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COML 506
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Social Equity Analysis of Seattle Public Schools

Introduction

www.seattleschools.org

- The Seattle Public School District (SPS) dedicates a great deal of time, effort, and resources to addressing racial equity among its students
- Test scores and graduation rates demonstrate a consistent achievement gap between white students and students of color
- Racial equity in education is vital to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in order to be prepared for adulthood

Why Racial Equity Is Important

- Social class is the strongest predictor of achievement in school and whether a student will go to college (Allen, 2011)
- Poor students are disproportionately labeled as low-status and segregated from mainstream students and education (Allen, 2011)
- Compared to white children, children of color are more likely to attend schools that are overcrowded, under-funded, with less current technology, and a lower percentage of highly qualified teachers (Racial Equity Tools, 2017)

https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/11/16/american-students-need-to-be-able-to-dream-big/

Seattle Public Schools Profile

59 elementary schools

https://marshalles.seattleschools.org

11 K-8 schools

10 middle schools

https://dennyms.seattleschools.org

12 high schools

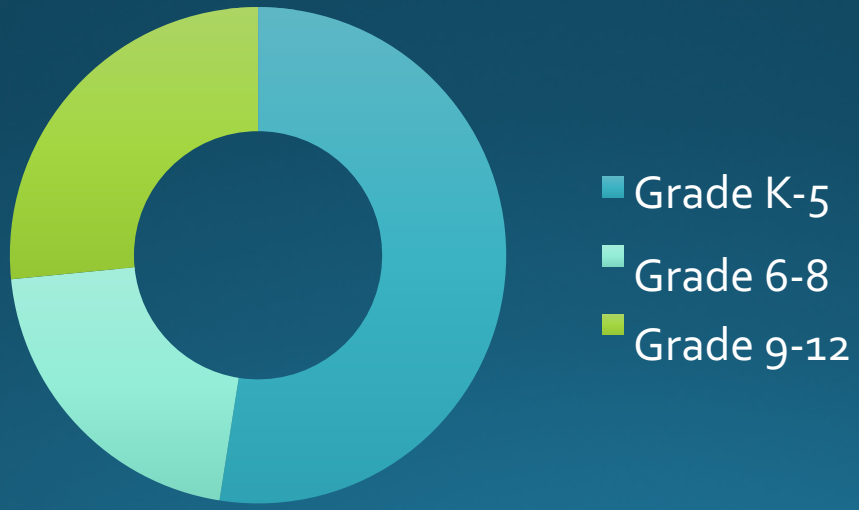
14 self-contained schools

https://franklinhs.seattleschools.org

SPS Enrollment

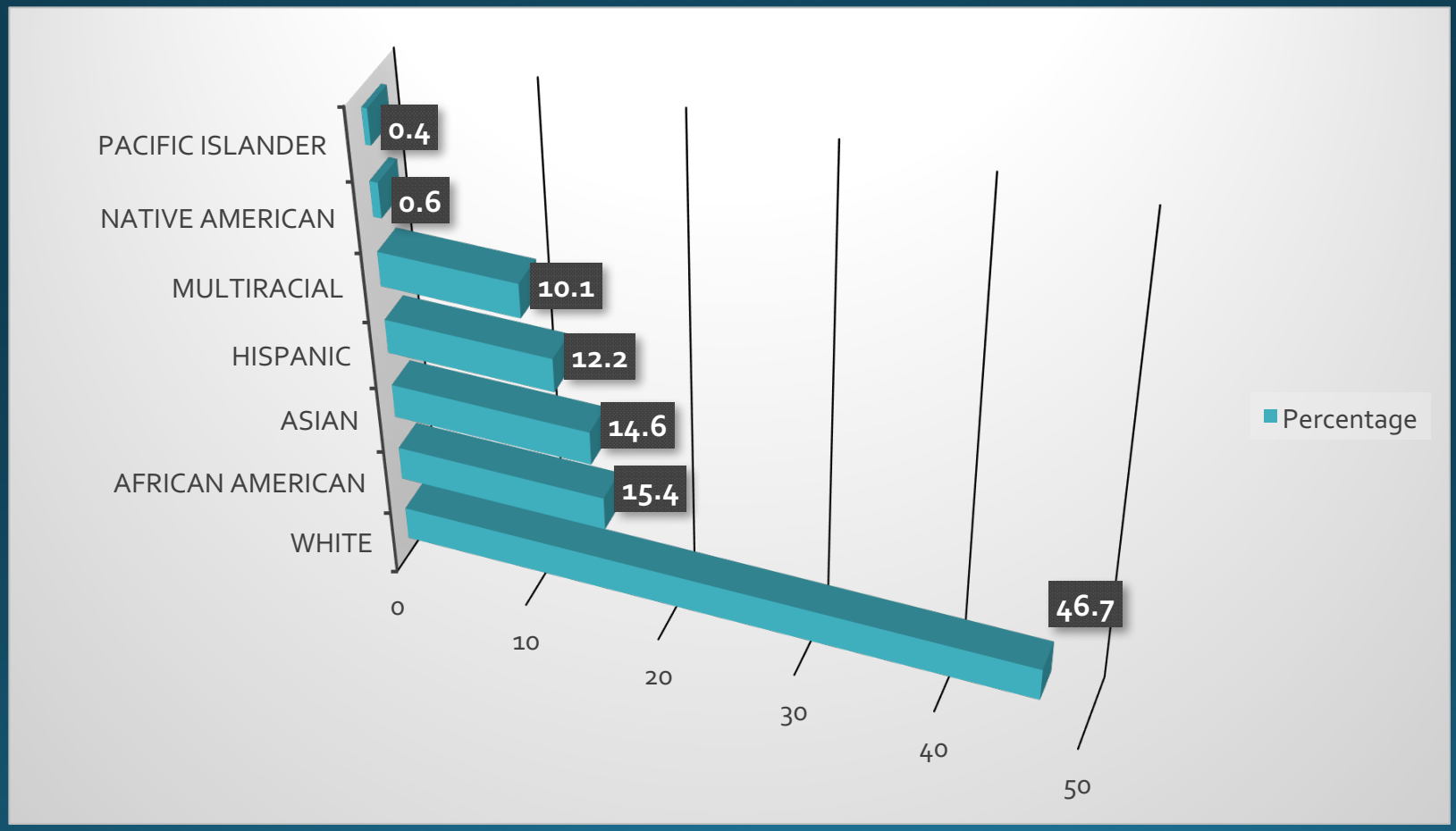
53,539 students were enrolled in SPS in 2016

- 27,789 in grades K-5 (52.8%)
- 11,277 in grades 6-8 (21.1%)
- 14,039 in grades 9-12 (26.7%)



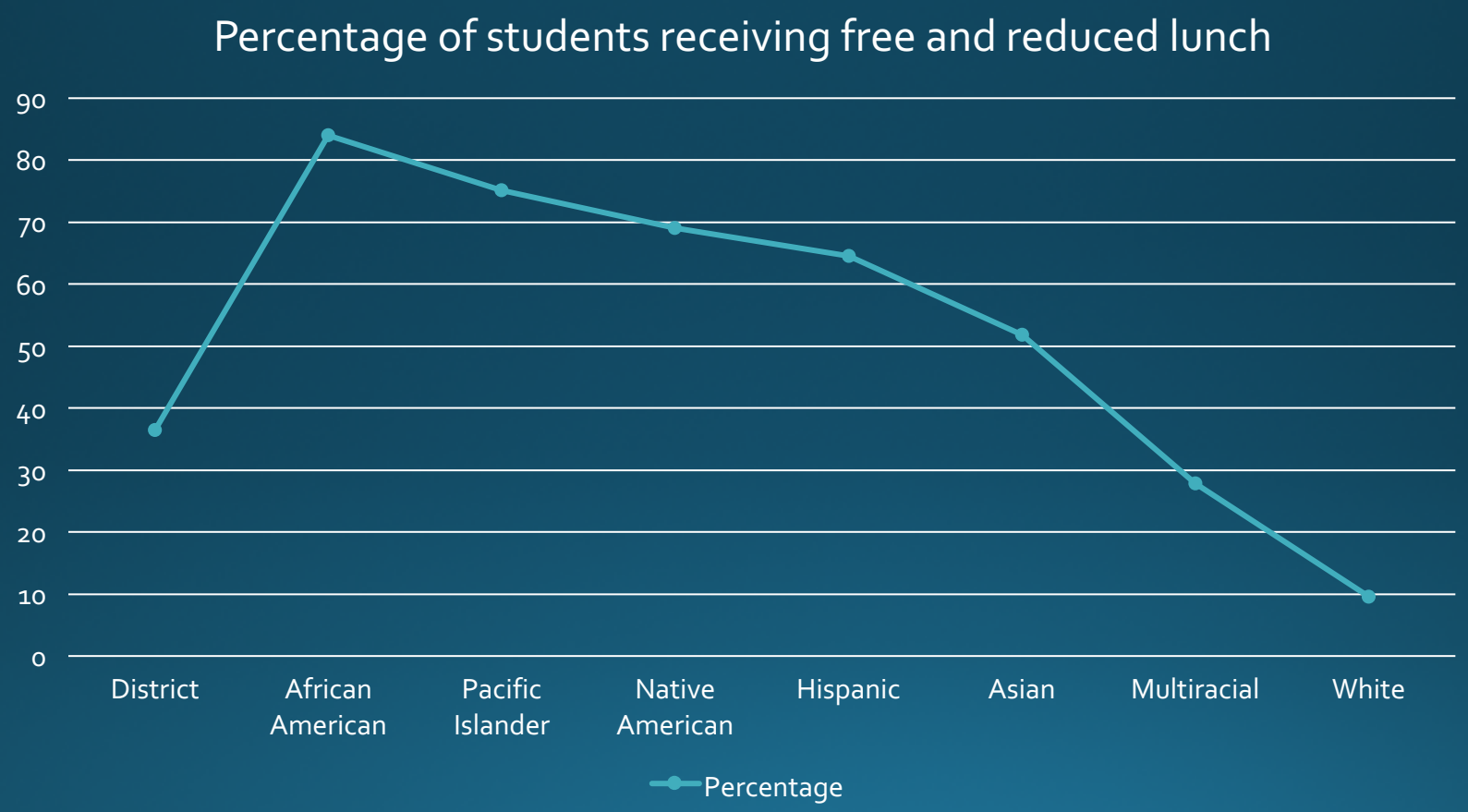
(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

SPS Enrollment



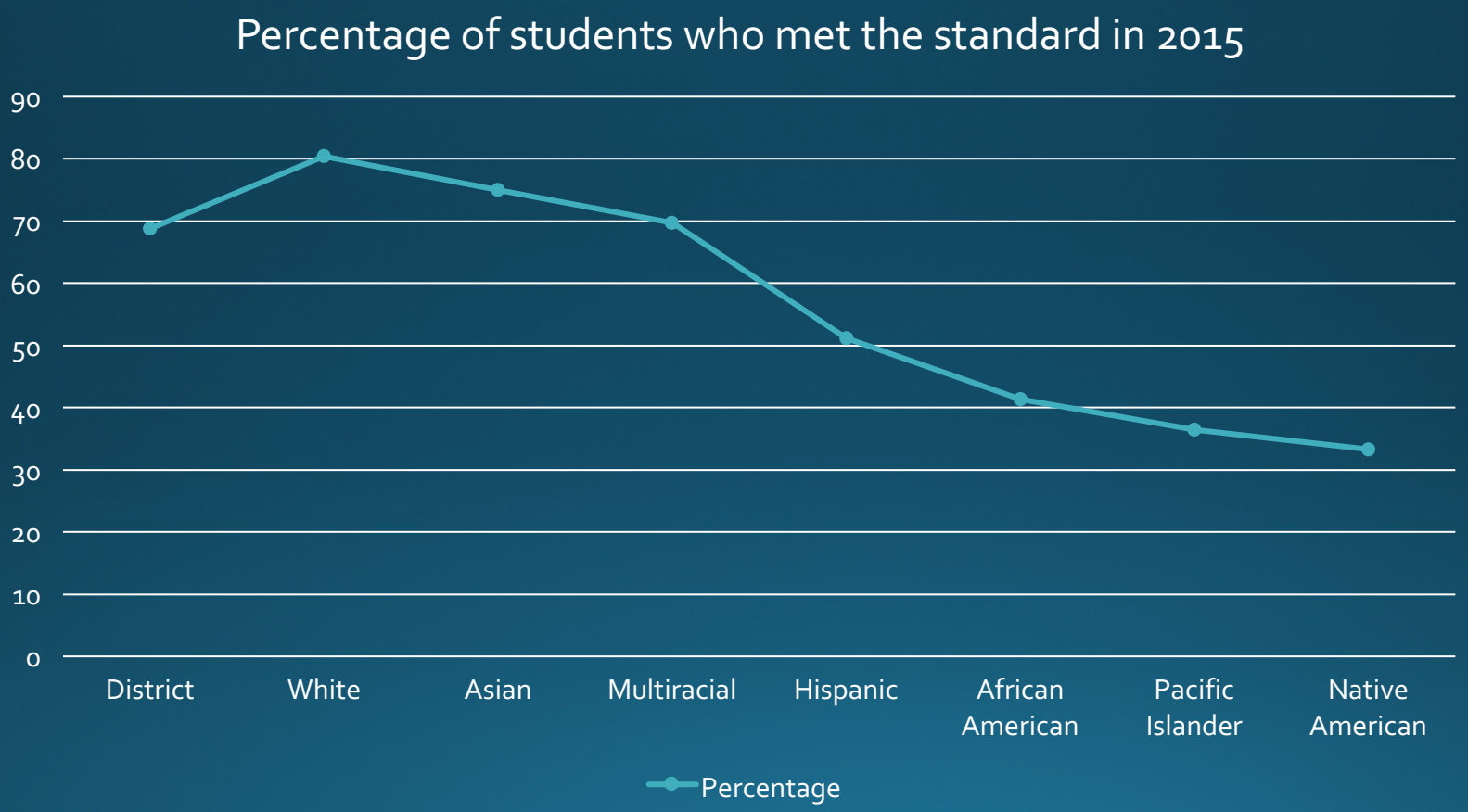
(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

SPS Free and Reduced Lunch



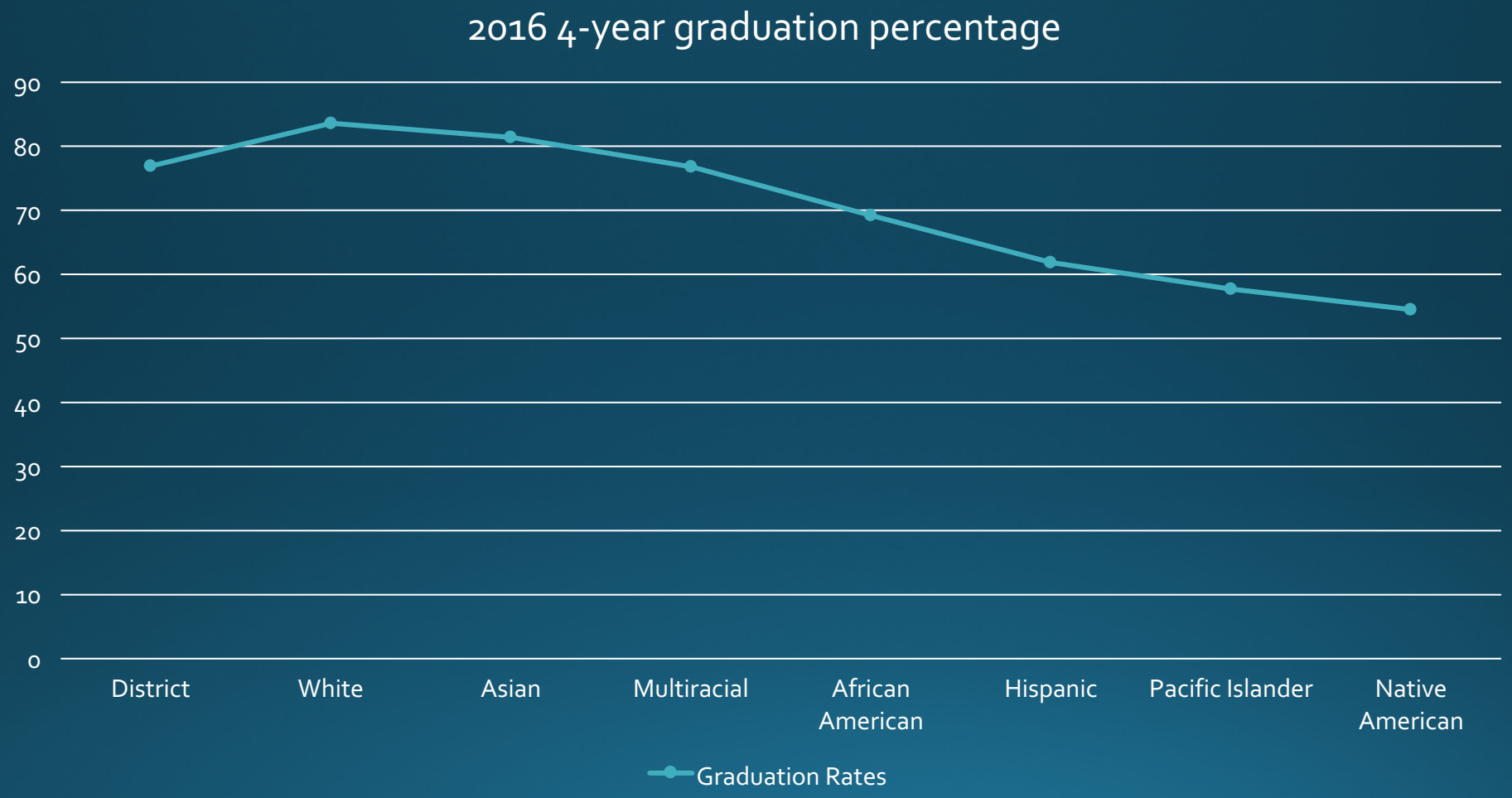
(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

SPS Third Grade Math Assessment



(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

SPS Graduation Rate



(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

Racial Equity in Education

- A 2016 study found that white SPS students tested two grades above the national average, while African American students tested 1.5 grade levels below the national average
- The 3.5 grade level difference between white and African American students in SPS is the fifth-greatest divide in the country (Seattle Times, 2016)
- SPS has instituted racial equity policies and established a Department of Racial Equity to address this important issue

SPS Racial Equity Policy

- In 2012, SPS created an official policy that committed SPS to ensure educational and racial equity
- The policy focuses SPS on closing the opportunity gap and creating learning communities that provide support and academic enrichment programs for all students
- The policy also commits SPS to ensuring the right of every student to have an equitable educational experience in a barrier-free environment with the opportunity to benefit equally

(Seattle Public Schools, 2012)

SPS Department of Racial Equity Advancement

- The Department of Racial Equity Advancement (DREA) advances the cultural transformation of Seattle Public Schools - the changes in policy, people, and practice necessary to create a culturally responsive organization that ensures racial equity and the success of every student
- Vision: Educational excellence through racial equity in every school
- Mission: To maximize culturally responsive instruction & leadership to transform educational opportunities, access and outcomes for every student, in every classroom, everyday

(Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

SPS Department of Racial Equity Advancement

DREA leads SPS' collaborative work in the areas of racial equity policy and practice. Its "toolkit" includes:

- Racial equity analysis tools
- Racial equity teams
- Professional development
- Equity and race advisory committee (Seattle Public Schools, 2017)

In addition to DREA, the City of Seattle created a Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable to explore racial equity issues in Seattle

- Education is a top priority of the Roundtable because it provides clear indicators of racial inequities on a variety of institutional and structural levels (Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, 2017)

Conclusion

1. Students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status (Darling-Hammond, 1998)

2. Minorities drop out at a greater rate than white students, which leads to higher unemployment and poverty rates (Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, 2017)

3. High school graduation rates are an indicator of the racial disparities between minorities and whites (Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, 2017)

4. The City of Seattle has taken strong steps to address racial equity in its schools, but more must be done to ensure every student has an equal chance to succeed

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