



Inland Empire Black Education Agenda

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**An Agenda for Black
Education Excellence**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Inland Empire Black Education Agenda report is a collaborative effort led by BLU Educational Foundation, in partnership with the Center for Social Innovation at the University of California, Riverside and the Inland Empire Black Equity Initiative. This report uses a mixed methods approach with quantitative data analysis and in-depth qualitative interviews with Black students and their parents/guardians in the Inland Empire.

The study, which includes a survey of nearly 1,100 Black parents, students, and community stakeholders in the Inland Empire, provides insight to educators as to what Black students and their families note as their top priorities for equitable education. The recommendations from the report stem directly from the students themselves and fall into 5 key priority areas: (1) academic success, (2) Black history, (3) college and career access, (4) effective teachers, and (5) graduation rates. The report ends with a call to action which includes not only what institutions can do to advance equity, but also how community members, parents, and teachers can actively engage and co-create solutions with leaders in schools and school districts. The report notes two highly impactful actions that can be enacted at the local level: (1) moving towards a more equitable Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and (2) the creation and adequate funding of an equity office at the school district level.

Closing the racial equity gap in education takes intentionality and long-term commitment. State, school district, and school leaders can be a powerful force for eliminating it. When school boards, superintendents and principals make closing the gap a top priority – and when they plan, allocate resources, and design accountability measures to do so – they make progress. School leaders must have high expectations of all students and teachers, along with an awareness of their own culture and the culture of others. These leaders must be able to understand and capitalize on students' culture, abilities, resilience, and effort, and they must reach out to engage parents and communities to support educational excellence.

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FRAMING THE ISSUE

In the 21st century, many educational institutions in the United States invest in reforms intended to close the achievement gap between Black students and their white counterparts. However, several indicators—including academic achievement in English and Language Arts (ELA) and Math, student suspensions and expulsions and, in California, A-G completion rates—continue to characterize Black students as failures. Policies like the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) were intended to provide equity based solutions to these types of issues by extending fiscal decision-making to districts and their stakeholder communities. Although community-based processes were meant to target the specific needs of the most disenfranchised learners, including Black students, most institutions and their communities are still missing the mark.

Even fifty years after the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, Black students continue to trail their white peers on a variety of important educational indicators (Hartney & Flavin, 2014). In fact, some academic research has found that educational achievement level in public schools in the U.S. can be easily predicted by income, race, language background, and other demographic variables (Uline & Johnson, 2005). Additionally, Black students have been historically under-represented in education because of the aforementioned factors. In part, the gap continues to exist because there is a failure to include Black families in the decision making processes that directly and positively impact the education of Black students.

In 2018, BLU Educational Foundation embarked on a year-long study to hear from a broad base of Black parents, students, and community stakeholders on what they believed were the key educational priorities necessary to achieve success among black students, preschool through college. The study initiated by the BLU Foundation was conducted in the Inland Empire

region of Southern California to magnify the voices of Black's in the area on their educational priorities from preschool through college. Too often, educational decisions are made for Black students without input from them, their families or the community. This study aims to provide insight to the education community on Black students and their families. The work highlights their top five educational priorities.

Additionally, the recent protests and demonstrations surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement has pushed inclusion and equity to the forefront of the national stage. While many government agencies, corporations, and other organizations have recently made new commitments to racial equity, real investment in equitable education and Black youth is essential and fundamental for real change to occur.

Furthermore, the consequences and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education not only poses new challenges, but highlights and exacerbates existing inequalities in the education system. Current researchers report that students will see economic and social impacts from the pandemic for years to come, the full scope of which is still yet to be seen. A recent report found that the average K-12 student could lose \$61,000 to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings due to the pandemic and, on its current trajectory, these losses are likely to be even higher (Dorn et. al 2020). Losses are expected to be even greater for Black, Latinx and low-income students, widening the existing achievement gaps by 15%-20% (Dorn et. al 2020).

The findings of this study, along with other extensive academic research, note the importance and urgency of creating an agenda for Black education excellence in the Inland Empire.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Like the present study, research on Black students' achievement is preceded by other scholarly inquiries. In 2012, researchers from the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, initiated a three-

part report on Black students' perceptions of K-12 Education entitled "Done to Us, Not With Us: African American Parent Perceptions of education, followed by Lift Every Voice and Lead: African American Leaders' Perceptions of K-12 Education Reform in 2017 and "A Seat at the Table: African American Youth's Perception of K-12 Education" in 2018.

In the first report, Bridges et al. (2012) suggest that the existing gaps between Black students and their counterparts are a direct result of a lack of resources and ill-prepared educators with limited experience in Black communities. They also go further and suggest that having less experienced educators in these schools contribute to the widening of the achievement gap. The authors of the second report, reasoned that the country should be alarmed by the disparaging gap in academic achievement between Black students and their counterparts from other racial groups (Anderson et al., 2017).

Finally, in the third report, researchers suggested that community leaders feel obligated to address the need for equity in education stating, "Ultimately, their involvement contributes to reducing dropout rates and closing the achievement and opportunity gaps between white and African American students" Meredith & Anderson (2018). One nonprofit leader who participated in the study explained how the Black community at large must speak up on behalf of students. They went on to say, schools "are not going to let that asset not provide the kind of high-quality education we think our children need" Meredith & Anderson (2018). The reports by the UNCF support the purpose of the present work on Black educational excellence by highlighting a gap in parental engagement and parent education which are vital in closing the achievement gap.

FINDINGS & DATA ANALYSIS

The theory of action in support of this study comes from Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis' (2016), Culturally Responsive School Leadership

(CRSL) Framework. The CRSL Framework argues that school and district leaders should practice four key behaviors: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts.

It is important for district and school leaders to be culturally responsive for a number of reasons. Not only do they have an effect on school climate, instruction, and reform, but their status as leaders makes it so that culturally responsive practices are unlikely to thrive without their full support. Few school and district leaders would likely argue against being culturally responsive. However, an examination of their self-awareness on issues of race, that of their teaching staff, their student discipline records, course enrollment patterns, budget allocations for students of color, and their actions in the local community may illuminate actions that extend beyond rhetoric. In this report, we asked nearly a thousand community residents about their educational priorities for Black children. After discussing the methods, we will organize the findings and recommendations by these four CRSL behaviors: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts.

This study followed a mixed methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from a short survey, and additional qualitative data came from interviews. The study focused on the Inland Empire region of California and included data gathered from respondents representing a variety of cities in the region. This study aimed to provide insight to educators as to what Black students and their families said are their top five and ultimately their number one priority.

Nine hundred and seventy-seven individuals participated in the survey. Out of the total

number of participants, approximately 99% of respondents selected Black as their ethnicity. The participants' cities of residence varied throughout the Inland Empire. In this study, in pursuit of Black Educational Excellence and Achievement, participants were asked to respond to the following:

- Ethnicity
- Gender/Age
- County and City of Residence
- Check the top 5 educational priorities you want to see for Black student success, preschool through college.
- What is your number #1 educational priority for Black Students?
- Why did you select the above response as your #1 education priority? Please share.
- Would you be willing to share your ideas in a small group to create a Black Educational Agenda?

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Prior to the 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education, Topeka Kansas, Black students experienced the unfair treatment of "separate but equal" in schools and society. Historically, Black students have been underserved in schools and their educational priorities have been decided primarily by quantitative data from state and local testing. The BLU Educational Foundation collected qualitative data from Black students and community members throughout the Inland Empire. This study aimed to collect more than quantitative data to determine the educational priorities of Black students. It focuses on the top educational priorities for Black students by including their voices, the perspective of their families and their community. Participants were asked to check the top 5 educational priorities they want to see for Black student success, preschool through college. Nine hundred and fifty-five people responded. The options were: academic success, Black History, college and career

access, community service, discipline and suspension, early childhood education, effective teachers, extra-curricular activities, family and school partnerships, graduation rates, internships and work experience, school safety, student support/resources (social-emotional) and technology. According to the data collected, the top five priorities selected by participants were; academic success, Black History, college and career access, effective teachers, and graduation rates.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Utilizing a grounded theory method to analyze the qualitative data, researchers used an open coding or substantive coding followed by an axial coding strategy. In grounded theory, axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and concepts) to each other by way of a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories."

The researchers used inter-rater reliability (IRR), also called inter-rater agreement, to calibrate as they coded the qualitative data and further analyzed the data by establishing a protocol to identify trends in the data under each of the priorities. The researchers individually coded and identified the themes, collaborated and calibrated. The researchers coded into three categories and identified several themes.

In addition to selecting their top priorities, participants were asked to select their overall number one top priority and to elaborate on why they chose that item as a priority. The researchers identified three priorities with a significantly higher participant response as their number one priority.

Academic Success

Academic Success was selected as the most significant priority of all the data compiled. Academic success aligns masterfully with the



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second and third behaviors within the CSLR Framework, which is Culturally Responsive Curricula and teacher preparedness followed by Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Environments.

“EDUCATION IS FREEDOM!”

- STUDY PARTICIPANTS ON WHY ACADEMIC SUCCESS IS IMPORTANT.

Fifty-eight percent of the participants selected Academic Success as their number 1 priority, one-hundred and thirty-eight participants expressed the importance of equity and overcoming barriers. Twenty-nine participants expressed that education is key. Likewise, 24 participants indicated that community is important. One-hundred and fifty-eight participants indicated that overall success provides opportunities for future prospects. Seventy-six participants express that high school graduation is important. The pie chart below shows that 570 participants selected academic success as their number

one priority. It is further divided into themes under academic success and the percentage of participants that specified why they selected academic success as their number one priority is identified in the chart

Black History

Black History was the second highest selected priority. Critical self-awareness is one of the four behaviors associated with the CSLR Framework and several participants explicitly indicated they selected this priority because Blacks need to be more self-aware.

“IDENTITY INFORMS AND DIRECTS ACTION. HISTORY IS THE FOUNDATION OF IDENTITY”

- STUDY PARTICIPANTS ON WHY BLACK HISTORY IS IMPORTANT.

Under Black History, the researchers identified the four themes. One-hundred and



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twenty-four participants indicated that they selected black history because it is important. Two-hundred and four participants selected Black History as their number 1 priority. Fifteen participants said they selected black history because it's not taught in schools or in the country. Thirty-two individuals said they selected Black History because black people need to be more self-aware and aware of their identity. Eighteen participants said they selected Black History because we need to know our past in order to determine the future. The pie chart below shows that 204 participants selected Black History as their number 1 priority. It is divided into themes that were identified in the qualitative data and the percentages are captured in the chart.

College and Career Access

College and Career Access was also high among the priorities selected as number one. Three of the four behaviors associated with the CSLR Framework align with this priority. In order to ensure more Black students have access to college and careers, CSLR framework suggests culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation and culturally responsive and inclusive school environments.

“HAVING A DEGREE IS OFTEN AN IMPORTANT KEY TO SOCIAL MOBILITY”

- STUDY PARTICIPANTS ON WHY COLLEGE AND CAREER ACCESS IS IMPORTANT.

Ninety-five participants indicated the importance of college and career access. The researchers identified 9 themes under college and career access. Ten participants expressed that they selected college and career access because education is key. Eighteen participants expressed their selection of college and career access as their number one priority to create equity. Likewise, eighteen participants expressed that college and career access gives Black students options and opportunities. Eleven individuals expressed that they selected college and career access in connection with success in life, career and overall. Eleven additional participants expressed that they selected college and career access because Black students need to be career ready. Seven participants expressed that they chose college and career access because it leads to college graduation.

Effective teachers

It is crucial for African American students to have good teachers for several reasons. First, good teachers make their students feel safe, cared for, and as if they belong. What we now know about the brain and wellness is that these are the precursors of school success (Hammond, 2015; Sanchez, 2016). However, when achievement and discipline gap data are coupled with firsthand accounts from African American students themselves (Greer, Clark-Louque, Balogun, & Clay, 2018; O'Connor, Mueller, Lewis, Rivas-Drake, & Rosenberg, 2011; Wallace & Chhuon, 2014), there is little indication that they are regularly taught in such an environment. What the data often show, and what Black students often describe, are classrooms where they do not feel listened to, cared for, valued, respected, treated with fairness, or authentically engaged.

Second, good teachers tend to have high expectations for their students. When describing

their best teachers, African American students often describe educators who “would not let them fail,” “go all in,” and “will try many ways to help you” (Greer et al., 2018; Wallace & Chhuon, 2014). In fact, according to Robert Rosenthal’s (1994) famous “Pygmalion in the Classroom” study, teachers with high expectations of students are (a) generally nicer to them, (b) teach them more content at deeper levels, (c) give them more and longer opportunities to respond, and (d) provide more positive and descriptive feedback.

“BLACK STUDENTS NEED TEACHERS WHO BELIEVE IN THEM AND HAVE THEIR BEST INTERESTS IN MIND”

- STUDY PARTICIPANTS ON WHY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS ARE IMPORTANT.



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Figure 1 - Top 5 Educational Priorities N=955

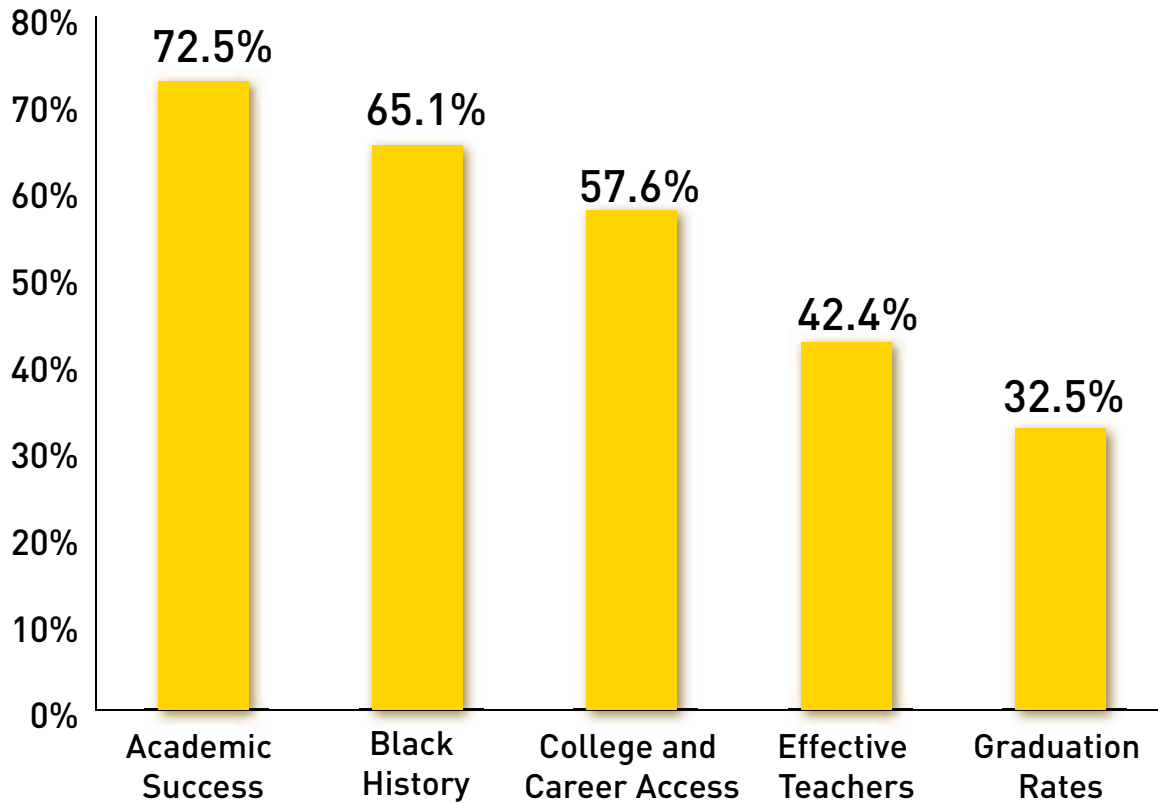


Figure 2

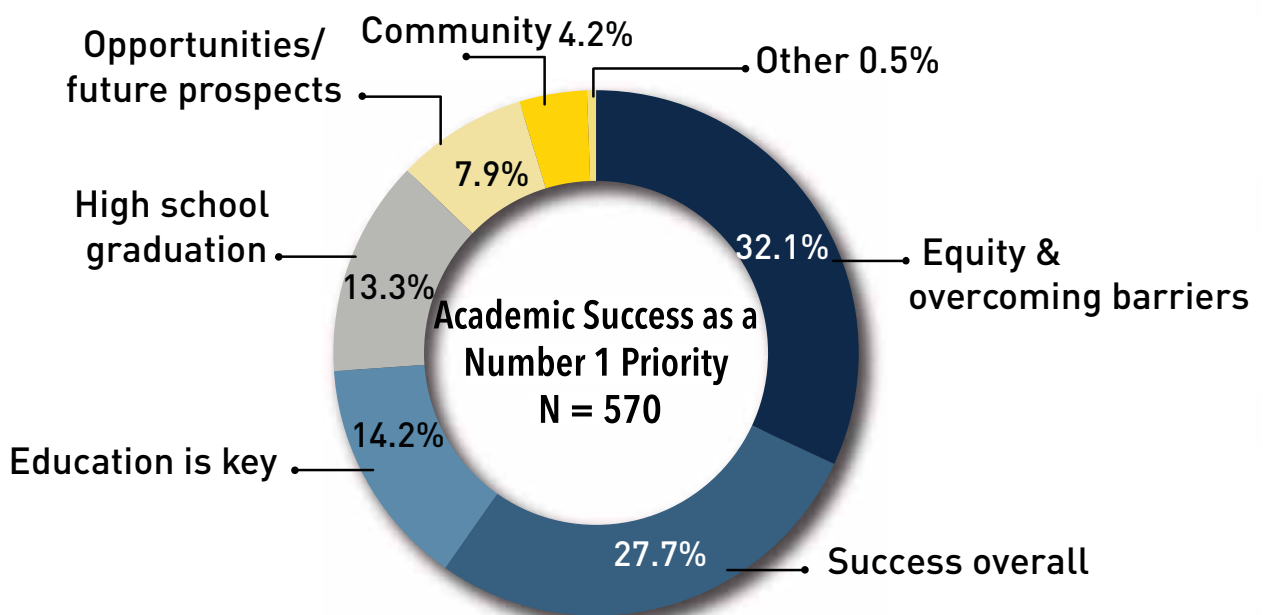


Figure 3

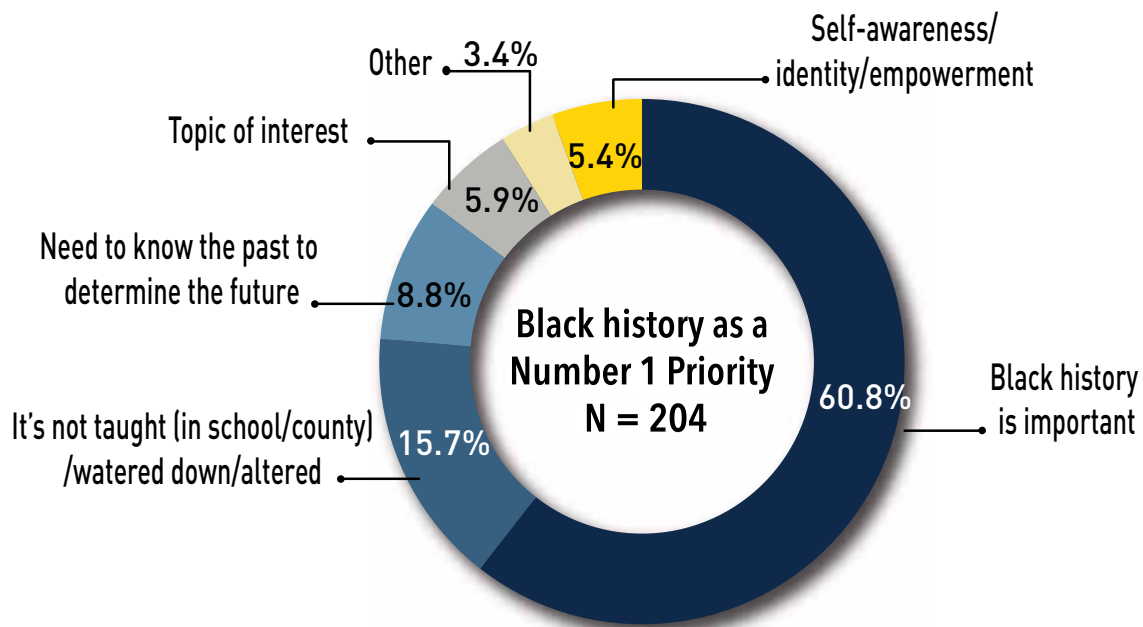
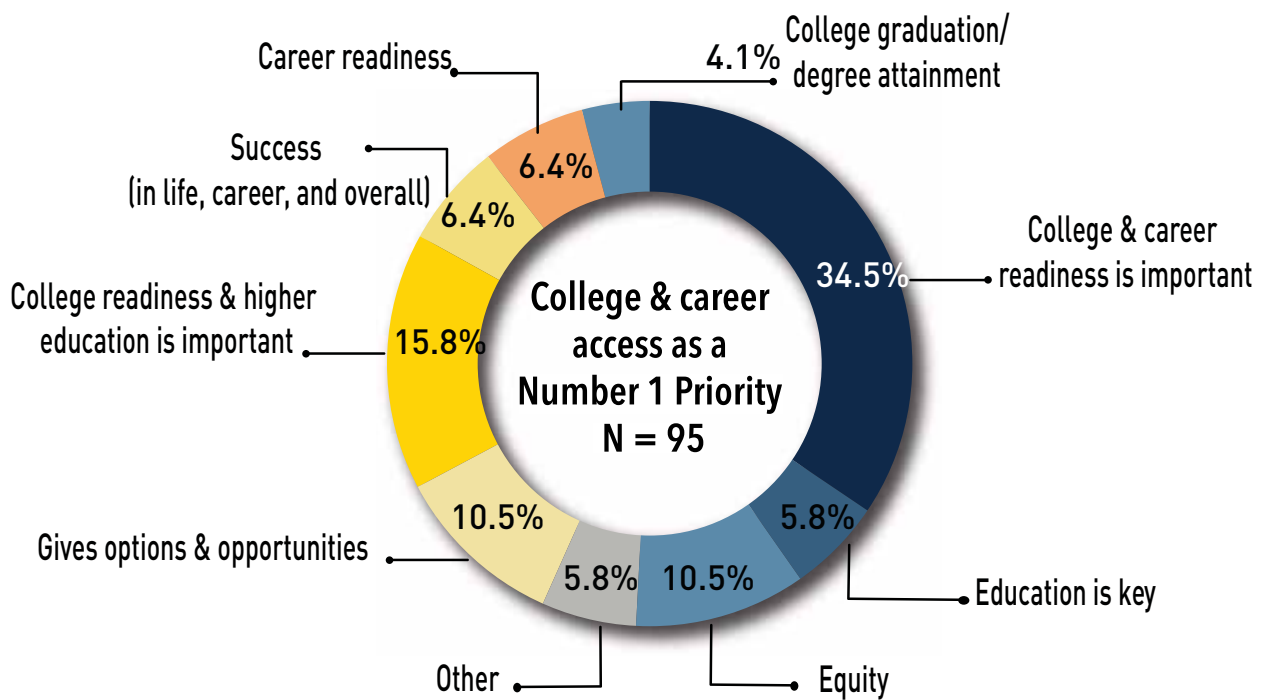


Figure 4



Unfortunately, research has repeatedly shown that teachers have lower expectations for Black students than all others, with Latino students receiving just slightly higher expectations, and White and Asian students receiving the highest. This was found in a 2007 review by Tenenbaum and Ruck. They analyzed 74 studies on teacher expectations by student's racial make-up, all with American teacher and student samples. Consistently, African American students faced the lowest expectations, got the most negative discipline, and received less positive speech from their teachers than all others.

Finally, good, culturally responsive teachers are empathetic. As Warren (2014, 2018) has shown in his research empathy is a key disposition for teachers in diverse schools, and it is likely to make teachers more effective with students of color. African Americans report more adverse childhood experiences and trauma than others (Umberson, Williams, Thomas, Liu, & Thomeer, 2014; Slack, Font, & Jones, 2016). Anecdotally, the present is also marked with frequent exposure to and widely available images of African American men, women, and children being killed, often by police and unarmed vigilantes. It is unlikely that African American children are able to simply check these experiences at the door when entering the classroom. Thus, empathy may be considered the teaching virtue that makes all other virtues possible (e.g., high expectations, caring relationships, sociocultural awareness, positive class culture).

Good & Black Teachers

As noted above, African American students need, and are morally and ethically deserving of good teachers. Not coincidentally, many of the characteristics of good teachers have been ascribed to African American educators. This is largely because African American teachers frequently report entering the field to make a difference in the lives of Black youth, and because they themselves understand the perils of navigating academic spaces as minorities (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Kohli, 2018).

That said, African American teachers, counselors, and administrators make up just 4% of all certificated faculty in California (see the California Department of Education's DataQuest website). When American schools were desegregated after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and African American children were bused to White schools, one of the consequences was the large-scale dismissal of Black teachers and administrators. In some districts, roughly 40-60% of Black faculty—even those with higher credentials than their White peers—were dismissed (Haddix, 2017; Siddle-Walker, 2001). Those cast aside teachers historically provided environments of care, safety, and belonging for African American children.

Today, research shows that Black educators—though few in number—positively impact students in several ways. They act as role models for African American students, particularly when there are Black male teachers; they are able to re-present curriculum through a critical, counter-perspective that is rarely heard in schools; they are less prone to negatively and harshly discipline Black students; and, most importantly, their instructional styles often lead students to academic success (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Cheng, 2017; Kohli, 2018; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Strategies such as growing your own programs have been mentioned as one solution (Haddix, 2017). What may be key there is the intentionality and moral courage to proactively recruit, hire, coach, support, retain, and promote African American educators.

CONCLUSIONS

Closing the gap takes intentionality and sustained commitment. State, school district, and school leaders can be a powerful force for eliminating it. When school boards, superintendents and principals make closing the gap a top priority – and when they plan, allocate resources, and design accountability measures to do so – they make progress. School leaders must have high expectations of all students

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and teachers, along with an awareness of their own culture and the culture of others. These leaders must be able to understand and capitalize on students' culture, abilities, resilience, and effort, and they must reach out to engage parents and communities to support educational excellence.

For students to be successful, schools need to establish a culture of high expectations and communicate those expectations to students and parents. Rigorous instruction is needed that challenges the student's ability to think. Students need comprehensive support to include academic, medical, social services and community agencies; this support can be provided through mentors, tutoring, peer support networks and role models. Students who need additional support should be identified early.

Additionally, ensuring that our districts and schools have Culturally Responsive Leaders will be beneficial as we act now to begin our journey towards fulfilling the Black educational priorities. We urge district and school leaders

to move past speaking about Black Educational Excellence and begin putting systems in place that ensure districts and schools develop educators who are critically self-aware, culturally responsive, and who strategically engage Black students and parents in an inclusive school environment.

CALL TO ACTION

- 1. Include/Name African American/Black students in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)**
 - A. Create a line item in budget for African American/Black students
 - B. Provide specific strategies/programs to increase African American/Black student achievement

- 2. Create, Support, and Fund an Equity Officer position and/or Department**
 - A. Create a line item in budget for the Equity Department
 - B. Hire/Assign effective and willing staff to the department
 - C. Complete and Equity educational audit centered on key indicators in the LCAP priorities and set goals to achieve optimal educational outcomes for Black students

- 3. Create a recruitment, retention, and graduation plan and strategy for Black students at all levels preschool through college**

- 4. Recruit hire and retain and promote Black teachers, professors and educational staff**

- 5. Provide an opportunity for leadership development for parents and community members to advocate and support black student achievement.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many ways that both institutions and parents/community can help create positive change for Black students in the region. In each section below, we identify different ways to carry out these priority areas identified by Black students and their parents.

Recommendations	For Institutions	For Institution & Community Partnerships
<p>Academic Success</p>	<p>Provide Achievement Gap schools (districts with 5% percent or more Black students) with a structured, rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum</p> <p>Provide strong Universal student supports to schools that have large Achievement Gaps</p> <p>Expand effective, special interventions and services to support students who have increasing/continuous attendance/discipline problems</p> <p>Train school and district leaders to utilize a Culturally Responsive Leadership Framework to strengthen four key behaviors: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula, instruction and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) engaging students and parents in community contexts.</p> <p>Require personalized plans for each student that monitors progression in academics as well as social-emotional development</p> <p>Connect, apply, and understand the different learning styles of students and how they impact the classroom</p>	<p>Provide parent-friendly information regarding all core subject areas</p> <p>Develop, support and fund African American Parent Advisory Councils at the district and site level</p> <p>Offer parent/community workshops in community-friendly spaces</p> <p>Provide parents with information on the Universal supports needed to educate the “whole” student</p> <p>Provide trainings to parents and community on how to be educational advocates for students</p> <p>Create opportunities for parents and community to contribute to the learning and development of students</p> <p>Create an asset map with local nonprofit organizations and churches that can offer services and support to students and families</p>

Recommendations	For Institutions	For Institution & Community Partnerships
<p>Black History and Culture</p>	<p>Infuse the study of Black history into the Pre-K-12 curriculum.</p> <p>Create a Black Studies college and career pathway</p> <p>Offer major in Black, African-American or African Diasporic Studies</p> <p>Create a Black Studies department Mandate Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement</p> <p>Establish Black Cultural Centers to uplift the contributions of Black/African people throughout history</p> <p>Establish campus Black Student Unions to celebrate Black culture, lifestyle and history and foster student growth and development through community service and outreach</p>	<p>Collaborate with community members to enhance Black studies curriculum through school activities and project based learning</p> <p>Commit to having robust Black History Month programming which is accessible to students and community</p> <p>Expose students to Black history year-round by exposing them to books, museums, exhibits, documentaries, community events, etc.</p>



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Recommendations	For Institutions	For Institution & Community Partnerships
<p>College and Career Access</p>	<p>Expand college access and success programs to increase access and support for Black students</p> <p>Increase the number and percentage of Black students who are enrolled and complete AVID 6-12th grade</p> <p>Make FAFSA/Dream Act completion a high school graduation requirement Require students to complete a college application during their senior year</p> <p>Hire and train culturally competent college and career counselors, advisors, and staff</p> <p>Disseminate information about financial aid and scholarships and provide hands-on support for completion</p> <p>Create an articulation agreement between high schools and post-secondary institutions to include Dual-enrollment programs.</p> <p>Provide sufficient Career and Technical Education courses of interest to Black students</p> <p>Expand and sustain ongoing student support systems in higher education, including study groups, culturally-based learning communities, tutoring, and mentoring</p>	<p>Invite community members and colleges to meet and discuss career and college options</p> <p>Partner with parents and community to provide information and resources for financial aid options</p> <p>Create viable career pathways in which black students have access to enrollment</p> <p>Build awareness in the Black community regarding college articulation agreements and college promise programs</p> <p>Partner with families and community-based agencies to support and participate in campus career days</p> <p>Create family and community college visits and open house activities</p>

Recommendations	For Institutions	For Institution & Community Partnerships
<p>Effective Teachers</p>	<p>Establish a pipeline of quality teachers and administrators by prioritizing and incentivizing the recruitment, hiring, and retention of African-American educators</p> <p>Create an Education/Teacher Pathway and Pipeline for future Black teachers</p> <p>Address the special language needs of Black students by administering Language Proficiency Tests to Black students in 4th grade</p> <p>Provide training for teachers to use English Language Development (ELD) strategies to eligible students to improve language development</p> <p>Provide cultural competency training for educators on all levels preschool through college</p> <p>Facilitate classroom management trainings for new and practicing educators</p>	<p>Include parents and community members as an integral part of the hiring and development of teachers and professors</p> <p>Share key school data of interests to families with the community at large</p> <p>Create goals and strategies to increase parent and community involvement in schools and colleges</p>

Recommendations	For Institutions	For Institution & Community Partnerships
<p>Graduation Rates</p>	<p>Prevent, intervene, and retrieve Black students who are at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out of the preschool through college system, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing special interventions and services to support students and their families -Expanding retention programs with the aim of tracking, retaining, and re-enrolling students. 	<p>Partner with businesses and communities to offer graduation incentives, internships, and job opportunities</p> <p>Provide and support interventions, mentorships, and parent partnerships that ensure student and family success</p>



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APPENDIX

Study Population: Our sample consisted of 1095 Black parents, students, and community stakeholders in the Inland Empire. Approximately 26% of respondents (286) were ages 41-59, while another 23% (250) were ages 18-24. The majority of participants were women (56%). Nearly 53% and 47% lived in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, respectively. Respondents lived primarily in the cities of San Bernardino (13%), Rialto (10.4%), Riverside (10.1%), Fontana (9.6%), and Moreno Valley (10.1%).

Study Protocol: To conduct this study the researchers followed several steps. Initially, they developed a survey and made it accessible online. Next, the research team took the survey directly to the community. Study staff canvassed various cities in the Inland Empire and went door-to-door seeking out participants interested in taking the survey. Finally, they facilitated three town hall meetings, one in each of the following cities: Riverside, Fontana, and Victorville. Finally, we interviewed some town hall participants after the meetings to gain more insight into their needs and wants. During the town hall meetings participants completed the survey and select participants engaged in an open-ended interview following a panel discussion.

Instruments: To collect data a short 10-item survey was created. Five of the survey items were designed to collect demographic data (e.g., age, race, gender, county and city of residence). Two items asked participants about their top educational priorities. One item was open-ended and asked participants why they had chosen the priorities they listed.

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The Inland Empire Black Equity Initiative was formed in 2014 and is composed of Inland Empire organizations that share a desire to improve social conditions through empowerment, education, and policy change. Guided by a deep commitment to the liberation and self-determination of Black people, this work advances our mission by helping us to deepen our influence and reach for racial equity throughout the region. Our initiatives focus on education, health & wellness, civic engagement, leadership development, advocacy, and the arts.

For more information visit: <https://blackequity.org>



BLU Educational Foundation provides educational and human services programming to youth, adults and organizations, with a mission, to build healthy productive communities. Our initiatives focus on education, health & wellness, civic engagement, leadership development, advocacy, and the Arts.



The Center for Social Innovation provides a credible research voice that spurs civic leadership and policy innovation. It integrates researchers, community organizations, and civic stakeholders in collaborative projects and long-term partnerships that advance resilience, inclusion, sustainability, and equity (RISE). Importantly, the Center seeks to shift away from a "problem" narrative to an "opportunity" narrative for marginalized communities and localities.