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Gerrymandering of School Districts Effect on Social, Educational, and Resource Access

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Abstract

For many Americans, access is found in educational institutions and spaces. Because of this, a lot of many have their futures dependent on where their school district is located, and how it was drawn. This project focuses on how the drawing of school districts affects said access.

Gerrymandering of School Districts Effect on Social, Educational, and Resource Access

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INTRODUCTION

Research Question: How does the drawing of public school districts in the United States affect K-12 students' access in terms of educational access, social access, and resource access?

ABSTRACT

For many Americans, access is found in educational institutions and spaces. Because of this, a lot of many have their futures dependent on where their school district is located, and how it was drawn. This project focuses on how the drawing of school districts affects said access.

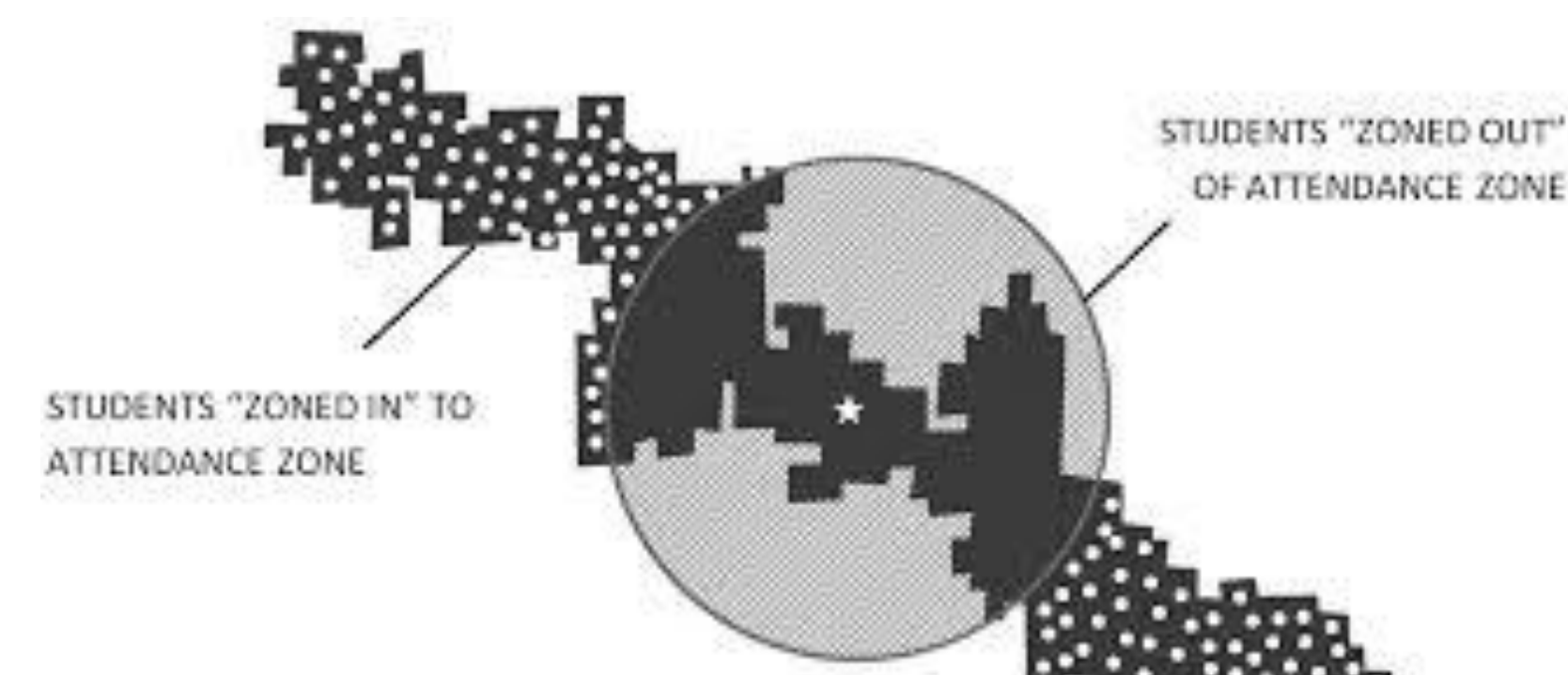


IMAGE: Attendance zones from Meredith P. Richards (2014)

Methodology

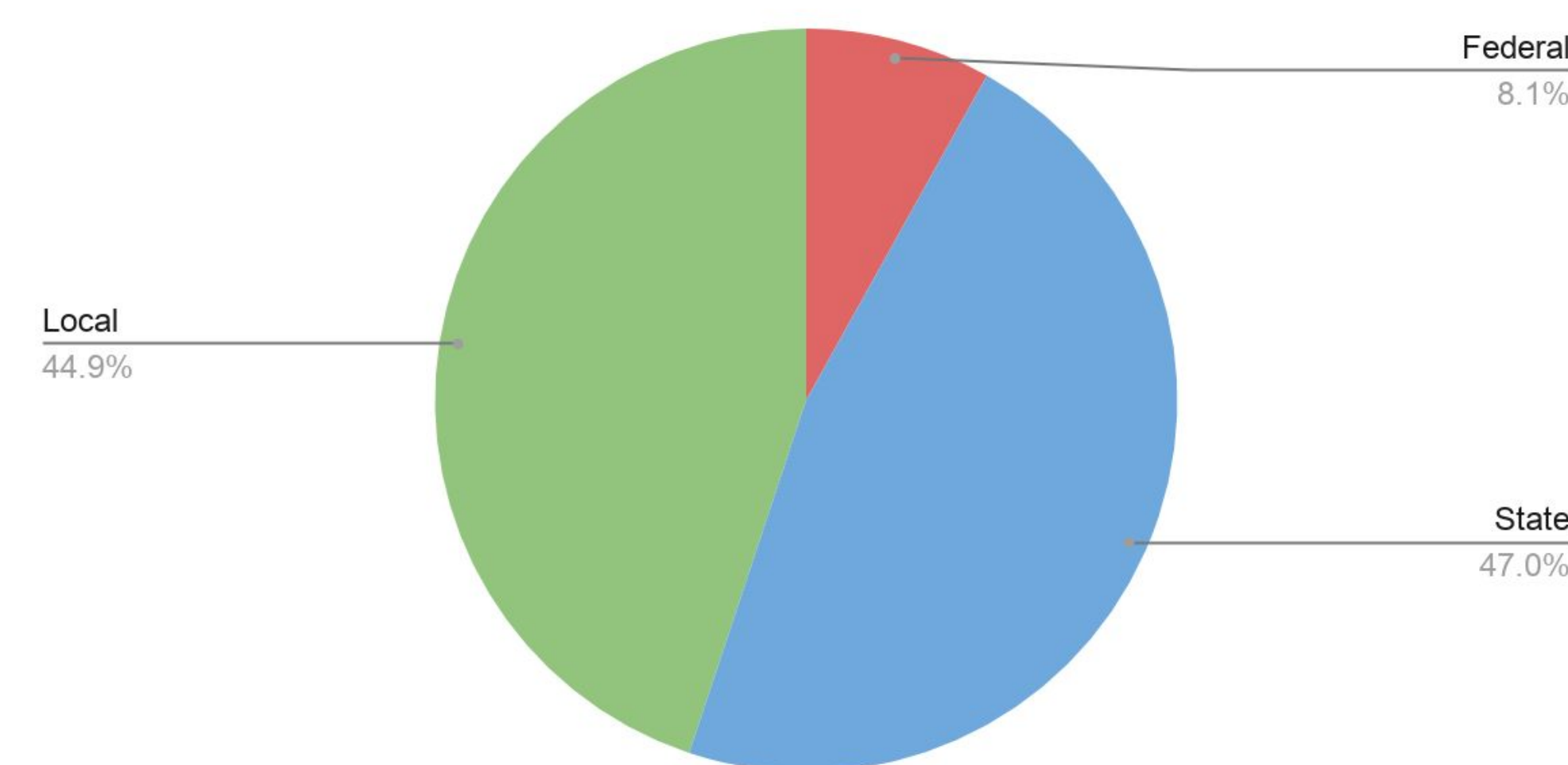
Primary Research: For my primary research I chose to interview two different public educators who both have worked in multiple school districts. These were both phone interviews, where I asked questions about access to technology, field trips, school lunches, and racial percentages in the classroom. I asked questions comparing the difference one school district to another, as well as questions about their opinions around educational gerrymandering, and public school funding.

Secondary Research: To support my primary research and continue looking at this from a national perspective, I also read a lot of academic journals about educational access, and educational gerrymandering. I also researched census data around race, wealth, and degrees per area. As well as analysing AP and IB test scores, State conducted test scores, and percentage of people moving forward with a degree after high school.

School of Public Service | Global Studies Department

Public School Funding Breakdown

Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source of funds in 2016-17



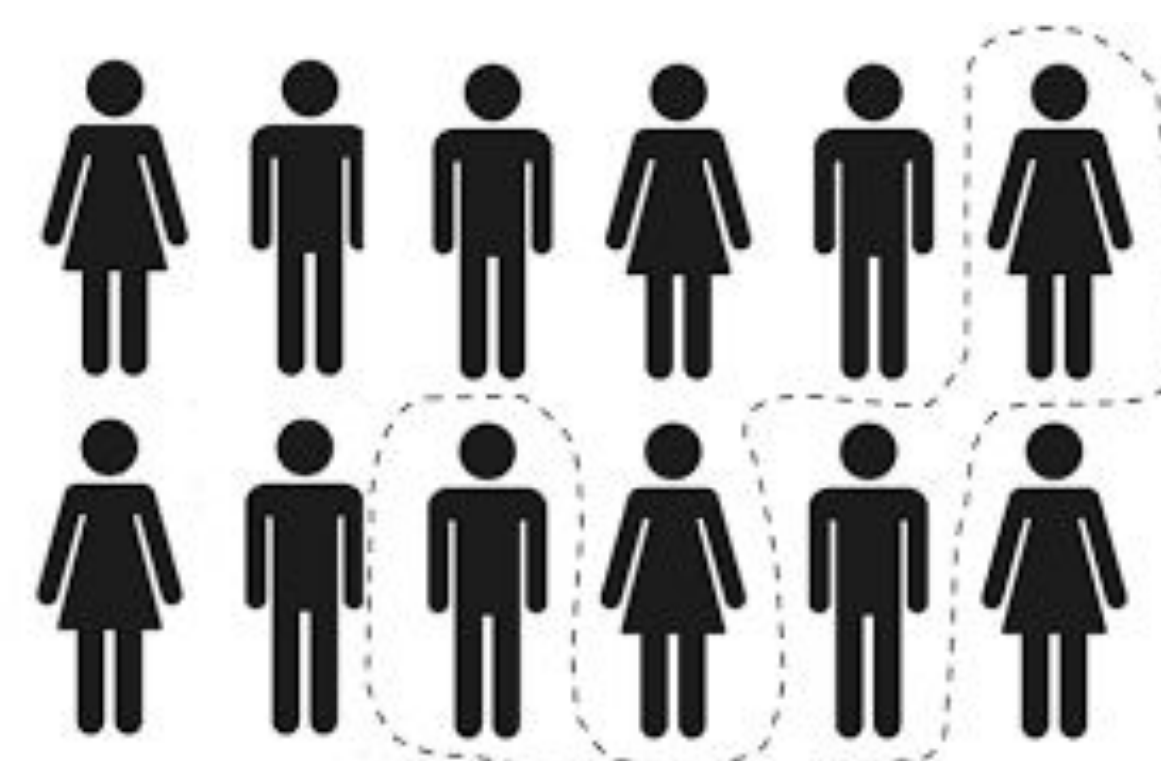
This graph shows data from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) from 2016-17. This data shows the allocation of funding from the federal, state, and local level. It is important to note that 44.9 percent of funding coming from the local level, 36.6 percent of that is coming from property taxes. This is noteworthy because if 36.6 percent of our public education is being funded by property taxes, than school districts that are drawn in areas with low property taxes will have far less funding than school districts with higher property taxes.

This disproportionately affects marginalized communities, as well as rural communities. This large cut creates disparities in access to everything from AP classes, to accredited teachers, to even access to free or reduced lunch.

Theoretical Framework

For this project I chose to narrow down on understanding two different things.

- The first being how the drawing of school districts affect our K-12 schools in the united states in terms of access to educational opportunities, social acces, and finally access to resources such as food and internet.
- The second part being how to fix the problems created by the disparities in access, and how to prevent these disparities from continuing.



IMAGE": Gerrymandering educational opportunity from Meredith P. Richards (2017)

Racial Impacts

Educational gerrymandering has become the 21st century method of classroom segregation. The drawing of school districts has dispositionally negative effects on many students of color. And the repercussions of this can be seen in many different systems throughout the United States today. Some of those being:

- The school to prison pipeline
- Access to free or affordable after school programs
- Access to free or reduced lunch
- Modern day racial wealth disparities
- AP and IB test scores
- State level test scores

Conclusion

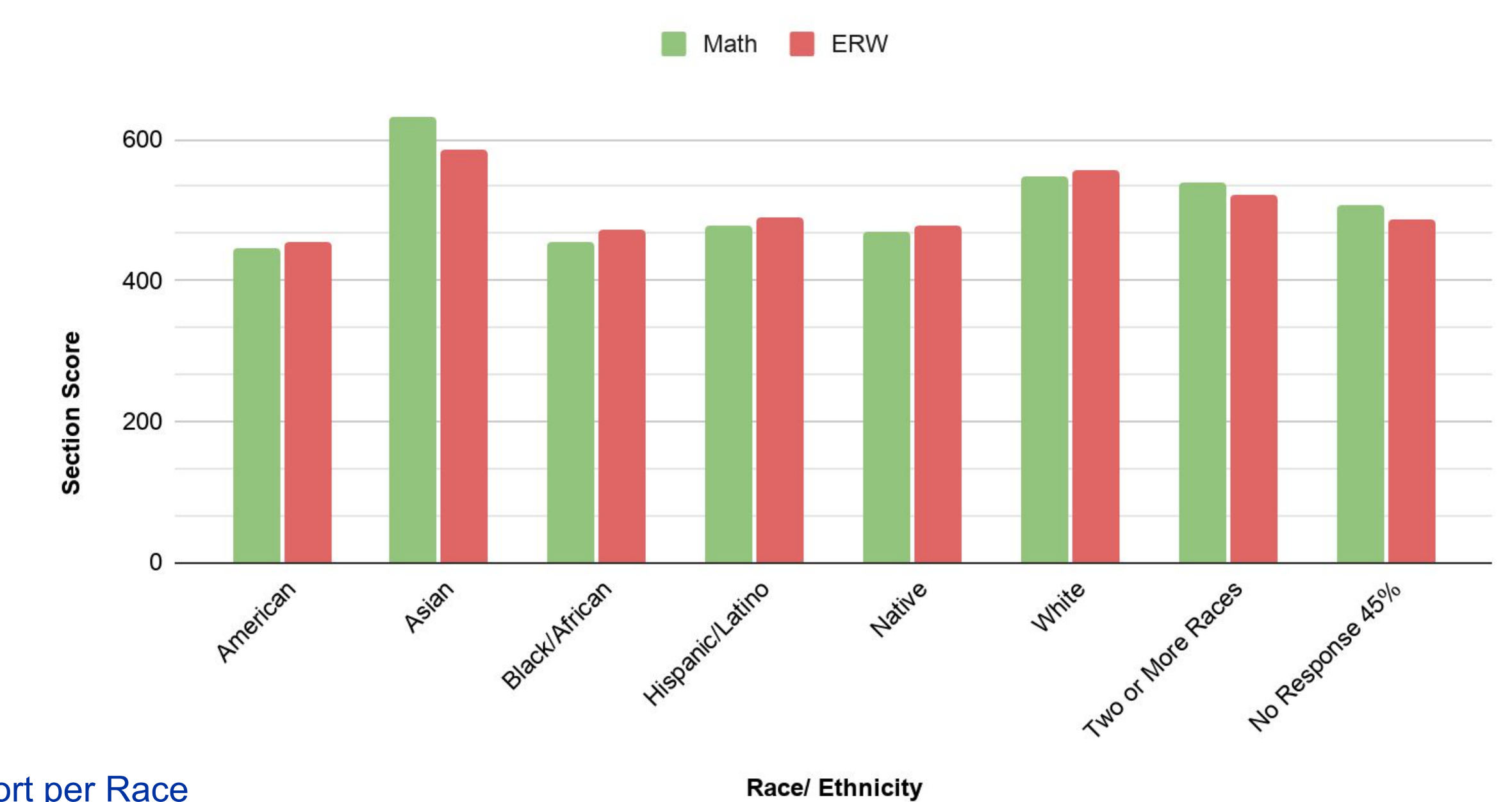
This is a complex problem and through my research I have come to the realization that it will take a complex mix of solutions. Some examples of potential solutions are as followed:

- Affirmative gerrymandering.** This practice can help create avenues to make sure that everyone is getting equal access.
- Change in funding.** Majority of funding for public schools comes from property taxes, if you make public schools a priority in federal funding, and even state funding a lot of these disparities in access will dissipate.
- Awareness.** A large part of the problem is the lack of awareness that this is an issue, the problems from this system as it is and currently is affecting generations to come, the sooner people start advocating for change in their own communities, the sooner we will come to change



IMAGE : Children in school (NYTIMES.COM) 2019

2020 SAT Suite Annual Report



Graph of 2020 SAT Suite Annual Report per Race