



# South Orange Maplewood School District: *Getting Integration Ready*

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A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue denim shirt and red pants, stands in the center of a classroom. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In the background, several students are seated at desks, some looking down at papers or books. The classroom is brightly lit, and the overall atmosphere is calm and focused.

**Welcome and Thank You!**



# History of School Desegregation and Integration

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## Robert Carter, argued 1954 *Brown v. Board* case, Michigan Law Review interview, 1975

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**"What makes Brown historic, however, is its fallout effect. It transformed and radicalized race relations in this country, removing blacks from the status of supplicants to full citizenship under law, with entitlement by law to all the rights and privileges of all other citizens.** Equal citizenship is not yet a reality but blacks can now contend that the reality is contrary to the law. **This is a powerful argument- a potent force that an equal facilities victory could not have produced.**"

*Brown* legislated opportunity to address educational inequalities...and our enduring challenge is to continue the charge.

This means tackling...the elephants in the room.



*"I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me."*

# SOMSD Equity Audit Reports

- Report 1: August 2020
  - Focus on ELA curricular frameworks (e.g., standards, objectives, learning targets), intervention supports, and operation of Professional Learning Community.
- Report 2: June 2021
  - Focus on math curriculum and enrollment, and curricular and learning climate on cultural diversity
- Report 3: June 2023
  - Focus on math curriculum, disparity patterns in special education, gifted/AP/Honors, and discipline, school culture and climate (e.g., Black students' experiences of belonging), and intervention supports.

## **EQUITY AUDIT REPORT 3:**

*DISPARITY PATTERNS,  
MATH CURRICULUM,  
CULTURE AND CLIMATE,  
AND INTERVENTION  
SUPPORT.*





# Equity audit activities

- **Document Review**

- Math curriculum
- Intervention supports (e.g., I&RS)
- Culture and Climate
- Program enrollment process

- **Interviews**

- School staff
- Students


- **Surveys**

- Students

- **Focus Groups**

- School staff
- Students





Disparity Patterns  
2018-19 to 2021-22

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# Relative Risk Ratios

1.0

Equal Risk

Above 1.0

Elevated Risk

Below 1.0

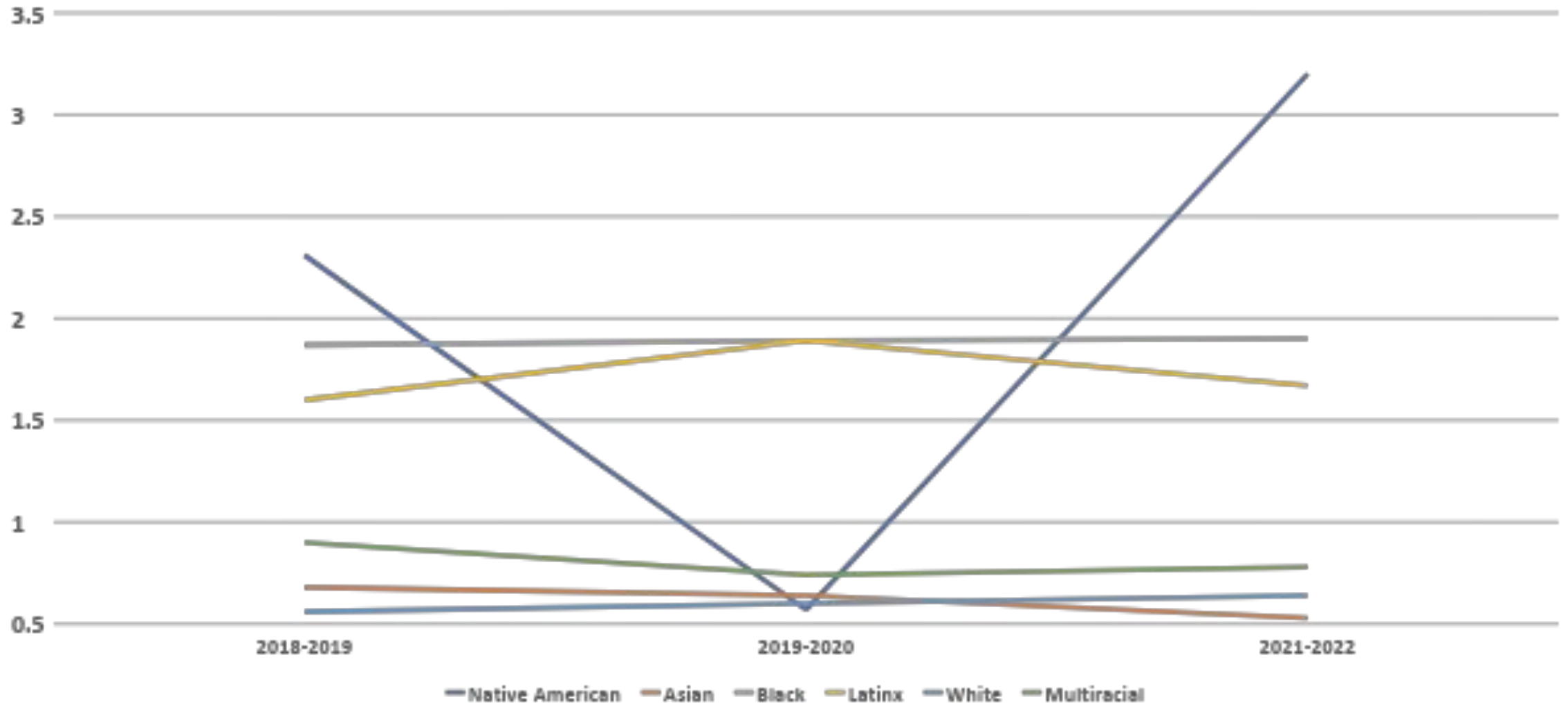
Lower Risk



# Special Education Findings

- In examining the special education data over the 2018-19 to 2021-22 school years, there is a persistent disparity pattern. Black students were consistently 80 to 90% *more likely* compared to all others to be identified with a disability. White students were between 40 to 50% *less likely* compared to all others to be identified with a disability.
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# SPECIAL EDUCATION RELATIVE RISK RATIO BY RACE: 2018-19 TO 2021-22



# ADDITIONAL PATTERNS

- Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, on average, 1 in every 5 Black student, Free/Reduced Lunch eligible (FRLP) student and male student were identified with a disability. Comparatively, on average, 1 in every 10 White student, non-FRLP eligible student, and female student were identified with a disability
- Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, Black, Latinx, FRLP eligible, and Male students were at greatest risk of being identified with a Learning Disability (LD) and/or Speech Language Impairment (SLI).

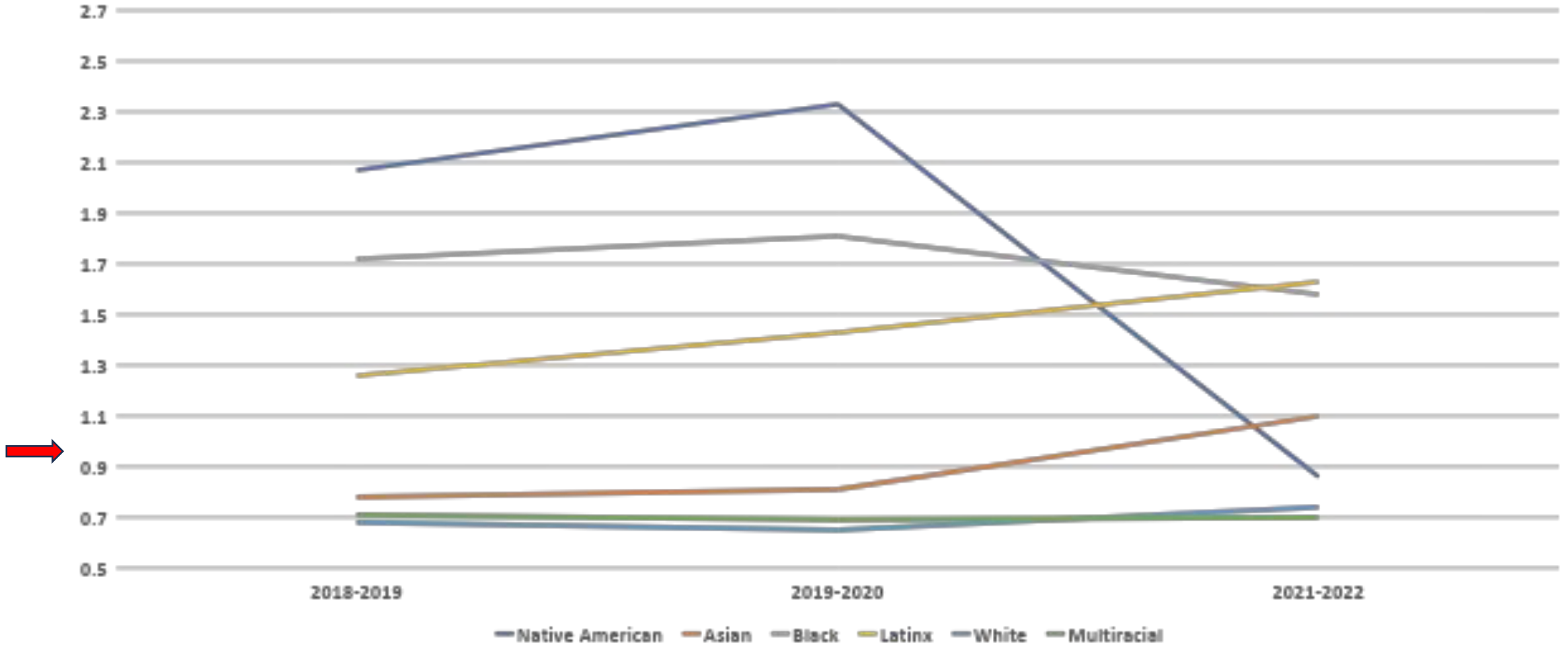
# AP and Honors Enrollment Findings

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- The analysis of honors and AP over the 2018-19 to 2021-22 SY demonstrate a pattern in which Black and Latinx students are at greatest likelihood of being enrolled in Honors classes and less likely in Advanced Placement classes (AP). Meanwhile White and Asian students have an inverse pattern compared to Black and Latinx students. This pattern suggest that Black and Latinx students' enrollment in advanced courses ends at Honors classes while White and Asians do not maintain a ceiling.

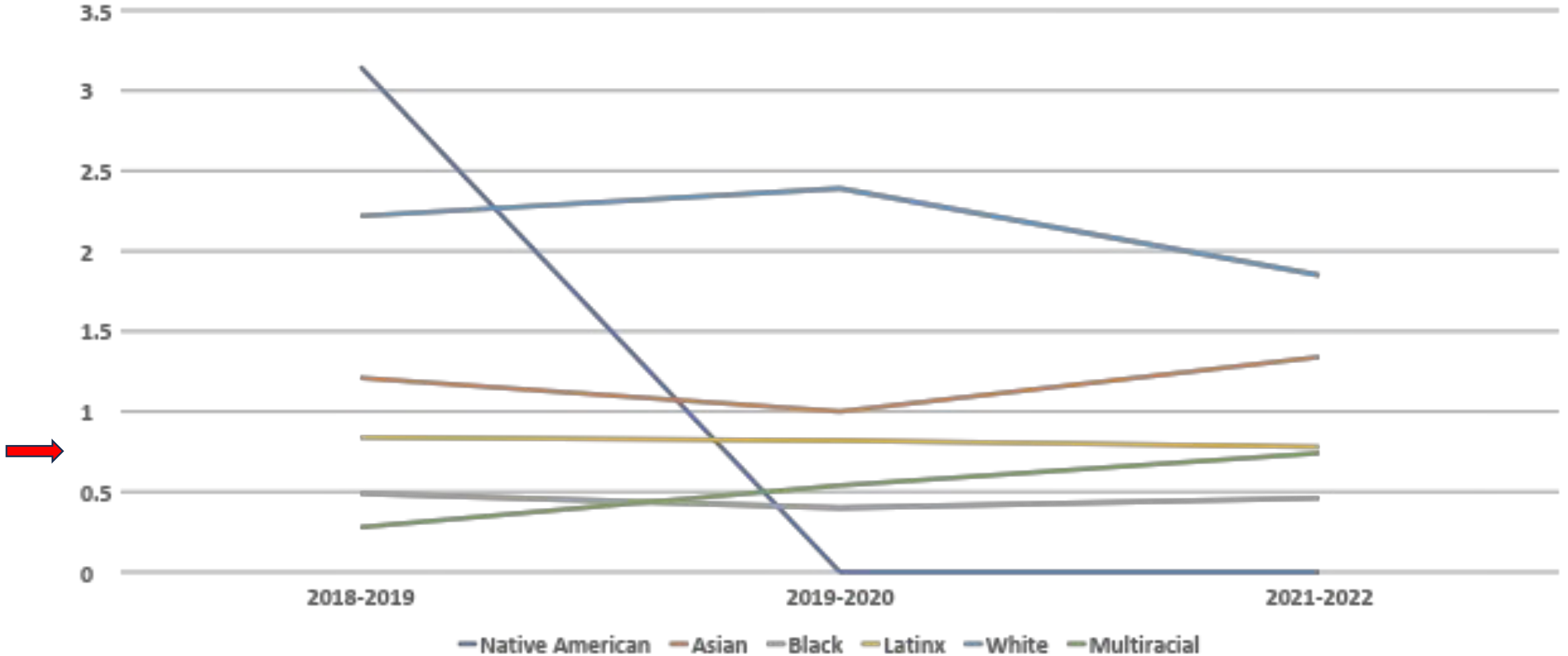


# HONORS RELATIVE RISK RATIO BY RACE: 2018-19 TO 2021-22





# AP RELATIVE RISK RATIO BY RACE: 2018-19 TO 2021-22



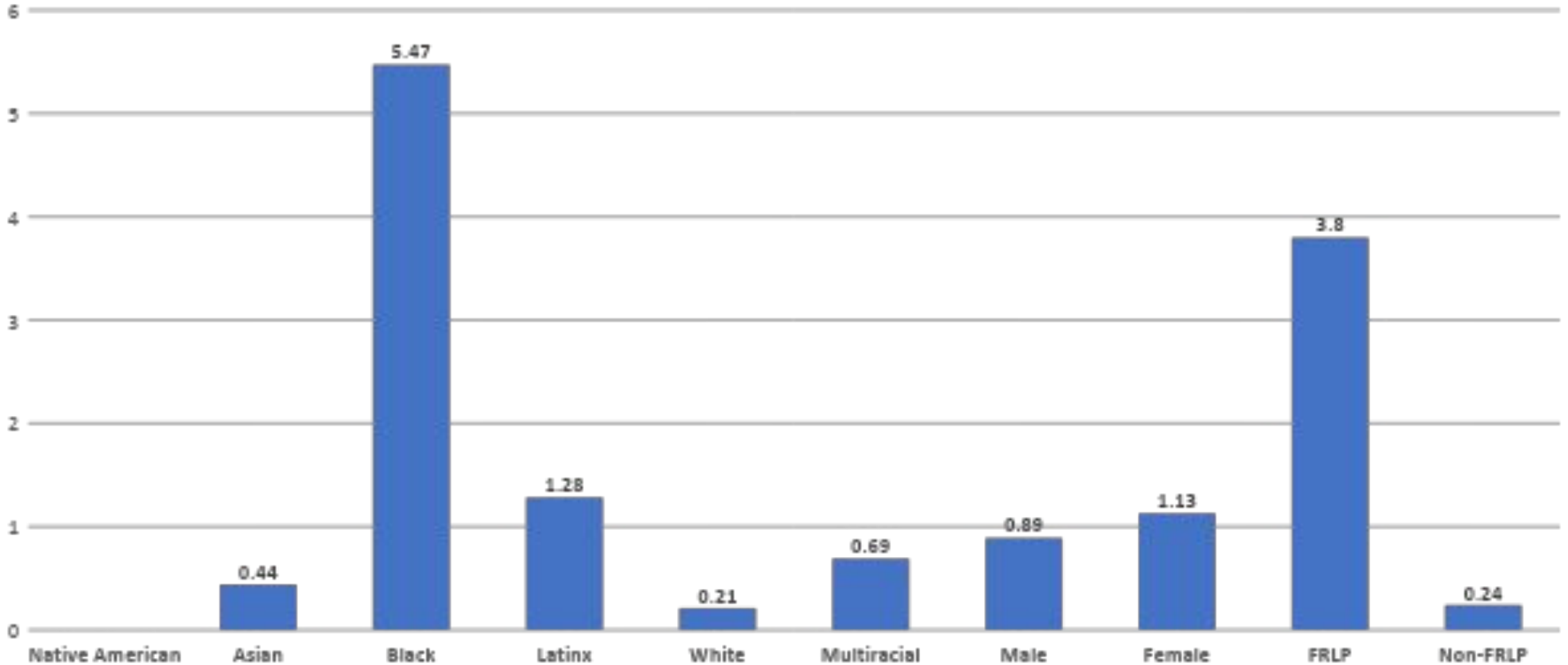
# ADDITIONAL PATTERNS

- Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, on average, 2 out of every 3 AP student identified as White; on average, 1 out of every 2 AP student identified as Male.
- Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, on average, 1 out of every 3 Honors student identified as Black ; on average, 1 out of every 2 AP student identified as Male.

# Discipline

- In 2021-22 SY, among the Black student population, which comprised 25% of the school district enrollment, they were 64% of the overall students receiving discipline; this represents an over-representation of Black students in discipline.
- Comparatively, White students are 54% of the overall student population and 19% of students with disabilities population; this is an under-representation.

# Discipline relative risk ratio by race, FRLP, and gender: 2021-22





# Overall Disparity Findings

Black students, FRLP eligible students, Latinx students, and male students more likely to be identified with a disability compared to all other groups.

White students and non-FRLP eligible students more likely to be enrolled in AP classes compare to all other groups.

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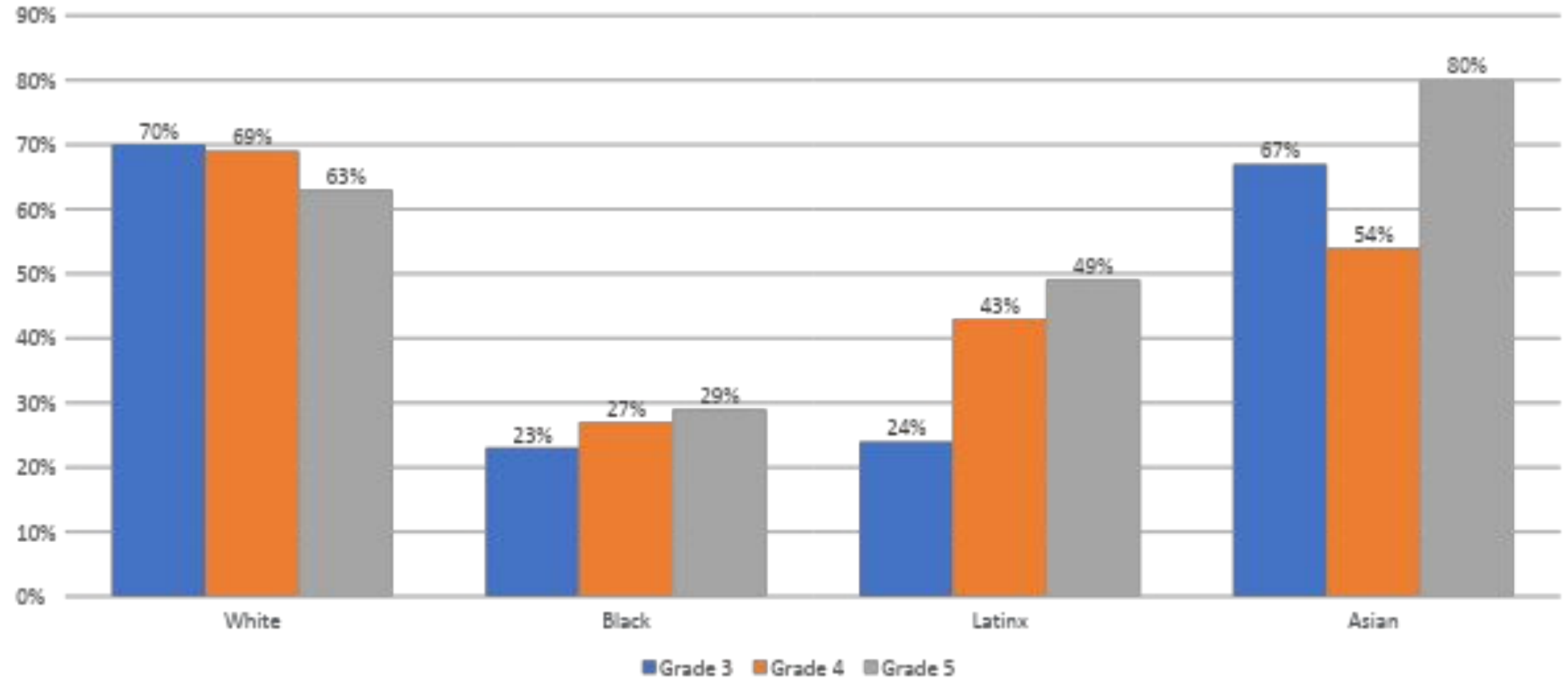
Disparities evident in elementary and middle school math achievement and Less rigorous curriculum experienced by middle school students in lower track courses

# Math Curriculum

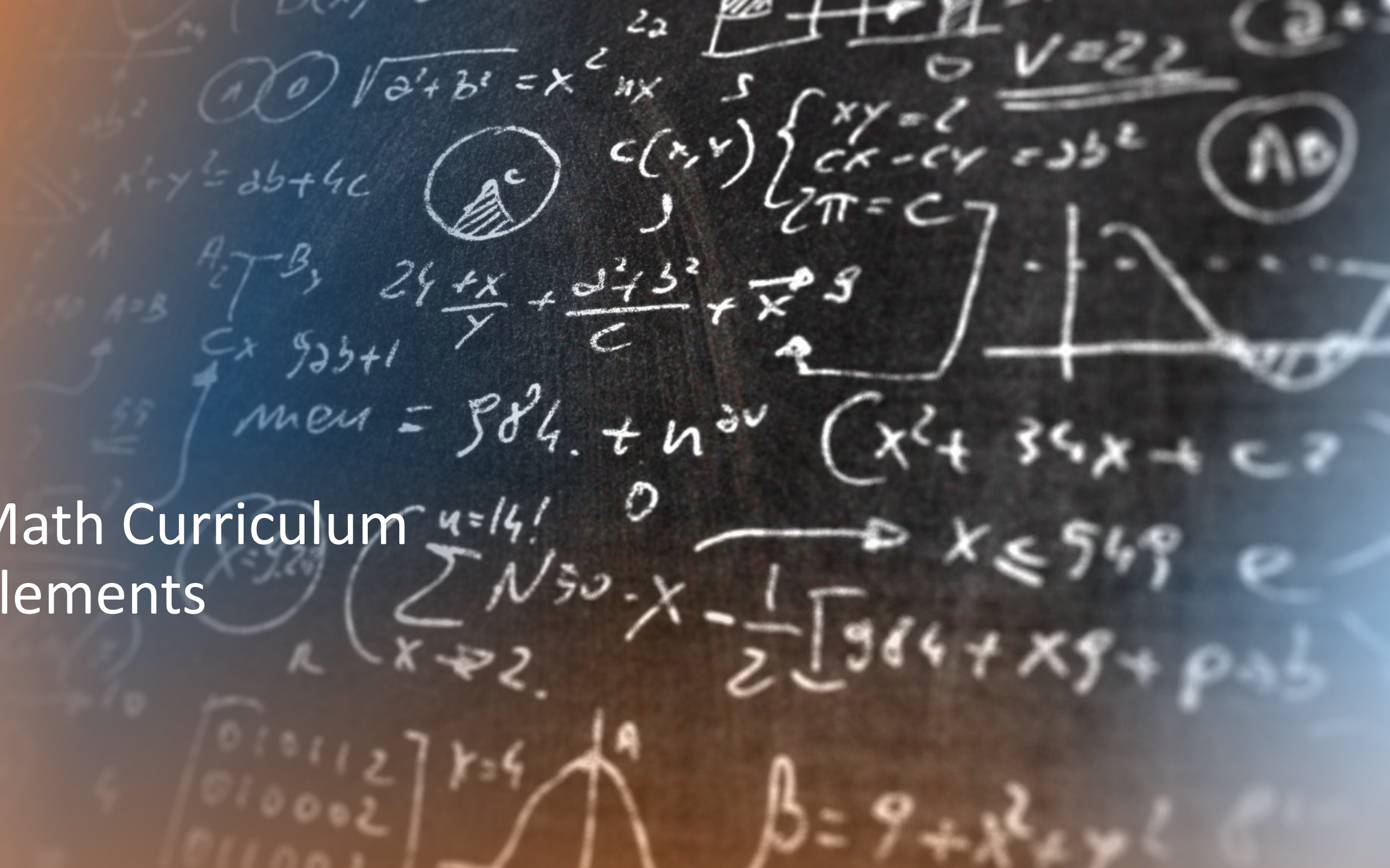


# Math Achievement by Race: 2021-22

Note: NJ assessment performance - % of test takers meeting or exceeding grade level benchmarks



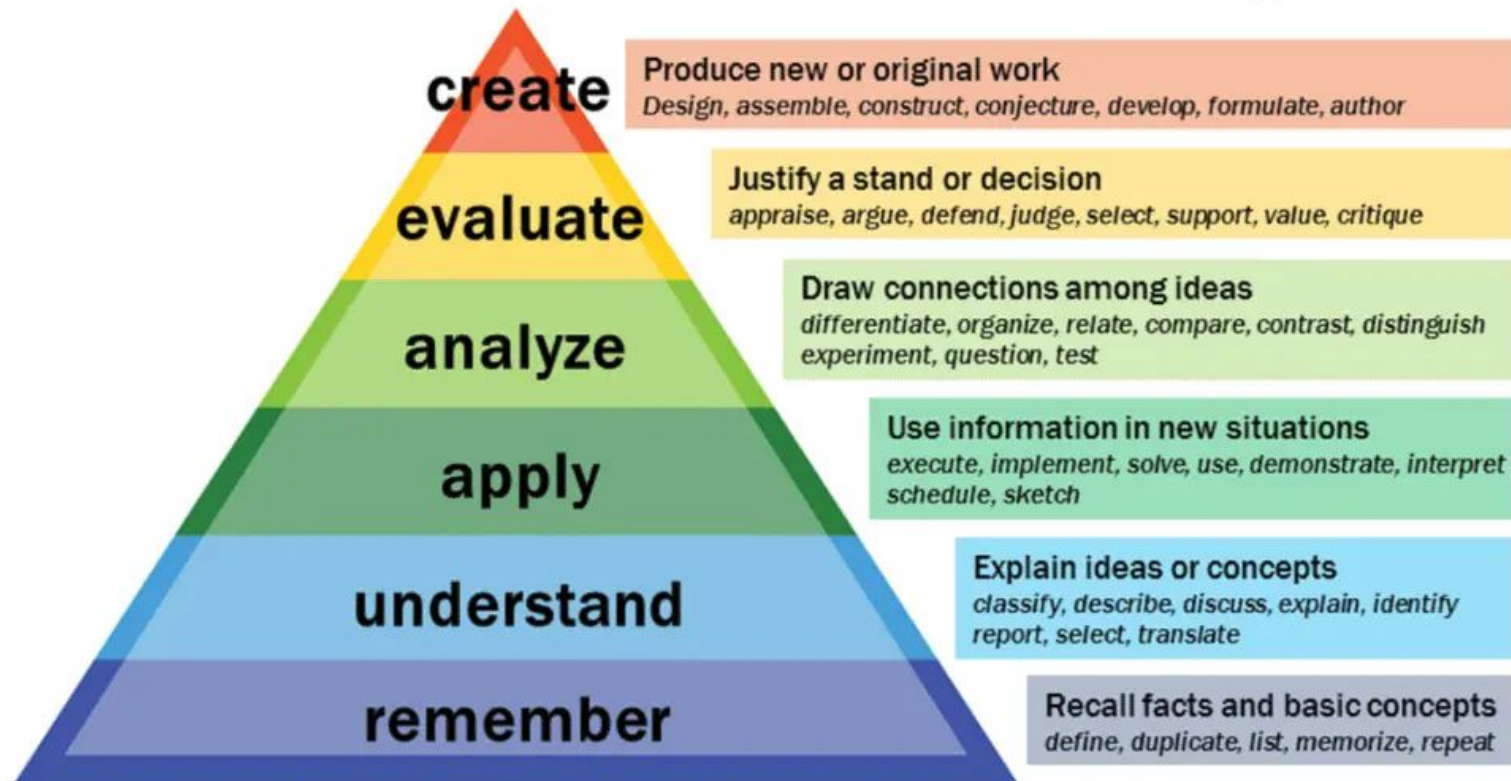
# Math Curriculum Elements





# Examined depth of thinking or cognitive work in middle school math classes

## Bloom's Taxonomy



# Math Curriculum

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- **Grade 6 Math**

- The majority of student learning standards focus on lower-level cognitive tasks such as "understanding" (e.g., finding) and "applying" (e.g., computing, dividing, adding, subtracting, solving) concepts.
- The essential questions and understandings in Unit 1 also focused on understanding and recall cognitive activities.

- **Grade 6 Pre-Algebraic**

- The majority of student learning standards encourage students to "write, read, and evaluate" (see below 6.EE.A.1 and 6.EE.A.2) or "apply and extend" (see below 6.EE.A, 7.NS.A.1, and 7.NS.A.2) their learning. Moreover, students are prompted to apply their knowledge to real-world examples (see below 7.EE.B and 7.EE.B.3).
- The essential questions and understandings in Unit 1 also focused on analysis and evaluation cognitive activities.



Math Course exposure  
guides pathways

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$$f'(x) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}$$

$$= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{(x+h)^2 - x^2}{h}$$

$$= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{x^2 + 2xh + h^2 - x^2}{h}$$

$$= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{2xh + h^2}{h}$$

$$= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{h}{h(x+h-x)}$$
$$= \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{x+h-x}$$

$$= \frac{1}{2\sqrt{x}}$$

$$f'(x) = \lim_{\Delta x \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+\Delta x) - f(x)}{\Delta x}$$

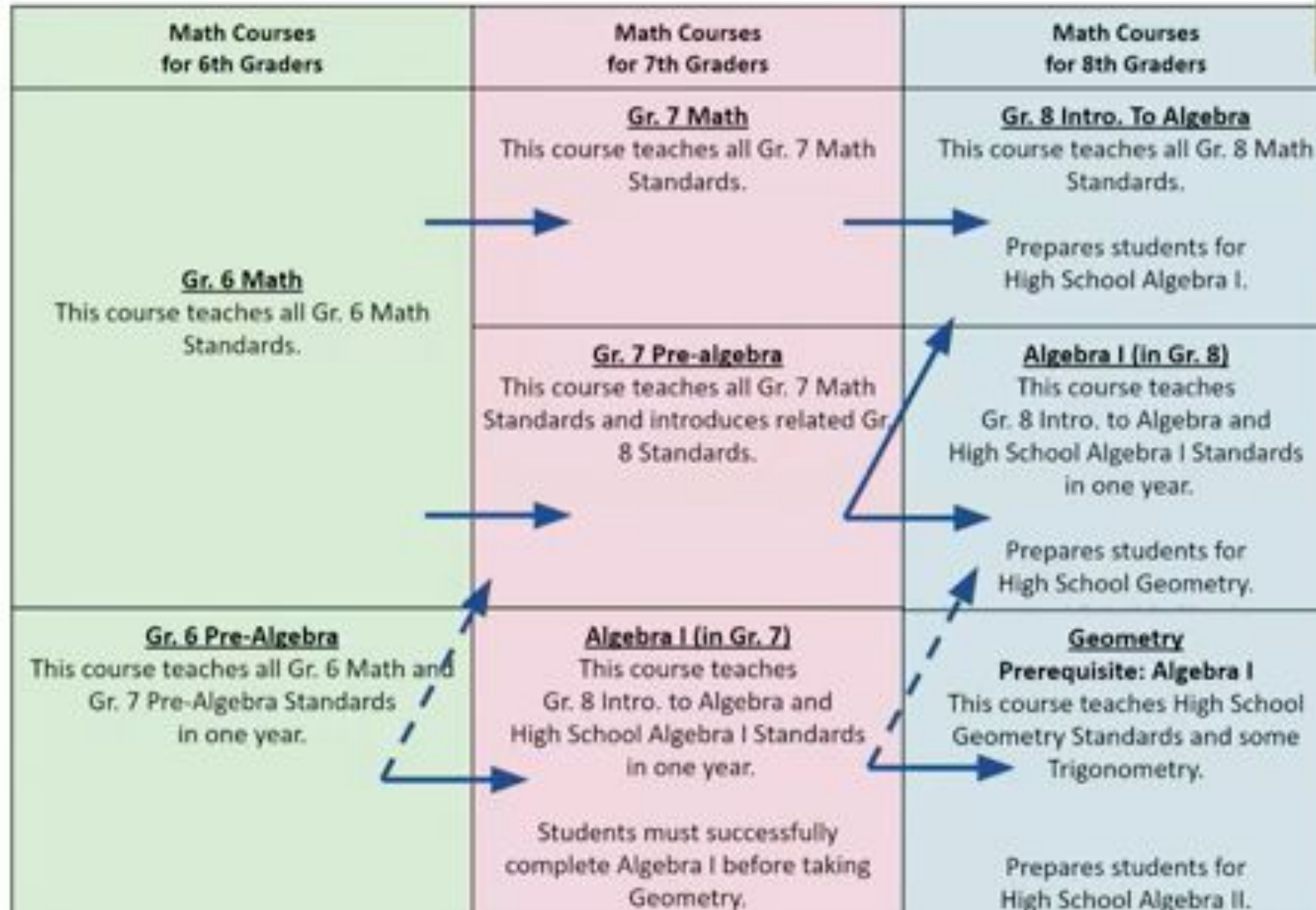
$$f'(a) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(a+h) - f(a)}{h}$$

$y = g(x)$   
Secant

$g(x)$

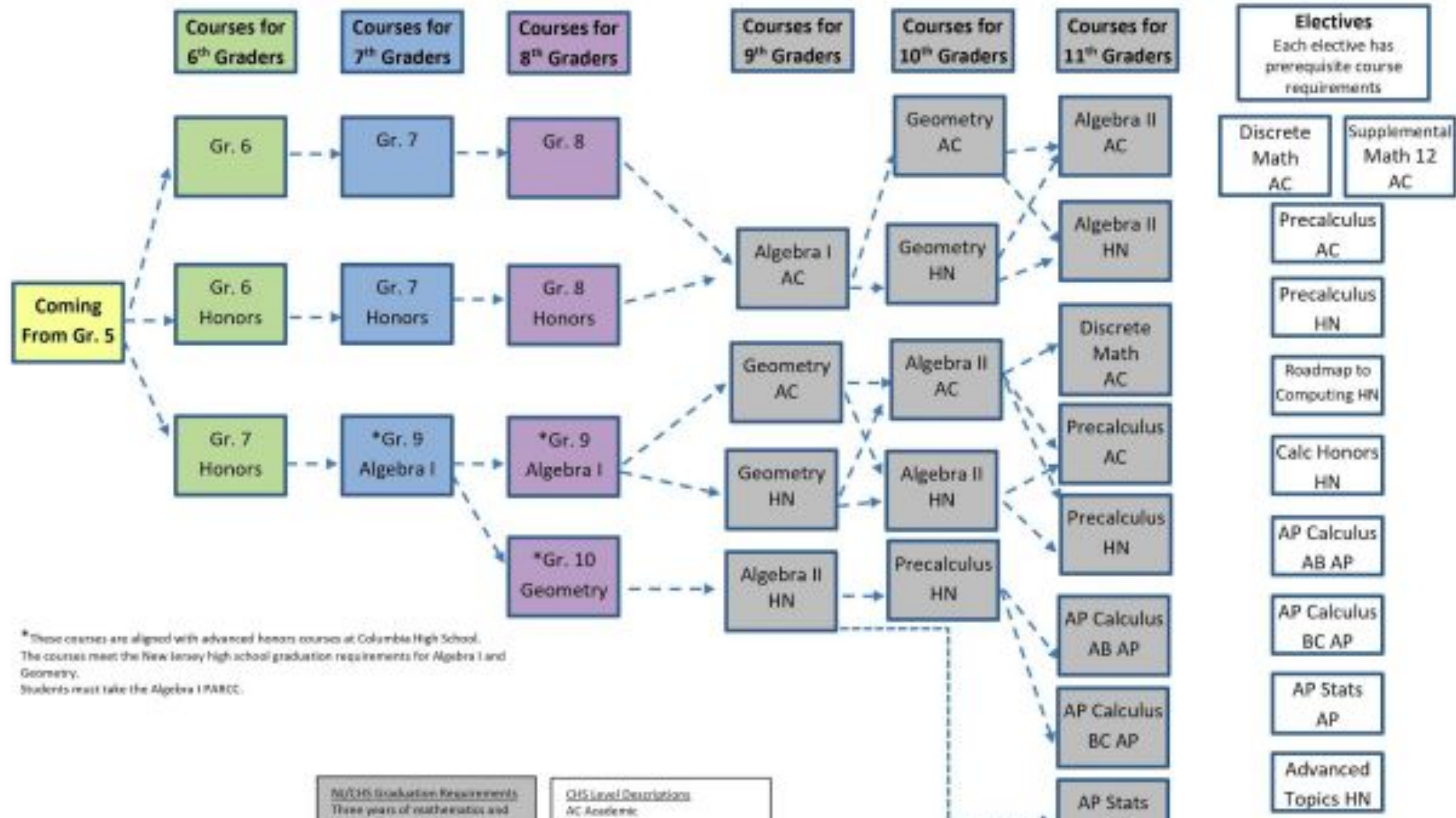
$x+h$

## Recommended Paths



### Middle School Math Recommended Paths

### High School Math Recommended Paths



# Overall Curricular Findings

Math disparities by race exist in elementary grades and persist into middle school grades

Math curricula outlines different cognitive activities based on course sequence

Students in grade level course sequence have fewer opportunities to enter other levels of math courses

# Intervention Supports

I&RS stands for “intervention and referral services” and is a support system for teachers to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior, or health difficulties in general education. The I&RS process begins formally after a teacher has already facilitated and documented in-class Tier 1 interventions.

# Findings

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- The district identified recommendations in a January 2023 memo to school leadership the need to address gaps in the process of providing intervention supports.
  - 1) consistent and uniform team compositions; 2) consistent I&RS teaming schedule; 3) creation of new and consistent I&RS assistance forms; 4) schools should share a uniform google drive on I&RS process; and 5) district creates and provides a bank of intervention.
- Each school provided sample intervention forms, however there was an absence of uniformity in content by school levels (elementary, middle, and high school)
- According to data shared by sample elementary schools, during the 2022-23 school year, Black and Male students are being enrolled most frequently for I&RS services.



# Culture and Climate: *Sense of Cultural Belonging*

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While there are some who experience the school district as “an oasis” there are others who experience the district as a place where they do not belong. Specifically, Black students say their experience of the district is one in which there is a lack of rigor and a lack of care in relation to their academic journeys.

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# Finding 1: Black students identify not feeling they belong

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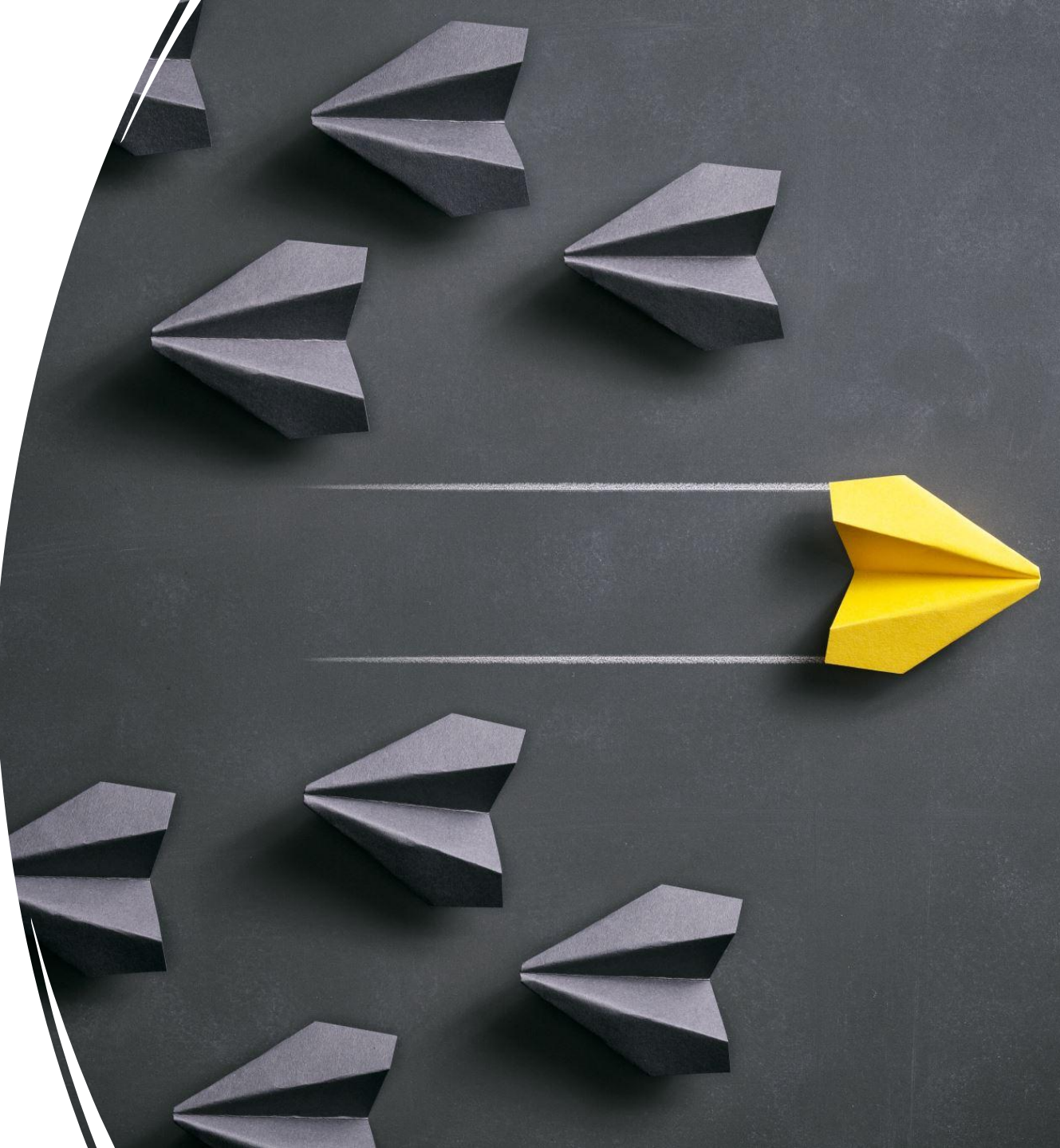
1. Black students perceive and experience the SOMSD as pressuring them to attend AP courses without supports;
2. Identify feeling isolated in AP courses due to being the only Black students and AP teachers ignoring their presence;
3. They experience being tokenized in courses; and
4. In lower-level classes higher performing Black students are expected to support other Black students



# Black students feel being weaponized in honors and AP classes

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- “I feel like at some point it feels like they’re desperate to have me in those classes --and it’s like they need me there to expand the diversity, like at that point I’m not seen as like a student if I’m seen as a weapon to use to fight backlash for like racism and junk.”



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## **Finding 2: Different opportunities available for students of color compared to White students**

- As one teacher reported, “They [white families] would go get private tutoring. They would go to Kumon, they'd go to Huntington,” while the families of color relied solely on the school’s support offering of the pull-out group class. Another teacher considered the AP Saturday academy as an unequal resource.
  - “They had an AP Saturday academy. Where is the Saturday academy for the kids that are failing? How are you having an academy that’s free for the kids. Teacher volunteered. Now teachers at the high school don’t volunteer for anything. Where is the extra work for—you talk about access and equity.”
- Black students identified not feeling comfortable to ask for help:
  - “Why do I have to go out and seek a tutor? Why I have to go out and get that help? 'Cause they're not helping. And when I first started at Columbia, there were certain teachers that I don't want to go to them and I didn't want to say anything, 'cause I felt like I wouldn't get that help.”

# Finding 2 continued

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- Teachers identify their peers as maintaining different levels of bias towards students of color:
  - “I do think that we are not encouraging our students of color. I don't know that we're reaching out to their families and letting them know fully what the options will be and I also still believe that there's a lot of bias and even teacher bias. And even when folks are trying, even when they are really, really trying to do the right thing, there's still a lot of internal teacher bias when guiding students in certain ways that is not resolved.”
- Black students identified feeling uncomfortable in AP classes due to teacher bias:
  - “For me to leave her class after semester one, I had to email the head of [redacted], and I wrote this two-page long letter, just detailing everything that I had been through in her class and how difficult it was for me to stay in here as a student. 'Cause I also feel like I'm not being supported enough.”
- Black students in higher level classes are often the only one, or one of very few, and receive little welcome. Thus, many choose to self isolate, as this student notes. “So it's just like I'm the only black girl in my class, so I kind of, I sit all the way in the back.”

# Recommendations



Build Policy to Institutionalize These  
Recommendations

# Curriculum

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- **Ensure that students in lower track math classes receive the high-quality instruction that they need to become better math students:**
  - Review the current curriculum and standards for lower-track math classes to ensure that they align with higher-level cognitive skills such as evaluation and creation (the two upper tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy). Identify areas where the curriculum can be enhanced to provide more challenging tasks that require students to analyze, evaluate, and create mathematical solutions.
- **Create enrichment and acceleration opportunities:**
  - Develop enrichment and acceleration programs that provide students with the opportunity to move into accelerated math classes in grades 6 through 8. Offer summer enrichment courses specifically designed to reinforce and extend math concepts.

# Intervention Supports

1. Development of a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization.
2. Extensive review of I&RS Implementation Process Guide in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies.
3. Develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings.



# Develop Equity Lens and Cultural Inclusion Adult Capacity

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1. Develop and implement a professional development series that focuses on continued development of cross-cultural capacity in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as colorblindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort.
2. Conduct a curriculum audit of courses in humanities, English-Language Arts, and history using a culturally responsive protocol to determine where more inclusive materials and pedagogies are needed.
3. Hire more Black teachers/teachers of color and create affinity spaces to support those teachers to increase retention.
4. Build on successes of affinity spaces for students of color such as MAC scholars.
5. Provide affinity spaces for BIPOC students across school levels.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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THANK YOU

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS EMAIL:  
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