

## Racial and Ethnic Group Differences in Responses on the CHKS Closing the Achievement Gap Module (CTAG)\*

Factsheet 9 describes how 17 school-based indicators covering academic performance, engagement, developmental supports, safety, and harassment differed significantly across eight racial/ethnic groups of secondary students as self-reported on the California Health Kids Survey (CHKS), based on data collected in 2006–08. Overall, White and Asian students reported much better grades and higher percentages on most CHKS school-related well-being indicators than did the non-Asian, non-White minority groups. The results indicated that underlying the racial-ethnic achievement gap there are also gaps in school engagement, safety, and student supports that need to be addressed. This suggests that efforts to close the state's persistent racial-ethnic achievement gap should include improvements in school climates to make them more engaging, safe, and supportive and reduce the level of harassment non-White students experience.

To obtain additional data about how school climate, particularly factors related to cultural sensitivity and equity, a supplementary 10-item *Closing the Achievement Gap Module* (CTAG) was created. This brief summarizes race and ethnic group differences in responses on this module as reported by over 200,000 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in 142 districts and 769 schools. The sample consisted of schools in diverse communities in southern and northern California that elected to include the CTAG Module in their CHKS survey in 2008/09 or 2009/10. The full results are provided in a statewide report examining all

the CHKS results by race and ethnicity for 2008–10.<sup>1</sup>

In this brief, we summarize how the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed with each question (hereafter referred to as the level of agreement) varied across the following four groups of students: African American, Asian, Hispanic-Latino/a, and White-Caucasian (non-Hispanic). The results reveal moderate variation across groups, with particularly large group differences in high school and in regard to issues of respect and racial/ethnic tension, with non-Asian minorities reporting lower outcomes than Whites and Asians. Analysis of several items asking about instructional support revealed an exception to this pattern, however, with Whites reporting less instructional support from teachers and adults at school than that reported by other racial/ethnic groups.

### Results

The range in agreement percentages across groups on the ten questions was 2–10 percentage points in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 3–13 percentage points in high school. In almost all cases, with a few notable exceptions, non-Asian minorities had results less positive than Whites and Asians. Among 7<sup>th</sup> graders, Asians and Whites generally had similar results; among 9/11<sup>th</sup> graders, Asians exceeded Whites, often substantially.

The biggest racial/ethnic differences among 7<sup>th</sup> graders were on the following three indicators of disrespect from staff and racial/ethnic tension among students, with

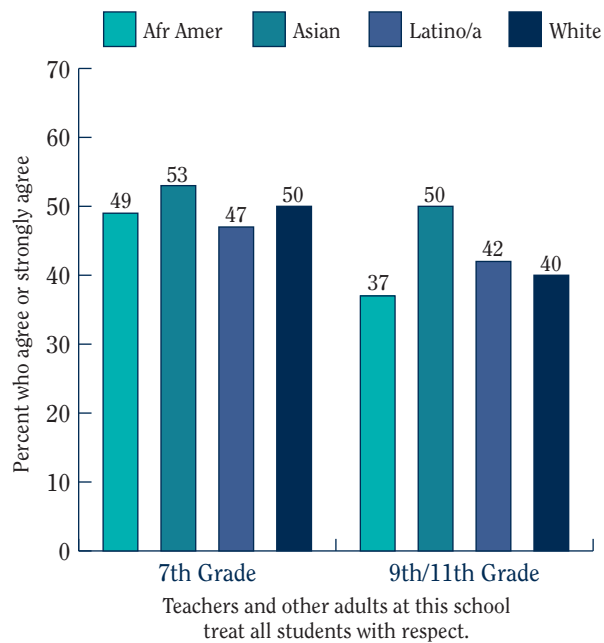
\*This document was produced by WestEd for the California Department of Education's Closing the Achievement Gap project.

non-Asian minority students reporting the lowest rates of respect and highest rates of tension and disrespect because of race, ethnicity, and nationality (Figures 1, 3, and 4 and Table 1).

- Teachers and other adults at this school treat all students with respect (6 points).
- There is a lot of tension in this school between different cultures, races, or ethnicities (8 points).
- I have been disrespected or mistreated by an adult at this school because of my race, ethnicity, or nationality (range 10 points)

Among high school students, four items differed the most by race/ethnicity. Only one of the items was the same as that for 7<sup>th</sup> graders — staff treatment of students with respect — and it had the biggest difference across groups, 13 points. African Americans reported the lowest percentage (37%) and Asians the highest, at 50%. Whites exhibited only slightly higher percentages (40%) than African Americans.

**Figure 1. Treating all students with respect by student race/ethnicity**



The next largest difference was for all students being treated fairly when they break school rules, an 11-point

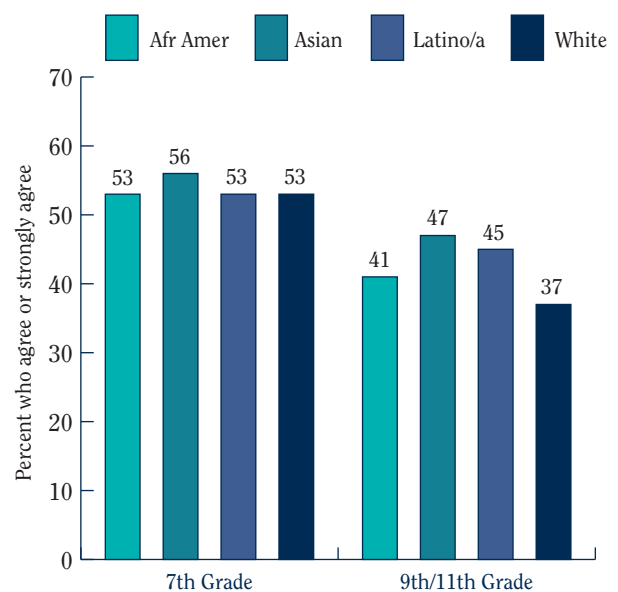
spread between Asians (46%) and African Americans (35%). Two items related to instructional issues had the next largest differences. These two items stand out as exceptions to the pattern described so far. These two items are:

- Teachers show how classroom lessons are important and helpful to me in real life (10 points)
- The teachers and other adults work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it (9 points)

But in contrast to the results above, on these two items, Whites reported the lowest level of agreement (see Figure 2).

Although the questions on disrespect by staff and student tension because of race/ethnicity did not exhibit the greatest differences across race and ethnic groups for the high school sample, the range in agreement percentages across groups was still large (6–8 points for high school and 8–10 points for middle school) (Figures 3 and 4). African Americans in high school particularly stand out with the highest percentage agreeing they have been disrespected because of their race/ethnicity (26% and 22% in middle and high school, respectively).

**Figure 2. Teachers show how classroom lessons are relevant by student race/ethnicity**



**Figure 3. Disrespected by adult due to race/ethnicity/nationality by student race/ethnicity**

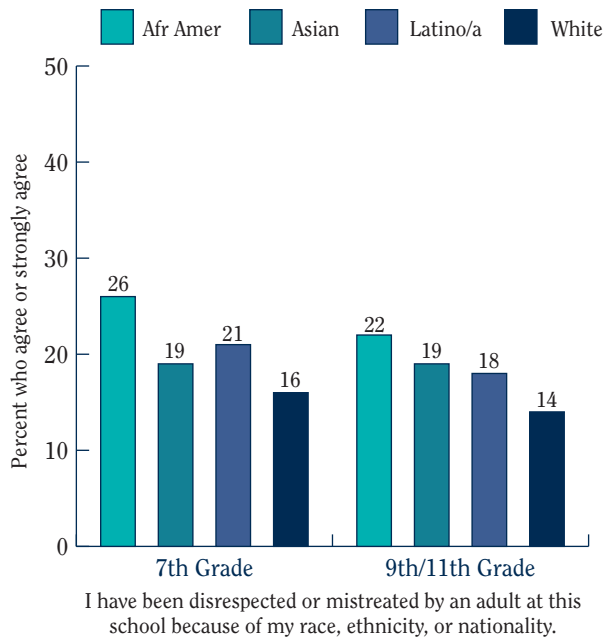
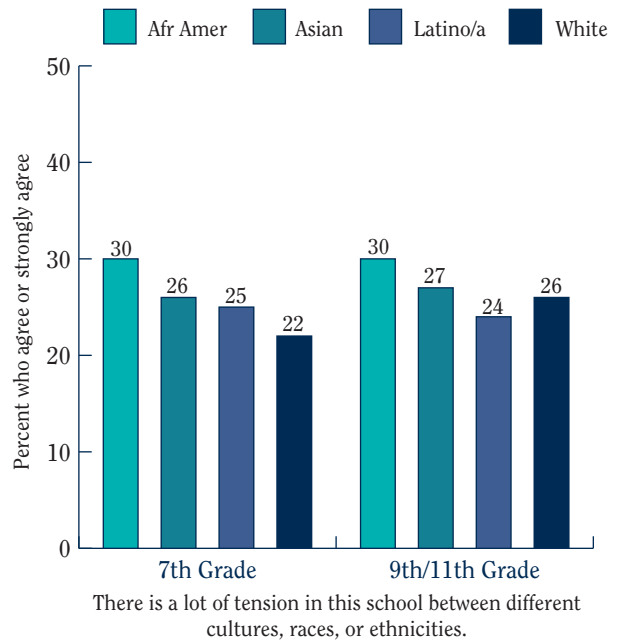


Table 1 provides detailed results for all the items on the CTAG module for African American, Asian, Hispanic, and White students. We summarize the results briefly by race/ethnicity.

**African American Students.** Particularly in high school, African American students report lower levels of agreement on the CTAG items than other groups. They report the lowest levels on the items assessing respectful treatment by school staff, teacher encouragement and assistance (high school, along with whites), opportunities to take part in classroom discussions and activities (high school), fair treatment of all students when rules are broken, and quality of school facilities. As described above, they are also more likely than other groups to report that they had been disrespected or mistreated because of their race/ethnicity and that there is a lot of tension in the school between different cultures, races, and ethnicities.

**Figure 4. Tension in school between different cultures, races, or ethnicities by student race/ethnicity**



**Asian Students.** In contrast to African American students, Asian students are more likely to report positive school climates than are students in other groups. Asians report the highest level of respectful treatment by school staff, teacher encouragement and assistance and demonstration of the relevance of classroom lessons, opportunities to take part in classroom discussions and activities (high school), fair treatment of all students when rules are broken, and quality of school facilities (high school).

**Hispanic Students.** Although Hispanics are often close to African Americans, they reported notably lower percentages than African Americans for racial/ethnic tension, even lower than Whites (high school only). This may be because so many Hispanics attend schools that are predominantly Hispanic.

**White Students.** White students are the most likely to report strong agreement that teachers provide opportunities to take part in classroom discussions or activities and that school facilities are clean and in good condition. White students also report the lowest levels of being disrespected or mistreated because of their race/ethnicity and tension in the school between different cultures,

racess, and ethnicities (middle school). In contrast, White students in high school are the least likely to agree that teachers and other adults provide encouragement and assistance in school.

### Conclusion

In short, in both middle school and high school, African American and Hispanic students feel less respected by staff than do Whites and Asians. In high school, they also are more likely to feel all students are not disciplined fairly, which can be seen as a component of respect. This may help explain why these groups also feel less connected to the school, have higher rates of truancy and dropout, and exhibit lower achievement test scores than Whites and Asians. Non-Asian minorities also report attending schools that are less clean and in good condi-

tion than do Whites and Asians. However, on indicators related to instruction and instructional support, not only do the differences diminish, but Whites report less positive outcomes than the other groups.

**Suggested citation:** Austin, G., and Hanson, T.L. (2012). *Racial and ethnic group differences in responses on the CHKS Closing the Achievement Gap Module (CTAG)*. CHKS Factsheet #14. Los Alamitos: WestEd Health and Human Development Program for the California Department of Education. Available from [http://chks.wested.org/using\\_results/publications](http://chks.wested.org/using_results/publications)

This document was produced by WestEd for the California Department of Education’s Closing the Achievement Gap project.

### Endnotes

1 WestEd. (2012). *California Healthy Kids Survey, Statewide Reports 2008/10, variations by race/ethnicity among secondary school students*. Los Alamitos: WestEd Health and Human Development Program for the California Department of Education. Available from [http://chks.wested.org/using\\_results/publications](http://chks.wested.org/using_results/publications)

**Table 1. CTAG Module Items by Student Race/Ethnicity**

	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade				9 <sup>th</sup> Grade			
	African Am	Asian	Hispanic	White	African Am	Asian	Hispanic	White
1. Teachers and other adults at this school treat all students with respect	49%	53%	47%	50%	37%	50%	42%	40%
2. Teachers and other adults encourage me to work hard in school I can be successful in college or at the job I choose.	56	57	54	56	47	54	50	46
3. The teachers and other adults work hard to help me with my schoolwork when I need it.	51	52	50	49	39	46	43	37
4. Teachers show how classroom lessons are important and helpful to me in real life	53	56	53	53	41	47	45	37
5. Teachers give me a chance to take part in classroom discussions or activities	48	48	46	52	43	48	44	46
6. The books and lessons in your classes include examples of your race or ethnic background.	40	38	38	39	33	36	35	36
7. All students are treated fairly when they break school rules.	45	49	45	47	35	46	39	37
8. I have been disrespected or mistreated by an adult at this school because of my race, ethnicity, or nationality.	26	19	21	16	22	19	18	14
9. There is a lot of tension in this school between different cultures, races, or ethnicities	30	26	25	22	30	27	24	26
10. The schoolyard and buildings are clean and in good condition.	39	42	39	44	31	37	34	37

*California Healthy Kids Survey*. Statewide weighted sample 2008–10. Percentage of students who “agree” or “strongly agree.”