

Minnesota's Academic Achievement Gap

By some measures, Minnesota's public schools are among the best in the nation. But underneath those generally positive statistics lies a serious problem: a "racial achievement gap." At every grade level, and in every subject measured by the state, Minnesota's students of color score lower than their white counterparts.

The state's population of children of color is growing in both size and diversity. In 1990, children of color represented just 9.2% of the state's public school students. By 2004, that figure had more than doubled to 19.8%. What that means, in practice, is that nearly one out of five Minnesota children is not receiving an adequate education.

ODDS THAT A 3RD GRADER ACHIEVED "SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE" ON THE STATE'S READING TEST¹:

American Indian: 1 in 14
 Asian: 1 in 12
 Hispanic: 1 in 22
 Black: 1 in 25
 White: 1 in 5

Poverty plays a critical role in academic achievement, but it is not the sole contributor to the gap.

- More than 25% of Minnesota students live in poverty, and children of color are disproportionately represented among those students.
- When poverty is removed from the equation, average test scores rise significantly for each racial minority group. The scores remain much lower, however, than those of white students.

POVERTY RATES AMONG MINNESOTA 5TH GRADERS

American Indian 67%
 Asian 65%
 Hispanic 74%
 Black 77%
 White 21%

PERCENTAGE PERFORMING AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL ON THE MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT TEST

		American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
3RD GRADE READING	all students	62%	58%	46%	48%	83%
	students NOT living in poverty	73%	78%	67%	72%	86%
5TH GRADE MATH	all students	58%	64%	49%	42%	83%
	students NOT living in poverty	71%	80%	67%	60%	87%

English language proficiency significantly boosts achievement.

- 6% of all Minnesota students have Limited English Proficiency.
- In several Minnesota school districts – urban, suburban, and rural – as many as 1 out of every 4 students is an "English Language Learner."
- Children proficient in English score at least twice as high as students still learning the language.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO PASSED THE MINNESOTA BASIC SKILLS TEST

		American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
8TH GRADE READING TEST	students NOT proficient in English	n/a	39%	31%	26%	41%
	proficient in English	59%	85%	71%	52%	87%
8TH GRADE MATH TEST	students NOT proficient in English	n/a	42%	24%	19%	42%
	proficient in English	43%	80%	56%	35%	78%

¹Each racial/ethnic category includes *all* members of that race or ethnicity, including both recent immigrants and established residents (i.e., African Americans and recent African immigrants). Asian includes Pacific Islanders.

Teacher-student racial disparities are growing in many districts.

- The teaching staff in many school districts does not reflect the racial demographics of the students.
- Statewide, nearly 20% of students are children of color and 97% of teachers² are white. This translates to about 165,000 students of color and 1,711 teachers of all minority races combined. (50,613 out of 52,324 teachers are white.)
- In urban districts, the disparity is especially pronounced. For example, while only 27% of Minneapolis public school students are white, 82% of Minneapolis public school teachers are white.
- Suburban districts continue to enroll more students of color due to population shifts and a growing number of urban families of color taking advantage of greater school choices. Teacher demographics do not mirror the growing diversity of suburban students. In Richfield, for example, 95% of teachers are white, yet only 54% of students are white.
- Racial disparities exist – and are growing quickly – in many rural districts, as well, although the racial composition varies from town to town. In Madelia, for example, 31% of students are Hispanic. Nearly one third of Worthington students are Hispanic, too, but an additional 11% are Asian. Language barriers complicate the picture for both of these racial groups, as well as for new African immigrants.

STUDENT-STAFF³ DEMOGRAPHICS STATEWIDE AND FOR SELECT MINNESOTA K-12 DISTRICTS IN 2003-04

		American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
MINNESOTA	students	2%	5%	5%	8%	80%
	licensed staff ⁴	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	97%
MINNEAPOLIS	students	4%	13%	13%	42%	27%
	licensed staff ⁴	2%	3%	2%	8%	82%
SAINT PAUL	students	2%	29%	12%	28%	29%
	licensed staff	1%	5%	3%	5%	85%
RICHFIELD	students	1%	9%	16%	19%	54%
	licensed staff	<1%	2%	0	3%	95%
BROOKLYN CENTER	students	1%	19%	7%	35%	38%
	licensed staff	1%	1%	0	3%	95%
WORTHINGTON	students	<1%	11%	28%	2%	59%
	licensed staff	0	0	0	0	100%
MADELIA	students	0	0	31%	2%	67%
	licensed staff	0	0	0	0	100%

Additional facts related to Minnesota's achievement gap can be found on the ALL KIDS LEARN overview fact sheet. Both fact sheets are available at www.MinnesotaMeeting.com.

MINNESOTA MEETING IS A PROGRAM OF THE MINNEAPOLIS FOUNDATION

¹Full-time equivalency (FTE). ²Staff includes all licensed teaching professionals. ³Race/ethnicity is unknown for 2.12% of Minneapolis' licensed staff. *Source for all data: Minnesota Department of Education.*