



San Diego Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Three San Diego Schools Stand Out for Narrowing Achievement Gaps

An independent report by Standard and Poor's shows that three San Diego Unified School District schools are significantly closing achievement gaps between higher- and lower-performing student groups. San Diego is one of only five districts in the state with at least three schools that have significantly narrowed at least one achievement gap between student groups. Schools recognized in the study include two middle schools and one elementary school: Dana and Correia Middle Schools in Point Loma and Hickman Elementary in Mira Mesa.

Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services this month announced it has identified exemplary California schools that have significantly narrowed reading and math achievement gaps between higher- and lower-performing student groups during the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years.

"It is difficult to narrow achievement gaps," said Thomas Sheridan, vice president of New York-based Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services. "However, this analysis shows that there are a number of schools that have made outstanding progress. Their success should be commended, and their practices should be more closely examined to illuminate the strategies that can be implemented by educators in other parts of California who are working hard to raise the performance of all students."

"This statewide recognition was earned by very significant academic achievement that narrows the gap between groups of students," said Dr. Carl A. Cohn, Superintendent of Schools for San Diego Unified School District. "This honor was attained by a diverse cross section of dedicated students, teachers and schools here during the past two school years. This district has proven that it can be done. All students can learn and excel."

The latest report represents Standard & Poor's second analysis of achievement gaps in California, updating the initial study to analyze performance trends through the 2004-05 school year. This study takes a closer look at achievement gaps by focusing on schools, rather than school districts, that have made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap between student groups.

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To be recognized for significantly narrowing the achievement gaps, schools had to meet all of the following criteria:

- test at least 30 students in each student group being analyzed.
- reduce at least one achievement gap between student groups in Reading and Math Proficiency (RaMP™) rates by more than five percentage points from one year to the next; and simultaneously raise the RaMP rates for each student group being compared.
- reduce at least one achievement gap between student groups in a grade-level reading test by more than five percentage points from one year to the next; and simultaneously raise that grade-level reading proficiency rate for each student group being compared. Must demonstrate similar progress in math, though not necessarily in the same grade level.

Dana Elementary and Correia Junior High were the only K-8 schools in San Diego County recognized for narrowing the gap between African American and white students. Dana closed achievement gaps among African American and white students in fifth grade reading and fifth grade math. Correia closed achievement gaps among African American and white students in eighth grade reading and seventh and eighth grade math.

Hickman Elementary closed gaps among economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in fourth and fifth grade reading and third and fifth grade math. Only one other K-6 school in the County received similar recognition.

A total of 103 schools statewide were identified for narrowing achievement gaps. In the statewide study of schools with at least 30 students tested in each subgroup, only 2.4 percent of those schools significantly closed achievement gaps among black and white students, while 2.3 percent closed gaps among Hispanic and white students, and 2.6 percent closed gaps among economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

Since 2001, the mission of S&P's School Evaluation Services has been to provide educators, policymakers, business leaders, parents, and taxpayers with an objective, independent analysis of school and school district data to allow them to implement more effective school reform policies.

S&P analysts, some of whom are former educators, have been studying educational research and methodologies for a number of years. Based on what they have learned from both school administrators and policymakers, they wanted to develop a service that looked beyond financial information and, instead, focused on a comprehensive review of all education information. From this idea, S&P created a new business unit, School Evaluation Services, and developed its unique Return on Resources framework to synthesize student performance, financial information, and community and school demographics to help explain school and school district performance holistically.

S&P makes its data and analysis available to the public on a free, interactive website called www.SchoolMatters.com. S&P is an independent third party with no vested interest or partisan affiliation. The latest report was produced through the National Education Data Partnership (NEDP), which is funded by The Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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