

Montessori Schools and Students of Color: Reviewing the Research

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Virginia Montessori Association Spring Networking Event

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About Me



NATIONAL CENTER for
MONTESSORI in the PUBLIC SECTOR



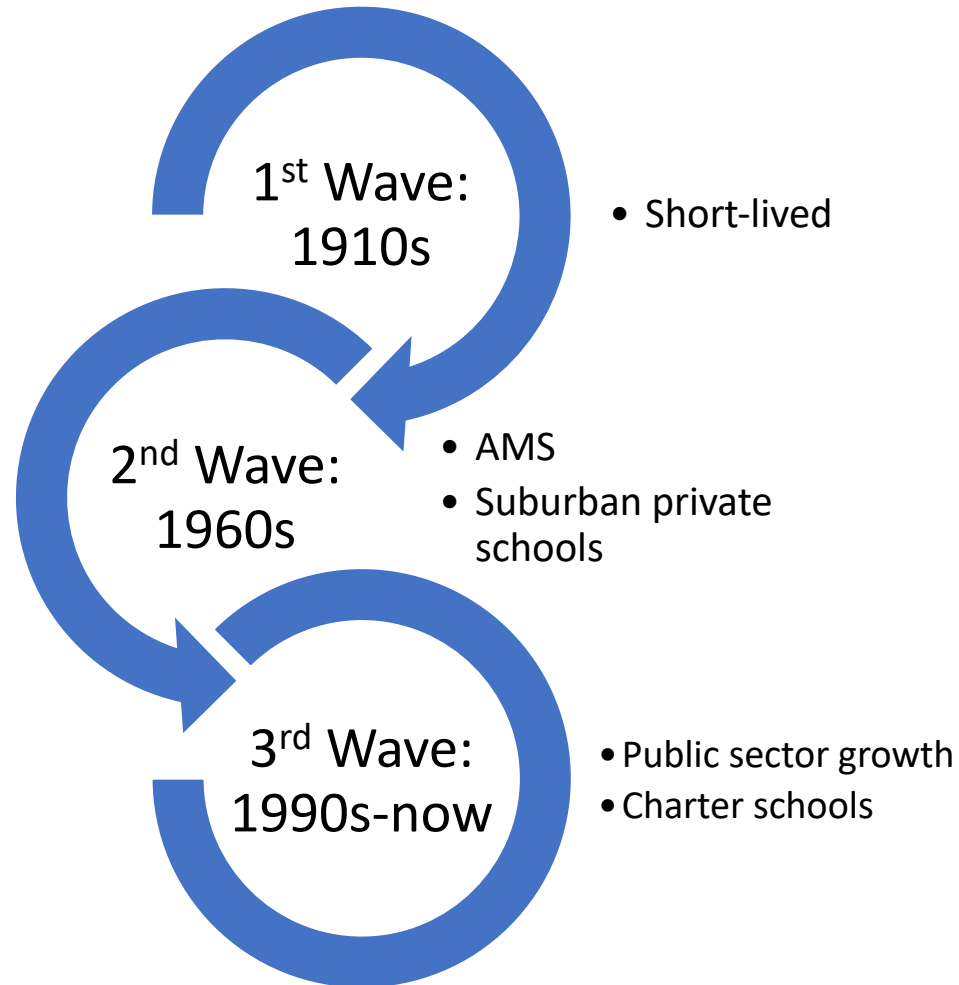
Agenda

- History: Montessori and students of color
- What we know about:
 - School diversity
 - Academic outcomes
 - School discipline
 - Teacher preparation/pipeline
 - Family engagement/recruitment
- Areas where we could learn more:
 - SPED
 - Culturally responsive teaching
 - Montessorians of color
 - ELLs

History

Montessori and Students of Color

Montessori in the US



Montessori and the Mainstream: A Century of Reform on the Margins

KEITH WHITESCARVER
JACQUELINE COSSENTINO

College of William and Mary

Background/Context: Montessori education has flourished as an alternative approach to schooling for a hundred years. In the century since the first Montessori school opened in the slums of Rome, the movement has undergone sustained growth while simultaneously enduring efforts to modify the method in order to reach a wider audience. Despite Montessori's endurance and reach, the movement remains largely unstudied by educational researchers. This article presents a historical treatment of the method and the movement by treating Montessori as a case study of enduring and ambitious educational reform.

Purpose/Objective: This article is an examination of the American Montessori movement as it has evolved over the course of the past one hundred years. Situated within an international context, the study traces the development of the movement from its failed introduction to the United States in 1991, to its rebirth in the 1960s, to its current resurgence as a time-tested alternative to conventional public schooling. Key questions revolve around Montessori's ongoing status as an influential yet marginal force in American educational reform.

Research Design: This is a historical case study drawn from archival data, interviews with Montessori leaders and practitioners, and secondary sources (biographies, memoirs) generated between 1906 and 2007.

The educational system known as the Montessori method presents a unique historical case study. It is international in scope; currently there are Montessori schools in at least 110 countries. It is enduring; the original Casa dei Bambini opened in Rome in 1907. It has undergone sustained growth; today, there are over 22,000 Montessori schools world-

PoC in American Montessori History



TEACHER. —Medhu Trivedi of India gives special assistance to young student under a picture of late black nationalist leader Malcolm X.

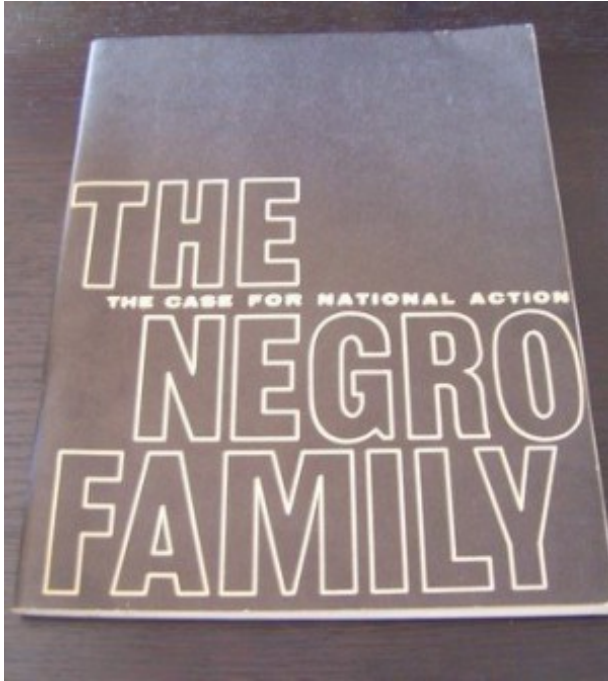


Further reading: Mira Debs, *Diverse Families, Desirable Schools: Public Montessori in an Era of School Choice*. Spring 2019, Harvard Education Press

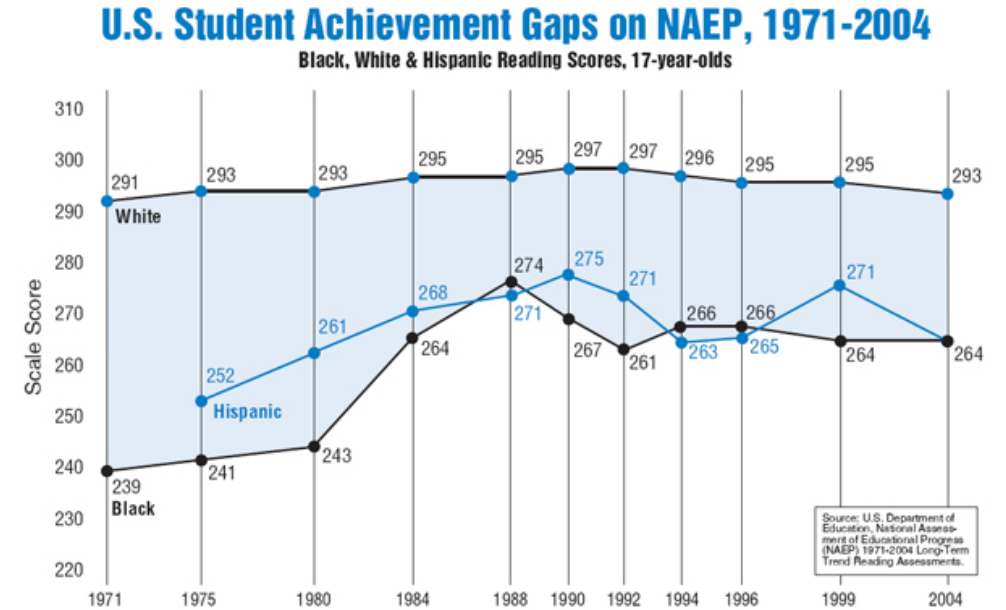
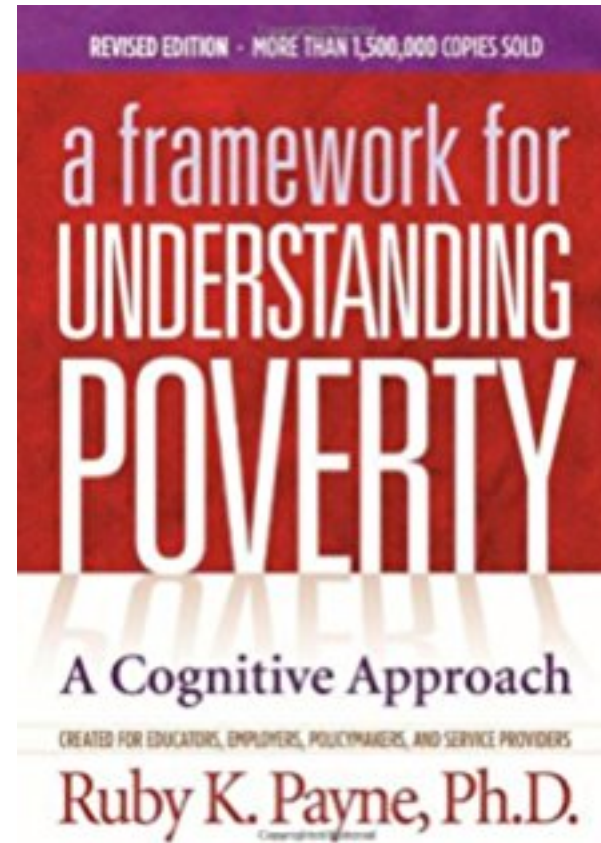
What We Know

Research on Montessori and Students of Color

Education Research and the Deficit Narrative

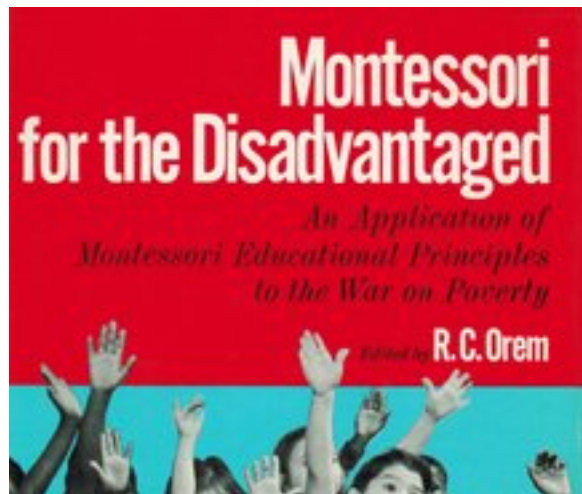


The Moynihan Report



The “Achievement Gap”

-----The “Culture of Poverty”-----



The Montessori Method: Some Recent Research

Solveiga Miežitis/OISE

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This paper on recent research with the Montessori method includes a brief review of this method for educating preschool-age children and criticisms leveled against it, and a review of comparative research studies in relation to several types of non-Montessori preschool programs with economically disadvantaged and middle-class populations. The comparative results are discussed in relation to three kinds of preschool experience: no schooling, traditional early childhood-oriented programs, and structured cognitive-oriented programs. The findings are interpreted in terms of Hunt's conceptual level matching model.

Cet article à propos des recherches récentes sur la méthode de Montessori comprend une brève revue de ce système pédagogique appliqué aux enfants préscolaires et des critiques de ce système, et des études comparées avec les nombreuses sortes de programmes préscolaires non-Montessori qui traitent des populations économiquement désavantagées et des populations de classe moyenne. Les résultats comparatifs sont discutés par rapport à trois sortes d'expériences préscolaires: pas d'école, les programmes traditionnels préscolaires, et les programmes structurés orientés vers la cognition. Les conclusions sont interprétées en employant le modèle conceptuel de Hunt.

The Montessori method, which gained wide acclaim in Europe around the turn of the century, was brought to the United States during the first decade. After a brief period of popularity, Montessori's educational system on this continent was abandoned in favor of the progressive education and social development oriented educational philosophies of William Heard Kilpatrick and John Dewey. Only a handful of Montessori schools remained until the current Montessori revival, which began around 1958, when Nancy Rambusch founded the Whitby School in Greenwich, Conn. Ahlfeld (1970) reports that at present about 600 schools carry the Montessori name. Many of these schools were initiated by middle-class parents who wanted individualized early learning for their children. More recently, the application of the Montessori method has been extended into the areas of compensatory education for the economically disadvantaged, and special education for exceptional children. The present paper presents a brief review of the method outlining the principles relevant to each of the above areas of instruction, and a review of research studies that evaluate the comparative effectiveness of the Montessori method in achieving motivational and cognitive goals with different groups of preschool children.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952), the first Italian woman physician, became interested in problems of learning in her work with disturbed and retarded children. In a search for more adequate techniques of instruction for these children, she studied the methods

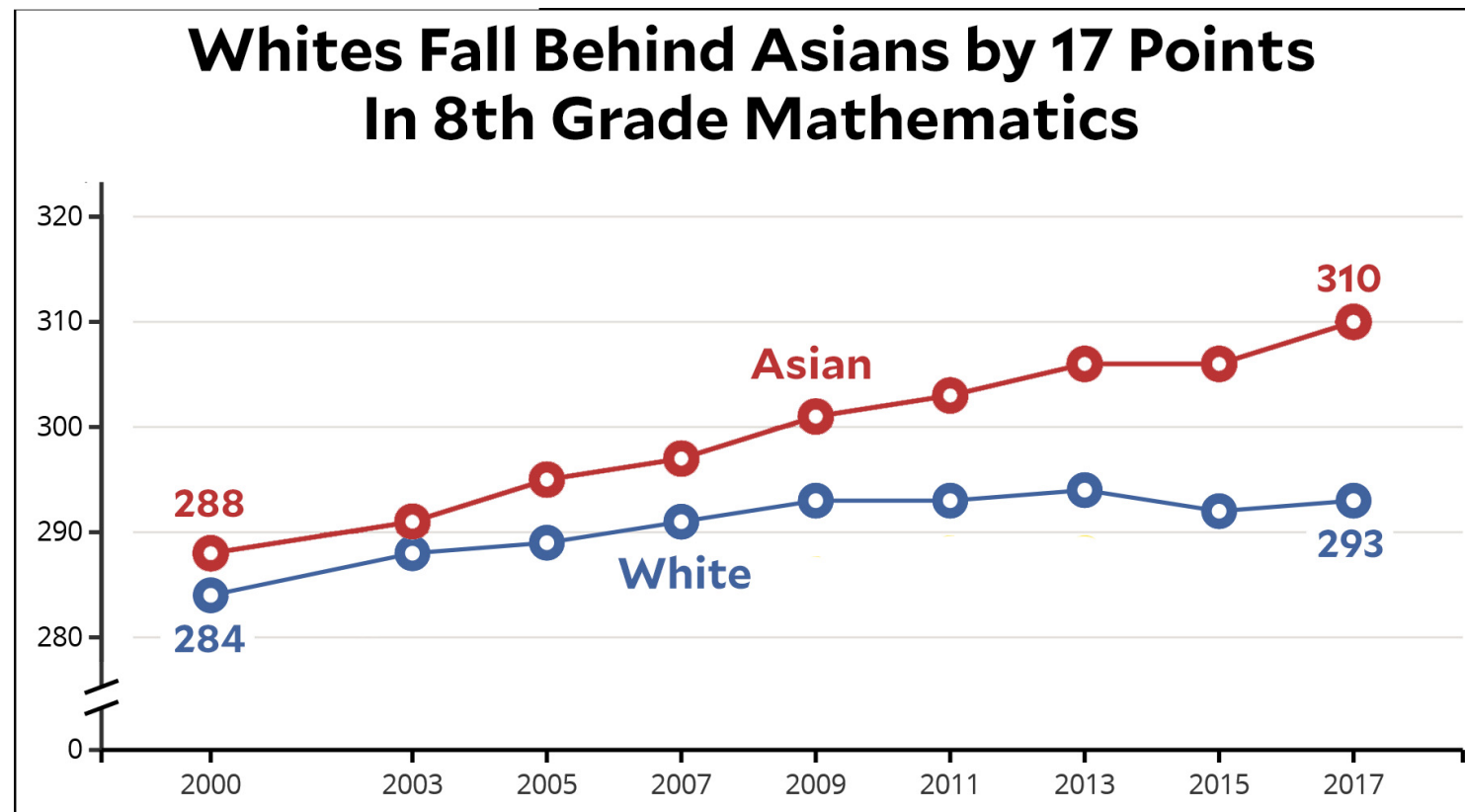
Several investigators have followed Hunt (1964) in hypothesizing that the Montessori method would be particularly fruitful in promoting cognitive development among lower-class children because of the suitability of the method for coping with their educational liabilities. Kohlberg (1967), for example, anticipated

MONTESSORI CLASSES FOR CULTURALLY DEPRIVED CHILDREN



White Kids Continue to Fall Behind In Latest NAEP Results

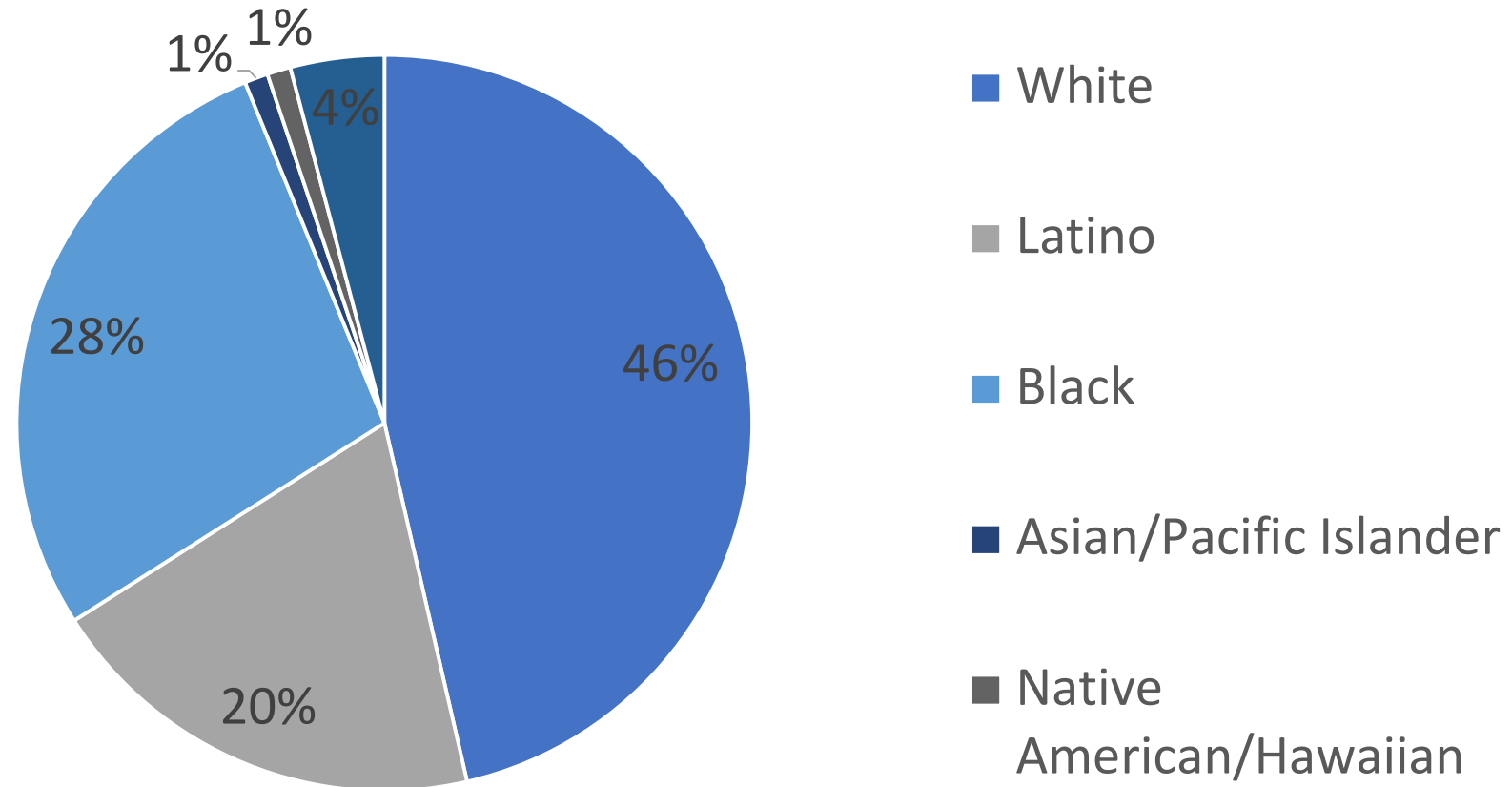
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Diversity in Public Montessori Schools

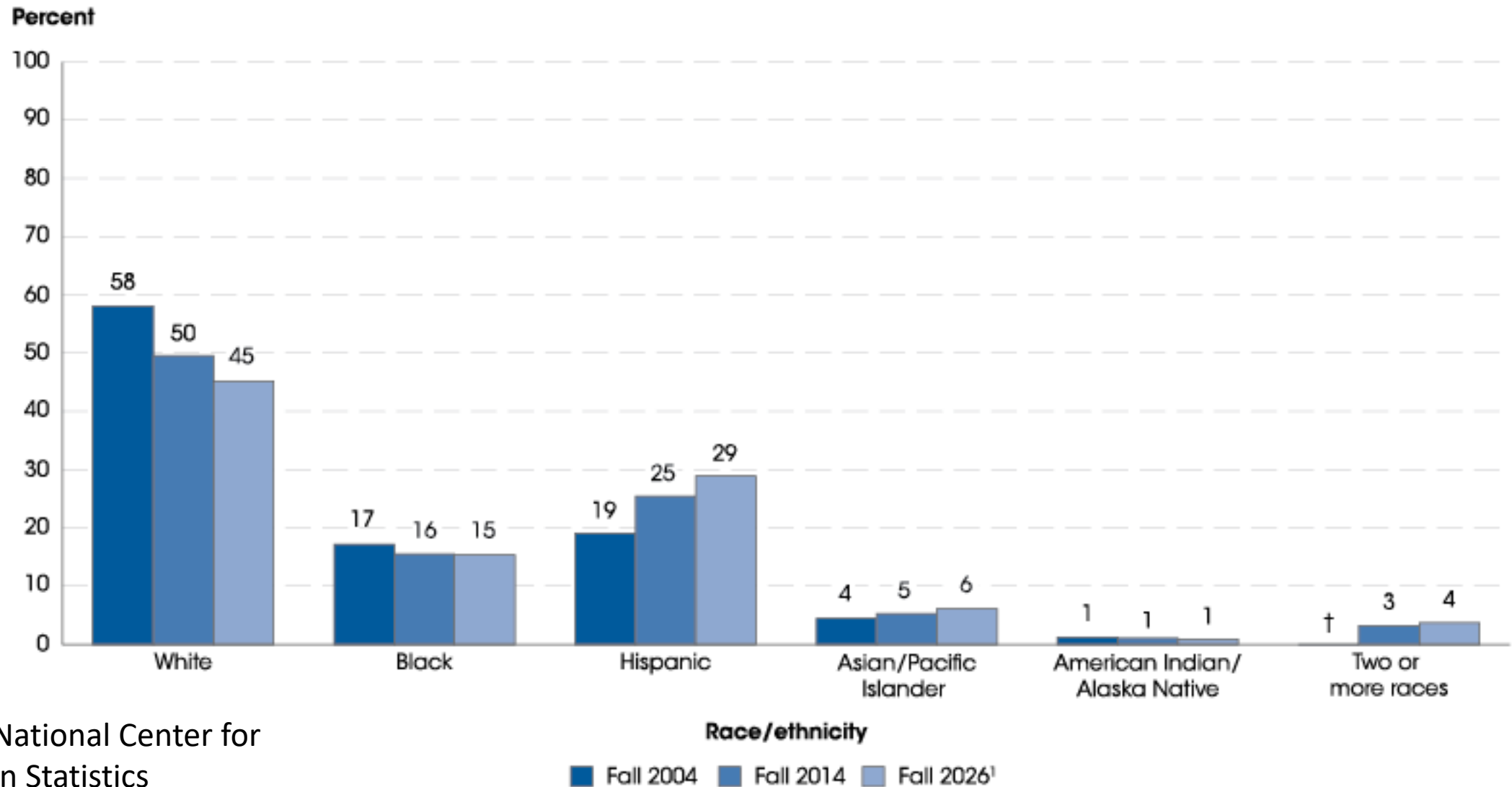
Who Are We Serving?

Race at Whole-School Public Montessori Schools 2012-2013



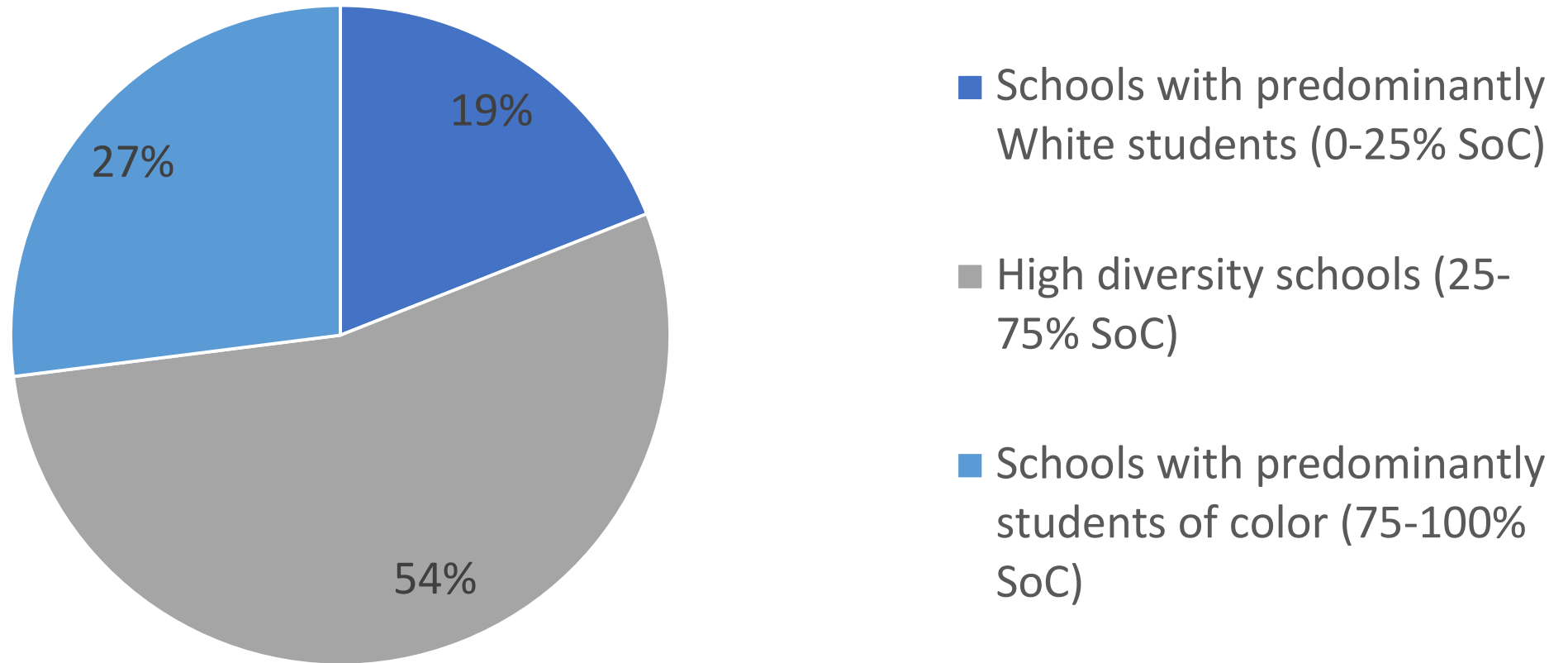
Source: Debs, M. C. (2016). Racial and economic diversity in US public Montessori schools. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 2(2), 15-34.

Distribution of Public School Students by Race 2004-2026



Source: National Center for
Education Statistics

Racial Diversity in Public Montessori Schools



Source: Debs, M. C. (2016). Racial and economic diversity in US public Montessori schools. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 2(2), 15-34.

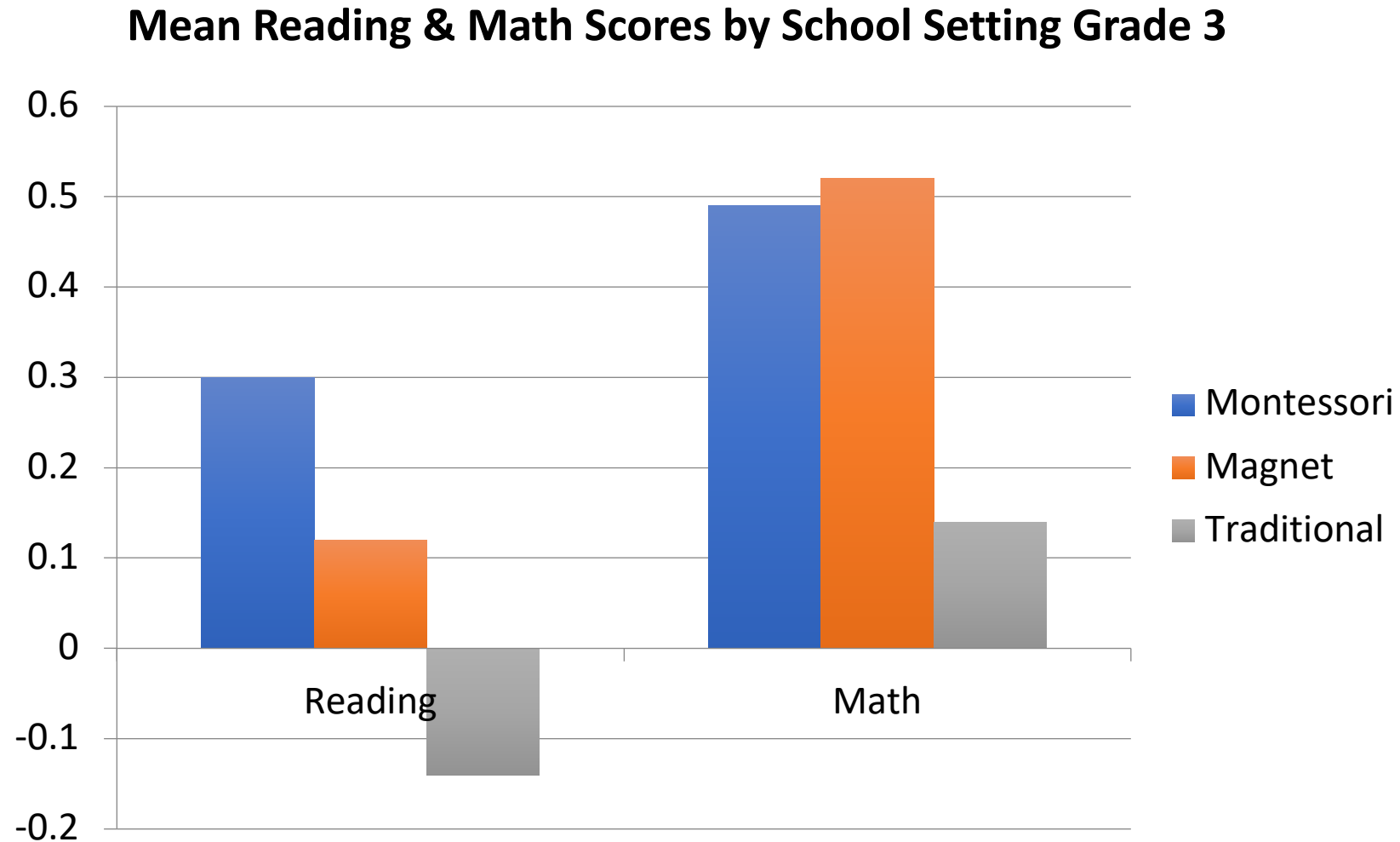
Academic Outcomes

How Effectively Are We Serving Students of Color?

Early Research: Academic Outcomes for African American Children

- Deficit orientation
- Conflated race and poverty
- Often poor controls for Montessori fidelity
- Failure to disaggregate results by race
- Mixed results

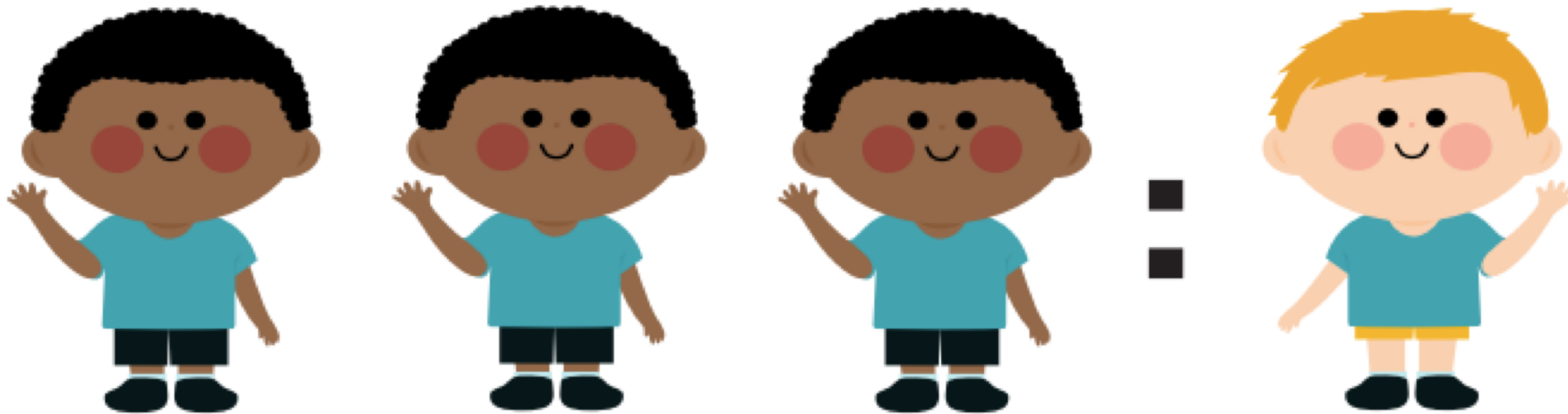
Montessori “Works” for African American Students



Discipline Outcomes

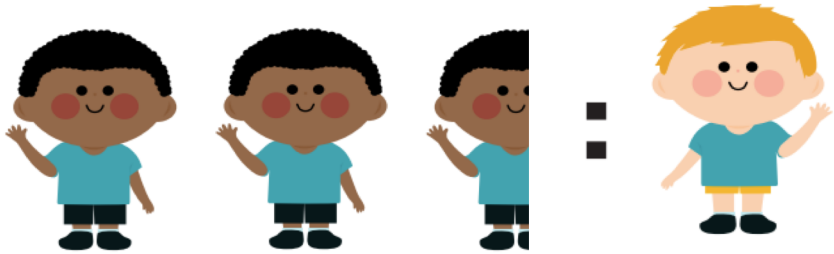
Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Out-of-School Suspensions and Race

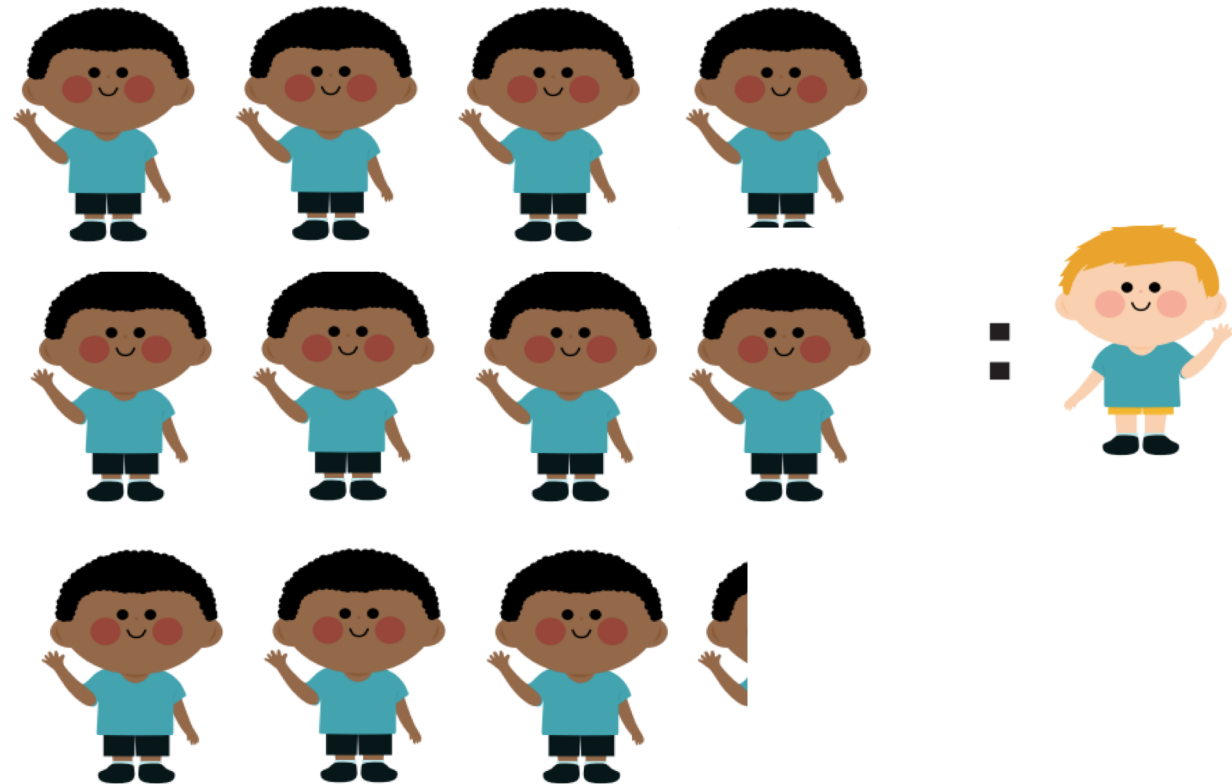


OSS for Black Children in Montessori vs. Traditional Schools

Montessori: 2.61x higher



Traditional: 11.15x higher



Relative Rate Index (RRI) for Montessori and Traditional Schools

School	White Student OSS *	Total No. White Students	OSS Rate per 100 White Students	Black Student OSS	Total No. Black Students	OSS Rate per 100 Black Students	RRI
Montessori							
M1	4	313	1.28	2	96	2.08	1.63
M2	2	296	0.68	2	65	3.08	4.55
M3	4	102	3.92	9	193	4.66	1.19
Total	10	711	1.41	13	354	3.67	2.61***
Traditional							
T1	2	718	0.28	2	112	1.79	6.41
T2	4	493	0.81	4	103	3.88	4.78
T3	0	466	0	0	118	0	**
T4	4	667	0.60	4	49	8.16	13.61
T5	4	313	1.28	9	112	8.04	6.29
T6	17	754	2.25	9	73	12.33	5.47
T7	2	610	0.33	2	88	2.27	6.93
T8	0	610	0	35	88	39.77	**
T9	2	821	0.24	0	79	0	0
T10	2	358	0.56	4	52	7.69	13.77
T11	4	544	0.74	4	82	4.88	6.63
T12	2	706	0.28	0	46	0	0
T13	6	562	1.07	8	121	6.61	6.19
T14	4	970	0.41	4	113	3.54	8.58
Total	53	8592	0.62	85	1236	6.88	11.15 ***

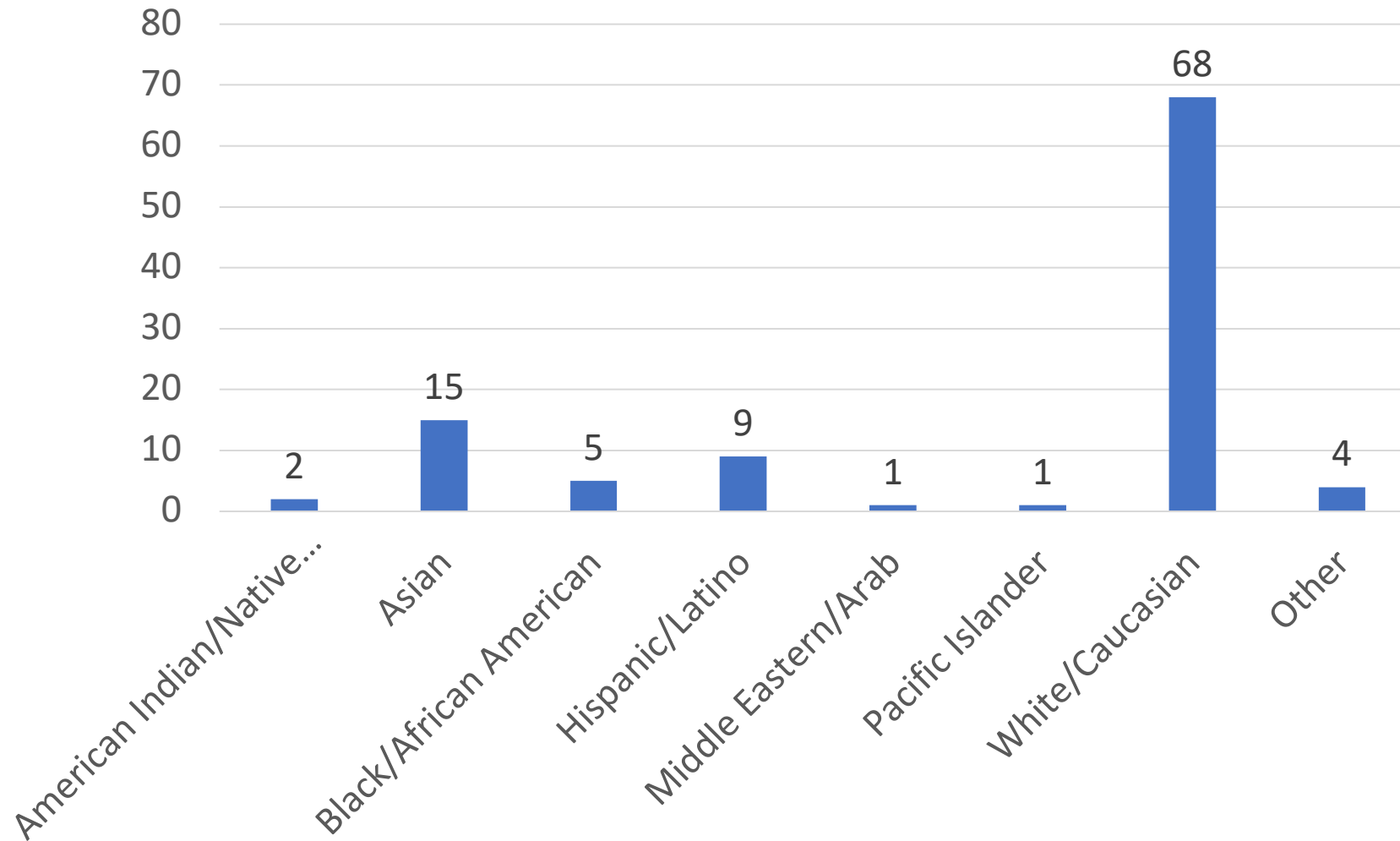
Note. * OSS = Out-of-School Suspension; ** = value could not be calculated.

*** $p < .001$

The Teacher Pipeline

People & Preparation

A Problematic Teacher Pipeline



Montessori Teacher Preparation: The Surround

Course Strands	Neurobiological Perspectives on Developmental Education	Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice	Advanced Seminar on Language and Literacy
Modules	Freedom & Discipline	Culture, Race & Privilege	Poverty & Language Acquisition
	Trauma	Family Engagement	English Language Learners
	Executive Functions	Special Education & Learning Differences	Supporting Language Development
Addressed in every Strand	Practical Applications <i>Observation • Case Studies • Managing the Prepared Environment • Assessment Montessori Style</i>		
	Theoretical Throughlines <i>Self-Regulation, Normalization, and Adaptation • Social Justice • Preparation of the Adult • Reflective Practice</i>		

Family Recruitment and Engagement: African American Families

- High value placed on early learning¹
- Concern for academic rigor
- Sense of self
- Shadow of historical educational inequities; “making up for history”²
- Appreciation for strong sense of community in Montessori schools and classrooms
- Implications for family recruitment and engagement

¹ Trust for Learning. (2017). *Parents as consumers of early childhood education: Research findings 2017*. Retrieved from www.trustforlearning.org.

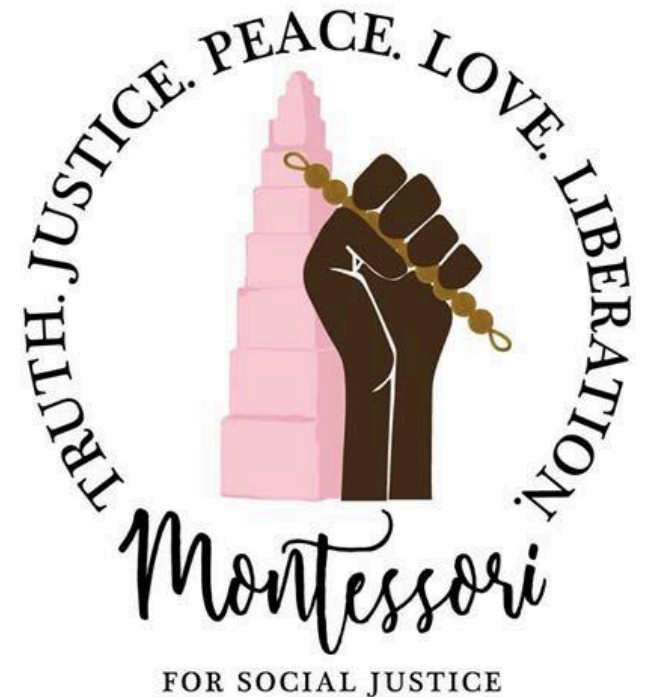
²Debs, M. (2016). Black and Latino parents’ experience of public Montessori schools. Poster presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting of the American Montessori Society. Retrieved from <http://amshq.org/Publications-and-Research/Research-Library/Conference-Handouts>

Open Questions

Areas for Future Study

We should learn more about...

- Special education
- Culturally responsive pedagogy
- Montessorians of color
- Outcomes for Latinx students
- English language learners



Next Steps: Courageous Conversations

- What can we do to make our school community more inclusive?
- How can we make sure our discipline policies and procedures are equitable?
- Do our teacher recruitment and hiring practices prioritize diversity?
- How are we engaging families and communities of color?

Questions?

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