

Urban Education: A Position Paper

As a staunch champion of public education, the Association of California School Administrators advocates for the preservation and improvement of the educational quality of life for students attending urban schools.

UEC Purpose

- To identify and study issues relating to urban education.
- To emphasize the need to improve educational opportunity for children in urban school districts.
- To build capacity in school leadership to support and address the unique needs in urban school districts.
- To recommend policy solutions and/or courses of action to deal with problems and needs of urban schools.
- To assist the ACSA Board of Directors in implementing those aspects of the association goals that address urban education issues.

Setting the Stage: What defines an Urban School District?

Urban school districts are located in areas with concentrated student populations. They have ADAs of 20,000 or more and are experiencing a sense of urgency in closing the achievement gap. Urban districts face most of the following challenges:

- Linguistic and Cultural Proficiency Diversity (community/student).
- Transiency and Mobility.
- Socioeconomics.
- Political Landscaping.
- Density/Urban Center.
- Achievement Gap.
- Parent/Community Education Level.
- ADA size.

Goal

The Urban Education Committee aims to focus increased attention on: ensuring all students in urban districts acquire essential skills and knowledge needed to excel; changing perceptions about urban schools; and giving the students of California a quality education.

The Urban Education Committee urgently promotes the education community's imperative charge to close the achievement gap. Our role as educational leaders is to identify, prepare and support committed educational

leaders who respond to the call for active leadership in closing the achievement gap for urban students.

Current Reality

According to the California Superintendent of Public Instruction, as of school year 2006-2007 there were 6.3 million students enrolled in California Public Schools. Of that number, approximately 2 million students, or one-third, are enrolled in districts defined as urban. Students enrolled in urban districts consistently, with few exceptions, score below the state average on standardized tests.

Test scores have placed a significant number of urban districts into Program Improvement status. Demographics and other issues contribute to the challenges that impede educational progress and improvement in urban districts.

Our Roadmap

This position paper outlines eight standards that educators, lawmakers and community leaders must reach in order to accelerate learning for all students while closing the achievement gap. Our challenge is to change perceptions about education in urban schools and give students of California a quality education.

Standard I: Leadership

ACSA believes: All students are entitled to culturally proficient educational leaders who possess skills, knowledge and understanding of issues associated with urban education. Urban districts deserve educational leaders who possess a skill set associated with urban education.

Standard II: Three R's

ACSA promotes the belief that:

- All students in urban districts are entitled to a rigorous (challenging) PreK-12 instructional program with strategic support and interventions.
- All students in urban districts deserve relevant (engaging) curriculum.
- All students in urban districts are entitled to a connection to their school experience through positive peer and adult relationships.

Standard III: Recruitment, Hiring and Retention of Highly Qualified Staff

ACSA believes all students in urban districts are entitled to highly qualified and culturally proficient staff who establish and communicate high expectations for themselves and the students they serve.

Standard IV: Health/Safety

ACSA promotes the belief that all students in urban districts are entitled to a safe learning environment and access to health services that address their physical, social and emotional well being.

Standard V: Community and Public Agency Partnerships

ACSA promotes the belief that all students in urban districts are entitled to benefit from partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations, law enforcement and social agencies that support a comprehensive educational program. ACSA must play a major role in providing the guidance needed to develop these partnerships.

Standard VI: Legislation

ACSA promotes the belief that all students are entitled to a Legislature that recognizes and responds to the unique needs of urban districts. All students are entitled to a Legislature which supports adequate funding for all students and understands the unique needs of urban students and schools. All students are entitled to a Legislature that seeks input and considers the impact legislation has on urban districts.

Standard VII: Professional Development

ACSA promotes the belief that all students in urban districts are entitled to educators who embrace and participate in structured, ongoing professional development focused on relevant teaching and learning.

Standard VIII: Sustainability

ACSA promotes the belief that all students are entitled to a system that supports collaboration between ACSA, districts and other educational agencies to foster continuous conversations around urban education issues.

Desired Outcome

It is the desired outcome that urban school districts will:

- have sufficient fiscal and community resources;
- have highly qualified, culturally sensitive teachers, administrators and support staff;
- change perceptions about education in urban schools;

- close the current achievement gap; and
- ensure the highest achievement levels for all students.