

POLICY NOTE

Officials Use Race to Help Set Academic Achievement Goals

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In the fall of 2012, the Washington state Superintendent of Public Instruction and education officials at the state's 295 school districts used student race as a factor in setting state, district and school-level academic achievement goals for state tests in math and reading for 2012 through 2017.

These academic achievement targets, called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), are based on student passing rates on state tests conducted in the baseline academic year 2010–11. State-level targets set by the Superintendent of Public Instruction and by school district officials are shown in the chart below.¹ Public education officials set different targets for academic achievement based on the race of each student.

Statewide Academic Achievement Targets

Student Racial Subgroup	Academic Subject	2017 Target Passing Rate per Group
American Indian	math	68.7 %
American Indian	reading	74.5 %
Asian	math	88.2 %
Asian	reading	89.5 %
Black	math	69.1 %
Black	reading	77.1 %
Hispanic	math	70.9 %
Hispanic	reading	76.4 %
Pacific Islander	math	71.6 %
Pacific Islander	reading	76.9 %
White	math	83.1 %
White	reading	87.6 %

To illustrate how the race factor works in practice, below are academic achievement rates set for each ethnic group by six school districts for 2017, based on the races of their students:

Goals for Bellingham School District

- Asian students: 87.8% passing in math, 89.5% passing in reading
- White students: 86.5% passing in math, 90.5% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 71.8% passing in math, 79.3% passing in reading
- Black students: 76.7% passing in math, 85.5% passing in reading

Key Findings

1. *The State of Washington uses race as a factor in setting student achievement goals on state tests.*
2. *High school graduation targets for 2017 are:*
 - 91.3% for Asian students
 - 89.4% for White students
 - 82.2% for Black students
 - 80.7% for Hispanic students
 - 79.8% for Pacific Island students
 - 77.7% for American Indian students.
3. *Creating learning expectations based on race affects the way education officials view children — through the lens of race rather than as unique individuals.*

¹ "State Level Baseline and Targets, 2012," Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, at www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AMO.aspx.

Goals for Seattle School District

- Asian students: 86.7% passing in math, 87.5% passing in reading
- White students: 90.5 passing in math, 93% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 73.5% in math, 77.6% passing in reading
- Black students: 67.6% passing in math, 74.5% passing in reading

Goals for Spokane School District

- Asian students: 81.2% passing in math, 80.0% passing in reading
- White students: 81.2% passing in math, 84.8% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 76.7% passing in math, 81.2% passing in reading
- Black students: 68.3% passing in math, 71.7% passing in reading

Goals for Tacoma School District

- Asian students: 79.1% passing in math, 82.8% passing in reading
- White students: 78.9% passing in math, 84.4% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 66.8% passing in math, 72.7% passing in reading
- Black students: 65.3% passing in math, 73.1% passing in reading

Goals for Vancouver School District

- Asian students: 85.9% passing in math, 87.9 passing in reading
- White students: 81.1% passing in math, 85.3% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 70.3% passing in math, 73.9% passing in reading
- Black students: 66.3% passing in math, 73.1% passing in reading

Goals for Yakima School District

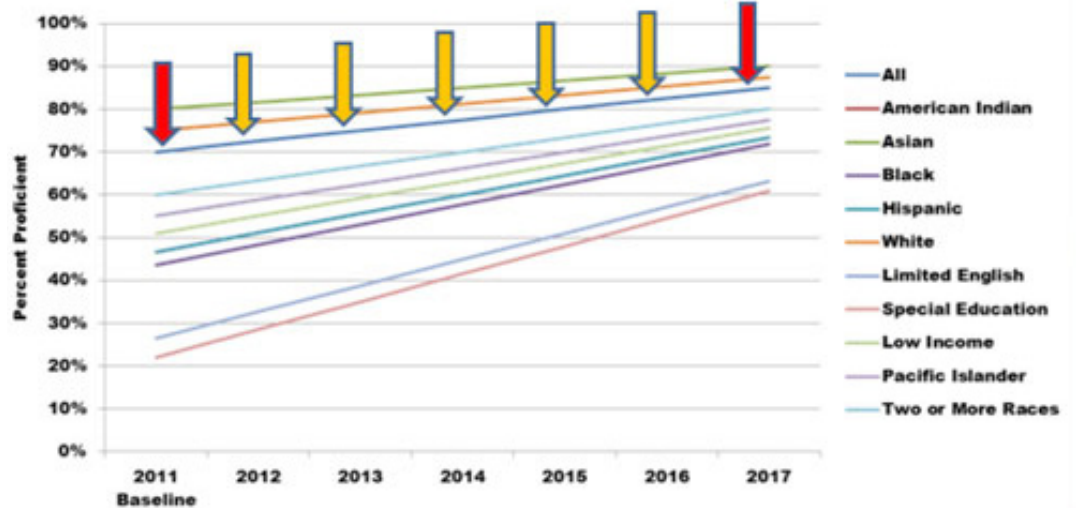
- Asian students: 81.9% passing in math, 86.1% passing in reading
- White students: 72.4% passing in math, 81.0% passing in reading
- Hispanic students: 65.4% passing in math, 72.3% passing in reading
- Black students: 66.7% passing in math, 74.6% passing in reading

Goals for student academic achievement by race, based on testing outcomes, have also been set for individual schools. These passing rates are available for each district and school on the Superintendent of Public Instruction's website.² Targets have also been set for other subgroups based on other factors, including low income, limited English and special needs, and for students of two or more races.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction issued the following chart to school district officials to show how they should calculate their target passing rates, or AMOs, for their students. The graph shows how the Superintendent directed school districts to use race as a factor in setting passing rates for students, in this case for the 10th grade reading test.³

2 "District Level Baseline and Targets, 2012," and "School Level Baseline and Targets, 2012," Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, at www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AMO.aspx.

3 "Memorandum No. 048," 12M Special Programs and Federal Accountability, Attachment C, Calculating AMOs, by Superintendent of Public Instruction, August 31, 2012, page 2, at www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/pubdocs/AccountabilityAnnualMeasurableObjectives%E2%80%9393AMOsQandA.pdf.



Race as a Factor in Setting Academic Achievement Goals for Graduation from High School

The Superintendent of Public Instruction and school district officials use student race as a factor in setting academic achievement targets for graduation rates from high school, setting both four-year and five-year targets. As an example, the following table shows official four-year graduation targets for each student racial subgroup.⁴

Student Racial Subgroup	2017 Graduation Target by Group
<i>Asian</i>	91.3 %
<i>White</i>	89.4 %
<i>Black</i>	82.2 %
<i>Hispanic</i>	80.7 %
<i>Pacific Islander</i>	79.8 %
<i>American Indian</i>	77.7 %

Conclusion

Given our state's passage of important civil rights legislation, most recently voter approval of Initiative 200 in 1998, and our country's long struggle against institutional racism, most Washingtonians may be surprised that education officials routinely use a student's race as a factor in setting academic achievement goals. According to Superintendent of Public Instruction guidelines, race is used as a factor throughout a student's career, at each grade level and in setting academic achievement goals for graduation.

Successful schools set high learning expectations for each and every child. This is demonstrated in private education, where educators assess and set learning goals for individuals, not by racial group. Successful schools treat school children as unique persons,

⁴ "Graduation Rate — Annual Targets All Groups, 2012," Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, at www.k12.wa.us/ESEA/AMO.aspx.



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and they develop their educational programs to meet the diverse needs of their students. Leaders in successful private and public schools expect all children, not just a set percentage of certain racial groups, to learn and grow and succeed.

Effective educational practice requires schools and teachers to educate every child based on his or her individual needs and talents. Creating learning expectations based on race affects the way education officials view children — through the lens of race rather than as individuals. Used in official guidelines, the racial group approach threatens to undermine good teaching and ultimately the learning success of all students.

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