Syllabus

Course Overview

Even if you have only been teaching for a short time, you have heard concerns voiced about addressing the "achievement gap". According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), "achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (that is, larger than the margin of error)."

The gap in achievement that separates students has been the focus of discussion, research, and controversy for decades. While the gap narrowed considerably through the late 1980s, particularly between black and white students, progress since then has been marginal, and below-par achievement of minority students remains one of the most pressing problems in education.

Researchers have identified a variety of factors that appear related to the achievement gap—students' racial and economic background, their parents' education level, access to high-quality preschool instruction, school funding, peer influences, teachers' expectations, and curricular and instructional quality. However, the educational system may need to revamp many programs and strategies in order to assure the success of all students.

In this course, differences in student achievement due to cultural, gender, racial, social, and economic factors will be considered. You will also examine current research and best practices with a focus on identifying those practices and instructional strategies most likely to eliminate achievement disparities.

Reference

National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) Achievement gaps. Retrieved from 222.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps

Field Experiences

Learners will be required to carry out field experience to complete this course successfully. Field experiences provide learners with opportunities to observe and participate in learning experiences that strengthen their understanding of course content. Field experiences for this program may occur in school and district settings, for example—private, public, charter, and online. Learners are required to secure an appropriate site to complete field experiences. You will be expected to complete 6–8 hours of field experience.

Discussions

- u03d1: Interview a school leader to obtain data to identify factors that contribute to achievement gaps (1 hour).
- u04d2: Interview a school leader to learn more about the achievement gaps in your school (1 hour).
- u05d1: Talk to school personnel to identify instructional strategies being used in your school (1 hour).
- u08d2: Interview a school leader to learn more about how school leaders promote integrity and fairness and enhance collaboration (1 hour).

Assignments

As the project for this course, you will develop an action plan for addressing the achievement gap in your school setting. As part of your plan, you will be expected to collaborate with other professionals at your school to collect data and to plan. Depending on the interventions you choose, you may need to contact school leaders, such as the principal or assistant principal, or you may need to contact teachers or other school officials. In particular, you are required to collaborate with school officials for your Action Plan Description and potentially for your Action Plan Steps assignments, depending on the focus of your project. Be sure to review the requirements of these assignments in order to plan your time effectively. It is estimated that your field work related to your action plan will take 2–4 hours.

Program Outcomes

Learners in the P-12 Master's in Education specializations in Curriculum and Instruction, Early Childhood Education, P-12 Studies in Education, Leadership in Educational Administration, and Reading and Literacy will demonstrate their ability to increase student learning by documenting mastery of the following program outcomes.

Graduates of Capella's P-12 Master's program will demonstrate:

- **Subject matter expertise**: Possess a deep understanding of subject matter, its place within the discipline, and its connection to other disciplines.

- **Teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners and classrooms**: Utilize multiple instructional models, resources, management, and pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of and engage diverse learners.

- **Knowledge and skills in equitable learning environments**: Apply knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to provide equitable, inclusive schools in which all students have the opportunity and encouragement to reach their potential.

- **Understanding of assessment-driven curriculum and instruction**: Understand assessment-driven, standards-based curriculum and instruction that is age- and developmental-level appropriate.

- **Practitioner-Scholar expertise**: Work as a practitioner-scholar by applying current research and theory on content, pedagogy, child development, and other education related topics to the improvement of instructional and leadership practices.

- **Research proficiency**: Conduct classroom- and school-based research to improve practice, programs, and student outcomes.

- **Data-driven decision making**: Informed thinking, planning, and teaching with appropriate data and data-driven strategies.

- **Ethical leadership**: Apply standards of ethical leadership and management, including knowledge, dispositions, and performances, in classrooms, schools, districts, and communities.

- **Systems thinking**: Understand the attributes and skills necessary to lead and manage schools as complex, adaptive systems.

- **Reflective practice**: Engage in reflective practice for continuous professional growth and improvement of instructional and leadership practices.

- **Effective communication skills**: Write clearly and communicate effectively with educational constituents in a variety of ways appropriate to purpose and context.

- **Critical thinking skills**: Engage in thinking, analysis, and problem solving that reflects scholarly intellectual standards, incorporates sound reasoning, and strives for equity and fairness.

- **Effective application of technology**: Use technology effectively to improve instruction, student learning, productivity, and professional practice.

- **Collaborative leadership**: Initiate and participate in communities of practice and other collaborations with education professionals, parents, and community members to mobilize resources that best meet student needs and enhance professional growth.

In addition, through their work in the specialization courses, graduates in Leadership in Educational Administration will demonstrate:

- **Understanding of school law**: Demonstrate understanding of the principles of P-12 school law.

- **Understanding of school finance**: Demonstrate understanding of the principles of P-12 school finance.

For more information about the program outcomes, as well as the P-12 Master's program, please see the Program Guide.

Course-Level Essential Questions

Consider the following course-level essential questions:

1.

What are achievement gaps?

2.

Why have we failed to decrease achievement gaps in our schools?

3.

Can we overcome achievement gaps?

4.

Who is responsible for closing achievement gaps?

Course Competencies (Read Only)

To successfully complete this course, you will be expected to:

1   Analyze methods to lower the achievement gap through the development, articulation, implementation, stewardship, and evaluation and revision of a shared vision of learning for a school.

2   Create and evaluate a comprehensive, rigorous and coherent curricular and instructional school program.

3   Develop a data- and research-based plan that decreases achievement gaps.

4   Reflect on personal dispositions to identify areas of focus for personal learning and growth.

5	Examine the roles of leadership and collaborative practice in successful school-wide improvement.
6	Promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.
7	Communicate in a manner that is scholarly, professional, and consistent with expectations for members of the education professions.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Required

The materials listed below are required to complete the learning activities in this course.

Integrated Materials

Many of your required books are available via the VitalSource Bookshelf link in the courseroom, located in your Course Tools. Registered learners in a Resource Kit program can access these materials using the courseroom link on the Friday before the course start date. Some materials are available only in hard-copy format or by using an access code. For these materials, you will receive an email with further instructions for access. Visit the Course Materials page on Campus for more information.

Book

Noguera, P. A., & Yonemura Wing, J. (Eds.) (2008). *Unfinished business: Closing the racial achievement gap in our schools.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 9780470384442.

Library

The following required readings are provided in the Capella University Library or linked directly in this course. To find specific readings by journal or book title, use Journal and Book Locator. Refer to the Journal and Book Locator library guide to learn how to use this tool.

- Aronson, J. (2004). The threat of stereotype. *Educational Leadership, 62*(3), 14–19.
- Barton, P. E. (2004). Why does the gap persist? *Educational Leadership, 62*(3), 8–13.
- Farr, S. (2010). *Teaching as leadership: The highly effective teacher's guide to closing the achievement gap.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Harsuvadha, N. & Slater, C. (2012). Culturally competent school leaders: The individual and the system. *The Educational Forum, 76*(2), 174–189.
- Samuels, C. A. (2014). Graduation disparities loom large. *Education Week, 33*(19), 1, 8.
- Watson, A., & Kehler, M. (2012). Beyond the "boy problem": Raising questions, growing concerns and literacy reconsidered. *New England Reading Association Journal, 48*(1), 43–55, 113–115.
- Williams, B. (Ed.). (2004). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices* (2nd ed). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

External Resource

Please note that URLs change frequently. While the URLs were current when this course was designed, some may no longer be valid. If you cannot access a specific link, contact your instructor for an alternative URL. Permissions for the following links have been either granted or deemed appropriate for educational use at the time of course publication.

- American Federation of Teachers. (n.d.). *AFT: A union of professionals.* Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/
- *Education Commission of the States.* (2014). Retrieved from http://ecs.org/
- Educational Testing Service. (2014). *ETS.* Retrieved from http://www.ets.org/
- *National Center for Education Statistics.* (2014). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/
- PBS 8. (2002). Ojibwe: Waasa-Inaabidaa "We Look in All Directions". Retrieved from http://www.ojibwe.org/

Suggested

The following materials are recommended to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course, but they are aligned to course activities and assessments and are highly recommended for your use.

Optional

The following optional materials are offered to provide you with a better understanding of the topics in this course. These materials are not required to complete the course.

External Resource

Please note that URLs change frequently. While the URLs were current when this course was designed, some may no longer be valid. If you cannot access a specific link, contact your instructor for an alternative URL. Permissions for the following links have been either granted or deemed appropriate for educational use at the time of course publication.

- U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) https://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (n.d.). Summary of the HIPAA privacy rule https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/laws-regulations/index.html

Projects

Project ➤➤ Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap

Project Overview

The Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap project is designed to assess your application of building level leadership skills that support an effective P-12 student learning environment. This Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap measures your knowledge of the ELCC Building level standard 1. For this project, you will take on the role of the principal of the school and develop an action plan that will be utilized for decreasing or eliminating the achievement gap to effect and support student learning between one subgroup and another and in one or more subject area. Your action plan provides an opportunity for you to apply your knowledge of current research, data on gap-closing strategies, model intervention plans and practice from each participant's perspective, and recommendations for future work related to closing achievement gaps to support student learning.

Consider the outcomes in this course. How can you apply the knowledge and skills to create an immediate effect in your school? As you progress through the course, reflect on the literature you read. Think carefully about the effect of illiteracy among select groups of people in your professional environment. Synthesize what you are learning about the effects of an illiterate society and strategies for change, and then evaluate how this relates to your own professional environment.

The course of action you propose does not have to be a monumental undertaking, unless that is what you want to do. It is fine to take on a moderate or small change that emanates directly from your personal philosophy, role as an educator, and personal experience. Approach your action within the context of a school principal to achieve a plan that could have a relevant and useful effect on your professional environment.

For this project, you will complete project component assignments in Units 3, 5, 7, and 9. You will revise and improve each of the pieces and submit the entire paper in Unit 10.

Length of component papers:

- Action Plan Literature Review: 4–5 pages.
- Action Plan Description: 4–5 pages.
- Action Plan Steps Part 1: 4–5 pages.
- Action Plan Steps Part 2: 4–5 pages.
- Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap: 16–20 pages.

APA formatting: Each component paper must be formatted according to APA style and formatting guidelines. Refer to the APA Style and Formatting module for more information. Your papers should meet the following specific APA requirements:

- Include a title page with the project title followed by the component title (for example, Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap: Action Plan Literature Review).
- Use current APA edition text citations and references.
- Be double-spaced and use Times New Roman, 12-point font.
- Use appropriate line alignment.
- Have proper margins.
- Use running headers.
- Use proper pagination.
- Incorporate appropriate headings and subheadings.

Note: The project scoring guide is an abbreviated version. Please review the full PDF version of the Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap Scoring Guide to be sure you understand how your work will be evaluated.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Proficiency on Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap Project

The *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project is an assessment that measures the candidate's proficiency related to select specialization outcomes and the ELCC standards. It is imperative that candidates demonstrate their proficiency on this project to successfully complete this course. As such, candidates will need to score at least an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project. If a candidate scores anything below an 80, he or she will be required to revise the final project until the scores is at least 80 or above. Candidates who score below an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project will receive an incomplete (I) for the course until the final project has been revised to meet the minimum requirement. It is important for candidates to understand that an incomplete in this course may impact their ability to enroll next quarter if future courses have this course as a prerequisite. Thus, candidates who have to revise the final project will need to do so as soon as possible to avoid hindering their progress in the program.

Unit 1 ▶▶ Defining the Achievement Gap

Introduction

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (Ronald Edmonds, Harvard University).

In many cases, when a student struggles, teachers wonder what is wrong or what is lacking with the student. Why can't this child read on grade level? Does he have a learning disability? Is it because he is an English language learner? Why is this other child so far behind her peers in math? Is it because she is female? Is it because of her family background? Does she come to school without adequate nutrition and sleep?

All of these are common questions that teachers ask when beginning to address why children demonstrate a gap in achievement. However, if we consider Dr. Edmonds's admonition in the quote above, it is time that school personnel begin to consider the things over which we have control, rather than simply searching for reasons that some groups of children often underachieve. As teacher leaders, we must begin to focus on interventions that we can implement in our own school settings as a way to decrease the achievement gap across the country.

In this unit, you will begin to consider the achievement gap by investigating what is meant by that term, and what factors contribute to differing levels of achievement in identified groups or students. You will also begin to reflect on what you hope to learn in this course and how mastering the course competencies will benefit you professionally.

Reference

Leverett, L. (2006). Closing the achievement gap: All children can learn. *Edutopia*. Retrieved from http://www.edutopia.org/closing-achievement-gap-all-children-can-learn

Learning Activities

u01s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella Library to complete the following:

- Read Barton's 2004 article, "Why Does the Gap Persist?" from *Educational Leadership*, volume 62, issue 3, pages 8–13. Pay attention to the factors that Barton identifies regarding the achievement gap.
- Read Aronson's 2004 article, "The Threat of Stereotype," from *Educational Leadership*, volume 62, issue 3, pages 14–19. Think about the implications of Aronson's research.

Use the Internet to complete the following:

- Explore the Educational Testing Service Web site.
- Explore the Education Commission of the States Web site.
- Explore the National Center for Education Statistics Web site.

These web sites provide research and data related to the achievement gap that will be helpful for your course project.

📊 Launch Presentation | 📄 Transcript

Multimedia

Click **Launch Presentation** to view *Achievement Gap Defined* to learn more about the basic achievement gaps and their causes.

Course Resources

Achievement Gap Defined

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u01s2 - Project Preparation

The Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap course project is composed of five assignments, due throughout the course. For this project, you will take on the role of the principal of the school and develop an action plan that will be utilized for decreasing or eliminating the achievement gap to effect and support student learning between one subgroup and another and in one or more subject area. Read the Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap course project description to learn the requirements and assessment criteria for your course project.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Proficiency on Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap Project

The *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project is an assessment that measures the candidate's proficiency related to select specialization outcomes and the ELCC standards. It is imperative that candidates demonstrate their proficiency on this project to successfully complete this course. As such, candidates will need to score at least an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project. If a candidate scores anything below an 80, he or she will be required to revise the final project until the scores is at least 80 or above. Candidates who score below an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project will receive an incomplete (I) for the course until the final project has been revised to meet the minimum requirement. It is important for candidates to understand that an incomplete in this course may impact their ability to enroll next quarter if future courses have this course as a prerequisite. Thus, candidates who have to revise the final project will need to do so as soon as possible to avoid hindering their progress in the program.

u01s3 - Field Experience

Field Experience

As part of your action plan, you will be expected to collaborate with other professionals at your school to collect data and to plan. It is estimated that your field work related to your action plan will take 2–4 hours. In particular, you are required to collaborate with school officials for your Action Plan Description and potentially for your Action Plan Steps assignments. Be sure to review the requirements of these assignments in order to plan your time effectively.

Note: You will also be required to interview school leaders for discussions in Units 3, 4, 5, and 8. Be sure to review the requirements for these discussions, so you can make appropriate arrangements.

u01s4 - Your Online ePortfolio

Online ePortfolios serve two key purposes: 1) to support learning and reflection, and 2) to be used as a showcase tool. Your learning journey can be documented, and ePortfolios contribute to lifelong learning and growth through reflection and sharing. Online ePortfolios can also be shared with employers and peers to present artifacts that demonstrate your accomplishments at Capella.

Using ePortfolio to Prepare for Your Capstone

Your program may culminate in a capstone course. At that time you may be required to show evidence of your learning throughout the program by referring to multiple assessments that you have created. You will be telling a story about your learning throughout the program using artifacts you have collected during many of these courses.

Using ePortfolio to Build Your Career

As you are preparing to tell your story in the professional world, leverage your ePortfolio artifacts to demonstrate the knowledge and competencies you have gained through your program in professional conversations, performance reviews, and interviews.

To do that, reflect on the knowledge and skills you have gained from your courses and the elements you have put in your portfolio, along with how you have already applied these things to your professional life or how you might apply them in the future.

Next, create your story or talking points to tell your professional story.

Saving Your Documents to ePortfolio

You will need a place to store your documents in an organized fashion so that you can access them at a later date. Do not rely on the courseroom to store your assignments for you as you will lose access to the courseroom after you've completed the course. Capella uses a cloud-based portfolio platform to facilitate your organization of the artifacts you create throughout your program.

To make an online portfolio useful, it is essential that it is organized clearly and that important files of any format are accessible. Read the Online ePortfolio Guidelines [PDF] to ensure you set up your online portfolio correctly.

Privacy Statement

Capella complies with privacy laws designed to protect the privacy of personal information. While you may voluntarily share your own information publicly, you are obligated to protect the personal information of others that may be associated with your academic or professional development. Before sharing information and material in any ePortfolio that is set up to be shared externally to your program at Capella, please consider privacy obligations in relation to protected populations who may be included or referenced in your academic or clinical work. Refer to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and/or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) if you have specific questions or concerns about your choices.

In This Course

You are required to save your assignments from Units 6 and 10 in your ePortfolio.

u01d1 - Learner Benefits from the Course

Read the Discussion Participation Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your discussion participation throughout this course.

Reflecting on the course competencies below, please describe the personal benefits that you hope to derive from this course. How will you employ these competencies in the daily accomplishment of your duties? In what ways will these competencies allow you to implement new and innovative ideas?

1. Analyze methods to lower the achievement gap through the development, articulation, implementation, stewardship, evaluation, and revision of a shared vision of learning for a school.
2. Create and evaluate a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional school program.
3. Develop a data- and research-based plan that decreases achievement gaps.
4. Reflect on personal dispositions to identify areas of focus for personal learning and growth.
5. Examine the roles of leadership and collaborative practice in successful school-wide improvement.
6. Promote the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

u01d2 - What is an Achievement Gap?

With new legislation and more focused attention on the issue of achievement gaps, educators must hold themselves accountable for improving schools when and where they can. Closing the gap must be more than a one-front operation. But where did this challenge come from? When did it start? What exactly do we mean when we point out that there are achievement gaps throughout the United States?

Exploring current literature and research, define and reflect on what is meant by the term *achievement gap*. Identify various achievement gaps and where they exist throughout the United States. Explain the various factors that contribute to the persistence of these achievement gaps and explain how cultural factors and inter-group interactions are related to student learning and academic achievement.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 2 ➤➤ Understanding the Achievement Gap - Historically

Introduction

In the United States, achievement gaps can be found among children even before they begin school. Once school starts, the gaps continue to increase for some groups of children, making it less likely that they will have equitable educational outcomes as their peers. The studies in this unit allow you to analyze the complexity of achievement gaps among particular groups of children and to begin to consider strategies for closing the gaps. In fact, one focus of the studies is the idea that the "one-size-fits-all strategy governing the current structures of schools ignores the complexity of the dynamics influencing the gaps among groups" (Williams, 2004, p. 15).

One way to address achievement gaps is for personnel at individual schools to use evidence to make decisions that are impactful. Teachers and school leaders who use educational research, existing data, and anecdotal evidence from successful schools and teachers to guide their interventions are more likely to effectively close the gaps among groups of students. In this unit, you will have the opportunity to learn about "where we have been" in terms of research on the achievement gap and interventions that have been developed as well as to consider what sorts of obstacles stand in the way of true reform.

Reference

Williams, B. (Ed.). (2004). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices* (2nd ed). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Learning Activities

u02s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Williams *Closing the Achievement Gap* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 1, "What Else Do We Need to Know and Do?" pages 13–24.
- Read Chapter 2, "The Continuing Challenges of Excellence and Equity, " pages 25–47.

- Read Chapter 4, "Cultural Values in Learning and Education," pages 67–98.

Use the Capella Library to complete the following:

- Read Watson and Kehler's 2012 article, "Beyond the 'Boy Problem': Raising Questions, Growing Concerns and Literacy Reconsidered," from the *New England Reading Association Journal*, volume 48, issue 1, pages 43–55 and 113–115.

u02s2 - Project Progress

The action plan literature review, due in Unit 3, is the first component of your course project. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your paper, you will find research that identifies evidence-based strategies that improve student performance and decrease the achievement gap. You will also evaluate the literature and discuss findings and conclusions.

See the project information and the assignment instructions in Unit 3 for details on what your action plan literature review should accomplish and include. Refer to the Action Plan Literature Review Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your plan in Unit 3.

u02d1 - Research Role and Intervention Strategies

Many expert historians will tell you that if you do not study the past and learn from those studies, you are destined to fall victim to the same pitfalls. With this advice in mind, explain the role that research has played in providing a framework for analyzing and dealing with achievement gaps throughout the United States over the past 30 years. Describe the key intervention strategies that have been prescribed in an attempt to close the various achievement gaps.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u02d2 - Cultural Obstacles, State and School Structures

The fact that effective teaching makes a difference in terms of student learning has been an accepted premise in public education for decades. And while master teachers intuitively differentiate their instructional strategies based on individual student needs, far too many schools and teachers do not. In fact, many techniques and processes in schools throughout the nation are actually contributing to the achievement gaps rather than helping to close them. With this focus in mind, describe the various cultural obstacles that have been preventing key intervention strategies from closing the achievement gaps. Give examples of the various state, district, and school structures that contribute to, or help to alleviate, the various achievement gaps.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Unit 3 ➤➤ Understanding the Achievement Gap – Today

Introduction

More than a decade ago, the federal government implemented the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). One goal of this legislation was to hold teachers and school leaders accountable for academic outcomes. As a result, yearly test data are examined and schools are rated based on the level of improvement each year. Of particular focus is the progress by various subgroups, including minority students and students with disabilities.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)—the Nation's Report Card—shows that, over time, African American and Hispanic students have shown significant improvement in their testing performance in reading and mathematics. However, a gap still exists. These two groups of students perform approximately 20 points less on the NAEP math and reading assessments at the 4th and 8th grade testing benchmarks—about two grade levels below their peers.

In the previous unit, you considered interventions that have been used in the past to address these achievement gaps demonstrated by students from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, students with disabilities, students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, as well learning and performance gaps between students of different genders. In this unit, you will continue to investigate causes of achievement gaps and begin to formulate ideas about how to address these in the area in which you can have the most immediate impact—your school or school system.

Reference

National Center for Education Statistics. National assessment of educational progress. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/

Learning Activities

u03s1 - Studies

Readings

Understanding the Achievement Gap

Launch Presentation | Transcript

Use your Noguera and Yonemura Wing *Unfinished Business* text to complete the following:

- Read Introduction, "Unfinished Business: Closing the Achievement Gap at Berkeley High School," pages 3–28.
- Read Chapter 1, "Structuring Inequality at Berkeley High," pages 29–86.

Multimedia

Click **Launch Presentation** to view *Understanding the Achievement Gap*. In this media piece, you will discover the impact that school or district programs can have on the achievement gap.

Course Resources

Understanding the Achievement Gap

u03s2 - Interview Preparation

Gaining real world experience is an important part of your education. In this course, you are required to interview a school leader or other school official for discussions in Units 3, 4, 5, and 8. Review the requirements for these interviews in u03d1, u04d2, u05d1, and u08d2. You will need to discuss the following topics:

- Identify the cultural, gender, racial, social, and economic factors that contribute to the achievement gaps in your community.
- Describe the achievement gaps that exist in your local community.
- Determine the individual or school-wide data that exists related to the achievement gap.
- Describe the research-based and practical resources in your school or district that may inform instructional and leadership decisions designed to address the achievement gaps.
- Find examples of effective, research-based instructional strategies designed to close the achievement gap and describe which of these strategies are being used to close the achievement gap in your school.
- Describe effective, research-based strategies that are being used to enhance collaboration and build trust among teachers and administrators to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners and improve achievement for all students.
- Describe specific actions a school leader or teacher could take to promote integrity and fairness to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners.
- Describe specific and deliberate action strategies that a school leadership team could use to bridge the achievement gap and build a professional growth plan for the professional staff to develop leadership capacity.

u03a1 - Action Plan Literature Review

For this assignment, you will conduct a review of the literature relative to potential interventions that you may choose to include in your action plan. The purpose of the literature review is to identify evidence-centered strategies and practices in the literature that can be used as solutions for both addressing the problem or issue and building organizational capacity that promote continuous and sustainable school improvement. Include specific strategies that can be used for fostering positive change throughout process (ELCC 1.3). This assignment will allow you to consider practices that you might implement as part of your Action Plan for Decreasing or Eliminating the Achievement Gap.

Be sure to include strategies in the following areas:

- Shared vision of learning.
- Curriculum and instruction.
- Leadership and collaboration.
- The larger political, social, economic, legal, or cultural context.

In writing your literature review, organize it into sections that present themes or identify trends, including relevant human development and proven learning and motivational theories applicable to the identified problem. In addition, explain why the chosen intervention strategy was selected and support this selection with relevant information gleaned from the review of the literature. Include the decision-making process that should be used when implementing the chosen intervention by discussing who would be involved in the process and why, what would be considered, what decisions were made, and how you will assist school personnel in understanding the identified best practices for student learning.

As you review the empirical articles you have selected, go beyond summarizing. Compare and critically evaluate the literature. Discuss findings and conclusions, and relate the findings to your specific problem and proposed intervention strategy.

Your literature review should be 3–5 pages, written in APA format, using in-text citations with at least five corresponding references. Be sure to use exclusively empirical literature—studies in which the author has conducted a study and is reporting the results.

Refer to the Literature Review Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate this component. Use the references listed in Resources to help you create your Literature Review.

Use the Template to complete your paper. Submit your action plan literature review as an attachment in the assignment area.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide direction on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources

Action Plan Literature Review Template

APA Style and Format

u03d1 - Current Status of the Achievement Gaps

Improvements in curriculum and instruction alone are not enough to close achievement gaps; they must be accompanied by corresponding changes in teacher education and practice. With this in mind, describe the current status of the major achievement gaps within the United States. Analyze some of the factors within school systems and communities that contribute to them.

Meet with a school leader (principal or assistant principal) to ascertain information about the data that is available to identify cultural, gender, racial, social, and economic factors that contribute to achievement gaps in your community. Then, explain those factors. What impact, if any, does the available data have on the school leader's ability to effectively address the achievement gap?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least one other learner. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u03d2 - Unintended Consequences

Even the best of intentions can have negative results. What if you realized that your efforts to provide effective master scheduling actually contributed to shutting some students out of a college opportunity? Or what if you found out that your school's procedures to ensure proper placement in mathematics prevented some students from ever taking an AP class?

After completing the *Understanding the Achievement Gap* media piece, describe your reactions. What did you learn? What surprised you the most? Have you seen similar initiatives in your own professional life that had unintended consequences? Are there ways to avoid these issues and help support all students?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least one other learner. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 4 ❯❯ Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap

Introduction

Educators have known about the existence of an achievement gap between different groups for a century or more. Unfortunately, despite good intentions, this gap persists. Federal and state education policies have spotlighted achievement gaps, and legislators and leaders have encouraged educators to identify causes and to implement programs to address deficits.

As we study the achievement gap, we have acknowledged that the problem exists. We have begun to identify the research that supports that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Through this unit and into the following ones, you will change your focus from a high-level view in which you consider gaps that are evidenced in children across the nation, to a more local view in which you begin to investigate the gaps that occur in your own school setting. This work will inform the action plan description that you will develop in Unit 5.

Learning Activities

u04s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Williams *Closing the Achievement Gap* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 5, "Pedagogy, Knowledge and Teacher Preparation," pages 99–114.
- Read Chapter 6, "Turnaround Teachers and Schools," pages 115–137.

Use your Noguera and Yonemura Wing *Unfinished Business* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 4, "Changing Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes," pages 153–199.

u04s2 - Project Progress

The action plan description, due in Unit 5, is the second component of your course project. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your paper, you will determine where the greatest achievement gap lies, clearly define measurable goals and a vision for increasing achievement, and clarify your position in implementing your plan.

Through completion of the action plan description, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with other stakeholders at the school or district level. This collaborative practice is needed in order to facilitate successful school-wide improvement. This collaboration with others should occur as a field experience. Interview the principal or assistant principal to ascertain the possible impacts of usage of the intervention at the school. In addition, depending on the particular challenge and interventions you select, you may conference with the data or assessment person at your school or system, your principal or other school leaders, or colleagues in grade-level groups or PLCs. Your selected focus for your action plan and the interventions and data you collect will help drive the decisions about which stakeholders to involve.

See the project information and the assignment instructions in Unit 5 for details on what your action plan description should accomplish and include. Refer to the Action Plan Description Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your plan in Unit 5.

Resources

u04d1 - Attendance and Improving Achievement

The truth is that despite the best intentions of school staff, sometimes decisions that are made at the school level have a negative impact on the achievement gap for a particular group of people. Think back to your experience in the achievement gap media piece. One of the decisions was to increase achievement by increasing attendance at school. Making the decision to increase attendance by not allowing students who have missed more than four days in a quarter to participate in after school activities may help some students. However, it may negatively impact students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or students who are homeless. If your goal is to improve attendance, what kinds of improvements do you think could be made that would benefit everyone? Be sure to explain and support your choices.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

u04d2 - Local Achievement Gaps

Most people think that if a district does not have racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic diversity, then achievement gaps do not exist. Although some may be less obvious, achievement gaps can be found everywhere.

Using information you learned from your discussion about the achievement gap with the school leader in Unit 3, describe the achievement gaps that exist in your local school, district, and community. Illustrate the individual or school-wide data that exists to gain a full and comprehensive understanding of the achievement gaps in your local school or community. Identify the cultural and social factors within the local school system and local community contribute to achievement gaps. Describe the research-based, practical resources in your school or district that may inform instructional and leadership decisions designed to address the achievement gaps.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least one other learner. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Unit 5 ≫ Instructional Strategies to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

 Introduction

Mrs. Redfield was recently hired to teach algebra at Terry Pines High School. Most of the students she will have are 9th graders, so one of the first things she did to prepare was to access last spring's standardized test scores for math for her future students. What she found concerned her very much. She found that nearly 40 percent of her students did not demonstrate grade-level proficiency in mathematics. As she examined the data, she saw that many of these students were English language learners and students with disabilities.

Mrs. Redfield began to reflect on instructional strategies that she learned in her teacher preparation program. She said to herself, "I learned so many practices and strategies for teaching math to students. Which of these will work best to eliminate the disparity in achievement that these students are demonstrating?"

This is a question that many teachers ask themselves as they plan for insuring the success of all students. In this unit, you will consider research-based strategies that have been shown to be powerful practices in addressing the achievement gap. You will also identify those that have been used by teachers and leaders in your own school system, and share those with your colleagues in the course.

Learning Activities

u05s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Noguera and Yonemura Wing *Unfinished Business* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 5, "Creating Demand for Equality: Transforming the Role of Parents in Schools," pages 201–246.

Use your Farr *Teaching as Leadership* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 1, "Set Big Goals," pages 15–51.

Optional Readings

Use your Williams *Closing the Achievement Gap* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 3, "Direct Vocabulary Instruction: An Idea Whose Time Has Come," pages 48–66.

u05s2 - Assignment Preparation

The plan of action to build trust is your next assignment due in Unit 6. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your assignment, you will create a professional development presentation about the Waasa-Inaabidaa, a Minnesota-based Native American group. You will also write a short paper describing what your professional development session would look like and how you would build trust and support among your participants.

In this unit, explore the Ojibwe: Waasa-Inaabidaa "We Look in All Directions" Web site, a companion site for the PBS documentary series about the history, and culture of the Ojibwe people in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Use the navigation at the top of the page to explore the links and access the series overview, classroom, information about the Anishinaabe-Ojibwe, and the episode summaries. You can use this information to create your presentation.

See the assignment instructions in Unit 6 for details on what your plan of action to build trust should accomplish and include. Refer to the Action Plan to Build Trust Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your assignment in Unit 6.

u05a1 - Action Plan Description

The action plan description forms the foundation of your action plan. As teachers and administrators are challenged with improving student learning and outcomes with limited resources, it is important for you to clearly describe context in which you are developing your action plan. Determining where the greatest achievement gap lies, clearly defining measurable goals and a vision for increasing achievement, and clarifying your position within the plan are important steps in school improvement.

Through completion of the action plan description, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with other stakeholders at the school or district level. This collaborative practice is needed in order to facilitate successful school-wide improvement. This collaboration with others should occur as a field experience. Interview the principal or assistant principal to ascertain the possible impacts of the intervention at the school. In addition, depending on the particular challenge and interventions you select, you may conference with the data or assessment person at your school or system, your principal or other school leaders, or colleagues in grade-level groups or PLCs. Your selected focus for your action plan and the interventions and data you collect will help drive the decisions about which stakeholders to involve.

Working with stakeholders in your school, determine the focus of your action plan. In a 3–5 page paper, write a description for your action plan for decreasing or eliminating the achievement gap that either you plan to implement now or in the future. The action plan description should include the following components:

- **Background**: Describe the demographics of your educational setting and the existing situation in your setting in terms of the achievement gap.
- **Assessment of Circumstances**: Identify and define a problem related to an achievement gap. How was the problem determined? Who was involved in this process? Explain what data you gathered to determine this need and display this data in a chart or table.
- **Purpose and Rationale**: Explain the intervention strategy that you propose to use in the action plan and why you expect the change you are proposing to bring needed improvement. Cite scholarly resources that support your intervention strategy and also include them in a references section at the end of your paper.

- **Vision**: Develop a vision of learning for the action plan that includes a discussion about how you will incorporate collaboration in the vision development process:
    - Ensure the vision is characterized by respect for all stakeholders including families and community entities; articulate the vision that you established for a school for this action plan to the stakeholders and identify the stakeholders (staff, parents, students, and community members). Through what venues will the vision be articulated (symbols, ceremonies, stories, and other activities)?
    - Describe what is involved in the implementation of the plan to support the plan's vision. You should clearly articulate what action will be taken, how the action should be taken, when it should be taken, who is responsible for the action, and where this action should take place. The implementation process should provide a timeline and deadlines for identified benchmarks. It should also detail a comprehensive plan for communicating the vision to school stakeholders. Create a table to present this information described in the narrative.
    - Describe how you will steward a vision for the action plan designed to decrease or eliminate the achievement gap. Tell what methods should be utilized with stakeholders, including the use of effective communication skills and data-based research strategies to monitor, evaluate, and revise the vision at periodic times. (ELCC 1.1).
- **Goals**: Develop measurable goals and objectives in terms of expected results. Create measurable strategic and tactical goals and objectives for the action plan. Explain how pertinent stakeholders will work collaboratively to develop implementation plans to achieve those goals. Discuss how you will ensure the goals in the school improvement plan align to the district improvement plans. (ELCC 1.2).
- **Self-Assessment**: Consider your own specific role in the action plan being developed. How will you take a leadership role in this initiative? What steps will you need to take? Consider these questions as you draft your description:
    - What is happening here that suggests a change is needed?
    - What are the key elements?
    - Why is this important?
    - How do I fit?
    - What changes are needed and why?

Your paper should be written in APA format using in-text citations with at least three corresponding references.

Use the Template to submit your action plan description. When you are finished with your description, submit your paper as an attachment in the assignment area.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide direction on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources

APA Style and Format

Action Plan Literature Review Template

Writing Feedback Tool

u05d1 - Effective Instructional Strategies

Effective teaching makes a difference and effective teachers use research-based instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student in every class. Failure is not an option. Are these statements simply sound bites used by an overworked principal to bolster the morale of a staff, or are they real pronouncements of fact? Are they evident on your campus or fading echoes from last week's faculty meeting? Give examples of effective, research-based instructional strategies designed to close the achievement gap and describe which of these strategies are being used to close the achievement gap in your school. The principal, assistant principal, instructional coach, or department chair, or grade level chair can be helpful in obtaining this information.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least one other learner. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u05d2 - Mid-Course Reflection

Reflect back on the personal benefits you identified in Unit 1 of this course and describe how those benefits are materializing. Are there additional benefits being derived through this course that you did not anticipate in Unit 1?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least one other learner. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 6 ≫ Planning for Action

Introduction

One of the main goals of the No Child Left Behind Act is to address the achievement of certain subgroups of learners. In fact, schools are required to report achievement data in disaggregated form by gender, by race, by disability status, and so on. Legislators felt that the achievement gap was an important issue, so they passed it on to the school systems. Administrators in the school system implement programs, select curricular materials, and task the teachers with addressing student learning. Teachers teach students and ask parents to support their children academically at home.

So, who is responsible most for addressing the achievement gap? Is it teachers? Although they work directly with students, they often feel powerless to make a significant difference. Is it school leaders? After all, they are further up the ladder than classroom teachers, in terms of locating resources. How about school system leaders? They have access to the budget and could make decisions that could provide assistance in addressing gaps. And where do students and parents fit in?

In this unit, we will consider the question of who is responsible for addressing the achievement gap. We will also think about ways to foster collaboration among all stakeholders so that success for all may be attained.

Learning Activities

u06s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Farr _Teaching as Leadership_ text to complete the following:

  • Read Chapter 2, "Invest Students and Their Families," pages 53–98.

Use the Internet to complete the following:

  • Explore the American Federation of Teachers Web site. Find reports or other publications regarding closing the achievement gap or redesigning schools to improve achievement.

u06s2 - Project Progress

The Action Plan Steps Part 1, due in Unit 7, is the third component of your course project. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your paper, you will design steps for your action plan related to the management of resources and collaboration with staff.

See the project information and the assignment instructions in Unit 7 for details on what your Action Plan Steps Part 1 should accomplish and include. Refer to the Action Plan Steps Part 1 Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your paper in Unit 7.

Resources

u06a1 - Plan of Action to Build Trust

As a leader of teachers, one of your responsibilities will be working collaboratively with others and promoting trust and buy-in from your colleagues. In this assignment, you will develop a plan for working with teachers in learning about cultural differences in a diverse group of people with whom they may be unfamiliar. Developing this plan will allow you to demonstrate your ability to collaborate with others to learn about other cultures, be sensitive to differences in diverse learners, and identify strategies to help meet their learning needs.

By successfully completing this assessment, you will demonstrate your proficiency in the following course competency and assessment criteria:

- Examine the roles of leadership and collaborative practice in successful school-wide improvement.
    ◦ Identify techniques that successful schools use to build trust and support among colleagues to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners.
    ◦ Use strategies to solicit support of strategies and practices to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Communicate in a manner that is scholarly, professional, and consistent with expectations for members of the education professions.
    ◦ Use appropriate writing style, correct grammar, usage, and mechanics.

One way to help teachers begin to collaborate in meeting the needs of diverse learners is to have them all start out on equal footing, by introducing them to a culture with which they may be unfamiliar. After they learn a bit about cultural differences of a particular group, they may be better able to address specific learning needs of students from that demographic.

For the purpose of this assignment, you are going to consider a Minnesota-based Native American group, the Waasa-Inaabidaa. Explore the Waasa-Inaabidaa - We Look in All Directions Web site linked in the Resources, a companion site for the PBS documentary series about the history, and culture of the Ojibwe people in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Use the navigation at the top of the page to explore the links and access the series overview, classroom, information about the Anishinaabe-Ojibwe, and the episode summaries.

Develop a professional development presentation that you would use to lead faculty in a professional development session about this cultural group. Your presentation should include two parts:

Part 1: A PowerPoint about the American Indian culture, including:

- Contributions of contemporary American Indian artists to the collective culture.
- Contributions of the American Indian spirituality belief system to the collective culture.
- Contributions of the American Indian to our relationship with the Earth and current environmental issues.
- Contributions of the American Indian culture to our current worldview.
- Contributions of the American Indian tradition of storytelling to our collective culture.

Part 2: A plan for the professional development session. In your plan:

- Provide an overview of what your session would look like. How long would it be? What materials would you use?
- Describe how you would build trust and support among your participants to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners.
- Describe strategies you would use to generate support from your participants for the integration of strategies and practices to help meet the needs of diverse learners.
- How would this information help you to deal with diverse learners in your classroom or your school?
- Describe strategies for getting everybody on board.

You should submit two documents for this assignment: a PowerPoint for Part 1 and a Word document for Part 2. In your PowerPoint, observe the 7-by-7 rule (no more than seven lines of text per slide; no more than seven words per line). Submit your documents as attachments in the assignment area.

Portfolio Prompt: You are required to save this learning activity to your ePortfolio.

Course Resources

u06d1 - Enlightened and Visionary Leadership

Illustrate how a school or district can address and overcome an achievement gap. Articulate who within the school is responsible for closing the achievement gaps. How are the actions of a school leadership team able to initiate systemic change in a school designed to challenge the achievement gaps? What are the potential moral and legal consequences of the decisions made at the school level to decrease the achievement gap? Include information found on the American Federation of Teachers Web site.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Aft: AUnion of Professionals

u06d2 - Flipped Classrooms and Improving Achievement

Refer back to the *Understanding the Achievement Gap* media piece. One of the program choices was a teacher who wanted to flip her classroom and require her students to view lectures at home so that they had more time for questions and to work on their project in the classroom. Some kids benefitted greatly from this new arrangement because they could watch the lectures repeatedly and they had more of a chance to work one-on-one with their teacher. Other kids struggled with this requirement because they did not have a way to view the lectures at home or because they did not learn well that way. If you wanted to flip your classroom, what could you do differently so that all students benefit? Be sure to explain and support your choices.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the post of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Understanding the Achievement Gap

Unit 7 ▶▶ Using Resources Effectively

Introduction

In response to high standards that have been set for educational outcomes, teachers and school leaders consistently wonder how to improve teaching and learning. Michael Fullan (2006), a recognized expert on school change, indicated that there are seven premises that should underlie any improvement effort:

- Focus on motivation.
- Capacity building, with a focus on results.
- Learning in context.
- Changing context.
- A bias for reflective action.
- Engagement at multiple levels.
- Persistence and flexibility in staying the course.

In this unit, we will consider strategies that enable school personnel to integrate new, potentially risky strategies and practices designed to meet the learning needs of diverse learners. We will work on the first strategy piece of the action plan—how to involve all staff in setting priorities and how to develop, manage, and allocate resources most effectively.

Reference

Fullan, M. (2006). Change theory: A force for school improvement. Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series Paper no. 157. Retrieved from www.michaelfullan.ca/media/13396072630.pdf

Learning Activities

u07s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Williams *Closing the Achievement Gap* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 7, "Implementing Opportunity-to-Learn Assessment Strategies and Standards," pages 138–153.

Use your Noguera and Yonemura Wing *Unfinished Business* text to complete the following:

- Read the Conclusion, "Lessons Learned: The Limits and Possibilities of Using Research to Counter Racial Inequality," pages 281–296.

Use your Farr *Teaching as Leadership* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 5, "Continuously Increase Effectiveness," pages 173–194.

u07a1 - Action Plan Steps Part 1

Now that you have researched best practices for addressing the achievement gap and you have identified the gap that exists in your own school setting, it is time to develop the steps of your action plan. This part of your action plan may also involve conferencing and brainstorming with stakeholders in your school setting.

Submit a 3–5 page paper that explains exactly what steps you will take (and when) to enact your plan. This is how you put your strategies to work. Specifically, the following should be included:

- Describe the strategies that you will use to provide effective organizational development and management of resources (fiscal, human, and material) giving priority to student achievement and learning, safety, curriculum, and instruction.
- Describe how you will include the staff in the process including setting priorities using appropriate needs assessments, research based data, and group process skills to build consensus, communicate, and resolve conflicts in order to align resources to the vision for the action plan.
- Describe how you will manage in an effective, legal, and equitable manner the allocation and use of fiscal, human, and material resources and seeking new resources to support the action plan. Pertinent points that should be addressed relate to the following skills: problem-solving, strategic planning, technology application, and operational planning.

Use the Template to complete your paper. Submit your Action Plan Steps Part 1 paper as an attachment in the assignment area.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide direction on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources
Action Plan Steps Part 1 Template
APA Style and Format
Writing Feedback Tool

u07d1 - Effective Practices

How can a school expected to have large achievement gaps produce levels of student achievement almost beyond belief?

Describe the various state strategies and school structures being used to make a difference in student learning and achievement at the local school level. What are the key insights from change research that may help lead significant and sustained school change and improvement at the local level? Describe why these strategies are proving effective.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources
Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

u07d2 - Key Insights to Change

Identify and describe instructional modifications that teachers can use within the classroom to challenge specific achievement gaps. Identify the curriculum and instructional practices that are proving effective in challenging achievement gaps at the local school level. Describe why these strategies are proving effective.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources
Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 8 ❯❯ Taking Action to Bridge the Achievement Gap

Introduction

Elena is a 6th grade science teacher. She is a little nervous, as she was observed by Mr. Carr, the principal, during her second period class. She goes into Mr. Carr's office and sits down.

Mr. Carr indicates that he was very pleased with her hands-on approach in science, and that she had students working together in cooperative groups—both of which are research-based instructional practices. Then Mr. Carr surprises her with the question, "Do you realize that you called on boys more than twice as much as you called on girls?"

After the conference, Elena reflected on the gender-related issue that Mr. Carr raised. She wondered, "Do I do that all the time? If so, do I just assume that my male students are going to be more proficient in science than my female students? That is definitely something I need to investigate."

Sometimes, we may have social assumptions ingrained in our teaching behavior. We might, like Elena, unintentionally assume that boys will perform better in science. We might think that girls will perform better in language arts than boys. We might expect girls to behave better. We might accept it without questioning if some of our African-American male students do not perform adequately academically—just assume that it is par for the course.

In this unit, we are going to examine practices that contribute to achievement gaps, particularly as they relate to gender, culture, and race. We will consider ways that leadership teams can collaborate with others to build equitable approaches that enhance learning for all students.

Learning Activities

u08s1 - Studies

Readings

Use your Williams *Closing the Achievement Gap* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 8, "Schools That Work for Teachers and Students," pages 154–177.
- Read Chapter 9, "Reframing the Reform Agenda," pages 178–196.

Use your Farr *Teaching as Leadership* text to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 6, "Work Relentlessly," pages 197–226.

u08s2 - Project Progress

The Action Plan Steps Part 2, due in Unit 9, is the fourth component of your course project. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your paper, you will design steps for your action plan related to school culture, effective instruction and school improvement.

See the project information and the assignment instructions in Unit 9 for details on what your Action Plan Steps Part 2 should accomplish and include. Refer to the Action Plan Steps Part 2 Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your paper in Unit 9.

u08d1 - Taking Deliberate Action

Develop a set of deliberate action strategies that a school leader could use to dismantle inequitable school practices that contribute to racial and gender inequity and create achievement gaps. Ensure that these strategies address cultural factors, inter-group interactions, and oppressions related to learning and academic achievement. Reflect on personal beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions related to diversity. How do these relate to the elimination of the achievement gap?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

u08d2 - Building Trust and Support

In Unit 3 you discussed various topics related to the achievement gap with the school leader. From that conversation and your research, identify and describe effective, research-based strategies that are being used to enhance collaboration and build trust among teachers and administrators in order to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners and improve achievement for all students. What specific actions has the school leader or teacher taken to promote integrity and fairness to help meet the learning needs of diverse learners? Include specific and deliberate action strategies that a school leadership team could use to bridge the achievement gap and build a professional growth plan for the professional staff to develop leadership capacity.

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Unit 9 ›› Changes for Long-Term Impact

Introduction

In the introduction to Unit 8, you read about Elena, who was questioning whether she held the assumption that boys in her class likely outperform girls in her class in science. After her meeting with Mr. Carr, she decided to do some research. What she found was that it is common to find that boys and girls are often called on at different rates in different subjects, they receive different types of feedback from each other, and that boys may be allowed more leniency for mild misbehavior. She also learned that there are issues related to culture and race. It concerned her to learn, for example, that the college graduation rates for African-Americans is 42% compared to their Caucasian peers (Black Student College, 2006).

In this unit, we will consider models and strategies that have proven effective and may be replicated in many schools. Additionally, we will investigate ways to improve the outcomes for students who have been underrepresented in college success.

Reference

Anonymous (2006). Black student college graduation rates remain low, but modest progress begins to show. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://www.jbhe.com/features/50_blackstudent_gradrates.html

Learning Activities

u09s1 - Studies

Readings

Use the Capella Library to complete the following:

- Read Harsuvadha and Slater's 2012 article, "Culturally Competent School Leaders: The Individual and the System," from *The Educational Forum*, volume 76, issue 2, pages 174–189.
- Read Samuels' 2014 article, "Graduation Disparities Loom Large," from *Education Week*, volume 33, issue 19, pages 1 and 8.

u09s2 - Assignment Progress

The Professional Dispositions for Leadership is due in Unit 10. In order to complete your assignment on time, it is important that you start working on it in this unit. In your paper, you will reflect on your personal dispositions and how they relate to student achievement.

See the assignment instructions in Unit 10 for details on what your Professional Dispositions for Leadership should accomplish and include. Refer to the Professional Dispositions for Leadership Scoring Guide to learn how the instructor will evaluate your plan in Unit 10.

u09a1 - Action Plan Steps Part 2

Submit a 3–5 page paper that continues the explanation of your action plan designed to decrease or eliminate the achievement gap. In this part of the paper, you should:

- Describe what strategies will be used to assess the impact of the action plan on the school's culture and foster a positive school culture that centers on the diversity of the community.
- Discuss what activities you will facilitate to apply principles of effective instruction to improve instructional practices and curricular materials by monitoring instructional practices; making recommendations regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum; planning and using technology to enrich the curriculum and instruction; and providing staff the assistance needed for improvement.
- Discuss how you will monitor the components of the school improvement plan to ensure actualization of the identified goals. Discuss the evaluation process that will be utilized to assess the effectiveness of school improvement plan including the data that will be analyzed. Describe how progress toward achievement of school vision and goals will be shared with pertinent stakeholders, including the community. (ELCC 1.4)

Use the Template to complete your paper. Submit your Action Plan Steps Part 2 paper as an attachment in the assignment area.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide direction on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Course Resources

Action Plan Steps Part 2 Template

APA Style and Format

Writing Feedback Tool

u09d1 - Replicating Strategies and Avoiding Pitfalls

One area to focus on when trying to close the achievement gap is the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff. In examining models that have been successful in American public schools and districts, describe the factors necessary to replicate strategies and approaches from these schools and districts in your school. What pitfalls exist and how can they be avoided by school leadership teams when developing long range plans to close the achievement gaps?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

u09d2 - Minority Students in American Colleges

Describe how the school leadership team might help address the under-representation of minority students in American colleges. How can high school reform efforts ensure all students receive access to and support for a rigorous academic program? Are there specific strategies that schools might employ to increase the performance of boys and girls through gender-specific strategies?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide

Unit 10 >> Leading for School Improvement

Introduction

Elena, the science teacher we met in previous unit introductions, went to Mr. Carr to discuss what she had learned about inequity in schools. She wondered if this might be more of a concern in their school than she was aware previously.

Mr. Carr said, "I am glad you brought this to my attention. In next week's faculty meeting, I will make some time to talk with everyone about this. Would you like to help facilitate that discussion?"

"Yes," Elena said. "I am really committed to examining my own practice so that I can give all of my students equitable opportunities for learning. I would welcome the chance to work with other teachers too."

As Elena left, she began to think of ways she could collaborate with others to improve achievement levels in all subgroups—boys and girls, those with disabilities and those without, and students from diverse cultures.

Elena has demonstrated professional and personal dispositions that we want all teachers to show—reflection on her own practice and acknowledgement of wanting to improve so that all children can learn, and the eagerness to collaborate with others. In this unit, we will consider your professional dispositions in regard to leading for effective change.

Learning Activities

u10s1 - Licensure Assessment Requirement

School Leadership Series: Learners in the Leadership in Educational Administration (MS, EdS, and PhD) program must complete the following assessments by the end of the second half of the internship to successfully complete their programs:

• School Leader Emphasis–School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA).
• District Emphasis–School Superintendent Assessment (SSA).

The assessments are administrated through the Educational Testing Service (ETS). You can visit this Web site to learn more about these assessments. Learners are responsible for any costs associated with these assessments. You should plan to register and take this assessment during the first internship course to ensure that you are able to submit your score reports by the end of second internship course.

u10a1 - Professional Dispositions for Leadership

In this course, you have identified an achievement gap and developed an action plan for addressing that in your particular setting. One underlying piece that influences the success of your action plan is the dispositions that you demonstrate.

By successfully completing this assessment, you will demonstrate your proficiency in the following course competency and assessment criteria:

- **Competency 4**: Reflect on personal dispositions to identify area of focus for personal learning and growth.
  - Reflect on personal commitment to professional and personal growth.
  - Describe how leaders act with integrity and fairness to ensure a school system of accountability for student success.
  - Describe how leaders promote social justice within the school.
  - Identify ways to demonstrate professional dispositions with students, families, colleagues, and communities.

- **Competency 6**: Promote the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.
  - Identify ways to advocate for students, families, and caregivers.

Develop a professional dispositions statement that is reflective of your mission, vision, and values in acting as a leader. In your document, address the following items:

- Describe how, as a leader, you act with integrity and fairness to ensure accountability for student success.
- Describe how, as a leader, you promote social justice within your school setting.
- Identify and describe ways that you display professional dispositions with students, families, colleagues, and the community.
- Describe how you can advocate for students and families in a professional and helpful manner.
- Evaluate where you are professionally, and describe ways that you can engage in personal and professional growth.

Your Professional Dispositions statement should be 2–3 pages in length. Use APA style. Submit your professional dispositions for leadership paper as an attachment in the assignment area.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide direction on your writing. In the tool, click on the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Portfolio Prompt: You are required to save this learning activity to your ePortfolio.

Course Resources

APA Style and Format

ePortfolio

Writing Feedback Tool

u10a2 - Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap

For the last nine weeks, you have worked on the separate parts of your course project. You have completed these assignments and received feedback on how to improve them. Now, you are going to revise and prepare the final submission of your entire project.

For the final project, you will incorporate the feedback you received from your instructor for the (a) Action Plan Description, (b) Action Plan Literature Review, (c) Action Plan Steps Part 1, and (d) Action Plan Steps Part 2 and include the revised content for each component.

The final paper should include the following components, and it must be presented in sections as indicated below:

1. **Action Plan Description:**
   - **Background**: Describe the demographics of your educational setting and the existing situation in your setting in terms of the achievement gap.
   - **Assessment of Circumstances**: Identify and define a problem related to an achievement gap. How was the problem determined? Who was involved in this process? Explain what data you gathered to determine this need and display this data in a chart or table.

- **Purpose and Rationale**: Explain the intervention strategy that you propose to use in the action plan and why you expect the change you are proposing to bring needed improvement. Cite scholarly resources that support your intervention strategy and also include them in a references section at the end of your paper.
  - **Vision**: Develop a vision of learning for the action plan that includes a discussion about how you will incorporate collaboration in the vision development process; ensure the vision is characterized by respect for all stakeholders including families and community entities; articulate the vision that you established for a school for this action plan to the stakeholders and identify the stakeholders (staff, parents, students, and community members). Through what venues will the vision be articulated (symbols, ceremonies, stories, and other activities)? Describe what is involved in the implementation of the plan to support the plan's vision. The should clearly articulate what action will be taken, how the action should be taken, when it should be taken, who is responsible for the action, and where this action should take place. The implementation process should provide a timeline and deadlines for identified benchmarks. It should also detail a comprehensive plan for communicating the vision to school stakeholders. Create a table to present this information described in the narrative. Describe how you will steward a vision for the action plan designed to decrease or eliminate the achievement gap. Tell what methods should be utilized with stakeholders, including the use of effective communication skills and data-based research strategies to monitor, evaluate, and revise the vision at periodic times. **(ELCC 1.1).**
  - **Goals**: Develop an action plan that includes measurable goals and objectives in terms of expected results. Create measurable strategic and tactical goals and objectives for the action plan. Explain how pertinent stakeholders will work collaboratively to develop implementation plans to achieve those goals. Discuss how you will ensure the goals in the school improvement plan align to the district improvement plans. **(ELCC 1.2).**
  - **Self-Assessment**: Consider your own specific role in the action plan being developed. How will you take a leadership role in this initiative? What steps will you need to take?

2. **Action Plan Literature Review:** Identify evidence-centered strategies and practices in the literature that can be used as solutions for both addressing the problem or issue and building organizational capacity that promote continuous and sustainable school improvement. Include specific strategies that can be used for fostering positive change throughout process **(ELCC 1.3).**

   Organize it into sections that present themes or identify trends, including relevant human development and proven learning and motivational theories applicable to the identified problem. In addition, explain why the chosen intervention strategy was selected and support this selection with relevant information gleaned from the review of the literature. Include the decision-making process that should be used when implementing the chosen intervention by discussing who would be involved in the process and why, what would be considered, what decisions were made, and how you will assist school personnel in understanding the identified best practices for student learning.

   Compare and critically evaluate the literature. Discuss findings and conclusions, and relate the findings to your specific problem and proposed intervention strategy.

3. **Action Plan Steps Part 1:**
   - Describe the strategies that you will use to provide effective organizational development and management of resources (fiscal, human, and material) giving priority to student achievement and learning, safety, curriculum, and instruction.
   - Describe how you will include the staff in the process including setting priorities using appropriate needs assessments, research based data, and group process skills to build consensus, communicate, and resolve conflicts in order to align resources to the vision for the action plan.
   - Describe how you will manage in an effective, legal, and equitable manner the allocation and use of fiscal, human, and material resources and seeking new resources to support the action plan. Pertinent points that should be addressed relate to the following skills: problem-solving, strategic planning, technology application, and operational planning.

4. **Action Plan Steps Part 2:**
   - Describe what strategies will be used to assess the impact of the action plan on the school's culture and foster a positive school culture that centers on the diversity of the community.
   - Discuss what activities you will facilitate to apply principles of effective instruction to improve instructional practices and curricular materials by monitoring instructional practices; making recommendations regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum; planning and using technology to enrich the curriculum and instruction; and providing staff the assistance needed for improvement.
   - Discuss how you will monitor the components of the school improvement plan to ensure actualization of the identified goals. Discuss the evaluation process that will be utilized to assess the effectiveness of school improvement plan including the data that will be analyzed. Describe how progress toward achievement of school vision and goals will be shared with pertinent stakeholders, including the community. **(ELCC 1.4).**

Assignment Requirements

- **Paper length:** 16–20 pages.
- **APA formatting:** Throughout your paper, use scholarly communication skills that follow APA sixth edition guidelines. Your paper should meet the following requirements:
  - Use APA 6th edition text citations and references.
  - Be double-spaced and use Times New Roman, 12-point font.
  - Use appropriate line alignment.
  - Have proper margins.
  - Use running headers.

- ◦ Use proper pagination.
- ◦ Incorporate appropriate headings and subheadings.

Complete your Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap and submit it in the assignment area. Refer to the Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap Scoring Guide to understand how you will be graded on this assignment.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Proficiency on Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap Project

The *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project is an assessment that measures the candidate's proficiency related to select specialization outcomes and the ELCC standards. It is imperative that candidates demonstrate their proficiency on this project to successfully complete this course. As such, candidates will need to score at least an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project. If a candidate scores anything below an 80, he or she will be required to revise the final project until the scores is at least 80 or above. Candidates who score below an 80 on the *Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap* project will receive an incomplete (I) for the course until the final project has been revised to meet the minimum requirement. It is important for candidates to understand that an incomplete in this course may impact their ability to enroll next quarter if future courses have this course as a prerequisite. Thus, candidates who have to revise the final project will need to do so as soon as possible to avoid hindering their progress in the program.

Note: Your instructor may also use the Writing Feedback Tool to provide feedback on your writing. In the tool, click the linked resources for helpful writing information.

Portfolio Prompt: You are required to save this learning activity to your ePortfolio.

Course Resources

APA Style and Format

Writing Feedback Tool

ePortfolio

u10a3 - ePortfolio Check

The assignments from this course document your progress in meeting the Capella specialization outcomes and the national standards that are the foundation of your program. In this assignment, you are required to add the following assignments to your ePortfolio:

- Unit 6: Plan of Action to Build Trust.
- Unit 10: Professional Dispositions for Leadership.
- Unit 10: Action Plan for Decreasing the Achievement Gap.

We recommend organizing your portfolio by outcomes.

Course Resources

ePortfolio

u10d1 - End of Course Reflection

Reflect back on the personal benefits you identified in Unit 1 of this course and describe how those benefits have materialized. Were there additional benefits derived through this course that you did not anticipate in Unit 1? How have your views and beliefs about the achievement gap changed based on the course readings and interaction with other learners and the instructor? How does what you have learned connect with your practice?

Response Guidelines

Read the posts of your peers and respond to the posts of at least two other learners. When responding, seek clarification, share your personal experiences that relate to their experiences, and provide feedback.

Resources

Course Resources

Graduate Discussion Participation Scoring Guide