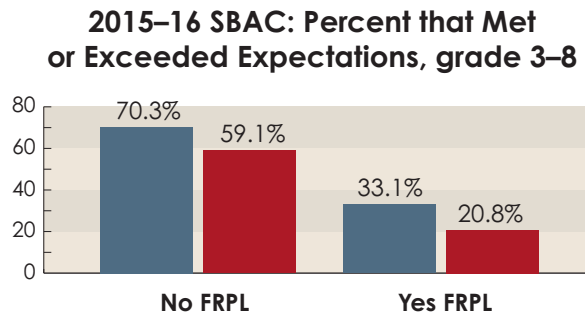


Color of Justice Fact Sheet: Opportunity gap

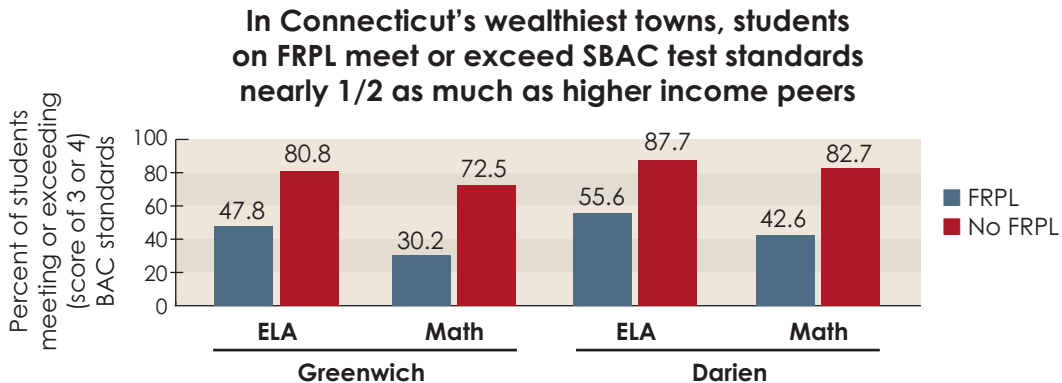
The achievement gap – the difference in performance between low-income students and their wealthier peers – is larger in Connecticut than any other state, according to recent data from the U.S. Dept. of Education. Low-income kids are typically two or more grade levels behind in core subjects. We prefer the term “opportunity gap,” because it zeroes in more effectively on the problem.

In 2016, low-income students – those eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) – scored significantly lower than students not FRPL eligible on Connecticut Smarter Balance assessments (SBAC) in both math and English/Language Arts (ELA):



There is a gap even within generally wealthy communities.²

In Greenwich and Darien – two of Connecticut’s three highest per capita income towns³ – students on FRPL earned lower test scores than their peers not on FRPL in the 2015-16 school year. In both math and English/Language, for both towns, students on FRPL met or exceeded standards *1.8 times less* than students not receiving FRPL:

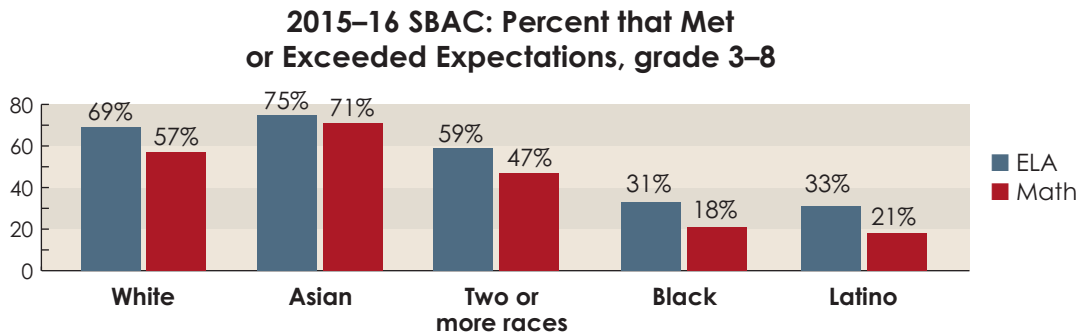


There is also an opportunity gap by race.

In 2016, black and Latino students scored lower on the SBAC than white students. White students were three times as likely to meet or exceed standards in math than



black students and were more than twice as likely to meet or exceed ELA standards:



Source: CT State Department of Education data

The opportunity gap feeds student arrests

Students who fall behind are at high risk of having behavioral problems in school, and of truancy and dropping out. Both are risk factors for arrest. A 2011 study by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute looked at more than 900,000 Texas students and found that those with higher rates of suspensions and expulsions were more likely to enter the juvenile justice system.

Social mobility

Americans believe that anyone who works hard enough can become a CEO, a best-selling author or even president. The path to success, we are taught, begins with applying oneself to excel in school. If all students don't have access to quality education, however, is this cherished belief true?

For example, no member of New Haven's High School in the Community Class of 2012 who went on to college earned enough credits in the first year to advance to sophomore year. These were young people motivated to continue their education, but they were not prepared to be successful in college after graduating from a public high school. (Source: New Haven Independent)

¹ Data analyzed and provided by A. Ricks, Connecticut Voices for Children, December 2016.

² American Community Survey 2010-2014, Five year Estimates accessed via <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t>.

³ New Canaan has the highest per capita income, however, SDE reported 0 students on FRPL, so no comparisons could be made.

