

# **Closing the Achievement Gap: Oceanside, CA Recognized by the U.S. Department of Education\***

In December 2004, four high schools were selected by the U.S. Department of Education for their four-year record of narrowing or closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students in mathematics and/or reading. El Camino High School (ECHS) in Oceanside, CA was selected because of its ability to narrow the achievement gap for Hispanic students with a 24 percentage point reduction in the math achievement gap and 14 points in reading. In addition, ECHS had the highest holding power of students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (95%).

Selected schools had to have a consistent demographic profile and graduation rate over five years. Common elements among the four schools were high expectations for student achievement, support systems for learning, attention to accountability and assessment to identify needs for additional help, and a collaborative and optimistic attitude on the part of the faculty.

All of the schools aligned their curriculums with state and local standards. ECHS focused on the California Content Standards for Mathematics and for Reading/Language Arts. The schools employed engaging teaching techniques to make student work interesting. They implemented problem-solving strategies, the use of hands on, concrete lessons, and individual instruction. The mathematics classes utilized a variety of methods to address the various ways that student learn. Technology was used as a teaching tool when appropriate.

All of the schools had strong leadership to support the commitment to change. In particular, schools eliminated remedial courses, did not track by ability, and expanded AP offerings that resulted in multicultural enrollments. Principals provided sufficient resources and time for professional development. Typically, there was a core of English and/or mathematics teachers who helped develop and direct changes.

ECHS is the one school that closed the achievement gap in Math for both African American and Hispanic students. The gap in mathematics was narrowed for African Americans in mathematics by 13% points. (Note: this result is not included in the DOE report). The math curriculum used since 1992 is College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM). The strategies taught in the CPM math classes are very similar to the CLAD (Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development) and SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) teaching methods, helping students not only in their math classes but in all subjects.

\*U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, *Closing the Achievement Gap: Lessons from Successful Schools*, Washington, D.C., 2005. The complete report is available at: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/OVAE](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/OVAE).