



HANOVER
RESEARCH

EQUITY AUDIT RESEARCH RESULTS

Wallingford -Swarthmore School District

School Board Meeting March 28, 2022

GOAL OF THIS PRESENTATION:

To summarize the major themes and key findings of Hanover's **equity audit** at WSSD.

1. Hanover Research: who we are and what we do
2. Description of the 3 studies that make up the equity audit
3. Research findings and recommendations
4. Q&A

THE HANOVER TEAM



Matt Ragone, Ph. D.

Senior Advisor, K-12 Education

Dr. Matt Ragone is a veteran educator with over 25 years' experience in public education. For the last several years, Dr. Ragone has applied his practical knowledge and experience to research projects for public school districts across the nation as they try to address the most significant challenges facing public schools today. Recent research topics have included equity and inclusion, program evaluation, social-emotional learning strategies, student and staff mental wellness, diverse staffing best practices, planning for curricular innovations (e.g., CTE, STEM, and eSports), and national benchmarking of graduation rates and diploma requirements. Dr. Ragone is a trained qualitative researcher in education policy, specializing in teacher evaluation policy research. He also serves as an adjunct professor at George Mason University teaching undergraduate and graduate students on topics related to education reform, politics in American education, and education policy implementation. Dr. Ragone received his Ph.D. from George Mason University, an Education Specialists degree in Administration and Supervision from Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from George Mason University.

THE HANOVER TEAM



Leila Nuland, Ph.D.

Managing Content Director

Dr. Leila Nuland is a K12 consultant with 19 years of experience working in the K12 sector as a former classroom teacher, 9th Grade Academy Team Lead, education researcher, and consultant. Leila has broad experience in research design and execution, including extensive training and experience with design-based research, and curriculum development. Leila brings a breadth of experience designing program evaluations and equity audits and consults with district leaders to build their capacity to make informed decisions and reforms. Dr. Nuland was trained in research methodology and statistics while earning her M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University and PhD from the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University.

HANOVER BACKGROUND & EXPERTISE

Since January 2008, Hanover Research has supported over 700 different K-12 school districts and more than 20 million students.



Our teams include 200 analysts and 35 PhDs
PhDs include expertise in all methodologies, education leadership, education policy, literacy, teacher education, special education, and communication



The K-12 content team has a wide range of practical experience. Our team is comprised of former high school & charter school principals, instructional coaches, data analysts, and teachers.



OUR MODEL

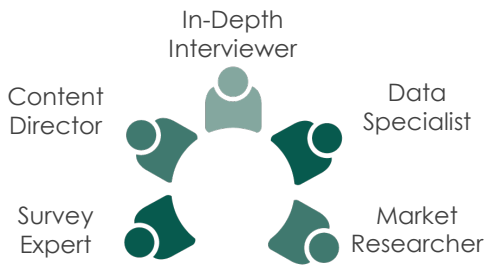
Unlimited access to customized research for a fixed, annual fee.

RESEARCH APPLICATIONS



- ANALYZE DATA:** Program evaluation, dashboard development, data visualization
- GATHER FEEDBACK:** Survey design, administration and analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups
- BENCHMARK PEERS:** Comparative analysis on departmental practices, virtual networking
- IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES:** Literature synthesis on key topics and detailed case studies

BREADTH OF EXPERTISE



- DATA ANALYSIS**
Data Scientist
Psychometrician
PhD, Mathematics & Statistics
GIS Analyst
- GENERALIST**
PhD, Educational Leadership
PhD, Education Policy
PhD, Economics
M.A., Organizational Management
Reading Specialist
- SURVEY DESIGN**
Social Science Analyst
PhD, Developmental Psychology
PhD, Ethnography
Focus Group Moderator
- TOOLS**
Data – R, SPSS, Stata, Tableau
Survey – Qualtrics, SurveyGizmo
Trends – JobsEQ, CrimsonHexagon
Visualization – Tableau, D3

EQUITY AUDIT: 3 STUDIES

- The focus of an equity audit is to view the district's practices through a data analysis of **academic, behavioral, and opportunity metrics** and the **perceptions of stakeholders**.
- For WSSD, the equity audit was completed through **three concurrent research projects**.



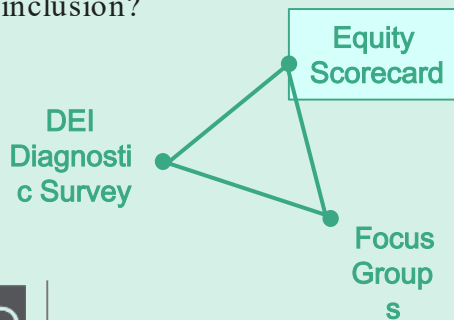
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What major themes and key findings emerge, particularly related to **equity of access for academic programs**?
2. What major themes and key findings emerge across all studies, particularly related to the district's efforts to provide an **equitable and welcoming learning environment for students**?
3. What major themes and key findings emerge across all studies, particularly related to the district's efforts to provide an **equitable and welcoming work environment for teachers and staff**?
4. **What key practices should district leadership consider** in upcoming conversations about the current climate in WSSD for diversity, equity, and inclusion?



METHODOLOGY: EQUITY SCORECARD

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- WSSD Data from 2015-16 through 2020-21
- Hanover Dashboard includes student outcomes and early warning indicators
- Data includes:
 - Enrollment information
 - Demographic characteristics
 - Academic outcomes
 - Behavioral outcomes
 - Participation in various programs and courses

Representation indices (RI)
measure disproportionality

Example of Underrepresentation

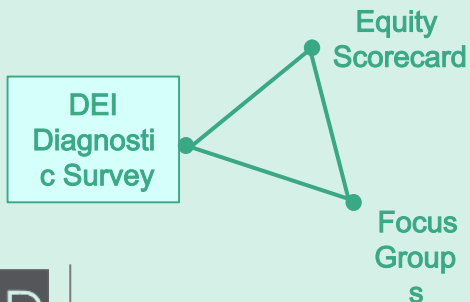
If % Black students participating in the gifted program is LESS THAN % Black students overall, then Black students are **UNDERREPRESENTED** in the gifted program.

Example of Overrepresentation

If % Black students participating in the gifted program is GREATER THAN % Black students overall, then Black students are **OVERREPRESENTED** in the gifted program.

METHODOLOGY: DEI DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY

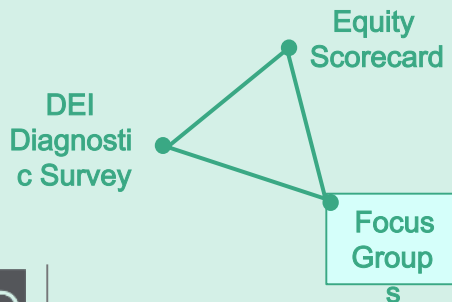
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- In January 2022, members of the WSSD community—2,244 students, parents, and staff—completed Hanover's Equity and Inclusion Diagnostic Survey.
- Hanover designed a dashboard to display the results, segmented by multiple characteristics.
- District leaders can use the results in the dashboard to understand stakeholder perceptions of the district's effectiveness in key equity-related areas, such as providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

METHODOLOGY: FOCUS GROUPS

1. What major themes and key findings emerge, particularly related to **equity of access for academic programs**?
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- Hanover scheduled five synchronous, online focus groups.
- WSSD provided Hanover with an abbreviated list of district staff, students, and parents from which to recruit participants for the focus groups.
- In the end, 5 groups:
 - Students in Grades 9-12 (1 group)
 - Staff (2 groups)
 - Parents (2 groups)



Research question #1:

WHAT MAJOR THEMES AND KEY FINDINGS EMERGE, PARTICULARLY RELATED TO EQUITY OF ACCESS FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS?

MAJOR THEMES

- Academic tracking locks students in early
- Access to advanced coursework
- Barriers to parent involvement

RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ACADEMIC TRACKING LOCKS STUDENTS IN EARLY

State standardized measures of academic proficiency, starting in Grade 3, indicate gaps between various groups (e.g., Black, and Hispanic students when compared to White students).

Gaps in reading proficiency across student groups begin in kindergarten and persist into later grades, affecting learning in other subjects.

RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ACADEMIC SUCCESS VARY BY STUDENT GROUP

Student Success Outcomes

		White	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Non-LEP	LEP	Without IEP	With IEP	Not Econ. Dis.	Econ. Dis.	Female	Male
Academics	Achieved GPA of 3.0 or Higher	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	P	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under
	Algebra I Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	Over	P	Over	Over	Under	P	Under	P	P
	Biology Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	Under	P	Over	Over	Under	P	Under	P	P
	ELA Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P
	Literature Proficient	P	Over	Under	P	Over	P	P	P	Under	P	Under	P	P
	Math Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	Over	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P
	Science Proficient	P	Over	Under	P	P	P	Under	Over	Under	P	Under	P	P
Program Enrollment	Enrolled in Advanced Course	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	P	Over	Under	P	Under	Over	P
	Gifted	P	Over	Under	Under	Over	P	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P

Underrepresented



Overrepresented

RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

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	Literature Proficient	P	Over	Under	P	Over	P	P	P	Under	P	Under	P	P
	Math Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	Over	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P
	Science Proficient	P	Over	Under	P	P	P	Under	Over	Under	P	Under	P	P
Program Enrollment	Enrolled in Advanced Course	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	P	Over	Under	P	Under	Over	P
	Gifted	P	Over	Under	Under	Over	P	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P

This is what the Equity Scorecard looks like: Student Groups are along the top (columns) and Student Outcomes are along the left side (rows)

RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

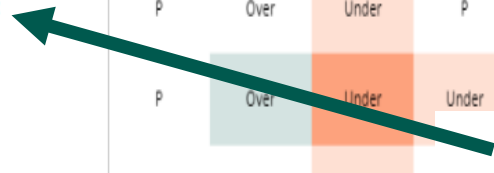
ACADEMIC SUCCESS VARY BY STUDENT GROUP

Student Success Outcomes

Student Groups



Student Outcomes



		White	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Non-LEP	LEP	Without IEP	With IEP	Not Econ. Dis.	Econ. Dis.	Female	Male
Academics	Algebra I Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	P	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under
	Biology Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	Over	P	Over	Over	Under	P	Under	P	P
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	Literature Proficient	P	Over	Under	P	Over	P	P	P	Under	P	Under	P	P
	Math Proficient	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	Over	Over	Under	Over	Under	P	P
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	Enrolled in Advanced Course	P	Over	Under	Under	P	P	P	Over	Under	P	Under	Over	P
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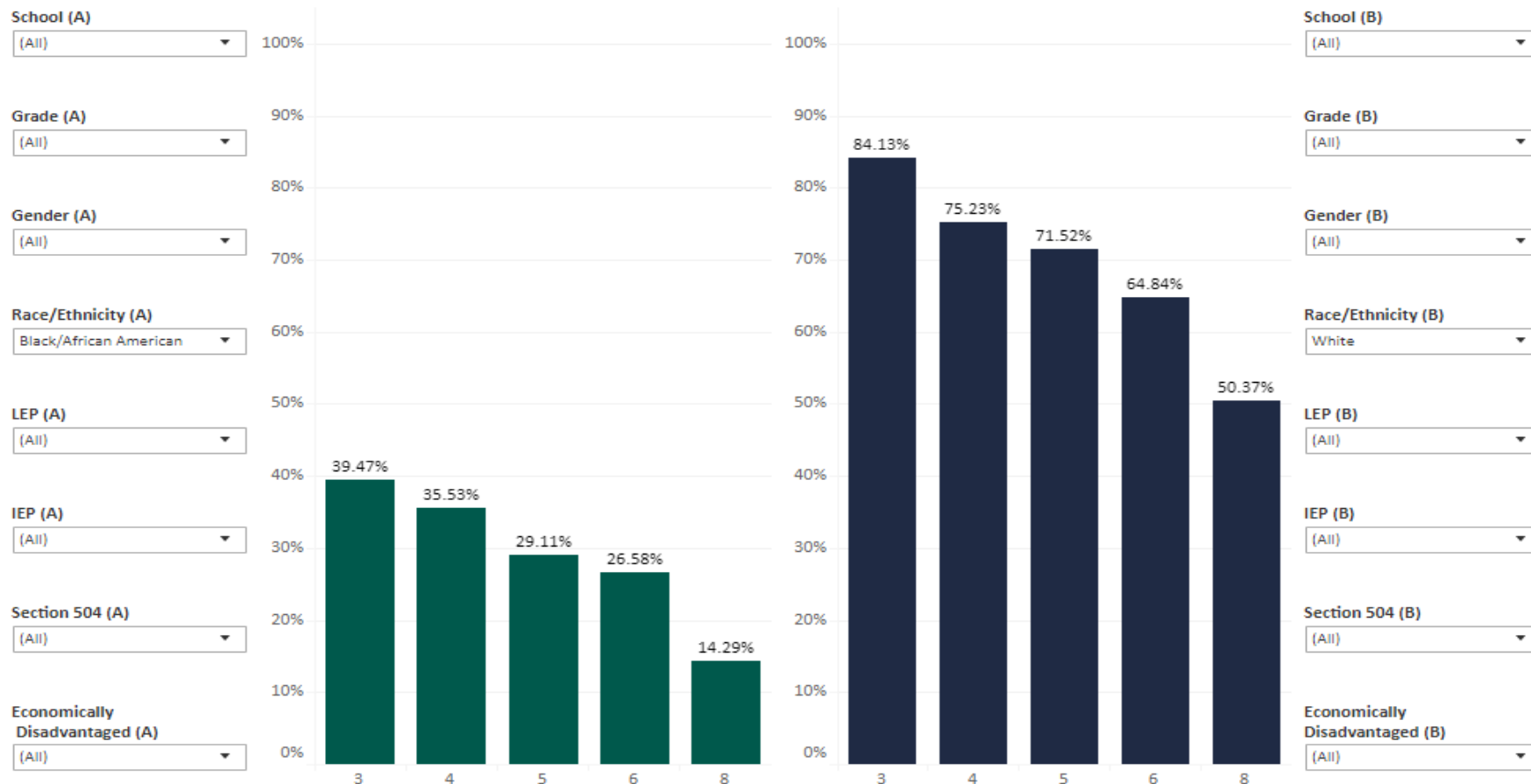
RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ACADEMIC TRACKING LOCKS STUDENTS IN EARLY

Group A

Group B

Math Proficient



RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ACADEMIC TRACKING LOCKS STUDENTS IN EARLY

Group A

Group B

Math Proficient

School (A) [All]

Grade (A) [All]

Gender (A) [All]

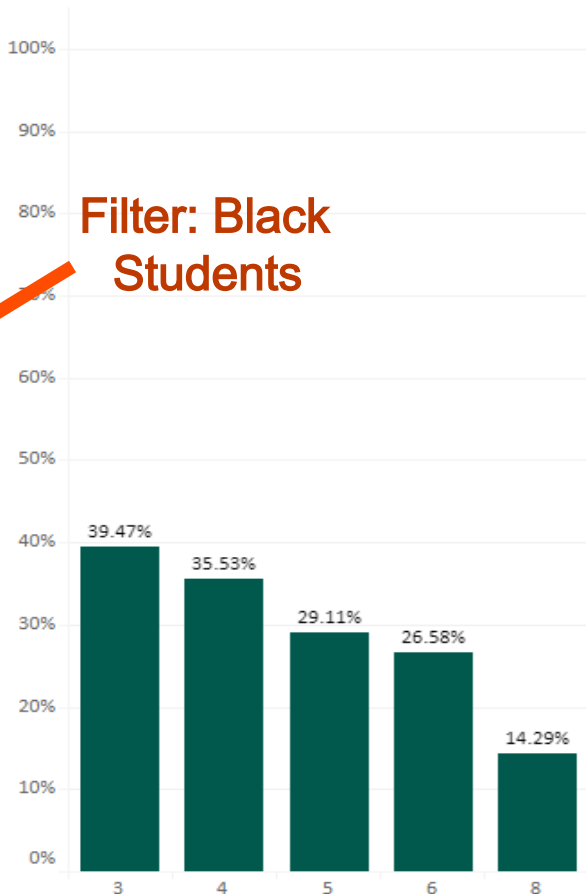
Race/Ethnicity (A) Black/African American

LEP (A) [All]

IEP (A) [All]

Section 504 (A) [All]

Economically Disadvantaged (A) [All]



Filter: Black Students

School (B) [All]

Grade (B) [All]

Gender (B) [All]

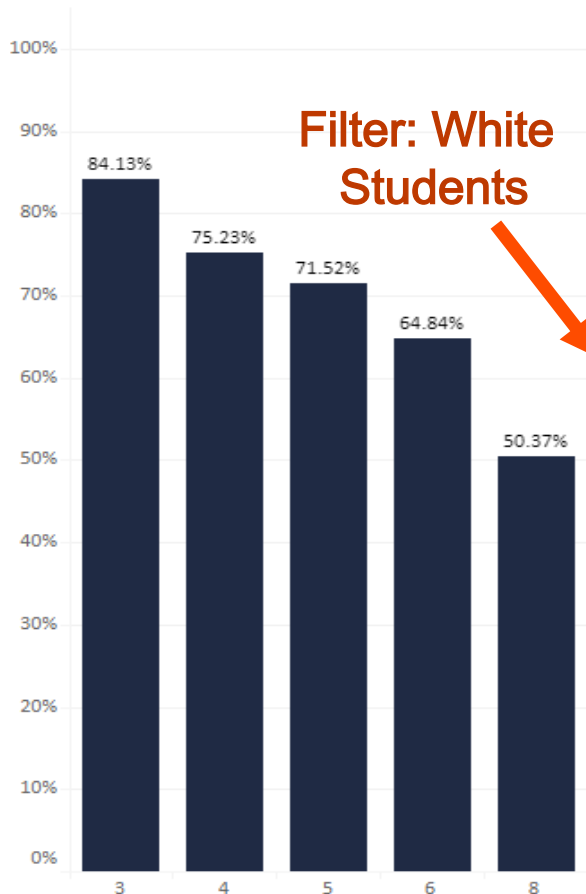
Race/Ethnicity (B) White

LEP (B) [All]

IEP (B) [All]

Section 504 (B) [All]

Economically Disadvantaged (B) [All]

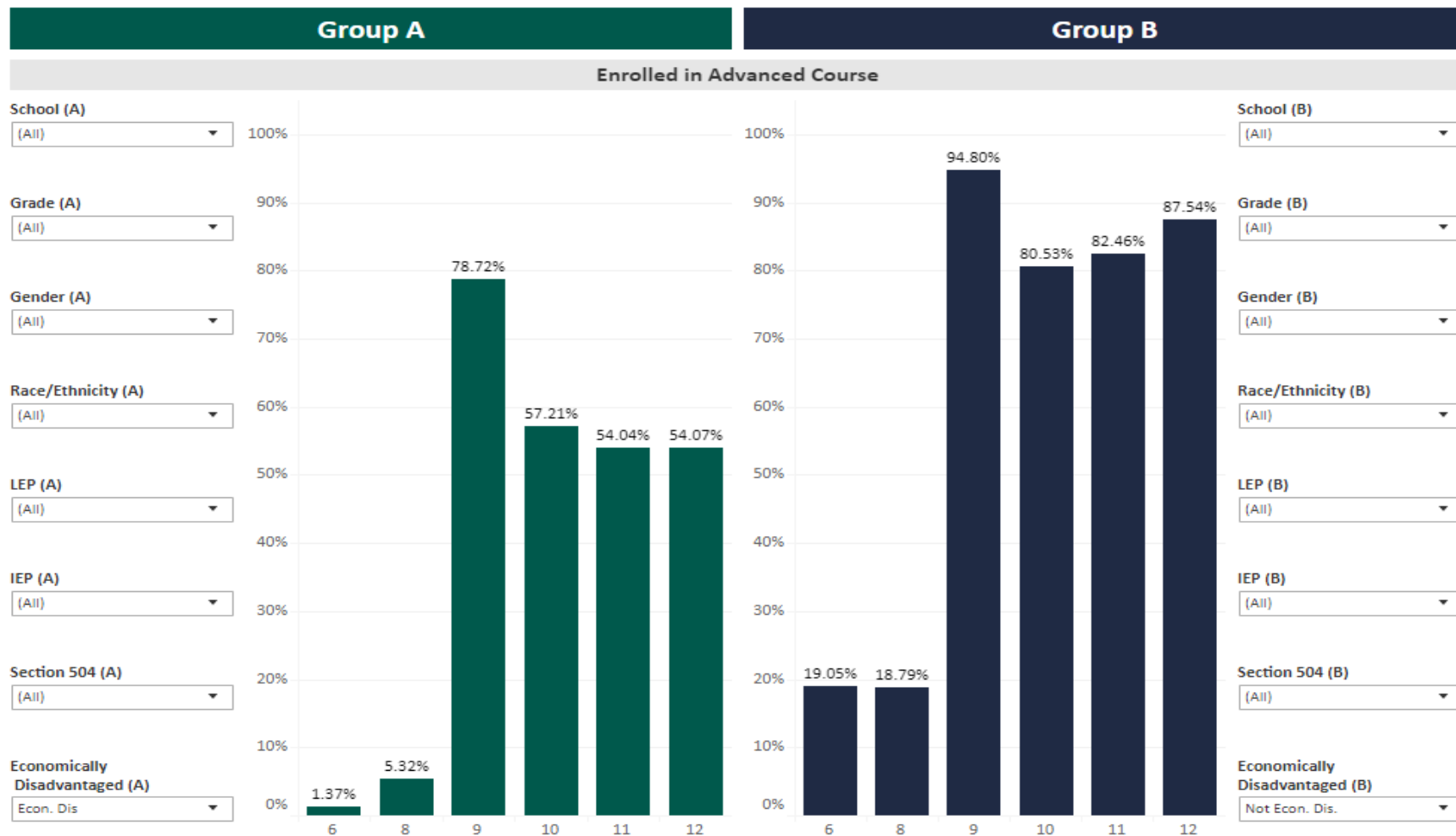


Filter: White Students



RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ADVANCED COURSEWORK



RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

ADVANCED COURSEWORK



Summary Key Findings regarding Advanced Coursework

- Currently, Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and LEP students are persistently underrepresented among students who participate in advanced coursework. Poverty seems to be a main driver of those gaps.
- 64% of high school students report that their teachers encourage them to take challenging classes.

RQ1: EQUITY OF ACCESS

BARRIERS TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Summary Key Findings regarding Parent Involvement

- 57% of parents surveyed agree their children's schools **provide translation services** to families who need it
- 46% agree schools **work with parents to reduce barriers** to parents' participation in school activities.
- In the **Focus Groups**, nearly all parents stressed the importance for school events to accommodate their schedules. Parents and teachers noted that younger students with working parents are often unable to participate in after school enrichment activities due to a lack of transportation.
- Working parents perceive current activity **scheduling favors those with greater amounts of free time and financial resources**. They stress the need for more "intentionality" in scheduling community-building events to accommodate their schedules.

Research question #2:

WHAT MAJOR THEMES AND KEY FINDINGS EMERGE REGARDING THE DISTRICT'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS?

MAJOR THEMES

- Discipline
- Handling of cultural diversity
- Impunity for bigoted behaviors

RQ2: EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

DISCIPLINE

Early Warning Indicator Outcomes

		White	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Non-LEP	LEP	Without IEP	With IEP	Not Econ. Dis.	Econ. Dis.	Female	Male
Academics	Failed a Course	Under	Under	Over	Over	Over	P	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
	Had a Disciplinary Incident	Under	Under	Over	Over	P	P	Under	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
Behavior	Had a Suspension	Under	Under	Over	Over	P	P	Under	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over

Referencing the *Early Warning Indicator* section of the Scorecard, we clearly see which student groups are *over-represented* in the outcomes: Failed a Course, Had a Disciplinary Incident, or Had a Suspension

RQ2: EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

DISCIPLINE

Early Warning Indicator Outcomes

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Academics	Failed a Course	Under	Under	Over	Over	Over	P	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
	Had a Disciplinary Incident	Under	Under	Over	Over	P	P	Under	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
Behavior	Had a Suspension	Under	Under	Over	Over	P	P	Under	Under	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over

For example, Economically Disadvantaged Students are **Over-Represented** in Receiving a Suspension

RQ2: EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

DISCIPLINE

Summary Key Findings regarding Discipline

- 34% of students receiving suspension are **Black** (WSSD Black student population = 8%).
- 1% of students receiving suspension are **White** (WSSD White student population = 75%).
- 45% of students receiving suspension are **economically disadvantaged** (Econ. Disadvan. students = 14% of all students).
- 57% of students receiving suspension have an **IEP** (IEP students = 17% of all students).
- On the DEI survey, 48% of **high school participants** are less likely to agree than other levels (74% elementary & 81% middle school) that consequences for discipline are equitably applied.
- **Focus group participants** also stressed the importance of cultural proficiency and consistent disciplinary actions.

RQ2: EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Summary Key Findings regarding Cultural Diversity

- Focus group participants (students and teachers) report that cultural diversity leadership does not always come from the top (i.e., school leaders).
- Ignorance of these important issues is cited as a key problem, for students as well as staff.
- 85% of survey respondents want the district to prioritize *ensuring a welcoming and safe school environment for students from different backgrounds*
- 55% of survey respondents say students often/very often *talk with students from different backgrounds*

Examples cited by focus group participants:

- Scheduling exams during non-Christian holidays
- Lack of transgender recognition
- Ignoring linguistic differences in IEPs
- Concerns about culturally biased reading material

RQ2: EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

CULTURAL TOLERANCE

Summary Key Findings regarding Cultural Tolerance

- Focus group participants say they have observed teachers make disparaging remarks about students of color, laughing during educational presentations promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion, social media “shaming” of parents who express concerns, and tolerating slurs uttered by students.
- Negative student behaviors cited by participants include racial, ethnic, and homo- and transphobic slurs as well as ethnic intimidation through social media and anonymous letters.
- Participants describe the district’s response to major incidents as “reactive” and “dismissive” and express the perception that the district tolerates bigoted speech and acts.

Recommendation

Unambiguous, consistently enforced policies that include both on- and off-campus behaviors are needed to restore trust and reassure stakeholders of the district’s commitment to upholding DEI principles.

Research question #3:

WHAT MAJOR THEMES AND KEY FINDINGS EMERGE REGARDING THE DISTRICT'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE AND WELCOMING WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

MAJOR THEMES

- Staff can be more sufficiently equipped to promote DEI
- Staff should address problems with conviction
- Staff diversity

STAFF CAPACITY TO PROMOTE DEI

Summary Key Findings regarding Staff Capacity to Promote DEI

- Teacher participants in the focus groups describe DEI work as inconsistent and typically led by one or two teachers.
- Teachers say colleagues are simply not equipped to lead DEI conversations or address issues that emerge in the classroom.
- Teachers express concerns that unequipped teachers results in less meaningful DEI lesson experiences that may do more harm than good.
- Finally, teachers who have equity promotion expertise would like to participate when decisions are being made about district- and school-level policies and initiatives.

Summary Key Findings regarding Staff Reaction to Issues

- Focus group participants say teachers and district leaders should address DEI-related issues more firmly and immediately. Their view is that they are reluctant to cause controversy.
- On the survey, 23% of staff members agreed WSSD *provides enough quality professional development on equity-related topics*

Focus group participants suggest the district does not assert enough leadership in promoting DEI.

As a result, **staff and school leaders do not feel sufficiently supported or protected** to engage with these issues.

Research question #4:

WHAT KEY PRACTICES SHOULD DISTRICT LEADERSHIP CONSIDER IN UPCOMING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT CLIMATE IN WSSD FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION?



RQ4: RECOMMENDATIONS

MAJOR THEMES

- Professional learning
- Strong district leadership
- Real structural change

Recommendations regarding Professional Learning

- Survey results indicate diversity and DEI topics are not discussed in class.
- Participants agree that DEI professional learning should involve all personnel regardless of position.

High-priority topics for professional learning

- Implicit biases
- Anti-racism
- Gender and sexual identities (especially transgender issues such as pronouns)
- Culturally-responsive teaching
- Behavior management, especially through an equity lens (including mandatory reporting)
- SEL and life skills

RQ4: RECOMMENDATIONS

STRONG DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Recommendations regarding District Leadership

- Future district efforts to promote DEI should be better planned and carry more commitment.
- Focus group participants suggest more alignment between stated commitment and DEI action.
- The district should commit to following up after perception gathering research such as focus groups and climate surveys.

Aspects of strong district leadership stakeholders would like to see

- Unequivocally repudiate bigotry with meaningful consequences.
- Provide support for staff advocates for equity.
- Use external PD vendors to ensure clear, knowledgeable upskilling.
- Hold all staff accountable for anti-bias and DEI education.
- Use existing staff expertise to lead professional learning.
- Respond to perception data collection with coherent action steps aligned to the feedback.

RQ4: RECOMMENDATIONS

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Recommendations regarding Structural Change

- Focus group participants applaud the district equity audit.
- Despite skepticism the district has the current capacity to implement systematic change on DEI issues, participants are on the whole hopeful that the audit will result in structural transformation of the DEI environment.

Participants Express Changes Should Include

- Engaged district and school-based DEI specialist and committees.
- Implement district-wide professional learning.
- Expand and update curriculum to emphasis DEI topics, including teaching strategies.
- Clearly state discipline policies and consistently enforce them.



CONTACT

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