



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Craig A. Kelley
City Councillor

To: Donna Lopez, City Clerk

From: Craig A. Kelley, City Councillor

Date: 18 April 2019

Subject: Memorandum Submission

Please place the attached memorandum, "CPSD, the Achievement Gap, and a Review of 8th Grade Math MCAS Results", on the City Council agenda as Communications and reports from Other City Officials for the 22 April 2019 City Council meeting.

Thank you.



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Craig A. Kelley
City Councillor

MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge City Council

From: Craig Kelley, *City Councillor*
Mark Gutierrez, *Council Aide*

Date: 22 April 2019

Subject: CPSD, the Achievement Gap, and a Review of 8th Grade Math MCAS Results

Cambridge Public Schools provide a remarkable education for many children in our community, but it does not serve all children equally. Despite their limitations, MCAS data can be a useful measurement of academic achievement and often mirrors other basic patterns of success that we see in schools, including successful participation in Honors or AP classes, involvement in various enrichment activities, membership in the National Honor Society, and so forth.

We assembled an interactive report, found at <http://bit.ly/mcas-review> (with selected screenshots attached) that analyzes Cambridge's 8th grade MCAS results for mathematics since the test's inception. While it is troubling to see the MCAS results for various subgroups to be so consistently low, it is even more disheartening to see that the achievement gap has actually widened despite almost two decades of focused effort and three major interventions.

There are two MCAS tests, the traditional legacy MCAS and, for the past few years, the next generation MCAS (Next Gen). Analysis of the legacy test revealed that it was no longer aligned with what students truly needed to be successful, so the Next Gen test was specifically developed to better predict next-grade level readiness and post-high school success.¹ The different tests give us a shifting base for test score review, but when looking at students who exceed or meet expectations, it is important noting that the new Next Gen test initially resulted in

¹ "The new test is designed to have coherent, consistent high standards from one grade to the next and give a clear indication of students' readiness for the next grade level and college and career... Under the legacy MCAS, many students would pass MCAS only to arrive at college and find they needed remedial courses. The next-generation MCAS is designed to indicate where students are academically while there is still time to get them back on track."
[Source](#); [More info](#)

a catastrophic drop in scores for all subgroups except European American/White and Non-Economically Disadvantaged, and, overall, a larger achievement gap.

Despite a staff truly dedicated to teaching our children, a generous budget, and the best intentions of all involved in our educational efforts, the CPSD achievement gap is not closing and some specific abilities remain disturbingly low. Overall MCAS test scores have slowly risen over the (many) years since MCAS testing first began, but better test preparation, students' growing comfortability with test-taking, and other factors are as likely to be elements of that slow rise rather than a greater mastery of the subject matter.

The rate that scores are rising is unequal as well. For students exceeding expectations especially, European American/White and Non-Economically Disadvantaged subgroups are far outpacing all other subgroups, creating a [scissor effect](#) where, while all increase, the higher performers increase faster than the lower performers. The Innovation Agenda, Extended Learning Time, and school consolidation implementations, the three major interventions since the start of MCAS, had little to no effect on closing the gap. Moreover, we have not seen any evaluations of how these interventions have impacted academic achievement in our schools.

I hope this memo and the associated [charts](#) help underscore the challenges we have had in giving all of our children the education they need for future success. This analysis, showing little improvement in the past 17 years despite three major interventions, may help us better focus on what future interventions, both in and out of our schools, could produce better results. While the City Council does not have any direct oversight or input into CPSD's policies, our 'yes/no' vote on the CPSD budget gives us the moral responsibility to explore budget-related issues to better understand how we can all create a more successful and equitable educational experience for all of our children.

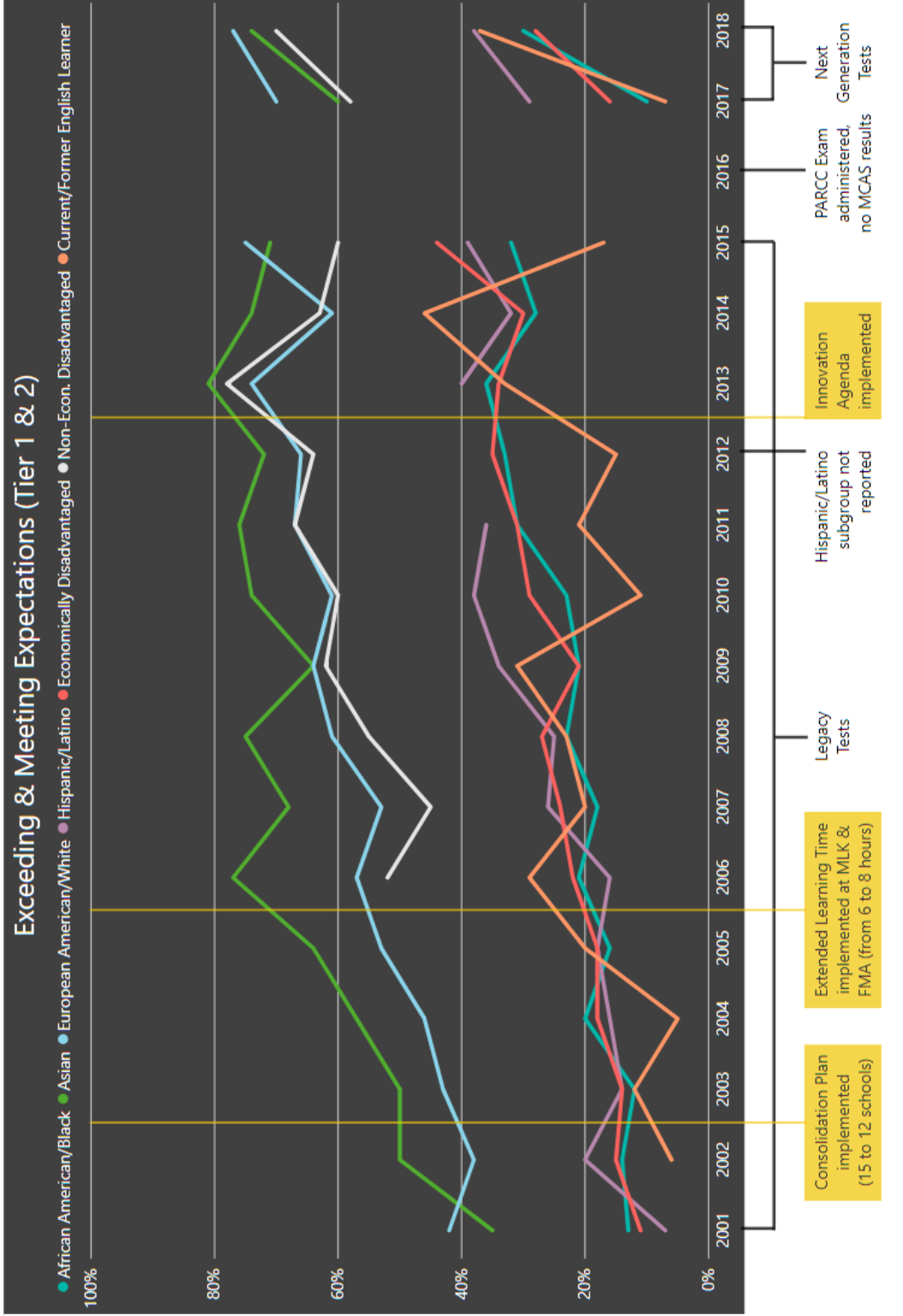
Thank you.

ANALYSIS:

MCAS

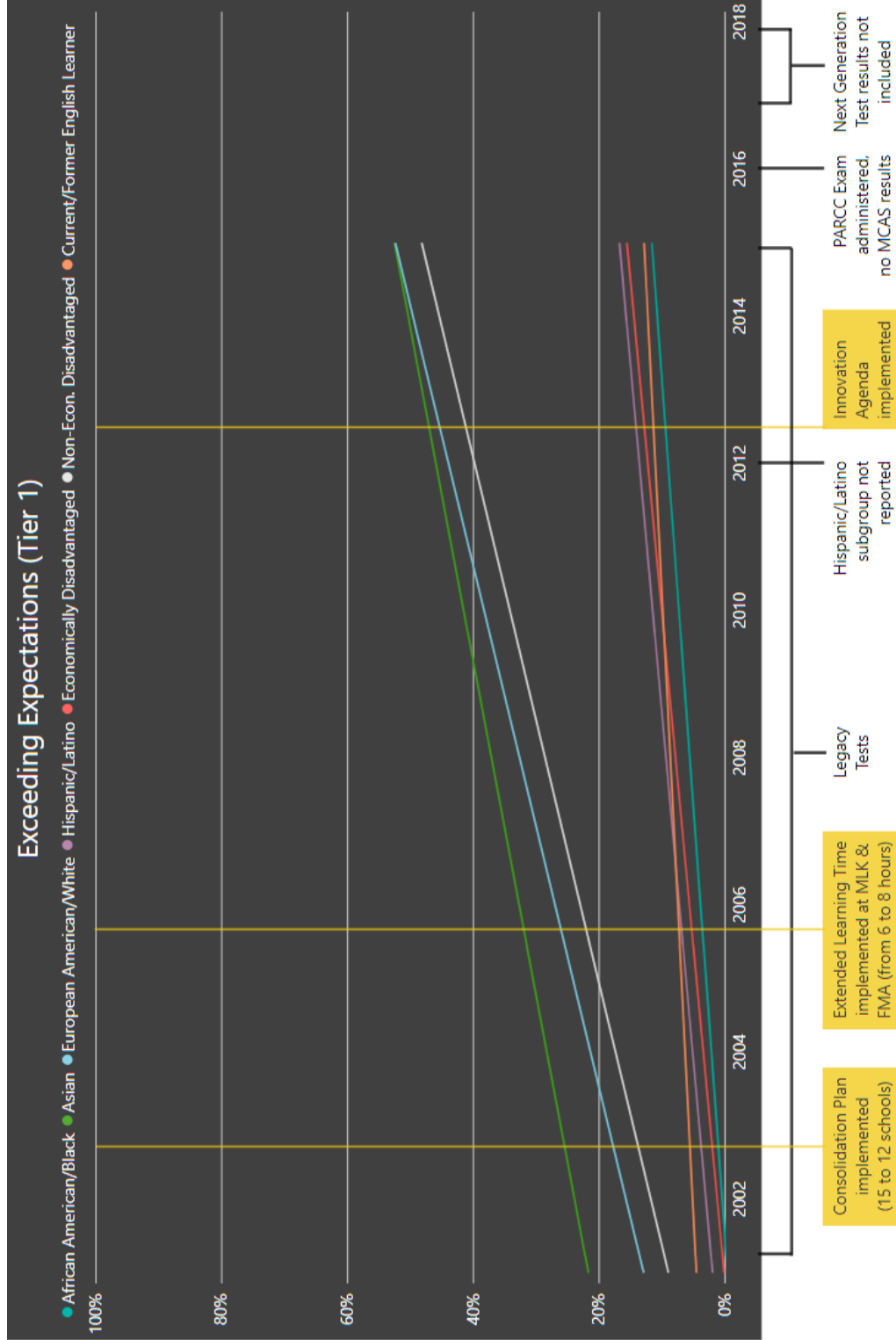
RESULTS

- Tier 1 & 2
- Tier 3 & 4
- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



**ANALYSIS:
TRENDLINES**
(Next Generation Test
results not included)

- Tier 1 & 2
- Tier 3 & 4
- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



**ANALYSIS:
ACHIEVEMENT
GAP SUMMARY**

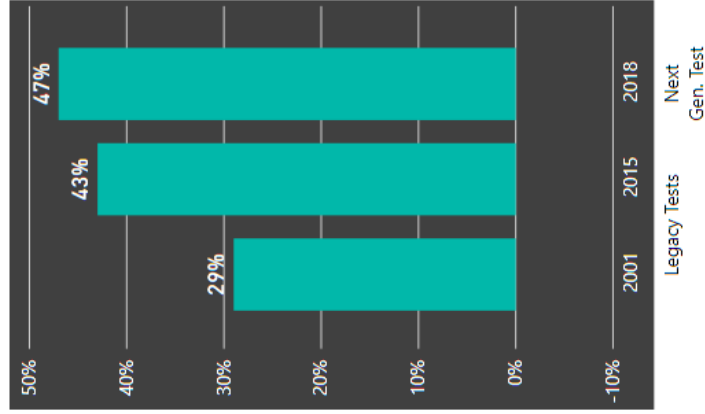
Exceeding & Meeting Expectations (Tier 1 & 2)

Tier 1 & 2

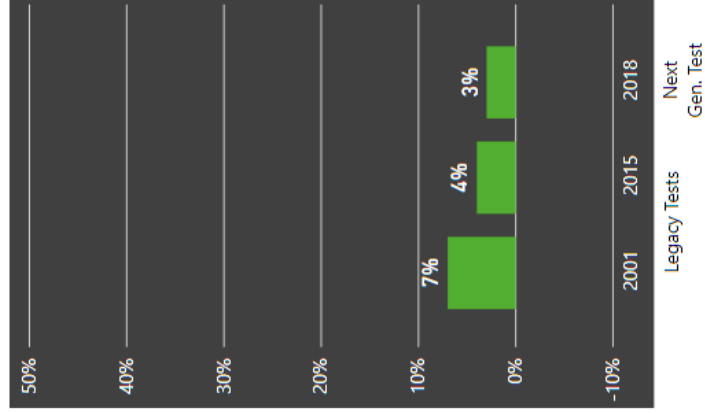
Tier 1

Tier 2

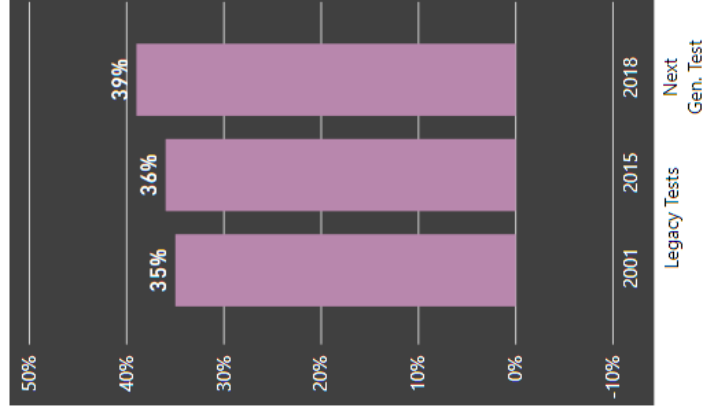
Achievement Gap between European Amer./White & African Amer./Black for 2001, 2015 & 2018



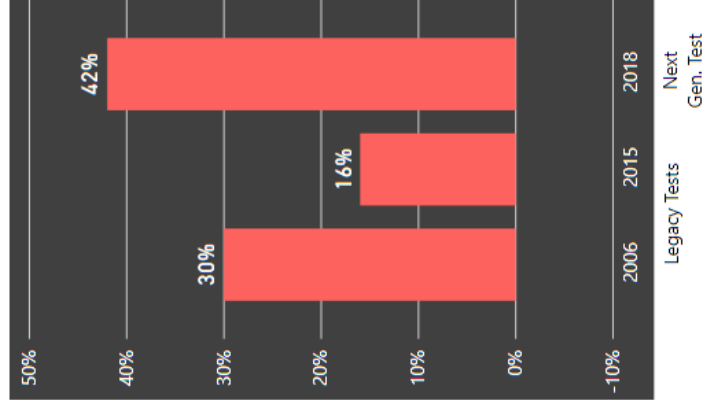
Achievement Gap between European Amer./White & Asian for 2001, 2015 & 2018



Achievement Gap between European Amer./White & Hispanic/Latino for 2001, 2015 & 2018



Achievement Gap between Non-Econ. Disadvan. & Economically Disadvan. for 2006, 2015 & 2018



**ANALYSIS:
ACHIEVEMENT
GAP EXPANDED**

Exceeding &
Meeting
Expectations
(Tier 1 & 2)

African Amer. Gap

Asian Gap

Hisp./Latino Gap

Economic Gap

