

Closing Achievement Gaps



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LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENT IOWA CODE 256.9.45

Prepare and submit to the chairpersons and ranking members of the senate and house education committees a report on the state's progress toward closing the achievement gap, including student achievement for minority subgroups, and a comprehensive summary of state agency and local district activities and practices taken in the past year to close the achievement gap.

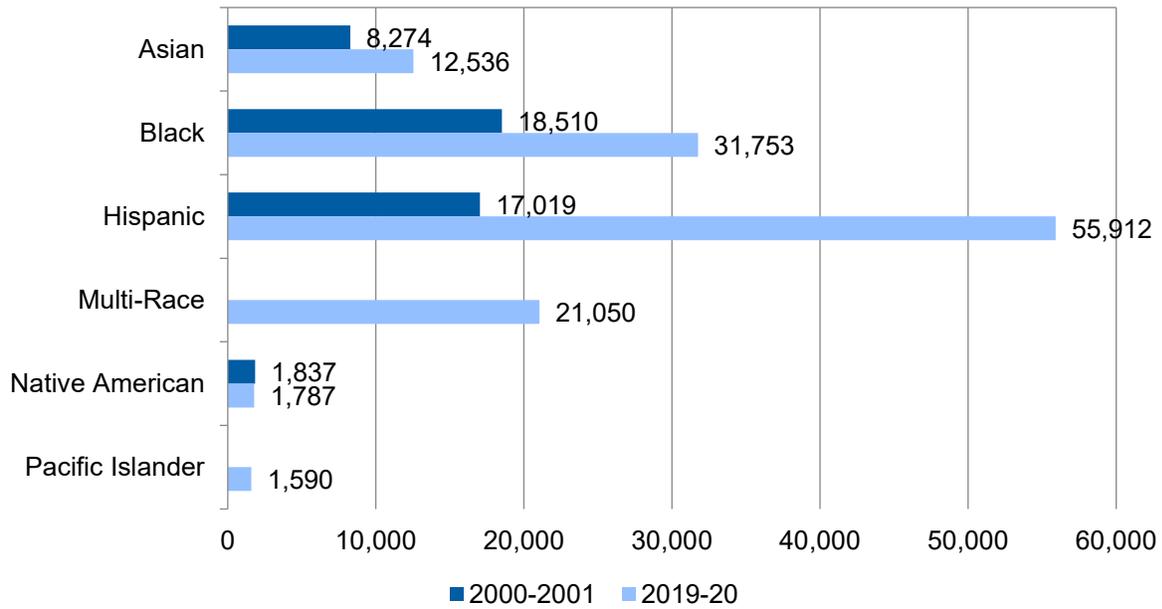
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN IOWA SCHOOLS

Over the past two decades, Iowa school districts have seen a significant shift in the students they serve. Over this period of time, the percent of Iowa students who identify as students of color has increased 169 percent while the white student population has declined 16 percent. This trend has accelerated in recent years with a change in the minority student population just under 1 percentage point (.8) from year to year.

Table 1 and Figure 1 highlight the changing demographic in the student population across a 20-year period. The largest increases can be found in the Hispanic and black student groups. The Hispanic student population has grown by 229 percent while the black student population has grown by 72 percent. Students who identify as multiracial is the third largest subgroup representing about 4 percent of all students. The multiracial student group has also seen a large increase since this category was added in 2009.

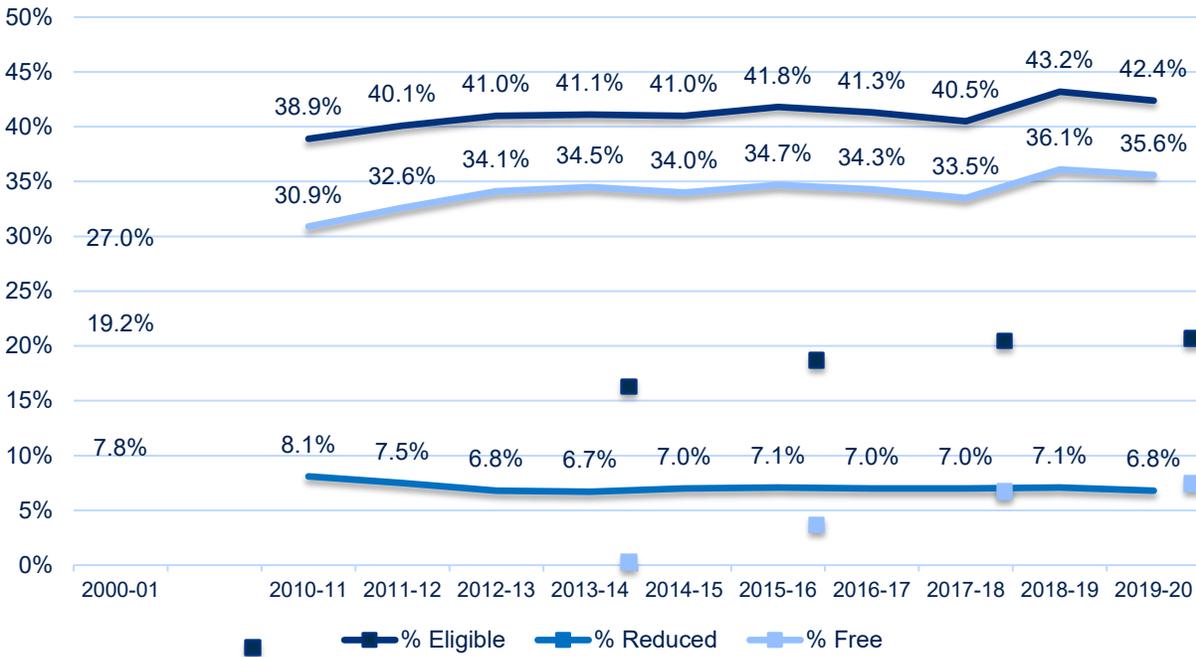
School Year	Minority	White	Total	Percent Minority	Percent White
2019-20	124,628	361,226	485,854	26%	74%
2018-19	120,376	363,215	483,591	25%	75%
2014-15	104,052	373,370	477,422	22%	78%
2000-01	46,250	430,677	476,927	10%	90%

Figure 1: Minority Student Trend in Iowa



Long-term trends show significant increases in the percentage of students who are living in poverty. Figure 2 provides a 20-year trend line of the percent of students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch (FRL). Over the past decade, the percent of students eligible has increased from 38.9 percent in 2010-11 to 42.4 percent in 2019-20. More recently, the percent of students has seesawed, going up one year then back down the next. From 2018-19 to 2019-20, the percent of students eligible dropped .8 percentage points.

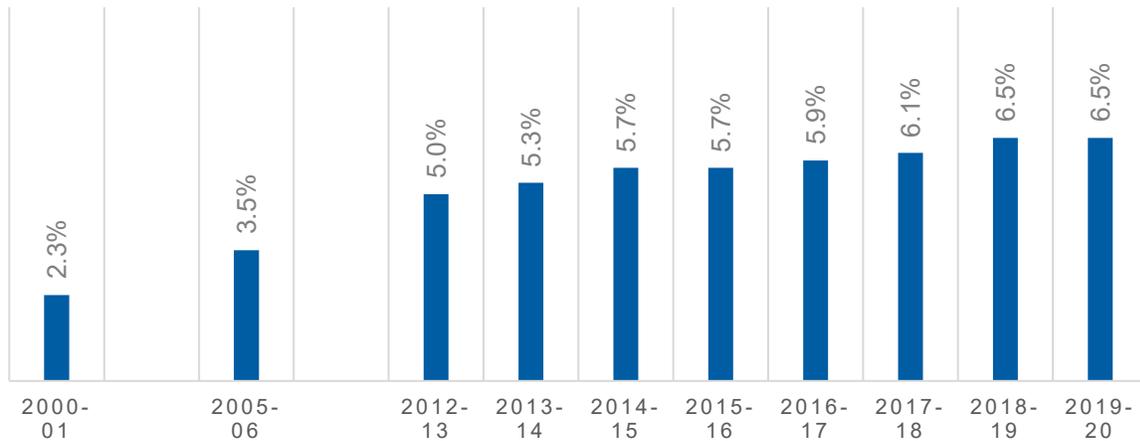
Figure 2: Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch - 2000-01 to 2019-20



Long term trends also show an increase in Iowa’s school-age population of students who have been identified as an English learner (EL). 2000-01, just over 2 percent (2.3) of Iowa students was an English learner (EL). In the 2019-20 school year, the percentage of EL students has increased to 6.5 percent. While the state overall has seen a three-fold increase over this period, the trend has flattened out with the most recent year-to-year comparison. In 2019-20 there was a slight uptick in the overall number of EL students. However, the percent of students in 2019-20 who are EL stayed the same as compared to 2018-19 (6.5 percent).

Approximately two-thirds of Iowa’s EL student population’s native language is Spanish. The other one-third of the EL student population has a wide variety of native languages with no one language representing larger than 3 percent of Iowa’s EL population. Finding qualified instructors who have the background and experience to effectively instruct EL students, given the diversity of languages, is a difficult challenge for Iowa school districts.

Figure 3: Percent of English Learners



CHANGING ASSESSMENT DIFFERENCES IN THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

In spring 2018, the Iowa Legislature passed House File 2235 which directed Iowa Testing Programs at the University of Iowa to develop a new state assessment. This new assessment, named the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP), measures English language arts and Mathematics in grades 3-11 and Science in grades 5, 8 and 10.

There are several important differences between the new ISASP and the old Iowa Assessments. First, the ISASP was developed to be more tightly aligned to and measure student performance against the [Iowa Core](#) academic standards. To ensure better alignment with the standards, Iowa Testing Programs developed new assessment blueprints for the ISASP. The new blueprints were designed to ensure coverage as well as increase depth of knowledge consistency within domains and items and the standards. Additionally, Iowa Testing Programs hired an independent nationally recognized expert to complete an alignment study between the ISASP and the standards. An alignment study demonstrates the degree to which the assessment is aligned with the Iowa Core. Evidence of alignment is a required step in receiving federal approval of the ISASP as part of an expert peer review panel which is conducted by the US Department of Education. Through the peer review process, the US Department of Education approves the use of all states' accountability assessments to ensure technical adequacy.

Another new feature of the ISASP is an expansion of the content covered by the assessment. The ISASP has been developed to measure English language arts more broadly by including a writing portion which had never been measured before as part of the statewide assessment. The mode of assessment administration also changed, going from an exclusively paper-pencil test to including an option to be administered online using computers in schools.

Lastly, new performance levels were adopted through an evidence-based standard setting process. A committee of 185 Iowa educators met in July 2019 and participated in a nationally recognized process (Extended Modified Angoff method) to determine the recommended performance levels. The performance levels define the range of scores for each level including: Not-Yet-Proficient, Proficient and Advanced. The process was led by Pearson, a vendor of Iowa Testing Programs.

Figures 4 and 5 provide information about the proficiency rates on both the Iowa Assessments and the ISASP for black, Hispanic and white students. While achievement gaps exist between other racial/ethnic groups, the largest groups were used to provide a more focused set of analyses. These analyses combine student achievement results across grades 3-8, 10 and 11 in order to take a high-level state view of performance between groups. Combining results across grade levels creates an aggregate level of proficiency, which was used in these analyses.

It is important to note that one should be cautious in drawing definitive conclusions when comparing results from the old Iowa Assessments and the new ISASP. As mentioned above, there are a number of important differences between the assessments including the design of the test, alignment to standards and format, as a few examples. While we acknowledge these differences, there is still value in comparing the size of the achievement gap between student groups between these different assessments. This type of analysis can provide information and determine if the picture of performance changes or stays about the same.

When the panels of educators made recommendations for the cut points for the new performance levels on the ISASP, proficiency was deemed to be a more rigorous standard than on the old Iowa Assessments. As it would be expected, the overall proficiency rates for all students and selected subgroups were lower on the ISASP compared to the Iowa Assessments. As a result, statewide proficiency rates declined 7.2 percentage points between reading comprehension on the Iowa Assessment to English language arts on the ISASP. The overall decrease in mathematics was slightly larger with an 8.1 percentage point lower proficiency rate on the ISASP.

The impact of the more rigorous expectations can also be seen in the differences in proficiency levels on the ISASP and the old Iowa Assessments between subgroups. In English language arts, the largest difference can be found in black student performance which was 9.2 percentage points lower on the ISASP. The smallest difference was for white students which was 6.5 lower on the ISASP.

In mathematics, the subgroup differences were very small between black, Hispanic and white students. The range of difference was only .3 percentage points between these student groups. This suggests that decrease in performance was consistent between the two assessments. In English language arts, the range of differences was larger between subgroups. White students had a 6.5 percentage point decline compared to 9.2 percentage points for black students with an overall difference of 2.7 percentage points. It is likely that the larger difference in English language arts on the ISASP is due to the make up of the ISASP compared to the Iowa Assessments. For example, the inclusion of writing in the ISASP.

Figure 4: ELA and Reading Comparison

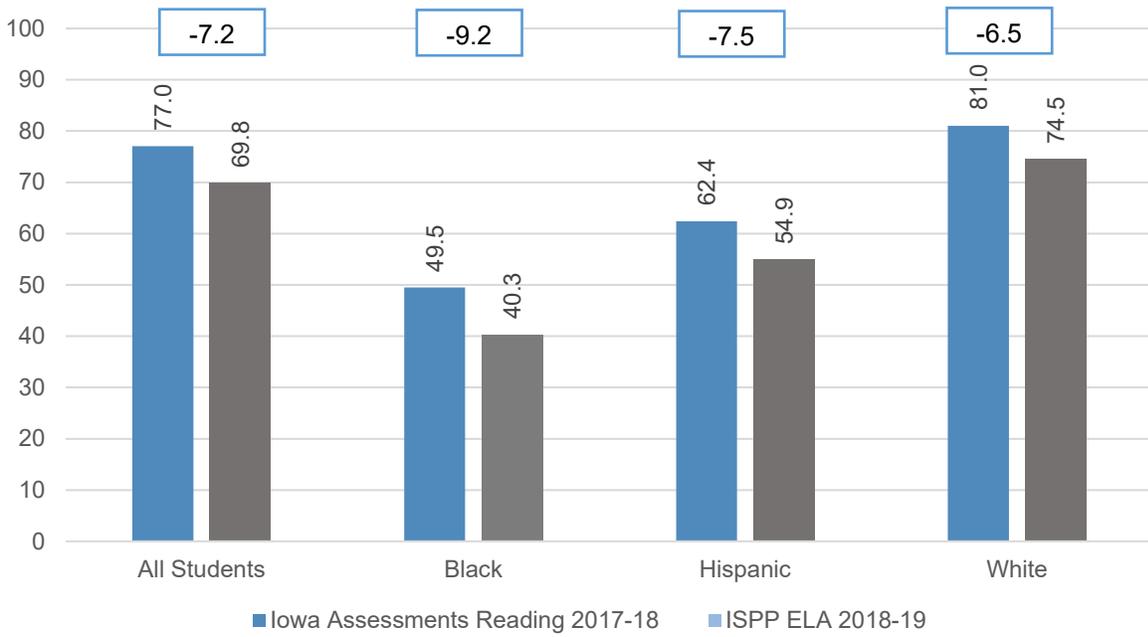
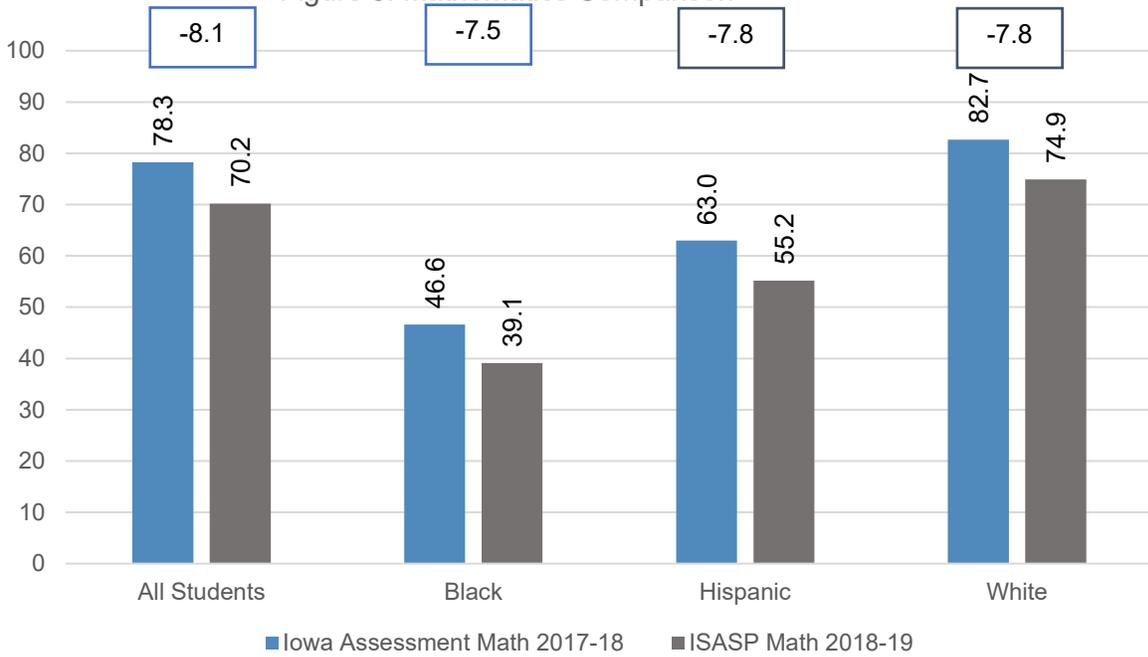


Figure 5: Mathematics Comparison



ANALYZING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Schools and districts nationally have been working to close the achievement gap in student performance for decades. The goal is to decrease inequity which exists between different groups of students, while at the same time, increasing student achievement for all. Achievement gaps exist between students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, but also between students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, students with disabilities, English learners and those who do not have these challenges.

Over the past decade, Iowa has seen the largest increases in the Hispanic and black/African American racial/ethnic student groups. This analysis will focus on the gap in the percent of students proficient in both reading/English language arts and mathematics between 2017-18 using the Iowa Assessments and 2018-19 on the ISASP. The purpose is to highlight differences in performance between the largest growing student groups. This does not suggest that other groups do not also have significant differences in achievement. Figures 6 and 7 provide information about the mathematics proficiency rates among Iowa's three largest racial and ethnic groups: black, Hispanic and white students.

Figure 6: Mathematics - Black/White Achievement Gap

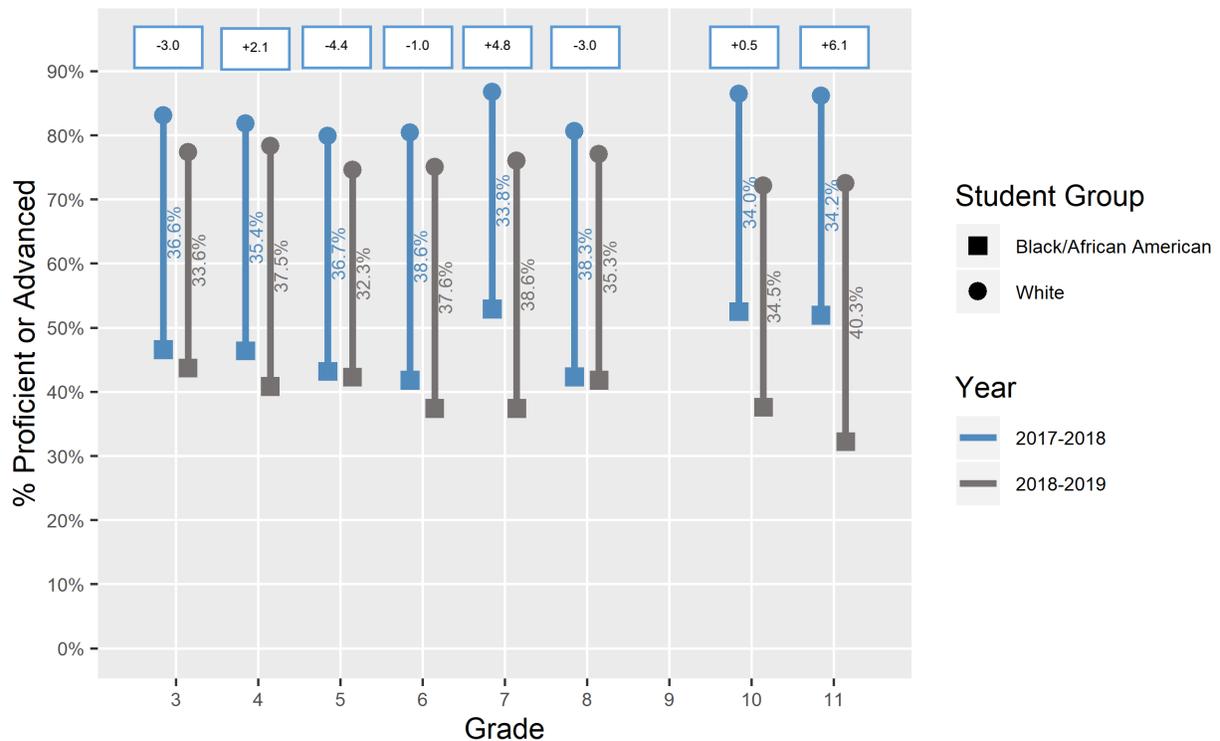
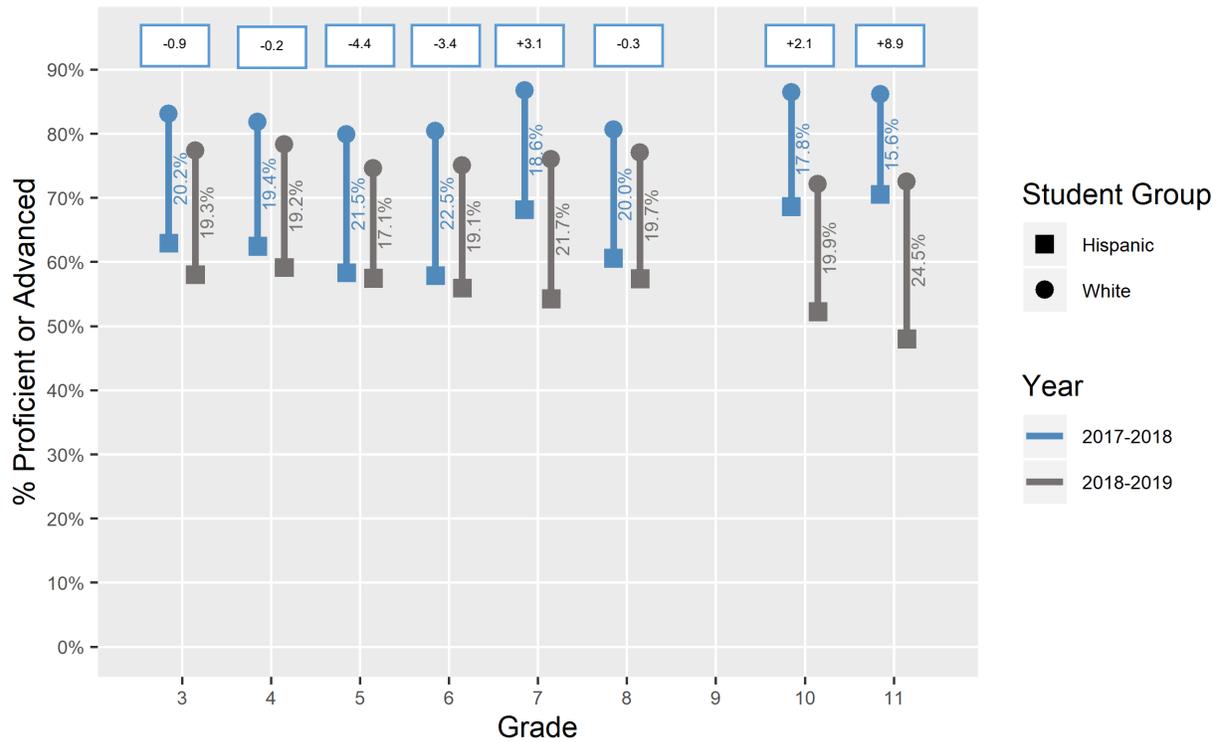


Figure 7: Mathematics - Hispanic/White Achievement Gap



A trend emerges in examining the achievement gap between black/white students compared to Hispanic/white students performance in mathematics. Table 2 provides an analysis of the achievement gap data presented in Figures 6 and 7. It shows if the proficiency gap between black/white students and Hispanic/white students increased or decreased between the Iowa Assessments and the ISASP as well as information about the gap.

The black/white and Hispanic/white gaps, for the most part, across grade levels tended to follow the same pattern either increasing or decreasing in the earlier grades. Starting in grade 7 this trend reverses itself with the size of the gap tending to increase. Across most grade levels, the pattern trended down with more grades seeing a decrease than an increase. In aggregate, 9 grade levels saw decreases in gaps while 7 grade levels had increases.

Table 2: Mathematics - Black/White and Hispanic/White Proficiency Gap Trend

Grade	Black/White Gap	Hispanic/White Gap	Note
3	Decrease	Decrease	Decrease larger for black students.
4	Increase	Decrease	Mixed.
5	Decrease	Decrease	Exactly the same decrease.
6	Decrease	Decrease	Decrease larger for Hispanic students.

7	Increase	Increase	Second largest gap increase. Gain larger for Hispanic students.
8	Decrease	Decrease	Decrease larger for black students.
10	Increase	Increase	Increase larger for Hispanic students.
11	Increase	Increase	Largest gain across grade levels. Increase larger for Hispanic students.

Figures 8 and 9 provide information about the English language arts (ISASP) and reading proficiency (Iowa Assessments) rates among black, Hispanic and white students.

Figure 8: ELA and Reading - Black/White Achievement Gap

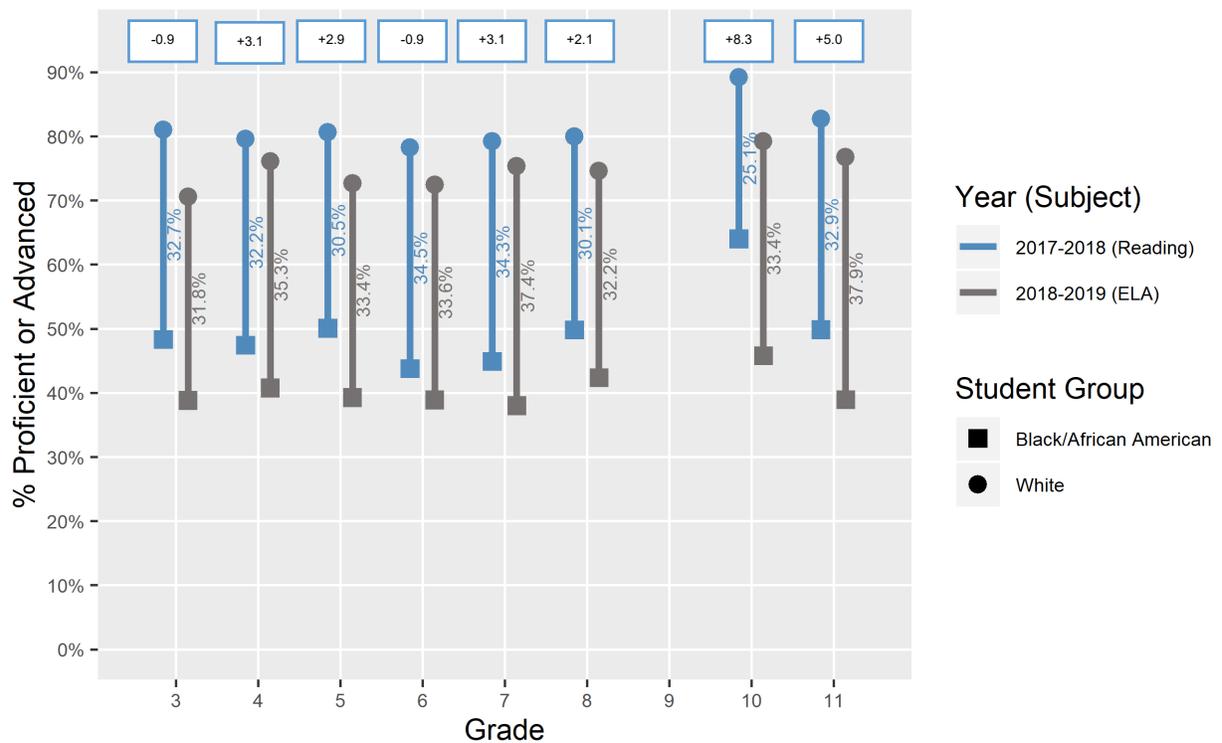
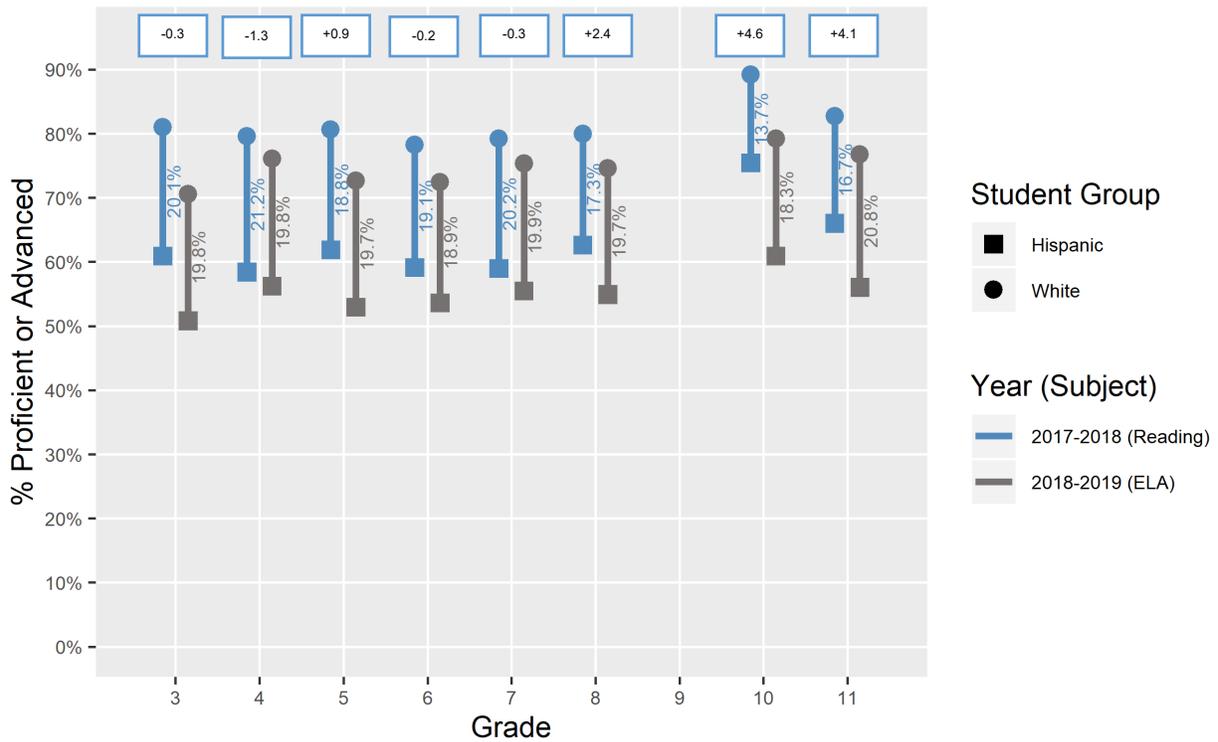


Figure 9: ELA and Reading - Hispanic/White Achievement Gap



A different trend emerges when examining the ELA and reading proficiency gap between black/white and Hispanic/white students compared to mathematics. Table 3 provides an analysis of the achievement gap data presented in Figures 8 and 9. It shows if the proficiency gap between black/white students and Hispanic/white students are increasing or decreasing between the Iowa Assessments and the ISASP as well as information about the gap.

For ELA and reading, the black/white and Hispanic/white gaps, for the most part, across grade levels tended to follow the same pattern either increasing or decreasing. This same pattern was found when examining the mathematics achievement gaps. Where the trend differs is that the gaps tend to be increasing in ELA, while the majority of gaps differences were decreasing in mathematics. Only 6 grade levels saw decreases, while 10 grade levels gaps increased. The black/white gap also tended to increase overall while the Hispanic/white gap was mixed across grade levels. The black/white gap has 6 grade levels increasing with only 2 grade level gaps decreasing. On the other hand, the Hispanic/white gap had 4 grade levels increasing with 4 grade levels decreasing.

Another interesting finding is that the ELA and reading gap differences tended to also be much smaller than the proficiency gaps in mathematics. Half of the gap differences between black/white students and Hispanic/white students were less than 1 percentage point difference. This suggests that the achievement gap in many grade levels was measured to be about the same between the ISASP and Iowa Assessments. This is somewhat surprising given that the ISASP ELA assessment design changed with the addition of a new writing component.

The ELA and reading gap between black/white and Hispanic/white students also tended to get larger in the higher-grade levels. Both grade 10 and 11, in ELA and reading had the largest

differences. Additionally, both grade 10 and 11 also saw increases in the achievement gap. This trend was also found in analyzing the mathematics achievement gaps. Additionally, the magnitude of the increase in the black/white achievement gap in grades 10/11 is particularly high and is similar to the large overall decrease in proficiency rate for black students seen in Figure 4.

Table 3: ELA/Reading - Black/White and Hispanic/White Proficiency Gap Trend

Grade	Black/White Gap	Hispanic/White Gap	Note
3	Decrease	Decrease	Less than 1 percentage point difference.
4	Increase	Decrease	Mixed. Increase larger for black students.
5	Increase	Increase	Increase larger for black students.
6	Decrease	Decrease	Less than 1 percentage point difference.
7	Increase	Decrease	Mixed. Decrease small for Hispanic students.
8	Increase	Increase	Increase about the same for both groups (less than 1 percentage point difference).
10	Increase	Increase	Increase larger for black students.
11	Increase	Increase	Less than 1 percentage point difference.

While we only have one year of results on the ISASP, it will be important to monitor the size of the achievement gap between student groups across time. First, multiple years of data are needed to set a new baseline for examining the achievement gap. Secondly, once a baseline has been set, it will tell us if the gaps are increasing or decreasing using an assessment which has tighter alignment to the Iowa Core academic standards. Over the past several years, this has been a challenge using the old Iowa Assessments because of the concerns about the alignment of the assessment to the standard. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the size of the black/white and Hispanic/white achievement gaps on the ISASP which can be found in Figures 6 to 9.

Table 4: ISASP
Black/White and Hispanic/White Proficiency Gap (in percentage points) by Grade Level

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 11
Black/White Math	33.6	37.5	32.3	37.6	38.6	35.3	34.5	40.3
Hispanic/White Math	19.3	19.2	17.1	19.1	21.7	19.7	19.9	24.5
Black/White ELA	31.8	35.3	33.4	33.6	37.4	32.2	33.4	37.9
Hispanic/White ELA	19.8	19.8	19.7	18.9	19.9	19.7	18.3	20.8

Overall, the black/white achievement gap tends to be much larger than the gap between Hispanic and white students. The achievement gaps are the largest in grade 11 between both black/white and Hispanic/white students. The largest gaps between black/white students were 40.3 percentage points in grade 11 mathematics and 37.9 in ELA. This compares to the largest of 24.5 in mathematics and 20.8 in ELA between Hispanic/white students.

The range in the gaps between Hispanic/white students also tended to be very similar and smaller across grade levels than the black/white gap. In ELA, the largest gap was 20.8 in grade 11 compared to 18.3 in grade 10 with a range difference of 2.5 percentage points.

On the other hand, the difference in the black/white gap in both mathematics and ELA was larger. The range of black/white gaps in math between grades 3-10 was 6.3 percentage points with a high of 38.6 in grade 7 and low of 32.3 in grade 5. In ELA the range was 5.6 percentage points with a high of 37.4 in grade 7 and low of 31.8 in grade 3.

DEPARTMENT AND DISTRICT ACTIVITIES TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

The 2019 version of the Closing Achievement Gaps report describes in detail the Department's work to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) across Iowa. Significant work was done to engage education stakeholders in building a statewide plan which meets Iowa's context. Instead of rehashing the same information in the 2020 report, this section highlights new activities over the past year to implement ESSA. A copy of the 2019 report can be found on the [Department website](#).

In December 2018, the Department launched the Iowa School Performance Profiles (ISPP) website. The purpose of the ISPP is to create an online tool which blends both State and Federal accountability. The ISPP system is comprised of multiple measures which are combined to determine an overall performance score for each school in Iowa. This score is a broad indicator of a school's needs. The overall score for a school is created from seven accountability measures: 1) Participation in Assessments, 2) Academic Proficiency, 3) Student Growth, 4) Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency (ELP), 5) Academic Achievement, 6) Conditions for Learning, 7) Graduation Rate and 8) Postsecondary Readiness (new in the January 2020 release).

The ISPP includes an overall score for each school and a score for all student subgroups. This provides a high-level score of all students in a school as well as an individual score for each student group. Subgroup scores can be used to determine if achievement gaps exist and if students are underperforming and in need of additional support – each school has an Achievement Gaps page where these comparisons can be explicitly made. Schools that are below the benchmark cut of 43.95 for their overall score or a subgroup score can be identified as a school in need of comprehensive support or targeted support.

If a school is identified either as comprehensive or targeted, there are a set of required school improvement activities. In early 2019, the Department began rolling out the system of support to address the performance of comprehensive and targeted schools. This system includes a series of tools: 1) data review, 2) self-assessment, 3) resource review, 4) facilitation guide, and 5) an action plan.

ESSA TRAININGS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Department completed multiple statewide trainings in order to work with Area Education Agencies (AEA) and Iowa districts and schools to develop school improvement plans using the above set of tools. The following trainings occurred over the past year to assist districts in building and beginning to implement school improvement strategies.

- May State Support Team meeting - May 28-29, 2019
- Fall Booster - September 11-13, 2019
- 2019 ESSA June Institute for Schools - June 12-14, 2019
- Winter Booster - January 16-17, 2020

The 2019 Summer Institute had 641 attendee registrations across all three days. The Department also completed an additional 115 regional sessions over the past year. Additionally, during the 2019-20 school year, all schools identified in needs of Comprehensive Support will have a site visit to be completed by the Statewide School Improvement Team (SSIT) in conjunction with the Department of Education. In total, there will be 19 districts and 34 school visits.

A core activity for schools that have been identified in need of improvement is to complete ESSA improvement plans. Schools must submit plans to the Department, at least annually, which outlines their activities to address their area(s) of need. The goal is to build an action plan which addresses one or more key areas including: 1) leadership, 2) assessment data-based decision making, 3) universal instruction, 4) intervention system and 5) infrastructure. Action steps and goals can be set in each of these areas. The plan covers information such as the content area of focus (reading, math or social emotional, behavior and mental health), action to be taken, data related to the area of need, measurable goals, timeline, resources needed for the action step and any evidence of implementation or progress of the action.

An analysis was completed of ESSA school improvement plans for schools that were identified in 2019 in need of Targeted support (n= 307). Schools that are Targeted have one or more student subgroup(s) which has been identified as struggling across multiple measures. This group of schools was chosen because of ESSA's overarching goal of closing the achievement gaps for racial/ethnic minority students; English learners, students with disabilities and students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch.

There were common themes which emerged when examining planned activities, action steps and goals in each of these areas. In the leadership area, schools reported a number of activities including: planned professional development opportunities; ensuring building leadership teams have a common understanding of implementing a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS); creating a culture of MTSS; developing a better understanding of assessment and growth; common goal setting using professional learning communities; and using teacher leaders to work with educators to implement effective instructional strategies.

In the area of universal instruction, the following themes were reported: improving the alignment between instruction, curriculum and assessment; need to unpack the Iowa Core standards; effective monitoring of interventions; need to better document interventions; review of ISASP and FAST results to set proficiency and growth targets; goal setting using multiple assessments including screeners, state assessment, portfolio assessment and district assessment; implementing new assessments which provide more information to help inform instructional practices; identify why universal tier practices are not meeting needs of all students or student subgroups; and professional development in evidence-based intervention.

Schools who wrote improvement plans for their intervention system indicated the following themes: research and pilot various diagnostic tools to more effectively target tier II and III interventions; targeting intervention with students who have deficits in the areas of reading and writing; utilizing more effective progress monitoring tools to guide instruction in small groups; using interventions that are aligned with instruction; ensuring fidelity of interventions; creating resources for educators to assist with differentiation; ensuring students have equitable access to grade-level content; ensuring PBIS is implemented; and working on social, emotional, behavior and mental health areas in their school.

Finally, in the infrastructure area, schools reported the following themes: professional development for professional learning communities; professional learning aligned with building instructional priorities including the areas of literacy, profile of a graduate and blended learning; professional development on MTSS process for teacher leadership team; focus on parent engagement outside of parent teacher conferences; and designing family engagement strategies.

Many of the activities reported across the different school improvement areas included data about the overall performance of students as well as specific student subgroups. In many action plans, schools included the most recent proficiency or growth results for different minority student subgroups, free or reduced-priced lunch eligible students and students with disabilities. This data was included to highlight their area of need or focus of improvement efforts. This is the first year of action plans submitted by schools to the Department. Across time, districts and schools will be able to see how their improvement planning connects to measurable results to close the achievement gaps and increase performance of the struggling student subgroup for which they were identified as Targeted.

YEAR 2 ESSA RESULTS AND SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION

In Iowa's ESSA plan, a cohort approach was chosen for identification and school improvement. Schools that are identified in need of Comprehensive or Targeted support are on a three-year cycle. The rationale behind this design is that quality school improvement strategies take time to plan and execute. Therefore, districts and schools should have both sustained funding and focus to implement meaningful change to impact student achievement.

In Year 1, the first year of ESSA designations, there were 34 schools identified in need of Comprehensive support. Because the cohort method of identification was chosen, no additional schools were added to this cohort of Comprehensive schools in Year 2. In the 2019-20 school year, these 34 schools are in their second year of support. All Comprehensive schools will receive a site visit by the Statewide School Improvement Team during the 2019-20 school year.

Unlike Comprehensive schools, who are in a locked-in cohort, Targeted schools are in a rolling cohort which can have additional schools added each year. The original Targeted (2018-19) cohort remains for a three-year period and is now in Year 2 of Targeted support. Again, the goal of the cohort approach is to ensure there are sustained school improvement efforts developed and delivered over time.

Table 5 shows a breakdown of the number of schools who had one or more students identified as Targeted in Year 1 or Year 2 of ESSA accountability. By examining the results of subgroup identification, you can get a sense of the change in the statewide trends in the number of schools identified and the achievement gap of subgroups. The overall number of schools who were Targeted decreased from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

Table 5 – ESSA School Identification*

Status	Year 1: 2018-19	Year 2: 2019-20
Targeted	307	299
Total Schools	1,268	1,261
% of Schools Targeted	24.2%	23.7%

* 34 comprehensive schools from 2018 removed

Table 6 includes the number of schools and the year the school was identified for Targeted support. A positive trend can be found which shows that a large number of schools moved from having one or more student subgroups identified as Targeted in 2018-19 to no longer having a subgroup below the cut point for ESSA designations in 2019-20. There were 149 schools in the second year of accountability who were Targeted in 2018-19 that no longer had subgroups identified in 2019-20. At the same time, there were 141 new schools in 2019-20 that did not have a subgroup identified in the prior year that now had at least one new subgroup of students identified as struggling. Overall, there were slightly fewer schools in 2019-20 compared to the prior year that had one or more subgroup of students identified. Schools are able to exit ESSA support after 3 years if there are no subgroups falling below the cut point in Year 4 of ESSA accountability designations.

Table 6 – Target ESSA Year of Support

Year Identified	2018-19 # of Schools	2019-20 # of Schools	Total	Year of Support
Targeted 2018 only (not in 2019)	149	--	149	Targeted Year 2
Targeted 2019 only (not in 2018)	--	141	141	Targeted Year 1
Targeted in 2018 and 2019	158	158	158	Targeted Year 2
Targeted in 2018 or 2019	307	141	448	Either Year 1 or 2

Table 7 shows a trend line of the reason schools were identified in need of Targeted support from 2018 to 2019. It is important to note that a school can be identified for more than one reason. Table 7 includes any reason a school is identified and is not a distinct school count.

Many positive trends can be found when examining the percent of schools identified from 2018-19 to 2019-20. The percent of schools that could have been identified for EL, FRL, IEP, black and Hispanic students all showed declines. These subgroups saw decreases of 14.1 (EL), 1.8 (FRL), 4.5 (IEP), 24.7 (black) and 4 (Hispanic) percentage points, respectively. The largest decrease in schools identified by far was for the black student group. In 2018, 47.1 percent of schools with a black subgroup were identified compared to just 22.4 percent of schools in 2019. The second largest difference was seen in the EL student group. The percent of schools identified for EL students dropped to 20.3 percent compared to 34.4 in the prior year. The

percent of schools identified because of FRL eligible students decreased 1.8 percentage points from 2018 to 2019. Lastly, the number one reason a school was identified as Targeted in 2018 was for the IEP subgroup. While this continued to be the largest reason a school was identified as Targeted, it was good to see this percentage decrease between 2018 and 2019.

Table 7 – ESSA Reason for Targeted Designation*

Subgroup	2018-19 Targeted			2019-20 Targeted		
	# Eligible Schools	# Schools Identified	% Schools Identified	# Eligible Schools	# Schools Identified	% Schools Identified
EL	122	42	34.4%	148	30	20.3%
FRL	889	101	11.4%	969	93	9.6%
IEP	369	216	58.5%	420	227	54.0%
Asian	57	0	0%	61	1	1.6%
Black/ African American	119	56	47.1%	156	35	22.4%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2	2	100%	8	0	0.0%
Hispanic	234	23	9.8%	270	16	5.9%
Multi-Racial	75	6	8.0%	87	9	10.3%
Native American	3	1	33.3%	9	1	11.1%
White	1,132	12	1.1%	1,135	31	2.7%

* 34 Comprehensive schools removed from this analysis

CONCLUSION

This report includes two decades of enrollment information about Iowa students. Over this time period, a significant shift can be found in the demographics of students who attend Iowa public schools. Iowa schools are more diverse now than in any other time in our history. Slightly more than one in four students is now a student of color. In addition, long-term trends show significant increases in the percent of Iowa students from an economically disadvantaged background. At the same time, year-to-year trends show a slight decrease in the percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Year-to-year trends also show a flattened trend line in the percentage of English learners. Enrollment projections suggest the trends will continue and the school population will continue to become more diverse across time. These data highlight the challenges to Iowa districts and schools in serving an increasingly diverse student population.

In 2018-19, the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) was delivered for the first time. This updated assessment included many new features which were needed. The ISASP raised the bar in student performance expectations as well as having tighter alignment to Iowa academic standards. In addition, content areas such as writing were added as well as more difficult items to measure student knowledge. These important enhancements were needed to update Iowa's assessment system.

As would be expected, performance on the ISASP looks different than on the Iowa Assessments when comparing results in 2017-18 to 2018-19. Overall, fewer students were proficient on the ISASP largely because of the increased expectations of the new assessment. The decrease in proficiency can be seen in the performance of both Hispanic and black students. The difference was larger in English language arts on the ISASP than in mathematics. The difference in mathematics was similar across black, Hispanic and white students.

The ISASP allows the state to set a new baseline for quantifying the achievement gap between black, Hispanic and white student groups. There are several important findings when examining the achievement gap on the ISASP compared to the gaps measures by the Iowa Assessment. First, ELA and reading gap differences tended to be much smaller than the proficiency gaps in mathematics. Half of the gap differences between black/white students and Hispanic/white students were less than 1 percentage point. This suggests that the achievement gap was measured to be about the same in many grade levels between the ISASP and Iowa Assessments. This is somewhat surprising given that the significant design change with the ISASP ELA assessment, such as the addition of a new writing component.

Second, the black/white achievement gap tended to be much larger than the gap between Hispanic and white students. The achievement gaps also tended to increase in higher grade levels with the largest gaps in grade 11 between both black/white and Hispanic/white students. This suggests that the gap widens as students progress across grade levels. Lastly, the achievement gap was the largest for black students compared to Hispanic students in both ELA and mathematics. Similar gaps also existed on the old Iowa Assessments.

In Year 2 of ESSA accountability, there were slightly fewer schools found to have one or more subgroups underperforming compared to 2017-18. Positive trends can also be found when examining the reasons schools were identified as Targeted between 2017-18 and 2018-19. The percent of schools that were identified for EL, FRL, IEP, black and Hispanic students all showed sizeable declines. This suggests that more schools had fewer subgroups missing the cut point and saw increases in performance.

There was significant activity across the state to rollout and begin to implement school improvement plans to increase student achievement and decrease achievement gaps. For example, the Department and AEA partners held over 100 regional training sessions. There was a week-long summer institute which had over 600 registrations. Furthermore, over 300 school improvement plans covering a wide range of important areas, such as leadership, infrastructure and intervention systems. These plans were designed to address a school's area of need. Plans included measurable goals, timelines, resources needed and evidence of implementation. These plans are being implemented during the 2019-20 school year. Future versions of this report will analyze improvement efforts and their impact on closing the statewide achievement gap between students.