

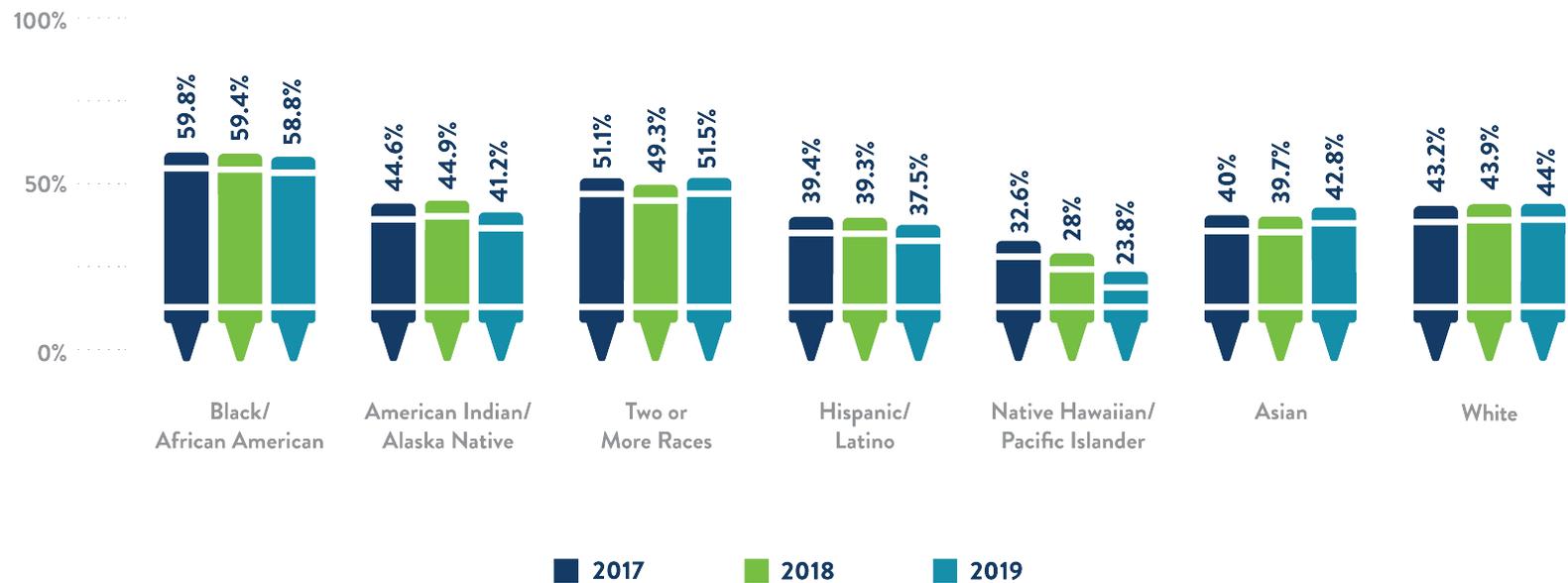


Chapter 6: Opportunities

<http://ecls.mn.gov/#/ch6>

The youngest Minnesotans are increasingly diverse. The ever-changing face of Minnesota children means that the state’s programs, policies, and investments must adapt in order to address their needs to ensure school readiness and well-being. Strategies to continue current progress include targeted outreach and investment, cultural integration to programs and curriculum, and an increase in program and policy leaders and educators from communities of color.

2017 – 2019 ECE PARTICIPATION SUMMARY



Recent investments in programs and policies targeted at increasing early education program access for low-income children like CCAP, Head Start, VPK, SRP, and Early Learning Scholarships, have successfully increased access for children of color. Additional targeted investments in these communities would continue to improve affordability and access while supporting cultural identity.

A key recommendation by the Office of Legislative Auditor is for the legislature to consider aligning funding and eligibility requirements of certain early childhood programs to make them more understandable and efficient. This change may increase access.

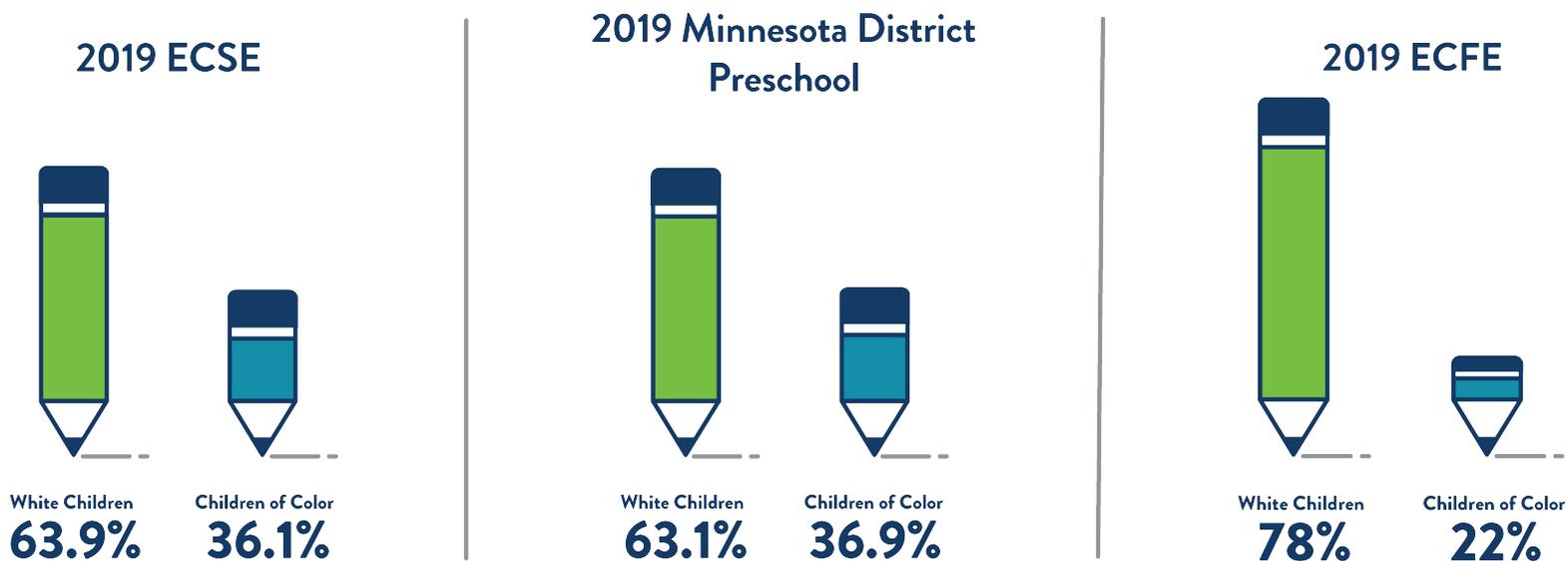
A child's culture and race are highly influential to their learning, and cultural preferences should be taken into account in instructional and family engagement practices within early childhood programming⁶. When culture is acknowledged and welcomed in a learning environment, children are more likely to thrive and their family is more likely to be engaged. As the diversity of Minnesota's children continues to grow, it is important for programs to adjust to these changing needs in learning and cultural preferences.

CCAP is successfully reaching the target populations that benefit most from access to stable, high-quality child care while parents work to improve family economic stability. This evidence demonstrates that CCAP is a key to success for many young, lower income children and children of color, and there is opportunity for expansion of services and benefits, if supported by more funding.

Statewide, children of color are underrepresented in school readiness and public parenting programs. This offers Minnesota school districts an opportunity for ongoing target outreach and increasing funds to reach more children of color and American Indian children.

Recent legislation requires ECFE programs to conduct annual community needs assessments. Among other things, these assessments must identify new and underserved populations, and programs should develop programming and services for families identified in the needs assessment. Local ECFE programs should continue to enhance efforts for reaching families that access MFIP and food programs, similar to how some ECFE programs have built outreach to other new and underserved populations.

Given the low participation rates for many populations of color and low-income children in ECSE, there is an opportunity for outreach to families in these communities whose children are likely eligible for ECSE. Providing intervention services early will decrease the likelihood of needing those services later on--a benefit to the family and child, as well as cost savings to the state.



The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) recently recommended that the “Legislature should consider requiring assessments of school readiness as children enter kindergarten.” The Minnesota Department of Education agrees with this recommendation, though statewide implementation will require additional funding. The OLA also recommended the use of a universal identifier across all programs as well as fully funding a statewide Kindergarten Entry Profile.

⁶ Ren-Etta Sullivan, Debra. (2016). Cultivating the Genius of Black Children: Strategies to Close the Achievement Gap in the Early Years. Red Leaf Press: St. Paul, MN



End of Chapter 6