



# The Opportunity Gap Persists

## *Delaware Must Make Education its Top Priority*

*“Violence is Black children going to school for 12 years and receiving 6 years’ worth of education” - Julia Bond<sup>1</sup>*

### Overview

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In Delaware, children of color—Black, Hispanic, and other non-white children—have not had and do not have access to high-quality education. Opportunity gaps persist between students of color and their white peers as well as low-income students and their affluent peers. Delaware must make education equity for students of color and low-income students its top priority.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Problem

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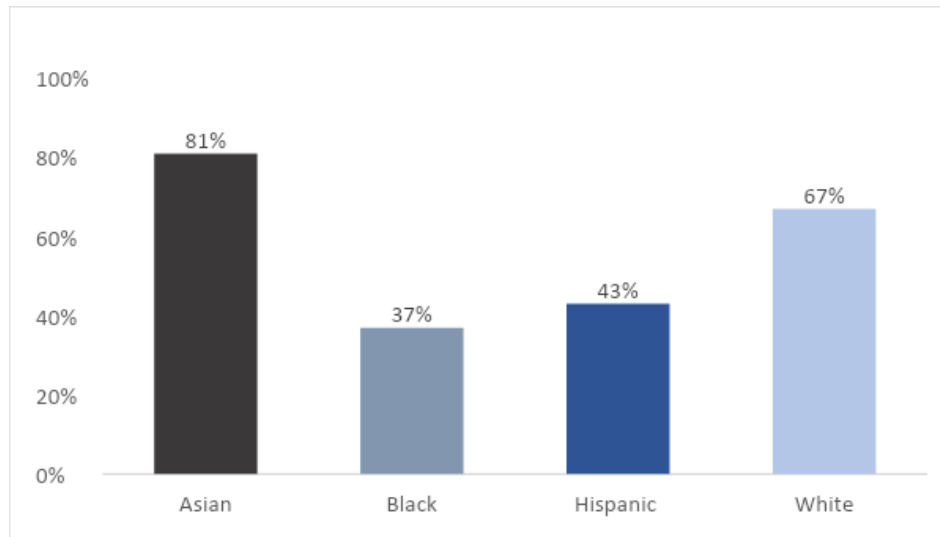
In Delaware and across the nation, students of color and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by education inequities. Results from the Delaware System of Student Assessment (DeSSA),<sup>4</sup> the state’s main tool for measuring student learning, demonstrate that white students are achieving at higher rates than Black and Hispanic students. Similarly, low-income students<sup>5</sup> are less proficient in math and reading compared with their non-low-income peers.<sup>6</sup>

These trends are not new. A research brief from the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware<sup>7</sup> states that over the past **20 years in Delaware:**

- the achievement disparity is large and unchanging between white students and Black and Hispanic students
- the achievement disparity is large and unchanging between low-income students and non-low-income students
- The proficiency rates have remained relatively unchanged for Black, Hispanic, and white students

A study from 2019 demonstrates that, in English Language Arts (ELA) in grades 3 through 8, 37% of Black students and 43% of Hispanic students were proficient compared with 67% of white students and 81% of Asian students (see graph below).<sup>8</sup> The disparities in math proficiency were even greater.

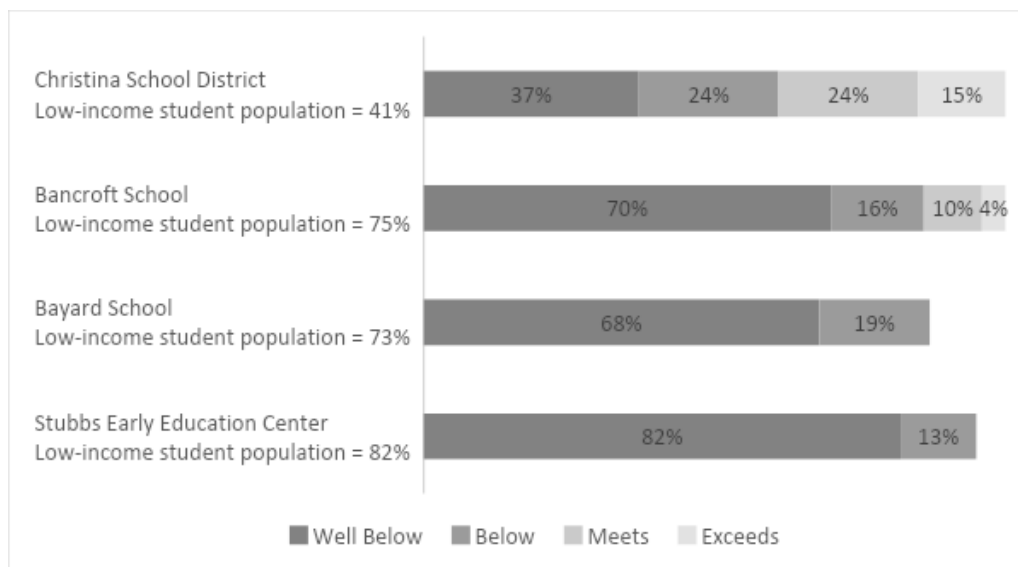
**Figure 1:** Delaware ELA Student Proficiency Rates, Grades 3-8, School Year 2018-19



Source: Rodel, “[Delaware Public Education at a Glance](#)” (2019)

For low-income students there are clear disparities as well. Figures 1 and 2 below compare ELA proficiency rates for elementary schools in the Christina School District with the highest and lowest percentage of low-income students.<sup>9</sup> The majority of students in low-income elementary schools are performing well below expectations. Whereas the majority of students in non-low-income elementary schools are performing at expectations or exceeding expectations.

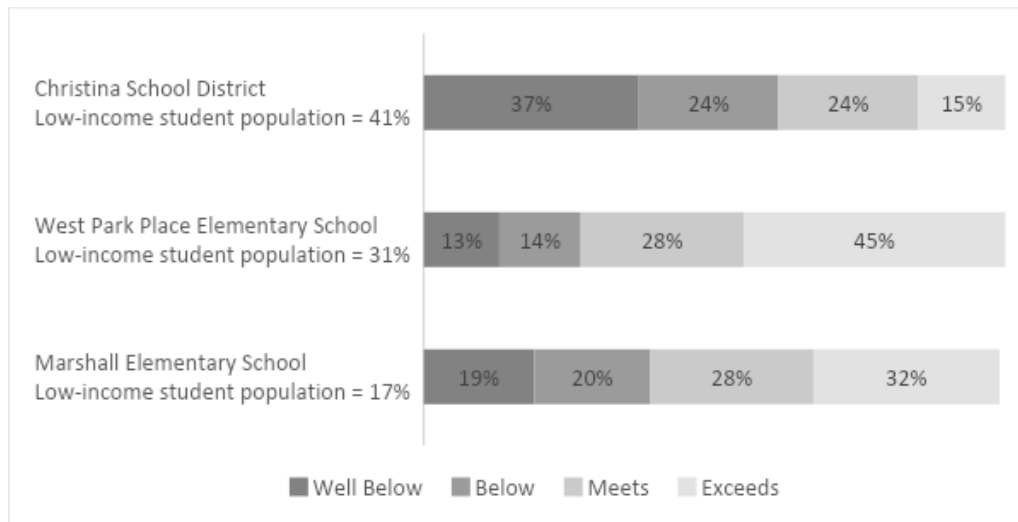
**Figure 2:** Christina School District: Student Proficiency in ELA, Districtwide and Low-Income Elementary Schools Comparison, 2018–19 School Year



Source: Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware 2020; [Delaware State Report Card](#)

\* [Bayard](#) and [Stubbs](#) data for “meets” or “exceeds” expectations is suppressed for student privacy

**Figure 3:** Christina School District: Student Proficiency in ELA, Districtwide and Elementary Schools with Less than 30% Low-Income Student Population Comparison, 2018–19 School Year



Source: Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware 2020; [Delaware State Report Card](#)

As evidenced, in Delaware the blatant reality is that students of color and low-income students have been and continue to achieve at lower rates than their white and affluent peers, respectively. This reality is a problem because it is holding our Black, brown, and low-income Delaware citizens back from thriving. Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with better incomes, higher rates of employment, less crime and incarceration, better health, less reliance on public assistance, more charitable donations and philanthropic contributions, more volunteerism, and higher levels of voting and political engagement.<sup>10</sup> We have seen decades of students of color and low-income students not reaching their potential because our system does not serve them equally. If we want our students of color and low-income students to be successful, Delaware needs make education equity its top priority. It is imperative our Black, Brown, and low-income students are afforded the same education, funding, educator quality and classroom rigor as our white and well-off students.<sup>11</sup>

## Policy Solutions

Immediate:

- Support [Senate Bill 56](#): An Act to Amend the Delaware Code Relating to Educational Opportunity Funding. This Act codifies the opportunity fund.
- Support [House Bill 100](#): An Act to Amend Title 14 of the Delaware Code Relating to Free Public Schools. This Act establishes a mental health services unit for Delaware elementary schools
- Support and fund the [Redding Consortium for Educational Equity recommendations](#) for Fiscal Year 2022

Long-term:

- Ensure the Delaware [education equity lawsuit settlement](#) is implemented with fidelity
- Provide long-term, sustainable funding and support for low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities—above and beyond Senate Bill 56 and opportunity funding.
- Similar to their [Justice for All](#) Agenda, encourage the Delaware Legislative Black Caucus to create an education equity agenda

- Support and fund the recommendations listed in the [Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League Building People Power: the Pace of Progress 2020 report](#), page 51

## Resources for More Information

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- [Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League](#)
- [Redding Consortium for Educational Equity](#)
- [ACLU of Delaware](#)
- [Education Equity Delaware](#)
- [First State Educate](#)
- [Wilmington Center for Education Equity and Public Policy](#)

## References

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<sup>1</sup>[Building People Power: the Pace of Progress 2020](#), Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, pg. 51

<sup>2</sup>[Building People Power: the Pace of Progress 2020](#), Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League

<sup>3</sup>[Now & Then: 2020 Fact Book](#), Kids Count in Delaware

<sup>4</sup>This system consists of multiple types of state-wide assessments that are administered during and after instruction to inform teachers, schools, districts and the state on measures of student knowledge and skills.

<sup>5</sup>In Delaware, low-income status is determined by students who receive any one of the following benefits: TANF, SNAP (Direct Certification).

<sup>6</sup>[Now & Then 2020 Fact Book](#), Kids Count in Delaware

<sup>7</sup>[Educational Opportunity Disparities in Delaware 1992-2019](#), Institute for Public Administration, University of Delaware

<sup>8</sup>Rodel, "[Delaware Public Education at a Glance](#)" (2019)

<sup>9</sup>The schools considered low-income have a student population of more than 50% low-income students. Schools with the lowest percentage of low-income students have a student population of less than 30% low-income students.

<sup>10</sup>[https://buildingpeoplepower.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/6x9-MWULPaceOfProgress-Draft-CC\\_22420.pdf](https://buildingpeoplepower.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/6x9-MWULPaceOfProgress-Draft-CC_22420.pdf).

<sup>11</sup><https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572548.pdf>