

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: ROAD TO ACADEMIC AND COLLEGE SUCCESS?

STATE OF BLACK ASHEVILLE DOCUMENT

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APRIL 4TH, 2018 | UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA: ASHEVILLE

This research investigates the educational disparities existing within Asheville City schools. Within Asheville City schools, the 4 and 5-year cohort graduation rates for all Asheville City Schools students graduating within the 2016-17 semester rest at 88%. However, major disparities exist within college ready indicators such as End-of-Grade (EOG) assessment, End-of-Course (EOC) assessment, and ACT exams. For minority students, specifically those of Black/African American descent, majority of EOC scores are below a 50% proficiency level, which raises concern towards college readiness and career success after secondary education. In addition, Black/African American as well as Latinx¹ students are more susceptible than their white peers to be the subject of punitive action (i.e. short-term suspensions, long-term suspension, expulsions) and dropouts, which according to the School-to-Prison pipeline theory, directly affects a student's academic performance and their likeness to be incarcerated. The Obama administration guidance was issued based on data that showed that, in 2012, Black students were being suspended at three times the rate as their white peers (Gray 2018) Thus, this question regarding inequity of punitive action initiated in the nation's school and graduation rates of Asheville City Schools becomes crucial: Is punitive action (i.e. short-term and long-term suspensions, expulsions) initiated by Asheville city schools disparate by race and gender? Do these punitive actions impact high school outcomes & college readiness and in what ways?

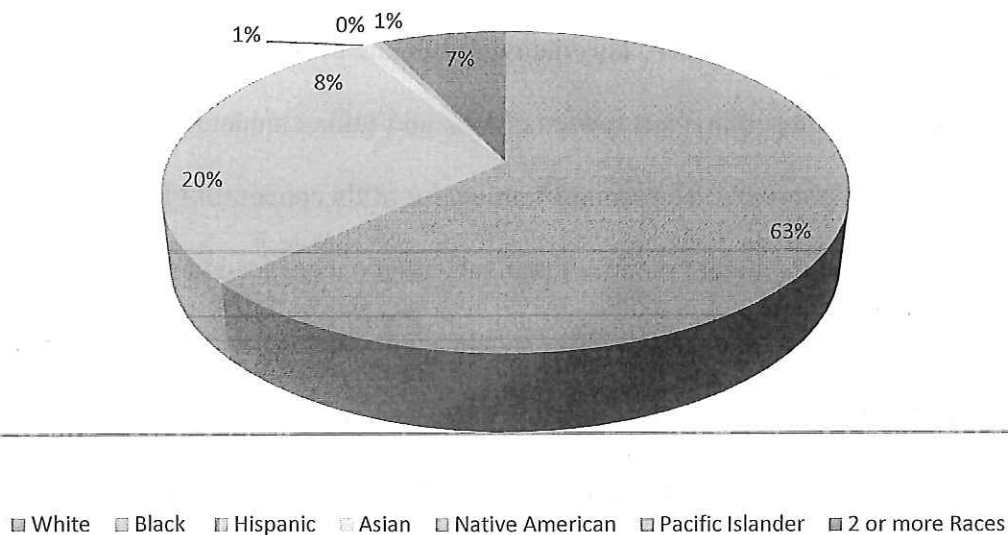
To support this thesis, this paper will adapt the framework of the School-to-Prison pipeline that is specifically focused on preparation of college readiness: it will present data regarding the discipline rates, standardized and college entrance results, dropout rates of Asheville City school released by the National Center for Educational Statistics and the North

¹ a gender neutral term often used in lieu of Latino or Latina (referencing Latin American cultural or racial identity).

Carolina Department of Public Instruction, as well as the data collected from secondary resources such as national remedial enrollment rates, the Youth Justice Project's Racial Equity Report Cards and various online sources. This data will illustrate the disparities between racial groups and negative impact discipline has towards Black and Latinx students enrolled in Asheville City K-12 public schools. The second framework of this paper will identify and suggest relevant regional and national practices that have either succeeded at closing these disparities or have attempted at doing so. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a non-profit that provides alternative learning skills for tutors to improve college readiness for all students, especially those traditionally underrepresented in higher education, has shown great success at closing achievement gaps. The organization's results and teaching methods will be analyzed to suggest alternative approaches to punitive action.

The foremost and crucial factor when considering an objective and statistical approach to understand social inequities within situations such as K-12 punitive disparities, is the analysis of disproportionality. According to a GAO report published earlier this year, Black students enrolled in the 2013-14 school year, accounted for 15.5 percent (7,311,312) of all public-school students (49,750,400) but disproportionately represented nearly 40 percent (approximately 1,120,00) of students suspended from school (2.8 million) (Gray 2018)

2017-2018 Asheville City demographics



This chart reflects data provided by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction for the 2017-18 school year.

The data displayed above presents Asheville City Schools' demographics of the 2017-2018 semester by ethnicity. In the 2017-2018 school year, there are a total of 4,421 students enrolled in Asheville City Schools were 63 percent of students are White (2,790 students); 20 percent Black (roughly 900 students) ; 8 percent Latinx (363 students); 1 percent Asian (47 students); .13 percent Native-American/American-Indian (6 students); .5 percent Pacific Islander (23 students); and 7 percent Multiracial or of 2-or-more Races (316 students). Out of the 4,421 students enrolled in Asheville City Schools, 2,198 are male students and 2,222 are Female students. Out of the 2,198 male students, 63 percent are White (1384 students) ; 21 percent Black (427 students); 7 percent Latinx (164 students); .7 percent Asian (17 students); .18 percent Native-American/American-Indian (4 students); .72 percent Pacific-Islander (16 students); and 6 percent Multiracial or of 2-or-more races (141 students). The demographics for females mirror the demographics of males: 63 percent of female students are White (1,406 students); 19 percent Black (427 students); 9 percent Latinx (198 students); 1.3 percent Asian (30 students); .09

percent Native-American/Pacific-Islander (2 students); .3 percent Pacific Islander (7 students); and 7 percent Multiracial or of 2-or-more races (152 students).

Black students only make up roughly 20 percent of Asheville City School students but constitute nearly three fourths (73.1%) of the students given short-term suspensions compared to White students who only constituted below one fourth (roughly 18%) of the students given short-term suspensions; Latinx students constituted 4.2 percent of the students given short term suspensions

The biggest dilemmas regarding the disparities in punitive action between different ethnic groups are racial biases-implicit or not- and the connection(s) between the student and teacher. Though many factors outside the learning environment affect a student's personal growth and academic performance, such as family relationships, income, and neighborhood experiences; a teacher matters the most. When it comes to student performance on reading and math tests, a teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership ("Understanding Teacher's Impact on Student Achievement" 2017) One could say that administrators (i.e principle, members of the school board) has a profound impact on a student's education, however it is not in the same degree of the teacher's impact. A principle does not fully interact on a socially interacting scale as a teacher does (i.e teaching the students collectively or one-on-one, understanding each students weaknesses). It is the teacher, as a public actor, who has the highest degree of access to influence a student's character and growth.

Racial biases are strong limitations that fractures students of color's growth, development, and achievement toward academic success. No matter whether these biases are

intentional or implicit, both are a negative perceptions and feelings based on the race, ethnicity, appearances, and attitudes of individuals. These biases are usually formed by images reinforced by societal customs (i.e. media, visuals) to be perceived as negative. Intentional racial biases (i.e. racism; prejudice) of course is driven more by intentional hate and dislike towards a racial or ethnic group. Implicit biases in particular processes in the unconscious mind; one is typically not consciously aware of the negative racial biases that develop over the course of their lifetime (Rudd 2014). Research suggests that these racial biases influences a teacher's expectations and attitudes for academic success. For students of color, particularly African American students, these expectations and attitudes commonly take form in cultural deficient thinking, the assumption that underperformance and underachievement is attributed by a student's race and socioeconomic status. The perception that African American and Latinx students, particularly those from low socioeconomic background, do not value education in the same manner as White students who come from middle and upper socioeconomic backgrounds, lead teachers to hold low expectations towards these students' work efforts, intelligence, and academic performance. For example, a 2007 meta-analysis of research found statistically significant evidence that teachers hold lower expectations—either implicitly or explicitly, or both—for African American and Latinx children compared to White students. The results of this study align with previous meta-analyses investigating this issue (“From the Push Out to Lock Up”2014).

It is also theorized that it is not only the teacher that is the most effective at harboring racial biases but the punitive environment of the school. In other words, it is what the school system has unconsciously established for decades: an appropriate, respectful, civilized, and organized environment that is made to favored White students/ White culture. The integration²

² Asheville City public schools desegregated in 1977, 23 years after the rule of Brown v. Board

and acceptance of students of color (i.e. Black and Latinx) added the embodiment of diversity into the school system but did not alter or integrate their cultural norms to the established school environment. Whatever cultural norms/ behavior students of color bring to school is at risk on being responded with punitive action. Thus, the cultural norms that students of color display are expected to be unconsciously assimilative the traditional, White, school environment. Zero tolerance policies provide the opportunity for teachers and administrators—regardless of race or ethnicity—to apply excessive punishment, not just as a consequence of the minor infraction, but also as a reflection of racial bias and a reprisal for the student’s perceived cultural deficiency

(“From the Push Out to Lock Up”2014). Black students are major victims to this. Most have been suspended for what can be categorized as minor incidents: not wearing a belt; “walking Black or dressing “gansta/thug-like”; refusing to take a hat off; texting; and/or talking on the phone.

Dominant beliefs about what it means to display appropriate female behavior can also affect treatment toward students. Black females are usually the victims of this belief. A report from the National Women’s Law Center that looks at schools in Washington, DC, found dress codes to be unnecessarily strict and harmful to female students, and that black girls in particular are often reprimanded or punished for violating these rules mostly by their hair and clothing. According to a student’s personal account, curvier Black girls were singled out for a violation and coded as dressing too “sexual” or “provocative” (Dvorak 2018). In Boston, Massachusetts, the parents of two students enrolled in Mystic Valley Regional Charter School, recounted when both of their children had been threatened with a suspension for natural/afro hair that was either deemed “distracting” or “unkept” (Lattimore 2017). This implies that certain dress codes have cultural biases, with schools banning such as hair, head wraps, nonreligious scarves and do-rags,

which are staples in African American wardrobes. Also studies have shown that schools describe the attitudes of Black females as “resisting”. Negative appraisals of Black females who are loud or have an “attitude”—is theorized to have come from a lack of understanding of Black girls’ desire to be heard and seen in the context of gender and race oppression (Gregory & Anne 2017) Black males are also known to be suspended for this action. This action of talking back or acting out is categorized under “willful defiance”, which came to public attention after California eliminated it in 2015 as a reason for suspension (Gregory & Anne 2017)

Latinx students, in particular, are known to be suspended for speaking Spanish.

According to a student’s personal account, teachers who hear students speaking Spanish to one another assume it is derogatory language aimed at either the school or teacher (personal account).

Students who display behavioral disorders are treated differently depending on their race. A new study in the latest issue of Sociology of Education shows that behavioral disorders (i.e. ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder) at school lead to criminalization for black students, and medicalization for white students (Ramsey 2015). White students who display behavioral disorders are appointed to prescription medication, diagnosis, and/or enrollment into Special-ED courses to specifically deal with their behavior while Black students and Latinx students are directed to the school authorities or police for disrupting a classroom.

These factors reinforce each other and creates an unconscious “hierarchy of caring” that influences who we care about and what groups and individuals are beyond our caring, in a place of invisibility or disposability (Ramsey 2015). Therefore, this creates a fracture within the relationship between students of color and teachers that exist before a student’s starts their public

education. According to Hirschi's Social Theory, an individual's bond to learning institutions consists of four elements: *attachment* to parents, peers, and conventional institutions, such as school and work; *commitment* to long-term educational, occupational, or other conventional goals; belief in the moral validity of the law; and *involvement* in conventional activities, such as school, work, and hobbies (Latimore et al. 2017). Thus, any racial and ethnic disparities in school misbehavior and school-based discipline must focus on the strength of social bonds and ties between students of color to conventional society, such as involvement, commitment, and attachment.

Racial biases of educators are not directly measurable; it is impossible to measure the initiative of which a teacher decides to suspend a student. However, by measuring the quantity of students suspended and the reasons for which they were suspended provides insight into these biases.

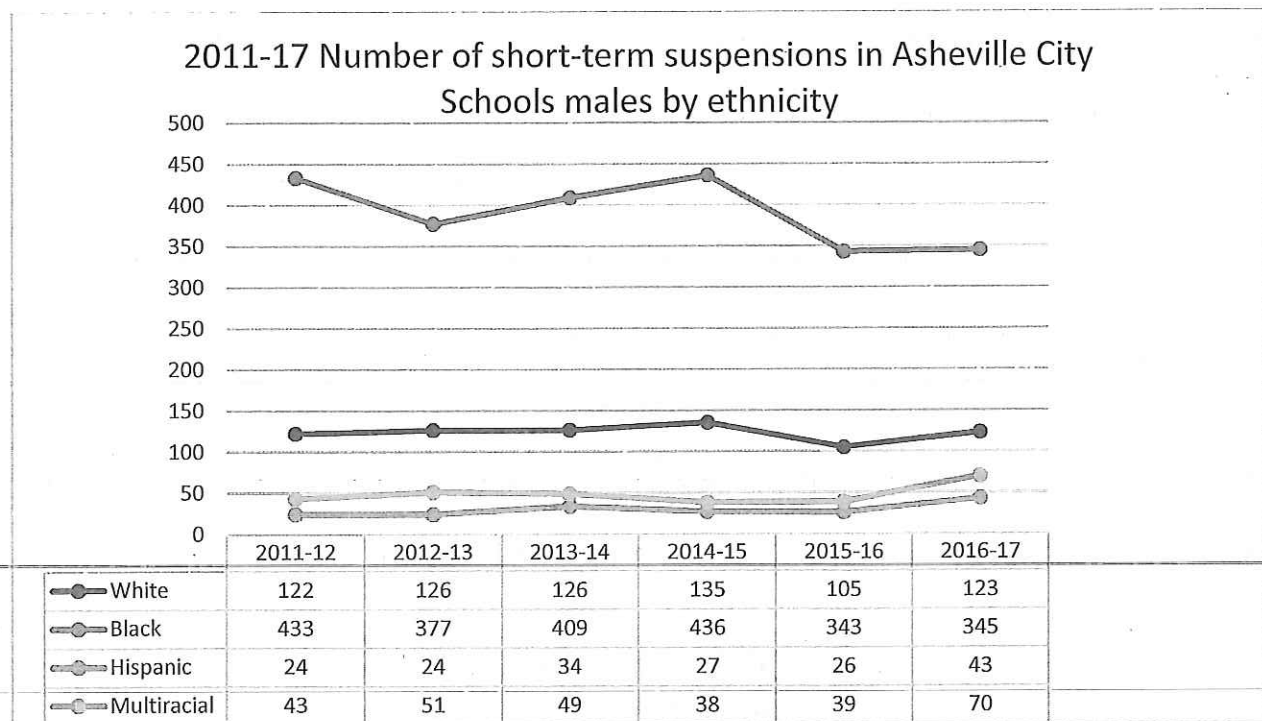
According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, there is no formal nor legal right to appeal an STS. All students facing STS have the right to: (1) an explanation of why they're being suspended (i.e. what school rule they broke and what evidence the school has); (2) tell their side of the story (i.e. this can be a very informal conversation between a student and administrator) and (3) take books home, get homework, and make up tests missed during the suspension (i.e. someone else must pick up work for the student) ("Where are My Suspension Rights?"). Only if given explicit permission from a school administrator, a student is not allowed on school grounds while suspended.

However, this right is not always exercised a principal may impose a suspension, specifically a short-term suspension, without providing the student an opportunity for a hearing if the presence

of the student creates a direct and immediate threat to the safety of other students or staff, or substantially disrupts or interferes with the education of other students or the maintenance of discipline at the school (Chapter 115C 2011)

Asheville City Schools report very insufficient or no data of long-term suspension or expulsions. Within the last six years, there have been 0 reports of expulsion. Prior to the expulsion of any student, the local board shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student's continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school staff (Chapter 115C 2011) If a student is expelled, the school that has called for the student's expulsion experiences defunding.

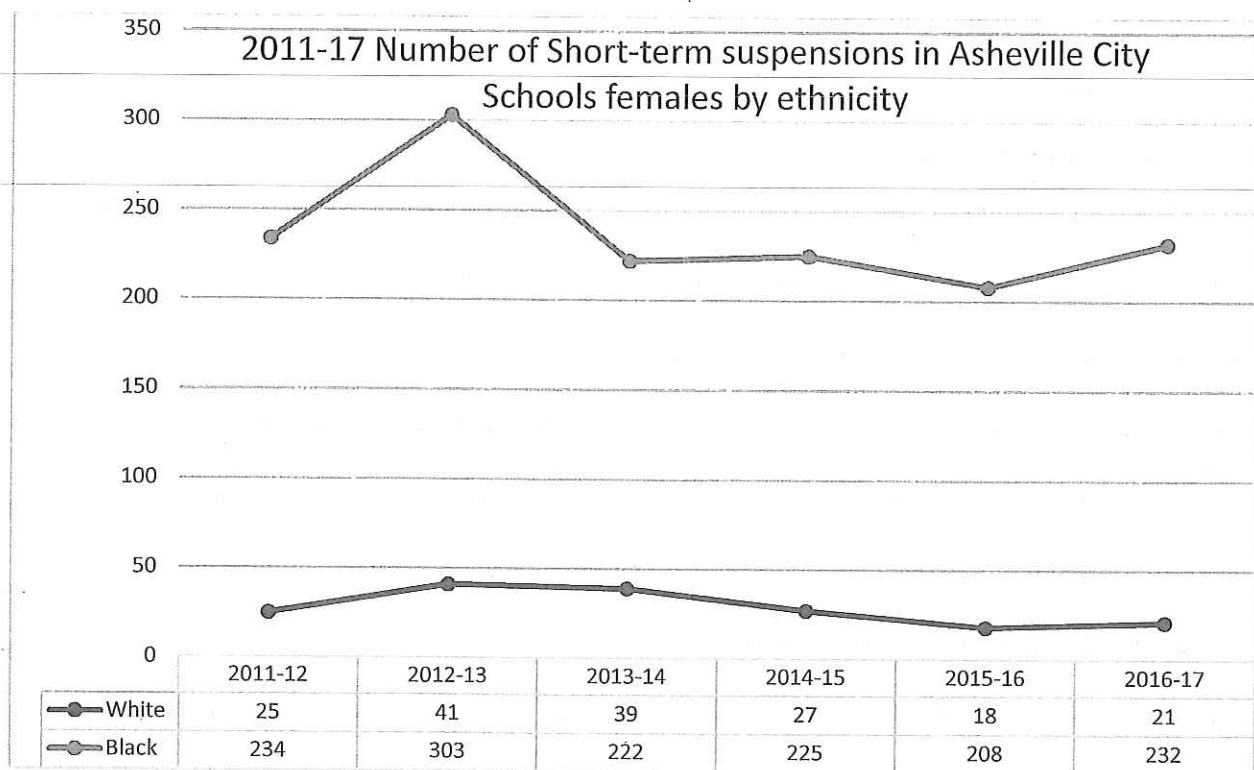
In 2014-15, the Southern Coalition for Social Justices Youth Project, in direct comparisons between African-American and white students, stated that city schools had the greatest racial disparity in rates of short-term suspensions in the state, as suspension were measured as a percentage of the student population versus the number of suspensions (Daffron 2017)



Source: NC Department of Public Instruction

The data displayed above presents the suspensions of males in Asheville City schools through the 2011-12 semester to the 2016-17 semester by ethnic groups. All ethnic groups display a fluctuating trend throughout the 6-semester period. The suspension rates of Black males display 2 downward trends, respectively from the 1.) 2011-12 to the 2012-13 semesters (a decrease of 57) and 2.) the 2014-15 to 2015-16 semesters (a decrease of 93). The suspension rates of Black males also display a 2-period long upward trend that presents a steeper slope (greater increase) than the upward trend of all other ethnic groups. The suspension rate of 377 in the 2012-13 semester increases by 32 (409) during the 2013-14 semester. From the 2013-2014 semester, the rate increases again by 27 in the 2014-15 semester, equaling to 436, the highest suspension rate of all ethnic groups throughout the entire 6-semester period. Black and White males display two of the highest suspension rate of the six semesters, with the Black suspension rate resting at 436 and White suspension rates resting at 135. Latinx male suspension rates display the lowest suspension rates in this semester, resting at 27. The suspension rates of Multiracial males rest at 38, the lowest rates displayed by the group in the 6-semester period.

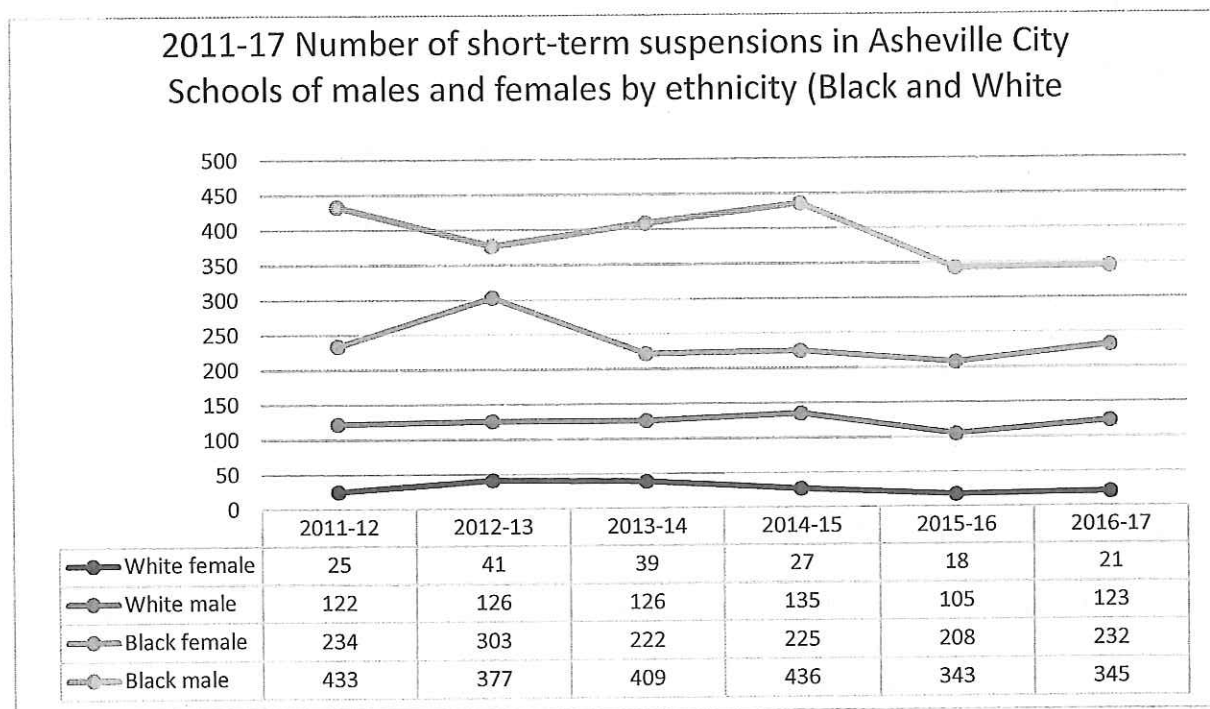
In comparison to the suspension rates of White males, the suspension rates of Black males throughout each semester within the 6-semester period have either tripled or quadrupled those values. Furthermore, the suspension rates of Black males, throughout the 6-semester period, are 6 to 18 times the suspension rates of Hispanics and Multiracial males. The suspension rate of Black males, out of all ethnic groups, are consecutively the highest throughout the 6-semester period, totaling to an overall of 2,343 suspensions. This is approximately three times the suspension rates of White males, which totals to 737 suspension; it is twofold of the overall suspension rates of all other ethnic groups throughout the 6-semester period, which sums to 1,205.



Source NC Department of Public Instruction

The data displayed above presents the suspension of females in Asheville City Schools through the 2011-12 semester to the 2016-17 semester by ethnic group. Both ethnic groups, particularly that of Black females, display a fluctuating trend throughout the 6-semester period. The suspension rates of Black females display two downward trends, respectfully from the 1.)

2012-2013-14 semesters (an 81-rate decrease) and the 2.) 2014-15 to 2015-16 semesters (a 17-rate decrease). White females also display a similar downward trend during the same semester periods, a 2 rate decrease from the 2012-13 to 2013-14 semester and a 9 rate decrease from 2014-13 to 2015-16 semester. During the semester of 2012-13, Black females displayed the highest suspension rate (303) of both ethnic groups during the 6-semester period, compared to the White female's suspension rate of 41, the highest suspension rate of the ethnic group during the 6-semester period. Both suspension rates of each group displayed the highest and lowest suspension rates during the same two semesters; the highest displayed in 2012-13 semester and the lowest displayed in the 2015-16 semester. The suspension rates of Black girls are either 8 to 12 times the rates of White females during the 6-semester-period. The suspension rates of Black females, out of both ethnic groups are consecutively the highest throughout the 6-semester period, totaling to an overall of 1,424. This is approximately nine-fold of the overall suspension rates of White females throughout the 6-semester period, which sums to 171.



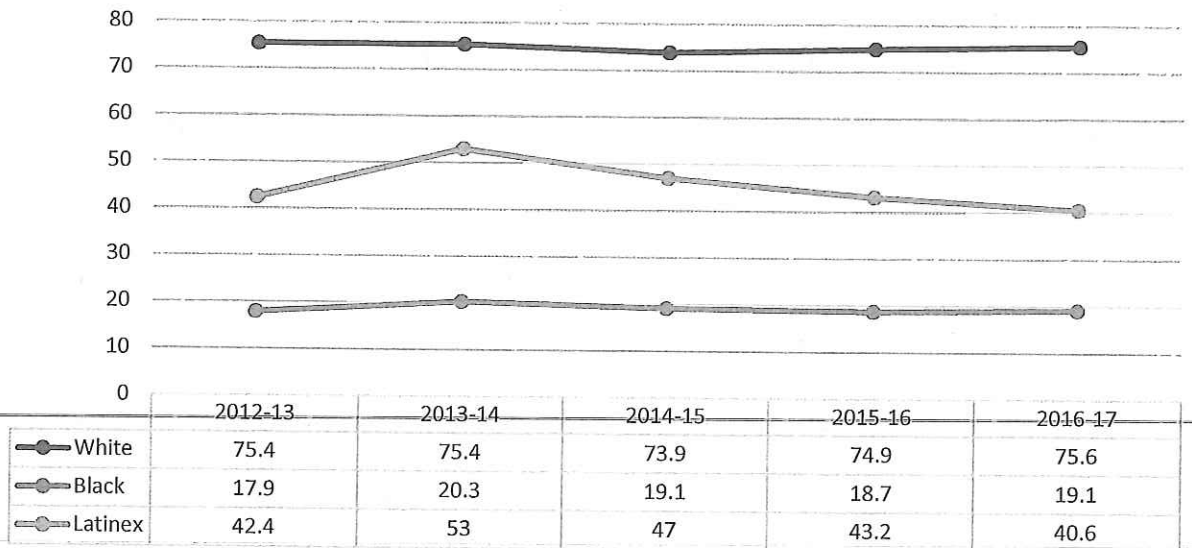
The data displayed above presents a “close-up” of the suspension rates between two ethnic groups (i.e. Blacks; Whites) who present the largest total of suspensions throughout the 6-semester period. Each group displays difference but either mirroring or similar fluctuations throughout the periods. The trends for White males and females are similar and slightly fluctuates over the 6-semester period, compared to Black males and females whose suspension rates fluctuate moderately over the semesters. Only between the semesters of 2015-16 to 2016-17, all groups experience an increase in suspension rates, with each group’s suspension rate increasing by 2 or 24 suspensions. The suspension rates of white females are the lowest suspension rates of the entire semester, only totaling to 141. When compared to Black males, the group with the highest suspension rates throughout the entire 6-semester period, the suspension rate of White females are approximately 11 to 25 times the suspension rates of Black males. The suspension rates of Black females are approximately twice fold the rates of Black males in the semesters of 2011-12, 2013-14, and 2014-15. When compared to White males, the suspension rates of Black females are twofold the rates of White males. Thus, the number of Black students suspended throughout the 6-semester period totals to a sum of 3,767 suspensions. This is approximately four times the total amount of suspensions White students received throughout the 6-semester period, which rest at a total of 908 suspensions. Out of the data shown, it is unknown if the students suspended more than once were counted in the data through out the 6 school years.

According to the Youth Justice Project , in the 2015-16 school year in this district, Black students were 12.1 times more likely than White students to receive a short-term suspension (“Racial Equity Report Cards 2017)

As the school-to-prison pipeline suggest that punitive action affects a student's academic success and growth. Suspended students are often left unsupervised at home or on the streets, slipping out of the mainstream and away from positive peer and adult influences they might otherwise have been exposed to in a formal learning environment ("From the Push Out to Lock Up"2014). The most crucial point to consider is that students that have been suspended are not learning at all if they are legally and socially forbidden to approach a public learning environment. Instead of acting as a mechanism to correct negative behavior into a positive outcome, it is unconsciously distorted into a mechanism that negatively impacts academic achievement and possibility with no measurable positive impact on overall school safety.

Based on 2014-15 data, the Southern Coalition for Social Justice's Youth Justice Project ranked Asheville worst in the state in terms of the disparity between how its African-American and white students performed on end-of-course exams (Daffron 2017)

2012-17 Percentage of Asheville City School students' whose EOC scores are college ready by ethnicity and gender

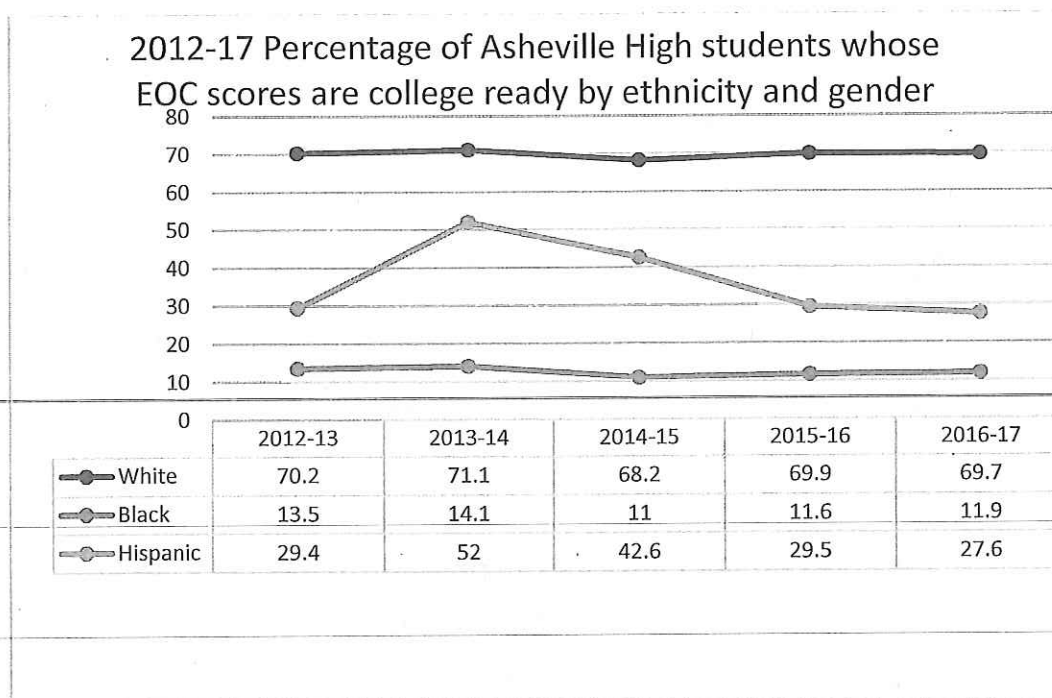


Source: NC Department of Public Instruction

The data displayed above presents the percentage of Asheville City students' whose EOC scores are identified as college ready by ethnicity and gender. According to the North Carolina Department of Instruction, the status college ready, regarding End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments, only applies to students that have scored either a level 4 or 5 ("End-of-Course Exams.")

Between the 2012-2013 to 2016-17 semesters, all ethnic and gender groups display slight fluctuations with a fairly constant trend. Latinx students in particular display moderate fluctuations throughout the 5-semester period that Ranging between the 2012-13 to the 2013-14 semesters. Blacks and Latinos display a slight to moderate increase (a 3 to 9 percent increase) in the percentage of students whose EOC scores were identified as college ready. Black students, out of all ethnic groups presented, display the lowest percentage of students whose EOC scores are defined as college ready out of the 5-semester period, averaging out to 19 percent of Black students who either scored a 4 or 5 on their EOC. This is a 51 percent differential compared to

the 75 percent of White students, whose EOC scores are the highest among all other ethnic groups in the 5-semester.

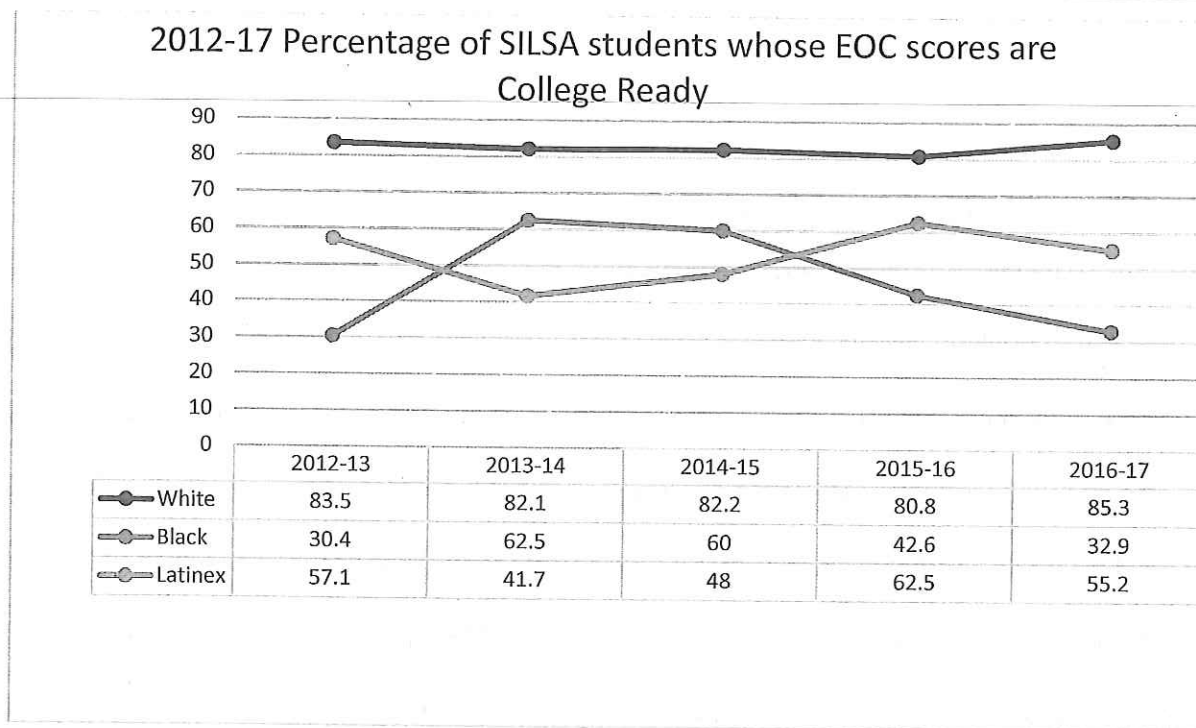


Source: NC Department of Public Instruction

The data presented above displays the percentage of Asheville High students, throughout the 2012-17 school semester, whose EOC scores are identified as college ready by ethnicity. Throughout the 6-semester period, all ethnic groups show slight and moderate fluctuations. This data largely mirrors the data of the percentages of Asheville City School students whose EOC scores were identified as college ready: the percentage of White students whose EOC scores were identified as college ready roughly exceeds the Black percentages by 60 percent and Latinx percentages by roughly by 20-30 percent. White students, throughout the 6-semester period, displayed the highest percentages of students whose EOC scores that were identified as college ready compared to Black students displayed the lowest percentages of students who EOC scores were identified as college ready. Similar to the district's data, all ethnic groups displayed an

increase in the percentage of students whose EOC scores were identified as college ready between the

According to the U.S News & World Report, The School of Inquiry and Life Sciences (SILSAS) at Asheville was ranked 13th among the 591 high schools in terms of preparing students to be college ready (citizen times SILSAS ranking)*. Originated as part of the North Carolina New Schools Project, SILSA is a redesigned high school that integrates curriculum through a life-sciences. SILSA strives to create rigor, relevance and relationships for all students through a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and academic excellence.



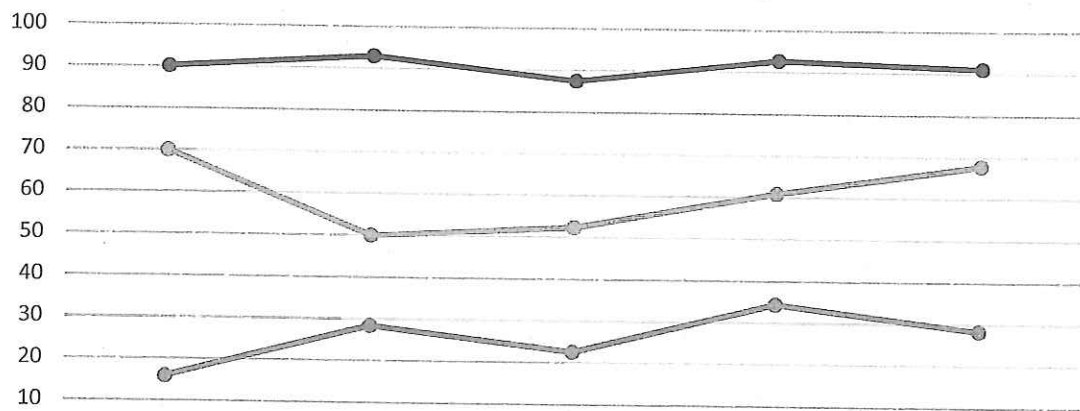
Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

The graph displayed above presents the 2012 through 2017 percentages of SILSA students by ethnicity who scored a 4 or 5 on their EOC. SILSA noticeably displays data that greatly differs from the data of Asheville City Schools and Asheville High: SILSA throughout

the 5 school years have more students (especially those of color) making a 4 or 5 on their EOC. While White students remain the ethnic group with the highest percentage of students scoring a 4 or 5, the disparities between all ethnic groups are less than that of Asheville High and Asheville City Schools. The trends of the minority groups are irregular to that of Asheville City Schools and Asheville High. The average percentage of Black students who scored either a 4 or 5, throughout the 5 school years, is 46 percent. This average is 33.6 percent higher than the average of Asheville High and 27 percent higher than the average of Asheville City Schools.

The ACT defines college and career readiness as “the acquisition of the knowledge and skills student needs to enroll in and succeed in credit bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a two or four-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation (ACT Plan Overview). The ACT composite score that is associated with college readiness (i.e. University of North Carolina (UNC) system average) is a 17. Though the UNC system requires no minimum ACT requirement, seniors/applicants applying with a composite score of 17 or below will have a harder time enrolling into one of the UNC colleges and universities.

2012-17 Percentage of Asheville City students whose ACT scores have met UNC Minimum by ethnicity and gender

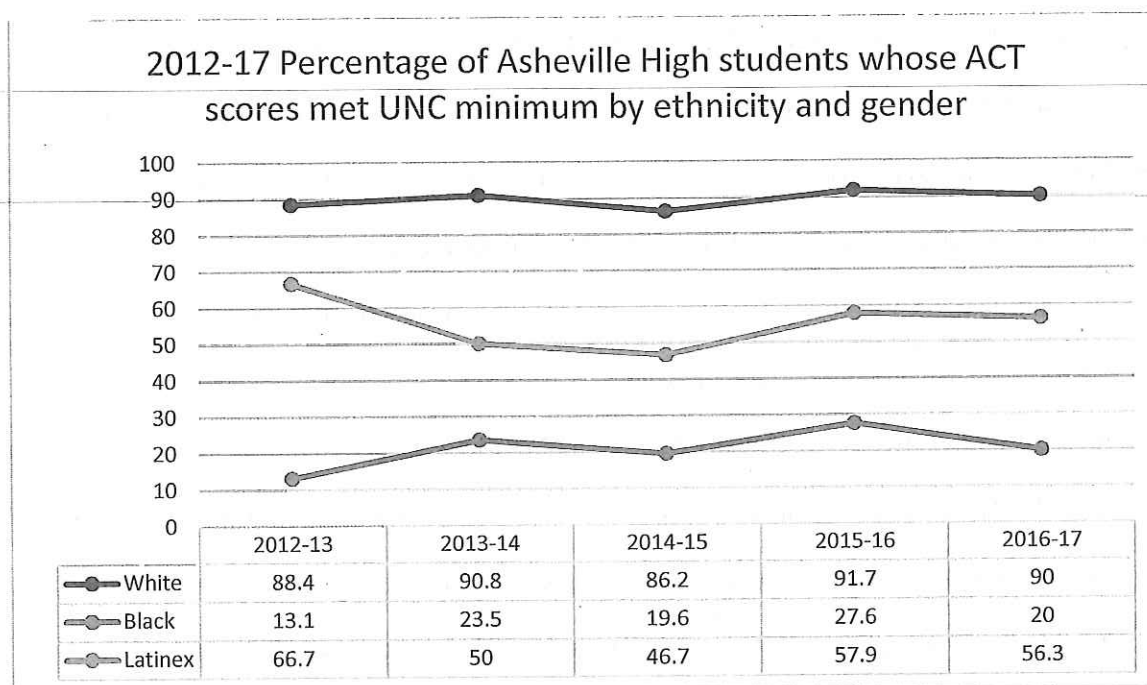


	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
White	90.1	93	87.5	92.8	91.2
Black	15.9	28.4	22.6	34.4	28.3
Hispanic	70	50	52.4	60.9	67.9

The data displayed above presents the percentage of students who scored a 17 or above (UNC minimum) by ethnicity, ranging from the 2012-13 semester to the 2016-17 semester.

Between the 2012-13 to 2016-17 semesters, all ethnic and gender groups display fluctuating trends. The fluctuations of African American Students and White students seem to mirror each other throughout the 5-semester period. From 2012-13 to 2013-14 semesters, both groups experienced an increase in the number of students who scored a 17 or above, then a downward trend from 2013-14 to 2014-15 that increases again from 2014-15 to 2015-16 semester and goes downward again between 2015-16 and 2016-17 semesters. Latinx students experience a rather irregular fluctuation than other groups: the highest number of students who scored a 17 or above are displayed in the 2012-13 semester, then the group experiences its lowest percent rate (50 percent), a downward trend from the same semester to the 2013-14 semester,

then an upward trend is experienced for the remaining 3 semesters. In the 2012-13 semester, only 15.3 percent of African American students scored a 17 or above, compared to all the students of other ethnic groups, which of whom 70 percent or more had scored a 17 or above (54-77 percent difference). The same narrative is also presented in the semester 2015-16, where 34.4 percent of African American student scored a 17 or above, compared to 60 percent of Latinx students and 92.8 percent of White students who scored a 17 or above (approximately 54-77 percent difference). All ethnic groups except for African American students, throughout the 5-semester period, had 50 percent or more students who scored a 17 or above.

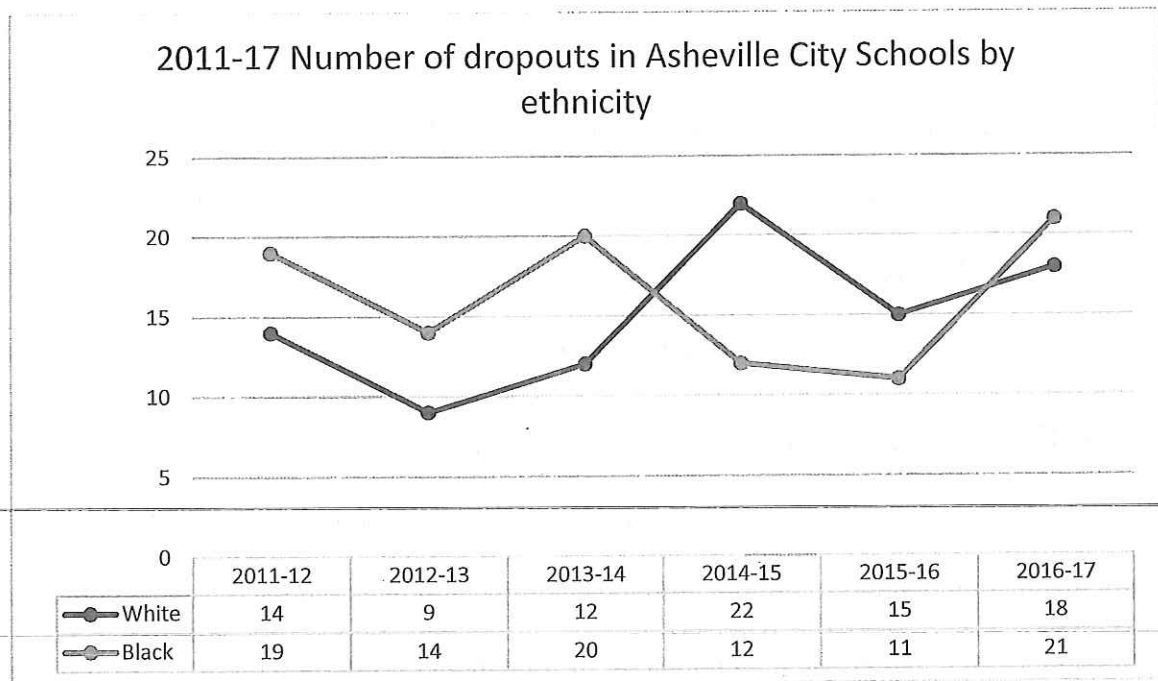


Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

The graph displayed above presents percentage of Asheville High students who scored a 17 or above on the ACT by ethnicity, through 2012 to 2017. Throughout the entire 5 school years, all ethnic groups display fluctuating trends. Black students and White students, specifically, display mirror trends at an approximately 60 percent difference: Between the 2012-13 to 2013-14 school year, both groups experience an increase in the percentage of students who scored a 17 or higher, then both groups

experience a decrease between the 2013-14 to 2015-14 school years; an increase happens again between the 2014-15 to 2015-16 years; and a decrease happens again between 2015-16 to 2016-17 school years. Latinx students is the only ethnic group that have displayed an irregular trend throughout the 6 years, first starting between the 2012-13 to 2013-14 school years with a decrease in the percentage of students who scored a 17 or above. White students, throughout the 5 years, displayed the highest percentage of students who scored either a 17 or above on their ACT compared to Black students, who displayed the lowest percentage. Furthermore, the average percent of white students who scored either a 17 or above on their ACT rest at 89.42 percent while the average percent of Latinx students who scored a 17 or higher rest at 55.5; Blacks 20.7 percent. Ultimately this data mirrors the City's data: the average percent of White students who scored a 17 or above in Asheville City Schools is 90.92 percent compared to Asheville High's average of 89.42; the average percent of Latinx students who scored a 17 or above in the school district is 60.2 percent compared to High's average of 55.5 percent; the average percent of Black students in the school district who scored a 17 or above is 25.9 percent compared to High's average of 20.7 percent. In both data sets (i.e. City; High), White students mirror black students with the same increasing and decreasing trends occurring between the same years. Latinx students in both sets, start off with the irregularity of decreasing in between the years of 2012-13 to 2013-14. Lastly, White students, in both data sets, display the highest percent of students who scored a 17 or above while Latinx students display data that is 2nd highest, and Blacks as the lowest. Asheville High has a higher amount of minority students than that of SILSA and as a result, contributes more data enough for it to greatly influence the district's data.

Researchers have found that excessive suspensions and expulsions lead to various negative outcomes for students, including dropping out of school — and studies have shown that high school dropouts are more likely to be incarcerated than those who graduate high school (“From the Push Out to Lock Up”2014). Specifically, students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out by the 10th grade than students who have never been suspended.



Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

The data above displays the number of dropouts in Asheville city schools, throughout 2011-17, by ethnicity. Throughout the 6 school-years, both Black and White students display fluctuating trends. Both Black and White students show high dropout rates, specifically Blacks in the 2016-17 school year (21) and Whites in the 2014-15 year (22). There are no significant disparities in dropout rates. The only exception is between the 2011-12 and 2013-14 school years, where the dropout rate of Black students to White students differentiated by 6-8 dropouts. Throughout the entire 6 years, a total of 97 Black students dropped out, compared to the 90 white students who have dropped out.

Practices initiated to relieve disparities and close achievement gaps

Many national and local practices have been executed to close the disparity gap within punitive action and education. Many have specifically targeted the approaches of dealing with misbehaving students, as approaches (i.e. racial/implicit biases) are contributing factors that

persist the existence of the school-to-prison pipeline. According to Youth Justice Project, suggestions for dismantling the pipeline are directed to lowering the class size, having an engaging curriculum, staff training, involving parents and community, and building emotional and social learning programs (“What is the School-to-Prison Pipeline?”). All of these suggestion list hint at social connecting environment. As stated earlier within the paper, a strong social bond between the teacher and student is crucial toward rewarding behavior and academic success.

One of the many practices initiated throughout the nation are Restorative practices. Restorative Practices are a framework for building community and for responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making the environment welcoming. Though there are many restorative practices, the one that is commonly known is Restorative Peace-making Circles.

Sitting in a circle shows a stronger sense of community. Every person in the circle shares responsibility for its functioning. The circle structure is more “yes-and” than “either-or” (Clifford 2016). Thus, dialogue is established rather than a traditional didactic undertone. A leader is picked as an individual who host question and each person takes the lead in turn when it is their turn to speak. Guidelines are sometimes established while other times the circle makes its own agreements. Decisions are made, but by consensus of the whole group; sometimes this means decisions come slowly or take unexpected forms. This allows teachers to see students more as an individual than just a student enrolled into the classroom

In 2015, Dallas Independent School District piloted Restorative Peacemaking Circles in six Dallas elementary and middle schools – Caillet Elementary, Dunbar Learning Center, and Medrano, Gaston, Hood and Boude Storey middle schools. By next semester, in-school

suspensions at the piloted schools dropped by 70%. Out-of-school suspensions dropped by 77%. The number of students sent to alternative school was cut in half (Long 2016).

The Youth Justice Project also suggest diversifying the faculty staff in public schools. Studies show consistent evidence that students are less likely to be removed from school as punishment when they and their teachers are the same race (Lindsay 2017). This effect is driven almost entirely by Black students, especially males, who are less likely to be met with punitive action when taught by Black teachers.

Asheville City Schools have initiated its own approach toward eliminating racial disparities regarding punitive action, End-of-Course and ACT exams. The Asheville City Schools Foundation board and staff began to look into racial equity with two years of self-assessment and training starting in 2012. In 2014, ACSF offered racial equity training to 50 participants - including four school-based teams and ACSF board members. The school-based teams received grant funding from ACSF to train fellow staff members and worked to identify barriers at their schools.

In Asheville High and SILSA, the Listening Project is aimed to close these disparities by identifying current successes and challenges for high school students. Its goals are to initiate community-based activities and events to specifically get a sharper view on where the disparities begin (“Listening Project at Asheville High”). Currently there are no results available.

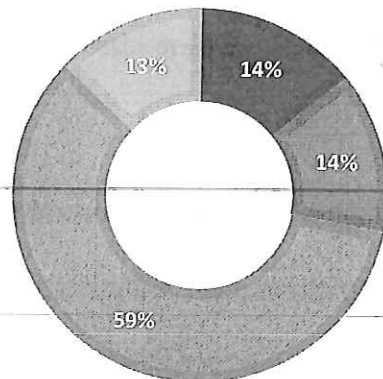
AVID

Another national and local organization that is known to deliver stellar results is AVID. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a nonprofit that changes lives by helping schools shift to a more equitable, student-centered approach. AVID trains 70,000 educators annually to

close the opportunity gap, so they can prepare all students for college, careers, and life (AVID Center).

AVID SENIOR'S RACE/ETHNICITY - CLASS OF 2017

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Other

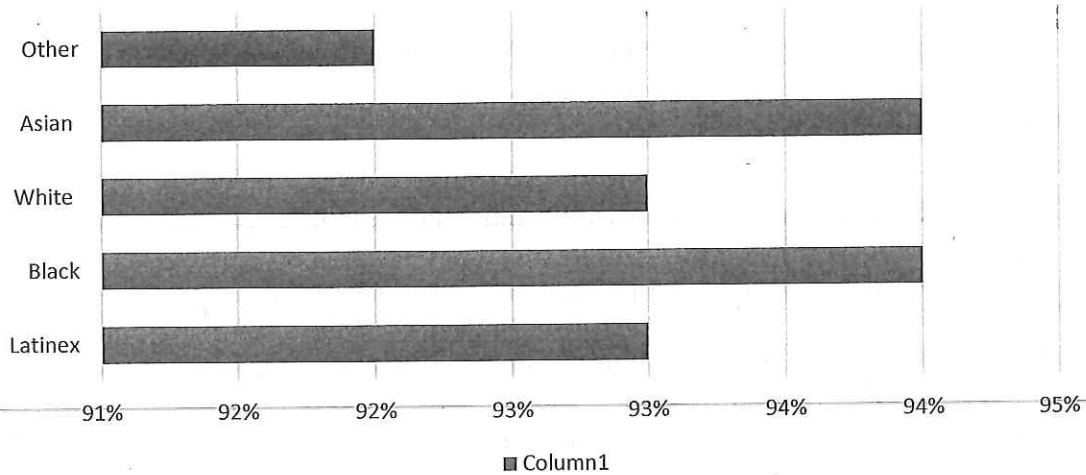


Source: AVID Data Center 2017

This pie chart displays the demographic make up of AVID's 2017 senior class. Unlike most of the traditional schools, AVID's program largely consist of minority students, specifically those of Latinx descent (59%). There seems to be an equal percentage of White and Black students and students of other races who are enrolled in AVID.

Regardless of their socio-economic background or lifestyles, students enrolled in AVID overcome obstacles and achieve stellar success. They graduate and attend college at higher rates, but more importantly, they can think critically, collaborate, and set high expectations to confidently conquer the challenges that await them (AVID Center)

2017 Percent of AVID Seniors Completing Four-year College Entrance Requirements



Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native students, students of two or more races, and students who declined to state.

AVID. (2017). AVID senior data collection: N = 44,174 AVID seniors

The graph displayed above shows the percent of AVID seniors completing 4-year college entrance requirements, in 2017. No major disparities between racial groups are present. Black and Asian seniors display the highest percent of seniors who completed 4-year college requirements (94%), while White and Latinx students display an equal percent of seniors who completed 4-year college entrance exams. Other students display 92 percent of students who passed 4-year college entrance exams.

The data of Asheville's City Schools AVID program reflect national data. Some 300 students in grades six through 12 participate in AVID; they attend Asheville High School, Asheville Middle School, and SILSA (School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville), housed in Asheville High School. Students in AVID typically have a GPA of 2.0 to 3.5, are usually the first in their family to attend college, and many come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Stanz 2018). As of 2016, 100 percent of AVID high school seniors have been

accepted into a college program, and more than 90 percent have chosen to attend a four-year college (Stanz 2018).

AVID has a crucial teaching methods that are assumed to result in AVID's stellar outcomes: Socratic Seminar

Socratic Seminar largely resembles Restorative Peace-making Circles; however, the only difference is that Socratic Seminar incorporates academic material into its methodology. It applies AVID's WICOR (i.e. Writing Inquiry Collaboration Organization Reading) techniques and the AVID notetaking system. The seminars are organized in a way to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with "right" answers ("AVID Socratic Seminar"). Dialogue becomes an exploratory mechanism that involves the suspension of biases and prejudices. Students try to seek deeper understanding to information by creating a dialectic class in regards to a specific text. Participants in a Socratic Seminar respond to one another with respect by carefully listening instead of interrupting. Students are encouraged to "paraphrase" essential elements of other ideas before responding, either in support of or in disagreement. While communicating to other students, members look each other in the "eyes" and use each other names. This simple act of socialization reinforces appropriate behaviors, collaboration, and promotes team building ("AVID Socratic Seminar").

According to AVID director Kim Kessaris, AVID's approach to punitive action is similar to the manner of Restorative Peace-making Circles. Instead of traditional kicking a student out of class, AVID tutors would wait after the session, sit-down and talk with the misbehaving student. If pulled out during the session, the tutor would either take the student on a walk, let the student express his or her feelings, or let the student sit and be alone for a moment. Sending students to the office, writing a referral, or calling the student's parents, is considered "last-resort" actions. It

is implied that the “sit-down” alternative applies to what traditional punitive action categorizes as “willful defiance” or minor mishaps (i.e. talking loud, talking back, etc), the main contributors of suspensions.

AVID’s principles for building a learning community	
1.)	Children are affirmed in their cultural connections
2.)	Tutors are personally inviting
3.)	Classrooms are physically inviting
4.)	Students are reinforced for academic development
5.)	Changes made to accommodate culture are essential to learning
6.)	Classroom is managed with firm, consistent, loving control
7.)	Interactions stress collectivity rather than individuality

Data Source: AVID Center 2017

The chart above displays AVID’s principles for building a learning community. The principles listed are centered around a student-centered, collaborative, cultural conscious welcoming environment. Compared to Asheville High’s Listening Project, AVID, like the Asheville City Schools Foundation, acknowledges cultural cognizance (i.e. children are affirmed in their cultural connections) as an essential part of a teaching tool. However, this cultural cognizant principle is not stand-alone; it is reinforced with all of the principles and techniques (i.e. Socratic Seminar) that AVID deploys.

Thus, the demographics of AVIDs students and teaching methods/strategies is theorized to be a major contributor towards the organizations approach toward discipline. Without what

might be called “culturally conscious implementation with a reinforcement of student-centered training,” there is the risk that advantaged students will reap the rewards of less punitive discipline policies and practices while marginalized students continue to receive more punitive treatment (Gregory & Anne 2017)

Conclusion

Based on the information and narratives analyzed, punitive action is disparate by race and gender in Asheville City Schools. Students of color, specifically Black students, make up roughly 20 percent (900 students) of all students in Asheville City Schools however an average of approximately 600³ students have been suspended⁴ in the last six school years. These disparities in discipline persist because of the racial biases-implicit or not- that is displayed by predominately teachers. These racial biases fracture the relationship between students of color and teachers.

Regarding this information, punitive action negatively affects a student of color’s academic growth and college readiness and it commonly comes in the form of short-terms suspensions, whether it is out-of-school suspension or in-school suspension). Most disparities particularly come from Asheville High, which has a larger population of students of color. Approaches that are quite successful at closing racial disparities such as Restorative Peacemaking Circles, diversifying school faculty, AVID deploy student-centered and cultural cognizant teaching methods reinforce each other to create a welcoming environment. Thus, suggestion to closing the racial disparities in Asheville City Schools are: (1) to employ teachers and school administration

³ Both Black females and males

⁴ Unknown if students are recounted

in training that prepares them in adopting a student-centered (i.e. Restorative Peacemaking Circles and cultural cognizant methodology; (2) Expand AVID to all Asheville City Schools; or/ and (3) Reaffirmation and emphasis of a student rights by administrators when suspended

The racial disparities persisting in punitive action, End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and ACT results mirrors the racial inequities persisting in the U.S as a whole. The world is more complex than statistical units organized in an objective and numerical fashion. What makes a difference is how one will use it: either the data presented will be used to 1.) sustain an education system which existence is to purposefully create disparities based on race by a omissive (i.e. ignoring purposefully; placing all racial data under the single numerical unit called “all students”) or laissez-faire (i.e. the system will correct itself overtime) mechanism; 2.) justify the counterargument’s conservative undertone, that all minorities (i.e. Blacks; Hispanics) are by nature underperforming and providing resources would be wasteful to these group who “intentionally” underperforms (i.e. resource-hoarding; fear of scarcity); or 3.) see the situation as an anomaly and problem that need to be addressed immediately, which will annihilate the divisive foundation of the education system.

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