


Examining the SCS Optional Program: Barriers to Black Student Enrollment in AP/Honors

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Overview and Thesis



By exploring one of the most prestigious schools in Shelby County, White Station High School, this research will attempt to evaluate what specific barriers prevent black students from enrolling in AP/Honors and the purposefulness of magnet school programs and AP/Honors classes.

The Process

- ▶ Secondary sources material
- ▶ Interviews with:
 - ▶ WSHS AP/traditional teachers
 - ▶ Graduates of WSHS
 - ▶ Parent of WSHS student
 - ▶ Linda Sklar, Director of the Division of Optional Schools and Advanced Academics
 - ▶ Natalie McKinney, Executive Director of Whole Child Strategies and former Director of Policy for both Shelby County Schools and legacy Memphis City Schools
 - ▶ Kevin Woods, SCS Board Member representing over District 4 and unincorporated areas of East Memphis

Findings

Historical Context

Brown v. Board of Education



Court ordered busing



White Flight and School Privatization



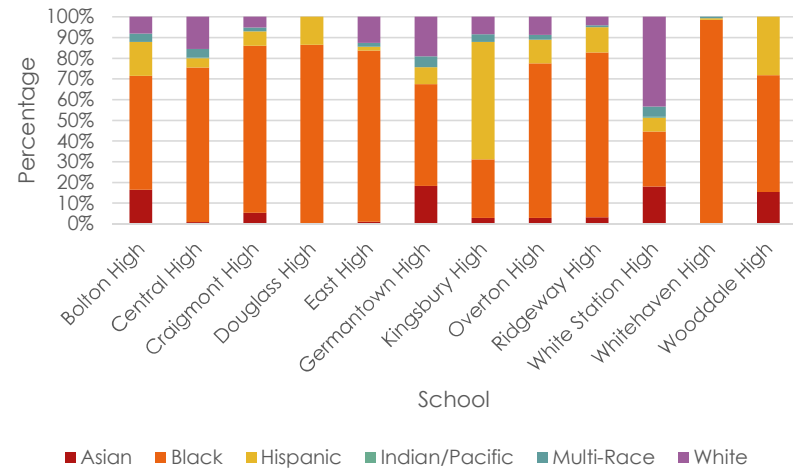
MCS adopt the optional program

Findings

Optional Program

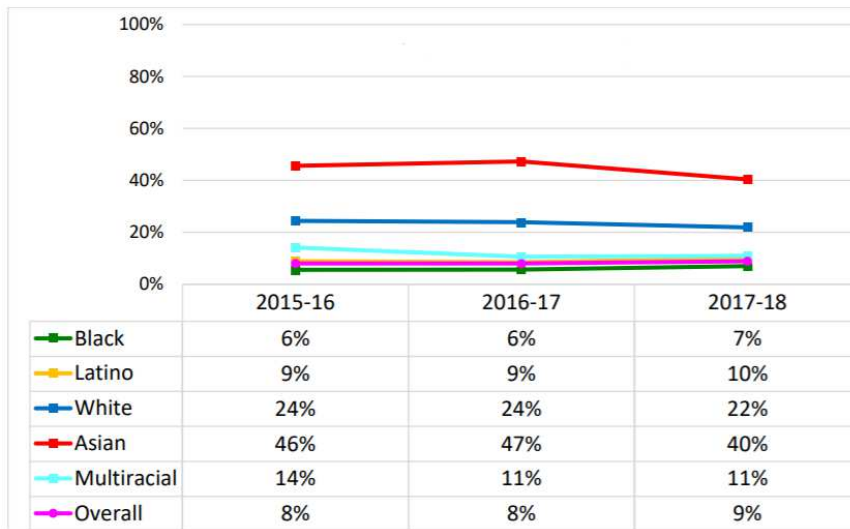
- ▶ 46 Optional Programs
- ▶ Academically Advanced Programs:
 - ▶ AP
 - ▶ Honors
 - ▶ IB
 - ▶ Dual Enrollment
- ▶ 65.99% of black students enrolled in optional program

2017-18 Optional Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity in High Schools

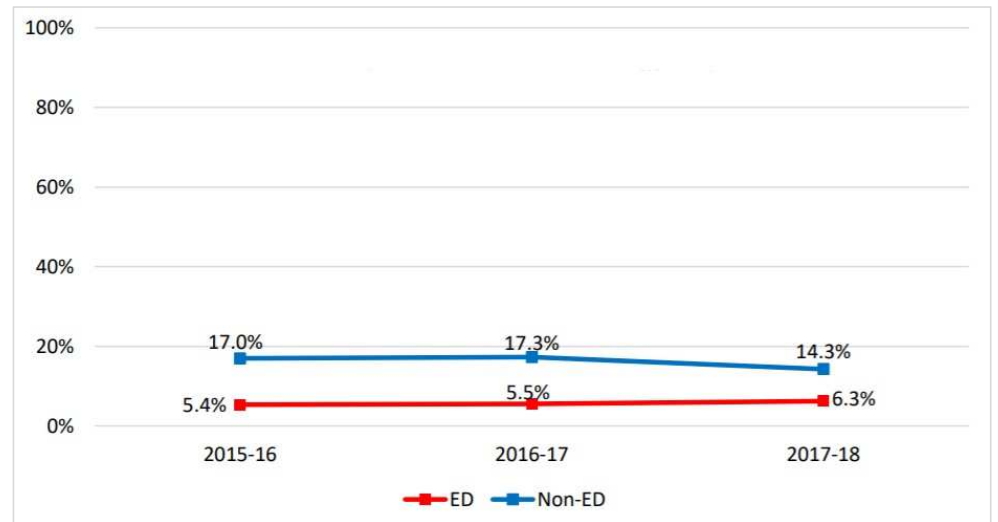


Findings

AP Participation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



AP Participation Rates by Socioeconomic Status



Findings

Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status and Race

- ▶ Memphis Poverty Rate (2016): 27.6%
- ▶ Poverty Rate of Black non-Hispanic (2016): 32.3%
- ▶ Memphis Child Poverty Rate (2016): 44.7%
- ▶ Economically Disadvantaged students in SCS (2016-17): 58.6%



Findings

School Registration

Tent City

- ▶ Constructed to fill 80 percent of slots by first come, first-serve and lottery made up the other 20 percent.
- ▶ First-come, first-serve approach create a “tent city,” a days-long campout every January on the lawn of the district’s central office.

Online Application

- ▶ To address problems of inequity, SCS has designed the online application to be mobile-friendly and has opened computer stations

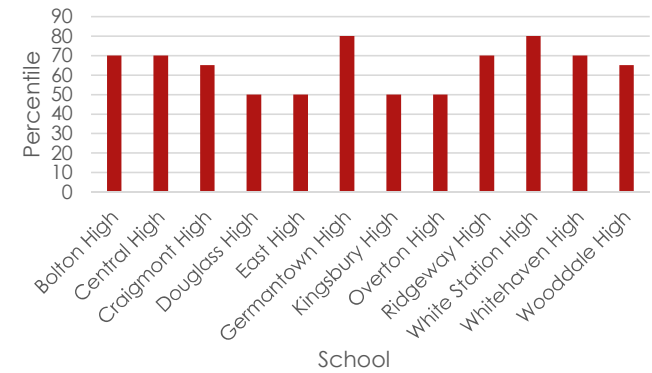
Findings

Entrance Requirements

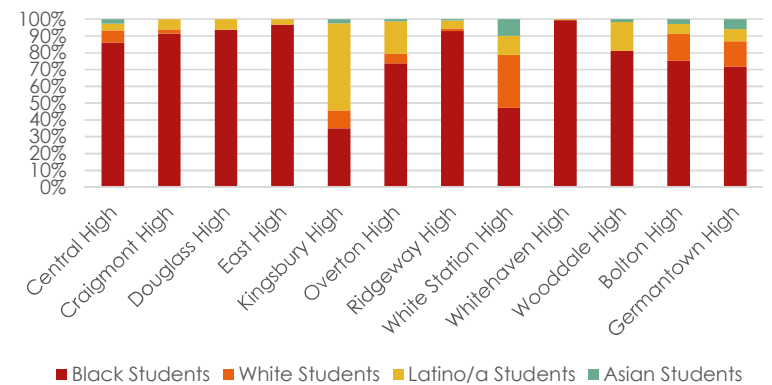
Test Scores and Tracking

- Academic hierarchies
- Varied TCAP and achievement tests scores
- Elitism in schools like White Station and Germantown
 - Ex. Student Interview
- Private Testing

Minimum Required Percentile on the TCAP for Optional Programs in SCS High Schools



2016-17 Racial Demographic of SCS Optional High Schools



Findings

Entrance Requirements

Conduct Grades

- ▶ For many of the optional primary schools in Shelby County, the entrance requirements demand that students “have satisfactory conduct on the most recent report card.”
- ▶ 2016-17 suspension rate for black students 17.5% and white students 5.0%
- ▶ White Station Experiences of Students and Parent
 - ▶ Targeting of traditional students
- ▶ Subject to variation
- ▶ Effect on mobility

Findings

Entrance Requirements

Tardiness/Absences

- ▶ “Have satisfactory conduct grades and attendance records, including promptness to school and to each class, with no more than 15 absences and/or tardies.”
- ▶ WSHS Discipline Plan
 - ▶ Attendance related infractions (tardiness/ excessive absences) are most referred incidents 48% (751) of all referrals
 - ▶ Referrals given after 5 or more tardies
- ▶ Subject to variation
- ▶ Effect on Mobility

Findings

AP Courses and Honors

- ▶ Rarity of participating in a half-half system
- ▶ Traditional exposure to AP courses
- ▶ Extensive process for traditional students to get into the optional program or take AP classes
- ▶ ESSA's Ready Graduate
 - ▶ Score a 21 or higher on the ACT
 - ▶ Complete four early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs)
 - ▶ Complete two EPSOs + earn an industry certification (on a CTE pathway leading to a credential)
 - ▶ Complete 2 EPSOs + score a designated score TBD on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) (TN Department of Education, n.d.).

Findings

National Discussion around Magnets and AP Courses

Magnet and Talented and Gifted Programs

- ▶ Nicole Hannah-Jones “tools of inequality” and keep white students in a district
- ▶ Magnets draw stronger students of color out → reduce academic diversity
- ▶ New York
 - ▶ Mayor De Blasio pushed to scrap the one high-stakes test that determine admission into the 8 most prestigious high schools

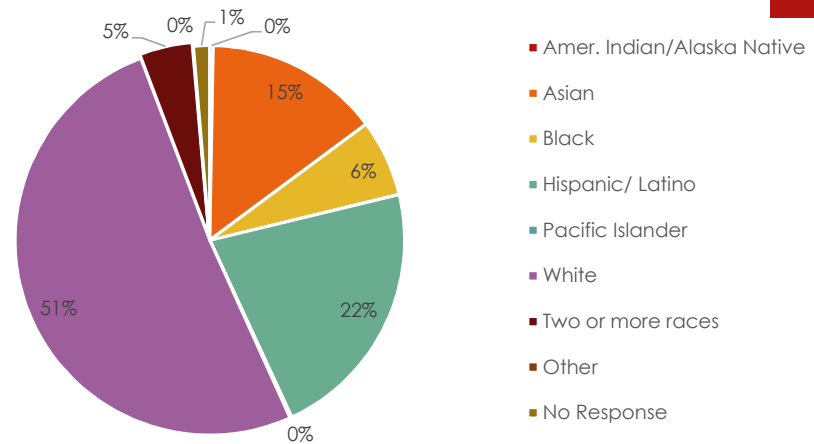
Findings

National Discussion around Magnets and AP Courses

Necessity of AP Courses

- College Board's total revenue for 2015 was \$916 million. \$408 million came from fees for the test and instructional materials
- Pay day or helping struggling schools and students
- Washington-Area Private Schools
 - Colleges want to see students taking demanding classes

2017 Percentage of AP Exam Test Takers by Race and Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity	Average AP Score
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.23
Asian	3.25
Black	2.03
Hispanic/ Latino	2.39
Pacific Islander	2.41
White	3.02
Two or more races	2.90
Other	2.67
No Response	2.72
National Total	2.84

Conclusions

- ▶ Recommendations
 - ▶ Advocate for traditional students
 - ▶ Eliminate optional program at the elementary level
- ▶ Critique most prestigious schools and programs
- ▶ More to be researched