

OSD WORKS TO CLOSE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

By Grace Logan
sports editor

The Oxford School District recently dropped from the no. 1 spot in the largest achievement gap category. However, for this category, Oxford is not striving to be the first place holder.

“We’ve carried the moniker of having the school district with the largest achievement gap but we no longer carry that,” Superintendent Brian Harvey said.

The achievement gap is defined as the difference in proficiency levels between the majority and subgroups such as economical disadvantages and racial ethnicity according to Harvey.

“Because when you look at it, our overall proficiency in 2017 was 53.1 percent and our overall proficiency in 2018 was 58.3 percent so our proficiency for everybody went up,” Harvey said. “All of these numbers are better than they were in 2017, which is good.”

According to Assistant Superintendent Bradley Roberson, the new information about the achievement gap reveals more than proficiency levels.

“The statistics provided by the Mississippi Department of Edu-

cation shows that the gap continues to shrink which means more and more of our students are prepared to attend college and enter the workforce after graduation,” Roberson said.

While there are a total of eight subgroups that are considered as factors for the achievement gap, the district has set their focus on African American, economical standing, and disabilities.

“I think historically here we are focused on the difference between our white and black students and our economically disadvantaged and our students with disabilities,” Harvey said. “Your limited English proficiency -that is another focus that we have- but they are a smaller subgroup than the students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged and our African American subgroups. All of those are the largest focus just because of the number of people.”

The district has put into place a goal known as the “95 in 5”. This means the district wants to have 95 percent of students proficient in five years.

“We got a long way to go particularly in math, almost 45, 47 points. But that’s where we want to go and we are seeing gradual increas-

es,” Harvey said.

According to Harvey, this increase in proficiency can correlate with many programs at OSD, such as AVID, intervention systems, and efforts the school district and the Carnegie Foundation has made to

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Brian Harvey
Superintendent

University of Mississippi School of Education and the Carnegie Foundation on implementing improvement science practices in our schools,” Roberson said. “Improvement science is a methodology that assists organizations in identifying root causes of issues and possible change agents to address them. Simply put, it is a methodology that shows us how to get better at getting better.”

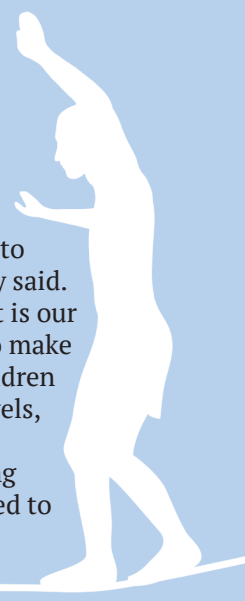
Oxford School District has had previous issues with having the largest achievement

gap between subgroups. Starkville’s district now has the largest achievement gap in the state.

“You look and see who is at the top, they are university towns and that’s just one of the things that college towns have to deal with. We are number two in English and number four in math. That’s the big thing. We have seen small improvements and we are at the tipping point of seeing big gains,” Harvey said.

Both Harvey and the school district are focused on using the research and resources to grow the district and shrink the achievement gap between the different subgroups.

“We have to focus our efforts and provide support necessary for all our students to achieve,” Harvey said. “All means all. It is our responsibility to make sure that all children learn at high levels, no excuses, and that is something we are committed to be doing.”



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