Equity 2000

A Summary of:

"The *Equity 2000* Evaluation, a Summary Report: Impact and Implementation, Report No. 86" (December 1997) Pelavin Research Center. By Carlos Ródriguez, Nidhi Khattri, and Mei Han.

"The Senior Survey Analysis of Cohorts 1, 2, and 3, Report No. 87" (September 1999) American Institutes for Research. By George Bohrnstedt, Pamela Jakwerth, Carlos Ródriguez, and Sherri Quiñones.

"Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools" (April 1999) Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, by Sandra Ham and Erica Walker.

Focus

- Early Childhood
- Primary School
- Middle School
- ✓ Secondary School
- Postsecondary
- Extended Learning

Overview

The College Board first piloted the Equity 2000 program in 1990 in Fort Worth, Texas in an attempt to increase college acceptance, attendance and success rates for minority students. The standard that drives this district-wide reform model is an expectation that all students will take Algebra I in the ninth grade and geometry in the tenth grade. Equity 2000 promotes academic enrichment for all students through the elimination of low-level curriculum tracking. Teachers trained by College Board staff implement an improved curriculum in all Algebra I and geometry classes, and extra help is offered to students struggling to meet the new standards. In short, the aim of Equity 2000 is "to demonstrate that a single, relatively simple policy change, requiring Algebra I and geometry for all students linked to specific programmatic interventions, could reduce the under-representation of minority and disadvantaged students in higher education."

POPULATION

Since 1990, over 700 schools and more than 500,000 students in 14 school districts have taken part in the Equity 2000 program. The national evaluations focused on students in 7 school districts: Fort Worth, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Nashville, TN; Prince Georges County, MD; Providence, RI; San José and East Side Union, CA. During the final school year of the national evaluation (1995-96), the student population in Equity 2000 districts was 47% African American, 28% white, 17% Latino, 6% Asian American, and less than 1% Native American. The proportion of minority students in most, if not all, of these districts has increased since the 1995-96 school year.

Key Findings

Between 1991 and 1996, the percentage of students enrolling in and passing Algebra I and geometry (or more advanced math classes) by the ninth and tenth grades, increased in the 7 districts.

- The proportion of students enrolled in Algebra I or higher-level math courses by the ninth grade increased for African Americans (45%-72%), Asians (63%-78%), Latinos (40%-72%) and whites (59%-75%).
- The proportion of students passing Algebra I by the end of ninth grade increased for African Americans (34%-41%), Asians (60%-65%), Latinos (31%-38%), and whites (49%-54%).

- The proportion of students enrolled in geometry or higher-level math courses by the tenth grade increased for African Americans by (34%-52%) Asians (59%-64%), Latinos (21%-39%), and whites (49%-61%).

- The proportion of students passing geometry by the end of tenth grade increased for African Americans by (29%-40%), Asians (57%-58%), Latinos (17%-29%) and whites (44%-52%).

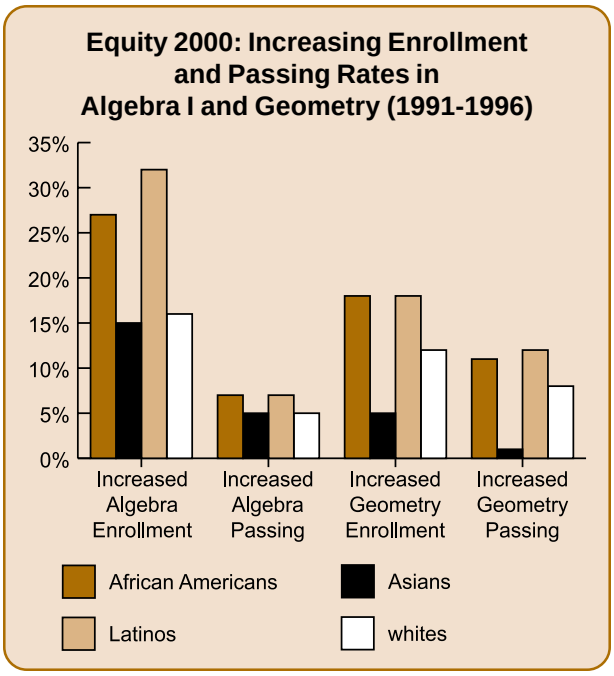
Only 3 of the 7 sites had achieved the program's stated goal (100% enrollment in Algebra I by the ninth grade) by 1995/96.

The gap between the proportion of African American and white students taking the SAT in Equity 2000 districts either decreased or remained the same between 1991 and 1996, however, the gap between Latino and white students increased.

Evaluators of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee found that between 1991 and 1997 the program:

- More than tripled the percentage of ninth graders in MPS taking Algebra I or higher level math: from 31% to 99%.

- Increased Algebra I enrollment of African American, Latino and Asian students by 75%, 78% and 67%, respectively.



- Nearly doubled the percentage of MPS students completing Algebra I by the end of ninth grade: from 25% to 55%. (The gain was significant for all students, but an achievement gap remained for all minority groups except Asians.)

- Trained 85% of the MPS math teachers from grades 8-10.

Milwaukee evaluators also noted, however, that nearly half (47%) of the MPS ninth graders who took Algebra I in those years did not pass the course.

Program Components

The College Board worked with various high poverty or high minority school districts across the country to implement Equity 2000 with the following components:

- Letters of Agreement signed by the school districts and Equity 2000 ensured that both partners had shared goals and agendas. The districts agreed to implement required Algebra I and geometry courses for all ninth and tenth graders in order to prepare them for college-level mathematics. Individual sites worked with the College Board to create time lines for implementation.

- Staff from the College Board worked with administrators, counselors and teachers in intensive summer workshops and in-service training sessions throughout the school year. This professional development began up to two years before implementation of new mathematics requirements in each district. In Milwaukee, algebra and geometry study groups with high school math teachers and professors from the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee (UMW) provided undergraduate credits and time for teachers to work on curriculum design.

- Voluntary Saturday Academies (for students) and summer math programs provided additional tutoring, algebra readiness classes, practice for high school proficiency exams and make-up courses for students in grades 8-12 who struggled with, or did not pass, the newly mandated requirements. In Milwaukee, Saturday Academies were sometimes held on the UMW campus.
- Parent Academies and program counselors helped parents understand the importance of math literacy to students' college access and success. Parents also joined students and counselors on field trips to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Contributing Factors

High Standards/High Expectations
Equity 2000 was founded on the expectation that all students can complete the math requirements necessary for college admission. Program counselors encouraged all students to take advanced math courses in high school and investigate college opportunities.

Extra Supports
Voluntary Saturday Academies and math summer programs were extended learning opportunities that served as "safety nets" to catch students who began to falter when districts mandated tough new math standards. Yet, because of the optional nature of the extended learning opportunities, teachers report lower than expected attendance.

Professional Development
Evaluators indicated that ongoing professional development was crucial to the implementation of the demanding curriculum changes mandated by Equity 2000.

Transition Focus
Mandating mathematics courses that were prerequisites for college admissions facilitated access to higher education for all students in the district. Field trips to HBCUs and other colleges expanded students' educational aspirations.

Unintended Consequences
High failure rates of mathematics courses were an unintended consequence of the new Algebra I and geometry mandates, despite the fact that each district planned and trained teachers for two years before implementing the tough math requirements.

Evaluator Comments

Evaluators from the Pelavin Research Center concluded: "Although a greater proportion and a larger number of minority students enrolled in and passed Algebra I and geometry, they [still] lagged behind their white peers."

Evaluators did not explain the fall off in college attendance for Asian students reported in the follow-up study.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

"The Equity 2000 Evaluation" focused on the five-year demonstration project of Equity 2000 in 7 sites. The sites were chosen to participate due to their commitment to minority achievement. Evaluators collected data from students' records, surveys of teacher and counselors, observation of mathematics classes and focus groups with school personnel. The 7 sites had over 300,000 students. "Getting the Right Algebra" evaluates the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee and utilizes district and program data collected annually. They also used interviews and focus groups with school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors and funding staff.

EVALUATION & PROGRAM FUNDING

The College Board funded both the evaluation and the program, providing more than $25 million to the districts that implemented the reform between 1991 and 2000. The Milwaukee study was a preliminary report conducted by MDRC. Funding for a full MDRC study never materialized.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The Equity 2000 sites covered by the evaluation were in Fort Worth, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Nashville, TN; Prince George's County, MD; Providence, RI; San Jose Unified School District and East Side Union, CA.

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