

# Equity Can't Wait

REPORT SNAPSHOT



## Racial disparities are evident across Washington's K-12 education system.

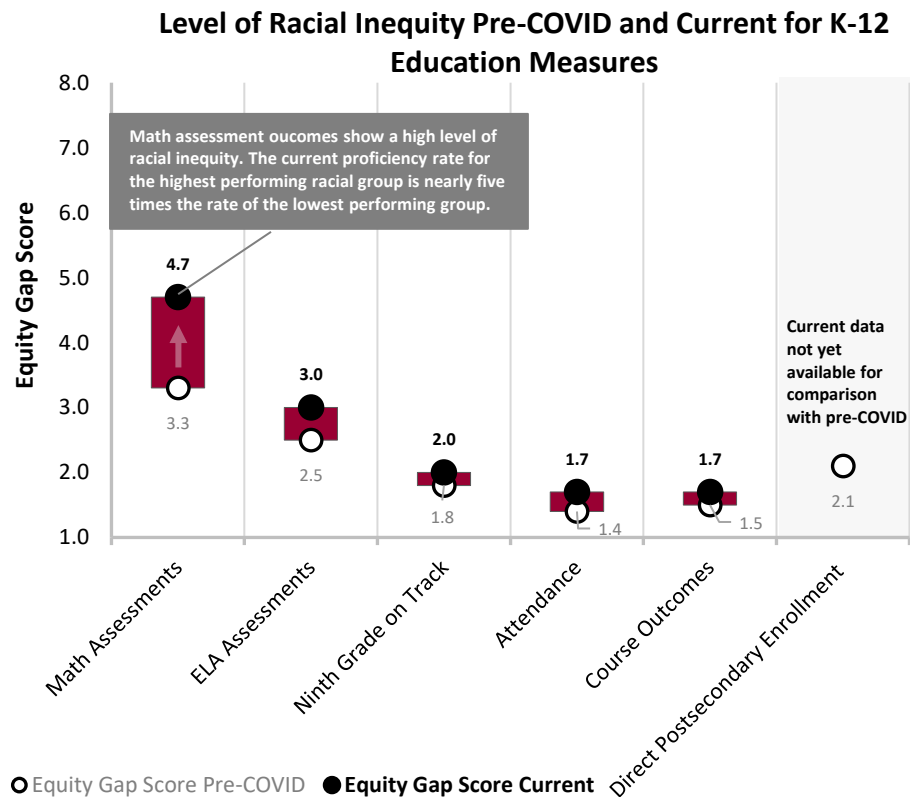
Washington K-12 education data reveals that there are consistent opportunity gaps for students of color. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need to address racial disparities as communities of color have faced disproportionate challenges. However, many of these issues are not new—rather, the pandemic highlighted persistent racial inequities for which progress is long overdue. In fact, although many racial inequities were exacerbated during the pandemic, some disparities remained consistent or even declined. The state can respond to data findings by implementing effective policies and practices to address longstanding issues in K-12 education so that all students can succeed.

**Equity Gap Scores** provide a scale of disparities between subpopulations—such as racial groups. The higher the score, the larger the disparity. A score of 1.0 implies that all groups perform equally on a given measure, while a score above 1.0 indicates an increasing level of inequity between groups.<sup>1</sup>

## Many racial inequities in K-12 education got worse during the pandemic.

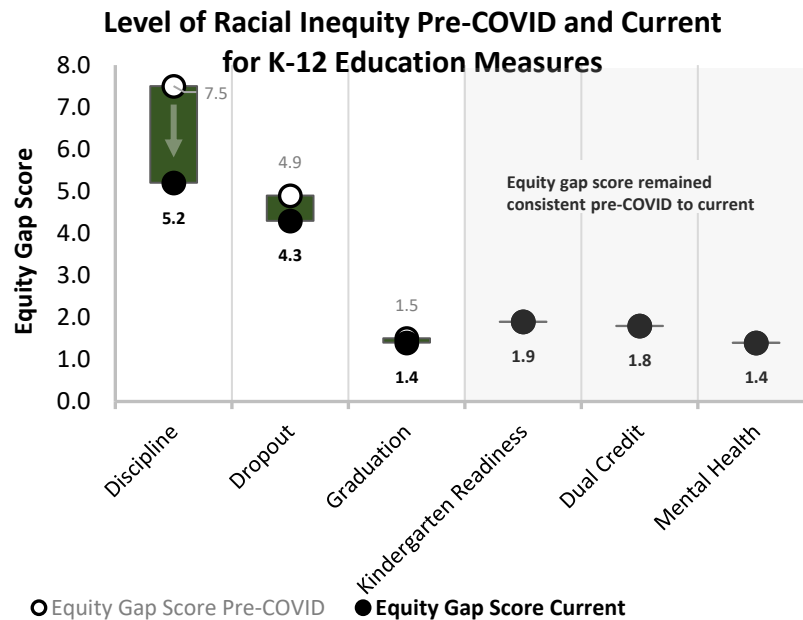
### Interpreting the Graph

This graph shows the level of racial inequity before the COVID-19 pandemic and for the most current data available for select measures in K-12 education. **White bubbles** mark the Equity Gap Score, or the level of racial inequity, before the COVID-19 pandemic. **Black bubbles** mark the Equity Gap Score currently. **Red bars** indicate that racial inequities *grew* during the pandemic, while the **green bars** in the graph below indicate that inequities *shrank*.



<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the Equity Gap Score measures the ratio between the highest and lowest rates of a given measure for different subpopulations. For example, 65.7 percent of Asian students scored at or above proficiency in standardized math assessments in 2021-2022, compared to 13.9 percent of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students. The ratio between the highest and lowest performing groups—the Equity Gap Score—is 4.7 (65.7 percent divided by 13.9 percent). In other words, the group with the highest performance has a math assessment proficiency rate nearly five times the group with the lowest rate.

## Some measures in K-12 education saw reduced racial inequities during the pandemic.



### Inequities Over Time

Some racial inequities in K-12 education have shrunk since prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and some have remained consistent. Despite heightened challenges, some changes in policies in response to the pandemic have helped to reduce racial disparities for some measures—such as graduation. However, there are still significant levels of racial inequity—particularly in discipline and dropout.

**Many racial inequities have persisted over time at consistent levels. Racial inequities in K-12 education are part of larger historical trends that can be explored in detail in the full report.**

### Key takeaways from the data:

- Before the pandemic, the group with the highest math assessment outcomes had a proficiency rate **3.3 times** the group with the lowest proficiency rate. Now, the gap is **4.7 times**.
- The ELA assessment gap also grew, but not as much as math. Before the pandemic, the group with the highest ELA assessment outcomes had a proficiency rate **2.5 times** the group with the lowest proficiency rate. Now the gap is **3.0 times**.
- The dual credit equity gap score has stayed consistent since before the pandemic. The group with the highest participation has a rate that is **1.8 times** that of the group with the lowest participation rate.
- Racial disparities in discipline and dropout rates shrunk during the pandemic. Racial disparities in graduation also decreased marginally. Before the pandemic, the rate for the group with the highest graduation rate was **1.5 times** the lowest rate. Now it is **1.4 times**.
- The group with the highest proportion of students enrolling in postsecondary education after high school graduation has a direct enrollment rate that is **2.1 times** that of the group with the lowest rate. Current data is not yet available to compare with pre-COVID inequities.

### Exacerbated pandemic challenges highlight an opportunity to take action to address racial inequities in K-12 education in Washington.

There are evidence-based practices that can help improve student outcomes across K-12 education measures that have been affected by the pandemic. Prioritizing effective strategies for students furthest from educational equity can help reduce disparities and improve educational outcomes in the state.

See **Equity Can't Wait: Examining Racial Disparities in K-12 Education in Washington State** full report for more detailed insights and information.