

**Bridging the Gap:
Evaluating Pinellas County Schools' Progress in Reducing the
Black-White Achievement Disparity (2016-2023)**

Comprehensive Report

**An Evaluation Commissioned by
Concerned Organization for Quality Education of Black Students (COQEBS)**

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Oscar A. Barbarin, Ph.D.
*Professor of Psychology and African American Studies
University of Maryland. College Park*

*Professor Emeritus, Psychology and Social Work
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

Summary

As a consequence of concern about the education of Black Students, COQEBS filed a class action lawsuit in state courts to compel PCS to reduce Black-White achievement gaps. The parties settled the suit with an agreement to create a 10-year plan to address academic achievement and disparities in discipline. With that agreement approaching its end, an evaluation was undertaken to take stock of progress and consider the way forward. As the court appointed monitor, COQEBS commissioned an evaluation to inform its decision about whether to end COQEBS monitoring role or to continue and revise the plan in order to achieve the intended outcome. If the evaluation results pointed to a need to extend the current agreement, the results of the evaluation would be used to discuss with PCS ways to improve BTG plans and implementation.

ANALYSIS. The success of BTG plans is measured by its progress in accomplishing six goals related to graduation rates, academic achievement, access to rigorous courses, student discipline, assignment to special education and minority hiring. The evaluation analyzed data that were publicly available from the annual BTG plans and end-of-year reports on the Pinellas County schools website and data requested from the District. In addition to summarizing public data, supplemental analyses were performed on grades in English, math and science courses, performance on state tests, graduation diploma types, discipline and assignment to special education services. These analyses provided more detailed insights about differences related to gender/ethnicity interactions, school racial composition, school level, grade level and duration of exposure to BTG interventions. Data related to possible differential staffing of schools were not provided by PCS. Consequently, Goal 6 pertaining to hiring was not addressed here.

FINDINGS. Significant reductions in racial disparities occurred in graduation rates, access to rigorous courses and assignment to special education other than for behavioral reasons. However, gaps in achievement and discipline were unchanged. Black children did not score at proficiency levels on state tests at high rates but earned standard diplomas by passing concordant tests. Black children's academic performance was lower than both White and Latino Students. Black boys emerged as a high-risk group who performed worse than all other groups on academic and disciplinary outcomes. Little progress was observed in discipline at schools with high Black enrollment. Elementary schools had greater improvement than middle and high schools.

CONCLUSION: Although progress has been noted in several areas, the continuing academic and discipline disparities point to a need for continuing efforts by PCS and engagement by COQEBS.

Bridging the Gap: Progress and challenges in mitigating Black-White Achievement Gaps in Pinellas County Schools

Background

This document describes the outcomes achieved by the Pinellas County schools (PCS) Bridging the Gap Plan to improve educational quality for Black Students and reduce racial disparities in discipline. Specifically, this report presents analyses of data on results achieved by the Bridging the Gap (BTG) Plan for the academic years beginning 2016 through 2023. This includes data drawn from the PCS website and data provided to the Concerned Organization for Quality Education of Black Students (COQEBS) for its evaluation.

The BTG is the outcome of an extended negotiation between PCS and COQEBS that arose from long standing community concerns about the adequacy of the education received by Black students in Pinellas County. Frustration over inattention to disparities in the education of Black children in Pinellas County Schools and a perceived lack of action to address the problems led to the filing of separate suits by the NAACP in federal court and by COQEBS in state court. A decision by the state court resulted in a settlement agreement signed by PCS and COQEBS in 2000. The School District signed three MOUs covering student achievement, discipline, and class assignments. These MOUs are part of the settlement's resolution. The School District agreed that COQEBS would be a suitable monitor of the School District's compliance with the settlement. PCS also acknowledged the importance of cooperating with the Black community, including parents and local leaders, to close the achievement gap.

Failure Factories Investigative Reporting:

In August of 2015, just before BTG began implementation, the Tampa Bay Times ran a series of articles entitled “Failure Factories” that resulted from their investigation of Black-White disparities in educational outcomes in Pinellas County schools. The series described in compelling detail the significant challenges and systemic issues within the Pinellas County Schools. The articles focused particularly on five elementary schools: Campbell Park, Fairmount Park, Lakewood, Maximo, and Melrose that exemplified the serious problems facing PCS. In these schools, located in predominantly Black neighborhoods, reporters uncovered evidence of significant educational disparities where student failure was the main product. The series underscored the deep-rooted issues of racial inequality and educational neglect in Pinellas County and offered the following observations:

1. **Benign neglect of and indifference to school re-segregation set the stage for academic failure of Black Students:**
 - After the abandonment of integration policies in 2007, Pinellas County schools quickly re-segregated. The five schools in question became 80-90% Black and experienced significant declines in reading and math scores, ranking among the

lowest in Florida. Moreover, about 84% of Black elementary students failed state exams.

2. **High teacher turnover meant that these segregated schools were staffed largely with inexperienced teachers ill-prepared to meet the educational needs of the students**
 - Veteran teachers sought transfers and left these schools staffed to be staffed by less experienced educators, and thus exacerbated the challenges of educating its students.
3. **Problems of School Discipline became rampant in racially segregated schools:**
 - The series reports higher rates of violence in these segregated schools compared to other schools in the District. Additionally, Black students faced disproportionately harsh disciplinary actions, with 45,942 days lost to suspensions, more than any other District in Florida.
4. **PCS attempted to address the problems:**
 - The District has proposed several measures, including increased funding, improved discipline policies, and the introduction of magnet programs to enhance diversity. Efforts to stabilize the teaching workforce included offering bonuses for recruitment and performance. However, Black leaders and community members expressed skepticism about the effectiveness and sincerity of these efforts.
5. **School Board supported efforts to address the situation:**
 - School board members generally supported increases in resources for these schools and acknowledged past failures in addressing Black student achievement. They emphasized the importance of strong leadership, community engagement, and targeted academic programs.

While the District took steps to address these problems, including financial incentives for teachers and the development of magnet programs, the effectiveness of these efforts remained in question. Moreover, the community's trust in the schools was low and in need of repair. The lack of trust was one of the factors leading community leaders to sue PCS over its continuing failure to provide a quality education to Black students as mandated by state law.

More than 10 years passed with little agreement between the schools and the community on how to proceed to implement the settlement agreement. As a consequence of rounds of negotiation PCS and COQEBS finally settled on a plan called Bridging the Gap (BTG). In 2016 the District formalized its first plan of action and collected baseline measures to be used for comparison in evaluating change over subsequent years. The plan was structured around of six issues:

- Graduation (Goal 1)
- Student Academic Achievement,(Goal 2)
- Access to and enrollment in Advanced Coursework (Goal 3)
- Discipline – Behavior Problems and Equitable School Responses (Goal 4)
- Assignment of students to Special Education (ESE) (Goal 5)
- School Staffing (Minority Hiring)(Goal 6)

To assess the progress of its BTG effort, PCS commissioned IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association) of San Antonio to complete an equity audit of BTG. In its May.2023 report, IDRA identified several important initiatives that have been undertaken by the PCS that offered some promise for improving educational outcomes. These include :

1. Instruction that focused on college and career readiness for high school students and introducing college and career exploration to middle and elementary school students.
2. Ongoing staff support and professional development
3. Data-driven decision-making and collaboration among District leadership and educators.
4. Summer enrichment and before-and-after-school learning, especially for students needing to master concepts in ELA and math.
5. Magnet schools and Specialized application programs
6. Specialized campuses based on student needs or interests
7. Individualized and flexible academic programs to all learners.

PCS staff identified for IDRA interviewers several challenges that PCS had not addressed successfully and that impeded progress toward the BTG goals.

1. Academic data collection, dissemination and use by school staff
2. Equipping teachers and administrators to handle behavioral problems,
3. Addressing disparities in disciplinary responses
4. Over-identification of Black students for special education,
5. Integrating student voices into school communities,
6. Engaging families and communities,
7. Providing transportation to students,
8. Dealing with a national teacher shortage that affects hiring and retaining quality educators.

It is expected that these issues would be integral to PCS planning of its future efforts to improve graduation, achievement and disparities in discipline.

Evaluation Aims and Method

COQEBS commissioned an independent analysis of outcome data in accordance with its role as monitor. The questions motivating these analyses are whether the goals of BTG have been achieved and whether the agreement between PCS and COQEBS should be extended beyond its current 10-year term and if a decision is made to continue, what changes should be made to BTG in order to increase its success in the future.

Limitations of the Evaluation. The following analyses rely on student outcome data provided by PCS. The evaluator did not have access to information on the extent, duration, intensity or loci of the BTG interventions described in the annual BTG plans. Moreover, the evaluation does not include information about on-the-ground experiences with BTG that would be provided by interviews or surveys of school staff, students and families. This additional information would shed light on the fidelity and impact of interventions, and provide valuable perspectives on what works and critical issues not addressed in the BTG plan.

Procedural Steps in the COQEBS Evaluation of BTG outcomes

1. Summarize analyses made public by PCS on how well they met the benchmarks they established for BTG
2. Concatenate yearly files to provide a longitudinal portrait of change over the entire BTG period
3. Conduct analyses that break out data for gender and race/ethnic groups with finer detail than provided in publicly available reports by PCS
4. Compare outcomes of PCS schools in North Pinellas county with schools in the South especially those with high concentrations of Black Students
5. Expand analyses from a comparison of Black vs Non-Black students to making a finer distinction that compares Black, White and Latino students.

The principal questions to be addressed by the statistical analyses of student outcome data are:

1. How much positive change has occurred in Black students' academic achievement, graduation, discipline, and access to advanced coursework over the BTG period compared to changes for White and Latino students?
2. If there have been positive changes, what groups of Black students have improved the most or least (e.g. by gender, school level, grade level or concentration of Black students)?
3. Is the extent and direction of change sufficient to conclude that PCS is on the right track, i.e., on a trajectory that is likely to end with significant reductions in racial disparities in educational outcomes and discipline and suggests that additional monitoring called for by the original agreement is no longer needed?

Statistical Analyses:

1. **Race.** Are there overall racial disparities with respect to the following outcomes:
 - graduation rates,
 - academic achievement,
 - advanced coursework,
 - discipline,
 - ESE- Special Education Services
2. **Gender.** Do these outcomes differ for Black boys and girls as compared to their gender peers?
3. **Change over time.** How much progress has PCS made in providing an equitable quality of education to Black students from 2016 to 2024 Does the extent of progress differ by school?
4. **School.** Do outcomes for Black students differ by school type, grade level or

concentration of Blacks in a school?

Presentation Order

The following sections of this document are organized around the BTG goals. Each section begins with a summary of the information contained in the 2024 BTG plans including its goals, the benchmarks used to evaluate success, the planned interventions and data on outcomes from previous years. This is followed by statistical analyses of data provided to COQEBS by PCS. These analyses offer a breakdown by race/ethnicity, gender, school level and grade. They also compare the outcomes of students in schools with high and low enrollments of Black students.

Goal 1: Graduation Rate

Goal 1: Eliminate the gap between the graduation rates for Black and non- Black students

Indicators/ Benchmarks: Decrease the gap in graduation rates between Black and non- Black students by an average of 1.8% each year until the gap is eliminated or greatly narrowed.

PCS Planned Interventions

Table 1.1 outlines the primary interventions described in PCS reports to improve graduation rates overall and eliminate the gap between the graduation rates for Black and non-Black students. This table also shows the years in which specific actions were prioritized.

Student Focused interventions: Many initiatives targeted students directly. These interventions utilized individualized learning plans, extended learning opportunities, tutoring, and mentoring. Remedial programs were offered to Black students with low Algebra test scores during the summer and before or after school during the academic year. Selected schools offered tutoring in English and Algebra to Black students scoring low on these state tests. “The Leader in Me” program and mentoring were also offered at select schools. They encouraged Black students to take concordant tests such as the ACT and SAT. In addition, they recognized Black student achievement in District award ceremonies.

Staff and Family Focused interventions. Other interventions targeted school staff and families. These include training and professional development for teachers on equitable grading, identify and re-teach key standards concepts, use of *Think Cerca* program to improve literacy. The District provided coaching for school leaders on using Graduation Status Reports. Schools created *learner profiles* and monitored the implementation of plans for Black students who were not on track to complete the requirements for graduation. Parent involvement included meetings to update parents on issues such as learning plans and informational materials on graduation requirements.

Table 1.1 Principal Strategies to achieve Goal 1- Graduation

Strategies/ Actions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Personalized Learning Plans.. <i>Individualized plans for Black Students not on track to graduate.</i>	X	X	X	X				
Targeted Tutoring: <i>Provide tutoring in algebra and literacy for struggling students.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Extended Learning Programs: <i>Before and after-school programs; hybrid programs for students unable to attend school due to life circumstances.</i>		X	X			X	X	X
Leadership and Mentoring: <i>Develop leadership training and mentoring programs for students in select schools</i>			X				X	
Professional Development: Train teachers to support Black students in ELA and math; equitable grading; coaching for leaders	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use Data. Procedures for using academic data to identify students in need of supplemental support		X	X	X				
Family Outreach: <i>Host events to inform parents about graduation requirements, supplemental programs and student learning.</i>	X	X	X	X			X	X

Progress in improving Graduation rates reported by PCS

Graduation with a standard high school diploma is intended to signify that a student has acquired a sufficient proficiency in English, math and science for employment, career or success in higher education. Florida developed tests to assess whether students have met that standard. Although a majority of Black students in PCS attain a grade point average above 2.0, most did not earn a score on the State's standard based test in English and math at a level 3 or higher that was designated by the state as at or above the proficiency level.

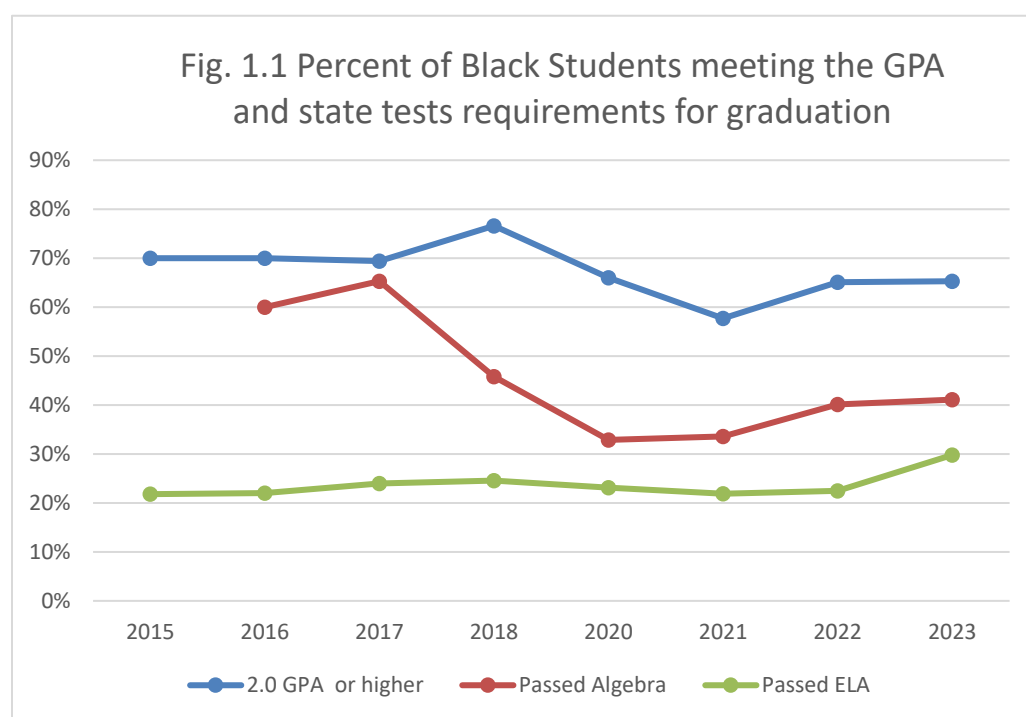


Fig 1.1. shows the percent of Black students who met the state graduation requirement for GPA and passage of Algebra and ELA tests. Their passing rate on ELA was at a low of 20% prior to BTG and rose to 30% by 2023. However, the gains in ELA were offset by reductions in the passing rate for Algebra 1. The percentage of Black students maintaining a grade point average above 2.0 that was required for receiving a standard diploma was more or less constant and hovered at around 70% of students. The data revealed disappointingly little increase over the BTG period.

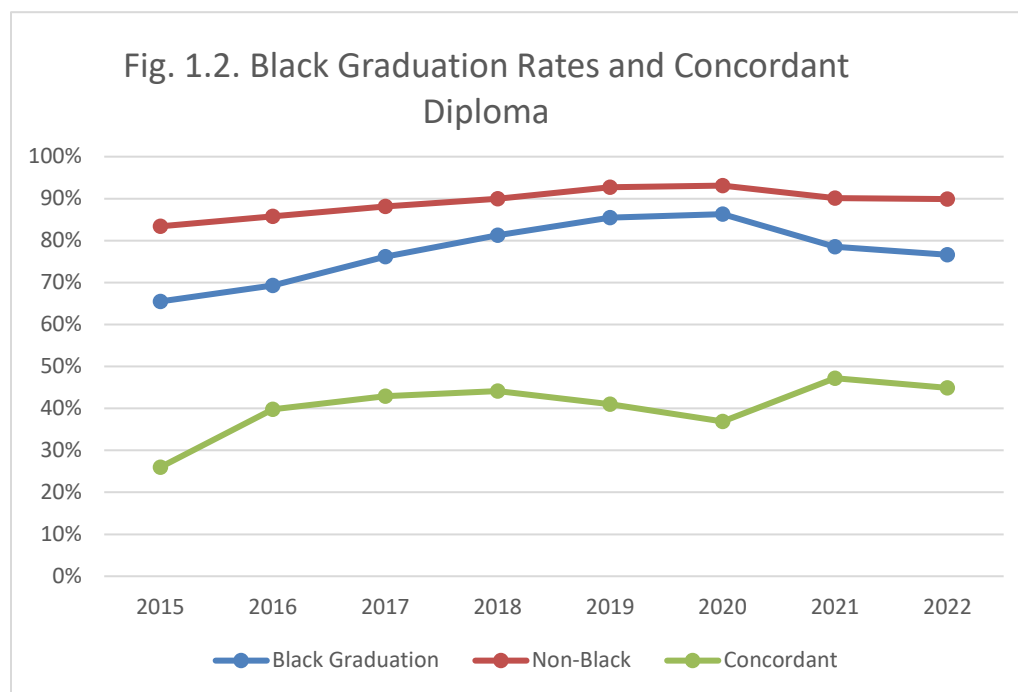


Fig 1.2. shows a steady improvement of the rates at which Black students graduated. The rate rose from a low of 66% to an impressive 86% in 2020. Moreover, the Black versus Non-Black gap in graduations narrowed between 2015 to 2020 but has expanded since then as the Black graduation dropped during the Covid epidemic. This raises questions about why the Black graduation rate decreased three times as much as the drop for non- Black students during the Covid epidemic (9% vs 3%).

The Black-White gap in graduations decreased from 2015 to 2020 but has been stable since then. Black graduation rates hovered around a high of about 70% but is lower than rates for Whites. However other indicators offer a deeper more disturbing account of Black academic skills and of racial disparities in achievement. As noted earlier, over the period covered by the BTG plan, Black students did not achieve the proficiency level on the tests required for a standard non-concordant diploma. The Black passing rates for these tests have been consistently low and have shown little sign of improvement.

Black Students Earn standard diplomas mostly via concordant testing

Tables 1.2 to 1.5 present data on the different types of diplomas students earned: standard diplomas, standard diplomas via concordant testing, certificates of completion and a category labeled in this report as diverted/lost outcomes such as GED's, dropout or students who withdrew or were lost to follow-up. Data on these types of diplomas are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sex.

Black students received standard diplomas about 30 % of the time which was a rate that was significantly less than White and Latino students. The rates for Black females did vary a great deal from a high of 84% in 2017 down to about 30% in 2022. (See table 1.2) Florida set the following passing scores: SAT English Language (EBRW) – 480 or 34th percentile; ACT Reading 18 or 45th percentile; SAT Math 420 or 19 percentile and ACT Math- 16 or 43rd percentile. The passing level for the English Languages tests are set at what is considered college-ready but for math they are below college ready. The rates at which Black students received standard diplomas via these concordant tests was high and increased over time. Black students did so at rates that are higher than was true for White students. Except for 2022, the rates for Black boys and girls were about the same.

Table 1.3 shows that Black students were more likely to fall into our diverted category at twice the rate of White students. Black males were more likely to be so designated than Black females, viz., at a rate of 21% versus 11% in 2022. Table 1.3 also provides data on the rates at which students receive certificates of completion or withdrew, were lost to follow up or received a GED rather than a standard diploma. Black students were also more likely to receive certificates of completion than White and Latino students. Black males and females received these certificates at about the same rate. (See table 1.3)

Table 1.4 presents data on the type of diplomas received by students attending schools with high concentrations of Black students. Even in these schools, White students often received standard diplomas at higher rates than Black students. However White students in high concentration Black schools were also more likely to be classified in our diverted category than Black students. At the same time Black students were more likely to receive concordant degrees than White and Latino students. The same pattern was true for certificates of completion although the numbers are quite small.

Table 1.5 presents data on the type of diplomas received by students in schools that have low concentrations of Black students. Specifically, these are the schools in areas 1 and 2 in North Pinellas County. Even in schools in more prosperous areas Blacks receive standard diplomas at lower rates than Whites and Latinos. Black students in these low Black enrollment schools are more likely to receive a standard diploma via concordant testing than Whites and Latinos. They are also more likely to receive certificates of completion though the absolute numbers again were quite small.

Further analyses conducted on the behalf of COQEBS, present a granular analysis of gender differences particularly on the status of Black males. Over time there has been a consistent pattern of Black males faring more poorly with respect to receiving the standard diploma. By 2022 31% of Black males compared to 55% of White males received a standard diploma via state tests. Instead, Black males were more likely to receive a diploma via concordant testing than White males. More troubling is a large number of Black males, 21% or more failing into the diverted category for one of several reasons including moving to adult education and GED, withdrawing or dropout from school are being lost to the system because the schools could not verify their whereabouts. In addition, Black males were more likely to receive a certificate of completion than any other group though there was much variation over time in these percentages. About 6.9% of Black males received certificates of completion in 2021 and this fell to 3.1% in 2022. Moreover, racial disparities in the receipt of diplomas via concordant testing and certificates of completion were greater in schools with low concentrations of Black students. In other words, Black students attending schools in which they were significant minority performed more poorly by comparison than students attending schools in which they were a majority.

Table 1.2. Standard and Concordant Diplomas Race X Gender for each of the 8 years from 2016 to 2022 (Percent and Frequency)

	Standard Diploma						Concordant Diploma ¹					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	35.4%	61.5%	48.5%	40.6%	69.3%	54.8%	35.8%	24.1%	32.2%	41.0%	22.0%	34.1%
	252	1394	264	267	1586	323	255	547	175	270	504	201
2017	83.7%	91.2%	88.8%	84.6%	94.2%	89.2%	7.0%	6.0%	7.9%	7.7%	4.5%	7.2%
	216	1278	237	231	1497	296	18	84	21	21	71	24
2018	33.4%	59.1%	46.2%	39.6%	66.3%	46.7%	43.3%	28.4%	37.1%	46.1%	27.1%	43.2%
	213	1292	257	267	1453	293	276	621	206	311	593	271
2019	29.8%	65.5%	47.2%	38.4%	71.6%	56.0%	50.8%	25.4%	42.8%	51.6%	23.0%	39.1%
	178	1455	303	246	1475	343	303	564	275	331	474	239
2020	36.6%	28.6%	37.3%	40.3%	26.4%	36.2%	9.8%	7.1%	7.8%	10.3%	5.5%	6.7%
	238	629	240	246	548	228	64	156	50	63	113	42
2021	62.8%	79.7%	70.1%	70.6%	87.8%	78.5%	12.2%	9.0%	14.4%	11.1%	5.7%	9.7%
	385	1680	473	465	1913	471	75	190	97	73	124	58
2022	31.3%	55.1%	45.1%	29.5%	59.2%	43.0%	40.0%	34.2%	38.9%	52.2%	33.6%	44.6%
	201	1159	334	179	1150	269	257	720	288	317	652	279
2023	30.1%	43.0%	33.0%	25.3%	41.4%	36.1%	51.1%	48.5%	55.5%	63.5%	53.3%	58.5%
	201	854	236	174	799	268	341	963	397	436	1029	434

¹ The term concordant diploma used in the tables designates a type of standard diploma earned by students achieving a proficiency level score on concordant tests. Concordant Diplomas are awarded on the basis of reaching proficiency levels on alternative tests such as SAT or ACT. BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

The rates at which BM are awarded a standard diploma fluctuates greatly between 2016 and 2023. Except for 2017 and 2021 one third or less of BM received a standard Diploma. The rate for BF is about 5% better. About twice as many White students received a standard diploma.

For most years, more than one in six Black males end school on one of the divergent paths: GED, transferred, dropout or unknown. The more recent rates for BF are about half that of BM but twice that of WF.

Table 1.3. Diploma Types (Diverted and Certificate of Completion) Race X Gender for each of the 8 years from 2016 to 2022 (Percent and Frequency)

	Diverted (GED), Dropout, lost, withdrawn						Certificate of Completion					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	27.1%	14.1%	18.0%	16.1%	8.2%	8.3%	1.7%	0.4%	1.3%	2.3%	0.4%	2.7%
	193	319	98	106	187	49	12	8	7	15	10	16
2017	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.1%	0.6%	9.3%	2.4%	3.0%	7.0%	1.3%	3.0%
	0	5	1	2	1	2	24	34	8	19	20	10
2018	11.0%	12.1%	14.9%	19.6%	5.8%	8.0%	3.8%	0.4%	1.8%	3.4%	0.7%	2.2%
	74	264	83	125	128	50	24	9	10	23	16	14
2019	19.3%	9.1%	10.0%	9.8%	5.4%	4.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
	115	202	64	63	112	30	1	0	0	1	0	0
2020	16.8%	8.5%	9.8%	8.8%	4.7%	6.3%	5.2%	2.5%	3.7%	3.8%	2.0%	2.7%
	109	187	63	54	97	40	34	54	24	23	41	17
2021	17.6%	9.6%	11.9%	12.3%	5.7%	9.2%	6.9%	1.6%	3.7%	6.1%	0.8%	2.7%
	108	202	80	81	124	55	42	33	25	40	17	16
2022	22.1%	8.7%	11.1%	11.0%	5.4%	7.2%	3.1%	1.0%	2.0%	2.6%	0.9%	2.7%
	142	184	82	67	105	45	20	21	15	16	17	17
2023	16.3%	8.9%	10.6%	8.1%	4.9%	4.6%	2.4%	.4% 7	.4% 6	2.3%	.8% 8	.8% 6
	109	160	76	61	93	34	16			16		

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

Comment: The rates at which students received certificates of completion are small and racial differences are small.

Table 1.4. Diploma Types in Schools with High Concentrations of Black Students by Race

	Standard Diploma			Concordant Diploma			Diverted, Dropout, lost, withdrawn			Certificate of Completion		
	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino
2016-17	36.9% 156	59.0% 147	50.6% 40	43.5% 184	24.1% 60	34.2% 27	17.5% 74	16.1% 40	12.7% 10	2.1% 9	24.1% 2	34.2% 2
2017-18	38.7% 172	59.0% 147	50.6% 40	42.0% 187	24.1% 60	34.2% 27	17.3% 77	16.1% 40	12.7% 10	2.0% 9	0.8% 2	2.5% 2
2018-19	39.7% 161	58.8% 141	45.6% 26	45.8% 186	22.9% 55	33.3% 19	10.6% 43	17.1% 41	19.3% 11	3.9% 16	1.3% 3	1.8% 1
2019-20	32.5% 134	66.8% 157	64.7% 55	53.9% 222	18.7% 44	27.1% 23	13.6% 56	14.5% 34	8.2% 7	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
2020-21	38.4% 484	27.5% 1177	36.8% 468	10.1% 127	6.3% 269	7.2% 92	12.9% 163	6.6% 284	8.1% 103	4.5% 57	2.2% 95	3.2% 41
2021-22	75.9% 261	79.5% 167	67.2% 41	7.6% 26	4.3% 9	4.9% 3	10.8% 37	15.7% 33	23.0% 14	5.8% 20	0.0% 0	4.9% 3
2022-23	29.5% 104	46.2% 90	38.7% 29	49.3% 174	36.9% 72	40.0% 30	17.6% 62	14.9% 29	20.0% 15	2.5% 9	2.1% 4	1.3% 1
2023-24	26.0% 189	28.9% 1032	32.0% 310	60.3% 433	54.9% 1211	56.0% 510	10.9% 59	15.8% 112	12.0% 47	2.9% 15	.5% 9	.0% 4

Table 1.5. Percent of diploma types in Low Black concentration schools in the North (Areas 1,2) by race for each year

	Standard Diploma			Concordant Diploma			Dropout, lost, withdrawn			Certificate of Completion		
	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino	Black	White	Latino
2016-17	61.4%	77.4%	64.6%	32.9%	18.7%	28.0%	5.1%	3.7%	5.4%	0.7%	0.2%	2.0%
	170	1838	349	91	444	151	14	88	29	2	5	11
2017-18	69.6%	77.4%	64.6%	26.4%	18.7%	28.0%	3.5%	3.7%	5.4%	0.5%	0.2%	2.0%
	295	1838	349	112	444	151	15	88	29	2	5	11
2018-19	48.6%	75.1%	57.6%	47.2%	22.3%	38.3%	3.1%	2.4%	1.9%	1.0%	0.3%	2.2%
	141	1746	336	137	518	223	9	55	11	3	7	13
2019-20	35.5%	79.8%	58.2%	58.8%	18.2%	40.3%	5.7%	2.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	169	1792	355	154	409	246	15	44	9	0	0	0
2020-21	33.7%	27.0%	33.6%	15.7%	6.2%	8.8%	10.3%	4.4%	6.7%	5.4%	2.3%	3.4%
	118	636	234	55	146	61	36	103	47	19	54	24
2021-22	73.0%	91.2%	80.6%	20.2%	6.3%	14.1%	2.4%	2.0%	2.0%	4.4%	0.5%	3.3%
	184	1911	519	51	133	91	6	41	13	11	10	21
2022-23	35.7%	66.7%	51.2%	58.2%	30.7%	43.9%	1.2%	1.7%	2.4%	4.0%	0.7%	2.1%
	89	1399	346	145	644	297	3	35	16	10	15	14
2023-24	28.3%	45.1%	35.9%	64.2%	50.9%	58.8%	6.1%	3.6%	4.8%	1.4%	.4% 8	.5% 4
	98	970	286	211	1093	468	21	78	38	5		

Summary and Conclusion.

Overall, graduation rates have improved. PCS achieved a degree of success in improving the graduation rates of Black Students in the early years of BTG and showed a substantial increase before 2020, dipped during the Covid Epidemic and has risen consistently since then. State data suggest that the percent of Black students awarded standard diplomas rose to over 80% by 2020 though it has declined slightly and has climbed for all groups through 2024.

There has been a noticeable shift from meeting the graduation requirement for a standard diploma from passing the state designed test to achieving a standard diploma by passing state approved alternatives. This trend has been noted some time for Black students but has become the option for White and Latino students too. Over time, more Black students earned diplomas via the alternatives provided by the state for students to receive the standard diploma by achieving a passing score on concordant tests such as the ACT and the SAT. Between 2015, the percent of Black students receiving a standard diploma in this way doubled from about 25 to about 50%. The equivalence of concordant tests and tests linked to state standards is a matter of debate and remains to be demonstrated. Nevertheless, Pinellas County schools can on the basis of its data analysis claim a degree of success in reaching its goal of improving graduation rate of Black students and in reducing somewhat the racial gap in graduation.

Goal 2: Student Achievement

Goal 2: Eliminate the gap between the proficiency rates in reading (ELA) and mathematics on state and national assessments for Black and non- Black students.

Indicators/ Benchmarks: Decrease the gap (~32%) in ELA-Reading and Mathematics proficiency for Black Students by an average of 3.2% each year until the gap is eliminated or greatly narrowed.

Planned Interventions

The key actions taken by PCS to achieve this goal centered around strengthening instructional practices, early childhood education, implementing literacy programs and increasing student and family engagement.

- **Professional development** and coaching for teachers and leaders in the use of culturally responsive instruction that enhances Black learners' engagement, accountability, and self-confidence. Increase real-time achievement data access for teachers. Train leadership teams to use early warning data for immediate student support.
- **Instructional Practices:** Conduct an Anti-Racist Curriculum Review; utilize cooperative settings and explicit vocabulary in instruction; focus academic intervention time in schools with high minority enrollments; draw up personalized learning plans..
- Expand full-day Pre-K programs.
- Implement Reading Recovery for first graders to improve literacy skills.
- Embed reading tutors in high-need elementary schools.
- Pinellas Early Literacy Initiative will target reading proficiency by 3rd grade.
- Accelerate enrichment in middle schools for students who are near proficiency,
- AVID inquiry-based tutoring in middle and high schools
- Establish STEM academies and arts clubs.
- Use the School Climate Transformation Grant to combat Black student disengagement
- **Family-Focused Actions.** Create a collaborative learning lab model for data review and family engagement. Encourage practice of reading and math skills at home, e.g. through an Online Extended Learning Program; parent training linked to student learning. Use Dual Capacity Framework to increase parent engagement.

Table 2.1
Strategies to improve Black Student Achievement

Strategies/ Actions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Culturally Responsive Instruction: Training/support to <i>implement culturally responsive materials and practices</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instructional Quality: Emphasize standards; Train teachers on responsive practices and high-yield instructional strategies (i.e. cooperative settings and discussions).			X	X	X	X	X	X
ACT/SAT Testing Prep. <i>Increase access and Encourage participation in ACT/SAT testing</i>					X	X	X	X
Data Driven Support. Train school leadership to use data for student support and to identify standards needing re-teaching	X	X		X			X	
Personal Learning Profiles <i>Monitoring and intervention with students not doing well</i>	X	X					X	
ELA Reading Intervention: Provide reading recovery and expand literacy interventions to boost literacy skills				X			X	X
Anti-racism Analysis. <i>Conduct anti-racist analysis of curriculum.</i>				X				
Peer Mentoring: Implement a peer mentoring program for Black male high school students		X						

Progress Reported by PCS

State end-of-year test in math and English (ELA). Fig 2.1 presents the passing rates of Black students on the state math and ELA tests. Blacks achieve a proficiency score at much lower rates than non- Black students. State tests for Algebra 1, Biology and English Language are correctly classified as “high stakes” tests. If students do not attain a proficiency level score of 3 or higher, they do not meet one of the requirements for graduation with a standard non-concordant diploma. The proficiency rates on both tests are so low that few Black students qualify for a standard non-concordant diploma unless the tests are waived or the student scores at the proficiency level or higher on alternative or concordant tests permitted by the state.

It is not until the past two years that we see modest improvements. For example, prior to 2023, about 20% of Black students passed the ELA test but 30% did in 2023. Moreover, the passing rate on the Algebra test dropped significantly between 2017 and 2023. This is also true for end- of-year tests in reading and math. Because of the low rates of proficiency on state tests, Black students have received standard diplomas by achieving proficiency scores on tests such as the ACT or SAT. Approximately 40% of the 70% of Black students who graduate qualify for the standard diploma through these tests.

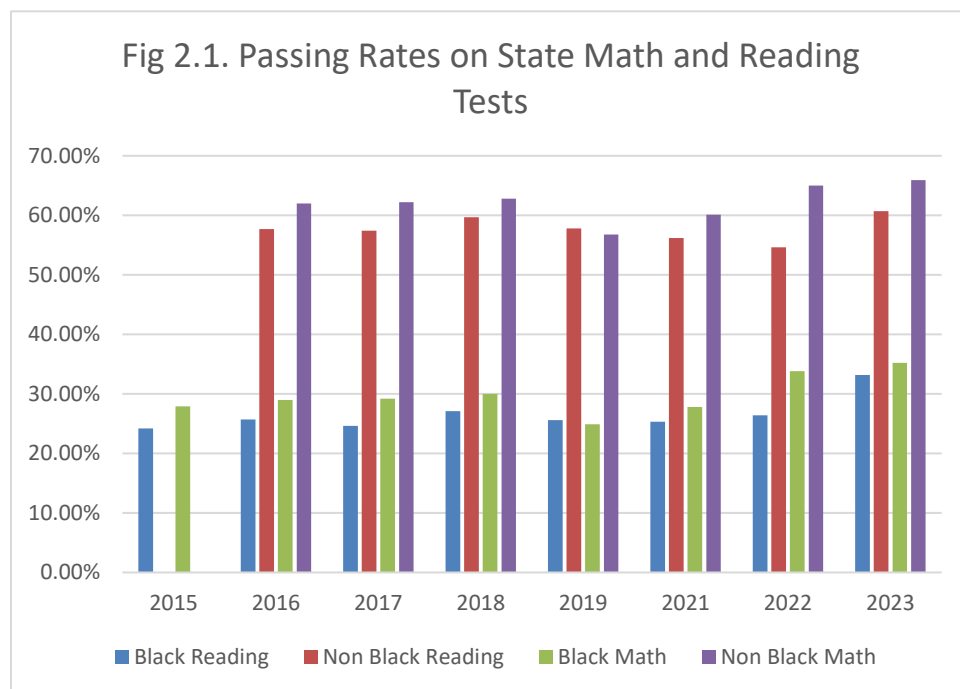


Figure 2.2 presents the rates at which Black students attained proficiency scores on the reading tests. These rates are disaggregated by grade levels. The lines in the graph demonstrate that there were substantial increases in the passing rates between 2019 and 2023. The figure shows that passing rates on state end-of-year tests are lower in middle and high school than in primary school. The primary school grades 3 through 5 had higher rates at each point and tended to improve to a higher level than the middle school and high school grades. These figures suggest a similar rate of improvement but differences between the elementary and higher grades may be accounted for by differences in the baseline year 2015. If this is true we expect to see improvements in middle and high school passing rates as these students progress through school.

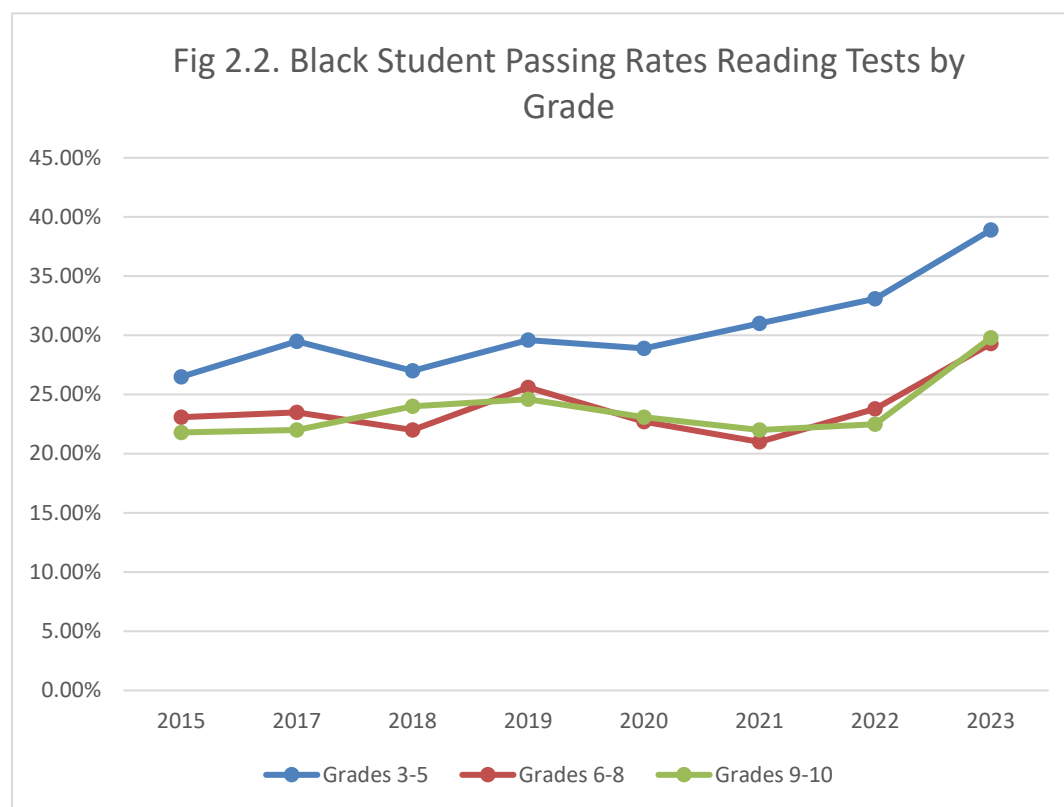
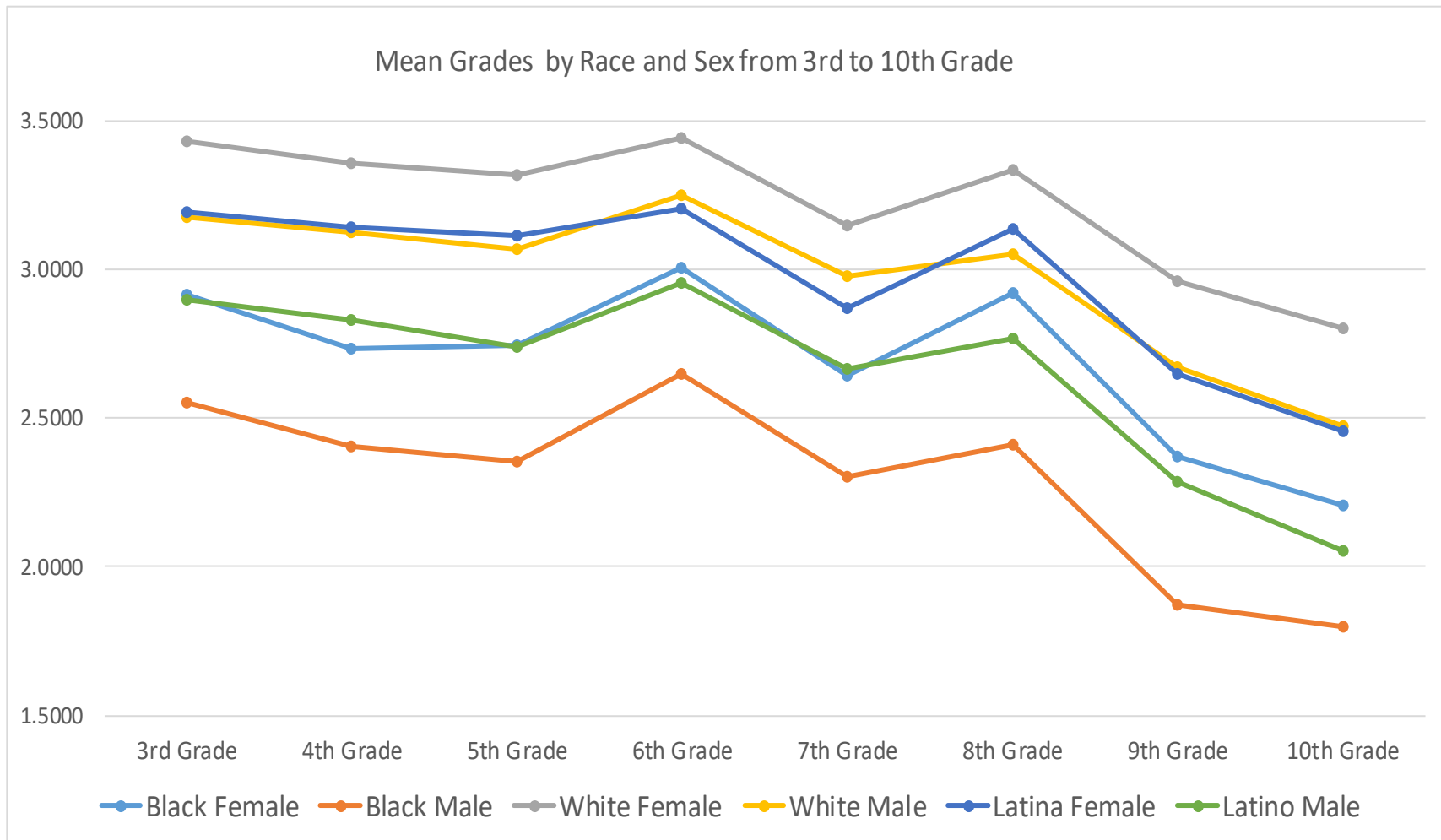


Figure 2.3 presents the average grades given to students in grades 3 through 12 across all courses from 2015 to 2023. This graph compares performance by grade for groups of students who differ by race/ethnicity and sex. The graph shows that White females consistently received the highest grades and Black males always had the lowest average grades. The highest grades are received in the 3rd grade but grades slump in the 7th and again in the 9th grade.

Figure 2.3 Mean Grades by Race and Sex from 3rd to 10th Grade



Passing rates for state tests by Grade level

Tables 2.2 to 2.6 present the passing rates on all of the state end-of-year and end of course tests. These data are disaggregated by grade level and reported separately for race and sex groups. In addition, these tables present the rates at which students passed tests in English language Arts (ELA), algebra and biology that were required to receive a standard diploma. The passing rate of Black students on both the end of course tests and the required tests for ELA and mathematics were extremely low. This has posed a significant obstacle standing in the way of Black students receiving a standard diploma.

Between 2015 and 2023 we see very little change or improvement in the rates at which all students achieve a proficiency score of 3 or above in the state reading and math tests. Overall, the proficiency rates for math were higher than those for reading and non-Black students consistently scored higher on both math and reading than Black students. Moreover, there was extraordinarily little change over time. Racial disparities are evident in 2016 and continue to be high for the entire period through 2023. The pattern is consistent over the years. There were slight elevations in the passage by Black students of the state reading tests. One bright spot is found in the elementary school where the performance on reading tests by Black students improved with a passing rate that rose from 25 to 40% during the BTG period. Passing rates for middle school and high school closely tracked one another and improved only slightly from about 25 to 30%.

Through professional development programs, PCS re-emphasized teaching to the Florida state standards in a possible attempt to increase the rates at which students pass tests based on the standards. Nevertheless, the passing rates for algebra have declined substantially since 2017. Similarly, this strategy seems to have done little to raise the rates at which Black students passed the state ELA test. Yet, a majority of Black students earned standard diplomas (via concordant tests).

Table 2.2 Proficiency rates (score of 3 or higher) on State tests (ELA- English Language Arts for Grades 3rd-6th by Race by Gender 2016-2023

	3 rd Grade ELA (English Language Arts)						4 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	9.5% 81	33.6% 738	20.2% 132	13.0% 100	41.9% 849	23.5% 161	8.2% 54	31.3% 659	18.4% 131	9.6% 70	36.0% 754	21.3% 136
2017	26.2% 206	59.0% 1239	41.7% 288	34.0% 265	67.9% 1310	42.2% 280	26.0% 207	54.2% 1177	39.8% 258	32.4% 238	64.5% 1281	47.0% 322
2018	28.2% 225	64.7% 1303	49.6% 353	36.3% 268	68.8% 1303	47.6% 331	27.1% 193	60.1% 1223	46.0% 307	36.8% 275	70.6% 1343	50.1% 344
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	26.2% 181	62.2% 1093	44.3% 263	32.9% 227	67.5% 1107	49.9% 330	25.7% 178	62.0% 1126	46.4% 307	32.0% 212	68.7% 1133	51.0% 322
2021	26.9% 210	56.5% 1032	44.0% 308	29.9% 204	66.7% 1117	51.3% 325	29.9% 181	64.4% 1112	47.1% 281	36.2% 230	69.6% 1152	54.0% 347
2022	29.7% 222	62.0% 1111	48.9% 339	34.9% 240	65.5% 1074	49.6% 334	30.1% 195	60.2% 1034	44.4% 292	31.9% 190	63.1% 1015	47.9% 293
2023	37.3% 265	70.6% 1222	57.1% 396	45.6% 288	72.5% 1128	55.4% 346	35.0% 229	63.0% 1086	51.9% 349	42.5% 263	66.9% 1033	49.8% 334

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

	5 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)						6 th ELA (English Language Arts)					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	5.4%	29.2%	13.6%	10.7%	39.0%	20.9%	7.3%	33.9%	21.6%	11.3%	40.1%	18.3%
	40	620	91	76	755	137	51	692	148	73	767	102
2017	19.3%	54.3%	46.9%	26.3%	64.7%	36.8%	15.4%	54.3%	41.9%	24.9%	65.9%	52.9%
	136	1148	316	200	1349	273	112	1112	1462	175	1251	1732
2018	22.3%	60.1%	40.6%	31.0%	69.3%	53.4%	19.3%	56.4%	37.5%	27.7%	65.9%	48.5%
	192	1299	269	234	1373	374	135	1138	281	210	1334	325
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	23.7%	60.5%	47.8%	30.3%	68.7%	49.1%	18.3%	53.9%	39.0%	24.2%	65.0%	45.2%
	163	1087	309	209	1181	310	114	942	242	153	1080	276
2021	26.0%	64.6%	48.7%	38.5%	72.4%	53.5%	17.1%	52.3%	36.1%	28.7%	63.3%	46.0%
	190	1184	333	254	1192	356	118	907	233	187	1038	279
2022	26.4%	58.8%	45.9%	31.0%	63.9%	44.5%	23.3%	57.8%	40.2%	28.7%	61.4%	44.9%
	165	1028	299	199	1042	299	167	1008	275	178	974	302
2023	33.1%	64.9%	55.5%	37.6%	72.6%	50.3%	25.8%	62.1%	44.9%	37.5%	69.2%	52.9%
	218	1102	347	227	1131	343	153	1000	280	220	1031	351

Table 2.3 Proficiency rates (score of 3 or higher) on State tests (ELA- English Language Arts for Grades 7th -10th by Race by Gender 2016-2023

	7 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)						8 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	5.4%	31.4%	17.3%	10.0%	41.6%	20.1%	6.0%	29.2%	18.4%	9.4%	38.8%	22.8%
	34	650	111	66	857	109	42	620	112	60	756	128
2017	18.3%	50.2%	34.0%	24.1%	64.0%	42.3%	19.6%	56.4%	37.9%	26.3%	72.4%	49.6%
	126	1023	233	151	1206	240	134	1190	253	183	1487	283
2018	20.1%	54.4%	35.7%	28.3%	67.8%	50.0%	23.1%	58.0%	42.4%	31.0%	69.4%	46.5%
	144	1083	261	200	1268	347	163	1192	300	203	1283	288
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	15.9%	47.9%	31.0%	27.2%	61.4%	44.0%	18.8%	53.9%	38.9%	28.1%	63.1%	46.9%
	121	889	194	186	1076	288	117	993	273	187	1154	297
2021	14.9%	50.6%	34.5%	22.4%	62.1%	42.0%	17.2%	48.8%	31.5%	24.4%	60.3%	41.1%
	91	885	226	149	1048	264	126	903	204	161	1061	269
2022	20.4%	52.6%	37.0%	30.6%	62.3%	45.5%	18.8%	53.0%	36.5%	26.6%	62.4%	41.8%
	133	891	253	196	990	291	117	936	245	181	1047	267
2023	26.4%	61.7%	42.6%	30.0%	68.0%	47.7%	21.4%	55.7%	40.1%	35.2%	66.6%	47.3%
	175	1017	295	184	1027	311	135	922	268	213	1032	304

	9 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)						10 th Grade ELA (English Language Arts)					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	7.5%	32.4%	15.6%	10.4%	41.3%	25.0%	5.0%	26.1%	15.1%	9.1%	32.6%	18.1%
	45	707	93	61	827	138	28	484	78	54	602	99
2017	21.5%	54.5%	38.1%	28.9%	69.3%	46.6%	19.4%	56.6%	35.3%	28.8%	70.8%	46.2%
	140	1171	234	179	1414	271	105	1188	211	166	1394	276
2018	19.2%	56.9%	40.4%	29.2%	68.7%	50.2%	20.1%	54.2%	36.3%	29.1%	69.2%	47.7%
	119	1190	262	198	1458	286	123	1127	216	172	1373	285
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	18.7%	53.3%	34.9%	27.3%	64.4%	45.8%	20.1%	51.7%	39.4%	28.5%	65.2%	44.7%
	116	998	221	172	1159	287	113	1003	260	152	1187	260
2021	18.3%	52.2%	37.4%	25.4%	64.3%	47.1%	16.3%	52.1%	32.8%	25.8%	63.0%	46.8%
	101	999	259	157	1240	297	95	951	208	156	1131	305
2022	20.9%	51.5%	32.8%	26.5%	59.7%	41.9%	18.8%	50.8%	35.4%	21.6%	55.5%	38.8%
	156	998	235	184	1143	306	108	974	260	143	1061	268
2023	26.3%	60.2%	44.7%	30.4%	68.5%	48.8%	29.6%	55.4%	41.1%	35.1%	63.5%	45.6%
	166	1089	309	204	1198	337	210	1028	287	226	1179	335

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

Table 2.4 Proficiency rates (score of 3 or higher) on State Math tests for Grades 3rd-6th by Race and Gender 2016-2023

	3 rd Grade Math						4 th Grade Math					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	13.6%	40.0%	31.8%	12.4%	39.8%	25.3%	16.9%	47.7%	33.5%	14.3%	44.4%	30.6%
	116	871	207	95	804	173	112	1009	242	105	937	195
2017	40.1%	69.1%	58.1%	39.9%	71.2%	53.6%	37.9%	71.3%	60.4%	34.9%	70.1%	53.3%
	316	1454	401	311	1375	357	306	1563	396	260	1393	367
2018	39.6%	71.6%	59.4%	39.2%	68.6%	52.5%	40.9%	73.5%	60.8%	39.3%	72.4%	55.9%
	316	1442	422	288	1296	366	285	1496	403	290	1372	377
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	29.9%	66.9%	54.8%	27.1%	62.7%	44.9%	36.0%	73.4%	61.3%	35.5%	68.2%	50.9%
	207	1184	324	188	1031	298	249	1336	408	237	1128	322
2021	35.4%	71.8%	58.0%	33.7%	69.4%	55.5%	41.2%	76.8%	66.4%	38.4%	70.8%	55.7%
	275	1294	404	230	1151	349	242	1281	390	243	1144	351
2022	35.9%	73.2%	60.0%	35.1%	68.9%	49.3%	42.0%	74.4%	63.8%	34.8%	69.7%	54.7%
	266	1311	417	239	1125	331	271	1275	420	206	1120	335
2023	40.6%	75.6%	65.3%	35.4%	71.8%	52.6%	45.8%	75.9%	67.7%	40.9%	72.5%	51.3%
	286	1303	452	221	1115	327	296	1304	452	251	1117	344

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

	5 th Grade Math						6 th Math					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	9.2%	41.7%	30.9%	11.3%	42.8%	25.5%	4.6%	34.7%	20.5%	8.6%	32.8%	18.1%
	69	893	209	81	836	168	33	719	142	56	636	102
2017	32.9%	69.9%	56.6%	35.2%	68.3%	52.1%	17.1%	60.3%	41.3%	24.0%	65.8%	49.0%
	235	1495	425	269	1438	353	129	1252	300	172	1257	332
2018	30.5%	69.9%	56.7%	30.7%	68.8%	52.1%	23.3%	59.8%	44.6%	23.7%	61.3%	46.4%
	264	1510	377	233	1364	367	162	1219	336	180	1245	312
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	30.6%	68.7%	58.3%	31.4%	64.7%	49.7%	19.3%	56.1%	39.9%	21.5%	57.3%	37.6%
	213	1234	378	217	1116	313	122	993	254	137	947	235
2021	31.5%	68.9%	56.2%	33.1%	65.3%	48.9%	20.5%	59.2%	44.0%	25.0%	61.3%	44.7%
	222	1239	380	214	1044	319	134	1001	287	155	988	269
2022	29.2%	68.9%	58.2%	30.1%	65.2%	50.5%	28.0%	68.6%	50.5%	32.1%	63.8%	47.5%
	182	1203	378	192	1064	339	201	1191	345	199	1014	317
2023	37.4%	72.4%	61.0%	34.9%	71.2%	57.2%	32.9%	71.9%	56.2%	37.0%	71.0%	53.8%
	246	1227	416	210	1108	357	197	1154	353	217	1058	358

Table 2.5 Proficiency rates (score of 3 or higher) on State Math tests for Grades 7th and 8th and Science for 5th and 8th grade by Race and Gender 2016-2023

	7 th Grade Math						8 th Grade Math					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	4.7%	33.6%	18.9%	7.8%	32.9%	16.6%	2.6%	14.8%	10.2%	2.3%	11.8%	8.6%
	31	637	118	52	610	86	16	177	45	12	112	33
2017	20.3%	64.7%	46.4%	24.0%	64.5%	40.7%	15.7%	38.7%	25.0%	11.6%	37.4%	29.4%
	145	1169	302	154	1087	229	94	395	118	64	310	101
2018	24.0%	64.2%	47.7%	26.6%	66.8%	48.8%	12.1%	37.3%	32.8%	12.7%	40.2%	24.0%
	170	1052	325	180	1009	309	67	301	130	59	270	82
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	22.5%	60.0%	43.0%	20.5%	61.3%	39.8%	12.4%	36.0%	29.4%	11.3%	32.9%	23.2%
	164	960	253	137	946	243	61	285	124	54	232	81
2021	18.8%	39.1%	42.6%	21.8%	40.0%	38.8%	14.7%	34.4%	18.4%	12.2%	33.0%	20.1%
	111	603	261	139	607	229	85	255	67	59	206	69
2022	25.4%	64.9%	47.3%	28.6%	63.2%	44.4%	21.7%	46.0%	35.3%	22.1%	43.3%	36.1%
	162	966	300	174	880	270	110	341	138	115	302	149
2023	31.6%	69.7%	50.5%	29.4%	66.2%	49.0%	19.5%	37.1%	29.6%	25.2%	35.8%	29.2%
	202	981	324	175	865	296	94	226	110	106	192	101

	5 th Grade Science						8 th Grade Science					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	7.9%	36.1%	17.9%	6.3%	35.9%	19.2%	7.9%	62.7%	23.3%	6.9%	64.3%	17.3%
	59	767	120	45	696	126	56	1332	144	44	1247	98
2017	29.3%	67.3%	51.4%	27.6%	65.9%	48.4%	18.9%	59.6%	39.2%	21.7%	66.3%	44.1%
	206	1432	383	207	1379	326	130	1256	261	152	1351	249
2018	26.5%	63.5%	45.2%	26.1%	66.2%	46.7%	19.4%	61.8%	42.4%	19.1%	62.0%	35.6%
	228	1370	300	198	1312	329	141	1251	303	125	1146	218
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	28.9%	67.4%	50.9%	25.7%	65.8%	47.3%	17.6%	59.3%	39.3%	16.6%	56.4%	38.2%
	196	1189	325	176	1112	292	108	1075	269	109	1030	239
2021	30.4%	66.1%	50.5%	30.8%	64.2%	46.4%	17.2%	56.2%	32.1%	19.3%	56.6%	36.0%
	220	1213	344	200	1051	302	124	1015	212	124	981	237
2022	34.7%	70.9%	58.6%	32.4%	67.9%	45.7%	17.3%	58.3%	39.5%	17.9%	58.2%	34.3%
	215	1230	380	208	1105	306	103	999	257	118	949	214
2023	39.6%	74.3%	59.9%	36.0%	75.0%	57.7%	21.2%	58.9%	42.7%	24.9%	60.9%	40.7%
	257	1258	408	215	1166	359	131	955	285	143	927	258

Table 2.6 Proficiency rates (score of 3 or higher) on End of Course State tests for Algebra, Geometry, Biology and Civics by Race and Gender 2016-2023

	Algebra End of Course						Geometry End of Course					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	4.0%	24.8%	10.8%	4.2%	27.6%	13.1%	4.4%	26.8%	17.4%	3.2%	25.4%	15.7%
	46	710	107	46	743	121	22	518	83	18	465	80
2017	17.5%	54.6%	37.5%	23.7%	61.6%	40.3%	19.0%	65.0%	45.5%	19.9%	67.1%	46.6%
	183	1628	366	243	1705	384	98	1176	226	107	1253	229
2018	17.8%	54.3%	38.6%	23.0%	60.6%	37.3%	20.5%	65.8%	53.0%	22.5%	65.2%	45.1%
	172	1563	418	224	1635	358	104	1351	284	126	1329	272
2019	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020	15.8%	59.2%	42.5%	18.2%	59.8%	44.8%	12.1%	50.9%	33.2%	14.0%	50.9%	31.5%
	108	1033	239	116	930	239	98	1185	291	120	1175	260
2021	16.7%	52.0%	35.7%	21.3%	53.4%	35.4%	15.6%	61.5%	49.9%	24.8%	58.2%	49.3%
	185	1335	392	238	1322	358	70	983	211	110	889	212
2022	18.0%	55.5%	38.1%	22.7%	56.5%	36.3%	10.5%	55.9%	34.1%	13.8%	54.7%	32.2%
	144	1100	307	194	1076	283	66	1037	254	95	1014	233
2023	22.8%	51.5%	35.0%	28.8%	50.8%	38.5%	23.4%	61.8%		22.7%	63.0%	
	266	1294	377	327	1208	439	128	1076	290	142	1070	259

	Biology End of Course						Civics End of Course					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016-2017	8.5%	34.5%	21.4%	8.0%	32.8%	21.9%	10.9%	48.7%	27.9%	15.7%	50.2%	30.7%
	41	730	120	48	660	119	72	1033	182	105	1037	164
2017-2018	26.8%	71.1%	49.2%	33.8%	74.2%	55.3%	32.7%	74.0%	57.4%	38.6%	77.0%	57.8%
	160	1469	291	196	1509	330	219	1498	393	243	1436	326
2018-2019	24.5%	70.3%	47.2%	30.6%	76.1%	52.1%	37.5%	76.4%	54.4%	43.1%	77.9%	62.8%
	177	316	316	219	1659	355	213	1421	366	255	1400	415
2019-2020	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa	Not Availa
2020-2021	23.3%	67.4%	51.9%	29.2%	72.0%	54.0%	34.4%	71.8%	52.2%	36.1%	70.4%	56.1%
	160	1364	353	207	1434	384	230	1349	343	245	1262	382
2021-2022	23.7%	68.6%	52.8%	30.0%	70.5%	53.4%	32.1%	75.8%	58.6%	41.3%	78.1%	60.7%
	166	1379	400	205	1367	352	204	1207	382	251	1262	347
2022-2023	26.1%	67.3%	47.8%	33.0%	71.6%	51.8%	39.5%	75.7%	59.8%	44.5%	78.3%	58.5%
	173	1301	358	231	1366	384	234	1286	377	293	1228	361
2023-2024	34.6%	70.9%	50.8%	38.5%	74.9%	53.0%	49.2%	80.3%	68.9%	52.3%	79.0%	67.4%
	248	1411	402	289	1406	414	296	1350	474	276	1231	435

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

Summary and Implications

Recent progress is noted in the performance of Black students on end of course tests administered by the state. Test scores improved noticeably in the school year 202302024 after changing very little prior to that time. When academic achievement is assessed in terms of average grades it is again clear that elementary schools achieved at a higher level than middle and high school students. The shape of the curve representing the grade levels of Black and White males and females is remarkably consistent from 3rd grade through 10th grade. All groups showed a decline from 3rd grade to 5th grade, an increase from 5th grade to 6th grade and the secular decline from 7 to 10th grade. The relative ranking of the groups remains constant across the grades. The best performers were White females. For most years, Latina females tended to do just as well as White males. Latino males and Black females had an almost identical pattern of academic performance. However, Black males consistently fell below all the other groups and achieved the lowest grades all the way from 3rd grade to 10th grade.

Achieving proficiency level scores on state tests continues to be a major challenge in PCS especially in middle and high school. PCS efforts to improve student performance on the state tests have not been successful to date. Eight grade math seems to have been a significant challenge for all students in that the percentage attaining proficiency was lower in the eight grade than in the seventh grade .

However, it appears that PCS helped students graduate with a standard concordant diploma by encouraging students to take the SAT or ACT and providing support in the form of practice tests embedded in regular courses.

Black students consistently earned lower grades than other groups of children. Moreover, they earned diplomas via concordant testing at significantly higher rates than other group though as noted earlier that rates increased for White students in 2024. . At this point we know little about the equivalence of the educational achievement represented in the standard and concordant diplomas. Again, this is a topic that deserves exploration in light of the racial disparities in the types of diplomas students receive.

Goal 3: Advanced Coursework

Goal 3: Eliminate the gap in advanced and accelerated participation and performance rates for Black and non- Black students.

Indicators/ Benchmarks: Increase the percentage of Black students enrolled in gifted, advanced and accelerated courses by an average of 1% each year to meet or exceed the percentage enrollment of Black students and increase the percent of Black students earning satisfactory performance standards by an average of .5% each year until that percent meets or exceed the District or state average.

Planned Interventions

- Recruitment and support of Black learners into rigorous courses. Elevating Excellence activities Recruit Black Students who might succeed in rigorous courses but are not currently accessing them.
- Professional Development for Talent Development Teachers: support teachers to identify a representative group of students for their Talent Development Program.
- Enhance tools provided to school principals: data, such as grades of Black students in accelerated courses; developed data reports of courses where Black students were struggling so that additional supports could be provided.
- Provide supports such as tutoring for students in advanced/accelerated courses such as the AVID elective,
- Extended learning programs.
- College and Career Centers used to convey information to students and families; they offer college planning boot camps.

Table 3.1**Strategies to increase access to Advanced Courses**

Strategies/ Actions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Universal Screening: <i>Remove barriers to advanced and accelerated course</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Training for Gifted Programs: <i>Increase support for teachers of gifted and talented learners</i>	X	X	X			X	X	X
Student Support in Advanced Courses: <i>Provide strategies and support for students in advanced courses</i>				X	X	X	X	X
Information Sessions: <i>Offer sessions for students showing potential in rigorous courses</i>	X	X			X	X		X
Training Counselor: <i>Train counselors to use data for course selection advice</i>	X	X			X			
AVID: <i>Program for minority learners</i>			X	X				

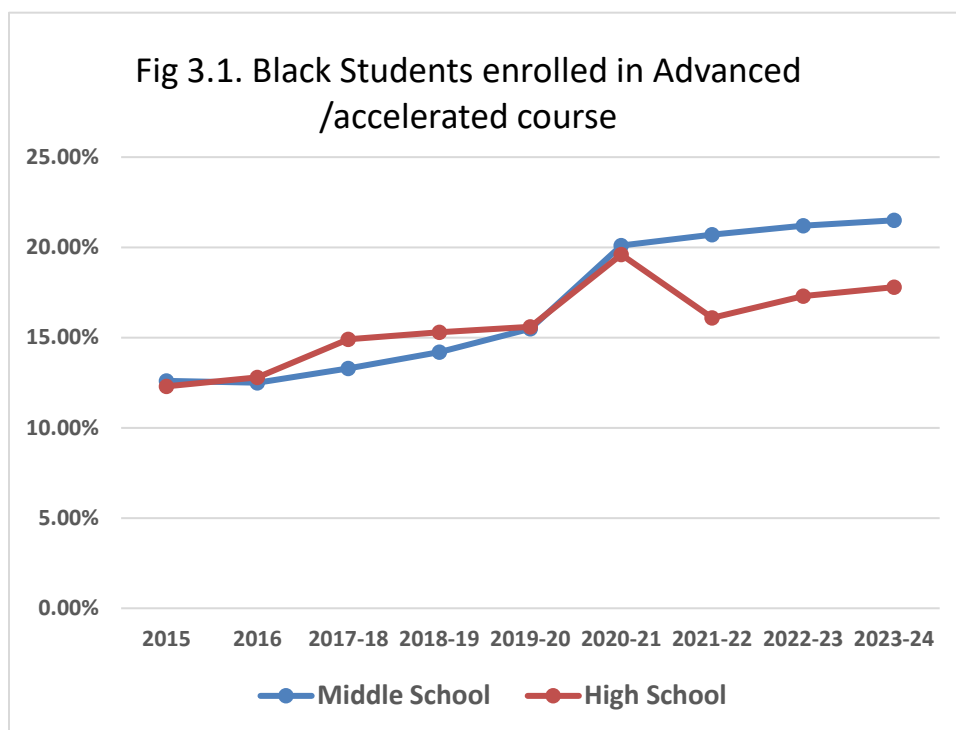


Figure 3.1 is based on data PCS reported in its 2024 annual BTG plan. The figure shows steady progress over time with respect to increasing enrollment of Black students in rigorous and advanced courses. The most impressive gain occurred for middle schools in 2020, and these gains have been maintained since then.

Black student participation in honors programs remained low, but there was evidence of steady improvements in that indicator as well. Table 3.2 presents the frequencies and percentages for student participation in Gifted programs disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sex. These data reveal that participation in honors increased for all groups of students but the Black-White gap in participation has not closed. Latino students' participation increased and their gap with Whites narrowed somewhat. The number and percent of Black males in honors programs has more than doubled since 2016. However, their numbers are quite low. They have the lowest rate of participation compared to White and Latino students and Black females.

Table 3.2 Number and Percent of Students in Gifted Program by Race and Sex

	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016-2017	1.3% 145	8.5% 2596	3.5% 327	1.6% 157	10.5% 2917	3.6% 317
2017-2018	2.1% 231	12.0% 3536	4.8% 460	2.6% 263	14.2% 3840	5.3% 477
2018-2019	2.1% 231	12.0% 3536	4.8% 460	2.6% 263	14.2% 3840	5.3% 477
2019-2020	2.7% 279	13.6% 3782	6.0% 575	3.4% 334	16.0% 4039	6.5% 594
2020-2021	2.8% 287	14.2% 3753	6.6% 619	3.5% 332	16.3% 3970	6.9% 615
2021-2022	3.1% 314	14.5% 3740	6.8% 673	3.7% 348	16.2% 3873	6.9% 629
2022-2023	3.3% 329	15.2% 3732	7.0% 699	3.9% 361	16.5% 3767	7.2% 670
2023-2024	3.5% 337	15.8% 3687	7.4% 741	4.2% 383	17.0% 3689	7.2% 685

Summary and Implications:

Pinellas County Schools' (PCS) BTG plans called for increasing Black student participation in rigorous courses. Their approach appeared to be systematic and comprehensive. According to PCS' plans, they revised policies governing eligibility, improved advising of students for course selection and supported students with supplemental assistance if they needed help once they were enrolled. These efforts appeared to have paid off. Data shows notable increases in Black enrollment in advanced curricula, particularly in middle schools.

The evidence for PCS success in increasing Black student access to advanced courses and rigorous curricula is incontrovertible. There have been substantial increases in Black student enrollment in challenging courses that appear to be related to the important systemic changes made by PCS as part of the BTG plan. However, results for participation in Honors programs were not as impressive. Black males again have the lowest rate of participation in programs that cultivate the most talented students.

Goal 4: Student Discipline

Goal 4: Reduce the total number of disciplinary infractions (referrals) and suspensions for Black students and decrease the disparity in referrals and suspensions for Black students to reach a level that is representative of the Black student population. (viz 18%)

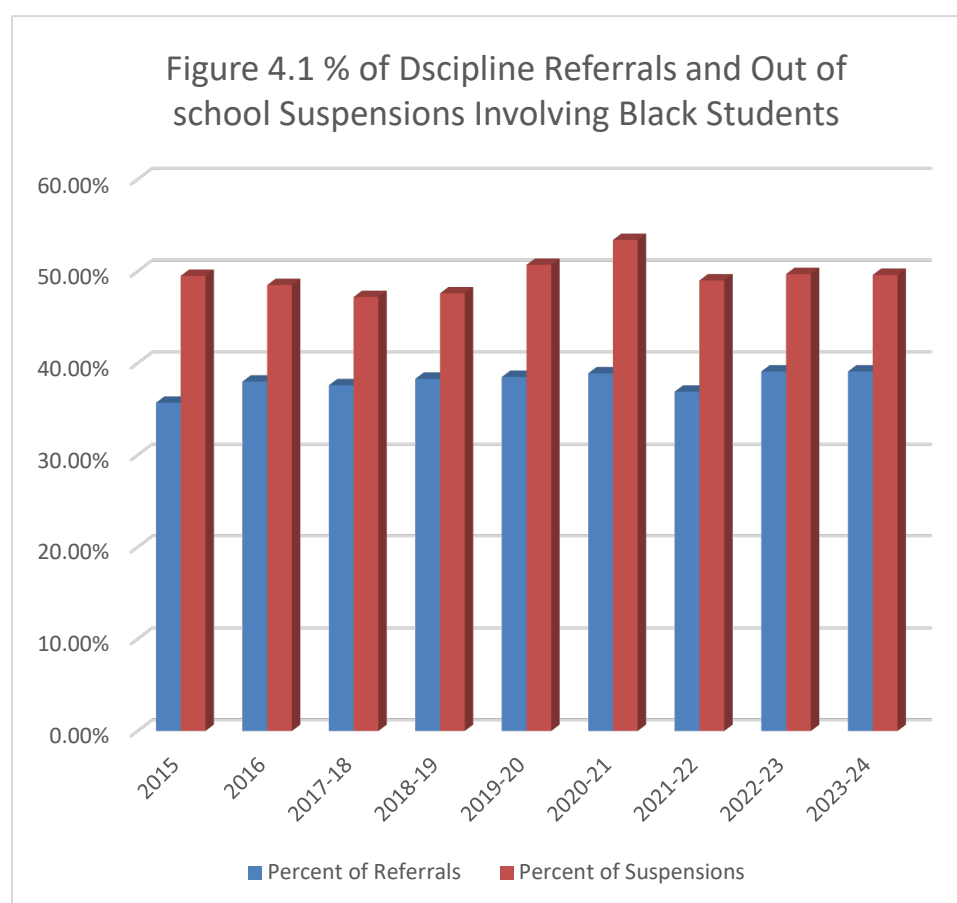
Indicator/Benchmark: Achieve a risk ratio of 1.0 for referrals and suspensions

Table 4.1 Strategies for Goal 4. Student Discipline

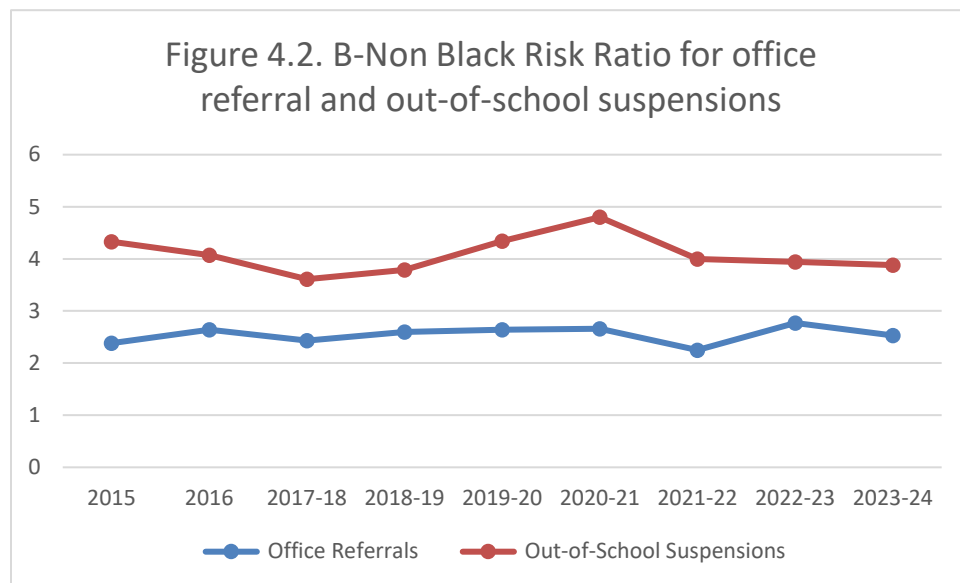
Strategies/ Actions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
PBIS Implementation: <i>Implement school-wide behavior plans and monitor PBIS components</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Restorative Practices: <i>Train staff in restorative practices as alternatives to discipline</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Discipline Data Analysis: <i>Analyze discipline data to address disparities and support schools with high needs.</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Consultation: <i>Work with community committees to improve discipline practices</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support for Suspended Students: <i>Implement differentiated supports and reintegration processes for students returning from suspensions</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Train School Resource Officer. <i>Support student behavior and de-emphasize arrests</i>		X		X	X			X
Train Behavior Specialists. <i>Teach BS to use evidence based and data driven interventions</i>				X				

PCS reports little Progress in reducing racial disparities in discipline

In its 2024 report, PCS states that it successfully decreased the number of Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODR) by 30.3% and achieved a corresponding decrease in the number of Out-of-School suspensions (OSS) by 56.7% for Black students. Although the absolute numbers of Office Disciplinary Referrals and Suspensions have declined over time, Black students continued to account for almost 40% of all disciplinary referrals in PCS. This percentage has been the same over the BTG period. See Figure 4.1. Similarly, Black students account for about half of all out-of-school suspensions and this pattern is largely unchanged. Moreover, the disparity in out of school suspensions is greater than the disparity in ODR.



Thus, while the absolute number of ODR and Suspensions have declined, racial disparities in ODR remained unchanged. As shown in Figure 4.2 the Black-Non-Black risk ratio for OSS is even higher than the risk ratio for office referrals. This suggests that once referred to the office, Black males are more likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. (See Figure 4.2)



Guiding student behavior is still a significant challenge in PCS, with Black students disproportionately involved in incidents requiring some disciplinary response. Defiance of authority, disruptive behavior and fighting are highly prevalent particularly in schools with high concentrations of Black students. Such incidents are the most common reasons for office disciplinary referral. Efforts to channel student behavior toward prosocial outcomes and reduce racial disparities in discipline have had limited success especially in middle schools and in schools with high concentrations of Black students. Although state law mandates arrests and referral to law enforcement for specific incidents, Black students are disproportionately subjected to criminal referral and arrests. In 2024 PCS reported a total of 246 arrests. Black students accounted for 75% of these arrests; 114 were of Black males and 71 were of Black Females.

Tables 4.2 to 4.5 present the rates of several groups of incidents referred for disciplinary reasons. These groups of incidents are related to fighting, defiance, disruptions, tardiness or skipping, and assorted other violations of school rules and disciplinary policies. To account for differences in the population base rates, the numbers for incidents are adjusted to reflect the number of

incidents per thousand students. The tables compare the rates by race/ethnicity and sex for students in schools with high and low concentrations of Black students (see Table 4.2). These incident rates are disaggregated by elementary schools (see Table 4.3), middle schools (see Table 4.4) and high schools (see Table 4.5). Note that the rates of incidents increase from elementary to middle school. Incidents decline from the highs of middle school by 9th grade.

Figure 4.3 presents the flip side of data on students for whom disciplinary incidents are reported. It captures the percentage of students in the school for whom there are no reportable incidents. This is an indicator of more or less positive functioning. As such it offers a different perspective that suggests significant improvement for Black students after weathering the disruptive stormy middle school era. Toward the end of high school, the gap between Black and other students decreases significantly.

PCS differentiate their responses to student infractions of the disciplinary code depending on the nature of the incident. See Figures 4.4 and 4.5. PCS with high concentrations of Black students most often respond to disruption with in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. Similarly, schools with low concentrations of Black students respond with ISS but also detention. For Defiance both types of schools use ISS and verbal reprimands. For tardiness and truancy the responses are again similar with ISS and detention. Fight evokes the most severe consequences in which both school types use OSS. When OSS is not used, high Black enrollment schools are then more likely to change students' schedule or use ISS. However, Low Black enrollment schools most often change student schedule or contact parents. Disciplinary actions are, for the most part, similar in schools with High and Low concentration of Black students. However, disciplinary actions occur less often in schools with low Black student enrollment than schools with high Black student enrollment.

Table 4.2 Rates of Serious Problems per 1000 by low(i.e. Areas 1 and 2) and high Black Concentration schools across all school levels (i.e., Primary, Middle and High Schools)

	Fighting		Defiance		Disruption		Tardy /Skip		Rule Violations	
	HI Bl	Lo B	HI Bl	Lo B	HI Bl	Lo	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo B
2016-17	230.61	40.82	388.46	89.70	365.46	57.30	467.26	120.85	254.87	98.07
2017-18	207.43	45.10	315.29	78.93	352.30	56.92	346.76	117.77	215.61	70.02
2018-19	172.04	39.03	424.14	54.39	306.08	43.87	388.10	89.61	201.26	56.92
2019-20	140.21	29.98	294.44	36.07	188.98	32.30	179.33	57.18	191.49	42.14
2020-21	137.10	17.62	156.40	21.55	104.65	16.02	136.53	53.15	57.18	17.98
2021-22	250.29	85.62	240.14	32.08	213.77	30.48	250.29	85.62	250.29	85.62
2022-23	184.28	37.38	267.52	39.74	163.17	34.87	184.28	37.38	122.99	37.08
2023-24	219.69	37.45	269.82	33.58	224.00	30.39	162.45	49.63	94.72	30.04

HI BL= High Black Concentration Lo BL Areas 1 and 2

Table 4.3. PRIMARY SCHOOL Rates of Serious Incidents per 1000 by Low (i.e. Areas 1 and 2) and High Black enrollment schools for fighting, defiance, disruption, skipping class or school and breaking rules.

	Fighting		Defiance		Disruption		Tardy /Skip		Rule Violations	
	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl
2016-2017	376.10	44.93	64.15	10.97	64.15	11.73	0.00	0.60	14.06	11.78
2017-2018	324.64	43.66	113.04	14.74	105.31	13.02	0.00	0.04	36.71	5.14
2018-2019	177.85	38.74	12.20	6.63	14.23	8.39	3.05	0.09	9.15	5.58
2019-2020	67.94	29.16	6.37	4.35	16.99	8.30	0	0	1.06	5.83
2020-2021	42.00	15.73	29.51	2.97	9.08	5.04	0	0	3.41	0.67
2021-2022	25.08	2.92	25.08	2.92	19.85	6.12	0	0	25.08	2.92
2022-2023	2.00	1.14	2.00	1.14	2.00	1.14	0	0	2.00	1.14
2023-2024	263.76	34.94	126.69	6.87	35.31	13.35	4.15	0	16.61	2.90

HI BL= High Black Concentration Lo BL Areas 1 and 2

Table 4.4. MIDDLE SCHOOL Rates of Serious Incidents per 1000 by Low (i.e. Areas 1 and 2) and High Black enrollment schools

	Fighting		Defiance		Disruption		Tardy /Skip		Rule Violations	
	HI Bl	Lo B	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl
2016-2017	304.94	68.86	528.40	125.29	322.84	154.77	331.17	78.96	236.42	111.60
2017-2018	261.08	99.64	383.81	158.89	255.66	175.01	170.55	155.96	113.80	130.42
2018-2019	220.56	79.00	465.84	105.20	181.20	134.28	189.00	140.26	156.47	112.62
2019-2020	219.70	72.40	375.04	83.99	188.83	113.16	174.71	108.81	192.12	64.34
2020-2021	260.07	5.01	198.23	6.19	186.93	5.71	152.30	2.66	96.11	1.47
2021-2022	369.72	96.69	253.04	101.49	323.91	41.83	270.58	38.63	135.29	36.11
2022-2023	303.52	72.44	288.61	74.38	218.27	166.75	175.08	62.96	46.25	39.86
2023-2024	301.92	82.52	406.33	104.21	298.91	115.84	132.68	91.25	91.59	72.73

HI BL= High Black Concentration Lo BL Areas 1 and 2

Table 4.5. HIGH SCHOOL Rates of Serious Incidents per 1000 by Low (i.e. Areas 1 and 2) and High Black enrollment schools

	Fighting		Defiance		Disruption		Tardy /Skip		Rule Violations	
	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl	HI Bl	Lo Bl
2016-2017	117.07	27.48	364.91	190.11	499.86	93.75	739.03	301.29	348.14	215.34
2017-2018	130.67	31.89	313.81	146.02	500.40	84.75	588.39	271.49	349.32	143.58
2018-2019	128.71	28.01	501.68	105.70	493.84	66.55	665.36	198.75	292.67	111.75
2019-2020	91.62	18.71	301.68	65.59	234.36	41.41	230.45	120.66	241.06	85.65
2020-2021	56.64	10.84	154.38	34.55	59.38	18.76	159.56	131.35	38.06	41.90
2021-2022	112.73	35.22	231.18	68.03	237.85	43.47	308.35	211.66	107.34	134.33
2022-2023	122.24	36.64	327.38	75.23	167.32	37.14	303.78	152.53	220.27	84.04
2023-2024	128.75	30.06	191.56	51.68	218.07	32.18	243.20	104.98	123.87	55.48

HI BL= High Black Concentration Lo BL= Areas 1 and 2

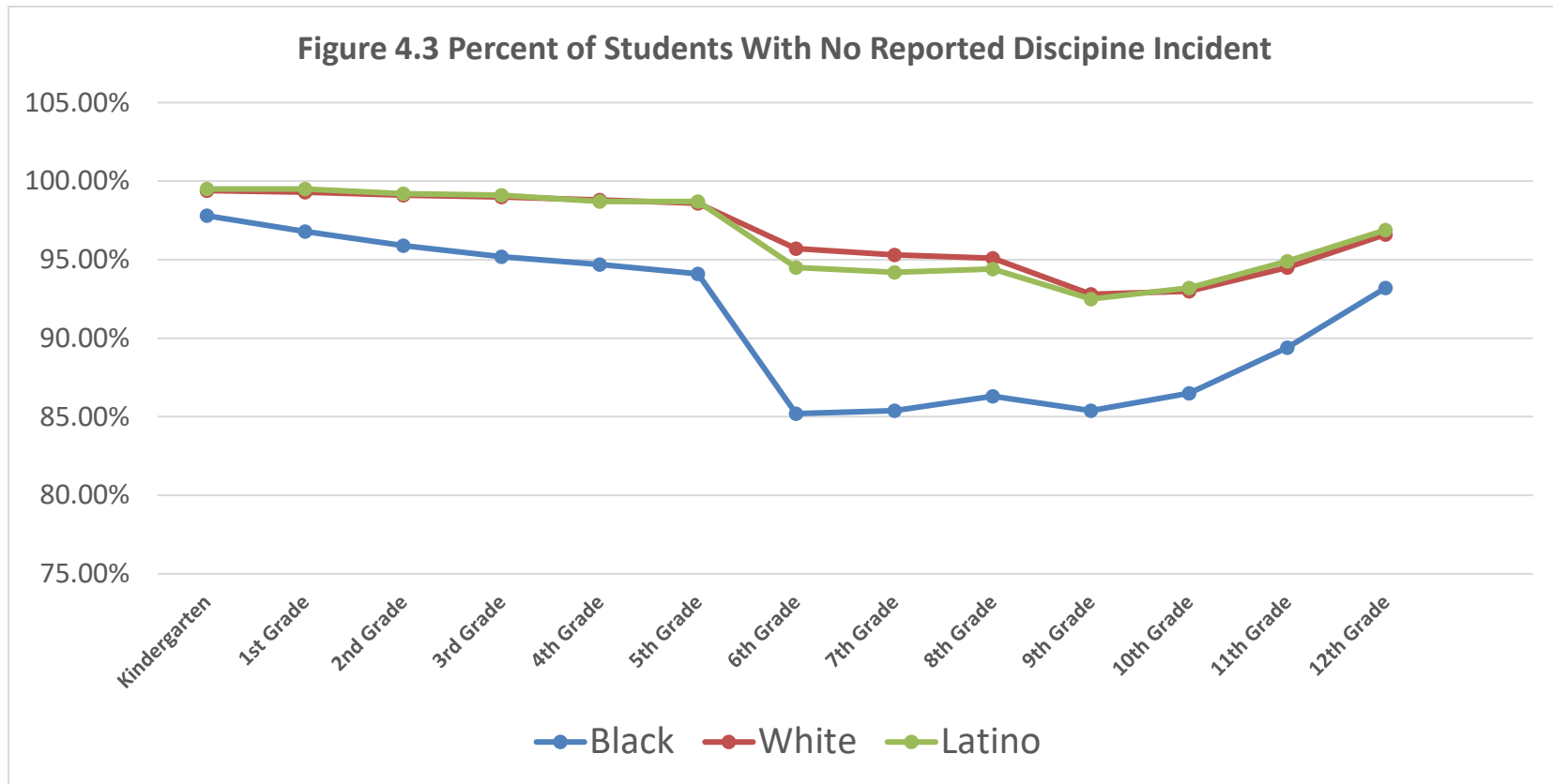
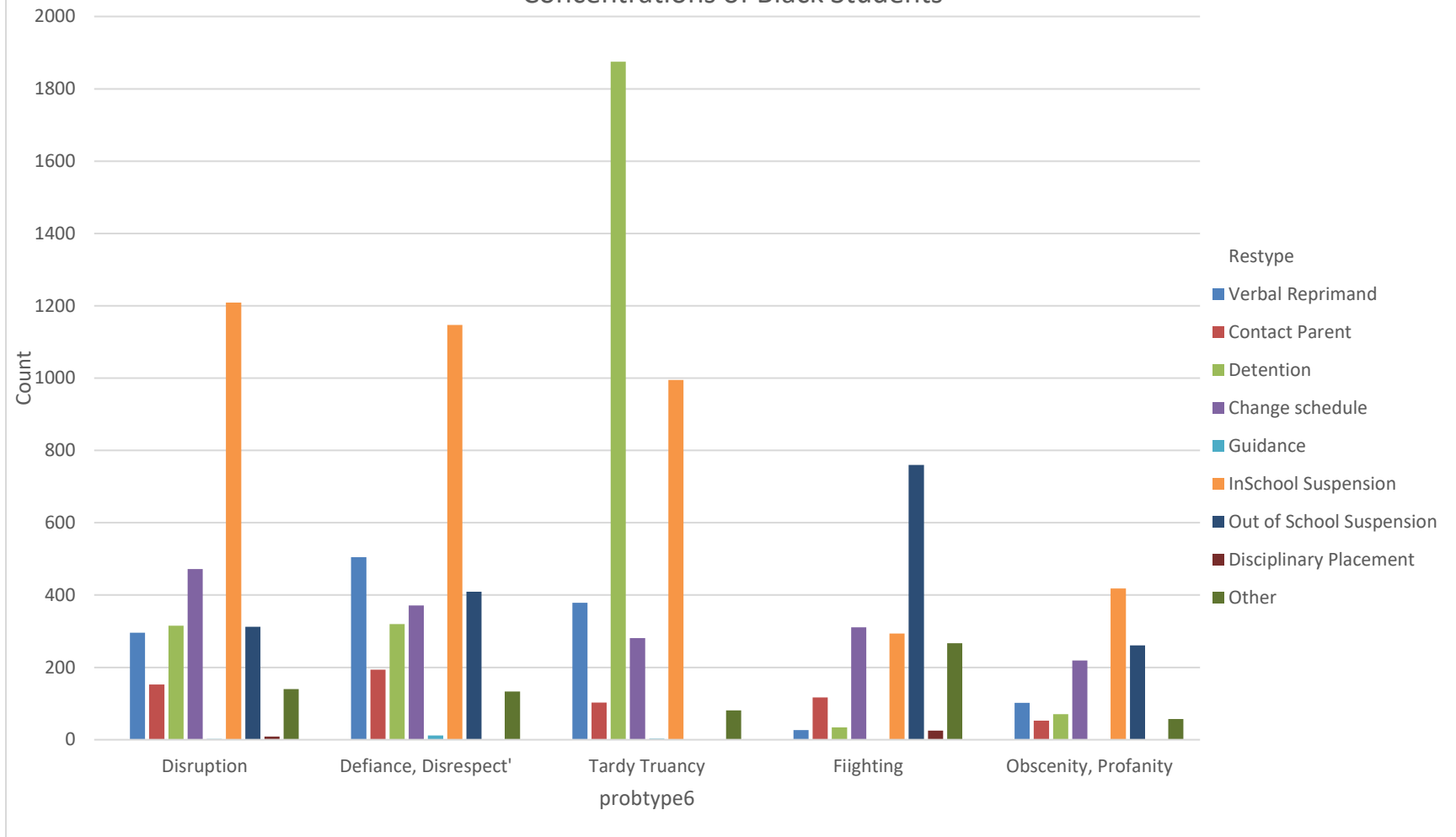


Figure 4.4 Response to Discipline Incidents in Transformation and schools with high Concentrations of Black Students



Summary and Implications.

PCS had been successful in decreasing the number of disciplinary referrals and reducing its reliance on out-of-school suspensions to manage student misbehavior. However, racial disparities in referrals and suspension have not changed. Black students make up about half of the student population subjected to out of school suspensions and this is higher than the rate at which they were referred administratively for behavior problems and infractions of rules. In other words, Black students are more likely to be referred to the office for a disciplinary issue. Once referred, they are more likely to receive an out of school suspension. Fighting and disruptive behavior are the most common reasons for disciplinary referrals. Middle schools have the most difficulty creating a positive behavioral climate and managing student misbehavior. Problems are relatively low in kindergarten to about 5th grade but rise precipitously during middle school. The rate of problems declines by 12th grade. High rates of disciplinary problems occur in middle school. An epidemic of fighting and disruption breaks out during the middle school years. This is not unique to PCS but is common in other large school Districts that have not revised how they organize middle schools. The transition from the protective environment of primary schools is often difficult for early teens who have to navigate new settings under extreme and sometimes negative peer pressure. PCS might do well to re-think the structure, size and organization of the educational setting for children now assigned to middle school to create environments where students have close relations with teachers as most did in primary school.

Goal 5: ESE Identification

Goal 5 Reduce the disparity of Black students found eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

Planned Interventions

- Identify and evaluate students needing special education and related services to support their learning and achievement.
- Records Review for Transfer Students with EBD eligibility to ensure they receive current IEP services during re-evaluation.
- Review Black Students designated as EBD in fourth and seventh grades, and for those with multiple eligibilities.
- Offer Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS), including a behavior technician onsite weekly, for students needing extra academic or behavioral support and evaluate the success of CCEIS interventions.
- Emphasize Tier 1 behavioral interventions in high minority schools.
- Assign Behavior Analysts to support ESE students and staff across all schools. Train and coach BA in using strategies with cultural components.

Strategies for Goal 5. ESE

Strategies/ Actions	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Efficient Evaluation. <i>Identify students in need of special education services.</i>		X	X	X	X		X	X
Records Review. <i>Focus on and identify disproportionalities</i>		X	X	X	X		X	X
Prevention. <i>Offer Early and Preventive intervention before EBD identification</i>			X	X	X			X
Intensive Intervention <i>Offer Tier 2 and 3 Services</i>				X	X		X	X
Adjust ESE Identification Process. <i>Monitor and Adopt Bias Free Assessment</i>	X							
Train Staff. <i>Training for behavior specialist</i>	X		X		X			
Support high Minority Schools. <i>Focus on behavioral interventions in high minority schools</i>			X				X	X

Progress Reported by PCS

Table 5.1 shows a significant reduction in the identification of Black students as needing special education services. Disparities in special education overall were low and remained low throughout the BTG period. However, the story is different with respect to the designation of Black students as eligible for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) services. Although there has been substantial progress in reducing the number of Black students assigned to EBD services progress in reducing the over-representation of Blacks in EBD services has been minimal. Significant disparities remained in the number of students eligible for EBD.

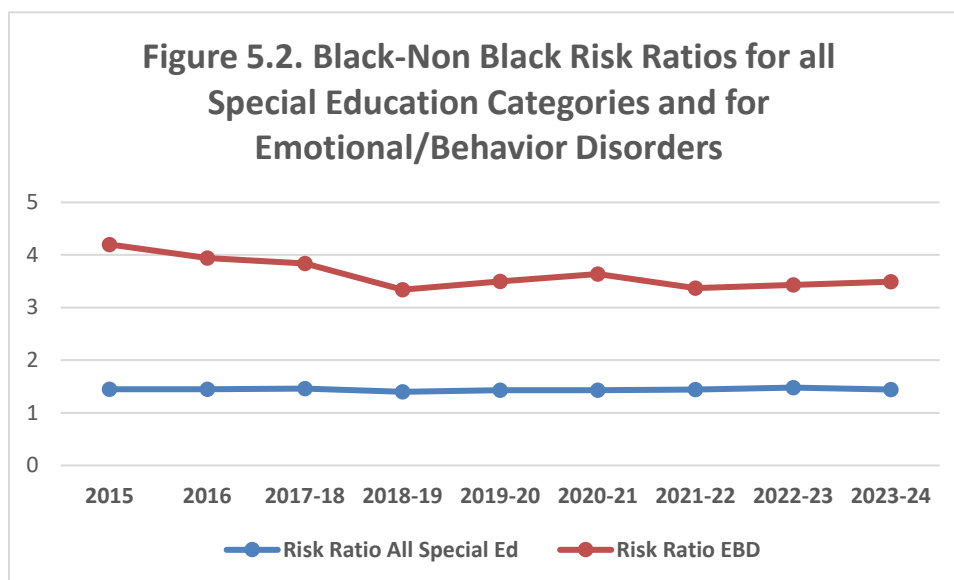
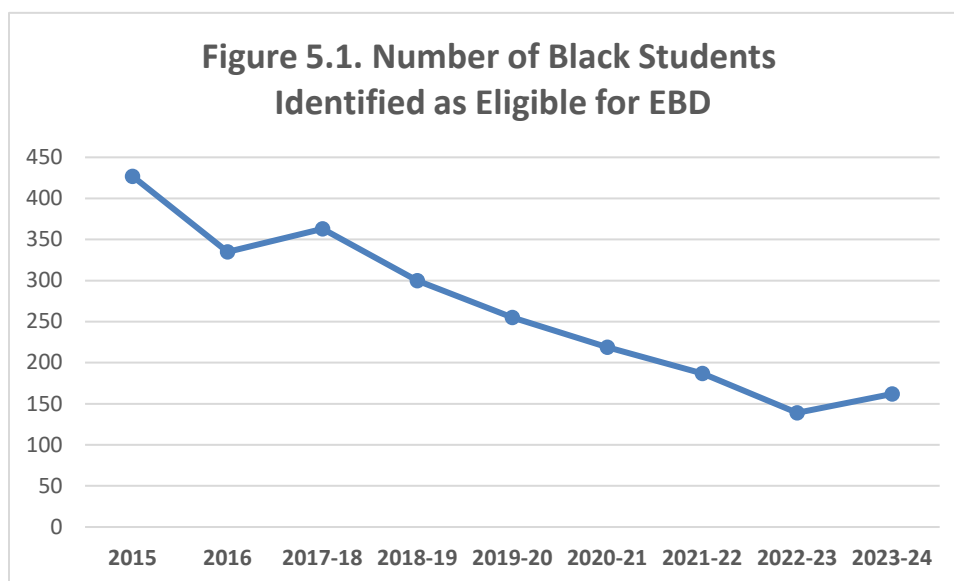


Table 5.2 presents the percentage and frequency of diagnosis for specific disorders that qualified students for special education services and participation in programs for students designated as gifted. Data for specific learning disabilities, speech and language deficits, emotional and behavioral disorders and participation in gifted programs are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sex for each of the 8 years of the BTG plan from 2016 to 2022.

Table 5.2. Participation in special programs by Race and Gender for each of the 8 years from 2016 to 2022 (Percent and Frequency)

	1. Specific Learning Disorder						2. Participation in Gifted Programs					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	6.7%	3.7%	4.3%	4.9%	2.7%	3.5%	1.3%	8.5%	3.5%	1.6%	10.5%	3.6%
	733	1130	401	496	742	304	145	2596	327	157	2917	317
2017	6.7%	3.8%	4.5%	5.1%	2.8%	3.9%	2.1%	12.0%	4.8%	2.6%	14.2%	5.3%
	734	1123	431	513	759	355	231	3536	460	263	3840	477
2018	6.7%	3.8%	4.5%	5.1%	2.8%	3.9%	2.1%	12.0%	4.8%	2.6%	14.2%	5.3%
	734	1123	431	513	759	355	231	3536	460	263	3840	477
2019	7.3%	4.2%	5.0%	5.7%	3.4%	4.4%	2.7%	13.6%	6.0%	3.4%	16.0%	6.5%
	765	1167	483	564	857	397	279	3782	575	334	4039	594
2020	7.7%	4.4%	5.3%	6.2%	3.7%	4.7%	2.8%	14.2%	6.6%	3.5%	16.3%	6.9%
	786	1178	499	586	894	418	287	3753	619	332	3970	615
2021	8.3%	4.6%	5.3%	6.4%	4.0%	5.0%	3.1%	14.5%	6.8%	3.7%	16.2%	6.9%
	838	1180	519	613	950	454	314	3740	673	348	3873	629
2022	8.9%	4.5%	5.1%	6.9%	4.2%	5.0%	3.3%	15.2%	7.0%	3.9%	16.5%	7.2%
	883	1098	509	646	946	467	329	3732	699	361	3767	670
2023	9.0%	4.7%	5.2%	7.4%	4.5%	5.1%	3.5%	15.8%	7.4%	4.2%	17.0%	7.2%
	879	1095	521	671	973	485	337	3687	741	383	3689	685

	Speech or Language Disorder						Emotional Behavioral disorder					
	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF	BM	WM	LM	BF	WF	LF
2016	7.2%	6.2%	6.0%	3.7%	3.1%	3.0%	3.4%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%
	798	1885	562	376	876	261	377	323	52	64	67	9
2017	7.3%	6.1%	6.1%	3.5%	3.1%	3.1%	2.8%	0.9%	0.4%	3.5%	3.1%	0.1%
	794	1817	590	357	838	285	301	264	42	357	838	6
2018	7.3%	6.1%	6.1%	3.5%	3.1%	3.1%	2.8%	0.9%	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%
	794	1817	590	357	838	285	301	264	42	59	63	6
2019	7.0%	5.9%	5.9%	3.5%	3.1%	2.9%	2.2%	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
	733	1640	570	341	784	261	227	189	31	43	33	10
2020	7.0%	5.5%	2.6%	3.7%	3.0%	5.4%	1.8%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
	713	1462	511	347	720	229	180	154	26	42	37	5
2021	6.7%	5.2%	5.2%	3.7%	3.0%	2.7%	1.6%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
	677	1339	514	355	709	245	157	146	25	36	39	5
2022	6.3%	4.9%	5.0%	3.6%	2.8%	2.6%	1.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%
	631	1195	497	340	628	243	139	119	24	35	43	6
2023	6.0%	4.9%	5.1%	3.6%	2.8%	2.6%	1.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
	584	1151	510	331	613	243	116	104	24	29	30	6

BM= Black Male, WM = White Male, LM = Latino Male. BF = Black Female, WF = White Female, LF = Latina Female

Summary and Conclusion

The key take-aways from these data tables are as follows:

- Percentages for specific learning disabilities, speech and language disorders and behavioral and emotional disorders have not changed much over time.
- Black males have the highest rates at which students are identified with specific learning disorders, speech and language difficulties and behavioral and emotional problems.
- The percent of students participating in gifted programs has increased for all groups including Black students.
- Black males have the lowest rates of participation in honors programs.

In the analyses of special education and honors programs, Black males again stand out as the most vulnerable group and the group least likely to be singled out for participation in programs designed to recognize talent and nurture high levels of academic achievement. Talent development programs may need to begin the process of identifying Black males earlier and nurturing their talents more intensely in elementary school.

Progress and Challenges

Data presented by PCS in their annual BTG plans show notable increases in Black enrollment in advanced courses and accelerated curricula. PCS found a winning formula for increasing student participation in rigorous courses. It removed policy impediments to these courses by providing open access, conducting universal screenings, identifying promising students and encouraging them to enroll in the courses. Once students enrolled in advanced courses, they developed data systems practices to monitor student performance. They trained teachers to work with students who might face difficulty and they provided supplemental assistance. This approach seemed to have borne fruit because it was comprehensive and sustained over time. District-wide, Black middle school students were represented in advance curriculum at about their proportion of the student population. Black participation in Middle school advanced courses exceeded that in the high schools as it rose from about 12% to over 20%.

Managing student behavior and preventing behavior problems has been a significant challenge for PCS throughout the BTG period. It is a challenge for which they have had little or no success. Problems are relatively low in kindergarten but beginning in 5th grade problems rise precipitously by middle school. Middle school appears to be the most troubled setting where the high rates of disciplinary problems occur. Fighting and disruption are the most common complaints, most common reasons for disciplinary referrals. Black students make up about half of the student population subjected to out of school suspensions. They were more likely than other groups of students to receive a disciplinary referral and even more likely to receive an out-of-school suspension. The rate of problems among Black student declines by 12th grade.

Student Race/ Ethnicity.

Black students performed more poorly than Whites in schools with both high and low enrollments of Black students. Racial disparities were found in each outcome, regardless of the minority concentration in the schools. Some schools, however, showed progress, providing more equitable and effective education for Black students.

Black student experience persistently large achievement gaps with White students. They had the lowest academic achievement as reflected in grades, performance on state tests and graduation rates. Latino students fared better than Black students but still lagged behind White students on almost all indicators of progress.

Gender.

Racial disparities are especially evident for boys. As a rule, girls are doing better in school than boys. They have higher grades, perform better on state tests and enroll in rigorous courses more often than boys. White girls perform better on all indicators of academic performance. They do better than White boys, Latino girls do better in most instances than Latino boys. Similarly Black girls perform better but not significantly so than Black boys.

Black boys emerged as a high-risk group that deserve targeted attention and focus because they experienced the worst outcomes and the least progress over time..

School Racial Composition.

Schools with high Black student concentrations show the least progress. While there have been areas of progress, significant challenges remain, particularly in test performance and equitable discipline practices. Some schools, like Campbell Park Elementary, achieved success in providing equitable education and can, possibly serve as models from which peer schools could learn.

Duration of exposure to BTG interventions.

With the exception of rigorous courses and graduation rates there are only inconsistent variations in academic outcomes from year to year. The rate of change is minimal. Despite its successes in improving access to rigorous courses and in increasing graduation rates since 2016, Pinellas County Schools continue to struggle with improving Black student achievement overall and developing a positive behavioral climate in schools with high concentrations of Black students. With few exceptions the graphs, figures and tables depicting achievement outcomes from 2016 to 2023 show little change. However, compared to students whose time in school in the BTG Plan years was limited, students enrolled in PCS during the period covered by the BTG did slightly better on some indicators of academic outcomes. In addition, there has been modest improvement since 2023. The need and the glimmer of progress in 2023 may justify continuing BTB though with some revisions.

School and Grade levels.

Elementary school were more successful on the academic and behavioral goals of BTG. Conversely, middle schools seem especially problematic in relation to academic success and discipline.

Grading PCS attainment of BTG goals over seven years.

Goal 1: Graduation (Diplomas)	B- Good
Goal 2: Academic Achievement (Grades and Tests)	D- Unsatisfactory
Goal 3: Access to Rigorous Courses	A- Very Good
Goal 4: Discipline	F- Failed
Goal 5: ESE Identification	C- Marginal

Despite interventions, the trend lines suggest little movement towards the goals established for BTG. PCS has met the benchmarks they set only **21%** of the time.

Graduation rates Improved. There was a fair degree of success in improving the graduation rates of Black Students in the early years of BTG but in more recent years there has been some backsliding or reversion.

Advanced Coursework Participation improved. The evidence points to substantial increases in enrollment of Black students in more challenging and rigorous courses as planned by PCS.

Student Achievement did not improve significantly. Although Black student participation in advanced courses, the expected effect on passing state tests has not been realized. There is modest improvement in performance on state math tests but very little improvement on reading tests.

Discipline did not improve. Although the number of reported disciplinary incidents and the use of out-of-school suspensions declined, racial disparities in discipline did not narrow.

Pinellas County schools are committed to providing **high-quality education** to all students. However, there is **overwhelming evidence** that they have not yet succeeded in providing the same level of education for Black students as evident in their own outcome data for the benchmarks they set for themselves. When measured against their own benchmarks the results have been **inconsistent with modest improvement followed by reversals** across most domains. Some success has been achieved in areas such as **graduation rates, participation in rigorous courses, and special education designation**. Although participation of Black students in advanced courses increased, one might logically expect that this would be reflected in increased rates at which they passed state tests. This did not happen. Although there was minor improvement in performance on state math tests there was very little improvement on reading tests.

The outcomes of PCS' efforts to reduce racial disparities in academics and discipline are admittedly disappointing for all. Progress has been slow, uneven and detectable in small increments. But all is not hopeless. Although the rates of passing state tests and graduating with a standard diploma continue to be problematic and discouraging, there are faint glimmers of progress in graduation rates, increased Black participation in rigorous courses, lower special education assignments, and low absolute rates of out-of-school suspensions. More time will be needed to solidify these gains and to make progress on the remaining BTG goals on which there has been little success. Tackling the problem of **racial disparities in education** is a difficult task that requires **steely determination and persistence** over time. Greater creativity and nimbleness will be necessary to accelerate the current glacial rate at which Black students are afforded the education they need for success in life.

Conclusion

Pinellas County schools have a constitutionally mandated responsibility to provide a quality education to all students. The BTG was undertaken to fulfill that mandate for Black students.

Although, there are signs of progress in several areas, PCS has not yet succeeded in providing a quality education for most of its Black students. Therefore the extent of progress is not sufficient to justify scaling back its efforts to achieve better outcomes for Black students..

This means reaching for better solutions to overcome the difficulties that have impeded that success thus far. The BTG has not achieved its goals. Doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome is irrational.

This progress shows that improvements are possible if there is a re-doubling of effort and a refining of strategies.

A good place to begin efforts to improve BTG would be to implement the recommendations contained in the IDRA Audit commissioned by PCS :

1. Review with staff the District's definitions of educational equity and excellence to achieve buy-in and a unified approach to the BTG initiative,
2. Expand family and community collaboration There is an urgent need to involve Black and other families of color in decision regarding resource allocation and implementing programs and policies related to student discipline and code of conduct. There is a need to develop the capacity of principals to interact with families.
3. Actively gather student input on issues at school that affect them. Initiatives, such as forming student advisory groups and involving students in focus groups, summits and developing student surveys about school climate.
4. Strengthen accountability for implementation of the BTG Plan at the building level along with increased autonomy and decision-making how to deploy resources.

Recommendations.

The COQEBS Board has two principal recommendations. The first addresses significant impediments to improving Black student achievement. The second arises from community concerns that the standard diplomas awarded via state or concordant testing do not adequately prepare Black Students for career and college as claimed by the District.

1. COQEBS recommends extending the BTG through AY 2035. In revising the current plan, COQEBS recommends that PCS directly address the following obstacles that arose in the evaluation as impediments to achieving the goal of providing a quality education to Black students. These impediments are:

Discipline Disparities. Student disruption, defiance and fighting are common reasons for disciplinary referral. These incidents suggest not only student problems with conflict resolution and self-regulation but also point to problems with instructional quality and a lack of mutual respect in the teacher-student relations. Each source of the difficulty requires different strategies to improve the school climate especially in middle and high schools. Preventive SEL interventions with demonstrated efficacy could promote social competence, reduce conflict among students and foster positive relationships with staff. Such programs are needed across the entire span from pre-k to 12th grade.

Middle school Transition. The loss of academic momentum over the transition from primary to middle school sets the stage for poor performance and failure in high school. Perhaps middle schools could emulate the academic successes of elementary schools by revising instructional methods and re-organizing grades 5 and 6 to be more like primary than high schools.

Black males' disparate academic and behavioral risks. PCS most consistent failures occur with Black males. PCS needs a deeper understanding and a more thoughtful analysis of the context and problems facing Black males in order to improve their outcomes.

Recruitment of Highly Qualified Teachers. PCS should re-double efforts to recruit and hire teachers who understand and can relate to the most vulnerable students. The district might consider developing its own pool of teachers for example through scholarship support for pre-service teachers in local teacher training programs in return for a multi-year commitment to teach in the District.

Decentralization. Building leaders are ultimately responsible for creating a positive school culture, preventing discipline problems, engaging parents, and partnering with community. Experienced leaders tend to know what will work and what will not in their buildings. Yet they seem to have very little

direct control over which programs to implement and how resources for these tasks are deployed. High responsibility combined with limited control over resource allocation is a recipe for waste, inefficiency and low accountability. Programs that ideally should be supervised and deployed by building leaders are often designed and implemented by staff in central administration. PCS should seriously consider re-locating and delegating full responsibility for programs such as those related to parental engagement, mental health and prevention of behavior problems down to the school site. They should be allocated resources and allow to make decisions about what mix of interventions would best serve the school.

2. **Conduct a follow up study of how graduates fare in post-high school education.** Concern that graduates are not prepared for career and college is pervasive in the Black community. Given the high graduation rates in the face of low rates of proficiency on end-of-grade tests, questions arise regarding the adequacy of the education graduates receive. Anecdotal reports from local colleges reveal that many Black graduates are not prepared for college level study and often must first enroll in non-credit remedial courses before they are ready to take college level courses. COQEBS recommends that the PCS commission a follow-up study of recent graduates to ascertain the extent of this problem, to identify the gaps in preparation and to explore what PCS might do to close these gaps.