A Plan to Close the Opportunity Gap

Dedication

This plan is dedicated to the success and future of African American students in Washington state.

"What we need to know at a very deep level is that African American children do not come into this world at a deficit. There is no 'achievement gap' at birth."

~ Lisa D. Delpit, M.ED.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere appreciation to all individuals, schools, organizations, and community partners who contributed time, expertise, and insight to the development of this report.

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Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee

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Community Stakeholders

Parents, Caregivers, Current or recent students, and Community Members of:

Adams County

Asotin County

Franklin County

King County

Pierce County

Snohomish County

Spokane County

Thurston County

Yakima County

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Common Abbreviations and Terms

Abbreviations

CTE	Career and Technical Education
HB 2722	House Bill 2722
IEP	Individualized Education Program
MAPS	Measures of Academic Progress
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
SPAC	Scale Scores State Assessments

Terms

Achievement Gap
Achievement gaps occur when one group of students (e.g., students grouped by race/ethnicity, gender) outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant (i.e., larger than the margin of error.) (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NECS)

Opportunity Gap
The opportunity gap is the way that uncontrollable life factors like race, language, economic, and family situation can contribute to lower rates of success in educational achievement, career prospects, and other life aspirations. (Close the Gap Foundation)

Black and African American
In education, the term Black refers to a pan-ethnic identity inclusive of individuals from the African diaspora globally (APA, 2023), while African American specifically denotes U.S.-born individuals descended from enslaved Africans and should not be used as a blanket term for all people of African ancestry (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023).

Report Summary

Introduction

For far too long, Black students in Washington state have navigated an education system that was not built with them in mind. Despite decades of reform, community organizing, and policy investment, the opportunity gap remains wide, and in some cases, is deepening. This report is both a mirror and a map: it reflects the lived realities of Black students and families across the state, and it charts a course forward rooted in community truth, systemic accountability, and a belief in what is possible.

What's needed now is not incremental reform. It's transformation: a shift from "achievement gap" narratives that blame students, to a bold reckoning with the systems that have failed to deliver on their promise.

About the Study

In 2024, the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), in partnership with the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs (CAAA), commissioned an update to the landmark 2008 report on the state of African American education in Washington. This report is the outcome of that call.

The plan emerges from a deeply engaged, statewide research effort led by Imago, LLC in partnership with Refraction Consulting and Majors Leadership Group. The work centered:

- A statewide survey of over 200 community voices
- In-depth interviews with educators, advocates, and stakeholders
- A focus group with caregivers
- Statewide data from OSPI and other public sources
- A scan of more than 40 recent research sources

Every recommendation is grounded in both data and the wisdom of lived experience. In order to develop recommendations, the CAAA convened the Study and Outcomes Workgroup, composed of eleven individuals representing a wide cross-section of experience, geography, and roles across the education and public policy sectors.

What We Heard: Eight Core Themes

The voices of families, educators, and community members consistently surfaced eight critical needs:

1. **Hire and Support Black Educators**
   Students need to see themselves reflected in those who lead, teach, and guide them.

2. **Deliver Culturally Responsive Curriculum**
   Curriculum must tell the truth, affirm identity, and spark curiosity, rather than erase or sideline Black experiences.

3. **Confront Racism in Schools**
   Racism is not an isolated incident; it is a system. And it's still showing up in school hallways, playgrounds, and policies.

4. **Address Discipline Disparities**
   Exclusionary practices push students out of learning. Fairness must be restored, and harm must be acknowledged and addressed.

5. **Expand Educational Pathways**
   Black students deserve more than a one-size-fits-all approach. College, career, trades, entrepreneurship: all must be viable and visible.

6. **Listen to Students and Families**
   Too often, Black voices are invited but not heard. That must change.

7. **Surround Students with Support**
   When students feel safe, seen, and supported, they rise. Every child deserves that foundation.

8. **Tackle Systemic Change**
   The problem isn't isolated programs. It's the systems themselves. And they must evolve.

Five Interdependent Goals for Impact

In alignment with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), this project and the CAAA advances five interdependent goals designed to dismantle systemic inequities:

1. **Increase Representation and Support for Black Educators**
   Build and sustain a diverse, affirmed teaching workforce.

2. **Ensure Equitable Access to Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness**
   Expand access to high-quality early learning and affirming environments from the very start.

2. **Improve Student Engagement and Reduce Exclusionary Discipline**
   Reduce pushout and disproportionate exclusionary practices, and invest in humanizing school cultures.

3. **Provide an Anti-Racist Curriculum and Fair Assessments**
   Replace biased systems with ones that measure and reflect Black students' brilliance.

4. **Expand Postsecondary Pathways and Career Readiness for Black Students**
   Ensure every student sees a future, whether that's college, trades, business, or the arts, and has the support to get there.

Each goal includes measurable benchmarks, a policy roadmap, and immediate strategies that schools and districts can begin using now.

What's Already Working

Across Washington state and beyond, there are bright spots to build from, such as:

- Teach253 (Tacoma): recruiting local youth into teaching pathways.
- Rainier Prep (Seattle): culturally responsive curriculum and small class sizes.
- ACE Academy (Seattle): supporting Black boys and building Black educator networks.
- Seattle Public Schools' Black Studies and Liberatory Ed work: centering joy and justice in curriculum.

These examples, and numerous others outlined in this report, prove that when we lead with purpose and persistence, transformation is not only possible, it's already happening.

Conclusion: A Call to Act

Black students are brilliant. They are creative, driven, and full of possibility. They are not lacking in talent or will. What's missing is an education system fully committed to their success.

This report is a call to courage, for policymakers, educators, and community leaders alike. The time for half-measures has passed. We must move with urgency and vision, informed by those who know the stakes best.

Washington state can lead. But only if we commit, not just to better outcomes, but to the deeper work of redesigning the systems that shape them.

Introduction & Background

A Historical Reckoning and a Renewed Mandate for Justice

In 2008, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issued a landmark report documenting the systemic educational inequities faced by African American students. That report, developed in response to House Bill 2722, drew attention to the urgent need to overhaul an education system that had long failed to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of Black children. While some progress has been made over the past 15 years, the educational landscape in Washington remains inequitable. Persistent disparities in kindergarten readiness, exclusionary discipline, academic achievement, and post-secondary access continue to harm Black students, families, and communities across the state.

Today, the work to address these challenges continues under the leadership of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC). Recognizing the deficit-based framing of "achievement gaps," this new study centers the concept of the "opportunity gap," a framework that highlights systemic failures rather than individual shortcomings. Led by Imago, LLC, this study draws upon the voices of caregivers, educators, and community leaders to identify enduring barriers and co-create bold, community-rooted solutions.

This project comes at a time of heightened awareness about racial injustice, growing distrust of public institutions, and an evolving educational landscape shaped by technology, alternative school models, and shifting political and cultural dynamics. In this context, Washington state has an opportunity to lead: to name racism explicitly, to invest in the brilliance of Black students, and to transform schools into spaces of affirmation, excellence, and belonging.

The findings from this update reaffirm the insights of 2008 and reveal new dimensions of systemic harm, as well as renewed possibilities for transformation. Through community-engaged methods,
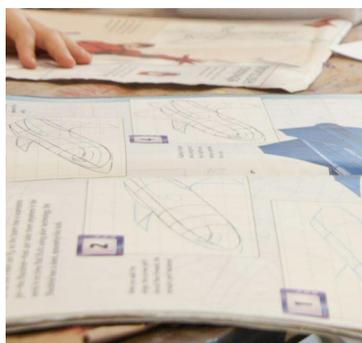
the research team identified key themes and opportunities that serve as the foundation for five strategic goals to further equitable educational access for Black students. These goals are not isolated recommendations. Instead, they are interdependent and must be pursued collectively. Together, they form the scaffolding for a future where every Black student in Washington can access a high-quality, affirming education and graduate fully prepared to pursue their dreams.

This is a call to action to move beyond reform and to reimagine, rebuild, and realize a truly equitable education system. The time for transformation is now.

Context

In 2024 the EOGOAC, in partnership with the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs (CAAA), commissioned an update to the landmark 2008 report on the state of African American education in Washington. This renewed effort was charged with developing a clear, community-centered roadmap to improve educational opportunity and academic success for African American and Black students across the state. The legislature reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring equity by directing the EOGOAC to assess current conditions, analyze persistent and emerging opportunity gaps, and deliver actionable recommendations for systemic change.

To carry out this work, the CAAA convened the **Study and Outcomes Workgroup,** composed of eleven individuals representing a wide cross-section of experience, geography, and roles across the education and public policy sectors. Members were selected through a collaborative process involving existing partnerships, community recommendations, and nominations from EOGOAC commissioners. The group included seasoned educators, school board members, nonprofit leaders, education policy experts, and community advocates, all committed to transforming education systems for Black students in Washington state. Special care was taken to ensure diversity in region, educational background, organizational type (public, charter, and independent), and lived experience.

This multidisciplinary Workgroup was tasked with reviewing new research, interpreting quantitative and qualitative data, identifying emergent issues, and developing meaningful outcomes and benchmarks to eliminate the opportunity gap. **A full list of members and biographies can be found in Appendix A.**

To inform its work, the Workgroup and consultant team undertook a robust community engagement strategy from May through November 2024. Imago, LLC, in partnership with Refraction Consulting and Majors Leadership Group, facilitated the research and community engagement (please see Appendix B for consultant profiles). Together, they employed a community-engaged research approach to understand how African American and Black students, caregivers, and communities experience the public education system. This included a statewide survey (n=200), a focus group with caregivers in Central Washington, and in-depth interviews with eight stakeholders

working at the intersection of African American student experience and education. Quantitative data was also collected and analyzed using updated state metrics, including kindergarten readiness, discipline disparities, graduation rates, and access to educational pathways.

Community at the Center

Throughout this work, care was taken to elevate community voice as a central source of expertise. Community members were not merely consulted but **treated as partners in this work**. The study's design recognized the historic harm caused by extractive research practices and instead emphasized reciprocity, trust-building, and the centering of Black knowledge and experience.

Given this understanding, Imago employed a community-engaged research approach to understand how Black parents, caregivers and community members are experiencing and interpreting their children's interactions with educational systems in Washington state. Using the mixed method approach, we gained a broad understanding of the issues:

- Qualitative questions in the interviews and survey allowed respondents to share their experiences and perspectives. We then conducted a grounded thematic analysis that illuminated the key themes in the responses.
- Quantitative questions in the survey allowed us to identify patterns over larger groups of participants in the community.
- Updated numbers provided by Washington State demonstrate patterns and trends across the public school system and its students.

Imago holds a strong belief that community voice is essential to working with the systemic challenges facing Black students. By using a community-engaged research approach, we:

- recognize community members as knowledge partners;
- collaborate with community members in equitable ways that confront, challenge and dismantle racism and other forms of oppression;
- acknowledge Black communities' past experiences with extractive and exploitative research projects; and
- inform policies and processes that undo inequity in education.

Because community voice is foundational to our research methodology, it also informs our approach to this report. Rather than relegating lived experience to anecdotal context, this report integrates qualitative insights alongside data as core evidence. The structure and tone are intentionally distinct from traditional formats, designed to elevate the expertise of those most impacted and to ground policy recommendations in both rigorous research and community-derived knowledge.

Survey, Interview and Focus Group Findings

In working with data collected from community sources, eight primary themes emerged as essential focal points. Secondary research and State data all support these areas of concern. **Please see Appendix C for a comprehensive view of our research methodology, and Appendix D for information on the research scan and sources.**

Theme One: Hire and support African American Educators

There is a significant shortage of teachers and staff of color in schools in Washington state. Even as schools are becoming more diverse in terms of student demographics, diversity among teachers and staff remains low. The lack of representation and understanding of Black cultures and communities in schools hinders the ability of schools to serve African American students.

As of 2023, Black/African Americans account for 4.8% of students in the state but account for only 1.6% of teachers statewide. More than 2,100 Black teachers need to be hired to bring these numbers to parity. In the survey, caregivers reported that their middle or high school African American child had an average of 22.5 teachers to date and that, on average, 2.7 of these (12%) had represented a similar racial or ethnic background as the child.

Caregivers indicated a **strong desire for more representation in the schools.** Three-fourths of survey participants (78%) indicated that increased recruitment of African American teachers would be more beneficial for African American students than for most other students, while two-thirds said the same about more support for early childhood learning (70%) and more pathways for high-school graduation (64%).

Voice 1: "I'm an African American male who works in the largest [public school] district in Washington. I believe that African American teachers, and male teachers in particular, are not valued in the classroom… I work in a building where the administration does not reflect the student and family population of our school. This needs to be a priority so that our kids can walk into classrooms and see people who look like them, which gives them the ability to see themselves as something more than what the world has come to accept from and of African Americans."

Voice 2: "The shortage of African American and other teachers of color in our schools is noticeable and harmful to all students. Kids need examples and role models of all kinds to develop a breadth of understanding and appreciation for themselves and others. Kids of color need to have role models they can more easily trust. They respond to these role models with open ears and eager hearts…"

Secondary Research Highlights:

- High student expectations are one of the essential tenets of culturally relevant teaching (Howard, 2001). Research has suggested that Black teachers hold higher expectations for Black students (Gershenson et al., 2016) and are associated with better outcomes for those students, including performance on tests, discipline, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment (Hart & Lindsay, 2024).

- Researchers contend that teachers of color are more conscious of the "hidden curriculum" that impacts students of color (I. U. Iruka et al., 2017) and teacher-student ethnic match in the classroom may mend racial disparities in discipline (Blake, et al., 2022).

Theme Two: Deliver Responsive Curricula

School curricula and teaching practices are rarely designed with African American students in mind, perpetuating an educational experience that may feel disconnected from students' cultural identity and history.

The curriculum often presents a Eurocentric perspective, marginalizing African history and culture and presenting a **distorted view of historical events** like enslavement and civil rights. Teaching methods and engagement strategies often **fail to recognize the strengths of African American history & culture**, misalign with the experiences of Black students, and lead to disengagement and misunderstanding.

Voice 3: "Education should empower children to challenge and critique societal norms, fostering liberation and creativity."

Voice 4: "African American Literature classes have been created to provide African American students the opportunity to learn from and about African American authors and their perspectives of life. This also allows non-African American students to learn... what and how it has been for African Americans to live in a world that deemed them inferior and or only able to do the bare minimum. This type of curriculum provides all students with the view of how truly powerful, resourceful and brilliant African American people are [and] gives our children the ability to see themselves in a role bigger than the world...places them in."

Survey respondents estimated that by the time their child had reached middle school or high school, an average of **only 40% of the child's teachers had provided culturally sensitive instruction** responsive to the child's experiences and needs, regardless of the teacher's own racial or ethnic background.

Survey respondents also pointed to the Eurocentric biases embedded in standards and standardized testing. Some pointed to the need to better prepare low-income students for testing, while others pushed for changes in assessment practices. A few expressed concern that teachers and schools are pushing a narrow ideological agenda.

Washington's increasingly diverse student population presents an opportunity to reshape the education system to better reflect and serve non-white narratives.

Informants also noted that more teachers are looking into culturally responsive pedagogical practices and urged schools to invest in training and development for all teachers.

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- High student expectations are one of the essential tenets of culturally relevant teaching (Howard, 2001). Research has suggested that Black teachers hold higher expectations for Black students (Gershenson et al., 2016) and are associated with better outcomes for those students, including performance on tests, discipline, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment (Hart & Lindsay, 2024).

- Researchers contend that teachers of color are more conscious of the "hidden curriculum" that impacts students of color (I. U. Iruka et al., 2017) and teacher-student ethnic match in the classroom may mend racial disparities in discipline (Blake, et al., 2022).

Theme Three: Confront Racism in Schools

> Voice 5: "If [black young men] are great in athletics, they're easy. They're going to graduate. It's gonna happen especially if they're multi-sport athletes… But when it gets outside of the multi-sports athlete athletics … they may fall through the cracks."
>
> Voice 6: "The school sent out a statement this past school year about the rampant racism occurring on the playground for grades 3rd-5th. The school stated they would implement focus groups for families/students to help address the issue and promote anti-racism. That never happened and the school year ended. Other parents stated this was not the first year their Black child experienced disgusting racism from other students, but due to ongoing issues and no staff addressing it, those parents went to the [public] school district to complain. I was told that was the only reason the school sent out a statement about their commitment to antiracism."
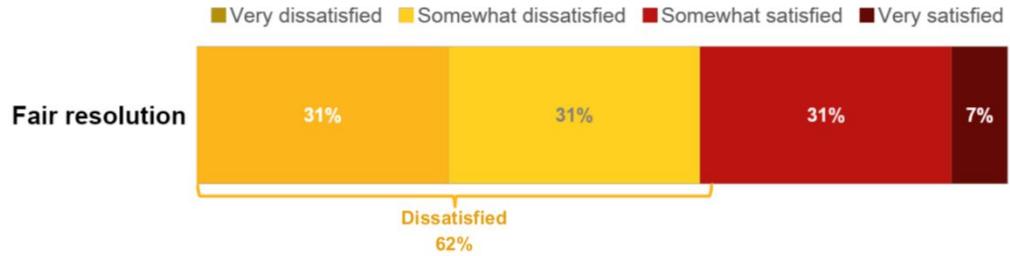
Instances of **overt racism and racial insensitivity** occur among students without repercussion and in the context of ongoing racial tensions and incidents within school environments. One key informant pointed to a shift as white students, particularly in rural environments, have been increasingly open with racist slurs.

A significant number of caregivers indicated that their child has been the **target of hateful or insensitive speech or differential treatment** due to race from other students (44%) and from teachers or staff (29%). A majority (62%) has witnessed racial or ethnic discrimination against other students.

In the survey, caregivers reported that among their African American children…

62%	Have **witnessed** racial or ethnic discrimination against other students
44%	Have been the target of hateful or insensitive speech or **different treatment from other students** due to race
29%	Have been the target of hateful or insensitive speech or **different treatment from teachers or staff** due to race

At the same time, survey respondents expressed frustration that schools were either "frozen" and **unresponsive** or offered shallow statements. This left many students and families feeling unsafe and **unwelcome** in schools. A majority (62%) of those whose child had experienced discrimination in any of these ways were **dissatisfied with the school's response** to discrimination.

Fair resolution — Very dissatisfied 31% | Somewhat dissatisfied 31% | Somewhat satisfied 31% | Very satisfied 7%
Dissatisfied 62%

Discrimination may impact Black girls and boys differently. In the focus group, participants highlighted the stereotypes placed on Black girls, who are assumed to be hyper-competent and thus not in need of attention. Black boys, however, are burdened by the stereotype of being physically strong while their mental and intellectual strengths go unsupported.

Key informants and some caregivers noted an increased awareness among schools and students about racism and injustice.

- More white educators experienced an awakening after the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.

- Students are more connected online and use social platforms to discuss educational injustices and challenge systemic issues.

Some cautioned, however, that even the most well-intended white educators cannot replace the need for African American and other educators of color who can represent and mentor African American students.

Secondary Research Highlights:

- There is a lack of access to appropriate social-emotional learning experiences that humanize Black children and prepare them for a world of anti-Black racism (e.g. Miller et al, 2022; Rogers et al., 2022)

- There is strong evidentiary support that negative teacher perceptions have significant effect on student outcomes (O. Flores & Guzenhauser, 2021).

- Shifting away from a deficit perspective can assist educators to recognize institutional school cultures and practices that influence disparities (Flores, 2018)

Theme Four: Address Disparities in Discipline

Voice 7: "Black students still are problematized. Rather than restorative practices, students face suspension or expulsion."

Voice 8: "My kindergarten grandson's teacher called me on the second day in his new school to say he was 'testing' her and questioned me about his previous education. He had been in an expensive preschool that had no complaints about his behavior. She consistently charged him with bad behavior but refused my request to sit in on the class. I challenged her in an unfruitful meeting with her, the assistant principal and a student teacher."

African American children are **over-disciplined,** labeled with behavior issues, or assigned to placements outside of general education. In 2023, Black students were almost twice as likely to be excluded from class for discipline than students overall statewide (6.4% versus 3.5%).
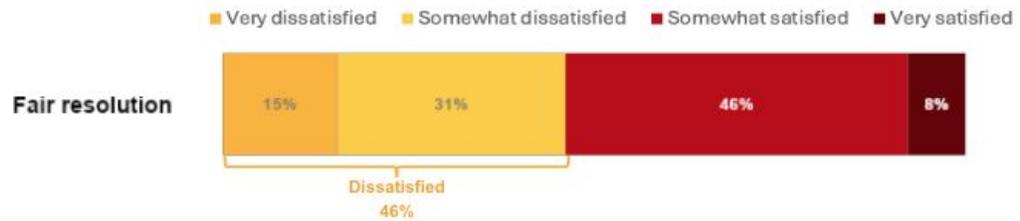
Survey respondents indicated concern with the impact of the over-disciplining of African American students. Several pointed to a **higher placement of Black and Brown children in special education** with inadequate support. Almost one-third of caregivers (29%) reported that their own African American child had been identified as having a behavior problem at school at some point, and many (46%) were **dissatisfied with how the school had resolved the issue.**

Secondary Research Highlights:

- There is a lack of access to appropriate social-emotional learning experiences that humanize Black children and prepare them for a world of anti-Black racism (e.g. Miller et al, 2022; Rogers et al., 2022)

- There is strong evidentiary support that negative teacher perceptions have significant effect on student outcomes (O. Flores & Guzenhauser, 2021).

- Shifting away from a deficit perspective can assist educators to recognize institutional school cultures and practices that influence disparities (Flores, 2018)

In Washington state public schools, **Black students are disproportionately subjected to physical restraint and isolation**, practices intended only for emergencies involving serious imminent harm. A 2023 report by the ACLU-WA and Disability Rights Washington

(Coming Into the Light: An Examination of Restraint and Isolation Practices In Washington Schools) analyzing OSPI data and interviews found that Black students (alongside students with disabilities, foster youth, and those experiencing homelessness, which are intersectional identities) experienced these trauma-inducing practices at significantly higher rates than their peers.

■ Very dissatisfied   ■ Somewhat dissatisfied   ■ Somewhat satisfied   ■ Very satisfied

| Fair resolution | 15% | 31% | 46% | 8% |

Dissatisfied
46%

Secondary Research Highlights:

- Black students lose approximately twice as many days of classroom instruction as a result of suspensions (Vincent et al., 2012), further widening the racial achievement and discipline gap (Morris & Perry, 2017)

- Students who receive exclusionary discipline sanctions also experience a disconnectedness from school (Shores, et al., 2020) which can lead to poor academic performance (Arcia, 2006).

Theme Five: Expand Education Pathways

Many survey respondents indicated a **need for expanded education pathways** for African American children. Key informants emphasized the **growth of charter schools and homeschooling** among African American families, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Some survey respondents indicated that option and charter schools have been important resources for their children.

Many caregivers also indicated the need for schools to serve students who may not be interested in college. They emphasized the need for expanded **job training, career development, and vocational education** in the schools.
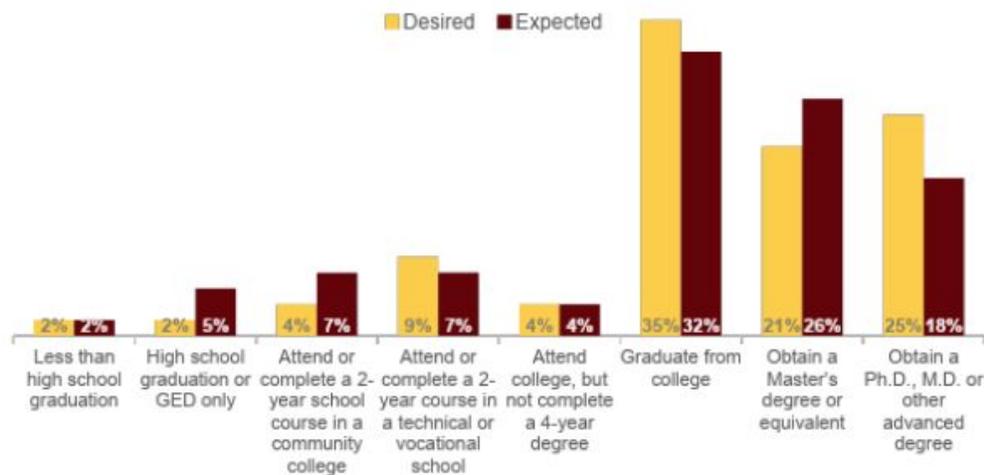
> Voice 9: "Efforts to inform all students about a range of postsecondary options are helpful. The focus on college is well-established. However, since this isn't that path that every student is interested in, or in some cases doesn't fit their more immediate needs, it's good to have options that… African American students, can pursue. "

Voice 10: "I am excited about charter schools because they are open to change. There is fertile ground rather than red tape, and they are actively looking for ways to do things differently. They are also employing more Black and Brown leaders and educators."

Voice 11: "I think the homeschooling movement is another opportunity, and parents being able to form homeschool collectives so that they don't all have to quit their jobs and spend all day homeschooling."

Caregivers desire and expect their children to be successful in school. Almost all those surveyed said they wanted their African American child to graduate from high school, and four-fifths (81%) hoped to see them graduate from college as well. The same caregivers said they expected that these 4-year degrees would be achieved (75%).

PARENT'S DESIRED VERSUS EXPECTED LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR THEIR CHILD

	Less than high school graduation	High school graduation or GED only	Attend or complete a 2-year school course in a community college	Attend or complete a 2-year course in a technical or vocational school	Attend college, but not complete a 4-year degree	Graduate from college	Obtain a Master's degree or equivalent	Obtain a Ph.D., M.D. or other advanced degree
Desired	2%	2%	4%	9%	4%	35%	21%	25%
Expected	2%	5%	7%	7%	4%	32%	26%	18%

Secondary Research Highlights:

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, student enrollment in charter schools, homeschooling, and private schools has increased rapidly. This increase is true for Black as well as Hispanic and white students (Jacobs & Veney, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Smith & Watson, 2024).

- Too often Black children are presented with an educational curriculum that does not challenge them intellectually nor is it culturally relevant. This lack of a rigorous educational curriculum unduly places Black children at-risk of educational failure (I. U. Iruka et al., 2017).
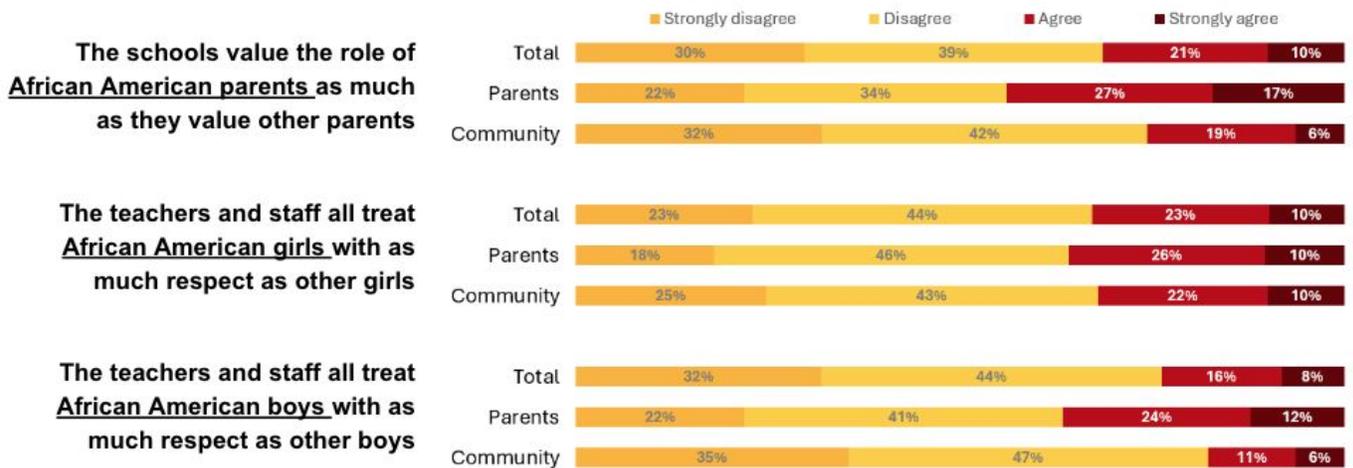
Theme Six: Listen to Students and Families

> Voice 12: "Reach out to African American parents and community leaders to involve them in decision-making processes and educational initiatives. These partnerships can provide a support system for students and help the school better understand and address community needs."
>
> Voice 13: "Stop denying the gravity of the situation… Listen to Black students. Acknowledge their voices."

Caregivers of African American students clearly indicated that they **do not feel valued by schools**. When asked if the schools value the role of African American parents as much as they value other parents, the majority (69%) disagreed.

They also expressed concern that teachers and staff do not treat African American girls and boys with as much respect as other girls and boys.

PERCEIVED VALUE GAP FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENTS AND STUDENTS
BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The schools value the role of African American parents as much as they value other parents				
Total	30%	39%	21%	10%
Parents	22%	34%	27%	17%
Community	32%	42%	19%	6%
The teachers and staff all treat African American girls with as much respect as other girls				
Total	23%	44%	23%	10%
Parents	18%	46%	26%	10%
Community	25%	43%	22%	10%
The teachers and staff all treat African American boys with as much respect as other boys				
Total	32%	44%	16%	8%
Parents	22%	41%	24%	12%
Community	35%	47%	11%	6%

Secondary Research Highlights:

- Scholars note that the voices of Black parents are rarely heard or included in school practices, such as participation in the establishment of discipline codes and membership in school councils. Black parents are not adequately provided with opportunities to learn about and become familiar with school policies (Iruka et al., 2017).

Secondary Research Highlights: (cont'd)

- Black parents often engage in involvement strategies that are unnoticed or hidden by school staff. For instance, Black parents often engage in involvement activities that are more reflective of their daily lives (Clifford & Göncü, 2019). These "hidden" efforts are often mistaken by teachers and administrators as a lack of parental involvement since they do not represent school-centric approaches to parental involvement (Iruka et al., 2014).

- Educators need to expand their approach to engagement beyond school-centric parental involvement and take responsibility for establishing more respectful, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships with and among families (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, n.d.).

Theme Seven: Surround Students with Support

Voice 14: "Be clear with students about expectations and opportunities and provide high support so that they can meet the requirements and access the opportunities of their choosing."

Voice 15: "[We] need culturally sustaining practices at all levels that validate and affirm students' sense of self and high expectations with high support."

Voice 16: "Encourage, challenge, and call out successes."

Existing educational models often **overlook the specific needs** of African American students, resulting in inadequate support systems.

Survey respondents pointed to **harms caused by the shift to remote or computer-based learning** during the COVID-19 pandemic, harms perceived as greater for African American students. Remote learning does not speak to the social and emotional skills students need and disconnects students from supportive relationships and services.

Parents and community members strongly emphasized the need to offer African American students **challenge and opportunity combined with high levels of responsive, effective supports.**

In the survey, caregivers pointed to a wide range of people who help them support their

African American child's education, both within and beyond the school. The classroom teacher and school counselors are perceived as the most critical school personnel in helping the parent support their child. **Friends, family members, and coaches are among the most commonly cited resources** outside of school.

When describing the person "most helpful" to them, parents describe seemingly basic, simple deeds: "taking an interest in my child," "providing a safe space," "showing respect," "positive encouragement." This is true, as well, for descriptions of classroom teachers, school staff and community members. Parents then cited high levels of support as essential to their child's current and future success.

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SUPPORT

■ Most helpful   ■ Also helfpul

Total helpful

	Most helpful	Total helpful
Classroom teacher(s)	34%	60%
Other friends or family members	14%	58%
School counselor(s)	14%	44%
Parents of other students	5%	33%
School coach(es) or club advisor(s)	0%	33%
Coach outside of school	5%	31%
Church/religious leader or staff	5%	24%
Other teacher(s) at school (not assigned to your student)	2%	24%
Youth leader(s) or counselor(s) outside of school	2%	22%
Neighbor(s)	2%	18%
Other	18%	18%
No one has helped me		2%

Secondary Research Highlights:

- Culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2010): Culturally relevant teachers hold specific pedagogical principles: they demand academic success of their students; laud cultural competence as essential to this success; and develop sociopolitical consciousness in their students to problematize oppression and act as change agents (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

> *Secondary Research Highlights: (cont'd)*
>
> - Black children are shaped by the rich cultural perspectives offered by their families and communities but these cultural assets are rarely recognized or incorporated in early education programs (Iruka, et al. 2017).

Theme Eight: Tackle Systems Change

Too many Washington state schools are deeply underfunded. Budget constraints pose significant challenges, leading to cuts and austerity that disproportionately affect students from minoritized communities. Key informants and survey respondents pointed to the **lack of resources such as textbooks and computers in the classroom and cuts to vital services such as school meals, transportation, and special education.**

> Voice 17: "I think we have an opportunity to really look at feedback... and really take this opportunity to redesign our education system."
>
> Voice 18: "If [a program is] relying on inconsistent nonprofit funding, it's hard for you to be there consistently... Unfortunately, our kids need us year over year, so a 3 [or 6] month program, or pilot program doesn't really benefit them if we're trying to create real transformation."
>
> Voice 19: "You have to make sure that you continue to change the other pieces of the environment, so students can be successful... You can't just give Black students the opportunity. You have to continue to do the work to improve the system and make sure the system is ready to educate Black students, and that our schools are student ready... Our students are capable and brilliant, but we can't continue to try to move them through failing systems with adults who don't care and who don't understand some of the challenges that could exist for them when they come to the table."

Funding systems will need to change in order to make many of the changes recommended throughout this research scan. Private funding will not fill the gaps, and students are not being served. Survey respondents indicated that **their schools are doing a poor** (30%) **or fair** (34%) job of meeting the needs of African American families today.

Overall, how would you rate the public schools in your community for meeting the needs of African American families today?

■ Poor	■ Fair	■ Good	■ Excellent

| 30% | 34% | 30% | 6% |
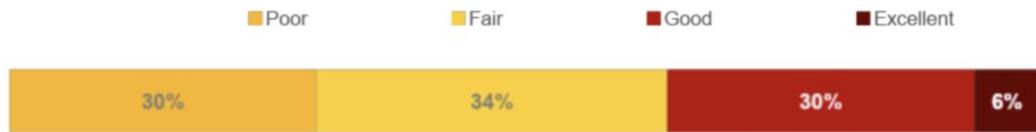
Key informants saw an opportunity to redesign the education system based on feedback from educators and students, ensuring that schools support both academic success and inclusivity.

Secondary Research Highlights:

- Sustained and significant increases in school funding can have a lasting positive impact on student achievement and other outcomes, especially for students from low-income backgrounds (Morgan, 2022)

- The Education Trust (2022) rated Washington state education funding as "moderately regressive" in 2022, with public school districts serving the most students of color receiving $512 or 3% less state and local revenue per student than the public school districts serving the fewest students of color.

State Data: Key Metrics

As previously noted, the key metrics data provides updated measures tracked by Washington state and provides additional context for multiple themes. The key metrics below most closely match to community feedback, and also match prior opportunity gap reports since 2008, and what has been most recently included in the OSPI "report card." However, there is further data available.

Please see Appendix C for quantitative research methods explanation, and Appendix E for a full set of metric data.

OSPI's Office of Student Information supported obtaining a customized set of newly available "detailed race" data, which disaggregates Black/African American into African-American and Black students with other identities and migration histories. Because the state's mandate to disaggregate is just coming into effect, this more detailed data is available only for the most recent 1-2 school years and unevenly across students of different grade levels.

Given this reality, this disaggregation has been used only sparingly where possible and appropriate.
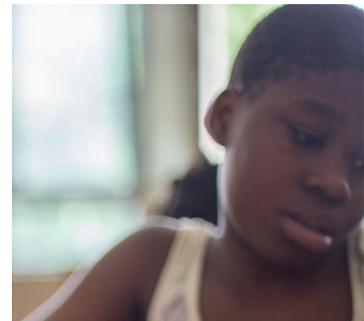
Table 1: State Education Metrics 2015 to 2023

	ALL STATE	BLACK	ALL STATE	BLACK	ALL STATE	BLACK
	2015		2020		2023*	
Ready for K	41%	39%	52%	44%	59%	53%
Black − All difference	-2%		-8%		-6%	
Meet 8th-grade math standards (SBA)**	46%	25%	33%	15%	34%	16%
Black − All difference	-21%		-18%		-18%	
9th grade on track	70%	57%	78%	69%	70%	64%
Black − All difference	-13%		-9%		-6%	
Graduate on time	76%	65%	83%	76%	84%	81%
Black − All difference	-11%		-7%		-3%	

Insights

- Rates for 9th-grade-on-track for and on-time graduation have risen for Black students since 2015, and at a faster rate for Black students than for students overall statewide. This has reduced the distance between Black students and others on these measures of grade-level progress.

- Since 2015, rates for meeting 8th-grade math standards have declined for Black students as they have with students overall statewide, though this decline has stabilized since 2020. A large distance remains between Black and other students (-18% versus overall).

- Kindergarten readiness is measured across an array of dimensions. Overall readiness, as defined in the OSPI report card, shows an ongoing improvement both for Black students and for students overall. The distance between Black and other students has gone up and down over the past ten years.

Table 2: Kindergarten Readiness 2023 - Disaggregated

	ALL STATE	BLACK	AA only
Ready for K	2023*		
K-ready: Math	42%	40%	32%
K-ready: Literacy	62%	60%	53%
K-ready: Cognitive	44%	38%	34%
K-ready: Language	50%	45%	47%
K-ready: Physical	58%	55%	58%
K-ready: Social Emotional	50%	44%	44%

* Ready for K and Meet 8th grade math from 2023-2024; all others from 2022-2023.

** Previously reported numbers replaced with SBA level-3+

Insights

The disaggregated data in Table 2, now available for younger students from 2023, makes it possible to track how African American students compare to Blacks overall. For measures of kindergarten readiness, African American students score on par with other Black students for physical, language and social-emotional dimensions. However, African American students are considerably more likely than other Black students to fall short of others entering kindergarten on measures of math, literacy, and cognitive readiness.

Table 3: State Discipline Metrics - Exclusion from the Classroom, 2017 to 2023

	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK	ALL	BLACK
	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
Excluded %			3.90	7.46	3.97	8.16	2.38	4.89	0.27	0.23	3.01	5.99	3.52	6.44
Ratio (RRI)*	2.5		1.9		2.1		2.1		0.9		2.0		1.8	

*2017 RRI from Equity in Discipline Theory of Action, OSPI Washington State, August 2019.

2018 metrics from Preventing and Addressing Discrimination in Student Discipline, Equity and Civil Rights Office, OSPI Washington State, October 2019.

All other data was calculated from data from OSPI Data Portal.

Insights

- The year-to-year trends in classroom exclusion rates since 2017 have been uneven in general and especially uneven during the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption to in-person education during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years.

- Even in that context, it can be said that the rates of exclusion for students statewide overall have trended down very slightly, while rates for Black students have trended down at a somewhat better rate. As a result, the relative risk for Black students to be excluded has declined slightly since the pre-pandemic years. Black students are now almost twice (1.8 times) as likely to be excluded from the classroom as students overall, compared to a bit more than twice as likely (2.1 times) before the pandemic.

A Final Thought on Key Metrics

While the data paints a sobering picture, there are reasons for hope. Improvements in graduation rates and the emergence of local success stories show that change is possible. But piecemeal programs will not solve deep structural issues. Washington's education system must make bold, sustained commitments to equity, rooted in listening to the very communities it has long underserved.

A Plan to Close the Opportunity Gap

No Neutral Ground: Embedding Anti-Racism into Every Strategy

Racism in education is systemic and deeply rooted, shaping every aspect of the student experience, from early learning opportunities to discipline policies, academic achievement, and career readiness. Addressing these inequities requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that dismantles structural barriers and replaces them with intentional policies and practices designed to support Black students' success at every stage of their education.

It is imperative that the EOGOAC, state legislators, and K-12 leaders carry out the crucial duty of protecting Washington's students' access to our state's civil rights and education statutes, especially in the rapidly evolving changes to federal education policies, programs, and practices around civil rights. If need be, this workgroup can quickly adapt the goals and recommendations within this report to comply with forthcoming federal mandates, both explicit and implicit, so that Washington state can still do right by its Black students.

The Road Ahead: What We Must Do - and Sustain - to Achieve Educational Equity for Black Students

The five goals outlined in this plan are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, reflecting the complex and overlapping challenges Black students face. Each goal reinforces the others: Black educators are essential for delivering an anti-racist curriculum, reducing discipline disparities improves access to advanced coursework, and early childhood education creates the foundation for long-term success. A fragmented approach to addressing racism in education will not lead to lasting change. Only by tackling these challenges as a comprehensive system can we build an inclusive and high-quality educational experience for Black students.
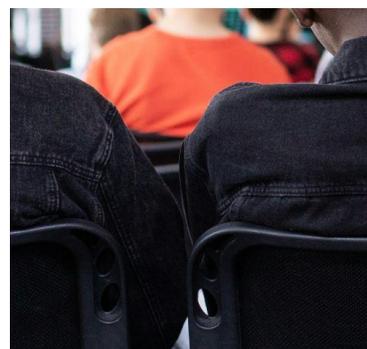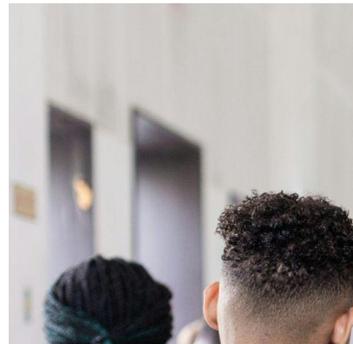
Together, these goals create a foundation for systemic change, ensuring that Black students not only receive an equitable education but also experience affirmation, belonging, and opportunity.

While the experiences of Black students in urban and rural public school districts may differ in context and scale, both face deeply rooted disparities in access to resources, culturally affirming education, and meaningful opportunities for success. Geographic location may shape how these inequities show up, but the pattern of underinvestment and cultural mismatch is consistent. Addressing these challenges requires solutions that are both place-based and system-wide, ensuring that Black students in every corner of the state receive the support, representation, and opportunities they deserve.

Representation and Support for Black Educators is critical to every other goal. A diverse teaching workforce improves student engagement, reduces discipline disparities, and provides mentorship that fosters academic and social success. Without intentional recruitment, retention, and professional support for Black educators, efforts to reform curriculum, discipline, and engagement will lack the necessary cultural responsiveness.

Early Education and Kindergarten Readiness ensure that Black students start their academic journey with the same high-quality learning experiences as their peers. Without equitable early education access, Black students face delayed school readiness, lower achievement trajectories, and systemic barriers to advanced coursework later on.

Engagement and Reduction in Exclusionary Discipline addresses how the failure to meaningfully engage Black students and families often results in exclusionary discipline practices. These practices contribute to chronic absenteeism, academic disengagement, and lower graduation rates. Advancing this goal also supports broader efforts to increase Black representation in education and expand culturally responsive curriculum, both of which are proven to reduce disparities in discipline and create more affirming, connected learning environments.

Equitable Curriculum and Assessments directly influence academic success, identity development, and engagement. When Black students see themselves reflected in their education, they experience higher self-confidence, stronger academic motivation, and a greater sense of belonging. Without reforming curricula and assessments, Black students will continue to face biased educational practices that fail to measure their full potential.

Educational Pathways and Student Outcomes ensure that Black students can translate academic success into post-secondary education and career opportunities. Expanding access to dual-credit programs, CTE pathways, and mentorship is essential for breaking cycles of economic exclusion and underrepresentation in professional fields.

Doing What's Possible Now While Building What's Needed

The recommendations are bold by design, and they exist across a spectrum of readiness. Some can build on existing infrastructure, policies, and momentum already in place across Washington's education system. Others require deeper shifts in practice, mindset, and accountability to take root. This work is layered, and it involves navigating real differences in perspective, complex historical legacies, and structural constraints. We've intentionally held space for that complexity rather than simplifying or smoothing it over. Each recommendation represents both an aspiration and a directional commitment, even when the path forward will require iteration, collaboration, and ongoing learning.

We also recognize that transformation does not happen on a time-bound funding cycle. Lasting change, particularly in systems as large and deeply rooted as public education, takes time and sustained investment. Success will not always look like immediate data shifts, though we hope it does. It will also look like consistency, resilience, and a long-term willingness to refine what's working rather than chasing what's new. We offer these recommendations not as quick fixes, but as part of a durable roadmap toward educational justice for Black students in Washington. The charge now is to stay in the work with urgency, with patience, and with accountability.

By fully implementing these goals, Washington state has the opportunity to move beyond performative equity measures and create a school system where Black students thrive: academically, socially, and in their future careers.

GOAL 1: Increase Representation and Support for Black Educators

Increase the representation and retention of Black educators, including paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators, to better serve and support Black students in schools.

Rationale

A diverse teaching workforce fosters academic success, reduces discipline disparities, and promotes an inclusive educational environment. Research highlights Black educators' profound impact on Black students' academic performance, engagement, and long-term educational attainment.

Black educators not only improve outcomes for Black students but also benefit all students through inclusive role modeling and setting higher expectations for everyone. Yet, Black teachers make up only 1.6% of Washington's teaching staff, while Black students represent nearly 5% of enrollment. This significant gap creates an urgent need for targeted recruitment and retention efforts.

One set of barriers that must be addressed is the lack of accessible pathways into the teaching profession for Black candidates, including financial constraints, certification hurdles, and a lack of institutional support. Recruiting, supporting, and retaining Black educators, especially in leadership positions, is a proven strategy to reduce discipline disparities, improve student achievement, and enhance school culture. Washington State's support for Black educators is imperative to realize equitable educational outcomes.

State leadership is essential in closing access gaps, especially in under-resourced areas.

The benchmarks and strategies outlined below aim to:

1. Increase the recruitment and retention of Black educators and faculty in teaching preparation to create a more diverse and representative teaching workforce.

2. Expand Black school leadership to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for Black students.

3. Strengthen mentorship and professional development to ensure that Black educators have the resources and support they need for the long term.

Benchmarks

- By 2035, increase the share of Black educators across the K–12 system to equitable levels, using targeted hiring goals and public school-led initiatives like Tacoma's Teach253 as models.

- By 2035, secure state funding that will become self-sustaining for a permanent Black Educators Affinity Network to offer centralized access to mentorship, information, professional development, support, and connection.

- By 2035, implement a statewide retention strategy that addresses working conditions and equitable compensation, ensuring that Black educators are retained at rates equal to or higher than the state average.

Strategies

1.1. Expand public school and state-level programs to recruit, mentor, and retain Black teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. Focus on increasing representation, ensuring solid institutional support and professional growth opportunities.

1.2. Partner with HBCUs and teacher preparation programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in building pipelines for Black educators in Washington state, and build local infrastructure to support them long-term.

1.3. Launch a Black educator Career and Technical Training Education (CTE) pathway with paid learning opportunities and integrated equity training.

1.4. Use exit data and other collected data to understand Black educators' experiences of belonging in the system and why they choose to leave the State or profession. Use findings to adjust policy and practice.

1.5. Create mechanisms to remove educators or administrators who demonstrate persistent bias or racial harm in school environments.

GOAL 2: Ensure Equitable Access to Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness

Strengthen family engagement, create culturally responsive pathways, and secure adequate funding to support school readiness to ensure equitable access to early learning programs for all Black students.

Rationale

Early learning is a powerful equalizer, but too many Black children in Washington state start kindergarten without access to the high-quality, culturally responsive programs they deserve. Early childhood programs are foundational in cognitive, social-emotional, and literacy development. Yet, significant disparities in access to high-quality programs, compounded by systemic inequities in education funding, persist for Black children.

Addressing early opportunity gaps pays long-term dividends in academic outcomes, graduation rates, and future economic mobility. Strengthening family engagement, creating culturally responsive pathways, and securing adequate funding are crucial strategies for addressing these inequities and ensuring that Black students enter kindergarten well-prepared. State leadership is essential in closing access gaps, especially in under-resourced areas.

The benchmarks and strategies outlined below aim to:

1. Ensure equitable access to early learning programs so that Black students can enroll in high-quality preschool and pre-Kindergarten education.

2. Foster student and family belonging and engagement by creating supportive and culturally responsive early childhood learning environments and preparation programs for early childhood educators.

3. Secure sustainable funding and resources to expand pre-Kindergarten programs and invest in a diverse, well-supported early education workforce.

Benchmarks

- By 2035, track and report the enrollment of Black students in early learning programs statewide to ensure representation and access.

- By 2035, launch statewide belonging measures in early education, using surveys or observations, to assess the experiences of students and educators.

- By 2035, increase the number of high-quality pre-kindergarten and transitional kindergarten spots in public schools with high Black student populations to equitable levels.

Strategies

2.1 Prioritize funding and program expansion in areas with the most significant gap between the number of Black students needing access to early learning services and opportunities and the resources or number of early learning spots available. Track enrollment data, representation, and resource allocation on a biannual cadence, regardless of federal mandates.

2.2 Work in partnership with early learning advocates to expand access to preschool, pre-kindergarten, and educational childcare programs. Advocate through lobbying for increased funding for availability in areas with the least access overall and disproportionate Black student representation.

2.3 Strengthen whole family engagement and support caregivers through home visits, culturally relevant materials, and workshops on the importance of early literacy and kindergarten readiness.

2.4 Ensure that all teacher preparation programs include training on culturally responsive kindergarten readiness assessment practices and family engagement.

2.5 Increase recruitment, support, and retention of Black early educators in early education and kindergarten readiness, and track their experiences to inform policy and create culturally responsive learning environments.

GOAL 3: Improve Student Engagement and Reduce Exclusionary Discipline

Increased awareness of the connection between attendance, engagement, and success will reduce exclusionary discipline practices and improve student outcomes. This effort will lead to higher attendance rates, fewer disciplinary actions, and increased student reports of positive school engagement, ultimately minimizing out-of-school time.

Rationale

A lack of meaningful engagement with Black students and their families contributes directly to disproportionate and inequitable discipline outcomes. When schools fail to understand and respond to students' cultural, social, and developmental contexts, they risk biased assessments, missed support opportunities, and harmful disciplinary decisions.

Black students are nearly twice as likely to face exclusionary discipline as their peers, leading to lost instruction, disengagement, and decreased graduation rates. Chronic absenteeism and inequitable disciplinary practices are deeply intertwined and disproportionately impact Black youth. Implementing strategies to minimize out-of-school time, increase positive engagement, and promote just and consistent disciplinary policies will help create a more equitable and supportive learning environment.

Black students are suspended and excluded at significantly higher rates (6.4%) compared to the state average (3.5%). The benefits of reforming discipline practices far outweigh the costs of inaction, as reducing exclusionary discipline has been linked to improved student attendance, higher graduation rates, and better academic performance. Legislative action is needed to hold systems accountable and invest in preventive supports.

Finally, Black children are disproportionately placed in special education, especially in more restrictive settings. This overrepresentation raises concerns about bias, misidentification, and unequal access to inclusive, supportive learning environments.

The benchmarks and strategies outlined below aim to:

1. Ensure accountability and equity in discipline practices by addressing persisting racial disparities and reducing exclusionary discipline for Black students.

2. Strengthen educator training and accountability to promote fair and culturally responsive discipline practices.

3. Improve student attendance and engagement by creating supportive interventions that keep Black students and families connected to school.

4. Expand social-emotional and mental health support to address systemic inequities and create a more inclusive school environment.

Benchmarks

- By 2035, conduct and enforce public school district-level equity audits of discipline practices and publish annual progress updates, already identified by OSPI in previous work. Use data to identify alternative approaches for increasing family engagement and reducing discipline disparities among Black students. This includes audits of:

  - Exclusionary discipline practices.

  - Discipline policies, revising to eliminate anti-Black racism in both design and impact.

  - Strategies that keep students present, engaged, and connected to their school communities.

- By 2035, reduce exclusionary discipline rates for Black students to equitable levels, aligned with OSPI benchmarks.

- By 2035, monitor and report the extent to which chronic absenteeism among Black students is linked to exclusionary discipline and implement strategies to improve attendance.

Strategies

3.1. Require training for all school staff on the link between engagement, discipline, and attendance—centered in anti-racist, trauma-informed, and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. Partner with OSPI, public schools, and labor unions to integrate these practices into educator evaluation systems and develop tools to assess implementation. Provide coaching and supports—not just compliance monitoring—to reinforce change.

3.2. Mandate the collection and public reporting of discipline data disaggregated by race and the staff member issuing discipline. Use this data to drive ongoing review and professional development, and to identify patterns requiring intervention at the school, grade, or public school district level.

3.3. Review relevant Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) governing discipline, and track their impact across schools. Partner with OSPI and public schools to hold shared accountability for policy implementation, and to identify and address school-based practices that create barriers to compliance or equitable outcomes.

3.1.　Support school-based mental health services and culturally responsive SEL that directly addresses the racism Black youth experience. Invest in growing a strong, representative pipeline of Black educators and mental health professionals equipped to lead and sustain this work.

3.2.　Partner with Community Engagement Boards to surface local drivers of disengagement. Implement early warning systems informed by student voice, particularly from BAA youth, and follow up with targeted interventions such as mentorship, counseling, and family outreach.

GOAL 4: Provide an Anti-Racist Curriculum and Fair Assessments

Provide Black students in Washington state's K–12 educational system with a fully funded, embedded, and comprehensive anti-racist curriculum and assessment framework. Recognizing that no singular guide currently exists for a fully anti-racist curriculum, this work requires a fundamental reimagining of the educational system itself. Developed in partnership with OSPI, these curricula and assessments will be co-created with communities to support positive identity development, reduce disparities in educational attainment, prioritize holistic student growth, improve academic achievement, and continuously evaluate the system's effectiveness.

Rationale

Washington state's current curriculum and testing systems don't reflect or support the full brilliance of Black students. When students don't see themselves in their learning, it affects their engagement, performance, and identity development. By prioritizing holistic student growth, culturally responsive learning, and fair assessment practices, Washington state can create an education system that affirms and supports Black students from early learning through graduation. The system's two key aims are to better understand the needs of Black students and to evaluate its effectiveness.

While school curricula and assessments are rarely designed with Black students in mind, one significant barrier is the persistent use of Eurocentric education standards and standardized tests that reflect white, middle-class norms. These assessments often fail to capture Black students' cultural knowledge, ways of learning, and intellectual strengths, resulting in their disproportionate placement in remedial tracks and special education programs.

At the same time, test scores remain one of the few tools available to surface disparities and hold systems accountable. This creates a paradox: we rely on data from flawed assessments to prove inequity, while continuing to subject Black students to evaluation tools that were never built for their success.

The legislature has the opportunity and responsibility to reimagine assessment frameworks that are culturally grounded, affirming of diverse intelligences, and designed to both reflect and support holistic student growth.

The benchmarks and strategies outlined below aim to:

1. Ensure equitable and accurate assessments that accurately reflect Black students' knowledge, strengths, and abilities, free from bias.

2. Foster positive identity development so that Black students see themselves reflected and valued in their educational experiences.

3. Eliminate disparities in academic achievement so that Black students have equitable opportunities for success in state-measured outcomes.

4. Establish an anti-racist education system where curricula, history, and learning materials affirm and empower Black students.

Benchmarks

- By 2035, adopt and implement a statewide anti-racist educational framework, developed and led by a dedicated OSPI office for Black education equity. Pilot this framework in 10 public school districts, including schools rooted in culturally specific, anti-racist models.

- By 2035, conduct independent reviews and revise all major assessments and state standards to ensure they are culturally responsive, free from racial bias, and aligned with diverse student knowledge and lived experiences.

- By 2035, develop and apply new equity barometers to track access, growth, and opportunity across schools, replacing outdated performance measures that reflect and reinforce systemic racial disparities, especially those tied to historic disinvestment.

Strategies

4.1 Direct OSPI to create a dedicated office responsible for Black education equity and charge it with leading the development of a statewide anti-racist framework. This includes:

- Requiring comprehensive, mandatory anti-racist curricula and culturally responsive pedagogy;

- Mandating the teaching of full-spectrum African American and ethnic studies history across K–12, beyond enslavement narratives;

- Using culturally grounded textbooks, media, and instructional tools developed with community input.

4.2 Provide sustained funding for professional development in culturally responsive and anti-racist instruction, while also establishing accountability mechanisms, including updates to teacher and staff evaluation tools co-designed with public school districts, OSPI, and labor partners.

4.3 Redesign state learning standards and assessment requirements to reflect culturally diverse ways of knowing, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Remove the use of assessments in decisions about school funding and access to opportunity programs.

4.4. Shift from punitive, deficit-based measures toward barometers that reflect whether schools provide meaningful opportunities for all students to thrive, without reinforcing historic inequities traced back to redlining and systemic disinvestment.

4.5. Commission a statewide research and learning initiative to examine schools, such as Roses in Concrete Community School (Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade), First Nations-inspired charter schools, and ethnic studies-based models, that center Black and Indigenous student success. Apply findings to inform the redesign of traditional public school models and policy shifts at the state level.

GOAL 5: Expand Postsecondary Pathways and Career Readiness for Black Students

Ensure that Black students are aware of and have access to multiple educational pathways and Black mentors, which fosters their academic excellence, self-determination, and success in post-secondary education and career opportunities.

Rationale

Black students and families in Washington state express strong aspirations for higher education and stable careers, yet continue to face barriers to dual credit, mentorship, and career-connected learning. Research confirms that Black students often face limited access to advanced coursework, college-prep opportunities, and career-aligned programs, which creates systemic barriers to higher education and career readiness.

Early exposure to various options, such as college, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship, is key to building agency, wealth, and long-term success. Washington state's educational system is vital in creating exposure and access to these opportunities.

The benchmarks and strategies outlined below aim to:

1. Expand access to multiple educational pathways by increasing participation in advanced coursework, college-prep programs, and career-aligned learning opportunities.

2. Ensure equitable participation in post-secondary readiness programs by removing barriers to dual-credit courses, CTE programs, and internships that prepare students for college and careers.

3. Increase mentorship and guidance opportunities by connecting Black students with Black educators, professionals, and community leaders to provide support and career exploration.

Benchmarks

- By 2035, increase equitable access and funding for Black students to advanced coursework, dual credit, and CTE programs statewide.

- By 2035, increase student participation in paid internships, apprenticeships, and other career-connected learning opportunities aligned with Washington's workforce needs.

- By 2035, close equity gaps in postsecondary enrollment, retention, completion, and career readiness for Black students.

Strategies

5.1. Increase availability of AP, IB, dual credit, and CTE programs in under-resourced schools. Provide targeted supports (e.g., tutoring, teacher training, scheduling flexibility) to ensure Black student success, not just enrollment.

5.2. Partner with, and provide funding for, CBOs, Black-led organizations, and industry partners to provide mentorship, job shadowing, and career-connected learning rooted in cultural strengths and local context.

5.3. Ensure Black students receive culturally responsive, age-appropriate guidance on financing education, navigating college systems, and building pathways to careers with upward mobility.

5.4. Provide family-facing tools, school-based programming, and public school district-level supports to normalize early conversations about future opportunities. Tailor resources to meet the needs of Black families and communities.

5.5. Partner with workforce boards, industry leaders, and labor unions to create and scale paid learning opportunities that connect directly to high-growth, high-wage sectors in Washington state. Prioritize placements for Black students and embed mentorship within programs.

Bright Spots and Model Programs

The programs, initiatives and resources that follow offer insight into what's working. They highlight effective practices and promising approaches that demonstrate impact, and their example can inspire and inform broader efforts.

Programs/Initiatives

- **Teach253 program** is a partnership between Pacific Lutheran University and Tacoma Public Schools in Tacoma designed to support high school students who want to become teachers.

- **Youth Truth Survey** is a national nonprofit that's been supporting schools in collecting feedback from students, families, staff, and others since 2008.

- **African American Male Achievement (AAMA) Office in Seattle Public Schools** was created in August 2019 as an innovation center focused on cultivating the strengths of Black boys and teens.

- **Kent School District's** work using Street Data method, which looks at data from the ground up, where educators and school leaders act as ethnographers to gather stories, artifacts, and observations from the margins: the families, students, and educators themselves rather than looking at grades and test scores, attendance and graduation rates.

- **Seattle Public Schools' Liberatory Education and Black Studies** initiatives aim to center the brilliance of Black students by embedding anti-racist, culturally responsive curriculum and practices that affirm identity, foster critical consciousness, and advance educational justice across the district.
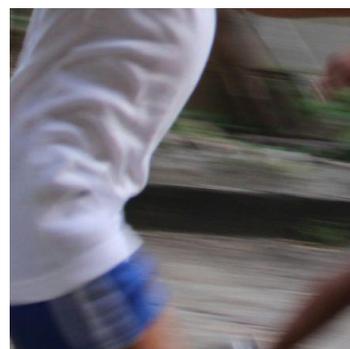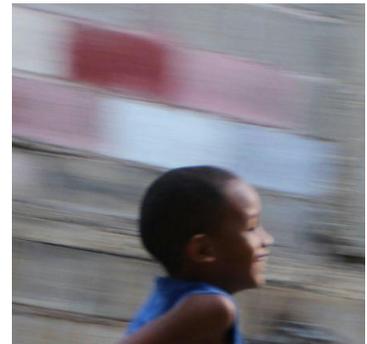
Charter Schools

- **Rainier Prep** is a public charter middle school located in the Highline area of Seattle. It utilizes adaptive strategies to leverage flexibility to meet student needs, including longer instructional hours, specialized curricula, and smaller class sizes, which nurtures student success, particularly for those who face educational barriers.

- **Catalyst Public Schools** is a public charter school in Bremerton dedicated to providing an equitable, rigorous, and joyful education that prepares every student to thrive in college, career, and life with strong SPAC scores.

- **Rainier Valley Leadership Academy** is a tuition-free public charter school with strong MAPS testing/growth scores in Seattle committed to cultivating student leaders through a social justice-focused, college preparatory education that empowers scholars to transform their communities.

- **Summit Public Schools** is a network of public charter schools in Washington and California with a 90%+ FASFA/WASFA completion dedicated to empowering a diverse community of students to become self-directed learners prepared for college, career, and life through personalized, project-based education.

- **Lumen High School** is a public charter school in Spokane committed to elevating the lives of teen parents by providing high academic standards in conjunction with a specialized, onsite Early Learning Center.

Other schools

- **Rise Up Academy** is an independent private school in Everett, WA, offering year-round preschool through kindergarten and before/after school programs for students up to 12 years sold. The school's mission is to eliminate the achievement gap by providing high-quality, innovative academic experiences that nurture children's enthusiasm for learning through education, the arts, and social impact initiatives.

- **Roses in Concrete Community School** in Oakland, CA attends to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. With a community-responsive model of urban education that treats the school as a center of health in the community, the school prioritizes the most basic human needs before 'teaching.'

Educational models

- **Ace Academy** in Seattle offers academic enrichment activities, leadership development, and mentorship programs to educate and support Black boys, and career advancement, support and resources to black educators in the state of Washington.

- Homeschooling Collectives like **Black Star Line** offer African-centered, community-rooted educational spaces where Black families collaboratively design and lead learning grounded in cultural affirmation, self-determination, and intergenerational knowledge. These collectives center joy, resistance, and the holistic development of children outside traditional school systems.

- **Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness** education is an asset-based approach that validates and affirms students' cultural identities and home languages, using them as foundations to build academic success and bridge students into the culture of academia and mainstream society. This pedagogy emphasizes situational appropriateness, allowing students to navigate different cultural and linguistic contexts without sacrificing their base culture or language.

- **Cultivating the Genius of Black Children** (Debra Ren-Etta Sullivan) is an educational framework and approach that recognizes the cultural assets, intellectual potential, and lived experiences of Black students, aiming to affirm their identity and provide rigorous, joyful learning environments. It emphasizes culturally responsive pedagogy, high expectations, and equity-centered practices to dismantle barriers and nurture excellence.

- **SEATech (Southeast Area Technical Skills Center) in Walla Walla School Public School District** is established to provide advanced-level Career and Technical Education programs based on rigorous academic and industry standards, preparing students for post-secondary training and successful entry into high-skill, high-demand careers and employment.

- Whatcom Intergenerational High School's **Returning to the Homeland Language Camp** in partnership with White Swan Environmental. Indigenous students spend four days camping on the San Juan Islands and learning their language.

Organizations

- **BUILD 206** (Brothers United In Leadership Development) is a Seattle-based grassroots organization that empowers Black men and boys through civic engagement, leadership development, mentoring, and community partnerships to foster pride, hope, and perseverance within the community.

- **KD Hall Foundation** is a Washington-based nonprofit dedicated to propelling women and girls, particularly those from Black and Brown communities, into leadership roles by providing access to education, mentorship, and real-world opportunities.

- **Speak with Purpose,** founded by Toyia Taylor, is a Seattle-based organization that empowers students, especially those from marginalized communities, by integrating public speaking into school curricula to enhance self-expression, confidence, and leadership skills.

- **<u>Thoughts Cost</u>** is an educational organization that offers specialized services to support students with disabilities, focusing on individualized instruction, social-emotional learning, and culturally responsive practices to help students achieve their IEP goals.

- **<u>True Measure Collaborative</u>** incubated by Washington State Charter Schools Association, partners with Washington public schools to provide professional development and coaching aimed at promoting inclusive education and anti-racist practices, particularly in special education services.

Conclusion: A Call to Commit and Act

This work is both a call to action and a blueprint for change. The challenges facing Black students in Washington's K–12 system are not new, and the will to confront them with clarity, urgency, and sustained commitment must be renewed.

The data is clear: disparities in access, opportunity, and outcomes are not the result of student failure, but of systemic design. We now have both the evidence and the community wisdom to redesign that system, starting with policy, funding, and accountability shifts that center the lived experiences of Black students and families.

The recommendations outlined in this report are not isolated fixes. Instead, they are part of an interconnected strategy to close the opportunity gap through culturally grounded, anti-racist, and equity-driven reforms. Implementing this vision will require courageous leadership, transparent partnerships, and a relentless focus on outcomes, not just intentions. Washington state has the opportunity to lead the nation in building an education system where every Black student not only succeeds, but thrives. Let's work together to create that reality.
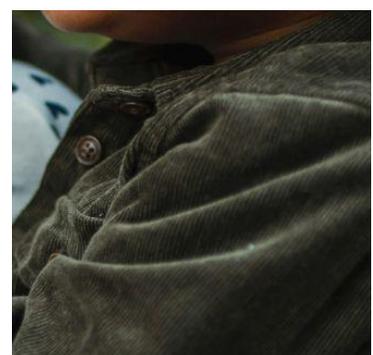
Appendix A –
About the Workgroup

Below are the Workgroup members. You may view their biographies on the following pages:

- Dr. James Smith, Owner, Diverse Education Evolution, EOGOAC Member, representing the Commission on African American Affairs

- Dr. Tyson Marsh, Associate Professor, University of Washington School of Educational Studies, EOGOAC Member (alternate), representing the CAAA

- Dr. Stephan Blanford, Executive Director, Children's Alliance

- Carlina Brown-Banks, Director of Community of Engagement and Outreach, Equity in Education Center

- Andrea Cobb, Sr. Program Officer, Gates Foundation, Former Executive Director of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning within the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

- Barbara Gilchrist, Director Coalition & Government Relations, Washington State Charter Schools Association

- Derick Harris, Executive Director, Black Education Strategy Roundtable

- Kathy Mulkerin, School Board Member, Walla Walla Public School Board

- Chelsea Oguike, Black Educator Coordinator, ACE Academy

- Anthony Shoecraft, Managing Director of Business Development, Kingmakers of Oakland

- Jacqueline Weatherspoon, School Board Vice President, Evergreen Public Schools

STUDY AND OUTCOMES WORKGROUP MEMBERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. James Smith, Owner, Diverse Education Evolution, EOGOAC Member, representing the Commission on African American Affairs

Inspired by other members of his family and friends that have pursued careers in education, Dr. Smith began to seek a similar path after retirement from the corporate world, so that he would be able to fulfill his ultimate dream of giving back to underserved children and communities. Today, he excels as the owner of Diverse Education Evolution. His previous corporate career involved high-level executive positions for the Allstate Insurance Company.

Dr. Smith channels years of additional experience in education to his work with Diverse Education Evolution. Over the years, he has gained valuable experience in the field as an adjunct professor for the City University of Seattle, and both a substitute teacher, Hearing Officer, and an education consultant for Auburn Public School District. For 11 years, he has also been a member of the Legislative Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee representing the Commission on African American Affairs. Throughout his career, he has made a difference in the lives of those less fortunate through his work with the Seattle Public School District's Race and Equity Superintendent Advisory Committee. Although his career has been filled with highlights, Dr. Smith is especially proud of being selected to participate as part of the committee that developed the administrative rules associated with the Civil Rights Bill HB 3026 regarding discrimination in education and being appointed by the Governor of Washington State as a Commissioner on the Commission on African American Affairs.

As a professional in his field, Dr. Smith attended the University of Washington for several years, later earning a Bachelor of Science Degree from the City University in 1976 and a Master of Business Administration from the City University of Seattle in 1978. Subsequently, he pursued postgraduate education obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy from Pacific Western University in 1983. Returning to graduate school after retiring, Dr. Smith earned his K-8 teaching credential at Seattle Antioch University in 2003. Dr. Smith retains his professional alignment with a plethora of organizations, including the National Black MBA Association, the Board of Black Education Strategy Roundtable Organization, the Board of the Equity in Education Coalition, the Seattle Alliance of Black School Educators, the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council, the OSPI Data Governance Committee, the University of Washington President's Minority Community Advisory Committee, the Seattle Public School District's Increasing Academic Achievement for African American Scholars Think Tank, Professional Education Standards Board (PESB) work groups and several other advisory committees.

Devoted to his community, Dr. Smith has been associated with various forums and school boards during his spare time. He has focused on developing strategies that help teachers progress towards meeting cultural competency standards, as well as policies, programs and research recommendations that eliminate and/or minimize testing barriers for candidates, especially bilingual and candidates of color. In addition to the above, Dr. Smith has worked on several task forces, such as the Discipline Task Force and Mastery-based Learning Collaborative. With a plethora of knowledge at his disposal, he has guest lectured for numerous Midwestern universities and K-12 schools and served as a keynote speaker for various Seattle community organizations. Due to his professional accomplishments, he was presented with a Service Award from the Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America for having served on their Board of Directors in four different major cities, an Ambassador for Peace Recognition from Washington State Ambassadors for Peace Association, Recognition Award for Outstanding Community Service by the Seattle Central Area Chamber of Commerce, and a 2007 Member of the Year Award from the Seattle Breakfast Group where he serves as the chairman of the Education Committee and a member of the board. Dr. Smith has also been recognized in the 24th edition of Who's Who in Finance and Industry and Who's Who in America.

Dr. Tyson Marsh, Associate Professor, University of Washington School of Educational Studies, EOGOAC Member (alternate), representing the Commission on African American Affairs

Dr. Tyson E.J. Marsh is Associate Professor and Coordinator for the M.Ed. Program in the School of Educational Studies at the University of Washington, Bothell. His work as an international school leader coupled with his experience working in rural, suburban, and urban schools in the United States inform his research focused on the political, historical, social, cultural and economic function of education and educational leaders in relation to Black, Indigenous, and minoritized communities. Dr. Marsh's current work is focused on the application of critical theories of race, class, and gender to assist educators in understanding the coloniality of schooling, while developing their agency and commitment to community-centered approaches to teaching, learning, leadership, and liberation.

Dr. Stephan Blanford, Executive Director, Children's Alliance

As the Executive Director of Children's Alliance, Dr. Stephan Blanford leads a team of policy experts, committed volunteers and more than 7,000 members across the state. Children's Alliance has led the advocacy community in the passage of critical improvements for children and their families such as the Fair Start for Kids Act, expansion of dental therapy, and Washington's innovative capital gains tax.

Stephan's unique experience within both the early learning and K-12 fields makes him a sought-after source of information for advocates in other states seeking to implement similar legislation. As a father, child care provider, researcher and advocate for the interests of Washington's 1.7 million children, he is eager to share perspectives on the causes of disparities affecting children, as well as innovative solutions that have yet to be implemented.

The intersection of racism and poverty have been lifelong academic pursuits for Dr. Blanford. His dissertation research concentrated on evidence-based strategies that closed opportunity gaps, and in 2013, he transformed research to action once elected to the Seattle School Board. More recently, he was awarded the Billy Frank Jr. Race and Social Justice Award for "leadership in transforming society."

Extending his leadership at the national level, he is Board Chair of Integrated Schools, and serves on the board of Partnership for America's Children. He also is the chief spokesperson for the No on Initiative 2109 campaign, which will be on the ballot in November 2024.

Carlina Brown-Banks, Director of Community of Engagement and Outreach, Equity in Education

Carlina Brown-Banks (Black/She/Hers) is an accomplished leader and advocate for community empowerment with over a decade of experience in civic and social organizations. Serving with grace and humility, Carlina has dedicated her career to fostering systems change that promotes justice and equity. Most recently, she brought her passion and experience to strategic process change as the Deputy Director and Senior Director of Community Engagement at the Community Center for Education Results. In these roles, she has spearheaded initiatives to support family and community engagement, managed grant funds, and built collaborative networks to uplift community voices and enhance institutional support.

With a keen focus on family engagement best practices, Carlina has supported transformative programs like the Road Map Project, directing conferences and initiatives that bring data-driven insights directly to communities. She is adept at managing complex projects, with skills in negotiation, operations, budgeting, and crisis management. Her past roles in property and lease management with CB Richard Ellis and United Dominion Realty Trust have further honed her skills in administration, problem-solving, and relationship-building.

Carlina's dedication to community service has earned her recognition, including the prestigious White House Champion of Change award in 2012. As a servant leader she is committed to advancing equitable systems and ensuring that communities are empowered to lead. Through each role and project, she remains focused on leaving a legacy of servant leadership and transformational change.

Andrea Cobb, Sr. Program Officer, Gates Foundation, Former Executive Director of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning within the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Andrea is a Senior Program Officer on the K-12 Education team. Andrea's portfolio focuses on engaging national and state level professional networks to build the capacity of system leaders to lead sustainable improvement in math education for all students and specifically students who are Black, Latino or experiencing poverty. Prior to coming to the Foundation, Andrea served as the Executive Director of the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning within the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), acting as the agency's Chief Research Officer. Andrea also served a 6-year term as an elected member of the Tacoma Public School District Board of Directors, leading the board as President through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barbara Gilchrist, Director Coalition & Government Relations, Washington State Charter Schools Association

Barbara works to advance equity in our public schools by building relationships with community members and organizations, developing partnerships, and strengthening stakeholder engagement to advance WA Charters legislative priorities. She is passionate about achieving a K-12 system that values the learning styles and needs of all students, supports and uplifts children of the global majority, and exemplifies true representation. Prior to joining WA Charters, Barbara was a Legislative Assistant in the Washington State Legislature where she helped members achieve their policy, communications, and constituent outreach goals.

Barbara earned her B.A. in Global Studies, Psychology, and Political Science from Pacific Lutheran University, and is an M.P.S candidate for Security and Terrorism Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has certified training in Basic Mediation, and is currently in her practicum to become a Mediator in Washington State. Barbara also sits on the Board of the Greater Tacoma Peace Prize and the Azia Book Awards, which celebrates and recognizes Children and YA books that depict multicultural and multiracial protagonists and families. In her free time, Barbara enjoys reading, knitting, and spending time with her family.

Derick Harris, Executive Director, Black Education Strategy Roundtable

Derick Harris is a distinguished education administrator based in South King County, WA, with a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in education. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Education at Seattle Pacific University, Derick focuses on advancing Black student achievement in the Pacific Northwest.
Derick brings extensive experience and expertise in the education sector to his role at the Black Education Strategy Roundtable (BESR). His career includes leadership positions in both public and private secondary and postsecondary education, such as Dean of Culture, Director of Student Success, Associate Dean of Administration, and most recently, Director of Student Affairs at Howard University. Throughout his career, Derick has consistently enhanced student engagement, academic success, and delivered equitable student support for historically under-resourced and at-opportunity students.

As a self-identifying Black, able-bodied, cis-gendered man and first-generation college graduate, Derick is deeply committed to an anti-oppressive, antiracist, anti-ableist, culturally responsive approach to leadership. His mission is to champion the educational, professional, and social success of Black students by advocating for improved educational policies that empower all aspects of their identities and educational pursuits.

As the recently appointed Executive Director of the BESR in Washington, Derick eagerly anticipates advancing the organization's mission in educational policy advocacy to achieve systemic educational justice.

Kathy Mulkerin, School Board Member, Walla Walla Public School Board

Kathy Mulkerin was elected to the WWPS Board of Directors in November 2021. Her current term ends in 2025.

Ms. Mulkerin grew up in Walla Walla. She attended Walla Walla Public Schools, K-12, at Prospect Point Elementary School, Garrison Junior High and Graduated from Walla Walla High School. She went on to attend college at the University of Portland earning a BA in Psychology. She holds a Montessori Teaching certificate from the Montessori Institute Northwest and a Masters of Education, Primary Montessori from Loyola University Maryland. She recently completed a Master of Professional Studies, Paralegal Studies from The George Washington University.

A lifelong volunteer, Ms. Mulkerin started her volunteer career as a teen at the YWCA of Walla Walla. In 2018, Ms. Mulkerin was recognized by the organization as one of Walla Walla's Most Inspiring Women. Ms. Mulkerin is a co-founder of COCOA (Color Our Community On Awareness) which amplifies the voices and culture of our local BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) community. Ms. Mulkerin is looking forward to being a volunteer with Walla Walla Child Advocates.

Chelsea Oguike, Black Educator Coordinator, ACE Academy

Chelsea Oguike is a dedicated educator and Black Educator Coordinator at ACE Academy, a non-profit organization based in Seattle, WA. With a background as a former deaf educator and preschool teacher in Illinois, Chelsea brings a wealth of experience in supporting diverse learning needs. Currently based in Renton, Washington, she has spent the past four years advancing educational opportunities for Black educators and students. Chelsea is pursuing her MBA, aiming to broaden her network and impact for BIPOC communities on a national and global scale. Her professional focus includes promoting inclusive education and addressing mental health and well-being among teachers, especially within Black communities.

Anthony Shoecraft, Managing Director of Business Development, Kingmakers of Oakland

Anthony Shoecraft is the Business Development Managing Director. Previously, he served in a number of roles at the City of Seattle, including Special Adviser to the Mayor in the Mayor's Office of Policy & Innovation and Strategic Adviser at the Department of Education & Early Learning, following years of leadership in regional education organizing, policy and advocacy. Anthony was selected for the inaugural cohort of the Harvard Business School's Young American Leaders Program and graduated from the University of Washington (MPA, MSW) and Hampton University. He is a south Seattle native, proud husband and father of two young children, and an enthusiast of all things cooking and chess.

Jacqueline Weatherspoon, School Board Vice President, Evergreen Public Schools

Jacqueline Weatherspoon (School Board Vice President) was appointed to the board to represent District 4 in March 2022 and re-elected in November of 2023. She is a member of the district's Equity Advisory Committee and also works with S.A.F.E. (Students Advocating for Equity). She held multiple positions for the Harmony PTA, including volunteer coordinator, secretary, vice president, and co-president. Jacqueline is a former reporter and editor at The Oregonian. She and her husband have three children in Evergreen Public Schools.

Appendix B –
About The Consultants

IMAGO, LLC

Imago, LLC is an organizational consulting, research, and executive coaching firm providing services to public, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations. In business since 2002, services span organizational change and strategy development work to executive coaching, leadership development, and community-based research design, implementation and writing. We are privileged to have partnered with a broad range of organizations - both large and small - over the years, and have previously partnered with the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs on multiple projects.

Imago's Founder, CEO, and Principal Consultant **Angela Powell, MA** (she/her), has been organizing effective change efforts since the 3rd grade when she instigated a school-wide anti-smoking campaign that empowered kids to support their parents in kicking the habit. Since then, she has gained over 30 years of consulting and service experience working with for-impact organizations and has a particular interest and expertise in supporting people and organizations to navigate the nuances of quickly changing environments and leading with boldness and creativity.

Committed to amplifying community voice, Angela has authored two reports that have shaped decision-making to advance equity for African Americans in Washington State: *Voices Rising: African American Economic Security in King County* (2017) combines statistical analysis and personal stories to highlight systemic and individual barriers to economic security for African Americans in King County. *And So We Press On: A Community View on African American Health in Washington State* (2020) draws on insights from 588 participants across the state, offering a comprehensive perspective on Black health and well-being. Additionally, she co-authored *Creating an Equitable Future in Washington State: Black Well-Being & Beyond in 2015.*

Angela earned her M.A. in Organizational Development from Bastyr University in 2001 and has shared her expertise as part of the faculty for Seattle University's Master's in Nonprofit Leadership Program and the LIOS Graduate College of Saybrook University.

REFRACTION CONSULTING

Maureen Emerson Feit, PhD (she/they), is the Principal and Qualitative Research Lead at Refraction Consulting. She utilizes her expertise in community-based research, interview methods, ethnography, and participant observation to provide insight and inform action. As Associate Professor of Public Affairs & Nonprofit Leadership at Seattle University, she works with practitioners to integrate critical, engaged research approaches into their practice. She worked for many years in organizations advocating for racial, gender, youth, and immigrant justice. In recent years, she has designed curricula for nonprofit leaders of color, community organizers, facilitators, and managers of environmental organizations. Maureen earned her PhD degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Michigan.

David Emerson Feit (he/him) is the Quantitative Research Lead at Refraction Consulting. His expertise includes online survey design, occasion-based sampling, attitudinal segmentation analysis, and data visualization. Beyond his roles as Vice President of Strategic Insights at the Hartman Group and Sr. Director of Market Research at RealNetworks, he has conducted donor surveys and public opinion polls with nonprofits supporting educational success for foster youth, healthy nutrition for high school students, and political participation for naturalized immigrant communities in Washington state. David taught quantitative and data analysis methods at the University of Washington and holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Princeton University.

MAJORS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Michelle Majors, EdD, MA (she/her), is the visionary behind Majors Leadership Group. As the Principal and Lead Strategist, her mission is to revolutionize the landscape of social justice/nonprofit organizations nationwide. With a Master's in Transformational Leadership, Michelle brings a gentle yet profound touch to her work, guiding organizations toward meaningful transformation. Within Majors Leadership Group, Michelle leads a dynamic team driven by a shared commitment to transforming office cultures, strengthening internal frameworks, and advancing equity. Her unwavering passion is evident as she delicately guides leaders toward realizing their capacity for greatness, fostering environments where people can shine. Michelle earned her Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership/Development from Seattle University.

Appendix C – Research Methods

Our Research process included the following methods:

1. SECONDARY RESEARCH SCAN

A scan of the recent literature on key educational outcomes and updated research and data on the opportunity gap for Black students in Washington was conducted. This process began by reviewing past WCAAA reports and then moving outward. The following keywords were used to identify more recent sources: African American, Black, education, opportunity gap, and inequality. These keywords were used to search: (1) in academic databases and Google Scholar for recent peer-reviewed research and scholarship and (2) via Google for research and data specific to Washington state. 44+ sources were identified, and key findings were summarized at the end of this section.

2. SURVEY

An online survey of caregivers of African American students in Washington State and other interested members of the broader community was conducted. Respondents were asked to complete a 15-minute questionnaire about educational opportunities, resources, initiatives, and challenges for African American students, and caregivers were also asked about the experiences of one of their own African American children. The survey was fielded from June through September 2024 and received 200 responses, including responses from caregivers (n=88) and community members (n=112). Of the 200 responses, n=134 completed the entire survey.

3. INTERVIEWS

Eight interviews were conducted with community stakeholders who are professionally positioned to speak to equity in education in Washington State. The stakeholders were asked to share their experiences, aspirations for a brighter future, and thoughts on necessary improvements. The interview data were analyzed, and core themes were identified.

4. FOCUS GROUP

Imago conducted one focus group with key informants, including parents and caregivers of African American children and youth, recruited by a Washington State Commission on African American Affairs commissioner representing the central Washington (Pasco) region.

The focus group covered topics including:

- Educational experiences of African American students over the past decade
- Challenges
- Strengths
- Promising strategies and interventions

Imago used the method of a convergence focus group, which includes people with similar perspectives and experiences and may assist in identifying shared patterns and group consensus. This method will allow participants to make comparisons, elaborate on what has been voiced by another, and check one another, leading to real-time re-evaluations and insights. Additionally, what does not come up in the focus groups, especially when expected by the facilitator, may be illuminating and tracked.

5. STATE DATA

Washington state officials were contacted to secure updated data on key metrics for Black/African American students.

To determine the scope of relevant metrics, prior opportunity gap reports since 2008 were reviewed and what has been most recently included in the OSPI's "report card."

Available historical data was downloaded from OSPI's public-facing Data portal, which includes state-level data for students and teachers overall as well as detail by the long-standing 7-category "race/ethnicity" classification (Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Hispanic/Latino of any race(s), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, White).

OSPI's Office of Student Information supported obtaining a customized set of newly available "detailed race" data, which disaggregates Black/African American into African-American and Black students with other identities and migration histories. Because the state's mandate to disaggregate is just coming into effect, this more detailed data is available only for the most recent 1-2 school years and unevenly across students of different grade levels. Given this reality, this disaggregation has been used only sparingly where possible and appropriate.

Tables with the state data are summarized at the end of the research scan and fully available and linked at the end of this section.

Appendix D –
Research Scan and Sources

We began our secondary research by reviewing past CAAA reports including:

- A Plan to Close the Achievement Gap for African American Students. HB 2722 Advisory Committee, December 2008.

- Closing Opportunity Gaps in Washington's Public Education System. Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, January 2011.

- Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), 2018.

- Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), 2020.

- Closing the Opportunity Gap in Washington's Public Education System, Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC), January 2023.

- Annual Report, Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds, September 2023.

To identify more recent sources, the keywords African American, Black, education, opportunity gap, and inequality were used to search (1) in academic databases and Google Scholar for recent peer-reviewed research and scholarship; (2) via Google for research and data specific to Washington state. 44+ sources were identified and are listed at the end of this section. A summary of key findings follows.

Findings in the Research

Our research scan confirms that the findings and recommendations in the 2008 OSPI report remain relevant. Since 2008, research on the opportunity gap has proliferated. This research has confirmed the findings in the 2008 report as well as the subsequent reports from EOGOAC.

A. In recent years, researchers have found that:

The opportunity gap persists

Nationally, Black-white educational inequalities remain large and persistent. The gap persists even after controlling for student characteristics, including racial differences in socio-economic status and neighborhood contexts (Shores et al., 2020). Outcomes of the opportunity gap across the U.S. include:

- A higher number of Black students are retained in grade

- Fewer Black students are enrolled in gifted and talented programs

- Black students graduate at lower rates

- Black children are overrepresented in special education, particularly restrictive special education

- Black students are more likely to be suspended (Shores, et al., 2020) and a disproportionate number of Black children are in the juvenile justice system (Padgaonkar, et al., 2021)

Note that we are using the most recent data to update the statistics specific to Washington state.

Public school districts continue to exacerbate the educational disadvantages that Black students face

Researchers have documented how the opportunity gap is sustained and exacerbated by:

- Inequitable distribution of resources such as under-resourced schools (Kitchens, 2021)

- Lack of Black professionals in child-serving professions (e.g., Farinde-Wu et al., 2020)

- Lack of quality teachers as more Black students enroll in a school (Jackson, 2009)

- Lack of access to appropriate social-emotional learning experiences that humanize Black children and prepare them for a world of anti-Black racism (e.g. Miller et al, 2022; Rogers et al., 2022)

- The intersection of health disparities and education (Fiscella & Kitzman, 2009)

An asset-based approach is essential

Over the past 16 years, researchers have documented the need for an asset-based approach to educational inequality specifically for Black students.

- To address the opportunity gap, educators must be proactive about mitigating racial exclusion in schools (Carter, 2009).

- There is strong evidentiary support that negative teacher perceptions have significant effect on student outcomes (O. Flores & Guzenhauser, 2021).

- Shifting away from a deficit perspective can assist educators to recognize institutional school cultures and practices that influence disparities (Flores, 2018) o An asset-based approach encourages educators to counter the deficit messages students receive and embrace the academic potential of all students (Capper et al., 2006).

- Yet, there is evidence that educators continue to use deficit-based thinking. In a qualitative study of school leaders, Flores & Guzenhauser (2021) found that despite growing recognition of the opportunity gap, the concept was largely absent from school leaders' talk.

B. Recent research also adds depth and context to our understanding

Research has added to our understanding of the opportunity gap, both by studying its impact in more depth and attending to the ways that the gap impacts different contexts and members of the Black community. This expanded research includes an emphasis on the following:

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequities

- Low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities experienced larger decreases in test scores compared to their economically advantaged, non-disabled, and white peers (Cramer & Krnacik, 2023)

- Pre-existing achievement gaps between low- and high income students, as well as gaps between students of color and white students widened over the course of the pandemic.

- There is also growing research on the pandemic's influence on non-academic outcomes. So far, studies have reported that during the pandemic, students experienced increased levels of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to before the pandemic.

Black students are still heavily impacted by the racial discipline gap

The disparate impact of school discipline for Black students is well documented:

- Black youth receive a disproportionate share of exclusionary disciplinary sanctions, despite Black students being no more likely to commit serious offenses than white students (Blake et al., 2022)

- Black students have been identified as being the highest racial group to receive exclusionary discipline (Blake, et al, 2022)

- The disparities start early. In public preschools, Black children received out-of-school suspensions at a rate nearly twice their enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Although Black preschool children accounted for 17% of preschool enrollment, they represented 31% of children who received one or more out-of-school suspensions and 25% of those expelled.

The racial discipline gap has a profound impact on Black students

Black students lose approximately twice as many days of classroom instruction as a result of suspensions (Vincent et al., 2012), further widening the racial achievement and discipline gap (Morris & Perry, 2017)

Students who receive exclusionary discipline sanctions also experience a disconnectedness from school (Shores, et al., 2020)

- Disengagement from school and poor academic achievement are likely influenced by differential treatment by teachers (Townsend, 2000).

- Perceptions of racial fairness have significant implications on students' feelings of belonging (Griffin et al., 2017).

- Disconnectedness can result in poor academic performance (Arcia, 2006).

- In their study of seven school public school districts in King County, Washington, the Center for Community Engagement found that Black students are overall more likely to receive harsher outcomes for the same infraction than their same-aged white peers (Cooley, 2017). The region's Black students are significantly more likely (71%) to receive exclusionary discipline than their white peers (46%) (Hernandez, 2017).

- Black students have a 71% chance of receiving exclusionary discipline, while their white peers see a 46% chance.

We need to consider the joint effects of race and gender

- Black boys are overrepresented in disciplines and expulsions.

  - According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023), Black boys were nearly two times more likely than white boys to receive an out-of-school suspension or expulsion in K-12 public schools in the 2020/2021 school year.

- Black girls experience exclusionary discipline outcomes often more than males, a trend paralleled in the criminal legal system (Annamma et al., 2019). In fact, the racial discipline gap is wider for Black and white girls than for Black and white boys (Blake, et al, 2022)

  - Black girls were nearly two times more likely to receive one or more in-school suspensions, one or more out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions than white girls in 2020/2021 (U.S. Department of Education, 2023)

- Black girls face an increased risk of racial bias. Educators may map stereotypes onto Black girls' behaviors, disciplining them for defying traditional standards of white femininity in an effort to "mold these girls into their rigid notions of racialized gender norms" (Blake, et al., 2022, p. 129)

- The "double jeopardy" of sexism and racism means that Black girls deal with unique obstacles, including underrepresentation in math and science programs (FitzPatrick, 2020).

We need to consider the multicultural and multilingual experiences of students classified as Black/African American

- As the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) emphasized, the term "Black/African American" is a federal government category that does not adequately capture the cultural diversity or myriad identities of Black children and youth (Cooley, 2017).

- Decades of developmental and educational research have shown that understanding the educational barriers students face requires attention to generational status and type of immigration (e.g., voluntary immigration vs. non-voluntary immigration by slavery or force (ibid).

- Subracial disaggregation of the federal Black/African-American category can be critical for understanding the differences in needs and outcomes within a racial group (Nguyen et al., 2017).

    - In their report, the CCER found that that were eighty-seven primary languages spoken among the South Seattle and South King County Black students in the 2015-16 school year, the most common of which were English and Somali (Cooley, 2017).

Culturally responsive teaching is essential to addressing the opportunity gap

- Culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2010): Culturally relevant teachers hold specific pedagogical principles: they demand academic success of their students; laud cultural competence as essential to this success; and develop sociopolitical consciousness in their students to problematize oppression and act as change agents (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

- Too often Black children are presented with an educational curriculum that does not challenge them intellectually nor is it culturally relevant. This lack of a rigorous educational curriculum unduly places Black children at-risk of educational failure (I. U. Iruka et al., 2017).

- There is a heightened need for culturally responsive teaching in science, math and technology (Brown et al., 2019; Brown, 2017).

- Black children are shaped by the rich cultural perspectives offered by their families and communities but these cultural assets are rarely recognized or incorporated in early education programs (Iruka, et al. 2017).

- Extensive research underscores that understanding how society treats Black people can serve as a protective identity factor, helping protect Black students against some of the psychologically damaging effects of racial bias and discrimination. Research also shows most youth of color, and particularly Black youth, grow up within communities that encourage them to positively identify with their race. This can serve as a promotive identity factor which encourages high self-esteem, academic success, and positive psychological well-being (Cooley, 2017).

- Teachers need to counter the deficit view that many Black children receive about their culture and group and integrate positive self and racial identity so that Black children to experience education as an intellectually stimulating and culturally affirming experience

Black Educators play a vital role

- High student expectations are one of the essential tenets of culturally relevant teaching (Howard, 2001). High expectations mean children are expected to exceed the curriculum standards and meet their potential, regardless of students' familial background or challenges.

- Research has suggested that Black teachers hold higher expectations for Black students (Gershenson et al., 2016) and are associated with better outcomes for those students, including performance on tests, discipline, attendance, high school graduation and college enrollment (Hart & Lindsay, 2024).

- Teacher-student ethnic match in the classroom may mend racial disparities in discipline (Blake, et al., 2022)

- Black students matched to Black teachers are less likely to be identified for special education. The results are strongest for Black boys, particularly those who are also economically disadvantaged and are strongest for disabilities with more discretion in identification (Hart & Lindsay, 2024)

- Researchers also contend that teachers of color are conscious of the "hidden curriculum" that impacts students of color (Iruka, et al. 2017)

- Yet, compared to white peers, Black students have lower probability of being taught by race-congruent teachers (Lindsay & Blom, 2017).

  - According to data from OSPI, there were 52,074 Black/African American students in Washington public schools (4.7% of the student population) and 1,123 Black/African American teachers (1.6% of the teaching population) during the 2022/2023 school year.

- In 2018, researchers found that the percentage of teachers of color in Washington public schools has increased steadily over this time period, but the percent of students of color in the state has increased at a far more rapid rate. Thus, the gap between the diversity of the student body and the diversity of the public teaching workforce in Washington has grown substantially over time (Goldhaber et al., 2018).

Public school districts also need to improve the success of Non-Black teachers

- In addition to expanding the recruitment of Black teachers, public school districts take steps improve the success of non-Black teachers with students of color (Hart & Lindsay, 2024) such as:

  - Promoting pedagogical strategies that help non-Black teachers successfully engage students of color, like leveraging students' cultural capital (Goldenberg, 2014).

  - Identifying and learning from teacher training contexts, such as HBCU programs, that promote success with Black students for Black and white teachers alike

  - Clarify guidelines for teachers regarding when they should recommend screening for high-incidence disabilities to minimize the role of teacher discretion in the identification process

We need investments in culturally responsive teacher preparation

- Many schools serving children of color are underfunded with poorly trained teachers and administrators (Flores & Guzenhauser, 2021).

- Preparatory institutions and programs do not adequately prepare educators to understand how to facilitate learning in the classroom, especially for minoritized children.

- Research has also shown that school principals can support equitable practices by supporting staff discussions that materialize teacher biases (Ross & Berger, 2009). School leaders need to be equipped to adapt, change, and challenge existing educational policies and practices.

School leaders need to use data effectively to address the opportunity gap

- Because the culture of schools is increasingly focused on the use of the data this is a vital site for current social justice work (Flores & Guzenhauser, 2021)

- School leaders need to hone their ability to use data effectively so that they do not default to a deficit mind-set (Park, 2018) and so that they can help shift school cultures and teachers' attitudes (Gerzon, 2015)

Black parents and caregivers are often excluded from school engagement

- The voices of Black parents are rarely heard or included in school practices, such as participation in the establishment of discipline codes and membership in school councils. Black parents are not adequately provided with opportunities to learn about and become familiar with school policies.

- Black parents often engage in involvement strategies that are unnoticed or hidden by school staff. For instance, Black parents often engage in involvement activities that take place in their homes and communities which are more reflective of their daily lives (Clifford & Göncü, 2019).

  - These "hidden" efforts are often mistaken by teachers and administrators as a lack of parental involvement since they do not represent school-centric approaches to parental involvement (Iruka et al., 2014)

  - Educators need to expand their approach to engagement beyond school-centric parental involvement and take responsibility for establishing more respectful, reciprocal, and collaborative relationships with and among families (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), n.d.).

We also need to recognize and build on the successes of Black students

- Despite the disproportionate obstacles they face, many Black children are excelling academically and socially and showing great promise as students. As Iruka, et al. (2017) argue,
  - Many Black youth are graduating from college with bachelors and advanced degrees and are identified as gifted and talented.
  - Black children, especially boys, are skilled in using language dynamically and creatively, and communicating with profound empathy and persuasiveness.
  - Extensive literature demonstrates how Black children who have been racially socialized by parents are aware of and embrace their cultural background exemplify particular resilience.
  - Educators should consider multiple competencies beyond academics to gauge the excellence and competence of young Black children.

C. Additional areas of inquiry

We identified multiple areas of inquiry that may require further attention:

Extensive literature on recruitment and retention of teachers of color

- This literature has grown significantly with an added emphasis on retention of Black teachers and educators.

Washington state's system for addressing truancy

- Washington state uses Community Engagement Boards to manage school truancy. The legislature made changes to this in 2021 which may be impacting students.

Changes to data collection in Washington

- Washington State House Bill 1541, signed into law in May 2016, requires subracial groups on enrollment forms under the Black/African American category (Cooley, 2017). We are just starting to see data that distinguishes between Black/African American students, but this data is limited to younger students.

OSPI Interventions

- In recent years, OSPI has convened a number of workgroups and committees that have made relevant recommendations about curricular change.

- Race and Ethnicity Student Data Task Force (2017).

- African American Studies workgroup (2020) developed recommendations for integrating, in a regular and ongoing basis, African American history, examinations of racism, and the history of the civil rights movement into curriculum provided to students in grades seven through twelve.

- Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee (2020) identified ethnic studies materials and resources for use in grades kindergarten through twelve.

- Social and emotional learning (2019 to present).

- GATE Partnership advisory committee (2007 to present) provides a wide lens of input on specific goals and topics related to the development and implementation of a dropout prevention, intervention, and re-engagement system across cradle to career milestones.

D. Additional Issues raised by respondents

Two issue arose in the survey responses of caregivers and community members and in the interview responses of key informants. We identified strong support in the research for both concepts:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more families have sought alternatives to the public schools, and Charter school enrollment has grown.

- According to a 2022 study by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Nearly 20% of families switched the type of school their child attended from March 2020 to May 2022 (Jacobs & Veney, 2022).

- National charter school enrollment increased by 7% since the beginning of the pandemic while district public schools experienced a loss of almost 3.5% (ibid).

- Nationally, Black student enrollment in charters has increased, as has enrollment of white and Hispanic students.

  - Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Black student enrollment increased by almost 35,000 students while public school districts lost nearly 180,000 Black students.

  - "Public education is a public trust, and these enrollment numbers suggest that trust may have been shaken. During the pandemic school years, the only clear pattern we could find is that charter school growth happened almost everywhere, as did growth in homeschooling and private schools. We saw it in urban, suburban, and rural communities. We saw it among Hispanic, Black, and white students (Jacobs & Veney, 2022, p. 28)."

  - In recent years, Washington state has seen the largest percentage increase in charter school enrollment in the country (ibid).

- During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic alone, Washington state charter school enrollment grew by 16.03% while non-charter public school enrollment decreased by 4.65%.

- Between 2019–20 to 2021–22, Washington state charter school enrollment grew by 46.8%. This increase brings the state's charter school enrollment from 3,162 to 4,642. During the same period, traditional district public schools in Washington lost 52,385 students, and total enrollment decreased by 4.6%. Washington's traditional public school district enrollment loss was the seventh largest in the nation.

- In Washington, increases were seen for white, Hispanic and Black students, with an increase of 629 white students (a 54.5% increase), 279 Hispanic students (a 52.7% increase) and 256 Black students (a 26% increase).

- Homeschooling has grown.

- Nearly 6% of all school-aged children nationwide were reported as homeschooled during the 2022-23 school year, compared to pre-pandemic estimates of 2.8% in 2019 (Smith & Watson, 2024).

- Among respondents that reported having homeschooled students in their household, 19% of respondents were Hispanic or Latino, 60% were white, 12% were Black, 2% were Asian, and 7% were two or more or other races (ibid).

- For Black students, this represents an increase from an estimated 1.9% in 2019 to 12% in 2022-23 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Smith & Watson, 2024).

- Research on Black homeschooling, which has been limited, stresses multiple motivations.

- Mazama (2015) finds that Black homeschooling parents do not form a monolithic group but instead represent ideological diversity, ranging from Christian fundamentalists to African cultural nationalists.

- Some scholars have found that race/ethnicity plays a part in motivating parents to homeschool their children, citing parents' concerns with norms and structures in schools that create destructive rather than support learning environments for children of African descent and a desire for their understand and appreciate the history and value of culture related to Africa and the Black Diaspora (Ray, 2015).

- More recently, Stewart (2023) has found that race defines school choice for homeschoolers and non-homeschoolers alike. Black mothers feel "pushed" out of schools due to experiences of discrimination. In the study, many middle-class Black mothers explained their schooling choices as motivated by concerns with racial discrimination in public schools, voicing concerns that their children would be mistreated by teachers, administrators, or students on account of their race, or that they would be excessively surveilled and policed.

Inequity in funding and resources has a direct impact on Black/African American students

- State and public school district leaders also need to ensure that "all students experiences in school include having fair access to resources, such as strong teachers with diverse backgrounds who provide engaging, culturally relevant, and standards-aligned instruction; rigorous coursework that will set students up for success in college and careers; and school environments that are physically safe and emotionally supportive (Morgan, 2022, pp. 1-2)."

- Sustained and significant increases in school funding can have a lasting positive impact on student achievement and other outcomes, especially for students from low-income backgrounds (ibid).

- Across the country, public school districts with the most students of color receive substantially less (16%) state and local revenue than public school districts with the fewest students of color, and high-poverty public school districts receive 5% less revenue than low-poverty public school districts (ibid).

- The Education Trust rates Washington state education funding as "moderately regressive" in 2022, with public school districts serving the most students of color receiving $512 or 3% less state and local revenue per student than the public school districts serving the fewest students of color.

- Students of color, particularly Black and Latino students, enjoy science, technology, engineering and math courses and aspire to go to college and pursue careers in STEM fields, but they are routinely denied access to relevant course opportunities such as AP Biology, AP Physics, and AP Chemistry (Patrick, et al., 2022).

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Appendix E –
Supporting Data Tables

Washington State Commission on African American Affairs
The State of African American Education in Washington
Data Supplement, December 2024

CONTENTS
Tables and Figures, in Order of Appearance

Demographic Context

T1: Population and Selected Trends, Washington State, 2023
Black/African American versus Total

	Total	Black/AA	
Population, 2023	7,812,880	505,822	
Portion of Total	100.0%	6.5%	
3-year Growth	1.1%	6.9%	← The state's Black/African American population has grown at a higher rate than the state average…
Top-3 Counties	4,044,837	371,898	
Portion of Total	51.8%	73.5%	← …is more concentrated in the state's largest counties…
0-4yo Population	421,127	44,183	
Share of 0-4yo	100.0%	10.5%	← …and includes more than its share of school-age children and younger, implying a growing presence at schools in the years ahead.
5-19yo Population	1,403,135	130,180	
Share of 5-19yo	100.0%	9.3%	←

Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023 (CC-EST2023-ALLDATA). https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-detail.html

- According to the latest Census estimates, Black/African Americans comprise 6.5% of Washington's population, including 130,180 children 5-19 years old.

- BAA children comprise 9.3% of 5-19 year olds and an even higher share of 0-4 year olds (10.5%), implying a growing presence at state schools in the years ahead.

- From 2020-23, the BAA population grew by 6.9%, more than six times the growth rate for the state overall.

- The most populous counties – King, Pierce and Snohomish – account for half (51.8%) of the state's population, but almost three-fourths (73.5%) of its BAA residents.

- While the larger counties tend to have greater shares of BAA residents, the BAA population is growing at especially high rates in smaller counties, with the fastest rates of growth occurring in Okanogan, Lincoln, Wahkiakum and Lewis counties. (See Table 2.) Notably, Thurston and Island counties have an increasing share of pre-school age BAA children even as their population growth lags behind the rest of the state.

T2: Population by County, Black/AA and Total, Washington State, 2023 and 3-Year Trends
In order of population size, Top 5 highlighted per measure

County	Population	Black/AA Pop	BAA/Total	Pop 3y Growth	BAA 3y Growth	BAA/0-4yo	BAA/5-19yo
King	2,271,380	211,429	9.3%	-0.1%	4.4%	14.1%	13.5%
Pierce	928,696	110,033	11.8%	0.6%	6.2%	17.2%	16.3%
Snohomish	844,761	50,436	6.0%	1.8%	10.0%	9.6%	8.8%
Spokane	551,455	22,258	4.0%	1.9%	11.7%	8.8%	6.4%
Clark	521,150	22,922	4.4%	3.1%	13.6%	8.1%	6.6%
Thurston	299,003	18,883	6.3%	1.0%	12.8%	12.3%	9.9%
Kitsap	277,658	14,274	5.1%	0.7%	4.0%	9.8%	7.9%
Yakima	256,643	6,601	2.6%	0.0%	8.7%	4.4%	3.5%
Whatcom	231,919	6,039	2.6%	2.0%	8.8%	5.1%	4.2%
Benton	215,219	6,757	3.1%	3.8%	14.3%	5.4%	5.0%
Skagit	131,417	2,794	2.1%	1.2%	13.0%	3.7%	3.8%
Cowlitz	112,864	2,563	2.3%	1.7%	10.4%	4.8%	3.8%
Grant	102,678	3,128	3.0%	3.3%	12.8%	5.6%	4.3%
Franklin	99,034	3,772	3.8%	1.9%	0.1%	4.8%	4.1%
Island	86,267	4,112	4.8%	-0.8%	-1.1%	11.4%	7.5%
Lewis	86,154	1,844	2.1%	4.4%	25.8%	4.1%	3.9%
Chelan	79,997	1,277	1.6%	1.0%	15.0%	4.0%	2.6%
Clallam	77,616	1,564	2.0%	0.3%	3.9%	5.1%	4.0%
Grays Harbor	77,290	1,988	2.6%	1.9%	12.9%	5.2%	3.9%
Mason	68,389	1,839	2.7%	3.6%	12.4%	4.9%	4.2%
Walla Walla	61,568	1,811	2.9%	-1.7%	-3.3%	3.7%	3.5%
Stevens	48,837	673	1.4%	4.8%	15.0%	3.0%	2.3%
Whitman	48,012	1,883	3.9%	0.4%	11.2%	6.7%	4.7%
Kittitas	45,508	939	2.1%	2.0%	5.3%	3.9%	2.8%
Douglas	44,798	891	2.0%	4.1%	17.7%	4.7%	3.1%
Okanogan	43,712	952	2.2%	3.7%	40.8%	4.1%	3.1%
Jefferson	33,714	630	1.9%	2.0%	4.5%	5.7%	3.8%
Pacific	24,200	517	2.1%	3.0%	13.9%	5.5%	4.7%
Klickitat	23,589	340	1.4%	3.4%	13.7%	3.7%	2.6%
Asotin	22,549	471	2.1%	1.0%	9.5%	4.4%	4.4%
Adams	20,820	669	3.2%	1.0%	9.0%	4.8%	4.1%
San Juan	18,566	328	1.8%	4.2%	29.1%	4.5%	3.8%
Pend Oreille	14,361	273	1.9%	6.4%	23.0%	3.5%	3.8%
Skamania	12,640	302	2.4%	5.0%	24.8%	4.5%	4.3%
Lincoln	11,738	201	1.7%	7.4%	31.4%	2.7%	2.4%
Ferry	7,497	155	2.1%	4.2%	11.5%	5.8%	5.7%
Wahkiakum	4,765	126	2.6%	7.1%	31.3%	10.3%	7.2%
Columbia	4,053	103	2.5%	2.6%	25.6%	5.6%	6.2%
Garfield	2,363	45	1.9%	3.0%	7.1%	3.1%	3.6%
State Total	**7,812,880**	**505,822**	**6.5%**	**1.1%**	**6.9%**	**10.5%**	**9.3%**

Based on U.S. Census Bureau, Annual County Resident Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023 (CC-EST2023-ALLDATA). https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-detail.html

Students and Teachers

T3: Students and Teachers by Race/Ethnicity, Washington State, 2022-23
In order of composition index (teacher % / student %)

	Students	Teachers	Student %	Teacher %	Index T%/S%
All (Classified)*	1,096,532	69,152	100.0%	100.0%	1.00
White	539,682	59,410	49.2%	85.9%	1.75
Amer. Indian/ AK Native	13,433	516	1.2%	0.7%	0.61
Asian	95,166	2,214	8.7%	3.2%	0.37
Black/ African American	52,074	1,123	4.7%	1.6%	0.34
Hispanic/ Latino (any race)	280,257	4,300	25.6%	6.2%	0.24
Native HI / Other P.I.	15,245	218	1.4%	0.3%	0.23
Two or More Races	100,704	1,371	9.2%	2.0%	0.22

Based on OSPI Data Portal. Calculations exclude n=347 teachers and n=163 students with no demographic details.

- During the most recent year for which teacher demographics are available, Black/ African American students accounted for 4.7% of all students, versus only 1.6% of all teachers.

- BAA teachers are present on staff at one-third (0.34) the rate as BAA students are enrolled.

- This implies that to reach parity with student share, the number of BAA teachers would need to increase by 2.9 times, representing more than two-thousand additional BAA teachers.

- A similar difference is apparent across all non-White student groups, reflecting the high-level reality that the vast majority (85.9%) of teachers are White, even though White students now account for less than half (49.2%) of students in the state.

Key Opportunity Measures

T4: Selected Opportunity Gap Measures, Black/AA Students vs All Students, Washington State

Measure	All Students	Black / AA	School Year	Source	Notes
Kindergarten Readiness					
Cognitive	43.6%	37.8%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Language	49.9%	44.5%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Literacy	61.6%	60.3%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Math	42.0%	39.8%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Physical	57.7%	55.3%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Social Emotional	49.7%	43.7%	2023-24	OSPI (WaKIDS)	Skills K and up, of those measured
Regular Attendance					
<2 absences/month	69.7%	68.2%	2022-23	OSPI	<2 absences/month
Discipline/Exclusion					
Excluded	3.5%	6.4%	2022-23	OSPI	Excluded 1+ times for behavior
Excluded >5 days	0.9%	1.8%	2022-23	OSPI	Excluded x Portion excluded 6+days
Assessment					
4th grade					
Reading	49.7%	35.0%	2023-24	OSPI	SBA; meets grade-level standard
Math	49.0%	29.3%	2023-24	OSPI	SBA; meets grade-level standard
8th grade					
Reading	49.8%	34.5%	2023-24	OSPI	SBA; meets grade-level standard
Math	35.6%	17.7%	2023-24	OSPI	SBA; meets grade-level standard
Ninth-Grade On Track					
Passed all courses	70.3%	63.6%	2022-23	OSPI	Passed all courses in 9th grade
Graduation					
4-year	83.6%	81.3%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on cohort beginning 2019
5-year	86.0%	84.9%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on cohort beginning 2018
Dual Credit					
Any	64.5%	65.7%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
AP	19.6%	17.7%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
College In The H.S.	15.7%	12.8%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
Running Start	8.1%	8.5%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
IB	2.7%	5.2%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
Cambridge	0.4%	1.2%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12
CTE Tech Prep	42.2%	45.3%	2022-23	OSPI	Based on students grades 9-12

Kindergarten Readiness

**Fig.1: Kindergarten Readiness, by Domain, WA State, 2023-24**

■ All Students ■ Black / African American

	Literacy	Physical	Language	Social Emotional	Cognitive	Math
All Students	61.6%	57.7%	49.9%	49.7%	43.6%	42.0%
Black / African American	60.3%	55.3%	44.5%	43.7%	37.8%	39.8%
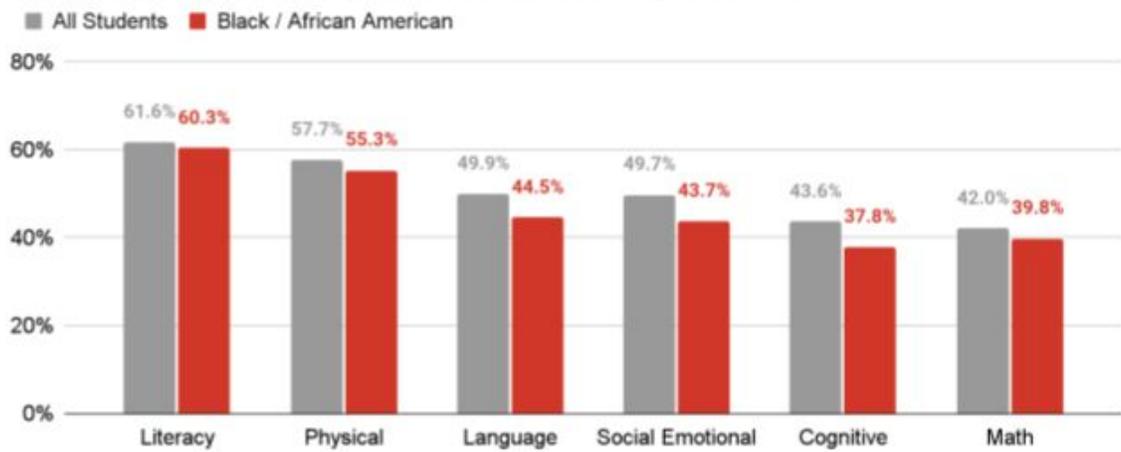
Portion of those students evaluated who demonstrate skill level of K or higher (purple) in each doman. Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_WaKids_2023-24_School_Year_[date].csv.

- Black/AA students are less likely than students overall to show kindergarten readiness across every dimension measured.

- Compared to other students overall, Black/AA students show the greatest shortfalls on Cognitive, Social Emotional and Language dimensions.

- They show the greatest parity with other students when it comes to Literacy.

Attendance

Fig.2: Regular Attendance by Grade, WA State, 2022-23
Highlighting **Black/African American** vs All Students vs Selected Groups

Regular Attendance by Grade, WA State 2022-23
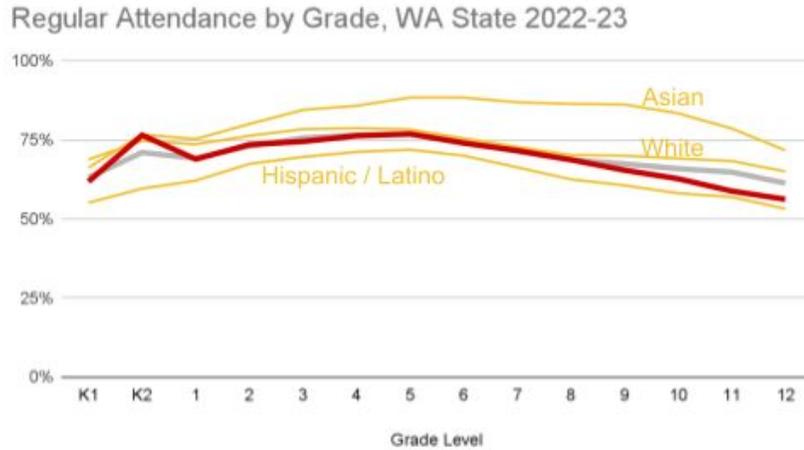
	K1	K2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	All Grades
All Students	63.1%	71.0%	69.2%	73.0%	75.6%	76.6%	76.8%	74.3%	71.4%	68.7%	67.4%	65.9%	64.8%	61.3%	69.7%
Asian	66.2%	76.7%	75.3%	80.0%	84.5%	85.8%	88.4%	88.4%	86.9%	86.4%	86.2%	83.4%	78.6%	71.7%	81.6%
White	68.8%	74.7%	73.6%	76.3%	78.4%	78.7%	78.3%	75.5%	72.8%	70.2%	70.0%	69.1%	68.3%	65.0%	72.5%
Black/ African American	61.8%	76.5%	68.9%	73.5%	74.5%	76.3%	76.9%	74.0%	71.6%	68.7%	65.4%	62.7%	58.8%	56.2%	68.2%
Two or More Races	62.2%	63.4%	67.1%	71.2%	74.5%	76.4%	75.5%	71.6%	69.0%	67.0%	63.6%	62.8%	63.6%	60.3%	68.1%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	55.1%	59.6%	62.1%	67.4%	69.6%	71.2%	71.9%	70.0%	66.3%	62.5%	60.6%	58.1%	56.9%	53.2%	63.2%
Amer. Indian/ AK Native	43.9%	50.0%	53.1%	52.7%	57.2%	60.2%	55.7%	54.6%	52.9%	53.1%	47.3%	46.8%	47.2%	45.2%	51.5%
Native Hawaiian/ Other P.I.	31.4%	40.0%	38.2%	45.7%	53.6%	59.5%	63.4%	59.6%	52.2%	52.3%	43.2%	41.7%	42.9%	43.1%	48.1%

Portion with less than 2 absences/month. Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_SQSS_for_2022-23_[date].csv.

- Regular attendance rates vary widely across grade levels, peaking in 4th-6th grade.

- Both Black/AA and overall attendance rates peak in 5th grade. Black/AA attendance rates diverge from the overall average beginning in 9th grade, with the gap growing wider through 10th-11th grades. White students show only modest declines in regular attendance until their senior year.

- The relatively small gap in regular attendance between Black/AA and all students in all grades (68.2% versus 69.7%, see table) is thus largely due to less regular attendance in high school years.

Discipline/Exclusion

Fig.3: Discipline Rate, WA State, 2018-19 - 2022-23
All Students vs. **Black/African American**
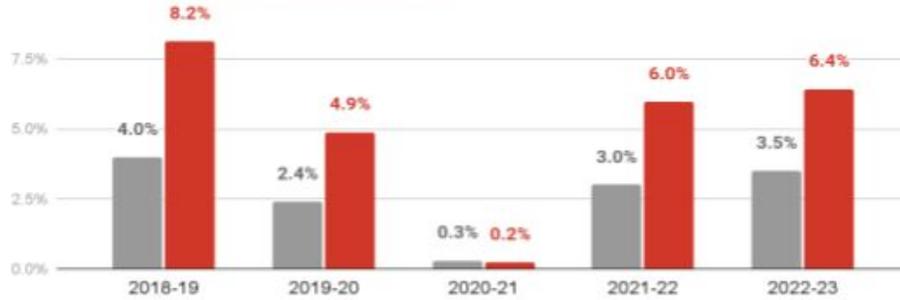
Excluded 1+ times for behavior. Source: OSPI Report Card dashboard (All students), data portal, Report_Card_Discipline_for_2022-23_[date].csv (Black/AA students).

T5: Discipline Rate and Exclusion Days, WA State, 2022-23
By race/ethnicity, in order of net rate of excluded 5 or more days

	How Many	How Long (Exclusion Days Rates)					Net
	Discipline Rate	1 Day or Less	2-3 Days	4-5 Days	6-10 Days	10+ Days	>5d Net
All Students	3.5%	25.4%	34.7%	14.3%	14.1%	11.5%	**0.9%**
Black/ African American	6.4%	24.7%	33.7%	13.7%	14.2%	13.8%	**1.8%**
Amer. Indian/ AK Native	6.6%	27.2%	35.3%	11.4%	15.3%	10.8%	**1.7%**
Native HI/ Other P.I.	5.6%	25.2%	33.4%	15.1%	12.3%	13.9%	**1.5%**
Two or More Races	4.4%	24.7%	33.0%	14.7%	15.3%	12.4%	**1.2%**
Hispanic/ Latino (any race)	4.4%	22.4%	35.8%	14.7%	14.8%	12.4%	**1.2%**
White	3.0%	27.6%	34.5%	14.4%	13.4%	10.1%	**0.7%**
Asian	1.0%	29.9%	36.9%	12.6%	11.1%	9.5%	**0.2%**

Based on several resources at OSPI data portal. Calculations for >5d based on Discipline rate x (6-10 + 10+ days).

- Rates of being excluded from the classroom for behavior have declined since 2018 for students overall and for Black/African American students, but the discipline rate for BAA students remains considerably higher than the overall average and even rose slightly between 2021-22 and 2022-23, from 6.0% to 6.4%.

- Accounting for both the number of students excluded and the duration of these exclusions over the course of the year, BAA students are the most likely of any racial/ethnic group to be excluded for more than a full week of school (5 days +) over the course of the year (1.8% for BAA versus 0.9% for all students).

Assessment

Fig. 4: Reading and Math, 4th, 8th and All Grades by Race/Ethnicity, WA State, 2022-23

% Meeting Standards, Highlighting **Black/African American** vs All Students
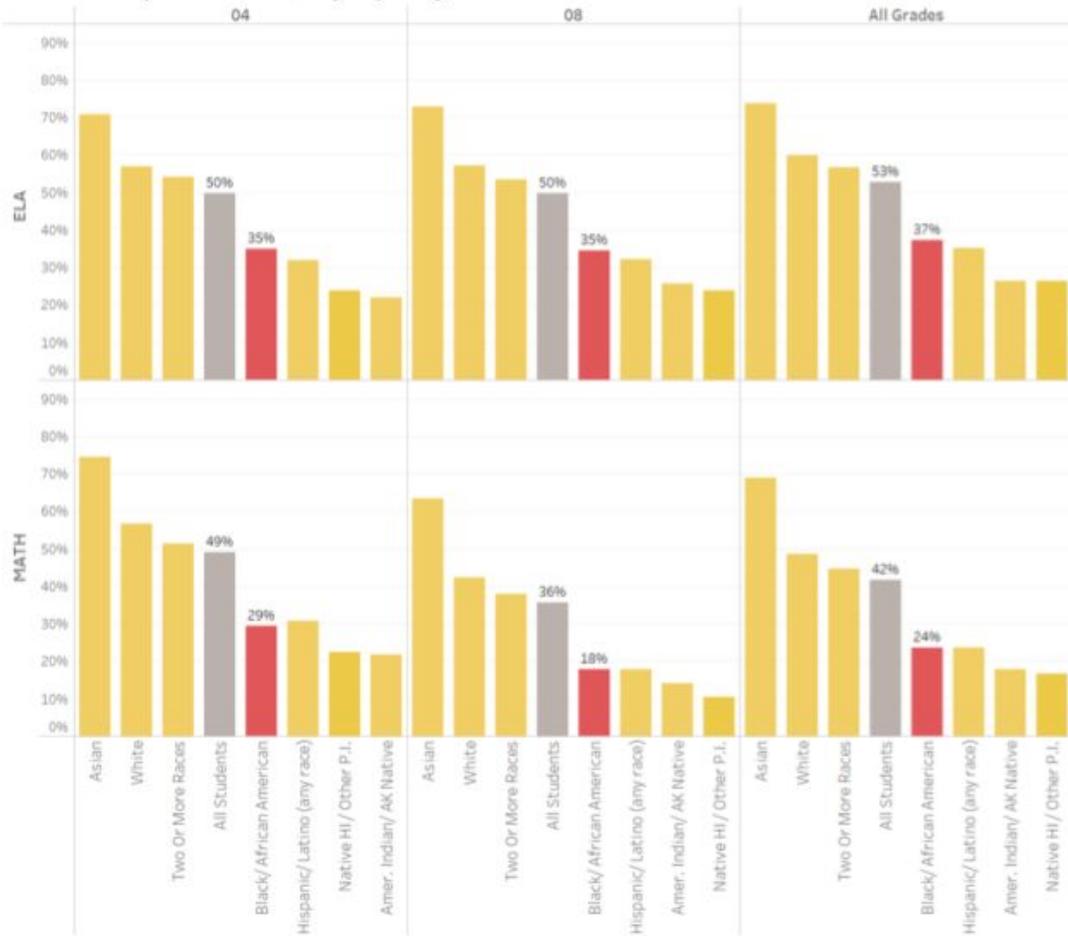
Portion meeting grade-level standards, Smart Balanced Assessment (SBA), ELA (Reading) and Math. "All Grades" includes 3rd-8th and 10th grade. Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_Assessment_Data_2022-23_School_Year_[date].csv.

- Black/AA students score well below students overall on both reading and math at key touchpoints of 4th and 8th grade.

- The shortfall is greater for math, at 18-20 pts lower than students overall.

- The hierarchy of scores across race/ethnic groups is consistent across grades and subject areas tested, with Asian and White students scoring above the overall average, Black/AA and Hispanic/Latino well lower than overall, and native/indigenous groups trailing furthest behind.

Ninth-Grade On Track

Fig. 5: Passed All Courses in 9th Grade, WA State, 2018-19 vs. 2022-23
Highlighting **Black/African American** vs All Students
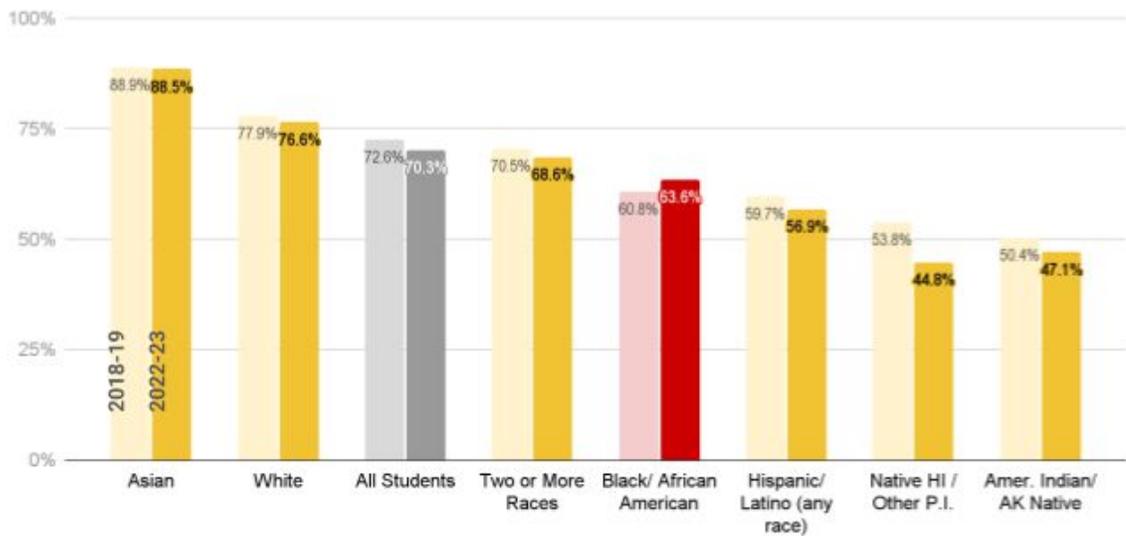
Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_SQSS_for_2022-23_[date].csv.

- Black/AA students (63.6%) continue to be less likely than average (70.3%) to pass all their courses in ninth grade. They outperform Hispanic/Latino students but lag well behind Asian and White students.

- This "on-track" measure fluctuated during the school years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, when requirements for passing may have been modified for a time. However, comparing against the last full pre-pandemic school year (2018-19), the most recent on-track rates for all students has dropped slightly for all students and for most every racial/ethnic group. Black/AA students represent the exception, showing a gain (up from 60.8%).

Graduation

Fig. 6: Four-Year Graduation Rate, WA State, Class of 2015-2023
Highlighting **Black/African American** vs **All Students** vs **Selected Groups**
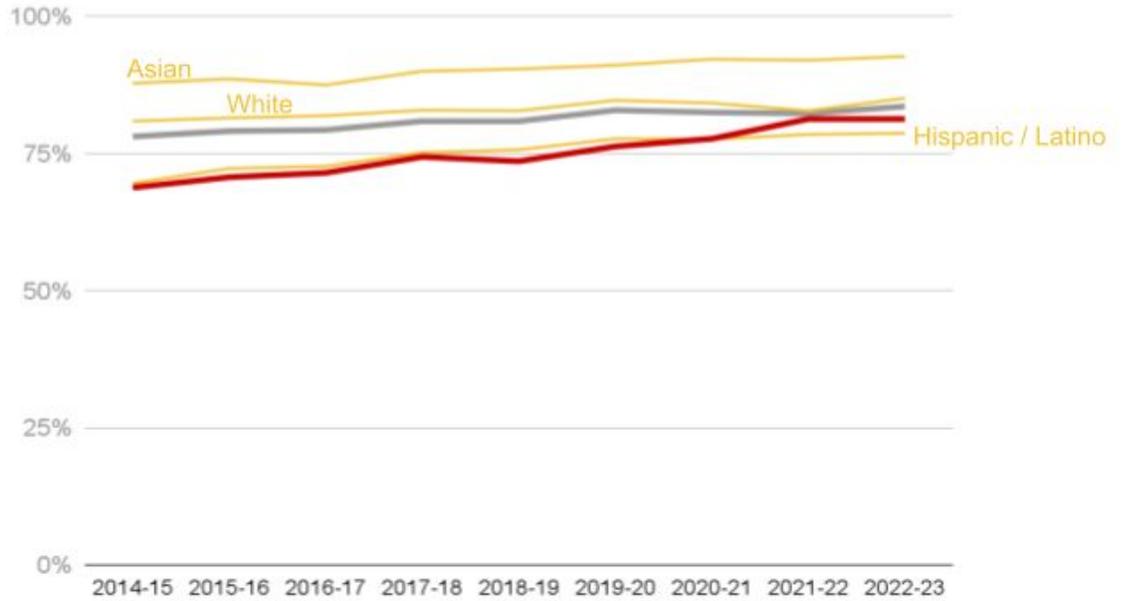
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
All Students	78.1%	79.1%	79.3%	80.9%	80.9%	82.9%	82.5%	82.3%	83.6%
Asian	87.8%	88.6%	87.5%	90.0%	90.4%	91.1%	92.2%	92.0%	92.7%
White	80.9%	81.5%	81.9%	82.9%	82.8%	84.7%	84.2%	82.8%	85.1%
Two or More Races	77.9%	77.9%	79.7%	80.7%	81.2%	83.9%	81.8%	83.8%	84.7%
Hispanic/ Latino (any race)	69.6%	72.3%	72.7%	75.2%	75.7%	77.7%	77.6%	78.5%	78.7%
Black/ African American	68.8%	70.7%	71.5%	74.4%	73.6%	76.3%	77.7%	81.3%	81.3%
Native HI / Other P.I.	67.0%	68.2%	68.1%	74.0%	74.4%	77.3%	75.3%	77.9%	76.1%
Amer. Indian/ AK Native	56.4%	60.6%	60.3%	60.4%	61.7%	69.8%	67.1%	67.8%	71.5%

Based on 4-year cohort beginning in 9th grade. Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_Graduation_2014-15_to_2020-2021_[date].csv, Report_Card_Graduation_2021-22_[date].csv, Report_Card_Graduation_2022-23_[date].csv

- Four-year, on-time graduation rates for Black/AA students remains slightly below the overall average and well behind the leading racial-ethnic group on this measure.

- During the past eight years, BAA students have made more progress in on-time graduation than other groups; in 2014, BAA rates were almost two points behind Hispanic/;Latino rates and as of 2022-2023 are now more than two points ahead.

- The five-year graduation rate for BAA is 3.5% higher than its four-year rate, implying that the extra year helps 3.6% of BAA to graduate, compared to a 2.4% for students overall. (See Table 4.)

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Dual Credit

Fig. 7: Participation in Dual Credit Options, by Race/Ethnicity, WA State, 2022-23
Highlighting **Black/African American** vs All Students
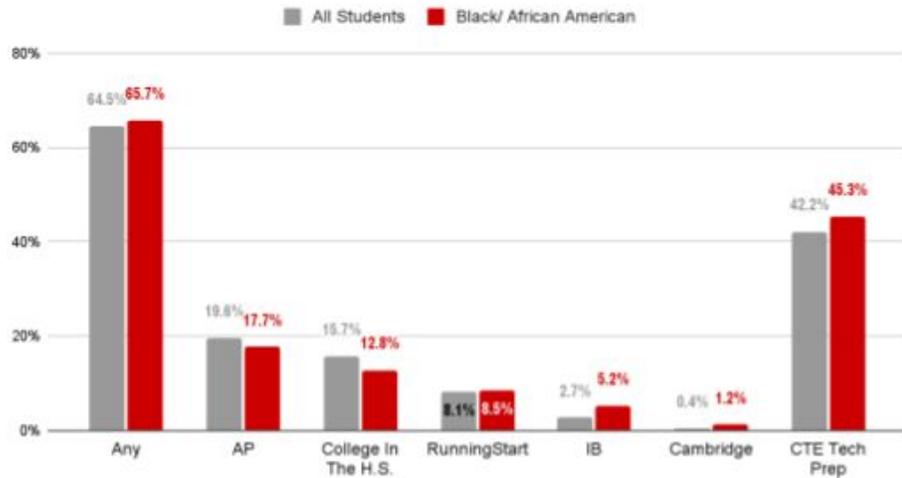
	Any	AP	College In The H.S.	Running Start	IB	Cambridge	CTE Tech Prep
All Students	**65%**	20%	16%	8%	3%	0%	42%
Asian	**81%**	40%	25%	13%	6%	1%	46%
Black/ African American	**66%**	18%	13%	9%	5%	1%	45%
Two or More Races	**65.4%**	21.9%	15.3%	7.7%	2.4%	0.5%	43.3%
White	**64.5%**	20.6%	16.2%	9.1%	1.8%	0.2%	40.4%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	**60.9%**	12.9%	8.9%	2.7%	2.6%	1.4%	49.1%
Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)	**59.9%**	11.9%	13.1%	5.1%	3.0%	0.5%	43.6%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	**45.7%**	6.9%	9.3%	3.9%	1.3%		34.2%

Based on students in grades 9-12. Source: OSPI data portal, Report_Card_SQSS_for_2022-23_[date].csv.

- Overall dual-credit participation for Black/AA students is on par with that of students overall, but this varies by specific program option. Black/AA students lag overall averages for AP and College in the High School, but participate in higher rates for Running Start, IB, Cambridge and CTE Tech Prep.

- Participation rates in general are far higher among Asian students and far lower for other non-White groups.

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