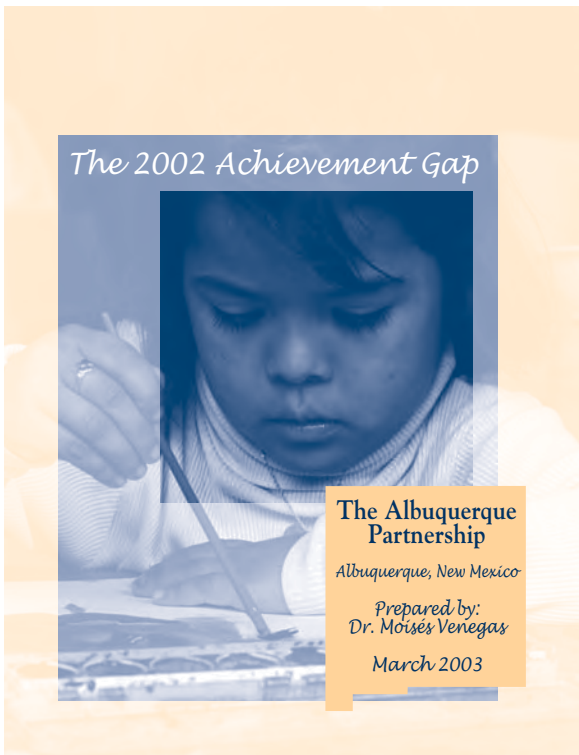


The 2002 Achievement Gap in New Mexico

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If you like to see last year's study
call (505) 297-9222

Last year we published a report on the dismal state of education for Native Americans, Hispanics and African-American children in New Mexico. We explored the failure of 30 years of attempted reform.

While the fact that education remains a voiced top priority for elected officials, educators and the general public has resulted in some optimism for us, we only remain pessimistically optimistic. For the last 30 years, we have not seen assertive action on the part of policy makers or educators for basic structural changes that would improve education for minority and/or low-income students.

With the 2001-2002 Terra Nova results, we see that a significant achievement gap continues to exist. The school ratings in New Mexico still indicate many schools in need of improvement. Poor quality instruction, low expectations and limited corrective action remain the norm for minority and/or low-income schools in New Mexico. Consequently low-student-performance schools struggle with the already bleak picture of low standards and expectations.

Noticeably, less than 1% (\$3 million) of the \$2 billion budget proposed by the State Department of Education (SDE) is specifically included for school improvement in a year when SDE identified 126 probationary schools and threatened to assume direct control of 14 schools. While the education establishment focuses on the money, we would like to focus on truly solving the achievement gap through wider school choice opportunities.

New Mexico Student Achievement: 2002

A total of 682 of the state's 764 public schools were rated in 2002.

- ✓ 35 rated as "exemplary": 5%
- ✓ 88 rated as "exceeds standards": 13%
- ✓ 433 rated as "meets standards": 63%
- ✓ 126 rated as "probationary": 18%

Ratings are based on standardized test scores (Terra Nova 40th percentile), dropout (annual) and attendance rates, parent and community involvement and school safety.

Key findings: New Mexico Schools

- ✓ Hispanic, African American and Native American students' scores are significantly lower than Anglo students' scores in all grades and all content area.
- ✓ Student scores fell in 2002 in more than half of the state's 89 school districts.
- ✓ Comparing the gap in the 3rd grade and the 9th grade in reading, for Anglos and Hispanics we find an achievement gap of 22 percentile points in the 3rd grade and 20 in the 9th grade.
- ✓ Comparing the gap in the 3rd and 9th grade in mathematics for Anglos and Hispanics, we find a gap of 16 percentile points in the 3rd grade and 23 in the 9th grade.

Elementary Percentiles By Ethnicity, Years 2001-2002 (Grade 3)

Ethnicity	Reading		Language		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	01	02	01	02	01	02	01	02	01	02
Caucasian	69	65	66	61	71	62	71	60	63	60
Hispanic	45	43	47	45	53	46	45	39	44	42
American Indian	30	27	36	29	43	32	30	23	35	29
African American	47	48	48	47	53	44	46	38	43	47
Asian/PacificIslander	62	55	67	54	81	59	67	49	62	51

Middle School Percentiles By Ethnicity, Years 2001-2002 (Grade 9)

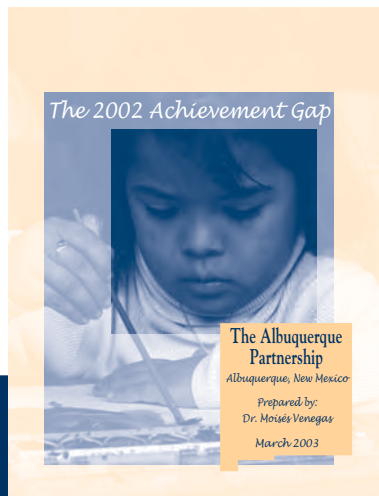
Ethnicity	Reading		Language		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	01	02	01	02	01	02	01	02	01	02
Caucasian	73	67	69	63	69	64	71	65	65	60
Hispanic	46	47	45	43	45	41	46	43	44	43
American Indian	33	35	39	32	34	33	36	27	35	30
African American	52	49	49	46	49	41	54	43	46	43
Asian/PacificIslander	69	63	72	61	77	62	69	58	68	56

High Minority Enrollment - Low Achievement

There has been no significant improvement in the correlation between high minority enrollment and low achievement, as illustrated by the tables below, showing Albuquerque's highest and lowest minority enrollment elementary and middle schools and their corresponding test scores. Data indicate, the higher the Hispanic/minority enrollment, the lower the test scores.

Elementary School	Minority Enrollment	Grade	Score 2000-2001	Score 2001-2002
Double Eagle	17.9%	3	86.7	82.0
East San Jose	97.5%	3	34.0	42.0

Elementary School	Minority Enrollment	Grade	Score 2000-2001	Score 2001-2002
Eisenhower	23.8%	8	79.0	78.0
Washington	94.6%	3	35.0	41.0



With the 2001 -2002 Terra Nova results, we see that a significant achievement gap continues to exist. The school ratings in New Mexico still indicate many schools in need of improvement.

Conclusion

Revisiting this data yearly is not an exercise in discouragement, although it is certainly distressing to observe another year's passing with no meaningful reform and thousands of children being failed. Policy makers, journalists and most importantly parents must be availed of the full facts concerning the achievement gap in New Mexico's government schools, so that there can be serious discussions of public policy solutions to the ongoing achievement gap problem.

Our recommendatons are as follows:

- ✓ Raise the standards of accountability and hold those involved accountable.
- ✓ Institute a college-prep curriculum as the default curriculum.
- ✓ Teach with the attitude that all children can learn.
- ✓ Pass legislation, which allows federal money to follow the child, to any school, private, public and/or parochial.
- ✓ Let parents choose where they send their children and make sure the state provides choice.

Choice is important. Public education in New Mexico enjoys an unfair advantage, and limited competition. School choice would help to solve this crisis of New Mexico's flagging reform efforts by giving parents that vital chance to participate fully in the education of their children. Without comprehensive choice reform, we are headed for reports of 40 or 50 years with no effective education reform, and academic achievement gaps translating in these children's adult lives into gaps in the American dream.

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