

## NEGP/DOD STUDY

### DOD SCHOOLS ARE A MODEL FOR THE NATION

- Schools around the nation can learn from the success of DOD schools. They've made dramatic progress in closing the achievement gap between white and non-white students, and the performance of students overall is outstanding.
- The National Education Goals Panel looked at DOD schools because they are uniquely successful, and their formula may be one of the best-kept secrets in education. We wanted to find out how they do it, and what other schools can learn from them.
- If the DOD school system were a state, it would rank number one in the country for minority students' achievement in reading and writing. Overall, only two states, Connecticut and Maine, ranks higher than DOD schools on national reading and writing performance tests.
- We recognize that the DOD school system is unique in some ways, but there are important lessons for all schools. Educators across the nation should take a close look at the recommendations in this report for improving the academic achievement of all students, and closing the achievement gap.

### WHAT WORKS

- Strategic planning & accountability. DOD schools employ a strategic planning process, tied to the eight National Education Goals. There are clear directions, goals, and targets set from the top, but schools make decisions about how to achieve their goals. Principals and teachers know what they are expected to accomplish and are held responsible for achieving those goals.
- Smaller schools. A small school is an elementary school with fewer than 350 students, a high school with fewer than 900.
- Sufficient resources. Money does matter. DOD schools are not lavishly funded, but they do make a serious commitment to making sure students have what they need and teachers are supported.
- Aligning everything to goals. DOD schools have a coherent policy structure that links instructional goals with accountability systems supported by professional training and development programs.
- Staff development. Professional development is linked to each school's performance, tailored to each teacher, and sustained over time.

- Expect more, get more. DOD Schools expect all students to be high achievers.
- Strong pre-school and after-school programs. DOD pre and after-school programs are a national model.
- Corporate commitment to education. The military expects parents to be involved in their children's education. A soldier's place of duty is at their child's parent teacher conference. They volunteer one day a month at the school. Employers should change workplace policies that keep parents from participating in their children's schools.

### **HOW DOD SCHOOLS ARE LIKE MANY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

- High rates of poverty: Half of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.
- Most of the students have parents with no more than a high school education.
- Students move from school to school frequently because military families are transferred often.

### **HOW DOD SCHOOLS ARE UNIQUE**

- DOD schools make a serious commitment of resources, especially professional staff development.
- They require parent involvement.
- The system emphasizes systemic alignment and strategic planning. There are clear directions, goals, and targets set from the top, but schools make decisions about how to achieve their goals.

### **ABOUT THE STUDY AND THE PANEL**

- The study, "March Toward Excellence: School Success and Minority Student Achievement in Department of Defense Schools," was conducted by the Peabody Center for Education Policy at Vanderbilt University.
- The National Education Goals Panel is bipartisan, and brings together federal and state leaders: eight governors, four members of Congress, four state legislators and two members appointed by the President.
- The eight National Education Goals call for greater levels of student achievement and citizenship; increased rates of high school graduation; higher levels of adult literacy; and safe, disciplined, and alcohol-and-drug free schools. The Goals also

call for all children to be ready to learn by the time they start school and for U.S. students to be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.