Latino Students in Pittsburgh Public Schools

A project by Carrie Haney (CMU Intern) for the Latino Community Center
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Introduction

- The purpose of this project is to research, understand, and advocate for the Latino community of Pittsburgh

- All information is within past 5 years

- Types of information

  - Data collection from public sources
  - Data from PPS from data request
  - Interviews with key stakeholders and Latino students and families

- Literature review – source of ideas for recommendations

- Presentation contains a series of 6 points

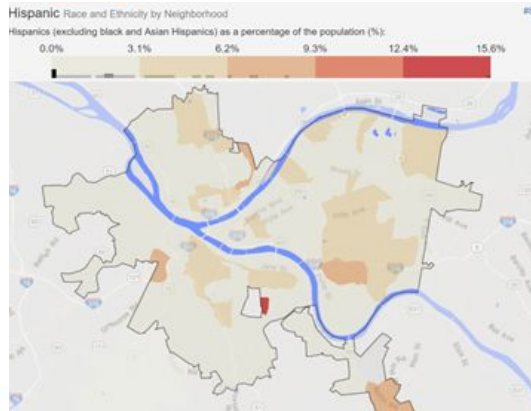- ***data found uses term "Hispanic" instead of "Latino"***

Describing the Population

Some Quick Facts

In Pittsburgh

- Approx. 3% of total Pittsburgh population identified as Hispanic (Council of the Great City Schools, 2016)

- Hispanic residents of Pittsburgh are spread out

https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Pennsylvania/Pittsburgh/Race-and-Ethnicity

In PPS

- Approx 3.3% of student population identified as Hispanic -- very similar to pop. at large

- In the 2018-19 school year, approx. 36.4% of Hispanic students across the district enrolled in ESL (PPS)

- Over last 5 school years, avg. of 13.8% of Hispanic students had active IEP (PPS Dept. of Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment)

- Over last 5 schools years, avg. of 5.2% of Hispanic students identified as gifted (PPS Dept. of Data, Research, Evaluation)
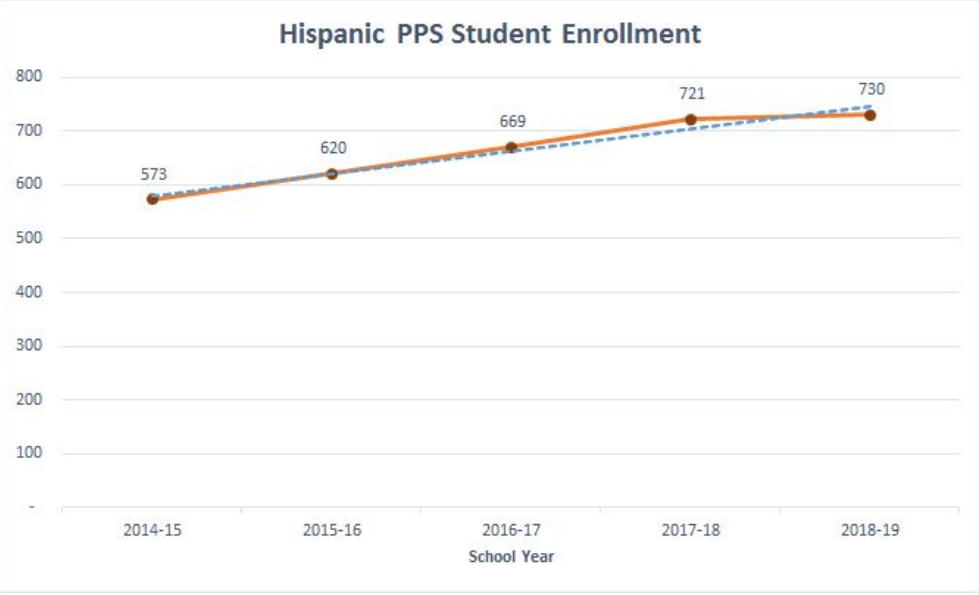
Point 1:

PPS total enrollment is decreasing, while Hispanic student enrollment at PPS is increasing

PPS Total Enrollment Counts are Decreasing

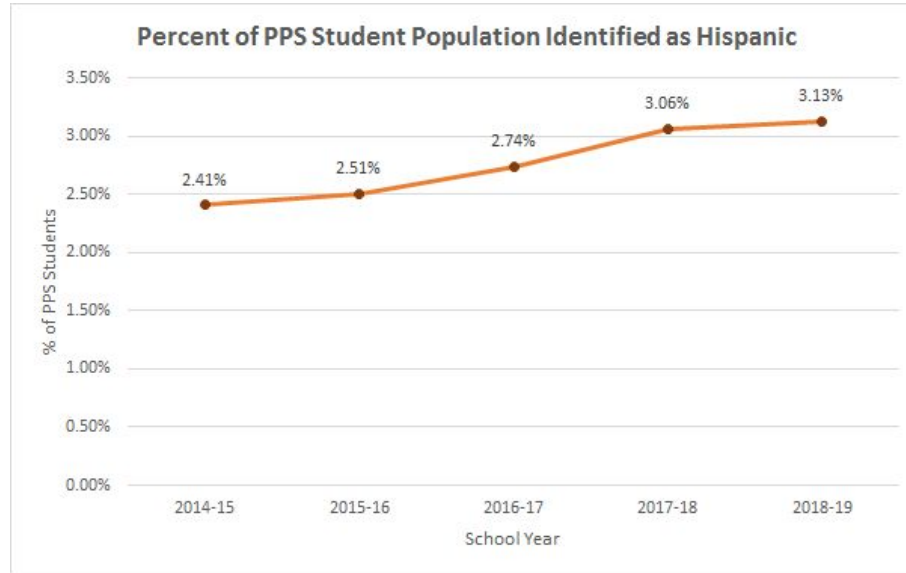

Counts from https://www.discoverpps.org/district/enrollment
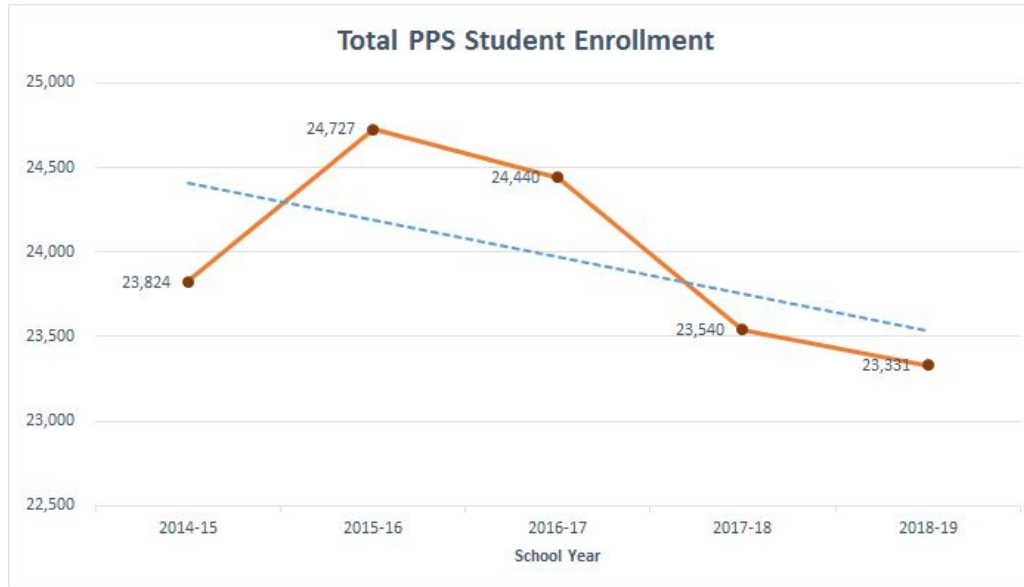
Hispanic Student Enrollment at PPS is Increasing

Counts from PPS Dept. of Data, Research, Evaluation and Assessment

PPS Hispanic Student Population is Growing

Total student counts from https://www.discoverpps.org/district/enrollment, Hispanic student counts from PPS Dept. of Data, Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

These trends support the need for this research project and the services LCC provides

- The number of Latinos and Latino students growing nationally (Gándara, 2017)

    - Latino school-age population in 1980: 8.1%

    - Latino school-age population in 2017: 25%

- Small population, but still urgent need

    - Pittsburgh has few existing supports to deal with rising Latino population

Point 2:

Hispanic PPS students are not performing as well as students of other race groups on standardized tests

Hispanic PPS students are not performing as well as students of other race groups on PSSA ELA and PSSA Math exams
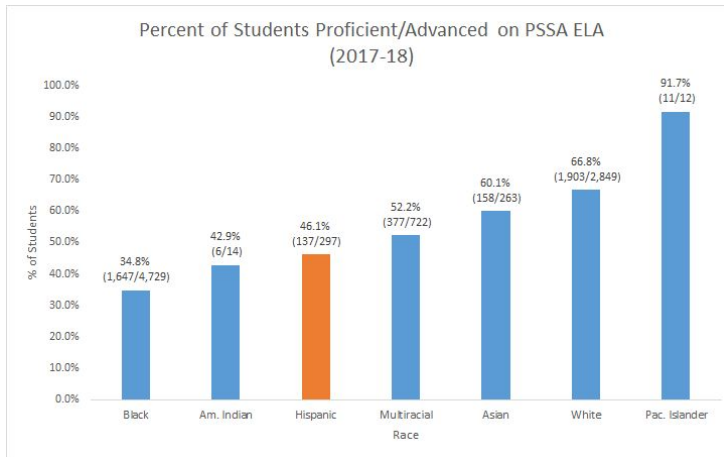
A+ Schools
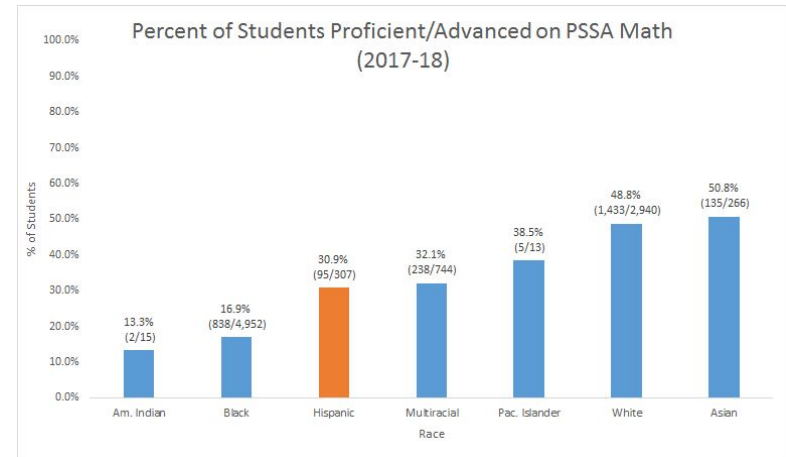
A+ Schools

Special attention should be paid to PSSA Math performance

- Math exam outcome worse than ELA for all race subgroups

  - Has been noted that a lack of Latino students are taking Algebra by 8th grade (A+ Schools, 2017)

  - Passing Algebra is an academic benchmark, prerequisite for high school math courses, and a common predictor of high school outcomes (The Education Trust – West, 2017)

Point 3:

Hispanic students at PPS are underrepresented in the gifted student population and face identification problems for special education

Hispanic students at PPS are underrepresented in the gifted student population

Number of Students Enrolled in the Pittsburgh Gifted Center by Race (2017-18)
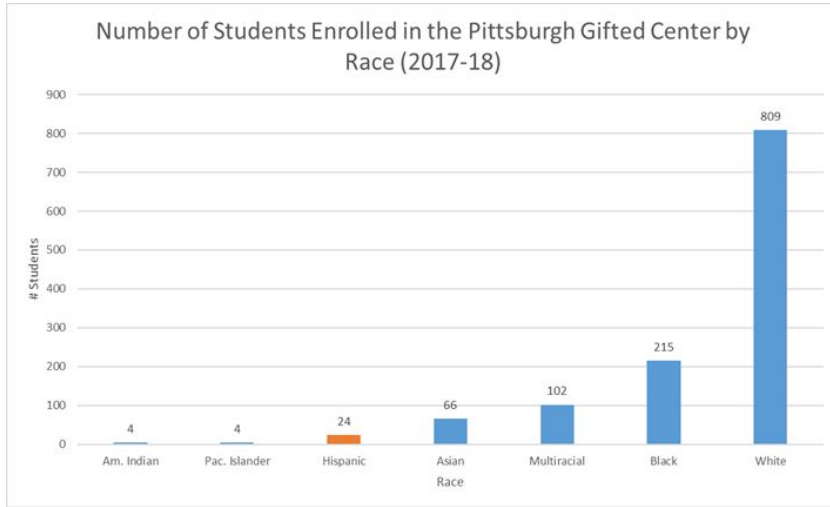
Enrollment data retrieved from https://www.discoverpps.org/district/enrollment, gifted data from A+ Schools

Race	% of Student Pop.	% Gifted out of Total
Hispanic	3.3%	2.0%
Asian	3.6%	5.4%
Black	51.8%	17.6%
White	33.0%	66.1%
Am. Indian	0.05%	0.3%
Pac. Islander	–	0.3%
Multiracial	8.2%	8.3%

Gifted underrepresentation is not only in PPS, but seen in other areas of the country

- A+ Schools has also noted the lack of Latino presence in PPS gifted programs

- In California, Latino students make up half of the K–12 student population but only 39% of all students in GATE (The Education Trust – West, 2017)

Hispanic students are both overidentified and underidentified for special education services

Overidentification

- Issue is language barrier but might be construed as having special needs

- Comes from a good place, but special ed not actually what student needs
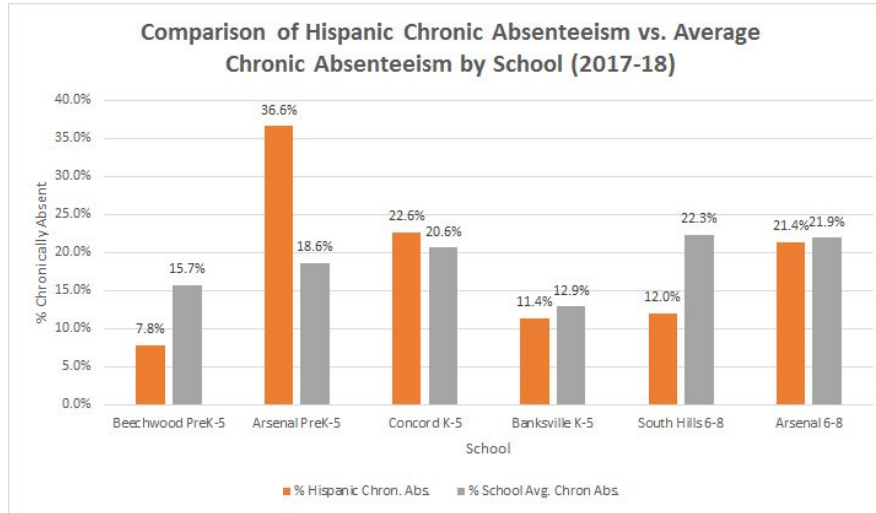
Underidentification

- Student needs to be proficient in English before getting special ed services

- Expensive for schools to provide special education

- Parents have final say in what their child needs

(Interview with J. Perlow)

Point 4:

Chronic absenteeism among Hispanic students is high in certain schools

Chronic absenteeism among Hispanic students is high in Arsenal and Concord Elementary

Comparison of Hispanic Chronic Absenteeism vs. Average Chronic Absenteeism by School (2017-18)

Enrollment data retrieved from https://www.discoverpps.org/district/enrollment, absenteeism data from A+ Schools

- These are the 6 schools with the greatest proportions of Hispanic students

- Two elementary schools – Arsenal Elementary and Concord Elementary – are exhibiting higher Hispanic chronic absenteeism rates than the school's average across all race groups

- Attendance often used as an indicator for academic outcomes for elementary students, especially

Chronic absenteeism among Hispanic students is high in PPS high schools

Comparison of Hispanic HS Chronic Absenteeism vs. Average Chronic Absenteeism by High School (2017-18)
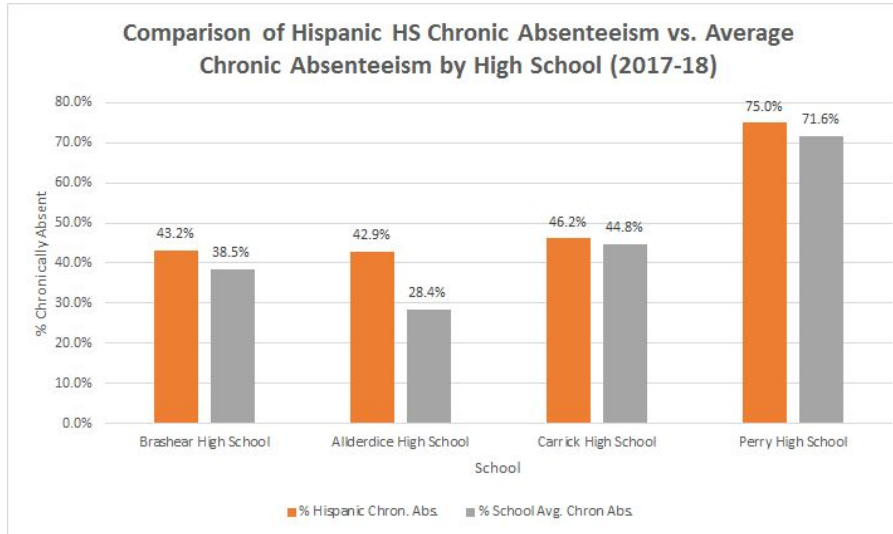
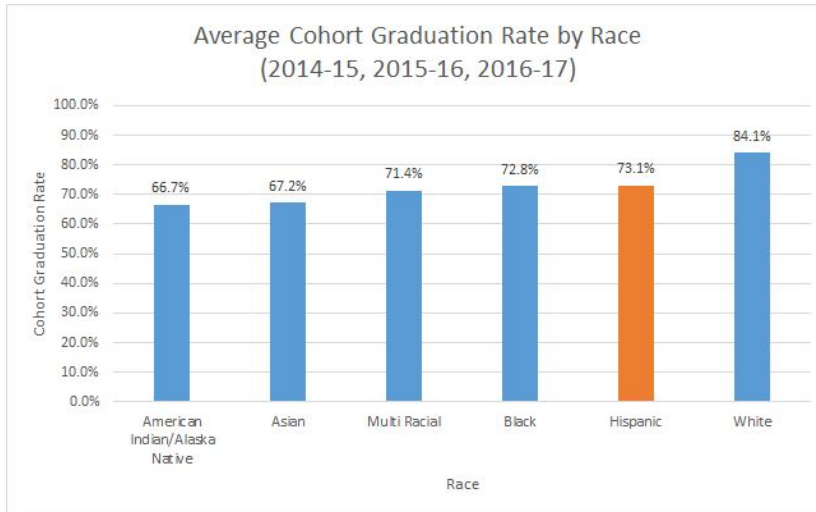- Chronic absenteeism rates among the four 9-12 schools at PPS

- The rate for Hispanic students is higher than the school average rate across all race groups

- Absenteeism is a "major correlate of low achievement" (Gándara, 2017)

Enrollment data retrieved from https://www.discoverpps.org/district/enrollment, absenteeism data from A+ Schools

Point 5:

1 in 4 Hispanic students at PPS are not graduating on time

1 in 4 Hispanic students are not graduating with their cohort

Average Cohort Graduation Rate by Race (2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17)

American Indian/Alaska Native: 66.7%; Asian: 67.2%; Multi Racial: 71.4%; Black: 72.8%; Hispanic: 73.1%; White: 84.1%

"The cohort graduation rates are a calculation of the percentage of students who have graduated with a regular high school diploma within 4 years since the student first entered high school. The rate is determined for a cohort of students who have all entered high school for the first time during the school year."
(https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate.aspx)

Note: we do not have data on the reasons why a student did not graduate with their "cohort"

Data retrieved from https://www.pghschools.org/Page/5072

Hispanic student dropout rates are a national concern

- Latino students tend to drop out at higher rates than other races in other areas of the country (The Education Trust – West, 2017; Gándara, 2017; Magaña Lewis and Filbrun, 2017)

- A similar trend noticed in PPS as well (Interview with J. Covel)

Point 6:

Hispanic students at PPS are underrepresented among the Pittsburgh Promise eligible student population

Hispanic students are underrepresented in the Pittsburgh Promise eligible student population

- Since 2008 inception, Pittsburgh Promise has given out scholarships to 8,161 PPS students (The Pittsburgh Promise, 2017-18 Annual Report, 2017)

  - **Hispanic: 97 of 8,161 total recipients (1.2%)**

  - Black/Multiracial: 3,743 of 8,161 total recipients (45.8%)

  - White: 4,098 of 8,161 total recipients (50.2%)

  - Asian or Pacific Islander: 218 of 8,161 total recipients (2.7%)

  - American Indian: 5 of 8,161 total recipients (0.06%)

The biggest reason why Hispanic students do not qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise is the GPA requirement

Reason Hispanic PPS Students not Pittsburgh Promise Eligible (2018-19)

13.4%

86.6%

■ GPA   ■ Attendance

Data retrieved from https://www.pghschools.org/Page/5076
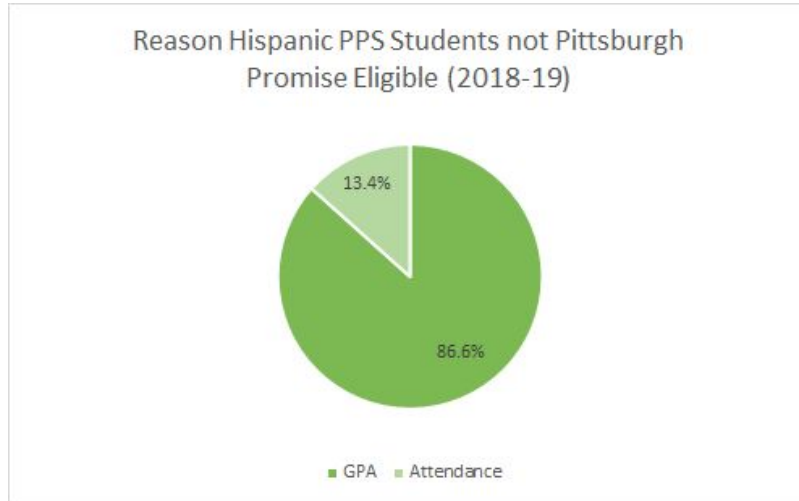
- Overall, among students not eligible for Pittsburgh Promise, 79.7% is due to GPA, 16.2% due to attendance, 4.1% due to both

- Appears that all PPS students mainly struggle with the GPA requirement (2.5 minimum)

Hispanic female students qualify for the Pittsburgh Promise at a higher rate than Hispanic male students

Percent of Hispanic Students Promise Eligible by Gender (2018-19)

[Bar chart: Female 74.2%, Male 42.0%; y-axis "% Promise Eligible" from 0.0% to 80.0%; x-axis "Gender"]
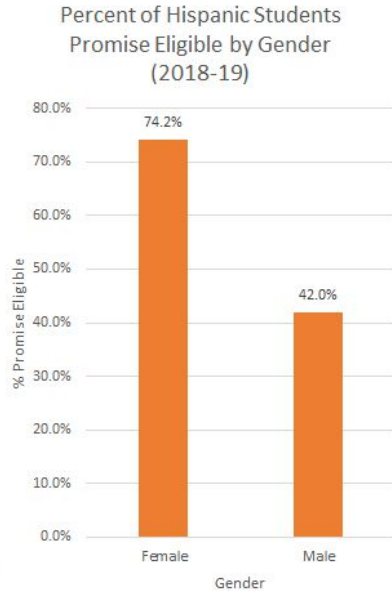
- Overall, female eligibility rate is 61.9% and male eligibility rate is 48.6% (PPS)
  - Latino gender gap even wider

- Seems to be consistent with national concerns about the achievement gap between Latino males and Latina females (The Education Trust – West)

- Pittsburgh Promise eligibility can be a good indicator of school performance for Pittsburgh schools

Data retrieved from https://www.pghschools.org/Page/5076

Some Positive News

Hispanic students at PPS are underrepresented in the suspended student population

Percent of Total Student Population by Race vs. Percent of Total Suspended Student Population by Race (2017-18)

Race	% of PPS Students	% suspended of total suspended students
Black	51.8%	76.3%
White	33.0%	14.5%
Multiracial	8.2%	6.9%
Asian (not Pac. Islander)	3.6%	0.6%
Hispanic	3.3%	1.6%
Am. Indian	0.05%	0.1%

% of Students

■ % of PPS Students   ▪ % suspended of total suspended students
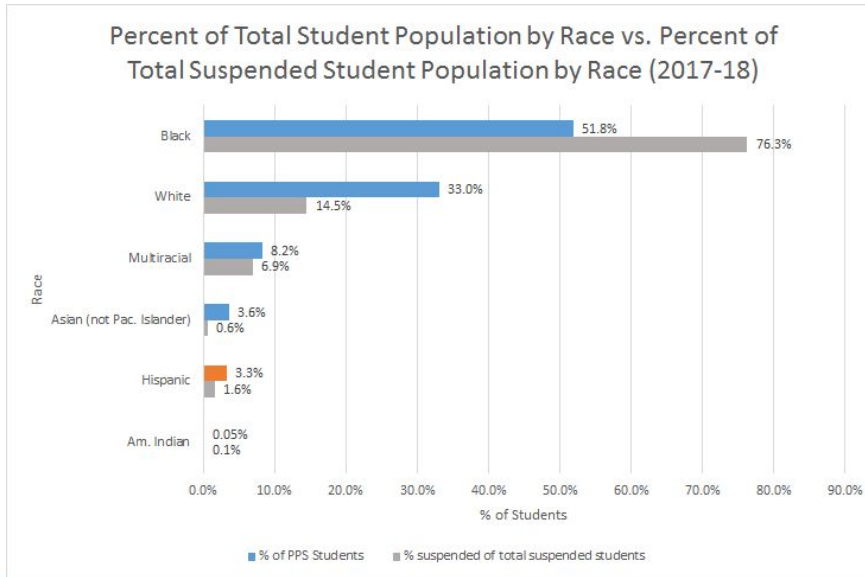
A+ Schools

- Suspensions can interrupt a student's education, especially in early years

- Suspension rate common indicator of academic outcomes

Hispanic students possess special skills because of their background

- Multilingualism

  - Students who speak multiple languages demonstrate greater cognitive function and flexibility

  - Allows students to be able to communicate and understand a broader range of people, views, experiences, and information

- Multicultural perspectives

  - Allows students to see that problems can have more than one answer

  - Allows for more creative thinking

(Gándara, 2017)

Testimonies of PPS staff, PPS leadership, and PPS community are positive

- PPS teachers work very hard and do everything they can to help students succeed (Interview with Anonymous)

  - Parent notified when child is having bad day emotionally, not just when misbehaving

  - Teacher encouraged student to continue speaking Spanish and be connected to native culture

  - Student reported receiving help from teachers when struggling in class, always offered extra time to complete work when student needed it

- Superintendent Hamlet is sympathetic to needs of the Latino community (Interview with J. Covel)

- Members of PPS community are accepting of Latino community, want to understand their culture and experiences (Interview with J. Covel)

  - Meetings with "high-level dive" into Latino culture

Progress in translating school information to Spanish and understanding Latino culture

- A long-term initiative of improving translation and interpretation support has been implemented at PPS already (Interview with J. Covel)

  - Increase of multilingual staff, Spanish-speaking assistants for ESL teachers

- Website being translated in Spanish and important alerts in Spanish (Interview with A. Matson)

Recommendations

What has worked elsewhere

- **Implement culturally responsive teaching in the classroom** (Arbelo Marrero, 2016; The Education Trust – West, 2017; Gomez and Diarrassouba, 2014; Magaña Lewis and Filbrun, 2017)
    - **Train staff on how to incorporate cultural trainings in lessons** (Gomez and Diarrassouba, 2014)

- **Increase diversity of teacher workforce** (The Education Trust – West, 2017; Magaña Lewis and Filbrun, 2017) – **recruit Latino teachers especially** (Gándara, 2017; Magaña Lewis and Filbrun, 2017)

- **More info in relation to college and admissions** (Gándara, 2017; Magaña Lewis and Filbrun, 2017)

- **Develop strong bilingual or dual language programs** (The Education Trust – West, 2017; Gándara, 2017)

Recommendation	Example
Implement culturally responsive teaching	In Los Angeles Unified School District, ethnic studies is now a graduation requirement. When fully implemented, all LAUSD students will receive a high school diploma only after gaining a foundational understanding of the experiences of Latinos and other minorities (The Education Trust – West, 2017)
Increase diversity of teacher workforce	The California Mini-Corps hires about 400 bilingual college students, most of whom are Latino, to serve as tutors for migrant students during school hours and in the summer. The tutors also receive ongoing coaching from the CMC program coordinator, a certified teacher who observes them and provides regular feedback. After completing CMC, about 80% of participating tutors go on to receive a teaching credential or permit (The Education Trust – West, 2017)
Offer more info on college and admissions	College Track partners with districts in California, Colorado, and Louisiana to support individual students from the summer before 9th grade through college graduation. Participants receive tutoring, academic workshops, test prep, study groups, college tours, college advising, and a scholarship help desk to assist them with applying to college. Once in college, students receive ongoing mentoring from a College Completion Coach (The Education Trust – West, 2017)
Develop strong bilingual or dual language programs	Look to the Sobrato Early Academic Language program, which serves students from preschool through third grade. The program, which includes a bilingual Spanish-English option, infuses English learner best practices into science and social science content. By third grade, SEAL students score similarly or better than similar students on tests of English language arts and math proficiency. Bilingual programs have been shown to be more effective than English immersion alone, and to increase proficiency in both English and academic content for English learners (The Education Trust – West, 2017)

Suggestions from Interviewees

- **Implement a dual immersion program** so students can learn Spanish as well as English (Interview with J. Covel)

- **Standardize procedure to identify students with special needs across all schools** (Interview with J. Perlow)

- **Bridge cultural differences in understanding the school system and school activities between district and parent** (Interview with A. Matson)

- From Latino families and students (Interview with Anonymous)

  - **Schools or city can offer more affordable tutoring resources**

  - **More extracurricular activities**

  - **A class designed for first-gen students on the college admission process, like at West Mifflin HS**

  - **More info on trades and technical schools at Brashear**

Next Steps

Expand the project and include more data

- Expand to all of Allegheny County

- Larger team & more time for project, possibly get support from Pittsburgh local government and other organizations

- Include sophisticated data analysis

- Data to include in future:

  - Post-graduation plans

  - College completion rate

  - Undocumented status

Thank you!

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