



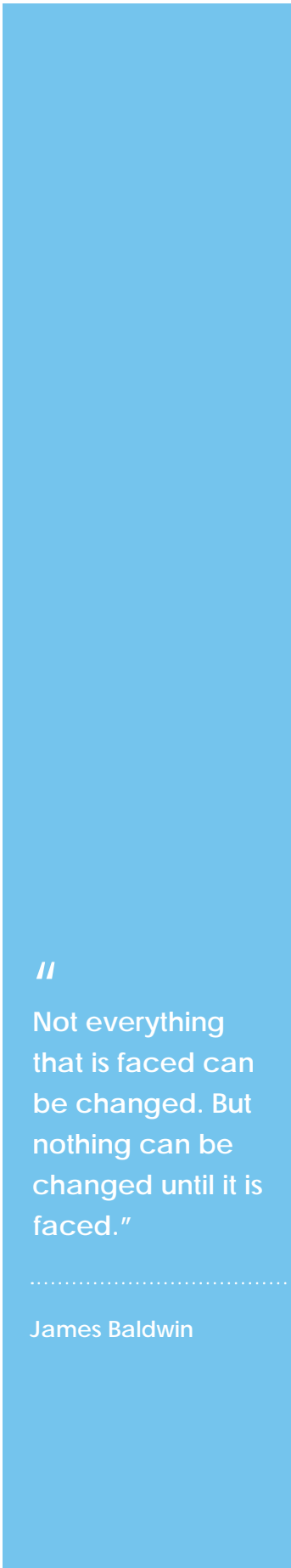
ACHIEVING EQUITY AND ACCESS IN THE CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Optimizing Rigorous Academic Experiences

January 2020

.....
Clark County School
District Superintendent's
Student Equity and Access
Commission



//
 Not everything
 that is faced can
 be changed. But
 nothing can be
 changed until it is
 faced.”

James Baldwin

INTRODUCTION.....

In July 2019, Superintendent Jesus F. Jara created the *Student Equity and Access Advisory Commission*. The Commission was comprised of 13 leaders throughout the community with diverse backgrounds, motivated to ensure the success of all students. Its charge was to make recommendations to the Superintendent to ensure equity and access for all students.

To accomplish its charge, the Commission participated in regular meetings and discussions over six months. During that time, the Commission reviewed extensive school-by-school data to better understand the current status of academic programming across our District and the critical areas in a student’s K-12 journey wherein our system has created opportunities and access for some, and prevalent hurdles and barriers for others.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS.....

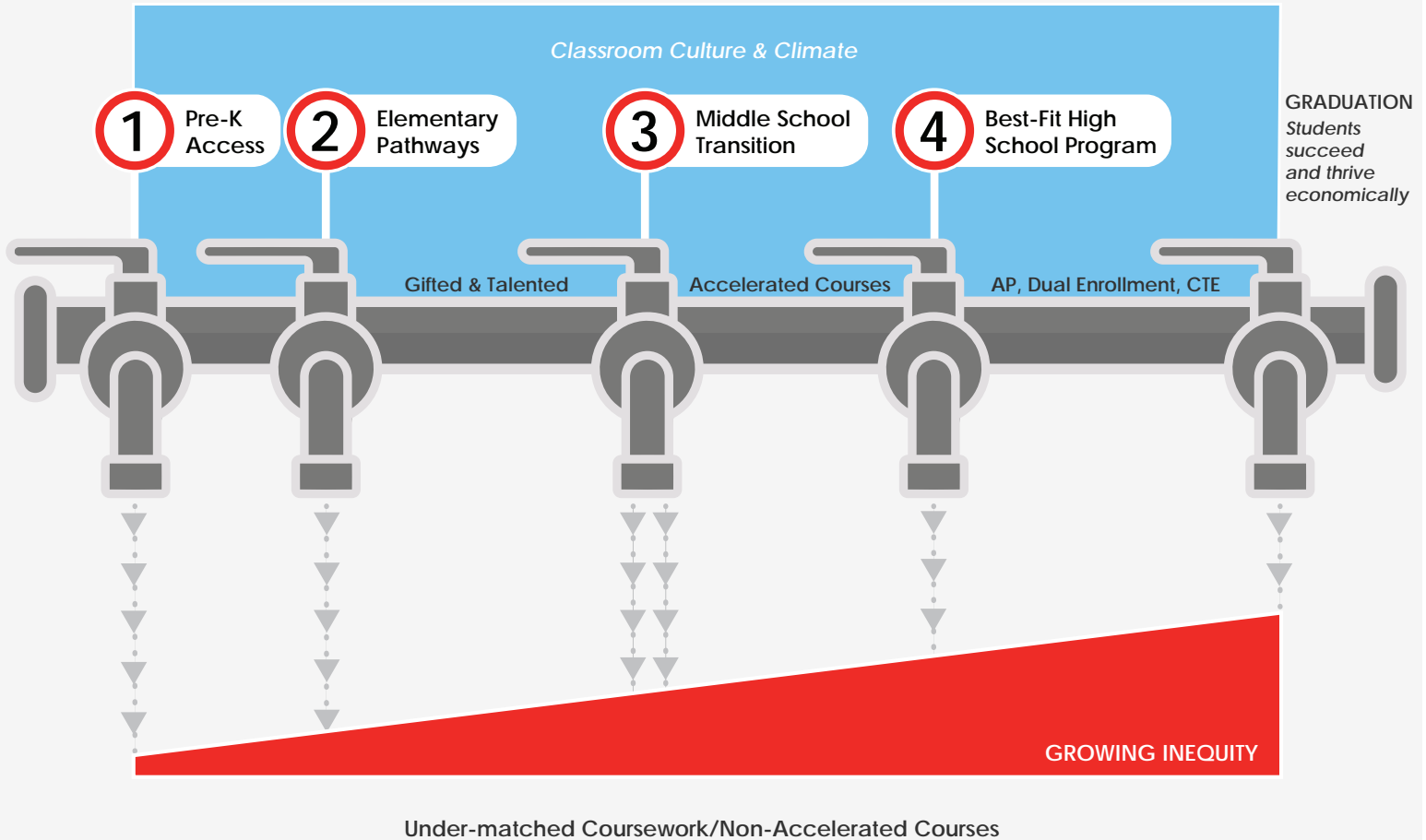
The Commission’s conclusions and recommendations are grounded by a few critical observations:

- **Every child has potential for excellence.** Today, not every child has access to academic opportunities that will actualize their potential. Currently, we are failing to give too many of our young people a public education worthy of their potential. The undeniable fact is that white students in the District are participating in advanced academic pathways more often and experiencing a great deal more academic success than their peers of color. We must fix this fundamental and unacceptable inequity.
- **Diversity is our community’s asset.** Clark County is a richly-diverse community full of hard-working, engaging, and caring families. While there are several ways our system is performing well, it is time to be direct and honest about what we need to improve to serve all our students.
- **Focus matters.** We believe it is better to address a few critical priorities well than to diffuse focus by tackling too many priorities at once.
- **It is time to act.** This report is a call to action to the Clark County School District to bring together stakeholders and address a real and pernicious problem — equitable access for all students to rigorous academic programming.



- **Available academic pathways significantly determine a student's education and life journey.** The day-to-day experience students have with instruction is the most important driver of their learning — but the academic program in which a student participates also deeply influences how well-aligned instruction is to their own unique needs. When our students access the advanced and specialized programs the District offers, they are on a path towards on-time, truly earned, meaningful graduation, and post-secondary success. However, when we wittingly or unwittingly create barriers and hurdles to accessing academic programming, we create a parallel track of students attending programming that does not maximize their academic potential. When we under-match students' academic programming, we limit their potential — including their lifelong earning potential — and we perpetuate the cycle of inequity in K-12 schooling and beyond.
- **Current efforts are important but not sufficient.** The District is currently implementing several plans to address gaps in the equitable provision of services to students — for example, efforts led by the English Mastery Council, Clark County School Justice Partnership, and services provided to students who live in particular zip codes — which are laudable, but put simply, current efforts are important but not sufficient.

BARRIERS LEADING TO CYCLES OF INEQUITY



The Commission's conclusion is that, in addition to continuing existing efforts, there are four fundamental failure points in our system which are excelling some students while holding back others. They demand immediate attention and remediation. We have defined them as Barriers Leading to Cycles of Inequity:

1. Pre-Kindergarten Access
2. Elementary Pathways: Magnet programs and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)
3. Accelerated Coursework in Middle School
4. High School Coursework: Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Credit, and Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Contained within this report are explanations of each failure point and specific recommendations for action. The action steps cannot take years to implement. Real action and shift in behavior must be prioritized immediately. Moving forward, consistent communication with the community must be transparent and focus on sharing the steps the District is taking while inviting the rest of the community to participate in concrete and meaningful ways.

The Commission believes that success in addressing and repairing the Barriers Leading to Cycles of Inequity will allow every student the opportunity to actualize their potential, thereby determining their success as well as the success of their families, the local economy, and our entire community.



THE COMMISSION’S PLEDGE TO SUPPORT.....

This report represents the response from the Commission based on the charge of the Superintendent conveyed on July 18, 2019. Membership has signed below indicating unwavering commitment to the recommendations identified in this report.

I. Bustamante Adams
 Irene Bustamante Adams
 Deputy Director and Chief Strategy
 Officer, Workforce Connections

Peter Guzman
 Peter Guzman
 President, Latin Chamber
 of Commerce

Punam Mathur
 Punam Mathur
 Executive Director, Elaine P. Wynn
 and Family Foundation

Linda P. Cavazos
 Linda P. Cavazos
 Clark County School District
 Trustee, District G

Lisa Morris Hibbler
 Lisa Morris Hibbler
 Chief Community Services Officer,
 City of Las Vegas

Mary Beth Sewald
 Mary Beth Sewald
 President and CEO, Las Vegas
 Chamber of Commerce

Brigid Duffy
 Brigid Duffy
 Director, Clark County District
 Attorney, Juvenile Division

Ryann Juden
 Ryann Juden
 City Manager, City of North
 Las Vegas

Javier Trujillo
 Javier Trujillo
 Director of Public Affairs,
 City of Henderson

Ken Evans
 Ken Evans
 President, Urban Chamber
 of Commerce

John Jack Martin
 John Jack Martin
 Director, Clark County
 Department of Juvenile Justice

Soriny Vinuya
 Soriny Vinuya
 President, Asian Chamber
 of Commerce

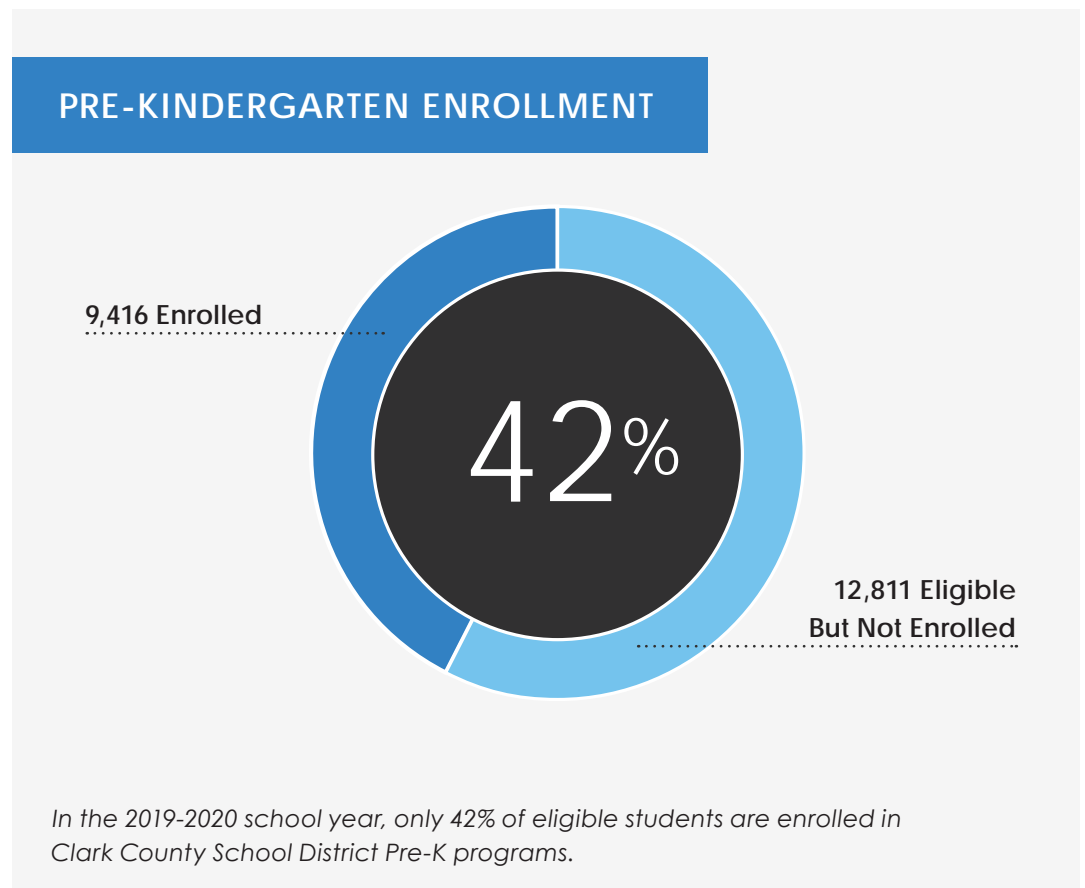
John Guedry
 John Guedry
 Chief Executive Officer,
 Bank of Nevada

FAILURE POINT 1: PRE-KINDERGARTEN.....

Why it Matters

According to the researchers at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), short-term, positive outcomes of Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) include improved school-readiness skills, higher academic achievement in mathematics and reading, lower rates of retention, and special education placement compared to students who have not received early education. These benefits extend into adulthood, as participants of early education programs have higher lifetime earnings and exhibit lower rates of crime and teen pregnancy.

Additionally, in the context of children's well-being, Pre-K programs often provide health benefits in the short term, such as developmental screenings, free immunizations, and dental and physical care, which can lead to improved long-term health.



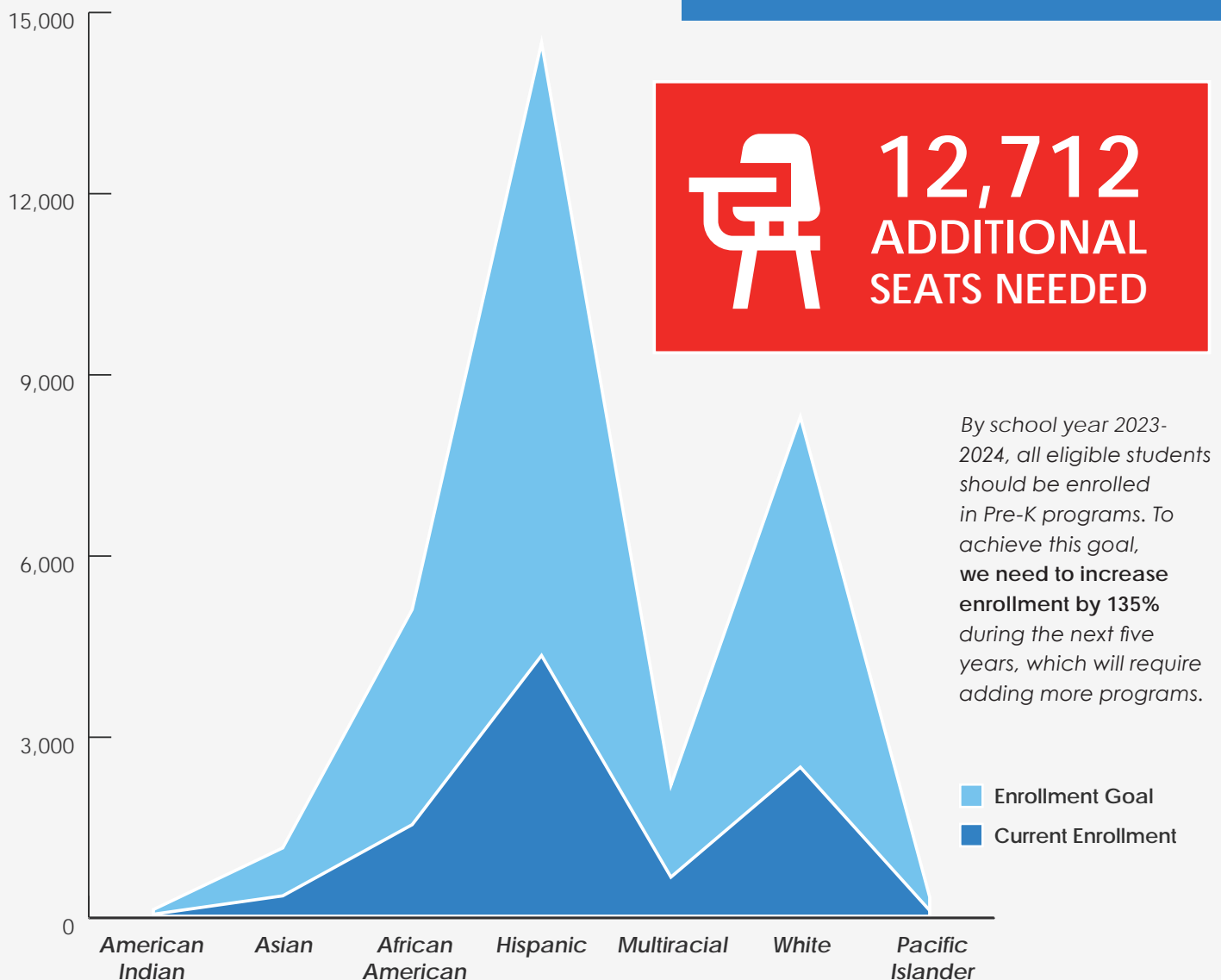
Current State of Equity and Access

The District currently has a number of Pre-K programs, including half-day and full-day Title I Pre-K programs¹, half-day Victory and Zoom Pre-K programs, full-day Nevada Ready Pre-K programs, and half-day and full-day Early Childhood Special Education Pre-K programs.

What the Data Show

Over the last three school years, the enrollment in Pre-K programs has decreased, despite the overall increase in enrollment in the District. With only 42% of eligible students enrolled in a Pre-K program, the District is far from offering universal Pre-K for all. Additionally, the District does not yet have a systemic mechanism for monitoring the quality of the Pre-K programs currently offered.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY



¹ Kelly, Fitzgerald, Wendell Williams, Carson, Booker, and McCall Elementary Schools have full day programs.



Our Goal Increase access to high-quality Pre-K programming for all students, specifically our low-income, Hispanic, and African American students. Strive towards 100% enrollment with a racial/ethnic breakdown that more closely mirrors the demographics of the District.

Recommendations for improving Equity and Access to Pre-Kindergarten:

1. Determine what is preventing enrollment or causing program withdrawal.
2. Ramp up recruitment and add more Pre-K seats to increase enrollment and ongoing participation in Pre-K.
3. Monitor quality of programs and hold programs accountable to high standards.
4. Seek funding for additional physical space and innovate programming models to create more Pre-K seats.

FAILURE POINT 2: ELEMENTARY PATHWAYS, MAGNET SCHOOLS, AND GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION.....

Magnet Schools

Why it Matters

According to the United States Department of Education report *Improving Outcomes for All Students: Strategies and Considerations to Increase Student Diversity*, magnet schools and programs benefit students by improving teaching and learning, offering quality school choice, providing educational equity, providing students the opportunity to attend school with students from diverse backgrounds, and expanding career opportunities.

Access to Magnet schools begins in elementary grades, but spans all grades across the District.

Current State of Equity and Access

As outlined in the Superintendent's five-year strategic plan, *Focus: 2024*, efforts are in place to expand magnet opportunities for students as well as to review and revise admissions criteria for the high school magnet programs. In September 2019, the District announced significant changes to admissions criteria in order to increase access and reduce opportunity gaps for underrepresented students. With the new criteria, students no longer need to participate in accelerated coursework in order to receive full points on the criteria rubric as a result of systemic barriers related to course offerings. *Focus: 2024* includes additional strategies to increase equity and access to magnet schools and programs.

With improved access and changes to the admissions criteria, transporting students to and from magnet schools remains a concern. Parents and staff have reported that transportation to and from magnet schools and programs is a barrier to students having equitable access. The District implemented changes to transportation several years ago in part as a cost-saving measure and some of these changes may have resulted in unanticipated barriers.

What the Data Show

Since the advent of magnet schools and programs, the District has implemented programs in 40 schools — 11 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and 17 high schools. Across the 11 elementary programs, magnet enrollment closely mirrors the overall district demographics with 48% of elementary magnet program students identifying as Hispanic and 16% identifying as African American.

While magnet school programs have contributed to the reduction of racial and socioeconomic isolation and increased academic achievement in the District, there is still a need to diversify and add additional programs in key parts of the community to offer more magnet program seats, particularly in Grades 6 through 12.

Our Goal

The District needs to study the impact of updated admissions criteria on students having equitable access to magnet schools and programs. The ultimate goal is to align magnet school demographics as closely as possible to the district-wide demographics for that grade level.

Recommendations for improving Equity and Access to Magnet Schools:

1. Study the process students and families use to enter a magnet program; identify what’s working well and where equity gaps exist; make outcomes transparent to the public.
2. Stay the course with *Focus: 2024* commitments related to magnet programs, including revising admissions criteria.
3. Study the current transportation practices for potential barriers; provide equitable access to programs by providing new and innovative transportation options to families previously unable to attend magnet schools.
4. Ensure college remediation rates for students attending magnet programs are addressed and decrease rapidly.

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)

Why it Matters Ensuring that individual student learning needs are met is critical to the overall vision of the District. Identifying students for specialized services is a fundamental way the District is able to meet individual student needs.

Current State of Equity and Access The District offers three programs within Gifted and Talented Education (GATE). GATE for Grades 3-5, Title I Alternative Gifted Services (“TAGS”) program for students in Grades 3-5 in only Title I schools, and the program for highly gifted students that is offered for students in Grades K-12. In identifying students for these programs, the District uses a matrix with a variety of information, including a teacher rating, tests to determine “IQ eligibility”, and achievement tests. The matrix also includes information about whether students are English Learners, are homeless, have an Individualized Education Program/504 plan, or are a member of an underrepresented population.

The District also permits parents/guardians to submit data from private testing to identify students for the GATE programs. Allowing private testing to be part of the identification process advantages families who can afford to pay for such testing and for parents who are aware that this is an option.

What the Data Show There is significant underrepresentation of our Hispanic and African American students in GATE programs. In GATE for Grades 3-5, the District serves 5,833 students in 226 elementary schools. GATE for Grades 3-5 is a pullout program that provides at least 150 minutes of differentiated instruction to students from an endorsed GATE specialist. While only 8% of students district-wide are enrolled in GATE, 16% of white students are enrolled, whereas only 9% of Hispanic students and 1% of African American students are enrolled in the Grades 3-5 program.

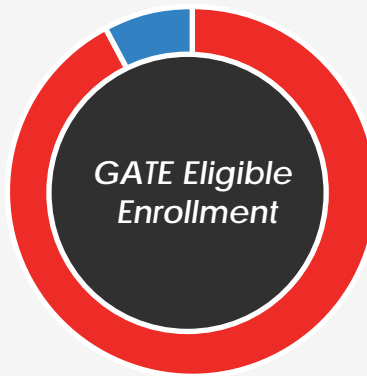
In the TAGS program, the District also services students in Grades 3-5. The District provides 50 minutes of differentiated instruction with an endorsed specialist. As the following chart illustrates, while African American students make up 16% of students enrolled in Grades 3-5, only 1% of African American students are

enrolled in GATE. This is a massive underrepresentation of African American students. Similarly, Hispanic students make up just over half of the overall student population but less than 10% of the GATE enrolled students. While TAGS enrolls a higher percentage of our low-income, Hispanic, and African American students these numbers clearly show the massive problem of underrepresentation in GATE in the District.

The graph (right) shows that this breakdown stems from various schools across the District in Grades 3-5 having widely different GATE enrollment numbers at schools that enroll a predominantly white student population compared to schools that enroll predominantly our low-income, Hispanic, and African American students.

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

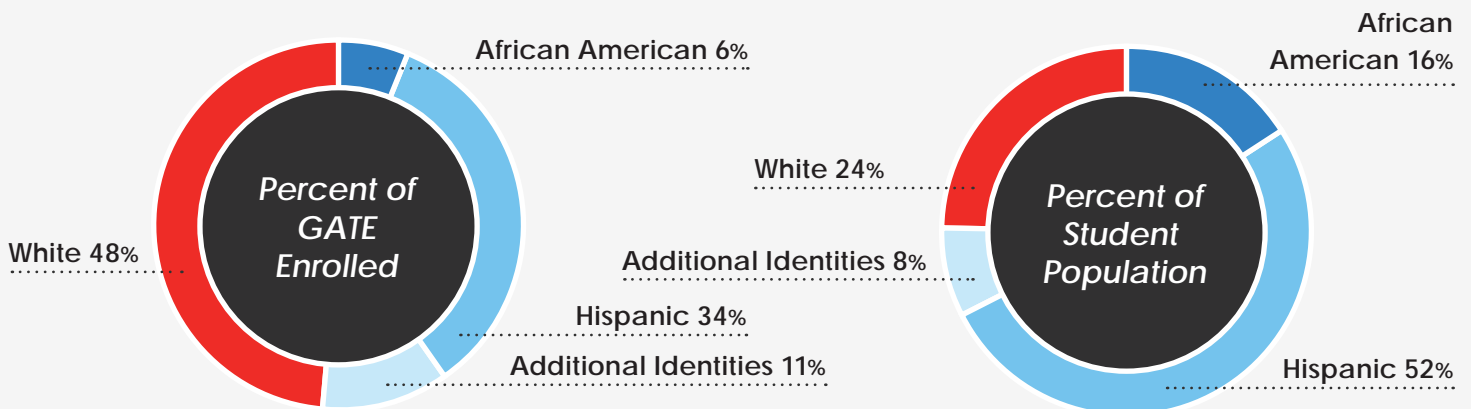
9%

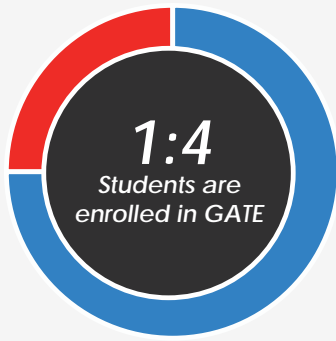


91%

There are currently only **5,833 students** enrolled in Gifted and Talented Education.

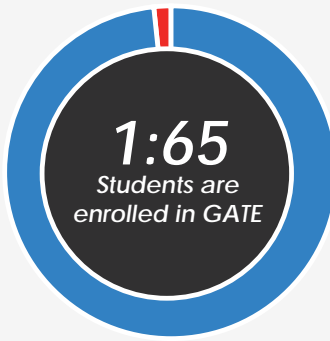
There are **64,276 students** that are potentially eligible for Gifted and Talented Education.





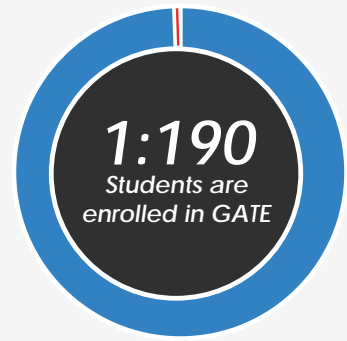
29%

SCHOOL A
MINORITY
POPULATION



86%

SCHOOL B
MINORITY
POPULATION



89%

SCHOOL C
MINORITY
POPULATION

Schools with a higher percentage of white students have more students in GATE than in schools with a higher percentage of students of color.

Our Goal The District must improve access to GATE programming so more Hispanic and African American students access the specialized instruction to support them with attaining their fullest academic potential. Specifically, the District should cut the gap in half between district enrollment and GATE enrollment for African American and Hispanic students by 2023-2024.

Recommendations for improving Equity and Access to Gifted and Talented Education Programs:

1. Review the eligibility/student identification process and design a more equitable process; discontinue the use of private testing.
2. Study existing programming to see how geographic access to programs influence enrollment.
3. Message what GATE services/course progression opportunities are available for secondary GATE students.

FAILURE POINT 3: MIDDLE SCHOOL ACCELERATED COURSES.....

Why it Matters

Research has shown students having access to rigorous mathematics and other core content courses in middle school is critical to students having access to and earning successful completion of advanced mathematics and core content courses at the high school level.

Current State of Equity and Access

The District does not have consistent guidance or practices that govern how students are recommended for advanced-level coursework. While academic ability and aptitude are strong factors to be considered in course recommendations, other important factors for students are social-emotional development and access to consistent and qualified licensed personnel. School policies regarding attendance, late work, and behavior may be disadvantaging African American and Hispanic students from being recommended for advanced coursework as grades are often not always solely based upon academic achievement.

The District's *Focus: 2024 - Student Success Priority Area 3* calls for an increase in equity and access to rigorous curriculum and instruction for all students. Among the objectives to achieve this goal, the target seeks to increase and diversify student enrollment and achievement in advanced coursework in all student groups at the District level and at each middle and high school.

What the Data Show

The District offers accelerated mathematics courses for students in sixth grade at all middle schools. For the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 7% of students enrolled in the accelerated mathematics courses are African American and approximately 36% of students enrolled are Hispanic.² Thus there is underrepresentation for both African American and Hispanic students enrolled in these courses.

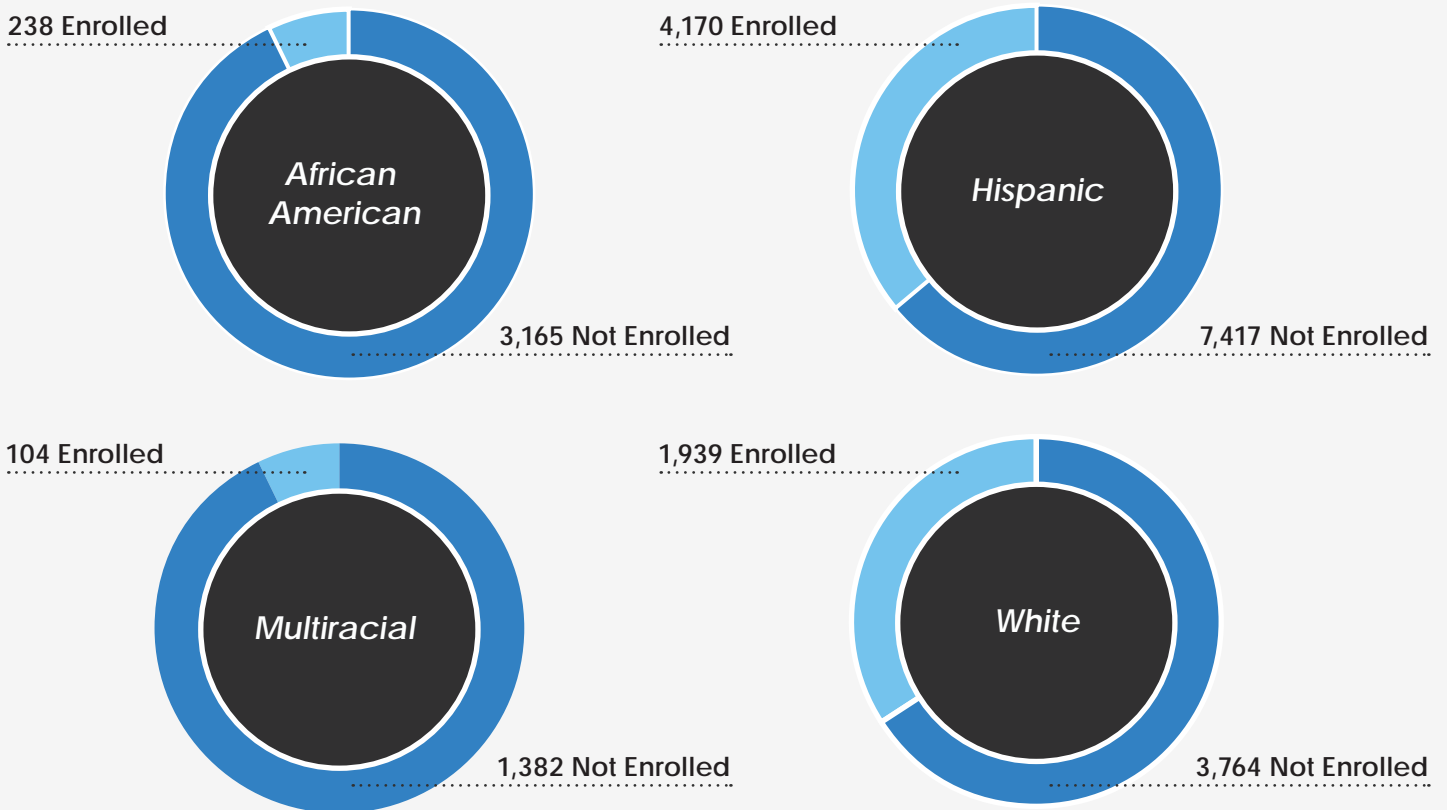
The District offers Algebra I at all middle schools and offers Geometry Honors in eighth grade, but only offers Geometry Honors at 35% of the middle schools. Most middle schools that offer Geometry Honors are in the suburban ring of the

²14% of District students are African American and 46% of District students are Hispanic.

valley and outlying areas of the county. The remaining middle schools offering Geometry Honors were in the valley and included six magnet middle schools. African American and Hispanic students are underrepresented in enrollment in Algebra I and Geometry Honors in eighth grade.

As with the enrollment in the higher-level mathematics courses, African American and Hispanic students were underrepresented in eighth grade Honors/ Accelerated English classes compared to their enrollment in the District.

ADVANCED MATHEMATICS ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY



- Enrolled
- Not Enrolled

Visual includes eighth grade enrollment.



Our Goal The District needs to create additional course offerings in schools that serve more of the District’s Hispanic and African American students. Enrollment in advanced mathematics in middle school should reflect the overall district enrollment demographics by 2023-2024. Additionally, the District needs to support student success in courses that prepare them for advanced mathematics and core content courses in high school.

Recommendations for Improving Equity and Access to Advanced Coursework in Middle School:

1. Open access to students by adding more classes to drive access and support recruitment.
2. Expand supports leading to success and mastery.
3. Monitor enrollment and student achievement data; follow-up to ensure students who participated in advanced coursework in middle school enroll in AP classes in high school.

FAILURE POINT 4: HIGH SCHOOL PATHWAYS — HONORS, ADVANCED PLACEMENT, DUAL CREDIT, AND CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Why it Matters

As students' post-secondary options expand and evolve along with regional industry shifts, so too must student preparation evolve. The District has a responsibility to support students with multiple pathways that honor the need to support all students with college readiness as well as a pathway that honors the value that high-quality Career and Technical Education and Dual Credit courses provide to our students and our community.

Current State of Equity and Access

Every high school offers a number of Honors and Advanced Placement courses as part of their curriculum course offerings. The number of Honors courses offered range from approximately 16 to 43 courses per school. The District required that each high school offered a minimum of 16 Advanced Placement (AP) courses for the 2018-2019 school year, but 14 schools offered less than 16 AP Courses.

Research evidence shows that students enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) are increasingly high performers, with higher than average graduation rates and impressive post-secondary enrollment. Roughly 50% of students in the District high schools engage in at least one CTE course while in high school and this number has steadily increased in the past three years.

While CTE participation numbers are extremely high, the number of students completing a three-year program sequence remains very low. Level I is a first-year course that introduces the skills and concepts for a specific workforce trade. Level III provides students an opportunity to show mastery to their selected pathway and achieve success on the certification assessment to join and be a successful member of the workforce immediately after high school. For example, over the past few years, on average, only 22-26% of students who start in a Level I CTE program completed through Level III. The state average hovers around 30% completion.

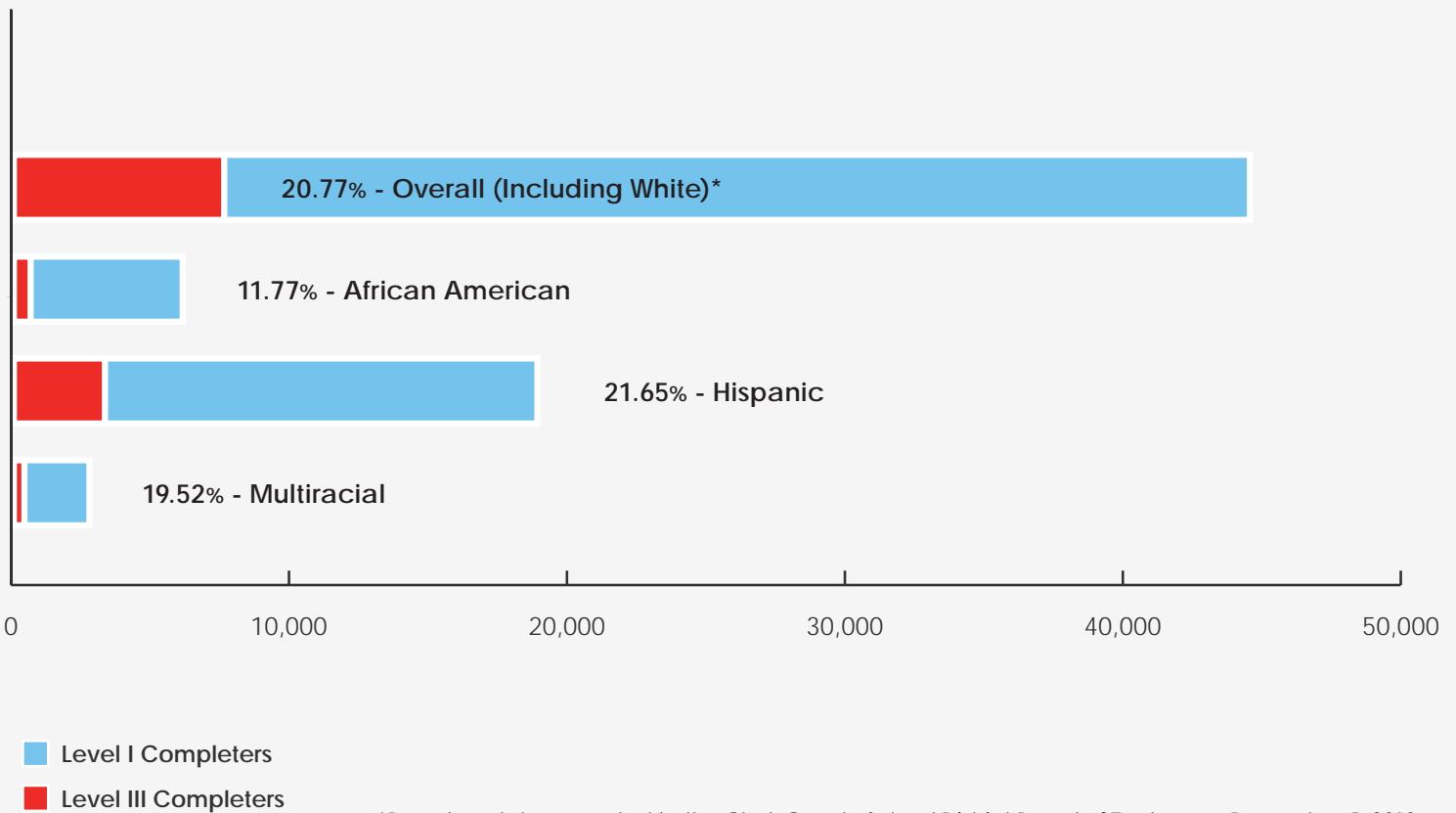
What the Data Show

There is access and opportunity on every high school campus for CTE programs, but the number of offerings vary greatly. For example, one high school offers 5 CTE programs, while another school offers 22 programs. Interestingly, the schools with over 15 program offerings have the highest numbers of students who do not complete a program.

Our Goal

Increase enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and participation in cumulative AP exams. Concurrently expand Career and Technical Education classes, dual credit opportunities, and honors classes at the high school level across the District. The District should design expansion to not only increase enrollment but to ensure enrollment more closely represents the demographics of the District and cuts the gap between participation in AP exams and CTE Level III completers and overall district enrollment in half.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM COMPLETION BY RACE/ETHNICITY



*Based on data presented to the Clark County School District Board of Trustees on December 5, 2018. Data from the 2018-2019 school year has not been verified.

Recommendations for Improving Equity and Access to High School Pathways:

1. Provide proper academic planning to individual students so they experience customized, personalized planning to support their path towards lifelong success that matches their academic potential and personal interests, whether that is a path to a degree-granting institution or preparation to join the workforce of a regionally thriving industry.
2. Use *Workforce Blueprint 2.0* to support workforce development efforts.
3. Add AP courses to schools that do not currently offer the minimum, prioritizing the addition of coursework to serve our low-income, Hispanic, and African American students who are currently underrepresented in advanced academic programs.

SUMMARY.....

Thank you for taking the time to review some of the data and information we have reviewed over the past six months. Now that you are informed, we hope that you are compelled to join us in taking action today and impressing upon the District to act now to solve the failure points.

In summary, our expectations of the leaders and educators of the District are to:

- **Further study and transparently share information about racial inequities in the system**
- **Align resources to these four failure points**
- **Prioritize communication and collaboration with the community, particularly communities of color**
- **Update policies**
- **Align all adult behavior to a renewed culture of high expectations for all students throughout the district**
- **Hold educators and leaders accountable**
- **Demonstrate improvement quickly**
- **Use data consistently to drive all decisions and actions**

By February 15, 2020, the Clark County School District Trustees should identify members to serve on a Blue Ribbon Commission comprised of Board of School Trustee members and individuals selected from the Equity and Access Commission. The intent of this group will be to formulate a quarterly plan to address all of the failure points creating clear and actionable next steps. These findings cannot become “another report” and collect dust on a shelf. Quantifiable action, resource deployment, and governance involvement must support the Superintendent of Schools to make this actionable. A coherent tactical plan will only drive efforts to slow or prevent students from falling into the cycle of inequity that has existed for too many years.

We plan to continue our conversations with the District and look forward to sharing more with the broader community in another communication of our own in summer 2020.

