

2022 Report to the Community Executive Summary

Pittsburgh's public schools at a glance

(all data for 2021-22 school year unless otherwise noted)

Number chronically absent in PPS K-12:
8,277 students missed
18+ school days

40%

54

District (PPS) schools and special education centers

11

Charter schools

20,350

PreK-12 students in PPS

5,250

Pittsburgh students attending charter schools

Number of students per teacher (PPS 2020-21):

11:1

Per-pupil spending:

\$28,182

Rank:

21 out of **500**

(in top 5% of state for spending)

Excess building capacity:

19,544 seats

(from 2022 PPS Budget)

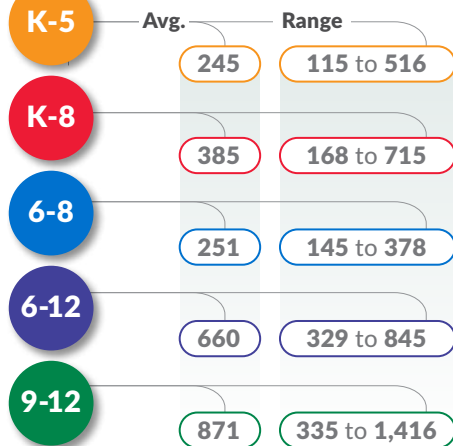
16%

PPS teachers of color

91%

of teachers across PPS feel their school is a good place to work and learn

PPS enrollment, by school configuration



Number of students suspended at least once

2,467

39%

Number of 3rd grade students who scored Proficient or better on state Reading tests: **534** out of **1,382**

Number Proficient or better in middle school math (grades 6-8): **571** out of **1,620**

35%

62%

Number of PPS seniors who earned a GPA of 2.8 or more: **737** out of **1,189**

Number of PPS students who scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam: **430** out of **1,479**

29%

82%

Number graduating within four years (PPS and charters) in 2021: **1,297** out of **1,573**

Number who entered college or trade school immediately after graduation in 2021 from PPS and charter schools (includes PPS Online Academy and special schools) **590** out of **1,282**

46%

Overview

“And how are the children?”

- Traditional Maasai greeting

Since 2004, A+ Schools has produced this *Report to the Community on Public School Progress in Pittsburgh* to provide you, the caregivers, community leaders, and members of organizations that serve our children, with a picture of how they are doing. And we know our children’s success is bigger than any one of us.

Our focus with this 17th report in 18 years is to understand whether we are giving each child what they need to reach and exceed a shared standard of success (our definition of equity). This summary provides an analysis across multiple dimensions of equity to understand how current systems (both school and community) work to create the outcomes that we see for our children.

We asked if the current system:

- Integrates schools racially and socioeconomically (enrollment equity)?
- Provides more resources to students with greater needs (funding equity)?
- Supports students with the greatest needs with a diverse and well-supported teaching force (teaching equity)?
- Disciplines all students in the same way (discipline equity)?
- Provides opportunities for all students to take rigorous courses and explore their passions (opportunity equity)?

We follow this discussion of system equity issues with a look at the outcomes that can predict future academic and life success. These outcomes are:

- Attendance
- State test proficiency
- SAT proficiency
- GPA as an indicator of future success in college or trade school
- Graduation
- College and trade school enrollment

We note that the pandemic has exacerbated issues of equity. We need to think more holistically about how community organizations like A+ Schools, our partners in the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative, and local, state and

What are the PSSA tests and Keystone exams?

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, or PSSA, is the state test for 3rd through 8th graders. Testing takes place in the spring.

PSSA content area	Grades tested
English Language Arts (ELA) & Math.....	3-8
Science	4, 8

The **Keystones** are state end-of-course exams, given at various times throughout the school year in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology. Students may take the exams more than once.

Scores for both PSSA tests and Keystone exams are rated “Advanced” (above grade level), “Proficient” (at grade level), “Basic” (not consistently at grade level), or “Below Basic” (below grade level).

A small number of students who receive special education services take an alternate test.

federal governments can come together with our schools to support our children and families, not just to succeed in school but to thrive in life. We hope this report provides our community with the data needed to answer the question “And how are the children?” in a way that spurs action and collaboration for our kids.

We also highlight bright spots across the district—schools and programs that are getting better outcomes by doing something in a different way.

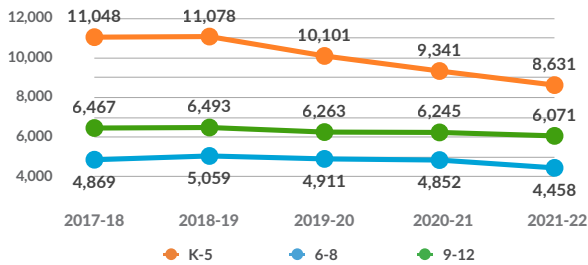
Unless otherwise noted, data refer to the 2021-22 school year.

Enrollment equity

In 2021-22, Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) enrolled 19,160 K-12 students, an overall decline of 3,224 or 14% of students since the 2017-18 school year. The steepest declines in enrollment were for K-5 students, with a total loss of 2,417 (-21%). Over that same period (2018-21), the City of Pittsburgh population between the ages of 5-19 declined from an estimated 48,298 to 46,507, according to the US Census. However, charter school enrollment for children living in Pittsburgh grew from 4,072 in November of 2017 to 5,250 in November of 2022, an increase of 1,178 students.

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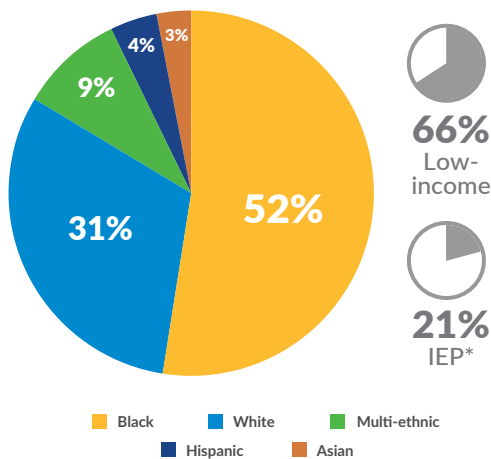
Enrollment change by grade level



Bright spot:

Schiller 6-8 saw the largest enrollment growth of any K-12 school in the city at 28% from 2017-18 to last year.

2021-22 District enrollment by race/ethnicity

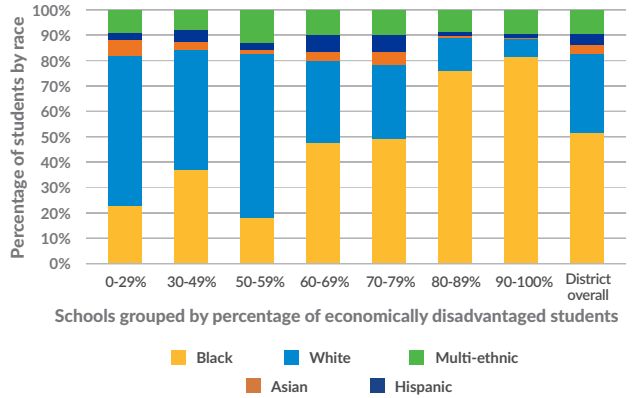


* Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for special education, excluding students identified as "gifted"

Compared to the overall demographics of the City of Pittsburgh, PPS has more students of color (69% compared to 34%) and more students experiencing poverty (66% compared to 20%). Both groups are segregated in PPS to a significant degree.

The chart that follows shows the demographic breakdown of schools by the range of students classified as "economically disadvantaged" by the district. 65% (6,138) of Black students attend schools where the concentrations of poverty are 70% or higher compared to 33% (1,947) of White students. Neighborhood segregation drives school segregation. Currently, 54% of Pittsburgh's students attend their neighborhood schools, which have enrollment boundaries that mirror Pittsburgh's highly segregated neighborhood boundary lines.

Racial and economic segregation in Pittsburgh schools



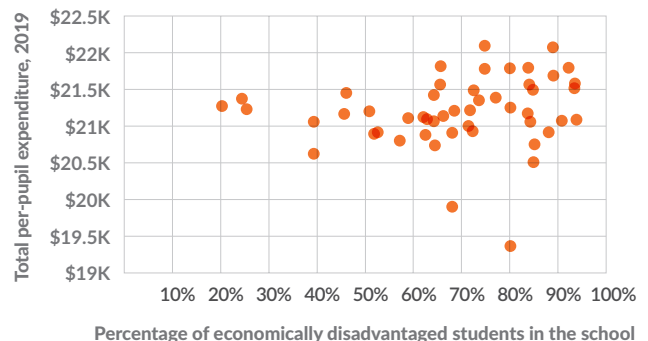
Whittier K-5 and Grandview PreK-5, both in the South area, provide an example. Whittier serves the predominantly White neighborhoods around Mt. Washington while Grandview serves the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the City's Hilltop. Whittier's population is 56% White and 22% Black. Grandview's population is 73% Black and 13% White.

Funding equity

School resources can differ based on the size and makeup of a school. An approximation for student need is the number of students experiencing poverty and the number of students with disabilities. How PPS provides for schools does not always account for these needs.

While some schools with higher concentrations of low-income students get more resources, others do not. The table on the next page shows the concentrations of low-income students and students with disabilities in the highest and lowest spending schools (based on the latest per-pupil spending numbers released by the state).

Per-pupil funding and students' economic disadvantage



Per-pupil spending by school type, low-income, IEP

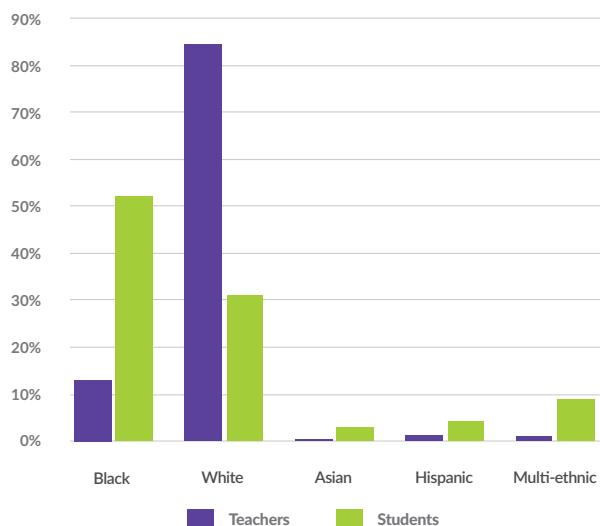
	School	Percent low-income	Percent IEP	Per-pupil amounts (2019)
↑	Highest \$ per-pupil magnet school Montessori PreK-5	20%	13%	\$21,268
↓	Lowest \$ per-pupil magnet school Classical 6-8	63%	31%	\$20,876
↑	Highest \$ per-pupil neighborhood school South Hills 6-8	75%	29%	\$ 22,088
↓	Lowest \$ per-pupil neighborhood school Perry 9-12	80%	29%	\$19,361

Teaching equity

Who are our teachers, and how are they deployed in different schools?

In Pennsylvania, according to Research for Action, in the 2019-20 school year, 6% of teachers were teachers of color, compared to a student population that was 35% of color across the state. Nearly 1,500 out of 2,982 schools did not have a single teacher of color. In Pittsburgh, 16% of teachers are Black or Brown. While our teaching force is much more diverse than the state average, many PPS students do not have Black or Brown teachers, including students at Grandview PreK-5, Woolslair PreK-5, and Mifflin PreK-8, where 100% of teachers are White. A diverse teaching force benefits all children, with Black students benefiting the most. One study showed that Black students who'd had one Black teacher by 3rd grade were 13% more likely to enroll in college compared to those who did not.

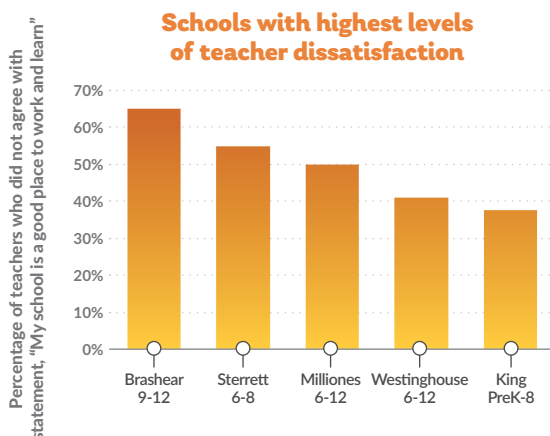
PPS student and teacher demographics



The state also tracks the percentage of experienced teachers in a school. A number of studies have confirmed that teachers with a little bit of experience under their belt are more productive and have a greater impact on student achievement than brand new teachers.

In Pittsburgh, the vast majority of the teaching force has 10 or more years of experience. When we look at where teachers are assigned, we see a fairly even distribution of novice teachers across schools, regardless of student poverty. However, there are a couple of notable exceptions. In the 2020-21 school year, approximately 41% of the teachers at Milliones 6-12 (UPrep) and 29% of the teachers at Westinghouse 6-12 had less than three years of experience teaching, according to state data.

PPS surveys teachers every year on the conditions of teaching and learning at their schools. Across the district, 91% of teachers responded positively to the statement, "My school is a good place to work and learn." In 12 schools, 100% of teachers agreed with the statement. The schools with the highest rates of disagreement are below.



Bright spot:

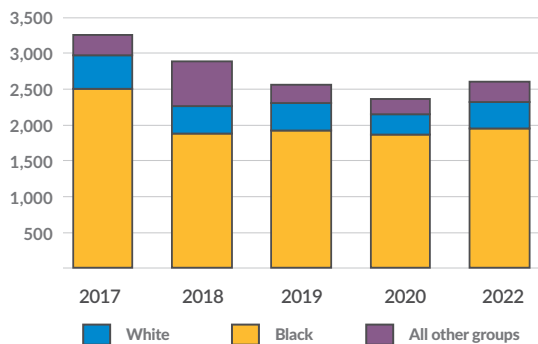
PPS has had significantly low teacher turnover with only 28 teachers new to their buildings in the 2021-22 school year. One reason for this high rate of staff stability may be the higher educator salaries paid by PPS compared to other districts. The current median salary for a PPS educator is approximately \$99,000 per school year.

Discipline equity

Another dimension of equity is how students are treated for breaking school rules. Over the past five years, suspensions have declined from a rate of 13% in 2017 to 11% this past year, which represents 2,467 students who were suspended at least once.

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2017-22 PPS suspensions by race/ethnicity



We did not report suspensions in 2021 because buildings were closed for much of the year.

Suspensions are still highly disproportionate by race and economic disadvantage. Of all out-of-school suspensions in the 2021-22 school year, Black students represented 75% and students who were economically disadvantaged represented 86%. As these high rates of suspension for Black and low-income students continue, even as overall suspensions decline, the district should evaluate how schools manage behavior, look at best practices for creating consistent behavior expectations and habits, and study what is working in schools with low rates of suspensions.



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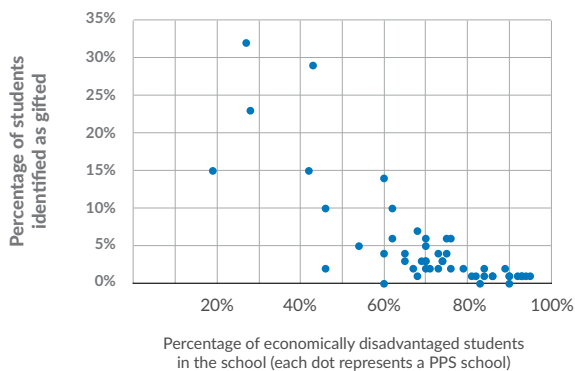
Beechwood PreK-5 and Montessori PreK-5 reported no suspensions last year.

Equity of opportunity

Gifted education

As noted in prior years, economic advantages that students are born into become educational advantages in the system. The chart below shows the percentage of students with a “Gifted” Individual Education Plan by the concentration of low-income students in a building.

Gifted identification and students’ economic disadvantage



Race/ethnicity	Total students	Students with gifted IEP	Percentage of total with gifted IEP	Percentage of all students with gifted IEP
Black	9,446	229	2%	17%
White	5,789	905	16%	66%
Hispanic	808	25	3%	2%
Asian	661	67	10%	5%
Multi-ethnic	1,682	135	8%	10%

When disaggregated by race, as shown above, there are disparities that call into question the bias of the measures used to determine whether a student meets the criteria for a gifted IEP, especially for Black and Hispanic students.

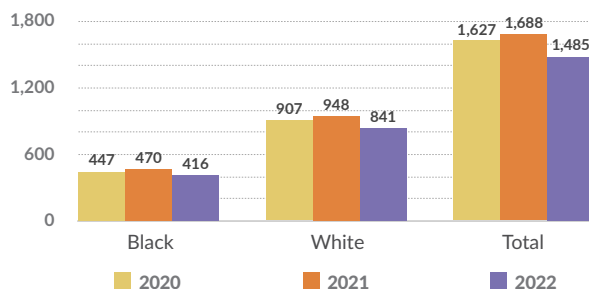
Gifted identification in elementary school affects the rest of a student’s K-12 academic career. For more information, visit pghschools.org/cas.

AP enrollment

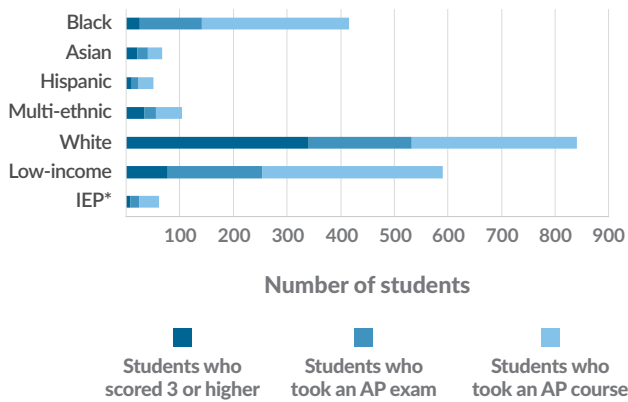
In the 2021-22 school year, the percentage of students in 9th-12th grades who took an AP course decreased compared to 2020-21, from 29% in 2020-21 to 26% in 2021-22.

Once again, Black students were under-represented in AP courses, at 28% of AP course takers compared to White students at 56%. One reason is that Black students are also underrepresented in gifted identification, meaning they must apply and have a teacher recommendation in order to take an AP course.

Number of students enrolled in one or more AP courses, 2020-22



AP course and exam taking, by race, low-income, IEP



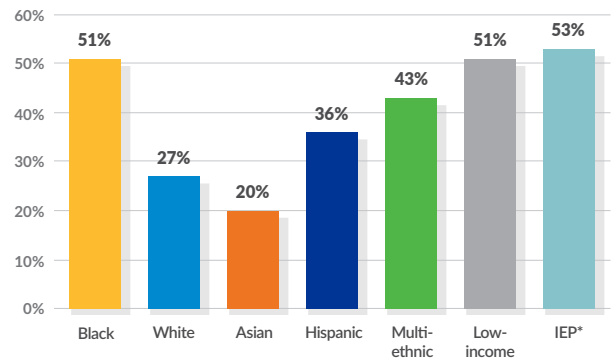
The chart above shows the number of students who took an AP course by race, economic disadvantage, and IEP status. The chart shows that 34% of Black AP course takers also took the AP exam, compared to 63% of White AP course takers. 25 Black students scored a 3 or higher on one or more exams, compared to 340 White students.

Student outcomes

Chronic absence

Overall, rates of chronic absence (missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason) increased from a pre-pandemic level (2019-20 school year) of 27% to 42% last year, with nearly half of high school students chronically absent. As noted in previous reports, absenteeism is highly predictive of whether a student will graduate, with one study showing that a student is **7 times more likely to drop out if they are chronically absent any year between**

Percentage of students chronically absent, by race, low-income, IEP



8th and 12th grade. Only 11% of chronically absent students who graduated from high school made it to a second year of college, according to another study.



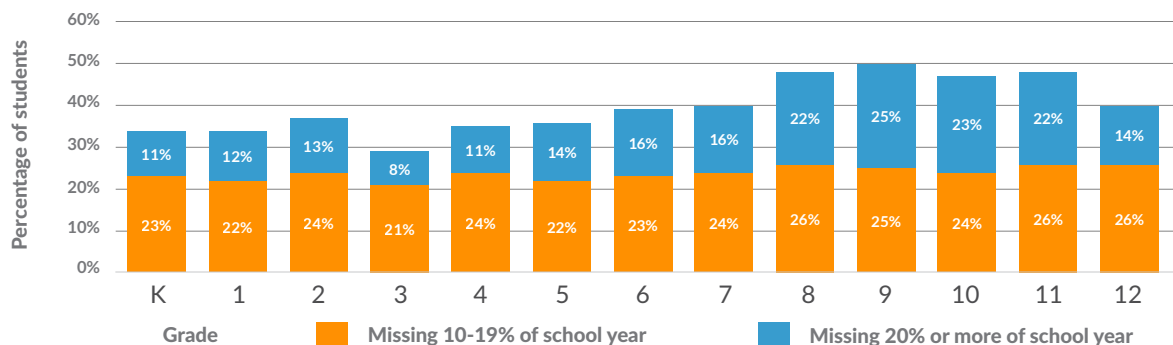
Bright spot:

Once again, Schiller 6-8 had the lowest rate of chronic absence of any school in 2021-22, at 10%.

PSSA data (grades 3-8)

The pandemic affected achievement for students across the country, with the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing historic losses. To better understand the impact of the pandemic on student outcomes in PPS, we compare the percentages of students who scored in the Proficient and Advanced ranges on the Pennsylvania State System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests for the 2018-19 and the 2021-22 school years, in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. In line with national data, we see

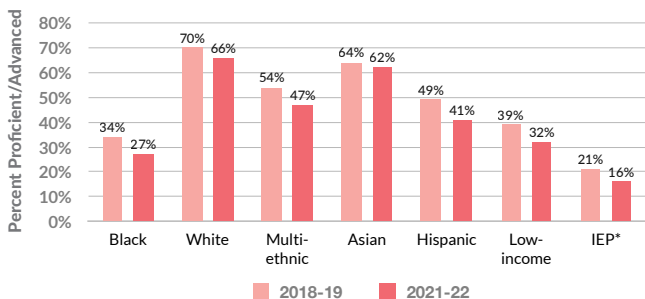
Percentage of students chronically absent, by grade



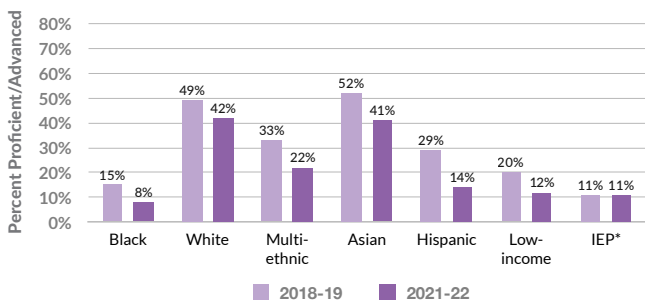
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that all student subgroups experienced a decline in achievement, with Black, Hispanic, and low-income students having the largest decreases.

Grades 3-8 ELA PSSA in 2018-19 and 2021-22



Grades 3-8 Math PSSA in 2018-19 and 2021-22



Bright spot:

88% of 3rd graders at Greenfield PreK-8 scored Proficient and Advanced on the ELA PSSA in 2022.

Please note: With changes to graduation requirements under Act 158 taking place, we are evaluating the efficacy of reporting Keystone Exam scores as there are now a variety of ways for students to demonstrate graduation readiness besides proficiency on these state exams.

College and trade school readiness

Even before the pandemic, high school and college or trade school completion rates in Pittsburgh meant that

many of Pittsburgh's students entered the workforce without the education or skills to get jobs with life-sustaining wages.

Completing high school and going on to get a postsecondary certificate or bachelor's degree has a lifelong impact on a learner. All of the highest paying jobs in our region require a bachelor's degree or higher credential. Industries with a high demand for new employees almost all require some form of postsecondary education, according to the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

A GPA of 2.8 or higher is one among several indicators that can predict success in college. Out of 1,198 seniors for whom we have data, 737 (61%) received a GPA of 2.8 or above, and 461 students (39%) did not. The majority of students (373 out of 461 students, or 81%) who did not receive a GPA of 2.8 or above were students of color. For the percentages by school, see the graph on page 15.

SAT scores

PPS also tracks how many students meet the college ready benchmark for SAT scores in both Reading and Math. While a recent study found that GPA is five times more predictive of college success than SAT scores (Allensworth and Clark, 2020), of 221 colleges surveyed in a report by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, 46% considered the SAT/ACT scores of "considerable importance," while only 5% said they were of "no importance."

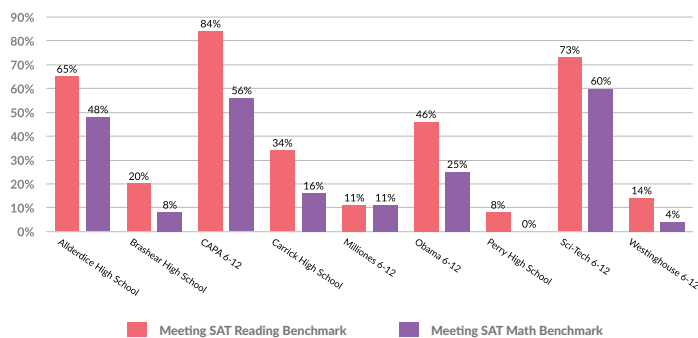
Graduation rate

Overall, rates of graduation in 2021, the most recent year available, rose from 80% in 2020 to 82% in 2021, with a significant increase in Hispanic graduation rates from 52% to 72%. The 18% that did not graduate represents 268 students, 67% of whom were Black, 21% White, 6% Hispanic, and 5% Multi-ethnic.

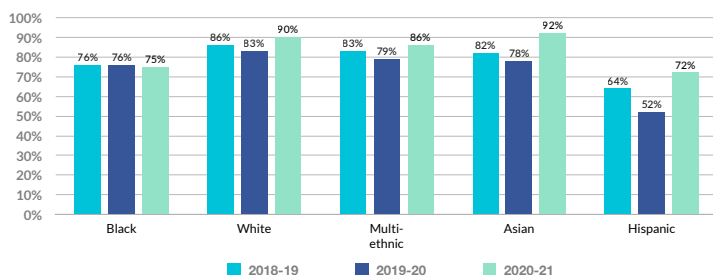
Conclusion

When we look at equity indicators across the district, we see a system that deprives some students of the opportunities they need for success, and disparities by race and family income for some data that raise serious questions. We are reminded that a system gets the outcomes it is designed to produce. In order to get better

Percentage of students meeting SAT Benchmarks



PPS graduation rates over time, by race/ethnicity



outcomes, we need to rethink many aspects of the current system to better ensure that students' needs are met, teachers feel supported in improving their practice, and families are welcomed as true partners with schools.

The pandemic showed that we have the community will to help Pittsburgh's children. If you can help, as a tutor, donor, volunteer, or interested citizen, contact us by emailing info@aplusschools.org or calling the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative Hotline at 412-256-8536.

Methodology

The executive summary analysis was conducted using data in the full report and previous reports as well as additional public data from the PA Department of Education and from PPS. See pages 146-147 for definitions and sources of information. The executive summary findings were developed by Sean Caulfield and Alec Harkins, data analysts for the report. For links to relevant research, view the online version of the report at ourschoolspittsburgh.org.

Data analysis, best practices, and presentations for your school

At A+ Schools, we value the insight that data analysis can provide for a school, and look to research that highlights local and national best practices to help address systemic barriers to equity in order for all schools to achieve the greatest successes for their students.

Call A+ Schools at 412-697-1298 or email us at info@aplusschools.org to schedule a presentation on this report for your school, community group, or agency. We'll review the report, explain how to use it, and answer your questions. These presentations can be customized to look at a particular school's data, a particular set of schools by grade or region, or the whole district.

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