

## Participation in a Professional Development Program on Culturally Responsive Practices in Wisconsin

In 2015 Wisconsin had the largest gaps in scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress between Black and White students in grades 4 and 8. Due to this disparity, state and school district leaders in Wisconsin are interested in improving education outcomes among Black students.<sup>1</sup> To achieve this goal, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction encourages schools to implement culturally responsive practices, which prior research suggests are related to improvements in outcomes among racial/ethnic minority students,<sup>2</sup> and supports a professional development program on those practices called Building Culturally Responsive Systems. This study examined the percentage of schools statewide that participated in the program, differences in the characteristics of schools that participated in the program and of schools that did not participate, implementation of culturally responsive practices among schools that participated in the program and schools that did not participate, and the relationship between participation and school-level academic and behavior outcomes. Education leaders in Wisconsin can use this information to improve the program and to guide future research.

### Key findings

- **Between 2013/14 and 2018/19, 4 percent of schools in Wisconsin (96 of 2,290) participated in the program (meaning that teachers and administrators from the school attended at least one of the program's five sessions).**
- **Schools that participated in the program had a larger average enrollment, were more likely to be eligible for Title I funds, and were more often located in cities and suburbs compared with schools that did not participate, but there was no meaningful difference between the two school groups in the percentage of Black students (the difference was less than 5 percentage points).**
- **About 6 percent of schools that participated in the program (6 of 96) were located in one of the five school districts that serve the majority of Black students in the state.**
- **About 17 percent of schools that participated in the program reported implementing culturally responsive practices in reading instruction compared with 28 percent of schools that did not participate.**
- **Program participation was not meaningfully related to a school's closing gaps scores (which measure a school's progress toward closing achievement gaps between target groups and comparison groups) for English language arts or math, attendance rate, suspension rate, or expulsion rate one year, two years, or three years later, after school characteristics and pre-program academic and behavior measures were accounted for.**

1. National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *NAEP data explorer*. Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata>.

2. Christianakis, M. (2011). Hybrid texts: Fifth graders, rap music, and writing. *Urban Education, 46*(5), 1131–1168. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ935781>. Dimick, A. S. (2012). Student empowerment in an environmental science classroom: Toward a framework for social justice science education. *Science Education, 96*(6), 990–1012. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ989868>. Milner, H. R. (2011). Culturally relevant pedagogy in a diverse urban classroom. *Urban Review, 43*(1), 66–89. Souryasack, R., & Lee, J. L. (2007). Drawing on students' experiences, cultures and languages to develop English language writing: Perspectives from these Lao heritage middle school students. *Heritage Language Journal, 5*(1), 79–97. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ831195>.