



NEWS RELEASE



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September 16, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Closing the Latino Achievement Gap Orange County 2011 Summit *Federal, State, and Local Educational Leaders Come Together on September 30 to Address the Gap and Consider Solutions*

(Santa Ana)—Latinos represent the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the United States; but the achievement gap for Latinos in public education persists and is a crisis that needs to be addressed. On **Friday, September 30**, some 350 federal, state, and local educational leaders will come together at **Santa Ana College** to focus on the challenge, data and projections, legislative policy and fiscal issues, and best practices for bridging the achievement gap.

The **Closing the Latino Achievement Gap Orange County 2011 Summit** is slated for Phillips Hall, 1530 West 17th Street, Santa Ana, CA, 92706 from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The summit is open to educators, parents, residents, and elected officials in Orange County. Since this topic is of interest to many, the public is invited to register to participate in a free webinar that will offer access to the opening plenary and closing sessions. Webinar registration is open at www.ocachieves.org.

“It is an honor and a privilege to partner with Santa Ana College to host this gathering which brings together educators, parents, and community members along with elected officials who are ardently committed to finding solutions to help close the achievement gap for Latino students,” said Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D., superintendent of the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD). “Together we can achieve success for every student in every classroom every day.”

The academic achievement gap is fueled by the fact that a substantial number of Hispanic students are English learners. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 37 percent of students in grade 4 and 21 percent of students in grade 8 are English language learners. The growing size of the Hispanic population in the U.S. and the number of fourth- and eighth-grade Hispanic students that are English language learners trigger the achievement gap between Hispanic and white fourth- and eighth-graders. While Hispanic students’ average scores have increased across the assessment years, white students’ scores remain higher on average, on all assessments.

Creating a college-going culture also remains challenging. A national survey of Latinos by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2009 found that 89 percent of Latino young adults say that a college education is important for success in life, yet only 48 percent say that they see themselves getting a college degree. The biggest cause of the gap between the high value Latinos place on higher education and their limited aspirations to finish college appears to be the financial pressure to support a family, the survey finds. About half of the survey’s respondents who cut short their education –either during or right after high school–cited poor English skills.

“We look forward to hosting this vital gathering to examine the issues and to help close the Latino achievement gap in higher education,” said Erlinda J. Martinez, Ed.D., president, Santa Ana College. “Santa Ana College is positioned to collaborate with our higher education partners, business and community organizations to open the doors of opportunity for all students.”

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The following sessions and presenters are expected throughout the day:

- 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. **White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans: Focus on Santa Ana**
Presenter: **Juan Sepúlveda**, Director, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans
- 9:00 – 9:45 a.m. Student Panel: **“What Will a 21st Century School Look Like?”**
- 9:45 - 10:30 a.m. Data Presentation: **“What Does/Doesn’t the Data Tell Us Regarding the Needs of the Long-term English Learner?”**
Presenter: **José Moreno, Ed.D.**; Associate Professor, Chicano and Latino Studies Department; California State University, Long Beach
- 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Keynote: **Addressing the Needs of the Long-term English Learner**
Presenter: **Patricia Gándara, Ph.D.**; Professor, Graduate School of Education; Co-Director, the Civil Rights Project; University of California, Los Angeles
- 11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Luncheon Entertainment: **“Mariachi de Oro”** Band from Godinez Fundamental High School, Director Eric Vismantas
- 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions
- 2:15 – 2:45 p.m. Teams Debrief
- 2:45 - 3:00 p.m. Summit Commitment/Call to Action

The Summit’s organizers include Santa Ana Unified School District; Santa Ana College; the University of California, Irvine; California State University, Fullerton; Chapman University and a number of community organizations. Sponsors are California Teachers Association (CTA) Orange Service Center, The College Board, Pearson, Santa Ana Educators’ Association, SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union, and Velásquez Press.

For additional information or to register for Closing the Latino Achievement Gap Orange County 2011 Summit, contact Nuria Solis, Director, English Learner Programs and Student Achievement at (714) 558-5855 or via email at cesar.gonzalez@sausd.us.

About Santa Ana College

Part of Rancho Santiago Community College District, Santa Ana College serves more than 30,000 credit and non-credit students each semester and offers 136 certificate and associate degree programs. The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel. Learn more at www.sac.edu.

Santa Ana Unified School District

Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) educates approximately 56,000 students at 61 dynamic school sites throughout the Santa Ana community. The K-12 school district is the largest in Orange County and the second largest employer in Santa Ana, with approximately 4,500 educators and staff members. The school district boasts 28 California Distinguished Schools, and two 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Contact us at [714-558-5555](tel:714-558-5555), or pioinfo@sausd.us. For more information about our schools, visit www.sausd.us.

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