

Lemmings Refuse to Accept Facts of Racial Differences In Intelligence

Federal Way Targets Racial Gap in Schools

by Linda Woo | Journal Reporter | July 7, 2001

A Jewess from the Federal Way system tries to teach a mulatto.

FEDERAL WAY - A 20-member task force will begin its work to narrow the racial gap in academics and discipline in the Federal Way School District.

The group was formed after a recent district study found that African-American students in the district are worse off than students of other races in several key areas.

"We know this is not just a school issue, but rather a community issue," Federal Way Schools Superintendent Tom Murphy said.

On average, **African-American students have lower graduation rates and academic performance; they are far more likely to be suspended or expelled; and they are over-represented in special education programs and underrepresented in advanced classes.**

A gap also exists for Hispanic and American Indian students, although not as severely as for black students.

The 20-member Equity & Achievement Task Force is composed of business and civic leaders, educators, students and parents of different ethnic backgrounds.

They'll meet over the summer and into early fall to explore **four factors typically cited for students' poor school performance: poverty, mobility, cultural barriers and parent access and involvement** [Low I.Q. cannot be considered -- Jeff]. They'll also look at cultural issues and how well teachers and students communicate.

When their work is done, the group will have developed plans to boost academic levels of students of color. The task force will present its recommendations to the School Board in October.

The issue is not limited to Federal Way. Similar racial disparities have been reported in urban school districts across the country for decades.

“These are very complex issues and represent societal problems and a system that has been in place for many, many years — a system that may not have changed with our times,” Murphy said. “What’s important to do now is close the gap and create an environment where all students have the access and equity needed to succeed.”

Alma Dansby, who was the principal at Lake Dolloff Elementary School and was appointed to head a new Office of Equity and Achievement, will lead the task force. Dansby’s experience includes working as a cultural enrichment specialist and developing multicultural curricula for elementary school students.

In addition to hearing from experts, the task force will hold “listening forums” to hear from parents, students and teachers; review other groups’ initiatives to identify best practices; and conduct outreach to ethnic communities.

The task force will meet at the Educational Services Center, 31405 18th Ave. S. Meetings are scheduled for:

- Tomorrow, 5:30-8:30 p.m.
- Aug. 8, 4:30-7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 28, 4-7 p.m.
- Oct. 9, 4-7 p.m.

The sessions are open to the public, but are working meetings for the task force. Additional sessions and listening forums will be scheduled in September. Community members can send comments to the task force at the district’s Web site at <http://www.fwsd.wednet.edu>. Meeting notes will be posted on the Web site within one week of each meeting.