



4th Annual College Equity Report Reveals 1 in 4 Black Students Graduate High School with a Waiver

July 12, 2021 by Educator Barnes

The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) has released its [4th annual Indiana College Equity Report](#). Unfortunately, the data was not promising for Black students. According to the report, one in four Black students graduated from high school due to a waiver. This is in comparison to only one in eight students graduating with a waiver across the state of Indiana.

The fact that twice as many Black students are only graduating high school because of a waiver in comparison to the overall data should be of concern to educators.

Hoosier students who are part of the graduating cohorts of 2019-2022, must pass the graduation qualifying exam (GQE) to graduate. For those students, the GQE is the ISTEP+ 10 standardized test. Although this report does not include data on the 2020 or 2021 cohorts, it is important to note that the GQE requirements were waived for graduating seniors in the 2020 cohort who had taken the ISTEP+ 10 test and had yet to pass it by senior year. Standardized tests were canceled statewide in 2020 due to school buildings being closed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Seniors for this upcoming school year will be the last group held to these guidelines.

Graduation cohorts 2023 and beyond will have different options. Students must complete all requirements for the diploma they are pursuing, show employability skills by completing either a project-based learning experience, a service-based learning experience, or a work-based learning experience, and they must show postsecondary readiness. One way to show postsecondary readiness is by passing the GQE. The GQE for cohorts 2023 and beyond are the SAT or ACT. If students reach college-ready benchmarks on one of those exams, they have met the last requirement.

Students will have other options to show postsecondary readiness such as earning an honors diploma or earning a C average in either three advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual-credit, or Cambridge international courses. However, the report shows that Black students are one of the least likely groups to earn an honor diploma with only 17% obtaining this diploma type. Additionally, the report states that Black students are the least likely to take advanced placement or dual credit courses. Only 40% of Black students took these courses. The average for the state was 63%.

Black students need to be better prepared to earn a high school diploma instead of getting by with a waiver. This report showed that Black students are the least likely to complete college in several categories reported about college regardless of whether it was a two or four year college.

To remedy this dire situation, the work must start in elementary school. Some might even argue the work should begin in preschool. Black students need to be proficient in math and literacy skills in elementary school. When they are not, they are put on the path to struggle through school and to potentially need a waiver to finish. Black students are not less

intelligent than any other groups of students, but they are not learning and achieving as much as other groups.

When students leave high school underprepared, even if they get into college, they might not finish because they are missing too many skills to be successful. This report should not be used only to put pressure on high school instructors, but the pressure should be on all educators to critically think about what needs to change in their schools to ensure that academic outcomes improve for Black students.