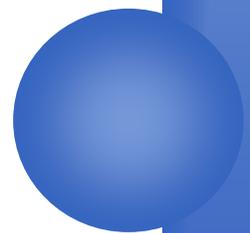


WASHINGTON STATE COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

African American State of Education Report

This report was prepared for the Washington State House of Representatives Education Committee. This report is to shed light on the current state of education amongst Washington's African American Community and steps the Commission is taking to close the educational opportunity gap.

February 2013



WASHINGTON STATE COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

African American State of Education Report

Chairwoman Santos and Members of the Committee,

This past year our Commission has worked hard with a wide variety of stakeholders to analyze educational disparity in Washington. We have come across alarming numbers, data and statistics that we would like to share with you.

We have made significant strides in education – but there is much more work to be done. We look forward to working with each and every one of you to ensure we continue to improve Washington’s education system. We are excited at the opportunity to ensure Washington students have the opportunity to receive a comprehensive, in-depth and equitable education in our State.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please contact me directly. Again, I look forward to working with you to make Washington the best place to learn, develop and grow.

Very Respectfully Yours,

Ed Prince, Executive Director

Washington State has a current population of 259,542 African Americans. Below you will see the breakdown by County:

By County	
Adams	49
Asotin	92
Benton	2383
Chelan	283
Clallam	690
Clark	8219
Columbia	9
Cowlitz	480
Douglas	168
Ferry	25
Franklin	1584
Garfield	0
Grant	1011
Grays Harbor	816
Island	1397
Jefferson	309
King	116033
Kitsap	6880
Kittitas	225
Klickitat	19
Lewis	375
Lincoln	68
Mason	692
Okanogan	246
Pacific	108

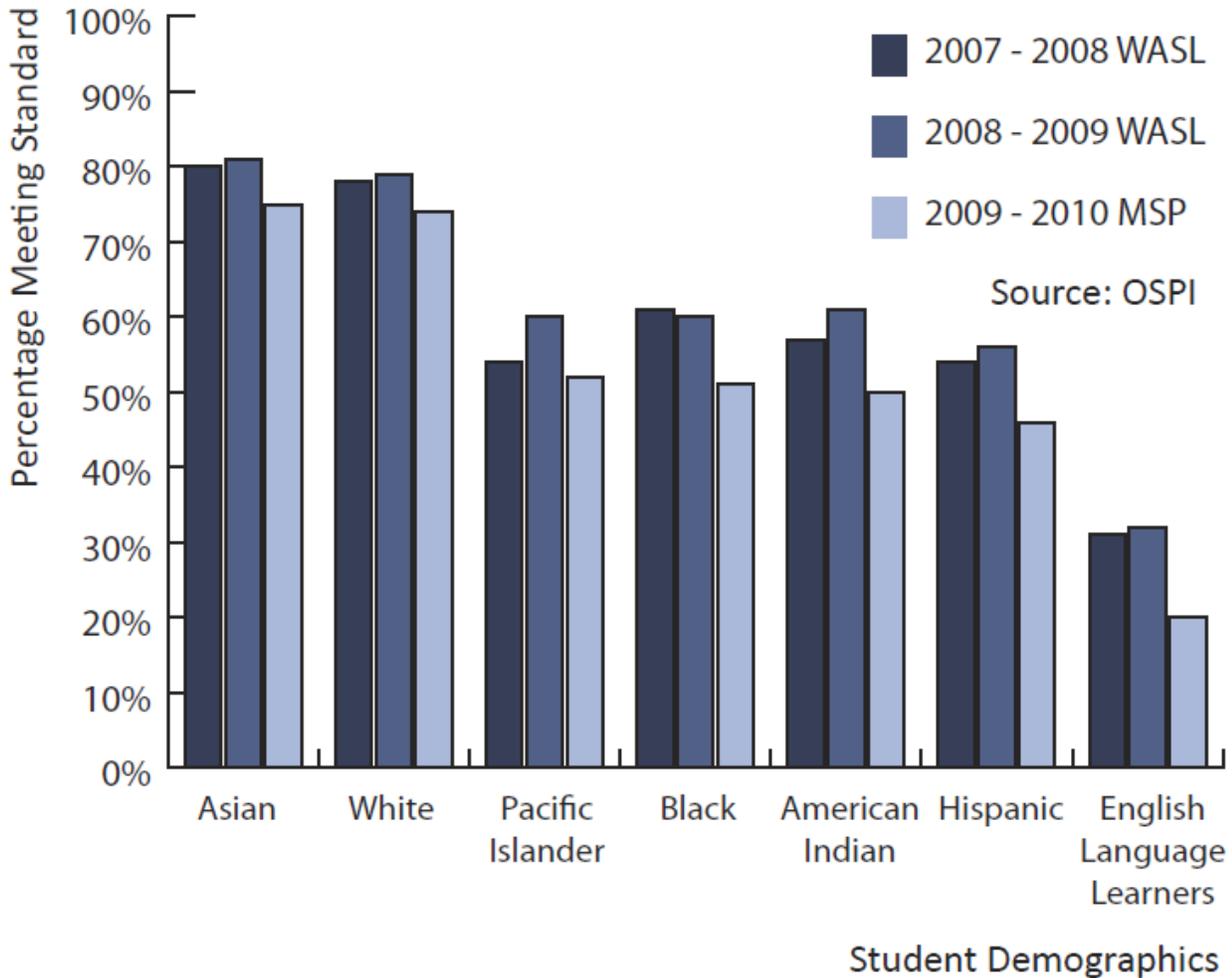
Pend Oreille	21
Pierce	53629
San Juan	95
Skagit	870
Skamania	10
Snohomish	15740
Spokane	8030
Stevens	198
Thurston	6796
Wahkiakum	11
Walla Walla	1093
Whatcom	2055
Whitman	898
Yakima	1942
Unknown County	25993
Over 10,000	Over 50,000
Under 10,000	Under 5,000

Grade	Black/ African American	Two or More Races	Black/ African American_M	Black/ African American_F	Two or_More Races_M	Two or More Races_F
PK	564	820	401	163	566	254
K1	2,264	2,999	1,189	1,075	1,589	1,410
K2	1,219	3,344	640	579	1,750	1,594
1	3,512	6,175	1,850	1,662	3,088	3,087
2	3,496	5,467	1,842	1,654	2,768	2,699
3	3,517	5,186	1,822	1,695	2,658	2,528
4	3,516	4,986	1,754	1,762	2,531	2,455
5	3,516	4,820	1,800	1,716	2,398	2,422
6	3,575	4,860	1,787	1,788	2,485	2,375
7	3,641	4,943	1,911	1,730	2,527	2,416
8	3,777	4,753	1,945	1,832	2,447	2,306
9	4,310	4,646	2,252	2,058	2,359	2,287
10	3,895	4,461	2,093	1,802	2,294	2,167
11	3,698	4,179	1,933	1,765	2,078	2,101
12	3,920	4,195	2,068	1,852	2,080	2,115

Washington State currently has 1,051,613 students enrolled from prekindergarten to grade 12. Out of those approximately 48,420 students are identified as African American. An additional 65,834 are identified as two or more races.

As you can see our 4th grade reading scores have declined steadily from the 2007-2009 conversion of the WASL to the MSP. Black students on average scored less than their Asian, White, and Pacific Islander peers. Their average is in close competition with that of American Indian students.

4th Grade Reading State Test Scores in Washington



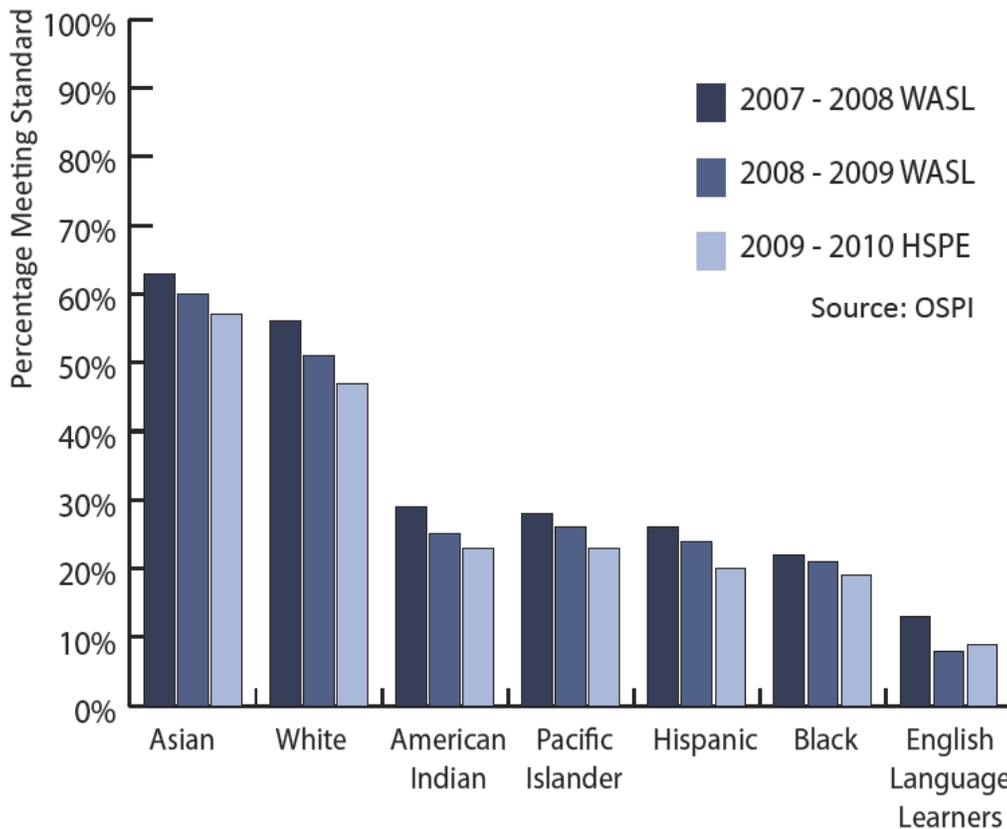
In 2008 only 2% of Black 4th grade students tested at an advanced level of reading proficiency. 19% tested at a proficient level. 32% tested at a basic level of comprehension. Sadly, 46% of students tested at a below basic level of proficiency. Research has shown these are early indication factors of student success.

4th Grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Test Scores 2008-2009 in Washington

	American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	White	Limited English
Advanced	7%	10%	2%	2%	10%	0%
Proficient	20%	26%	19%	12%	30%	3%
At Basic	33%	32%	32%	31%	36%	16%
Below Basic	40%	33%	46%	55%	24%	80%

Once students have completed their primary education they are again tested in similar proficiency categories once they reach 10th grade. You can see below that African American 10th grade math scores have significantly decreased from the 2007-2009 conversion of the WASL to the MSP. Black students on average scored less than their Asian, White, American Indian, Pacific Islander and Hispanic peers. African American students only scored slightly higher than “English Language Learners.”

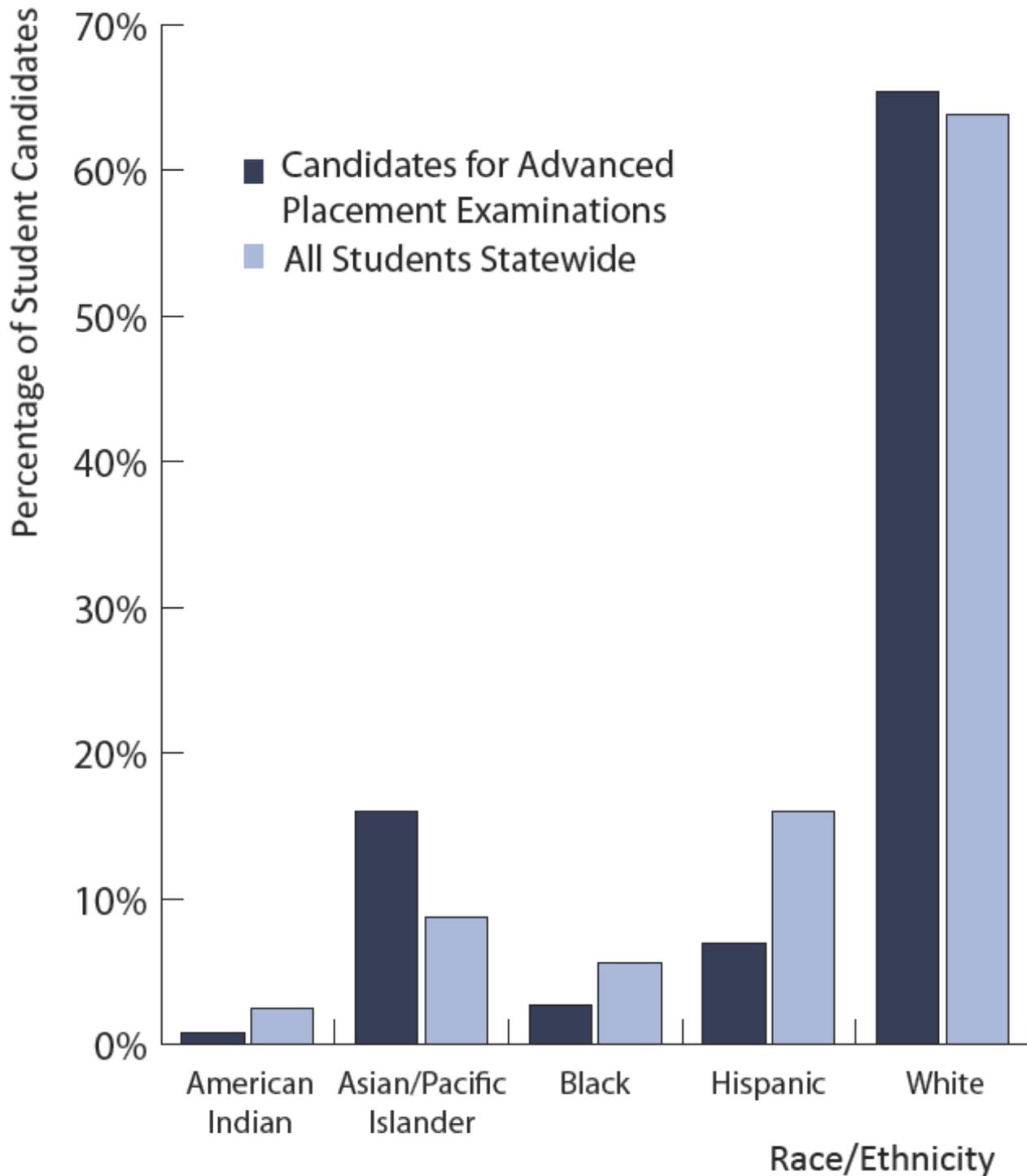
10th Grade Math State Test Scores in Washington



African American students are less likely to qualify, test and place in advanced placement programs in our school system. They are at an examination rate lower than their White, Asian and Hispanic peers.

Candidates for Advanced Placement Examinations by Ethnicity, 2010

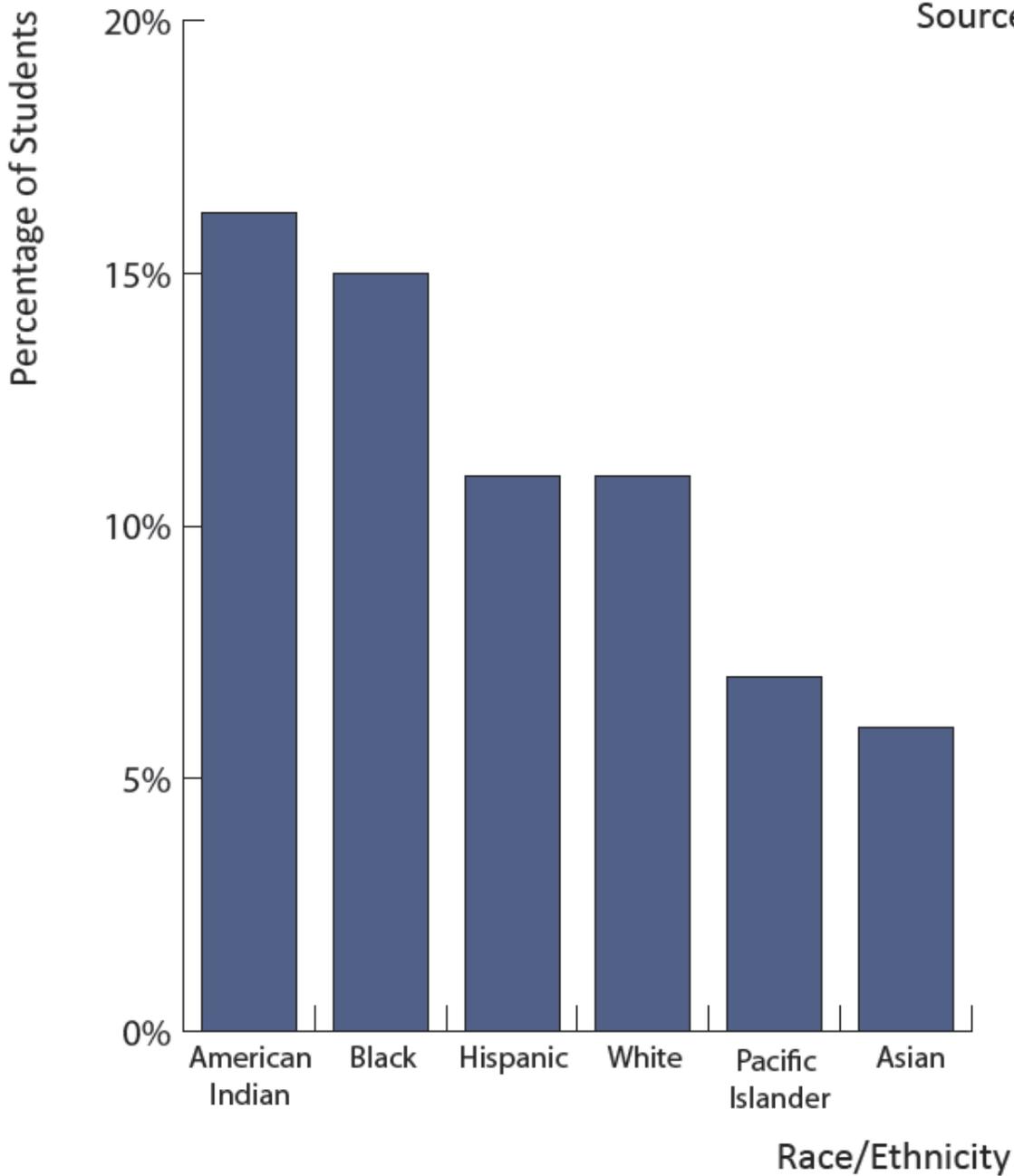
Source: OSPI



On the opposite spectrum of advanced placement, African American students are the second highest ethnicity group to receive special education services. Almost 15% of the African American student population is receiving some special education services. This ranks higher than their Hispanic, White, Pacific Islander and Asian peers.

Percentage of Student Population Receiving Special Education Services, 2009

Source: OSPI



“In today’s public schools, success for African Americans is too often elusive. Our society still bears the legacy of a long history of racism, exclusion and low expectations for African American children, and our public education system has not adequately responded to remedy this situation. This persistent challenge is deeply harmful to the African American community, to our state, our nation, and our democracy. With every passing year, the damage mounts and the danger to our future grows more acute. Lower rates of high school graduation lead to less employment, higher rates of incarceration, ill health, substance abuse, and intergenerational poverty. No failure is more costly than the failure to educate our African American children. These are problems of our whole society – problems with deep roots in our nation’s history. But while we cannot change the past, we can and must change the education system that shapes our future.” – *African American Achievement Gap Report- OSPI*

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap impacting African American students is caused primarily by:

1. Inequitable distribution of skilled, experienced teachers
2. Insufficient and inequitable school funding
3. Inadequate, obsolete, and unbalanced distribution of facilities, technology and, instructional materials
4. Inequitable access to demanding, rigorous pre-college coursework Institutional racism
5. Lack of cultural competence among teachers, school staff, administrators, curriculum and assessment developers and the school system itself

Secondary causes of the achievement gap are:

1. Intergenerational poverty
2. Families/communities not able (and often not welcomed by the education system) to support or advocate for children
3. A lack of supplemental services such as mentoring and tutoring to young people whose backgrounds subject them to the inequities and risk factors listed above

Findings

1. The data are clear: by every measure, from test scores to college attendance rates, African American students are less likely to get the education they need to succeed in today’s world.

2. More than an issue of poverty, the achievement gap is also about race. Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) data reveals that White and Asian students in poverty score higher than African American students not in poverty.
3. African American children on average start kindergarten significantly behind their peers in their early learning development – particularly with vocabulary, early literacy skills, number sense, and social behavior.
4. Unless we address this deficit from birth to five, we have no hope of closing the achievement gap as students continue through school.
5. African American students are under-represented in advanced placement and gifted programs, but over-represented in special education and discipline referrals. They are less likely to be enrolled in rigorous coursework, including the key disciplines of science and math, and more likely to drop out of high school. They are less likely to attend and graduate from college.
6. There is little alignment between early childhood education, K-12 and higher education that would lead to a seamless system of matriculation. There are best practices successfully closing the achievement gap for African American students in our state, but there are few opportunities to share these at the state, regional and local levels. Policy makers should recognize that this is a missed opportunity to replicate success and therefore, the impact from current expenditures is far less than it could be. District-negotiated contracts with unions affect the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers.
7. Data is unavailable statewide to provide value-added, disaggregated, longitudinal information about student achievement and student discipline. OSPI is currently working to provide this much needed access to student-specific and teacher-specific data and analysis through the development of the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).
8. Lack of broad institutional and political will is a primary impediment to closing the achievement gap for African American students in public schools.

Community Factors That Impact the Achievement Gap

- In 2010 African American children in Washington between the ages of 0 and 17 faced a rate of poverty equal to 36.9%.
- The average individual income for an African American is \$21,438 per person.
- In the US, poverty is still tied to race: 24.7% of the African American population live below the poverty line while 8.6% of Caucasians do.

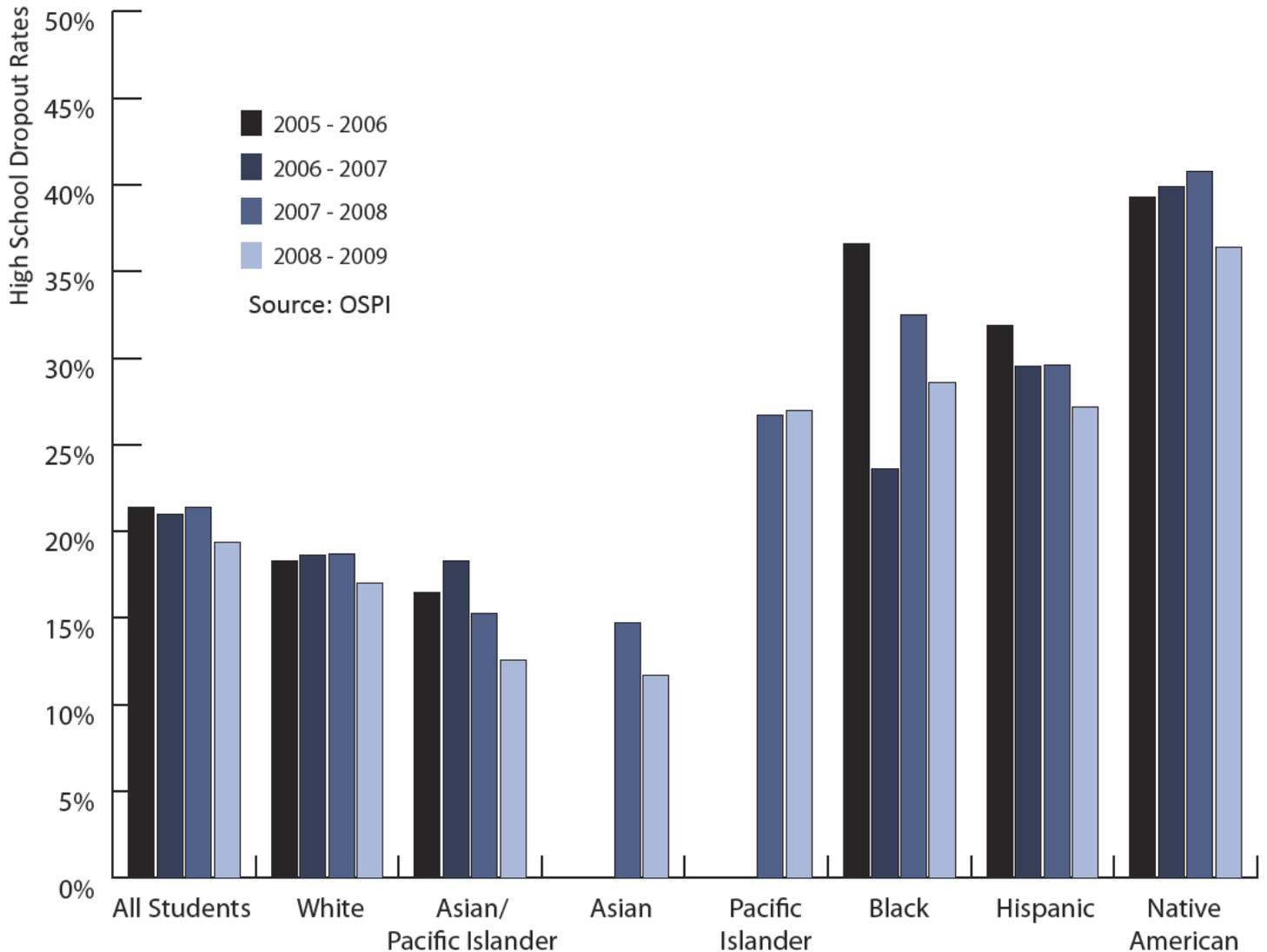
- School budgets are tied to property taxes. This is why schools in poor neighborhoods get about half as much money per student than schools in affluent neighborhoods.
- Most schools in bad condition are in cities where at least 70% of students are below the poverty line.
- Urban students are less likely to graduate than their suburban counterparts. High school graduation rates are 15% lower in the nation's urban schools when compared with those located in the suburbs.
- The chart below shows the average African American adult has less than a Bachelor's degree – it becomes a generational trend.

Education Level	Sample of 142,237 individuals
Males	
Less than High School	9158
High School Graduate / GED	20153
Some College or AA	31,923
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	16,869
Females	
Less than High School	9444
High School Graduate / GED	15440
Some College or AA	26884
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	12366

Children of poor families are up to six times more likely to drop out than wealthy children.

OSPI conducted a research study between 2005-2009 that shows Black students have been able to lower their dropout rate. However, they still rank higher than Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Asian, and White peers.

Estimated Four-Year Cohort Dropout



Suggested Ways to Close the Gap

Good teachers are critical to student success

Teacher quality is the school factor that makes the greatest impact on student achievement. Consistent exposure to effective teachers can overcome obstacles to learning and even closing the achievement gap.

Poor and minority students get less qualified teachers

Low-performing schools are frequently unable to attract and retain effective and experienced teachers. Unfortunately, low-performing schools also tend to serve large numbers of poor and minority students. In an attempt to resolve this situation, the teacher equity clause in the federal No Child Left Behind Act mandates that states ensure that teachers of core subjects are “highly qualified” and that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. This is a step in the right direction, although “highly qualified” does not necessarily mean of “high quality.”

The impact of an ineffective teacher lingers over time

Research concludes that “the effects of even a single ineffective teacher are enduring enough to be measurable at least four years later. Good teachers in subsequent grades boost achievement, but not enough to compensate for the effects of an earlier ineffective teacher” (Thompson & O’Quinn, 2001).

Incentives can motivate more and better teachers

Understanding the dynamics of the teacher labor market is critical for policymakers considering ways to improve teacher distribution. The main policy task is to leverage incentives attuned to the current labor market, to produce more and better candidates, to recruit teachers into struggling schools, and to keep them there long enough to make a difference.

Students need good teachers as role models

Diverse, culturally knowledgeable, experienced, and highly qualified teachers can help narrow the achievement gap and serve as models for children who will live in multicultural environments. Children of color also need teachers who look like them, who share similar cultural experiences, and who can be role models to demonstrate the efficacy of education and achievement.

Early learning can narrow the gap

Recent research reveals that while African American and White one-year olds are on average equal in their development, a gap appears by the age of three. That gap tends to grow as these children continue in school, unless they get more time, better teaching, and more resources to help them catch up. Access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs that emphasize vocabulary development and early literacy skills can do a great deal to narrow the achievement gap. Some of the long term benefits of high-quality prekindergarten programs include higher rates of high school graduation and post-high school employment.

Achievement has improved, but gaps still exist

Washington State has made progress in improving student learning since the passage of our state’s school reform legislation in 1993. All groups of students have seen gains in reading, writing, math and science. The significance of this important accomplishment should be acknowledged. But while all groups have improved, the gap between them

persists. And educators and employers agree that the gains made so far pale in comparison to the higher levels of learning that all students need to get good jobs and to be informed citizens in this age of new technology and new economies.

Less education means less economic opportunity

In this context, today's lower educational attainment by African American students is more than a chronic problem; it is a fast-growing emergency. Each year, the level of academic skill and knowledge needed in our society rises, and the economic prospects of those without such skills and knowledge declines.

Low expectations stunt growth and achievement

Low expectations are a known deterrent to achievement, yet the poison of low expectations for African American students persists. It may be impossible to document lower teacher and school administrator expectations for African American students, but there is ample evidence of it: African American students are 1.42 times as likely as other students in Washington to be identified as eligible for special education. Within specific categories, African American students' are 2.7 times more likely of being identified as having an "Emotional & Behavioral Disorder" (EBD) than other students. And the over enrollment of African American students in special education is matched by their under-enrollment in programs for the highly capable.

Performance of African American males is grim

Within the disturbing data on educational achievement related to African Americans, a focus on African American males presents an even direr picture. African American males are more likely than any other group to be suspended from school. They are under-represented in programs for the highly capable, over-represented in special education programs, and outperformed consistently by African American females. As a consequence, African American males often experience the most challenges in higher education settings as both students and teachers. The data on high school graduation rates for African American males are startling. In Washington, half of all African American males received diplomas with their cohort during the 2005-06 school year. This is a gap of 20 points when compared to White males (<http://www.schottfoundation.org>). These data are directly linked to other facts: African American males are significantly overrepresented in unemployment numbers, in the juvenile justice system, and in prison populations. A change in our system of education is the best hope for transforming what are now the grim prospects of African American males.

High expectations promote academic success and less remediation

All students need a well-taught, rigorous, world-class curriculum, that prepares them for success in college without the need for remedial classes. But in 2002, the average African American 12th-grader's reading level was equivalent to that of the average White 8th-grader (The Education Trust). The result is that nearly 25 percent of African Americans who enroll in college require remediation in reading, compared to 7 percent of White students. It's about relationships, relevance, and rigor. What African American students need is exactly what all students need. They need teachers and school leaders who have high expectations of them. They need rigorous and relevant curriculum that engages, challenges, and connects them to the world they know with the world they need to know. They need

more math and science, more access to advanced placement and programs for the highly capable, and more of the supports that would help them succeed. They need teachers and school leaders with the skills to connect with them and teach them well.

Improvement requires genuine commitment

The State Board of Education's proposal to increase graduation requirements, called "Core 24," is a step towards greater rigor, and therefore a step in the right direction – but only if it is accompanied by a genuine, statewide commitment to ensure that African American students get the quality teachers, the early preparation, and the support they need to rise to this higher expectation.

Closing the gap takes intentionality

State, school district, and school building leadership can help perpetuate the achievement gap, or it can be a powerful force for eliminating it. When school boards, superintendents and principals make closing the gap a top priority – and when they plan, allocate resources, and design accountability measures to do so – they make progress.

Developing real relationships is critical

To be effective, leaders must have high expectations of all students and teachers, and a high degree of awareness of their own culture and the culture of others. These leaders must be able to mobilize students' cultures as a force for learning, and they must reach out to engage parents and communities to support educational excellence. Strong leadership helps embed these attributes in the school or school district.

Leaders who close gaps see it as a moral imperative

Perhaps most important, education leaders who have made progress in narrowing the education gap are those who have a sense of urgency and a deep moral conviction that this work is central to their purpose as educators. These are the educators who have the courage to challenge the status quo, to build the political will for change, and to inspire their communities to sustain the work of making schools work for everyone.

Success in school requires supporting the whole child

To succeed in school, students need strong leadership, effective instruction, high expectations, and more. They need a comprehensive program of academic and social support. This program should include academic and professional career advising, psychological wellness counseling, and elements that build trusting relationships. Such support will ensure that African American students experience schools as supporting communities enabling their success and not as environments of alienation and hostility. For far too many African American children, this necessary support system and basic prerequisite to educational success is missing.

Academic success requires guidance and planning

Students need consistent academic guidance – beginning in elementary school – to help them think about their own aptitudes and interests, and to plan for their adult lives. This guidance should continue through college and should include career advising. Especially for students whose parents did not attend college or post-secondary job training, learning how to navigate the education system is a critical skill. Additionally, the move from high school or college to the world of work is for many students the final in a series of critical transitions for which they need professional guidance.

All students should feel like they belong in school

Far too many African American students believe that the education system does not belong to them, and that they do not belong in it. Changing this perception requires intentional, sustained effort on the part of educators. Expanded

school guidance programs are needed to focus on the positive development of student attitudes and habits of mind that lead to success in school and life.

Struggling students need high expectations and rigor, too

Tutoring and mentoring programs, supplemental instruction, and other support for struggling students must also convey high expectations and recognition of students' strengths if they are to break out of the discouraging pattern of remediation which has become all too familiar. Academic excellence must be the hallmark of these programs. School systems must be more responsive. The over-representation of African American students in discipline referrals, absenteeism, special education placements, and drop-out rates is reflective of the current lack of coordinated student support. Also, the under-representation of African American students in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, high level math and science courses, and the lack of attention to students who need support for transition to post-secondary opportunities is indicative of the often low expectations of African American learners. We should add supports for African American students that build the awareness and knowledge of post-secondary opportunities, including navigating college entrance requirements and building a high school transcript that reflects readiness for advanced studies. All students deserve special assistance to consider their possible future, especially those who will be the first generation of their families to engage in higher education. These are issues of teacher-to-student and teacher-to-family communications. By starting earlier and by being consistent in communications about life-long expectations, more African Americans students will have greater opportunities beyond high school.

When families are involved, students do better in school

Studies conducted during the past 30 years have identified a clear relationship between parent involvement and increased student achievement. An analysis of a decade's worth of national research published by Harvard researchers Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp (2003) indicates a clear correlation between the level of family involvement and student academic success. Studies found that students with involved parents, no matter what their economic, racial/ethnic and educational background, were more likely to: Earn high grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs

- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to School
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.
- Partnerships are central to high performing schools

Schools that succeed in involving families from very diverse backgrounds share three key practices. They:

- Focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families and community members
- Recognize, respect and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural differences
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

Families need to be connected and informed

African American parents and caregivers, like other Washington parents and caregivers, struggle to understand a system of public education that is very different from their own experiences. As Washington schools have moved into a system

of standards and assessments, we have also created an urgent need for parents and caregivers to become better informed and educated about the current public education system. If the achievement gap is to be closed, family involvement must be considered a legitimate and integral part of public education in the State of Washington.

What We Are Doing

In November of 2011, the commission started partnering with the African American Leadership Forum (AALF) to look at issues surrounding the opportunity gap and the disproportionality in discipline among African American students. Our representative on the legislative opportunity gap working group, Wanda Billingsly is our point person with AALF.

In August of 2012 a cross cultural coalition representing all four ethnic groups, the tribes and immigrant/refugee populations came together to start working on a plan to ensure that communities of color had their voices heard on education funding in light of the McCleary decision. This group has outlined five "buckets" in which we would like to see funding go:

- Extended day kindergarten
- Transitional bilingual programs
- Wrap around services
- Extended day learning and summer school
- Early learning

This group has met with several legislators and policy staff members from the House and Governor's staff. Director Prince is the commission liaison with this group.

Director Prince has continued to be active on the early learning front; Serving on Thrive by Five's Advancing Racial Equity working group and their Love, Talk, Play working group.

Director Prince is also serving as our representative to the Equity in Education Coalition.

