

Abstract

Ancient Greek philosopher Plato, known in part for his contributions to the development of education in the Western world, is quoted as having said “the direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.” Even in the twenty-first century this statement still rings true in the United States, with implications that can be empowering for some and conversely limiting for others. That is to say even in the “land of opportunity”, in our public school system as it exists today, minority students are often-times left in a disadvantaged position when it comes to the educational outcomes determining their futures. Research (Doug Archbald, Janice Hale, Sean Kelly, etc.) supports that from early ages in primary and secondary education, minority students are far behind white students in participation in the programs and classes that are vital for continued higher education.

Even in diverse, progressive areas such as suburban Shaker Heights, Ohio and liberal hub Berkeley, California—areas that point to their diverse communities as a point of pride—the gap between minority and white students is concerningly visible and significant. The former is the case for these students across the country and it’s important to examine this occurrence. In our current climate, a college diploma is often considered an essential precursor to gainful employment in a job or career that will ensure a sense of security, success, and longevity in the United States. However, because of their lack of participation in the Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses that competitive colleges and universities are looking for, minority students are most often not on the same track as far as increasingly necessary higher education is concerned. In other words, these students are at risk for not having the same educational backing and experience that could be instrumental in setting up and foregrounding their futures.