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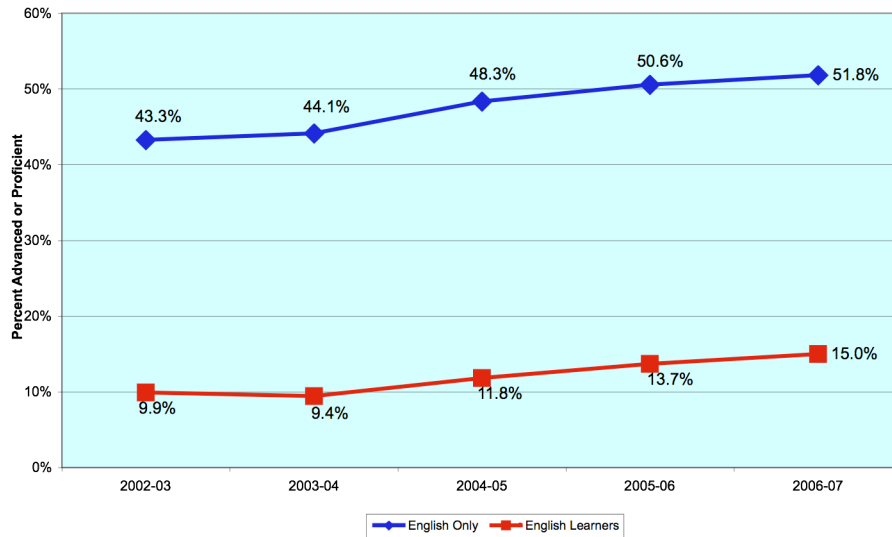
**California's 2007 STAR test results again show no significant improvement. According to State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, for the past five consecutive years, the achievement gap for California's majority minority students, Latinos and African Americans, has reached an alarming point of "social disparity". Superintendent O'Connell's announcement fails to mention the lack of progress made for one of California's greatest challenge -- educating its 1.6 million English Learners.**

**Superintendent O'Connell's repeated, annual lament of the persistent achievement gap has now reached a boiling point requiring a "call to action" for serious reconsideration of the California Board of Education's educational strategy which has consistently yielded insignificant results and is now placing the future of all of California's students in peril.**

West Covina, CA (August 15, 2007) – Today's announcement by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell of the 2007 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program show little to no progress in the academic improvement made of all of California students. Most significant is the continuing achievement gap among racial groups. Surprisingly, after five years of a predictable trend, Superintendent O'Connell finally realizes that the achievement gaps among whites and African Americans and that of whites and Latinos are inexcusable, alarming and requiring a 'call to action'.

Equally alarming however is the fact that Superintendent O'Connell failed to even mention the achievement gap between California's English Only and English Learners which since 2003 to 2007 has grown from 33.4% to 36.8%, respectively (Table 1 below). Many administrators, educators and parents noted the obvious lack of mention of this critical subgroup of students as a possible sign of even more disappointing news in the Superintendent's efforts to prepare over a quarter of California's 6.2 million students.

**Table 1: GAP English Only and English Learners  
California State Totals  
California Standards: English Language Arts**



“To simply ignore the lack of progress in reducing the achievement gap between English Only and English Learners is not the way to lead or address one of California’s greatest educational challenge and resource”, states Maria S. Quezada, CAFE Executive Director. “We hope that Superintendent O’Connell and the State Board of Education are truly committed to rethinking their current strategies and allow different voices to offer innovative and practical solutions to support all of our students, including English Learners. As a world leading economy, California cannot afford to fail its future generations of leaders for all segments of society.”

Early in his appointment, Superintendent O’Connell’s firmly promised California’s parents of significant academic improvement and reductions in the achievement gap. Along with the State Board of Education, O’Connell has maintained for the last six years a stern commitment to a “one-size-fits-all” approach often dismissing and disregarding the advice and willingness to participate by organizations such as CAFE and Californians Together, in helping resolve the daunting challenges faced in California’s educational system.

“As school teachers we know our students personally and what academic needs they have to realize their full potential,” states Karling J. Aguilera-Fort, CAFE’s President. He adds, “Superintendent O’Connell should be motivated to truly seek alternative approaches, including providing additional textbook options to accelerate reading in English, as a serious effort to reduce the achievement gap and meet his moral obligation to prepare all students for the economic and social success they deserve.”

A number of school districts are hoping that the bipartisan bill, Accelerated English Acquisition and Literacy Pilot Program (AB 1177), co-authored by Democrat Jose Solorio of Anaheim and Republican Chuck DeVore of Irvine, and recently passed by the State Assembly on a bipartisan vote, could be one significant step in bringing more resources to California’s classrooms of heavily impacted school districts.

AB 1177 calls for specifically designed materials for English language development (ELD) and literacy intended to help teachers and English learners accelerate English proficiency and to study the impact of these materials in accelerating language development and reading/language arts achievement. For details see the complete Assembly Education analysis at: [http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/0708/bill/asm/ab\\_11511200/ab\\_1177\\_cfa\\_20070604\\_200952\\_asm\\_floor.html](http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/0708/bill/asm/ab_11511200/ab_1177_cfa_20070604_200952_asm_floor.html)

“The cry for ‘staying the course’ has often lead societies to great dangers. California cannot afford to jeopardize its future generations by staying on the narrow path created by Superintendent O’Connell or the State Board of Education”, states Shelly Spiegel-Coleman, Executive Director of Californians Together. “Leaders, no matter what, should be willing and open to turn to those who offer their commitment, talent and expertise to help better society as a whole and those most in need. That is our commitment to improve education for all of California’s students, including English Learners. We hope Superintendent O’Connell keeps his promise.”

CABE is a statewide organization with over 6,000 members and 60 chapters/affiliates who firmly believe in the learning of English, high quality educational programs and respect for diversity of California’s students and parents. CABE supports research, planning and learning to guide equitable instructional programs and practices for English Learners. [www.bilingualeducation.org](http://www.bilingualeducation.org)

Californians Together is a statewide coalition of parents, teachers, and education advocates and civil rights organizations committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children. Californians Together founded in 1998 as a non-profit organization after the passage of Proposition 227. Californians Together, in conjunction with many of its affiliates, strive to foster full participation in a democratic society through quality education for children and parents from underserved communities.

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