

About Us • The Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed) is a Washington, DC-based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those underperforming and those historically underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship.



ACCOUNTABILITY RESULTS

About Our Data • Our data set includes all schools that received ratings in each state's ESSA accountability system, as well as schools identified for support and improvement, during the first year of ESSA implementation. States typically issued their first school ratings under ESSA in the 2018–19 school year based on data from the 2017–18 school year. We also collected student enrollment data for the school year in which each state's school ratings were based. Four of the 10 states we selected for the analysis are “priority places” of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, whose support made this data collection possible: Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, and New Mexico. The remaining states were selected based on several factors, including geographic diversity, size, and availability of data.

In three states (Connecticut, Michigan, and Washington), schools received ratings exclusively based on the number of points they earned on an index. The remaining seven states also provided schools with an A–F letter grade rating. We considered high-rated schools to be those that scored in the top quartile of the index or received an A grade, while low-rated schools were those scoring in the bottom quartile of the index or receiving an F grade.

© Alliance for Excellent Education, 2020

Cover Photo by Allison Shelley for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

WHEN EQUITY IS OPTIONAL

Students of Color Disproportionately Attend Low-Rated Schools

School ratings provide important insights into how schools are serving their students and can help reveal disparities in the quality of education different groups of students receive. To understand these disparities, All4Ed analyzed the first year of school ratings under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 10 states: Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, and Washington. First, we looked at the share of each state's Black, Latino, and White student populations enrolled in high- and low-rated schools. We found that much greater percentages of Black and Latino students were enrolled in low-rated schools than their White peers. Put another way, **students of color were much more likely to receive a poorly rated education than White students.**

Second, we compared student enrollment trends within schools that received the top rating in the state (e.g., an A grade) versus schools that received the lowest rating (e.g., an F grade). The results, while perhaps not surprising, are alarming. **Students of color were overrepresented in schools with low ratings and underrepresented in schools with high ratings in all 10 states, often by very large margins.**

These findings should give states pause and a renewed sense of urgency about investing in the resources and supports necessary to improve low-performing schools and ensure that every child—particularly students of color—have equal access to an excellent education.

FINDING 1 | Black and Latino students were more likely to attend low-rated schools than White students.

We looked at the percentage of each state's Black, Latino, and White student populations enrolled in high-rated versus low-rated schools during the first year of ESSA implementation. The results are consistent and troubling: **In every state, a much higher percentage of Black and Latino students were enrolled in low-rated schools compared to White students.** The reverse was true in top-rated schools.

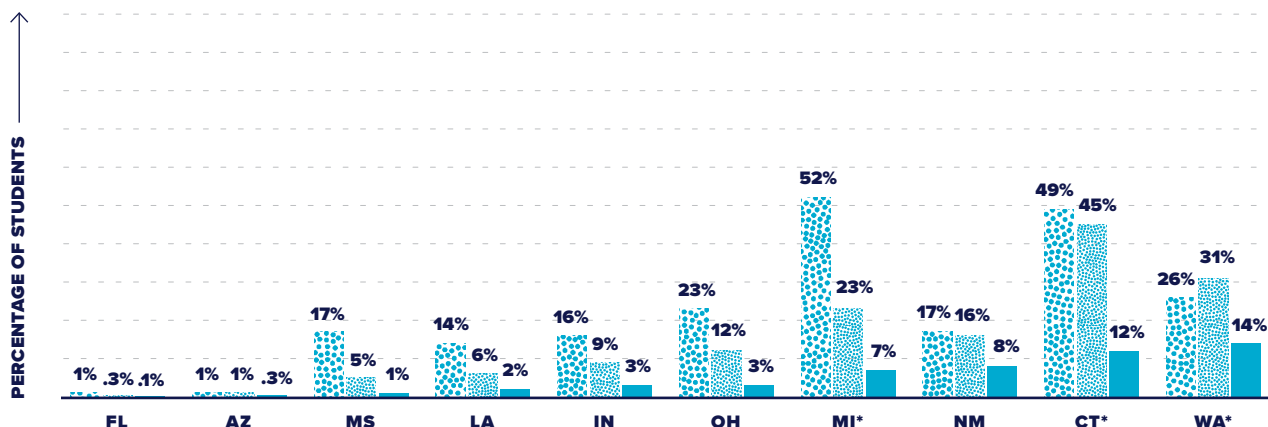
▲ In **Mississippi**, only 1% of White students were enrolled in F schools compared to 17% of Black students. In other words, the odds that a Black student was enrolled in an F school were 17 times greater than for his or her White peers.

▲ In **Connecticut**, White students were three to four times more likely to attend highly rated schools than students of color. Only 9% of Black students and 11% of Latino students attended schools in the top quartile of the state's school rating index, compared to 36% of White students.

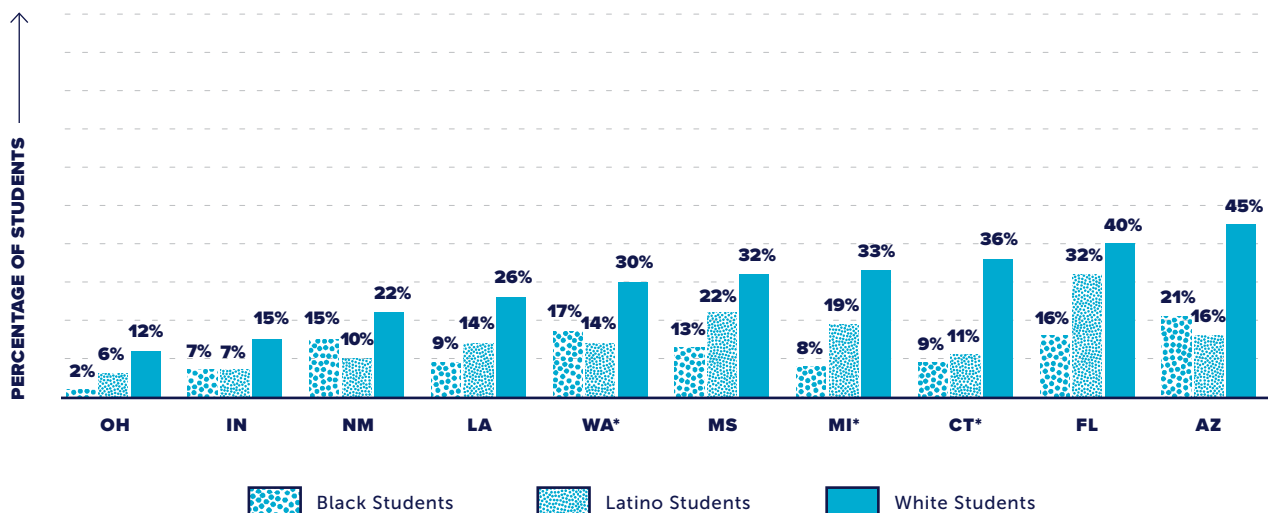
In the seven states that rated schools using A–F grades, our analysis also reflects states' choices regarding how many schools received each grade. Most states' school grades skewed high, especially in Florida and Arizona, where 29% and 25% of schools, respectively, got an A. Likewise, just 1–2% of Florida and Arizona schools received an F grade—limiting the proportion of any student group who attended low-rated schools in the two states.

FIGURE 1. WHAT SHARE OF BLACK, LATINO, AND WHITE STUDENTS ATTENDED LOW- AND HIGH-RATED SCHOOLS?

Low-Rated Schools



High-Rated Schools

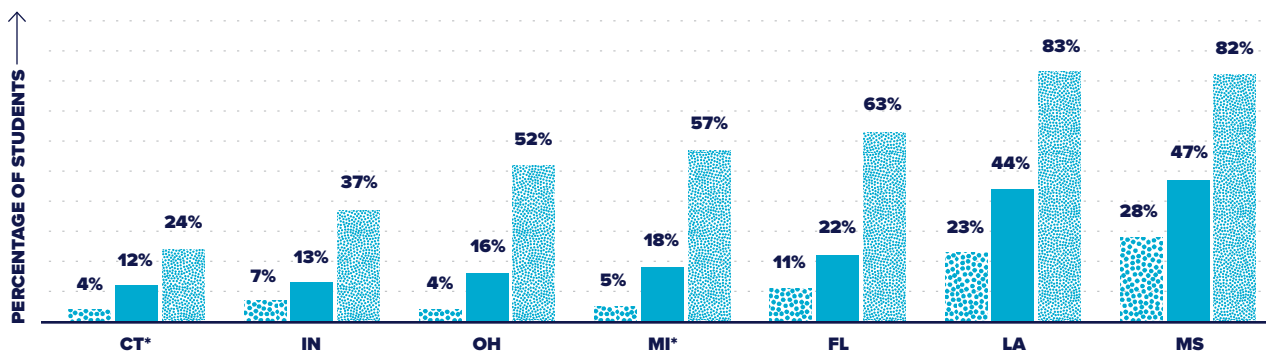


☑ **Note** *In Connecticut, Michigan, and Washington, the analysis is based on schools scoring in the bottom and top quartiles of the state's school rating index. As a result, roughly equal numbers of schools received high and low ratings for purposes of our analysis.

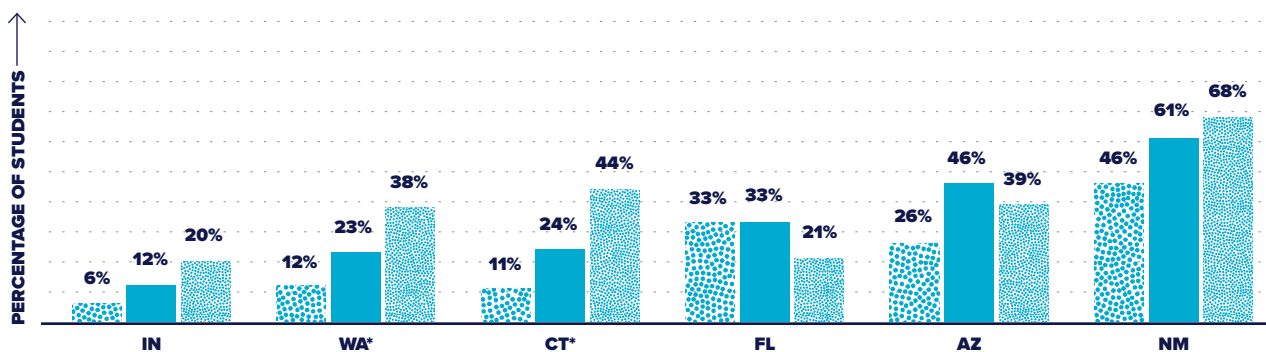
FINDING 2 | Students of color were overrepresented in low-rated schools and underrepresented in top-rated schools.

FIGURE 2. WHAT PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN HIGH- AND LOW-RATED SCHOOLS WERE STUDENTS OF COLOR?

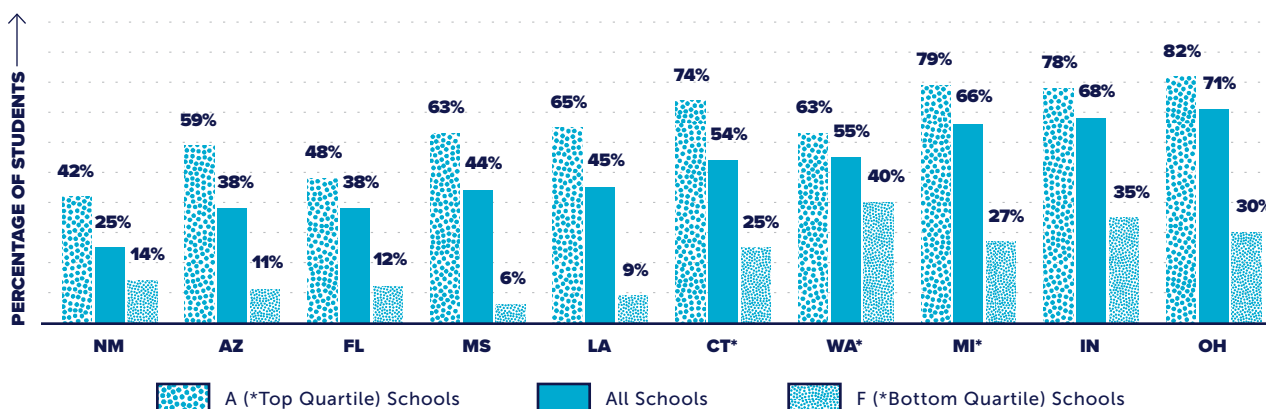
Black Students†



Latino Students†



White Students



We also reviewed the enrollment rates of students of color in low-rated and high-rated schools and compared them to their relative proportion of the overall student population.

Black and Latino students were overrepresented in low-rated schools and underrepresented in top-rated schools, while the reverse was true for White students.

BLACK STUDENTS: Across all 10 states, Black students were 18% of all students enrolled but 38% of students in low-rated schools and 8% in top-rated schools. The disparities, however, were much larger in some states. In **Florida**, 22% of all students were Black compared to 63% of students in F schools and only 11% in A schools.

LATINO STUDENTS: Overall, 21% of students were Latino compared to 24% of students in low-rated schools and 19% in top-rated schools. Latino students were significantly overrepresented in low-rated **Connecticut** schools, where they exceeded their share of the total population by 20 points. Yet in **Florida** and **Arizona**, the pattern disappeared: Latino students comprised just 21% and 39% of students in F schools respectively, but 33% and 46% of students overall.

WHITE STUDENTS: Across the 10 states, 52% of all students were White versus 36% of students in low-rated schools and 59% in top-rated schools. White students were underrepresented in low-rated schools most significantly in **Mississippi**, where they were 44% of students overall but just 6% of students attending F schools.

Notes

* Schools receive points but no overall rating. The analysis is based on schools scoring in the top and bottom quartiles of the state rating index.

† The figure includes only those states where Black or Latino students were at least 10% of overall school enrollment.