The Community Outreach Demonstration Project
“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”

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Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Washington has experienced a large increase in the population of students of color in recent years. According to a 2000 report from the Northwest Regional Educational Lab (NWREL) titled, *The UNITY PROJECT: Creating a Circle of Awareness*, the percent of students of color in 1980 was 12 percent. In 1998, the percent had jumped to 23 and, in 2004, students of color made up 28.6 percent of the student population of Washington. In 2000, 34 percent of Hispanic children and 24 percent of Asian children were living in households where English was not the primary language. A large proportion of children of color live in households that have less income, less education, less access to adequate housing and health care, and, in general, fewer advantages of all kinds than do white children.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction added Community Outreach to the responsibility of the Professional Education and Certification division. The division became known as Higher Education, Certification and Community Outreach.

**Mission**

Its mission was to address the unique needs of historically underachieving students, their families, their ethnically diverse communities, and educators of the K-20 educational institutions that provide those services. The overall purpose was to assist these schools, families, and communities to improve the educational outcomes primarily for historically marginalized students.

To accomplish this mission, Community Outreach adopted these primary goals:

1. Provide information about Washington State’s Education Reform Act and its provisions, the Essential Academic Learning Requirements, and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning to the public with a special focus on inclusion of the ethnic communities and minority educators.

2. Inform and educate students, parents, communities, and educators about the academic and success indicators of ethnic and minority students, the historical and current trends in the achievement gap, and strategies to address the gaps.

3. Provide technical assistance and research to students, families, communities, and educators regarding strategies for family and community involvement and the positive impact these have on student academic and school improvement, obtaining results beyond those of just professional development efforts.

4. Assist the improvement of student and school success by creating partnerships and shared responsibility for student learning among schools, districts, and community interests, such as, ethnic, hard to reach, low socio-economic families, Higher Education, K-12 educators, and community-based and faith-based organizations.

In order to implement these goals, Community Outreach convened in 1997 a special cadre of K-20 minority educator representatives and ethnic community leaders for the purpose of planning. Ethnic minorities were largely underrepresented in the earlier task forces, committees, and meetings that were convened during the adoption of education reform activities and policies. Each staff person was responsible for inviting 10 -15 people from across the state to review the data, particularly as it impacted the respective groups.
Shock

Shock!!! What? I can’t believe this information. Is this for real? I told you so. I knew it all of the time. What are the schools doing to our children? These statements were heard over and over again as the respective groups reviewed the data.

Overcoming the shock and looking more closely at the data and research were the major efforts to better understand the problems impacting marginalized groups of students. What does this mean? What can we do? These were major concerns of the group. The groups quickly recognized that blaming the school personnel was not the answer. It realized looking at the system including them in preparing their students to reach their full potential was much more realistic and responsible.

Individual Ethnic Think Tanks – Strategic Plans

The group was divided into five think tanks with staff support – African American, Asian Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latino, Native Americans, and Low Socio-Economic Status. The assignment was to outline issues and strategies vital to eliminating the achievement gap, accelerate the learning of their children that will guarantee their becoming productive and successful 21st century citizens. Each Think Tank developed and updated its Strategic Plan periodically.

Multi-Ethnic Think Tank – METT

It was soon realized there were common threads running through the strategic plans. The Think Tanks thought it would be a good idea to develop one paper from which they could all support. Teasing out the common threads was left to writers identified by each of the group. Dr. Thelma Jackson (African American) Miebeth Wooley (Asian, Pacific Islanders), Norma Zavala (Hispanic/Latino) Martina Whesula (Native American) represented the ethnic groups. The Low Socio-Economic Status (LSES) was considered a part of the group since a disproportionate number of students within the ethnic groups lived in poverty. LSES became a separate Think Tank because of the need to focus exclusively on the issue of poverty. Total acceptance was necessary for the METT paper to be accepted. As in all negotiations on something you believe and fight for, it was very difficult to compromise on the values and beliefs of your culture. Tears flowed, feelings hurt, unbecoming language, participants walking out. Many meetings were held. Drafts of the meetings were shared with the individual Think Tanks only to have drafts returned rejected.

Call To Action – Mandating An Equitable And Cultural Competent Education For All Students in Washington State – Adopted

Approximately a year later, the final draft was presented in a hotel in SeaTac. Contentious points remained unresolved. Throughout the day the leaders went to and fro to their respective Think Tanks to seek guidance and acceptance. The Think Tanks assembled for a final vote to determine if it was at all possible to have an agreement. Frustrated, words going back and forth in the large meeting, it was decided to try for a final vote or give up. When the final vote was called, all members stood with the exception of one. No one moved. Each holding their breath and their eyes on him waiting patiently and hoping for his vote. As he rose to provide consensus the participants broke out in an uproar, the METT had given birth to its guiding principles. The Think Tanks became the METT with the birth of Call To Action – Mandating An Equitable And Cultural Competent Education For All.

Dr. Terry Bergeson – Superintendent

The leaders and staff met with Dr. Bergeson to share the document outlining their concerns and recommendations. Dr. Bergeson understood and reflected on their concerns and in writing identified what she could support. Many of the recommendations have been accepted, implemented or in the process of being implemented. Her support included funds for the METT to meet at least twice a year, making presentations at meetings, and acknowledging its contributions in education.
Recognition

The document has been seen as very important and has been cited in many of the policy-making agencies including, State Board of Education, Washington State Senate and House Education Committees, Washington Education Association, Washington State School Directors Association, Association of Washington School Principals, Washington Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and many local school districts. The Washington Education Association forwarded the paper to the National Education Association as a model for other states to follow.

Unity Project

In order to observe the application and process of family and community involvement efforts, identify promising practices, and advocate for the implementation of effective school practices, the Think Tanks adopted 28 demonstration schools across the state, all of which had a high number of students of color and students from low income families. The schools were selected by additional criteria, such as student achievement and success factors and a willing principal who valued community involvement highly and was willing to network with other principals to address the problems and solutions in school reform and the achievement gap. All of the schools were to be elementary schools. Each Think Tank identified three to eight schools with high numbers of historically underachieving students for consideration. Community Outreach staff members of ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds were assigned to consult with and assist each Think Tank and each of the Unity schools that the Think Tank identified as a demonstration site.

In 1997, the achievement of the schools, as measured by the state WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) was extremely low. The average achievement in reading for fourth grade students in the 28 schools was 24.6 percent passing compared with the state average of 47.9 percent passing. In many of the schools, fewer than 30 percent of fourth graders passed the WASL reading test.

The Community Outreach effort was directed to systemically engage students, families, communities, post-secondary institutions, and other community agencies to align resources with schools to ensure success for all students. This process was given the name “UNITY,” an acronym for “Unifying Neighborhoods to Inspire and Teach Youth.” Providing technical assistance and training to and for educators, families, students, and community, community- and faith-based organizations as well as business and the K-12 and post-secondary education organizations is done through a model of forming inclusive partnerships. Integration of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and values into other traditional methodologies and the effective utilization and leverage of existing resources are a paramount requirement in order to assure the ability to replicate the success in any community school.

An underlying philosophy of the Unity Project was that parents and the community need to be actively involved in their child’s education. Responsibility for children’s achievement must be shared among school, parents, and community.

The Unity Project had two goals:

- Ninety percent of 1996-97 kindergarteners will read at grade level by third grade
- Families, communities, and post-secondary institutions will recognize and align resources with schools to ensure success

This report covers a seven-year time span and attempts to answer the following questions:

- To what extent have the Unity Schools improved the achievement of their students?
- What factors might be associated with gains in achievement?
- What are the lessons learned?
- Are there exemplary models?

Data for these goals are:
The 2004 WASL and ITBS Reading scores
Demographic information on income and minority populations for the 28 schools
Data from a survey of the Unity Schools conducted in 2002.
WASL data from 1996-97 (the first year of regular test data) and ITBS data from 1998-99 (the first year the ITBS was used as a measure of nationally-normed performance)
Results of the NWREL study of the Unity Project. The report, completed in 2000, was a qualitative study which included interviews with family members, older children, community members, and school, university, and OSPI staff regarding their experiences with the Unity project and documenting promising educational strategies and practices. The report also contained a comprehensive review of research on promising practices, particularly for the populations in the Unity schools, and abstracts for each of the schools based on interviews, classroom observations, and examination of school documents.

Cautions: This is a study of 28 schools that have been involved with the Community Outreach staff. Comparisons and conclusions should be made very cautiously as they are based on a small number of schools, many of which have a small number of students. Moreover, the results are based on reports from busy principals. Results could change dramatically from year to year.

Unity Project Results

Data were analyzed on a number of factors:

- Overall WASL reading performance (percent passing the established state standard)
- Performance of students who have been enrolled in the district for two or more years
- Difference between 1996-97 and 2003-04 WASL Reading Scores
- Performance based on minority status (measured by percent white in the school, used because it is the most stable measure of non-minority status)
- Performance based on poverty, measured by percent free/reduced lunch
- Third Grade ITBS reading scores, both 2003-04 scores and the difference between 1998-99 and 2003-04 scores
- WASL performance related to information from a 2002 survey of the Unity schools on reading programs, support services, and family and community involvement

Table 1. Performance: Overall, the 28 Unity schools, with very high poverty and minority populations, had a passing score that is 14.7 percent lower than the state average. The average percent passing score for Unity schools is 59.7 percent passing the Reading Test compared to the state average of 74.4. The first year of the project, Unity schools’ average score was 23.3 per cent lower than the state average.

Three schools had higher passing scores than did the state, and ten more schools were within ten points of the state average. Ten schools had disappointing scores, with fewer than 50 percent of the students passing the WASL Reading Test.

Table 1 also includes scores for students enrolled in the district for two or more years. Data were available for 24 of the 28 schools. In general, the scores of the “more stable” students are slightly higher (1.4 per cent) than the school average. The largest differences in performance between the general population of students and those enrolled for two or more years, for two schools, were about six percent. Most differences were about two points higher for “more stable” students. The data do only represent mobility over a fairly short period of time, two years of enrollment in these elementary schools, but mobility does not seem to make a significant difference in performance over that period of time.

Table 2. Gains: The Unity Schools made a larger gain, by 8.6 per cent, than did the state: a 26.5 percent gain for the state over seven years compared to a 35.1 per cent gain for the Unity Schools. One school, Taholah, went from no students passing the Reading Test to all students passing, a significant accomplishment. Seventeen Unity schools made larger gains than did the state. Ten schools made a lesser
gain. Only one school dropped, but by only one point in seven years.

Table 3. Minority Status: Percent white was used as the measure of non-minority status. The specific minority populations of these schools are too small to analyze data by ethnic status for each school, so overall white was used as the measure. It should be noted that most of the highest minority schools are Hispanic and American Indian. The minority population of the state is 28.6 per cent. The minority population for the Unity Schools is 76.8 per cent, more than twice the state average. To the extent that minority groups have, on most achievement tests, lower test scores than the white population, the 14.7 percent difference between the Unity Schools and the state, and the higher gains made by the Unity Schools demonstrate unusual progress.

Looking at the table of WASL scores for any relationship between minority status and achievement, the schools, ordered by percent white, do not demonstrate any major conclusions. Although more of the lowest minority Unity Schools have passing scores above 50 percent passing than do the highest minority schools (11 of the 14 lowest minority schools compared to 7 of the 14 highest minority schools have scores of 50 percent or more passing), many of the high minority schools have demonstrated good progress.

Table 4. Poverty: Per cent free/reduced lunch (f/r) was used as the measure of poverty. Data are available for 27 of the 28 schools. The poverty level for the Unity Schools is more than twice the state average: 79.4 per cent f/r for the Unity Schools compared to 36 per cent for the state. All but two of the Unity Schools have higher poverty levels than does the state, most of them with more than twice the f/r level than the state. In fact, the range of poverty levels is very small for 25 of the Unity Schools. The largest numbers of high poverty schools are African-American and Hispanic. As with the minority status conclusions, given the extremely high levels of poverty in the Unity Schools, their progress is remarkable.

ITBS Scores: The Unity Schools’ scores on the Third Grade ITBS Reading Test were, overall, 20.3 percent lower than the state. Only two schools were above the state average and only seven were within ten points of the state average. The Unity Schools made about the same level of progress as did the state. This is not surprising, as norm-referenced tests demonstrate considerable stability.

Table 5. Progress by Ethnic Group: Table 5 shows the scores for the schools within each ethnic category or Think Tank group. Columns three and four show state level data for each ethnic group, the difference between each ethnic group’s state-level 1997-98 and 2003-04 WASL scores, and data for the relevant ethnic group within the school when enough students were tested in the school to make that data available. For example, if only eight members of the ethnic group took the test in a school, scores are not reported. If, as happens in many Hispanic and American Indian schools, a large number of these students (ten or more) were tested, scores for the group are reported in columns three and four. Total white scores, without regard to income, are reported in columns three and four for the Low SES group.

The Low SES group has higher performance, lower minority, and lower poverty levels than do the other groups. The other four groups’ WASL scores are within eight points of each other. The American Indian and Hispanic schools appear to have less diversity than do the other groups. The Hispanic schools have a very high poverty level.

Tables 6 and 7. Survey Data: WASL Scores related to reading program, staff development, and parent involvement are reported in Table 6 ordered from highest to lowest WASL score and, in Table 7, ordered by gains made since 1996-97. The information is based, primarily, on a survey completed by Unity Schools in 2002. For schools that did not respond, other information was used, such as information from grant applications for reading programs and the NWREL report. Twenty-one schools responded to the survey.

Unfortunately, the tables do not reveal the “silver bullet” for reading achievement. That is, many of the schools with the highest scores or the highest gains used reading programs that were used by schools that made modest gains. Success for All, Open Court, Waterford, Houghton-Mifflin, 90-Minute Block, Read Well, Harcourt-Brace, and Scott-Foresman were the most commonly used programs.
All of the schools had Washington Reading Corps grants. Other supplementary services used by the schools were Accelerated Reader, Reading Recovery, and before- and after-school tutoring. Almost all schools require students to read at home each day for 20-30 minutes. Some require reading alone; some require reading with parents. A few require parent verification.

Many of the schools, particularly the Title I and Migrant/Bilingual schools have Family Liaisons. Many of the schools have Parent Advisory Councils or involve parents in planning, but many do not. Most of the schools have Parent Literacy Nights where parents and children come to the school; students are engaged in activities involving reading, and parents attend a program on ways to help their child improve reading.

Principals were asked to identify their most effective or most desired programs. Extended day services, summer school, tutors, small class size, reading coaches, professional development of effective strategies, cultural awareness training, and effective parent involvement strategies were the most commonly named activities.

**Conclusions regarding Student Performance.** The Unity Schools’ performance is still below the state average in reading, but they did make greater gains than did the state as a whole. Although the Unity Schools had much higher minority levels (23.2 percent white – or 76.8 percent non-white - compared to the state average of 71.4 percent white) and much higher poverty levels (79.4 percent free/reduced lunch compared to the state average of 36 percent) than did the state as a whole, these 28 schools made a 35.1 per cent gain in achievement on the WASL Reading Test from 1996-7 to 2003-4. The state average gain was 26.5 per cent.

There was no clear relationship between available demographic variables and achievement. There was also no clear “best program” for reading, possibly because of the limited range of scores on these variables. Supplementary services such as tutoring, extended days and years, and effective parent involvement were strategies most often named by principals as desired activities.

**Lessons Learned**

For OSPI:

- The Divisions need to work together on programs to assist schools, pre-school through grade 12, for school and district improvement
- Race and poverty must be considered when assisting schools in communities that have high percentages of minorities and children from low-income families
- OSPI should assist schools in designing and providing high quality professional development that is based on effective practices
- Consider the School Report Card as a Community Report Card, not just a report on the school

For Schools:

- Schools need intentionally-designed programs that include activities provided by and for the community
- Principal support is essential in working with the community
- There needs to be increased awareness, understanding, and participation of school personnel in activities within the community
- Become aware of potential programs, materials, grants, and technology

For the Community:

- A Community Advocate who lives in the community must be engaged to speak in behalf of both the school and the community

For All:
Find ways to celebrate education. For example, have the first day of school start in the evening so that parents and community members can participate in activities.

Exemplary Practices from the NWREL Report.

- Children need a consistent, caring environment in order to build resiliency.
- Communicate high expectations for children. Build on strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses.
- Provide multiple avenues for children to be successful, including active learning opportunities and projects.
- Provide a culturally-relevant curriculum and culturally-sensitive teaching.
- Use assessment data and standards-based teaching to monitor progress.
- Professional development should follow the guidelines for High Quality Professional Development as set out in “No Child Left Behind”.
- See education as a shared responsibility with parents. Engage in outreach strategies to obtain the active involvement of all parents.

Community Outreach Division Eliminated—1997-2006

As of July 1, 2006, the Community Outreach division was eliminated. As stated above the impact of the Community Outreach division while difficult to measure certainly contributed to the heighten awareness of the academic achievement gap, the need for having authentic voices of marginalized groups, the acceleration of staff becoming culturally competent, the urgent need for recruitment of role models in the education profession, the essential need to partner with the faith and community based organizations, recognition of the need to increase trust between the education profession and ethnic groups, shared beliefs in the value of education, differences in the strategies for meeting the needs of students and families, recognition of nontraditional values, and the need for resources and professional development necessary to meet the needs of marginalized groups. The Community Outreach division through its actions and history demonstrated: “It takes a village to raise a child.”

Table 1. Fourth Grade Reading WASL Scores, 2003-04, with Demographics, Schools Ordered from Highest to Lowest

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Published by Western CEDAR, 2007
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Table 2. Difference between Fourth Grade WASL Reading Scores, 1996-97 to 2003-04, with Demographics, with Schools Ordered from Highest to Lowest Difference
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Table 3. WASL Scores by Minority Representation Expressed as Percent White with Schools Listed from Highest to Lowest Percent White

| WA State | 74.4% | 26.5 | 71.4% | 36.0% | 58 | 3 |

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https://cedar.wwu.edu/jec/vol2/iss1/16
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Table 4. WASL Scores by Poverty Expressed as Percent Free/Reduced Lunch with Schools Listed from Highest to Lowest Per Cent F/R

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Table 5. WASL Scores for Schools Organized Alphabetically within their Ethnic Group with WASL Scores for All Students within the School, WASL Scores for the Ethnic Group (if at least ten students), and Demographics.
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<th>% F/R</th>
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Table 6. Reading Programs and Supplementary Services by Fourth Grade Reading WASL Scores, 2003-04, Schools Ordered from Highest to Lowest

Code:

AR = Accelerated Reader

SFA = Success For All

WRC = Washington Reading Corps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/ District</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>WASL Rdg 2004</th>
<th>WASL Dif, 1996-97 to 2003-04</th>
<th>Reading Program</th>
<th>Supplementary Services</th>
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Unity Average

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<th>Reading Program</th>
<th>Supplementary Services</th>
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<td>Taholah</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>SFA</td>
<td>WRC</td>
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<td>Hood Canal</td>
<td>Amer Indian</td>
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<td>51.3</td>
<td>Waterford -K</td>
<td>WRC</td>
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<td>AR</td>
</tr>
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<td>Compact for Reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>gr 3-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln/ Toppenish</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>Open Court</td>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reading Material</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
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<td>West Hills Bremerton</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>Houghton-Mifflin</td>
<td>90-min Blocks</td>
<td>WRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake City/Clover Park</td>
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<td>72.0</td>
<td>SFA</td>
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<td>Tutor with SFA</td>
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<td>Morning Reading Club</td>
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<td>Harcourt</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Wolfle/North Kitsap</td>
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<td>AR</td>
<td>Individual Ed Plans</td>
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<td>Read Well K-3</td>
<td>Open Court 4-6</td>
<td>WRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southgate/Clover Park</td>
<td>African Amer</td>
<td>69.4</td>
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<td>Four Block Reading gr 2-5</td>
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<td>Scott Foresman</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Read Naturally</td>
<td>AR</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compact for Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams/Wapato</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurgood Marshall/Seattle</td>
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<td>65.3</td>
<td>90-Min Block</td>
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Griffin: The Community Outreach Demonstration Project "It Takes a Village"
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<th>Math Average</th>
<th>Reading Program</th>
<th>Math Program</th>
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<td>Amer Indian</td>
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<td>47.6</td>
<td>Harcourt-Brace K-2</td>
<td>Houghton-Mifflin 4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naval Ave/ Bremerton</td>
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<td>31.1</td>
<td>Read Well</td>
<td>WRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield/ Toppenish</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>Open Court</td>
<td>AR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edison/ Tacoma</td>
<td>African Amer</td>
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<td>27.2</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
</tr>
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<td>8.1</td>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>Reading each night</td>
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<td>45.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
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Table 7. Reading Program and Supplementary Services by Gain Scores between Fourth Grade WASL Reading Scores, 1996-97 to 2003-04 with Schools Ordered from Highest to Lowest Difference

<table>
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<th>School/District</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>WASL Rdg 2004, % Passing</th>
<th>WASL Difference, 1996-97 to 2003-04</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Unity Average</td>
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<td>35.1</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>Scott Foresman</td>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln/Toppenish</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>56.0</td>
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<td>51.3</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
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<td>28.8</td>
<td>Harcourt</td>
<td>WRC</td>
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<td>WRC</td>
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<td>26.5</td>
<td>Scott Foresman</td>
<td>WRC</td>
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<td>24.0</td>
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</table>

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**Office Of Superintendent of Public Instruction**  
**Community Outreach**  
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