

CHARTING THE COURSE NAVIGATING SYSTEMS

Annual Report 2022



VISION

A Racine County workforce that is fully capable and employed.

MISSION

Higher Expectations engages community partners, aligns efforts, and maximizes resources to promote excellence and equity in education and employment outcomes in Racine County.

CORE VALUES

Transformative: We work to disrupt the status quo, so that systems will support and shift power to low-income individuals and communities of color.

Community: We amplify community power by sharing our access to high level spaces and developing local leaders' capacity to make collaborative decisions with the community.

Strategic: Through the use of data and analysis, and in partnership with community and key stakeholders, we prioritize major goals and initiatives that lead to systems transformation.

GOALS

Higher Expectations is committed to using evidence-based and data-driven decision making to identify local best practices, align community efforts, and track progress on key outcomes from birth to successful employment.

We have three core goals:

- Every child enters school ready to learn
- Every student succeeds in school
- Every resident succeeds in a career

LETTER FROM OUR STAFF

In 2022, our work has focused on transforming systems to work better and more equitably for all Racine families. We continue to ensure that students and families are a part of identifying challenges and developing solutions for our community. We have been proud to illuminate our community's voice, needs, and power across many of our efforts. Working with the community and bringing together partners across sectors has helped to strengthen our goals and outcomes. There have been a number of bright spots this year that you can learn more about in this report!

A major observation to come from our COVID-19 Impact Report was COVID's impact on high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment. This fall, our post-secondary partners made a specific request for Higher Expectations to convene, facilitate, and support efforts to increase post secondary enrollment as an ongoing major community-wide initiative. Additionally, Racine Unified, UW-Parkside, and Carthage College signed an agreement to offer dual credit courses as part of the education pathway that began in the fall of 2022. Students may now earn up to an entire semester of college credits as part of the education pathway. There have also been conversations with state representatives about the challenges associated with the barrier created by the current legislatively mandated FORT (Foundations of Reading Test) requirement for elementary education certification.

Higher Expectations has been able to play a large role in the expansion of the HSED 5.09 program and this year we received a Workforce Integration Grant, which utilizes American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, in partnership with Gateway Technical College, YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin, and Southeast Wisconsin Workforce Development Board. This grant allowed us to hire a full-time team member to focus on outreach to Racine residents without a high school degree, conduct surveys and interviews for feedback from the community and program participants, and use that feedback to continuously improve the HSED program as it expands across Southeastern Wisconsin.

This year, we supported a comprehensive and impressive new strategic plan for the Racine Unified School District. For the first time, and with our partnership, Racine Unified engaged community members in the creation and development of their Strategic Plan. They also embraced local and national best practices for fidelity and rigor that will improve outcomes for students. Higher Expectations will continue to facilitate engagement. We will convene selected community co-chairs, business leaders, and area institutions twice annually for five years to track measurable progress and provide accountability. In line with the efforts Racine Unified is making to focus on literacy in the upcoming Strategic Plan, our Data Impact Manager also developed an Early Literacy Data Tracker. Pre-Kindergarten and early elementary teachers district-wide are already using the tool to track literacy success.

Last, but certainly not least, Higher Expectations underwent a major transition in leadership, and in our organizational structure. This has provided an opportunity for leadership to be distributed across these three Senior Leadership roles in our organization, where no single role outweighs the other. Our prior model placed too many demands on a single managerial role. Therefore, our new model is a Senior Leadership triad, also called Distributed Leadership, comprising our Executive Director and two Managing Directors. We also recognized that previously, there was no process for reviewing the role of Executive Director, which was inequitable. We have been transparent with our team and external partners about this shift. Higher Expectations' Executive Committee is now tasked with developing an annual review process to ensure that it is responsible and equitable.

We are looking forward to another great year in 2023!

Learna Jones

DeAnn Posselt

R. Jft

Elizabeth Gardner

Robert Jemolara

Jeff Dubois

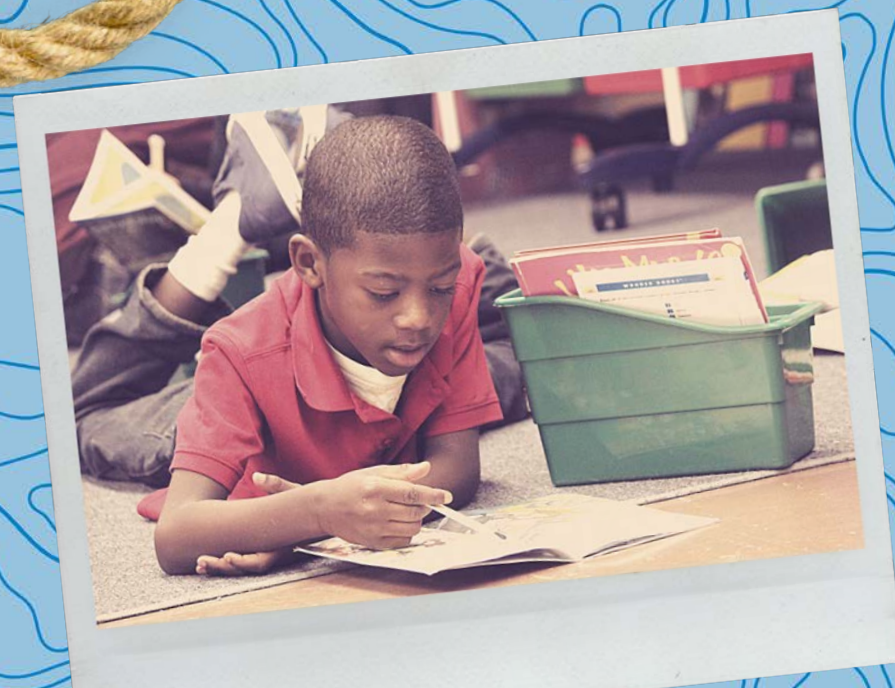
Yolanda Judtme

Christina Flowers



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OUR TEAM

Charmeka Flowers

In my role, as Student Engagement Associate, I help connect students/people to information to help them complete the 509 program or job training at Gateway. This helps make it easier for people and students to get an HSED or job training by improving educational outcomes for the community.

Yalanda Ludtke

In my role, as the Managing Director of Partnerships, I support our Education and Post-Secondary Team and manage community partnerships in order to maximize access to education. This helps improve economic mobility for Racine residents by reducing barriers to education.

Leanna Jones

In my role as Community Engagement Coordinator, I facilitate meetings and conversations with parents, families, and students. This helps Higher Expectations support community-led strategies to improve educational outcomes for the community.

Elizabeth Erickson

In my role as Managing Director of Engagement, I challenge systems leaders to co-create solutions with Racine residents and support the Higher Expectations engagement team. This helps improve educational outcomes by ensuring systems are changed in a way that fits community needs.

Kristin Jenders

In my role, as the Project and Facilitation Manager, I facilitate and project manage community initiatives among secondary, post secondary partners and community stakeholders in order to provide accountability and structure to meet defined objectives.

Jeff Neubauer

In my role as Executive Director, I help leaders of major organizations understand their role and responsibility for transforming their institutions to improve education and economic outcomes for all members for our community from career to cradle.

DeAnn Possehl

In my role, as the Post Secondary Education Network Facilitator, I convene higher education partners in order to improve post secondary completion in our region. This helps improve economic mobility in Racine county by increasing college enrollment, completion and ultimately post -secondary attainment in the region.

Ben Taft

In my role as the Data Impact Manager, I collect, organize, and present data about our community. This helps Higher Expectations' goal of improving educational outcomes and economic mobility by identifying areas where improvement is needed and areas where we can celebrate progress.



BECOMING AN ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATION

Since our inception, Higher Expectations has worked to reduce racial disparities in the Racine community. We disaggregate local outcomes data by race, ethnicity, and income. We encourage our partners to trust data that exposes systemic racism in our community. We partner with national organizations to better inform our institutional partners and community about our Country's history of racism and systemic challenges. We work with our partners to prioritize and address racial disparities in educational and employment strategies. In 2020, we recognized that we must do more as an organization, and began working internally with our team, alongside our partners and community consultants, to become an anti-racist organization. We recognize that to truly do better as a community to dismantle racism in our systems and rebuild in a way that truly serves all of us, we must change our internal systems as well.

This year, we took a closer look at where we are in becoming an anti-racist organization, utilizing the chart below.

Continuum of Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization					
MONOCULTURAL ==> MULTICULTURAL ==> ANTI-RACIST ==> ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL					
<i>Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits ==> Tolerant of Racial and Cultural Differences ==> Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets</i>					
Exclusive	2. Passive	3. Symbolic Change	4. Identity Change	5. Structural Change	6. Fully Inclusive
An Exclusionary Institution	A "Club" Institution	A Compliance Organization	An Affirming Institution	A Transforming Institution	Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization in a Transformed Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc. Openly maintains the dominant group's power and privilege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tolerant of a limited number of "token" People of Color and members from other social identity groups allowed in with "proper" perspective and credentials. May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life Often declares, "We don't have a problem." Monocultural norms, policies and procedures of dominant culture viewed as the "right" way "business as usual" Engages issues of diversity and social justice only on club member's terms and within their comfort zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity Sees itself as "non-racist" institution with open doors to People of Color Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting "someone of color" on committees or office staff Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups <p><i>But...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Not those who make waves" Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision making Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control Token placements in staff positions: must assimilate into organizational culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity Develops analysis of systemic racism Sponsors programs of anti-racism training New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege Develops intentional identity as an "anti-racist" institution Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage Actively recruits and promotes members of groups have been historically denied access and opportunity <p><i>But...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their world-view, culture and lifestyles Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institutions life and work Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism and all other forms of oppression. Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices Members across all identity groups are full participants in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interest A sense of restored community and mutual caring Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression Actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations.

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By having open and honest conversations with our team, we have set the goal of moving from "A Compliance Organization" to "An Affirming Institution" by 2023. Higher Expectations has committed to every member of our team participating in Phase One training from the Racial Equity Institute. We have discussed our work culture norms, and work to ensure our ways of being are known across our team. We solidified our decision-making process, and shared it with all levels of our team, and had intentional conversations about our budget and capacity.

Higher Expectations will continue to commit to continuing to identify places where we need to grow. We will continue to work towards being an organization where everyone feels welcome, worthy, and included. This has been an extremely valuable experience for our staff and team culture, and we encourage all teams to change practices to become anti-racist as well.



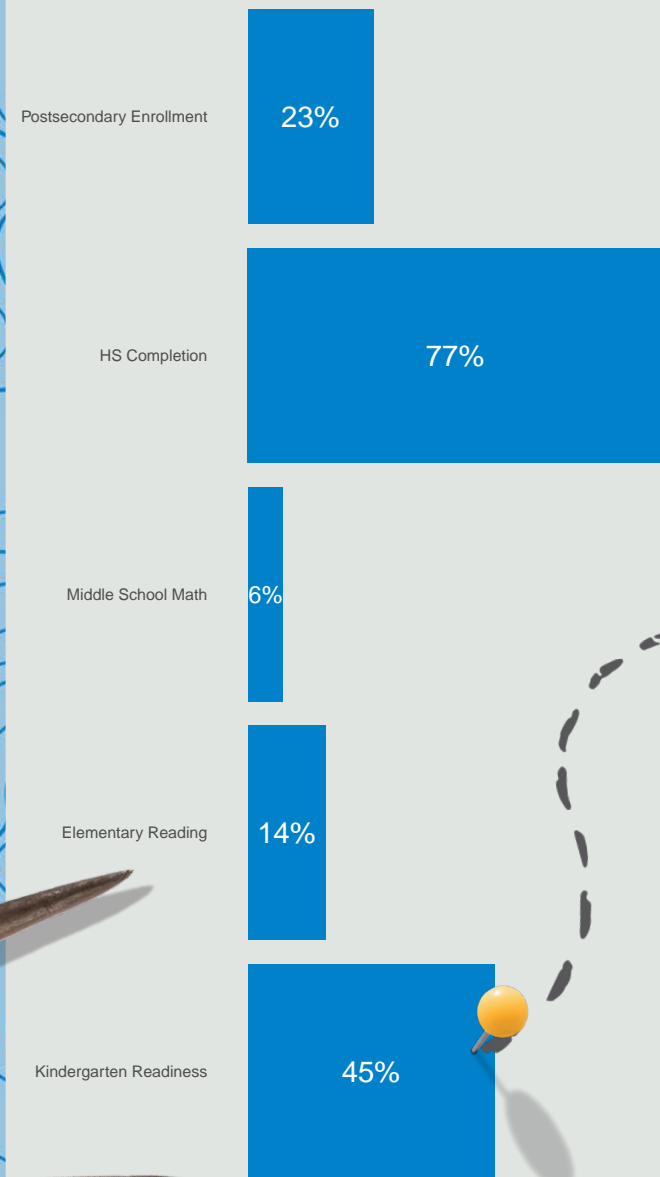
IMPROVING DATA

Since the beginning of our organization in 2014, we have reported outcome-level data. These data show how the individuals in our community are doing at different points in their educational journey in Racine County. We disaggregate those data by race and ethnicity, which you can see throughout our report, and in the data dashboards on our website. This approach reveals that our system leads to different outcomes for people depending upon the community they belong to. We believe that systems should create equitable outcomes across all racial and ethnic demographics, so that all students are able to start school ready to learn, succeed in school, and go on to earn family sustaining wages in their career.

In 2022, we see that there is still room for improvement across all outcome areas. Higher Expectations is working with partners to transform systems to better support all students, and their parents. We do that by asking our partners and community members where inequities are, and where those inequities may derive from. We believe that, with the right information, our community will achieve better outcomes for every student, including students of color and economically disadvantaged students and families.

We also believe what you measure is what matters, and that is why, in addition to reporting outcome-level data, we are digging deeper into systems-level data. While outcomes data can help us see the results of better systems, they don't help us understand the inequitable barriers to education families face. Some of that work is highlighted on the next page.

Higher Expectations for Racine County Career to Cradle Outcomes for 2022

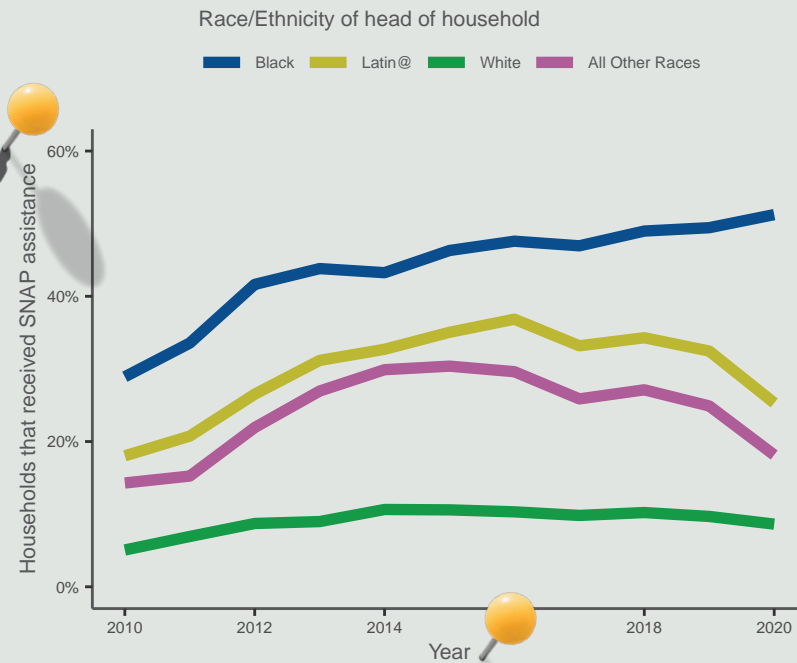


TRACKING SYSTEMS

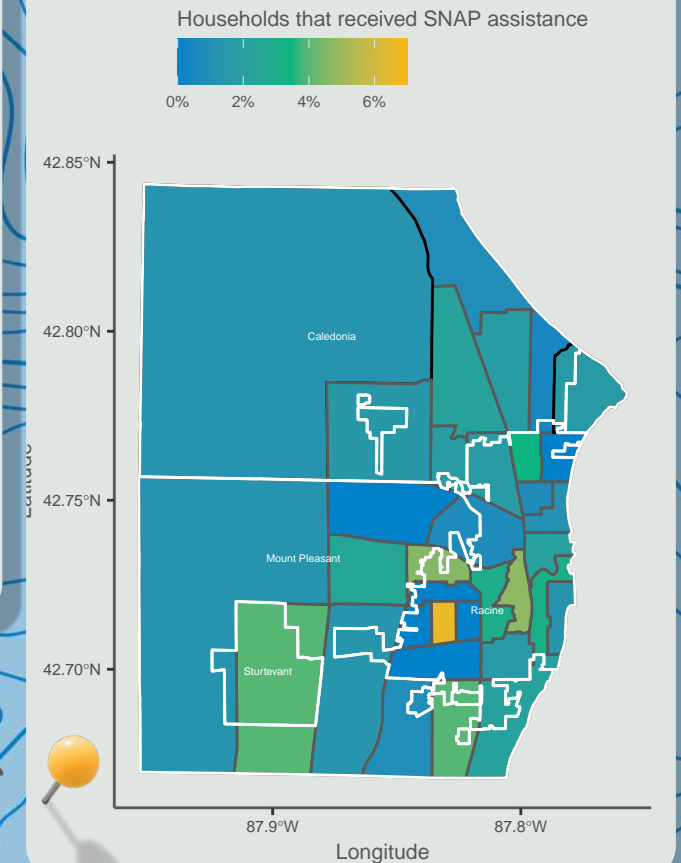
As part of our commitment to shifting the narrative to the performance of systems, rather than individuals, we have begun examining socioeconomic indicators by census tract. For example, we show below the percentage of households within each census tract that have received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) aid in the past 5 years. We recently received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support this work. For that grant, we will create maps and neighborhood descriptions that relate access to early childhood care to specific socioeconomic challenges. If we know that some challenges are disproportionately appearing as barriers to childcare access then we can inform our policymaking colleagues about where change is most needed.

Our goal is to understand similar relationships between socioeconomic challenges and in-school performance by students at Racine Unified. We will connect students' residences (or unhoused status) to specific challenges, and identify which ones are associated with lags in academic achievement. Local policymakers can then target their efforts on these challenges and create systems transformative policies that maximize the positive impacts on student progress.

Households Receiving SNAP Assistance Disaggregated by Race

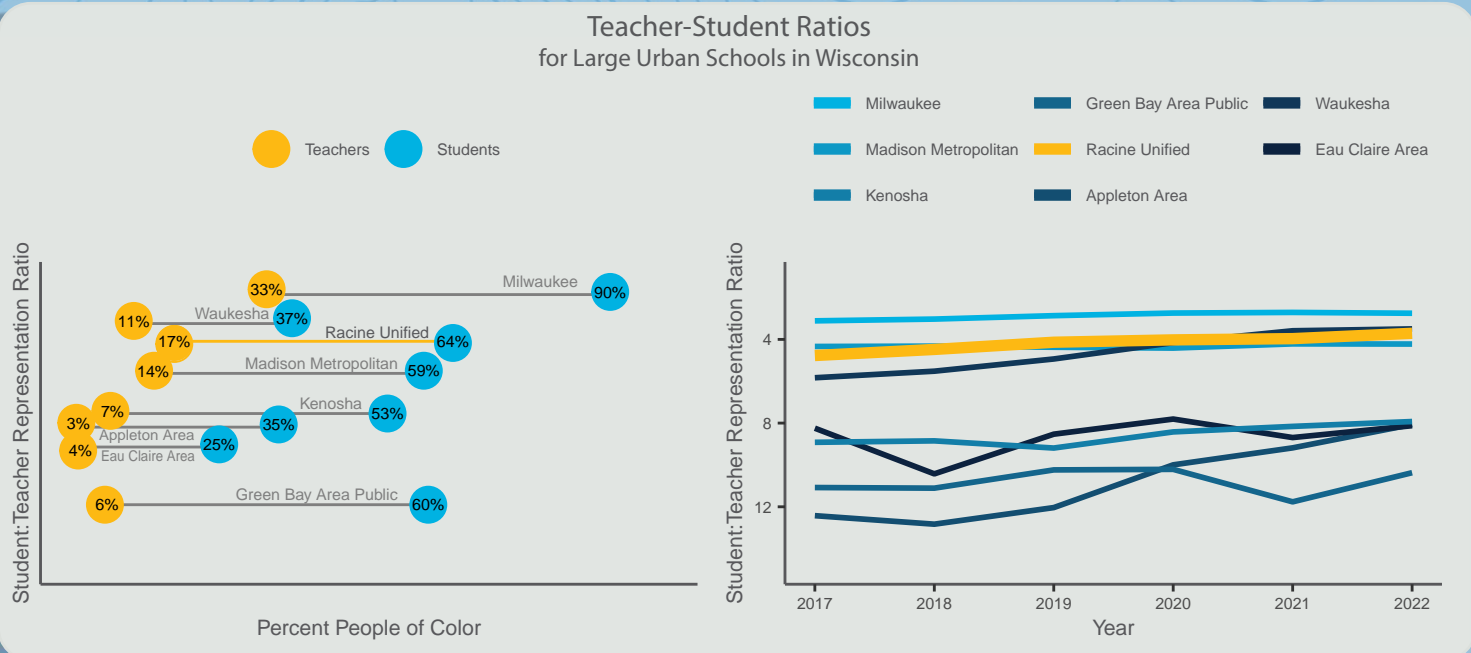


Households Receiving SNAP Assistance by Census Tract



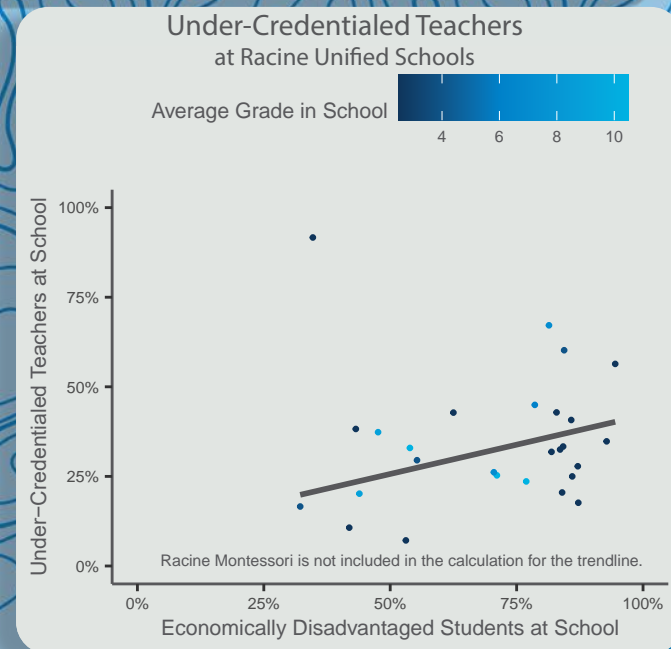
INCREASING ACCESS

We've always worked to increase the educational attainment of the Racine community, and this year marks a great step forward in our partnership with an exciting initiative to address the teacher shortage across the nation, grow a teacher population within Racine Unified that is more reflective of the demographics of our community, and increase the number of Racine Unified students who enroll in our community's post-secondary institutions.



Above, you can see that Racine Unified has had a high representation ratio compared to other large districts. Racine Unified has also improved more during recent years than most comparable districts. Representation ratio is a district's percent students of color divided by its percent teachers of color. The chart on the left shows how the representation ratios of different districts (the vertical axis) are determined by the student and teacher populations (the horizontal axis). The chart on the right uses the same vertical axis, and its horizontal axis shows the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in each school district.

One of the most important ways that we can foster equitable systems is to make sure that all students have access to well-trained, well-supported teachers. Wisconsin requires that each school district report the number of teachers that are working outside of their field of certification, or who have an emergency permit and are working towards certification. In our report, we call that group of teachers "Under-credentialed." We compare the percentage of under-credentialed teachers in Racine Unified schools to the percentage of students in each school that are reported as "Economically Disadvantaged." We find that the percentage of under-credentialed teachers increases by one point for every three percentage points that the population of economically disadvantaged students increases.



In May of this year, Racine Unified, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, and Carthage College announced that they are partnering in a new Education Pathway Initiative to help combat the teacher shortage in area schools. Higher Expectations supported this work by convening partners and facilitating conversations to action.

In September, 29 students enrolled in the first of the new dual-credit courses in the education pathway at Case, Horlick, and Washington Park high schools. Through this program, these students may earn up to one semester of college credit through concurrent enrollment courses. These credits will transfer between UW-Parkside and Carthage college, and will apply toward a college degree in education at these institutions. Students are taking college-level courses like Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology and Assessment, and Teaching and Supporting Learners with Diverse Characteristics and Needs with support from their high school teachers and staff.



"This initiative allows us to take our Education Pathway to the next level in terms of providing hands-on learning opportunities and ensuring our graduates are one step ahead when they enter college."
- Racine Unified Superintendent, Dr. Eric Gallien

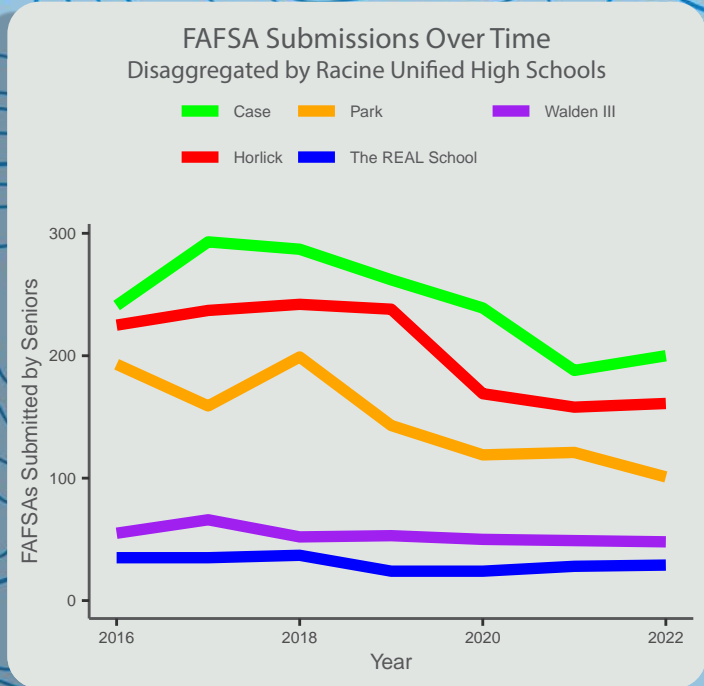
"Through this pathway, we will encourage and educate more Racine high school students to take these positions in their home community, supporting public education in Racine and, we believe, reducing teacher turnover."
- Carthage College President, Dr. John Swallow

"UW-Parkside is excited to partner with RUSD and Carthage College to offer a vital education pathway that will make a difference in ensuring students in our region have equitable access to a post-secondary education,"
- UW-Parkside Chancellor, Dr. Debbie Ford.

The primary goal of this new partnership is to create a more seamless pathway for students interested in elementary or secondary education to gain real-world experience as they explore the world of education. Another goal is to increase the number of credits students can earn, at no cost to the student, while still in high school.

Higher Expectations and our partners hope that this program will also encourage more Racine Unified students to return to Racine Unified to teach. It should also reduce teacher turnover in our community's schools. It also seeks to create a teacher population that matches the demographic of our student body. Finally, it should increase the number of Racine residents with postsecondary degrees.

This work is just one the many things our team is working on to reduce barriers to post-secondary education for our families. We have partnered with Racine Unified to increase the number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Higher Expectations has coordinated efforts across area high schools so that students have dedicated school time to complete their FAFSA. Students do this with support from counselors and volunteers from our community, taking a crucial step in reducing the financial burden of college access.



LIFTING UP YOUTH

In March of this year, we met with 15 teens at the Main Project Cafe and challenged them to work with us to plan an event for teens, by teens. Our only stipulations were they had to remain within a \$5,000 budget, and an access to a resources or learning must be available for attendees at the event. Over the next seven months, our team worked with teens to create Back 2 School, an event for teens, by teens, where attendees could win prizes for having conversations about college with college graduates from the community.

It started with a conversation with Racine Parent Leaders, an initiative to increase parent engagement in decision making across our work. Parents talked about the lack of engaging, safe activities for their teens. In an effort to be led by our community, we thought it would be a great opportunity to engage youth, and meet a need in our community.

Across the course of the planning period, we worked with teens from 8th-11th grade. Teens were compensated \$20/meeting for their time, and were given lunch at each meeting. Higher Expectations worked as a consultant, listening to what the students wanted, and working in between meetings to draft budgets, create options for event design, and reach out to vendors and partners in the community. All decisions were made by the teens.

We had a lot of ideas of what this event could be, but learned a lot from the teens as we continued on a path towards event day.



"I wanted to be part of planning this event because it sounded exciting and I wanted to come out of my comfort zone. I learned about college and now I feel like it's something I could actually do." - Siany

"I wanted to help plan this event because I wanted to be part of something bigger than myself. I learned how to be myself and how important it is to share my ideas" - Seth

"I liked being part of planning this event because we got to do it ourselves, it was all teens making decisions and deciding what we did, no grown ups"- Julian

"While planning this event I learned how to get out of my comfort zone and how to have fun doing something with new people" - Sybria

"I kept coming back to plan because I was excited for the turn out and what we could do to change the environment for kids like us" - Aubree



On September 10th of this year, it was the big day of the event. We gathered at Pritchard Park, and put the seven months of planning to the test. Students and volunteers from the community set up the prize, t-shirt, and food tables, spaced out the lawn games chosen by our planning team, and helped the DJ and inflatable vendors to their space for their set up.

As volunteers arrived, they were each given a set of tickets to give out to students who had a conversation with them about college. Each ticket could then be placed in a prize bin, and at the end of the event we randomly selected winners for prizes chosen by our planning team. As attendees arrived, they were met by a student planner, given a t-shirt and a list of questions about college they could ask volunteers, and told how they could enter to win prizes. They also were able to answer questions about college-going culture to earn tickets.

Over the course of the five hour event, approximately 50 teens were in attendance. Of the 50 attendees, 30 of them had conversations about college, and each talked to an average of 3 college graduates about college.

"We learned a lot about college. I am meeting with one of the college people that were at the event soon to keep learning more. I learned about FAFSA, and how to pay for college, and that college is something I could really do" - Julian

In the upcoming year, we will continue to talk to teens to learn more about barriers to college enrollment, and work with teens to co-create solutions to increase the college-going culture around Racine.

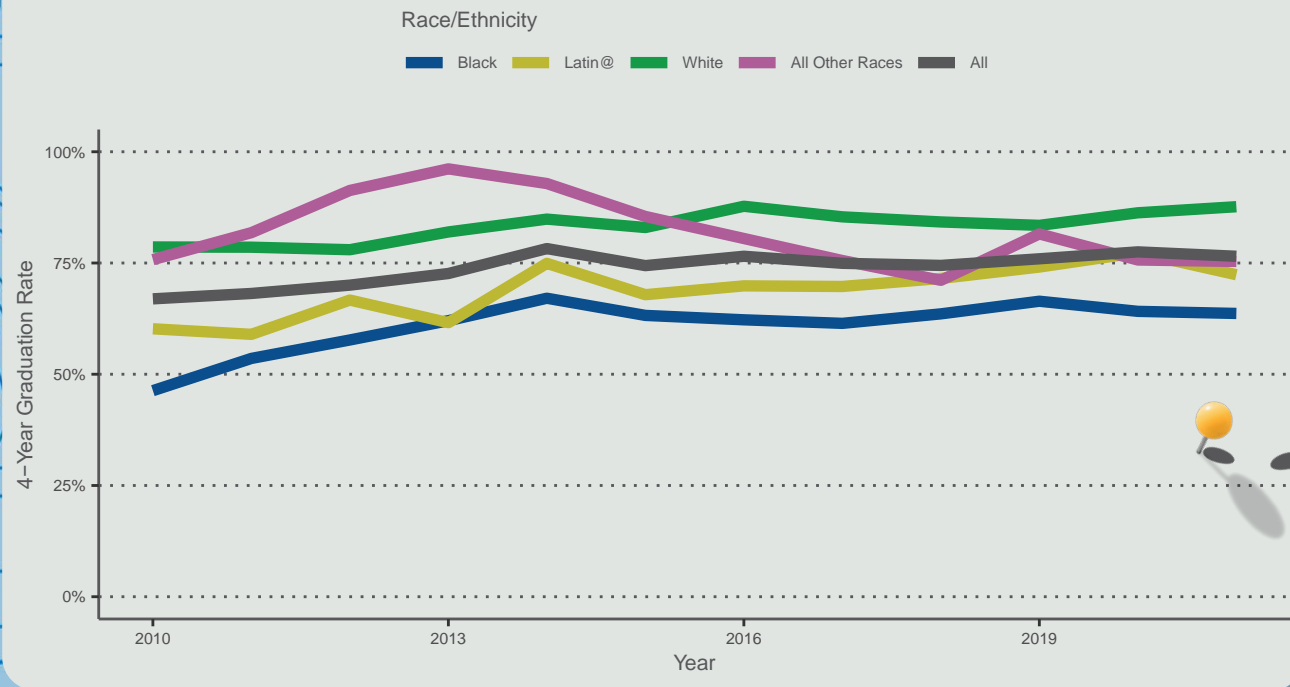
CO-DEVELOPING INNOVATION

Since 2019, we have been working with our partners at the City of Racine, Gateway Technical College, and YWCA of Southeastern Wisconsin to increase high school attainment. These partners expanded the capacity of the YWCA's 5.09 High School Equivalency diploma program to reach more Racine residents. The 5.09 program uses a competency-based curriculum for credit recovery. Through this program, Racine residents who would not otherwise be able to can gain their high school credentials. The program helps them demonstrate their skills and understanding of the material through projects, quizzes, class discussions, and homework.

Racine Unified joined this partnership in the 2021-2022 school year. Adult students aged 18 to 20 could re enroll in Racine Unified while attending the 5.09 program. The YWCA's 5.09 program was available at all three comprehensive high schools in Racine: Case, Horlick, and Washington Park.

Last year, 140 students were able to graduate from Racine Unified as a direct result of the 5.09 program at the comprehensive high schools. Other alternative high school diploma programs graduated 33 additional students because of referrals by Racine Unified and the 5.09 teams.

Racine Unified High School Graduation Rate Over Time
Disaggregated by Race

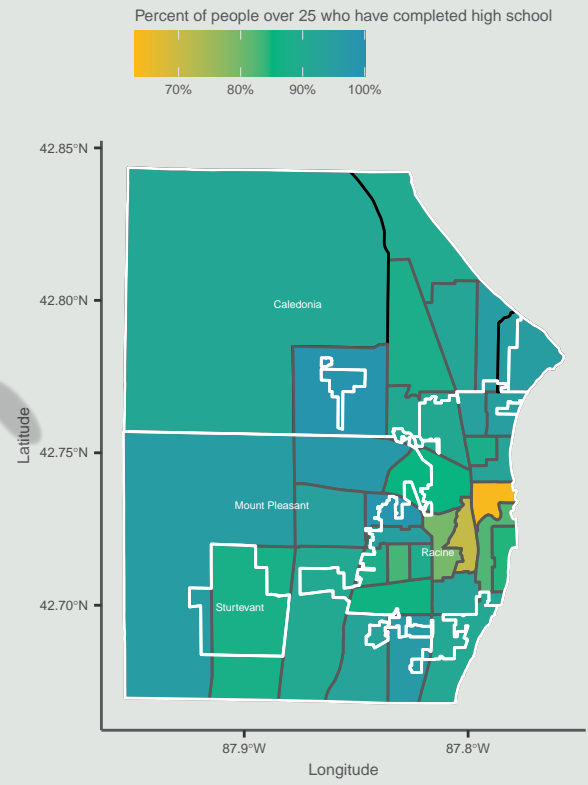


In their senior year, students who are credit deficient, or off-track to graduate because of challenges in their first years of high school, are referred into the Competency Based Credit Recovery Program (CBCRP) by their counselors. Students must have already completed a certain amount of credits. They must also pass a competency exam that shows that their math and reading levels are appropriate for the program. Students who are identified for the program in their junior year can often enroll in summer school before the start of the senior year, and receive assistance to increase their credit, math, and reading levels as needed.

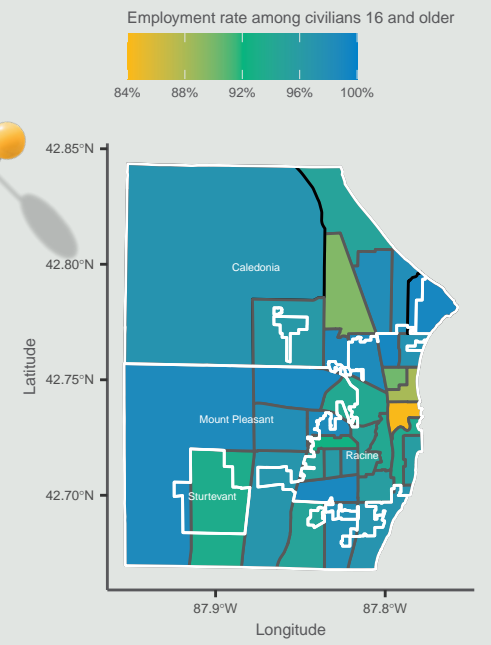
Higher Expectations worked with Gateway Technical College, the YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SE WDB), and other community-based and economic development organizations to secure up to \$5.6 million for the Southeast Wisconsin's Talent Optimization Project. The project has three aims. First, to scale the 5.09 High School Equivalency Program to Walworth and Kenosha counties, Second, to increase the pathways to family sustaining careers after participants earn their high school credential. Third, to create a pre-lab for residents who do not meet the required levels for math and reading when they enter the program.

The program addresses the urgent need for educated workers in high-demand fields. It also reduces the large number of adults who lack high school credentials.

High School Attainment
by Census Tract

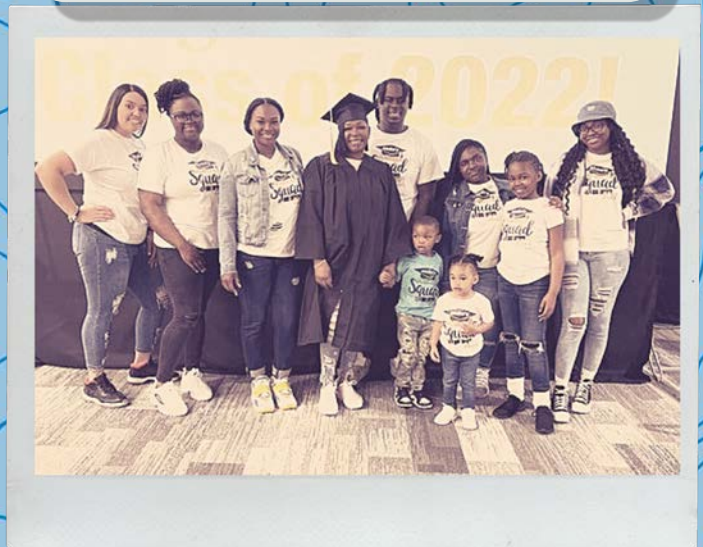


Employment Rate
by Census Tract



Higher Expectations' role in this grant is to plan and facilitate focus groups, surveys, and interviews for feedback from the community and program participants. This will inform continuous improvement in the program's recruitment and retention strategies, as well as project delivery.

We have added Charmeka Flowers, a graduate of the 5.09 program, to do this work as a Student Engagement Associate on our team. Charmeka showed amazing determination and leadership while in the 5.09 program, and was recruiting program participants even before her first day on our team.



CO-DESIGNING STRATEGIES

As Racine Unified was preparing to sunset their Raising Racine Strategic Plan and beginning to plan its next phase, they asked for our assistance. This year, Higher Expectations has worked with Racine Unified and a consultant from Steady State Impact, Garrett Landry, to create the 2027 Strategic Plan.

Initially, Garrett led a year-long process with Racine Unified Leadership members and the community. Following that, there was an intentional focus on outcomes that the District and Community wanted for students, educators and employees to achieve. Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, Garrett worked with Racine Unified leadership and members of the community. He learned what outcomes the district and community want for Racine Unified's students, educators, and employees. This work started with an internal steering committee to set the vision for the strategic plan. Then it defined internal goals, initiatives, and tactics that will drive district outcomes. Next, the district identified desired achievement and performance outcomes for the visioned priorities. This included setting key performance indicators (KPIs), and determining baseline measurements for each outcome for the district overall, and in each department level. Also included in this stage was conducting a financial comprehensive needs assessment, which was aligned to the strategic initiatives identified by the district.

In 2022, Higher Expectations played a key role in identifying what the community saw as the portrait of a great school and aligning that with the creation of the strategic plan. This work is discussed in more detail on the next page. The plan was revised and refined based on input from sub-committees made up of community members. Through the work of district leadership and community meetings, the key outcomes were narrowed down to the six big goals detailed below. For more information, go to rusd.org/about/strategic-plan-2027

2027 Goals

Six Key Goals for 2027

86% of students will graduate with the skills needed to be college, career, and life ready

75% of early elementary students will attain early literacy proficiency level by 3rd grade

86% of middle school students will be high school ready upon completion of 8th grade

±/5% variance in data in the outcome above when disaggregated by race, student group, gender, & socio-economic status

80% of families will choose Racine Unified as the premier school district in the region

100% of district facilities will have modern and relevant technology and physical structures

"Collectively, this new plan involves all stakeholders with the knowledge that we must all challenge ourselves to think differently. We must especially factor in the unprecedented world events that have stalled progress everywhere, and notably within the previous strategic plan, Raising Racine. We know that stakes are high and it is paramount we do not get this next phase wrong. Students were and are still in need of immediate changes, as the gap between disparities and opportunities became even more visible. There was a need to pause and analyze where we are going, what we want the future to look like, and how to ensure every student is on a positive trajectory."

- Dr. Eric Gallien, Racine Unified Superintendent

Higher Expectations facilitated the creation of a sub-committee to help develop the new strategic plan. We played a pivotal role in engaging stakeholders within the community and advocating for their inclusion in co-developing this plan.

Well over 100 community members applied for a chance to be a part of the sub-committee. Fifty community members were selected, headed by four community leaders as co-chairs. These groups were specifically selected to match the demographics of Racine Unified's population, and to have representatives from each school in the district. This group was divided further into two topic areas: academics and infrastructure.

Over the course of 2022, the co-chairs met four times to discuss the challenges Racine Unified students face, and how the strategic plan could help the district better support students to overcome them. That input was then weaved throughout the framework of the strategic plan.

Higher Expectations will continue to provide support for parent, family, and community engagement as Racine Unified Schools implements the new plan. We will work with the district and the community to share accountability of meeting the 2027 Strategic Plan goals.



NAVIGATING COVID'S IMPACT

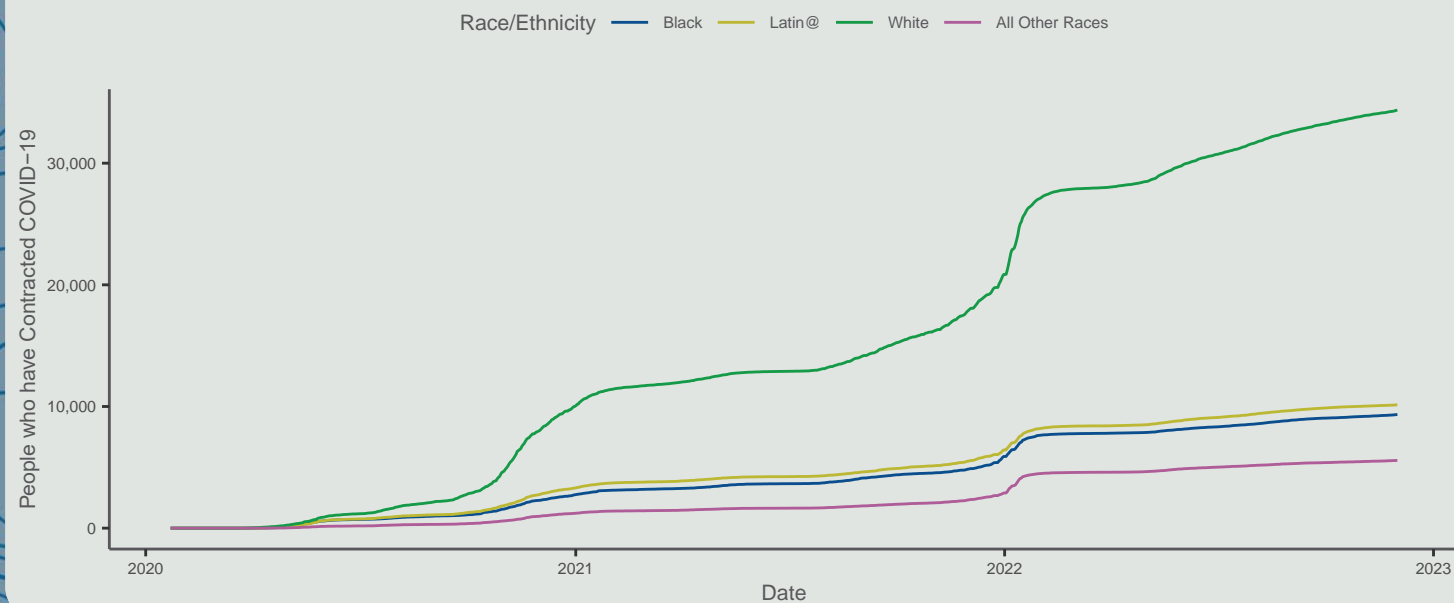
Nearly three years ago, K12 schools & college campuses first shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We settled in for several weeks of staying home, but those weeks turned into two full years of fighting a pandemic. From education to employment to childcare, adjusting to a transformed education environment and dealing with the loss of life caused by COVID-19 has caused a deep disruption in the lives of our children and families. The pandemic is still here, but the economy is rebounding, and students are now fully back to in-person learning. At the request of our Leadership Table, Higher Expectations for Racine County took a look at the impact of COVID-19 on the students and families in our own community early in 2022.

These data show us that our systems weren't prepared to cope with the amount of illness and death caused by COVID-19. This does not mean institutions were unable to adjust. One example is Racine Unified's critical work to provide Chromebooks for each student. This allowed remote learning to take place while schools remained closed. We have bounced back quickly in some areas. Unemployment is now extremely low and the size of the workforce has returned to pre-pandemic levels. In other areas, the data are suggesting lasting impacts. To get a closer look at the impact of COVID, see The Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Employment report on our website.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, infections from the Omicron variant seem to have passed their peak. The number of cases that Racine County is currently experiencing meets the CDC guideline for "Low Transmission" status. Nevertheless, COVID-19 persists. Previous drops in the number of cases have turned out to be lulls between spikes, rather than endpoints. Spikes are caused by variants that are more infectious, if proportionally less lethal, than their predecessors.

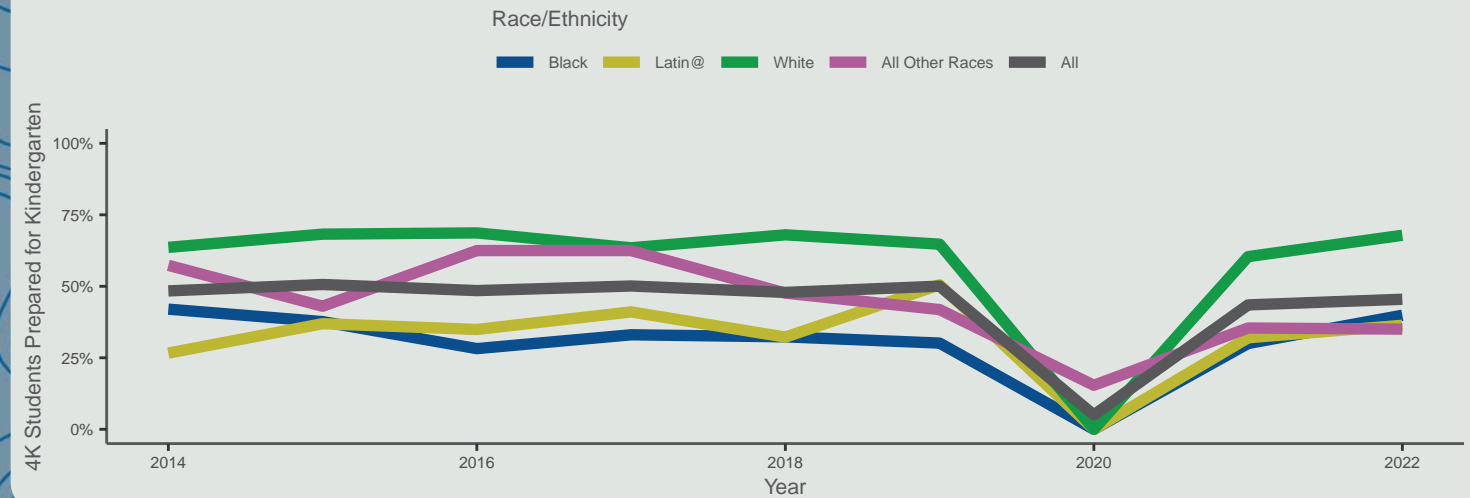
It is important to note that "proportionally less lethal" is from the perspective of people who have contracted COVID-19. Fewer people may have died once they contracted Omicron, but the total number of deaths in this wave was just as high as in previous waves because the absolute number of cases was so high. Data collected by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services show that the deaths in our community were not distributed evenly across all demographics.

COVID Transmissions in Racine Unified Boundaries
Disaggregated by Race



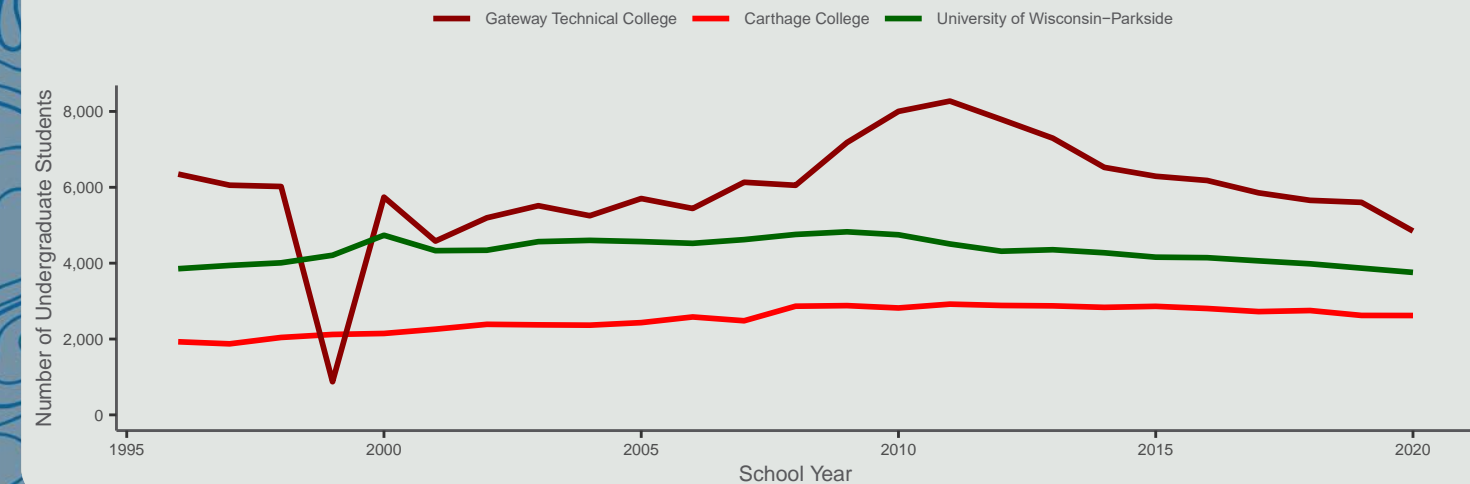
The pandemic had a negative impact on the four-year-old kindergarten (4K) students who will be in the graduating class of 2034. Students' scores on the 2020 Spring PALS (Phonological Awareness Screening) assessment, as well as their Fall and Winter scores in the 2020-21 school year, were unusually low. PALS scores for students in the subsequent two years of 4K seem to be recovering. Racial disparities in scores seem to have been amplified by the pandemic, and the dramatic pattern of disparities seems to be continuing.

Kindergarten Readiness Over Time
Disaggregated by Race



Our post-secondary institutions have seen downward trends in enrollment prior to the COVID pandemic, but saw a drop in enrollment in 2020, and continue to see declining enrollment. This downward trend in post-secondary enrollment is happening across the United States, but is particularly apparent when we look at the number of Racine Unified graduating seniors who are moving on to some kind of post-secondary institution. This is something Higher Expectations and our partners are actively working to address.

College Enrollment Over Time
by Racine Area Post-Secondary Institutions



LEADERSHIP TABLE

Brian Agen
VP of Human Resources, Modine Manufacturing

Dr. Bryan Albrecht
President, Gateway Technical College

John Batten
President & CEO, Twin Disc

Jonathan Delegrave
Racine County Executive

Joe Dillon
President/CEO, InSinkErator

Dr. Deborah Ford
Chancellor, UW-Parkside

Brian French
Vice President, CNH Industrial

Dr. Eric Gallien
Superintendent, Racine Unified School District

Ali Haigh
President & CEO, United Way of Racine County

Jackie Hallberg
President & CEO, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin

Karen Hanson
VP/Chief Nursing Officer, Aurora Medical Center - Mount Pleasant

Mario Martinez
President, Marz Group Insurance

Cory Mason
Mayor, City of Racine

Kristin Mcmanmon
Regional President - Milwaukee/South Racine, Ascension Wisconsin

Matt Montemurro
President/CEO, Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce

Tom Moore
Senior Vice President, Johnson Financial Group

Chris Ruud
President & CEO, Delta Hawk

Dr. John Swallow
President, Carthage College



DATA NOTES

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Higher Expectations

for Racine County

410 Main St.
Racine, WI 53404

higherexpectationsracinecounty.org

