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The Unrealistic Expectations of Standardized Testing & the Failure to Serve Diverse Populations

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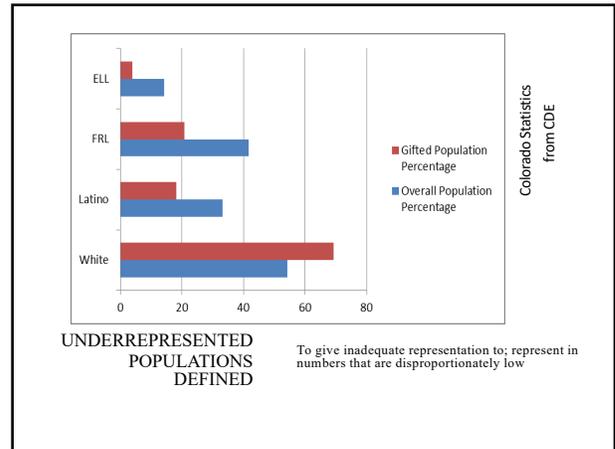
Why do we need to talk about bias in testing, assessment standards and accountability?

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Disproportionality:

- Disproportionality occurs when one group is overrepresented or underrepresented in a particular situation or category, compared with the percentage of that group in the general population.

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Disproportionate representation persists, not just in Colorado, but across the country.

- In Gifted Ed
- In Special Education
- In Discipline Practices
- In Graduation Rates
- In College Acceptance
- In Teacher Diversity!

Everywhere that standardized testing is used as a gate keeper.

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What are the Gaps?

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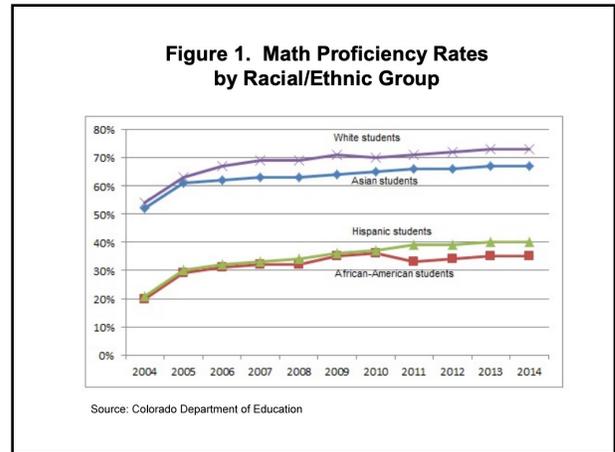
Definition

- Achievement Gap:**

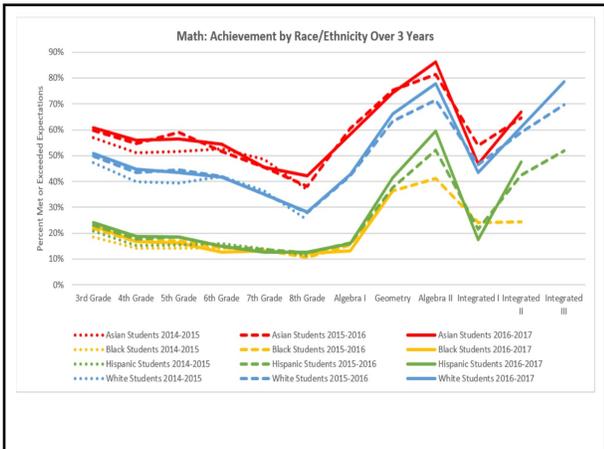
State law defines "achievement gap" as the difference in academic achievement attained by student groups on the statewide assessments



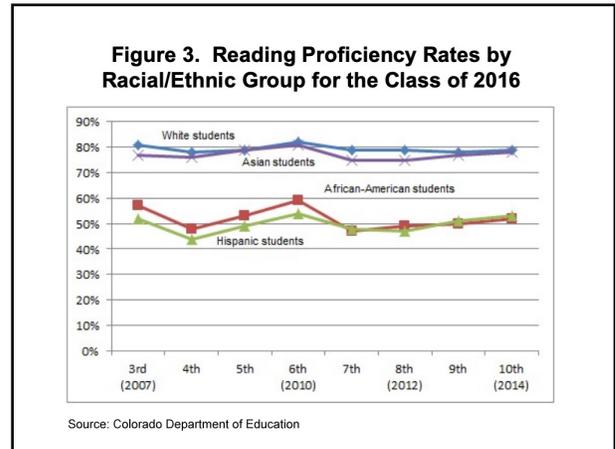
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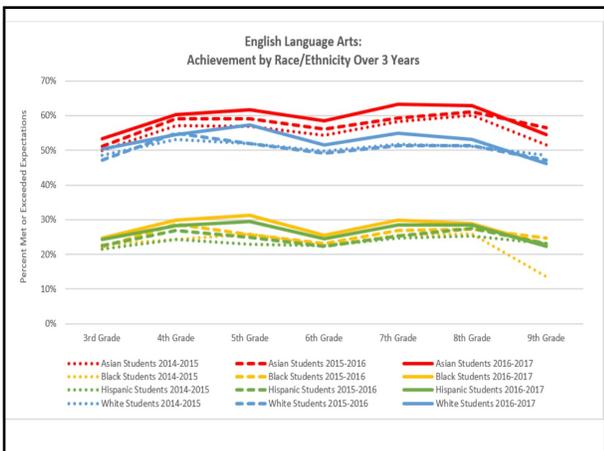
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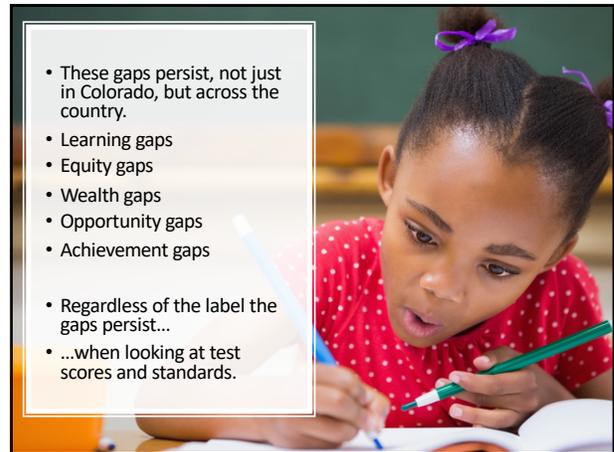
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- These gaps persist, not just in Colorado, but across the country.
- Learning gaps
- Equity gaps
- Wealth gaps
- Opportunity gaps
- Achievement gaps

- Regardless of the label the gaps persist...
- ...when looking at test scores and standards.



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**Biological Determinism:**



In the early 1800's scientists set out to prove that the social and economic differences between races, classes, and sexes arose from inherited and inborn differences.

That biology, not society, determined outcomes.

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- 1882 – Francis Galton – Developed a standardized test for rating intelligence based on physical traits.  
He later recognized that his tests were not working because there was **too much variability among individuals in the population**
- 1905 – Alfred Binet – Developed a verbal test of mental age  
He later recognized that **remarkable diversity** existed among individuals in the population and felt a qualitative measure would be more accurate.
- 1913 – Goddard – Promoted the use of the Stanford-Binet test of cognitive abilities in schools and at Ellis Island  
He wanted to use testing to **eliminate undesirable traits** from the population.
- 1915 – Robert Yerkes – Used standardized mental and performance tests to determine who would qualify as officers  
It was later determined that these tests measured familiarity with **American culture** more than intelligence, and though they were the first mass produced written tests, were not administered consistently, and so results were invalid.

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These tests all presupposed that intelligence is:

- Heritable
- Innate
- Numerable



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“We still think there’s something wrong with the kids rather than recognizing there is something wrong with the tests.”  
-Ibram X. Kendi

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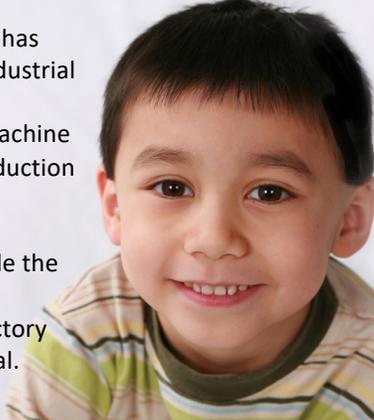
Accountability Audits must acknowledge that the gaps may exist **BECAUSE** of the tests.



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Standardization has origins in the industrial revolution – by standardizing machine parts, mass production was possible.

This in turn made the production of standardized factory workers essential.



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“By harnessing the seeming precision of numerical assessments and standardization in classrooms, educators could make the case that they, like their industrialist peers, were objective, scientific, and therefore effective.”

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- Standardized tests were being challenged for misuse and for not really measuring what they were supposed to measure as early as 1925.



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- In 1965, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act opened the way for standardized testing to be used to evaluate programs.

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Between 1983 and 1994 changes in world economies and competition drew attention to achievement levels of American students.

Suddenly factory workers weren't in the same demand.

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Accountability for results and a business model for pressure to improve achievement are devised as the answer.

**Goals 2000**  
asked for standards and measurable success



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- In 2001 NCLB required state-mandated standardized testing be used to assess school, and teacher performance.

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“Though test makers claimed that their tests were closely aligned with the state standards, and makers of instructional materials claimed that their products were closely aligned with the tests and the standards of particular states, independent analysts repeatedly found otherwise.”

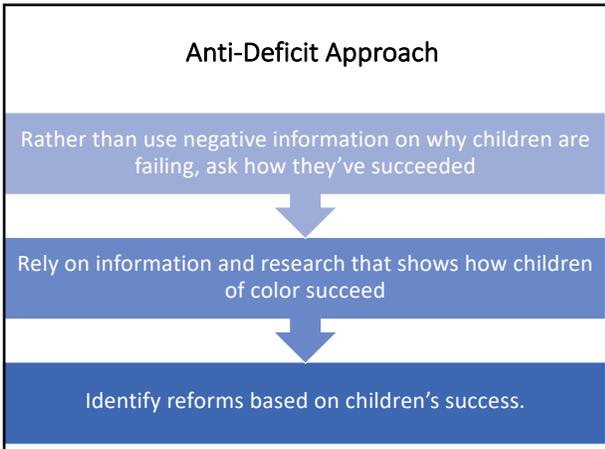


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We continue to rely on nineteenth-century industrial practices to assess students.

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### What CAN we do?

- Integrate efforts to neutralize the ways that systemic racism blocks access to avenues of success – by creating place-based (local control) opportunities that ensure access to resources.
- Develop initiatives to shift the education system from a narrow focus on test results – and instead emphasize timely, appropriate, high-quality authentic assessment tailored to the culture and context of communities.
- Make new investments to raise awareness of the racial inequities of our assessment systems – politicians, policy makers, practitioners, the public...
- ...and in Research to identify optimal culturally relevant strategies for public education and for developing teacher knowledge of Culturally Responsive teaching & assessment strategies.

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Questions?

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Thank you!



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