



# Philadelphia, PA

COPPER

Philadelphia is one of the country's most historic cities, and is located in the Delaware Valley on the mid-Atlantic coast.<sup>1</sup> As immigration from Europe ballooned, Philadelphia quickly became the leading commercial and cultural center of the American colonies, and like other places, native tribes were killed, enslaved, or otherwise displaced. By 1765, Philadelphia had a population of 23,000 people, comprising the largest city in north America.

The city's continued growth was driven by industrialization through the early 20th century and World War I. "The region's major industries included textiles, locomotive manufacturing, shipbuilding, iron and steel production, and sugar refining. With the discovery of petroleum, Philadelphia became an oil storage and refining center."<sup>2</sup>

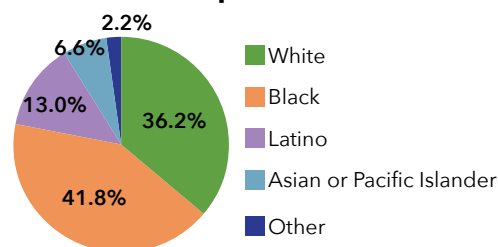
Between 1880 and 1930, the Black population of Philadelphia grew from 32,000 to 220,000, due in part to the availability of jobs during the two world wars.<sup>3</sup> The housing crisis in Philadelphia and other industrialized cities across the country during this time led to the start of public housing projects that at the time largely spurred development of white-only, single family homes and an agenda of segregation and employment discrimination that continue to impact community segregation and wealth inequity in Philadelphia and across the country.<sup>4</sup> Today, Philadelphia is the most racially segregated of the 10 cities studied, even though socioeconomic segregation is relatively low.<sup>5</sup> In 2015 and 2016 Philadelphia was one of 10 cities the U. S. Department of Justice identified as responsible for a spike in violence. Research shows close connection between segregation and concentrated poverty and community violence, and the prevalence of those two factors in Philadelphia help explain why we also see high levels of violence in communities.<sup>6</sup>

In the 2016-17 school year, the School District of Philadelphia served 130,000 students, of whom half are Black

# 36%

of supports measured through Index

## Racial/Ethnic Composition: 2014



U.S. Census Bureau; NHGIS; Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.  
Policy Link/PERE National Equity Atlas, [nationalequityatlas.org](http://nationalequityatlas.org)

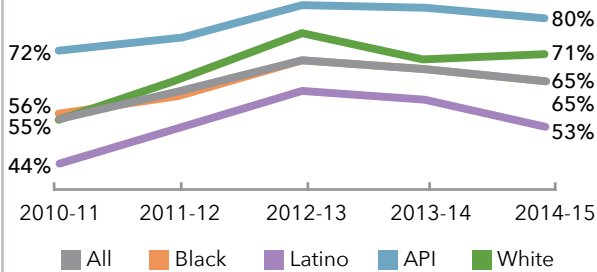
youth, 20% are Latino, 14% are White, and 15% nearly evenly split between Asians and youth of multiple races. These students attend 251 facilities, including 151 elementary schools, 16 middle schools, 57 high schools, and 27 alternative schools.<sup>7</sup> 86% of students in Philadelphia's public school system come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and young Black and Latino Philadelphians are more than twice as likely to be living in poverty as White children. Disparities in health further highlight the racial disparities in healthy lifestyles. Rates of infant mortality in Philadelphia are more than 2.5 times as high for Black youth (11.7) as they are for Whites (4.3). Likewise, youth mortality rates for Black (37.8) and Latino (36) youths are more than twice that of Whites (17.2) and more than 1.5 times that of Asians (23.6).

# THERMOMETER INDICATORS

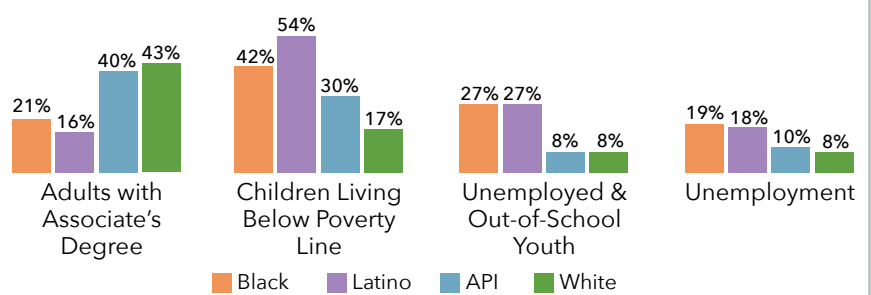


Current conditions for childhood success

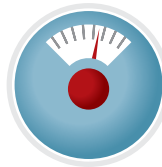
## 5-year Graduation Rates



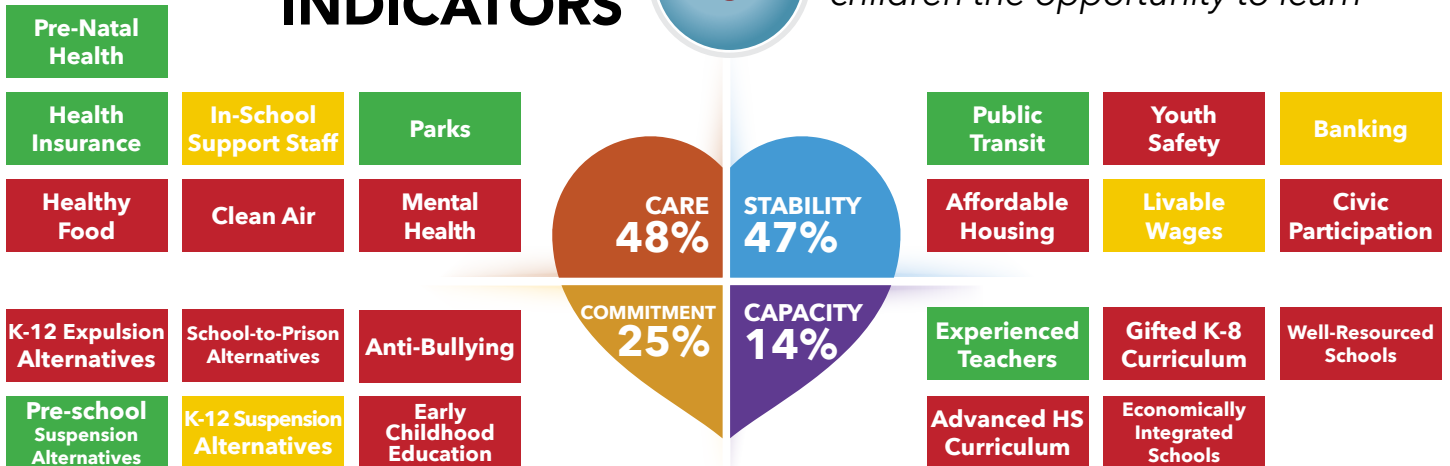
## Social & Economic Prosperity



# THERMOSTAT INDICATORS



Access to supports that provide all children the opportunity to learn



## State of Healthy Living and Learning in Philadelphia

Philadelphia has 36% of the supports measured through the Index, which is below average for the 10 cities measured. In terms of healthy living environments, the number of renters experiencing housing cost burden is among the highest (57% of renters pay more than 30 percent of household income on housing), and there are relatively high rates of full-time workers earning under 200% of the federal poverty level among Latino and Asian people, and to a lesser degree Black people, compared to White people. Along with other cities, Philadelphia has public transportation infrastructure, with nearly 100% geographic access for residents across racial groups. Level of supports for Capacity are among the lowest in the group of 10 cities studied. In particular, none of the K-8 public schools offer gifted curriculum, and only

81% of students attend a school offering at least one AP/IB class. These contribute to one of the lowest levels of participation in AP/IB coursework, with only 19% of students enrolled in at least one AP/IB class. While teacher salaries on average are the second lowest (\$29,400 once adjusted for cost of living), Philadelphia has one of the highest rates of experienced teachers (95% with 2+ years teaching experience). Philadelphia also has one of the highest levels of students in high poverty schools (72%) – with 81% of Black and 84% of Latino students in high poverty schools compared to 35% of White students. In two places, Philadelphia did not receive points because the data were not available (including expulsion rates and voter participation).

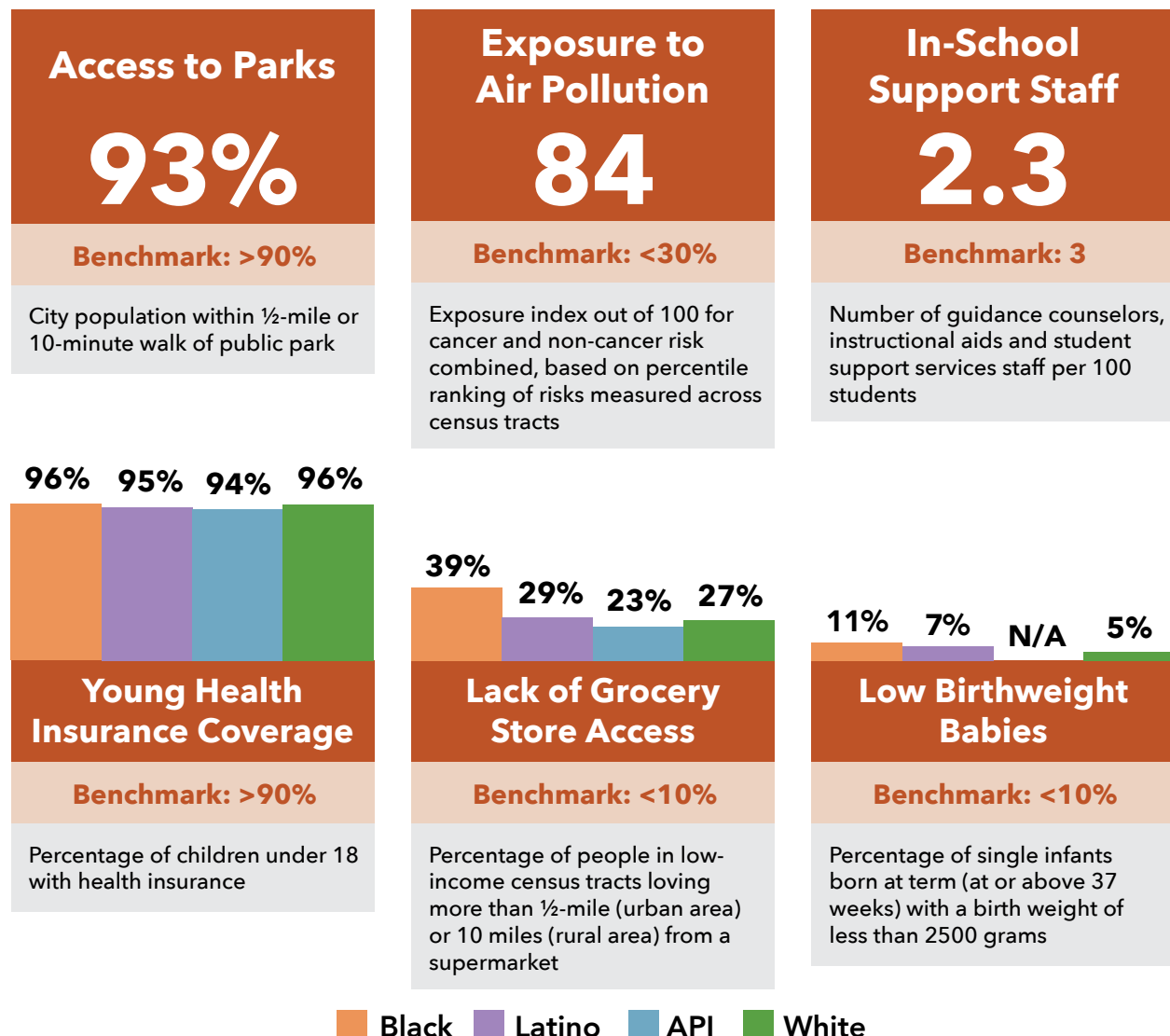
# CARE

Philadelphia has 48% of the supports measured for *Care*, including access to healthy foods and parks, clean air, pre-natal health, in-school support staff and mental health supports.

Like most other cities studied, there is a substantial gap in access to grocery stores, with approximately a third of low income families living in neighborhoods without a grocery. The vast majority of youth in Philadelphia have access to health insurance, and public parks are available in close proximity to most resident neighborhoods. Still, there are persistent inequities in health starting at birth, with Black babies born at low birthweights at more than double the rate of White babies.

There are significant efforts under way to improve the level of care for youth and their families in the city. In 2010, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health

launched “Get Healthy Philly,” a multi-disciplinary, cross-sector initiative focused on healthy eating, active living, and tobacco control. The aim was to “create environments that make it easier for Philadelphians to engage in healthy behaviors,” and included a focus on increasing affordable community food access, active transportation options, improved school food quality, and other environmental changes.<sup>8</sup> That same year, the city launched the Healthy Corner Store Initiative to implement corner store conversion initiatives, a healthy corner store certification program, and free health screenings for local residents.<sup>9</sup> In the first year of these efforts, collaborative efforts to create change helped improve food access for approximately 100,000 Philadelphia residents. Progress continued in the following years, with greater access to SNAP at farmer’s markets and efforts to improve food at local restaurants.<sup>10</sup>



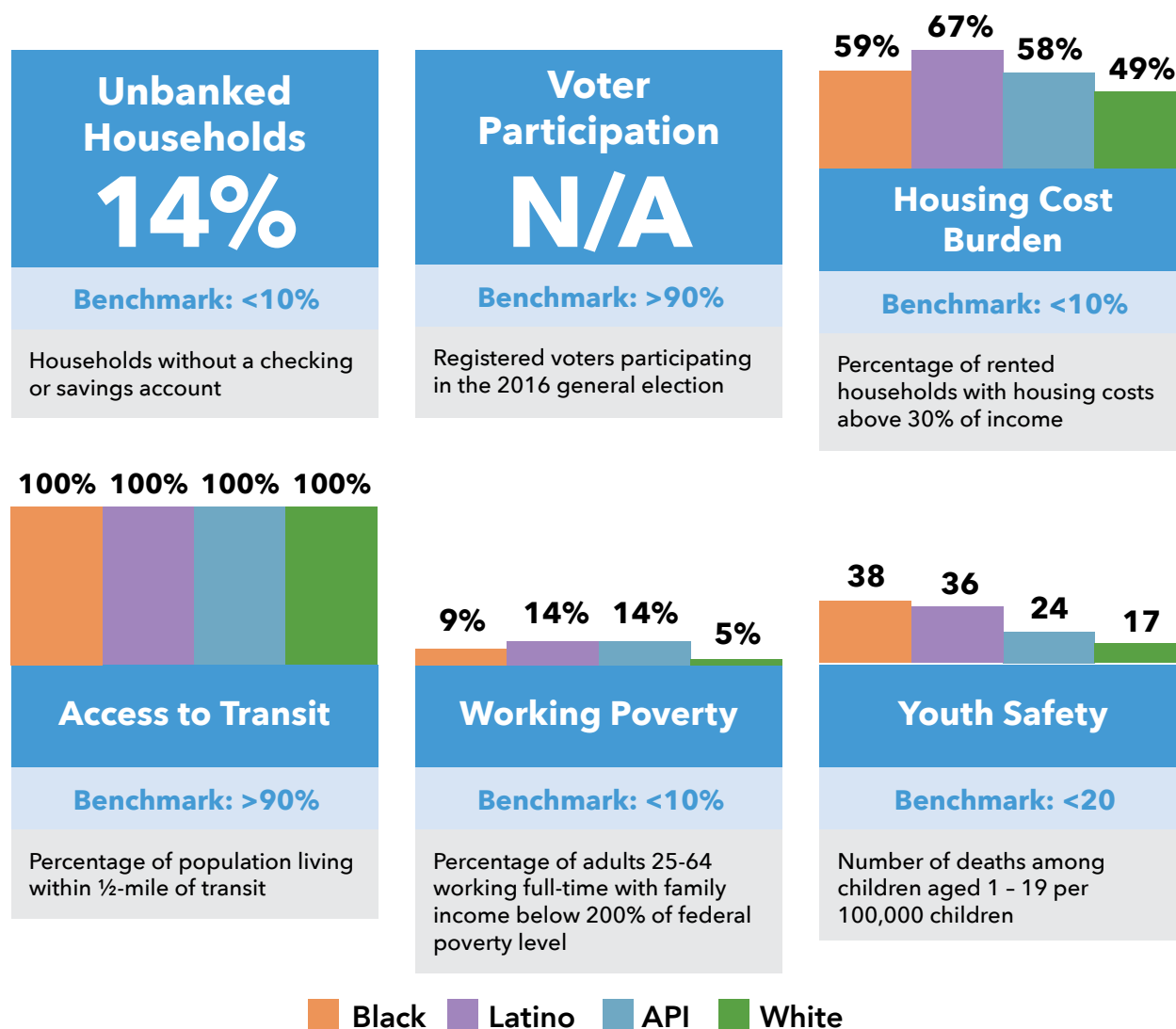
# STABILITY

Philadelphia has 47% of the supports measured for *Stability*, including supports for affordable housing, transit accessibility, civic engagement, livable wage jobs, youth safety and access to banking.

Philadelphia has strong geographic access to public transit, with 100% of residents living in close proximity to bus or rail stations. Philadelphia has been working to implement a Pedestrian Plan to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists; encourage biking and walking, and increase utilization of sidewalks and streets as enjoyable public spaces.<sup>11</sup>

Affordable housing and livable wages are major issues affecting stability. More than half of Philadelphians are paying more than 30% of their incomes on rent. For Latinos, the problem is more prevalent;

a staggering two-thirds of Latinos are significantly housing-cost burdened. Local planners assert that the housing issue in Philadelphia is “a three-fold problem – affordability, income, and age of housing stock.”<sup>12</sup> In terms of income, Latino and Asian families working full time are three times more likely than their White peers to receive wages well below what families need to get by. Additional factors affecting local stability include relatively low access to banking and inequity in youth safety. There are also troubling differences in safety for children of color. Black and Latino children die at more than double the rate of White children, highlighting a need for safer community spaces and more equitable opportunities to learn and thrive.



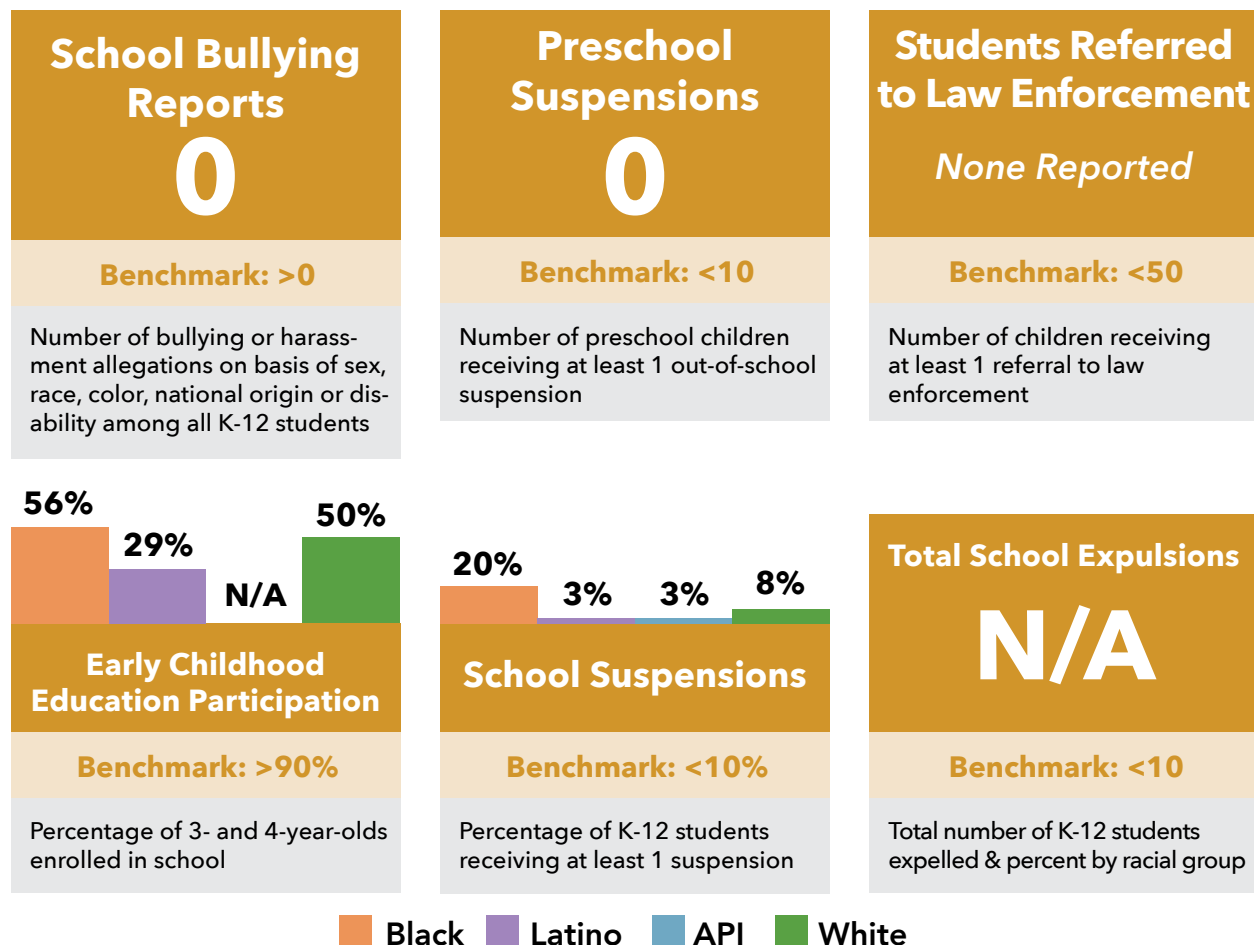
# COMMITMENT

Philadelphia has 25% of the supports measured for *Commitment*, including providing students with access to early childhood education, positive discipline practices in pre-school and K-12, and anti-bullying efforts.

Youth in Philadelphia could benefit from school environments that demonstrate commitment to each child, although it is difficult to determine how much, as important data were missing from this measure. School expulsion data were reported as “missing” by the Office for Civil Rights, and there were no referrals to law enforcement or instances of school bullying reported. Data on suspension rates highlight disturbing inequities in use of punitive discipline approaches. Specifically, 1 in 5 Black students received at least one suspension in the 2013/14 school year, while numbers were substantially lower

for other racial groups. There are powerful advocacy groups like School Discipline Advocacy Services pushing for change to discipline practices, and reports that the City Council is proposing city-wide bans on school suspensions for primary students.<sup>13</sup>

As with all other cities studied, there is also a need for greater enrollment in early childhood education to provide all children with the opportunity to learn and thrive. In particular, only a third of Latino children ages 3 and 4 are enrolled in early childhood education, while at least half of White and Black children are enrolled. Longitudinal studies show strong connections between early childhood education and academic success in grade school, highlighting a need for policies and programs that provide every child with early learning so they are set up to succeed later in life.





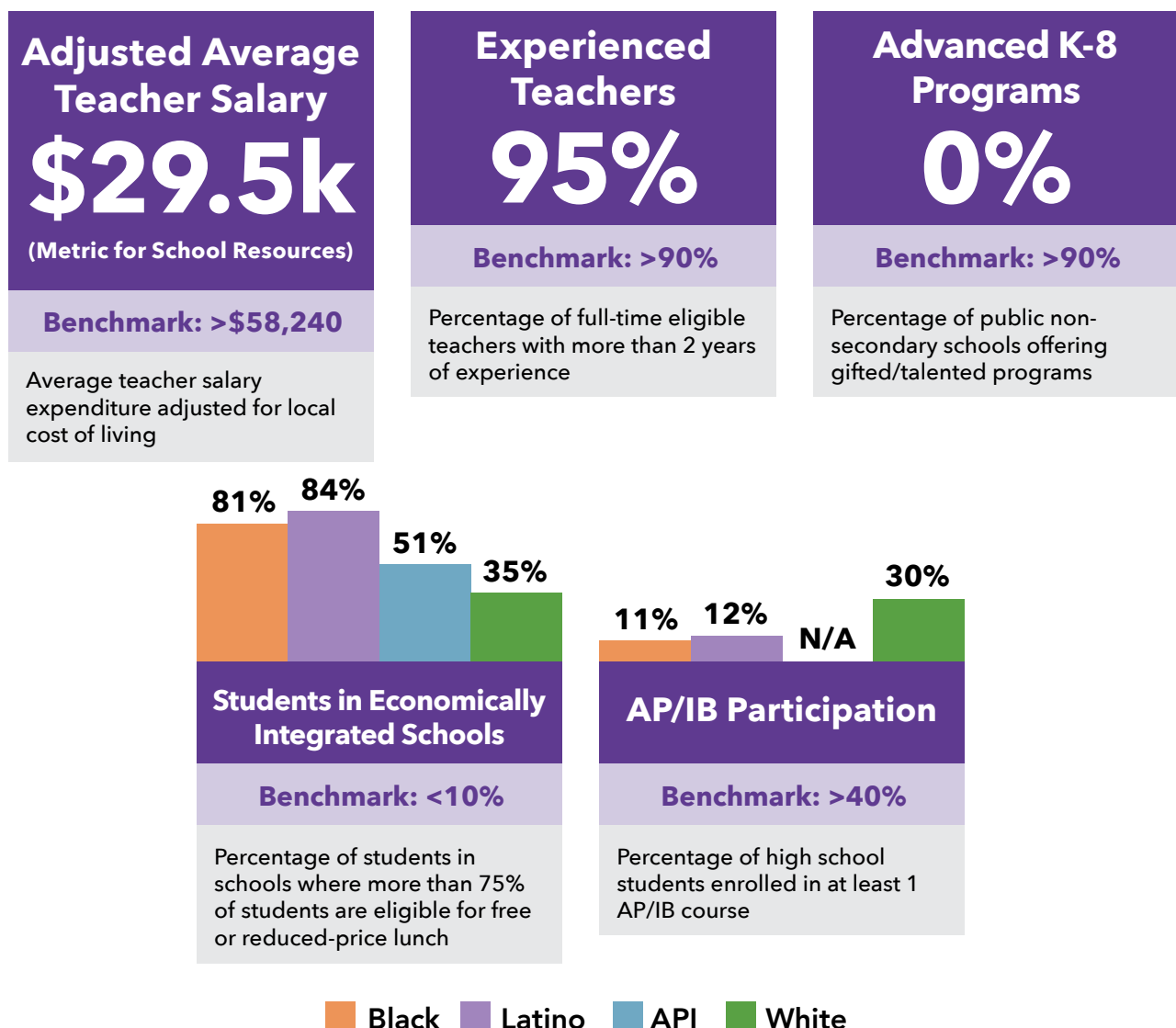
# CAPACITY

Philadelphia has 14% of the supports for *Capacity*, measured by access to challenging curricula, experienced, well-compensated teachers and diverse, unsegregated schools.

While teacher salary is among the lowest of the cities studied (\$29.5k on average once adjusted for cost of living), 95% of teachers in Philadelphia have been teaching for over two years. By comparison, teachers in Little Rock earn twice as much.

The school district is deeply segregated, with the vast majority of Black and Latino students attending schools where more than 75% of students are eligible for free or

reduced-price lunch. By comparison, only one-third of White students are in high-poverty schools. Furthermore, most of Philadelphia's students lack access to challenging coursework; none of the K-8 schools offer gifted/talented programs and only 80% of students are enrolled in a high school students that offers Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs. As a result, less than 20% of high school students are enrolled in an AP/IB course, with enrollment among Black and Latino students three times lower than their White peers. Focusing on access to rigorous coursework puts students on track for post-secondary attainment and ensures they have the opportunity to learn and thrive.





# LOVING CITIES CALL TO ACTION

Across the country, we see powerful examples of organizations and community members taking steps to provide systems of supports that give all children an opportunity to learn. While each city may identify their own priorities, there are four key things that all cities can do to strengthen their system of supports. These are outlined below along with promising models and approaches to learn and build from.

## 1. Increase Adoption of Models for Delivering a System of **CARE** to all Children and Families

To address childhood trauma and other mental and physical health needs, cities need to equip each and every public school to be a hub for assessing and meeting healthcare and other resource needs. Models like **Communities in Schools** and **City Connects** equip schools with staff and tools to provide a system for addressing individual student and family needs at scale. For more information on CIS's model go to: [www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/](http://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/).

For more information on City Connects model go to: [www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lsoe/sites/cityconnects/our-approach.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lsoe/sites/cityconnects/our-approach.html).

In addition to school models that refer students to providers, **School-Based Health Alliance** is a network of local, state and national nonprofits working to “complement the work of school nurses by providing a readily accessible referral site for students who are without a medical home or in need of more comprehensive services such as primary, mental, oral, or vision health care.”<sup>14</sup>

SBHA and its state affiliates help schools establish and effectively run school-based health centers. For more information on SBHA affiliates, go to [www.sbh4all.org/about/state-affiliates/](http://www.sbh4all.org/about/state-affiliates/).

## 2. Elevate Policies and Practices That Integrate Communities and Schools to Increase Community **STABILITY** and Equitable Allocation of Community Resources

To address community and school segregation, we need to build mainstream understanding of the history of policies in the U.S. that created segregation and wealth inequity and come to terms with the damage those policies continue to have on communities today. In his book *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein recognizes that we as a society have largely “forgotten the history of how our government segregated America,” and schools widely teach curricula that has been

white-washed, failing to educate the public on our history of oppression and de jure racial segregation.

*The Color of Law* outlines several examples of affirming policies that could be adopted if there were greater political will to reverse the damage of past policies and supports rooted in racism. One key policy change communities can adopt is inclusionary zoning policy, which can “require housing developers to set aside

a portion of the homes they build at below-market rates, and reserve the right for the public housing commission to purchase one-third of those units to operate as subsidized public housing.”<sup>15</sup>

Reforming the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program can also lead to greater community integration.

Increasing subsidies to be on par with housing costs in more affluent neighborhoods and increasing the number of vouchers allocated to serve all families that have been damaged by historically racist policies would be a large step in beginning to heal and repair communities.

### 3. Increase **COMMITMENT** to All Children Through Increased Early Childhood Education Opportunities and Greater Training for Teachers and Administrators in Anti-Racist Practices and a Culture of Inclusion and Healing

Federal programs that provide access to early childhood education need increased funding to meet the scale of need that exists.

Racial opportunity gaps are not just about gaps in access to resources; they also result from unintentional differences in the ways adults and other students treat children of color.

These “invisible forces” are hard to measure, but are becoming clearer through research from groups like GLSEN and Georgetown Law Center that put data to the implicit biases and harassment that students, teachers, administrators and other adults within the system inflict against girls and boys of color. For recommendations on practices for increasing inclusion and reducing bullying in schools see GLSEN’s report at: [www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTortment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D\\_0.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTortment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D_0.pdf)

For recommendations on policies and practices to address bullying without using zero tolerance approaches that are more harmful than helpful to school safety and culture, go to [www.schottfoundation.org/resources/two-wrongs-dont-make-right-why-zero-tolerance-not-solution-bullying](http://www.schottfoundation.org/resources/two-wrongs-dont-make-right-why-zero-tolerance-not-solution-bullying).

The Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF) is a leader in strengthening the organizing infrastructure in local communities by giving grants to local and regional groups that organize young people, parents and caregivers, educators and other community members to advocate on behalf of students impacted by exclusionary school discipline practices. For individuals and foundations interested in contributing to local organizing, CJSF shares several ways to get involved: [www.cjsfund.org/get-involved](http://www.cjsfund.org/get-involved)

### 4. Deepen Public and Private Commitment to Increasing **CAPACITY** of Public Schools

According to research by the Education Law Center and Rutgers Graduate School of Education, states are largely failing to invest adequately and fairly to provide all students with the resources and supports that they need to succeed.

For data and resources to advocate for fair school funding, go to: [www.schoolfundingfairness.org/is-school-funding-fair](http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/is-school-funding-fair)



## Endnotes

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