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'CRISIS' FOR LATINO AND BLACK KIDS

By YOAV GONEN, Education Reporter

January 21, 2008 -- The city's efforts to reform its middle schools and close the racial achievement gap haven't made the grade: Black and Latino eighth-graders still lag far behind their white classmates, according to a critical new report.

A coalition of parents and community groups behind the report is calling on education officials to take urgent measures to address what they call a "middle-school crisis."

At a rally today, scheduled to coincide with the report's release on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the group, NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, is set to propose three immediate remedies for the city's 200 lowest-performing middle schools.

Their suggestions include adding 90 minutes of academic and enrichment time per school day, implementing targeted training and incentive programs for teachers, and increasing academic, social and emotional supports for students.

The report uses state and national test data to show that the city's black and Latino eighth-graders have fallen further behind their white peers in reading proficiency between 2003 and 2006-07.