



FIVE CHARTS THAT SHOW WHY WE REALLY NEED TO TRACK EDUCATIONAL EQUITY



Since the dawn of the nation, the United States has experienced unequal educational outcomes resulting from unequal educational opportunities. The history of U.S. education is one of hard-fought struggles to improve. Yet such improvement is difficult absent good information about the status quo.

In September, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released *Monitoring Educational Equity*, a consensus report designed to better describe that status quo. The report identifies a set of equity indicators that can highlight disparities, in order to explore causes and monitor change. Such consensus reports are influential because they focus on the big questions of science and social science, with the goal of producing independent, rigorous and objective information.

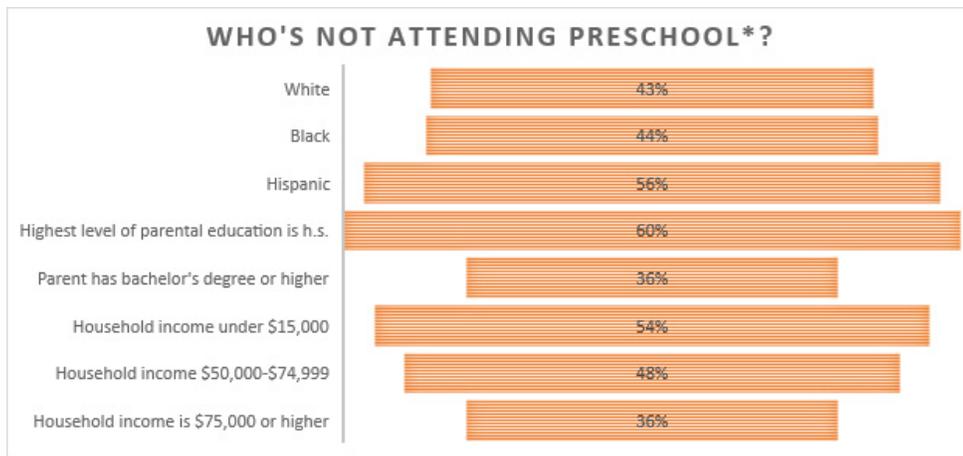
Noting that multiple measures are necessary when evaluation educational equity, the report recommends tracking 16 indicators. The committee members, who include NEPC Fellow [Karolyn Tyson](#) of the University of North Carolina, also recognize **current thinking** around the need to trace unequal outcomes to inequitable opportunities. As such, fewer than half of the indicators (seven) fall into the outcomes category, with a focus on three broad areas (kindergarten readiness, K-12 learning and engagement, and educational attainment). The remaining nine indicators address four main dimensions of unequal opportunities: (1) racial, ethnic and economic segregation; (2) access to high-quality early childhood education; (3) access to high-quality curricula and instruction; and (4) exposure to supportive school and classroom environments.

The charts below are created by NEPC, drawing upon data from the report. They illustrate

today's unequal opportunities and outcomes, demonstrating just how far we, as a nation, still have to go.

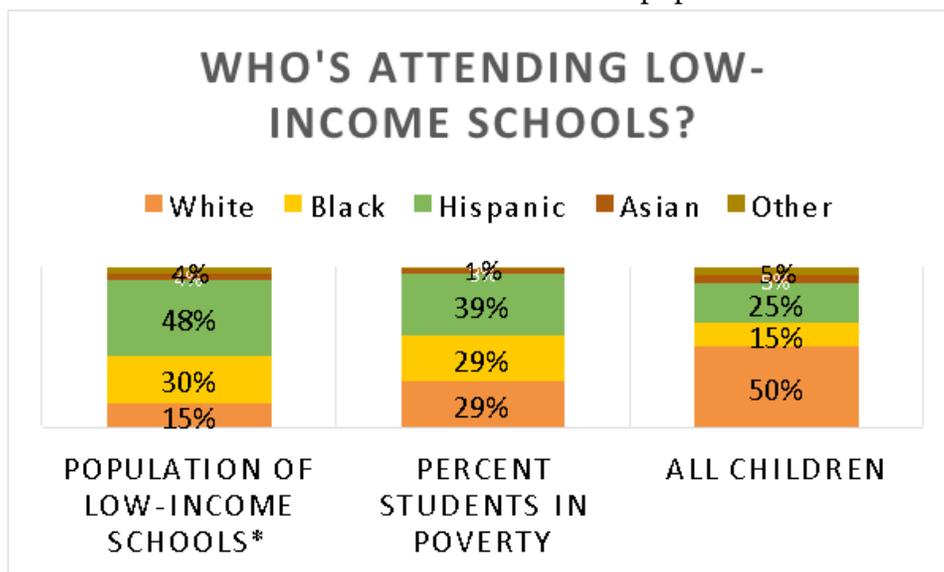
Unequal Opportunities

1. **Unequal access to early childhood education:** Evidence abounds that children benefit from high-quality early childhood education. Yet key groups of children who would benefit most (Hispanic children and those from low-income families) are less likely to attend preschool.



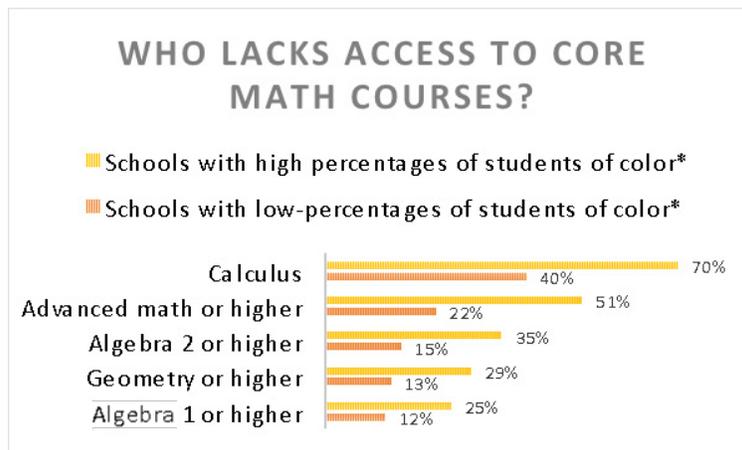
*Percentage of 3-5 year-olds not in preschool. Data from 2013.

2. **Uneven exposure to high-poverty schools:** Research shows that schools that serve high concentrations of families living in poverty too often lack the resources to meet students' academic and social-emotional needs. Relative to their share of students living in poverty and also to their share among all children under 18, Hispanic children are over-represented at such schools. Black children are also over-represented at high-poverty schools relative to their share of the overall child population.



*Low-income schools are defined as schools with free and reduced-price lunch rates of at least 75 percent. Data from 2017.

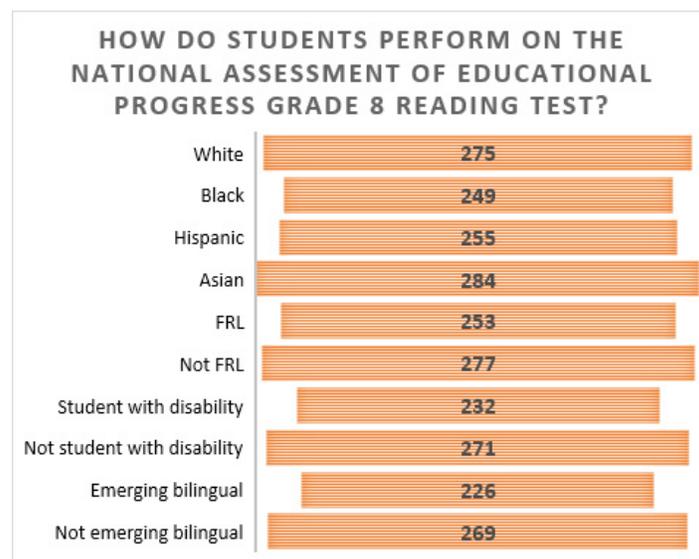
3. Unequal access to a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum: It's difficult to learn what you're not taught. Yet access to a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum varies significantly by race, with students attending schools with high percentages of students of color less likely to be exposed to the coursework they need, in order to be admitted to college and to succeed once they are there.



*Schools with low percentages of students of color are in the 20th percentile or lower when it comes to their share of students of color. Schools with high percentages of students of color are in the 80th percentile or higher. Data from 2018.

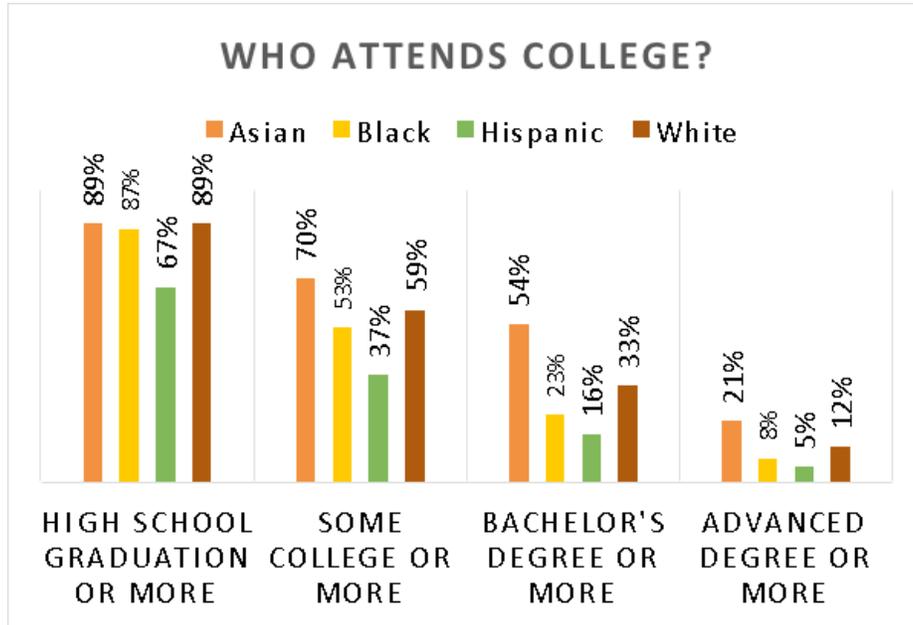
Unequal Outcomes

4. Disparities in Assessment Results: The longstanding National Assessment of Educational Progress is often referred to as our nation's report card. Consisting of multiple exams administered across subjects to students at different grade levels, it is one of the most widely used indicators of educational outcomes. Across grade levels and exams, outcomes are worse for Black and Hispanic students, for children from low-income families, for students with disabilities, and for emerging bilinguals.



The National Assessment of Educational Progress scale ranges from 0 to 500. Data is from 2017.

5. Differences in Postsecondary Outcomes: In today’s society, postsecondary education is increasingly critical to economic survival and is even associated with the ability to live a healthy, long, and satisfying life. Yet Hispanic and Black youth are significantly less likely than either Asian or White youth to continue their educations beyond high school.



Data from 2015.

NEPC Resources on Equity and Social Justice

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