Augmenting the Use of Data

Uprooting Dominant Stories About "Racial Achievement Gaps"

National Conference on Student Assessment

June 17, 2008

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Who We Are

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Who You Are

- Introduce yourself to the person next to you—you'll be talking with them quite a lot today!

What We'll Do Today

- Reflection

- Interaction

- Conversation

- Presentation

- Problem Solving

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A Framework for Talking About Race

- – We don't share a common and compelling direction **or** shared sense of current reality.

- – We disagree about the cause of major problems in the system.

- – We lack the skills to talk about race.

- – We lack the skills to analyze the presence, role, and implications of race in our systems.

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Four Agreements

- Stay Engaged

- Speak Your Truth

- Experience Discomfort

- Expect and Accept Non-Closure

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Setting the Stage: Where We Are Going

Why are we assessing?

What are we assessing?

How are we using results of assessment?

What impact does this have on racial equity?

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Setting the Stage:
Where We Are Going

Why do we disaggregate data?

What has changed for students of color as a result of disaggregating data?

What do you think you know, based on that data?

What are the mental models we are bringing to the instrument?

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Warm-Up Discussion

Pair-Share and Report-Out:

Why do we disaggregate student achievement data by race?

Why Disaggregate?
Middletown City School

Middletown City Schools' Initial Strategy

- Helped us to identify gaps among our subgroups

- Allowed us to focus our efforts

- When attached to accountability, brought some people to the table

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Vision, Middletown City Schools

Recognizing the need to prepare students to become productive members of a democratic society, we envision that the Middletown City School District will:

– Raise achievement levels of all students

– Eliminate achievement gaps

– Earn a rating of "Excellent" on the school district's state report card

Disaggregated Data

Fourth Grade Math At or Above Proficiency
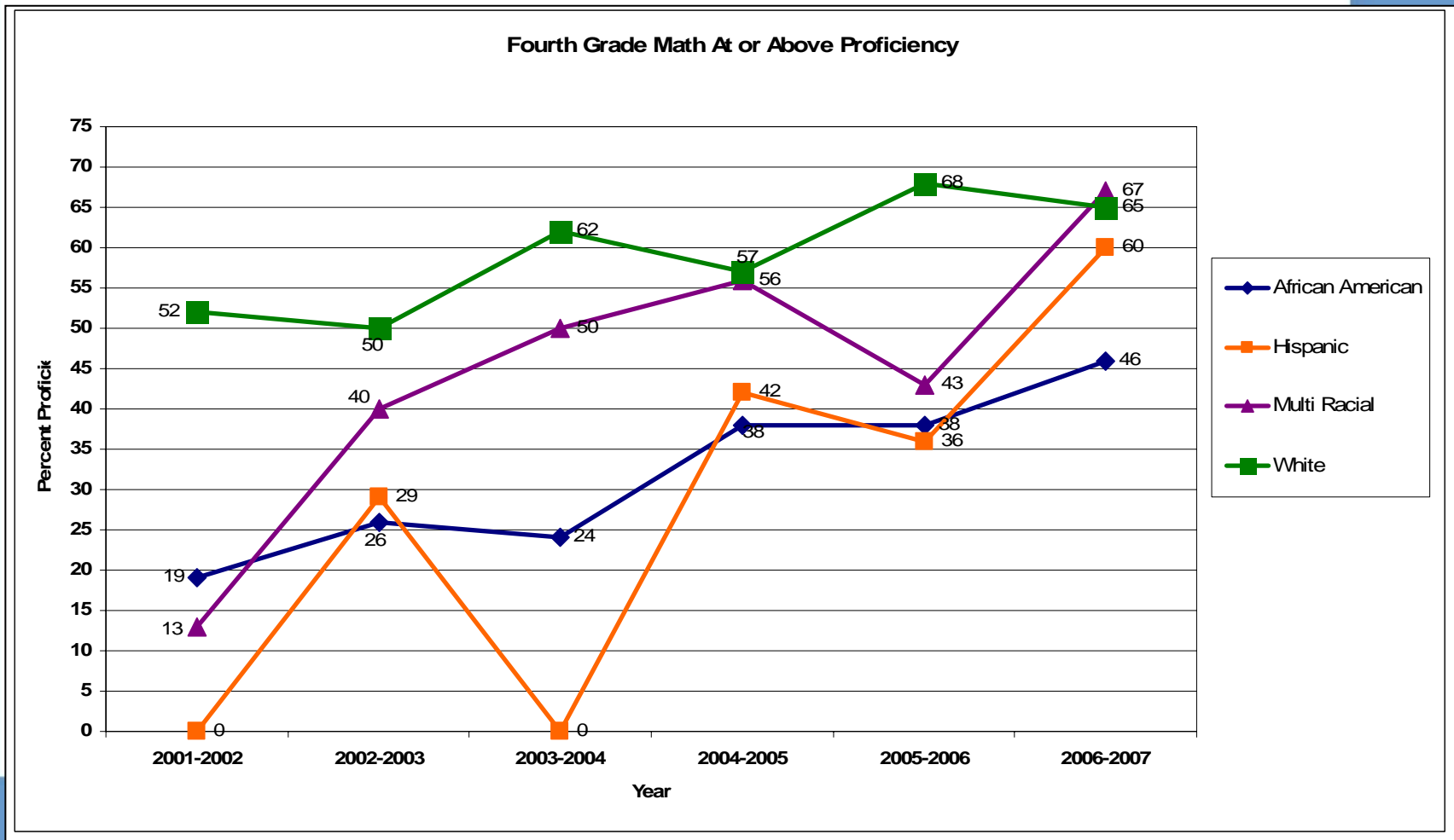
Why Disaggregate?
A National Perspective

From the National Perspective: An Equity-Focused SBR Strategy:

– Expose that many schools are NOT providing students of color with opportunities to learn.

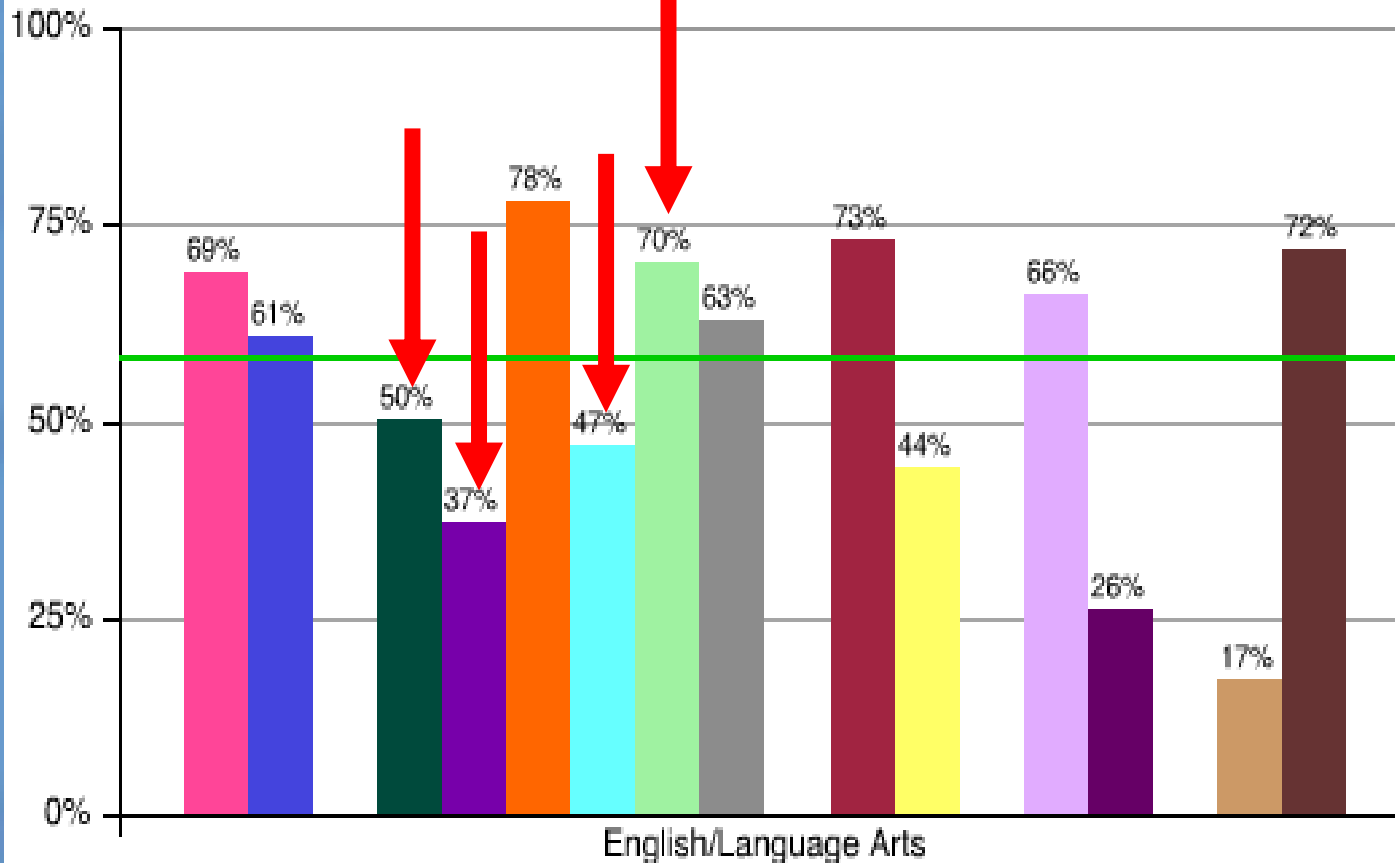– Identify schools serving students of color very well—and broadcast that info.

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Indiana's "Gaps"

Some Schools Have Closed the Gap

Percent Meeting Graduation Require

	All	African American	Latino	Poor	
Elmont	99	99	100	100	99
New York	85	74	72	75	88
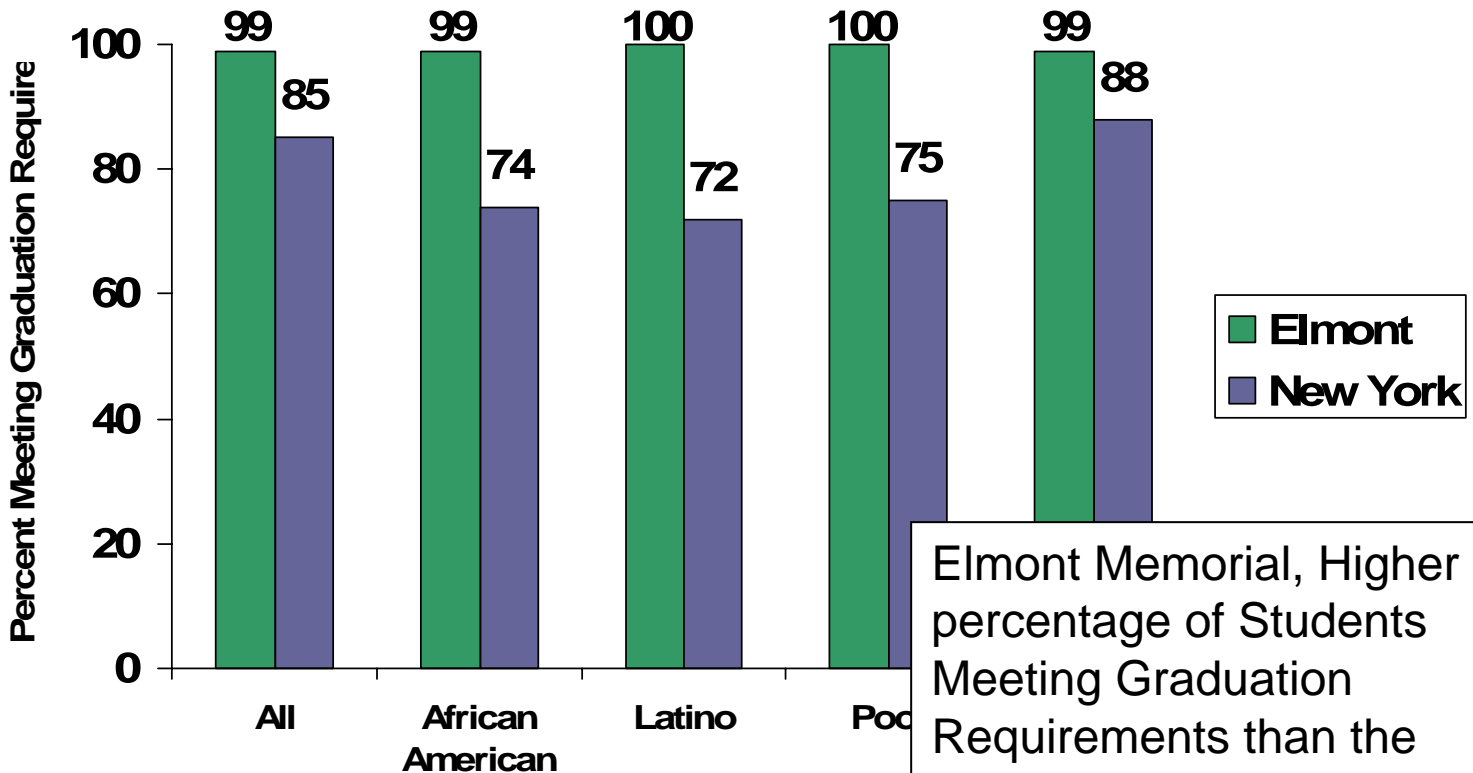
Elmont
New York

Elmont Memorial, Higher percentage of Students Meeting Graduation Requirements than the State, Class of 2004 Regents English

Why Disaggregate? The SW Ohio Consortium on Racial Equity

- We convened a Consortium on Racial Equity in K-12 Education at Miami University in SW Ohio

- We started with traditional achievement gap investigations; Our goal was to "close racial achievements gaps in Southwest Ohio while raising the achievement of all students."

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Why Disaggregate? The SW Ohio Consortium on Racial Equity

- The data on race are compelling…

Ohio's "Gaps"

Average ACT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity in Ohio, School Year 2005-2006
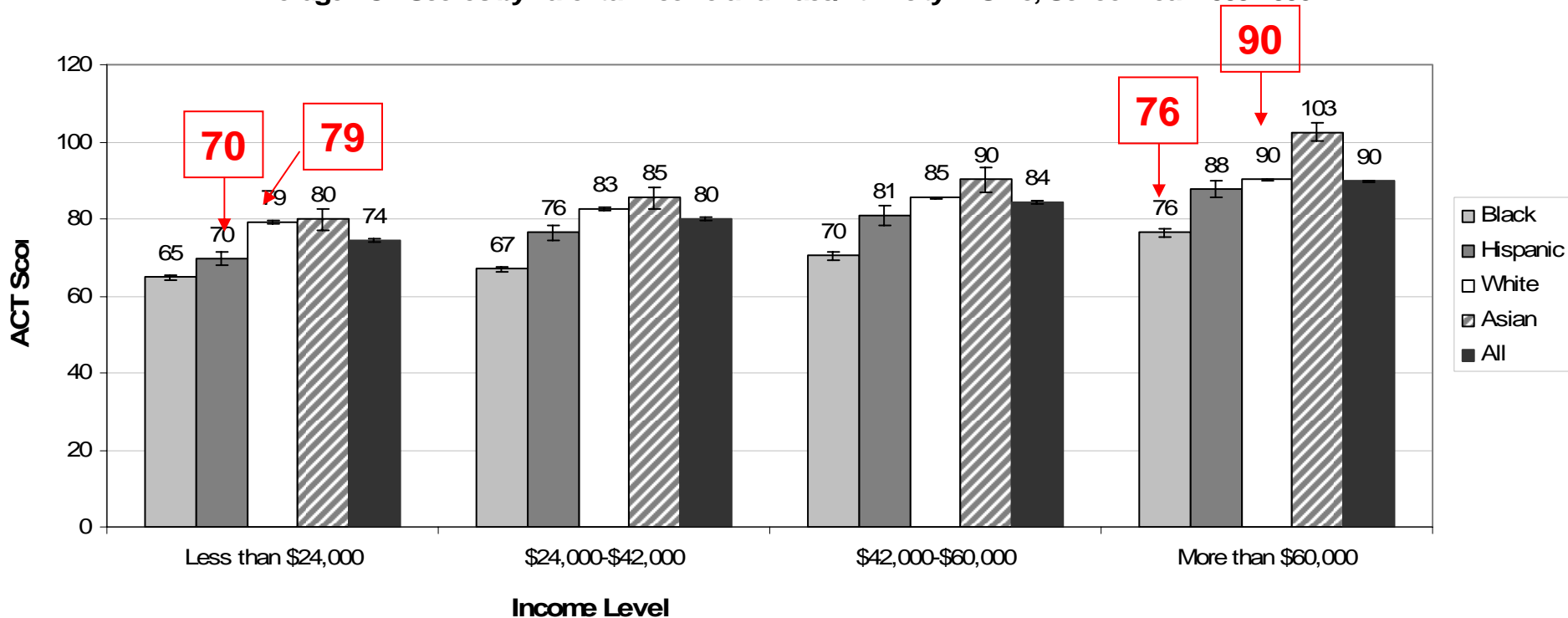
Ohio's "Gaps"

Average ACT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity in Ohio, School Year 2005-2006
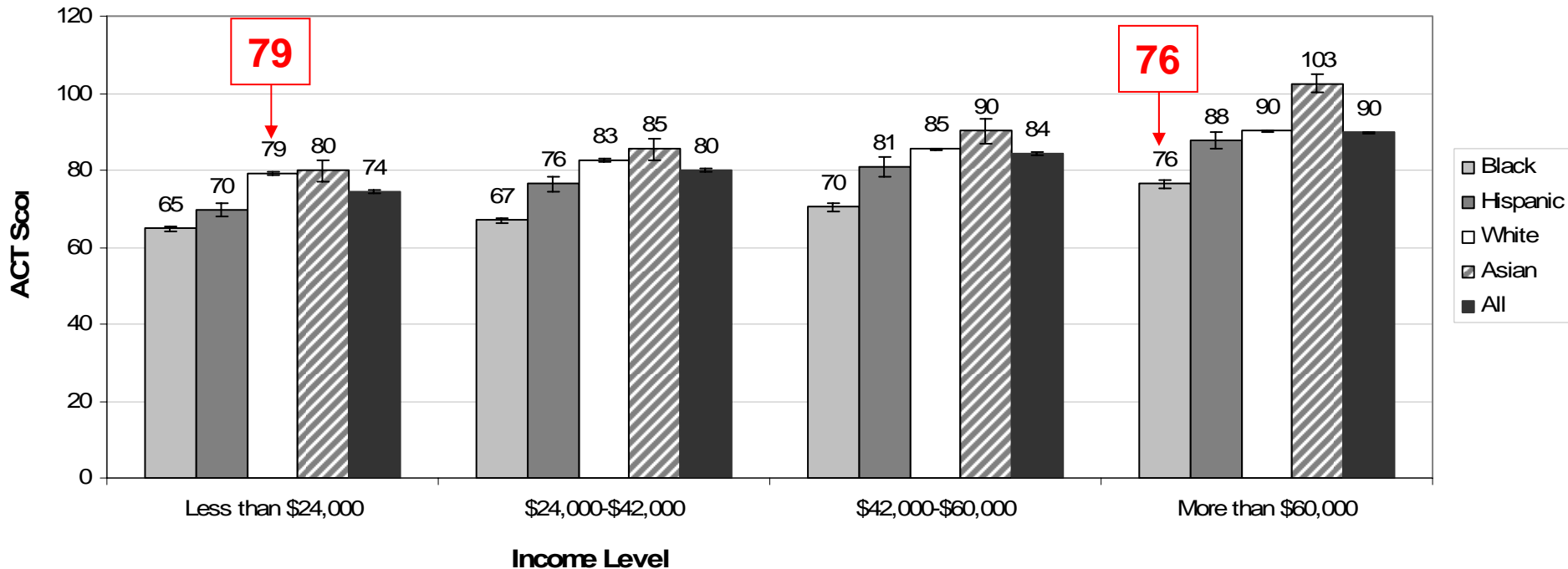
Watching the Way We Talk

- As we continued this work over time, though, we worried that the way we use these data reinforce existing/hidden beliefs about the intellectual inferiority of children and communities of color.

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Discussion

We asked ourselves:

What does the term "racial achievement gap" mean?

How do we talk about racial achievement gaps? What words do we use?

Pair-Share and Report Out

Watching for Words

We asked educators participating in a year-long program on racial equity, **"What does the term 'racial achievement gap' mean to you?"** Sixty-three participants—including teachers, administrators, school board members, and community members—responded. We grouped their words by topics.

Topic 1: What is the Gap?

- Disparity

- Difference

- Discrepancy

- Situation

- Distance between

- Lack of

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Topic 2: Where is the Gap?

- in Achievement

- in Performance

- in Learning (amount, level)

- in Outcomes

- in Growth

- in Success

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Topic 3:
How Do We Measure the Gap?

- Standardized Tests
- Assessments
- Written, multiple choice tests
- Achievement tests

- Outcomes
- Gifted/AP Rates
- Graduation Rates
- Disciplinary Rates

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The Significance of Problem Definition

- The way we talk about a problem does several things:

  - It locates the source of the problem, which defines the solutions we consider.

  - It conveys messages to others about what is happening.

  - While sometimes it debunks beliefs, most often it reinforces them.

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How We Have Been Defining the Problem

The way we have been talking locates the problem in the students themselves.

The problem typically is defined as a problem of *underachieving students.*

If the problem is underachieving students, the solution is *remediation.*

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Defining the Problem Defines the Solution Set

- This focus on underachieving students and remediation allows us to focus on "fixing the kids" and not fixing the system.

- This allows us to shift the burden/blame onto students, their parents, and their communities.

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The Message This Conveys

- This framing does not require us to look at the system or to assume responsibility for the gap.

We Suggest Re-Framing Is In Order!

- **If the problem is *underachieving students*, the solution is to fix the kids (i.e., *remediation*)**

  - Supplemental Educational Services

  - Double-dosing

  - Reading First

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Re-Framing

Alternatively, if the problem is *underserved students*, the solutions are different:

- Target resources: Per pupil expenditures, equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers

- Better instruction: Formative assessment, differentiated instruction, research-based practice

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Re-Framing

- **The problem is that we still aren't looking at race.**

  - We can have excellent teachers who still exhibit racial insensitivity that harms children.

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Other Ways of Thinking About the Racial "Achievement Gap"

- "A Girl Like Me"
  http://www.reelworks.org/watch.php

Discussion

- What does the video "A Girl Like Me" say to you?

- Reflecting on the video, what does the current conversation about "racial achievement gaps" leave out?

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Focus On Race

- For us, it suggests that we MUST address race in our work in education.

- Yet, this is not the norm…. When we talk about solving racial achievement gaps in reading, we tend to talk about reading or remediation.

- We needed a framework for investigating race.

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Critical Race Theory (CRT)

- CRT is interdisciplinary.

- CRT places race/racism at the center of analysis.

- CRT recognizes race as a social construct but addresses race as "real" in the sense that we treat it as such.

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Critical Race Theory (CRT)

- CRT insists on recognition of the social and historical context of racial subordination.

- CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color (naming one's own reality, voice, counter-storytelling).
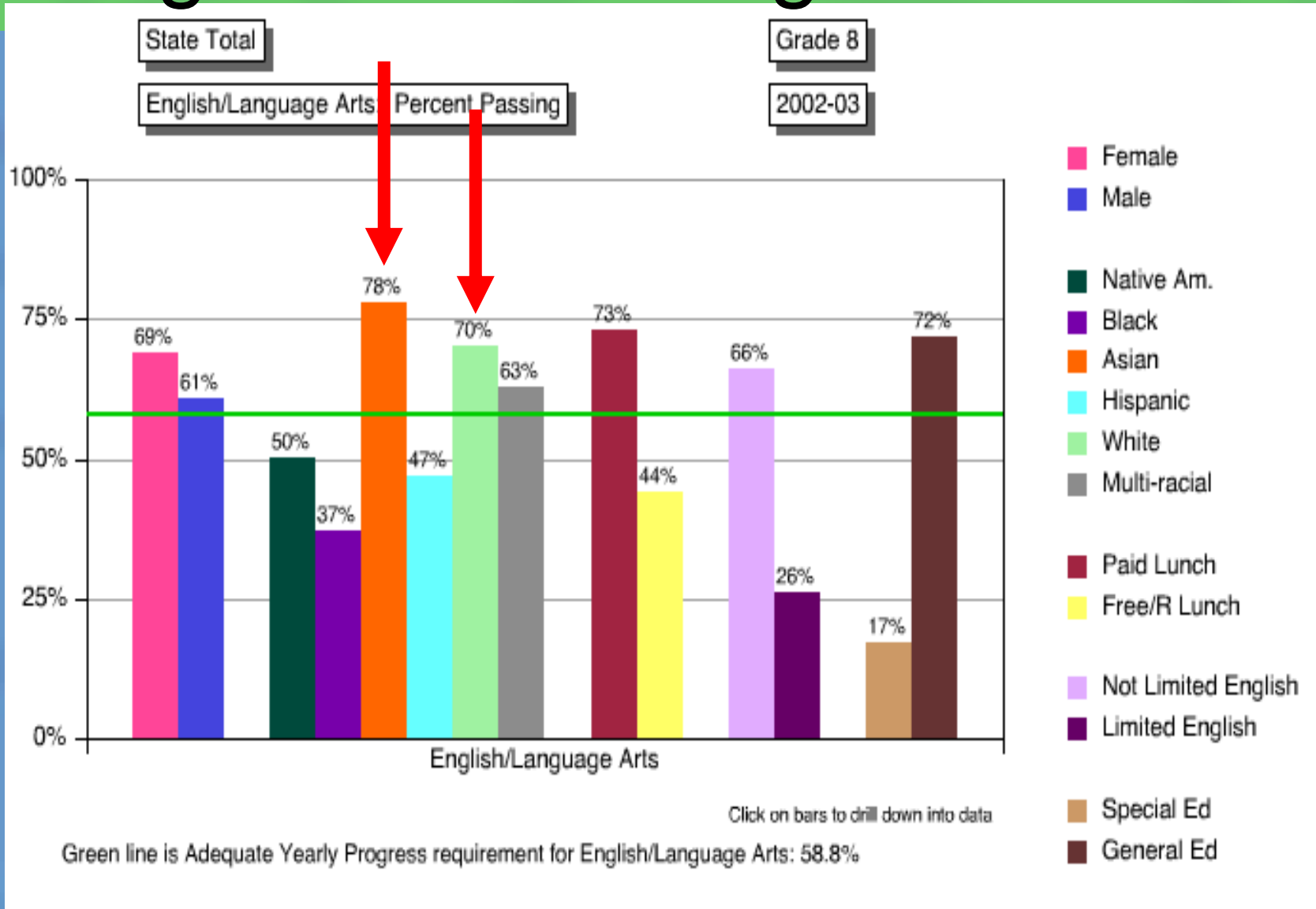
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Critical Race Theory (CRT)

- CRT has an activist agenda to transform and redeem, not just to critique and deconstruct.

- CRT works toward eliminating racial inequities as part of the broader goal of eliminating all forms of inequity.

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CRT Teaches a Couple Critical Things: Normalizing Whiteness

State Total

English/Language Arts Percent Passing

Grade 8

2002-03

Female
Male

Native Am.
Black
Asian
Hispanic
White
Multi-racial

Paid Lunch
Free/R Lunch

Not Limited English
Limited English

Special Ed
General Ed

100%

75%

50%

25%

0%

69%
61%
50%
37%
78%
47%
70%
63%
73%
44%
66%
26%
17%
72%

English/Language Arts

Click on bars to drill down into data

Green line is Adequate Yearly Progress requirement for English/Language Arts: 58.8%

Source: **Indiana Annual State Report Card, 2003,** Indiana Department of Education

CRT Teaches a Couple Things: Tendency to Reinforce Deficit Models

- The way we talk about and use disaggregated "achievement" data reinforces deficit thinking about students of color.

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- Because we focus on "achievement," we ignore some of the most devastating experiences students have in school.

Re-Framing

- **So, if the problem is *racial injustice*, the solution is *courageous conversations about race:***

  - You cannot address racial disparities without dealing with race.

  - It's not (just) about mathematics and reading; it's about race.

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Discussion

- Where are you right now?

- What is troubling you?

- What questions do you have?

- What ideas are you formulating?

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Questions We Ask

- If you buy the ideas—or at least are willing to *rent* the idea for a little while—that the way we talk about and use student "achievement" data disaggregated by race re-inscribes dominant beliefs about students of color, ***what can assessment professionals do***?

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- As we work to eliminate racial achievement gaps…

    … how can we talk **more about race** and **about more than just "achievement"**?

    … how can we alter our practice so we don't reinforce attitudes about deficits among students of color?

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Possible Solutions

- We need to more holistically capture the student experience.

- **Broadening the frame?**

  - Shifting from talking about "achievement gaps" to "racial disparities"

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Possible Solutions

- **Augment the Data?** Collect more information than just performance on standardized exams

  - School climate surveys

  - Ethnographic research (student experiences, teacher beliefs, forces at play)

  - Etc.

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Possible Solution

- **Ask different questions** of the data?

  - When reporting data that reveal racial disparities, ask what work the recipient of the data is engaged in around race.

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Possible Solutions

- **Support conversations about race**?

  - Support professional development, facilitate conversations, study race, engage in different research

Possible Solutions

- Changing our terms?

- Augment the data?

- Ask different questions?

- Support conversations about race?

- Your ideas?

- Pros/Cons of each?

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Questions To Leave You With

- What are our roles in disrupting patterns of racial disparity?

- What changes are we willing to undergo to improve student performance?

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Questions to Leave You With

Questions We Ask:

How is the world described in the way we talk about the achievement gap?

What stories have we been telling about the patterns we describe?

Where does the problem reside in our stories about the patterns?

What are some alternate ways of looking at the patterns?

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Save the Date

The Summit *for* Courageous Conversation: Achieving Racial Equity *and* Excellence in Education

September 28-October 1, 2008

New Orleans, Louisiana

More information is available at
www.pacificeducationalgroup.com