



Summary:

Partnership Name: All Hands Raised

Initiative: Using data to close the achievement gap

Issue: Significant gaps between white students and students of color

Method Applied: Promoting data-driven decision making to change policy and practice

Results: The graduation rate in the All Hands Raised region increased by 8 percentage points over the past three years. Latino students, the region's largest minority, helped drive those gains with a 13 percentage point increase over the same period.

Take-away for Practice:

Use data to help drive focus in your work. Start simple with the data you have and think creatively about how to get the data you need. Dig deep into the data and engage partners in its analysis. Be brave, transparent, and honest in acknowledging your community's disparities. Use what the data tells you to frame your work going forward.

Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap

Challenging an Urban Myth: Acknowledging the Achievement Gap

One of the great powers of using data to inform community decision making is the ability to challenge persistent myths. A pervasive myth in Portland was that when it came to education, everything was going just fine. The community treasured its schools and common knowledge placed the overall graduation rate at about 80%, with only slight gaps separating white students and students of color. Another myth was that the vast majority of Portlanders were white.

But committed leaders from across different sectors, led by leaders from within communities of color and other partners, were willing to come together to take a closer look at what the data were really saying to them. This is what they found:

➤ When looking at the overall demographics of the region, a tremendous shift was occurring, namely:

- 3 in 10 residents were people of color; and
- 1 in 2 students were people of color.

➤ When comparing education outcomes from cradle to career, there was a significant gap between white students and students of color. In fact, there was a gap in every corner of the community and in every school, with African American, Latino, and Native American students consistently lagging behind.

➤ The average graduation rate for all students in recent years had actually been closer to 50% and gaps as large as 30 percentage points separated white students from students of color in any graduating class.

A Call to Action for Racial Equity

Compelled by this data, Portland leaders made the bold decision to be transparent about the reality on the ground and address it head-on. Today, through All Hands



Raised – a unique cross-sector partnership made up of leaders from the education, business, non-profit, philanthropic, and civic sectors – they have vowed to take action to achieve their shared vision: enabling ALL children to reach their full potential.

Portland Public Schools Superintendent Carole Smith, a member of the All Hands Raised Council, captured the collective belief of the partnership when it came to the achievement gap. "More than family income, more than language proficiency, more than disability and giftedness, race is the single most predictive factor in our students' success," said Smith. "In a time of ever tightening resources it is all too possible for some to portray this equity work as a tradeoff – that the needs of some students will go wanting while we do this work. Instead, I believe that by confronting our biggest shortcomings, we will become a more flexible, responsive and accountable community where all students can thrive and learn from each other what it means to succeed in a world of diverse races, incomes, learning abilities and languages."

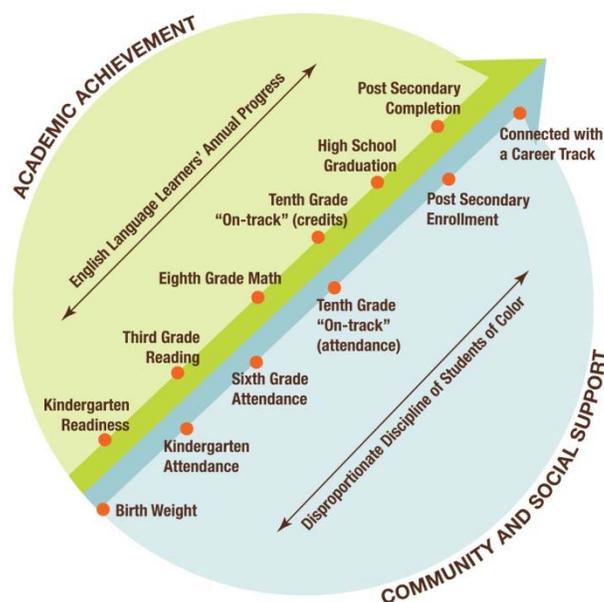
Targeting Equity Every Step of the Way

For each of the key indicators adopted by the All Hands Raised Partnership, leaders adopted a target for overall improvement, plus an accelerated target for specific groups of students in order to close the gaps impacting students of color.

Responding in Multiple Ways: Changing Policy and Practice

Through strong district leadership, in partnership with peers across sectors, the partners are taking action by challenging themselves to do more and to expect more, changing internal policies to support improvements for every child and identifying practices that get results:

- **Courageous Conversations:** District leaders, staff, and community partners have undertaken a series of "courageous conversations" to get underneath the causes of pervasive achievement gaps. Participants in these discussions not only ask themselves what they need to do differently, but identify concrete actions to take in communities and schools to have impact.
- **Powerful Policy Change:** District leaders have adopted policies that make data analysis related to the achievement gap part of their standard practice. Portland Public Schools also hired a Chief Equity Officer to drive action around the achievement gap and oversee professional development. This enables staff to identify white privilege and institutional racism that often goes unnoticed. Through the All Hands Raised Partnership, superintendents from the six participating districts have launched a shared action plan with community leaders of color to identify and address systemic inequities throughout their respective organizations.



- Identifying Practices that Work: A deep dive into the data made it clear that the transition from middle to high school was a crucial time for addressing the achievement gap. Based on this finding, All Hands Raised has convened key partners working to ease the transition from middle to high school, with a focus on partnering with culturally-specific community organizations. These partners work together to identify local practices that help ensure students not only make this step in their journey, but also stay on track to graduate by earning sufficient credits in their freshman year of high school. In the end, many non-profits chose to repurpose their summer programming to implement these shared practices, including targeted case managers and access to 50 summer VISTA volunteers to bolster existing programs. This focused work on a critical transition point along the cradle to career continuum led to a significant increase in credit accumulation and attendance rates. The partners continue to review data monthly and make further improvements with support from continuous improvement experts from Providence Health & Services, Oregon's largest employer.

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The bottom line: these efforts have led to a consistent reduction in the achievement gap as illustrated in the data below from Portland Public Schools.

Milestone	2009-10 Actual	2010-11 Target	2010-11 Actual
 Reading to Learn (Exceed benchmark by the end of 3rd grade)	46%	Keep up: +5	+5 (51%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 43pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-5 (38 pts) ✓
 Ready for High School (Meet writing benchmark in 7th grade)	52%	Keep up: +5	+10 (62%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 33pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-4 (29 pts)
 On Track to Graduate (Enter 10th grade with 6 credits)	54%	Keep up: +5	+5 (59%) ✓
	Largest gap: African-American v. white 33pts	Catch up: Close gap by 5	-5 (28 pts) ✓

Portland Public Schools, Milestone targets and results, published October 2012

Clearly there is more to do. But the leadership of All Hands Raised is poised to build on these successes by continuing to be transparent about what the data are actually saying and identifying ways to improve the learning journey of every child.

