

**CLARIFICATION: Meeting is open to the public and open to media for observation.
Registration for participation is closed.**



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Governor Bill Richardson Hosts African American Education Solutions Summit

*Part of Graduate New Mexico Initiative to Close the Achievement and Graduation
Gap*

SANTA FE– Governor Bill Richardson will host the first of a three-part summit series aimed at closing the achievement gap and increasing graduation rates for New Mexico students on Monday, October 26, 2009 at the Hotel Albuquerque. Governor Richardson will deliver welcoming remarks at 8:30am. The African American Solutions Summit is co-hosted by Education Secretary Dr. Veronica C. García and Dr. Harold Bailey, Executive Director of the Office of African American Affairs.

“This is unlike anything we have ever done before, in that, it is 100 participants brought together to be a community think tank to ignite effective action and dramatic impact,” Governor Richardson said. “We looked all over the state for individuals who were recommended by their communities and colleagues as innovative, collaborative, and creative. At least 25 percent of the participants will be students because youth must have a voice at the table to help shape their own future.”

Nearly nine thousand of New Mexico public students are African American. The percent of African American students scoring proficient in math increased in every grade except 7th in 2009 with third grade posting a 14% gain and 6th grade a 10% gain last year alone.

Over the last five years, the percentage of black students proficient in math more than doubled in 5th, 6th, and 8th grades. Despite this progress, math proficiency for New Mexico African American students overall hovers around 36%. In 2005, there was a 27 point gap between the percent of white and black 4th grade students proficient in math; by 2009, that gap closed by only one point. Only 61% of black students graduate from high school, compared with 71% of white students in New Mexico.

"While I acknowledge that progress has been made; the growth has not been large enough nor has it come fast enough. This summit is different in that it engages students and hands-on practitioners to truly listen to their perspectives," said Education Secretary Veronica C. García.

The participants will take part in the one-day summit facilitated by the non-partisan public policy non-profit New Mexico First. Together, students, teachers, parents, community resource providers, community health workers, and spiritual leaders will work to come to consensus on out-of-the box solutions to address the achievement and graduation gap. They will produce three kinds of recommendations out of the one-day summit:

- What can be implemented in the classroom immediately,
- What can be implemented in the community, and
- What can be considered for legislative action.

They will hear from keynote speaker Mr. Quentin Lawson, Executive Director of the National Alliance of Black School Educators and a youth panel to hear both nation and local perspectives.

"This African American Solutions Summit clearly demonstrates Governor Bill Richardson's commitment to engage the community in the framing of solutions that will address educational achievement gap issues. This event is the first of its kind and a history making event for the black community," said Dr. Harold Bailey.

As part of his promise to improve education in New Mexico, Governor Richardson committed \$9.4 million of the discretionary stabilization stimulus funds to efforts to close the achievement gap. One of the most important components of our approach is community engagement.

The Summit runs from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Registration for the event is closed. The event is open to the media. Media should report to the registration table for a media pass and press packet. For planning purposes, please see the attached agenda.

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