



Youth-Defined 23 CORE BARRIERS to Achievement

For 1-10-06 Briefing to School Board

Note: Data gathered from 30 focus groups of AAPS high school students during Fall/Winter 2005-06

* These themes were represented in all Focus Groups.

+ These themes were represented in the majority of the Focus Groups

Italics -appeared in March focus groups only

I. Barriers – Personal

- A. *Negative peer influence
 - 1. Peer pressure
 - 2. Competition
 - 3. Social distractions
 - 4. Expectations
 - 5. Teasing for achievement
 - 6. Bandwagon impact / following the crowd
- B. *Stereotyping/ lack of cultural understanding
- C. Low self esteem
 - 1. No morals
 - 2. No success
 - 3. No confidence
- D. Personal perceptions of obstacles (ex. Lack of challenging curriculum)
- E. *External structure*
- F. Disabilities
- G. Lack of Self-motivation / Procrastination
- H. *Adult pressure / Expectations*
- I. Family pressure/ expectations
 - 1. Lack of support
 - 2. Home life
 - 3. Distractions & trauma
 - 4. Social status
 - 5. Money, job, and time management issues
- J. *Language barriers / being an outsider*
- K. *Isolation*
- L. *Lack of friends*
- M. Lack of understanding each other/conflict of ideas

II. Barriers – School

A. *Lack of encouragement and support from teachers, counselors, administrators, ALL STAFF, (contract limitations and limited time during school)

1. **Limited level of relationship between students and staff*
2. *Teachers are inaccessible, not enough help
3. +Lack of administrator interest in students
4. Disinterest from teachers
5. Unrealistic expectations by teachers and counselors
6. *Teacher favoritism*
7. *Feeling unwanted*
8. *Lack of friends in classes / no social support*
9. *Lack of welcoming classrooms / teachers not engaged in student learning*
10. Limited communication and info from counselors
 - a. Counselors hard to see/ have too many students/ inaccessible
 - b. *Unorganized counselors*

B. *Lack of understanding & sensitivity for cultural factors (religion, gender, ethnicity, race, income, youth culture, etc.)

1. +Stereotyping and discrimination
2. +Lack of respect for students from many staff
3. +Lack of respect for youth culture
 - a. Lack of democratic representative inclusion of students and request for their input on policies
 - b. Lack of involvement of youth in own education choices
4. *Teachers uninformed of challenges faced by immigrant students*
5. *Language barriers*
6. *Receptivity of all staff to students / acceptance of dissenting opinions*
7. *Judgment based on sibling precedence*

C. +Limited curriculum and instruction issues

1. +Teacher lack of subject knowledge
2. Teachers are cocky
3. Value own abilities more than helping students
4. *Not enough notice / time constraints for studying / lack of test coordination*
5. Students have different learning styles & need different teaching methods.
6. Classes not challenging/too easy or too hard (placement issues)

D. +Limited Resources

1. +Inaccessibility of technology/computers and library resources.
2. Money
3. *Inadequate school supplies*
4. *Inability to meet financial expectations to purchase supplies*

E. +Lack of structure and firm standards (counter-productive/ineffective policies)

1. +*Weak external structures (easy to skip, tardiness policy, cheating, suspension)*
2. Lack of enforceable rules and school support
3. *Impact of large school population*
4. Insufficient teacher accountability; district holding all staff accountable

III. Barriers – Community

- A. * Lack of information and access to resources and opportunities
 - 1. Transportation issues
 - 2. More sports
 - 3. Need money
 - 4. Volunteering opportunities
 - 5. Library resources & computers
 - 6. Time issues
 - 7. Need jobs
 - 8. Tutoring
 - 9. Other

- B. *Stereotyping by adults (stores, police, media, others)
 - 1. *Low receptivity and respect from adults*
 - 2. Low receptivity and respect from media

- C. +Parental influence & family problems
 - 1. *Parental punishment and restrictions
 - 2. +Lack of parental involvement and engagement
 - 3. +Parents' lack of understanding of life today
 - 4. +Parents have negative points of views about students' activities outside of school
 - 5. *No interaction with extended family*
 - 6. *Family detachment from community*
 - 7. *Parents over-committed with work*
 - 8. Parental expectation for students different than students' expectations
 - 9. Too much pressure from parents, school, sports, and jobs

- D. +Low self-motivation/ self esteem
 - 1. Age restrictions
 - 2. Social intimidation/exclusion
 - 3. Limited financial resources
 - 4. *Culture of boredom*
 - 5. *Time management*

- E. Safety