

Report Reveals Racial Gap in N.C. Schools

By **KIMBERLY GRABNER**
Staff Writer

The N.C. Justice and Community Development Center recently reported an achievement gap between racial groups in the state's public education system.

The report pinpointed areas in which white students outperformed minority students in test scores and placement in academically gifted programs. It also revealed that minority students had higher dropout and school suspension rates as well as greater placement in special education programs.

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white students performed 25.5 percent higher in reading and scored 194 points higher on the Scholastic Assessment Test than black students.

The center hopes its findings will help narrow and eventually eliminate the academic achievement disparity between white and minority students.

Greg Malhoit, the center's executive director, said the gap between white and minority students had been a pressing problem in the state for many years.

The organization has set a five-year goal to narrow the gap, although it does not have the power to implement the recommendation. Malhoit said state leaders were aware of the gap but failed to do anything about it.

But state leaders claim they are working to narrow the discrepancy.

"We certainly don't dispute the gap," said Reid Hartzog, press secretary for

Gov. Jim Hunt. "We certainly are willing to work with any group aiming to close the achievement gap."

The center's recommendations include creating local task forces to examine the gap and creating a special unit within the State Department of Public Instruction to monitor progress.

The State Board of Education responded to the justice center with a general statement accepting the data, saying it believed most of the recommendations were needed, Malhoit said.

Jon Sanders, publications director of the Pope Center for Higher Education, also said he approved of what the center was trying to accomplish.

"The approach is to close the gap by bringing the minority students up to the level of the white students," he said.

Sanders said the Healthy Start Academy in Durham was an example of

a school that had boosted minority achievement. Minority test scores at the school are among the highest in the state, he said.

The Public School Forum of North Carolina conducted a study last year concerning the same issue and concluded that more money needed to be earmarked for programs intended to help disadvantaged students. But John Dornan, the forum's director, many other issues could compete for the funds needed to implement these programs, like Hurricane Floyd relief.

Malhoit stressed the need for state leaders to improve minority achievement. "We think the future of public education is hanging in the balance with how the state responds to this."

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Cuban Boy's Relatives Challenge Deportation

Associated Press

MIAMI — Elian Gonzalez's relatives in Miami went to federal court Wednesday to challenge the Immigration and Naturalization Service's ruling that the 6-year-old boy must be returned to his father in Cuba.

Lazaro Gonzalez, Elian's great-uncle, filed the federal lawsuit after Attorney General Janet Reno declared last week that the boy's status was an immigration matter solely in the jurisdiction of federal law. "It is about protecting Elian's civil and constitutional rights, the same as if he was any other child," said Spencer Eig, a lawyer for the great-uncle. Elian has been living with his Miami relatives since he was found floating on an inner tube off the Florida

coast Thanksgiving Day.

The lawsuit names as defendants Reno, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner, INS District Director Robert Wallis, the Department of Justice and the INS. It accuses the government of violating Elian's rights to due process of law and asks the judge to prevent the INS from returning the boy to Cuba before the agency gives him an asylum hearing.

No hearing date was immediately set. The Justice Department and the INS said in a statement they were prepared to respond quickly and would ask the court "to expeditiously address this matter."

"It is important for the well-being of Elian Gonzalez that the status of this 6-year-old boy be resolved as quickly as possible," the statement said.

Reno had brushed aside a ruling from a Miami family court judge delaying the boy's return. But she postponed an INS deadline to return the boy to his father in order to give Elian's U.S. relatives time to challenge the INS decision in federal court.

LISTSERV

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Sherry Graham, director for ATN Response Services, said listservs were not typically monitored.

"The listmaster is only involved when there's an error in the list," she said.

Graham said that although some of the postings violated the ATN Ethical Standards policy, the seniors were simply responding to a previous posting and did not realize their message was sent to the whole list.

However, Smythe said some of the postings were definitely in violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

"Some of the postings were off-color and can be considered sexual harassment," she said.

Penalties for this type of offense have yet to be determined. Haywood said the Honor Court must look specifically at any given situation in order to determine the punishment.

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AMERICORPS

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opportunity to do that."

Clare Norins, a graduate student from Greensboro, stayed closer to campus last year when she participated in N.C. Public Allies, an AmeriCorps program based in Durham.

"Public Allies, which is located in seven cities throughout the country, brings together young people ... and empowers them to serve as community leaders," Norins said.

Norins was placed with Wake County Human Services where she helped coordinate a volunteer-run parent education program. The program aimed to help parents prevent substance abuse and other high-risk activities among their children.

"Public Allies really opened my eyes to the privilege I have enjoyed in my life and how I can, in turn, use that privilege to give back to the community," Norins said.

"(AmeriCorps) gives you real world experience while also allowing you to contribute to the community in a very meaningful way."

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MACNELLY

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ously."

After working for Shumaker at The Chapel Hill Weekly, MacNelly worked at the Richmond News Leader and began drawing his now-famous comic strip, which he said was based on Shumaker, under whom he had his professional start.

"A lot of people make jokes about the comic strip and he said at one time that it was based, at least in part, on me," Shumaker said. "I don't see the resemblance, but that's what he said."


The Chicago Tribune hired MacNelly in 1982 and he continued to gain repute in his field.

He has won three Pulitzer Prizes and has been judged "best in the business" among political cartoonists in 1987, 1989 and 1993.

"Shoe" is terrific, but I think the political cartoons are spectacular," Stone said. "I just pray for his recovery."

"Jeff is a voice that we hope will never be stilled. There's an eternity of I'd say, decision and broadmindedness. That's needed in our society — we desperately need a Jeff MacNelly. He gives the First Amendment a new nobility."

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