Initial Equity Report: State College Area School District

Prepared Spring 2022

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Our Partnership

The Center for Education and Civil Rights at Penn State University formed a partnership with State College Area School District in the summer of 2020 with the intention of assisting the district with collecting and analyzing data, particularly to investigate equity opportunity gaps. This partnership is mutually beneficial, as we and other scholars within Penn State's College of Education are committed to developing sustainable collaborations, particularly these sorts of research-practitioner partnerships.[1] Knowing that accurate data collection and analysis processes are integral for districts like SCASD to understand and effectively address inequities in their schools, this report offers district personnel a research basis for its equity work while also supporting transparency about educational inequality in the community.

[1] In its 2021-2025 strategic plan, PSU's College of Education expresses its intent to pursue research that addresses social issues and to invest in outreach, dissemination, and partnerships that are mutual in nature. As scholars from the College of Education, we intend for our relationship with SCASD to be, as the strategic plan says, one in which we can "engage collaboratively …to address pressing social issues, including poverty, essential literacies, racism, inclusion, mental health and well-being, and climate change, among others." To read more about the College of Education's strategic plan, please visit https://ed.psu.edu/strategic-plan-2021-2025

What is equity?

Equity takes individual needs and strengths into account and ensures that students have the resources and opportunities they individually require to thrive. Equality is a term that is frequently confused with equity; while equity responds to individual student needs, equality ensures that all students receive the same resources and opportunities.

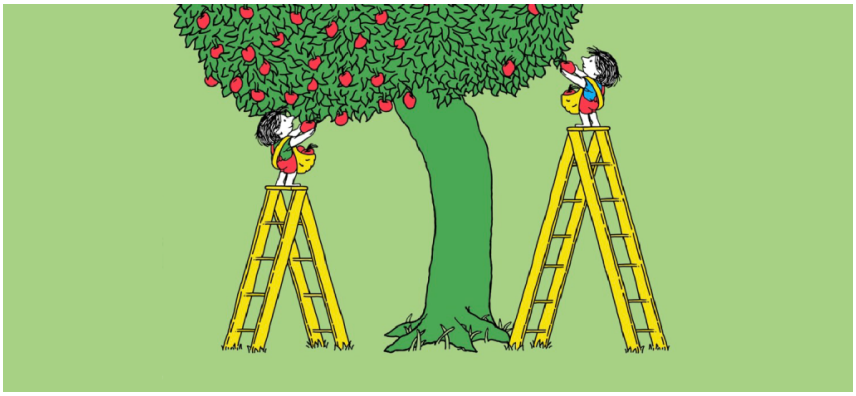

Illustration from https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/

As the photo above illustrates, not everyone has the same advantages. Equity is achieved when individuals receive the supports they need to access opportunities, symbolized in this photo by apples. Individuals who can reach more apples, or opportunities, due to their position, the abundance of apples, and/or the slant of the tree (or system) require a shorter ladder (or supports) than individuals who cannot reach as many apples.

Timing of this report

Since the spring of 2020, COVID-19 has had differential impacts on families throughout the country.[2] For families of color, the hardships of the pandemic have been compounded by the long-standing racial discrimination they have experienced in this country. Research shows that students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and students from non-English-speaking households had, for instance, a disproportionately higher likelihood of receiving instruction through remote learning, more obstacles in accessing reliable Internet and laptops/Chromebooks and, on average, increased difficulty focusing on schoolwork due to higher levels of economic and psychological stress.[3] Moreover, in the realm of pre-COVID American public schooling, minoritized students already had experienced, on average, disproportionate exclusion from experienced and robust instruction and higher rates of suspension and expulsion.[4] As a result, research suggested that racial disparities would be further entrenched once children resumed full-time, in-person learning, meaning district leaders and educational stakeholders would need to pay increased attention to equity opportunity gaps.[5] We are releasing this report in the spring of 2022 to assist the district in this effort.

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[2] Addo, I. Y. (2020). Double pandemic: racial discrimination amid coronavirus disease 2019. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *2*(1), 100074. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100074

[3] Beusekom, M. Van. (2020). *Studies spotlight COVID racial health disparities, similarities*. University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/09/studies-spotlight-covid-racial-health-disparities-similarities; Gaylord-Harden, N., Adams-Bass, V., Bogan, E., Francis, L., Scott, J., Seaton, E., & Williams, J. (2020). *Addressing Inequities in Education: Considerations for Black Children and Youth in the Era of COVID-19* (Issue Statement of the Evidence).

[4] Kostyo, S., Cardichon, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). *Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real: State Strategies to Close the Opportunity Gap A Follow-Up Report to Advancing Equity for Underserved Youth. September.* https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/essa-equity-promise.

[5] García, E., & Weiss, E. (2020). *Lessons from pre-pandemic research to inform relief, recovery, and rebuilding*; Moore, K. (2020). *Structural Racism is a Public Health Crisis: Addressing Racial Disparities in COIVD-19*. http://library1.nida.ac.th/termpaper6/sd/2554/19755.pdf

Overview of this Report

To mitigate educational inequities, which have only grown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers and educators need clear and trustworthy data that can inform their efforts. In order to provide a comprehensive baseline report of SCASD, we analyzed the following data points:

- Enrollment by race/ethnicity, free-and-reduced lunch, and qualification for special education classes
- Levels of teacher diversity compared to student diversity
- Opportunities for advanced learning, including gifted education in elementary, Algebra I in 8th grade, and AP courses in high school
- Frequency and severity of student discipline by race/ethnicity
- Keystone scores (for English/Language Arts and Algebra 1) and graduation rates for different races/ethnicities, students considered economically disadvantaged, and students enrolled in special education classes

Each of the district's eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and singular high school are reflected in the data featured in this report. Data for the Delta Program is only included when district-wide data is reported; we do not feature any school-level data for Delta in this report because this data was not readily accessible to us. Because Delta operates as a program within the district and not as a separate school outside of the district, SCASD officials need consistent access to Delta's data points if they are to make district-wide progress on equity; moreover, it is important for transparency to the larger community and families.

This report is intended to serve as a yardstick that SCASD and the community can use to measure equity gains moving forward. In addition, we hope this report can function as a guide that offers a snapshot of the district's current state, as well as what concrete next steps can be taken. To aid this effort, we include a description of each metric and its importance, an assortment of visuals (both figures and tables), and a bulleted list of noted findings and trends. When appropriate, we include resources to assist the district in taking next steps.

District-wide Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

We start with an analysis of overall student enrollment by race/ethnicity, displayed in Table 1.[6] This gives us a big picture of *who* attends SCASD's schools and how those demographics have changed over the last five years. This data will be an important point of comparison when considering who is enrolled in advanced classes, who receives what sort of discipline in the district, and who earns proficient Keystone scores and graduates on time, analyses which will come later in this report. Table 1 offers raw numbers for student enrollment, as well as what percentage each student subgroup is of the entire student population.

Findings Include:

- SCASD remains a predominantly White school district, but the student population is becoming more diverse. Demographic shifts from 2016-2021 include more multiracial students (+1.1 percentage points, or 78 students), more Black students (+0.4 percentage points, or 29 students)[7] and fewer White students (-1.3 percentage points, or 129 students).
- The overall number of students from year to year remains just above 7,000.
- Among students of color, Asian students are the largest subgroup in the SCASD district and multiracial students are the second.
- Although Black and Hispanic students are smaller groups, there were still 200+ enrolled students for each subgroup in the 2020-21 school year.

[6] Data with a raw number of ten or lower has been suppressed whenever it is attached to confidential information (economic status, special education enrollment, etc.). Suppression is indicated with the use of an asterisk. We do not suppress any data concerning enrollment or other non-confidential information.
[7] % change for Black students is over 10%

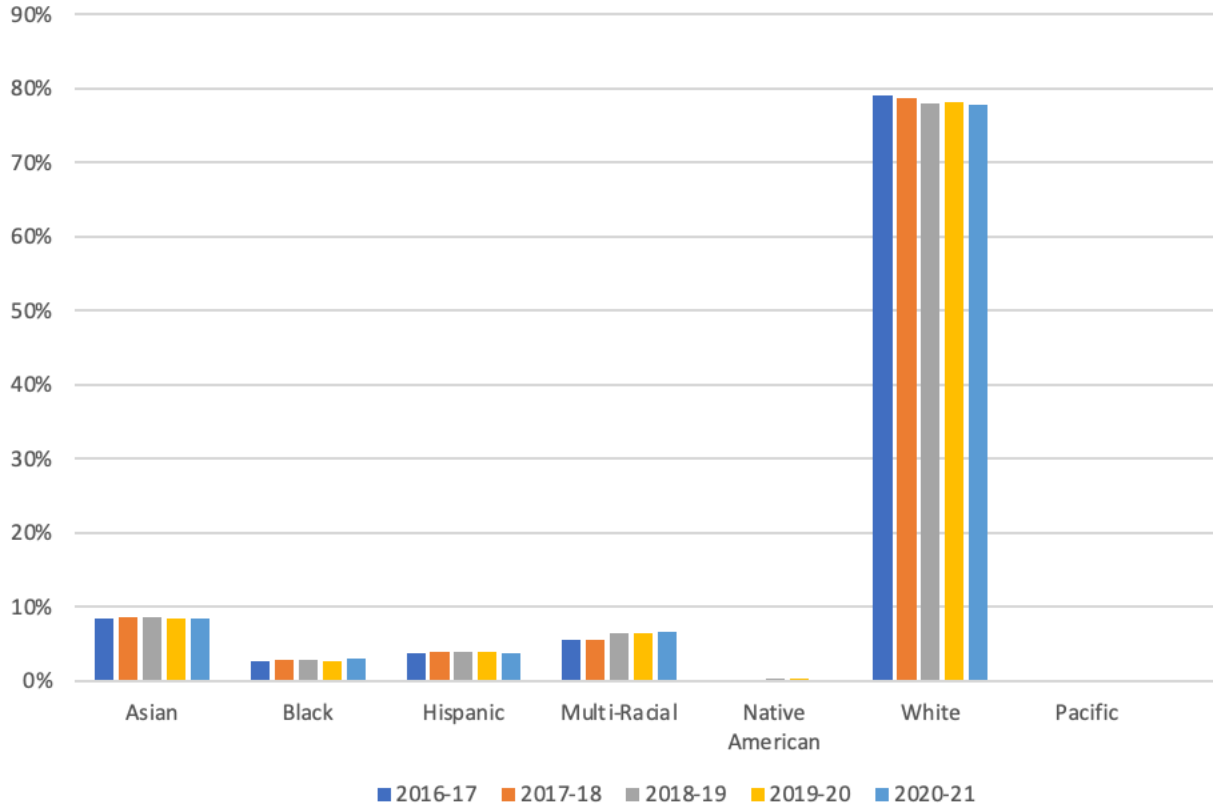
Table 1: District-wide Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	Numbers					Percentages				
	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**
Asian	602	608	610	599	587	8.5%	8.6%	8.6%	8.5%	8.4%
Black	189	204	196	182	218	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%	3.1%
Hispanic	268	284	281	275	269	3.8%	4.0%	4.0%	3.9%	3.8%
Multi-Racial	386	393	453	459	464	5.5%	5.6%	6.4%	6.5%	6.6%
Native American	17	16	19	20	11	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
White	5579	5549	5555	5500	5450	79.1%	78.6%	78.0%	78.1%	77.8%
Pacific	11	5	5	4	6	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Totals	7052	7059	7119	7039	7005	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Data reported by SCASD

The following figure offers a visual display of the same percentages reported above.

Figure 1: District-wide Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, displayed as percentages



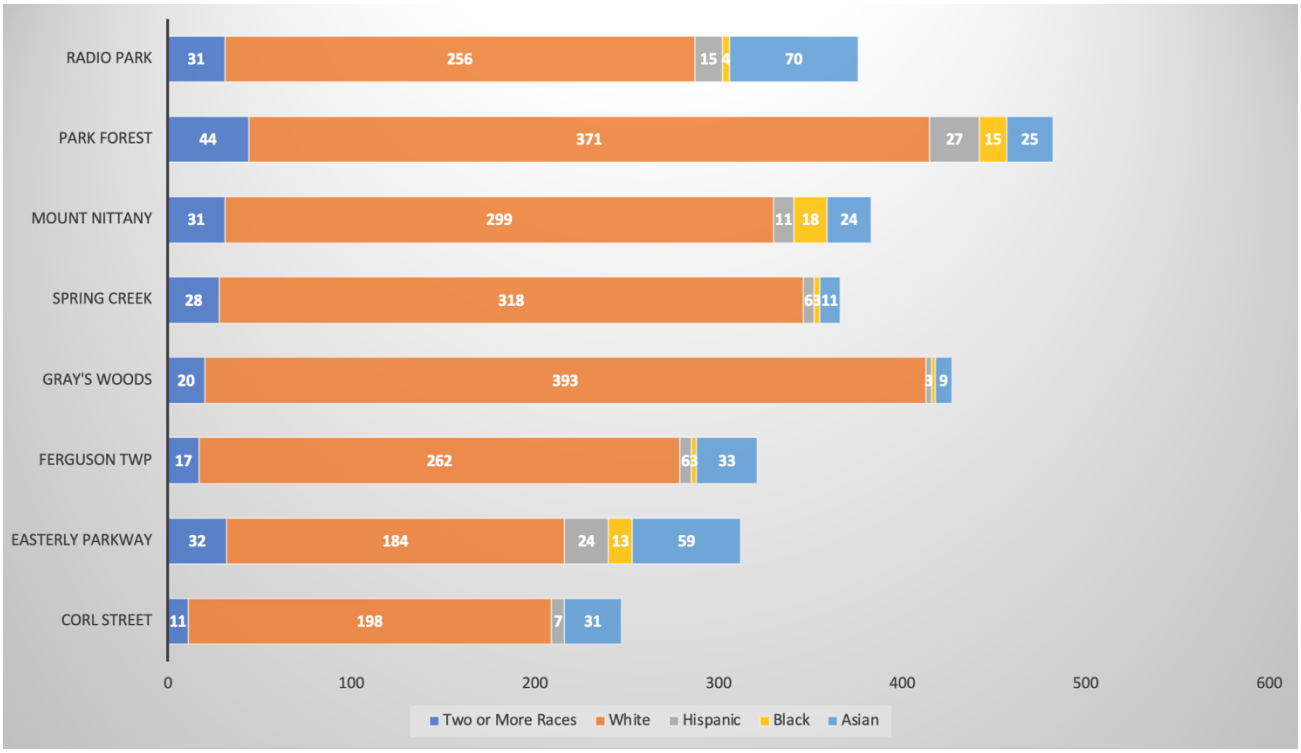
Data reported by SCASD

Figures 2 and 3, below, provide a closer look at the demographics of the district's elementary schools in particular. Figure 2 shows the raw numbers of student enrollment by race/ethnicity during 2019-20, while Figure 3 shows the percentage of White students at each elementary school in selected years since 2013-14. We feature White student percentages in Figure 3 to determine if there are heightened concentrations of White students in particular elementary schools. Because SCASD's student population is majority White and because the demographics of the eight elementary schools differ widely, this is an important data point for the district to monitor.

- For the years surveyed (2013-14, 2015-16, and 2019-20), Gray's Woods is classified as an intensely segregated White school (where Black and Hispanic students make up 10 percent or less of the enrollment).[8]
- An analysis of school level-demographics reveals that in 2013-14, 2015-16, and 2019-20, Easterly Parkway had the lowest percentage of White students of the eight area elementary schools. In the 2019-20 school year, Easterly Parkway's student population was 59% White, a difference of more than thirty percentage points from Gray's Woods' enrollment which was 91% White.
- Park Forest MS and Mount Nittany MS have very similar demographics, as eight elementary schools funnel into these two middle schools.

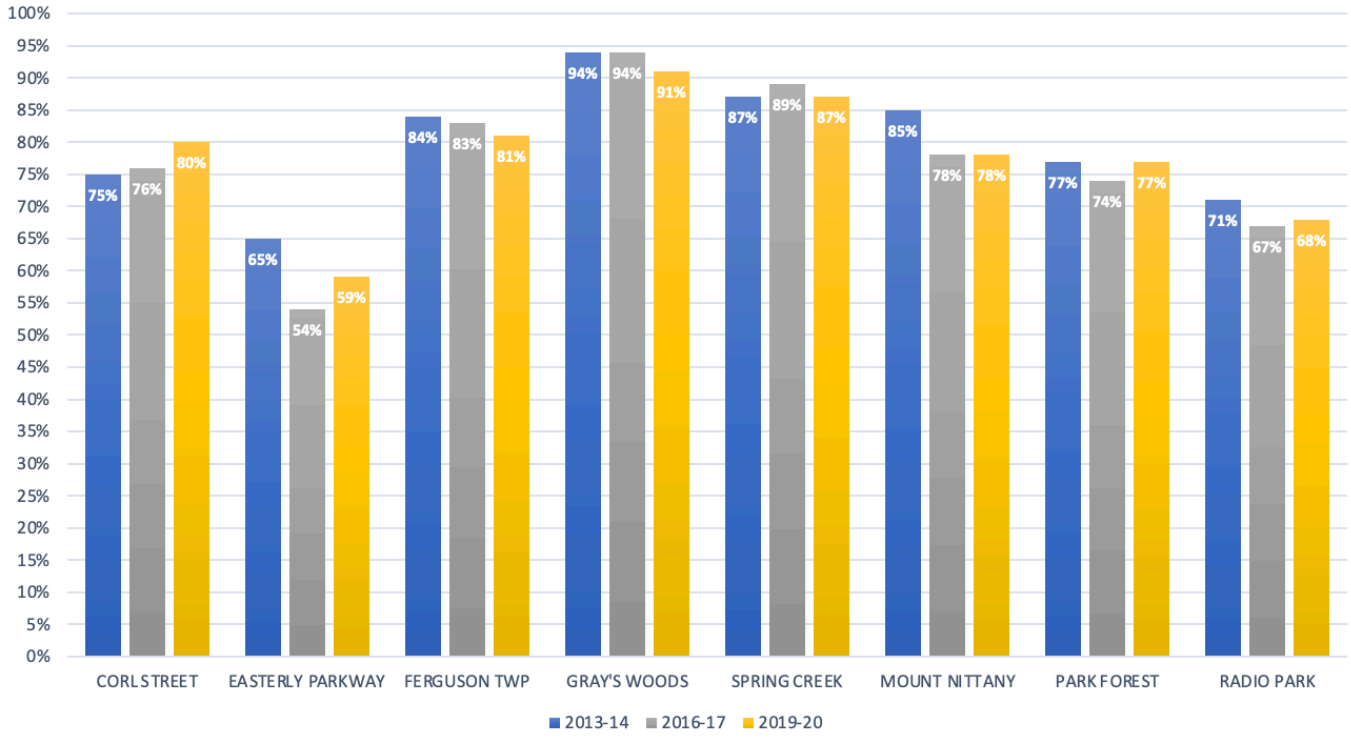
[8] Intensely segregated schools are problematic for many reasons, including that they can provide limited cross-racial exposure to their students, that they are less likely to have an integrated staff, and that they are disproportionately resourced. For a broader discussion on the harms of segregation, see Siegel-Hawley, G. (2020). Why School Integration? In *A Single Garment: Creating Intentionally Diverse Schools That Benefit All Children* (1st ed.). Harvard Education Press.

Figure 2: Elementary Student Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2019-20



Data provided by National Center for Education Statistics. Because of their low numbers at some schools, Black student enrollment does not display easily in this figure. The raw numbers are: Radio Park – 4, Spring Creek – 3, Gray's Woods – 2, and Ferguson Township – 3.

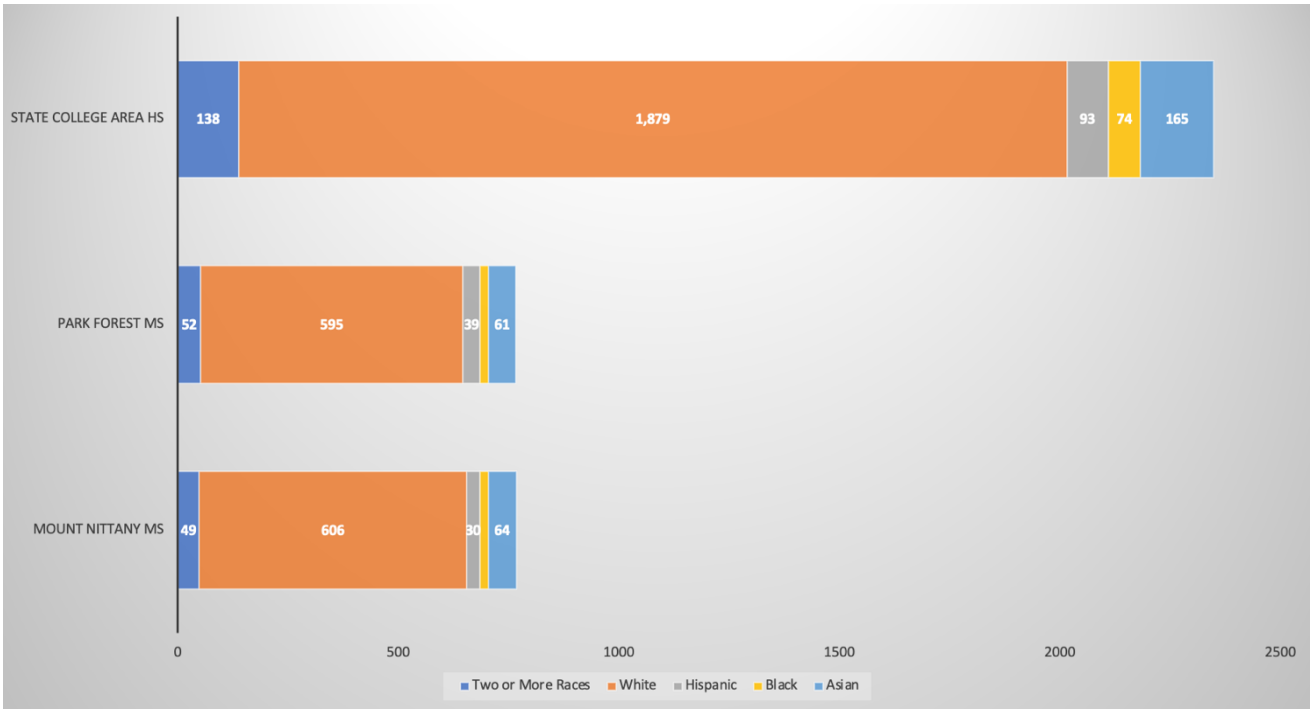
Figure 3: Percentage of student enrollment that is White, by elementary schools (2013-2020)



Data from National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data

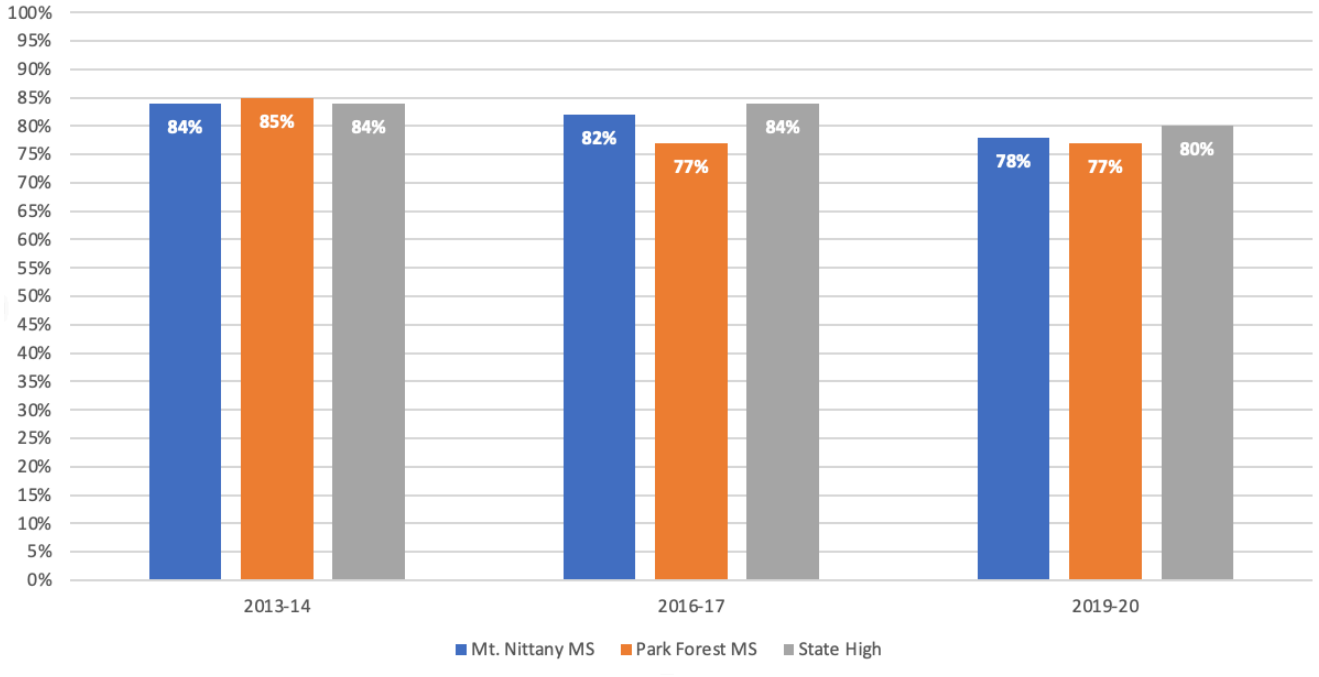
Figures 4 and 5 display the same information for secondary schools. With just two middle schools and one high school in the district, there is less variation in student race/ethnicity in secondary schools than in elementary schools.

Figure 4: Secondary Student Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2019-20



Data provided by National Center for Education Statistics. Numbers for Black students at the middle school level are not displayed due to small size; there were 19 Black students at both Park Forest MS and Mount Nittany MS in 2020-21.

Figure 5: Percentage of student population that is White, by secondary schools (2013-2020)



Data provided by National Center for Education Statistics

Students Experiencing Economic Disadvantage

This section uses receipt of free-and-reduced lunch as a metric for understanding who in the district might be suffering from economic disadvantage.[9] Table 2 below reports what percentage of all economically disadvantaged students each student subgroup makes up; one reading from this table, for instance, is that during the 2019-20 academic year, 7.5% of all economically disadvantaged students identified as Asian. Altogether, this data helps us understand the economic hardships families within the community are facing and also helps us consider whether a specific sub-group of families experience a disproportionate share of economic hardship. This is important contextual information that will enable us to better monitor the degree to which economically disadvantaged students encounter barriers to advanced educational opportunities that more affluent, or non-economically disadvantaged, students do not tend to encounter.

Because multiple identifiers are included in Table 2 (economic status *and* race/ethnicity), this table includes intersectional data. "Intersectionality" is a term that was coined by the law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to refer to the ways that Black women face multiple layers of oppression: on one account due to their race, and on another due to their gender. When reflecting on how the term has evolved, Crenshaw says, "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things."[10] Intersectional data allows us to report more nuanced findings, which can lead to more finely tuned recommendations. If we find, for instance, that Hispanic students experiencing economic disadvantage face specific obstacles that White students experiencing

[9] The free-and-reduced lunch variable is inaccurate for some students as undocumented immigrant families do not always feel safe returning qualifying paperwork due to fears of deportation. See Lytton, B. (2017, March 27). Danbury's undocumented nervous about school food programs. *News Times*. https://www.newstimes.com/local/article/Danbury-s-undocumented-nervous-about-school-11028803.php#taboola-2. Even so, free-and-reduced lunch is the best measurement we currently have to measure economic disadvantage. Note, because the federal government began offering free-and-reduced lunch to all students, regardless of family income, prior to the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are only considering free-and-reduced lunch prior to this time.

[10] *Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later.* (2017). Columbia Law School. https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later

economic disadvantage do *not* tend to face, we can collaboratively fashion solutions that respond to the unique challenges faced by these specific Hispanic students.

Findings Include:

- Black and Hispanic students in State College are significantly disproportionately economically disadvantaged. In 2019-20, Black students made up 2.6% of district enrollment but 7.1% of all students experiencing economic disadvantage. That same year, Hispanic students made up 3.9% of district enrollment but 6.6% of all students experiencing economic disadvantage.
- To a lesser extent, multi-racial students are disproportionately economically disadvantaged; in 2019-20, multiracial students made up 6.5% of the district but 7.5% of all students experiencing economic disadvantage.
- As best as we can tell, Asian and White students are disproportionately less impacted by economic disadvantage.

Table 2: Total % of All Students Experiencing Economic Disadvantage, Identified by Race/Ethnicity

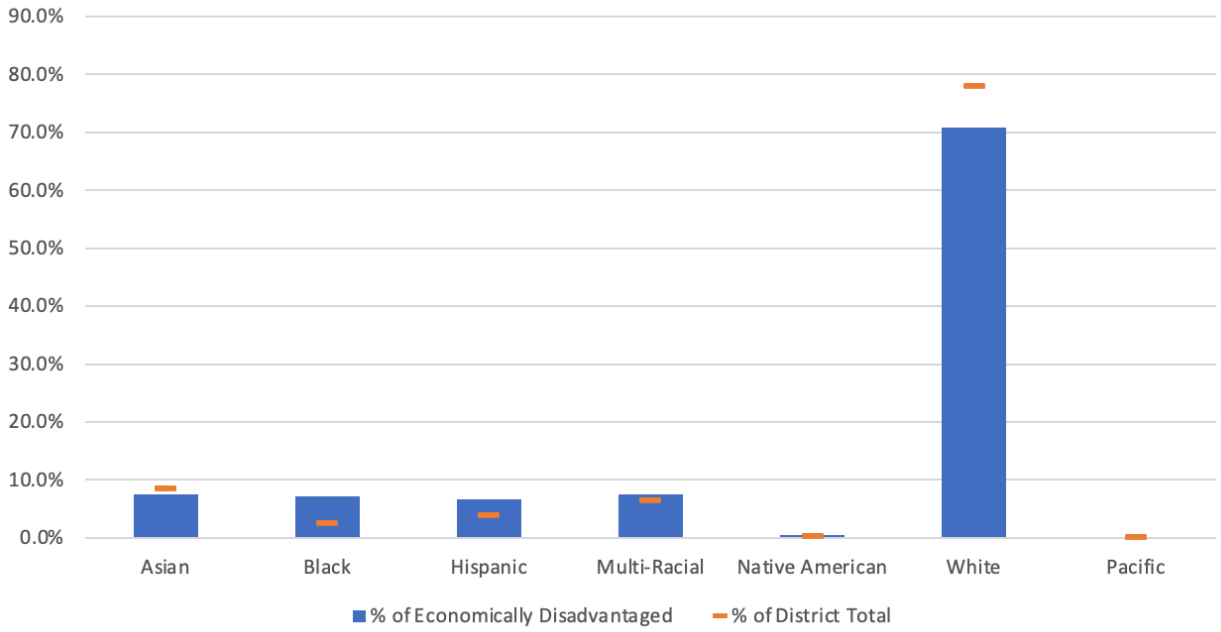
	Raw Numbers				% of All Economically Disadvantaged Students			
	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**
Asian	175	161	151	128	9.2%	8.6%	8.2%	7.5%
Black	126	131	134	122	6.6%	7.0%	7.2%	7.1%
Hispanic	114	124	117	113	6.0%	6.6%	6.3%	6.6%
Multi-Racial	130	136	152	129	6.8%	7.3%	8.2%	7.5%
Native American	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
White	1347	1309	1290	1215	70.8%	70.1%	69.7%	70.8%
Pacific	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	1904	1868	1851	1716	99.4%	99.6%	99.6%	99.5%

Data provided by SCASD

Figure 6 shows the percentage of each student subgroup for both the total economically disadvantaged student population as well as the total district student population for the 2019-20 academic year, allowing us to quickly see if any student subgroup experiences disproportionate levels of economic disadvantage. These percentages are considered proportionate if the orange dash meets each blue bar at its end point.

This figure shows that lower percentages of Asian students and White students are classified as economically disadvantaged while multiracial, Hispanic, and Black students are disproportionately more impacted by economic disadvantage.

Figure 6: Comparison of Student Racial Subgroup Percentage of All Economically Disadvantaged Students and Total District Enrollment, 2019-20



Data provided by SCASD

To consider this data in a different light, we could flip the information and consider how many students are *not* "economically disadvantaged." Calling these students "economically secure" or "economically advantaged" are both misnomers, as the criterion used to define these students is merely that they are not documented by the district as qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch.[11]

That being said, looking at the data this way does make some trends more obvious, especially when we consider what percentage of each student subgroup qualifies as *not* economically disadvantaged. As Table 3 shows, large racial disparities exist. In 2019-20, only a third of the district's Black students did *not* qualify for free-and-reduced lunch, a trend that has been fairly consistent since 2016. The majority of students in other subgroups are not economically disadvantaged, though 41% of Hispanic students are. Asian and White students are the least economically disadvantaged of the district's population, which corresponds with the findings in Figure 6.

Table 3: Total Percentage of Student Subgroups *Not* Reporting Economic Disadvantage, Identified by Race/Ethnicity

	Raw Numbers				Percentage of Student Subgroup			
	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**
Asian	427	447	459	471	70.9%	73.5%	75.2%	78.6%
Black	63	73	62	60	33.3%	35.8%	31.6%	33.0%
Hispanic	154	160	164	162	57.5%	56.3%	58.4%	58.9%
Multi-Racial	256	257	301	330	66.3%	65.4%	66.4%	71.9%
Native American	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
White	4232	4240	4265	4285	75.9%	76.4%	76.8%	77.9%
Pacific	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	5148	5191	5268	5323				

Data reported by SCASD

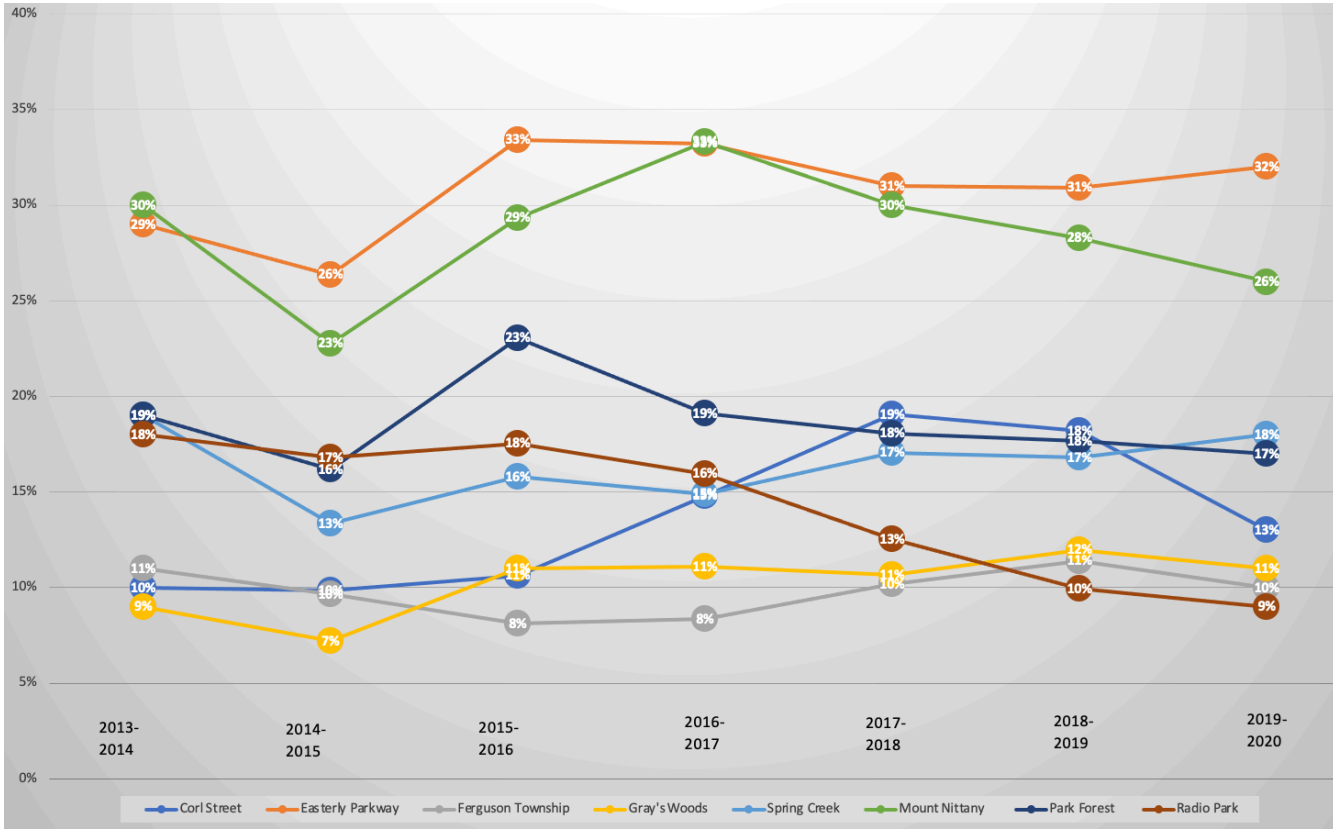
[11] It's likely that not all of the students who would have qualified for free and reduced lunch between 2016 and 2020 submitted forms indicating as such, in which case the district would have inaccurately grouped them into this category. Moreover, just because a student does not qualify for free-and-reduced lunch does not imply that their family can afford to live comfortably in the district. For more research on the use of free and reduced lunch as a measurement, see pages 4-5 of Siegel-Hawley, G., Taylor, K., Frankenberg, E., & Bridges, K. (2021). *Double Segregation by Race and Poverty in Virginia Schools Report.* https://cecr.ed.psu.edu/sites/default/files/Double_Segregation_by_Race_and_Poverty_Virginia_Schools_2021.pdf

The following two figures provide more nuance by showing the rates of free-and-reduced lunch for each school in the district. Figure 7 includes data for the district's eight elementary schools, while Figure 8 focuses on the district's secondary schools.

Elementary school findings include:

- Since 2014-15, Easterly Parkway has had the highest (or tied for highest) rate of students who qualify for free-and-reduced lunch.
- There is a wide range in the rates of free-and-reduced lunch across the elementary schools; in 2019-20, 32% of Easterly Parkway's students qualified for free-and-reduced lunch while just 9% of Radio Park's students qualified.
- Radio Park's rate of free-and-reduced lunch has seen the greatest fluctuation, from 18% in 2013-14 to 9% in 2019-20.

Figure 7: Percentages of students qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch among elementary schools, 2013-2020

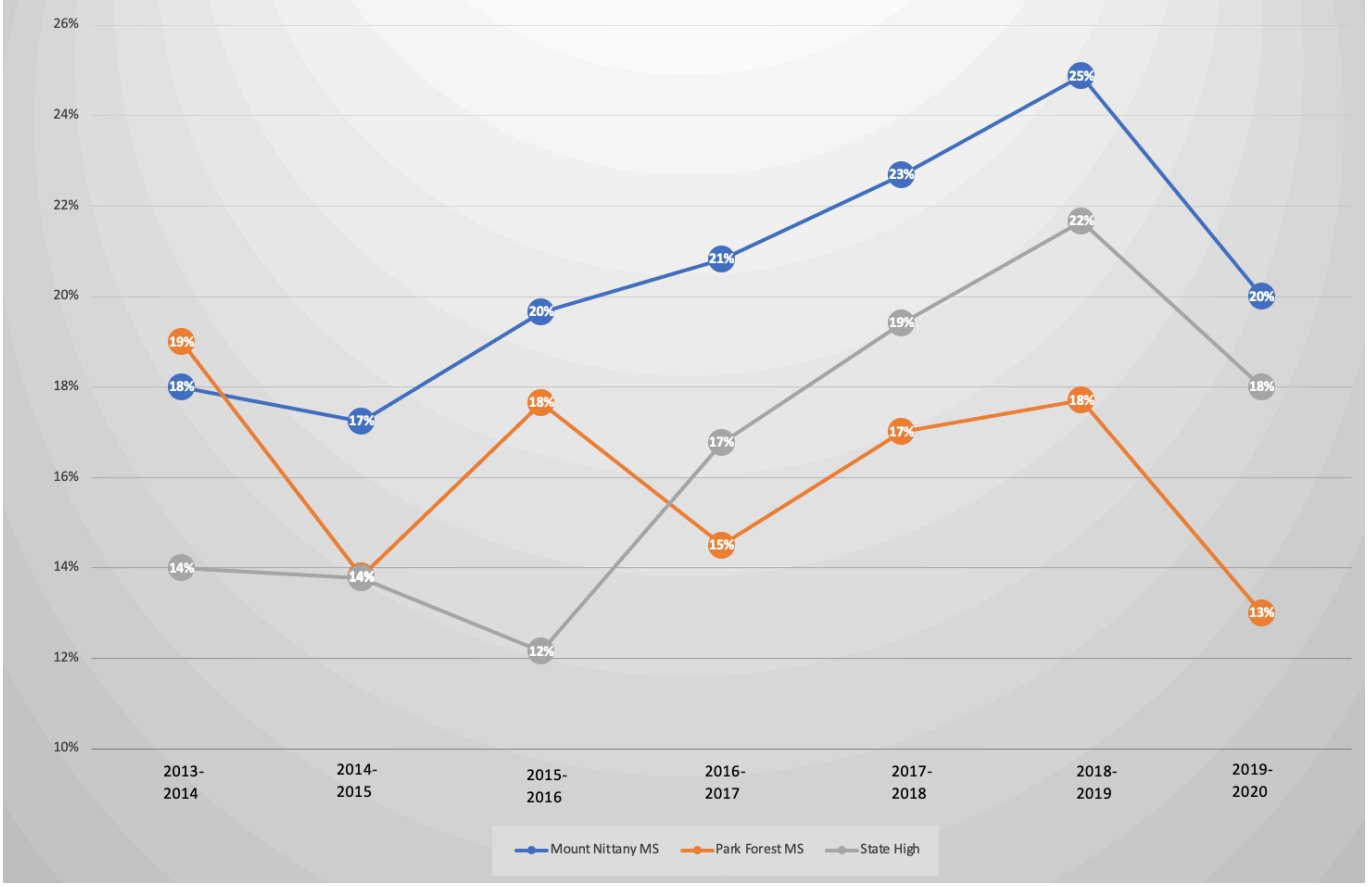


Data provided by National Center for Education Statistics

Secondary school findings include:

- Since the 2016-17 school year, the percentage of Mt. Nittany Middle School students that receive free/reduced lunch is 6-7 points higher than Park Forest Middle School.
- The high school's rate of free-and-reduced lunch is currently a steady average of both middle schools' rates; note, this is not always the case (see years 2013-2016).

Figure 8: Percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, by secondary schools (2014-2020)



Data provided by National Center for Education Statistics

This section, in conjunction with the first section on enrollment, reveals that while the middle schools do not differ significantly in regard to racial composition, there is a difference in the socioeconomic status of enrolled students.

Students Identified for Special Education

Table 4 offers another set of intersectional data: qualifying for special education services and race/ethnicity. This data allows us to understand the prevalence of special education enrollment in our district as a whole while also noting what, if any, student subgroups are disproportionately identified for special education.[12] The data contained within this report enables us to start with a high-level overview, which we hope the district will build on in future years.

The percentages in Table 4 speak to the total population of students enrolled in special education; for example, in 2020-21, 4.3% of all students receiving special education services were Asian. Later in this report, when we consider outcome data, the information in Table 4 will also help us determine if any subgroup of special education students is particularly struggling to access learning opportunities.

Findings include:

- Asian students are disproportionately less likely to receive special education services (Table 4). Note, we don't share this finding with the hope of unnecessarily *increasing* Asian students' enrollment in special education; rather, we highlight this finding to suggest that Asian students might have disproportionately unequal access to some support(s) that effectively keeps them from needing the services offered by special education.
- Comparing the numbers in Table 4 to Table 1, higher percentages of students receiving special education services were Black and Hispanic students compared to their share of the district enrollment.
- Multiracial and White students are enrolled in special education at similar levels to their share of the district enrollment.

[12] SCASD states that they are an inclusive district, meaning the majority of students who are identified for special education remain in classes with non-identified students. They have shared that supports for identified students consist of having a case manager and generally, attending a special study skills class as an elective. In some districts, students who are identified for special education may be enrolled in wholly separate classes; in this case, they might not have access to regular classroom instruction and interaction with peers, both of which can be important for students' development. Although SCASD may be inclusive, a wide variety of categories are included within the broad label of special education, and not all students receive the same general supports. As such, a more finely grained analysis would be useful to determine the varied experiences for students. This analysis might also consider at what point students are identified for services and to what degree tracking intersects with special education identification.

Table 4: Total Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education Services, Identified by Race/Ethnicity

	Raw Numbers					Percentages				
	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**
Asian	41	40	40	44	49	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.8%	4.3%
Black	68	76	68	66	66	5.5%	6.3%	5.7%	5.7%	5.9%
Hispanic	49	51	57	51	54	4.0%	4.2%	4.7%	4.4%	4.8%
Multi-Racial	72	66	78	75	77	5.8%	5.5%	6.5%	6.5%	6.8%
Native American	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
White	995	971	953	917	879	80.8%	80.3%	79.2%	79.1%	77.9%
Pacific	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	1232	1210	1203	1159	1129					

Data reported by SCASD

Table 5 similarly provides data on students enrolled in special education, but the percentages speak to the entire population of students in each *racial subgroup* rather than the entire population of special education students as a whole. For instance, in 2020-21, 8.4% of all Asian students in the district were enrolled in special education.

Table 5 allows us check for stark anomalies in special education enrollment. If a significantly high percentage of an entire racial subgroup is enrolled in special education classes *and* there is a sizable presence of students from that racial subgroup enrolled within the district (i.e., there are enough students from that racial subgroup that the data is not suppressed when reporting), there are questions the district ought to be asking: is bias present in the districts' qualifying process for special education? Do all students have access to the unique in-school supports they need as individuals and, to the extent that the school can provide it, to the unique out-of-school supports they require?

Findings include:

- Roughly 1/3 of the district's Black students and 1/5 of the district's Hispanic students are enrolled in special education classes (Table 5).[13] We should expect to see proportional percentages of students who are identified for special education services across all races/ethnicities.
- Asian students are the least likely to receive special education services, which has increased slightly since 2016.
- Special education enrollment for both multiracial and White students is roughly 16% of each respective subgroup.

Table 5: Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity Identified for Special Education Services

	Percentages				
	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**
Asian	6.8%	6.6%	6.6%	7.4%	8.4%
Black	40.0%	37.3%	34.7%	36.3%	30.3%
Hispanic	18.3%	18.0%	20.3%	18.6%	20.1%
Multi-Racial	18.7%	16.8%	17.2%	16.3%	16.6%
Native American	*	*	*	*	*
White	17.8%	17.5%	17.2%	16.7%	16.1%
Pacific	*	*	*	*	*

Data reported by SCASD

[13] The board received a notification from the Pennsylvania Department of Education regarding this overrepresentation. The district has responded to this notification with a board memo: https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/stco/Board.nsf/files/C2JRX470107F/$file/6.B.%20Special%20Education%20Significant%20Disproportionality%20of%20Black%20Students%2005-03-2021.pdf In the memo, the district describes the problem by stating, "The PDE notification that we're identifying Black students for a [specific learning disability] at a higher rate relative to other groups is also troubling, prompting us to reflect on our policies, procedures and practices related to all students who receive special education."

Teacher Diversity

Teacher diversity is important for both students and staff of all races/ethnicities: families of color are more likely to trust schools where White teachers are working alongside colleagues of color; minoritized students demonstrate significant academic and social-emotional gains when they have opportunities to learn from teachers of color; and White students have healthier formation of their racial identity when they have opportunities to learn from teachers of color.[14] Teacher diversity also benefits teachers. Because a diverse teaching staff often draws a diverse student population, schools with a diverse teaching staff are less likely to be intensely segregated than schools with more a racially homogenous teaching staff; moreover, because intensely segregated schools are often sites of concentrated poverty, teacher diversity helps create more evenly resourced schools with lower teacher attrition.[15]

Historically, the teaching field has been overwhelmingly comprised of White teachers, the majority of whom are female. In 2019-20, White teachers made up 94% of the teaching force in Pennsylvania as a whole and a few years earlier, in 2017-18, they made up 79% of the public-school teaching force nationally.[16] Monitoring this data allows SCASD to see how it compares to national and statewide trends, as well as how levels of teacher racial diversity compare to levels of student racial diversity within the district.

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[14] To read a comprehensive and recent report we wrote analyzing levels of teacher and student racial diversity in Pennsylvania, as well as policy suggestions for increasing rates of cross-racial exposure between both, see Dulaney, K., & Frankenberg, E. (2021). *Inching Toward Integration? A Report of Student and Teacher Exposure to Racial Diversity in Pennsylvania's Public Schools, 2013-2020*. https://cecr.ed.psu.edu/sites/default/files/ CECR_diversity_ brief.pdf Regarding healthy racial formation, see Anderson, M.D. (2015). Why Schools Need More Teachers of Color – for White Students. *The Atlantic,* 1-12. http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/08/teachers-of-color-White-students/400553/; Gershenson, S., Hart, C. M. D., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. W. (2017). *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers* (No. 10630; Discussion Paper). www.iza.org; and Tatum, B. (2017). *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (Revised ed). Basic Books;

[15] Siegel-Hawley, G. (2020). *A Single Garment: Creating Intentionally Diverse Schools That Benefit All Children*. Harvard Education Press.

[16] Will, M. (2020, April 14). Still Mostly White and Female: New Federal Data on the Teaching Profession. *Education Week*. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/still-mostly-white-and-female-new-federal-data-on-the-teaching-profession/2020/04

Figure 9 shows that there were much higher levels of student racial diversity within SCASD during the 2019-20 school year compared to lower levels of teacher racial diversity. Teacher racial/ethnic data is difficult to examine, despite the importance of teacher racial diversity. This Figure, as well as Table 5, contains data that was collected by Research for Action, a non-profit education research organization based in Philadelphia. Table 5 includes information on the number of teachers of color within each school in the district for four recent years.

In this section, we also feature data that SCASD reported to the federal government that details the number of faculty of color that held positions as teachers, teacher aides, consultants, or administrators. The data reported by SCASD is marginally different than the data reported by Research for Action. We include both to be transparent about this discrepancy although both are similar in showing that there is minimal diversity among educators in the district. A hope of our partnership is to help the district build capacity in accurately monitoring this and other indicators of equity, like rates of teacher turnover.

Research shows that the attrition rate for teachers of color is higher than that of White teachers;[17] monitoring this data point, therefore, would support overall efforts to increase teacher diversity within the district. School-level data specifically lets us know where teachers of color are located throughout the district and whether or not they have any other colleagues of color in their same building. This is important because when teachers of color have none or just a few colleagues of color working alongside them, they have heightened risk of attrition.

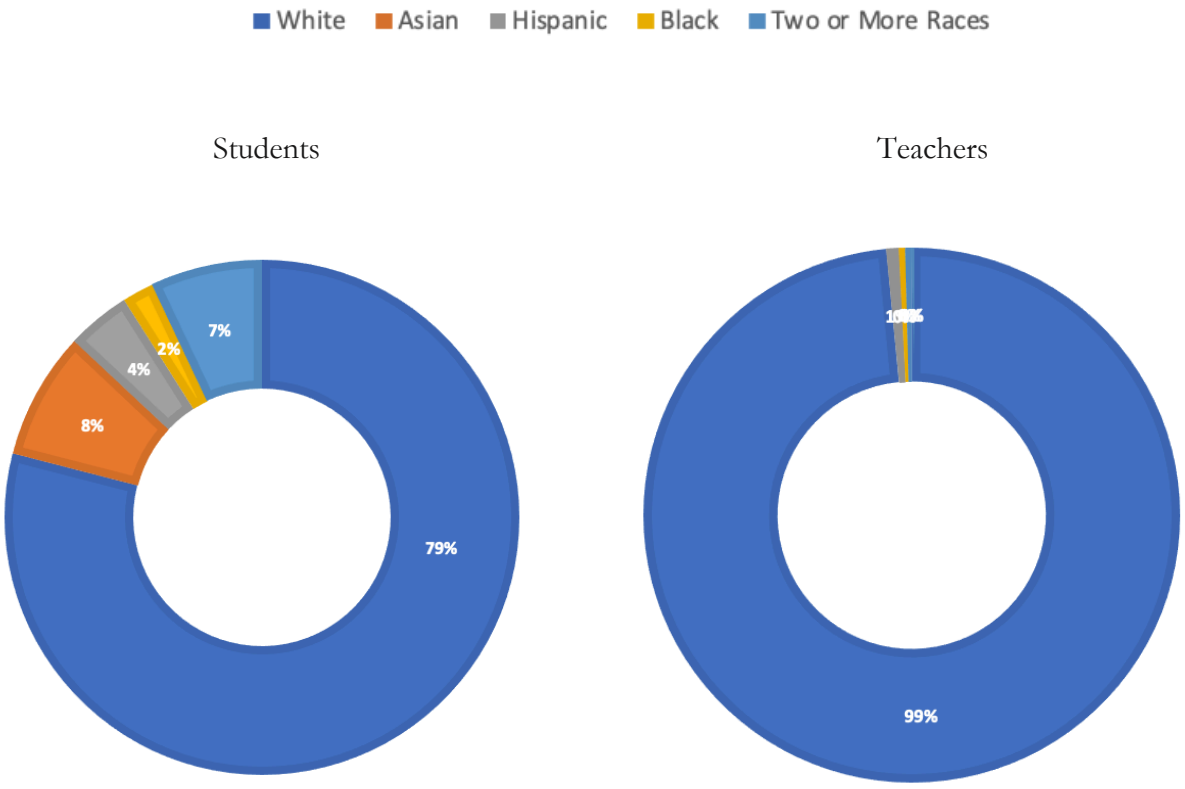
[17] Ingersoll, Richard M.; Merrill, Elizabeth; Stuckey, Daniel; and Collins, Gregory. (2018). Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force – Updated October 2018. CPRE Research Reports. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/108

Findings include:

- There is wide disparity between the student and faculty demographics; while just 79% of the student population is White, 99% of the teaching faculty are.
- There were more teacher aides of color than teachers of color in the schools in 2014, 2016, and 2018 (Table 7).
- The teachers of color who work in the district are racially isolated at their school with few to no other colleagues of color. The highest end of that spectrum – having 3 colleagues of color – is at the high school level, where the number of educators is the highest and where teachers in separate departments may have little interaction with one another (Table 6).
- Each year, a majority of SCASD schools had all-White faculties (Table 6).
- Schools that have not had any teachers of color since 2013-14 are:
    - Spring Creek (Houserville/Lemont; 13% students of color)
    - Gray's Woods (9% students of color)
    - Mt. Nittany Elem. (22% students of color)
    - Park Forest Elem. (23% students of color)
    - Park Forest Middle (23% students of color)
- In five of seven years, the two most racially diverse elementary schools had no teachers of color:
    - Radio Park (34% students of color; all White teachers until 2018-19)
    - Easterly Parkway (41% students of color; all White teachers except 2016-17 & 2017-18)

Note that when new teachers of color are hired, it's important to students' racial development that they be able to interact with and learn from them as regular classroom teachers, not solely as specialists or teachers of language.

Figure 9: Comparison of Student and Teacher Demographics, 2019-20



Data from https://www.researchforaction.org/publications/teacher-diversity-in-pennsylvania-from-2013-14-to-2019-20/.

Table 6: Teacher Diversity by School (2013-2020, selected years)

	2013-14		2015-16		2017-18		2019-20	
	Teachers of Color	All teachers	Teachers of Color	All Teachers	Teachers of Color	All Teachers	Teachers of Color	All Teachers
Corl St. Elem	1	17	1	17	1	17	1	17
Easterly Park	0	24	0	24	1	27	0	27
Ferguson Township	2	25	2	23	1	21	0	21
Gray's Woods	0	27	0	27	0	28	0	26
Spring Creek (Houserville / Lemont)	0	24	0	23	0	25	0	25
Mt. Nittany Elem	0	24	0	26	0	27	0	30
Mt. Nittany MS	1	57	1	56	1	58	2	60
Park Forest Elem	0	33	0	35	0	34	0	35
Park Forest MS	0	64	0	68	0	63	0	63
Radio Park Elem	0	27	0	27	0	25	1	27
State College HS	4	181	4	189	2	192	4	196
Totals	**8**	**503**	**8**	**515**	**6**	**517**	**8**	**527**

Data from https://www.researchforaction.org/publications/teacher-diversity-in-pennsylvania-from-2013-14-to-2019-20/. Note, these raw numbers are estimates based on group percentages reported and total teachers in the school.

Table 7: Teacher/Staff/Admin Diversity at the District Level

	Faculty of Color 2014	Faculty of Color 2016	Faculty of Color 2018
District-Wide Teachers	5	5	5
District-Wide Teacher Aides	8	7	7
District-Wide Consultants & Support	1	2	2
District-Wide Admin	1	1	2

Data was reported by SCASD to Equal Opportunity Employment Commission

It is incumbent upon districts not only to attract and hire new teachers of color, but to find strategic ways to retain the teachers of color they already employ. Promoting equity in this instance means focusing some level of teacher support directly on teachers of color; this includes creating culturally affirming school environments, providing financial assistance like loan forgiveness and relocation stipends, and monitoring data points like these in addition to teacher recruitment and retention.[18]

[18] For further description on the implementation of these ideas, as well as additional ways to support teachers of color within the district, reference Ed Trust's recent report, *If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover.* (2019). https://edtrust.org/resource/if-you-listen-we-will-stay/

Opportunity for Advanced Learning

Although school-level data in this report shows us that there are more racial/ethnic differences among the enrollments in SCASD's elementary schools than in the secondary schools, the sorting of secondary students can lessen the heterogeneity of classrooms even in schools that are more diverse. The practice of separating students into distinct courses of study begins informally in the earliest years of elementary school through mechanisms like separate curriculums and ability groups, and more formally as early as the third grade through the separation of students into distinct classes based on test scores.[19] Students who receive Title I services are formally separated for additional math and reading support even earlier than third grade, oftentimes during their social studies or science classes.[20] Recent research suggests that these students' literacy scores would actually be better supported by gaining the content knowledge they miss when absent from their social studies and science classes, meaning formalized out-of-class remediation services can, in some cases, function as a barrier to students' later opportunities for advanced learning.[21]

Research has documented that curricular tracks within secondary schools are frequently segregated along racial and socioeconomic lines, with White and Asian students disproportionately enrolled in Advanced Placement and Honors courses, while students of color are disproportionately enrolled in remedial or college preparatory classes.[22]

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[19] Some districts separate students into different classes for particular units of study rather than the entire year. SCASD, for example, is doing this at least for its math curriculum, beginning in third grade. While this is still a more formal mechanism of sorting students, it's meant to allow for more flexibility and movement of students between tracks than rigid all-year placements.

[20] Title 1 schools are determined by Pennsylvania's Department of Education (PDE) each year.

[21] See Tyner, A., & Kabourek, S. (2020). *Social Studies Instruction and Reading Comprehension: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study* (Issue September). https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/resources/social-studies-instruction-and-reading-comprehension. SCASD states that, rather than pull students from social studies or other core instructional time, they attempt to offer interventions during independent reading. According to our discussions with district leaders, students who tend to need interventions also struggle with independent reading, so missing this time is less harmful than missing core instruction.

[22] Burris, C. C. (2014). *On the Same Track: How Schools Can Join the Twenty-First Century Struggle Against Resegregation*. Beacon Press.

Although there are state guidelines requiring special services for "gifted" students,[23] identification as "gifted" does not necessarily translate to separate classes, push-in enrichment, or even specially designed instruction for all students. Some students, for instance, qualify for the "gifted" designation but receive ample enrichment through SCASD's core curriculum. For this reason, a more granular analysis of the impact of distinct interventions for "gifted" students would be helpful in the long-run.

That being said, we do know that students who are identified as "gifted and talented" have increased access to advanced courses and/or coursework, and students who are labeled as "gifted" may benefit from teachers' perceptions of them. Students who are labeled "gifted" in elementary school often enroll in Algebra I in 7th grade, thereby ensuring they have ample time in high school to pursue the level of advanced coursework that selective colleges increasingly recommend and expect from applicants.[24] SCASD currently ensures that students have equal opportunities to access "gifted and talented" supports by implementing universal screening for all students in the third grade.[25] Ensuring that all students have *equitable* access to advanced opportunities could include targeting long-term wrap-around services for students experiencing poverty or homelessness, and, as some districts have done, supporting all teachers to confidently integrate "gifted" assignments and/or extensions into all classes to eliminate separate tracks of study.[26]

Table 8 shows what percentage of each student subgroup is identified for "gifted" education, while Figure 10 shows student demographics for the district's "gifted and talented" student population as a whole. Figure 11 shows the breakdown of total "gifted and talented" demographics by elementary, middle, and high school aged students.

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[23]We put the terms "gifted and talented," referred to in Pennsylvania as just "gifted," in quotation marks for two reasons. Most straight-forwardly, this is a formal label that is applied to students by SCASD and by many other districts throughout the country. To be as clear as possible in our analyses, we seek to use language that is already prevalent and that the district and community have experience with. At the same time, we understand that the selective application of this label to *some* students implies that not all students are gifted and talented in their own ways, an implication that we find very problematic. These quotation marks, therefore, are both a nod to the formality of this label and a questioning of this term. To see state guidelines on "gifted" education in Pennsylvania, see https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Gifted%20Education/Pages/default.aspx

[24] *Educational Opportunities and Discipline Issues in Public Schools on the 65th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education.* (2019). U.S. Government Accountability Office. https://www.gao.gov/blog/2019/05/16/educational-opportunities-and-discipline-issues-in-public-schools-on-the-65th-anniversary-of-brown-v-board-of-education

[25] This information is listed on the district's "Gifted Support Services" webpage at the following address: https://www.scasd.org/domain/2715

[26] To learn about an exemplar district that has intentionally sought to "untrack" their curriculum in favor of exclusively mixed-leveled classes, read Carol Burris's 2014 text, *On The Same Track: How Schools Can Join the Twenty-First Century Struggle Against Resegregation.*

In the sections below, we consider access to advanced curricular offerings across the age spectrum. We start with a district-wide glance and then we examine opportunities from youngest to oldest.

Findings include:

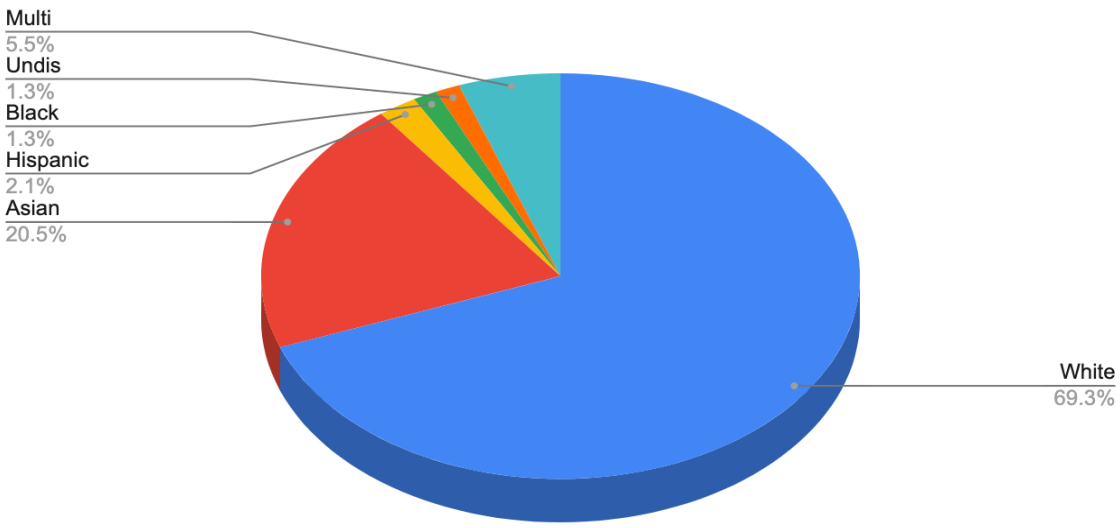
- Asian student population is vastly overrepresented in aggregated district-wide "gifted" education, approximately 20% of students; White, Hispanic, Black, and multiracial students are underrepresented.
- Most students identified for gifted, however, are White (70%).
- Black students have the largest disparity in terms of their percentage of "gifted and talented" enrollment (1%) being underrepresented in comparison to their percentage of district enrollment (3%).

Table 8: Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity Identified as "Gifted"

	Percentage of student subgroup identified in 2020/2021
White	4.84%
Asian	13.29%
Hispanic	2.97%
Black	2.29%
Undisclosed	4.53%
Multi-Racial	5.45%

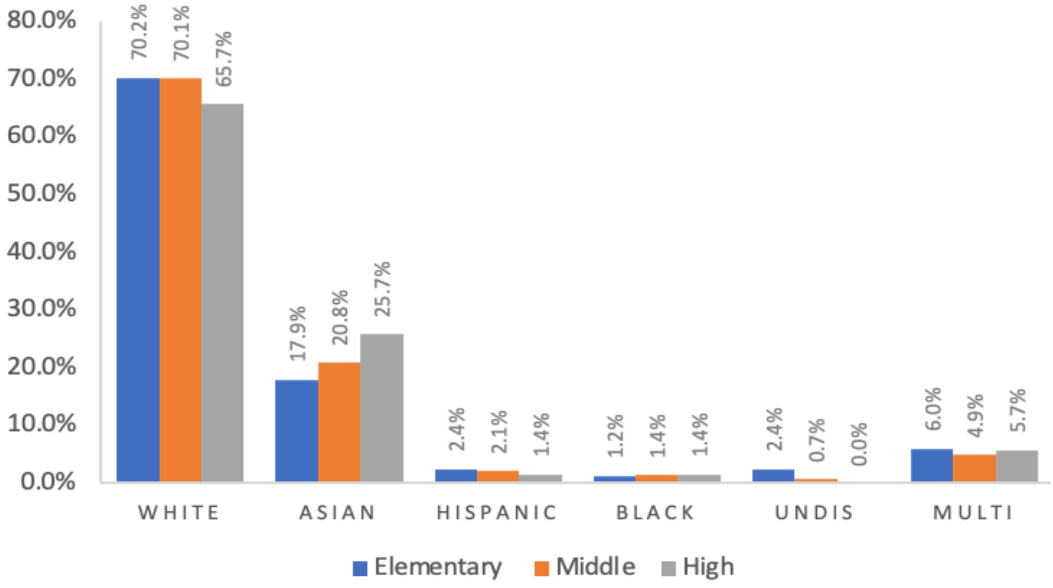
Data reported by SCASD

Figure 10: 2020-21 District-Wide & "Gifted & Talented" K-12 Demographics



Data reported by SCASD. Note, SCASD implements universal screening for "gifted & talented" status in third grade. Students who did not attend SCASD can be tested by the request of a teacher or parent. Once students are identified as "gifted & talented," that identification follows them through their entire educational career in Pennsylvania.

Figure 11: 2020-21 District-Wide & "Gifted & Talented" Demographics by School Level

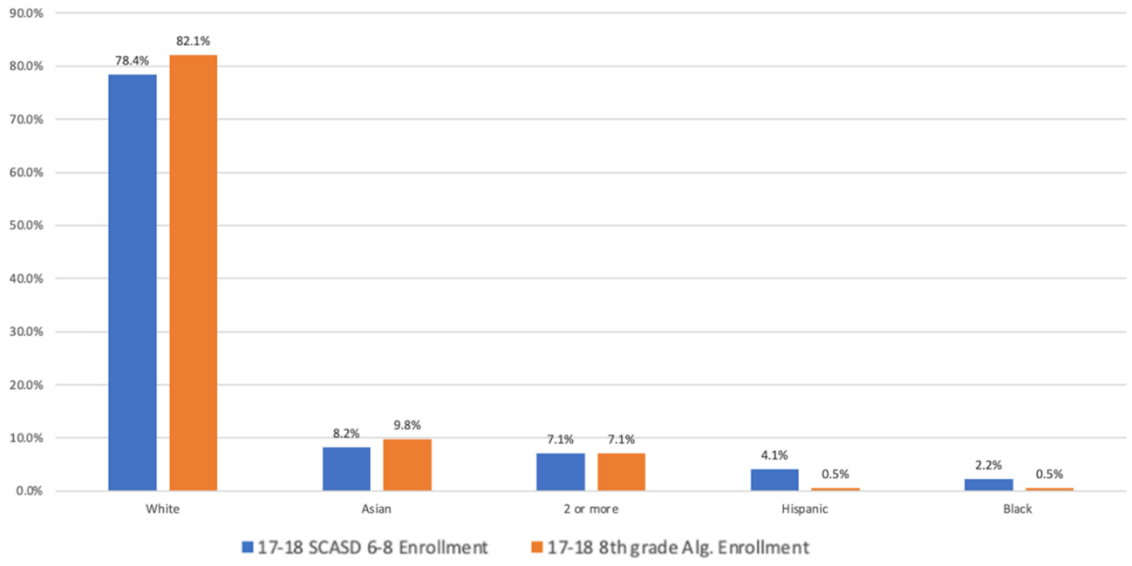


Data reported by SCASD

Findings in middle school include:

- When looking specifically at 8th grade enrollment in Algebra 1 classes (in 2017-18), White and Asian students are overrepresented.
- There is a large disparity between the percentage of middle school Hispanic students in the district (4.1%) and the number of Hispanic students enrolled in Algebra 1 in 8th grade (0.5%) during the 2017-18 school year.

Figure 12: Middle School Demographics vs. 8th grade Algebra 1 Enrollment, 2017-18



Data from U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017-18

Advanced Placement (AP) classes are one form of advanced coursework offered by SCASD.[27] These courses are offered at State High and the curriculum and end-of-year standardized assessment is developed by the College Board. AP courses are known for their breadth; in order to cover all the required curriculum, students often have to complete additional hours of homework. Taking the end-of-year standardized test is not required for enrollment in the course. Tests are administered through the district and cost an additional fee[28]; students who take and pass their AP test(s) earn college credit

[27] Other forms of advanced coursework include Honors classes, IB classes, and dual enrollment in HS and college classes. We analyzed AP data exclusively in this report because it was the most consistent data point we had access to. Note that AP classes in the district are also open to Delta students.

[28] The College Board does have a fee waiver system: https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/exam-administration-ordering-scores/ordering-fees/exam-fees/reductions. General information about AP exam policies and guidelines can be found at https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/exam-policies-guidelines/exam-fees.

that saves them tuition money and time in college. In SCASD and in many other districts, an "A" in an AP class also earns students a GPA of 5.0, which means students' weighted GPAs can climb above 4.0 when they are enrolled in advanced coursework.

Data surrounding AP enrollment and test-taking is publicly available, typically every two years, through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Although the data is reported by the district, district staff have shared concerns about the validity of OCR's 2013, 2015, and 2017 data sets. To be transparent, we include data from both sources in this section. However, the validity concerns within these data sets makes it challenging to note conclusive findings regarding AP enrollment. Moving forward, a goal of our partnership is for consistent and reliable data regarding AP enrollment to be available to district officials and to the public (including through district reporting to OCR) so that this data can be accurately monitored both internally and externally.

The following three tables contain OCR data and show the race/ethnicity of students enrolled in AP classes at State College Area High School for three academic years.[29] Findings in high school from this data set include:

- Over a three-year span (2013-14, 2015-16, and 2017-18), between 540 and 570 AP courses were taken at State High each year, though Black and Hispanic students never accounted for more than 3% of enrollment (according to OCR data). Because the figures in Tables 9, 10, and 11 show AP course enrollments rather than the number of students enrolled, it's possible that some students are counted more than once, meaning these percentages, which are already low for Hispanic and Black students, may actually be inflated.

Table 9: 2013-14 AP Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	American Indian	Asian	Hawaiian/ Pacific	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	Total	IDEA Eligible	EL
AP Science	0	0	0	2	0	16	0	18	0	0
AP Math	0	22	0	4	4	94	4	128	2	2
AP Other	0	22	2	13	10	361	16	424	13	4
Total Courses	0	44 (8%)	2 (0%)	19 (3%)	14 (2%)	471 (83%)	20 (4%)	570	15	6

Data from Office of Civil Rights

Table 10: 2015-16 AP Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	American Indian	Asian	Hawaiian/ Pacific	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	Total	IDEA Eligible	EL
AP Science	0	19	0	4	2	67	2	94	2	0
AP Math	0	34	0	4	0	118	7	163	2	2
AP Other	0	46	0	7	4	220	7	284	2	2
Total Courses	0	99 (18%)	0	15 (3%)	6 (1%)	405 (75%)	16 (3%)	541	6	4

Data from Office of Civil Rights

Table 11: 2017-18 AP Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	American Indian	Asian	Hawaiian/ Pacific	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	Total	IDEA Eligible	EL
AP Science	0	10	0	0	0	12	0	22	0	0
AP Math	0	37	0	4	3	147	6	197	2	2
AP Other	0	36	0	13	9	274	2	334	2	2
Total Courses	0	83 (15%)	0	17 (3%)	12 (2%)	433 (78%)	8 (1%)	553	4	4

Data from Office of Civil Rights

We additionally tried to examine demographic breakdowns for students who took AP classes but did not take any AP exams, but the publicly accessible data from the Office of Civil Rights was conflicting. The district provided AP testing data to supplement this section, which the following three tables display. Tables 12, 13, and 14 report the race/ethnicity of students who opted to take AP exams in the spring of 2019, 2020, and 2021. Race and ethnicity were self-reported by students at the time of testing. Not all students who enroll in AP classes choose to take an AP exam. These exams are optional and cost an additional fee of $105 each, though the district does offer full financial aid for students who qualify for free lunch and partial financial aid (all but $25 of the exam) for students who qualify for reduced lunch. Because this data reflects the number of exams taken and not the number of students taking exams, some students may be counted more than once. Figure 13 reports the percentage of tests taken, by student subgroup, that received a passing score of 3 or higher. While we acknowledge that test scores can be complicated equity indicators due to biases that may be present in exams themselves, we chose to include these scores because AP exams can help students gain college admission. Figure 14 shows what percentage of the high school population, by race/ethnicity, took an AP exam in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Findings in high school from this data set include:

- On average, about 8-9% of the district's students have taken at least one AP exam over the past three years.
- Of the district's student subgroups, a higher percentage of Asian and Hispanic students have opted to take AP exams over the past three years than other student subgroups.
- In both 2019 and 2020, fewer than 70% of AP tests taken by Black and Hispanic students received a score of 3 or higher. All other student subgroups have an average passing rate above 70%.
- Considering the total percentage of student subgroups, Black students were the least represented among AP tests taken in 2021.

Table 12: Students Who Opted to Take an AP Exam by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-2019

	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	No Response	Total
9th grade	*	18	*	*	43	*	*	73
10th grade	*	27	*	*	52	*	*	102
11 grade	*	25	*	*	146	*	*	192
12th grade	*	31	*	*	132	*	*	182
Unknown	*	*	*	*	6	*	*	15
Total	*	105	25	14	379	20	16	559
% of Tests Taken	0%	19%	4%	2%	68%	4%	3%	100%

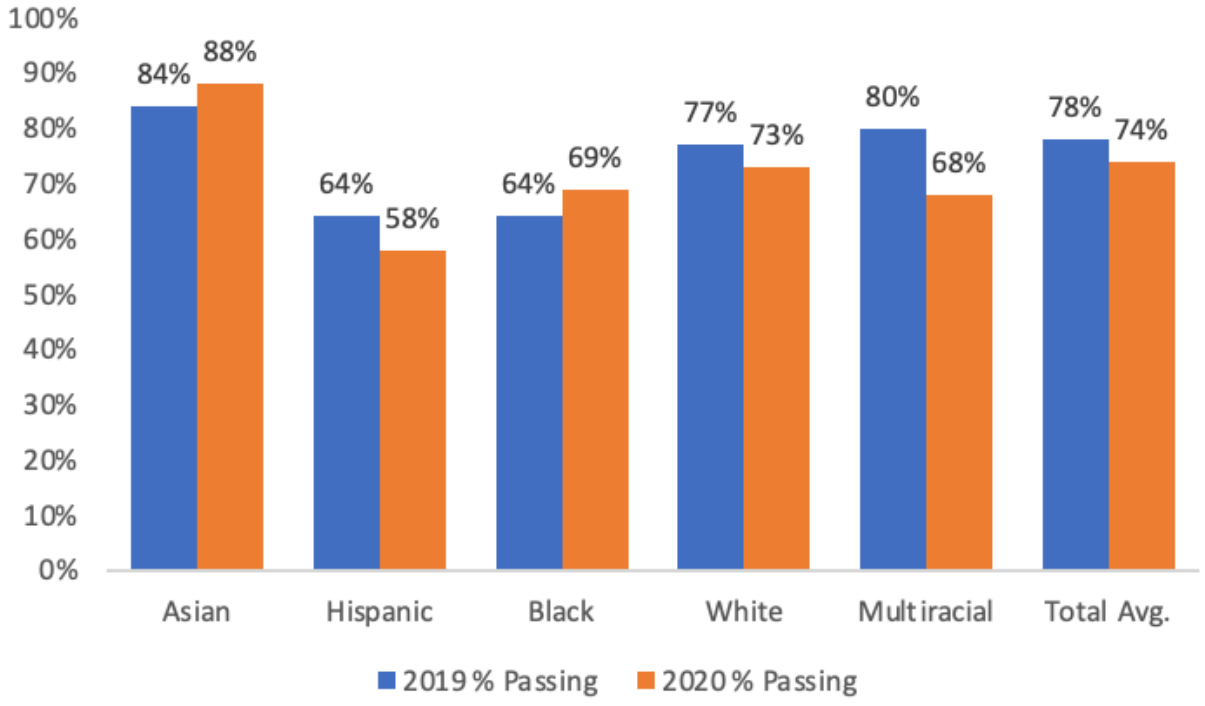
Data provided by SCASD. In the 9th grade row, one test was taken by a student younger than 9th grade.

Table 13: Students Who Opted to Take an AP Exam by Race/Ethnicity, 2019-2020

	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	No Response	Total
9th grade	*	*	*	*	59	*	*	87
10th grade	*	30	*	*	70	10	*	132
11 grade	*	31	14	*	164	14	10	241
12th grade	*	25	*	*	144	*	*	189
Total	*	95	38	16	437	38	24	649
% of Tests Taken	0%	15%	6%	2%	67%	6%	4%	100%

Data provided by SCASD

Figure 13: Percentage of AP Tests Taken, Sorted by Student Subgroup, That Received a Qualifying Score ("3") or Higher, 2019-2020



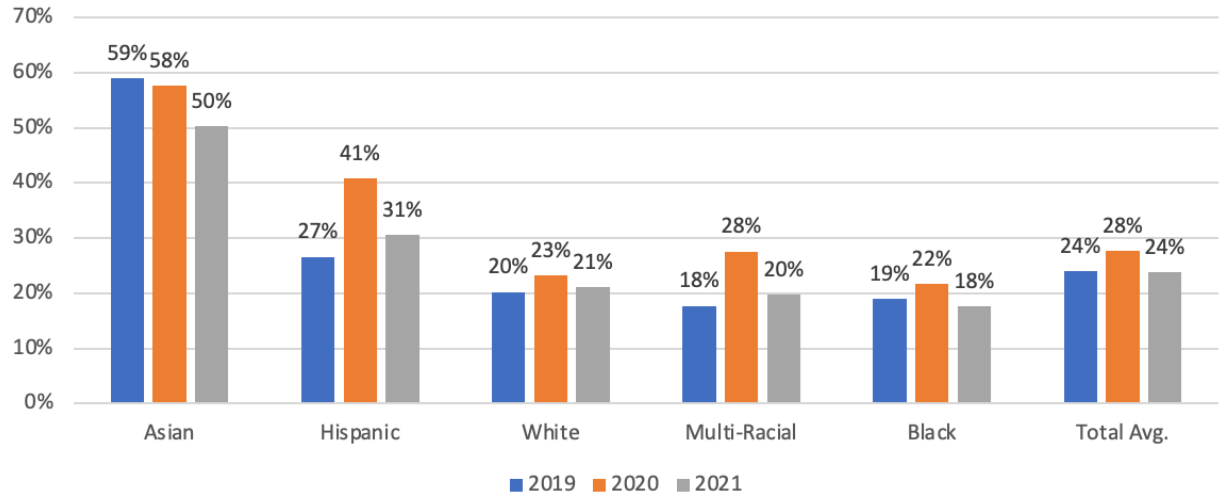
Data provided by SCASD

Table 14: Students Who Took an AP Exam by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-2021

	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	2 or more races	No Response	Total
9th grade	*	20	*	*	65	*	*	98
10th grade	*	17	*	*	85	*	*	123
11 grade	*	31	*	*	138	14	*	196
12th grade	*	25	*	*	104	*	*	147
Total	*	93	30	12	392	30	*	564
% of Tests Taken	0%	17%	5%	2%	70%	5%	1%	100%

Data provided by SCASD

Figure 14: Percentage of High School Student Subgroups Who Took an AP Exam, 2019-2021



AP data provided by SCASD and high school enrollment data provided by Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In light of the data discrepancies in this section, a goal of our partnership is to collaborate with SCASD in building capacity to consistently and accurately collect and analyze this data. In future iterations of this report, we'd also recommend analyzing which students are enrolled in State High's IB program.[30]

[30] See, e.g., U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2016). *Better use of information could help agencies identify disparities and address racial discrimination* (GAO-16-345). Author.

Student Discipline

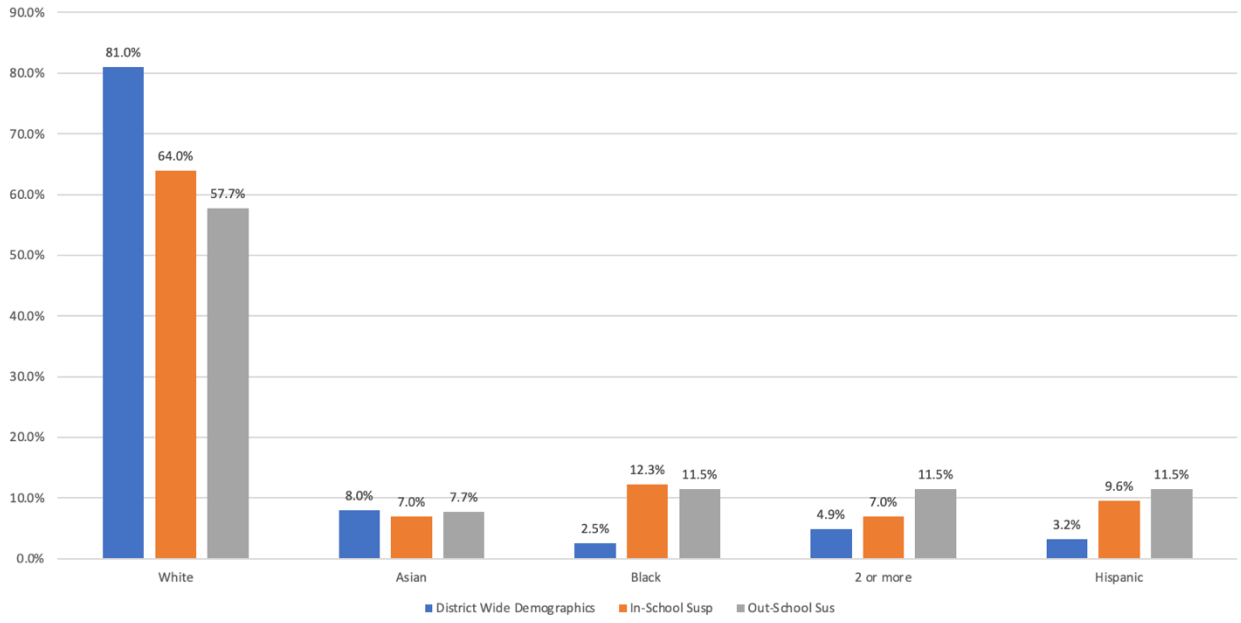
Research has long shown that teachers, the vast majority of whom are White, tend to discipline students of color more frequently and severely than they do White students, even when these students behave in the same ways.[31] Examining disciplinary data enables the district and community to determine if any subgroup of SCASD students is disproportionately disciplined, both in frequency and/or severity. Although not included in this initial review, we suggest that it would be useful to analyze data on which staff members are assigning what discipline so that the district can monitor if any subgroup of staff disproportionately disciplines students, both in frequency and/or severity, and/or if there are certain time periods (lunch, recess, etc.) that could be studied to reduce discipline incidents. In the tables below, we show data that specifies the prevalence of in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. This is a particularly important indicator because students who are suspended lose out on classroom instructional time, which can compound inequities for already marginalized students.

[31]For recent research showing how these disparities negatively impact life outcomes for students of color, see *Educational Opportunities and Discipline Issues in Public Schools on the 65th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education*. (2019). U.S. Government Accountability Office. https://www.gao.gov/blog/2019/05/16/educational-opportunities-and-discipline-issues-in-public-schools-on-the-65th-anniversary-of-brown-v-board-of-education; Gordon, N. (2018). Disproportionality in student discipline: Connecting policy to research. In *Evidence Speaks*. https://www.brookings.edu/research/disproportionality-in-student-discipline-connecting-policy-to-research/; Morris, M. W. (2016). *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. The New Press; and Riddle, T., & Sinclair, S. (2019). Racial disparities in school-based disciplinary actions are associated with county-level rates of racial bias. In *PNAS Highlights* (Vol. 116, Issue 17). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1808307116.

Findings include:

- Black SCASD students face disproportionately more discipline than students of other races/ethnicities (see Figure 15). This is true for Black students who qualify for special education services and those who do not.[32] High rates of suspension means that Black students are often missing class time due to discipline.
- Across multiple metrics and years, Asian students and White students face lower-than-average rates of suspension (both in-school and out-of-school) while other student subgroups face higher-than-average rates of suspension in the district (Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 15: District-Wide In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-16



Data from Office of Civil Rights

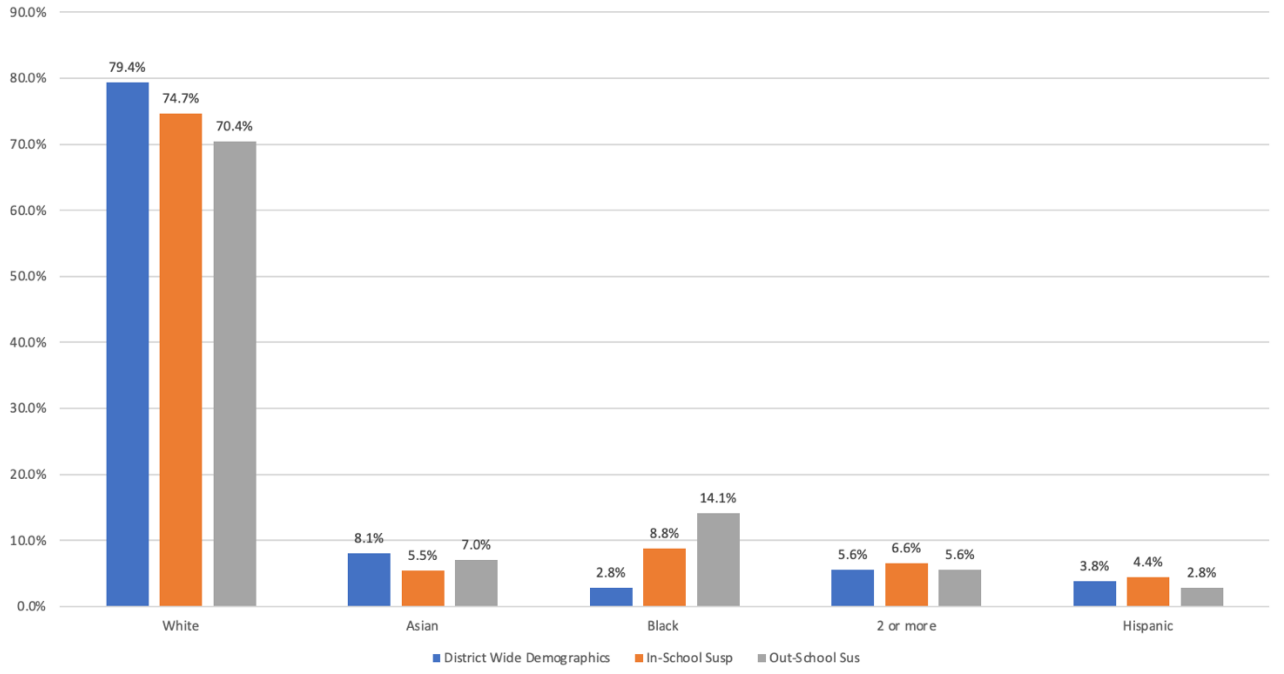
[32] In a memo released to the Board of Directors in October 2020, district administration shared that, according to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education, "the State College Area School district had a disproportionate amount of discipline of Black students receiving special education services from the 2016-2017 school year through the 2018-2019 school year." The memo goes on to include the district's response: https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/stco/Board.nsf/files/C2JRX470107F/$file/6.B.%20Special%20Education%20Significant%20Disproportionality%20of%20Black%20Students%2005-03-2021.pdf

Table 15: District-Wide Discipline by Race/Ethnicity for the 2016-17 School Year

	Student Population (# of students)	Total # of Incidences (non-suspension/ISS/ OSS combined)	Total # of Lost Instructional Days (OSS)	Avg. # of instructional days lost to instruction per 100 students
Asian	602	63	10.0	1.7
Black	189	107	34.0	18.0
Hispanic	268	83	28.0	10.4
Multi-Racial	386	146	23.0	6.0
Native American	17	0	0.0	0.0
White	5579	966	329.5	5.9
Pacific	11	0	0.0	0.0

Data reported by SCASD. Note: students may have more than one incident.

Figure 16: District-Wide In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-18



Data from Office of Civil Rights

- By far, the majority of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) happen at the secondary level. In 2017-18, 4% of lost instructional time due to OSS occurred at the elementary level; 14% occurred at the middle school level; and 82% occurred at the high school level (Table 16).
- In 2017-18, both middle schools assigned a total of 21 days of OSS. In Park Forest, all 21 days of lost instructional time were experienced by students of color, even though students of color make up just 24% of the student population (Table 16).

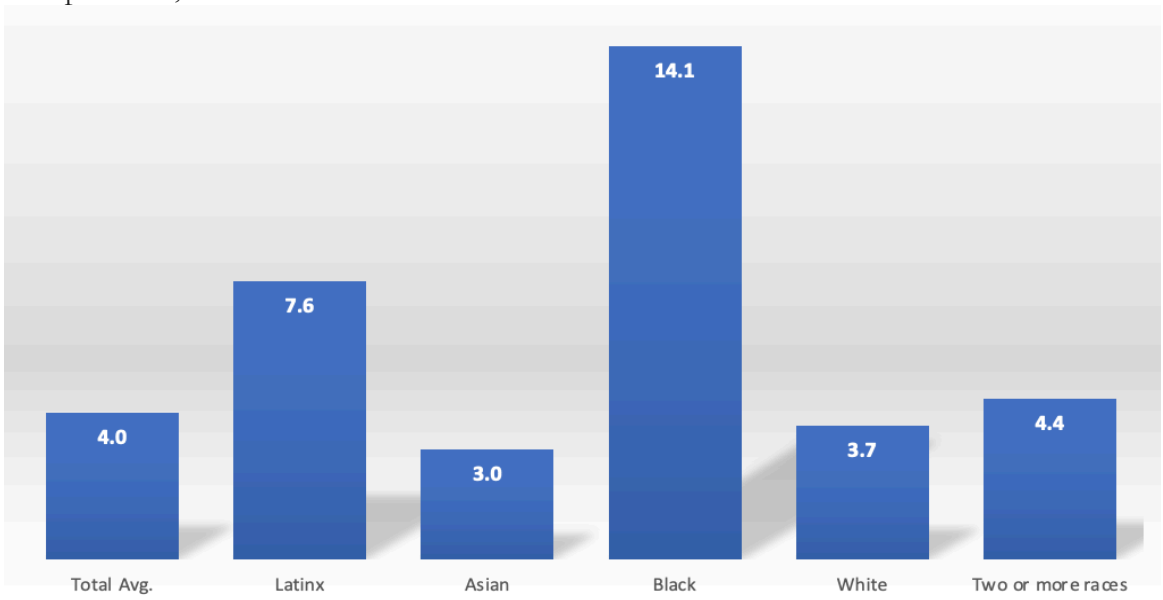
Table 16: Days of Lost Instruction due to Out-of-School Suspensions, 2017-18

	days lost to OSS	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multiracial
Park Forest EL	10	0	0	4	6	0
Radio Park EL	2	0	0	0	2	0
Mt Nittany MS	21	0	2	0	19	0
Park Forest MS	21	0	11	10	0	0
State College High	244	33	23	0	168	20
District totals	**298**	**33 (11%)**	**36 (12%)**	**14 (5%)**	**195 (65%)**	**20 (7%)**

Data from Office of Civil Rights; other schools did not report out of school suspensions in 2017-18.

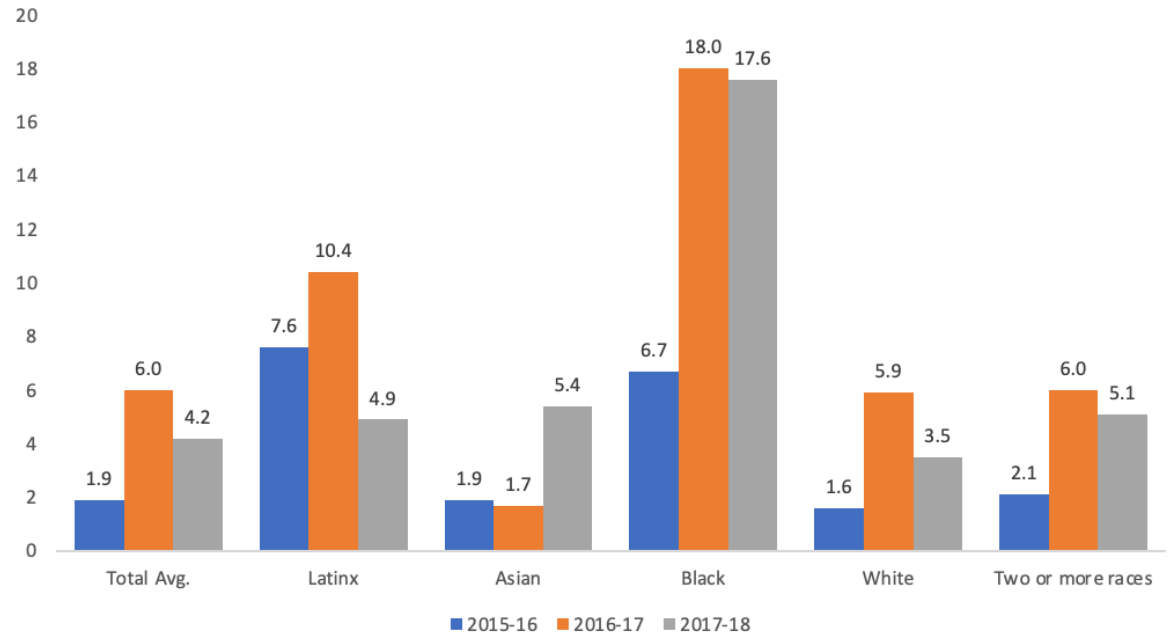
- Between 2015 and 2018, Black students in SCASD lost an average of 14.1 days of instruction for every 100 students due to OSS and Hispanic students 7.6 (Figure 17). These are the highest proportions of lost instructional time in the district.

Figure 17: Average Days of Lost Instruction (per 100 students) due to Out-of-School Suspensions, 2015-2018



2015-16 and 2017-18 data from Office of Civil Rights; 2016-17 data from SCASD

Figure 18: Days of Lost Instruction (per 100 students) due to Out-of-School Suspensions, Disaggregated by Year



2015-16 and 2017-18 data from Office of Civil Rights; 2016-17 data from SCASD

In sharing data outlining both the severity and frequency of disciplinary action, we hope to inform the community's ability to productively understand and work towards disciplinary policies that are fair to all students and minimize lost instructional time.

Keystone Scores & Graduation Rates

The final section of this initial report focuses on student outcomes, specifically graduation rates and standardized test scores. Both of these focus on outcomes of students that are largely specific to high school students, and it would be useful to look at related outcome measures like standardized test scores and rates of promotion for younger students as well in the future.

Graduation rate is arguably the most crucial outcome measure as it is heavily tied to students' progression into colleges and careers, as well as the levels of success students will experience in each. Our data for graduation rates (in Tables 17 and 18) comes from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is reported for separate cohorts identified by years. The 2015-16 4-year graduation cohort includes all of the students who began their freshman year of high school during the 2012-13 school year; the "total grad rate" explains what percentage of this cohort graduated with a regular high school diploma within 4 years.

Findings Include:

- The graduation rate for White students is consistently higher than the total grad rate, while the graduation rate for Hispanic students is always lower.
- For Black students and other subgroups, the graduation rate is usually lower than the graduation rate of White students.
- The 2019-20 school year saw the highest 4-year cohort graduation rates for all students in the past five years, except for Black students.

Table 17: High School 4-year Cohort Graduation Rates, 2015-2020

	Total Grads	Total Cohort	Total Grad Rate	Econ Disadvantaged Grad Rate	EL Grad Rate	Special Ed Grad Rate
2015-16	518	552	93.84%	86.49%	75.00%	75.00%
2016-17	517	559	92.49%	83.52%	33.33%	71.15%
2017-18	555	582	95.36%	26.67%	70.00%	79.66%
2018-19	542	581	93.29%	83.61%	75.00%	75.38%

Data from Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Raw numbers for this table, aside from those detailed in the "total grads" and "total cohort" columns, were not available from PDE, though they may have helped explain the large dips in grad rates for some students in some years.

Table 18: High School 4-year Cohort Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2020

	White Grad Rate	Hispanic Grad Rate	Black Grad Rate	Multiracial Grad Rate	Asian Grad Rate
2015-16	94.37%	85.00%	100.00%	89.47%	92.31%
2016-17	93.52%	81.82%	78.95%	95.00%	90.91%
2017-18	96.08%	91.67%	83.33%	100%	92.50%
2018-19	94.29%	83.33%	85.71%	76.47%	97.78%

Data from Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Raw numbers for this table were not available from PDE, though they may have helped explain the large dips in grad rates for some students in some years.

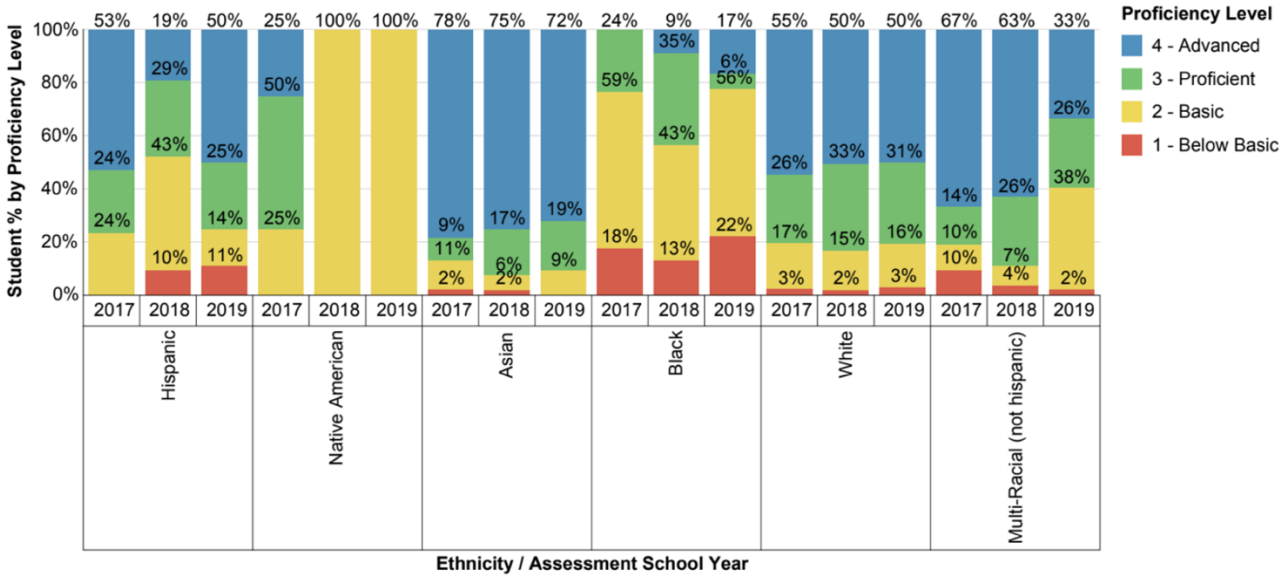
In Pennsylvania, the state end-of-course standardized tests are referred to as Keystone exams, and students earn a score of 1-4 with "1" being "below basic," "2" being "basic," "3" being "proficient," and "4" being "advanced." Keystone exams are assigned, by the state, to specific courses (e.g., 10th grade Literature, Algebra I, Biology, etc.), and students take these exams at the end of the academic year when they enroll in each of these designated courses. Pennsylvania had initially intended that, beginning with the graduating class of 2017, passage of the Literature, Biology, and Algebra I Keystone exams with a proficient score was required for graduation; there are now, as of summer 2021, other pathways to graduation for students who do not meet proficient on these high-stakes tests.[33] Performance on these tests is also part of the current federal accountability system. In this review, we consider scores for both Algebra I and 10th grade Literature, in order to examine both a math and literacy-focused test. The Literature exam is only offered in 10th grade. The Algebra I exam is not grade-level specific; a number of students take the Algebra I Keystone in the 8th grade, for example, while other students won't take the exam until 9th or 10th grade.

Findings for the Algebra I exam include:

- In 2019, the majority of Hispanic, Asian, White, and Multi-racial students scored advanced or proficient, though Black students did not (17% were advanced, 6% were proficient).
- A significant majority of Black students earned "basic" (56% in 2019) or "below basic" (22% in 2019) on the Algebra 1 exam. Also, a disproportionate percentage of Hispanic students scored "below basic" (10-11%) during the last two years (Figure 19).
- Over half of all special education students have scored "basic" on the Algebra 1 exam across all three years (Figure 20). In addition, there's been an increase of special education students earning "below basic" (0% → 5% → 12%). This is likely due to the fact that the state did not mandate Keystones be taken each year for graduation; more students who qualify for special education services were tested in the years the tests were mandated.
- There has been a gradual increase of economically disadvantaged students who earned "basic" or "below basic" on the Algebra 1 Keystone; in the last two years, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students scoring at least proficient is approximately twenty percentage points lower than students who are not classified as economically disadvantaged (Figure 21).

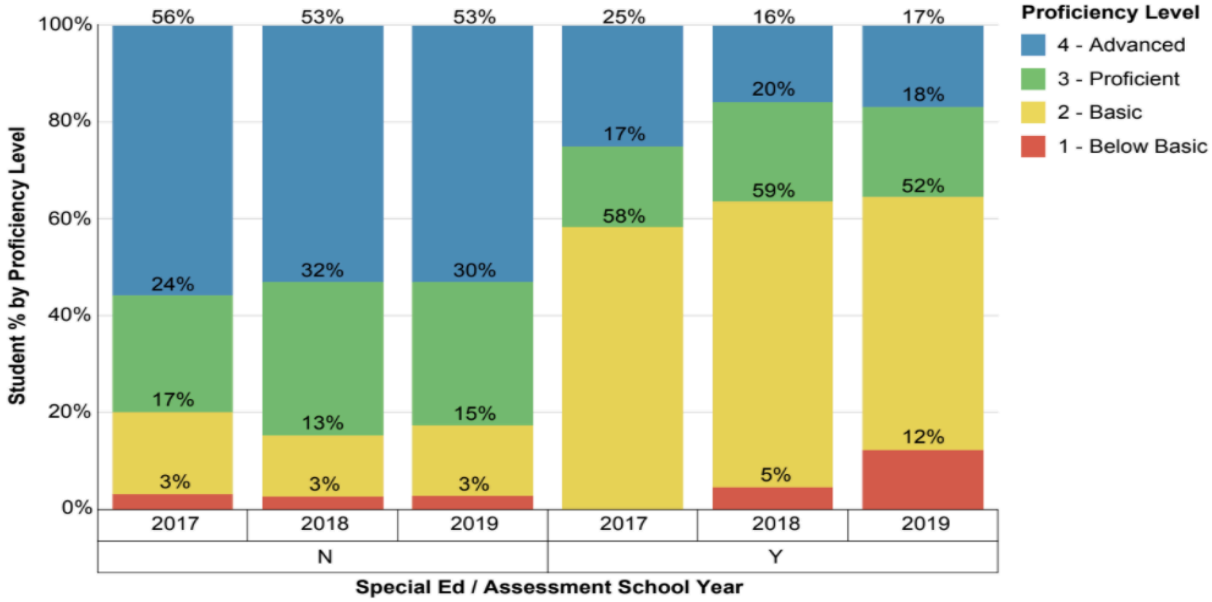
[33] See https://pdesas.org/Frameworks/DCEToolKit/Act158PathwaysToGraduationToolkit for description of alternative pathways.

Figure 19: Algebra I Keystone Scores (2017-19) by Race/Ethnicity



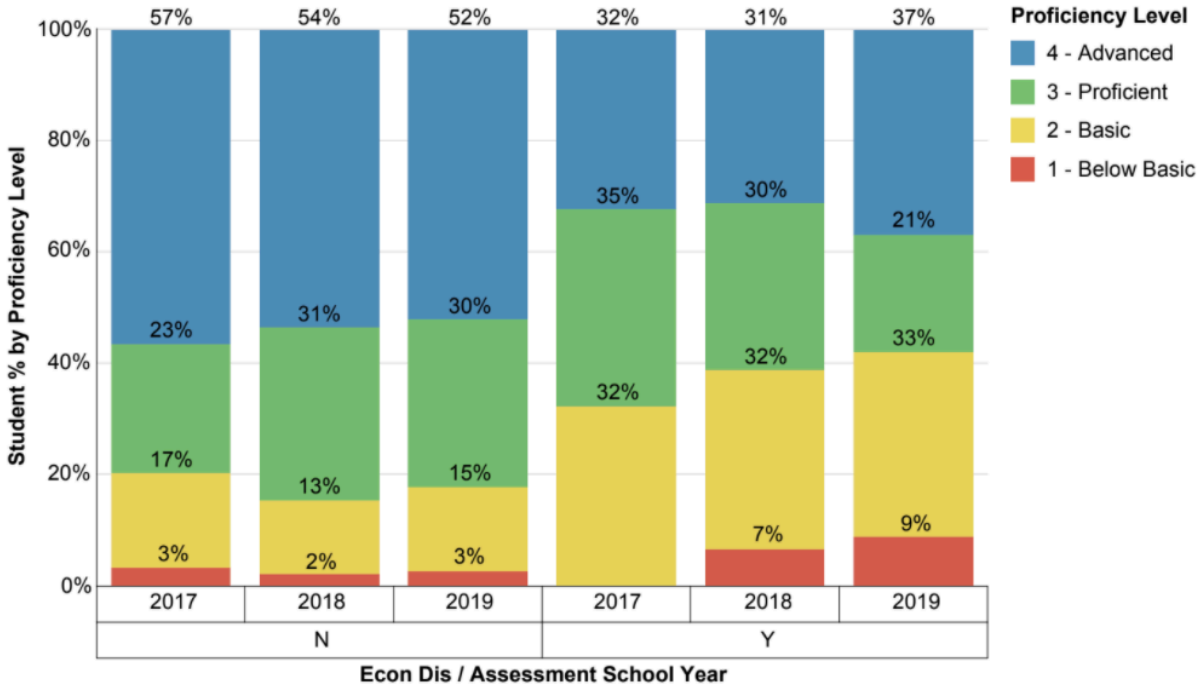
Data Reported by SCASD. Total students tested: 577 students in 2017; 637 in 2018; and 635 in 2019.

Figure 20: Comparison of Algebra I Keystone Scores (2017-19) for Students Who Do and Don't Qualify for Special Education



Data Reported by SCASD. Note: "N" indicates students that do not qualify for special education services; "Y" indicates students who do qualify. Total number of non-qualifying students: 565 in 2017, 593 in 2018, and 570 in 2019. Total number of qualifying students: 12 in 2017, 44 in 2018, and 65 in 2019. Note, the state did not mandate Keystones each year for graduation; more students were tested in the years the tests were mandated, which explains the increase in numbers of qualifying students.

Figure 21: Comparison of Algebra I Keystone Scores (2017-19) for Students Who Do and Don't Receive Free-and-Reduced Lunch

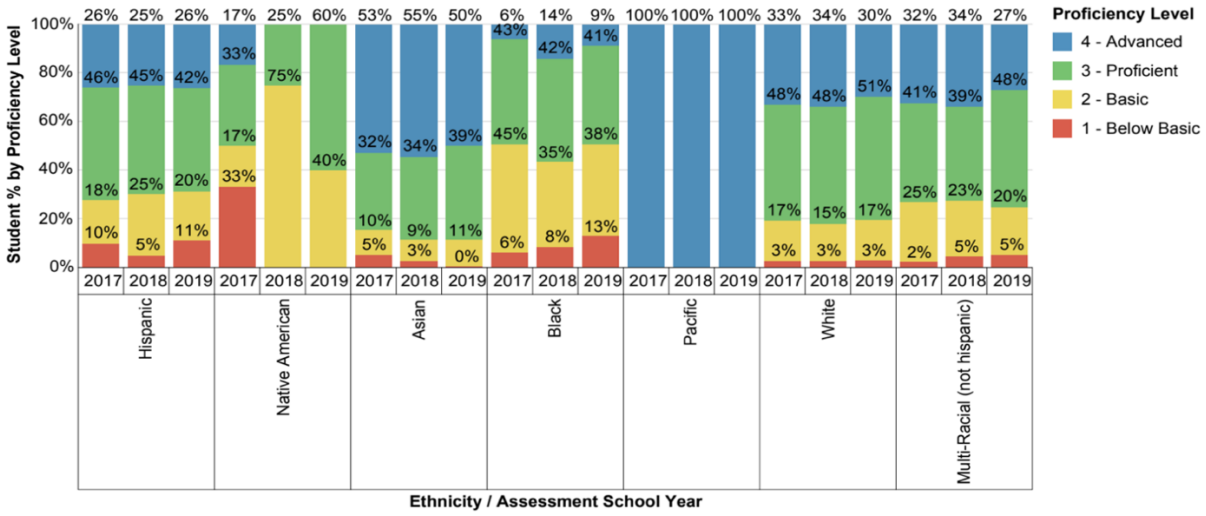


Data Reported by SCASD. Note: "N" indicates students that do not qualify as economically disadvantaged; "Y" indicates students who do qualify. Total number of non-qualifying students: 543 in 2017, 547 in 2018, and 521 in 2019. Total number of qualifying students: 34 in 2017, 90 in 2018, and 114 in 2019. Note, the state did not mandate Keystones each year for graduation; more students were tested in the years the tests were mandated, which explains the increase in numbers of qualifying students.

Findings for the Literature Exam include:

- In 2019, the majority of all student subgroups – Hispanic, Native American, Asian, Pacific, White, and Multi-racial -- scored either advanced or proficient except for Black students (5% were advanced, 45% were proficient).
- Students who qualify for special education had relatively consistent performance on the Literature Keystone across all three years, with roughly 1/5 of all students scoring "below basic," half scoring "basic," a quarter scoring "proficient," and just 4-5% scoring "advanced." Economically disadvantaged students scored higher, though their scores were just as consistent. These trends are in line with research that suggests that literacy scores fluctuate less than math scores and require more long-term, nuanced remediation.[34]
- In the two latest years, special education students scored "proficient" at nearly half the rate of non-special education students (Figure 23).
- In the two latest years, non-economically disadvantaged students scored "proficient" 10% more often than economically disadvantaged students. Economically disadvantaged students scored "basic" nearly twice as often and "below basic" five times as often as non-economically disadvantaged students (Figure 24).

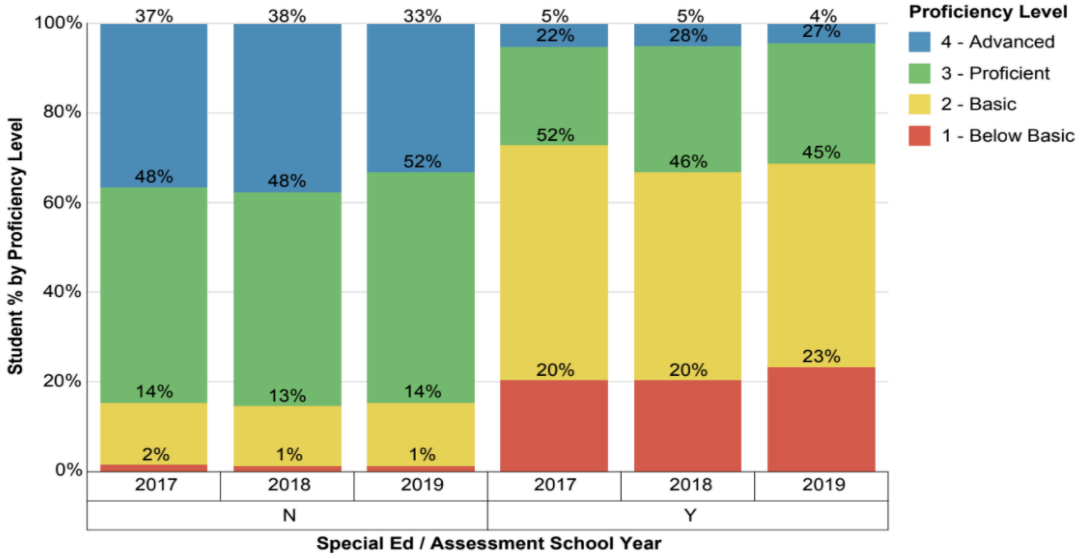
Figure 22: 10th Grade Literature Keystone Scores (2017-19) by Race/Ethnicity



Data reported by SCASD. Total students tested: 550 students in 2017; 524 in 2018; and 1043 in 2019. Note, the state did not mandate Keystones each year for graduation; more students were tested in the years the tests were mandated, which explains the increase in numbers of students.

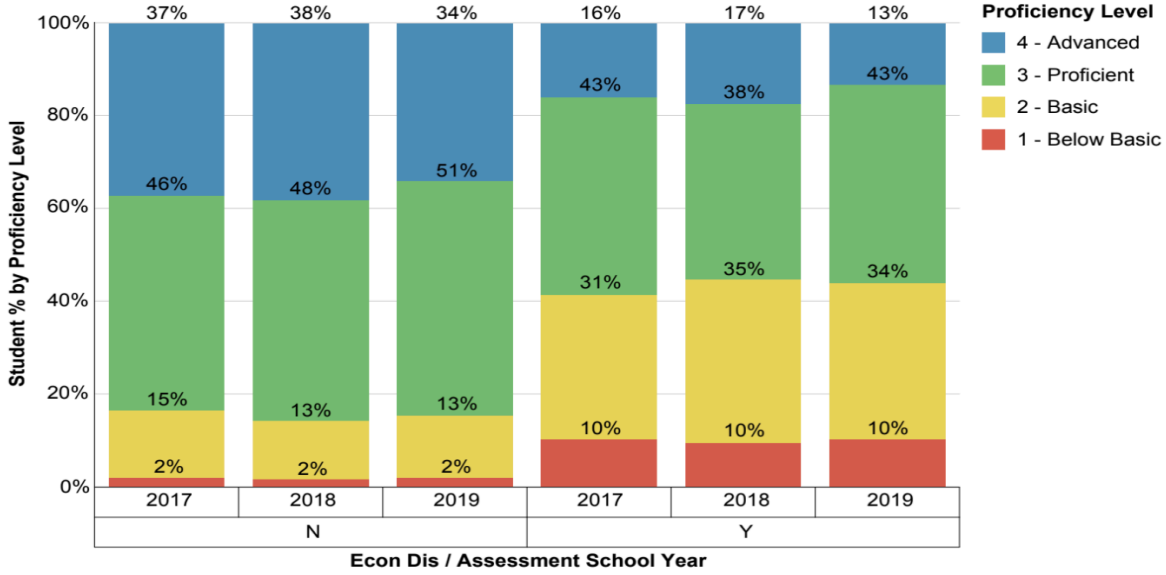
[34] For more on comparing math and literacy remediation, see Rich, M. (2013). *In Raising Scores, 1 2 3 Is Easier Than A B C*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/education/reading-gains-lag-improvements-in-math.html

Figure 23: Comparison of 10th Grade Literature Keystone Scores (2017-19) for Students Who Do and Don't Qualify for Special Education



Data Reported by SCASD. Total number of nonqualifying students: 546 in 2017, 521 in 2018, and 991 in 2019. Total number of qualifying students: <10 in 2017, <10 in 2018, and 52 in 2019. Note, the state did not mandate Keystones each year for graduation; more students were tested in the years the tests were mandated, which explains the increase in numbers of qualifying students.

Figure 24: Comparison of 10th Grade Literature Keystone Scores (2017-19) for Students Who Do and Don't Qualify for Free-and-Reduced Lunch



Data Reported by SCASD. Total number of non-qualifying students: 546 in 2017, 517 in 2018, and 953 in 2019. Total number of qualifying students: <10 in 2017, <10 in 2018, and 90 in 2019. Note, the state did not mandate Keystones each year for graduation; more students were tested in the years the tests were mandated, which explains the increase in numbers of qualifying students.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the analyses provided above, we make the following recommendations for the district to consider as short and long-term next steps. We begin with one overarching recommendation and then offer a suggested next step for each section of the report.

Overarching monitoring equity indicators of students' experiences in SCASD and their educational outcomes: Accurate data, including longitudinal data, is important for monitoring equity indicators. As SCASD finishes transitioning to a new data system, we recommend developing a robust data collection and monitoring process that can regularly review data like those reported here while also providing more nuance to areas like teacher retention, the impact of interventions used for special and "gifted" education, as well as more qualitative measurements of school culture, curriculum strength and variety, levels of community support, and the well-being of both students and staff.[35] As it matures, this data collection process would grow in depth and complexity, adding new dimensions of equity indicators (e.g., paying special attention to families that include immigrants, emergent bilingual students, etc.). Data should be easy for educators and staff to access, and some indicators, while preserving student privacy, should be provided for parents, students, and community to see, with explanation and proposed action steps as needed by the district.

Monitor district-wide and school-level enrollment by race/ethnicity: SCASD remains a majority White district, although students of color make up varying percentages of enrollment across district schools, which will require different strategies to include students and families and to support educators in this work. **All schools, regardless of the number of students of color, should be perceived as welcoming to all families.** Intentionally build trust with families of color and prioritize teaching about racial diversity in all SCASD schools. Being careful not to burden families of color, find ways to listen to their experiences, perhaps through collaboration with the Race & Marginalized

[35] For a comprehensive overview of how to begin measuring these inputs and outcomes, see Schneider, J. (2017). *Beyond Test Scores: A Better Way to Measure School Quality*. Harvard University Press. Some qualitative survey measurements, created by Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment, are available at https://www.cce.org/uploads/files/MCIEA_survey_scales_for-website_Final.pdf. Along with our report, we've attached another toolkit that may be helpful in this regard.

Populations workgroup.[36] Ongoing professional development is recommended, as it can support educators on their professional learning around race, equity, and inclusion.

Redistribute resources to better support students experiencing economic disadvantage: As with race/ethnicity, the percentage of low-income students is also unevenly distributed across district elementary schools. Future redistricting could consider how to create more economic diversity at all schools. Meanwhile, using ESSER funds that are immediately available, allocate a portion of ESSER III monies to directly assist the district's low-income students, by supporting wrap-around services like tutoring opportunities, a full-time nurse and additional counseling staff, as well as trauma-informed professional development, especially at Easterly Parkway, Mount Nittany Elementary School, and Mount Nittany Middle School where the district's economically disadvantaged students are clustered. These services are particularly important right now as low-income students are statistically more likely to have endured heightened levels of trauma as a result of COVID-19. Also fund additional classroom and/or assistant teachers to lower the student/adult ratio while students and staff continue to be impacted by COVID-19 and needs are exacerbated. This might be especially important in early grades where children have had little, if any, experience of normal school years and may have heightened academic, social, and behavioral needs. Finally, we highly recommend the district undertake ways to systematically define, identify, and measure the economic disadvantage of students given concerns with existing measures generally as well as during changes because of the pandemic.

Further analyze the varied experiences of students identified for special education: This initial analysis should provide the foundation for a subsequent, more finely grained analysis to understand the varied experiences of students receiving special education services, based on what services they receive and in what setting. In this analysis, we suggest looking for disproportionality among different categories of special education identification, and also seek to pinpoint whether and how bias may be present in the district's qualifying process for special education, or determination of how services are provided. It might also be worth considering whether other academic or social support services early on and/or teacher professional development might help to reduce the number of students needing services. Such information would be important to share with the community

Increase teacher diversity: SCASD, like many districts, has a woeful lack of racial/ethnic diversity in its teaching staff. The district should undertake efforts to increase recruitment of teachers of color and to retain the teachers of color it has. One way to grow faculty of color could be to support a district-wide paraprofessional licensing program. This would be particularly helpful for promoting

[36] This list of resources, also compiled by Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment, may assist the workgroup's efforts or inspire ideas for collaboration: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jQ3dBTqc3aViBx7RR8s1H_AN7IwVV-RuMksECfL6F48/edit?usp=sharing

teacher diversity in SCASD as there have been more teacher aides of color than teachers of color in the district in 2014, 2016, and 2018. Teachers of color currently have the highest rates of attrition nationally.[37] Adding more teachers of color to the district can reduce racial isolation for teachers of color that are already employed and can help mitigate teacher attrition. Several such licensing programs are gaining traction in Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh Public Schools has created a program where teacher aides can earn a subsidized teaching degree through Point Park University while still working. South Fayette School District is similarly currently collaborating with Howard University to construct OTIS (Operation Teachers of Color Irrigation System), a program that recruits teachers of color to South Fayette and western Pennsylvania school districts by having them student teach in the region; participants then have a guaranteed opportunity to interview for available jobs within the district or region upon their graduation. Envisioning the development of a similar program between SCASD and PSU could be mutually beneficial for both the district and the College of Education, whose strategic plan outlines equity goals that are in alignment with this recommendation.[38] This partnership could also be used to explore ways PSU could help provide support for teachers of color within the district that could be part of an effort to retain these teachers.

Support equitable opportunity for advanced learning: Beginning with elementary and middle schools, support all teachers to confidently integrate multi-level assignments and/or extensions into all courses to eliminate students leaving class to pursue leveled courses of study.[39] Arrange for instructional support staff to participate in grade-level PLCs to develop appropriate lessons and co-teaching opportunities, and support teachers with online curricular resources that provide built-in differentiation to assist them in meeting the needs of all learners. To the extent that different levels of study exist as separate experiences for students, regularly review enrollment data to look for disparities and identify formal and informal mechanisms that may be stratifying students (e.g., teacher recommendations, etc.). Monitor progress, including how the newly created Multi-Cultural Student Success Initiative is able to assist in this effort, and annually reflect on how this staff member can most strategically support the district's growth.

Review and possibly revise student discipline policies to reduce racial disparities: Consider how State High's REACT team can be involved in helping the district embed restorative practices throughout all schools. Invest in professional development on this front as necessary. Prioritize

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[37] Ingersoll, Richard M.; Merrill, Elizabeth; Stuckey, Daniel; and Collins, Gregory. (2018). Seven Trends: The Transformation of the Teaching Force – _Updated October 2018. CPRE Research Reports. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/108

[38] To read the College of Education's strategic plan, please visit https://ed.psu.edu/strategic-plan-2021-2025

[39] Students may still need to leave class for middle school math, but all other subjects should support heterogenous grouping. To read more about inequality in gifted programs, see the work of Allison Roda, including her book: Roda, A. (2015). *Inequality in Gifted and Talented Programs: Parental Choices about Status, School Opportunity, and Second-Generation Segregation*. Palgrave Macmillan.

responding to behavioral concerns in a way that does not take students out of class.[40] One framework, Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Intervention Support, may also be helpful in guiding the districts' efforts. This framework supports a process of using data to ask questions about the current discipline system, analyzing the current discipline system, designing a new model of system, checking and examining the imagined impact of the newly created system, implementing the new system, and reflecting on the changes and current reality.

Monitor outcomes on Keystone exams & graduation rates by race/ethnicity: Future research could help determine what the barriers are to successful four-year graduation for all students, thereby supporting SCASD's effort to graduate all students for career or college. Test scores, while important for helping students access opportunities, should continue to be contextualized by other data points. We strongly advise against responding to test score inequities by strengthening remediation efforts for students with lower scores. This approach typically results in a narrowed curriculum for students and can remove joy from learning. The recommendations we've offered above are connected in the research to higher test scores; in other words, schools that strive toward racial integration, which includes lowering the ratio of students of color to teachers of color; that focus on increasing students' sense of belonging; and that adopt culturally responsive curriculum will create an environment that will also help raise students' test scores.

[40] For ideas on managing student behavior without relying on suspensions, see this brief from the Duke Center for Child and Family Policy: https://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/instead_of_suspension.pdf. For more on Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Intervention Support, see the work of Aydin Bal and specifically Bal, A., Afacan, K., & Cakir, H. I. (2018). Culturally Responsive School Discipline: Implementing Learning Lab at a High School for Systemic Transformation. *American Educational Research Journal*, *55*(5), 1007–1050. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218768796

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About the Center for Education and Civil Rights (CECR)

The Center for Education and Civil Rights seeks to be a hub for the generation of knowledge and coalition-building among the education and civil rights communities to promote research-based actions that address the complicated nature of racial and ethnic inequality in the 21st century. The Center's collective work is intended to promote equity across the educational pipeline by supporting efforts that facilitate integration through an inter-disciplinary approach. CECR is directed by Erica Frankenberg. For more information, see **cecr.ed.psu.edu** or follow **@psu_civilrights**.