



The Achievement Gap Initiative At Harvard University

Leadership Summit, Houston, Texas

Understanding the Achievement Gap Challenge -- Some Reasons for Cautious Optimism

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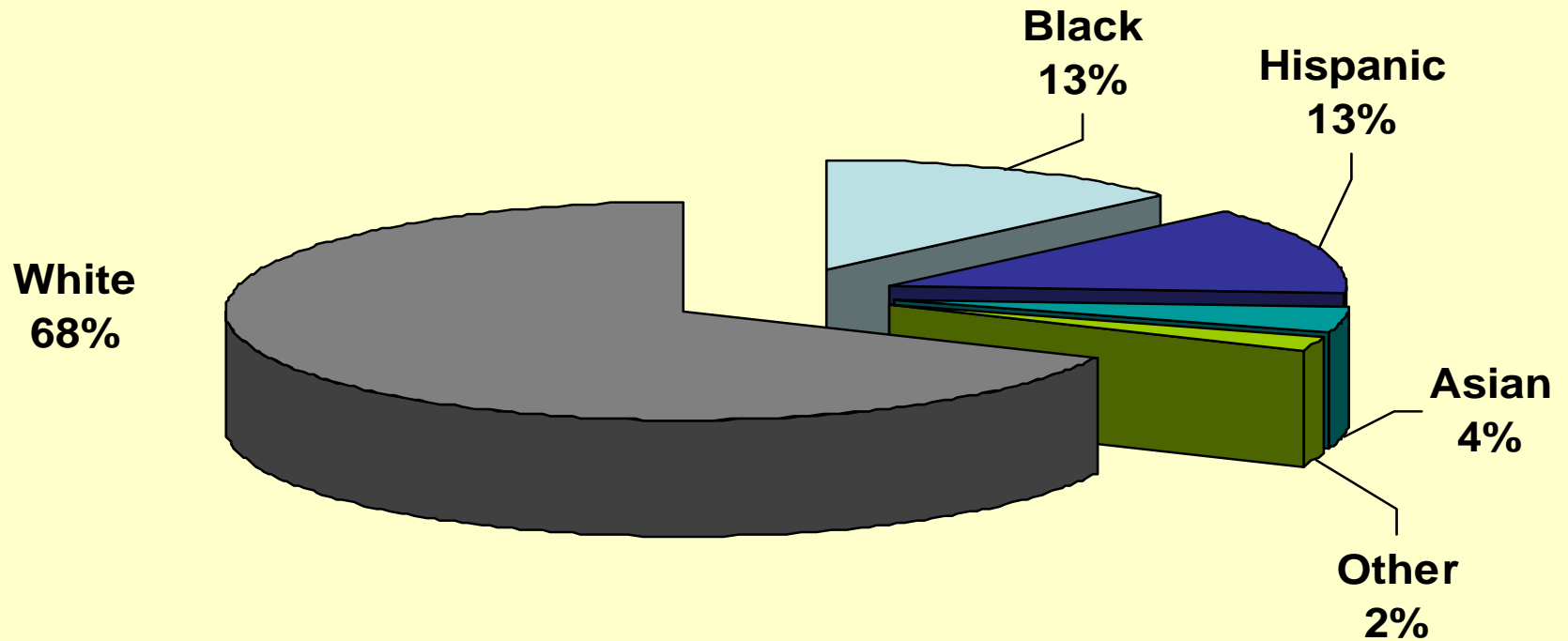
Web Addresses: www.AGI.Harvard.edu and www.tripodproject.org

There is an urgent need for:

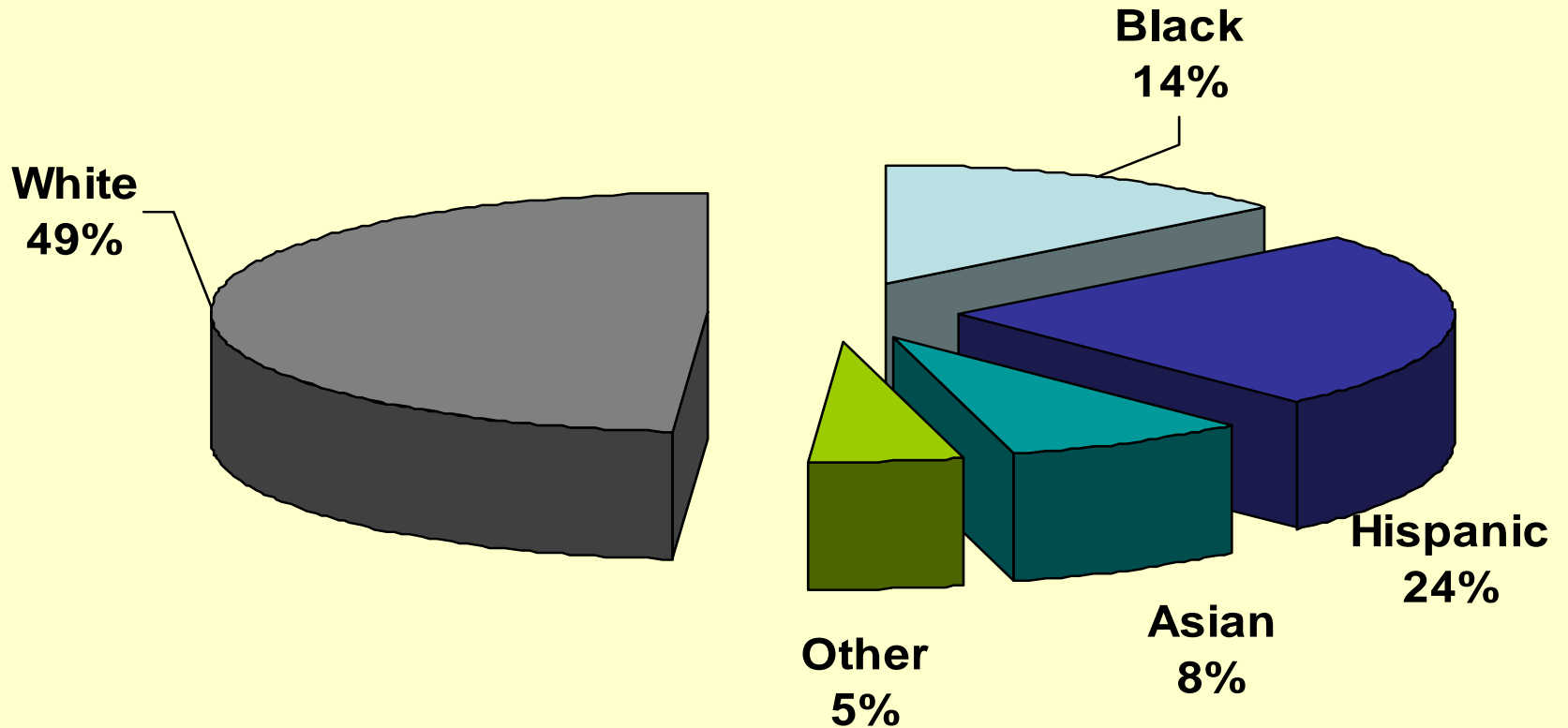
- **Youth cultures that more consistently support behaviors consistent with academic learning and the pursuit of excellence;**
- **Parenting that nurtures intellectual growth and balances warmth and responsiveness with structure and demandingness;**
- **Teaching that engages and challenges students;**
- **Community supports to supplement parents and teachers;**
- **Leadership to organize, guide and motivate others in a *21st Century Social Movement for Excellence and Equity.***

This presentation: *urgency AND possibility.*

US Population Shares in 2000



US Population Shares Projected for 2050



*“Any fool can count the seeds in an apple,
but only God can count the apples in a
seed.”* Rev. Robert Schuller

The bounty of the harvest depends upon the effectiveness of cultivation, and the effectiveness of cultivation depends, over time, on the intensity of the search for effective methods and the dedication of effort to help children reach their full potential.

Some Good News

- Black-white and Hispanic-white test score gaps at the high school level for NAEP and SAT scores narrowed dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, during a period when the gap in high school graduation rates also narrowed.
- Black-white and Hispanic-white test score gaps in the NAEP for nine-year olds have narrowed in recent years, even as scores for white 9-year olds have risen.
- There are virtually no differences in mental ability by SES or race/ethnicity at 9-11 months of age in the National ECLS.

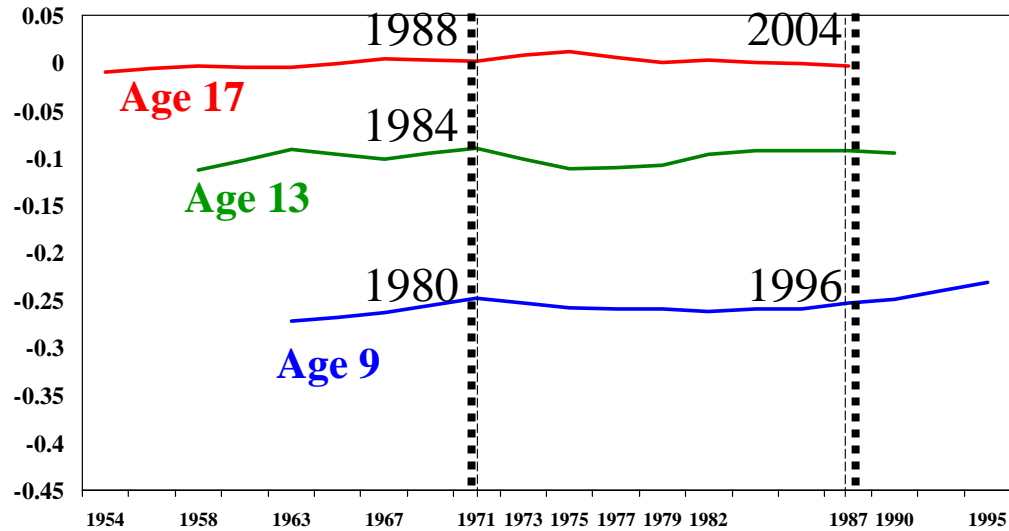
Some Bad News

- At the end of the 1980s, black-white and Hispanic-white gaps for high school students abruptly stopped narrowing for NAEP scores, SAT scores and high school graduation rates.

Standardized NAEP scores for white 9, 13 and 17-year olds.

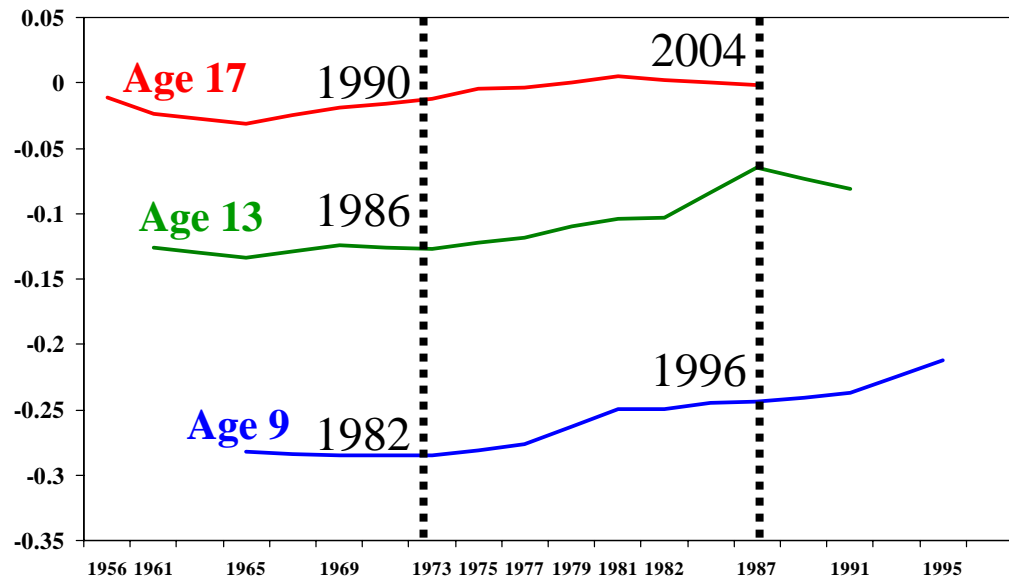
(Distance below 17-year old whites' scores, as a fraction of white 17-Year olds' scores in 1996)

Reading



WHITES

Math



*Note: The horizontal axis is the approximate birth year.

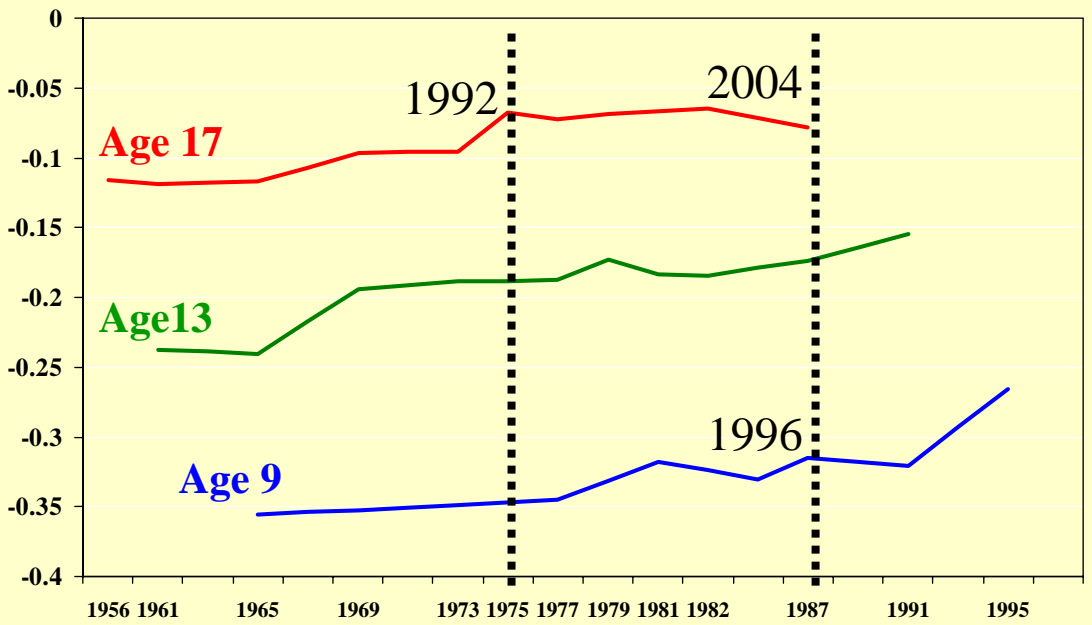
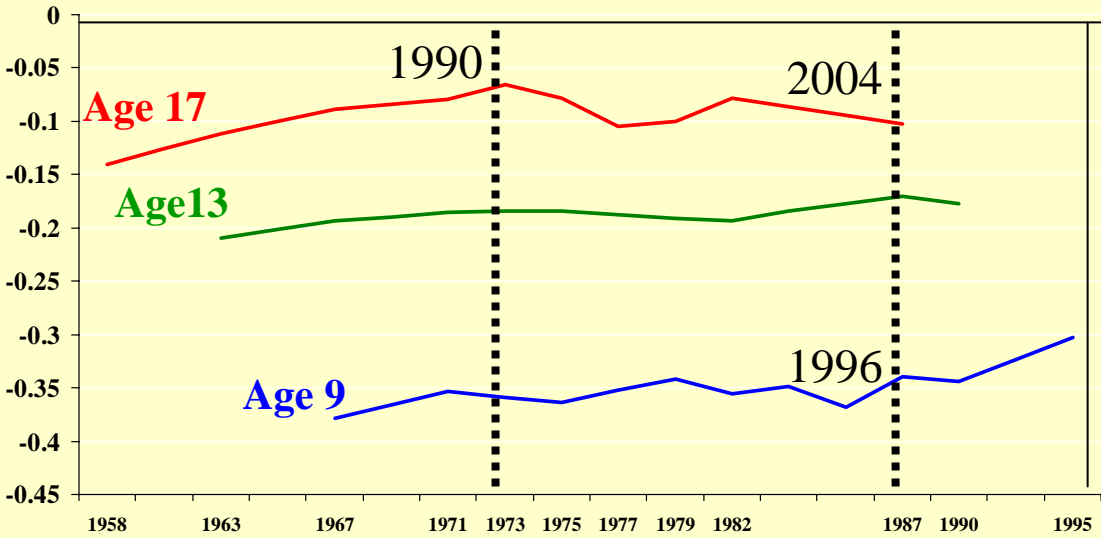
Standardized NAEP reading scores for Hispanic 9, 13 and 17-year olds.

(Distance below 17-Year old whites' Scores, as a fraction of white 17-Year olds' scores in 1996)

Reading

HISPANICS

Math



*Note: The horizontal axis is the approximate birth year.

Standardized NAEP scores for black 9, 13 and 17-year olds.

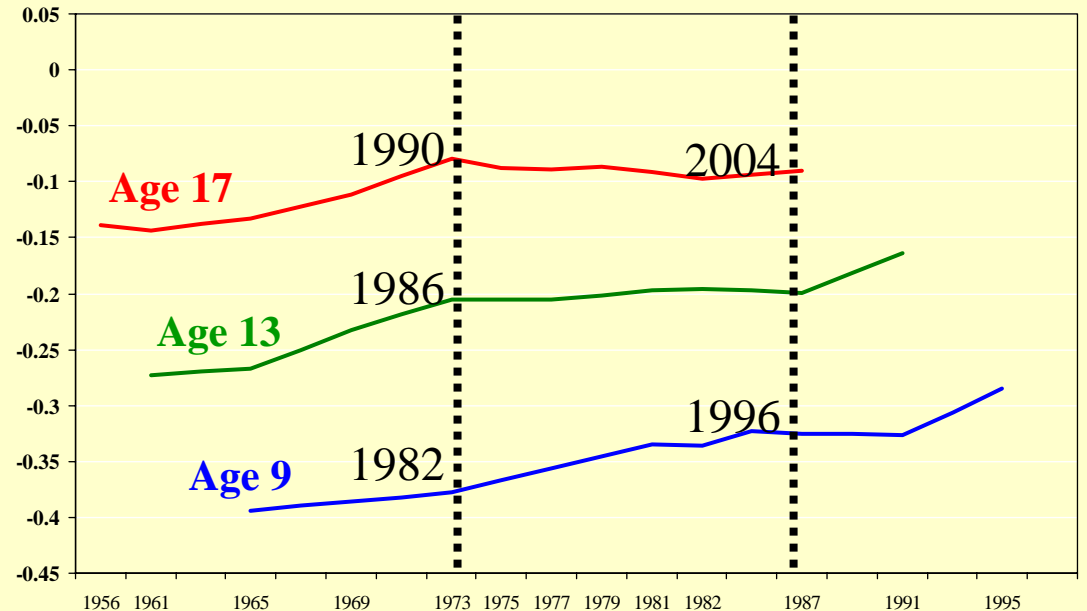
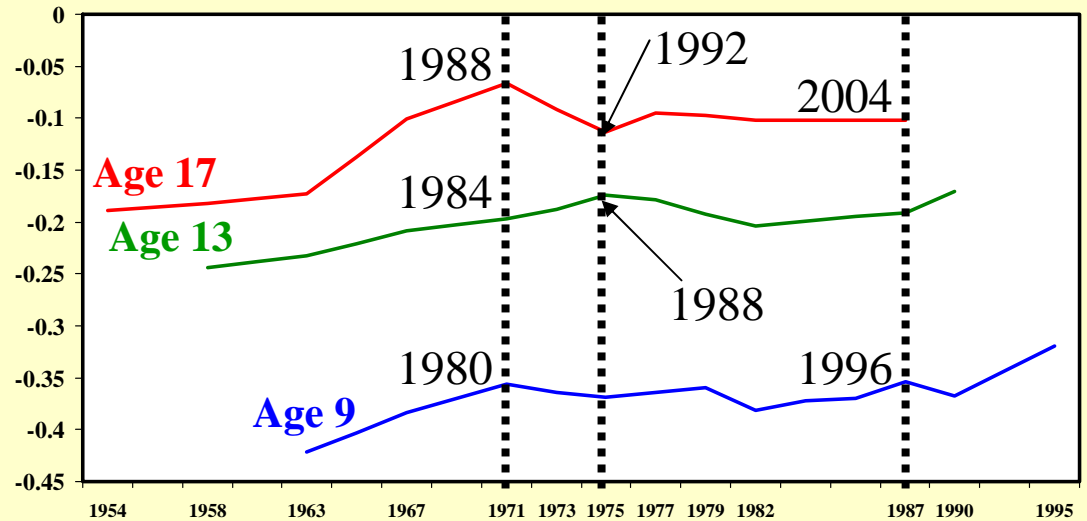
(Distance below 17-year old whites' scores, as a fraction of white 17-Year olds' scores in 1996)

Reading

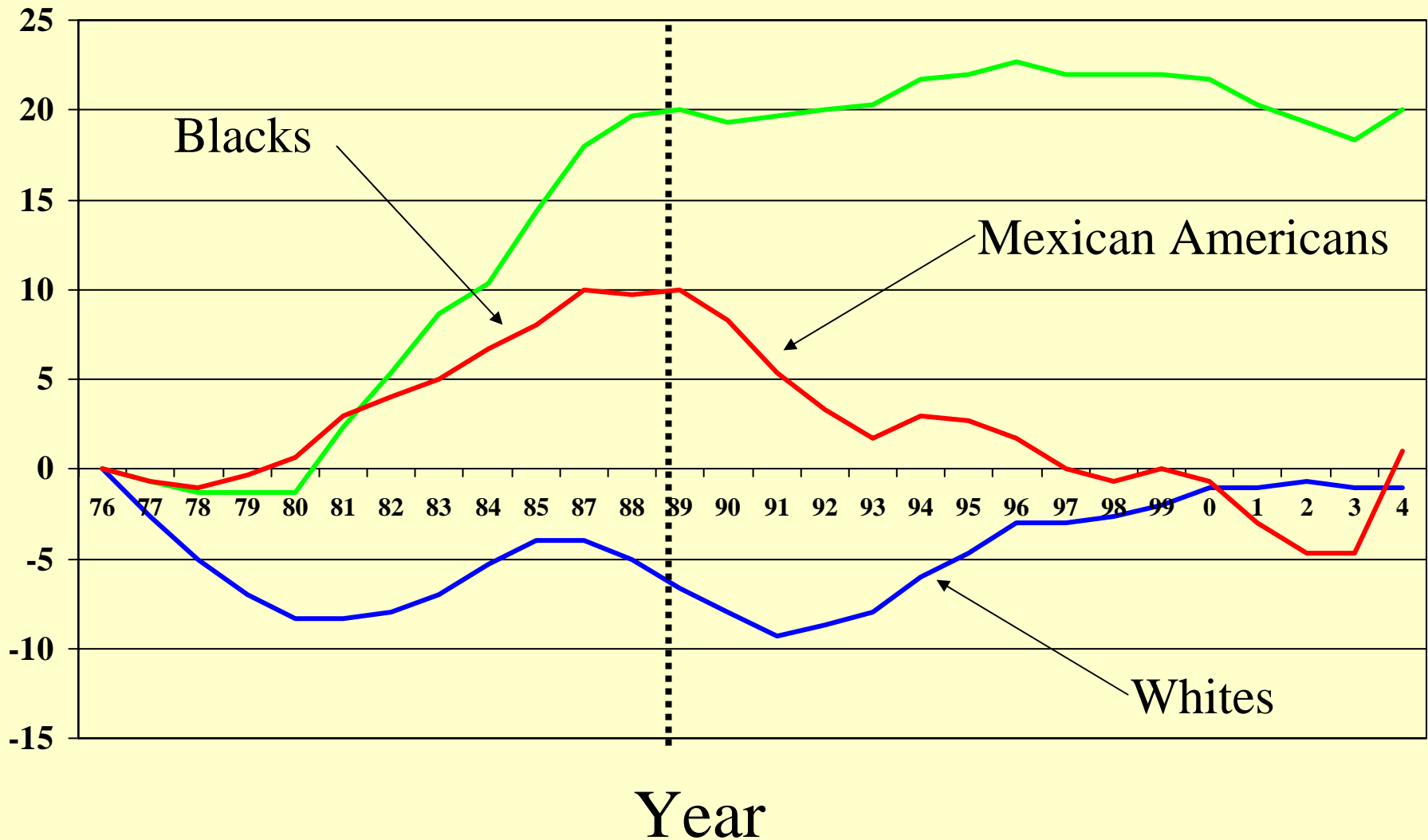
BLACKS

Math

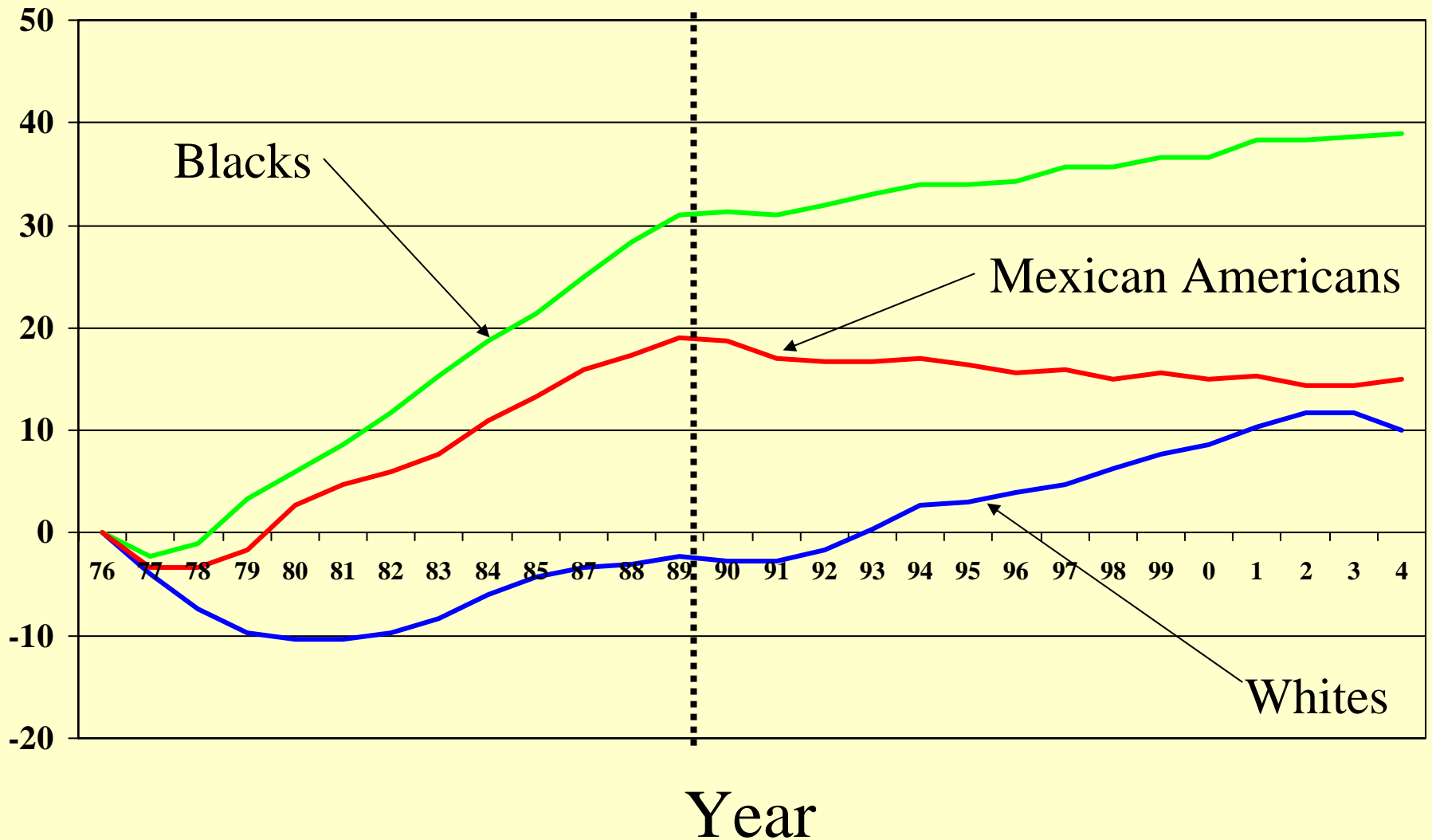
*Note: The horizontal axis is the approximate birth year.



Changes 1976-2004 in SAT Scores by Racial/Ethnic Background. Re-centered in 1996. (Three-Year Moving Averages)



Changes 1976-2004 in SAT Math Scores by Racial/Ethnic Background. Re-centered in 1996. (Three-Year Moving Averages)

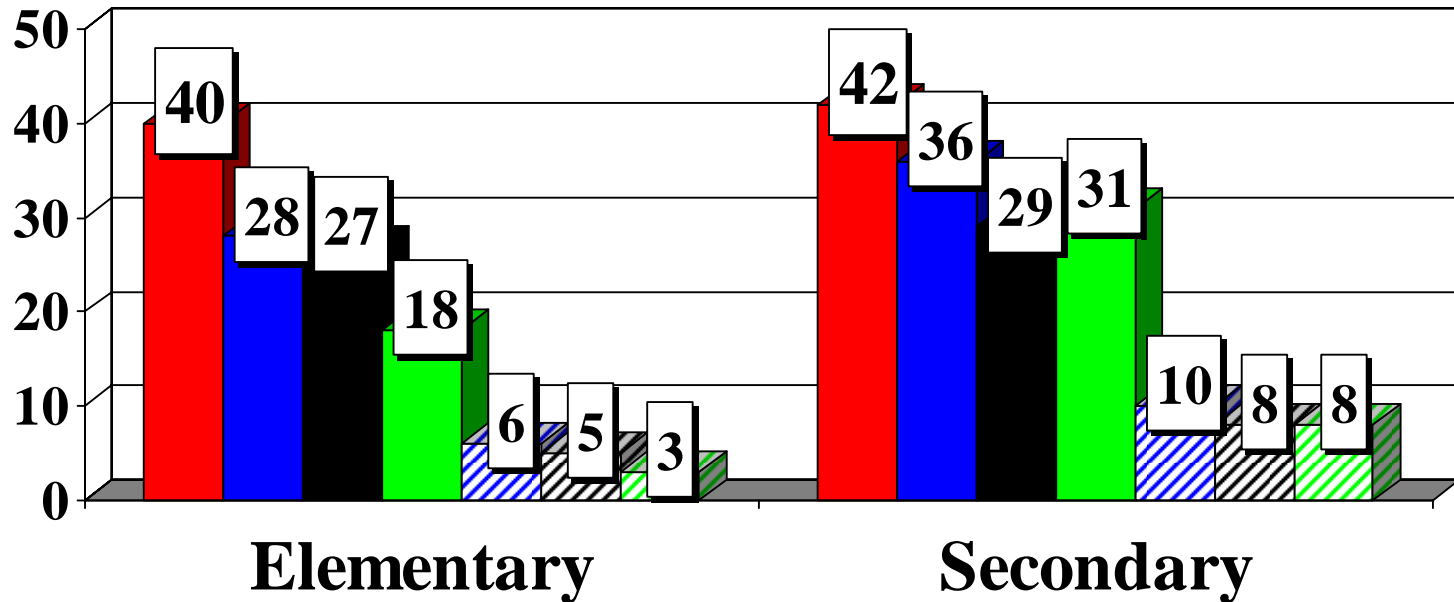


Conclusions Concerning Trends

- **Black-white and Hispanic-white gaps narrowed dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, showing clearly that narrowing is possible.**
- **Progress for black and Hispanic teenagers stopped abruptly at the end of the 1980s, with an apparent (and unexplained) shift in youth culture among black teens: leisure reading levels and class attendance both fell.**
- **The birth cohort of black youth that was 13-years old in 1988 had the highest-ever NAEP reading scores as 13-year olds, but then extremely small reading gains by the time they were 17 in 1992. It may be just a coincidence, but 1988-92 was the commercial take-off period for hip-hop and rap music.**
- **The first few years of the present century have shown higher scores and smaller racial gaps in the NAEP at 4th and 8th grades, but not at the high school level.**
- **Finally, NAEP data from 1994 and 2002 show that remaining gaps among 12th graders are large at every level of parental education.**

Leadership And Framing the Work

Percentages of teachers checking each listed statement, concerning “the last professional development program that had little or no effect on teaching or learning” in their classes.



- It was just too much, on top of everything else the school was trying to do.
- There was too little support and training.
- Teachers were not held accountable for doing it.
- The way it was introduced didn't inspire me to try.
- I never thought it could work with my students.
- I really tried to make it work, but it just didn't help my students.
- Doing it well would have been too much work.

IMPLICATIONS

Reason Ineffective:

What leaders can do:

“The way it was introduced didn’t inspire me to try it.”

Introduce ideas in ways geared to foster interest and positive anticipation.

“Teachers were not held accountable for doing it.”

Confirm agreements, including on design & use of monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

“There was too little support and training.”

Offer appropriate training & assistance and organize teams for peer support & sharing.

“It was just too much, on top of everything else the school was trying to do.”

Establish priorities, streamline assignments, foster coherence of systems.

Teacher engagement in professional development, such as addressed on the previous slides, is especially important when professional development might serve to expand instructional repertoires for topics that students find difficult to learn.

Three Legs of the Instruction Tripod

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graph TD; A[Three Legs of the Instruction Tripod] --- B[Content]; A --- C[Pedagogy]; A --- D[Relationships]
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Content

Pedagogy

Relationships

Why We Began

- **Encouragement:** MSAN's Black and Latino 7th-11th graders identified teacher encouragement much more often than teacher demands, when asked *why* they worked hard *when* they worked hard.
- **Understanding:** Half of Black and Latino 7th-11th graders reported they completely understood half or less of their teachers' lessons and half or less of what they read for school.
- **Effort and Skill:** No difference in average reported time on homework among Black, White and Latino students, but whites reported higher homework completion rates.

Five Engagement Targets

== Our targets for student engagement



Five Organization Norms

Five Learning Conditions

== Conditions & Norms that help us meet our goals

A Framework for Strengthening all Three Legs of the Tripod

Content

Pedagogy

Relationships

The Central Framework

1. Trust & Interest

1. Mistrust & Disinterest

2. Control & Autonomy

2. Imbalanced Control
& Autonomy

3. Ambitiousness
(high goals)

VS.

3. Ambivalence
(low goals)

4. Industriousness

4. Disengagement &
Discouragement

5. Mastery & Consolidation

5. Confusion & Irresolution

Four Trust Questions, regarding:

1. Motives

2. Competence

3. Dependability

4. Collegiality & Respect

(Whose excuse are you?)

These group process ideas help us to formulate targets for student engagement

Trust & Interest	→	Feel trusting, safe and welcome
Control & Autonomy	→	Behave cooperatively
Ambitiousness (high goals)	→	Embrace mastery goals
Industriousness	→	Work diligently
Mastery & Consolidation	→	Achieve satisfaction

The Basic Framework = Three Clusters of Five Concepts

A. Five *STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TARGETS*

**B. *Five CLASSROOM CONDITIONS for
Achieving the Student Engagement Targets***

**C. *Five ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS for
Achieving and Sustaining the Classroom
Conditions***

A. Five *STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TARGETS*

- 1. *Feel trusting, safe and welcome* in the school environment**
- 2. *Behave cooperatively* and abide by school rules.**
- 3. *Embrace mastery goals* more than socially comparative goals.**
- 4. *Work diligently* and remain resilient in response to setbacks.**
- 5. *Achieve satisfaction and a sense of efficacy* based on effort and progress.**

B. Five CATALYTIC CONDITIONS for Achieving the Student Engagement Targets

- 1. Feasibility: Instruction and supports make success seem possible.***
- 2. Relevance: Lessons show connections to real life.***
- 3. Enjoyment: Lessons are interesting and appropriately challenging.***
- 4. Teacher Support and Press: Teachers are both supportive and demanding.***
- 5. Peer Support: Peers are supportive (or at least not detractors).***

C. FIVE ORGANIZATIONAL DOMAINS for Achieving and Sustaining Catalytic Conditions Targets:

- 1. School climates characterized by high support and high press for all (including adults) are the norm.***
- 2. Multiple people play leadership roles and there is shared, mutual accountability for effort & outcomes.***
- 3. Teachers have deep content knowledge and focus collectively on developing relevant, challenging, coherent and streamlined curricula.***
- 4. Instruction is focused on achieving mastery for all students of critical skills and “higher order” understanding of challenging content.***
- 5. Assessment and feedback, both formative and summative, are targeted to support effective learning for students at all skill levels.***