

EDUCATION INEQUITY:

Data Behind the
Racial Disparities
in San Diego USD

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BY ROOSEVELT BLACKMON, CO-CHAIR, LINCOLN CLUSTER, SAN DIEGO

DISPARITIES BY RACE

San Diego is not a positive outlier for Black student achievement. 62% of Black students can neither read nor write on grade level and 72% do not perform at grade level in mathematics.

A 2019 report by Linda Darling Hammond's Learning Policy Institute entitled "California's Positive Outliers" identified San Diego Unified as a district where Black students performed higher than predicted on a regression analysis. While San Diego superintendent, Cindy Marten frequently points to Linda Darling Hammond's study as evidence of her accomplishments with Black students, one

cannot make the case that Black children are doing well in the district, given their low rates of academic proficiency in English Language Arts and mathematics. Notably, the report found San Diego Unified, under Marten, was not a positive outlier for Latino students. This is significant because Latinos represent 44% of the district, in other words 44,965 students.

"The NAACP San Diego would like to express its firm and resolute opposition to the nomination of current San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Marten, to the post of deputy secretary in the federal Department of Education... During her administration, African-American students and families have not only been systematically de-prioritized, but key programs and resources to support African-American student success have been stripped and 'abolished.'"

FRANCINE MAXWELL

President of NAACP San Diego Branch

San Diego Unified is certainly notable in one way: its wide performance gaps between Black and White students. These gaps are wider than those in San Diego County and wider than those in California as a whole.

SAN DIEGO MAY BE AN OUTLIER, BUT IS IT REALLY POSITIVE?

According to the [LA Times](#), “racial disparities are evident in other aspects of San Diego Unified schools, including the national test scores that President Joe Biden’s team cited as one reason for choosing Marten. In 2019 San Diego Unified was one of two large, urban districts nationwide to outperform the average on national test scores for math and reading for fourth- and eighth-graders. Despite that record, achievement gaps for Black and Hispanic students compared to White students remained largely unchanged from 2013, the year Marten became superintendent, according to NAEP, the Nation’s Report Card.”

San Diego Unified has Yawning Achievement Gaps in Math and ELA between Black and White students

% Meeting State Standards (2018-19)

	ELA	MATH
Black Students	38	28
White Students	76	70
Achievement Gap	38	42

Source: California Department of Education at caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp

“President Biden nominated Cindy Marten for United States Deputy Secretary of Education in part based on the characterization of her track record on equity with students of color as a superintendent in the San Diego Unified School District. However, the facts do not support that Black and Latino student achievement is an area of strength for nominee Marten. Her track record on equity leaves a lot to be desired.”

ROOSEVELT BLACKMON
Lincoln Cluster Co-Chair

ALARMINGLY HIGH RATES OF SUSPENSION FOR BLACK STUDENTS IN SAN DIEGO USD

The Suspension Rate for Black Students Remains Unchanged from 2013 when Cindy Marten Took the Helm.

According to the [LA Times](#), in the 2018-19 school year Black students in San Diego Unified were suspended more than three times as often as White students, and they made up 18 percent of students suspended despite making up 8 percent of the student body. The suspension rate for Black students that year was unchanged from 2013, when Marten took the helm.

A 2019 report called “[When They Teach Us: The Education of Black Children in San Diego](#)” from the Community College Equity Assessment Lab’s Black Minds Project made the following findings about suspensions in San Diego Unified:

THE SUSPENSION RATE FOR BLACK BOYS IS **206% HIGHER** THAN THE DISTRICT AVERAGE

and represents the highest suspension rate for any racial or gender group.

THE SUSPENSION RATE FOR BLACK GIRLS IS **46% HIGHER** THAN THE DISTRICT AVERAGE

BLACK MALE FOSTER YOUTH IS THE SUBGROUP MOST LIKELY TO BE **SUSPENDED AT 26%**

THE TOP SCHOOLS SUSPENDING **BLACK BOYS**

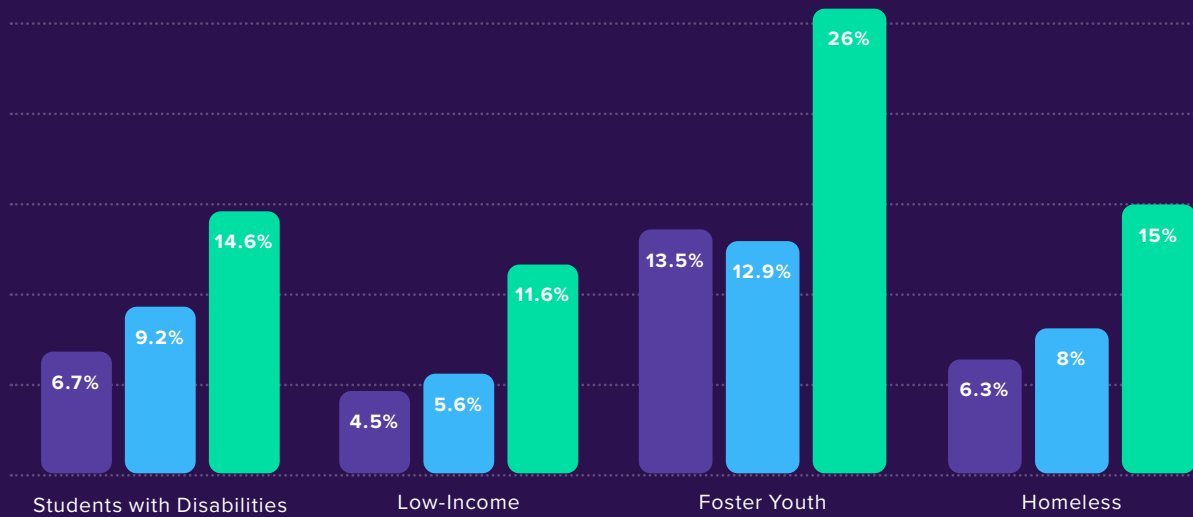
are Montgomery Middle School (at 52.4%), Fletcher Elementary School (at 40%), Innovation Middle School (at 38.9%), and Millennial Tech Middle School (at 36.2%).

THE TOP SCHOOL SUSPENDING **BLACK GIRLS**

is Millennial Tech Middle School, (at 37%). This school is followed by Memorial Scholars and Athletes (at 27%), Challenger Middle School (at 20%), and Knox Middle School (at 20%).

Suspension Rates Percentages for Students in SDUSD by Special Population, 2017–2018

■ District Average ■ Black Females ■ Black Males

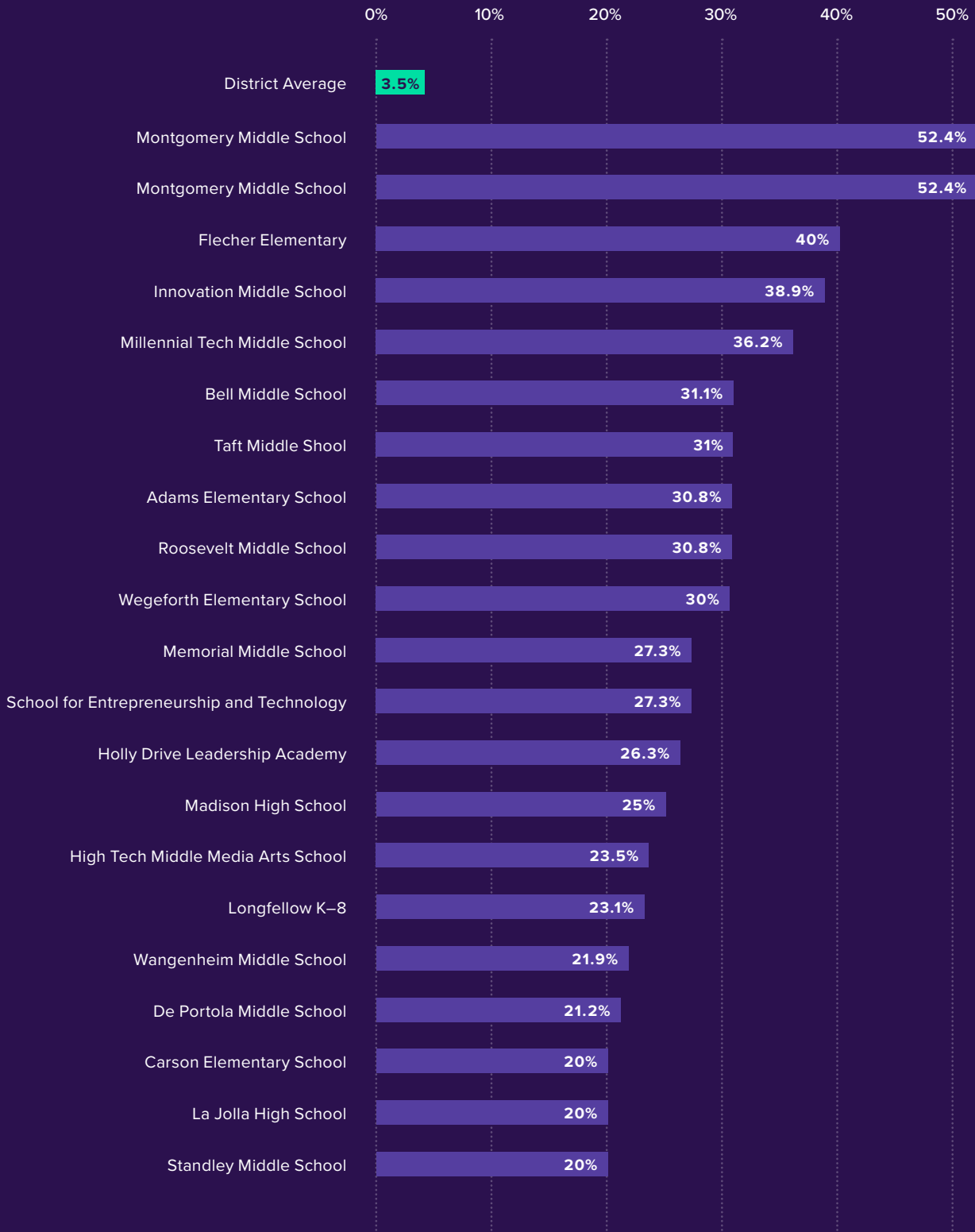


1 IN 4
black boys
in foster care
are suspended
in SDUSD

Greater Likelihood of Black Male Suspension in SDUSD by Grade Level 2017–2018



Top Schools Suspending Black Boys in SDUSD, 2017–2018





CINDY MARTEN'S MIXED EQUITY RECORD IN CLOSER VIEW

One way to understand the opinion of Cindy Marten among San Diego's grassroots communities, is to look at how the conversation is evolving among equity groups on how to replace her.

It seems inconsistent with President Biden's vision to sign executive orders aimed at addressing systemic racism with one hand while nominating a deputy education secretary with a questionable track record on equity issues for Black and Latino children with the other.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

JANUARY 26, 2021

San Diego Groups Call For Open Superintendent Search More Transparent Than Last One

In 2013 the San Diego Unified School Board chose Cindy Marten as the new superintendent **behind closed doors**, hours after then-superintendent Bill Kowba told the board he would retire and before the general public knew the board needed a new superintendent.

Community members criticized the move as a **closed-door appointment** that violated open meeting laws and denied them the chance to give input.

Almost eight years later, the superintendent position is up for grabs once more as Marten is **expected to be officially named** U.S. deputy education secretary next month, pending Senate confirmation.

Now a coalition of community groups is telling the school board it should not choose the next superintendent the same way it chose Marten.

The coalition includes the Association of African American Educators, ACLU of San Diego and Imperial Counties, Parents for Quality Education, the Black American Political Association of California San Diego chapter, the San Diego Urban League, the NAACP San Diego branch, the Chicano Federation and parent group Reopen SDUSD.

Members of the community group coalition said they need a transparent search process because they think the lack of one in 2013 led to the appointment of a superintendent who has not done enough for Black and Latino students and other historically disadvantaged groups.

“We want to ensure we don’t have another superintendent that fails to address the academic achievement and opportunity gaps that have been plaguing our communities of color,”

TOM KELIINOI

President of Parents for Quality Education