

Introduction

EOS' mission is to strengthen educator and system leader capacity to break down barriers to increase access, belonging, and success in rigorous college and career-prep secondary school courses for students of Color and low-income students so that they may thrive in their postsecondary pursuits and life goals.

For the past 10 years, Equal Opportunity Schools has partnered with school districts around the country to increase access, belonging, and success in college in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses for high school students of Color. EOS' approach to this is grounded in partnerships, equity, and both qualitative and quantitative data collection. A core component of the work EOS does with districts and schools across the country is to present new and dynamic real time data to district and school leaders about both their equity ecosystem and a new methodology of student identification, called the Student Insight Card. EOS administers to both students and staff in the Fall and Spring of each school year which includes a trusted adult survey. Coupled with administrative and focus group data, EOS surveys provide schools and districts a holistic, bird's eye view of the state of equity and belonging for high school students of Color.

One line of inquiry in the EOS student survey and an essential component of the forty three points on the Student Insight Card is the student- identified "trusted adult." As part of its annual data collection with school and district partners over the past 10 years, EOS has collected "trusted adult" data from over one million high school students from across the country. In order to identify the trusted adults, each student sees a list of each adult in their building and can select up to two adults who they consider a trusted adult. In this context trust is defined as a student's trust in an adult to provide good advice about important decisions and/or classes.

The purpose of collecting this data is to shift advanced coursework patterns by leveraging the power of relationships between students and educators. Over the course of its work with schools, EOS learned that students were experiencing barriers to AP/IB courses that included access to information about AP and teacher's low-expectations about students' ability to succeed. EOS found that identifying trusted adults within a school building and matching them with students who trust them is an accelerator for students to access advanced placement courses. As part of this process, EOS asks trusted adults to meet with students to support them in navigating advance coursetaking.

When combined with the other data that EOS collects on students and adults, this data can also provide critical information about how trust operates in schools. We know that strong relationships (Patrick, K., et al. 2021) are critical to student success and trust can play a critical role in how students experience belonging at school (Bowen, J. 2021). The EOS dataset on trusted adults is an opportunity to examine how trust is racialized, particularly between students and teachers.

In 2022, Equal Opportunity Schools partnered with the Center for Trust and Transformation to examine the trusted adult dataset for insights on trust in schools, specifically between students and teachers. The Center for Trust and Transformation supports partners through coaching, consulting, and research to deepen our understanding of how trust operates in cultural and contextual ways.

The dataset in this quantitative analysis includes demographic and background data on both the students and the adults in the school building whom they trust. Detailed information about the overall research design is outlined below. These data were cross-referenced with a variety of student outcomes data, including data on academic achievement, belonging, and student mindsets. This analysis is groundbreaking both in the focus on trust and equity and the size of the data set.

This inquiry focused on two strands of inquiry. The first inquiry explored insights that the data itself can offer including:

- What patterns and outcomes emerge when trust is or is not present, particularly between teachers/staff and students of Color?
- What are the different trends that support/hinder trust and/or student success?

Based on the findings from the first inquiry, the research team examined:

- How can EOS improve survey questions for students and adults?
- How can EOS data be utilized and applied to understand important factors/dimensions of equitable learning environments?
- How can EOS facilitate research partnerships to advance knowledge about their data to inform the model?

We engaged in both strands of inquiry concurrently, analysis and interpretations are interconnected. Findings from the first inquiry helped to inform our findings for our second inquiry, and findings from our second inquiry gave insightful context to findings from our first strand of inquiry.

The report that follows offers insights into the background research on trust in schools, research design, findings, recommendations, and implications for further research.

Evidence Base Review

The section below offers insights from the literature on what we can learn from current research regarding trust between students and educators, and in schools as a whole. One assumption contained in this inquiry is that race and ethnicity are factors that impact trust. While the literature is still emerging through this lens, this inquiry seeks to bolster the field's understanding of how race/ethnicity and trust interact in schools specifically. The section below provides an overview of the literature related to student-educator trust, including current research and conditions that promote trust between students and educators.

We know from existing research that trust is both racialized¹ (Nunnally, 2012; Smith, S., 2010) and politicized (Vakil, McKinney de Royston, Suad Nasir., Kirshner, 2016) and there remains a need for more formal research in education specifically on trust through the lens of racial equity. Social segregation (DiPrete et al, 2011), historical context (Smith, 2010), and implicit biases (Stanley, D., Sokol-Hessner, P., Banaji, M., & Phelps, E., 2011) all play a role in the phenomenon of trust but we have little empirical insights into how these elements interact with trust and distrust within schools and districts that serve students of Color, specifically. If we are going to reimagine our school systems to be anti-racist educational environments that nurture the brilliance and potential of students of Color, we must better understand the nuances of trust through the lens of racial equity.

There is a significant portion of existing research that focuses on parent-teacher trust as essential to student success (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Kemmis, Wilkinson et al. 2014; Cosner 2009; Daly 2009; Forsyth 2008; Forsyth et al. 2011; Tschannen-Moran, M. 2009), however research examining the importance of relational trust between students and teachers in particular is limited (Gregory, A. and Ripski, M. 2008), especially research focused on students of Color.

Defining Trust Between Educators and Students

Trust is rooted in our lived-experience and informed by our cultural and historical contexts which makes trust dynamic, multi-dimensional, and multi-faceted. In education and the social sciences broadly, there are several definitions of trust that guide relationship building in schools. The most prevalent definition in education comes from Tony Bryk and Barbara Schneider based on their examination of trust in a longitudinal study of 400 Chicago elementary schools in the early 2000's. Bryk and Schneider defined relational trust as composed of four components: respect, personal regard, competence, and personal integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The focus of this research was on trust between teachers, school leaders, and parents, specifically.

¹ Maybe include an explanation of racialized and politicized trust

Another popular definition of trust comes from Megan Tschannen-Moran and Wayne Hoy (1998) which defines trust as individual's willingness for vulnerability is the belief or confidence that

another person is: benevolent, competent, honest, reliable, and open (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran 1999; Tschannen Moran and Hoy 1998; Platz, M. 2021).

Relational trust functions to strengthen social exchanges, furthers opportunities for improvement, and sustains ethical imperatives, through accountability, shared expectations, and high levels of interconnectedness (Schneider, et al. 2014). Relational trust is a critical ingredient required for student's to learn from teachers, for developing a student's confidence in their "academic self", and to employ effective academic strategies (Tschannen-Moran, M. and Hoy, W. 2000; Platz, M. 2021). Studies have shown that high levels of relational trust promote student's desire to learn (Rimm-Kaufman, S. and Sandilos, L. 2015), and results in increases in student's academic achievement over time (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Goddard et al. 2009; Adams 2010; Lee 2007; Mitchel et al. 2010, 2008), it is also a critical factor in increasing student's ambition to pursue a post-secondary education (Schneider et al. 2014). Student trust in teachers is also positively associated with feelings of safety (Mitchel et al. 2010, 2008), improved academic motivation, and an increased sense of belonging and identification with school (Mitchel et al. 2010, 2008; Lee 2007).

Conditions that Promote or Hinder Student-Educator Trust

Researchers agree that conditions that foster and hinder trust do not exist within a vacuum, making it important to examine conditions that exist on the individual level, but also within the institutional school context. For example, the profound and inequitable impact of the COVID pandemic and the public reckoning of the legacy of structural racism has shone a spotlight on the need for a focus on trust and repair between students, families, and educators (Mills, G. 2021).

Individual Level Conditions:

Individual features of both the trustee (educator) and the trustor (student) play a role in the development of trusted relationships. We know from existing research that trust is impacted by our intersectional identities (Fox-Williams, B. 2020), such as race (Nunnally, 2012; Smith, S., 2010), gender (Maddux and Brewer, 2005), and the adults' title and expertise base (Ingersoll and Merrill 2011; Johnson 2005).

An educators' teaching style, including their style of discipline and their ability to foster a supportive environment for their students' learning are also related to student-educator trusted relationships. Gregory and Ripski (2008) found students' feelings of trust in their teachers is diminished when teachers use authoritarian styles of discipline. While this study does not offer insight into how trends related to discipline and trust differ across student racial groups, research shows that students of Color (Black and Latinx Boys in particular) disproportionately experience punitive discipline including in- and out-of school suspension and expulsions (Gopalan, M., & Aiko Nelson, A. 2019). Thus we can posit that the relationship between discipline and trust is likely impacted by a student's race or ethnicity and their gender.

Similarly, studies have shown that a teacher's perception of a student and their teachability and their ability to meet or surpass academic expectations impacts student-teacher trusted relationships (Van Maele, D. & Van Houtte, M. 2010). Again, a teacher's level of racial and ethnic bias impacts their perceptions of student teachability, with teachers generally holding higher expectations for White and Asian students compared to their Black and Latinx counterparts (Fish, R. 2017; National Education Association).

With the knowledge that trust is racialized, it becomes critical to acknowledge that teachers in the United States are predominantly White. According to [Pew Research analysis of data](#) from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, in 2018 79 percent of teachers were White, while the population of White students was 47 percent. The data showed that there was an 8 percent increase in teachers of Color between 1987 and 2018, however progress is slow when it comes to the rate at which schools, and the general population, are becoming more racially diverse. This diversification is critical because recent studies have shown that teacher's that are the same race as students of Color, particularly Black students. Data from [Project STAR \(Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio\)](#) shows that Black elementary students perform better on end-of-year exams when assigned a Black teacher at some point during their schooling (Schofield, K., 2022). In another [study](#), Project STAR found that having a Black teacher at some point in their education increase the likelihood that Black students were to graduate high school by 13 percent, and increased the likelihood that they enroll in college by 19 percent (Schofield, K., 2022)

Organizational/Structural Level Conditions:

Racism, sexism, and politicized conditions intersect to create a unique experience for students of Color that affects their daily interactions with educators and shapes their feelings of trust (Fox-Williams, B. 2020; Natanson, H. 2022). Similarly, general trust in American schools has dropped due to the pandemic and legislation restricting lessons focussed on issues of race, racism, gender, gender identity, and sexuality (Natanson, H. 2022).

School level conditions can also impact student-teacher trusted relationships. When studying public middle schools in New York City, Fox-Williams (2020) found that trust between students and educators is impacted by race. For example, higher collective trust is found for Black students who are in schools where Black educators make up 50 percent or more of the school's faculty body (Fox-Williams, 2020). On the other hand, a higher representation of Asian educators in the teacher-body racial composition has a negative impact on Asian students' trust in teachers (Fox-Williams, 2020).

This evidence base forms the foundation of this analysis and points to areas where more research is needed. The analysis that follows provides critical insights into how trust operates between students and teachers in the high school context.

Research Design

The Center for Trust and Transformation partnered with Equal Opportunity Schools to do an in-depth exploratory analysis of the organization's trusted adult data specifically. We used an iterative design and process focusing on exploring findings from the largest district of EOS partnering schools. Methods for these preliminary data analyses include running frequencies and cross-tabulations. The tables that accompany this report include one-way tables for single categorical variables and two-way tables for two categorical variables. The two-way tables include p-values calculated from chi-squared tests for independence.

Using the insights from this first iteration we expanded our sample to all EOS partnering schools in our second iteration. In addition, we ran preliminary regression models to test hypotheses about the factors that affect whether or not a student has a trusted adult. This exploratory process allowed us to be flexible in our research design, making it possible to follow the story the data told us.

The data analyzed in this study were collected via two categories of EOS school data sources: (1) administrative data and (2) annual surveys. This inquiry only included data from EOS' annual fall survey because this survey had more student and staff responses than the Spring survey. In addition, pre-work that was conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for EOS was a critical foundation for this analysis. The dataset that was created for AIR formed the foundation for the data was transferred to CTT for the trusted adult analysis. More specifically these data included:

A de-identified student analysis dataset from EOS was constructed from:

- Student administration file (includes all students in EOS schools)
- AP/IB Enrollment file that includes all students in EOS schools who enrolled in AP/IB courses
- GPA file that includes a subset of students' fall and spring cumulative GPA
- Student characteristics file that uses student survey responses to construct summary asset and barrier characteristics

A de-identified staff analysis dataset was constructed from:

- Staff administration file (includes all staff in EOS schools)
- Staff survey file that includes staff survey responses about their attitudes towards students and learning, as well as staff demographic information

In addition, student and staff relationship data originated from the EOS relationship file, which links students and school staff via one of the following actions:

- Student identifying an adult as "trusted"
- Adult recommending student to enroll in advanced (AP/IB) courses

For our analyses, summary relationship measures were calculated separately for students and staff. For students, we calculated:

- The number of unique trusted adults per school year
- The number of unique recommendations from staff per school year
- An indicator for whether a student had identified a trusted adult in the school year
- An indicator indicating whether a student had any advanced course enrollment recommendations from staff in the school year

At the staff-level, we calculated:

- The number of students that identified a staff person as trusted per school year;
- The number of students the staff person recommended per school year;
- An indicator for whether a staff person was identified as a trusted adult in the school year;
- An indicator for whether a staff person made any recommendations in the school year.

For the purposes of this analysis, the universe of schools in the dataset was all EOS partnering schools. Within schools, administrative data were available for all students and staff. Race and gender information was collected for students via student-level administrative data. For staff, self-identified race and gender information were provided via the staff survey. For our analyses, we include data from the 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2019-20 school years.

This resulted in data collected from 1,832,382 students over a period spanning from 2016-2020. We analyzed data collected from 1404 EOS partnering schools, in a total of 450 districts between the 2016-2020. The table below provides general summary statistics of the dataset.

	<u>Number of Schools</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Number of Staff</u>
2016	157	228,822	14,771
2017	230	328,617	17,433
2018	285	372,920	15,968
2019	349	455,269	15,402
2020	383	446,754	13,540
<u>Total</u>	1,404	1,832,382	77,114

Table 1: General Summary Statistics of the Dataset

** These figures are deduplicated (to ensure we count unique students and staff in a given year), and students and staff may appear in multiple school years.*

The racial breakdown (%) within this dataset are as follows:

<u>Student Race</u>		<u>Staff Race</u>	
<i>Asian</i>	11.5%	<i>Asian</i>	3.1%
<i>Asian Indian</i>	0.4%	<i>Asian Indian</i>	0.0%
<i>Black</i>	15.4%	<i>Black</i>	10.1%
<i>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</i>	0.4%	<i>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</i>	0.3%
<i>Latinx</i>	28.1%	<i>Latinx</i>	6.6%
<i>Indigenous</i>	0.6%	<i>Indigenous</i>	0.6%
<i>Other</i>	3.3%	<i>Other</i>	2.4%
<i>White</i>	40.3%	<i>White</i>	65.4%
Table 2: Race & Ethnicity Breakdown of Students & Teachers			

The analysis data file used in this report was constructed using R software. Oneway and twoway tables in the report were also calculated using R software with the arsenal library. Where possible (depending on subgroup sample sizes), the two way tables include p-values calculated from chi-square tests for independence for categorical variables.

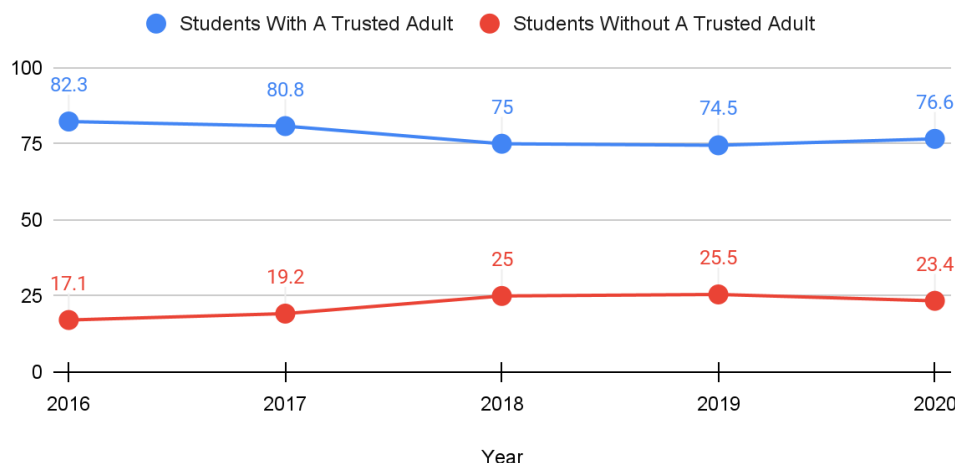
Findings

The findings below outline the results from the data analysis on students who completed the EOS survey. This section highlights who students trust, what factors influence trust, how durable trust is in student-teacher relationships, and whether trust relationships translate into advanced placement recommendations. The section closes with an analysis of the student benefits of having trusted relationships.

Who Do Students Trust?

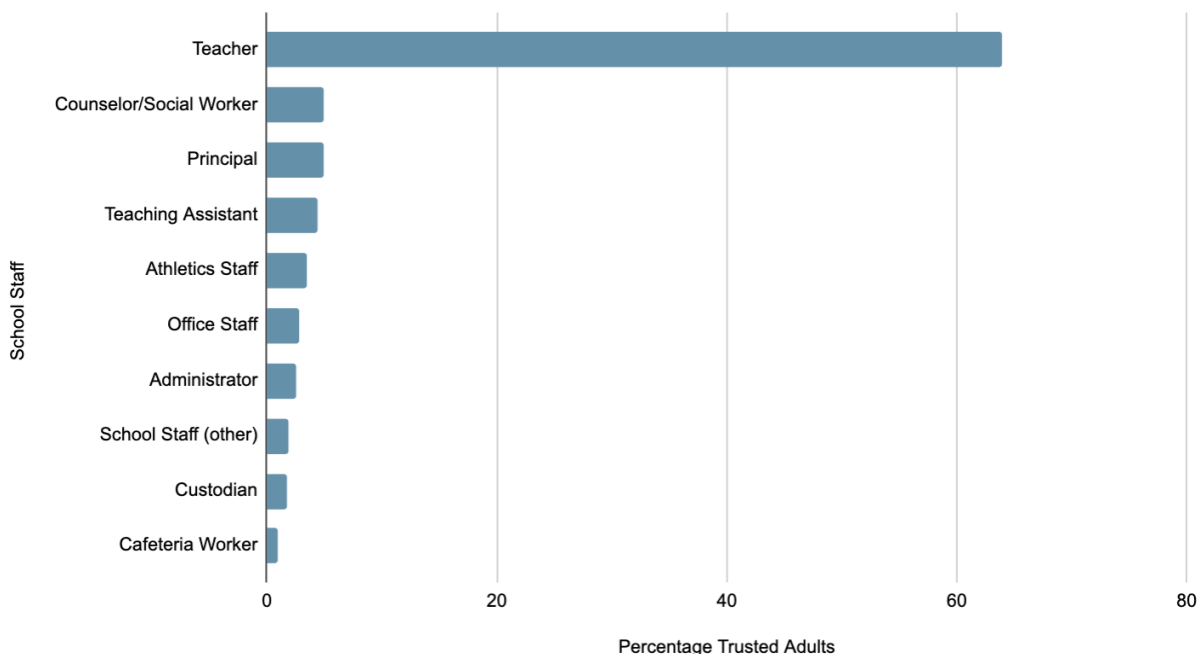
Across 2016-2020, an average of 77 percent of the students who took the survey reported having a trusted adult for at least one year and nearly one quarter of students reported a period of time in school when they did not have a trusted adult at all. There are many factors influencing whether students identified a trusted adult, however it is also critical to note that overall from 2016-2019, students reporting a trusted adult decreased consistently. In 2016, the percentage of students with trusted adults was the highest at 82 percent and in 2019 trust was at its lowest at 74 percent. There was a slight increase in trust in 2020 to 77 percent.

Figure (X): Students With A Trusted Adult and Students Without A Trusted Adult



Sixty-four percent of students named a teacher as their trusted adult, which includes multiple categories of teachers including Special Education, Dance, Art, Math, and substitute teachers. Notably, the other 44 percent identified a wide range of staff with whom they have trusted relationships including Assistant Teachers, counselors, athletics staff, principal, office staff, and custodians. At the school-level, all of the schools in the sample had at least one non-instructional staff member who were identified as trusted adults; in most schools (averaging 77 percent between 2016-2020), less than 25 percent of trusted adults were non-instructional staff. The chart below provides a snapshot of the range of trusted adults that students identified and points to the breadth relationships that students develop while at school. These relationships are a critical resource for supporting students, better understanding what students need, and creating opportunities for adults across a multitude of roles to provide insights into a students strengths and areas of growth. Currently, classroom teachers are primarily responsible for Advanced Placement recommendations, however this data suggests that students may have relationships with adults beyond classroom teachers who may be better positioned to make a recommendation. There are a variety of factors that influence whether non-instructional staff make recommendations for students to pursue advanced coursework including (but not limited to) district/school policies and familiarity and/or comfort with the recommendation process.

Trusted Adults Identified by Role

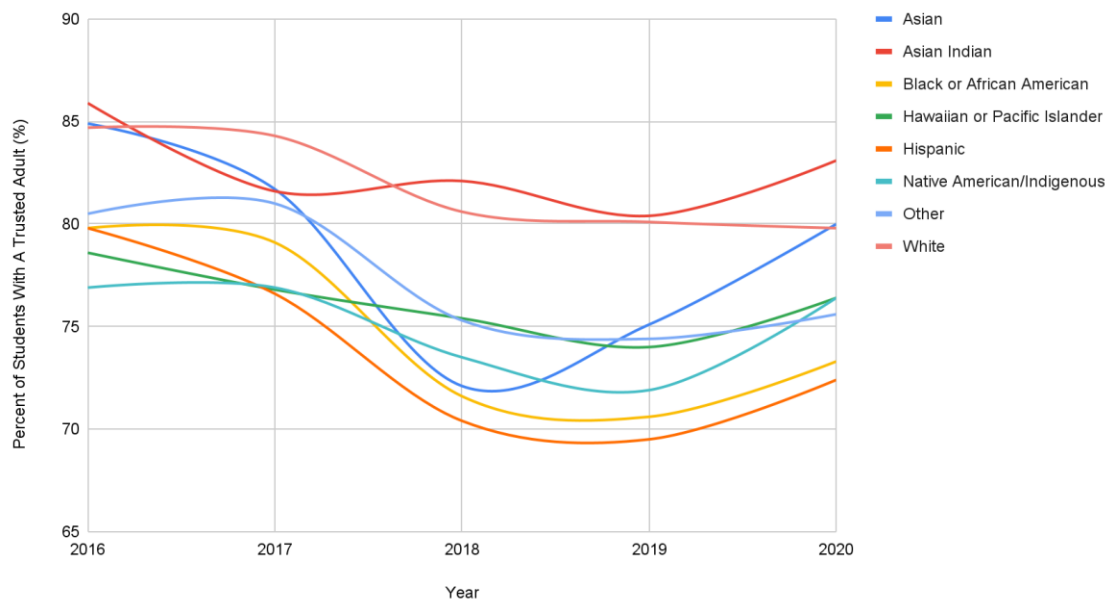


What Factors Impact Student-Teacher Trust?

Trust and Race

Within a given year, students who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander consistently report having a trusted adult at lower levels than students that are White, Asian, and Southeast Asian. For example, in 2018, 72 percent of Black students reported having a trusted adult versus 81 percent of White students [Appendix Table 1]. In addition Black students and Latinx students reported the most significant decreases in the presence of a trusted adult from 2016-2020 compared to other racial categories. Between 2016 and 2020 we saw a 6.5 percent decrease in Black students and a 6.4 percent decrease in Latinx students reporting the presence of a trusted adult, compared with a 4.9 percent for White students.

Figure (x): Students with A Trusted Adult Disaggregated by Race & Ethnicity



To understand the longevity of trusted relationships between students and teachers we explored how often students had a trusted adult across multiple years of responding to the EOS survey. Similar trends are seen across years as is seen in a single year; White, Asian, and Asian Indian students report having a trusted adult over multiple years at higher rates than students who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.² [Appendix Table 2]

We also looked at patterns of student-trusted adult pairs - defined as each unique instance of a specific student identifying a trusted adult - by student and educator racial background. To do this, we compared the extent to which educators that shared the same racial background as the student were overrepresented in the trusted adult sample as a whole and found a higher incidence of trusted relationships when educators and students are of the same race. This indicates that students are significantly more likely to identify an educator as a trusted adult if they share the same race/ethnicity as the educator. For example, in 2018, while Latinx teachers comprised only 7 percent of teachers in the sample, they comprised 15 percent of the teachers identified as trusted by Latinx students. Similarly, while Black educators only comprised 7 percent of the trusted adult sample, they comprised 22 percent of the trusted adults identified by Black students, compared to 3.2 percent who were chosen by White students. For Indigenous students, the likelihood of having a trusted adult of the same race was very small, as only 37 percent of the

² This pattern is consistent, regardless of how the representation of staff compares to that of students. For example, even in schools where there is a smaller discrepancy between the representation of students of Color compared to educators of Color, Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander report having a trusted adult at lower levels than for White, Asian and Asian Indian students.

schools in the sample had **any** Indigenous staff and of those schools with Indigenous staff, they represented only 1 percent of the school staff as a whole. When we control for schools that had any Indigenous staff, we find that Indigenous student-trusted adult pairs are slightly overrepresented compared with Indigenous staff representation overall (they comprise 1.3 percent of trusted adult pairs with Indigenous students vs. 0.7 percent of trusted adult pairs overall). [Appendix Table 3]

These findings indicate that race/ethnicity may be an important component towards building trusting relationships between students and staff at the aggregate. We wanted to better understand these trends at the school level as well. In order to do so, we examined a sample of 90 schools in the data to better understand emerging school level trends around racialized trust. We looked at the bottom 30 schools with the fewest number of students of Color in the sample with an average of 14 percent of the student body identifying as non-White, the median 30 schools where students of Color represent roughly 50 percent of the student body, and the top 30 schools where students of Color represent 99 percent of the student body.

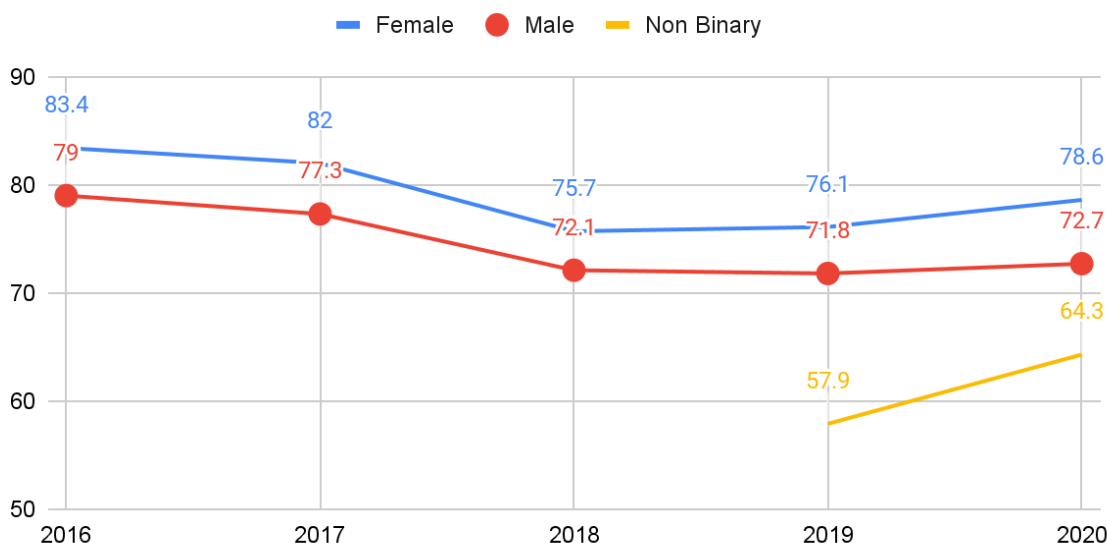
We found that overall trust was higher among all students in schools with predominantly White students with 82 percent of students identifying a trusted adult versus 74 percent in median diversity schools and 66 percent in the most diverse schools. In both predominantly White schools and schools that are 50 percent White and 50 percent students of Color, trust among White students was at least 5 percentage points higher on average than students of Color (83 percent vs. 78 percent in the least diverse schools, and 76 percent vs. 71 percent in median diversity schools). In schools with predominantly students of Color, the differences between White and students of Color were smaller, with 66 percent of students of Color and 67 percent of White students identifying a trusted adult. These findings indicate that more White and students of Color are able to develop trusting relationships in schools that are less diverse. However, the diminishing trust gap between students of Color and White students in the most diverse schools perhaps indicates that students of Color and White students operate on a more equal footing in schools with a very diverse student body. More analysis is needed to better understand trends around trust within students of Color in both heterogeneous and homogeneous school environments. [Appendix Table 4]

These collective findings must be also taken in context of the trends in teacher demographics in the United States. [Teachers of Color are more likely to work in schools with predominantly students of Color](#), and White teachers are more likely to teach in schools that are less racially diverse. The schools in the EOS dataset fit the same pattern - the schools with the least diverse student body had, on average, only 5 percent staff of Color, while schools with median and highest student diversity had 18 percent and 48 percent staff of Color, respectively. Future analyses can look at a broader set of schools to confirm the pattern, however this preliminary analysis indicates that students of Color are more likely to build trust with teachers of Color, while White students are more likely to trust other White teachers, and it is in the most diverse schools that students of Color have the most opportunities to develop trusting relationships with teachers that share their same background.

Trust and Gender

This analysis examined gender patterns as well. As previously mentioned research has found that gender plays a role in student-teacher trust. Our analysis shows that students who identify as female (across all race/ethnicities) report higher levels of trust compared to students who identify as male or nonbinary.³ Across 2016-2020 between 86 and 76 percent of students that identify as female report having a trusted adult compared to 79 and 71 percent of students that identify as male. While students that identify as female experienced a larger decrease in reports of a trusted adult [7.7 percent] compared to their male counterparts [7.2 percent], this dataset also shows more trusted relationships overall among female students as seen in figure (x). This could suggest that trusted relationships between teachers and students that identify as female could be more durable.

Figure (x): Students with Trusted Adults: Disaggregated by Gender



According to a study on gender-diverse youth in Northeastern high schooler 9.1 percent of students identify as gender-diverse (Kidd et al. 2021), but EOS' dataset collected data from a total of 35 students (0.008 percent) in 2019 who identified as gender fluid, gender non-conforming, other, or would prefer not to say. We acknowledge that for a variety of safety and personal reasons it can be difficult to get data on actual percentages of transgender and non-binary students, however given the size of the dataset we conclude that there are more gender-diverse students in the dataset than are identified.

Trust is higher between teachers and students with the same gender and race across the board, indicating that trust patterns persist across race and gender. Black and female identifying students are twice as likely to identify a Black and female identifying educator than a Black and

³ Please note that the data on students who identify as nonbinary are based on school-provided gender information, and therefore may be incomplete.

male as a trusted adult. Black male students are just as likely to identify a Black male educator as a Black female educator as trusted adults (12.2 percent vs. 12.1 percent in 2019). White female students are 80 percent more likely to identify a white female teacher as a trusted adult than a white male teacher, while white, male students are highly more likely to identify White, male educators as trusted adults than White, female educators (42 percent vs. 35 percent, respectively, in 2019. [Appendix Table 6]

How durable is trust?

This dataset offers 5 years of consecutive data on trusted adults, which makes longitudinal analyses possible. We wanted to understand what we call “the durability of trust.” In our analyses, we define the durability of trust as the extent to which trust a student identifies a particular teacher as trusted in multiple years.

White, Asian, and Southeast Asian students report having a trusted adult over multiple years at higher rates than other students. Black students report having a trusted adult over multiple years at the lowest rate of all student demographic groups with 11 percent of student-trusted adult pairs repeated in multiple years, compared to 14 percent of Latinx students, 16 percent of White students and 17 percent of Asian students. [Appendix Table 6]

This implies that trust between students of Color who are not White or Asian and school staff is somewhat fragile. Ideally, all students would have trusted adults for multiple years and not experience instability in relationships. Students require stable, supportive relationships in order to thrive socially and academically.

Does trust translate into recommendations?

This dataset offers interesting insights into the role of trust in expanding access to advanced courses for high school students of Color. To examine this we looked at reciprocity, or whether staff recommendations for students to take advanced courses is correlated to the student-staff trusted adult relationships. The process of recommendations must be taken into account here. Teachers who make AP/IB recommendations can only see students who are current 10th or 11th grade students enrolled in one of their classes and who are not already enrolled in an AP/IB class. Teachers can select a student and offer their name for a recommendation, but they don't see a comprehensive list of students from which to make their recommendation. Non-certificated staff can provide recommendations by searching for a student's name. The analysis of staff recommendations shows that the percentage of students with recommendations remain relatively consistent from 2016-2020, with only a slight decrease over time of approximately 2 percent. Summary data also shows that recommendations occur at a lower rate than reports of trusted adults, which suggests that in the aggregate, trusted adult relationships are not necessarily translating into recommendations. [Appendix Tables 7-8]

Across 2016-2020, Asian and White Students are more likely to report that they have a trusted adult and have been recommended for advanced courses compared to Black students, Latinx

Students, Indigenous Students, and students that identify in the “Other” race category. Within those that have fewer trusted adults and recommendations, Black students are reporting the presence of a trusted adult and recommendations the least.

We examined the extent to which trusted adults and recommendation activity were reciprocal in nature: do teachers who recommend students to AP/IB classes later become trusted adults to their students? Or similarly, do teachers who are identified as trusted by students later recommend those students to higher level classes? Overall, we found that most trusted adult-student pairs were not reciprocal: between 2016 and 2020, among recommendation-eligible students, only about 12 percent of trusted adult-student pairs included recommendations.⁴ Similarly, among teachers that recommended students to higher level classes, only 19 percent were identified as trusted adults by the same student. This suggests that for the most part, students identify school staff as trusted adults for reasons independent of the recommendation process. [Appendix Tables 9-10]

In order to further understand the dynamics between trusted adults and recommendations among trusted adult-student pairs that **did** include recommendations, we examined the sequence of identifying trusted adults and recommendations: did recommendations occur before, after or in the same year that adults were also identified as trusted? Among trusted adult-recommendation pairs, 66 percent of the teachers made recommendations in the same year that they were identified as trusted, while 30 percent made recommendations in the year before they were identified as trusted, and only a small percentage (4 percent) made recommendations in the year after they were identified as trusted. This suggests that for those trusted adult-student pairs, the recommendation process may have influenced the development of trust between student and teacher. However, more inquiry is needed at the school and school district levels to better understand the logistics and power dynamics of how teacher recommendations are made.

When examining reciprocity patterns across staff race, there were racial differences across the years, with Asian and White teachers being identified as a trusted adult that made a recommendation at higher rates compared to Black, Latinx, Indigenous teachers, and teachers who identify in the “Other” race category.

Benefits of trusted relationships

As previously mentioned, trust between students and educators can have social, emotional, and academic benefits for students. In this analysis, we found that students who identify trusted adults are 10-20% more likely to be enrolled in advanced placement courses. [Appendix Table 11] Across all students in the sample, those who identify trusted adults have a higher GPA by an average of .2 GPA points, with the highest effects on Latinx students (.3 GPA points). [Appendix Table 12]

⁴ For this analysis, we only included students who would be eligible to receive a recommendation for AP/IB classes - students in the 10th or 11th grade and who were not already enrolled in AP/IB classes.

When we look at disaggregated data in advanced course taking, White and Asian students who identify trusted adults are more likely than Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other students of Color to enroll in advanced placement courses. In this analysis we found that BIPOC students identifying a trusted adult does not necessarily translate to advancement placement enrollment. [Appendix Table 12] Furthermore, White, South Asian, and Asian American students are recommended for advanced placement courses. Black, Latino, and Indigenous students with higher GPA's are more likely to be recommended for advanced placement courses than students with lower GPA's. This points to potential racial bias in the referral process given the differential effects of GPA on recommendations across racial/ethnic categories.

Overall, White students in this sample were twice as likely as Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students to be enrolled in AP courses. Asian students are almost 3 times as likely to be enrolled in AP courses as compared to their Black, Latinx, and Indigenous counterparts.

As part of the student survey, EOS also collects data about students' perceptions of their social, emotional, and academic mindsets. We were able to compare the trusted adult data with this mindset data to better understand how student mindsets may contribute to the development of trusted relationships.

We found that students who identified as having a growth mindset had some positive correlation with having a trusted adult. From 2016-2020, 84 percent of students with a growth mindset (or a belief that abilities including intelligence - grow with dedication and hard work) had a trusted adult, whereas an average of 78 percent of students who lacked a growth mindset had identified a trusted adult. We found that students who identified as having academic self and academic strategies (or the confidence in their academic future and their strategies to get them to that future) as assets from 2018-2020, there is between a 7-11% difference in having a trusted adult between students with these assets and those that do not. [Appendix Table 13]

The data also showed that adult encouragement can play a critical role in student trust. Students that did not receive encouragement from adults to take advanced learning courses are between 4-10% less likely to indicate the presence of a trusted adult compared to students that did receive encouragement from adults. [Appendix Table 14]

Recommendations for EOS

The partnership between EOS and CTT was a fruitful one. EOS is interested in similar such partnerships to better understand the implications of the data the organization has collected over the last ten years, so we offer the following recommendations to ensure such partnerships are productive and efficient.

Recommendation 1: Assess and reimagine the advanced course recommendation process in partner schools

These data indicate that there is more work to be done in schools around the recommendation process. If the hypothesis is that relationships are an accelerator for high school students of Color to access advanced courses, then the process should include input from a wider range of adults who may have more nuanced knowledge of student's lives and what they are capable of achieving. In addition, if we know that implicit bias and racialized trust are factors, then it makes sense that the referral process should have checks and balances of its own to mitigate these factors.

Even with a trusted adult, this analysis showed that factor alone does not necessarily translate into student enrollment in advanced courses, particularly for students of Color. Black students specifically, are the least likely to have a trusted adult relationship that translates into a referral for advanced coursetaking. It will be critical for EOS and school leaders alike to follow up with trusted adults and educators to better understand how they make referral decisions.

EOS can begin this conversation with key district partners who have either demonstrated interest in reimagining the referral process to prioritize access for students of Color. These partner district can form a cohort that pilots and learns together to refine an approach to leveraging multiple trusted adults in a given school to increase access to advanced coursework.

Recommendation 2: Articulate and refine the role of trusted adult data as it relates to EOS Program Delivery.

These data have powerful implications for helping EOS achieve its mission of strengthening educator and system leader capacity to break down barriers to increase access, belonging, and success in rigorous college and career-prep secondary school courses for students of color and low-income students. We encourage EOS staff and partners to continue having conversations about how these data are collected and used, and what the implications are for increasing racial and gender diversity in advanced course taking in high schools.

This includes several potential activities in the near term. First, in order to make the trusted adult data more actionable EOS can consider developing a trusted adult data dashboard for staff and partners to use in their work to increase recruitment and retention of students of color in advanced placement courses. There is also an opportunity to explore revisions to EOS' trusted adult training for school partners to include analyses on the role of bias and cultural relevance in trust building. Another opportunity is to examine how EOS collects and uses trusted adult data, including potential updates to trusted adult survey items to better capture trust dynamics between

students and educators. Trusted adult data can also be relevant for helping EOS gauge the extent to which a given school or school system is leveraging relationship building to remove barriers for students of Color and students impacted by poverty to access advanced coursework.

There is also an opportunity to engage school partners and youth in a conversation about the survey prompts and how the data is used. EOS can also engage partners in revising the trusted adult training to focus more on racial and gender dynamics. This feedback is critical to ensuring that the updates to the trusted adult training and survey items are relevant and useful to both EOS and its partners.

Recommendation 3: Provide future EOS partners with an in-depth codebook to better decipher the data and how it is coded.

As part of this, we recommend that there is always someone on staff who is familiar with the data and has capacity to provide support to the data partner as questions arise. EOS' data is complex and there have been changes made to the dataset over time that require context and explanation. If EOS has multiple data partners, it may also be helpful to develop a Frequently Asked Questions document to alleviate the burden on EOS staff to answer common questions repeatedly. Conversely, we think it is helpful to be in dialogue with EOS staff about what is coming up in the data to ensure we are providing insights that can be helpful for future analyses.

A few areas for future consideration include providing partners with more context on how the data is used both internally to EOS and externally with partners. It is helpful to know EOS' intended purpose and vision for how this data will improve outcomes for students in order to help researchers have more insight into how and why the data exists and how it is used.

Recommendation 4: Expand some survey categories to be more inclusive and representative.

Finally, we recommend a few adjustments to the survey categories. First, we recommend that EOS expand the list of gender identities that are included in the student survey. The current survey includes male, female, and nonbinary, however there are far more gender categories that students may select. This is important in order to be inclusive but also to better disaggregate EOS' data by both race and gender.

The other adjustment is to include South Asian as a staff racial/ethnic category. It is currently listed as a student racial/ethnic category but not for staff, limiting the ability to analyze trends in relationships for South Asian staff specifically.

Recommendations for Schools

There is a growing awareness of the critical importance of trust in schools. Much of this is centered on adult relationships (e.g. trust between teachers and parents), but trust between students and teachers are a key factor in student success both in terms of academic and social-emotional success.

Recommendation 1: Invest in recruitment and retaining of Teachers of Color

In this recommendation we echo the resounding call from the field to [recruit and retrain more teachers of Color](#) into the profession. This includes efforts to certify more teachers of Color and ensure a culture of support and belonging once they are hired. While students are capable of building trusted relationships with a wide range of adults, there remains a racial diversity gap between teachers and students that needs to be addressed in order to build more trust in schools. Teachers of Color play a critical role in supporting the diversity of advanced course taking in high schools as they bring shared lived experiences, fewer implicit biases, and often higher expectations of what students of Color can achieve.

Recommendation 2: Support educators and school staff on building trust with students of Color, particularly across racial differences

The data showed that bias may be impacting trusted relationships between educators and students of Color. These biases may be limiting opportunities for students of Color to gain access to advanced placement courses because of cultural differences and/or expectations that students meet a white, normative standard of success.

To address this, schools and districts can offer training, coaching, and support for educators to recognize when these biases are present and what role they may be playing in how they view the capabilities and potential of students of Color. For example, data showed that teachers are less likely to refer students of Color, despite trusted relationships so more needs to be done to ensure that these relationships translate into increased expectations and support for students to enroll in advanced coursework. Related, the data shows that students with high academic performance are more likely to identify trusted adults so teachers have an opportunity to cultivate trust among students at all performance levels as a means to support academic success.

Implications for Further Research

This inquiry focused specifically on a longitudinal dataset that provided rich insights into student-educator trust. However, more research is needed to better understand the nuances of these relationships and how to support greater trust in schools.

As previously mentioned, trust research in education focuses heavily on adult relationships (e.g. teachers and parents) and sufficient attention is not paid to better understanding trust between teachers and students. Students typically have less power and influence inside schools, so it is critical to understand how they are impacted by adult interactions and how adults can shift their mindsets and behaviors to support student success.

This analysis was primarily quantitative and more qualitative research is needed to understand the stories, perspectives, and nuances contained within the data. To do this, we recommend speaking directly with students and educators from a wide range of backgrounds to better understand how trust forms, what the barriers are, and what becomes possible when trust is present between students and teachers. Ideally, we can continue to expand on [best practices](#) for educators to build trust with students, particularly with students of Color.

Closing

This inquiry found that trust is racialized and gendered within schools and these dynamics have an impact on both student-teacher relationships and the accessibility of advanced coursework. This window into student-teacher trust provides critical insights into how EOS and its partner schools can leverage the trusted adult data to increase access to advanced coursework for students of Color. This analysis serves as an important reminder that technical processes such as advanced course taking are inherently relational. We must attend to these relationships as an essential component of accelerating student success and belonging in schools.

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