

"Closing the Achievement Gap"

Hempstead High School

1. What did we learn from Dr. Brown?

- Many picked up on the fact that having authentic, trusting relationships with students is foundational for student success/achievement.
- We need to close the trust gap BEFORE we can close the achievement gap.
- We marveled at what we would have missed from our speaker had we allowed his exterior to determine our willingness to listen.
- It is imperative we learn to "dance" more.
- Students are talking to us all the time. Are we listening?
- We were exhorted to be balcony people for our students.
- We should be confident about having high expectations for students—both in their school achievement and in their ability to become people with honorable character.
- Having fun and learning happen at the same time—today's experience is a case in point.

2. SO WHAT does our new learning mean for us and our practice?

- It's not too late to begin building relationships with those students we've held at arm's length.
- We should collaborate regarding ways to creatively discipline or approach topics.
- We tend to expect so much from ourselves, to be all things to all people. But it's OK to reflect on our shortcomings and to increase awareness of our goals. Let's just make sure our words don't take the place of our actions.
- We need more time to support each other and problem-solve for areas where we see kids really struggling in the school setting.
- Our students need time to get to know each other as well. We need to build in activities that allow for students to work with others with whom they might not typically interact. When students feel comfortable with their teachers and with each other, amazing things happen.
- We must distinguish between fair and equal in our own practices.
- We need to listen more and talk less. Give students our attention so we can get theirs.
- We should spend more time sharing success stories; they are inspiring!

3. NOW WHAT will we do differently because of our collective new learning?

- We will make a commitment to be balcony people and not basement people. We will endeavor to construct an elevator or a flight of stairs at least to the first floor, as the basement will always be with us.
- We will work on acknowledging students and greeting them when they come to our classes. We will give them our attention via eye contact, smiling, positive body language, etc.
- We will endeavor to instill the confidence in our students that they are capable of success.
- We will be relational role models with colleagues and students, so that students who observe us will be comforted by our positive relational abilities.
- We will share our positive feedback and excitement about making a difference in the lives of our students with those who didn't attend the session.
- We will invite Dr. Brown back to the district to work with us on the "nuts and bolts."