

Connecticut's Academic Achievement Gap

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Issue

Provide the most recent data available regarding the academic achievement gap in Connecticut.

Summary

This report (1) describes the statutory and State Department of Education (SDE) definitions of the achievement gap, (2) explains how SDE identifies achievement gaps in districts and schools, and (3) provides tables and charts with performance index (PI) scores that show the achievement gaps between certain student subgroups (i.e., students classified by different status or educational need).

The data show that Connecticut continues to have significant disparities in the PI scores between (1) racial groups and (2) high needs and non-high needs students.

Achievement Gap

The “achievement gap” is defined in two ways in Connecticut: (1) a statutory definition and (2) SDE’s federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) plan definition. In statute the “achievement gap” is the existence of a significant disparity in the academic performance of students among and between (1) racial groups, (2) ethnic groups, (3) socioeconomic groups, (4) genders, and (5) English language learners (ELL) and students whose primary language is English ([CGS § 10-16mm\(a\)](#)). This definition is specifically for the Achievement Gap Task Force law. In SDE’s federal plan, the state uses the Connecticut Next Generation Accountability System to analyze the academic performance of student subgroups including high needs and non-high needs students. In the plan, SDE defines the achievement gap as the PI score gap of more than one standard deviation greater than the statewide PI score gap between high-needs students and non-

high needs students in any subject are (see below for definition of high need students). When the PI score is higher than the target (i.e., 75) the target is used rather than the score.

Next Generation Accountability System

The Connecticut Next Generation Accountability System analyzes school and district performance based on 12 indicators, including academic performance and growth in certain subjects, absenteeism, and graduation. The PI is one part of this broader accountability system.

The PI is the average performance of students in a certain subject-area standardized assessment on a range from 0-100, and is reported for students in each student subgroup.

The state’s PI target is 75, and some districts reach this goal while many do not. In Connecticut, the standardized assessments used to measure students’ academic performance are primarily the SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) and the SAT. The SBAC is administered in grades three through eight and in grade 11, and the SAT is typically administered to students in grade 11.

Using this data for all the students who take these assessments, it is possible to determine the PI score for the entire state, a district, or for a particular student racial or ethnic group, gender, or learning need (such as high need students). This means, for example, the English language arts (ELA) index score for the entire state is determined by the student ELA assessments for students in grades three through eight and grade 11 to determine a single score to represent that subject area.

The tables below show the ELA and math PI score gap between (1) black or African American and white students and (2) Hispanic or Latino and white students for the previous three academic years. After white students, black or African American and Hispanic or Latino are the next two largest groups of students when broken down by race and ethnicity.

Table 1: ELA and Math PI Score Gap Between Black or African American Students and White Students

| | ELA | | | Math | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Black or African American | 55.7 | 55.3 | 56.5 | 47.7 | 48.4 | 49.3 |
| White | 73.3 | 73 | 73.5 | 67.3 | 68.4 | 69 |
| Index Score Gap | 17.6 | 17.7 | 17 | 19.6 | 20 | 19.7 |

Source: CSDE

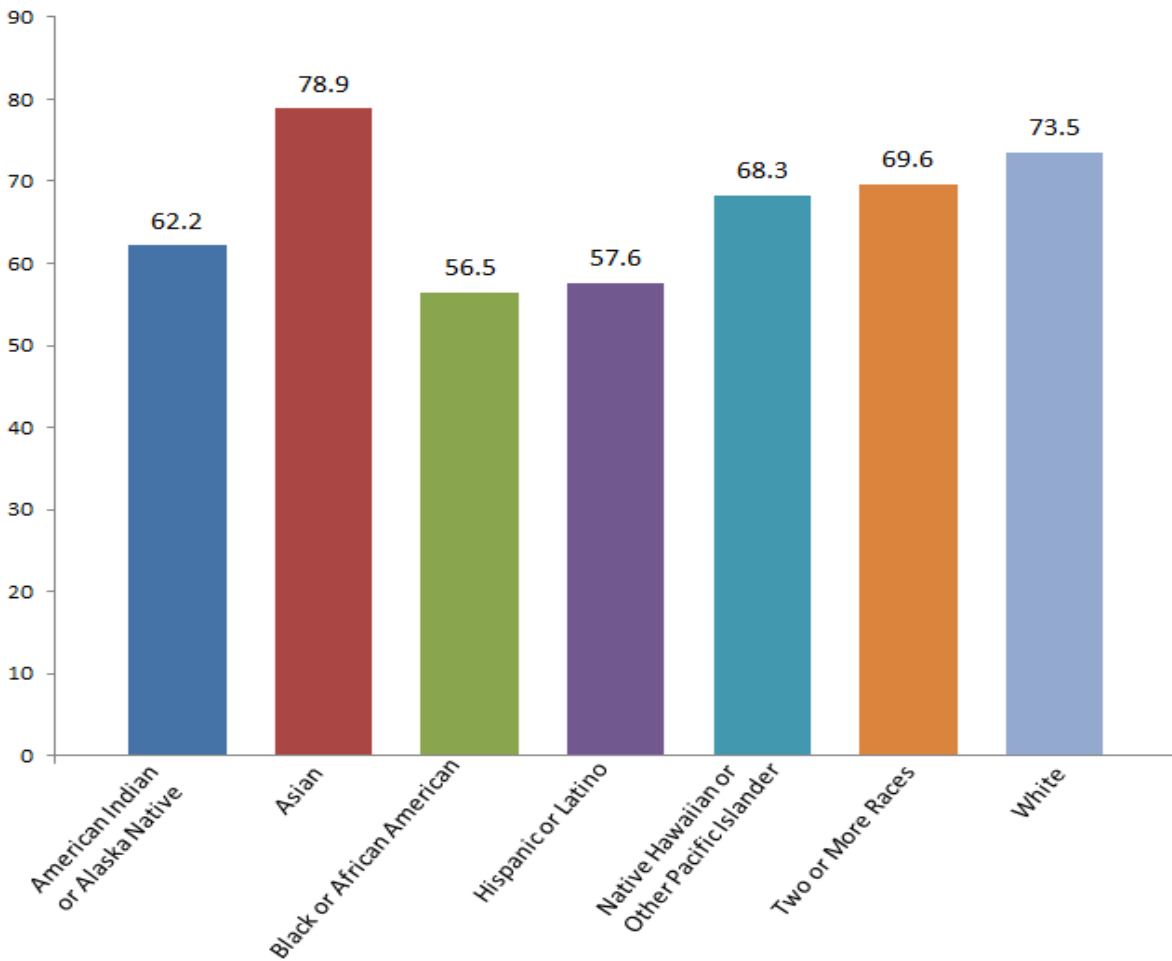
Table 2: ELA and Math PI Score Gap Between Hispanic or Latino Students and White Students

| | ELA | | | Math | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 57.3 | 56.6 | 57.6 | 50.2 | 51.1 | 52.1 |
| White | 73.3 | 73 | 73.5 | 67.3 | 68.4 | 69 |
| Index Score Gap | 16 | 16.4 | 15.9 | 17.1 | 17.3 | 16.9 |

Source: CSDE

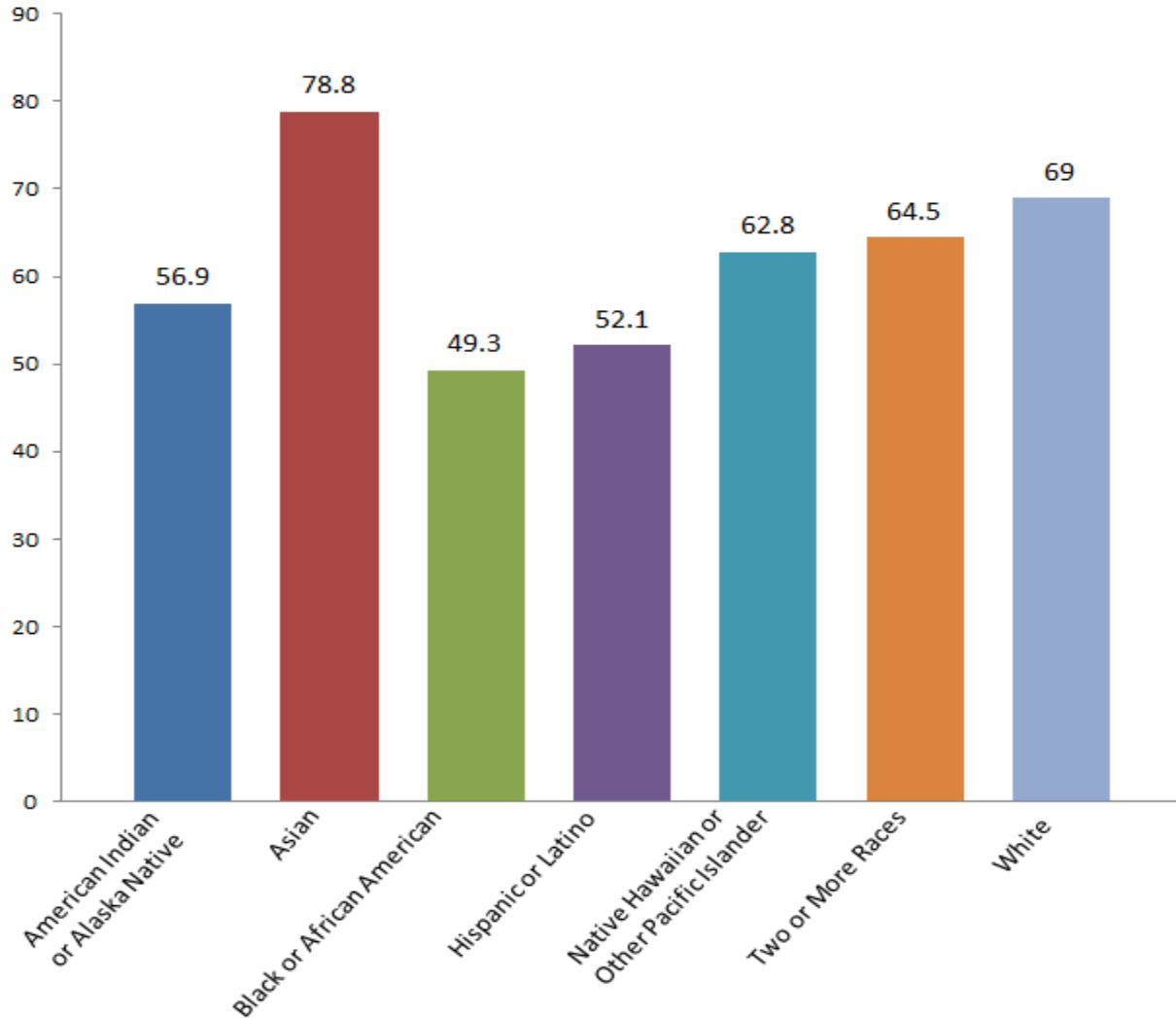
The following charts show ELA and math PI scores disaggregated by all races and ethnicities contained in the Next Generation Accountability System.

Chart 1: 2017-2018 ELA PI Scores by Race and Ethnicity



Source: CSDE

Chart 2: 2017-2018 Math PI Scores by Race and Ethnicity



Source: CSDE

High Needs Subgroup

The accountability system features a “high needs” subgroup which is made up of (1) students with disabilities, (2) English language learners, and (3) students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. Under Connecticut’s ESEA plan, the state uses the “focus schools” category to capture schools that have significant achievement gaps between students in the high needs group and the students not in that subgroup.

According to SDE, the size of the PI score gap between the high needs subgroup and the non-high needs subgroup is used to identify achievement gaps in Connecticut districts or schools. The table below shows the index score gaps between these subgroups.

Table 3: ELA and Math PI Score Gap Between High Needs and Non-High Needs Students

| | ELA | | | Math | | |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| High Needs | 56.7 | 55.9 | 57.5 | 49.9 | 50.5 | 52 |
| Non-High Needs | 77.5 | 76.5 | 77.6 | 71.6 | 72.1 | 73.3 |
| Index Score Gap* | 18.3 | 19.1 | 17.5 | 21.7 | 21.6 | 21.3 |
| *When a score is higher than the state target (75) the gap is calculated from the target and not the score. Thus for ELA for 2015-16, the calculation is $75 - 56.7 = 18.3$. | | | | | | |

Source: CSDE

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