



# The Voluntary Transfer Program and the Racial Achievement Gap Within PAUSD



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## INTRODUCTION

What are we talking about?

- The Voluntary Transfer Program (VTP) within Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD)
- Program in which hundreds of students from underprivileged socioeconomic neighborhoods are enrolled in and bused to PAUSD schools
- The racial achievement gap in schools is influenced by systematic bias, **busing**, and **social identity threat**

Fill me in!

- **Busing**: voluntary transportation from one school district to another
- **Racial achievement gap**: Disparity in educational performance among students of different races
- **Social Identity threat**: school environment may negatively affect learning or performance of students from marginalized racial groups

What's the issue?

- Achievement gap **persists** despite programs designed to integrate VTP students
- When students feel **outcasted**, they can have lower expectations for themselves and **perpetuate negative stereotypes**

What has to be done?

- This study looked into what these programs were **lacking** by asking the VTP students themselves

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

### Inquiry approaches

- Needs assessment research: Asking questions, comparing answers, making informed decisions about what to do next
- Active research: Collaborate with members of the VTP in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction

### Data collection tools

- Survey: Aimed at learning directly from VTP students what support programs are offered to them

### Data analysis techniques

- Descriptive statistics: Describe the basic features of the data

- 1 Met with PAUSD equity coordinator, Dr. Judy Argumedo
- 2 Collected VTP data on programs and extracurriculars
- 3 Collected comparison data on programs and extracurriculars
- 4 Present findings and suggestions to district in May

## DATA AND FINDINGS

Figure 1: VTP Freshmen and Sophomores

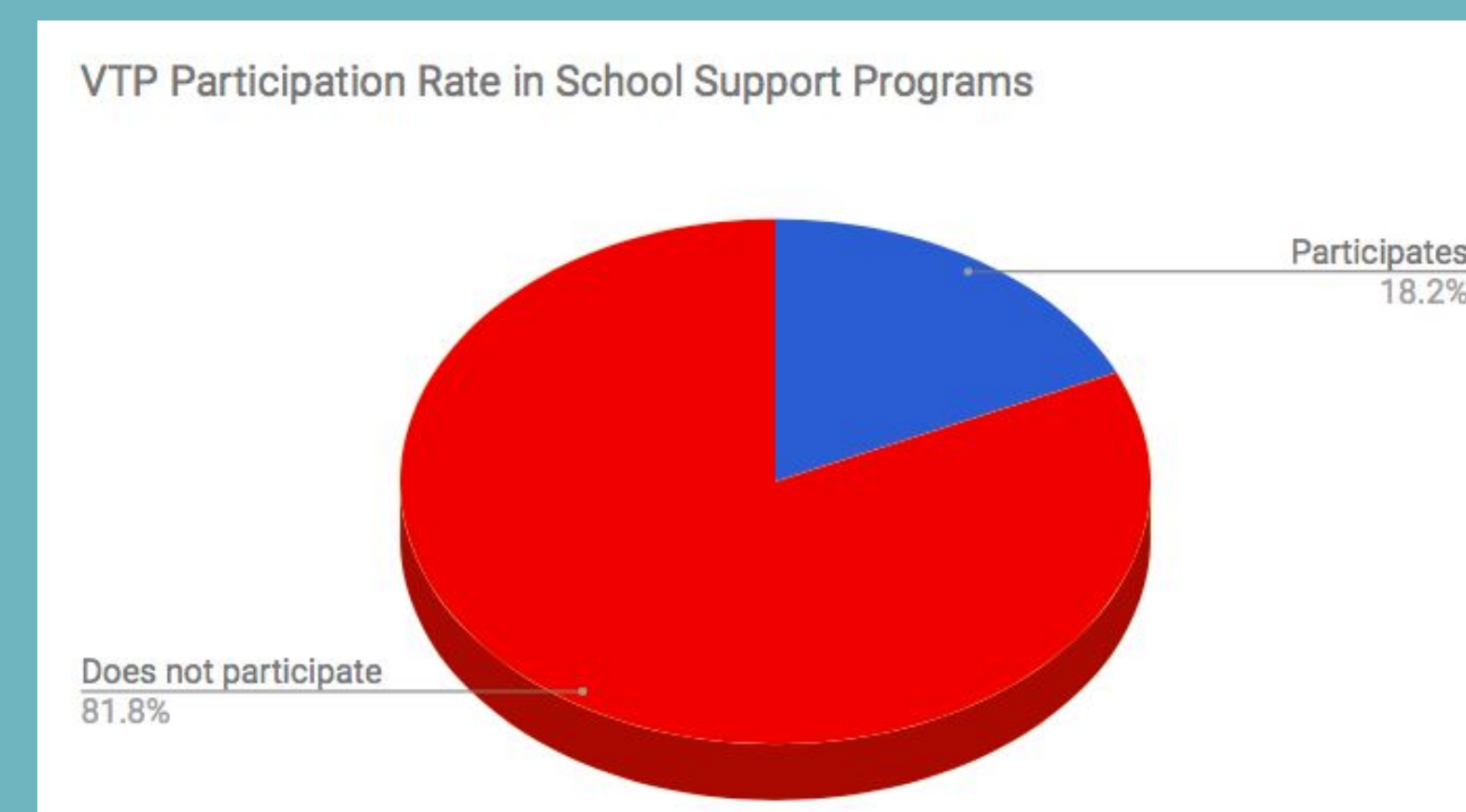


Figure 3: Non-VTP Juniors and Seniors

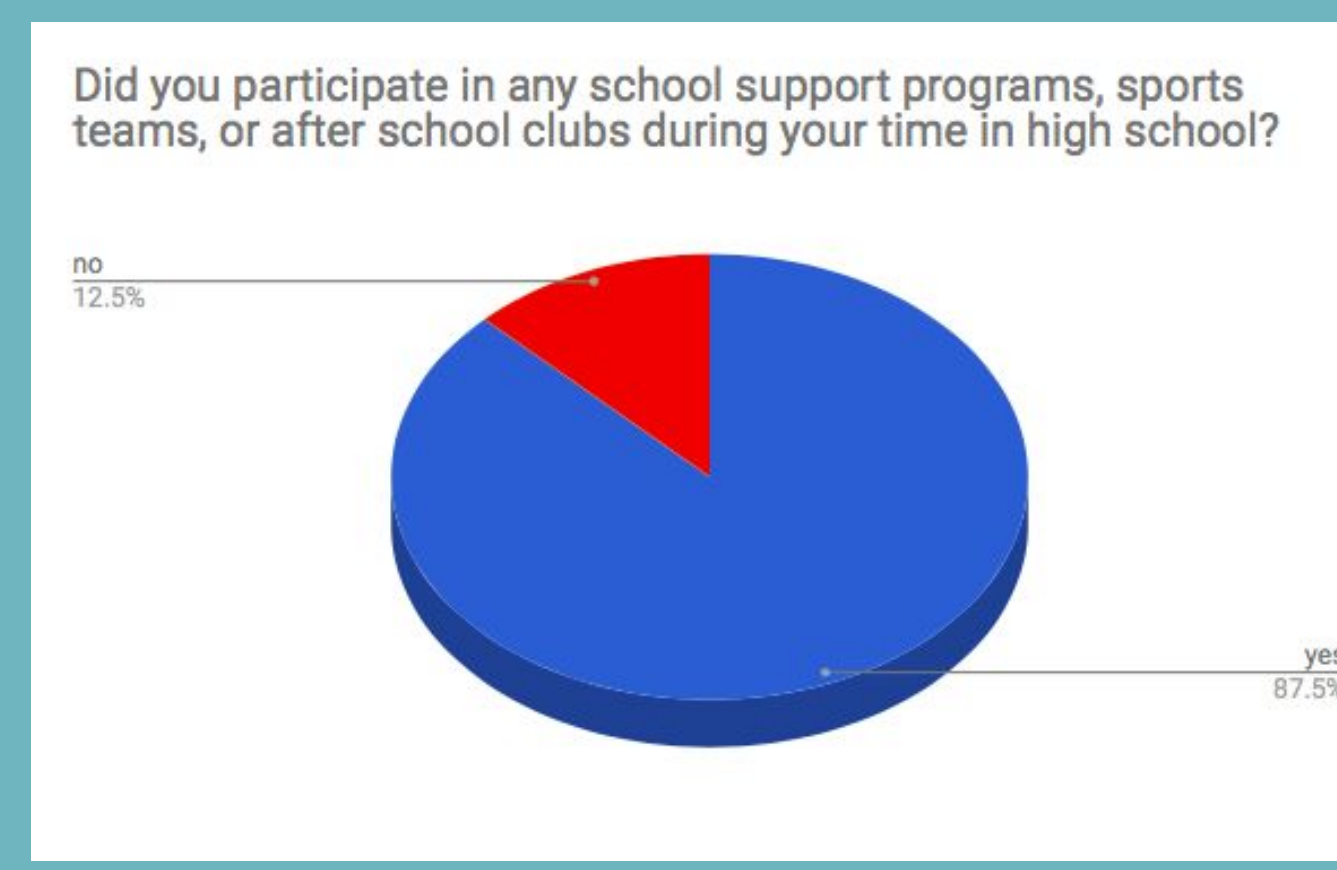


Figure 5: PAUSD Minority Students

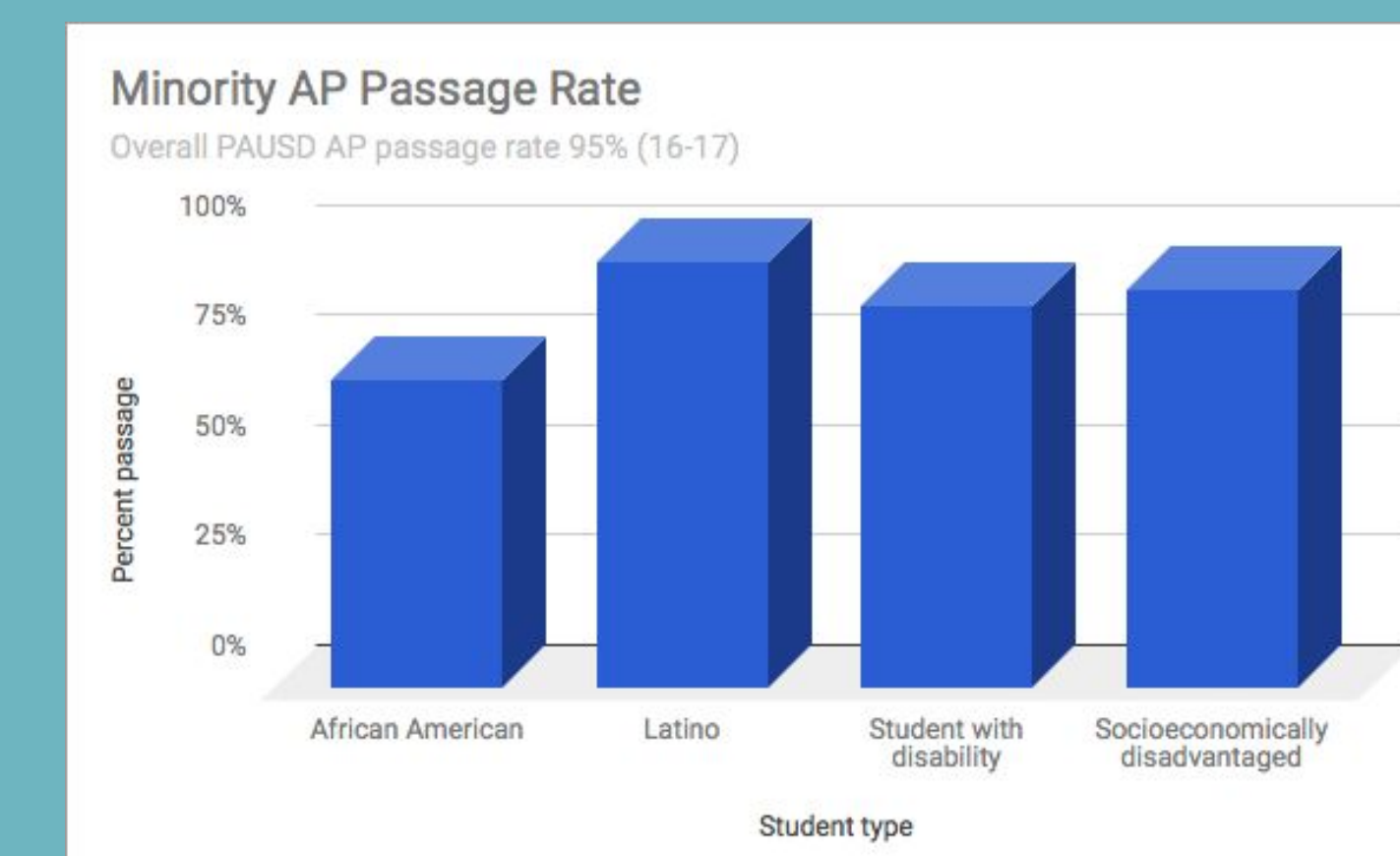


Figure 2: VTP Freshmen and Sophomores

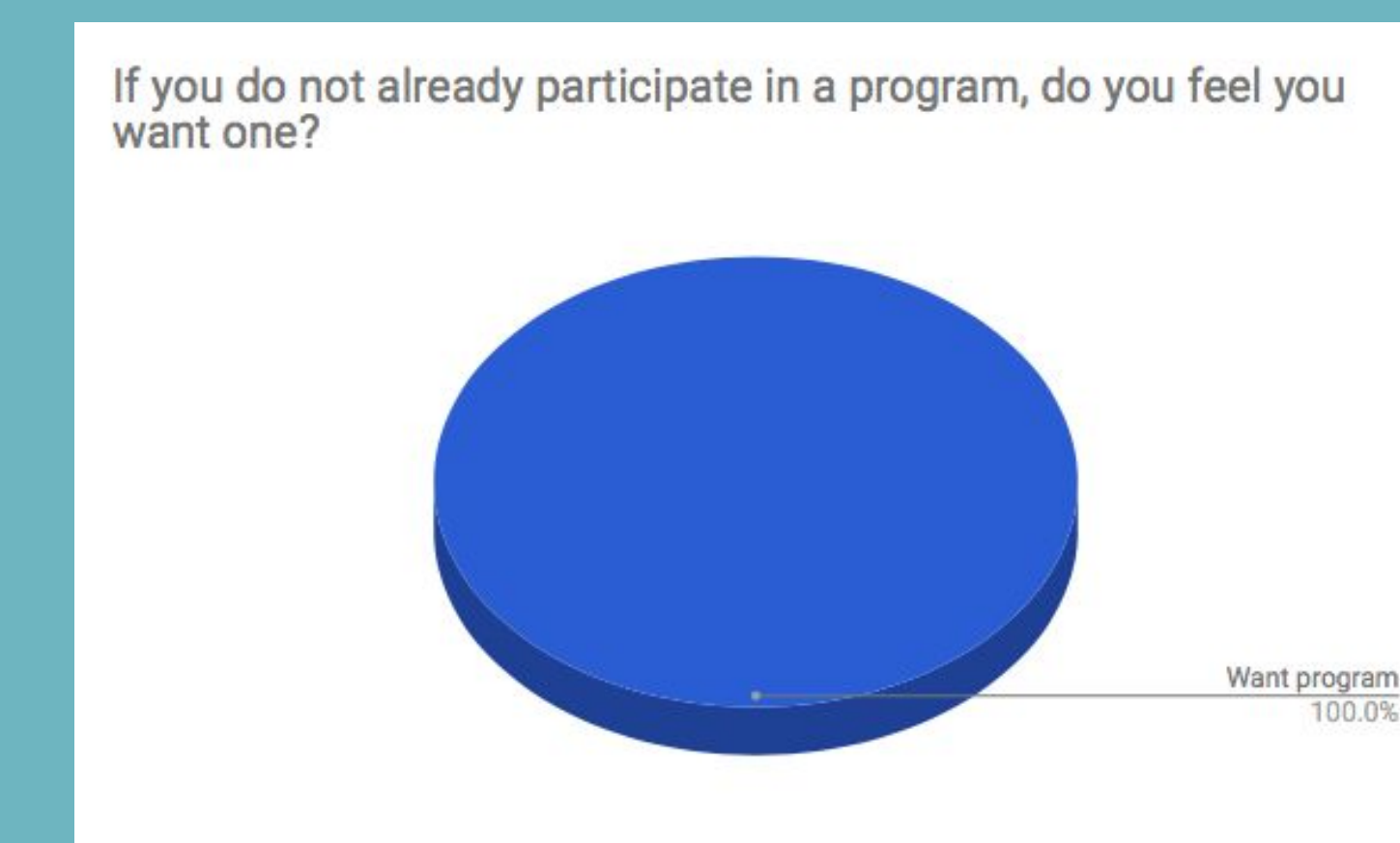


Figure 4: Non-VTP Juniors and Seniors

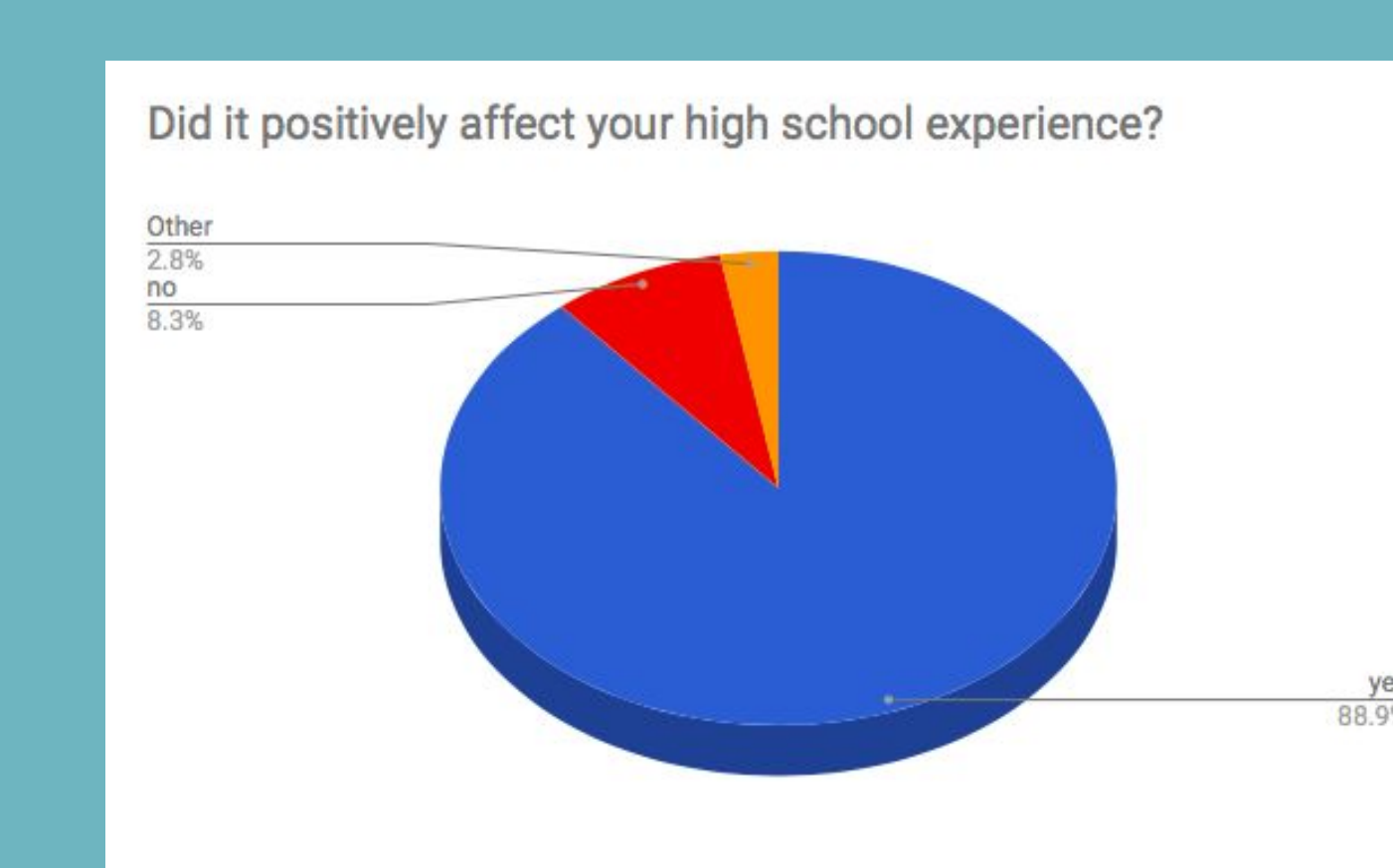
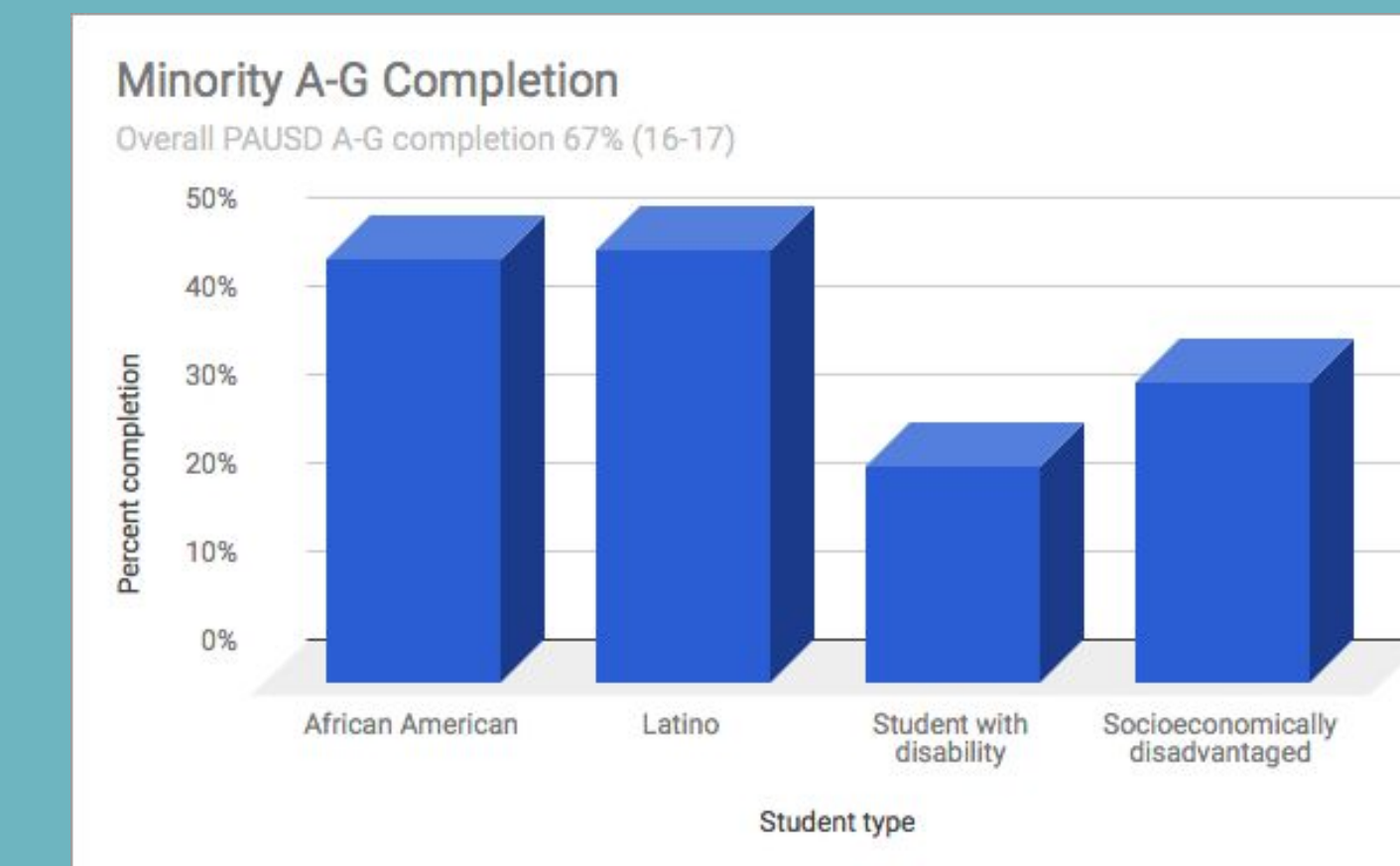


Figure 6: PAUSD Minority Students



## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

- VTP African American and Latino students are **not participating** in after school enrichment and support programs at the **same rates** compared to non-VTP students (Figure 1 compared to Figure 3)
- When Latino and African American students do take AP exams the **rates of passage are high** (Figure 5)

- The majority of non-VTP students who participated in after school activities had a **positive experience** (Figure 4)
- 100% of VTP students who do not already participate in a program, feel they **need one** (figure 2)
  - VTP Program **suggestions** made by VTP students include: theater, music, tutoring, internships, homework help, fun activities, tutors during preps, and tutors in East Palo Alto

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

- Students may need **encouragement** to take the AP exams, which enrichment programs can do
- Tutoring support could possibly **raise A-G completion** (Figure 6)
- Support could also lead students to take **academically rigorous courses** in their junior and senior years if they are supported in their foundational classes

- If students feel more supported by their school community, they may be willing to take **risks** such as enrolling in more difficult classes
- Implementing programs that VTP students have requested could make them feel as though their **voices are being heard** and they are being **welcomed** and supported
- Next steps: present findings to the district and begin process of implementing a program(s) that will decrease the racial achievement gap within PAUSD

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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