



Inequities in Opportunity and Achievement in Maryland

Maryland has long prided itself on its education system. A deeper look at the data, however, shows that statewide averages mask deep inequities in opportunity for certain groups of students. These gaps in opportunity lead to gaps in achievement between students of color and White students, as well as between low-income students and higher income students. What's more, racial inequities persist among students of similar family income levels.

To be clear, these disparities are a reflection of how we organize our schools and shortchange certain students when it comes to critical educational opportunities/resources from early childhood through high school. With the pending recommendations from the Kirwan Commission, the state has the opportunity to reshape the education system to eliminate persistent income and racial inequities. The future of the state depends on it.

That begins with an honest look at the data – data that show dramatic racial gaps in student outcomes regardless of family income.

- White students are more than twice as likely to meet or exceed expectations on 4th grade reading and Algebra I than both Black and Latino students, and the achievement gap is bigger among higher income students.
- Black and Latino students are less likely to enroll in college within one year of graduation than their White peers. The gap is larger among higher income students.

These disparities in outcomes are the direct result of disparities in access to opportunities to learn. Students of color in Maryland are less likely to have access to:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Racial disparities in academic preparation begin before kindergarten.
- Latino children are particularly underserved before kindergarten, and are much less likely to be enrolled in pre-school than their White peers regardless of family income level.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

- White students were nearly twice as likely as Black students and 2.5 times more likely than Latino students to participate in dual enrollment.
- Black students are particularly underrepresented in Advanced Placement courses. Black students are 36% of all high school students, but only 18% of students who took at least one AP exam. (Whereas, White students make up 42% of high school students but 51% of AP-exam test-takers.)
- Only 34% of AP exams taken by Black students and 54% of exams taken by Latino students received a passing grade, compared with 68% of exams taken by White students.
- Black and Latino students who “concentrated” in CTE were less likely than their peers to pass a technical assessment or attain college credit through their program.

STRONG TEACHERS AND LEADERS

- Students in schools with high percentages of students of color are twice as likely to have a first-year teacher as students in schools with low percentages of students of color.
- Among high poverty schools, the schools with higher percentages of students of color have higher percentages of first-year teachers. (There are similar disparities between districts with the smallest and largest percentages of students of color.)
- The educators in Maryland’s schools do not reflect the diversity of its families and students. While only 38 percent of students in Maryland are White, 74 percent of teachers and 61 percent of principals are White.

EQUITABLE FUNDING

- Most districts in Maryland do not receive the money the state says they need, and districts with the most students of color are shortchanged the most.
- Nearly half of Maryland's Black or Latino students attend schools in one of the three most underfunded districts in the state. These districts receive about \$4000 less per student than the Thornton formula says they should.

A school accountability system is one of the most powerful levers a state has for incentivizing change in practice in districts and schools.

- Maryland schools can receive high ratings without actually serving students of color, low-income students, English learners, and/or students with disabilities well.
- Maryland does not specify what schools that are identified as consistently underserving one or more students groups will need to do to improve — or what support the state and its districts will provide. Nor does the state have a mechanism in place for holding districts accountable for addressing these disparities.

These disparities have profound and lasting consequences for individual students, for our economy, and for our democracy.

THE STATE MUST EXPLICITLY ADDRESS THESE INEQUITIES IN OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT BY, FOR EXAMPLE:

- Ensuring that districts and schools serving high concentrations of students of color and low-income students have the resources they need — from early childhood education opportunities, to a strong and diverse teacher workforce, to sufficient per pupil funding and equitable access to college and career readiness pathways;
- Making timely data on racial inequities in achievement — and in access to critical resources — transparent and readily available to parents, community members, researchers, and policymakers; and
- Holding policy- and decision-makers at every level accountable for disrupting these patterns of inequity through the state's school rating system, governance responsibilities, and other levers.

Please see our fact sheets on inequities in **achievement** and in access to **early childhood education, high quality teachers and leaders, equitable funding, and rigorous college and career pathways** for more detailed data documenting the problems, and for policy recommendations in each area.