

# The Achievement Gap in the Lexington Public Schools . . .



Annual Conference of the Achievement  
Gap Initiative  
at Harvard University

June 17, 2008

# METCO's History in Lexington

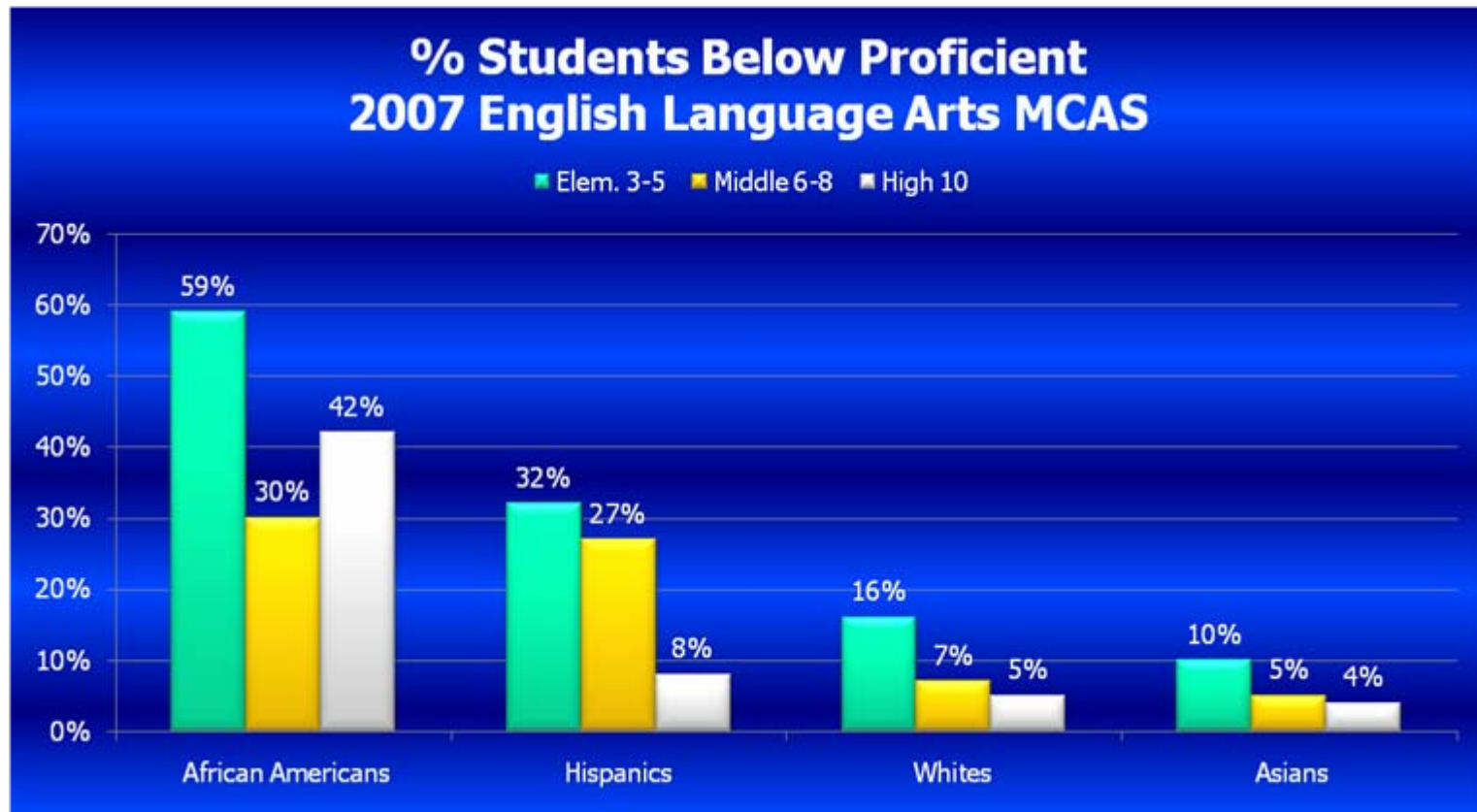
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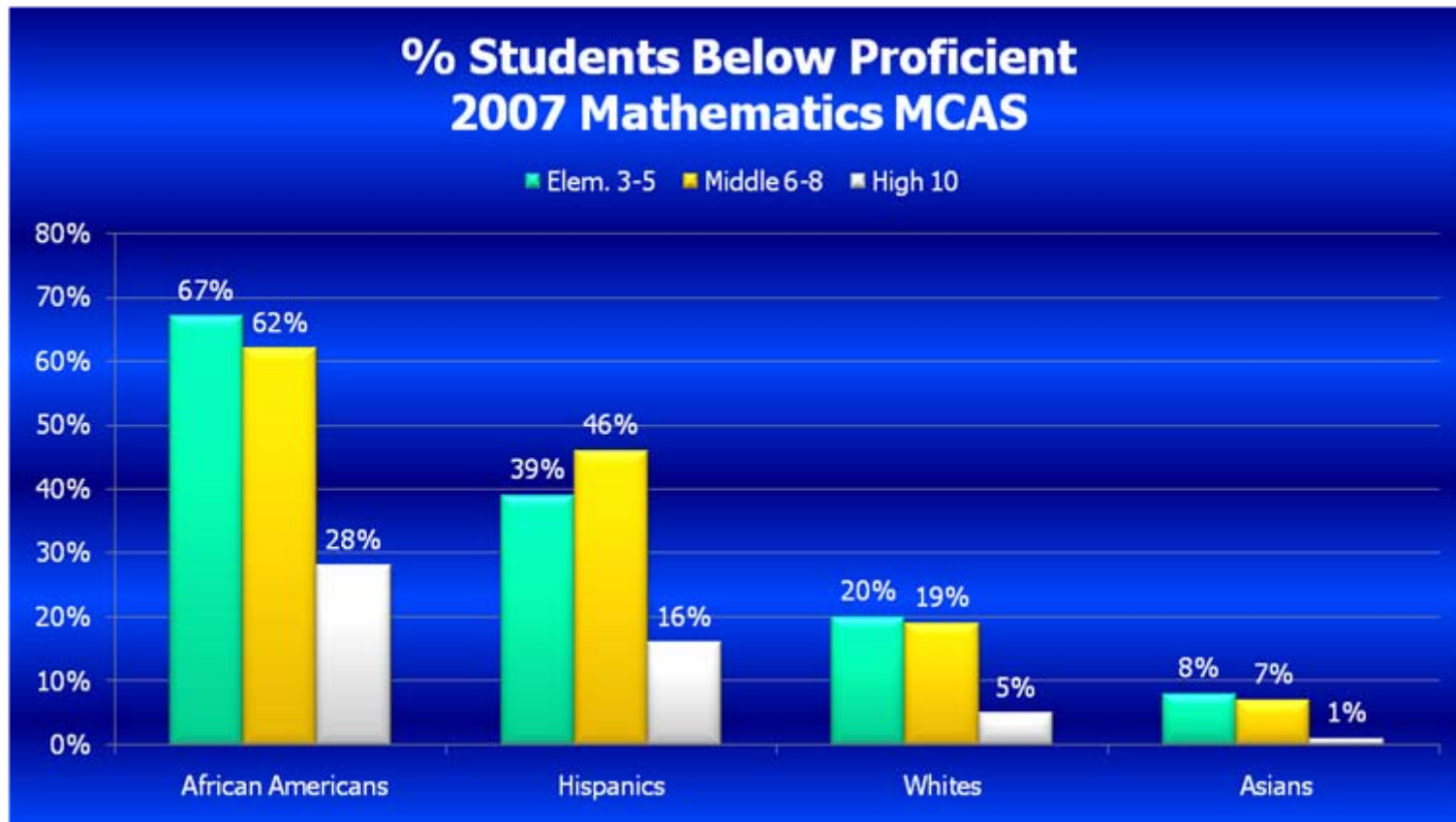
- Efficacy Training
- Empowering Multicultural Initiative Training
- School Improvement Plans
- Diversity Committees

ALL efforts have been well-intentioned, but insufficient or unsuccessful. The achievement gap persists.

# MCAS Results: English Language Arts 2007



# MCAS Results: Mathematics 2007





# Lexington Grade 1-2 Math & RLA Assessments, Fall 2007

## Mathematics

Score	METCO	%	Non-METCO	%
0-30	8	33.3%	730	79.7%
35-65	7	29.2%	118	12.9%
70-100	9	37.5%	68	7.4%
Totals	24	100.0%	916	100.0%

## Reading Language Arts

Score	METCO	%	Non-METCO	%
0-30	14	51.9%	635	74.2%
35-65	6	22.2%	128	15%
70-100	7	25.9%	93	10.9%
Totals	27	100%	856*	100%

\* 1 second grade class missing



# Middle School Mathematics

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In the aggregate at our middle schools...

- 28% of all seventh graders and 9% of METCO seventh graders are in Extended Math
- 58% of all eighth graders and 3 % of METCO eighth graders are in Algebra 1



# High School Course Selections and Grade Point Averages

## Student Course Selections at LHS 2006-2007

<b>METCO</b>		<b>Non-METCO</b>
74.6%	<b>Unleveled</b>	63.6%
1.3%	<b>Honors</b>	14.8%
19.7%	<b>Level 1</b>	20.6%
5.9%	<b>Level 2</b>	1.0%

## 2006-2007 LHS average GPA

- 60 METCO students: **2.17**
- 1,896 other students: **3.10**



# Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

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## 39 METCO Parents' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Insufficient or lack of parental involvement
2. Some parents' lack of expertise/strategies to provide effective academic support
3. Students' lack of sufficient time to do schoolwork
4. Ineffective teaching styles and strategies
5. Homework issues: incomplete, undone, misunderstood, no help
6. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations
7. Poor study habits and skills
8. Lack of awareness and/or ineffective response to cultural differences
9. Students' lack of confidence in academic pursuits
10. Peer pressures: social relationships over academic pursuits, high achievement not valued



# Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

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## 31 LPS Staff Members' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Inadequate system supports for struggling students
2. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations
3. Insufficient teacher communication with parents
4. Students' and parents' low expectations
5. Students' attitudes: academics undervalued, intelligence is fixed
6. Ineffective/insufficient use of data to drive instruction
7. LPS over-reliance on SPED
8. Weak literacy skills, especially vocabulary & comprehension
9. Lack of mentors/role models for students
10. LPS curriculum with excessively high expectations

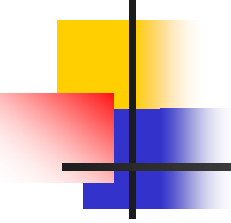


# Survey Results: Why is there an achievement gap?

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## 22 METCO Students' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Student lack of effort and attentiveness
2. Student belief that school is not a number one priority
3. Insufficient time to do schoolwork
4. Ineffective teaching styles and strategies
5. Student embarrassment in asking questions
6. Inadequate access to academic help and resources
7. Lack of in-school support
8. Student attitudes: high achievement is not cool; place friendship obligations over schoolwork
9. Teachers' communication, conscious and unconscious, of low expectations

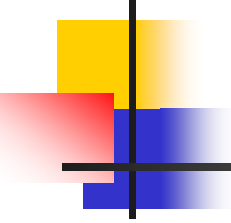


# Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

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## 39 METCO Parents' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Increase parent communication and involvement with teachers and the schools
2. Provide many more embedded programs for struggling students
3. Provide more tutoring options for students
4. Provide in-school and after-school homework support for students
5. Maintain and regularly communicate high standards
6. Provide a mentoring program for METCO students
7. Provide training for interested parents in study skills/academic support
8. Develop on-going systemic encouragements for high achievement
9. Provide more test preparation/skill instruction
10. Parents must increase their own supportive and informational networking

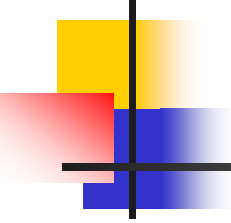


# Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

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## 31 LPS Staff Members' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Develop and implement additional academic assistance, as needed
2. Use data-driven intervention strategies
3. Develop a mentor program for METCO students
4. Provide clear, consistent feedback to students much more frequently
5. Provide early and extensive literacy interventions for all struggling students
6. Develop strategies to increase parent involvement
7. Continue to train staff in a variety of teaching styles & strategies
8. Implement full-day Kindergarten as soon as possible
9. Provide more professional development to embed best practices
10. Provide more study skills instruction

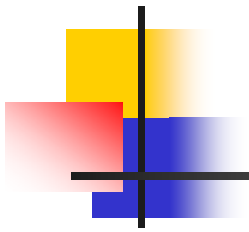


# Survey Results: How can the gap be closed?

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## 22 METCO Students' Responses in Order of Frequency

1. Provide many more in-school tutoring options
2. Provide more test preparation courses / sessions
3. Provide after-school academic support programs
4. Provide in-school and after-school homework support
5. **Develop more teacher sensitivity to different learning styles**
6. **Push students harder and into more high level courses**
7. Provide more study skills and time management instruction

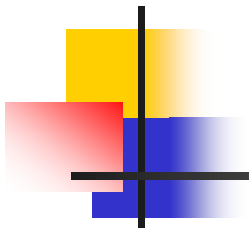


# Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

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## Administration

- Focused, deep implementation of a limited number of achievable goals
- Accountability defined in terms of student learning
- Revision of scheduling practices to maximize extended learning
- Policy of pairing most effective teachers with most challenging underachievers

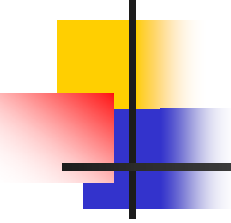


# Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

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## Curriculum

- Primacy of early intervention for underachievers in literacy and math
- Enrollment in higher-level courses with the necessary supports for success
- Frequent, common assessment of underachievers as drivers of academic interventions
- Abundant extended learning opportunities

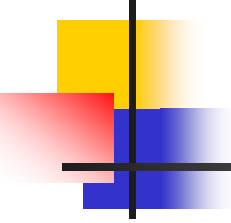


# Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

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Teachers at gap-closing schools are more likely to...

- Use data to understand skill gaps of low-achieving students.
- Administer frequent, common assessments of students.
- Receive professional development on analyzing low-performing student data.
- Receive professional development on linking low-performing student data to instructional strategies.
- Have leaders that encourage or lead systematic inquiry into the gaps.
- Discuss low-performing student achievement data with colleagues.
- Visit each others' classrooms to observe instructional strategies more frequently.



# Common Characteristics of “Gap-Closing” Schools

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- Collaboration is almost exclusively around student learning and development in structured Professional Learning Communities.
- Effective programs are in place to develop strong, trusting, and encouraging adult-student relationships.

# Recommendations



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## Administration

- Adopt an Action Plan and constitute an Achievement Gap Task Force
- Institute full-day Kindergarten
- Provide an elementary METCO late bus on Thursday afternoons
- Hire more staff of color
- Improve data gathering capacity, analysis, and dissemination
- Revise scheduling practices to maximize extended learning
- Address the issue of over-referral to special education

# Recommendations



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## Curriculum

- Develop data-driven intervention strategies for underachievers at all schools
- Ensure enrollment of METCO students in higher-level courses with supports for success
- Develop effective, comprehensive, common assessments
- Develop additional courses in literacy and mathematics for significantly underachieving 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders
- Institute mandatory, Lexington-supported and staffed, rigorous, summer school

# Recommendations



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## Teaching and Learning

- Intervene early with 2 hours of daily literacy instruction and 1 hour of daily mathematics instruction in elementary schools
- Institute a system-wide METCO mentoring program
- Increase counselors' and METCO social workers' collaboration around the tracking of student achievement
- Increase tutoring support before, during, and after school
- Develop a plan to address survey concerns: teacher/METCO parent communication, persistence of low expectations, student attitudes and confidence, parents' request for effective learning strategies to use at home