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Developing an Achievement and Educational Equity Gap Library Resource for the Twin Cities

Prepared in partnership with
The Achievement Gap Committee)

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Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Process

Findings – Findings on information available on local achievement gap efforts

Findings – Findings on the evolution of how the achievement gap is framed

Findings – Recurring Themes from the Research and Interviews

Observations on the Blurring of the Integration and Achievement Gap Debates

Recommendations and next steps

Required Reading on the Gap – List-in-Progress

Appendices

A) June advisory meeting summary

B-G) Interview summaries

Executive Summary

Minnesota policymakers, teachers and community members have known about the achievement gap for decades, and despite their best efforts it continues to exist. The challenge has launched numerous initiatives, reports, pilot projects, and task forces, from school-specific solutions to broader community-based solutions. School districts, state and local governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, and others have all worked on the problem. A review of the historical record shows a long list of well intentioned but inadequate efforts to close the gap. The following research is an effort to chronicle the history of those efforts, and learn from them.

Research shows evolving language and philosophies in how we understand and attempt to solve the achievement gap. Some focus on school-based solutions to improve math and reading test scores. Others take a broader view, looking at access to early childhood education or health care, things that are not school specific but support academic success. Among people deeply involved in this work, there appears to be a growing “achievement gap fatigue.” Some believe that the achievement gap framework should be replaced by an “equity gap” or “opportunity gap” framework, which provides a broader umbrella to understand differences in student achievement. However, there is no consensus on what equity means, and a clearer understanding is needed if we are to harness the political will to successfully address chronic educational disparities.

There seems to be general agreement on a few things. Better coordination is needed. Policy makers and education professionals need easier access to the good information already available. Further, if gaps are not closed, it will hurt Minnesota’s long-term competitiveness and economic success.

This report summarizes the summer’s research, but does not represent the most important work products. This project has created three main products:

1. **The Library:** The project has the beginnings of a list of state and local efforts to close the achievement and opportunity gaps. This is an effort to create some historical memory around these initiatives and create a central repository for policymakers, advocates and the media. There is an Excel sheet with recent initiatives as well as a paper archive. This is a start, but not exhaustive. This is in the possession of Scott Russell.
2. **A Clearinghouse:** A draft document provides the outline of a website/directory of Minnesota-based organizations working in this area. A more ambitious website could include interactive elements, such thing as an events calendar and/or Wikipedia. This is also in the possession of Scott Russell, who compiled the list of organizations.
3. **A Compilation of Best Research and Analysis:** The library is voluminous and most people won’t have the time to sift through it. Project leaders felt it was important to highlight some of the best work, a sort of Required Reading List, so it does not get lost in the volume of material on the topic.

Next Steps: The Committee on the Achievement Gap sponsored this research and has secured a \$10,000 grant to start a website. It might choose to do it on its own site, develop one in partnership with other organizations, or pass the library on to an organization with a similar mission and more capacity. The Minnesota Minority Education Partnership already has expressed interest in collaborating on the project. Further discussions are needed with other organizations working in this

area. The key in moving forward on the library is to find the right fit, where the site supports ongoing work rather than duplicating it.

Introduction

The University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) funded summer research to create a library of historical efforts to close the K-12 achievement and opportunity gaps in Minnesota, and make them available to practitioners, policymakers, and other interested parties. The project has evolved and expanded during the summer.

CURA contracted to work with the Committee on the Achievement Gap, a group led by former Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser and Grant Abbott, retired executive director of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches. Until recently, the Committee's primary work was hosting public, monthly brown bag seminars. Local and national leaders would explain different efforts to close the achievement gap. After several years and much learning, Committee members began asking themselves what other steps they should be taking.

Scott Russell, a Committee member, approached the group about creating an Achievement Gap Library and Clearinghouse. Russell had collected the material in 2007 as part of a large research project done in conjunction with former Minneapolis School Board member Dennis Schapiro. Russell and Schapiro found that the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area has seen a number of gap-closing approaches and hundreds of projects that did not yield significant permanent results. They found a lack of historical memory about what has been tried and what had worked. The lack of coordination has produced a "non-system" that failed to address student needs, notably students of color. The materials were now dated, and primarily focused on Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

With help from Consultant Nancy Johnson, the Committee approached CURA about updating and expanding the library, and developing a proposal to make it public. The project's two initial goals were to find a way to make the historical information more accessible and meaningful and secondly to provide advocates and policymakers with a highlights version.

The research work included a literature review, supplemented by interviews with local advocates and researchers. It showed the analytical frame of this work is shifting away from the "achievement gap" to broader issues of equity and opportunity gaps. Minneapolis Public Schools did one of the first local applications of this approach, a 2008 venture with the Organizing Equity Project (OAP). The Education Equity Organizing Collaborative (EEOC), a part of OAP, analyzed how the outcomes of a referendum to raise property taxes to fund schools would impact equity for white students and students of color.

People interviewed for this report had a strong interest in more centralized and accessible information on best practices on closing the gap, particularly for specific cultural and ethnic groups. There also is interest in creating the capacity for more original research. Much of this was beyond the capacity of this project, but it deserves to be on the future to-do list.

This past year has seen publications, recommendation-making, and website revamping – in part because of new state administration. Publications with policy recommendations from OAP (June

and Growth & Justice (June), Governor's Workforce Development Council (2010), MMEP's *College Access Matters II* (2010) and also *The State of Students of Color and American Indian Students* (2009).

Process

The members of The Committee on the Achievement Gap (CAG) are predominantly white. One project goal was to diversify the group of people providing input and direction. The project began with a review of Russell's 2007 research. Next the CAG scheduled an advisory meeting to get broader feedback. Attendees represented diverse organizations interested in the achievement gap: Mariam Mohamad (CAPI), Elaine Salinas (MIGIZI Communications), Christopher Orr (MinnCAN), Mary Cecconi (Parents United), Chuck Peterson (MN Council of Foundations), and Marcus Harcus (interested citizen). (For minutes, see Appendix A.)

Follow-up interviews were scheduled with several advisory members and others who were recommended: Jermaine Toney and Julia Freeman at the Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Elaine Salinas, Dan Mueller (Associate Director) and Heather Johnson (Library Manager) at Wilder Research, Danielle Grant (Director of Indian Education) of the Minneapolis Public Schools, Neal Thao of Metropolitan State University and an affiliate of Ready4K, and Rodolfo Gutierrez of HACER. (For summaries, see Appendices B-G.)

In the advisory meeting and in interviews, people talked about what kind of resource would be most helpful to a variety of users, including researchers, advocates, policymakers, and members of the general public. One of the primary interview goals was to learn which organizations and individuals kept track of what information and to understand how to create a resource that would actually be used. There were not standard questions in place during these meetings other than questions about what information each organization kept and how accessible it was.

Findings from the research and interviews are discussed below. Some of the feedback received focused on pedagogical questions—those involving teaching approaches—rather than policy questions. It went beyond the scope of this research to analyze the impact of specific curricula or educational techniques. The current collection contains almost no source material on teaching. (A significant amount of information is available at the national level through the [What Works Clearinghouse](#). Some interviewed expressed interest in finding better ways to share information on local applications of these teaching best practices. A few people went further, saying the state needed to devote more research power to this area, but that it was not being done.)

The Committee had a very positive meeting with the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (MMEP) on September 8. MMEP representatives expressed interest in collaborating on the library. MMEP also suggested representatives from the Committee meet one-on-one with other organizations to measure their interest and support in such a site, then reconvene as a group. Committee members have begun those one-on-one talks.

Findings on information available on local achievement gap efforts

- 1) **The historical record shows a number of well intentioned but inadequate efforts to close the gap.** Russell and Schapiro found that over 20 years of efforts at improving the wellness and opportunities of local youth have not proven effective enough to eradicate longstanding problems such as disparities in educational achievement. Those interviewed for this project had similar analyses, calling efforts piecemeal, short term, or a revolving door and citing shallow historical memory as an obstacle to sustained interventions. While there might not be a high demand to access individual documents in the library, the library itself would have value in the larger synthesis of information it supports, and the reminder it offers that there is no magic bullet.¹
- 2) **Policy makers, advocates, and education professionals need easier access to the good information already available.** We know a lot at this point about what works – when certain interventions are essential, the cost-benefit analysis of spending on education that offsets spending on the criminal justice system and social services. Clear and reliable findings are too difficult to locate.
- 3) **Advocates in particular want quickly deployable information—graphics with short text—that communicates the essentials about massive amounts of complicated data.** A good example is OAP’s most recent policy brief: “Race Equity Policy Brief #2: Solutions that Deliver Equity and Excellence in Education” (June 2011). The Institute on Race and Poverty has developed strong examples of visual representation of demographic, geographical, and income statuses as they relate to achievement and equity.
- 4) **A primary value of the library is that it *itself* serves as evidence of decades of mostly uncoordinated efforts that have made little headway.** Meetings on September 8 and 16 with the leadership at MMEP have helped outline how the library’s content might be reintroduced to an online community in a way that brings it forward and makes it relevant today.

Findings on the evolution of how the achievement gap is framed

- 1) **There is growing consensus that a broader frame of “equity” or “opportunity gap” should be the primary focus over the achievement gap.** One person said “achievement gap fatigue” has impoverished public discussion about the problem, and whether it is indeed closable. Others said that many members of communities of color find the term “achievement gap” offensive because it places the responsibility on students for not achieving and perpetuates stereotypes about the intelligence and work ethic of nonwhite students. In the midst of these conversations about terminology, this summer the Minnesota Department of Education committed to make equity central to their goals and policies. (See commentary on the Organizing Apprenticeship Project website, oaproject.org, as of August 2011).

¹The need for a historically informed system-level analysis has also been identified by Itasca and the Minnesota Business Partnership in the (circa) 2008 report, “Minnesota’s Future: World-class Schools, World-class Jobs”: “Despite their importance to student performance, no one in Minnesota has a clear picture of the effectiveness of teachers, principals or the programs that prepare them. Student outcomes – the ultimate goal of public education – are not linked back to the major elements of the system in ways that facilitate understanding about what is and is not working. The need for continuous improvement demands availability of and accessibility to this kind of information” (11).

- 2) **People use multiple lenses to understand and focus on closing the gap.** Some interviewed expressed a desire for extremely specialized information, such as what works with Latino third graders or American Indian fifth graders. They wanted differentiated data and best practices for specific groups. Others have a more structural critique of the problem—that there is too much inequity of opportunity in general. They represent different understandings of how to close the achievement gap. One focuses on pursuing *pedagogical* techniques that work with specific groups of kids to actually help them learn. The other focuses on *equity of opportunity*, which is identified as the key problem that, if solved, will help close the achievement gap.
- 3) **Vocabulary is shifting towards an equity framework, yet a clearer definition of terms is needed.** One example comes from Growth & Justice’s report: *We’re All in this Together: Educational Achievement and Attainment by Minnesotans of Color* (June 2011). It says to ensure Minnesota’s economic stability, the state needs to address “inequities” to increase achievement for a growing population of students of color. But the report does not name specific inequities or educational practices or policies that perpetuate inequality. It is clear that inequality exists – but there is a need for concrete examples of what that means and where it persists. Research needs to address not just best practices with specific groups of students, but also specific inequities and their impact.
- 4) **The lack of public understanding and agreement on what equity means hinders the political will to work toward solving the achievement gap.** Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson says that equity means that resources sometimes must be allocated unequally to achieve the same results. In other words, equity means that all students have the same opportunity to thrive and succeed academically, *not* that every student receives exactly the same resources. (Such an approach has been accepted for special education. Parents seem to understand that students with disabilities should receive more assistance than non-disabled students do not to ensure that disabled students continue to progress alongside their non-disabled classmates.) In contrast, some parts of the public have a general distaste or even hostility toward race-conscious governance, which is often framed as unfair or a form of “reverse racism,” presumably toward white students. For more on this issue, see OAP’s Policy Brief #2: “16 Solutions that Deliver Equity and Excellence in Education,” 3.
- 5) **College Readiness for all students has become a district goal of both Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools.** Some have questioned what this means for students who intend or are qualified to pursue vocational training or trade apprenticeships rather than college. On one hand, the college readiness goal is described as necessary and as an issue of equity, and on the other hand as unrealistic and unhelpful when gaps in E-12 education are persistent. See the Report of the Citizens League Study Committee on High School to Higher Education, “A New Vision for Saint Paul Schools: Preparing All Students for Success in Higher Education,” May 2005.

Recurring Themes from the Research and Interviews

- 1) **There is a significant problem with children entering kindergarten not ready to learn. It results in lower student achievement, and long-term costs to the K-12 system and the state budget as a whole.** Insufficient early childhood care and education is also associated with public and society costs associated with crime, incarceration, and poverty. Although implementing effective programs requires more additional costs than savings, the savings show up outside the K-12 system. Many advocates for early childhood care and education programs as well as members of the business community have argued that these programs make economic

sense and that we ignore this at our peril. See Wilder Research, “The cost burden to Minnesota K-12 when children are unprepared for Kindergarten,” December 2008.

- 2) **Remediation is expensive.** Underprepared students, including high school dropouts who are not prepared for the workforce, produce staggering costs to the state. For example, “Minnesota loses an estimated \$89 million each year to costs associated with remediation, nearly \$50 million of which represents direct costs to public colleges and universities. The remainder represents losses to individuals and the economy from lower earnings ...” See “All Hands on Deck,” 29.
- 3) **There are many ways to measure achievement. Achievement and the achievement gap often are narrowly defined by standardized test scores in reading and math.** Other forms of assessment and paradigms for understanding development such as the Search Institute’s “40 assets” model used in Saint Louis Park during much of the 2000s, or other measures of social and cultural competency, safety, and connectedness, are absent.
- 4) **Standardized testing used to judge school success is not a precise or timely enough tool for teachers to make adjustments.** Testing shows that disparities exist, but in a zoomed-out picture. Trying to make fine-tuned student interventions based on such data is not working.
- 5) **Poverty alone does not explain testing gaps.** Low-income white students perform better on tests than low-income students of color. See Matt Kane and Jose Pacas, “Educational Achievement and Attainment by Minnesotans of Color” (Growth & Justice, June 2011), 15.
- 6) **Teacher effectiveness is a central issue in the achievement gap debate. It’s a politically volatile issue with little consensus on how to improve teacher effectiveness. The Bush Foundation has taken up teacher preparation as their primary education initiative.** “There is growing consensus among experts that teacher effectiveness is the single most important determinant of student success.” (“All Hands on Deck,” 36.)
- 7) **Standardized testing does not consistently measure what policy makers want to measure.** In the 2006 *CURA Reporter*, Scott Abernathy noted the myriad ways that reliance on test scores as part of No Child Left Behind imprecisely and unfairly uses student performance as a proxy for measuring administrative and teacher performance.
- 8) **People disagree over the role and efficacy of charter schools and how to parse their effect on integration and achievement.** The number of students attending charter schools has tripled since 2000. In part, the growth is fueled by a belief that charters will help close gaps and increase equity of opportunity for students of color. However, some policy analysts and critics argue charters are under regulated, fail to substantially increase achievement, and not only perpetuate but worsen racial segregation.² There are tensions between well-supported arguments that integration is necessary and benefits all children, and advocates who say that although charters increase segregation, regular public schools have failed to meet their children’s needs. See any of the recent publications by the Institute on Race and Poverty, but particularly “Failed Promises: Assessing Charter Schools in the Twin Cities” (November 2008) as well as Appendices G and C of this report for summaries of interviews with Rodolfo Gutierrez of HACER, who cites El Colegio as a successful model for Latino/a and Hispanic students, and Elaine Salinas of MIGIZI, who reported that an American Indian charter school is currently in development in Minneapolis and is slated to open in 2012.

²There is also critique about the dangers of allowing competition between charters and regular public schools and allowing private dollars to supplement charter budgets (or any public school budgets) because this erodes the very public nature of public schools and encourages the creep of privatization. For a national take on this issue, see the op-ed by Michael A. Rebell and Jessica R. Wolff in the *New York Times*, August 25, 2011, “When Schools Depend on Handouts” – <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/opinion/when-schools-depend-on-handouts.html?scp=52&sq=public+school&st=nyt>.

- 9) **People generally agree that if gaps are not closed, Minnesota’s economic stability and competitiveness are at grave risk. Demographics show that the most underprepared students are the fastest growing population, which means the gap is widening.**

Projections show that by 2025-2030, “Over the next 10 years, the number of high school graduates who are students of color and immigrants will increase by 98 percent, while white graduates will decrease by 17 percent, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.” (See OAP’s Policy Brief #2: “16 Solutions that Deliver Equity and Excellence in Education,” 5.) **Among all students, boys of color are the most at-risk.** Their failure to thrive has been connected with juvenile justice issues (in what some analysts have identified as a “school to prison pipeline” for young black men in particular), extreme underrepresentation among college students, long term un- and under-employment, the highest rates of incarceration, and other issues that deeply affect their lives, the lives and livelihoods of their families, and the future economic stability and competitiveness of Minnesota more generally. Preparing all of Minnesota’s students for participation in Minnesota’s communities and workforce is essential to the state’s long term vitality.

Observations on the Blurring of the Integration and Achievement Gap Debates

- 1) **School integration remains a divisive issue. Recently, integration has been reframed as an educational issue and is being subjected to an achievement assessment. This is historical amnesia in education policy.**

Confusion among legislators about the reasons behind school integration requirements made integration aid vulnerable to budget cuts. “Lawmakers still don't agree whether the primary goal of the program should be physically integrating schools, closing the racial achievement gap, promoting interaction between white and minority children or a mix of them all. As far back as 2005, the legislative auditor has said that integration aid lacks a clear goal, and that neither the state nor schools adequately assess its results.” (See [“Integration era drawing to an end?”](#) by Kelly Smith and Sarah Lemagie, 5/14/11.) The Minnesota Legislature passed a bill this year that ends integration funding beyond 2013. That decision was based on an argument that the achievement gap was not sufficiently closed to justify continued funding of integration initiatives. (See Carlos Mariani Rose of MMEP, “Why We Cannot Abandon School Integration in Minnesota,” March 22, 2011.) Since the *Brown v. Board* decision (1954), integration has been an equity measure. Treating integration funding and programming as dependent on closing achievement gaps does not acknowledge that integration has historically been mandated to protect equity. Further, those deliberations didn’t take into account evidence that integrated schools help students of all races in a variety of ways that are not measurable by state exams (see IRP, “A Comprehensive Strategy, July 2009, 1).

- 2) **Integration is necessary but insufficient, on its own, to close gaps in achievement.** See reports by Myron Orfield for supporting evidence.

Recommendations and next steps

Given the austere financial climate both at the public and philanthropic level, the time is ripe for marshalling a collection of materials that can help any number of interested parties assess and reassess how to learn from past efforts, and improve coordination of information. The Committee is in a good position to move forward on the library project. It has secured a \$10,000 grant to start a

website. The Committee could choose to do it on its own site, develop one in partnership with other organizations, or pass the library onto an organization with a similar mission and more capacity to maintain and update it. The Minnesota Minority Education Partnership already has expressed interest in collaborating on the project. Further discussions are needed with other organizations working in this area. A shared archive could help focus partnerships among local stakeholders. The key in moving forward is to find the right fit, where the site supports ongoing work rather than duplicating it.

The proposed Achievement Gap/Opportunity Gap Required Reading List is a work in progress, open to changes. The goal is to highlight some of the best local work in this area and bring it to the attention of policymakers, advocates, political leaders, the media and others. A web presence such as an Achievement Gap library could help meet that goal.

The Committee could pursue any number of avenues given the discussions that occurred this summer. Here is a list of possible directions.

Partner with the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership on a resource that incorporates the library. In a meeting at MMEP on September 16, there was discussion about possible next steps for the web platform that would support the library going public and expanding. Collaborating with MMEP – is the most promising opportunity to date to make the library of lasting use to the widest and most influential audience. MMEP requested Committee members to hold one-on-one talks with other potential partners, and to reconvene a meeting at a later date.

Seek additional help and feedback on a proposed informational structure Given the large volume of information, structure is key. One of the project's next steps is to decide on how to organize and maintain the archive. The project could get the support another CURA research student, or approach the library degree program at St. Catherine's University about possible organizational help. MMEP and other potential partners and users should provide feedback.

As one part of the library, make Scott Russell and Dennis Schapiro's unpublished "Crosswalk" documents publicly available. These Crosswalk documents summarize past local efforts in such areas as closing the achievement gap, closing opportunity gaps, early childhood education, and they highlight recurring recommendations. As pieces that both summarize and analyze past efforts through 2007, these documents serve as a possible foundation for an electronic resource on local initiatives and their results. These could be updated and supplemented with executive summaries and an additional emphasis on assessing equity. Vital background information could be published, with executive summaries, on a website that would ensure that the enormous work that went into them is put to use. These Crosswalk documents are currently more valuable to most potential users than the physical library because of their summative function.

Build timelines of promises and initiatives, in an electronic format, to give advocates and policymakers easy access to the research. This type of graphic could communicate the issues and findings clearly and quickly, and it could easily be updated. An abbreviated version of the library could include a timeline showing the history of key state and local efforts to close the achievement gap. Elaine Salinas specifically requested graphic projections of what life in Minnesota will look like ten and twenty years from now if certain issues are not resolved (see Appendix C). The Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota has created detailed maps with supporting graphics that communicate demographic changes and disparities measured by

income, race, and geography that could be animated to show changes over the last two decades. A professional modeler could supplement the maps with projections and then run it in a time-lapse format.

Bring brown bag series to a wider audience. Updated brown bags meetings could be streamed live on the Internet and recorded as webinars or downloadable podcasts. These would help reach a larger audience. This would require new partners.

Required Reading on the Gap (List is in progress and subject to change)

Criteria for the list:

- Comprehensive explanation of factors that perpetuate gaps in achievement, equity, or both
- Evidence-based recommendations
- Focus on previously identified issues such as integration, assessment, and school readiness
- Attention to all constituencies

These are not in any particular order.

1) **Organizing Apprenticeship Project**, “Race Equity Policy Brief #2: 16 Solutions that Deliver Equity and Excellence in Education” (June 2011). By Jermaine Toney and Hillary Rodgers.

In addition to providing a well-supported agenda for addressing inequities that prevent successful and sustainable efforts to close the achievement gap, Toney and Rodgers also establish that improvements for fewer than 61,000 students of color (our of 215,000 total) will close the gap with white students on standardized tests. In other words, **we know how many kids need to make improvements to close the gap.**

2) **Itasca Project**, “Minnesota's Future: World-class Schools, World-class Jobs” (circa 2008)

Taking international gaps into consideration and drawing upon the McKinsey report, “How the World’s Best Performing School Systems Come out on Top” (2007), this report emphasizes the importance of achievement among all students to the future **international competitiveness and economic viability** of Minnesota. Its organizing question is, “How does Minnesota’s education system compare with the best in the world; and what can we learn from them to deliver a better education to the students of Minnesota?”

See also the Itasca Project’s “The Economics of Early Childhood Care and Education in Minnesota” (2005).

3) **Minneapolis Foundation**, “Raising Expectations: The Opportunity Gap” (March/April 2009)

This **graphic-heavy fact sheet** from the 2009 Season Summary of the Minnesota Meeting provides, in six pages, a digest of current problems and proposed solutions.

4) **Myron Orfield**, “Regional Strategies for Racial Integration of Schools and Housing Post-*Parents Involved*,” *Law and Inequality* 29, no. 149 (2011): 149-173. See especially 149-160 on case studies.

School integration and housing policy are inextricably intertwined. Orfield advocates for **metropolitan – not single-district – integration**, which “is one of the most effective

strategies known to reduce White flight and to make schools and neighborhoods more racially stable” (160). He demonstrates the **centrality of housing policy** and moving away from single-district integration policy for producing schools and neighborhoods that are more racially stable. This piece defines a regional strategy based on national best practices that addresses the need for a coordinated, sustainable approach to integration in the interest of educational equity and neighborhood stability. IRP developed a regional strategy that seeks regional balance so that individual districts that work toward integration do not end up losing even more students and money, which exacerbates segregation and inequity. Thus, the need for an incentive-based system that operates on a larger, coordinated scale. Proposing regional policy and addressing housing and education in tandem are IRP’s hallmark approaches.

See also: **Institute on Race and Poverty**, Comprehensive Plan (2009).

5) **Scott F. Abernathy**, “Evaluating the Impact of No Child Left Behind in Minnesota,” *CURA Reporter* (Spring 2006), 17-23.

Abernathy argues that the data received from school testing is probably biased against schools in high-need communities, that educational quality is being measured in a very indirect way, that schools are measured by their students rather than their services. He recommends two models: the “growth” model that measures changes in numbers of students reaching proficiency and the “value added model” that extracts the value a school adds to student achievement by tracking changes in test scores over time for individual students. Neither of these is perfect, but they are both better than the cross-sectional model in place. Policy makers should also add direct measures of principal and school quality since test scores are an indirect measure of school leadership and teaching. Essentially, the argument here is that NCLB should not rely exclusively on test scores and should include experience-based data that allows for the identification of excellent leaders who are working in the highest-need schools. **Abernathy shows that current assessment tools are too blunt and therefore do not tell us what we need to know.**

6) **Myron Orfield and Nicholas Wallace**, “Expanding Educational Opportunity Through School and Housing Choice,” *CURA Reporter* (Summer 2007), 19-26.

This article provides a condensed treatment of some of the issues Orfield addresses in his piece in *Law and Inequality* and attends to how **school and housing choice expands opportunity for all students**. Orfield and Wallace argue that the only way to achieve educational equity is through both school and housing integration, which is only possible by expanding affordable in housing into non-low-income areas and through programming such as the intradistrict voluntary desegregation initiative *The Choice is Yours*. This article succinctly argues that integration provides benefits for all children, not just children of color and poor children, and that integration, while not a magic bullet for all public problems, “has demonstrated clearer effects on expanding opportunity than any other type of solution” (26). Moreover, “money by itself is not working” and charter schools, which are “unproven” and increase segregation, are not the answer either.

See also: IRP, “Comprehensive Plan” (2009); and IRP, “The Choice is Ours” (May 2006), both available for download from www.irpumn.org.

7) **Wilder Research**, “Tackling the achievement gap head on: A background and discussion paper for community groups interested in helping all children succeed in school,” May 2005.

This has more of a Saint Paul focus, but the findings read as relevant to Minneapolis because of similarities in racial, immigrant, and low-income student demographics. This study found that early childhood interventions are essential because that is when gaps initiate. One standout finding is that high quality center-based preschool programs include emphasis on cognitive skill development, which “tends not to be an emphasis of Head Start Programs” (11). Note also from the MELF commissioned study that Head Start is one of the most expensive early learning programs. The “core elements” that are effective in closing gaps are: a focus on teaching and learning; challenging, rigorous curricula; alignment of curricula, instruction, standards, and assessment; and teaching development programming (12).

Schools that emphasize teaching and learning – quality instruction and curricular rigor) – markedly improve the academic achievement of low-income and minority children. This study also emphasizes the importance of small class sizes, especially in kindergarten through third grade (14). A section on “strategies with weaker or inconsistent evidence for their effectiveness in closing the achievement gap” lists some programs and approaches with mixed results or low or no measurable effect on reducing the school readiness gap or the school achievement gap, including increasing access to health insurance, adult education for mothers, after school programs, student and family support services, school funding, and school choice. A few of these are especially important findings given their prominent role in ongoing debates on how to address readiness problems and close the gap. Support services for students and their families may improve conditions that interfere with learning, but require much more and longer term study to access the measurable impact. Note that “these efforts take an indirect approach to academic success, in the sense that they do not seek to directly increase learning but seek to create conditions where more learning can occur” (16). Likewise, the report finds that simply providing schools with more funding does not guarantee improvements unless the schools are already clearly underfunded. Struggling and/or ineffective schools do not simply turn more income into improvement. Finally, school choice or options (such as charters, vouchers, magnets, and open enrollment) have produced no consistent evidence of improving the quality of education available (16). “Proponents believe that by introducing market forces and decentralization into public school systems, the quality of education available to all children, including children from disadvantaged backgrounds, will improve. At this point, there is no consistent evidence that such benefits will result” (16). This is a very important finding in light of other work by Myron Orfield and the IRP that emphasizes how open enrollment can be a problem if it is not part of a regional approach, just to start.

This report also shows that non-cognitive skills or “soft skills,” which refer to emotional and social skills such as self-discipline, dependability, perseverance, self-confidence, communication skills, ability to work in a team, positive attitude, and adaptability, are important to success or achievement long-term and *are not reflected in achievement test scores*. “Similar to cognitive skills, there appears to be a gap in non-cognitive skills by race and income” (16). “Early childhood education programs... can potentially have the largest impact on non-cognitive skills. While IQ or cognitive benefits may fade over time, the socialization benefits of effective preschool programs may persist. These social skill benefits may be manifested later in less use of special education services, less likelihood of being on welfare, less criminal behavior, and higher wages.” **This is a powerful argument in**

support of how essential quality early childhood programs are to overall school and post-secondary success and to closing achievement gaps.

8) **MELF**, “Timing of Early Childhood Education: Is there an optimal time to intervene in a young child’s life to improve readiness for school?” (June 2010)

Yes, there is an optimal time. It is during the third year. “Optimal” means both in outcomes for kids *and* the most significant economic returns. Other reports and policy guides stress the high need of the 0-5 group and the benefits of intervention during this window, but this report by MELF concludes that assuring intervention at age 3 is essential.

9) **MELF/CEED**, “Final Evaluation Report: Lessons Learned from the MELF Community Grants” (Dec. 2009).

10) **Governor’s Workforce Development Council**, “All Hands on Deck: Sixteen Ideas for Improving Minnesota’s Workforce” (2011).

11) **Carlos Mariani Rosa**, “Why We Cannot Abandon School Integration in Minnesota” (March 22, 2011):

http://www.mmep.org/MMEP_Why_We_Cannot_Abandon_School_Integration_in_Minnesota2.html

Mariani reports that, “The Legislature has struggled with its integration rule for several years after the Legislative Auditor criticized it for lack of clarity on what could be funded with state funds. The discussion centered on whether the purpose was to increase interracial contact or to increase the academic achievement of students of color. MMEP believes that is a false choice. As a multi-racial society, Minnesota is learning that achievement and interracial competence are bound together and that an appropriate expectation of our schools is to produce young citizens with the important skills of building and managing a successful society from our racially diverse reality. These skills are as important as math, science and writing skills.”

12) **Memorandum of Agreement between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis American Indian Community** (2006, being renewed right now).

13) **Minneapolis Public School Board and the African American Mobilization for Education**, The Covenant Between the Minneapolis Public Schools and The African American Mobilization for Education (September 5, 2008)

This Covenant only remained in place for a few months. Local news sources report that the dissolution of this Covenant has hurt rapport between the Minneapolis Public Schools and a number of African American community members.

14) **MMEP**, Covenant for Education Equity with Excellence with Students of Color and American Indian Students (November 2008)

This Covenant was launched the same fall as the Covenant between the Minneapolis Public Schools. The MMEP covenant continues to accept organizational and individual endorsement through the MMEP website.

15) **MMEP**, “Minnesota Economic Realities Tied to the Educational Success of African American Males” (November 2010)

MMEP has taken up an initiative that specifically targets the needs of African American boys. The conference it sponsored in late fall 2010 also focused on boys of color. This particular 3-page policy brief does not specifically say what the disparities are or where inequity lies, nor does it make any specific policy recommendations. It does, however, make recommendations about the process that must begin, namely collaboration among all stakeholders (rather than a top down approach, which is presented as unsustainable), to address what MMEP identifies as a crisis for African American male students.

16) **MMEP**, “State of Students of Color and American Indian Students” (2009)

17) **Search Institute**, Full report version of “Signs of Progress in Putting Children First: Developmental Assets among Youth in St. Louis Park, 1997-2001” (2003)

St. Louis Park implemented a program in which 40 “assets” – 20 of them external and 20 internal – were measured before and after students completed the “9th Grade Program.” The Search Institute concluded that the program had a positive effect. Increased numbers of assets dramatically reduce risk behaviors and increase “thriving.” The report says, “Although preliminary (owing to a relatively small sample size) and correlational, these findings suggest that a strong asset base can, indeed, provide a foundation that guides young people’s decisions both now and in the future.” (32).

The assets framework has helped clarify the connections between a number of factors that presumably affect behaviors and actual behaviors. Here are some key findings: both white and non-white youth are less likely to abuse alcohol and be violent and more likely to help others and maintain good health as their assets increase (35). Differences between students who live in two-parent compared with one-parent homes and students who are eligible and ineligible for free or reduced lunch show that as assets increase, gaps between the groups narrow regardless of race. Students with very high numbers of assets are very similar regardless of race, family composition, and family economic status. See pages 36 and 37. **The number of assets a student has is a better predictor of behavior than family income.** “We found that, overall, experiencing fewer than 10 assets is two to five times as powerful in predicting risk as poverty. For example, young people (regardless of their levels of assets) who live in low-income families are twice as likely as other youth to engage in antisocial behavior. In contrast, low-asset girls (regardless of their family economic status) are nine times as likely as other girls to engage in antisocial behavior as other girls, and low-asset boys are four times as likely as other boys to engage in antisocial behavior.

This finding has important implications for policy makers and for asset-building efforts. Too often, activities and programs are designed to address a particular subgroup of young people based on traditional socio-demographic risk factors (such as youth from single-parent families). These findings suggest that identifying young people with low levels of assets may actually be a more accurate strategy than typical approaches for addressing the needs of young people who are most likely to be struggling” (40).

18) **Ready4K** – “Moving the Needle on School Readiness: Minnesota’s Legislative Challenge” (April 2007)

19) **Minnesota Early Learning Foundation/RAND Corporation**, *The Cost of Providing Quality Early Care and Education in Saint Paul, Minnesota* (2011)

20) **Minnesota School Integration Council**, “Every Child, Every Day: Educational Equity through Integration – A Final Report and Recommendations of the Statewide Task Force on School Integration” (January 2011)

Drawing upon MMEP’s “2009 State of Students of Color and American Indian Studies Executive Summary,” this report emphasizes that Minnesota’s educational achievement, high school graduation, and college entrance rates relative to other states appear superior, but that “beneath these successes are well-documented educational disparities among racial and ethnic groups” (7). “These ‘achievement gaps,’” the report says, “demonstrate an uneven distribution of opportunity in the system.” **This report firmly identifies the gap itself as evidence of inequity.** If inequity is the problem, the solutions focus on increasing and ensuring equity (of opportunity). The Minnesota School Integration Council defines *equity* as “high expectations and access to meaningful and relevant learning for all students so that outcomes are not predictable or disproportionate by protected class status” (8). The Council recommended that the state maintain only the components of the Desegregation Rule prohibiting intentional segregation and then recall and replace the remainder of the rule and statute with a new policy and program: the Educational Equity through Integration Program (11). **This report also identifies the necessity of a two-pronged approach to “true integration.”** It notes that, “*Structural shifts* address the arrangement of schools and flow of students in a district or region. *In-school strategies* address the policies and practices that affect students and staff” (15).

21) **Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER)**, *Let Us Meet You Where You Are: Securing the Educational Accomplishments of Migrant Students (SEAMS)* (December 2006)

22) **Philips Indian Educators** website: www.pieducators.com

The Philips Indian Educators (PIE) came together in 2005 and now serves as the primary advocacy group representing the needs of American Indian students, families, and the community in Minneapolis. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Minneapolis Public Schools is a project of the Philips Indian Educators and the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID), a coalition of American Indian leaders in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metro area. This site links extensively with literature and other sites that emphasize the PIEs’ four focus areas: knowledge, respect, sharing, and wisdom. Educators will find information on best practices with indigenous students. Other highlights include sample curriculum components, a cultural resource bibliography, and articles on assessment, family engagement, language revitalization, the ongoing effects of colonization on American Indian students and their families, and an indigenous teaching bibliography.

23) **Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board**, *City’s Children* 2007 (1988)

Now nearly 25 years old, this document represents a moment in the late 1980s when a diverse group of advocates and stakeholders came together to detail a common vision for the wellness and success of Minneapolis youth. That its hopes have gone largely unrealized – and in the case of school readiness, success, and educational equity, have worsened – makes this piece an important artifact in the long history of struggles to improve outcomes for youth.

24) **ASPEN Associates on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Education**, “Minnesota Voluntary Public School Choice: Multi-Year Evaluation Summary” (May 2009)

The essential part of this report is how it addresses the question, “What is the impact of participation on student achievement?” The short answer is that during 2007-2008, suburban transfer students outperformed eligible non-participants; and over a four year period, achievement results were mixed, with some participants performing better than their non-participating counterpart and sometimes not (vii).

25) **Scott Russell and Dennis Schapiro**, Cross Walk files, particularly “The Minneapolis Achievement Gap: A Historical Review of School District Efforts to Close the Gap, and Non-School Factors that Could Influence It” (2007)

Appendix A

Achievement Gap Committee – Advisory Meeting

Tuesday, June 14, 2011
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Office

Minutes

Present: Mariam Mohamad (CAPI), Grant Abbot, Christine Manganaro, John Risken, Elaine Salinas (MIGIZI Communications), Christopher Orr (MinnCAN), Mary Cecconi (Parents United), Chuck Peterson (MN Council of Foundations), Don Fraser, Marcus Harcus, Nancy Johnson, and Scott Russell.

There was a brief review of the project's origins and the long history of efforts to close the achievement gap. The bulk of the meeting was devoted to give and take about what is needed in an achievement gap library and who else could be included in the conversation.

Mary – There is a history of “fits and starts” on the issue → Need a research center on educational policy that could do original research. This has been discussed with the U. of M. The state Department of Education (MDE) is supposed to be doing some of the information gathering and outreach, but cannot given its resources and structure. Sixty percent of the MDE funding comes from the federal government (for assessment and compliance) and it is, therefore, not *servicing* school districts

- Angie Eilers has looked into this issue and would be a good contact.
- Educational policy folks need **primary research**; they need a **clearinghouse** with a **filter**
 - ex: the AVID program works well with Latino youth – Why?
- Policy people and other experts at UMN will not effectively advocate for the kinds of programs that are needed or share **definitive** data with legislators in a way that they (legislators) can understand and use
 - ex: David Johnson of the UMN works as a consultant to 37 states, but not to MN (**NOTE** that he is an applied researcher and is on his way to working at the Humphrey Institute.)

Grant – There are three levels required for the library: cataloging, a reference library with a filter, and deeper analysis (Why did this or that work or not work?).

Mary – The fourth level is an opportunity for primary research including metrics and indicators. **The library idea is less interesting to CAREI (at UMN). They have been using the terms research center and clearinghouse [when naming needs].**

[Note: CAREI website is here: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/carei/>]

Elaine – Community-based agencies have done research. Also, Minnesota goes for broad, universal strokes on everything → This is *wrong*. We need to see research on American Indian children, for example. The research needs to distinguish what works for particular groups. There is not enough done on American Indian education. There *is* a lot of anecdotal evidence, but there is a need for **quantitative** evidence, not just anecdotal. Elaine and her org are a resource since they have kept up with the latest on some of these issues.

Mariam – “The achievement gap” is vague as a term. Funders and schoolteachers need to know precisely what it is. “We cannot miss trying to understand the achievement gap itself.”

Grant – How do we define what “works”?

Ex: Regarding American Indian children – Are parents afraid that they will lose children to the dominant culture [if the children have success]?

Elaine – It is not that American Indian parents do not want measures. Measures are fine since American Indian kids are growing up in this time and place where they face realities similar to all other kids. The problem is that measures do not capture the potential of American Indian kids. American Indian communities want more measures. **“Measures are necessary, but not sufficient.”**

Nancy – An important question is, What works, for whom?

- Suggestion of materials or focus toward parents, toward teachers (need a section for them in the library/on the site?), and towards policy makers

Mary – Mentioned Destination 2010 and Blandin – belief statements from their work; the finding was that mobility makes a difference in children’s achievement.

- Important to know **who funded what research**
- Need a place to identify research that is controversial, even in the face of scientific consensus, and what the different sides/position are. (Example: Global warming.)

Christopher – Also need to know what did not work and what has not produced results.

Nancy – Another question: which projects or initiatives had integrity [or were being pursued with integrity, or correctly]?

Ex: issue with providers who are not actually implementing the curriculum or implementing it in the right way, but they are being assessed as if they are.

Elaine – The central question is **What is the purpose?**

Also, there are framing issues with the achievement gap language: The achievement gap is actually an education opportunity gap. And there is a big gap between the U.S. and the rest of the industrialized world, so it would be good to include something on the [inter]national achievement gap (e.g. we could close the achievement gap here, but miss the bigger global challenge.)

[There was a mention at this point of a graph that showed MCA-II test scores and opportunity right next to each other. Elaine might have mentioned this. Nancy also mentioned that the achievement gap starts early with early care and education opportunities from 0 – 5. For example, the state cut its contribution to child care subsidies for low income families by 50% in 2003. Maps developed by GMDCA in 2006 show the loss of licensed, quality childcare spaces by census tracts in Minneapolis overlaid with MPS 3rd Grade Benchmark test scores.]

Mariam – Look at the list of organizations and initiatives [that Scott handed out] and see what works and what is still being funded.

- The resource ought to address and explain why the achievement gap exists in relation to other issues like housing, out of school activities, etc.

Scott – There is collective amnesia about what we have tried.

Chuck – His organization is starting a research project focused on where private funders are putting education dollars and then looking at what has worked. This initiative started after MN did not get “Race to the Top” funding.

They are also starting to look at the role of philanthropy in education. An important development: The Gates Foundation pulled out of Minnesota because of a lack of cohesive vision. They identified good efforts happening, but that they are piecemeal, uncoordinated. → The question has become: Could philanthropy direct funding efforts to achieve better outcomes? [They are getting more into advocacy, too.]

Mariam – The McKnight Foundation and University President Bob Brunicks have also advanced a comprehensive agenda for early childhood.

Nancy – The Early Childhood Funders Collaborative led by the Minneapolis Foundation and Twin Cities United Way developed a strategic plan for a Minnesota Early Childhood System that brought the 0-5 community together around a shared vision.

Elaine – There is a fundamental debate going on nationally about STRIVE, a systemic approach, versus the Harlem Children’s Zone approach, which is not very scalable because of the huge investment in each child.

In regard to **poverty**, a longstanding theme of how the gap has been framed and explained: It is as if it doesn’t matter anymore. There are all these things affecting kids, but the bottom line is that kids need to perform. The rubber has met the road. Schools are going to have to educate kids *despite* other factors. So, poverty, like so many things, has also been used as an **excuse** [for poor outcomes].

*Phillips Indian Educators (www.pieducators.com) has resources → Talk to Elaine.

Mary – See the CAREI literature reviews. She reiterated that primary research needs to be done and mentioned the good research happening that is being communicated by the TED talks.

Mariam – See also COMPAS at the Wilder Foundation and Dr. Art Rolnick and Dr. Arthur Reynold’s Human Resource Collaborative at the UMN.

Scott – Heard that a focus on **specific communities and what works** is what is needed. Asked if there were people they all suggested that I (Christine) speak to.

Chuck – Said he will talk to people. He sends foundation-specific reports out to his network and has those reports, which could, perhaps, be of interest.

Scott is still interested in historical memory. **Local best practices** is an important refocus of the project.

Elaine sees programs and methods that are working.

Mariam mentioned that there have been PhD students at the University of Minnesota who have done achievement gap research with families. She also said researchers (presumably white and outside the community) cannot do surveys instead of doing focus groups and actually talking to people, and that researchers who are not a part of the community cannot just march in there and try to run a focus group.

Mariam also added that **a lot of people are offended by the term achievement gap.**

Mary – Regarding the reframing the achievement gap, see John Jackson of the Schott Foundation. and also Chris Coleman and the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) schools. [People felt achievement gap could be offensive and imprecise.]

Last round of comments to wrap up the meeting

Elaine – See the Organizing Apprenticeship Project’s (OAP) “Rainbow Papers.” The question is what is the opportunity here? There is also a mapping project of sorts. **Geography matters.**

Mariam feels strongly about **changing the name** from achievement gap. Look at the Harlem Children’s Zone for some language.

Mary – Talk to Jermaine from OAP.

Nancy – CEED (Center for Early Education and Development) at the U of M provided simple, clear, and compelling expert testimony and “one pagers” on evidence that were effective with legislators and media. [In response to comments about the need to find ways to effectively present research in precise but clear and definitive terms for courts and legislators who need evidence based research on which to base policy decisions.]

Mariam used to work at McKnight. Contact them. She insists. Talk to Chris (who leaves tomorrow?), Sarah Hernandez, and Eric Mushler (sp?), who have done things with GIS [re: the geography and opportunity disparity focus that emerged toward the end of the meeting].

Elaine – We must recognize different ways of knowing. We should question traditional/orthodox research. Ex: Native Alaskans knew that climate change was afoot before scientists developed consensus on it. **This process should honor different ways of knowing.**

Mary insists that we must state clearly, when including research studies, who paid for it.

Chuck – Marine Bazinet of the Bazinet Family Foundation and Kaya (Kaja?) at Cargill Foundation are also potential contacts.

Marcus – Internalized oppression is a major factor. Be thinking about this and also about culturally sensitive and empowering curricula.

<meeting adjourned around 6:30>

Appendix B

Summary of Meeting at the Organizing Apprenticeship Project

Christine Manganaro

June 24, 2011

At OAP, with Julia Freeman and Jermaine Toney [Note that Toney left OAP on June 29.]
12-1p.m.

Julia was part of a meeting originally scheduled with Jermaine. She took a leading role in the discussion. Julia was put in touch with me through Nancy Johnson, who heard back from Beth (OAP) that Julia could be part of the next advisory meeting. Julia is OAP's education equity point-person.

I explained the origins and general ideas behind the gap library project and some of the input from the first advisory meeting. Julia had lots of questions. I explained that the goal was to make information that was difficult to find available to the general public as well as people interested in policy and advocacy and mentioned the names of the people who were at the first advisory meeting to demonstrate who we have talked with first. Julia said she has "great pause" about compiling the kind of information I told her we had and were seeking out without having a clear understanding of the precise impact that it would have or that it was intended to have. What is the impact? She asked several times what the impact would be on users or on the gap itself. We need to sort out the precise goal.

They do not want to include their reports and other materials in a library that no one will use.

This is especially true since they update all the time.

"We are about advancing educational equity," Julia said. The idea of actually advancing educational equity is at the core of what they do and is the primary impetus behind every single action. If something does not clearly advance equity, it is low priority.

Work is already happening on this [the achievement gap]. People contact OAP frequently about educational equity work. Julia was an organizer for a June 12 meeting that brought a lot of stakeholders and community members together, the Racial Equity Gathering.

In response to the idea that the audience for the library was probably the general public – regular folks, parents – as well as people interested in policy and practices, Julia said that parents don't care about past initiatives. "They care about now." They ask questions like, What opportunities exist now? How do I advocate now? And other questions about how to help their individual child, how to pay for extracurricular activities, how to come up with the \$75 or more that it costs to join a sports team, etc. This is especially true for poor parents and parents of color. She said that *maybe* she could imagine more affluent parents reading some pieces of a library like this, but this sort of hobby reading (her idea, my wording) is extremely rare and totally outside the norm for the poor parents and parents of color that she has worked with.

It would, in her words, behoove the group to be specific about audience first and foremost.

The term achievement gap is an enormous problem and has been for a while now a rather antiquated term that people in the organizing and advocacy communities insist is misinformed and wish to avoid. It is however, as Jermaine chimed in, the dominant paradigm. It is still used a lot in media and among some people interested in the issue, but it is extremely problematic because, among other things, it is so focused on outcomes and therefore blames kids. There is an equity gap – the term Julia and Jermaine used throughout the meeting. The stance of OAP and a number of allies and allied organizations is that closing the equity gap (also referred to as an opportunity gap) is the only way to close the achievement gap. Jermaine said explicitly that you have to close the equity gap *before* even beginning to address the achievement gap. For example, addressing equity first would mean that teachers and resources go to the right spots *first*, and then you could start looking at achievement outcomes.

The equity gap is also what OAP deals with because it addresses race, culture, economics, and gender. It is multi-faceted and multi-factorial. “Equity gap” allows for a broader lens and the outcomes and impacts associated with it are broader.

Julia plays a major role in the Educational Equity Organizing Collaborative. Based on what she said, this group sounds very active and connected.

Neither Julia nor Jermaine had heard of the Friday brown bag lunches on the achievement gap. [I asked to get a sense of who knows what around town about who is doing what.]

Julia said point blank that we need a “pencil sketch” for me to use when I go around town talking to people. She always has one when she meets with people and tells them that it is indeed a pencil sketch that can be changed, but there is at least a sketch.

Jermaine explained some of the history of OAP and when they took up the analysis with which they work now. They hit a wall sometime in the last decade and after doing a lot of reading and taking cues from the Applied Research Center (Oakland), they shifted to the new analysis, which is explicitly about racial inequity. It is, however, a focus on race, but not exclusive to race. They started doing the Minnesota Race Report card five years ago. Jermaine has done all five reports. The shift they experience with their educational analysis and recommendations during these years was that the equity gap must be attacked to effect the achievement gap.

We talked about OAP’s positions on racial equity in some detail and they impressed upon me, after I asked a few questions about local norms among their colleagues working on these issues, that the analysis that the “achievement gap” is fueled by inequities, particularly racial inequities, that must be addressed. I asked if taking up this position was necessary to be a player in the conversation or to remain current and relevant. They did not correct my perception that this was the accepted analysis (separate from the dominant paradigm about the achievement gap). Julia did say that the Achievement Gap Committee did not need to take up their analysis or anyone else’s to do a library project. She reiterated that she was not sure what the library was going to do, exactly, to advance educational equity. My impression is that they do not want to tell anyone what to do, but that it is safe to say that the most involved, connected, and diverse organizing, advocacy, and policy analysis professionals in town share their position on this being about equity and that it needs to be explicitly stated and addressed. (In other words, they don’t like the term achievement gap in part because it does not address what needs to be done, precisely, other than that kids need to pass tests.)

They gave me two documents, which are available on the website, both of which are Race Equity Policy Briefs. The first one (Dec. 2010) is titled “14 Solutions that Expand Job and Economic Opportunity, and Reduce Minnesota’s Disparities.” The second came out this month (June 2011) and is titled “16 Solutions that Deliver Equity and Excellence in Education.” Both Julia and Jermaine emphasized the “solutions” focus of these titles since, as they say, OAP is focused on solutions above all else.

Julia is interested in coming to the next advisory meeting. She is noncommittal about being apart of the project longer term. I should let her know when the next meeting is scheduled.

Note that I did not come away from the meeting with any specific resources beyond the reports they gave me, but they include bibliographies that are interesting and impressive. I was going to ask them what they thought were essential components for a library like this, but their position seemed quite clearly to be that they did not understand how a library-like resource would impact the equity gap and was therefore outside their purview. They were encouraging of me personally and offered frank, yet carefully put questions and responses. I did not come away with materials, but I consider this meeting to have been very educational.

Appendix C

Summary of Meeting with Elaine Salinas

Christine Manganaro

July 15, 2011

At MIGIZI Communications.

1:30-3 p.m.

Elaine says that there is not a lot on Indian students nationally because they are frequently lumped in with the “other” group when there is a breakdown by race. This is probably because American Indians make up about 1% of the U.S. population.

She recommended that I read the “Rainbow Papers” authored by Jermaine Toney. [These were renamed Racial Equity Policy Briefs. As of this meeting, OAP has produced two.]

Elaine said that she has material on Indian education as part of a larger collection on the Indian community generally. She clips or copies, digitally or in hard copy, material she comes across about the Indian community. One example is the National Indian Education study.

The Philips Indian Educators (PIE) have put together bibliographies, which are available on the website along with open calls for lesson plans for American Indian classrooms. PIE has also done training for Minneapolis teachers in a workshop setting and has uploaded some of that information. A lot of the education techniques that PIE participants have tried, reported on, and innovated in their classrooms are borrowed from communities of Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Maori (Aotearoa/New Zealand). See the Alaska Native Knowledge Network, supported by the University of Alaska. Elaine said that a lot of Indian education work in the lower 48 states is influenced by Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian, and Maori practices. (Example: language immersion modeled on the early childhood language learning “nests” implemented by Native Hawaiian educators with Native children.)

The MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Indian community is in its fifth year right now. This is an agreement between the Minneapolis public schools and the Indian community. Elaine can send the document. They are trying to renew this agreement right now.

Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID) were the ones who first met with school officials. MUID meets every other week with 15-20 people usually attending. Once the agreement was made, MUID asked PIE to monitor. Representatives from PIE meet with the superintendent of schools once a month.

More on accountability: There is an annual report to the school board and the Indian community, via MUID.

There is an MUID summative report available through the Minneapolis Public Schools. Elaine told me to find the Indian Education part of the website and it might be there. [I have not been able to find this on the MPS site yet.] I can also contact Erik Vandenberg who does research, evaluation, and assessment for the district. He produced the report.

I asked Elaine to give me ideas for organizations or groups analogous to MUID or PIE. She emphasized that the Northside Achievement Zone was an important one. It has brought a lot of people together. Talk to Sondra Samuels, she says.

She also mentioned HACER (St. Paul; Hispanic focus), MMEP, and the Hmong Organizing Project, which is part of Take Action Minnesota. They have done good work in St. Paul. There is a Southeast Asian Community Council (or something like that) in North Minneapolis, but they are not doing a lot with education right now.

PIE reports on what is working at meetings, and these reports are based on the experiences of the PIEs themselves. They share ideas and things they have tried that have been successful. A lot of what people have tried comes out of the literature and examples, as mentioned above, from AK, HI, and NZ. There is not empirical research support for PIEs findings. I asked if anyone had approached PIE about documenting their work and informal experiments and it did not sound as though that has happened at all. This is mostly a group that collaborates around ideas and attempts to try things that have worked elsewhere, assess if they are helpful, and then decide what to do right away as part of intervening in the most timely and effective way possible.

There is an American Indian charter school in the works, slated for Fall 2012. Its curriculum and other approaches are being modeled on and drawn from outside research on other Native educational techniques. It will be a place-based school, meaning that it will use local history, ecology, and so on as the focus of the curriculum. It will start as a pre-K through third grade school and add a grade each year until they get to twelfth grade. Right now things are moving slowly, in part because of the state shut-down.

Danielle Grant, the director of Indian education for Minneapolis public schools, is someone to check with about what has worked for teachers who have been through PIE's training program. Teachers go through training in the fall, in August, and then there is follow up in the spring, meaning reporting on how things have gone since implementing what they learned in training. (The training itself models Native pedagogical techniques and theory, so teachers themselves experience what they are learning to implement in their own classrooms.) Elaine said that many teachers have reported that the training by PIE has been the best and most worthwhile professional training or enrichment they have received.

The equity versus achievement map that Elaine mentioned in the first Achievement Gap Committee advisory meeting in June was created by OAP, the Organizing Apprenticeship Project. They actually mapped the opportunity gap. Elaine seemed to like this approach in part because of its effectiveness as a graphical tool for communicating where the gaps are and what is needed to bridge them. We talked about this map and some of the text of OAP's most recent policy brief (#2) authored by Jermaine Toney and Hillary Rodgers as effectively explaining that the gaps are indeed closable – that what it would take to improve achievement is actually far from a pie-in-the-sky vision.

The gap is widening, Elaine said, and disinvestment in education correlates with the gap. Regarding the Mind the Gap report: The business community is outsourcing jobs. They don't care about Minnesota kids, she said. I asked Elaine if she thought that members of the business community were being disingenuous when they argued that the gap needs to be addressed to improve the future workforce of the state and therefore the economic competitiveness and stability

of Minnesota and she said yes. Those comments are total beans, she said, and amount to public relations – it sounds good for them to say this.

There is an enormous international gap in achievement. Elaine said she thinks this came out in the Third International Mathematics Study that the lower 25% of students in India outscored the top 25% in the United States.

We talked about how to make this library or other digital resource project the most useful. She said that the information we [broadly construed; “we,” meaning people with information on the gap] already have should be used to move people from complaisance. People need to look at the data and see an imperative [to action]. Recent budget decisions regarding payments to Minnesota schools should cause an absolute outrage among Minnesotans, Elaine said, but somehow they are not. There is not nearly enough outrage in general about these issues.

The most important question is how to put data into the hands of people who can make a difference. This issue has not been cast yet in a way that influences people. Whether we use the term equity, opportunity, or disparities (to be the most general), there is a casting issue [because people are not moving on this as much as is needed].

This [recasting] could be done more graphically. For example, make a map and *show* the impact on the economy if things are not improved. Paint a picture of Minnesota’s future based on today’s data! Paint that picture about quality of life, not just economics. Make a timeline and call it “Mapping Our Future.” *Show* people the projections in a way that they will remember. I mentioned that a picture or map is also the kind of graphic that can go viral on the internet since people email those things to friends and family or post on Facebook. Elaine seemed to agree with this assessment that social media could pick up the right format for communicating clearly casted graphic representations of the status quo and the future.

Elaine also said that developing sound bites or simple ideas that stick with people could be very helpful. [I’m noting that this would require analysis as a priority parallel to archiving in the design and implementation of the resource.] She cited the finding above about math achievement and added that she has continued to remember that college graduates earn \$1 million more in their lifetimes than high school graduates. She has also continued to remember that for every \$1 of wealth held by white people in the U.S., black people hold 7 cents. (She thinks this last fact came from the Mind the Gap report done by the Itasca Project and McKinsey.)

Minnesota used to be at the top nationally. Policy was good for Indians 25 years ago and that affected Indian education positively. There has been a corresponding decline in Indian student achievement as policies related to American Indians have become less helpful and the climate has devolved. Elaine also mentioned at one point that twenty years ago, students of color made up 30% of Minneapolis students and now they make up 80%. There has been a decline in educational outcomes because the city and the state have failed to deal with the demographic change they knew was coming twenty years ago. Elaine was one of the educators talking about this then, and the schools did not do anything to stave off a widening gap.

We don’t need another online resource on the achievement gap, Elaine said. We need new resources to tell a story with a different slant, to *move* people.

Related to moving people away from complaisance and toward action or a new awareness or outrage about the problem, Elaine said that exurb (exurb?) families would get upset about the *international* gap if they knew about it, if they knew that top achieving American students were dramatically underachieving compared with their international peers.

Elaine said I could come in almost anytime to look at her hard copy files or to load up a thumb drive with files from her computer. She has a number of files in hard copy that are just print-outs of digital files on her hard drive and desktop.

Appendix D

Summary of Meeting at Wilder Research

Christine Manganaro

July 19, 2011

With Dan Mueller (Associate Director) and Heather Johnson (Library Manager)

11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

I explained the project to Dan and Heather, including the motivations behind it and active questions about where it will be located or supported on the web. We talked about what information the committee has in comparison with what Wilder Research and the Minnesota Compass websites provide.

Heather explained that Compass accepts reports. [These reports are easy to find on the Compass site, which I looked at prior to the meeting. They are listed in reverse chronological order.] If we have a report that we want put out there, we can send it to Heather and she will post it. An example would be an analysis of what the contents of the archive contain – what they say about some facet of the achievement gap or initiatives to close it. Almost all of what Compass puts on the web is reports. They can feature local initiatives such as the Achievement Gap Committee under their “Ideas that Work” section. She also suggested that Compass and the Achievement Gap Committee could do meetings or events together and that “piggybacking” makes sense given the mutual interests of the groups.

I asked how Wilder Research’s website that contains reports and the Compass site are connected or overlapped in terms of information provided. Dan and Heather individually explained how the information they chose to put on the respective sites was developed and chosen. For Compass, the selection process is rather unscientific and they do not troll the web or systematically search for pieces to include. They receive reports and analysis from other organizations and some of their in-house researchers and if it is interesting and appropriate, it goes up. They do not take an explicitly historically-minded approach to collecting, meaning that they do not search for past material to include. However, they attempt to maintain some sense of the history of analysis on the issues they track by maintaining the links on the site and simply adding to the list. Users can find past reports and analysis by moving back chronologically.

Dan explained that the research they do at Wilder is shaped by client needs. Clients include public schools and agencies as well as private entities. [My sense from this conversation and perusing the Wilder and Compass websites is that Wilder’s client-focused approach has yielded a very different outcome than what is on the website of CAREI at the University of Minnesota, which is much less comprehensive.] Wilder’s orientation, however, is to make as much information as public as possible. After they do evaluations or assessments, they ask clients if they can communicate findings publicly, which means on the web. Sometimes, and ideally, this means making an entire report available. Other times this means creating a summary or shorter, less detailed version of a report available. In their research, they try to maintain neutrality and objectivity and to work without a political slant.

We talked about the achievement gap versus opportunity gap frames, especially since in Dan’s profile on the Wilder website, it refers to his work on the “achievement gap (opportunity gap).” My

goal was to clarify how they see these terms or frames as interchangeable or not. Dan said, speaking from his years of research on education, that a lot of the gap has to do with opportunity. Most of his research has been on programming, removing barriers, and providing supports to students. He appeared to understand what I was getting at by asking about these different terms, but in his comments about opportunity being such an enormous issue he basically dismissed the idea that the opportunity disparity stance is overtly political since it is based on good long-term evidence. [This approach seems to offer a lot of advantages. Dan and his organization, like a number of others, have essentially adopted the position that naming the opportunity gap is perfectly explainable and an empirical finding rather than a political agenda or dogma. The way Dan explained his approach validated my developing sense that the opportunity gap has been so apparent for so long among people who study these issues that they do not see using that language or frame as politicking as much as honing in on the precise problem.]

Dan mentioned that liberal advocates [his language] were trying to create middle class childhoods for low-income children and spoke to the complications that come with that. For example, some advocates with that orientation essentially argue that children without access to that kind of childhood should be in different homes. This is very problematic.

Dan has done a lot of work on early childhood in general. Most recently the Wilder Foundation has been involved with the Achievement Plus program. There is also a partnership of some kind between the Bush Foundation and Wilder. The Bush Foundation is putting all of its education resources into improving teacher training. There are six local colleges in the partnership that are focusing on introducing teachers-in-training to classrooms much, much earlier than is typical. Dan says some teachers spend three years studying educational theory in class and less than one year – sometimes just a semester – student teaching or otherwise in the actual school setting in which they were planning to teach. Many student teachers discover that teaching, particularly in certain settings, is not for them. This program aims to get them into the classroom early and often.

I asked Dan and Heather what they do with all of the reports and other data they collect as researchers at Wilder prepare to write the reports and analyses that get posted on the website and given to clients. Do they store it on site? Allow the public to use it? They said that there is a private library at Wilder that in-house researchers use. Then they put “interesting stuff” – information (which is all report or analysis – never raw data) that advocates or the general public might be able to use – online. I asked Heather if they have a sense at Compass of who is using their site, especially since they have an RSS feed so that people can subscribe to immediately receive notice when one of the interest areas is updated or something is added. She does not know if Compass is monitoring who is using the site or if they know the balance of policymakers versus the general public. She can ask about this if necessary.

Dan asked me if Minneapolis or St. Paul schools archived their materials in a way that made them available (or a question very similar to this). I told him that these were two of my next calls, but that it appeared as though information directly from the schools was not exactly easy to find or understand. He mentioned the state department of education and I told him what we heard in the first advisory meeting: that the state was not prioritizing analysis or communication with the public given its preoccupation with assessing compliance with federal initiatives like No Child Left Behind. He told me that St. Paul does not have a very systematic approach to archiving.

In terms of what has been tried, Dan said that Wilder has done evaluations for clients including the Saint Paul Schools, but he doesn't exactly know how those evaluations are always used. After he did an assessment of an early childhood program, Saint Paul used it and implemented a successful technique or program across the city. In other cases, it has been less clear what happened after the assessment was complete. He said that when federal money goes away, programs end and the outcomes are hard to even measure. I told him about Scott and Denny's work in 2007 and the list of 400 initiatives and programs. Dan smiled knowingly at this and confirmed that a history of short-lived programs that cannot be or were not evaluated has been a serious problem. This was a segue-way into a more casual, frank conversation about some of the motivations behind the library project and current problems with the "fits and starts" pattern that contributed to the state failing in the Race to the Top competition and the Gates Foundation pulling out of Minnesota because of lack of coordinated efforts in education. Dan completely agrees on the damage done by years of uncoordinated efforts and spoke with the most conviction that I had seen in the meeting about how "faddish" so many education initiatives are. This is a problem because it not only makes programs very difficult to assess, because they are rarely or never implemented in ways consistent with initial plans or objectives, but that fads and individual superintendent's rotating visions (that they often never see through themselves because their tenures are so short) has bred teacher complaisance. This complaisance and lack of buy-in is, then, is a real barrier to effective implementation. He agrees that there has not been a concerted effort to amass what we know and what we don't know out of the mass of initiatives and data. "We need a common vision," he said, and "we're [Minnesota is] resting on laurels."

After I told Dan and Heather what I thought I was getting from them, to make sure I understood what they had told me, Heather told me that yes, they will accept a report or analysis from us for inclusion in Compass, but that it must be a link from a website. They are not equipped to provide PDFs; all the reports on Compass are linked. I mentioned that we had tossed around the idea of partnering with or putting information on MMEP's website and she said, "Oh, I look at that all the time. We watch it."

Heather also suggested that we could scan and upload the materials that Scott collected and simply provide them on the web if all else fails. She had said, however, very early in the meeting that Wilder and Compass do not do this. They provide "digested" material for policymakers' and public consumption.

Dan and Heather offered more input via e-mail if need be. Heather, while knowledgeable about Wilder's library approaches and content, will probably not be a necessary re-contact unless the Gap Committee decides that they want to submit a report to Compass. Dan could be an important ongoing contact given his research experience on the very issues that are important to the Committee and his familiarity with local initiatives, especially in Saint Paul it seems.

Appendix E

Summary of Meeting with Danielle Grant

Christine Manganaro

July 26, 2011

At Minneapolis Public School headquarters in Northeast. Grant is Director of Indian Education for the Minneapolis Public Schools.

2-3:30 p.m.

After I explained the project's impetus and what we had done so far, Danielle explained a little about her experience with the achievement gap issue and working for the Youth Coordinating Board. She explained that there have been efforts that her experience dictated would not work, but people went through with them anyway. The example she used was the Youth Are Here Bus that was started on the North side and in south Minneapolis. She said she could have told the people starting that program that it would be impossible to get black, Latino, and Somali kids to ride the same bus, and it was. The program failed.

Basically, she shared the sentiment that there have been misguided programs that have been repeated later because of shallow historical memory and the short amounts of time that most people spend in jobs dealing with these issues before moving on. At a meeting of the YCB recently, Danielle learned that they were planning to build a database of some kind that was precisely the same as the one they had sold off years ago, that was in place when she worked for them, and no one seemed aware that the YCB was about to embark on a re-do of a project they had already done, paid for, and then discarded or moved elsewhere.

She said a searchable database would be good. The MPS website is supposed to be re-launched on July 27, so for the last six months, no one has been updating or maintaining department sites pending the revamped site launch. She indicated that the searchability of the site in place when we talked was terrible.

[[Danielle did most of the talking and made a number of observations about how things have worked and continue to work locally. This account reflects the meandering conversation we had.]] Danielle told me that the Minneapolis Public Schools are very conservative with student data – more conservative than a lot of districts. This can make it difficult to make some data available since anything that could be traced to specific students is kept confidential. For example, providing graduation rate data about American Indian students in south Minneapolis is no problem since there are a significant number of Indian students in those schools. The data is anonymous. Contrast this with graduation rate data for Indian kids on the North side. It is usually kept in house since there are so few Native students in North schools that the outcome could be traced to specific kids. Danielle said that one of the high level administrators at the district has complained that this approach in general makes it hard to compare findings and that the conservatism with student data is overdone.

Under Bernadeia Johnson, the newest superintendent, there is now a “total equity lens.” The district paid for – and Danielle emphasized, managed to *schedule* – administrators’ and teachers’ attendance at the Leading for Equity Institute. Given the financial output and difficulty of arranging for so many important people to be unavailable for a couple of days while at the Institute, this was an enormous

priority and commitment to making it happen. The district is continuing to work with the National Equity Project. Danielle mentioned that in a previous job, she worked then Minneapolis mayor Sharon Sayles Benton, whose lens was so focused on kids that on almost every topic, her question was “How does this affect kids?” This same approach is coming out of the superintendent’s office, except the lens is equity. We talked about how equity in education, specifically in regard to opportunity, is something other local organizations like OAP have been taking up. She says she is hopeful about this direction and its potential for creating a culture of always thinking about equity before doing anything. Regarding where equity fits into the whole achievement and opportunity matrix, Danielle said Indian education work *is* equity work. School district work *is* equity work.

The intention behind the new Memorandum of Agreement between the Minneapolis Indian community and the MPS, in addition to renewing the contents of the previous one, is to create more measurable outcomes and to make best practices work and research significant priorities. Lynn Nordgren of the teachers’ union is also involved so that there is more teacher participation and buy-in.

Regarding budget issues and their effect on Indian education: Indian ed and English language learning programs have not taken cuts under Bernadeia, who seems them as historically underfunded, not ripe for further reduction. They also recently got a big federal grant for college preparation. They are six months in on the four-year project.

[[Danielle mentioned the Children’s Agenda 2020. This is worth comparing with Minneapolis Children 2007.]]

I had explained that one of the projects we would be working on was creating timelines of both promises and initiatives. I’m also thinking about working on a timeline related to inequity. I asked Danielle what we should look at and how we should go about a search if we were trying to trace inequity generally or American Indian student opportunity specifically. She said that we could look on the Indian education page on the MPS website, which has an explanation about why the department exists. She said the PIE (Phillips Indian Educators) website that we had already talked about would also be helpful. Danielle shared that Minneapolis was the first non-reservation school district to receive Title VII, both because of the numbers of Indian students it has served and because of the activism in Minneapolis around that time and Minneapolis’ centrality to AIM (the American Indian Movement).

Danielle does not have specific suggestions for “required reading” on the achievement gap or inequity.

I asked her to speak candidly about her ideas, suggestions for what we should avoid, especially if it seemed like there would be heavy overlap with other efforts, and who I should talk to. She said she thought there might be some overlap with what MinnCAN was doing, but that we should check. She also said she was involved with MMEP, whose focus on research, convening, and advocacy was a close match in objective. She agrees that MMEP is very active and influential. Danielle said I must talk to Jennifer Godinez at MMEP especially since she is very passionate and knowledgeable about new immigrant populations.

Danielle emphasized that it is not helpful to have a website without also creating ongoing opportunities for dialog. The Committee needs to think about convening on this. If it develops a

website, it will need to walk people through and keep doing that. Just making a site without actively publicizing it and showing people what it can do – by putting them in a room and walking them through it – is not helpful. She mentioned that what happened with City Children 2007 and now the 2020 agenda is that they were focused too far out, too far in the future for people to feel incited over the next couple of years. With this kind of effort, people get sick of it, get bored, or leave jobs associated with it and it becomes a dead end. “This is why 20 year plans are dumb,” she said. People become exhausted and move on and there is no historical or institutional memory to help avoid the same mistakes and overshoot initiatives. She did agree a couple of times that a lack of historical memory contributed to wasted effort.

Danielle said we must connect with the Itasca Project or at least read their stuff.

Danielle showed me a map of the district and how the neighborhoods are broken into different zones and schools. I had asked a question about the equity agenda and how parents in different parts of Minneapolis responded or failed to respond to the equity agenda, who knew about it, who fought it (if anyone), and so on. She said that Minneapolis liberals quite classically say they care about equity, but not when it begins to affect their child or limit school choice. She explained how white parents strategized to get their sons and daughters into South High by having them apply to be part of the learning community there that uses Native pedagogy and content. Once they start school, the white students drop out of that specific program after they’ve been admitted, but remain at South. These parents did not like being limited by the regular placement options, so they found this back door, which means students who truly want or need that program do not get access. Danielle showed me on the map what she and others call the “Fertile Crescent” of voters in Minneapolis, stretching from Linden Hills through south Minneapolis in kind of a crescent moon shape. This is a largely white, disproportionately affluent part of the district in which parents vote in much higher numbers and are more involved. They support equity generally, but are aggressive about getting what they want for their kids when push comes to shove.

Danielle and I also chatted about what was happening in Eden Prairie, in which white parents are unapologetically pulling their kids out of those schools and sending them to Minnetonka (which is taking them, apparently) because they are concerned about the number of Somali kids attending Eden Prairie Schools. Danielle said that the situation in Minneapolis can be frustrating, but at least white parents in Minneapolis have some sense of decorum and subtlety about dealing with where their kids go to school and don’t just say right out that they want out because of Somali kids.

When I asked how the public will in the Fertile Crescent affects the MPS equity agenda, Danielle explained that the new election procedure for the school board, in which there are members from several neighborhoods and two at large chairs rather than all at large members, means that white people are elected to those at large chairs and this will always be the case. She also said that the way the zones are laid out, it will be nigh impossible for an American Indian member to be elected given that the zone is shared with *the* concentration of Somali residents. There is currently no black board member even though the majority of children attending Minneapolis schools, by race, are black. I think Danielle said there has not been a black board member in 20 years.

When working on an equity timeline, it would be a good idea to include school board seats in this analysis.

Danielle offered future input and advice if I need it and asked me to say hello to Scott.

Appendix F

Summary of Meeting with Neal Thao

Christine Manganaro

July 29, 2011

At Perkins at University Avenue and Snelling Avenue. Neal Thao is a professor of social work at Metropolitan State University and has worked with Ready4K.

10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

After I explained the basics of the project, Neal made several recommendations about who to touch base with to get more information and a sense of how to reach the precise constituency we are focused on. He mentioned Head Start and the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul. The Cultural Center has a large library that it adds to constantly. It includes masters' theses and dissertations as well as a lot of other information gathered on any topic related to Hmong people.

Neal said that things have improved in public schools in the Twin Cities since he arrived in 1984. Then, cultural celebrations looked completely different. Now, on Cinco de Mayo, there are many Latino children dressed up and celebrating with knowledge about the holiday. It's the same at Hmong New Year. There are a lot of Hmong kids partaking in what is a familiar event for them.

Regarding where the Committee puts the physical archive, Neal said that the Saint Paul Libraries or another community space would be more accessible to minority users. The Minnesota Historical Society is more elite, more upper class. There is a tendency for some minority people to avoid places like that. Putting the archive in a place that many people are comfortable visiting is one consideration for the Committee. It is part of creating an information system that works for everybody.

Neal also suggested contacting Mission Possible, which works with disadvantaged kids on ACT and SAT preparation. Ask them how they reach out to people. Ask the Boy Scouts, too. They have been very successful connecting with Hmong kids or other minority students in Saint Paul.

The Committee must be flexible about what its target constituency is and it should think about the community as it makes plans. Identify the constituents who are first priority. Neal says the focus should be on professionals, people who do ESL work, people involved in charter schools, and other educated people. They will use the library or clearinghouse to stimulate their efforts. The next constituency might be parents. Be clear if this is the plan. The question is how to get this project to the people. Neal says that professionals who work in a capacity to put ideas from the library into action should be the primary target since that the way the information will make its way to the people. "Rank and file" citizens will not put the information to use in the same way because they cannot.

Neal said that educators are very familiar with MMEP, with whom he worked for eight years. Members of the public are more familiar with ECFE – Early Childhood and Family Education, which serves a lot of low-income families. It also serves parents who sign up for its programs who are moving into the middle class. Neal said this group – minority parents who are becoming middle class – should be another primary target since they are becoming the group that can advocate in

more powerful ways. They are becoming more like white middle class parents in their approach to their children's education.

Focusing on leaders makes sense because they know what research is, exactly, and what to do with it. Superintendents and school leaders should be the target because they make change. Policymakers talk a lot, but the people on the ground who make decisions are school officials. Another target related to this is students who are studying for advanced degrees in teaching and social work. They work with children and need this information.

Also check out FFN (Family Friendly Network). Ready4K serves this constituency. Neal says that in general it is mothers who are involved in this. In the Hmong community, moms and aunts have historically done more of this work than fathers, whose role is to work and hunt and be involved in family affairs other than the education work typically done by women.

One place that has a lot of resources on Hmong topics is University of California-Davis. And people know about it. Word travels when there are resources that people can really use, that are stable, that are unique.

We should talk to Jesse Lee at Ready4K. He does a lot of training for Ready4K. He has the listserv for Hmong and minority educators more generally. There is an annual Hmong Summit and Jesse will have this info, on research. [It was not clear exactly what this research is.]

Neal talked about how he takes the achievement gap discussion with a grain of salt. Test scores and other typical measurements of achievement are middle class concerns. Neal wants to focus on other things like engagement in school, attendance, culturally appropriate and useful approaches, parent involvement, and outreach to parents. He is also concerned about groups who need help and who are more specific than we might assume. He does not worry about African Americans in Frogtown, for example. They are basically middle class. He worries about African American kids who moved to the Twin Cities from Gary, Indiana and are struggling. We need to focus, generally, on where the need is.

Neal shared that he sent his own child to boarding school on the East Coast. We talked about that choice and about the value of education in his family. He has a number of nieces and nephews with degrees, both undergraduate and advanced, from top colleges such as Brown and the University of Chicago.

Poverty and disruption are huge problems in schools, Neal says. He visited Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis – one of many, many schools he has visited from Minnesota to Manhattan to Georgia and Texas – and it was mayhem. Teachers get exhausted and cannot manage in such a chaotic environment. There are also problems with minority, especially immigrant, students who do well in their ESL curricula and are promoted to AP and IB programs and then their needs are not met (they feel condescension in some cases) or there are problems with teachers assuming that they are cheating if they have done too well. The system lacks support for single parents. There are also problems with the ways that districts identify gifted and talented students, who are disproportionately white a lot of the time because their parents are often more attuned to how the system works and they are assertive about getting their kids into advanced programs. Saint Paul uses the Discover Test now on all students enrolled in kindergarten through second grade so that they can locate kids of color who qualify for the gifted and talented program at the Capitol School.

Neal said that at most schools, it is not the principal whose tone affects parents initially. It is the receptionist. If parents call the school and the first person they speak to scares them off, they are hard to get back and they won't be involved.

Neal says the charter school movement started because people want a culture that is sensitive to their needs. Charter schools are off and running, but it is too early to know if they are effective. Neal said that something like 17 schools in Minneapolis closed, in part because school officials would not experiment in ways that might keep schools open. That is a lot of lost revenue for the district. He asked, what about the idea of opening a charter within an existing school? Neal said this idea never got any play because there is not enough experimental spirit about this kind of thing. This is a culture issue. There is not enough experimentation and too much sticking with the same approaches and then failing.

Neal related a discussion he and Don Fraser (and several others) had with Jeffrey Canada of Harlem Children's Zone. Canada said that his secret weapon was his staff. They are generally extremely energetic and often young. He expects them to burn out or go on to other career paths, but while he has them, he works with them as he also knows they will leave at some point and uses this great staff to recruit more like them.

Neal suggested that I look at Cristo Rey, started in Chicago and now here in Minneapolis. The program seems to be doing very helpful things for low-income, mostly Latino students. In Chicago it has a 95+% graduation rate. Neal also mentioned St. Paul Connection.

He offered additional ideas and input as needed.

Appendix G

Summary of Meeting with Rodolfo Gutierrez

Christine Manganaro
August 2, 2011
At HACER office.
9:30-10:45 a.m.

After I explained the project to Rodolfo, he explained some of the history of HACER. Rodolfo arrived in 2007. HACER came out of the Brown Power Initiative, which is supported by the National Dream Fund. There have been parallel efforts in Mankato, Owatonna, and Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Foundation had led local foundations in an effort to pool money and call for proposals. Several organizations, including the Institute on Race and Poverty and HACER, were designated as focused on research to end segregation. (IRP still does this.) The other function was an advocacy function, as opposed to research, which we did not go into. There was an initial 3-year effort and then the funding ran out. HACER is working on a new project with the Somali Action Alliance on ESL programming in Minneapolis Public Schools and on community and family involvement.

HACER's past research efforts are described on their website, for the most part. There is still some updating that needs to be done. The latest report on the site was finished in 2007. HACER is presently working on a number of projects, most of which are through partnerships and collaboration with other organizations. One focus is school suspension. They are also working on an enormous comparative project on migrant students. This includes comparative work on migrants and education. They are collaborating with Pan-American University in Texas. HACER is a member of the EEOC (Education Equity Organizing Collaborative) supported by OAP. And HACER is working with CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio) on health care and with CLAC (Chicano Latino Affairs Council) on increasing the educational level of Latinos. Recently, HACER became affiliated with MMEP. There is also a charter high school for Latinos in South Minneapolis, El Colegio, with which HACER has a relationship. (Rodolfo is on their board, according to the El Colegio website.)

HACER is working with the Human Rights Commissioner. (I think this means at the state level rather than national.) There is support from the Blandin Foundation, which focuses on rural areas, to study demographics. HACER wants an emphasis on education in this project.

I asked Rodolfo who the audience was for the HACER website. He said legislators, community organizations, lawyers (especially immigration lawyers), health care providers, and emerging organizations. They also get a lot of calls requesting more details about the content on the site. A new site is in the works, but Rodolfo did not tell me how it would differ from the current site.

I also asked Rodolfo what HACER's relationship with the University of Minnesota was and is now. He said HACER's affiliation began 26 years ago when Jesse Betcke, who was involved in research in the Humphrey Institute in some way, was the steward of a collaboration among a few entities doing research: CURA, Augsburg, Hamline, Macalester, and the Chicano Studies program at the University. Initially HACER was housed within CURA, which hosted them; they were not part of CURA. HACER was never an official program or department of the UMN; the UMN has simply

been a host. HACER moved from its original office within CURA to its current site in Appleby Hall on the East Bank when a new CURA director arrived, after Bettecke, and decided that CURA needed the space back. The new location is less ideal for HACER, but the upside is that they continue their host-guest relationship with the UMN and were not moved off campus. HACER pays no rent for its space and there are benefits to being on campus in a University-maintained building.

I asked Rodolfo what he considered required reading or especially generative sources on the achievement and equity gaps both for Hispanic/Latino students and generally speaking. He said that we had to look at the Itasca Project. There is an associated collection of what has been done. This is a “must” for looking at before doing any project on education in Minnesota. Rodolfo also suggested looking at the work of one of CURA’s researchers who has done work up north on minorities, particularly new immigrants. This is “wonderful,” Rodolfo said, in part because it deals with new immigrants so broadly. Both Hispanic/Latino students and new immigrants from Scandinavia are included. Finally, Rodolfo recommended looking at information that has come out of meetings that the Minneapolis Foundation has hosted on education. They have reports on their website on talks given by people like Wendy Kopp of Teach for America and Carlos Mariani.

Regarding HACER’s own library: They have binders of their research files and electronic form. These are in the HACER office as well as in the basement of Appleby Hall. A lot of the work they do is client research that is not for public consumption. For example, UCare has contracted with HACER, but does not want the research done for them publicly available. It sounds like HACER has put its most important research on the website and will make as much as they can available as the site is updated.

I asked Rodolfo to comment on the degree to which HACER’s researchers have been able to differentiate Hispanic/Latino people and undocumented people. He said that it is difficult to do this, especially in places like southern Minnesota where there are more undocumented people who are wary about being identified as undocumented. In some cases, Rodolfo said that people who were probably undocumented were initially willing to talk with HACER, but changed their minds once they realized that there was research going on. They were too worried about their status somehow being revealed in ways that could hurt them later. Rodolfo noted that it is illegal to flat out ask people about their status, so HACER does not ask. The whole situation makes differentiating migrants who are documented and undocumented very difficult. There are a few organizations that take this on anyway and are doing some analysis. Centro Campesino is one of them. They work in Austin, Watseka, and Mankato. Another organization is Centre Cultural Chicano in Moorhead. HACER helps CCC read their own data by providing them with estimates of what percentage of their contacts are likely undocumented so that CCC can apply that to their research. The Institute on Race and Poverty works on this, too, a little.

Note that Rodolfo is on the board at the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

Rodolfo provided some advice about how to proceed with the project, mostly by suggesting a few other contacts. He said specifically that we need to follow up with organizations that are really working to change these patterns around the gap. One place to look for information is the Mexican Consulate, which is involved in promoting support for adult education and higher education. Another contact is Hector Garcia, the director of CLAC. He is promoting alliances and wants research and action to come together. The CLAC website has reports that might interest us. The

National Council of La Raza has representatives in Minnesota. It would be great to bring some of La Raza's experiments to Minnesota (which Rodolfo agrees, like some other people I have interviewed, has been resistant to the kind of experimentation and innovation necessary to create lasting change). Finally, Rodolfo recommended Minnesota Compass (Wilder) for its information. He is on their advisory board.

When we were talking about schools that work, Rodolfo praised El Colegio in South Minneapolis. I pointed out that researchers from the Institute on Race and Poverty have argued convincingly that charter schools have seriously exacerbated school segregation. Rodolfo knows the IRP very well. He knows Myron well and joked about their banter back and forth about this. He said that there are charter schools that are doing terribly, but there are some that have really started meeting the needs of minority kids in ways their needs were not even close to being met in other schools. He and Myron have talked about this. Myron and the IRP's primary focus is segregation, so they have argued based on their findings that yes, indeed, charter schools have exacerbated segregation. They have also argued from both local and national evidence that segregation negatively impacts the achievement gap. Rodolfo concedes that there is solid evidence that charter schools have helped exacerbate school segregation, but he also insists that some of those schools are serving minority kids very, very well. This appears to be an important crossroads for analysis and questions about priorities in education policy. Rodolfo agreed with this assessment.

Rodolfo answered a couple of questions that Nancy put on the agenda. One was about whether HACER or another research group had done research on K-12 districts or early childhood programs that could demonstrate effectiveness with Latino kids. Norma Garces who works for Hennepin County knows something about those efforts. Carlos Mariani and OAP will have some documentation on this. Regarding whether there are approaches or strategies that HACER considers "best practices" for Latino education, he said that the best model was Hiawatha Academy, which has created classes that emphasize parent participation. Parents are also on the board of directors and there are community representatives involved. Talk to Chris at Hiawatha Academy, who could perhaps give us a tour. Rodolfo said we would see a diverse population of kids who are happy. Finally, another contact on these issues and in general is Alberto Monserrate, who is on the board of the Minneapolis Public Schools. Rodolfo called him a key informant. Alberto has also had key involvement in the Race to the Top process.

Rodolfo is happy to participate in the next focus/advisory group and wants to be kept informed.

