support and the extent of their parental involvement, indicated that African American parents often feel alienated and do not feel welcome in their attempts at home-school involvement (Koonce & Harper, 2005).

Despite the structural changes in society, most educators still view traditional patterns of direct parental involvement (e.g., volunteering, attending school conferences) as the primary way of parental school involvement (De Gaetano, 2007; Tutwiler, 2005). Such views disregard the realities of the day-to-day lives of a majority of families. Specifically, many African American parents reported that due to their busy schedules they prefer to participate in their children's education at home by helping with homework and discussing educational expectations. Parents also indicated that they would be more willing to participate in school-home collaboration if it focused on higher-level decision-making, such as helping make instructional and organizational decisions as opposed to classroom volunteering and parent-teacher conferences (Cooper, 2009).



# Issue #1: Minimal Parent Involvement

## Research & Results

Parents of African American students are not as actively engaged in providing input and decision making as parents of students from other ethnic backgrounds. Current parent engagement programs do not target parents/caregivers of African American students.

Additionally, parents of African American children report feeling alienated and not welcome on campus and indicate that these feelings prevent or discourage their school involvement.

Knowing the importance of parent involvement and the impact it has on student achievement, as well as deficit-based perceptions of African American parental school involvement, the Stakeholder Committee set out to identify research and evidence based recommendations, strategies and resources that can help increase the involvement of parents/caregivers of African American children.



**20%** of Riverside County school districts have an **African American Parent Advisory Committee**.

**1** district has an African American Advisory Council (AAAC).

RCOE Parent Engagement Leadership Initiative (PELI) reports significantly **lower rates** of African American parent participation in their trainings.

## Recommendations

1. Reach out to parents of African American students through Parent Engagement Leadership Initiative (PELI) programs.
2. Develop school and district parent advisory groups and collaborative councils for parents and caregivers of African American students. Create parent liaisons through the advisory council for African American parents/caregivers.
3. Administer surveys and conduct parent focus groups that identify parent/caregiver needs or issues. Select goals and identify the actions that will be taken to address issues identified by parents/caregivers to create safe and welcoming environments on campus and increase parent involvement.
4. Train office staff, faculty and administration on cultural responsiveness and cultural sensitivity.
5. Partner with faith-based and community organizations to reach and develop a positive rapport with parents and caregivers of African American students.
6. Provide ongoing cultural response and culture sensitivity training for all classified, certificated, and administrative staff.

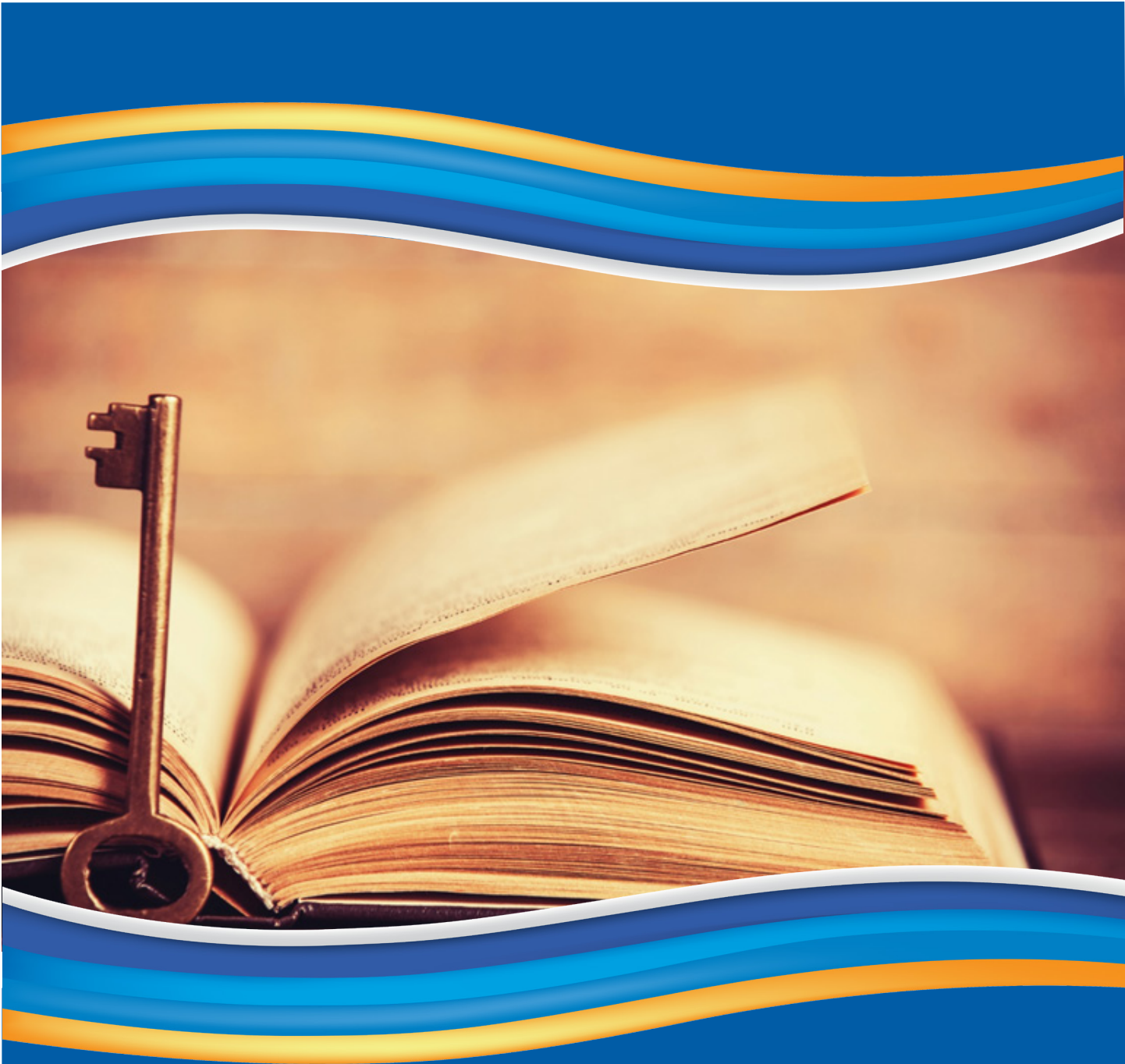


## Resources (Focus Area #3)

For a list of local resources and organizations providing services that support the recommendations related to parent engagement and participation, please go to <http://www.rcoe.us/leadership-institute/>.

1. Footsteps to Freedom: Educator's Tour of the Underground Railroad: Black Voice Foundation
2. Multicultural Partnerships: Involve All Families, Darcy Hutchins, Marsha Greenfield, Joyce Epstein, Mavis Sanders, Claudia Galindo
3. National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) (Promising Practices Targeting African American Parents)
4. Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family/School Partnerships by Vivian R. Johnson, Karen Mapp, Don Davies, Anne Henderson
5. Parent Engagement Leadership Initiative (PELI):  
<http://www.rcoe.us/educational-services/files/2013/10/2013-PELI-English-Brochure.pdf>
6. National Council on Educating Black Children Parent University Curriculum.





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