



News Release

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Vast Differences in School Experience and Educational Outcomes persist for Connecticut Black and White Students

NEW HAVEN – Ensuring a quality education for all children is essential to ensure workforce preparedness, economic competitiveness and shared prosperity. Public schools play a vital role in helping all children fulfill their potential. According to a new report by Connecticut Voices for Children, however, not all children enjoy the same quality educational experience, with significant disparities between White and Black students. The report finds systemic and persistent differences in chronic absenteeism, exclusionary discipline, and teacher recruitment. These disparities translate into deep and persistent gaps in student outcomes that will have important, long-term negative impacts for the state.

“The school experience, for Black students, is in many ways fundamentally different from that of White students,” says Camara Stokes Hudson, Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children and author of this study. “There are systemic differences, derived from a combination of biases, practices, and policies that put Black students at a disadvantage.”

According to the report, Black students are four times more likely to be suspended than their white counterparts; chronic absenteeism among Black students is two and a half times higher; access to advanced classes is significantly more limited; only seven percent of students enrolled in gifted and talented programs are Black; and Black students are much less likely to have teachers of their own ethnicity, with only 3.5 percent of teachers in the state are Black, for 13 percent of the student population.

The report highlights not only disparities in experience, but also large disparities in education outcomes. Graduation rates for Black students (78 percent in 2015-2016) trailed that of Whites (92 percent for the same period). College readiness reflected an even larger gap, with Black students scoring close to 100 points below Whites in SAT exams. Other standardized tests like Smarter Balance documented similar gaps.

“The future of Connecticut depends upon strategic investments in our children: investments that break down systemic barriers to opportunity and ensure high quality education for all of our students,” says Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director at Connecticut Voices for Children. “Ensuring equity and excellence in public education should be a top state priority, driven by an economic imperative that aligns with a moral imperative.”

The report recommends policies to reduce inequity and support student success, including restoring funding to the Talent Department of SDE to support Black teacher recruitment, expanding data sharing on school discipline and school attendance, improving anti-bias training for school personnel, and ensuring adequate school funding to assure excellence in high minority population school districts.

About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.