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Data, Policy, and Community Solutions to Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in K-16 Education in Rhode Island

Providence, RI (January 18, 2023): Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will release its newest publication, *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in K-16 Education in Rhode Island*, on Thursday, January 19, 2023, from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. at The United Way of Rhode Island. Featured speakers will include **Paige Clausius-Parks**, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; **Cortney Nicolato**, President and CEO of United Way of Rhode Island; and **Angélica M. Infante-Green**, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Reflections will be shared from the following panel: **Jully Myrthil** of Young Voices, **Naiommy Baret** of Parents Leading for Educational Equity, **Christine Alves** of Rhode Island School for Progressive Education, and **Adama Brown** of United Way of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island Public School Enrollment

- In October 2021, 53% of Rhode Island public school students were white, 29% were Hispanic, 9% were Black, 5% were Multi-Racial, 3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% were Native American.
- On October 1, 2021, 81% of students enrolled in the four core cities (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket) were Students of Color, compared with 27% in the remainder of state. There are also large percentages of Students in Color in Newport (65%), Cranston (53%), and North Providence (49%).
- The diversity of Rhode Island is an asset; however, there are wide, persistent, and unacceptable disparities in K-12 education by race and ethnicity.

Root Causes of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Education

- Racial and ethnic disparities have existed in the United States and Rhode Island from its founding. Removal of Native Americans, several centuries of slavery, a century of Jim Crow laws, and residential segregation created large gaps in academic access and attainment for Students of Color. While policies that created segregated schools ended decades ago, America and Rhode Island have yet to see a truly integrated educational system that produces high-quality educational opportunities for all.

- Efforts to address racial and ethnic disparities often focus on Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American students and families and give less attention to white students and families. Achievement gaps by race often provide advantages to white students and disadvantages to non-white students.

Family, Community, and the Classroom

- White families and Families of Color often have the same hopes and dreams for their children, however, more white families have access to assets that allow them to make different decisions about where to live, where to send their children to school, and to secure resources that help them advocate for their children.
- Students in schools with high concentrations of low-income students and Students of Color have unequal educational opportunities when compared with the educational opportunities available to students who attend schools that are more diverse or that have mostly higher-income or predominantly white students because the schools they attend have more absences, lower graduation rates, teachers who have less classroom experience, and more teachers who are teaching outside their subject area of expertise.

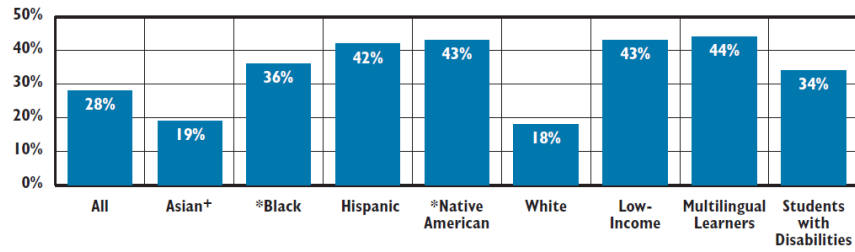
Diversifying the Educator Workforce

- When Students of Color are taught by Educators of Color, they demonstrate long-term academic achievement including higher reading and math test scores, decreased likelihood of dropping out of high school, increased likelihood of going to college, and increased social and emotional development.
- In Rhode Island, during the 2021-2022 school year, 12.4% of fully certified educators identified as a Person of Color.
- Rhode Island is not implementing many policies that other states are using to recruit and retain a diverse education workforce.

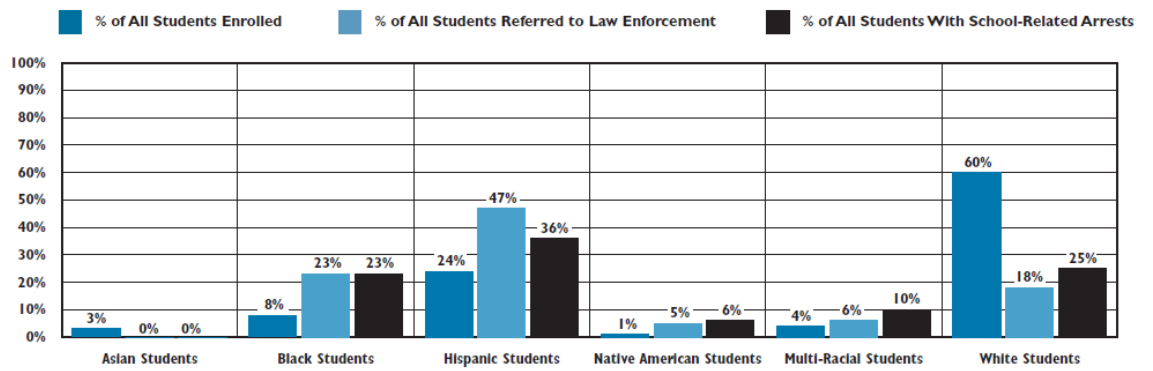
Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Education: Indicators and Outcomes

- Below, we have provided snapshots of several indicators that demonstrate the persistent racial and ethnic disparities in education. **Please see the publication for a full explanation of the data.**

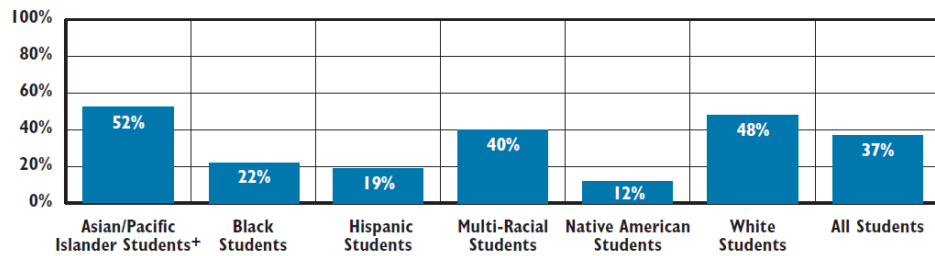
K-12 Chronic Absence Rates in Rhode Island by Student Subgroup, 2020-2021 School Year*



Bias in School Discipline by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2015-2016



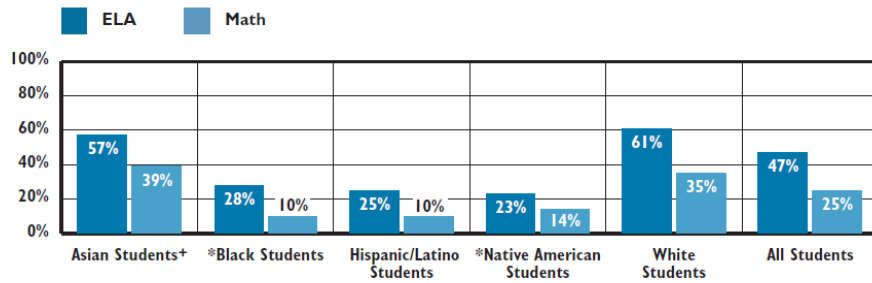
Third Graders Meeting Expectations on the RICAS English Language Arts Assessment by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2022



Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2021

YEAR	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Asian Students	315	6%	1%	5%	88%
Black Students	1,006	8%	<1%	10%	82%
Hispanic Students	3,047	12%	1%	10%	77%
Native American	72	13%	0%	11%	76%
White Students	6,346	5%	1%	6%	88%
ALL STUDENTS	11,201	8%	1%	8%	84%

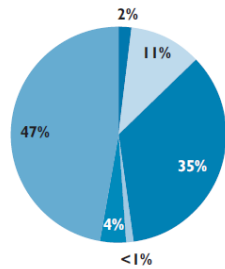
Test Takers Meeting Expectations on the SAT English Language Arts and Math Assessment, Rhode Island, 2022



Student Enrollment in Dual and Concurrent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2020-2021

Students Participating in Dual Enrollment Courses

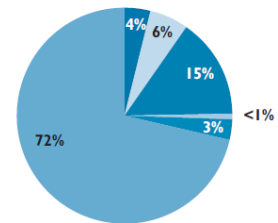
- 2% Asian Students
- 11% Black Students
- 35% Hispanic Students
- <1% Native American Students
- 4% Multi-Racial Students
- 47% White Students



n = 834

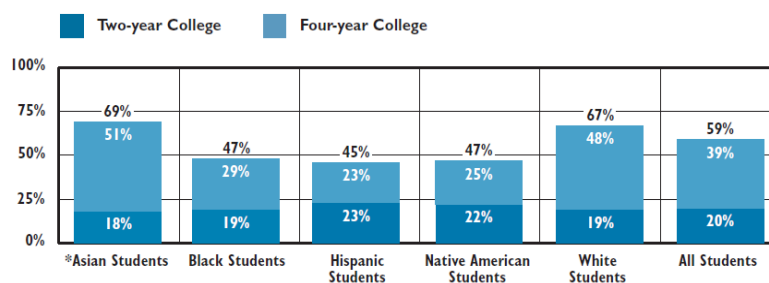
Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment Courses

- 4% Asian Students
- 6% Black Students
- 15% Hispanic Students
- <1% Native American Students
- 3% Multi-Racial Students
- 72% White Students

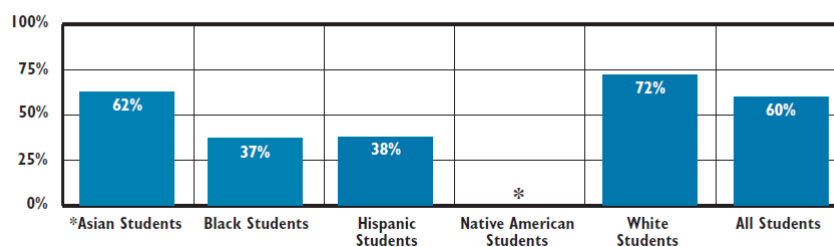


n = 4,763

Immediate College Enrollment by Race, Ethnicity, and Type of College, Class of 2021, Rhode Island



Six-Year College Completion by Race/Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2014 Cohort



Data Limitations: The Need for Disaggregation and Improved Collection

- The **Asian American** community is diverse, the fastest-growing, and the most economically divided racial and ethnic group in the United States. The disparity across Asian subgroups can be attributed to differences in immigration origins, educational attainment, occupations, and generational wealth. The lack of disaggregated data for the Asian population contributes to the misperception that all Asian Americans are excelling, resulting in underrepresentation in equity initiatives, especially for **Southeast Asians** where the largest disparities are found.
- **Middle Eastern and North African** communities are racially and ethnically diverse. The U.S. Census Bureau considers people descended from the Middle East and North Africa to be white. Middle Eastern, North African, Arab, and Iranian communities have spent decades advocating for the U.S. Census Bureau to create a separate category for themselves. Because Arab and Iranian students are not demographically identified, they are often overlooked and underrepresented in equity initiatives.

“Rhode Island must address persistent racial and ethnic disparities in Rhode Island’s K-16 education system with urgency,” said Paige Clausius-Parks, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. **“Our public schools are becoming increasingly diverse, and if we don’t get this right for Students of Color, we are condemning our entire education system to failure. This report provides concrete policy recommendations that are informed by Students, Parents, and Educators of Color. The data is here, the research is here, the recommendations are here. Now it’s time for action.”**

Recommendations

- **Center the voices** of Arab, Asian, Black, Latino, and Native American youth and parents in policy decisions.
- Ensure that education data is disaggregated by race and ethnicity when possible and **implement the *All Students Count Act***, so that disaggregated data on Asian and Pacific Islander students is publicly available.
- **Provide equitable access to high-quality early education programs** to minimize the learning disparities that appear early and grow over time.
- Implement **family-centered approaches** that increase equitable access to family engagement and leadership opportunities by providing appropriate interpretation and translation services, transportation to family engagement events, free child care at school events and meetings, and home visits in cases when families are unable to attend in-person meetings.
- Build the future teacher candidate supply by **allowing high school students to take college courses and earn credits that they can apply toward a teaching degree and license** and create a loan forgiveness or scholarship program for students who commit to becoming teachers in Rhode Island.
- Invest in **financial incentives to attract and retain Educators of Color** using targeted financial incentives like loan forgiveness programs, scholarships, and bonuses.
- Invest in **Grow-Your-Own programs** including TA to BA programs that help to attract and retain Educators of Color.
- Permanently **remove test-based admission requirements** for teacher preparation programs to expand pathways into the teaching profession.
- Modify "last-in, first-out" policies of the **teacher layoff** process with equity by expanding the definition of educator quality to include race and multilingual fluency.
- Increase federal, state, and local investments to **expand access to high-quality after-school and summer programs** and to build and sustain an effective out-of-school time workforce.
- Increase implementation and sustainable funding of effective models of **school-based mental health care** with clinical strategies.
- Enforce the legal statute that **restricts the use of out-of-school suspensions for non-violent offenses**, and **end the practice of arresting and referring students to law enforcement** for non-violent offenses.

- Reallocate funds for School Resource Officers (SROs) and law enforcement to **fund more school and community-based mental health services and school counselors.**
- **Evaluate and address barriers to offering concurrent enrollment courses** at more schools that Students of Color attend.
- Provide **academic, financial, and social supports** for college Students of Color to help increase college completion rates.
- Pass legislation that requires the General Assembly to include **race and ethnicity impact statements** in any legislation related to education.
- Adjust the Rhode Island **education funding formula** to ensure funding distribution is more equitable, less reliant on property wealth, and provides targeted funding to meet the needs of low-income students, Multilingual Learners, and high-cost Special Education students.
- Ensure **ESSER funds are used** to address the impact of COVID-19 on Students of Color.
- Amend the state's constitution to include a judicially enforceable **right to an equitable, adequate, and meaningful education** to ensure all children receive high-quality educational opportunities.

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education, and development of Rhode Island children with a core focus on equity.