

# Testing, Accountability and the Achievement Gap

presented by

**Dr. Diane Archer-Banks**  
President/CEO  
Educational Access Institute, Inc.

**EAI**  
Educational Access Institute  
Building Bridges of Opportunity ↔ Success for Tomorrow's Leaders

## OVERVIEW

- What is the Achievement Gap?
- Indicators of the Achievement Gap
- Achievement Gap – The National Landscape
- Do We Need Assessment/Testing?
- Is School Accountability Important?
- Testing and the Achievement Gap
- Differing Landscapes
- Testing, Accountability, & Florida
- Some Contributing Factors to the Achievement Gap



## What is the Achievement Gap?

- "Achievement gap" - differences between the test scores of low-income underserved groups and the test scores of their White and Asian peers.
- Underserved student groups include:
  - Racial and ethnic minorities
  - Students from low-income families
  - English language learners
  - Students with disabilities
  - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People (LGBT)

([www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org))

## Indicators of Achievement Gap?

- Performance on tests (statewide tests, SATs, ACT, etc.)
  - Access to advanced level courses and programs
  - Unequal Grading Policies
  - Attainments (high school diploma, college degree, employment)
- (Pace, 2014; [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org))

## Achievement Gap – The National Landscape

### NAEP 2015

- In reading and math, **43 percent** of White 8th graders scored Proficient or above, compared to **13 percent** of Blacks/African Americans.
- On the 2015 NAEP reading and math tests, **19 percent** of Hispanics and **61 percent** of Asians scored Proficient or above.

### SAT 2015

- In 2015, SAT taken for college admission, the average combined score for Whites was **1576**; for Blacks/African Americans, it was **1277**.
- On the 2015 SAT, Hispanics' average scores ranged from **1343 to 1347**, depending on their nationality. For Asians, it was **1654**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2015)

## Do we need Assessments/Testing?

- Assessment is a key process in education.
- Through assessment, we can find out whether instruction has had its intended effect, because even the best-designed instruction cannot be guaranteed to be effective.

## Is School Accountability Important?

- Accountability systems provide us with the data we need to determine how well our schools are doing in educating our children
- Accountability systems by themselves, do not close gaps and raise achievement. However, well-designed accountability systems:
  - Set a clear expectation that schools must raise the achievement of **all of their students**, not just some.
  - Focus **attention and resources on the full range of student groups**, including those who are sometimes ignored.
  - Prompt action when schools don't meet expectations for any group of students. .

## Testing and the Achievement Gap

- Racial/ethnic/socioeconomic gap is well-documented.
- National and state assessments for science, reading, and mathematics show that White students score higher than all other racial/ethnic groups, particularly when compared to Blacks and Hispanics.
- Socioeconomic resources, neighborhoods, and school characteristics, and family compositions are usually cited as contributing factors to this dilemma.

Figure 3. Average reading scale scores on the long-term trend National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for 13-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1971 through 2012

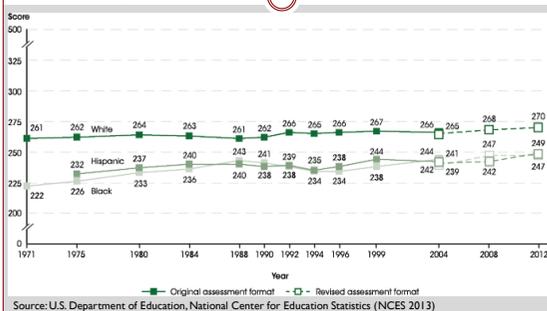


Table 3: Percentage distribution of students below basic reading achievement. National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) select reading achievement level by race/ethnicity and grade. 2011-2013

Grade & Year	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	33	22	51	49	20	53
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	24	15	41	36	17	37
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	26	17	44	36	20	35

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2015)

**Table 3: Percentage distribution of students below basic mathematics achievement. National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) select mathematics achievement level by race/ethnicity and grade . 2011-2013**

Grade & Year	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	18	9	34	28	9	34
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	27	16	49	39	14	45
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	36	25	62	50	19	46

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2015)

## Differing Landscapes

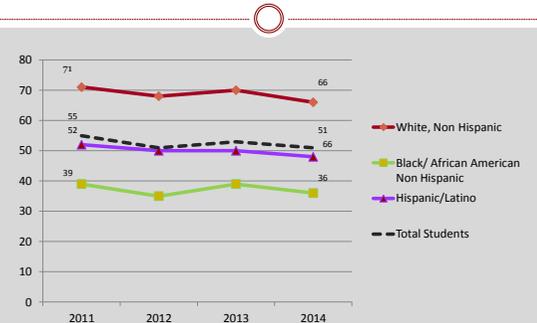
- Schools housed in low-income area with low performance standards tend to focus more on increasing test scores to improve their adequate yearly progress score.
- In contrast, schools in more advantaged, affluent suburban areas were scarcely affected adequate yearly progress reports, and consequently, has the autonomy and resources to teach as they wished; incorporating more subject matter and improved instructional strategies (Pace, 2014)

## Testing, Accountability, & Florida

- Florida's Standards Assessment measures students' achievement of Florida's education standards, which were developed and implemented to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for success in college, career, and life.
- Assessment supports instruction and student learning, and test results help Florida's educational leadership and stakeholders determine whether the goals of the education system are being met.
- Florida's Standard Assessment includes criterion-referenced tests to measure achievement of the state's curriculum standards.

(www.fldoe.org)

**Percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students in Duval County who earned a 3 or better on the FCAT 2.0 Reading from 2011 – 2014 by Race/Ethnicity**



## Exploring Some Contributing Factors to the Achievement Gap

### Unequal Grading Policies

- Grading scales vary widely among schools in any given school district. For example in one school district, a grade of 80% earned an "A" in a school serving predominantly low-income students of color but was a "C" in a more affluent school that served predominantly White student.

#### Question:

- How can this impact how low-income students of color are prepared for college and future careers

### Unequal Access to Advanced Level Courses

- A disproportionate percentage of students of color are excluded from participating in Advanced Level academic programs and courses such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), etc.

#### Question

- How can this potentially impact teaching and learning among low-income students of color and other disadvantaged groups

Questions/Comments

