

# Caucus Council News

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE CAUCUS, BLACK & HISPANIC COUNCILS

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Fall 2014-Winter 2015

## Technology is key to reaching at-risk students

In the quest to overcome barriers that prevent at-risk youth from being successful at school, many districts and policymakers have turned to technology as a way to reach struggling students before it's too late.

However, according to recent report by the Alliance for Excellence in Education and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, these efforts have yielded mixed results, with the authors finding some strategies and common approaches to be more successful than others.

Among other things, the report found that low-income students and students of color had less access to qualified teachers and high-quality curricula, books, materials, and computers than white and affluent students. It also found that 64 percent of Hispanic teens owned a computer in 2012 compared to 81 percent of white teens.

This information comes as no surprise to Lillian Tafoya, who

chairs NSBA's National Hispanic Caucus and is a long-serving school board member of California's Bakersfield City School District.

An ethnically diverse district—about 80 percent of the roughly 30,000 K-8 students are Hispanic and 10 percent are African American—Bakersfield also serves a significantly indigent population, with nearly 90 percent of students qualifying for free and reduced-priced meals.

"A lot of our families don't have computers at home. They don't have the money and a lot of them don't have the education to help our students," Tafoya says. "We always say poverty is our enemy because it's not that our (students) aren't bright enough, it's that they are starting on an unequal playing field."

Regardless of where they start, Tafoya and her fellow educators are committed to closing those achievement gaps.

"One of the things that makes this work so urgent is the Hispanic

population is the fastest growing minority group in the United States and yet we have one of the lowest attainment levels," Tafoya says. "In order to maintain America's prosperity, we have to innovate, out-educate, and maximize the potential of all our students."

Bakersfield has worked towards that goal by taking advantage of flexibilities provided under an overhaul of the state's school finance formula, funneling funds to increase technology access and address their unique needs. As a result, not only have all the computer labs throughout the district been updated, but also every middle school student and every two elementary students now have access to a Chromebook.

According to the joint study, these actions are hugely important, as teachers in high-poverty schools were more likely to report that the "lack of resources or access to digital technologies" among students was a challenge in their classrooms.

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**“Educators need more training in digital learning and administrators need to know what the objectives are and how professional development can meet these goals.”**

Only 3 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools agreed that “students have the digital tools they need to effectively complete assignments while at home,” compared to 52 percent of teachers in more affluent schools.

While improving technology access is an important first step that school boards can take, the work doesn’t stop there, the study’s authors’ stress. Among other things, educators need more training in digital learning and administrators need to know what the objectives are and how professional development can meet those goals.

Bakersfield has sought to refine that focus by integrating a STEM program in the district, beefing up its science, technology, and math offerings and introducing engineering and robotics programs with the aid of local employer and oil giant, Chevron.

“One of the reasons I think Chevron was so supportive was because they realize this is their future workforce,” Tafoya says. “And there’s a lot of information out there that show we won’t meet the needs of our workforce unless our kids get better skilled in the STEM fields.”

In fact, this has become a mission of the National Hispanic Council, which adopted a resolution that pushes policymakers to invest more in STEM and arts education to ensure the U.S. remains a competitive global force and at the same time open doors for traditionally underrepresented students.

“There’s a shortage in these fields that need to be filled,” Tafoya says. “We can either rely on other countries to fill those jobs or prepare our own students to meet those needs.”

To read the full report, visit: <http://stanford.io/1r3k4jM>.

# Minority Males with Disabilities at Highest Risk of Dropping Out

High school graduate rates are at historic highs with students of color posting the greatest gains. But minority males with disabilities continue to be left behind, according to the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.

Students with disabilities alongside their peers with limited English proficiency are the group of students least likely to graduate on time. The U.S. Department of Education calculates the current overall graduation rate at 80 percent, but the rates for students with disabilities lag 20 percentage points or more. Disparities by race are even greater: Fewer than half of African-American and Latino students with disabilities graduate. Within these groups, males fare the worst.

The center hopes to draw attention to the forces that prevent these students from completing their high school education, leaving them at greater risk for unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. In its report, “Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds,” the center explored the distinctive needs of American Indian, African-American, and Latino males with disabilities and

highlights some exemplary work being done to keep them on track to a diploma.

The report found many risk factors affecting all three groups’ chances of dropping out, many of which show up early in their schooling: failing grades, high absenteeism, retained in grade, low expectations, poor health and sense of well-being, numerous disciplinary infractions, and the lack of cultural sensitive instruction and practices.

But there were also differences between them. For example, African-American and American Indian students were more likely than others to be identified—as well as misidentified—to receive special education services, although there was no difference between Latinos and whites. In addition, while family involvement is important for all groups, it seems to play a particularly strong role in the education of Latino youth with disabilities.

The report authors acknowledged gaps in the research on minority males with disabilities, but were nonetheless able to identify promising practices for schools to implement on behalf of these students:

- **Frequent, culturally sensitive communication between the family and**

**school:** Schools “should employ strategies that foster, expand, and encourage parental engagement.” This should include training for school personnel in cultural competencies specific to the school community and thus be able to “bridge cultural gaps between students, parents, and schools.”

- **Disciplinary policies that aim to reduce out-of-school suspensions:** Along with better family and community outreach, schools should implement restorative justice practices to reduce student conflicts and make minority males with disabilities feel more connected to the school community.
- **Integrated health services, including mental health:** Minority males with disabilities often exhibit low self-worth. The availability of mental health services and counseling can help mitigate these feelings and boost students’ confidence.
- **Data systems able to flag early warning signs:** Many indicators that minority males with disabilities are at risk of eventually dropping out can

begin to show in the early grades. Data systems that recognize such indicators as failing grades in math and English, chronic absenteeism, and low “behavior” marks can help schools target interventions before they become hard-to-break patterns.

Lastly, the authors called for more research. “If these students are to be effectively served, research must also identify and document effective strategies and practices for use with this population,” the report said. In particular, the report cited the need to study the relationship between race and ethnicity, socio-economic status and diversity of the schools, with the likelihood of being identified as having a disability.

To read this report online, visit <http://bit.ly/1vskcsp>.

## **PROMISING DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR MINORITY MALES WITH DISABILITIES**

**Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS).** ALAS provides mentors for at risk middle- and high-school students in addition to family outreach. ALAS also has a favorable rating from What Works Clearinghouse. <http://raiseinspiredkids.com>

**Check and Connect:** A mentorship program that matches trained mentors with high school students at risk of dropping out. Check and Connect has a high effectiveness rating from the What Works Clearinghouse. <http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/>

**Restorative Justice:** The Alameda County Health Care Services Agency published this working guide for schools wanting to implement restorative justice processes. <http://healthyschoolsandcommunities.org/Docs/Restorative-Justice-Paper.pdf>

# National Hispanic Council 2014 Scholarship Winners

National Hispanic Council of School Board Members announced its 2014 Scholarship Winners. The council established the scholarship program in 1999. Since then, it has awarded more than 100 scholarships totaling more than \$100,000.

To qualify, the students must meet all of the following criteria:

- be of Hispanic origin
- be eligible to graduate from a public high school in 2014
- provide proof of acceptance to a qualified college or university with the intention of completing a four-year degree
- have a grade point average of 2.5 or higher, on a four-point scale, and
- demonstrate financial need.

This year's recipients are:

**Marisol Angulo**, Western International High School, Detroit, Michigan

**Yessenia Garcia Braulio**, Alonso High School, Tampa, Florida

**Mauricette Lucette Campos**, Escalante High School, Chama, New Mexico

**Jose Luis Garcia Cintora**, New High School, Newark, Delaware

**Daniel Garcia**, A.P. Leto Comprehensive High School, Tampa, Florida

**Jose Guzman**, Western International High School, Detroit, Michigan

**Brandon Gonzalez Lezama**, Ocean View High School, Huntington Beach, California

**Johnny Anthony Montanez**, Patagonia Union High School, Patagonia, Arizona

**Yesenia Morales**, Amityville Memorial High School, Amityville, New York

**John Ramon A. Vigil**, Espanola Valley High School, Espanola, New Mexico

## NSBA CAUCUS DATA

Read the latest reports on trends in education and student achievement.

### Absences Add Up

This review of national testing data shows that students with higher absenteeism rates have lower scores on national standardized tests. The good news is poor attendance can be turned around when policies and practices encourage schools and communities to partner with students and their families to monitor their data and implement promising and proven practices.

<http://bit.ly/1t9Q3wC>

### Black + Brown

This report provides analysis about the Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions—HBCUs and HSIs—that have in the past and continue today to perform important roles in the educational attainment of African Americans and Latinos.

<http://bit.ly/1zJB7XL>

### State of America's Schools

Gallup's research on student achievement demonstrates the importance of "human" elements such as self-discovery and emotional engagement in the learning process.

<http://bit.ly/1zJBGkc>

# Meal Event Speakers at NSBA's Annual Conference in Nashville

Make plans to see these speakers at councils' breakfast and lunch events while attending NSBA's 75th Annual Conference in Nashville.



**Denise Juneau is the speaker at the National Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native School Board Members Luncheon on Saturday, March 21.**

As the first American Indian woman elected to serve in a statewide elected position, Juneau is a strong advocate for all Montana students and promotes policies that ensure students meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. As Montana's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Juneau is committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship. Under her tenure, test scores are up and dropout rates are down. Her initiative, Graduation Matters Montana (GMM), has schools and communities working together to implement locally-developed plans to keep more students in school. Juneau is committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship.

NSBA asked her these questions:

**Q.: How has GMM helped keep students in school and on track to graduation?**

A.: GMM is a signature initiative of my administration to increase high school graduation rates and better prepare students for college and careers. Since launching the program in 2010, the state's graduation rate has climbed from 81.7 percent to an all-time high of 84.2 percent, and the dropout rate has fallen. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana will see a \$4.3 million annual boost to the state's economy going forward, and the new graduates will earn an additional \$68.2 million over the course of their lifetimes.

Currently, there are 48 Montana communities that have launched a local GMM initiative. This means that school leaders, students, community organizations, and Main Street businesses are coming together at the local level to look at their data, reflect on effective practices, and do things differently and better to support all students succeeding. They are aided in their efforts by a unique public-private partnership I have created with state and nation corporations. Private sector contributions from companies such as AT&T, IBM, State Farm Insurance, and

the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation have brought over \$1.3 million to the table for the initiative.

**Q: How do school leaders work toward creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship?**

A.: School leaders have a critical role to play in preparing children to be successful in their lives. They must set a vision that is compelling, and engaging, and then be ready to bring time, creativity, and resources to the task. I see Montana communities galvanize around the vision of GMM and make real improvements in education outcomes by convening a multi-stakeholder team, looking at their data, reflecting on effective practices, and promoting a vision that it takes all of us, working together, to have a lasting impact. This work is not possible without forward-looking, collaborative leadership. That is the role of school leaders—to bring out the best in the people who work with and for students, and make sure, through data, that real progress occurs.

**Q.: What would you most like your audience to take away from your presentation?**

A.: Working together, school

leaders, businesses, students, and state education agencies can make a marked difference in students' lives. I have seen over the course of Graduation Matters Montana that we can raise expectations that every student can graduate. Montana, like many states, is a local control state: We have strong, capable school boards and board trustees determine much of the direction of their school districts. Through GMM, I have seen trustees roll up their sleeves with school staff, students, and community leaders to hone in on effective practices, and make a difference. Leadership at the top—whether it's my position as Montana's State Superintendent, or a local school—is imperative to set the vision that change is possible, as is the authentic engagement with those who have the most to gain from improved graduation rates: the students.



**Richard Santana is the National Hispanic Council of School Board Members Breakfast speaker on Sunday, March 22.**

A former gang member, now a Harvard University graduate, Richard Santana's journey provides a powerful and graphic illustration of cultural relevance in schools.

His moving accounts of his gang-life experiences and how they shaped his beliefs, attitudes and self-expectations are inspiring, unsettling, and thought-provoking. Santana challenges his audience to critically assess their own perceptions and helps them to recognize how these perceptions influence work relationships, effectiveness and productivity. His message is one of making choices: between hope or hopelessness; between evaluating young people based upon our own standards or accepting them in the context of their own; between giving up on our most challenged youth or truly becoming their advocates.

NSBA asked him these questions:

**Q: How can school leaders become advocates for our most challenging youth?**

A.: An educator must have a genuine interest in the social conditions of the challenge youth. Many times a turning point can occur when the student feel validated and nurtured.

**Q.: What role has public school played in your life?**

A.: I am a product of public education. It has been critical in my development as an educator.

**Q.: What would you most like your audience to take away from your presentation?**

A.: I speak to the heart. My goal is to validate the efforts and energies that educators devote towards the development of our children. My hope is that the participant leaves with the understanding that they can make a difference.

**Roland S. Martin is the speaker at the National Black Council of School Board Members Luncheon on Sunday, March 22.**

Named as one of the 150 Most Influential African Americans in the U.S., Martin is an award-winning and multifaceted journalist. Over the course of a journalistic career that has seen him interview multiple U.S. presidents to the top athletes, and entertainers in Hollywood, he is a journalist who has always maintained a clear sense of his calling in this world. As the host and managing editor of "Washington Watch with Roland Martin," which airs on the TV One Cable Network, he focuses on news and analysis of culture, entertainment, politics, and sports from an African American perspective. Martin spent six years as a contributor for CNN, appearing on numerous shows, earning accolades near and far for his no-holds barred honesty, conviction, and perspective on various issues impacting Americans.

In an audio interview with NSBA, Martin talks about what he considers the most important education story he has ever covered (it involves questioning President George W. Bush about affirmative action and legacy college admissions). His luncheon presentation, he says, will challenge the audience not to accept the status quo. When you leave, he says, you will understand that you have the ability to fix the system—your own way.

Listen to Martin's interview at <http://bit.ly/1Kj717w>.



# Schedule of Events for AIAN, NBC, & NHC



## At NSBA's 2015 Annual Conference in Nashville, Tenn.

### Saturday, March 21

10:30 am – 11:45 am: National Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native School Board Members Elections & General Business Meeting- Omni Nashville, Legends Ballroom E

10:30 am – 11:45 am : National Hispanic Council of School Board Members Elections & General Business Meeting – Omni Nashville, Legends Ballroom F-G

Noon – 2:00 pm: National Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native School Board Members Luncheon featuring Denise Juneau- Omni Nashville, Broadway Ballroom H/K

2:30 pm – 4:30 pm: *Early Literacy: The Importance of Every Child Reading on Grade Level by 3rd Grade* (Combined programming with AIAN, NBC, NHC & CUBE) – Nashville Music City Center, Room 207 C-D

3:45 pm – 5:00 pm: National Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native Breakout Session – *The State of American Indian Alaska Native Education* – Nashville Music City Center, Room 204

4:00 pm – 5:15 pm: National Black Council of School Board Members Elections & General Business Meeting – Omni Nashville, Music Row 5

### Sunday, March 22

8:00 am – 9:45 am: National Hispanic Council of School Board Members Breakfast featuring Richard Santana – Omni Nashville, Legends Ballroom F-G

8:45 am – 9:45 am: National Caucus of American Indian/Alaska Native School Board Members Board Orientation – Omni Nashville, Music Row 3

Noon – 2:00 pm: National Black Council of School Board Members Luncheon featuring Roland Martin – Omni Nashville, Broadway Ballroom West

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm: National Hispanic Council of School Board Members Board Orientation – Music Row 3

3:45pm – 5:00 pm: National Hispanic Council of School Board Members Breakout Session – *Building Capacity to Effectively Engage Today's Parents and Communities* – Nashville Music City Center, Room 205A

3:45 pm – 5:00 pm: National Black Council of School Board Members Breakout Session – *Using Restorative Practices to Promote a Positive Culture and Supportive Climate in Schools* – Nashville Music City Center, Room 204

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm: National Black Council of School Board Members Board Orientation – Omni Nashville, Music Row 3