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## Education focus of summit

By Carolyn G. Schatz, Staff Writer

Local heads of education will be among the 4,000 stakeholders expected at the Achievement Gap Summit today and Wednesday at the Sacramento Convention Center to address the reasons children are struggling academically.

The working summit, hosted by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, represents the first time educators have gathered to openly confront the racial and cultural dimensions of the academic achievement gap, according to the state Department of Education.

San Bernardino County Superintendent Herb Fischer, San Bernardino City Unified Superintendent Arturo Delgado and Rialto Unified Superintendent Edna Davis-Herring are among those at the summit seeking to get to the bottom of the systemic barriers that keep students from succeeding in the classroom, and later in life.

O'Connell, who has made the achievement gap the top focus of his administration, first referred to the racial nature of the gap in August, when he committed to tackling the problem at a two-day summit. The gap exists between black and Latino students and their white and Asian counterparts.

Differing expectations and the way resources are allocated might discriminate against some students, he said.

"We need challenging curriculum in all of our schools," O'Connell said. "But that is not always the case.

"We tend to have lower expectations and fewer resources in minority schools," O'Connell said. "Schools on a year-round calendar tend to be in minority districts."

Of California's more than 6.3 million students in public schools, nearly half are Latino, about a quarter are still learning the English language and 40 percent are struggling with poverty.

All are issues that have deeply affected schools across the region.

And now, local leaders aim to help find a solution to what O'Connell calls "the pernicious gap that deprives too many young people of the opportunity to learn and succeed."

The two-day summit will focus on four major themes:

Access: How do all students gain access to what they need?

Culture/Climate: How can schools offer the best learning environment for all students? Is it a safe place for students to learn? Is it an environment that promotes learning and a sense of belonging



for students and school staff?

Expectations: Are high expectations for teachers and students truly held?

Strategies: What practices have proven effective, or look promising, for closing the achievement gap?

After the summit, O'Connell plans to issue a set of recommendations in his State of Education address early next year on how the state can better help public schools close the achievement gap.