



children's defense fund ohio

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Ohio Report Card Data Makes Case for Greater Focus on Equity in Education – Not Less

New education data revealing wide disparities in education released same day State School Board repeals resolution calling for equity and opportunity for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color

COLUMBUS — Ohio Report Card data released yesterday demonstrates a continued need for equity to be prioritized in Ohio schools – but just hours after the data's release, Ohio State Board of Education members repealed a resolution condemning racism passed last year.

The anti-racism and equity resolution, Resolution 20, was rescinded by the State Board of Education and replaced with a new one, Resolution 13, in a move that is a step backward for Ohio's education system and our responsibility to ensure opportunity for all children, especially those most marginalized.

"Generations of Ohio students, many of them Black, Latinx, and other students of color have entered and exited Ohio's schools lacking opportunities to achieve their dreams as adults because of societal racism and resource inequities in our education system," says Tracy Nájera, Executive Director of [Children's Defense Fund-Ohio](http://www.cdf-ohio.org) (CDF-Ohio). "The data reveals these disparities persist and are widening, and yet, our state abandoned bare minimum commitments to advance equity and instead adopted a toothless resolution ill-fit to take on the barriers that stand between Black and Brown children and lifelong opportunities to thrive."

According to Ohio Report Card data for the 2020-2021 school year:

- **High School Graduation.** The statewide 4-year graduation rate has risen since the class of 2016, from 83.6% to 87.2% for the class of 2020. This is true across all demographics; however, disparities in 4-year graduation rates persist. For example, 90.1% of white students graduated in four years in 2020 compared to just 76.9% of Black students, 78.8% of Latinx students, and 79.8% of Indigenous students.
- **Chronic Absenteeism.** In 2020-21, the percentage of students who were chronically absent increased to 25%, compared to 18% in 2018-19. Among Black students, chronic absenteeism increased almost 50%, from 32% to 47% from 2018-19 to 2020-21 (meaning that nearly 1 in 2 Black students missed more than 10% of instruction time during the past school year). Among Latinx students, chronic absenteeism increased 60% and among white students it increased 32%.
- **3rd Grade Reading Proficiency.** Proficiency in English Language Arts declined across the board for Ohio's 3rd graders. Fewer 3rd grade students were proficient in reading in 2020-21 than the 2018-19 school year, decreasing from 66.7% to 51.9% in two years. Among Black and Latinx students, the decline was closer to 20% within this same time period. The 2019-2020 school year had the lowest rates of proficiency, with only 44.2% of 3rd graders scoring proficient test results.
- **8th Grade Mathematics Proficiency.** Fewer 8th graders were proficient in math in 2020-21 compared to 2018-19, decreasing from 57.3% to 42.6%. During the 2020-2021 school year, a mere 15.4% of Black students scored proficient on standardized testing in math compared to 51.2% of white students.

Report Card data also showed that Ohio's student enrollment declined by 3% last year compared to the prior school year. Notably, pre-school and kindergarten enrollment showed the biggest declines, but students in all

grade levels were missing from school last year. Further, while the number of non-graduates decreased almost 2,000 students from class of 2019 to class of 2020, only 131 more students graduated within that same timeframe.

“These data reveal the hardships of a year of remote pandemic learning. We must also recognize the heroic efforts of our parents, educators, and communities across the state who have stepped up to keep our children connected and learning during this time. We’ve seen the best of humanity during this time as so many have come together in service of our children. Though we see dips in various indicators across all student demographics, attesting to just how hard this time has been for our children and their families, we also recognize how resilient and strong they have had to be every day,” continues Nájera. “But what the data also reveals is the sheer longevity, persistence, and staying power of disparities in opportunity, ever wider now, if we do not act to condemn white supremacy and racism in all forms. Ohio deserves better.”

Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio recommends Ohio support greater equity for Black and Brown students in Ohio by:

- **Prioritizing support for children, especially children of color most negatively impacted by COVID-19, with school-based supports using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and ESSER federal relief dollars.** Children’s health and mental wellness is foundational to their ability to thrive and flourish. CDF-Ohio, along with their partners in the [Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition](#), call for the expansion of school-based health care in Ohio schools. Expanding equitable access to physical and mental health services through community connected, school-based health care increases access to quality health care for children who need it and for the whole community.
- **Supporting child-focused financial support for Ohio families.** We know that raising children can be expensive, and many families struggle with the costs of child care, housing, clothing, food, school supplies, and medical expenses. Ensuring families have access to [direct cash assistance](#) such as the expanded Child Tax Credit and one-time hazard pay for low-income workers with children who have taken on the brunt of the pandemic are both key poverty reduction tools that help families achieve stability, shield children from adverse childhood experiences, and help children focus on learning instead of stressors outside of school.

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The Children’s Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.