



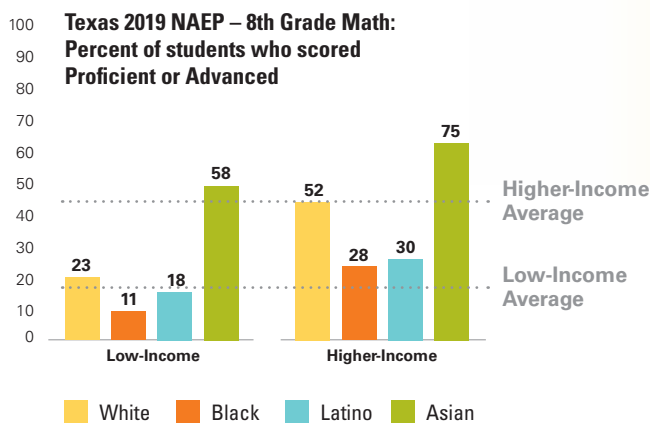
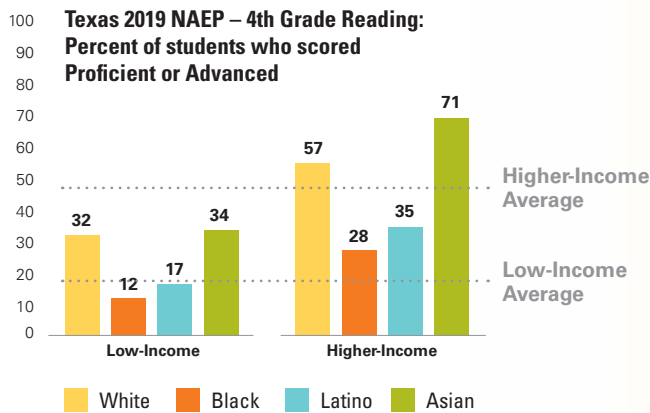
All Texas Students Need Equitable Opportunities to Learn

Students of color (74%) and students from low-income backgrounds (61%) make up the growing majority in Texas public schools.ⁱ Our success as a state depends on their success and on our collective ability to ensure Texas schools provide equitable opportunity for all students.

However, data from national and state assessments, along with decades of research, show Black and Latino students in Texas — regardless of family income — and all students from low-income backgrounds, receive less educational support and, as a result, are far more likely to fall behind academically than their peers.

Due to the failure of Texas education systems to ensure high-quality learning opportunities, fourth grade reading and eighth grade math proficiency rates for all students from low-income backgrounds were less than half the rate of their peers from higher-income backgrounds before the pandemic.ⁱⁱ

And regardless of family income, proficiency rates for Black and Latino students were about half the rate of their White and Asian peers before the pandemic.



The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in various subjects across the nation. Texas has fallen in national reading and math rankings since 2005 and consistently ranks in the lower half of states.

Based on initial 2020-21 STAAR data, these gaps in learning opportunities for Black and Latino students and students from low-income backgrounds only widened because of the pandemic, regardless of whether they received primarily remote or in-person instruction.ⁱⁱⁱ



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Why do these disparities exist? Because ability is equally distributed among all Texans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income, but opportunities to learn are not.

For example:

- Despite data showing all Texas students can be successful if given the opportunity, even the highest-performing Black and Latino students are assigned at much lower rates than their White peers to gifted and talented programs, eighth grade Algebra I, Advanced Placement and dual credit courses.^{iv}
- Black and Latino students are disproportionately taught by teachers with no previous classroom experience. Black fourth graders are nearly 60% more likely than their White peers to have a first-year reading teacher, and nearly 150,000 elementary-age English learners attend schools without educators certified to teach bilingual programs.^v
- Even though they are no more likely to misbehave, Black students are five times more likely and Latino students are almost twice as likely to be suspended out-of-school than their White peers. These suspensions are overwhelmingly for violating codes of conduct that lend themselves to discretionary enforcement and rarely threaten the physical safety of other students.^{vi}

As Texans, we can't say we are offering equitable opportunities to all students as long as these and other disparities exist. For our schools to truly serve as the "great equalizers" they can be, and for Texas to benefit from the talents of generations to come, **we must work to create fair, inclusive schools that offer equitable opportunities to all Texas students.**

Lawmakers should put in place policies to ensure all students in Texas benefit from:

- High-quality curriculum and classroom assignments that honestly depict the contributions of all Texans and Americans and align to standards that will prepare them for success in college and career
- Improved teacher preparation programs that equip candidates to create safe and supportive classrooms for a diverse student body
- An effective and diverse teacher workforce that is engaged in decisions related to curricula, teacher preparation standards, professional development, and instructional materials
- Learning environments that foster healthy relationships and support positive social, emotional, and academic development

ⁱ Texas Education Agency, Snapshot 2019 Summary Tables, Snapshot 2019: State Totals, 2019-2020.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ Texas Education Agency (July 2021), 2021 STAAR Analysis. Retrieved from: [TEA](https://tea.texas.gov/assessment/2021-staar-analysis).

^{iv} Ed Trust (November 2020). Improving Equity in College & Career Readiness Outcomes in Texas. The Education Trust. Retrieved from: edtrust.org/texas.

^v Ed Trust (November 2020). Improving Access to Strong and Diverse Teachers in Texas. Retrieved from: edtrust.org/texas.

^{vi} Ed Trust (November 2020). Ensuring Safe and Supportive School Climates in Texas. Retrieved from: edtrust.org/texas.

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