



Albemarle County Public Schools

Instructional Practices Audit

Report #2: Classroom Level Experiences of Students of Color

Spring 2023



Classroom Level Experiences of Students of Color

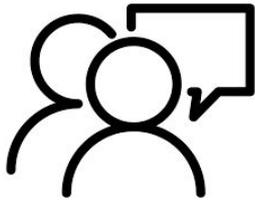
Context for this report

- [Albemarle County Public Schools](#) (ACPS) serves nearly 14,000 students in grades PK-12th, 28% of whom are Black or Hispanic and 31% of whom are economically disadvantaged
- The mission of ACPS is to end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and special capacities for our children's success through high-quality teaching and learning for all
- In 2021 ACPS launched its current strategic plan—Learning for All—focusing on three primary goals, including a goal to eliminate opportunity, access and achievement gaps
- With this context in mind, the Division partnered with [Bellwether](#) to conduct an instructional practices audit to answer an essential question:
 - Why are pass rates for ACPS students of color on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) for K-5 reading, K-5 math, and high school Algebra 1 lower than the averages for other students of color in the state and lower than their peers in other demographic groups in ACPS?
- Over a span of 16 weeks in the spring of 2023, a team from Bellwether visited 11 schools, spoke with over 350 stakeholders, and analyzed data and artifacts from the Division
- The findings from this work are synthesized into four reports that describe key themes and learnings, elevate primary root causes to persistent achievement gaps, and outline a set of recommendations to address each root cause moving forward

The following questions informed the research and analysis included in this report

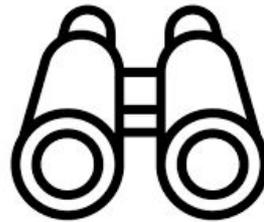
- How do teacher instructional practice and use of the curriculum vary within and across schools?
- What school-based systems and structures are in place to support the use of formative assessment data to inform instruction and interventions?
- Is the use of differentiated and personalized instruction evident in classrooms?
- Do students of color have ample opportunities to attempt performance tasks which are standards-aligned and on grade level?
- Are the practices espoused in district-provided professional learning and programs such as Responsive Classroom consistently evident in instruction and the broader school culture?

The information synthesized in this report comes from three primary sources of data...



Qualitative Data

From interviews and focus groups with over 260 stakeholders from across ACPS



Observation Data

From visits to 61 elementary classes, 20 middle school classes, and 8 high school classes



Quantitative Data

From both publicly available datasets and internal datasets provided by ACPS

...and is organized around five key themes that surfaced from conversations and data review

- 1 Theory vs. practice.** The Division has invested in curricular resources and instructional approaches to strengthen instruction; however, these investments, which are supported by sound pedagogical theory, do not consistently translate into rigorous classroom practices.
- 2 Professional learning system.** ACPS has developed ample structures for professional learning, with a clear focus on collecting and analyzing student data; school-based staff want a more intensive, systematic approach to professional development that supports data-driven instructional practices.
- 3 Analyzing vs. acting on data.** Staff across the Division are increasingly collecting and analyzing student data disaggregated by subgroup; however, formative assessment data is not consistently used to inform timely decision-making at the classroom level.
- 4 Tier 1 instruction vs. RTI supports.** The Division has purchased High-Quality Instructional Materials and developed standard approaches to some Tier 1 instructional practices; school-based staff expressed a desire for more Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention supports to meet the needs of all students.
- 5 Compliance vs. engagement.** Most schools and classrooms maintain safe environments in which students are generally compliant with school rules; however, authentic student engagement grounded in rigorous instructional practices and high expectations for all students was not observed in all classrooms.



Many of the underlying theories of Culturally Responsive Teaching have begun to take hold across the Division...

CRT has helped create shared language...

- **“CRT opened my eyes to the importance of language.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“Our language is very intentionally asset-based.** We say ‘striving learners,’ not ‘below benchmark.’ We don’t say ‘your kids’ and ‘my kids’ – they are all our kids. Those tweaks to our language have become a norm.” (School Leader, ES)
- **“CRT is the most specific investment in students of color we’ve made as a division.”** (School Leader, ES)

...elevated the importance of relationships...

- **“I’ve really benefited from the Culturally Responsive Classroom.** I’ve focused a lot on elevating student voice in my classroom, and that came from CRT.” (Teacher, MS)
- **“The idea is that if you know your students and if you understand their cultural background, you will adjust your instruction accordingly.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“I think you end up seeing CRT reflected in how we engage students and families—**that’s become a real focus at our school.” (Teacher, ES)

...and driven a range of reflective practices

- **“We are very aware of the barriers our students face beyond math– like vocabulary in a math problem. Almost intuitive for us think about that now.”** (Teacher, MS)
- **“We could still do better, but I think more students are seeing themselves reflected in our instructional materials.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“If we, as a majority white teaching population, are truly going to close the achievement gap, we are going to have to do the real internal work.”** (Teacher, MS)



...but work remains to overcome barriers to consistently adopting and embedding CRT in instruction

Worry CRT has not translated to instruction...

- **“We could use more CRT instructional strategies** for specific things in the classroom.” (Teacher, ES)
- “The CRT training was powerful but it was missing the ‘what now’- **how do you apply this to your everyday practice?**” (Teacher, HS)
- “The book study and collecting evidence of certain practices is helpful, but I **wish I had more resources offered to me to support instruction.**” (Teacher, ES)

...the certification process is time-intensive...

- **“The CRT certification is a lot of work...** it was presented as a one year process, but it takes much longer.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“I’m just trying to keep my head above water;** even if CRT is the answer, I need to get my head above water before spending the time on this.” (Teacher, MS)
- **“We’re using about half of our staff PD time to do the CRT microcredential** because we’ve heard from teachers it would be difficult to complete otherwise.” (School Leader, ES)

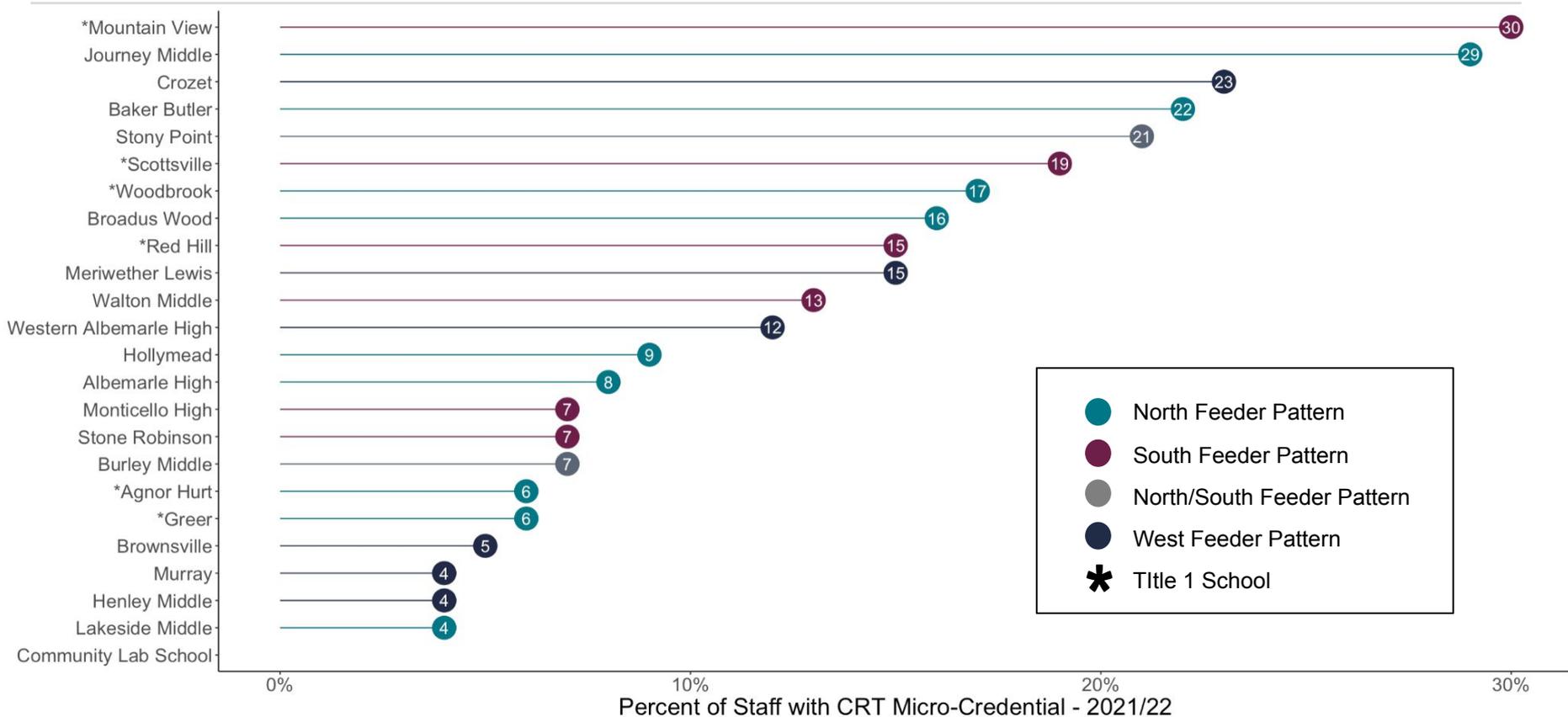
...and becoming increasingly compliance-driven

- **“My feeling is that CRT has become a buzzword,** and we are trying to increase our microcredential numbers in a check-the-box fashion.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“Not enough people see it as the process, rather than the box to check.”** (Leader, Central Office)
- “To me, it was probably the best job-embedded PD I’ve done, but **now that it is mandatory, it becomes a way to check a box.**” (Teacher, MS)



In most schools fewer than 1 in 5 staff have either the CRT micro-credential or certification

Percent of Staff with either CRT Micro-Credential or Certification
2021-2022



- North Feeder Pattern
- South Feeder Pattern
- North/South Feeder Pattern
- West Feeder Pattern
- * Title 1 School

Source: Internal ACPS Data



ACPS' elementary math curriculum Investigations is high quality, but many school-based staff expressed concerns

Perception that Investigations is not SOL-aligned...

- “My issue with Investigations is that **the resource doesn't align with the standards.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “Investigations is based on common core standards, so **it is not tied to our standards.** That's a major issue.” (School Leader, ES)
- “**Investigations has a lot of holes** because it's aligned to the CCSS- things are little off with the pacing between CCSS, the division, and the curriculum.” (Teacher, ES)

...and doesn't meet the needs of all learners

- “Investigations is **very open-ended and has very little direct instruction.** Many of our students of color need more explicit instruction.” (Teacher, ES)
- “Investigations is very spiral-based... it **doesn't account for a transient student population.** If a student comes to us midway through the year, you may find that the time spent on standards doesn't support that student.” (School Leader, ES)
- “Investigations focuses on the conceptual, but **doesn't get back to the foundational skills...** it's a curriculum that works in white private schools.” (Teacher, ES)

These concerns may stem from lack of resource-aligned PD

- “The **problem is not Investigations, it's how we use it.**” (School Leader, ES)
- “**We need professional learning on the program** to understand how to adapt the program to our school and classroom contexts.” (Teacher, ES)
- “Investigations has **been in use for 20 years and they used to have great PD** back then. Now we only buy pieces of the program, and no PD.” (Teacher, ES)

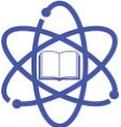


Staff shared a desire for more training to implement specific curricula and approaches (i.e., to connect theory with practice)



Being a Reader

- “We adopted Being a Reader this year, and **the professional development has felt very disconnected.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “I have Being a Reader, but **I’ve never had training in phonics.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “Being a Reader has 30-40min of **independent reading time that is very unstructured, which may not be the best use of time.**” (Teacher, ES)



THE SCIENCE OF READING

- “**We need professional development on the Science of Reading.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**There is an urgency around the Science of Reading...** literacy is an opportunity, and we cannot wait.” (Teacher, ES)
- “We need good professional learning for teaching assistants in high-quality reading instruction... **we all need to be knowledgeable about the Science of Reading and good at aligned instructional practices.**” (School Leader, ES)



Responsive Classroom®

- Some teachers love Responsive Classroom: “Morning meeting is one of my favorite parts of the day... **Responsive Classroom techniques are very helpful in building relationships** with students.” (Teacher, ES)
- Others are less sure: “**Responsive Classrooms is not an approach for every student.**” (Teacher, ES)
- Some want more training: “My last training [on RC] was in 2011... **there should be more follow-up and resources** to support Responsive Classroom.” (Teacher, ES)



Our class walkthroughs reinforced the notion that work remains to connect theory with practice

Being a Reader

- In observed classrooms, most classes implementing BAR leveraged small group instruction versus the whole group component in the curriculum.
- Early elementary grades have invested heavily in providing each classroom with an additional educator; however, we observed missed opportunities to leverage the co-teacher to support more students.
- Most students who were working independently received little to no feedback on their work.

Responsive Classroom®

- It was observed that morning meeting at the elementary level provides students with opportunities to build relationships in "circle" activities, work on SEL skills, and discuss their interests.
- Although many teachers are trained in Responsive Classroom techniques, only one elementary school consistently provided students with choice.
- We saw little evidence that students of color are consistently receiving instruction that affirms their identity and culture.



Across grade levels, we observed varied implementation of curricular resources and use of SOLs to drive instruction

Elementary Schools

- The **district has adopted HQIM for K-5 ELA and Math** (Being a Reader and Math Investigations), and some of the supplementary resources are culturally relevant.
- **Being a Reader is not consistently implemented** across schools; specifically, the whole group instruction component of BAR was seen in only one class.
- Investigations has aligned lessons and assessment, however, **implementation varies** across schools and classes.
- A number of teachers noted there **may be partial misalignment** between Investigations Math and the Virginia SOLs.

Middle Schools

- There were **no visible signs of consistent use of curricular materials.**
- Classrooms **did not have visible representation of intended learning targets**, and when students were posed with the question, “what are you learning” they were unclear of their expected learning objective.
- There was observed **evidence of teacher-created materials**, as well as printouts from open source resources as well as pay-per-use sites.
- Very few of the observed activities had culturally relevant components embedded.

High Schools

- It was observed in all High School classes that **teachers are following curricular scope and sequence.** However, objectives and **standards were not displayed** and seen to drive instruction.
- SOLs were used to inform and drive student learning in all classrooms.
- **6 of 8 High School sections demonstrated non grade-level content** and lack of urgency to close gaps.
- Despite SOLs driving learning, **only 2 of 8 classrooms were observed implementing grade-level content** at the rigor level of the standards.



Staff across ACPS see a need for more training and support to implement curricular resources and drive rigorous instruction

We heard a need for resources and aligned PD

- “The resources are there, but **they’re only resources if there’s no training.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “Math Investigations and Being a Reader are not the answer to everything- **a box with a script will not make miracles happen.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “Having curriculum is good, but **it’s not enough if we don’t supplement that with professional development to meet the needs of students.**” (School Leader, MS)
- “We **can’t purchase our way out of this.**” (School Leader, ES)

Teachers want instructional PD...

- “We **can’t close achievement gaps without the proper professional development and resources.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**We need instructional PD,** and it feels like we just don’t do that.” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Teachers desperately want to improve their craft—we need PD** to be inspirational, worthwhile, and not feel like we’re adding more to our plates.” (Teacher, ES)
- “**We need more PD in reading and math,** and yet we don’t have reading or math summer training sessions.” (Teacher, ES)

...and all staff want a “systematic” approach to PD

- “I can’t remember the last time I’ve had systematic PD in math. **Systematic is the key word- it needs to be more than just bite-sized stuff.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**We need intense and systematic PD** and an institute-style training rather than one-offs.” (School Leader, ES)
- “Feels like right now we are doing lots of one-and-dones, lots of reactive PD. **We need a systematic approach to PD, and that has to be led from the top.**” (Leader, Central Office)



Many staff view Division-led PLCs unfavorably and want more opportunities to collaborate within and across schools

Many do not view current DPLCs favorably...

- **“DPLCs are a waste of time.** We had a session where we looked at line plots, which are not even a standard we teach. Things like that decrease trust.” (Teacher, MS)
- “Teachers routinely come back and say DPLC was poorly planned and not aligned to the standards. **The structure is there, but the content is not.**” (School Leader, ES)
- “We’re losing instructional days to full-day **DPLCs that don’t feel productive or aligned to strategic priorities.**” (Leader, Central Office)

...and want more collaboration across schools

- **“I’d like to have other teachers leading our DPLCs, or at least sharing what they are doing that is working.** I think that would lead to more buy-in.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“When we have time to talk to other colleagues, I appreciate it.** It’s the level above that I feel less connected to, and I get less value from.” (Teacher, MS)
- **“We need basic collaboration across schools, including peer-led DPLCs.”** (School Leader, ES)

Some see a need to prioritize PD over PLCs

- “We are really strapped to find time to do the PD we value as a school. **The DPLC takes us down a different road than where we want to go.**” (Teacher, MS)
- “I think **it needs to be more PD and less PLC.** We are already doing PLC at our school, so it feels duplicative” (School Leader, ES)
- **“DPLCs are really meant to look at data and assessments—they’re not structured as PD.”** (Leader, Central Office)





Teachers are frustrated by limitations—both real and perceived—of the Division’s instructional coaching model

Teachers expressed frustration about the limitations of the current coaching model...

- “Our instructional coaches are great reflective partners and they have good ideas, but **they can’t help implement specific things in your classroom.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “We have instructional coaches, but **there are all these exceptions about what they can and can’t do**, which makes the coaching tricky and frustrating.” (Teacher, ES)
- “We need to revamp the instructional coaching model. The actual needs of teachers are not being met. **Coaches need to be more proactive.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “Our coaching model is not great. **Coaches are trained not to give advice, so they are mostly observing and listening.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “The coaching **model relies on teachers asking for help, which no one wants to do.**” (Teacher, HS)
- “We do not think the coaching model is effective. **Coaches can’t offer advice unless they are asked.**” (Teacher, MS)

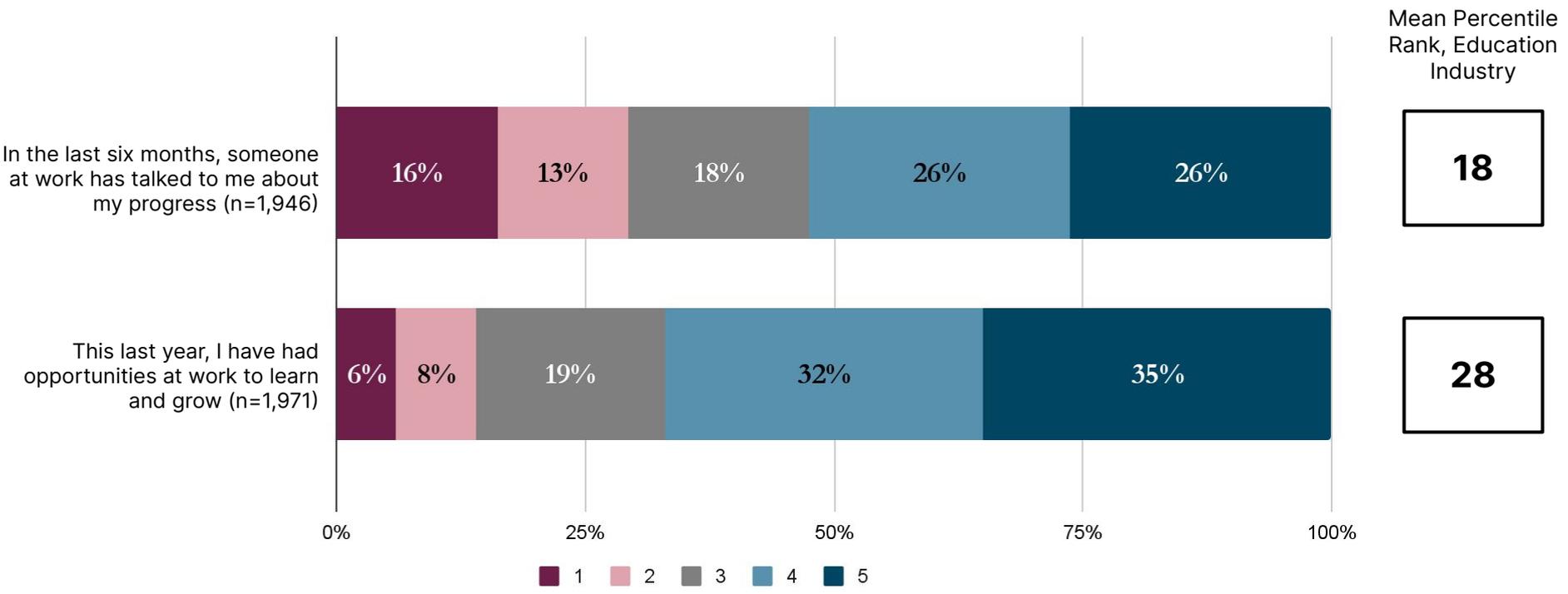
...which Central Office staff acknowledge

- “Teachers want instructional coaches to come in and be the expert—lead PD, tell them what to do—but **the philosophy is to be a reflective partner. That philosophy can create a rub**, or a difference in expectations between coaches and teachers.” (Leader, Central Office)
- “The term ‘coach’ is important in how the model manifests in reality—**coaches have no positional authority** or accountability for how instructional initiatives are implemented within schools.” (Leader, Central Office)



Staff survey results reinforce the notion that there is an opportunity to strengthen professional learning

Staff Employee Engagement Survey Responses 2022





Investment in PLCs has increased the use of data, but teachers need more support connecting data to practice

We heard the PLC structure has increased the use of data...

"We are **very good at looking at data**- we can tell where kids are..."

"I have **some PLCs that are really well-oiled machines** that know how to use data and make decisions about what comes next..."

"We have definitely **gotten better at collecting our data and reading it**..."

"Our **principals are pretty comfortable with data**..."

"We **love looking at the data**..."

...but has not always translated to meaningful changes in practice

...but I think that is often where the conversation ends. We look at the data, we know where students are, but **we don't get to the 'now what?' - that loop is not getting closed.**" (Teacher, ES)

... I have others that look at their data and disaggregate it, but then **don't really know what to do next.**" (School Leader, MS)

...but then I think we hit a wall about how to improve. We feel stuck." (Teacher, ES)

...but **not all of them know what to do in response to what they see** in their data." (Leader, Central Office)

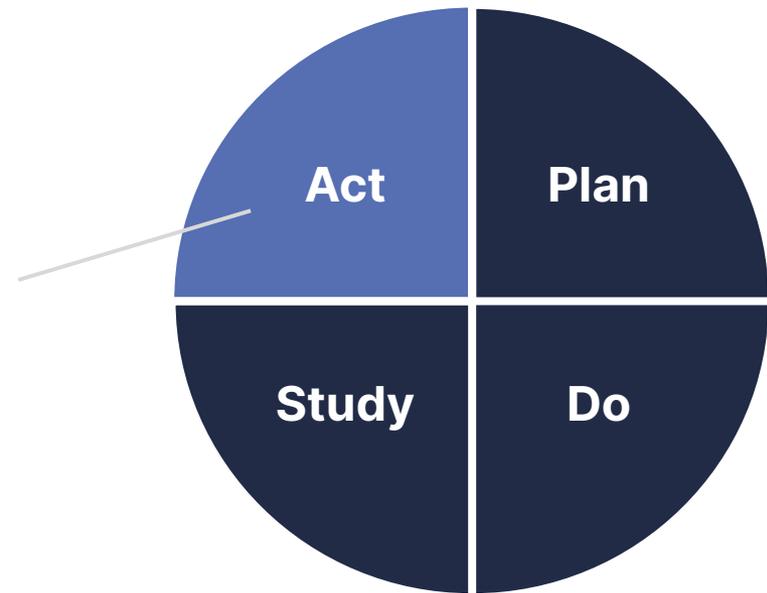
...but **we're not sure what to do with it.**" (Leader, Central Office)



A few staff members referenced PDSA cycles to illustrate where they perceive a gap in current data practices

“We do school-based PLCs and I think our team knows how important data is, but **we are still getting team members to understand the full PDSA cycle. I want to make sure we are making it all the way through that cycle to act on our data.**”

(School leader, MS)





Staff expressed differing views on summative assessments; many see need to strengthen the use of formative assessments

Some expressed concern over the use of summative assessments...

- **“Giving the exact same assessment that students have already done doesn’t give us valid data** because it is not new content.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“We want less summative assessment coming from the Division.** We are using a ton of instructional time.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“[On the mid-year] we basically assess what students don’t know, just to say we know what they don’t know.”** (Teacher, ES)

...and suggested the Division focus more on formative assessments

- **“We need more formative, just-in-time assessments...** there are intensive, data-driven assessments that can be delivered in 3 minutes or less.” (Teacher, ES)
- **“We need more consistency with formative data on an ongoing basis** throughout the year.” (Leader, Central Office)
- **“We need more timely data... a lot of these assessments happen too late for us to do anything about it.”** (Teacher, MS)

“There are definitely differing philosophies on things like common assessments. I don’t know how much of that is down to philosophical differences versus a **lack of understanding on the purpose and use of assessments.**” (Leader, Central Office)



We observed very little formative assessment during our walkthroughs

- Formative assessments and checks for understanding were rarely seen during instruction, even as small groups were often used in all grade levels.
- Based on observations, the level of academic expectations and rigor varies across schools. Specifically, more affluent, majority-white schools provided students with more choice and more opportunities to engage in independent writing while receiving [formative] feedback from teachers.
- It was noted that Math Investigations provides common unit assessments, but there is not an expectation for teachers to use them.
- Based on observations, across schools and within schools teachers do not look at the same data nor is the same data reviewed during DPLCs.
- One school outlines on their school-wide schedule that every class will close with some type of formative check for understanding, but there was no evidence of this in the observed classrooms.



ACPS' focus on the guaranteed and viable curriculum has some staff concerned there is less investment in RTI supports

Tier 1 instruction is clearer than RTI approach...

- “The Division is focused on the guaranteed and viable curriculum. **We know what our Tier 1 resources are; the question is what we do after Tier 1.**” (School Leader, ES)
- “**We need a really clear model of tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.** Right now that is very school-based.” (School leader, MS)
- “Our teachers work really hard on Tier 1, but **we could use more Tier 2 and Tier 3 support,** particularly after COVID.” (School Leader, ES)

...which is less structured and less resourced...

- “We say we do RTI, and **we have an RTI position, but no actual structure...** we aren’t able to provide interventions we know work.” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Teachers are left to fend for themselves to find intervention resources.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Our intensive services are not as strong as I’d like to see currently.**” (Leader, Central Office)

...leaving many feeling stuck

- “We have Kindergarten students who can only identify a handful of site words. We’ve reached out to people, done research, and students are still not where they need to be. **We’ve hit a wall, and we need help.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Students get the same interventions year after year,** but it is clearly not working, so **what are the other resources?**” (Teacher, ES)
- “When [our best teacher] has created plans for students and they are still not successful, it’s like geez, **we don’t really know what to do next.**” (School Leader, MS)



Staff say differentiation is a challenge, and expressed concerns about current intervention practices

Differentiation during Tier 1 to support all students is a challenge for many teachers...

- “Investigations and BAR are very scripted and inflexible, and because they are so structured, **it can be hard to flex to reach our students of color.**” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Our differentiation is really intense**, and doing that while trying to stay on pacing is really tough.” (School Leader, MS)
- “**I didn’t realize I would have to differentiate as much as I’ve needed** to, and it feels unfair for me to sit kids in front of these math activities that are not developmentally appropriate for kids that are counting on their fingers.” (Teacher, ES)
- “**Differentiation is really hard** for teachers.” (School Leader, ES)

...and some had concerns about students accessing Tier 2 and 3 interventions at the expense of instructional time

- “Within our intervention model, there is no opportunity for me to push into Tier 1 to coach. **Our model is all pull-out: grab, grab, grab.**” (Literacy Specialist, ES)
- “We have lots of **kids who are getting pulled multiple times per day from multiple people, and I think that can be really disruptive.**” (Literacy Specialist, ES)
- “What we don’t want is for our specialists to **pull kids out of class and have that lead to limited exposure to grade-level standards and curriculum.**” (Leader, Central Office)



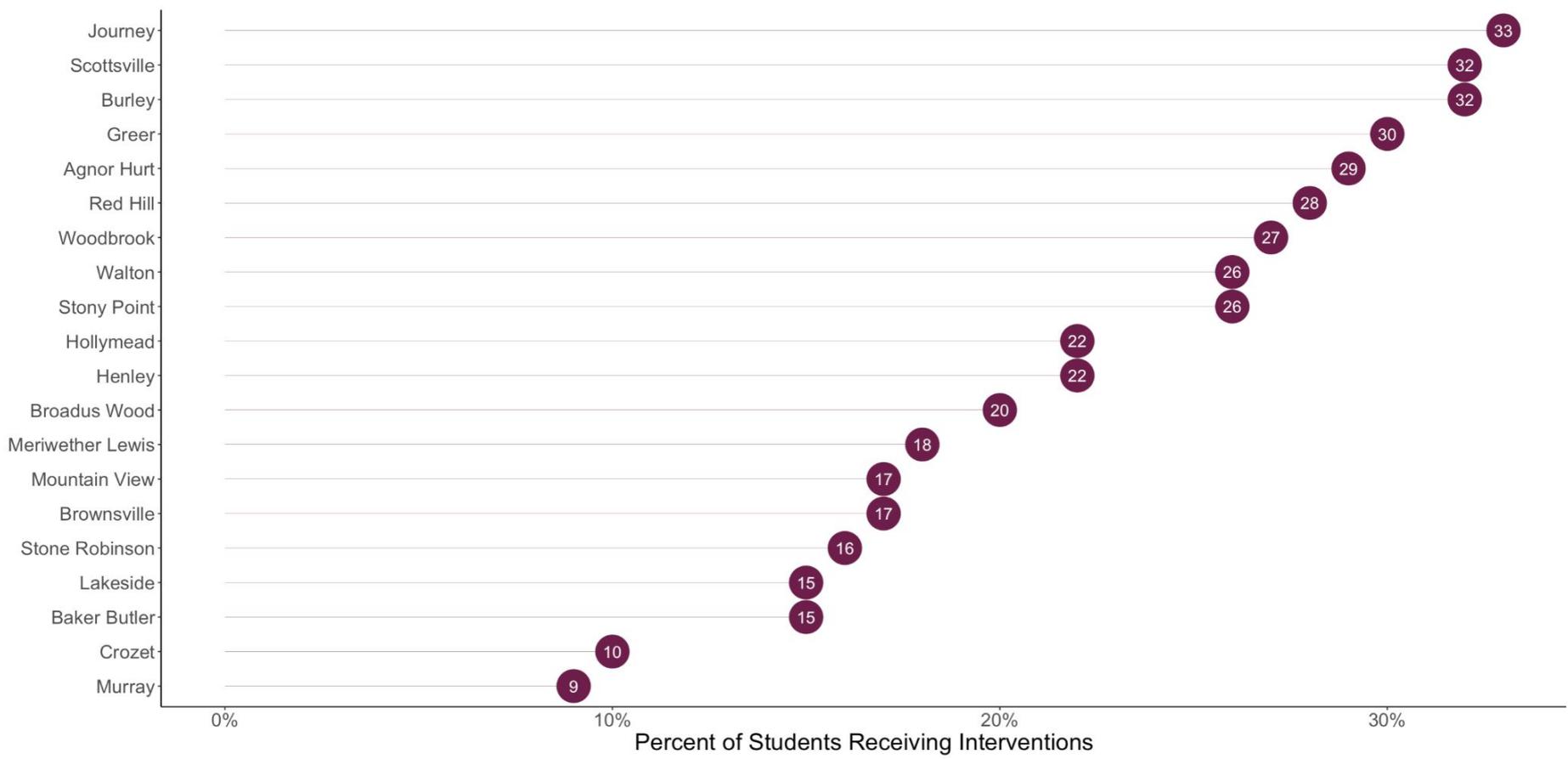
We saw limited evidence of differentiation during our class walkthroughs

- In elementary schools, many classes have a teacher and a co-teacher to support students; however, their delivery and supports were not differentiated for student needs.
- In elementary schools, very few classes provided students with opportunities to work independently while receiving feedback.
- One elementary school consistently provided students with choice (majority non-Black school); however, during whole group instruction, lessons were heavily teacher-led with limited opportunities for student discourse.
- Co-teachers appeared to work well together, but we saw clear opportunities to better differentiate their role in supporting students with various needs during class.
- Based on observations in middle schools, teachers missed opportunities to offer choice to students, provide effective vocabulary strategies, and offer other differentiated supports.
- In middle schools, classes were observed in either whole group direct instruction or individual work, but in every instance students were all tasked with the same activity with no evidence of differentiation or choice.
- In one high school, differentiation was observed as a strength within SPED and ELL classrooms.



According to internal data, 12 schools provide RTI support to over 20% of their students

Percent of Students Receiving Intervention Services
2023-2024





Some stakeholders also expressed concerns about how RTI and identification for learning differences plays out in practice

- **“If you say, ‘my child needs more support,’ nothing happens,** but if you say, ‘my child needs an IEP,’ the whole conversation shifts.” (Parent, ES)
- “When we talk about identifying students of need, **unless it is done by individual parents or teachers who elevate students to RTI, it doesn’t happen.** Nothing systemic.” (Teacher, MS)
- **“Hard to talk to parents and say that their kids are a year behind and don’t qualify for intervention.** Of those who qualify, the vast majority are students of color.” (Teacher, ES)
- “Algebra 1 is not the time.... It is too late. Students lack the foundational numeracy. **ACPS passes students from grade to grade without any type of support or remediation.**” (Teacher, HS)



The majority of classrooms visited exhibited safe, positive climates...

Elementary Schools

- 7 of 7 ESs observed generally had a **safe and positive environment**
- **Physical spaces are well-maintained** and inviting
- **4 of the 7 schools use morning meeting** as a culture-building routine
- Based on observations, students and teachers follow **norms that support learning and relationship building**
- On 3 occasions we observed a **teacher supporting a student not meeting expectations in a thoughtful and restorative manner**

Middle Schools

- 2 of 2 building leaders had clearly articulated **school-wide visions for culture**
- **Physical spaces are well-maintained** and inviting
- **Students observed smiling and laughing** during transitions, navigating hallways respectfully and with a sense of pride
- 1 MS outlined **tiered behavior support system** in which Tier 2 results in student removal from the classroom setting
- In two instances, use of Tier 2 support seemed unwarranted; **stronger Tier 1 practices may have mitigated need to elevate to Tier 2** in both instances

High Schools

- **Students were compliant** and consistently followed teacher-set classroom norms
- **Physical spaces are well-maintained** and inviting
- **Mutual respect for community norms** were seen throughout HS hallways
- Classroom spaces **did not have any visible supports** in the classrooms such as a “cool down corner” or graphic reminders of expected norms



...However, interviews with school-based staff indicated that is not always the case

Student behavioral needs impact teaching & learning

- **“Basic behavioral issues are a major problem.”**(Teacher, MS)
- **“What takes up the majority of our time? Student behavior.”** (School Leader, ES)
- **“It’s very hard to manage behavior. I spend a lot time dealing with disruptions, stopping fights... I get to teach two hours a day.”** (Teacher, ES)

Some teachers feel unsupported & overwhelmed...

- **“I often feel like I don’t know what to do with a student that is being defiant. My skill level is not matching what the student needs in that moment.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“We have no school-wide behavior plan, no consistent protocol.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“It’s hard to teach when we are putting out fires all day. Our counselors are overwhelmed- they are rushing from one fire to another.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“We had kids with high needs prior to COVID, but after COVID it is so intense... students with big feelings, high anxiety, trauma, disregulated.”** (School leader, ES)

...and see a need for more mental health and SEL

- **“An SEL curriculum would be helpful, and I wish we had a county-level one—this is especially important for kids coming out of the pandemic.”** (Teacher, ES)
- **“We should be prioritizing mental health needs** and reflecting that in the staffing for a school that has a tremendous amount of trauma.” (Teacher, MS)
- **“From the counseling perspective, I’m frustrated there is not much consistency from school to school.** Yes we need to tailor our approach to fit our school context, but it would be nice to have a little bit more guidance.” (Teacher, MS)



Though students appeared largely compliant during our visits, we did not observe students deeply engaged in learning

Elementary Schools

- **Depth of engagement with grade-level content varies** across classes. Ex: in one G5 class students were editing essays in Google docs based on teacher feedback, while another in another G5 class students were doing a read-along
- Some similar instructional practices seen in most classrooms, but **mostly limited to turn-in-talks**
- During whole group instruction, **lessons were heavily teacher-led** with limited opportunities for student discourse
- Very few classes provided students with **opportunities to work independently while receiving feedback**

Middle Schools

- Observed instructional practices varied, with **little consistency across classes**
- In most observed classrooms, the **teacher carried the majority of the cognitive load**
- It was noticed that when students struggle with content, **teachers often provide answers versus giving strategies** to work towards a solution
- All classes were observed in either whole group direct instruction or individual practice; in every instance, students were tasked with the same activity with **no evidence of differentiation or choice** within Tier I

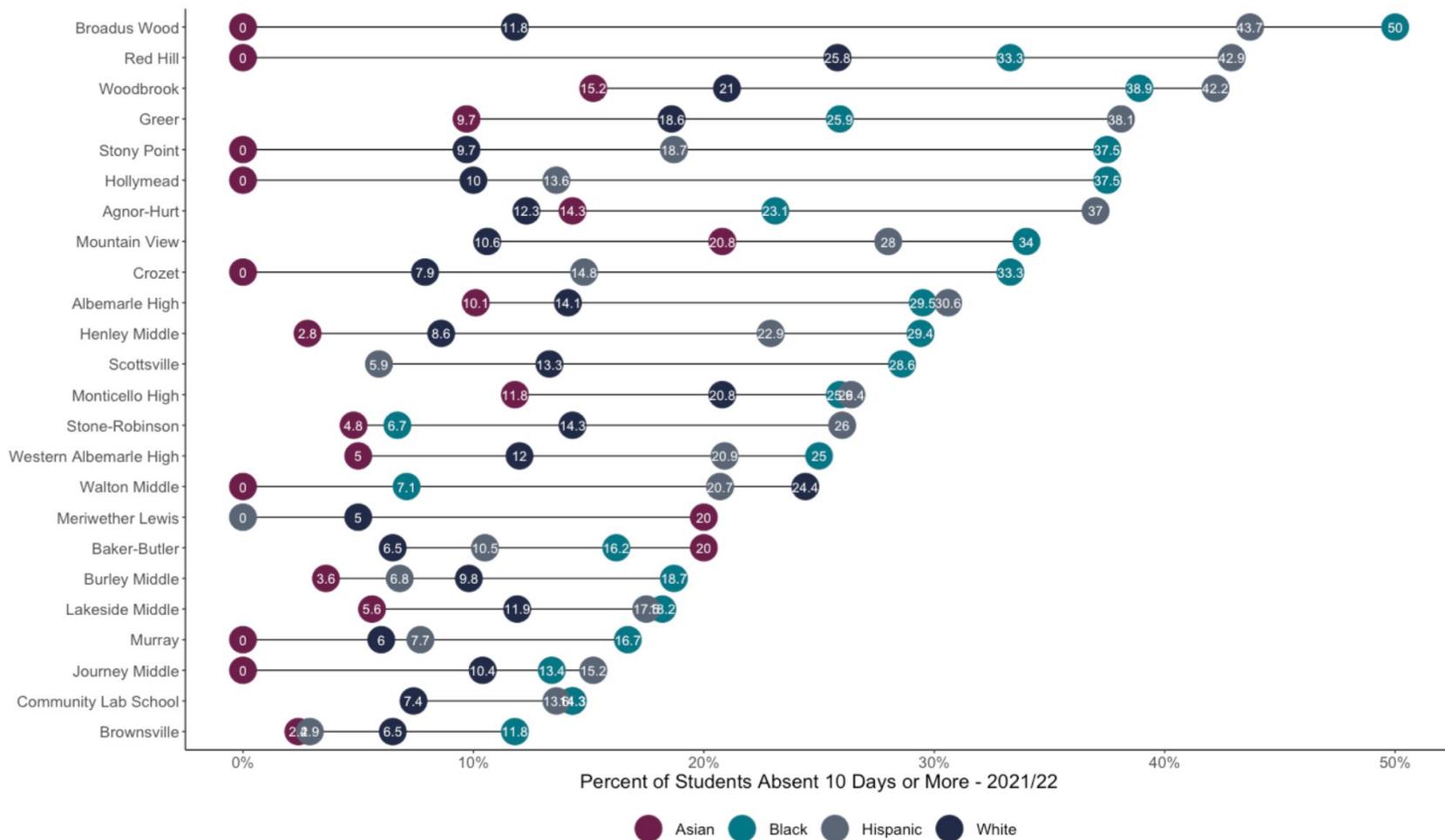
High Schools

- **2 of 8 HS classrooms** exhibited high levels of engagement & academic grade-level content
- **4 of 8 HS classrooms** demonstrated small group instruction, stations, and/or prioritization of student choice; however, this **did not equate to high engagement for all** students
- **Differentiation observed as a highlight within SPED and ELL classrooms**
- When student engagement was observed it was in **direct correlation to deep student/ teacher relationships and teacher mindset** that ALL students can achieve.



Looking at data on attendance—a necessary precondition to engagement—we see significant gaps by subgroup (1 of 4)

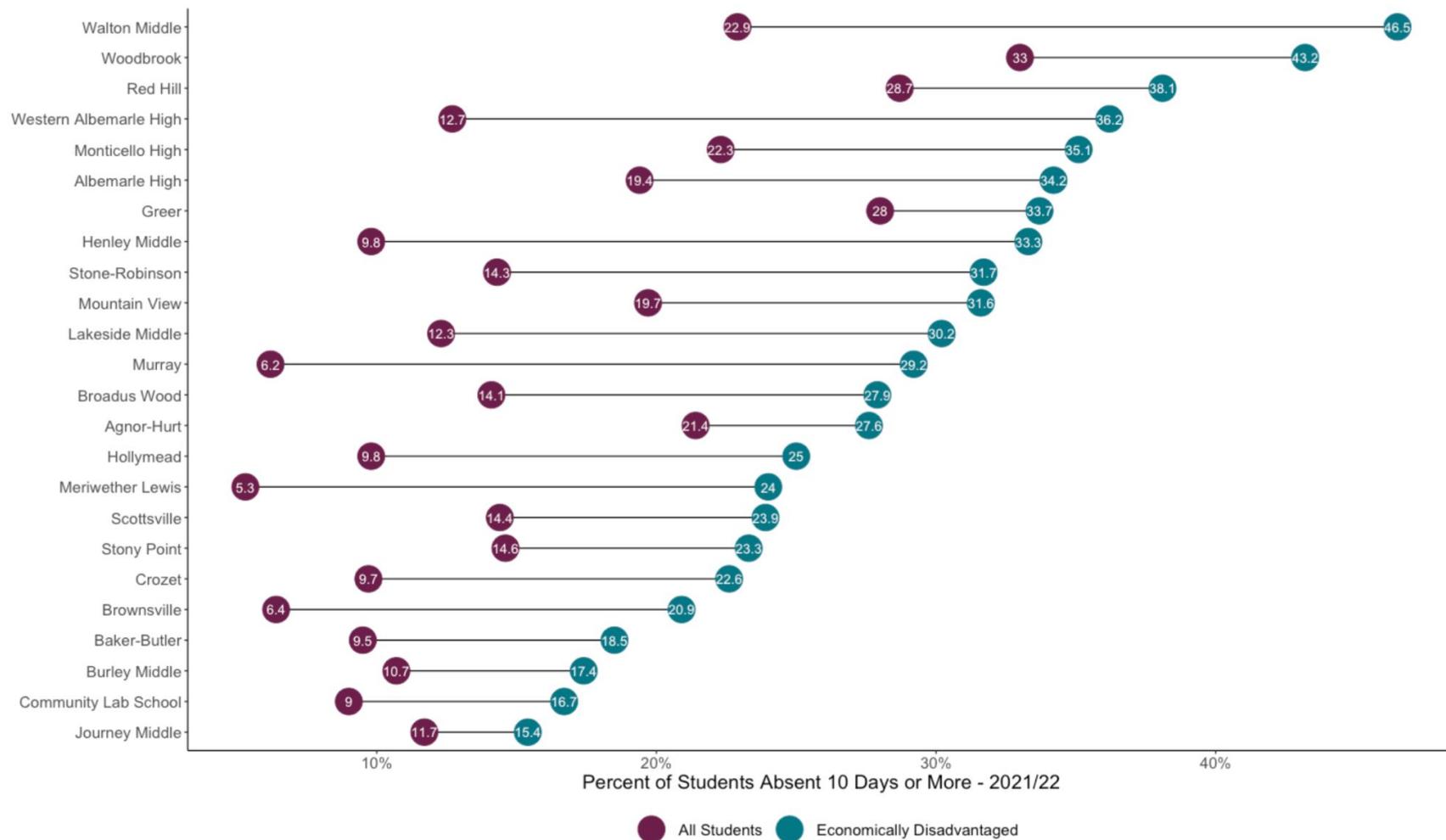
Percent of Students Absent 10 Days or More, by Race/ Ethnicity
2021-2022





Looking at data on attendance—a necessary precondition to engagement—we see significant gaps by subgroup (2 of 4)

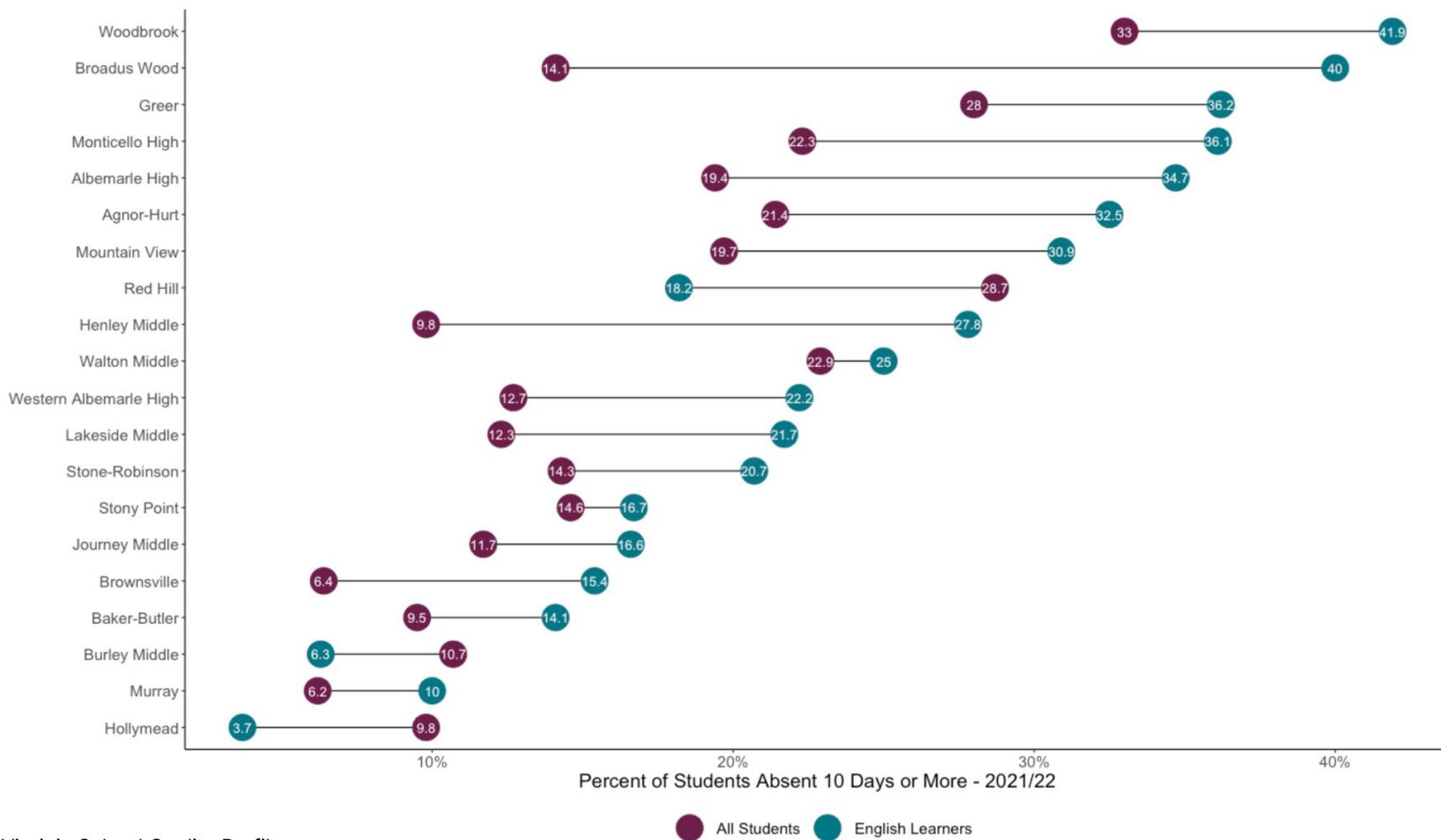
Percent of Students Absent 10 Days or More, by Economic Status
2021-2022





Looking at data on attendance—a necessary precondition to engagement—we see significant gaps by subgroup (3 of 4)

Percent of Students Absent 10 Days or More, by ELL Status
2021-2022

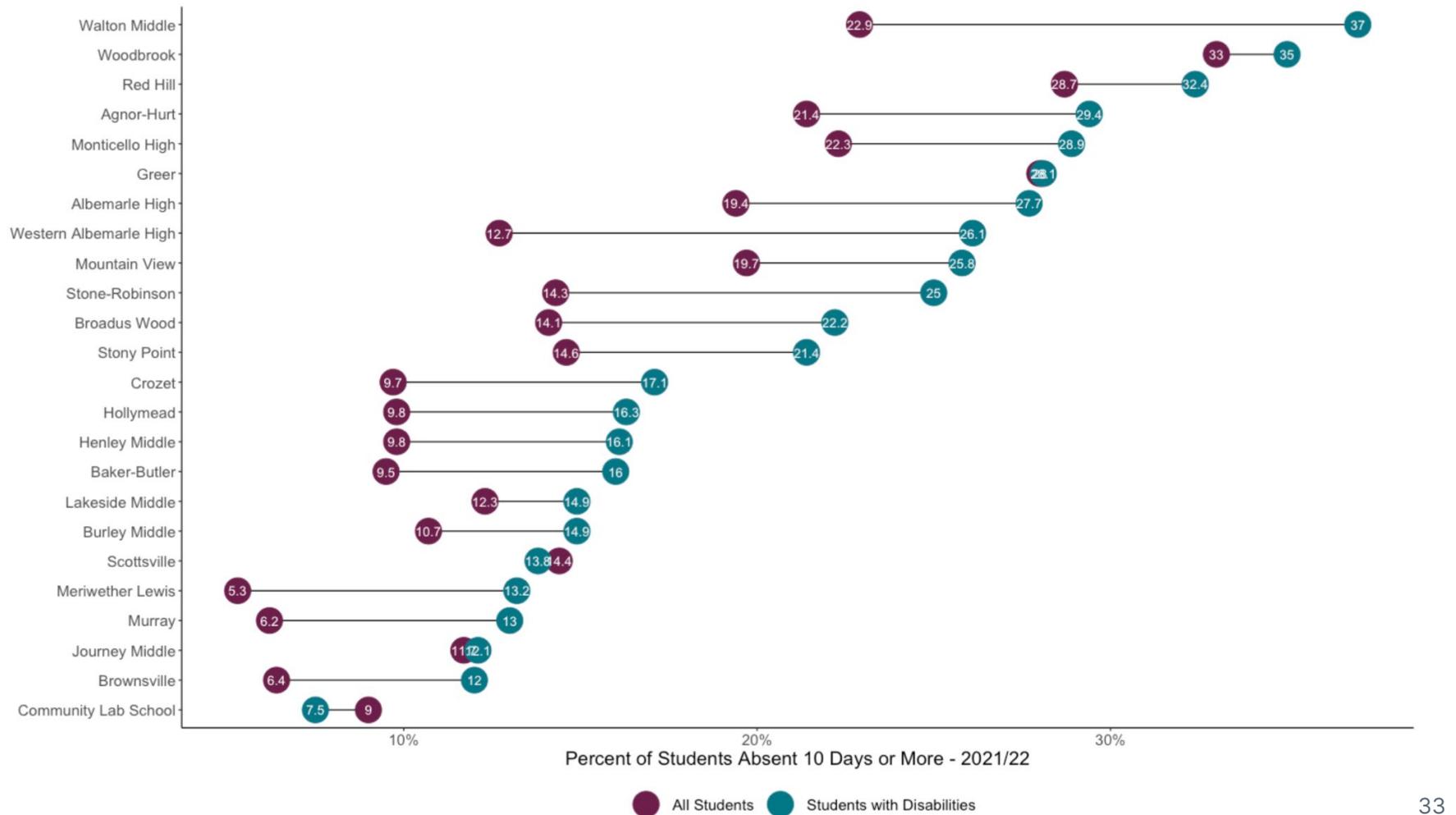




Looking at data on attendance—a necessary precondition to engagement—we see significant gaps by subgroup (4 of 4)

Percent of Students Absent 10 Days or More, by Disability Status

2021-2022





Some staff worry about implicit biases and a ‘culture of low expectations’ for students of color

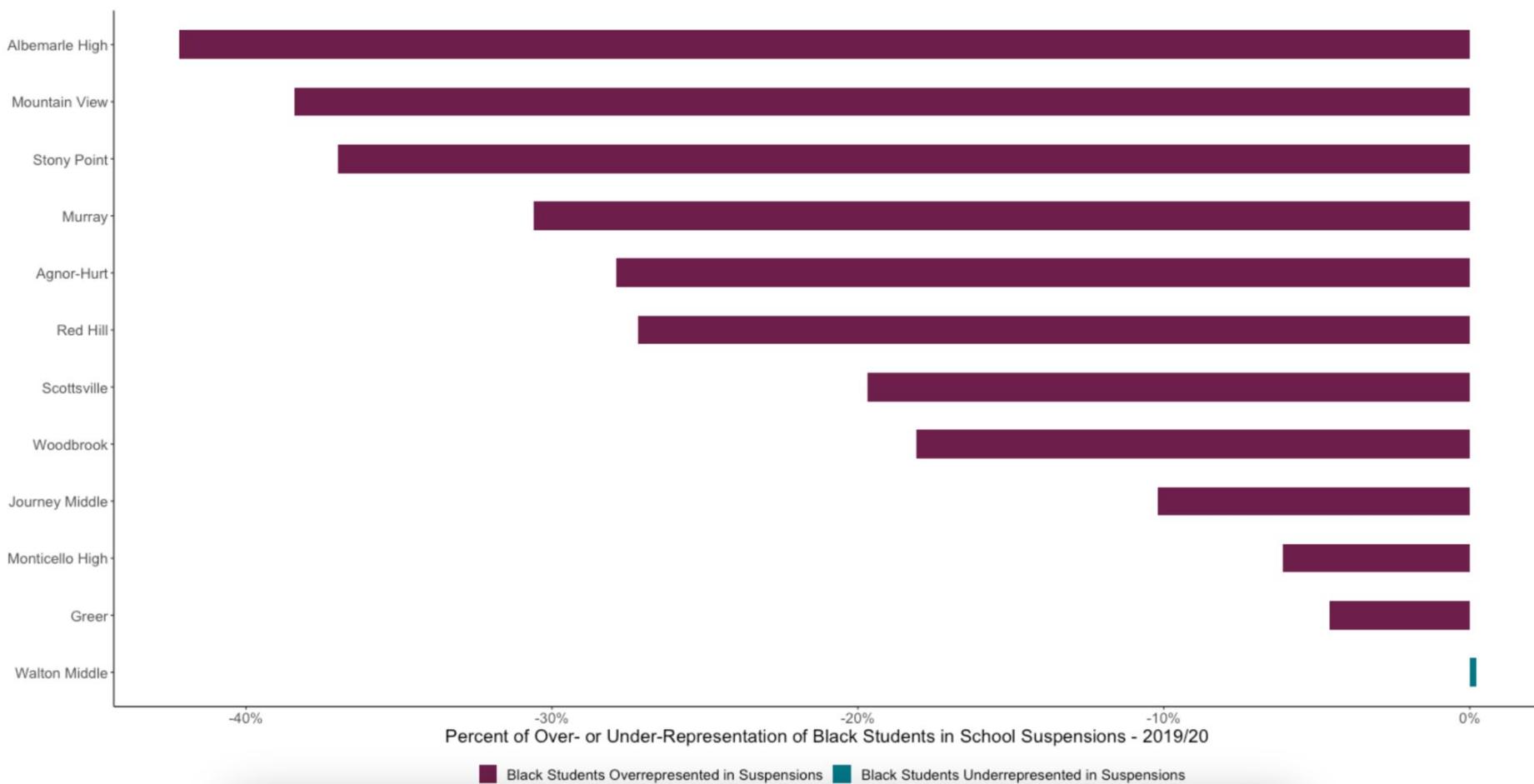
- “I do **think there is some implicit bias in how teachers speak to parents of color.**” (Leader, Central Office)
- “I **don’t think teachers mean to lower expectations for black students, but it is done.**” (School Leader, ES)
- “**Teachers have a mindset issue that students of color cannot do the work.** I’ve pushed back against teacher bias, but I still feel like my colleagues think students of color can’t pass Algebra 1 SOL.” (Teacher, HS)
- “**I think there is a culture of low expectations across the board for students of color.** For example, disruptive behavior is not checked with students of color, but that same behavior wouldn’t be tolerated in mostly white honors sections. And I’ve heard teachers make excuses like that’s just how ‘they’ are...” (Teacher, HS)

“I definitely think **there is still room for folks to understand the historical context of culture and race and why that matters.**” (Leader, Central Office)



Public data show that Black students are over-represented in suspensions at several schools across the Division

Percent Over- or Under-Representation of Black Students in School Suspensions
2019-2020



Reminder: this is one of four reports including in the instructional practices audit



**Holistic Experiences of
Students of Color**



**The Role of Systems &
Structures in the Achievement
of Students of Color**



**Root Causes and
Recommendations**