

**Final**  
STAFF SUMMARY OF MEETING

COMMITTEE ON JOINT EDUCATION

Date: 02/02/2005  
 Time: 07:38 AM to 08:43 AM  
 Place: HCR 0107

This Meeting was called to order by  
Representative Merrifield

This Report was prepared by  
Jennifer Thomsen

ATTENDANCE  
 Bacon  
 Balmer  
 Benefield  
 Evans  
 Jones  
 King  
 Larson  
 McKinley  
 Paccione  
 Penry  
 Pommer  
 Rose  
 Solano  
 Spence

X = Present, E = Excused, A = Absent, \* = Present after roll call

Bills Addressed:		Action Taken:	
Closing the Achievement Gap Commission		-	

**07:38 AM -- Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the co-chairman, Representative Merrifield.

**07:39 AM**

Bill De La Cruz, John Sleeman, and Ken Santistevan, members of the Closing the Achievement Gap Commission, introduced themselves. Mr. De La Cruz gave an overview of the commission and its history and focus. He noted that the members of the commission would summarize the report of the commission to the committee.

**07:44 AM**

John Sleeman, commission member and representative of the Attorney General's Office, described his background and noted that United States Senator Ken Salazar continues to be committed to the issue of closing the achievement gap. He spoke to the cost of the achievement gap, outlining wage differences, poverty levels, incarceration rates, and risk of violence of high school dropouts.

**07:47 AM**

Ken Santistevan, commission member and a representative of business, spoke to the business perspective on the achievement gap. He noted that as future employers, businesses have a stake in the achievement gap issue. He remarked that businesses need to take a hands-on approach to the problem. Mr. Santistevan mentioned the school-to-career initiative.

**07:49 AM**

Phillip Moreno, commission member and Greeley School District Board of Education member, introduced himself and spoke to policy issues on the achievement gap. He mentioned that there are policies that are working in his district and in districts throughout the state and the country to begin closing the achievement gap. He asked the members of the committee to keep the achievement gap in mind when reviewing legislation that comes before them.

**07:52 AM**

Karen LeFever, commission member and Vice President of Development of the Western Region of Edison Schools, Inc., introduced herself and spoke to her experience that the achievement gap can be closed by work at the local and policy levels. She remarked that great teachers and choice make a difference. Ms. LeFever noted that teachers need powerful systems in place as well as professional development. She noted that it could take three to five years to make a difference in the achievement gap.

**07:55 AM**

Monte Moses, commission member and Superintendent of the Cherry Creek School District, introduced himself. He addressed the issues of race and cultural sensitivity and the connection between the achievement gap and higher education. He noted that cultural sensitivity is needed and that high expectations must be held for every student. Dr. Moses noted that a concept of a pre-K-16 education is needed, not just K-12. School, social, community, and economic conditions must be addressed in order to begin closing the achievement gap, he said.

**07:59 AM**

Dwight Jones, commission member and Superintendent of the Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8, introduced himself. He addressed the issue of high expectations. He noted that schools that have closed the achievement gap have focused on high expectations for all students. He remarked on recommendations of the commission including leadership, standards and accountability, rigorous curriculum, and high expectations for all students that encourage all students to go on to college.

**08:04 AM**

Bill De La Cruz, commission member and community representative representing the Colorado Coalition of Hispanic School Boards, gave an overview of how the commission works and where and when it meets. He noted that the commission's report is an interim report and outlined objectives for the coming year.

**08:07 AM**

The members of the commission answered questions from the committee. Dwight Jones responded to questions from Representative King regarding how the process of closing the achievement gap was started in Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8. He noted that before an accountability report was required by the state, one was required in his school district. He remarked that teaching the teachers in the district that all students could achieve was key. He noted that the attendance rate at the high school in the district is very high and that students believe they can go to college. He noted that 80 percent of high school students in the district go on to postsecondary education. He

remarked that the local board of education fully funds students taking college level courses rather than the district offering many advanced placement courses. Representative King asked about money from the federal government for impact fees at Fort Carson. Mr. Jones responded that those funds are used for capital needs.

**08:13 AM**

Senator Williams asked questions of Dr. Moses on how Cherry Creek School District has worked to close the achievement gap. Dr. Moses noted that the Cherry Creek School District has undergone many changes in population and diversity. He said that the district disaggregates data in order to galvanize action. He noted that the district has changed the level of expectations for every student. He remarked that the district has done away with some remedial programs because data shows that students do better in more difficult courses. Senator Williams asked what the success has been in the district in closing the achievement gap. Dr. Moses remarked that more students have taken higher level courses and that achievement test scores for minorities have been improving but that the level of those minorities is still behind the level of white and Asian students, so the achievement gap still exists, but at a lower magnitude than some districts.

**08:20 AM**

Representative Balmer asked Mr. Santisteven how the business community can help close the achievement gap. Representative Balmer noted that occupational aspirations often begin at the middle school level. Mr. Santisteven remarked that businesses are waiting for schools to ask. He noted that the school-to-career initiative provided funding to put a liaison into schools. When funding for the school-to-career initiative disappeared, and the coordinator was no longer in the school, the line of communication was cut. He noted that the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce need to get involved to show kids that Latino and black businesses can be successful. He noted that students respond to people from their own communities. Mr. De La Cruz noted that systemically there is a cultural boundary - an impediment to allowing outside people to come into schools.

**08:29 AM**

Representative Paccione asked about class sizes. Mr. Jones remarked that the culture within his district has encouraged a climate of site-based management, so the people who are doing the work make the decisions. The district's administrative staff is minimal; the resources go to the schools and the schools decide how to use the resources.

**08:31 AM**

Senator Bacon encouraged the commission to consider the total experience children in Colorado have, such as home, school, housing, and health care. He noted that there are many issues outside of schools that prevent students from doing well in school. Mr. De La Cruz remarked that section five of the commission's report addresses many of these issues.

**08:35 AM**

Representative Todd asked the members of the commission about the feasibility of a focus on the arts in relation to student achievement. Mr. Santistevan remarked that the Denver Center for the Performing Arts has a teacher externship program to motivate teachers to find creative ways to teach their subject matter. He noted that the

Colorado Alliance for Art Education also promotes the arts. Mr. Santistevan said that arts are a motivator and keeps students going to school. Dr. Moses noted that in his district there is a commitment to a well-rounded program including the arts, but that accountability pressure is puts a squeeze on arts and other programs. Ms. LeFever noted that if teachers know where students are in their achievement progress it frees up time for other things.

**08:42 AM**

Senator Windels thanked the commission for their time and encouraged the commission to look at legislation that is going through the legislative process and to give legislators guidance.

**08:43 AM**

The committee was adjourned.