



Working to Close the Achievement Gap

By Nicole Adrian

While educators, administrators and lawmakers have dozens upon dozens of educational issues to think about, act on, plan for and worry about, it seems that closing the achievement gap should be at the top of the list of issues.

The U.S. Department of Education describes the achievement gap as, “The difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups.” But those disparities can also occur between English learners and native English speakers, socio-economically disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged students, and students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities.

It seems only right that all students be given the opportunity to be successful in their academic careers. Many schools and districts throughout the country are working hard to find innovative ways to improve teaching and learning for students at all learning and ability levels. The authors of the articles included in this issue of *Primary and Secondary Education Brief* come from a variety of educational backgrounds, and the programs and projects they implemented affect students from many economic and social backgrounds and races.

Two administrators from Colorado Springs School District 11 write about how the administration and staff implemented a three-tiered response to an intervention approach in an attempt to close the achievement gap. The program includes interventions and support for all students performing below grade level.

In another article, from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, the authors detail examples of how three schools around the country are working to meet annual measurable achievement objectives, especially with the diverse make up of today’s schools.

Lisa Palacios from Learning Points Associates describes how a New York state school district underwent a district-level curriculum audit to turn student performance around. The district had been designated, based on performance in English language arts, as one in need of improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Lastly, Marcy Lauck from California’s San Jose Unified School District—which serves 32,000 students, more than half of which are Hispanic and 47% are socio-



economically disadvantaged—writes about the district’s Choice Plan, an innovative remedy to avoid mandatory busing segregation.

While these projects and programs may be specific to the districts or schools in which they are occurring, the message these stories carry is the most important—implement innovative approaches to help those students most in need so the achievement gap can get smaller, and all students can be successful and educated.