

**Conditions That Contextualized Disparities at Erwin Middle School**

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*Conditions that Contextualized Disparities at Erwin Middle School*

As what Kozol (2012) stated in *Savage Disparities*, “What is now encompassed by the one word [school] are two very different kinds of institutions, that, in function, finance and intention, serve entirely different roles. Children in one set of schools are educated to be governors, children in the other set of schools are trained to be governed.” Majority of black and Latinx<sup>1</sup> students attend schools that are extremely segregated by race, in vastly underfunded school districts (Cuervo, 2016). Students of color and low-income students have much lower rates of educational achievement and attainment (BenDavid-Hadar, School finance policy and social justice, 2015). In most public schools, children of color may be systematically disadvantaged by a variety of factors: tracking, cultural biases in testing and curriculum, differential treatment from teachers, who may stereotype them as trouble makers or potential gang members (Raza, 2011).

To a large degree, the reason that race continues to be a persistent source of controversy in American education is because even as the number of children of color in American schools continues to grow, disparities in academic outcomes and opportunities continue to be pervasive and persistent in American education (Russell J. Skiba, 2016). On every measure of achievement

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<sup>1</sup> Latinx is a gender-neutral term often used in lieu of Latino or Latina (referencing Latin American cultural or racial identity)

and attainment, race continues to be a salient factor in defining and dividing the American student population. For this paper, it primarily focuses on Erwin Middle School and the conditions of how the middle school deals with racial disparities.

From 2010 to 2017, Erwin Middle School was cited for having low EOG test scores and large influx of diversity that is regarded as a positive, yet challenging notation (Public Schools of North Carolina , 2017). Erwin district's diversity was repeatedly referenced as a challenging dynamic due to the combination of locals and newcomers. Erwin Middle School is located in Asheville, NC. The Erwin district of Buncombe County Schools covers a large geographical area, which includes some suburban areas to the north and west of Asheville, as well as a large rural area that extends to the northern and western edges of Buncombe County, including Leicester, NC. The school is noted to contain a large diverse student background, to which the school enlists that there are over 18 languages that are spoken. The 3 largest language groups are Spanish, Eastern European (Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan), and Pacific Islander (Micronesian, Marshallese, and Tagalong) (Public Schools of North Carolina , 2017).

Educational disparities come from the difference in the learning quality and results experiences by students from different groups, most often measured by grades, GPA scores, test scores, dropout rates, and college completion rates. In the case for Erwin, Erwin district's diversity was repeatedly referenced as a challenging dynamic due to the combination of locals and newcomers. Newcomer parents frequently cited their differences as not being seen as assets. Immigrant parents (from Latin America, Europe, and Asia) cited struggling with the "bad reputation of all immigrants," or the hurtful way prejudices held against families who are learning English play out in their daily lives. This year there was a large increase in hate-crimes, many parents noted. One African-American parent had a noose put around her mailbox, while

another had a racial slur written at the bottom of his driveway. Students have been in the Resource Room some weeks, daily, crying for fear of their families getting separated due to deportation. Parents cited fears about getting separated from their children during the increase in Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and pickups in Asheville.

Significant language barriers were also frequently discussed during parent conversations and on surveys. The Newcomers Project has greatly helped with advocating in the Erwin district and county wide for better language access. Communication barriers not only in terms of language, but also in terms of hearing from their child's teacher, and being able to access information online with a significant number of family households without internet at home. High numbers of parents have given excellent feedback about the "13 Positive Calls" teacher strategy for connecting with families. Transportation is one of the biggest barriers for life in Erwin. While resources may be there, if people can't get to them, there's little to no point. In a survey done by Warren Wilson students around transportation in the Erwin district (Erwin Middle School Data Center, 2017):

- 80.6% of students reported having missed school-related activities
- 77% have missed activities like theater productions, sporting events, and concerts
- 48% of community members have missed employment opportunities

Growth Status		
Did Not Meet		

	Score	Grade
Achievement	49	
Growth	64.4	
School Performance	52	D
EOG Reading	50	D
EOG Math	45	D

Figure 1A: 2014-2015

Growth Status		
Met		

	Score	Grade
Achievement	53	
Growth	83.5	
School Performance	59	C
EOG Reading	57	C
EOG Math	52	D

Figure 1B: 2015-2016

Growth Status	School Performance Grade
Not Met	D

	Score	Grade
Achievement	51	
Growth	57.1	
School Performance	52	
EOG Reading	50	D
EOG Math	43	D

Figure 1C: 2016-2017

Source: North Carolina School Report Cards

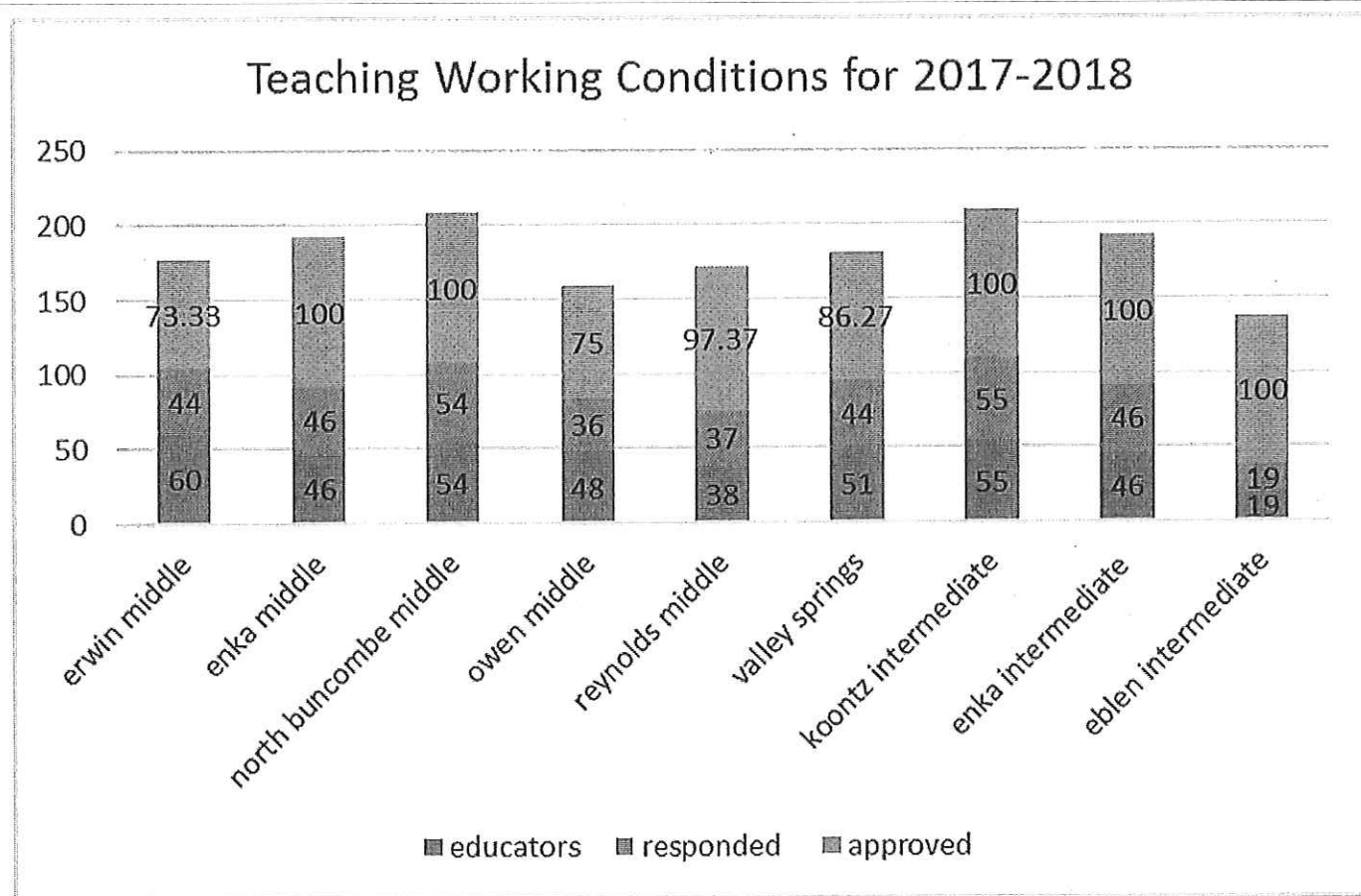
Each year, Buncombe County Schools and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provide parents and stakeholders with a school report card. This report card includes important information about school and student performance, class sizes, attendance, school safety, and teacher quality.

The report card provides excellent information but may not be a complete profile of a school. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires schools to issue report cards with school performance grades. Each school's letter grade describes its 2016-17 performance and is composed of student achievement (80 percent) and student growth (20 percent). No traditional public school in Buncombe County earned an A grade and five received D's in North Carolina's annual report card for schools. Now in its fourth year, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction School Performance Grades report assigns schools letter grades based on achievement performance percentages compiled by multiple end-of-year tests and

overall student academic growth. Traditional public schools in Buncombe County have yet to earn an A grade, and the five D's in the report released this month represent a new low. Erwin Middle School and Johnston, Leicester, Oakley and Woodfin elementary schools all were awarded D grades for the 2016-17 school year (Asheville Citizen's Times, 2018).

Teachers/staff voiced being grateful for:

- Their “phenomenal students”
- The feeling of going home having made an impact
- United Way’s “work and resources”
- “Unparalleled support” from their teachers/admins/staff team



## Figure 2A : Teacher Working Conditions for 2017-2018

Source: NC Teaching Conditions Survey

During the four-week window the survey is administered, educators may complete the survey anytime, from any Internet location, using an anonymous password. The data gathered provides customized reports to schools and districts about the state of working conditions in their respective school. These data are essential as different schools are starting from different places and must have different priorities for improving working conditions. Results from the survey are posted online for schools and districts that meet the minimum threshold of 40% response and at least 5 respondents. The survey covers Community Engagement and Support, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Managing Student Conduct, Use of Time, Professional Development, Facilities and Resources, and Instructional Practices and Support. These results, as well as the results for the state, are posted approximately five weeks after the survey closes. North Carolina was the first state in the country to conduct such a statewide survey. The power of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey is evidenced by its current replication in more than 16 other states. Erwin Middle School was given 73.33% teacher approval of the working conditions, in contrast to the other middle and elementary schools districts in Buncombe County Schools. Owen Middle School received the second lowest score, following by Valley Springs Middle School. A snapshot of the 2016 iteration shows that North Carolina had 101,846 respondents which yielded a response rate of 86%. As a comparison, the 2014 iteration had 93,178 respondents yielding a response rate of 89%. 8,600 more educators participated in 2016 than 2014 (NC Survey Conditions, 2017).

Teachers have expressed concerns during the school year, including the school behavior system/process (students in Out-of-School Suspension not getting any meaningful consequence,

missing schoolwork, and then coming back further behind). Teachers want to lead more clubs but many students can't participate due to lack of transportation. As of this year, Erwin district schools had to cut back on their buses for the high schools to pay for better technologies (computers, tablets, SMART-boards, i.e.). Inevitably, the budget cut lead the middle school to ride with the high school. Underlying, generational health issues that make students more reactive and prone to behavioral struggles. Students are going hungry (80% of students are on Free/Reduced lunch).

Most of the students at Erwin are economically disadvantaged (69-72%). Less than 10% of students have limited English proficiency In either grade, the percent of academically "gifted" students and students with disabilities diagnosed is about the same (between 12% and 16%) Students are struggling to come to school (42% of students are in a warning color) Students are struggling academically (20-25% of students are failing) 15% of students feel that there isn't anyone who supports and encourages them. Most students have someone at home or at school they can trust.



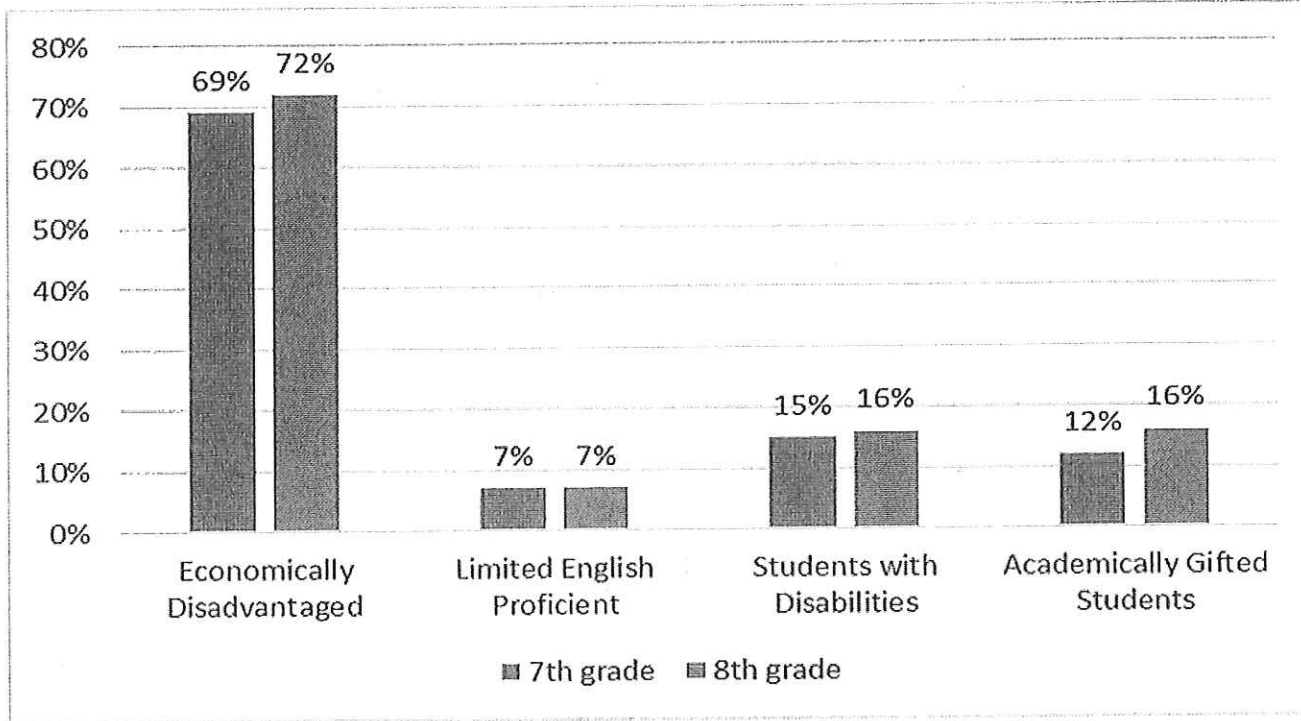


Figure 3a: Exceptional Children Data in 2017-2018

Source: Erwin Middle School Community Initiative Center

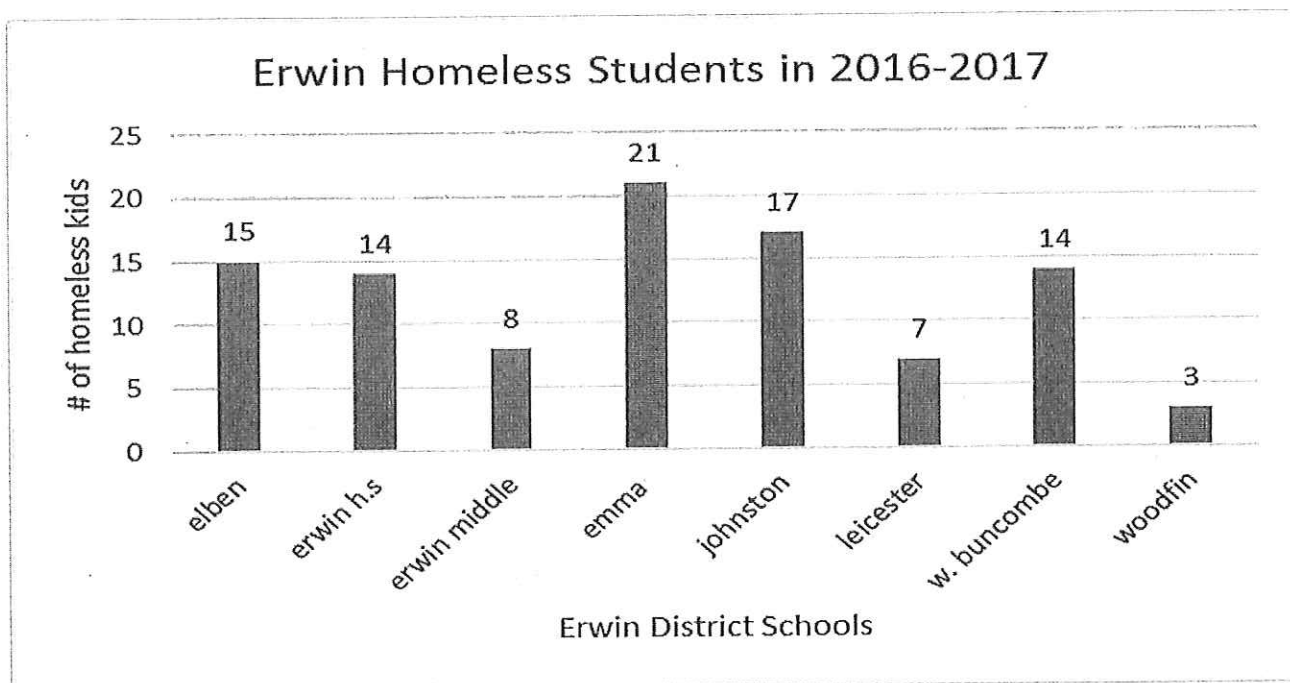


Figure 3b: The Number of Homeless Students at Erwin in 2016-2017

Source: Erwin Middle School Data Center

There are 99 homeless students (last year there were 72) in the Erwin district who receive free and reduced lunch due to homelessness, 8 of them are at Erwin Middle. Most of the homeless students at the Erwin district is attending Emma elementary, followed by Johnston, and so forth. Most of the children will attend to Erwin middle & high school where they will make up the population of the economically disadvantaged student percentile. In 2014-2015, the State of North Carolina approximately contains 26,636 students, which makes up at least 1.9% of the student population that is consisted of homeless students (NCES, 2015).

Erwin also noted the lack of substitute teacher retention and the increasing mental health demands of student body. The student services and administration team's largest concern is mental health. The following data was compiled around the mental health needs of Erwin Middle: 10 threat assessments (harming another student) happened in the 2017-2018 school year as of 3/15/18. 30 suicide assessments (harming self) happened in the 2017-2018 school year as of 3/15/18. The 7th grade counselor met with students over 220 times in 100 days, he sees 4 students on average a day, plus many days he spends doing an assessment or calling DSS. The 8th grade counselor met with 139 at least once in 100 days (meeting with each student between 1-26 times), she sees 3-6 students on average a day, plus many days she spends doing an assessment or calling DSS. School counselors have been so overwhelmed the last two years with individual student mental health needs, suicide risk assessments, and crisis needs that they have not had time to do group counseling or preventive care (including classroom guidance activities and prevention programming with ALL students). Counselors noted the indicators of possible suicide at Erwin: the abrupt decline in school work, social withdrawal, neglect of personal

appearance or radical personality changes, changes in eating or sleeping habits, depression and comments about suicide as a solution to a problem ("Go kill yourself").

The Erwin district has the second highest threat assessment plan rate in Buncombe County. The Erwin Middle counselors have been unable to do any preventative care or education in two years consecutively. They have been overwhelmed with suicide attempts and students threatening to harm others. Our counselors, teachers, and students all report the overall rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and lack of emotional regulation have been extremely high (RHA Health Services, Inc, 2018).

The nationally "recommended average" ratio for counselor: students is 1:250. Erwin Middle's ratio is 1:340.

#### National "Recommended Average for Counselor

- 1:250

#### Erwin Middle's Ratio

- 1:340
- When you add in schools with higher rates of poverty (Erwin 22.2%), lack of access to resources, trauma, and the counseling needs of students increases drastically.

Source: RHA Health Services, 2018

When you add in schools with higher rates of poverty, lack of access to resources, and trauma, the counseling needs of students' increases drastically.

The N.C EOG (known as North Carolina End-Of-Grade Test) are standardized tests are used to measure the progress of students from 3rd grade to 8th grade. Results from the NC EOG tests, and NC End-of-Course (EOC) tests for high school students, provide actionable data that

will help parents, teachers, and students improve academic performance in reading, math, science, writing, and other subjects. The North Carolina Testing Program also uses NC EOG and NC EOC to determine each school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NC End-of-Grade tests are aligned to North Carolina State Standards, which define what students should learn each year. The NC EOG reading test and NC EOG math test are given to students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8th grades, and measure how well they are meeting grade-level expectations. Fifth graders and eighth graders also take the NC EOG science test. The North Carolina Writing Assessment is administered in 4th grade, 7th grade, and 10th grade. In addition, all students take the North Carolina Test of Computer Skills beginning in eighth grade and must achieve a proficient score to graduate.

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North Carolina uses a broad range of assessments that promote learning for all students. With the goal of leaving no child behind, North Carolina offers alternative tests for struggling students, including the North Carolina Competency Test, which is given to 9th grade students who did not score at or above the proficient level on the 8th Grade NC EOG tests. The North Carolina NCEXTEND is designed to measure the progress of students with severe disabilities who require special accommodations. Students with Limited English Proficiency take the ACCESS for ELLs®, which measures their progress in English language acquisition. North Carolina also participates annually in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card, where a sampling of students (from grades 4, 8, and/or 12) are tested in several content areas as part of a nationally representative assessment of student performance.

The North Carolina EOG, EOC, and NC Competency Test are standards-based, criterion-referenced tests. Students compete only with themselves and are measured by how well they

have mastered grade-specific skills. The NC End-of-Grade and NC End-of-Course tests are scored on four performance levels, with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 4 the highest. Students scoring at or above Level 3 are considered to be proficient. The North Carolina Test of Computer Skills and the North Carolina Competency Tests are scored on a pass-fail basis. North Carolina's goal is for all students to pass the tests and allows tests to be retaken.

The EOG data was extracted from the Public Schools of North Carolina in the Department of Public Instruction. The site reports student performance by student subgroup for two years. The report includes the number of students at or above grade level, valid scores, and the 'alternate assessments' per group. The subgroups are reported by gender, ethnicity, language proficiency, disability, and economic condition. Reports of Supplemental Disaggregated State, School System, and School Performance Data are reported during a ten year span. Figure \_\_ is broken by EOG Proficiency Scores by Male Ethnicity, which also the EOG score is combined with Math, Reading, Science, Math GS\*, Reading GS\*, Science GS\* (Grade school was used until 2013).

According to Figure 4a, most of the students of color fluctuate throughout the years, where they performed better than White male students. However, from 2015-2017, African American male students exponentially dropped while their other peers remained stagnant. The biggest takeaways of this graph is that male Multi-racial students tend to perform the best, followed by African American students (up until 2015), followed by Latinx students (performed 2x better than African American & White students), and finally White Students. Students of Color tend to fluctuate more than their White peers because the disparities at Erwin are connected to the micro-aggressions in their classrooms. A Stanford study found that black students are treated differently by teachers when they misbehave or don't follow directions a

second time. Other research released in 2014 from the American Psychological Association shows that black boys as young as 10 are viewed as less innocent than their white peers and have a greater chance of being mistaken for older children, which can contribute to how their behavior is viewed by teachers (Raza, 2011).

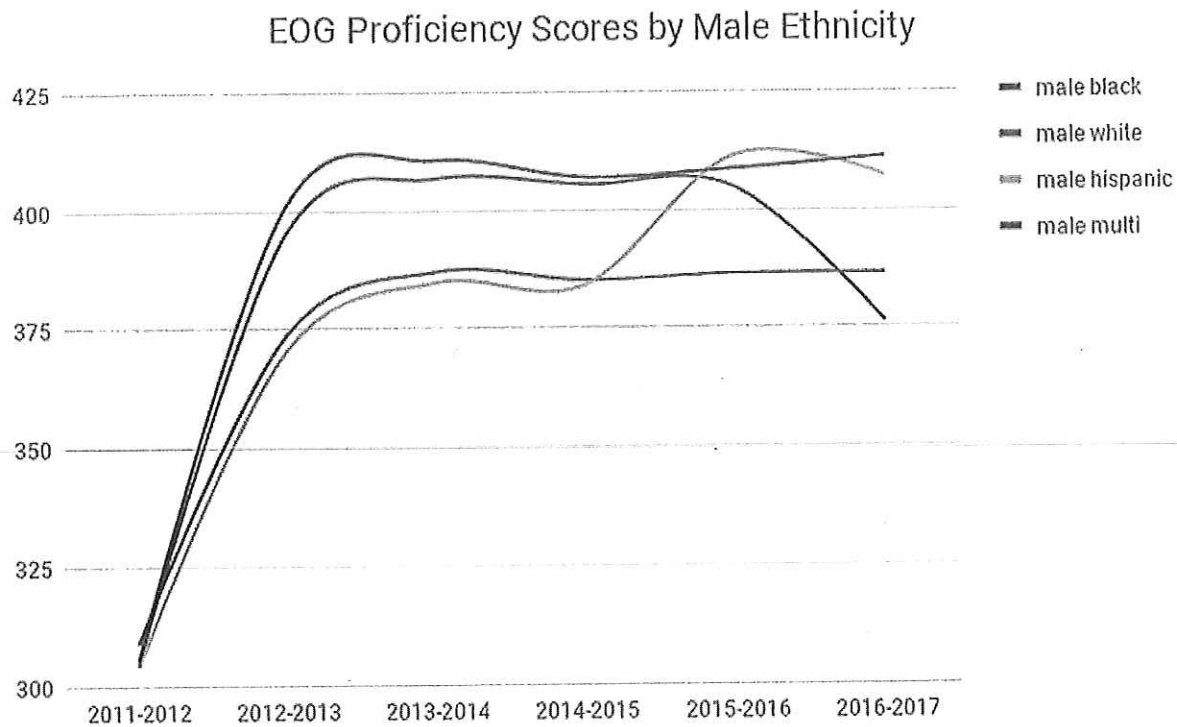


Figure 4A: EOG Proficiency Scores by Male Ethnicity Scores

Source: Reports of Supplemental Disaggregated State LEA Scores

Data was compiled, not only for the male students by their racial composition but also the data is provided for females by ethnicity, along with LEP (Limited English Proficient Students):

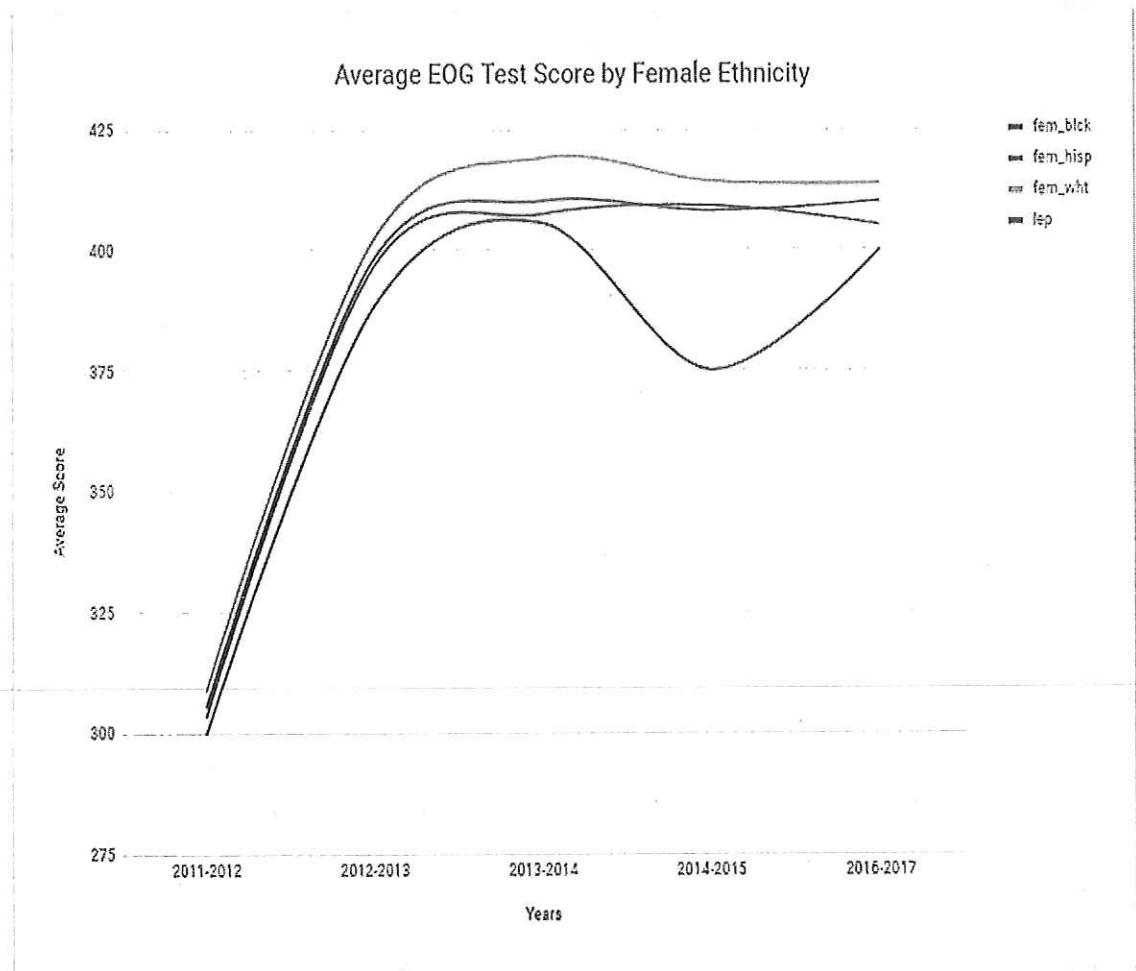


Figure 4b : EOG Proficiency Scores by Female Ethnicity

Source: Source: Reports of Supplemental Disaggregated State LEA Scores

Figure 4b shows that Female White students tend to outperform female students of color from 2011 to 2017. Female Latinx students remained stagnant following by African American female students, then female identified LEP students. In 2014-2015, there is a drastic drop for LEP students. The school noted that there was a change of administration and curriculum for LEP

/ ESL students. But, why does did the change of adminstration affected test scores? Were there unqualified or unmotivated teachers at Erwin? There were a lot of dashes and lack of students that participated the EOG test, which lead one to believe that there might be something wrong with the validity of the data that was reported for LEP students. This lead to further investigation and data extraction for the LEP program at Erwin:

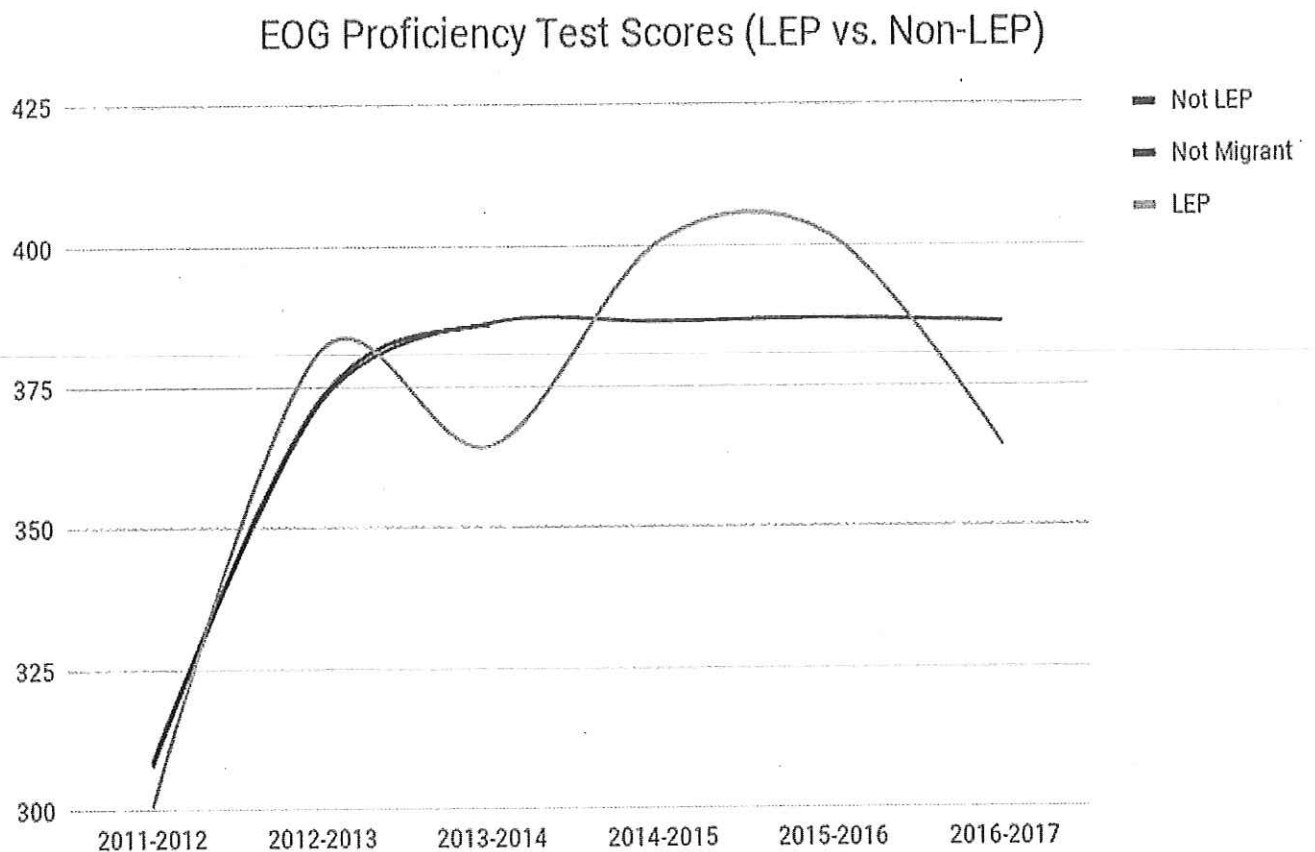


Figure 4c : EOG Proficiency Test Scores for LEP & Non LEP students

Source: Source: Reports of Supplemental Disaggregated State LEA Scores

The data findings of Figure 4c. for LEP, Non-Lep, Migrant\* test scores were extracted from 2011 to 2018 and the biggest take way of this data arises questions of validity and reliability.



First, the trend line for LEP students shown irregularities of performance until 2014 where it dropped. Non-LEP remained stagnant and shown 'consistency' during a 8 year period. From 2006 to 2014, Buncombe County Schools categorized 'Migrant' as their own subgroup. There is no information as to why the school system removed the "Migrant data". The biggest takeaways: Are EOG scores related to a language barrier or an academic difficulty for English Language Learners? The practice of subgroups are skewed, in ways where it raises more questions to whom is considered to be LEP, Non-LEP, Migrant status at Erwin Middle? The placement of subgroups is deemed questionable because the educational practices and programs are vastly different for grade school students. Ultimately, it leads to the achievement gap in education where the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The structure of Erwin's form or purpose of education is broken by its achievement gap (Gándara, 1998).

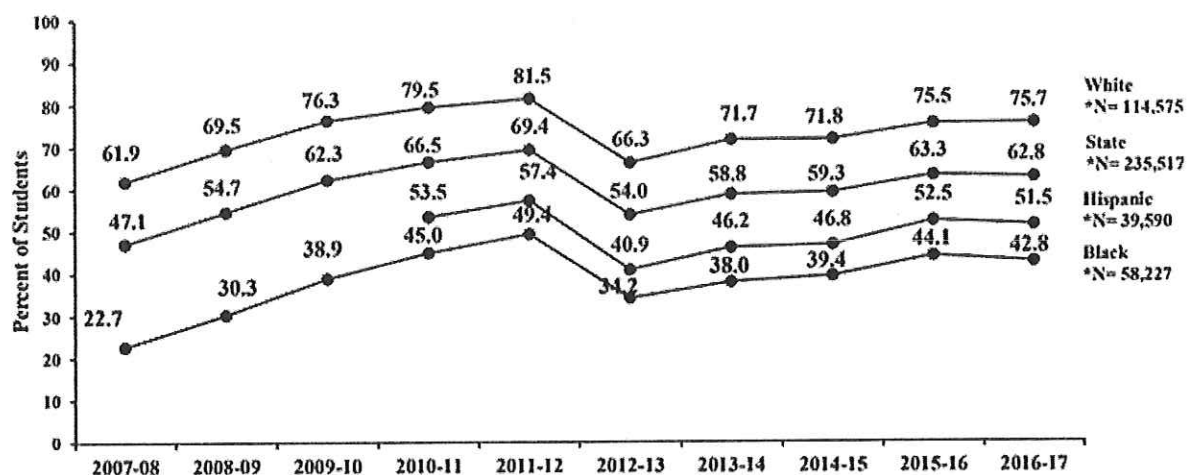
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The process of education, which are the interactions, teaching, learning, communication, i.e. is greatly different per each subgroup and the overall experience at Erwin is polarized by its cultural sensibility towards its 'diversity' at the school (Anne Gregory, 2010). This data does not answer the question: Are EOG scores related to a language barrier or an academic difficulty for English Language Learners? Instead, it demonstrates the importance of programs that support linguistic and cultural learning, such as the Newcomers Project (Skiba, et al., 2011). Further testing in the student's native language could examine the relationship between academic ability and English proficiency. Included in the data for English Language Learners in the graph above are Newcomer students; students who just arrived to the United States less than a year ago. These Newcomer students are from all over the world - the Ukraine, the Marshall Islands, El Salvador, and more. The Buncombe County Schools ESL department cites that now up to 20 Newcomer students are coming to Erwin each month (BCS ESL Department Central Office,

2017). Last year, Erwin Middle had 16 Newcomer students, but more than 22 moved through the school this semester alone. This year, they have 20 Newcomer students.

The 2016–17 North Carolina State Testing Results document provides information on student participation and performance at the state level with some limited local education agency (LEA) data. These test data were generated from original administration data files provided by each LEA, including charter schools, one regional school, and two educational entities, through fall 2017. The primary focus of this compendium of data is student participation and performance on End-of-Grade and End-of-Course general and alternate assessments during the 2016–17 school year. Secondly, overall performance on North Carolina Final Exams is provided. State and system-level results contained within this document may be used to make grade-to-grade, and subject-to-subject comparisons. However, the NC State Testing Results did not indicate nor separate the data by racial and gender composition. It lead to some confusion to what the reader is trying to read, thus it concluded that the handbook is not user-friendly.

**Figure 4. 2007–08 to 2016–17 End-of-Grade General Test Results  
Statewide Percent of Students At or Above Proficiency in Science  
Grades 5 and 8 Combined, for Black, White, and Hispanic Students**



Source: Reports of Student Performance, 2018.

An example of this misleading chart is provided by the NC handbook of End-of-Grade General Test Results where the EOG proficiency of students is combined for African American, White, and Latinx students.

Newcomer parents frequently cited their differences as not being seen as assets. Immigrant parents (from Latin America, Europe, and Asia) cited struggling with the “bad reputation of all immigrants,” or the hurtful way prejudices held against families who are learning English play out in their daily lives. This year there was a large increase in hate-crimes, many parents noted (Erwin Middle School Data Center, 2017). One African-American parent had a noose put around her mailbox, while another had a racial slur written at the bottom of his driveway. Students have been in the Resource Room some weeks, daily, crying for fear of their families getting separated due to deportation. Parents cited fears about getting separated from their children during the increase in Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and pickups in Asheville.

The presence of these disparities reminds us that not only does race still matter in American society; it matters a great deal. It matters not only with respect to the so-called “achievement gap” the unequal academic outcomes that consistently correspond to the race and socioeconomic status of students that national leaders have claimed to be fixated on closing since 2001, but also with respect to gaps in educational opportunity. However, in case of Erwin Middle School, the school have done relatively well to address gaps in opportunity, access to good schools, to highly qualified teachers, to rigorous courses, to a culturally relevant curriculum, to quality preschool, etc. even though our policymakers decry with great frequency the gaps in achievement.

In Asheville and Buncombe County, children who live in poverty graduate from high school at a rate of 80%, while their classmates graduate at a rate of almost 90%. While every student struggles with challenges, it is not hard to imagine how a student saddled with the baggage of daily struggles, such as hunger, homelessness, parental unemployment and depression, can fall behind academically. Students living in poverty commonly need more individualized supports than their peers. Specific needs and challenges persist at Erwin Middle and in the Erwin district, as well as in the surrounding community that can be targeted by this growing community school initiative. This research is a continuation of the full community needs assessment report created during the 2016-2017 school year, but also looking back to see the brief correlation that leads up to present.

For the needs assessment, both qualitative and quantitative data, cohort, and participant observatory studies were utilized to compile this report. Data was gathered regarding the strengths and areas of need of the school and the surrounding community. Quantitative data that was utilized include community-level data as well as student-level information on attendance, behavior and grades. Data sources include North Carolina PowerSchool, US Census American Communities, North Carolina 2-1-1 Call Center records, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Through the needs assessment process, there are several challenges of Erwin Middle School and the surrounding community were identified. The stigma of mental health of students and families, transportation (school buses, and public bus system), high rates of poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, lack of access to health resources, lack of jobs, affordable housing, and an epidemic of meth and heroin use and addiction. There is a strong correlation of racism and diversity belief differences are prevalent in the school & community. The

misunderstanding and age-old “blame game” exists between families and school staff. The home life may include violence, drug use, apathy or disinterest in education. Local and systemic burnout of staff, and low teacher pay. Significant fears around Immigration (ICE) raids and community violence and a lack of a “community hub,” a central green space where young and old can hangout (see figure 3). The general community conversations happened in parent leadership groups, the Dix Creek/Newfound community, Deaverview, Multi-Cultural Family Night, Micronesian Family Night, Eastern European Family Night, and with Sandy Mush stakeholders. Most-noted community challenges included: transportation, jobs, affordable housing, mistrust between school and home, no free time due to work schedules, basic food and health needs, low levels of education and literacy, fear and prevalence of racial discrimination in and outside of school, fear of deportation and in-school violence.

Figure 5a: Erwin District vs. State Data Comparisons

Erwin	State
22.2% in poverty	17.% in poverty
5.7% unemployed	6.9% unemployed
11.8% less than high-school diploma	17% less than high-school diploma
40% rental housing	33.6% rental housing

Source: Erwin Middle School Community Initiative Data, 2017

**In the Erwin district, many needs and challenges persist.** Looking at 211 resource referral caller data (28806 zip code), the most calls this past year were made for housing/shelter

(3,082 calls), healthcare (2,500 calls), legal assistance (2,331 calls), and mental health & addictions (1,673 calls). The top four categories of calls in the 2016-2017 year were for housing, health Care, legal consumer and food. The highest number of calls in 2015 was also for housing. Mental health professionals in the Erwin district (counselors, private practice, etc.) note the relatively low number of calls for mental health services/support often speak to the stigma, or lack of education, around mental health and its effects. Families and advocates cited high numbers of legal assistance in the Erwin district having a correlation to the high percent of immigrant families with mixed-status or undocumented family members seeking legal support.

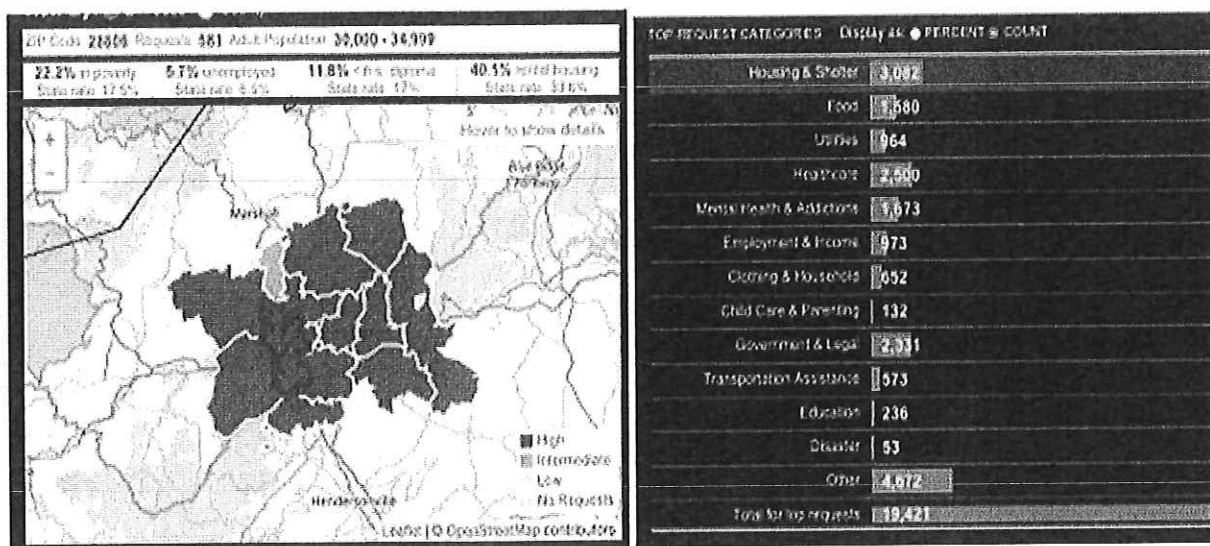


Figure 6a: Data of the # of 211 dispatch calls in the Erwin District

Source: United Way Data Center in Asheville, NC, 2018

Some parents believe their child is attending a school that failed them when they were students. We are slowly changing that reputation, and parents have seen and reported the differences they experience “we know now the middle school is a good place to go, and that’s very comforting” said one parent. Many disenfranchised parents cited rarely feeling that they

have control in their child's world including within their schooling. This sentiment was expressed across linguistic, socioeconomic and racial lines throughout our conversations and our surveys. Erwin Middle School started the Parent-Teacher Home Visitation Project this semester; which has huge evidence-based outcomes for building trust and relationships in and out of the school. Parents cited a strong urge to be more involved in the school community, but weren't because they simply didn't know how to get involved, or because of their work schedules (working a late shift or multiple jobs) and home life commitments (such as caretaking aging family members).

According to Erwin Middle School, parents are getting more involved sitting on committees in the school, on the Parent Team, in running Homework Dinners and sitting on the Resource Team. Erwin district's diversity was repeatedly referenced as a challenging dynamic due to the combination of locals and newcomers. Newcomer parents frequently cited their differences as not being seen as assets. Immigrant parents (from Latin America, Europe, and Asia) cited struggling with the "bad reputation of all immigrants," or the hurtful way prejudices held against families who are learning English play out in their daily lives. This year there was a large increase in hate-crimes, many parents noted. One African-American parent had a noose put around her mailbox, while another had a racial slur written at the bottom of his driveway. Students have been in the Resource Room some weeks, daily, crying for fear of their families getting separated due to deportation. Parents cited fears about getting separated from their children during the increase in Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and pickups in Asheville. Significant language barriers were also frequently discussed during parent conversations and on surveys (Taylor, 2007). The Newcomers Project has greatly helped with advocating in our district and county wide for better language access. Communication barriers



not only in terms of language, but also in terms of hearing from their child's teacher, and being able to access information online with a significant number of family households without internet at home. High numbers of parents have given excellent feedback about the "13 Positive Calls" teacher strategy for connecting with families. Transportation is one of the biggest barriers for life in Erwin.

While resources may be there, if people can't get to them, there's little to no point. In a survey done by Warren Wilson students around transportation in the Erwin district: 80.6% of students reported having missed school-related activities, 77% have missed activities like theater productions, sporting events, and concerts. 48% of community members have missed employment opportunities. 47.2% of community members either share a car, or don't own a car. 60% of community members said transit prevented them from participating in something they were interested in. Said one parent, transportation has "prevented me from consistently arriving to work on time. (Erwin Middle School Data Center, 2017)"

At Erwin Middle School, there is a large influx of White and Latinx children who make up the population of the school. However, there is a significant trend of Pacific Islanders (The Marshall Islands and Micronesia), Eastern European, and i.e.

As of 2017-2018, there are 40.5% of the school are students of color, 60% of the school is white. White: 405 students (60%), Hispanic: 166 students (25%), African-American: 52 students (8%), Multiracial: 37 students (5%), Pacific-Islander: 14 students (2%), Asian: 3 students (0.44%), Native American: 1 student (0.15%) (See Figure 3a). Students' conversations throughout their time in our ambassador leadership program, *Welcome Warriors*, have cited many experiences of racism and micro-aggressions among students, and between students and teachers. One 8<sup>th</sup> grade student noted, "Due to the diversity of our school district, a lot of people



just don't understand people who are different than [them], because they only ever see [them] at school. There are things they hear at home to other students, and it's hurtful and not true" said one 8th grade student. Racial slurs, religiously imbibed statements, and derogative political phrases (ex. "Go back to Mexico!") are commonly heard in the hallways. Teachers have cited struggling with how to handle student bullying based on difference (language or skin color or physical ability) in their classrooms. Students of color and white students noted in their roundtable discussion that they see and hear "lots of things" that make them uncomfortable.

What contributes the 'behavioral misconduct' is the mutual feelings of inequity that is reported from students of color and teachers. A lot of students felt there was a cultural misunderstanding and there were reports of internalized issues: *African American students are spending more time away from classes, resulting in lower academic achievement in school* (Heck, 2005). There is a high number of staff identifying student behavior as a significant issue, which leads to the high numbers of referrals. One Latinx student found it to be "enjoyable" to be in ISS because he rather stay away from the teacher "in case if they blew up in front of him for not being able to answer a question properly."

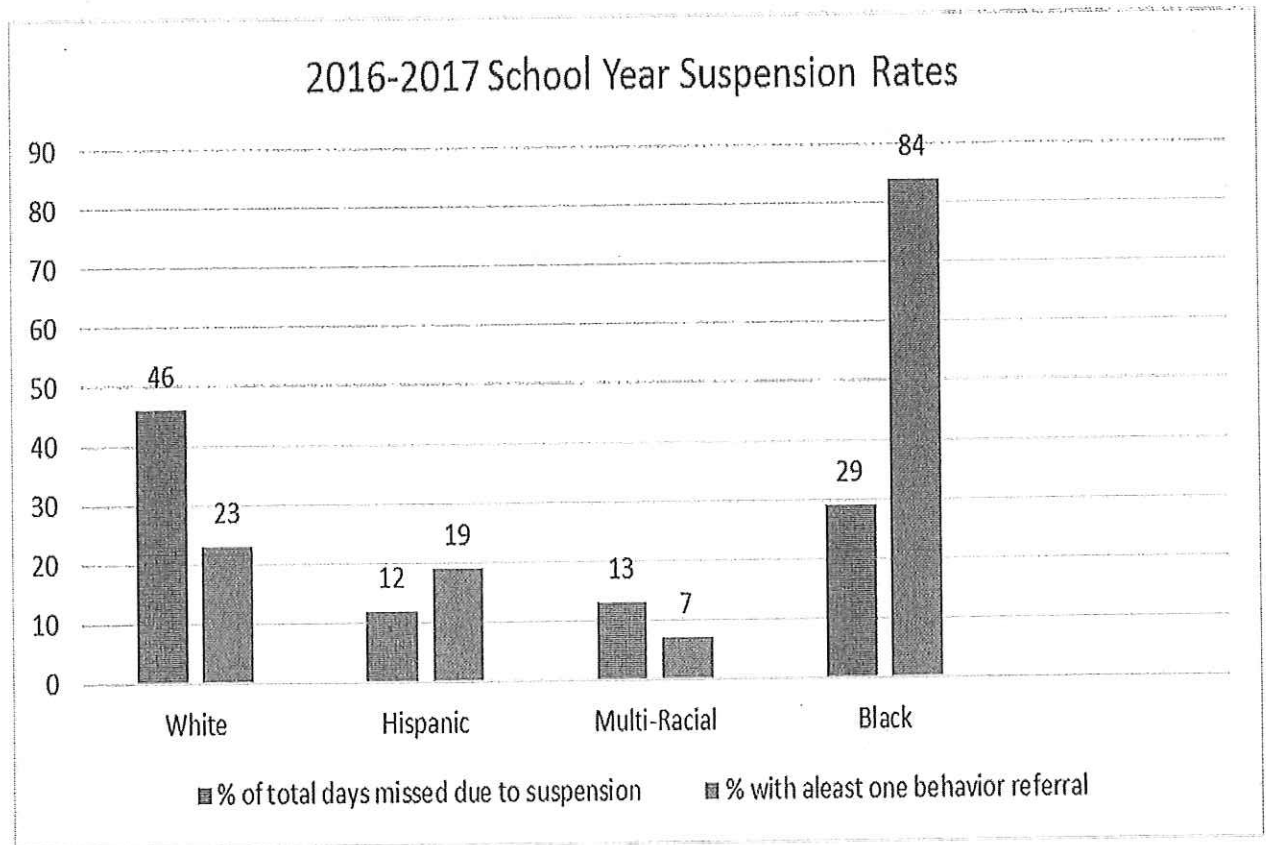


Figure 7a: 2016-2017 School Year Suspension Rates

Source: Erwin Middle School Data Center, 2018

In 2011, nearly 1 in 14 students were suspended, most for non-criminal offenses. Fewer than 6 in 10 of expelled students went to alternative placements, the rest went home - making truancy and crime more common. Students suspended are 3 times as likely to end up in juvenile justice system the next year. Policy implementation is inconsistent and biased and policies fail to discriminate between major and minor disruptions (e.g. food fight arrested and suspended 25 students (Skiba, et al., 2011)). At Erwin Middle, African American students miss nearly 6 times more school days due to suspension than white students and 8 times more than Latinx students.

In the graph (see figure 3c). below from the school-wide student survey, clearly the student body is divided on this issue:

Figure 7b: Racial Composition of Erwin Middle School

Source: Erwin Middle School Community Initiative Center

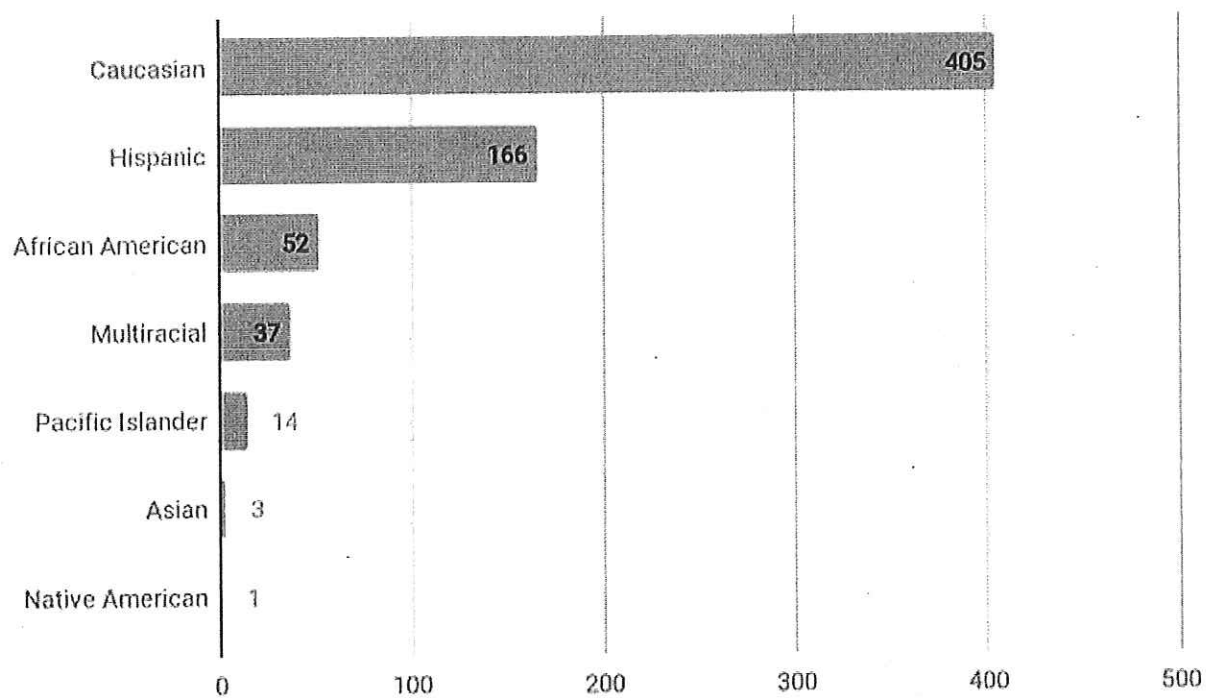


Figure 7c: Racial Composition by Grade Level

Source: Source: Erwin Middle School Community Initiative Center

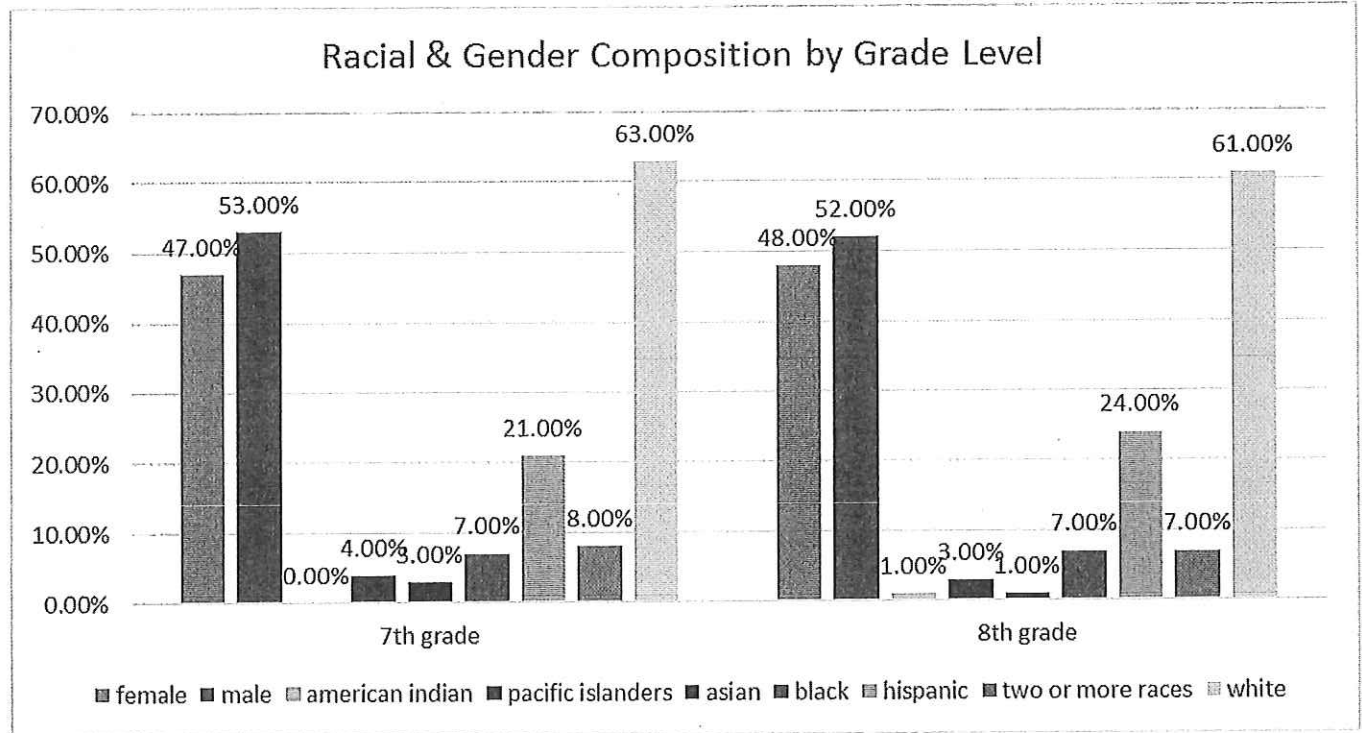
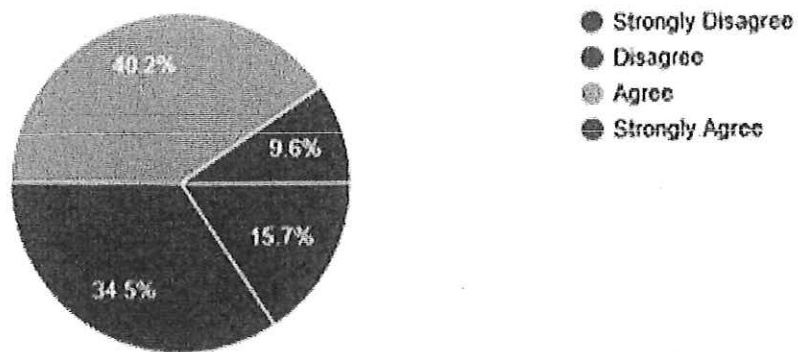


Figure 8a: Student 'Respect' survey

Source: Erwin Middle School Community Initiative Center, 2018

**At my school, students treat others who are different from them with respect.**

502 responses



50% of students felt that students who are “different” are treated with respect (40% agree, 10% strongly agree) and 50% said that they felt “different” students are not treated with respect (34% disagree, 16% strongly disagree).

In terms of overall risk factor (students being at risk due to attendance, behavior or course 8 grades), the following is a look at Erwin Middle students as of March 2018:

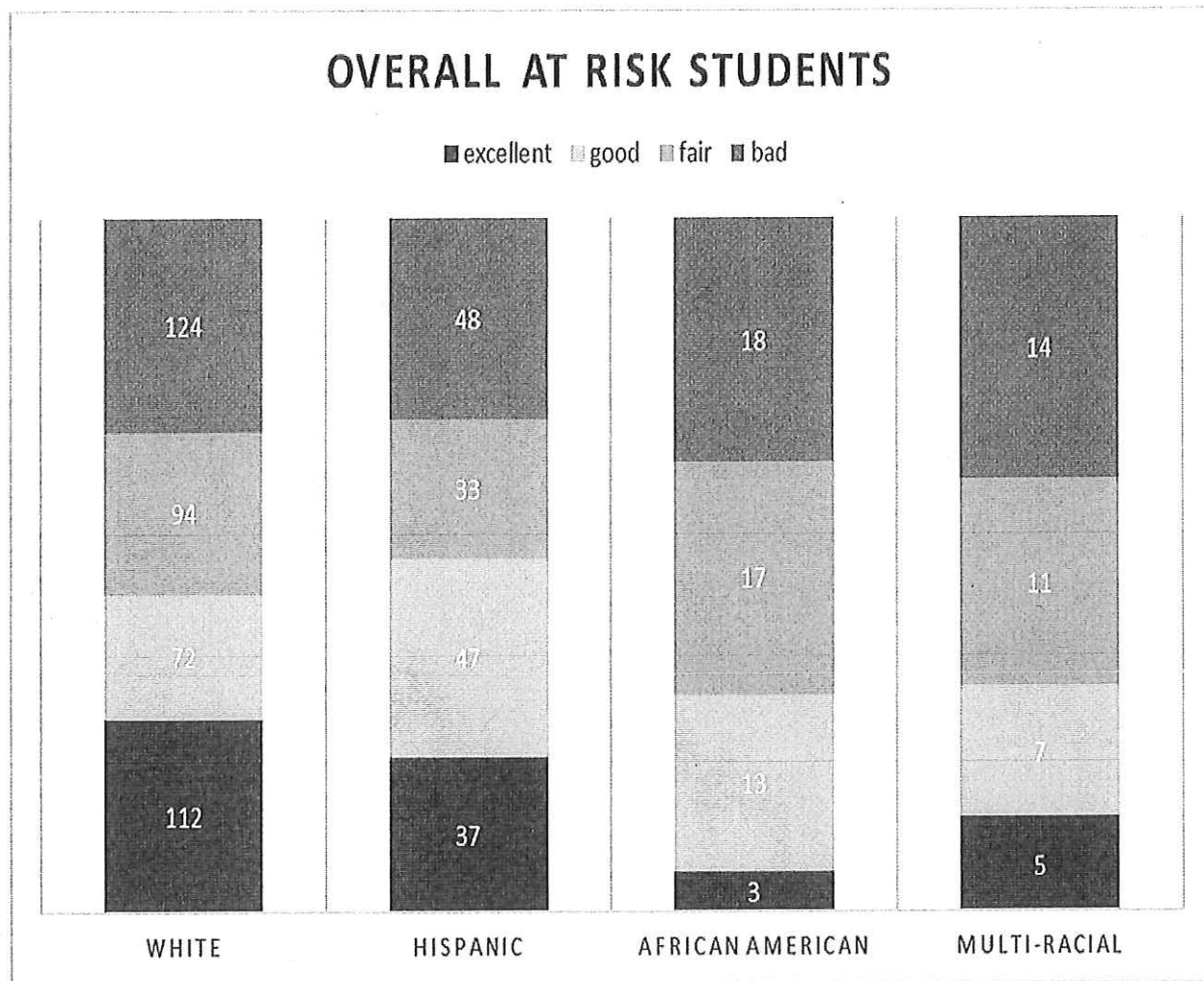


Figure 9a: 'At risk students' at Erwin

Source: Erwin Middle Disciplinary Center, 2018

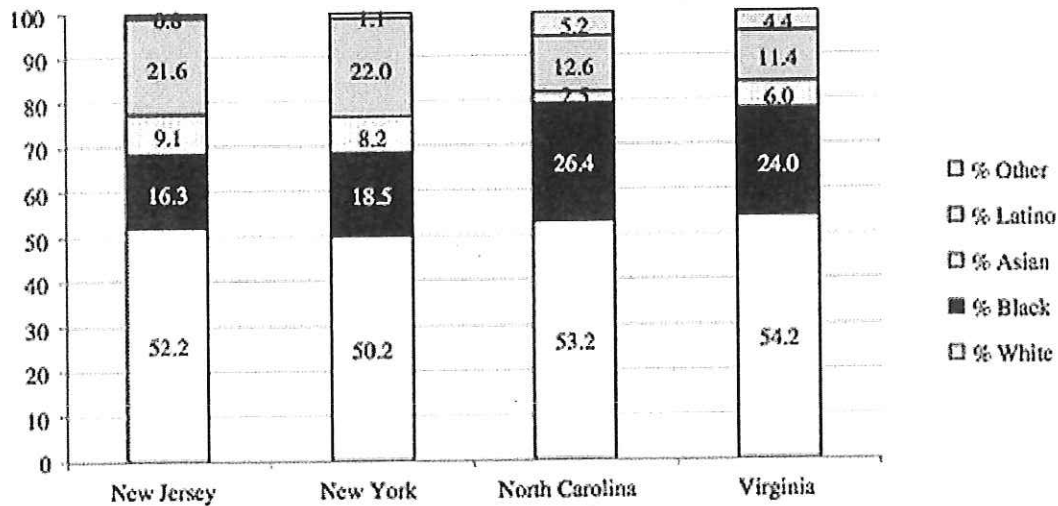
Attendance: No group is at 80% in green, the highest group in red are multiracial. 14 students (27%, 10 out of 37 totals in red), Behavior: Hispanic kids and White kids are above 80% in green, African American kids are less than two points away from 80% (78.85%), Multiracial kids are less than five points away from 80% (75.68%), Academics: No one is at 80% in green, every group is between 20-25% in red.

There are similar racial compositions in North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, and New York. Public school enrollment is becoming more multiracial, but in 2010, white students still accounted for just over half of the enrollment in all four states (see Fig. 3)

In New Jersey and New York, Latino students accounted for the second largest share of enrollment (22 %), and in North Carolina and Virginia, black students comprised the second largest share (24–26 %). While these differences are important, the overall level of non-white students in each of the four states is similar, allowing for an informative comparison of segregation patterns of non-white students from white students in these four states. Black and Latinx students exposed to smaller shares of white students and white students more isolated in fragmented states (Russell J. Skiba, 2016). The typical black and Latinx students in Virginia and North Carolina are exposed to larger shares of white students than in New York and New Jersey. In each state, the typical black student is exposed to the smallest share of white students, although the typical black student's exposure to white students is more limited in New York (17 %) and New Jersey (24 %) than in Virginia (36 %) and North Carolina (35 %). A similar pattern of more limited exposure to white students exists for Latino students in New York and New Jersey while Latino students in the less fragmented states of Virginia and North Carolina, while still underexposed to white students, are exposed to larger shares of white students. In addition to higher levels of segregation for black and Latino students in the two more fragmented Northern states, the typical white student in New York (Saha, 2007).

Figure 10a: State Racial Compositions in 2010-211

Source: (BenDavid-Hadar, Intradistrict equity of public education resources and performance, 2015)



Policymakers are increasingly aware of these patterns, and since 2001 they have typically framed the problem as an “achievement gap” (Miller, 1995). Others have framed the problem as an “education debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and an “opportunity gap”. (Carter & Welner, 2013) Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015): a critical part of the legacy of racism and racial discrimination in the U.S., a legacy that has produced and perpetuated unequal educational opportunities in the present, particularly for low-income children of color. In many schools throughout the country, the conditions under which racial minority children are educated are often woefully inadequate and profoundly unequal. This is particularly the case in communities where poverty is concentrated (Kozol, 1991). A recent study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education (2013) documented pervasive disparities in resources, educational opportunities, and the treatment afforded to children of color. The study concluded that “...any honest assessment must acknowledge that our efforts to date to confront the vast gaps in



educational outcomes separating different groups of young Americans have yet to include a serious and sustained commitment to ending the appalling inequities—in school funding, in early education, in teacher quality, in resources for teachers and students and in governance—that contribute so mightily to these gaps (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 14). Of course, these problems are not new. Rather, they are the direct result of racial discrimination and unequal treatment that have been present throughout U.S. history and have been pervasive in other aspects of American society. Invariably, schools *reflect* broader patterns of privilege and inequality in American society, but while there is considerable pressure placed upon schools to equalize academic outcomes, there is little evidence of similar efforts being waged in other institutions and parts of society.”

One should not be surprised that similar continuities between racial injustice in the past and racial inequities in the present are common in education today. For example, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, which in 1957 was the epicenter of a bitter battle over racial integration, a battle so intense that President Dwight D. Eisenhower found it necessary to deploy U.S. troops to enforce his integration order, nonetheless remains racially imbalanced today. Whereas in 1957, the school had a student body that was nearly all white, in 2012–2013 it had a minority population of 67 % (U.S. News and World Report, 2015). The largely minority (Black) student population is noteworthy because the city itself is relatively integrated (48 % white, 42 % Black). Unlike the past, when segregationist laws and the threat of violence by white mobs kept racial barriers intact, in the current period, de facto segregation is maintained through “choice” and enrollment patterns that are viewed as voluntary. Even more extreme patterns of racial concentration can be found in cities and towns, especially in the north and west (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). Ironically, today school integration is more likely in the south

than in other parts of the country. In most large cities, a dual system of education has emerged: a private, well-resourced system that serves a largely white, affluent student population, and an under-resourced public system that primarily serves poor children of color. The latter schools are often chaotic, occasionally unsafe, and from an academic standpoint, generally inferior in quality. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has described many urban high schools as “dropout factories” because they manage to graduate so few of the students who enroll there.

At Erwin Middle School, The biggest challenges are transportation (school buses). The Middle School must share buses with the high school and lead to re-routes to the Emma, Deaverview, Canterbury Heights, i.e. A majority of community members have limited to no reliable options for public transportation; the Asheville city bus system does not cover the Erwin community. Many students would be unable to travel to and from school without the school-provided bus system. Parents of these bus-riding students often find it nearly impossible to reach the school without transportation; students are unable to participate in after-school activities and parents find themselves distant from the educational lives of their children. While some community resources may be available, the inability to receive transportation exacerbates and perpetuates the poverty cycle (Cuervo, 2016).

Racism and diversity belief differences are prevalent in the school & community that can lead to local and systemic burnout of staff resulted from low teacher pay. Students and families frequently cited racism in roundtable discussions. Families highlighted diversity being a barrier to understanding each other and families highlighted feeling judged for their differences (Taylor, 2007). Many students cited experiencing bullying due to being different (speaking another language, being from another culture, etc.). 16% of teachers this year said cultural, racial, and language barriers (lack of diversity anti-racial bias training) prevented student success.

The significant fears around Immigration (ICE) raids and community violence.

Examples: ICE raids in WNC (2018), West Asheville fatal shootings (2018), Police brutality case in the ADP (August 2017). The reputation at Erwin Middle School received mixed reviews: 16% of teachers said school reputation was hurtful to student success. Until last year, Erwin Middle was rated an F by the Department of Ed, and held a bad reputation for years in the community. Despite incredible people making positive change, this residual “reputation” of Erwin Middle has had continually negative effects on the school.

Erwin Middle School is in need for remedies. The school wants to find solid a community liaison for the Erwin community that includes not only rural communities, but in housing complexes such as Deaverview Pisgah View apartments. There needs to be a need more bilingual education. Many immigrant families express their frustration with language barriers and support. The school introduced The Welcome Parents Call Tree program: The Call Tree group includes, in addition to native English-speaking parents, bilingual parents who represent the other five major languages spoken by students and families at Erwin Middle (Spanish, Ukrainian, Russian, Moldovan and Marshallese). In 2018, EMS (Erwin Middle School) will provide training for staff and teachers around racial bias and micro-aggressions. It will also include cultural competency trainings such as Socio-economic class awareness and teaching strategies & curriculum development for newcomer students. This will benefit for teachers from Kiki, BCS ESL Coach.

The school wants to introduce the Community Resiliency Model (CRM) where Spanish classes for parents, teachers and community providers. Increase individual, group and family counseling (Erwin Middle School Data Center, 2017). The administration will improve In-School Suspension (ISS/ALT) by providing additional training in mindfulness curriculum and

improved space, which it also includes Restorative Justice training. In terms of Student Safety, In October 2017, Our Voice provided Shifting Boundaries curriculum (bullying, identity, safe spaces in school map) by providing more Anti-bullying programs and safe spaces in the school. To increase academic support, the middle school wants to expand field trip access/fund, specifically for 8th grade and 7th grade annual trips: A United Way Board member donated \$5,000 to Erwin Field Trips Life-Experience Fund January 2018. Increase mentors and tutors, including bringing aging population into the school: "Erwin Mentor Network" created (six current groups), eight individual tutors coming into school weekly to aid students with homework help. Ultimately, the school has a long, slow journey to revamp its reputation but it starts with fixing the educational system and illuminate the systematic issues that most students of colors endured.

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