



The Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success (ARCHES) is a voluntary confederation of collaboratives focused on improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap through collective action among schools, community colleges, baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities, business, and community and family-centered organizations.

SOUTHERN ALAMEDA COUNTY REGIONAL EDUCATION ALLIANCE (SACREA)

History

SACREA's mission is to develop collaborative educational services and professional development opportunities that result in improved academic proficiency and college readiness of African-American students in southern Alameda County. In November 2006, the Southern Alameda County Regional Educational Alliance (SACREA) began to address differences in academic achievement between African-American students and other racial-ethnic groups. In conjunction with the professional development constructs and mathematics initiatives of the San Leandro and San Lorenzo Unified School Districts, the Alliance has focused on developing culturally relevant curriculum and providing academic support and college awareness activities for African-American middle school students in these two districts.

Membership

The Alliance consists of the Alameda County Office of Education, Hayward Unified School District, San Leandro Unified School District, San Lorenzo Unified School District, Chabot College, California State University, East Bay, Holy Name University, Mills College, Southern Alameda County Alliance of African-American Educators, JL Davis Family Resource Center, and business partners Johnson Controls International and RT Fisher and Associates.

Demographics

Southern Alameda County is an urban and racial-ethnically diverse area that is located between the major cities of Oakland and San Jose. Especially relevant for this collaborative, African-American students comprise an average of 15 percent of each participating school district. Moreover, an average of 13 percent more African-American middle school students scored below proficient on the mathematics and English/Language Arts sections of the California Standards Tests than did all students in the San Leandro and San Lorenzo districts in 2005-06.

Impact

In 2007, SACREA received an ARCHES grant to address systemic practices in order to improve the academic performance of African-American students, particularly at the middle school level. This initiative initially began as a three-pronged effort that included:

- expose African-American students to college access programs;
- implement culturally relevant and responsive curriculum for African-American students; and,
- discuss the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of students, educators, and parents about the performance capacity of African-American students.

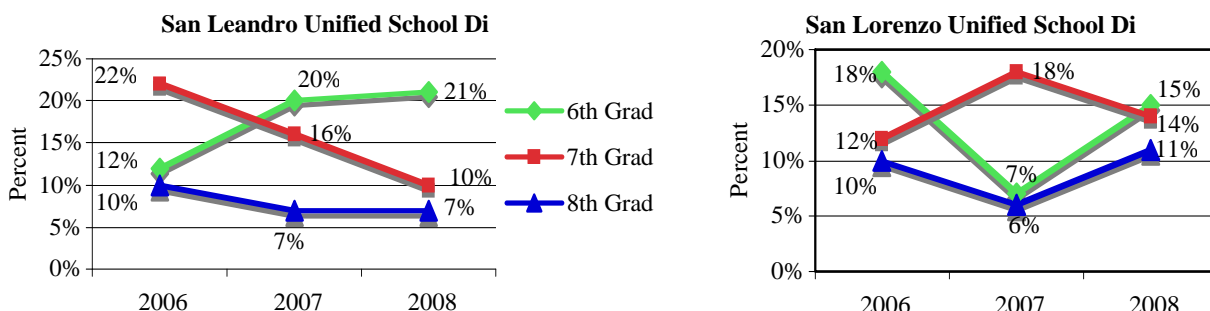
In July, 2009, SACREA reported that key district and school site leadership to support this continuing effort. Outcomes related to each of the three approaches delineated above include:

- Exposure to college access programs: Over 1,300 students received college access program and college preparatory mathematics class information in these three districts. Half of the families or caregivers have received relevant information as well.
- Implementation of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum with 120 teachers: Over two-thirds of the secondary mathematics teachers in participating schools believe that the existence and implementation of relevant curriculum is both feasible and necessary in order for student achievement to improve. In-service training on this type of curriculum is planned.

- Beliefs, attitudes, and expectations: Teachers and counselors at participating middle schools responded to a survey about their beliefs and expectations of African-American students. Using these survey results, staff development addressing teacher and counselor needs and perceptions has been planned that include two research-based instructional strategies that have proven effective for African-American youth.

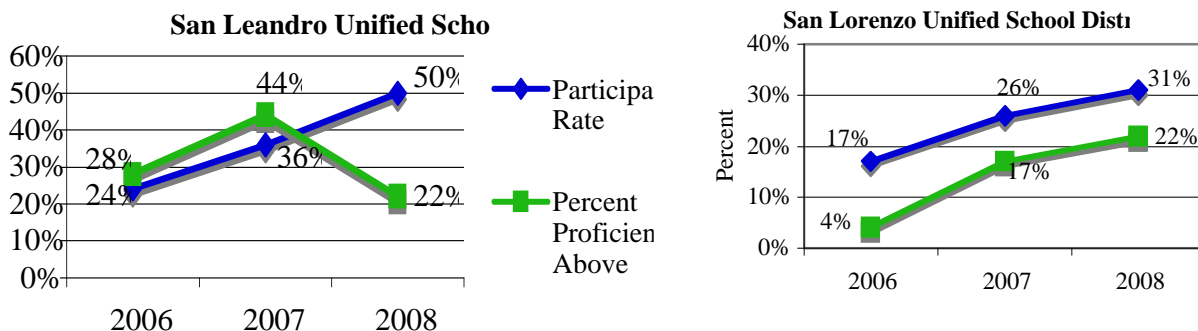
In terms of patterns of student achievement in mathematics for African-American middle grade students, no consistent trend in either district is evident on Display 1.

Display 1
Performance of African-American Middle School Students in Two Districts on the California Standards Test in Mathematics Over a Three-Year Period



Display 2 shows the proportion of African-American students enrolled in Algebra during this period -- a relevant pattern in understanding the trends shown in Display 1.

Display 2
Enrollment and Performance of African-American Middle School Students in Two Districts on the California Standards Test in Algebra Over a Three-Year Period



- In both districts, the proportion of African-American middle grade students who enrolled in Algebra has increased significantly since 2006 -- a fact that may explain the decrease in the proportion of students scoring Proficient or above in General Mathematics during this time.
- In San Lorenzo, the proportion of students who scored at the Proficient or higher level on the California Standards Test increased as well; the opposite trend occurred in San Leandro.

Future Initiatives

- Continue this district-wide middle grades effort by conducting the teacher and counselor training sessions predicated on the results from the survey mentioned above;
- Based upon the attitudes and beliefs that emerge from the training session, implement the relevant and responsive curriculum stage of this effort; and,
- Continually monitor student achievement to determine relevant patterns of change.