

Falling Out of the Lead

Tracking High-Achievers Through High School and Beyond

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The Education Trust

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The Education Trust

Mission

The Education Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students, pre-kindergarten through college.

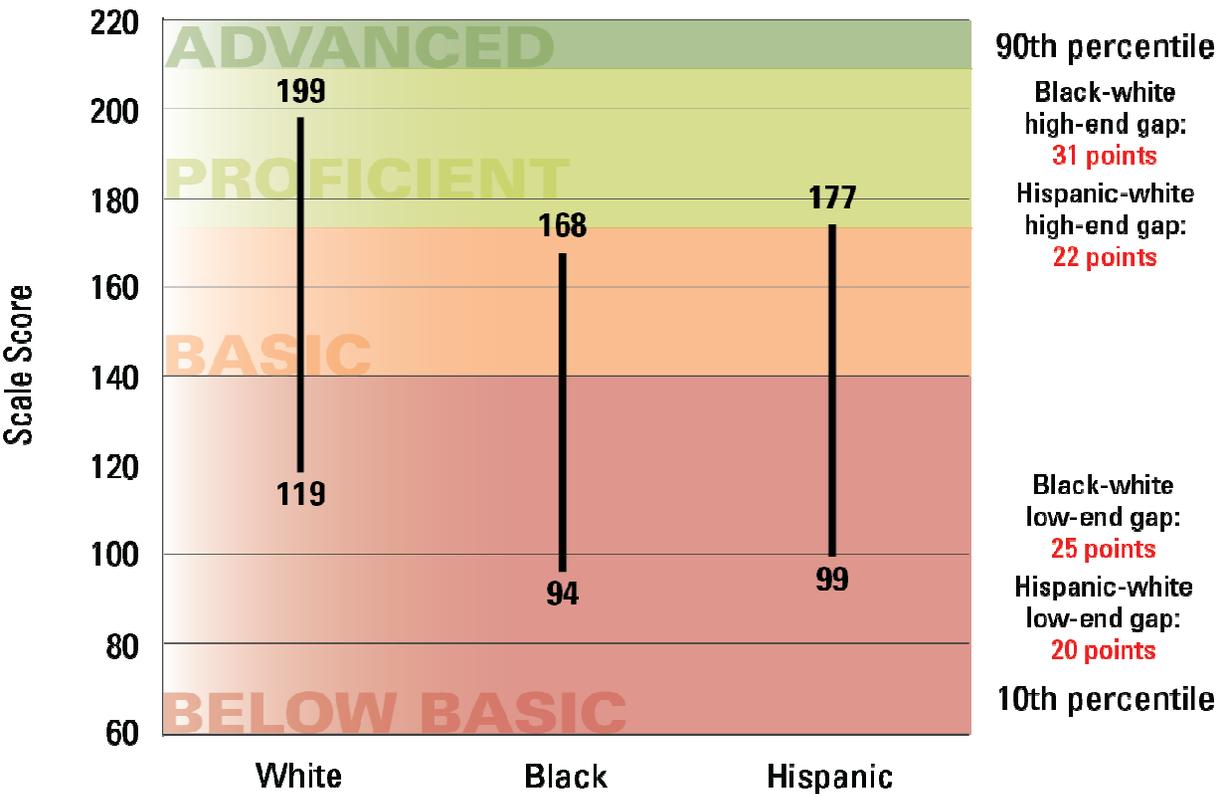
Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people--especially those from low-income families or who are black, Latino, or American Indian--to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.

Agenda

- Examine new research exploring the trajectories of initially high-achieving students as they progress through high school and into adulthood.
- React to advice from students about how to best serve high-achieving students.
- Explore the practices of a high school that is attaining impressive outcomes with an academically diverse student population.
- Reflect on current challenges and practice, and brainstorm actions to help high-achieving students of color and low-SES students stay on track.

Why high-achievers?

Figure 7: NAEP 10th percentile-90th percentile range, 12th grade math, by race, 2009



Note: Below basic = <141, basic = 141-176, proficient = 176-216, and advanced = >216.

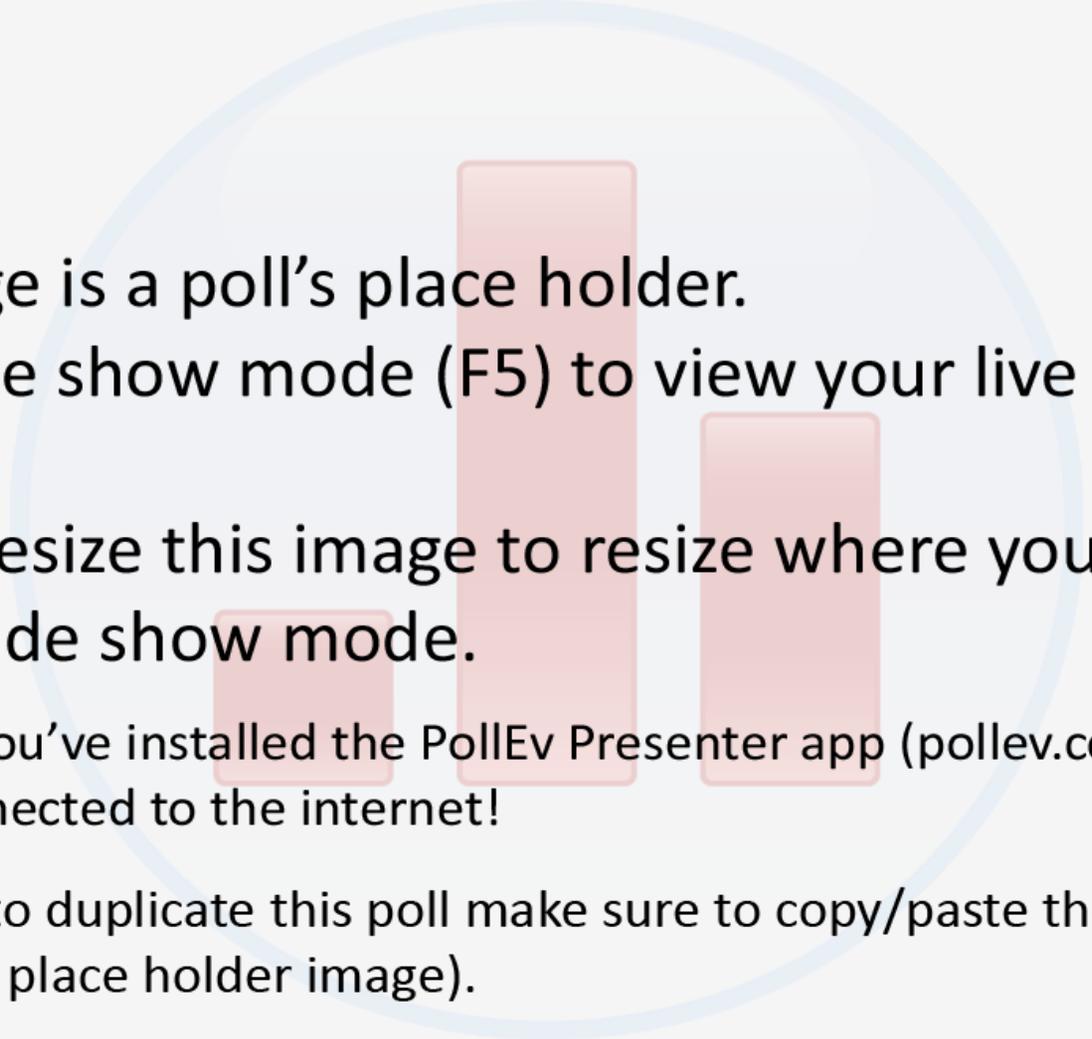
We will never close the achievement gap if we only pursue a bring-the-bottom-up strategy. We need to focus on equity across the achievement spectrum.

Who are we studying?

- Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002)
- Students were first interviewed as sophomores in 2002 and have been followed periodically through 2012.
- Data are representative of roughly 2.5 million high school students.
- Some Definitions:
 - High-achieving students: Those who scored in the top quartile on a math and reading assessment in 10th grade
 - Socioeconomic status (SES): A measure of multiple background characteristics, including parental income, parental education, and parental occupational status
 - High-SES: Highest quartile of the SES distribution
 - Low-SES: Lowest quartile of the SES distribution

At the Starting Gate





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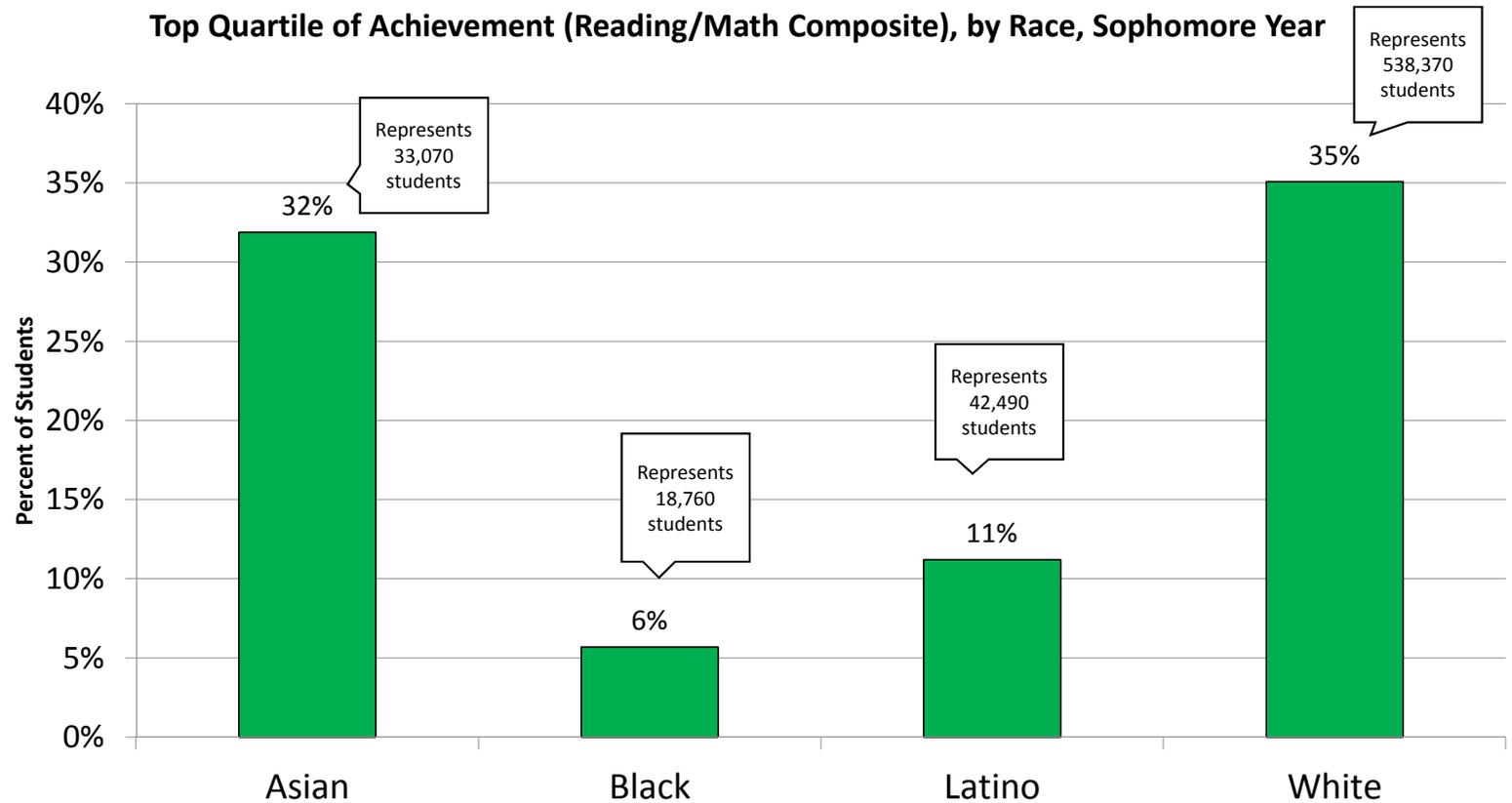
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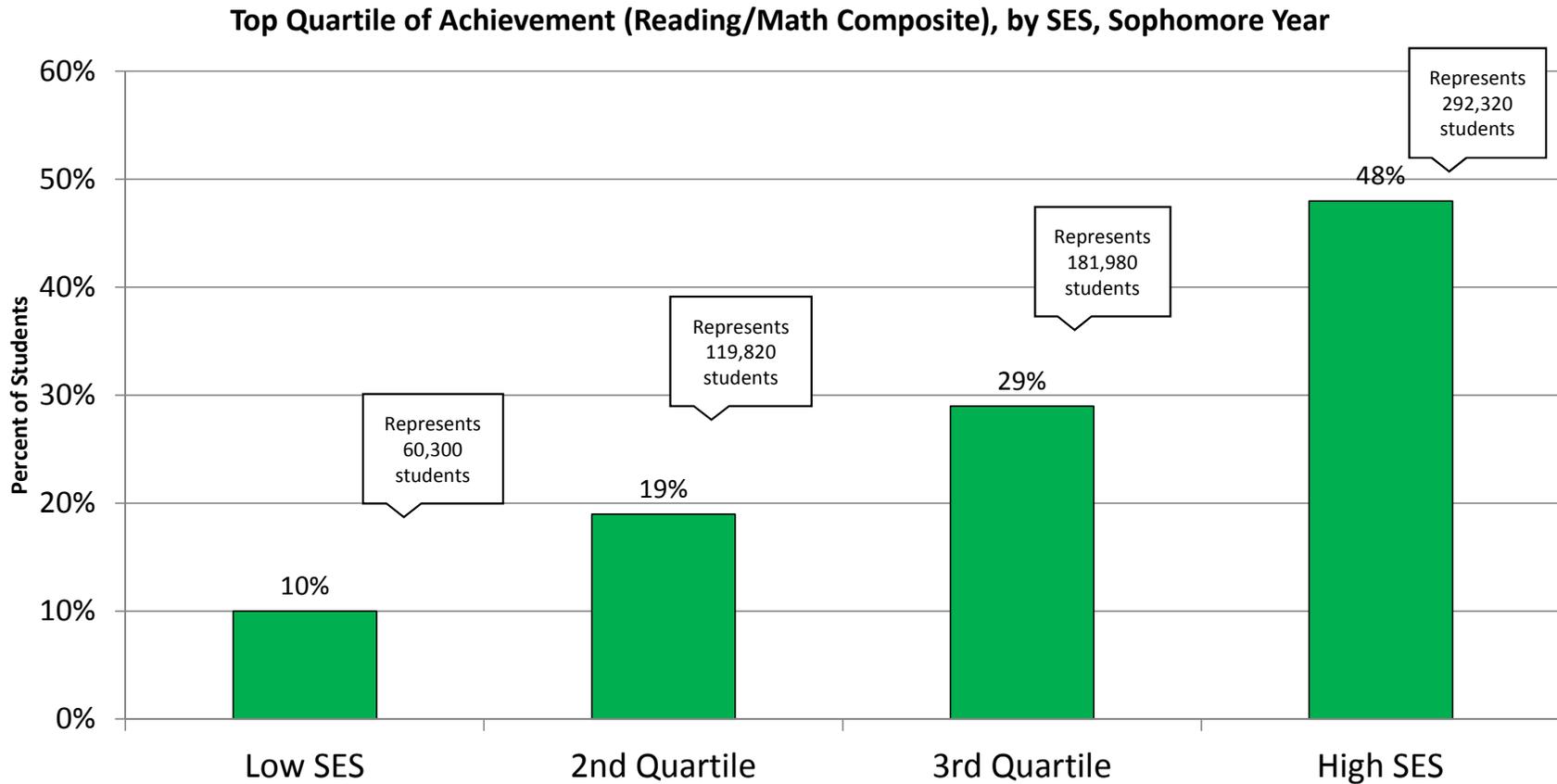
If students were coming into high school with identical preparation, we would see 25% of each group performing in the top quartile of achievers. But instead, we see this:

Top Quartile of Achievement (Reading/Math Composite), by Race, Sophomore Year



In number, there are more high-achieving Latino students than Asian students.

There are similar inequities by socioeconomic status.

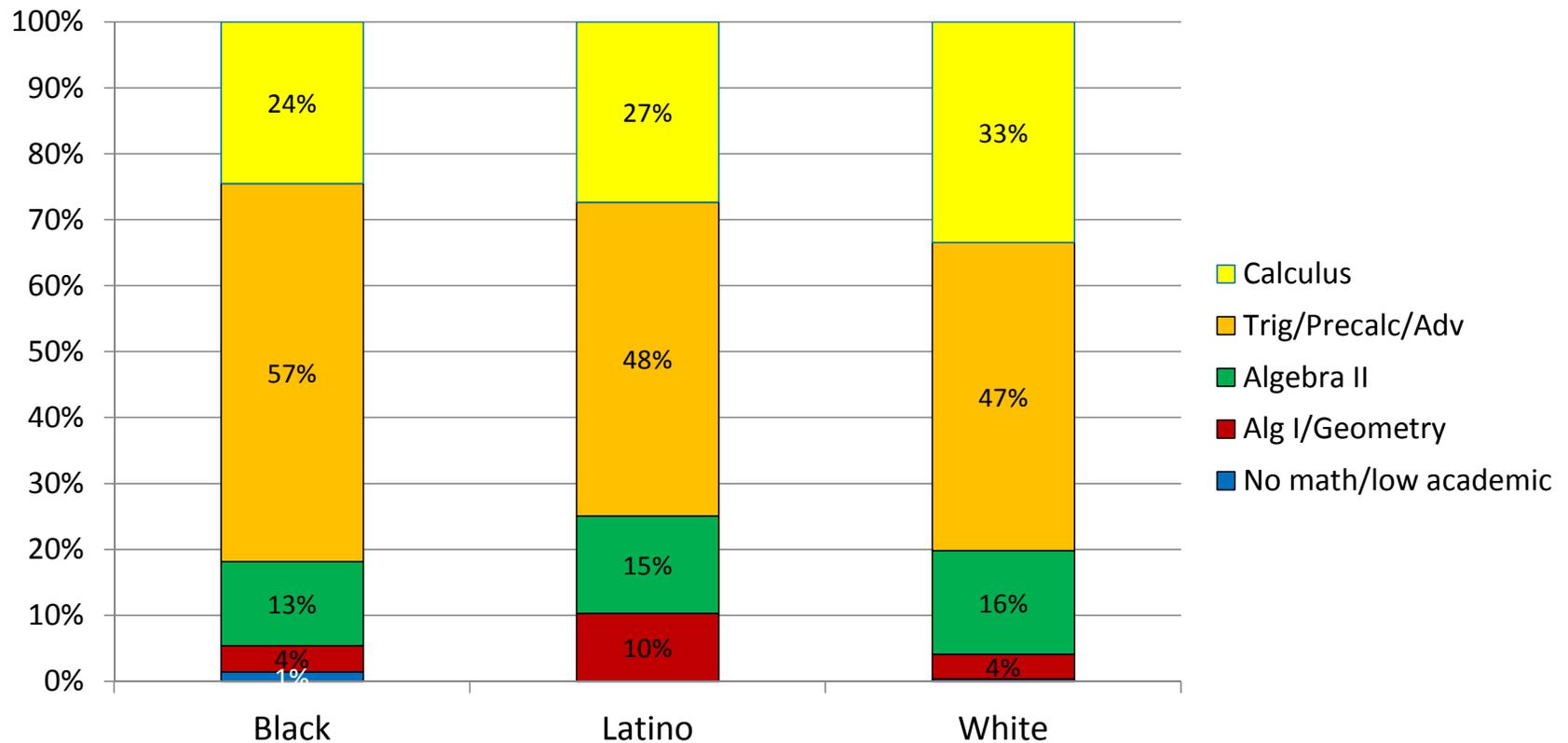


Course-Taking in High School



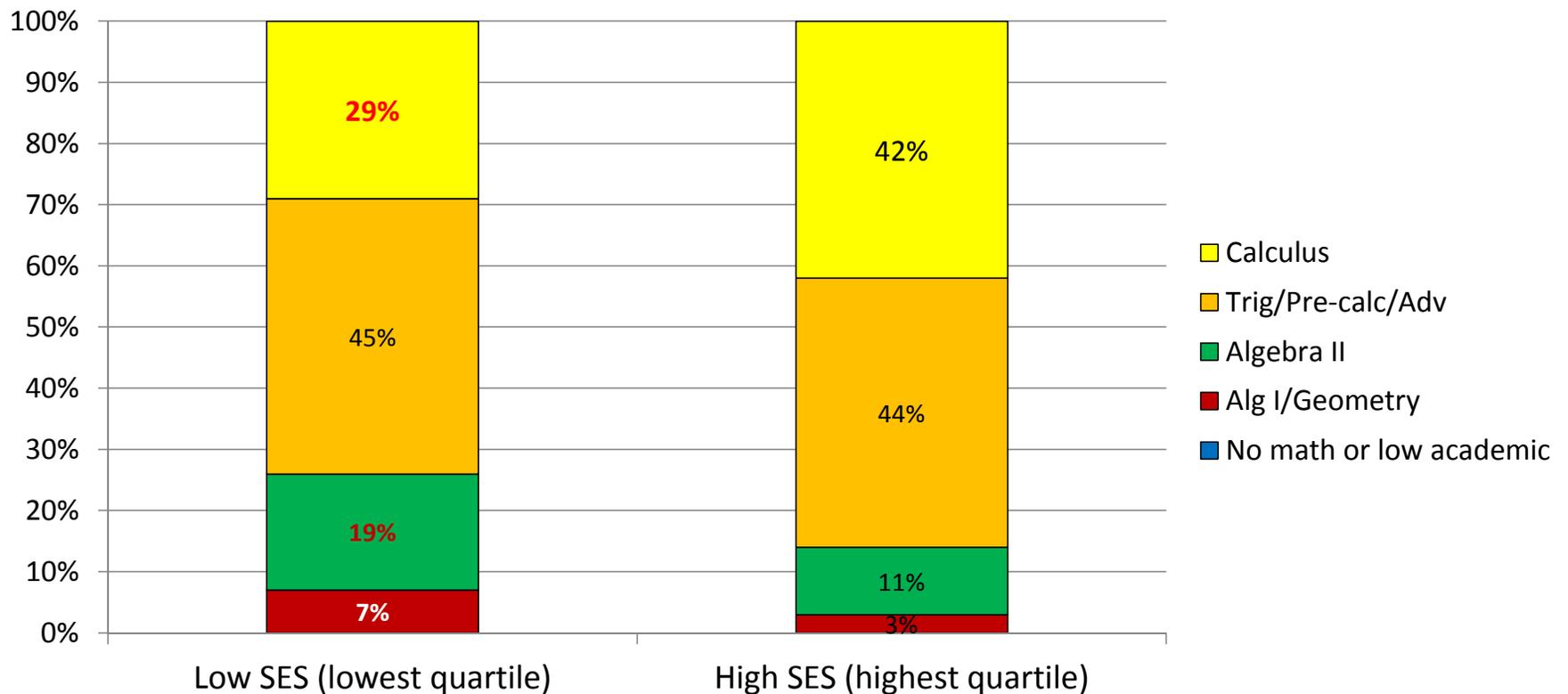
Initially High-Achieving Students of Color: Black, white, and Latino students are about as likely to reach a course beyond Algebra II and calculus.

Highest Math, High Achieving Students, by Race



Initially High-Achieving Low-SES Students: Low-SES students are significantly less likely to reach calculus than similarly performing high SES students.

Highest Math, High Achieving Students, by SES



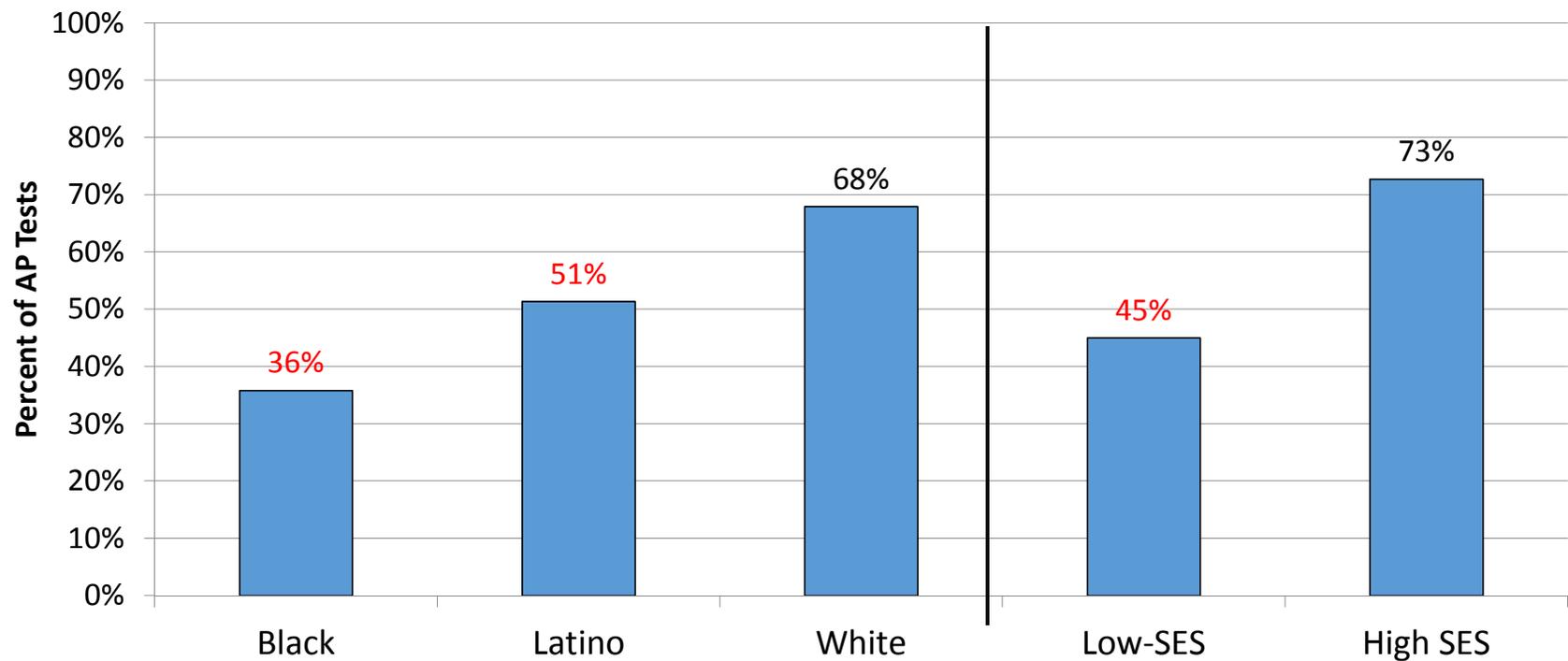
Results are similar for science course-taking, AP/IB course-taking, and the percent of students completing an academic concentration.

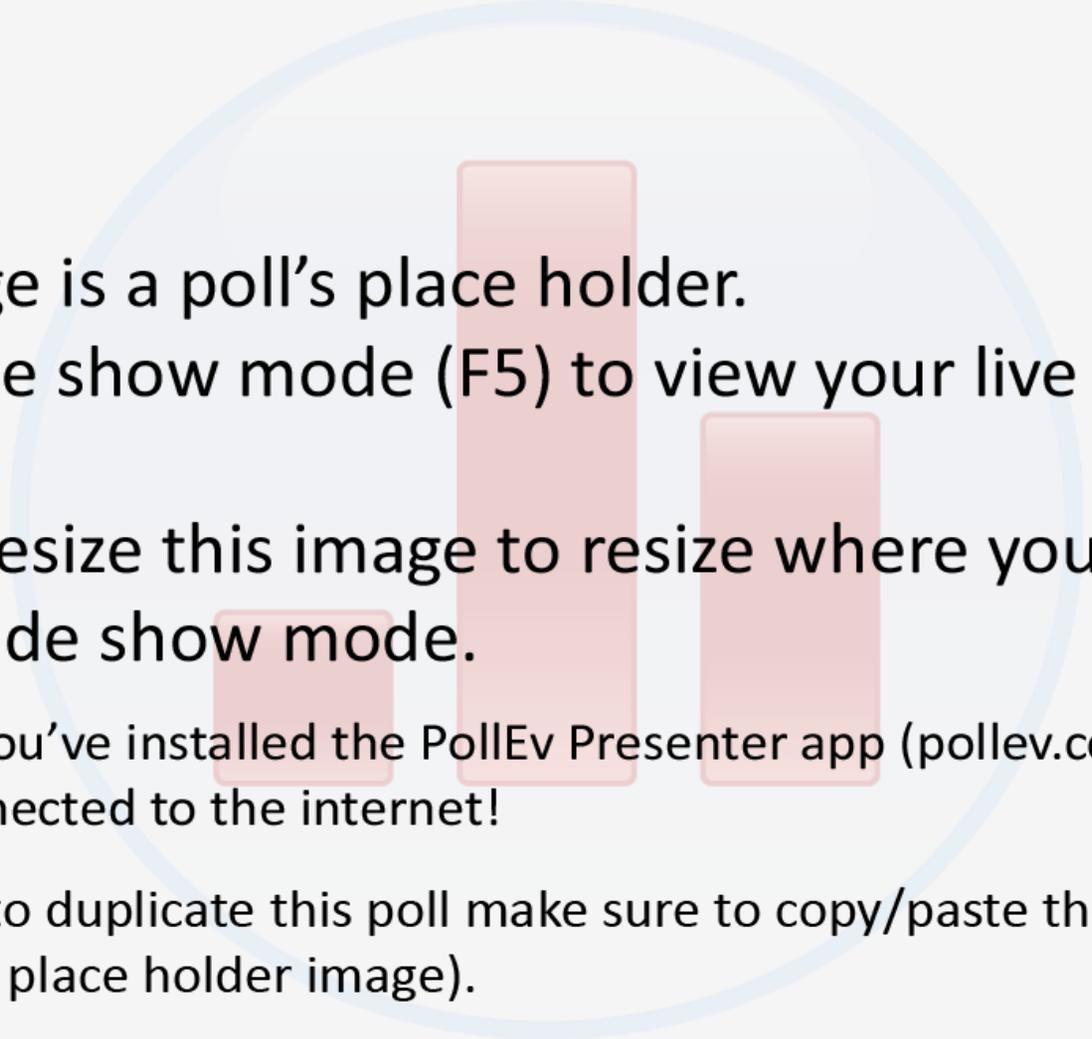
AP Outcomes



High-achieving students of color and low-SES students pass a smaller share of the AP tests they take than high-achieving white and high-SES students.

Percent of AP Tests that Receive a Score of 3 or Higher, High-Achieving Students, by Race and SES



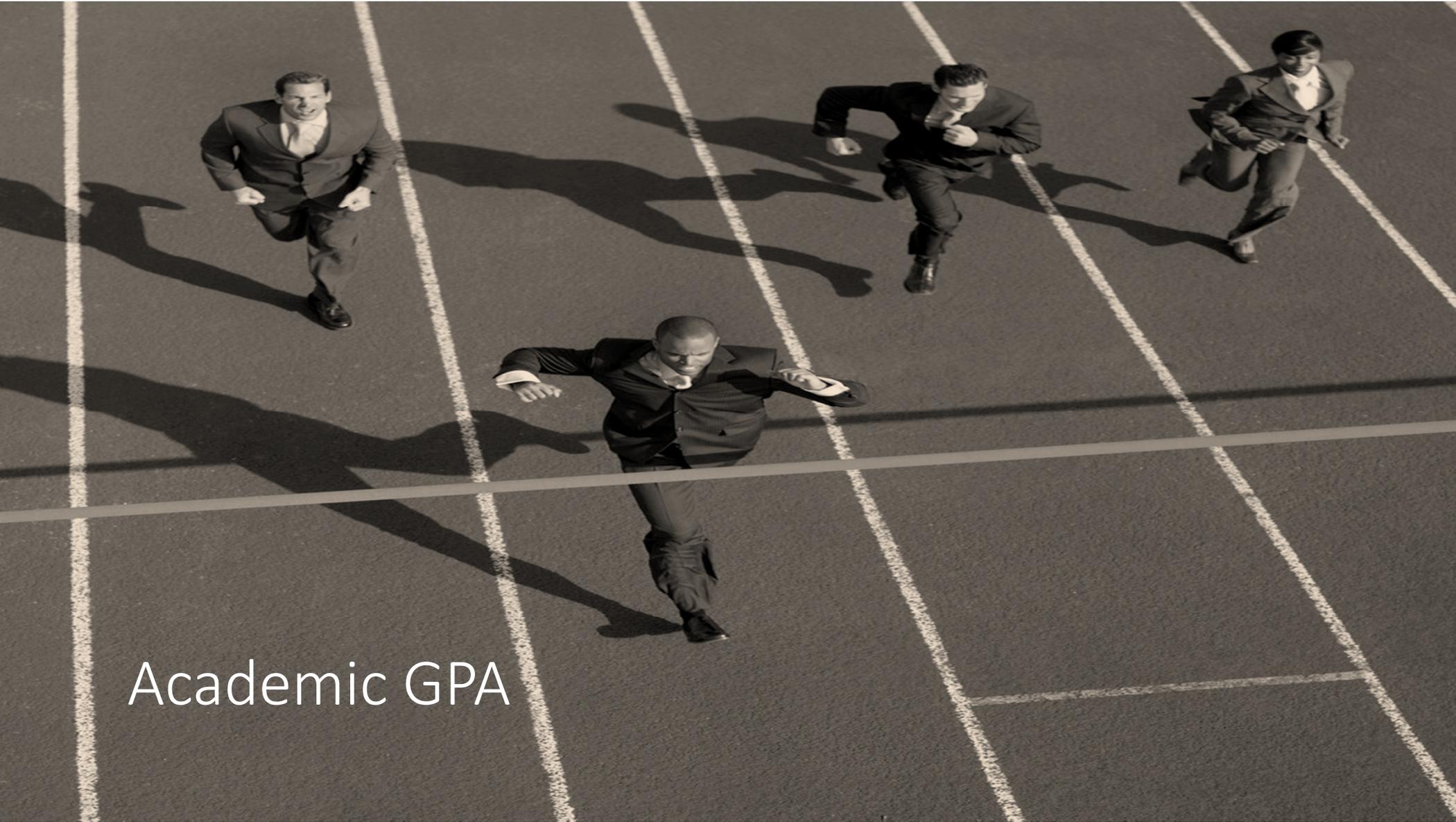


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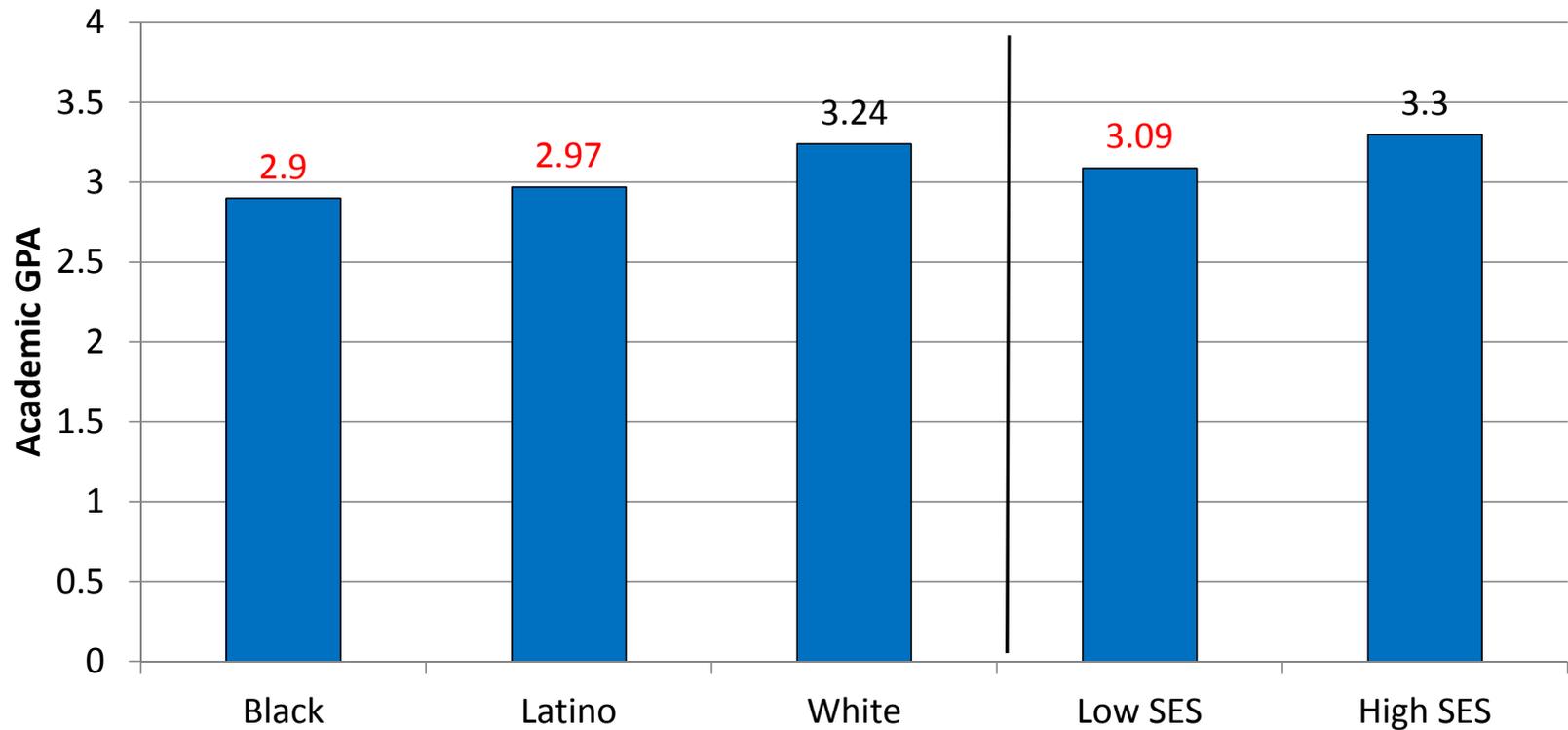
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Academic GPA

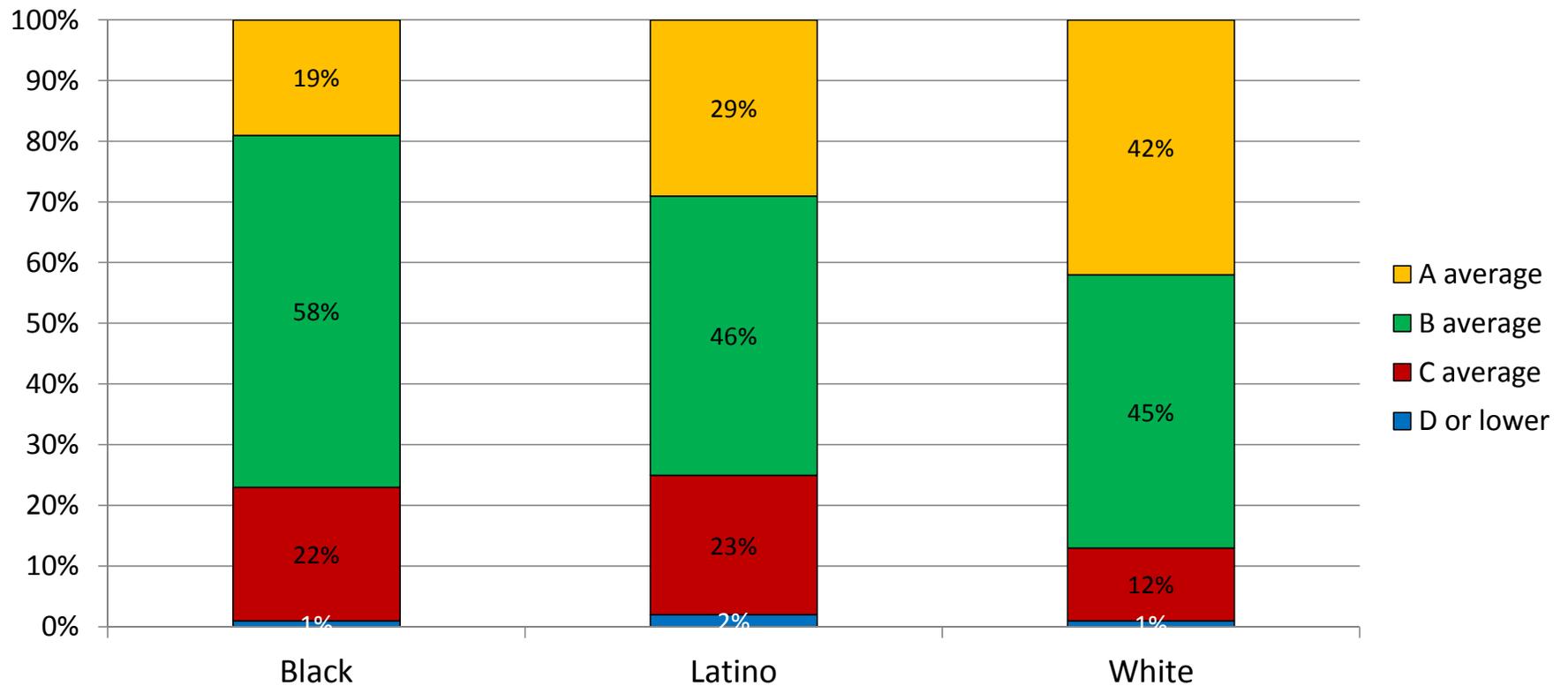
Initially high-achieving black and Hispanic students receive lower grades in their academic courses, on average, than initially similar white and Asian students.

Academic GPA, High-Achieving Students, by Race and SES



What does this mean for initially high-achieving students? White students are more than 2x as likely as similar black students to earn an A average in their academic courses.

Academic GPA, High-achieving Students, by Race



Grades are a complicated measure, capturing achievement, study habits, participation, and teacher perceptions, among other elements.

Research can help unpack the trends we see:

- One study found that black students receive lower GPAs than their academic preparation would seem to warrant, while the opposite is true of white students.
 - Student-reported study habits and behavior records explained little of this gap
 - Teacher beliefs about how hard their students were working explained much of it.
- A second study found that, in Chicago, high school attendance records and study habits did not explain any of the GPA gap between similarly achieving black and white students.



What Lies Beneath the Numbers:
Student Experiences

We interviewed 5 recent high school graduates who participated in the Young Scholars Program.

- The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation selects about 60 scholars annually who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to helping others.
 - Scholars are selected in 8th grade
 - Average family income of selected students is about \$25,000
 - Once accepted, scholars receive substantial guidance and scholarship from the foundation
- The young adults we spoke to attended different schools throughout the country, and their experiences differed substantially. Reflecting on their high school experiences, they offered advice for how educators can support high-achieving low-income students like themselves.

Course quality varied tremendously among the students we spoke to, with some accessing consistently high-quality courses and others rarely experiencing the type of instruction that would push them to grow academically.



“I took a lot of AP courses, but even my regular courses were rigorous.”



“My calculus class wasn’t really calculus.”



“Crossword puzzles made up 60 percent of our grade, and exams only made up 10.”

Some students felt that teachers were always available to help them succeed, whereas others felt their teachers were “there because they had to be.”



“I had so many teachers go above the call of duty to help me.”

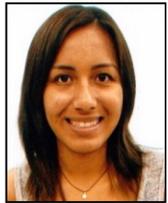


“Getting the support was great. From what I hear, you don’t get that support in other schools.”



“When teachers don’t take the initiative to explain things to students or help them learn it, students don’t feel like they can turn to their teachers for that type of help.”

Despite their high level of incoming preparation, the students received different levels of support from their schools to realize their college dreams.



“(The school) gave us a college counselor who we start working with in 11th grade...They make it a requirement that we finish our applications in November, so that we only have to worry about scholarships and financial aid for the rest of the year.”

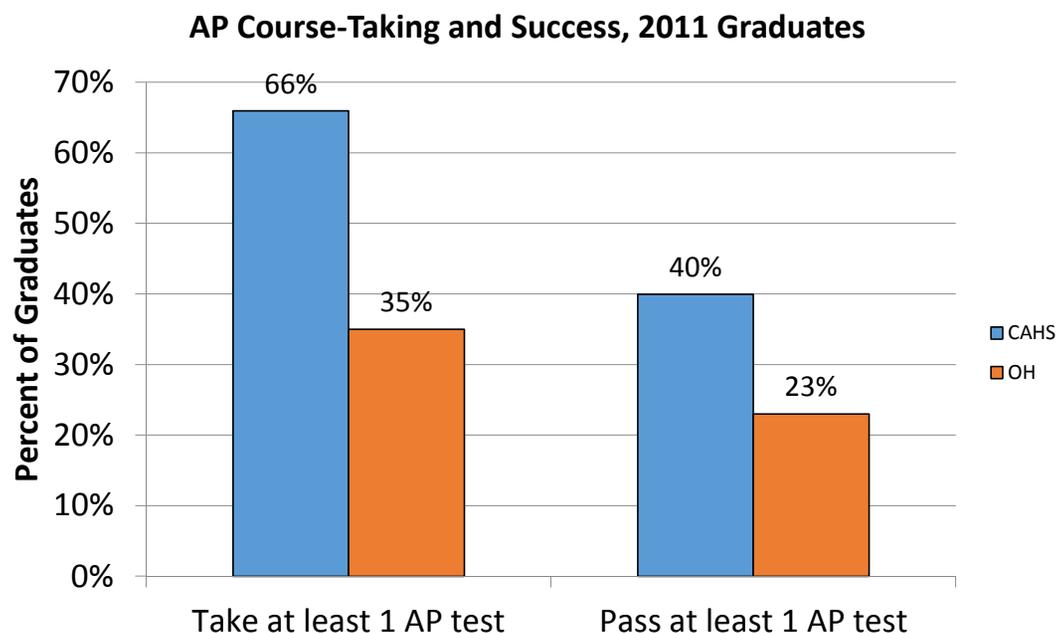


“My school didn’t really tell us what we needed to do in order to apply (to college), so a lot of students felt overwhelmed.”

So what can schools do?

- Columbus Alternative High School (CAHS), Columbus, Ohio
 - Grades 9-12, 606 students

CAHS	Ohio
65% African American	17% African American
26% White	74% White
61% Low-Income	45% Low-Income
98% Graduation Rate	80% Graduation Rate



Source: Ohio Department of Education, 2011 data

“Start early:” Offer opportunities in high school that expose students to college-level content and expectations.

- How it looks at CAHS:
 - Summer work prior to the freshmen year: Students must read three novels and compose a draft essay in response to their reading.
 - Rigorous freshmen-level humanities course, which is “really intense,” according to a recent graduate.
 - Commitment to acceleration in 9th grade
 - “Our greatest struggle is 9th grade. By 11th grade, they’re ready.” –Principal Wells

“My advisor was probably the single greatest resource I had at the time:”
Provide students with quality mentorship, particularly during the college search and application process.

- How it looks at CAHS:

- Intensive support during 9th grade year: All staff tend to freshmen 1 day a week, while other students are at internships. During this time, freshmen participate in advisory and 2 academic assistance courses.
- “In AP Chemistry, I was struggling so much...I was able to talk to my first year chemistry teacher from 9th grade. He stayed after school multiple times and worked around my complicated schedule and explained things to me in a way I understood.” –CAHS graduate
- “My school counselor was priceless...She was so helpful finding resources and helping with financial stuff.”

“What holds back a lot of students is people tell them ‘No:’” Communicate positive messages to students about their future possibilities, and help them identify solutions to potential barriers that stand in the way of their postsecondary dreams.

- How it looks at CAHS (according to a student):
 - Talking to students about taking a chance and helping them access resources:
 - “A lot of high-achieving students shy away from applying for opportunities because of the cost.”
 - “I have a friend whose parents wanted her to stay in-state, but she wanted to go to an out-of-state private school. (CAHS) told her to apply even though she didn’t have the money, and (the college) gave her a scholarship.”

“Being in an environment with other students at or above my ability level...really helped me:” Cultivate a college-going culture such that students feel their peers aspire to similar postsecondary goals.

- How it looks at CAHS:

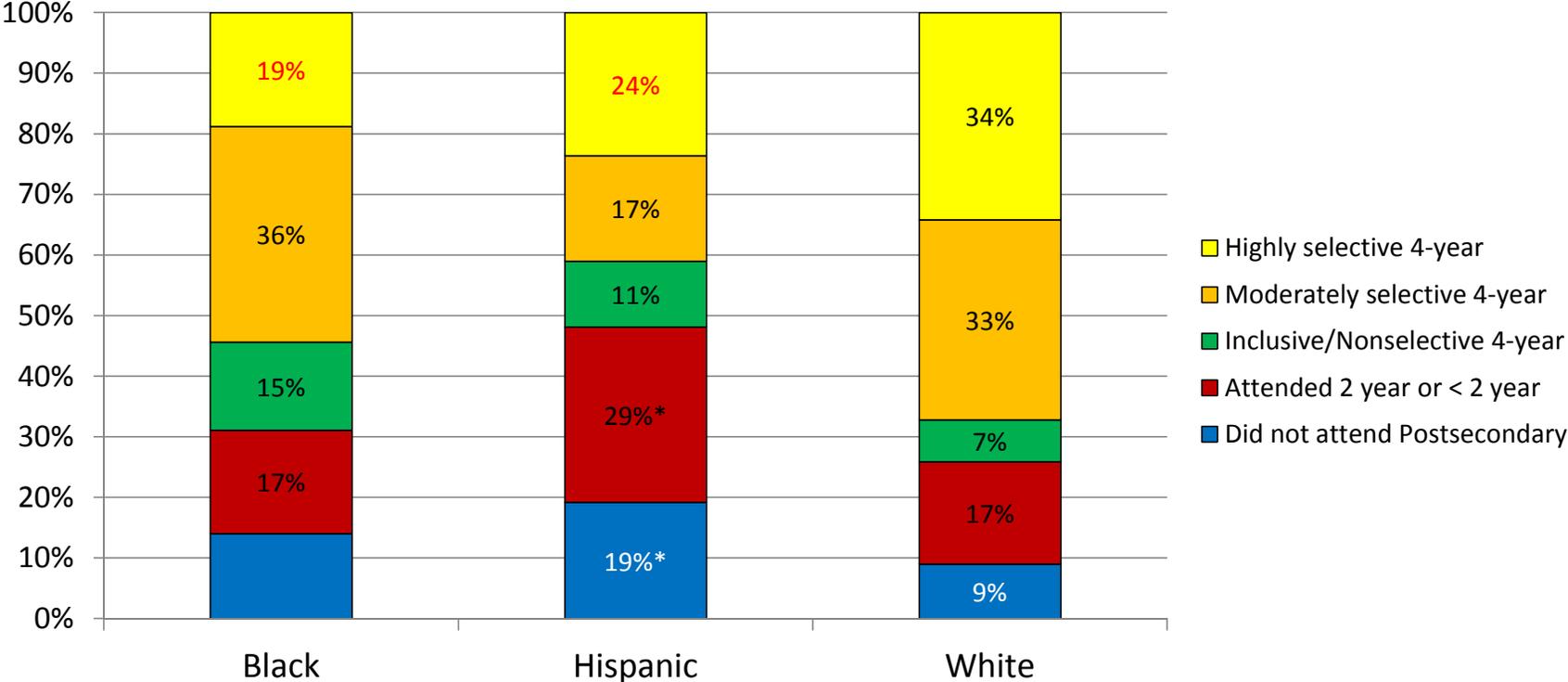
- Only honors courses, no remedial or general coursework
- 17 Advanced placement courses as well as the IB program. All students have to take AP or IB English in their junior year to ensure at least one authentic college-level experience
- Math requirement: 4 years, instead of the 3 required by the state
- 35 student-led clubs, ranging from poetry to fashion
 - “We don’t offer sports, so the main focus is college enrichment or academic excellence or leadership.” –Principal Wells
- Upperclassmen emphasize the importance of academic excellence to new students



Postsecondary Outcomes

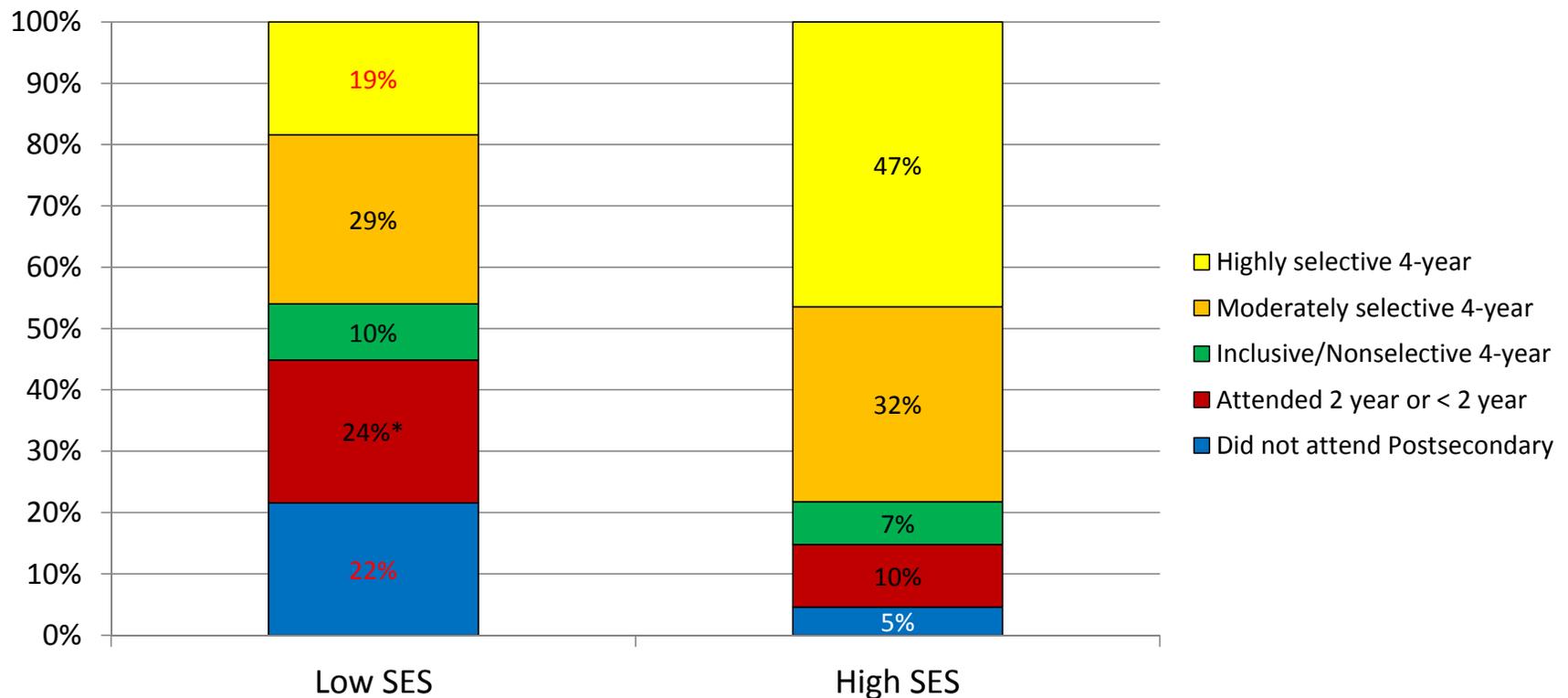
Initially high-achieving students of color: Black and Latino students are less likely to attend a selective 4-year institution than white students.

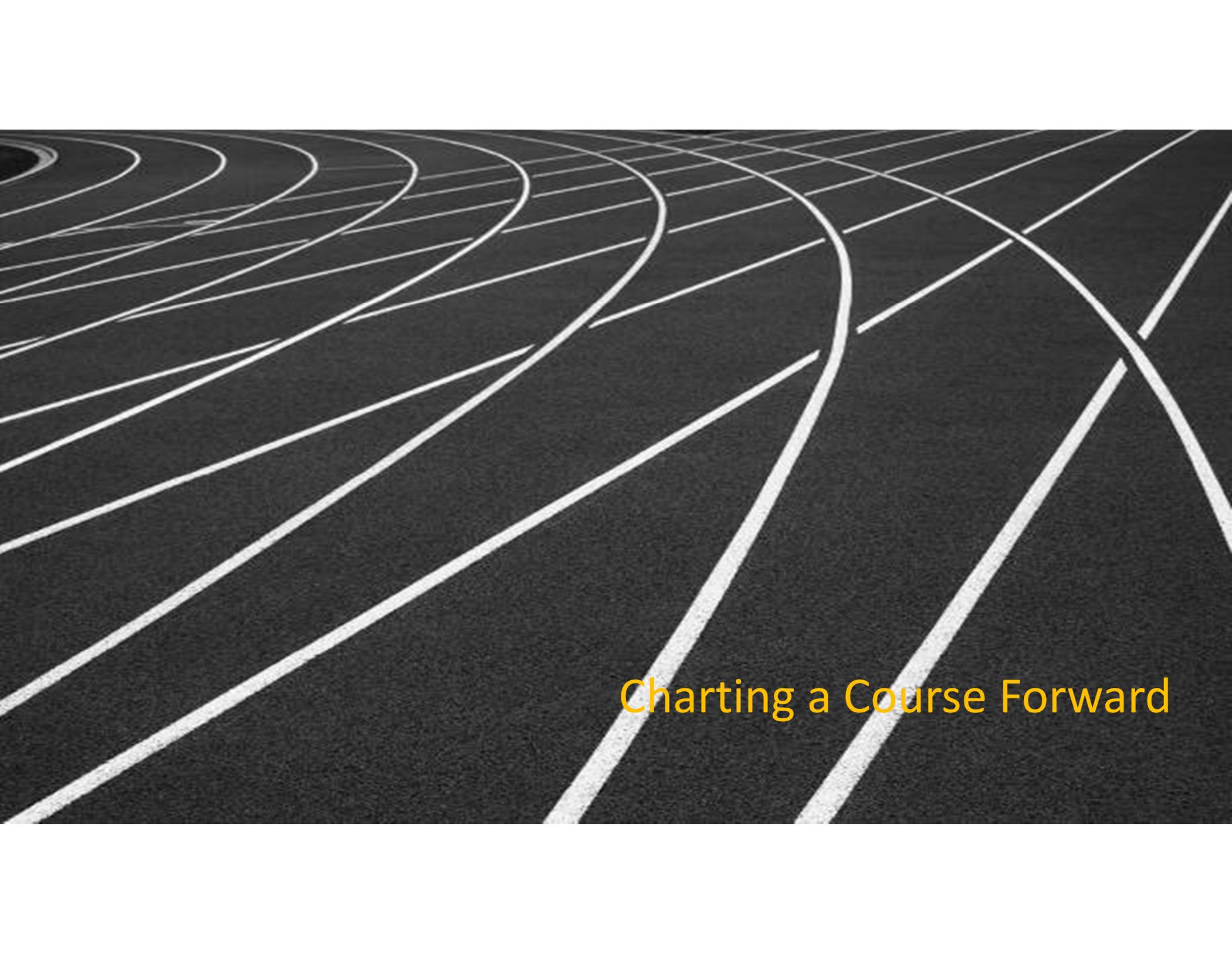
Selectivity of 1st Postsecondary Institution, High Achieving Students, by Race



Initially high-achieving low-SES students: Low-SES students are less likely than high-SES students to attend postsecondary school, enroll in a 4-year institution, or attend a selective college.

Selectivity of 1st Postsecondary Institution, High Achieving Students, By SES



The image features a dark, textured background with a series of white, curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines are arranged in a grid-like pattern that curves and converges towards the horizon, suggesting a path or a course. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and forward progression.

Charting a Course Forward

As educators, how can we ensure that students of color and low-SES students aren't falling out of the lead?

- In your school or context, what do you believe are the challenges that lead to inequitable outcomes?
- In your position or role, what actions are you/can you take to ensure that high-achieving students receive challenging instruction and support?
- Does your school/district have a system to identify high achieving students and monitor predictors of postsecondary readiness and success for them?

Want to learn more?

- Check out the full report
 - Marni Bromberg : mbromberg@edtrust.org
 - Christina Theokas: ctheokas@edtrust.org
- Visit www.edtrust.org
- Come to The Education Trust Conference. This year's conference is on November 13-14 in Baltimore at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel. Registration will open soon.