



# School Boards and Educational Equity: Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice

A training to engage local school board members and district administrators in addressing educational equity in their districts

July 30, 2019 Webinar



# Agenda

**1.** Welcome and introductions

**2.** Achievement and opportunity gaps in Wisconsin

**3.** Strategies to improve outcomes and close gaps

**4.** What school board members can do

# Welcome & introductions

**Who we are**

# Meet the presenters



Leslie Anderson

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*Senior Staff*



Dan Aladjem

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*Senior Staff*



Jeanine Hildreth

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*Senior Staff*



Alisha Butler

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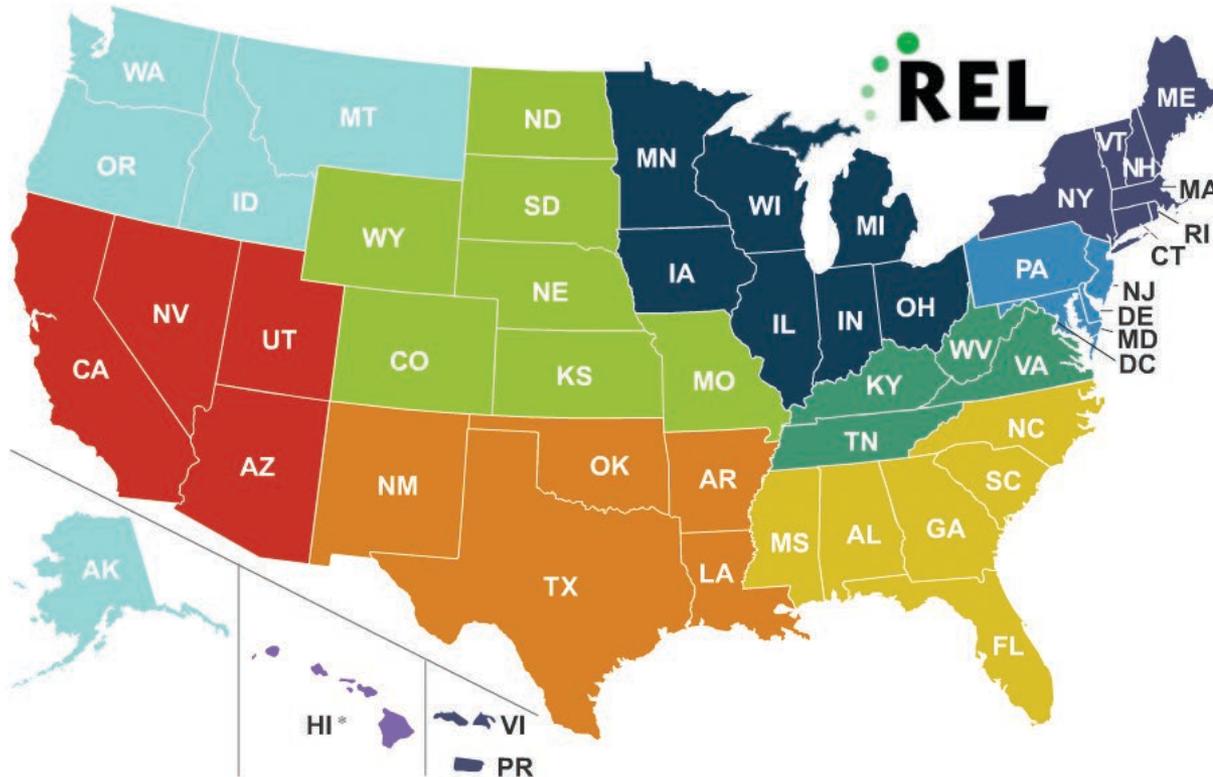
*Senior Staff*

# Regional Educational Laboratories



**Midwest Achievement Gap  
Research Alliance (MAGRA)**

# Regional Educational Laboratories



- |              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Appalachia   | NW       |
| Central      | Pacific* |
| Mid-Atlantic | SE       |
| Midwest      | SW       |
| NE & Islands | West     |

\* The Pacific Region contains Hawaii, pictured on the map, and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, & Yap), Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, & the Republic of Palau, not pictured on the map.



# Goals of the training

# Goals of the training

1. Raise awareness about opportunity and achievement gaps experienced by Wisconsin's Black students.
2. Facilitate conversations among peers.
3. Share resources and strategies that school board members and districts can use to increase educational opportunities and improve outcomes for students in their district.

# Background

Although limited, a growing body of research has examined the role of school boards and their influence on the quality of education (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Delagardelle, 2008; Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997; Lee & Eadens, 2014).

- There are studies that show an association between school board practices and academic outcomes (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Shober & Hartney, 2014).
- The role of school boards is particularly important in Wisconsin, where, in 2011, Act 10 shifted more responsibility regarding decisions and policies aimed at impacting student learning to school boards (Ford, 2015).



**The value of the board is in the strategic oversight and support that the board provides. The board brings the passion, the drive, the commitment to achieve the moral imperative, not distracted by the day-to-day administrative challenges. This is purposeful action.**

— Campbell and Fullan (2019)

# Group discussion

As you introduce yourselves to one another, please provide the following information:

- Your name, role, and district.
- Your district size, type, and demographic characteristics.
- Why you chose to attend the training.
- What you hope to get out of the training.



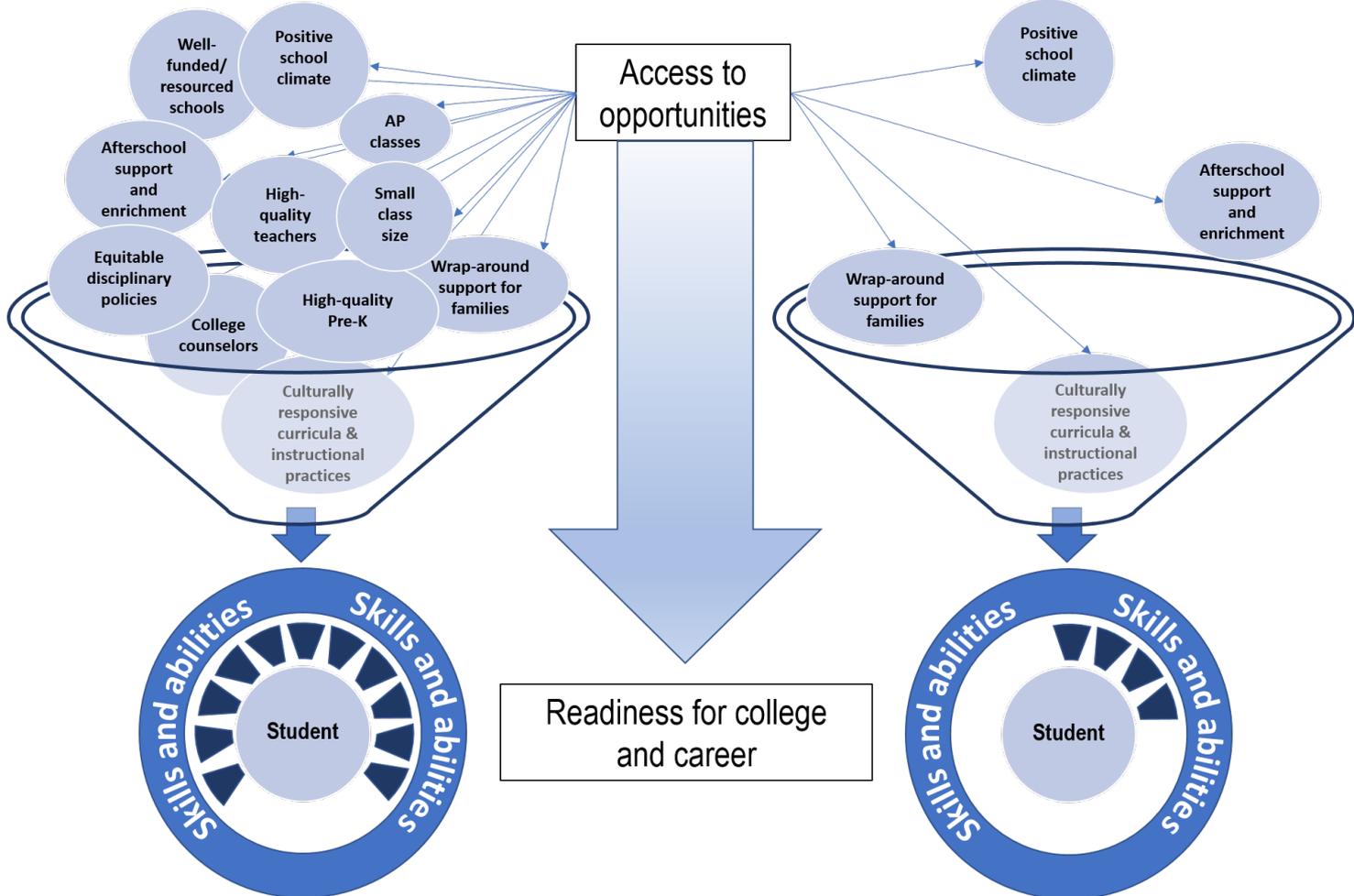
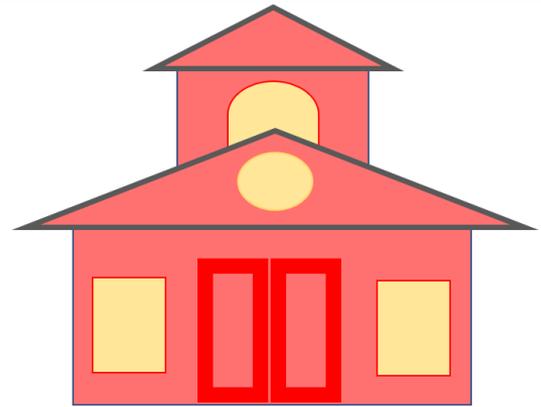
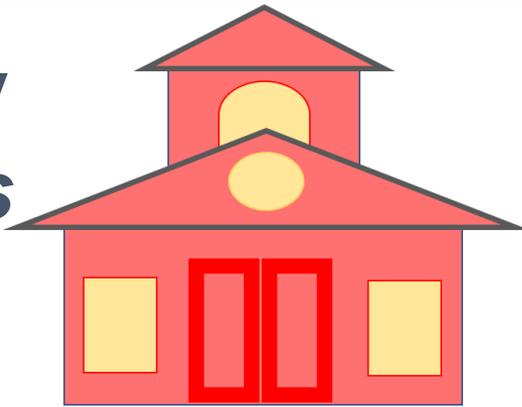
# Achievement and opportunity gaps in Wisconsin



**In a pluralistic and democratic society, schools must respond to students' actual needs, build on their unique strengths, be culturally responsive, and provide the opportunities necessary to give every student a fair chance at academic success.**

— Carter and Welner (2013)

# Opportunity gaps across schools

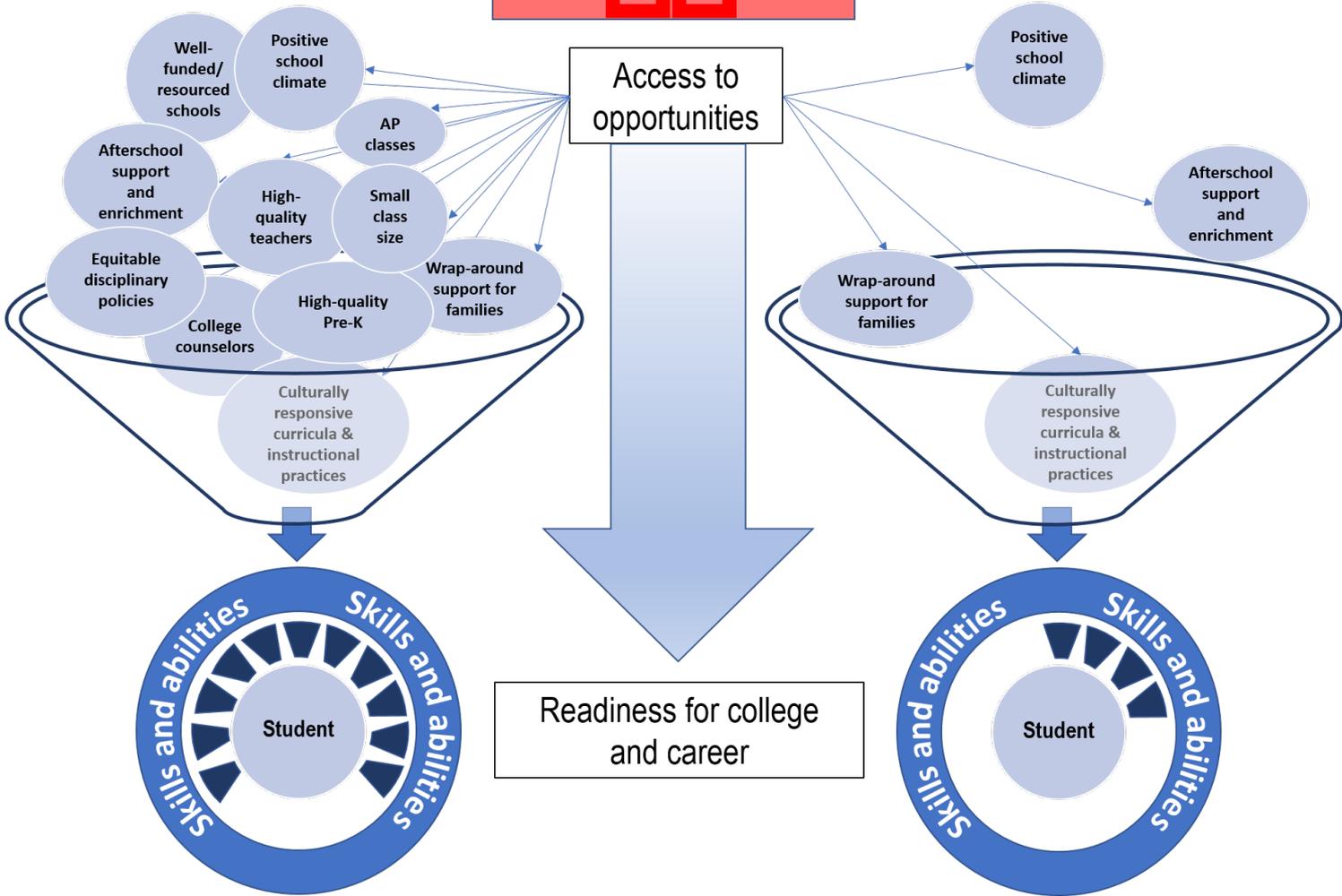
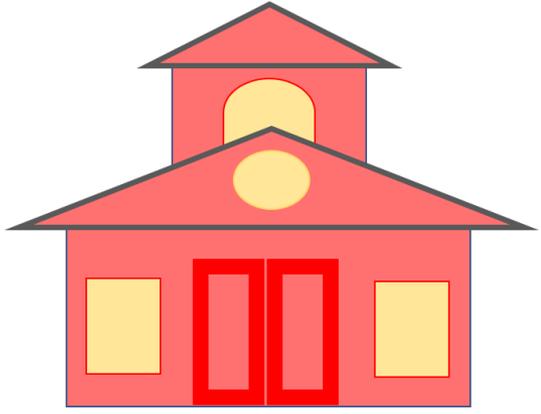




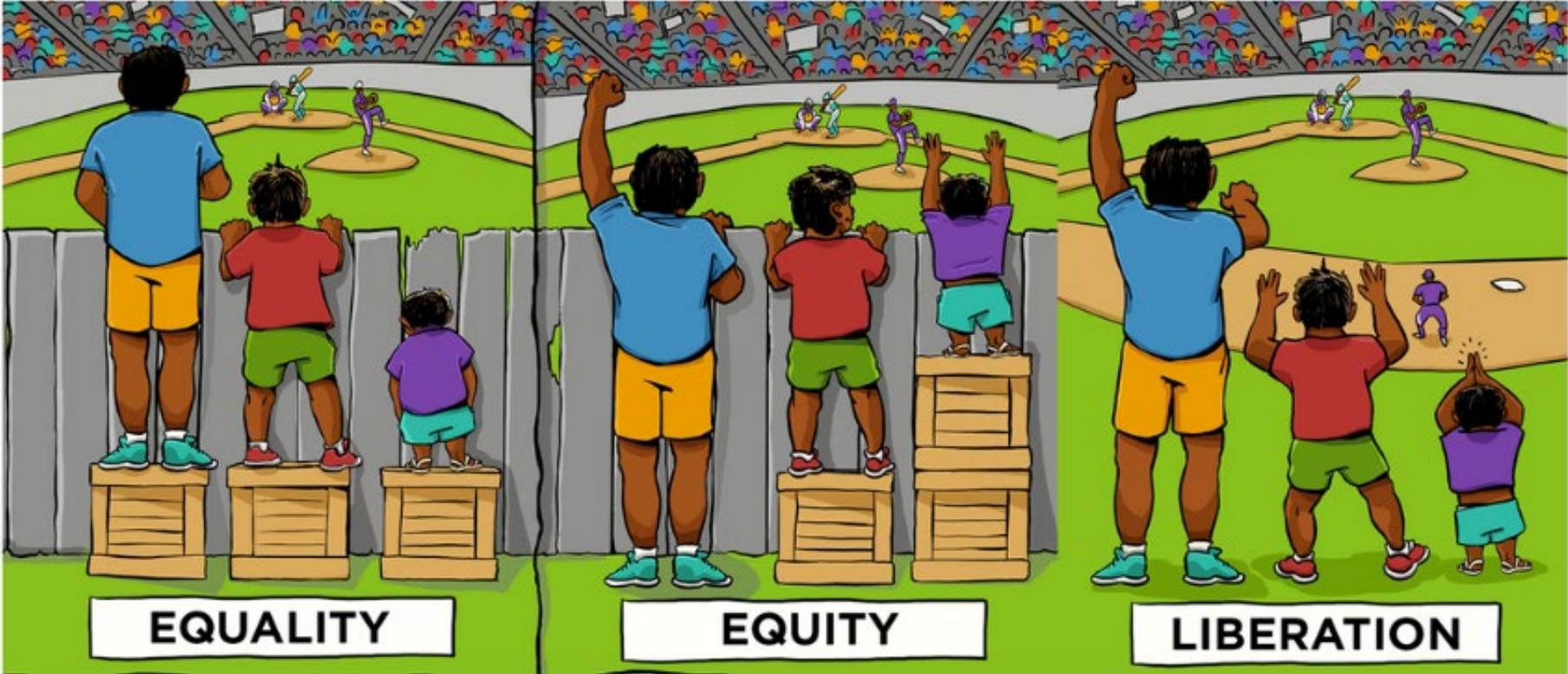
**Students of different social groups may attend ‘good’ schools together, but the segregation that often occurs within them belies claims of equal opportunity. In many schools, African American, Latino, and Native American students are rarely exposed to the upper-echelon college preparatory classes.**

— Carter and Welner (2013)

# Opportunity gaps *within* schools



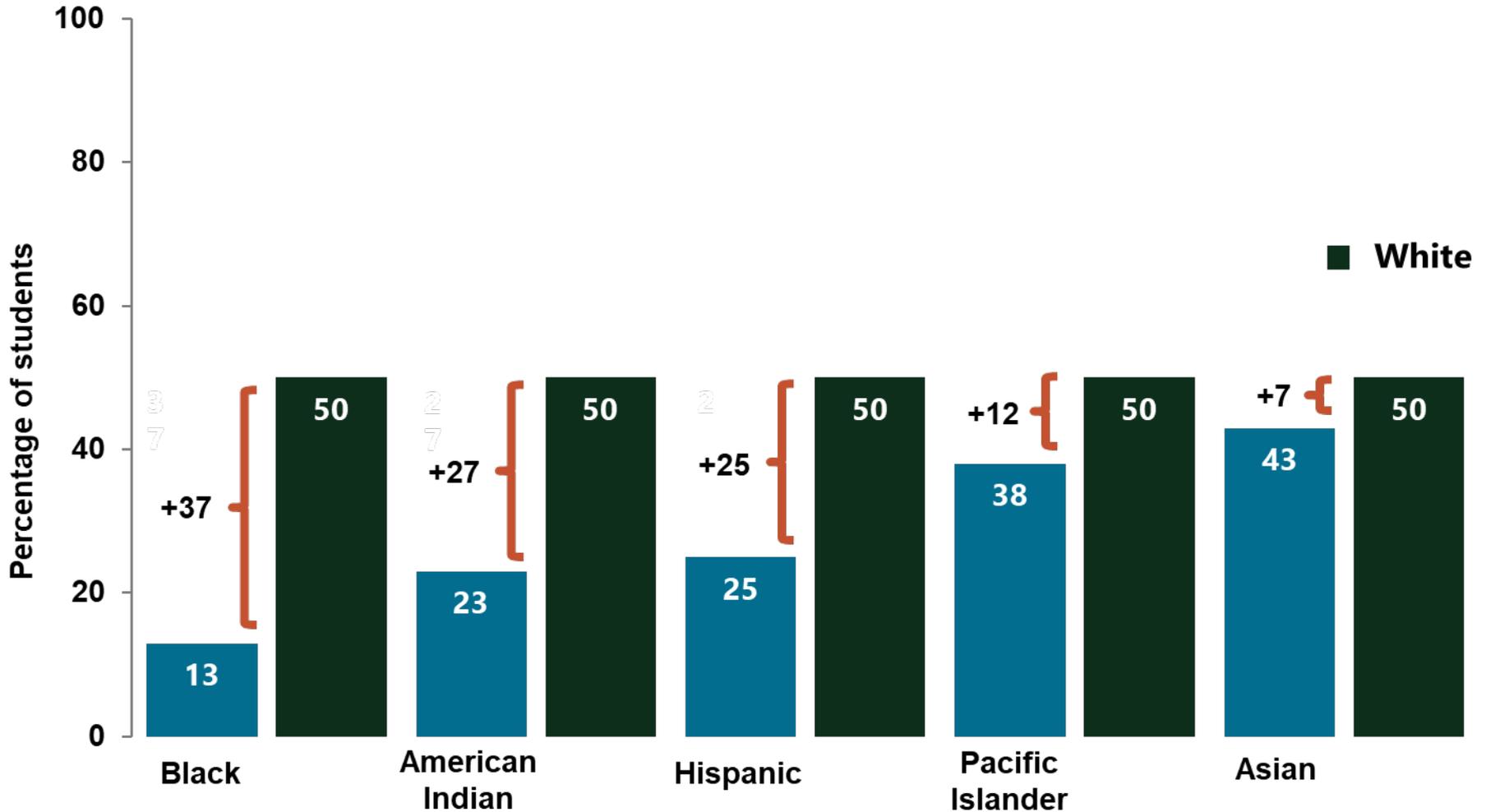
# Equality, equity, and liberation





# State-level data: Student achievement

# Percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in English language arts (2017/18)



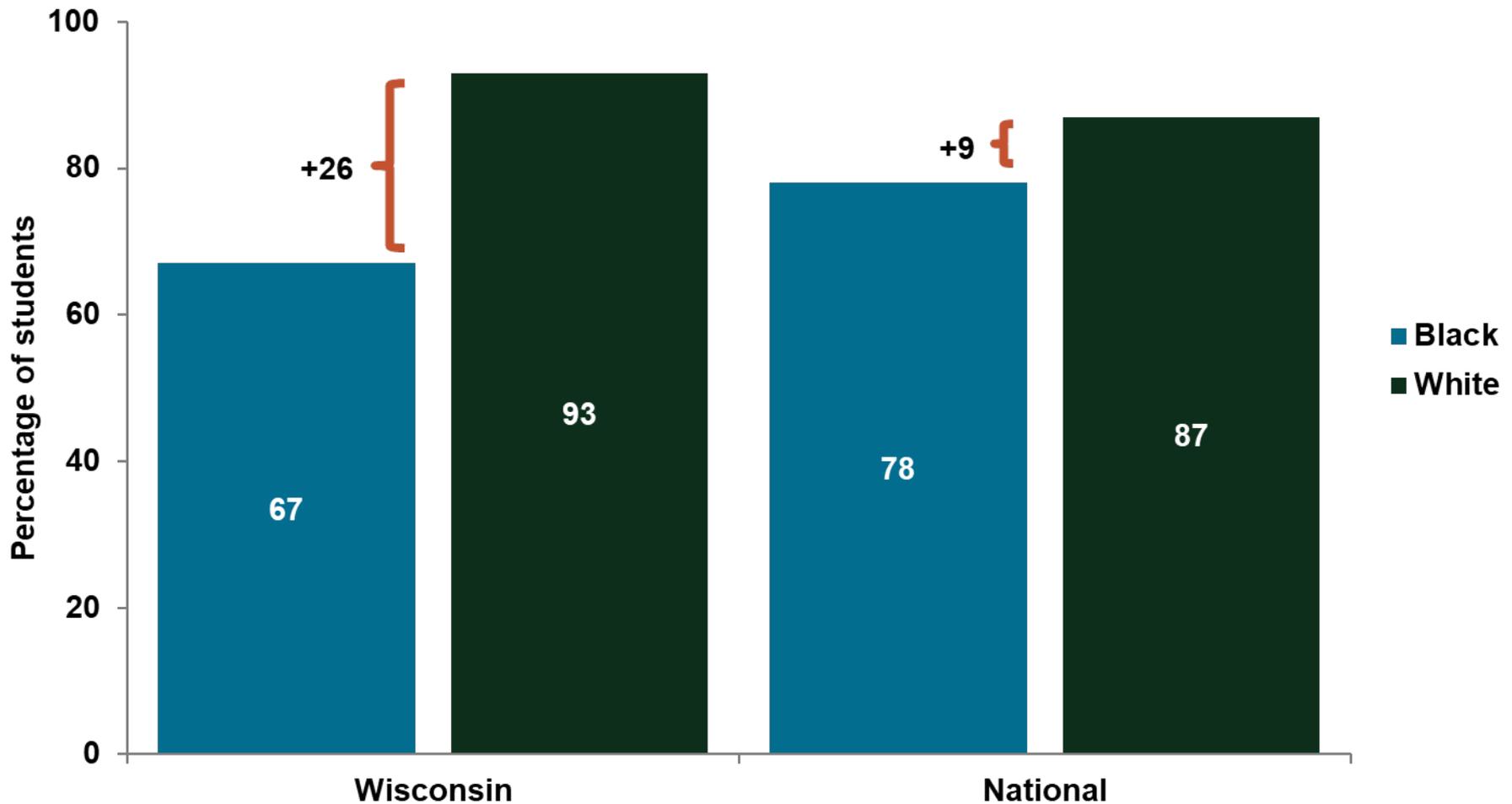
# **State-level data: Graduation and college enrollment**

## In Wisconsin...

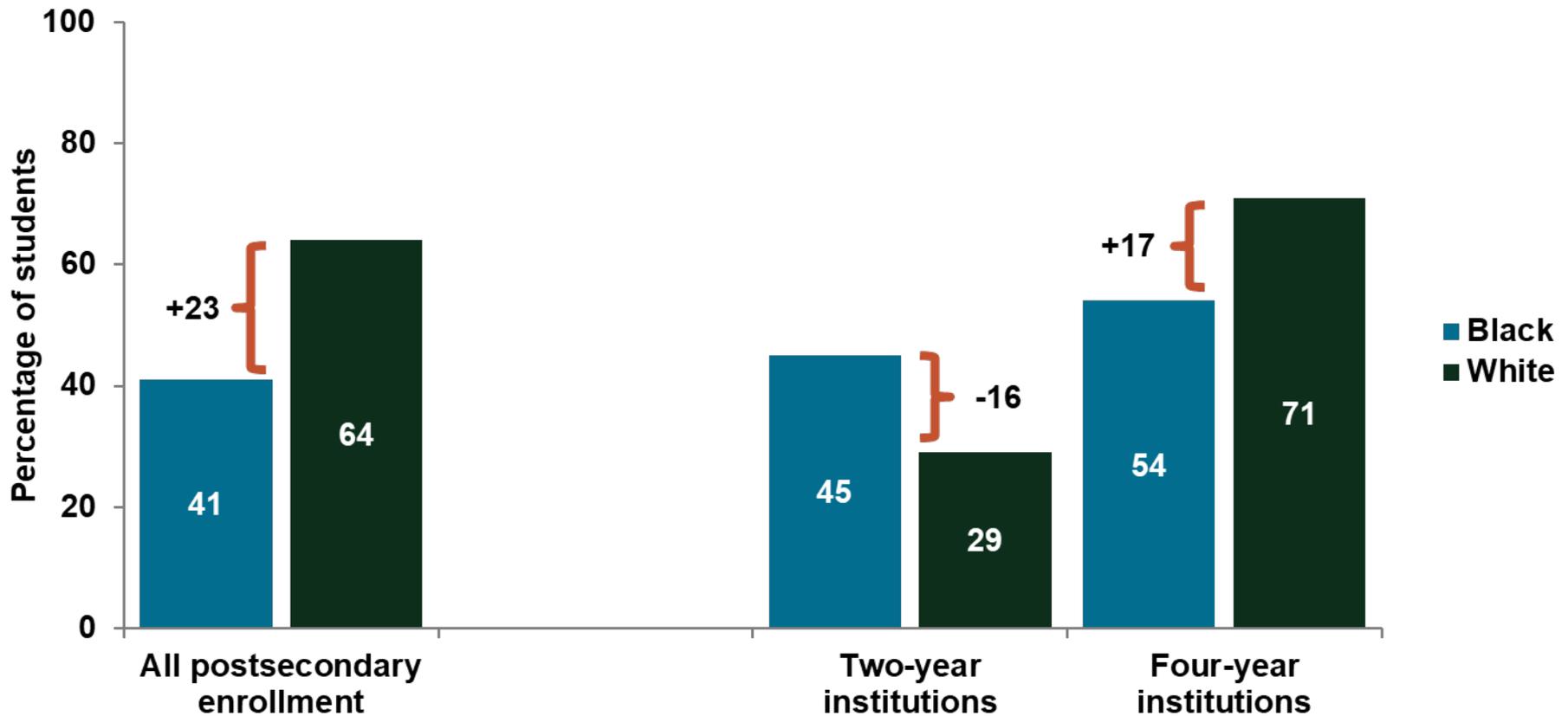
A similar trend can be observed in the high school completion rate. Wisconsin has a 26-point gap between Black students who complete high school and White students who complete high school.



# High school completion rates, 2017/18



# Postsecondary enrollment in Wisconsin, class of 2018





**Wisconsin's high school graduation rate of 88.4% in 2015 was 6th highest nationally, according to new federal data that revealed a record high U.S. graduation rate Monday, but the state retains the unfortunate distinction of being No. 1 for the widest graduation-rate gap between White and Black students.**

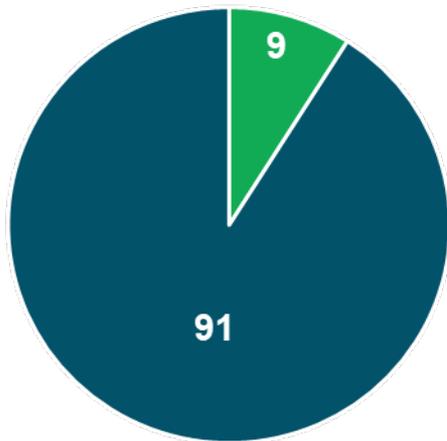
— Richards (2016)

**State-level data:**

**Other**

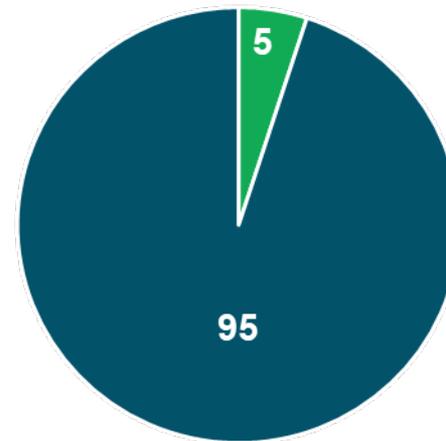
# Enrollment in Advanced Placement courses in Wisconsin, 2017/18

Percentage of student population



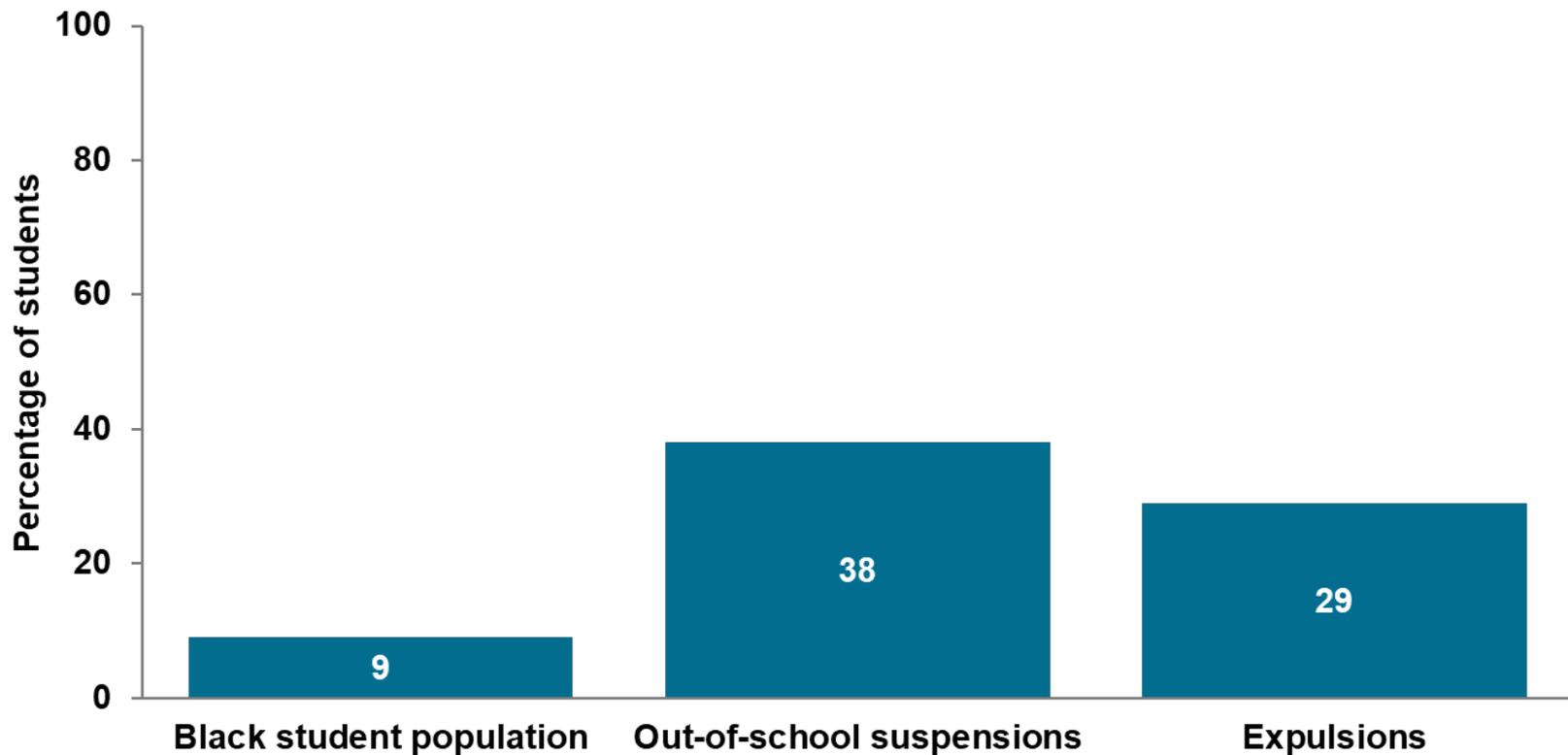
■ Black students ■ All other students

Percentage of students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses



■ Black students ■ All other students

# Exposure to exclusionary discipline actions in Wisconsin, 2017/18



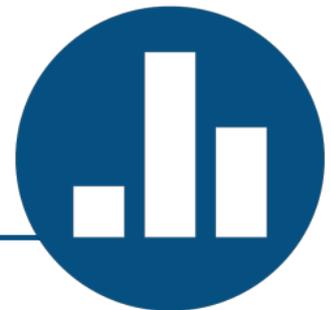
# To what extent are you familiar with these data on the opportunities and outcomes of Black students in Wisconsin?

Very familiar

Mostly familiar

Somewhat familiar

Not at all familiar



# District-level data

# Exploring your data

**Step 1:** Please go to the following website:

<https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/>.

**Step 2:** Find your district.

**Step 3:** Record the following data on your planning tool:

- Opportunity.
- Discipline.
- Achievement gap.



**Step 4:** If done, explore your district data from:

- Civil Rights Data Collection: <https://ocrdata.ed.gov>.
- WISEdash: <https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov>.

# To what extent were you familiar with your own district's data disaggregated by student race/ethnicity?

Very familiar

Mostly familiar

Somewhat familiar

Not at all familiar



# Strategies to improve outcomes and close gaps

## Evidence-supported interventions associated with Black students' educational outcomes

### Findings from a systematic review of research

Michelle R. Same  
Nicole I. Guarino  
Max Pardo  
Deaweh Benson  
Kyle Fagan  
Jim Lindsay  
American Institutes for Research

Two expert reviewers who are unaffiliated with the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest and American Institutes for Research offered comments to a previous draft of this report. The authors revised the report based on their comments. Any remaining errors or omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

February 2018

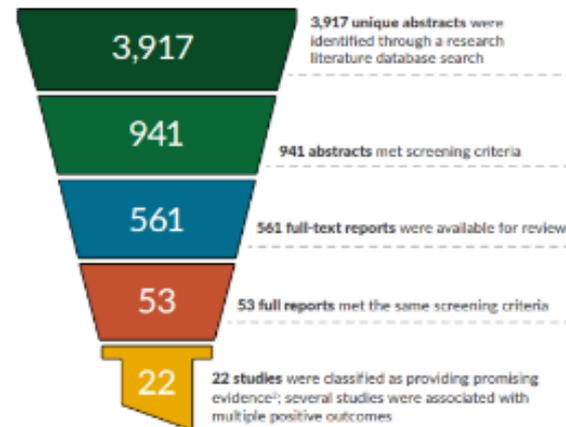
[Link to report](#)

## Promising practices to increase the academic success of Black students

Along their paths to educational success, Black students in the United States face a number of challenges that hold some students back from reaching their full potential (Arenic E. Casey Foundation, 2017).<sup>1</sup> The Midwest Achievement Gap Research Alliance (MAGRA), which conducts and supports the use of research on increasing educational outcomes among Black students in Wisconsin, asked Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest to identify interventions—with supporting evidence—associated with favorable academic outcomes among Black students.

REL Midwest used a **systematic review process** to identify policies, practices, and programs associated with increasing Black student academic achievement (in English language arts [ELA] and mathematics), increasing high school graduation rates, and decreasing high school dropout rates.

### Research Review Process



#### Screening criteria:

- Report type
- Date
- Sample
- Study design
- Measured outcomes
- Intervention type
- Statistically significant associations between practices and Black student academic outcomes



State-, district- and school-level leaders can use this report as a **starting point** toward forming a comprehensive strategy to improve the educational outcomes of Black students.

Taking a **deliberate approach** in selecting, implementing, and monitoring interventions that best fit the local setting and student population may reduce Black-White achievement gaps.<sup>3</sup>

[Link to infographic](#)

# Supporting Black students' excellence

## Connecting research to practice



[Link to video](#)



## Supporting Black Students' Excellence Connecting Research to Practice

### DOCUMENTARY VIEWING GUIDE



Documentary link: <https://detroit.com/RELDocumentary>

#### About the documentary

Along their path toward educational success, Black students face circumstances and challenges that may impact their ability to reach their full potential. Research shows that Black students are less likely to have access to high-level mathematics and science courses, more likely to face harsher school discipline, and more likely to attend schools with higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers compared to their peers.<sup>1</sup> This video highlights a few strategies that are being implemented in schools in Wisconsin to improve the educational outcomes among Black students. These practices include high expectations, strong student-teacher relationships, and mentoring programs and have been identified as promising from a systematic literature review that Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest conducted in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

**Schools Featured:** Julian Thomas Elementary School and Mitchell Elementary and Middle School

#### Intended audience

REL Midwest created this video as a tool for teachers, school leaders, and state and local education agency staff to learn about evidence-based approaches that support the improvement of educational outcomes among Black students. The documentary focuses on examples from Wisconsin, but the information and evidence shared in this video offer important lessons for people and groups based outside the state. REL Midwest encourages viewers to watch the video and use the following questions as a starting point for a discussion on ways to improve the educational outcomes for Black students.

*“Wisconsin does have a rich cultural and racial diversity; that’s who we are, but how it shows up in education—we can do better.”*

– Dr. Chrishirella Simon, Manager, Office of Family & Community Engagement Racine Unified School District, Racine, Wisconsin

Please let us know how you used these materials! Send an email to [relmidwest@ed.gov](mailto:relmidwest@ed.gov).

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education Data Rights Data Collection (2018). *Key highlights on equity and opportunity gaps at our nation's public schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oeo/oeo-2018-14/181000.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sims, M. R., Guirao, S. I., Pardo, M., Bennett, D., Hayes, R., & Lickite, J. (2018). *Effective supports and interventions associated with Black students' educational outcomes: Findings from a systematic review of research*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. <https://rel.ed.gov/?i=0581117>

*“Wisconsin does have a rich cultural and racial diversity; that’s who we are, but how it shows up in education—we can do better.”*

– Dr. Chrishirella Sutton, Manager, Office of Family & Community Engagement Racine Unified School District, Racine, Wisconsin



## Discussion questions

## Additional resources



# [Link to viewing guide](#)

# State and district strategies



# State strategies

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction identified closing the achievement gap as a statewide priority.

Specific efforts include:

- Convening the Task Force on Wisconsin's Achievement Gap, which produced the report **Promoting Excellence for All**.
- Pledging in its 2017 **Every Student Succeeds Act Plan** to cut the achievement and graduation gaps in half for all student subgroups in 6 years.
- Introducing the **Districts of Innovation Program** to encourage innovation and equity initiatives by removing policy and administrative barriers from schools.



W I S C O N S I N   D E P A R T M E N T   O F  
P U B L I C   I N S T R U C T I O N

# District strategies



## Racine Unified School District

- Codified its commitment to improving educational outcomes for Black students in its **core values**, its 5-year strategic plan, and other governing documents.

## Green Bay Area Public School District

- Appointed an equity coordinator.
- Hired a bilingual family engagement coordinator who helps ensure that all students have access to quality educational experiences.



# District strategies

## School District of Janesville

- Started working on improving educational outcomes for Black students 10 years ago.
- Participated in developing the state framework, Developing Excellence for All, five years ago.
- Adopted the state framework and launched its own Excellence for All initiative.



# District strategies

## School District of Janesville

- Appointed a district staff member to lead the equity work.
- Integrated equity issues into all district work.
- Reviewed curricular materials and resources to ensure that adopted materials are both high quality and representative of the lives of students.



Through this review, district staff learned that high school students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes were the only ones allowed to take textbooks home.

# District strategies

## School District of Janesville

- Each school was required to:
  - Conduct an equity audit to identify gaps.
  - Create an **equity team** of diverse staff.

### Equity team

1. Attend districtwide trainings focused on
  - Analyzing data.
  - Implicit and explicit bias.
  - Micro-aggressions.
2. Train and support other members of the school staff to analyze data, learn about implicit and explicit bias, micro-aggressions, and other equity-related topics.
3. Develop the school's equity plan.

# District strategies

## Milwaukee Public Schools

- Created the Department of Black & Latino Male Achievement
  - Initiated a Positive Narrative Change Campaign to ensure students are “seen as assets that bring brilliance, creativity, and greatness.”
  - Implemented Black and Latino Male mentorship programs.



*BLMA's vision is that Black & Latino boys and young men will possess an affirmed sense of identity, dignity, and self-confidence, and will have the necessary tools to triumphantly navigate college, career, and life.*

# Group discussion

What efforts, if any, are under way in your district to improve educational outcomes for Black students?

- What have been the successes and challenges of these efforts?
- Have the efforts led to improved outcomes?
- In what ways has the school board been involved in the efforts?





# What school board members can do

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Pat Savage-Williams (2018) identified 10 ways that school boards can champion racial equity:

1. Have a strong commitment to racial equity.
2. Adopt an equity statement.
3. Know district demographics.
4. Expand personal knowledge/understanding of race issues.
5. Initiate and create structural changes to support equity.
6. Develop goals and policies with an equity lens.
7. Change school budgets to prevent disparities.
8. Be data informed.
9. Develop partnerships and allies to achieve equity.
10. Expect opposition.

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9. Develop partnerships and allies to achieve equity.
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# What school board members can do

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## 1. Have a strong commitment to racial equity.

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- Members of the school board must be willing to commit to creating a school culture that embraces and implements racial equity practices.
- The board needs to commit to the importance of racial equity work and endorse the efforts of the superintendent to move forward.



# What school board members can do

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## 2. Adopt an equity statement.

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- An equity statement will serve as a guidepost for the equity work of the district and provide the framework to focus on racial equity at every level.



# What school board members can do

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## 2. Adopt an equity statement.

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“ We affirm in our actions that each student can, will, and shall learn. We recognize that based on factors including, but not limited to, disability, race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, not all students receive equitable educational opportunities. Educational equity is the intentional allocation of resources, instruction, and opportunities to meet the specific identified needs of students and staff in the local school community.



*Approved by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) Board of Directors in June 2018*

# What school board members can do

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## 2. Adopt an equity statement.

---



ETHS is committed to equity because excellence for all students requires equity. This commitment will be achieved by:

1. Providing all students with access to resources, opportunities, supports and interventions to ensure that they maximize their abilities and potential.
2. Giving students what they need, not necessarily equally, to meet their learning and well-being requirements.
3. Assuring that all ETHS staff continue to examine and eliminate institutional beliefs, policies, practices, and teaching that perpetuate racial disparities in achievement.

# What school board members can do

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## 2. Adopt an equity statement.

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4. Preparing all students to succeed in a multi-cultural, global society by teaching the contributions and viewpoints of all people in culturally relevant curricula.
5. Raising the achievement of all students while eliminating the racial predictability of achievement.

*Approved by the Evanston Township High School Board of Education on September 7, 2011*

# What school board members can do

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## 4. Expand personal knowledge/understanding of race issues.

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- Expand your racial consciousness. Unconscious biases influence institutional and structural racism and impact student learning in school systems.
- Find and attend workshops on unconscious bias (*in educational institutions*) and develop tools and language to engage in courageous conversations about race.
- Develop the capacity to challenge insensitive policies that serve to impede the success of students of color.



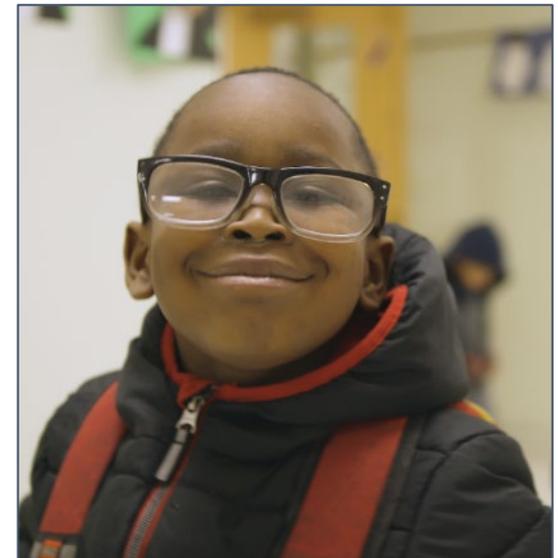
# What school board members can do

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## 5. Initiate and create structural changes to support equity.

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- Look at the disparities within your district and identify the structures that hold them together.
- Tradition and customs are often named as “reasons” for patterns that usually support racial inequities. Some may not see them as problematic.
- In collaboration with the superintendent, create a counter-narrative with different outcomes.



# What school board members can do

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## 7. Change school budgets to prevent disparities.

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- Equitable allocation of resources is paramount to equity in a school district.
- School board members should partner with the superintendent and collaborate with the chief financial officer to ensure that equitable resources are allotted for all students.



# What school board members can do

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## 8. Be data informed.

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- Develop practices and methods to measure, report, interpret, and analyze data regularly for the purposes of improvement and transparency.
- Identify racial/ethnic disparities in student outcomes, including:
  - Academic performance.
  - Discipline.
  - Attendance.
  - Dropout and graduation rates.
  - Involvement in extracurricular activities.
  - Special education classification.
- Determine how to measure success, and be willing to make changes or tweaks if the data indicate the need to do so.

# What school board members can do

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## 10. Expect opposition.

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- Change is difficult and not always welcomed by everyone.

# Which strategy do you feel reflects a current asset or strength of your school board?

Have a strong commitment to racial equity

Adopt an equity statement

Know district demographics

Expand personal knowledge/understanding of race issues

Initiate and create structural changes to support equity

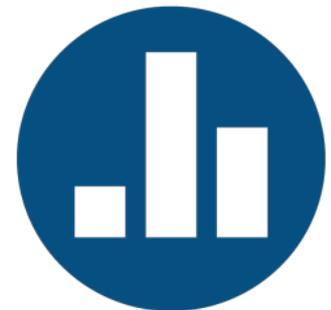
Develop goals and policies with an equity lens

Change school budgets to prevent disparities

Be data informed'

Develop partnerships and allies to achieve equity

Expect opposition



# Which strategy do you feel is a current area of growth or need for your school board?

Have a strong commitment to racial equity

Adopt an equity statement

Know district demographics

Expand personal knowledge/understanding of race issues

Initiate and create structural changes to support equity

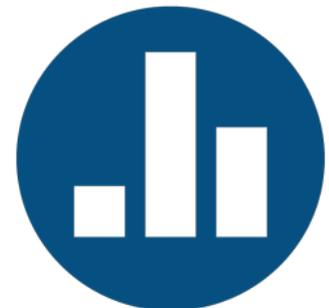
Develop goals and policies with an equity lens

Change school budgets to prevent disparities

Be data informed'

Develop partnerships and allies to achieve equity

Expect opposition



# Group discussion

What do you notice about the poll responses in terms of which strategies were identified as assets and which were identified as areas for growth?

How easy or difficult would it be to implement the various strategies? Which strategies would be the easiest and most difficult to implement?

In your view, what is missing from the list? What would you add? Why?



**Looking forward**

# Potential next steps for your school board

- What do you believe your board could do **next week** to improve educational outcomes among Black students and close opportunity and achievement gaps?
- In **six weeks**?
- In **six months**?
- In a **year**?
- In your view, **who needs to be involved** to make meaningful and significant improvements?



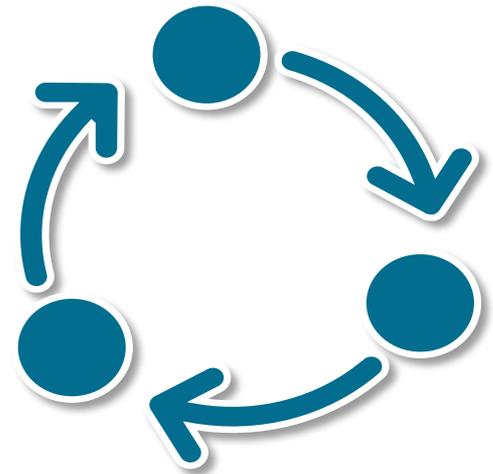
# Potential next steps (continued)

**Step 1:** Share your ideas about the steps your school board might take in the next year to improve educational outcomes among Black students and close opportunity and achievement gaps

Click on the following link and enter your ideas in the Google Docs file:

[Google Docs](#)

**Step 2:** Discuss potential next steps in your Breakout Room



# Group discussion

- What did you learn about the actions that school boards can take to improve outcomes for Black students?
- Which actions surprised you?
- Which actions do you think your board might implement? Why?
- Who needs to be involved in efforts to improve outcomes and close gaps in the district?





# Feedback survey

$11 = 8 + 3$   
 $12 = 9 + 3$   
 $13 = 10 + 3$

# For your information

A recording of this webinar will be available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/default.aspx>.

# Thank you!



Leslie Anderson  
LAnderson@policystudies.com



Dan Aladjem  
DAladjem@policystudies.com



Jeanine Hildreth  
JHildreth@policystudies.com



Alisha Butler  
Abutler@policystudies.com

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