



THE

U.S. Department of EDUCATION

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President's & Secretary's Priorities

Major New Initiatives for Fiscal Year 2000

1. All students will read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade.
2. All students will master challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of 8th grade.
3. By 18 years of age, all students will be prepared for and able to afford college.
4. All states and schools will have challenging and clear standards of achievement and accountability for all children, and effective strategies for reaching those standards.
5. There will be a talented, dedicated and well-prepared teacher in every classroom.
6. Every classroom will be connected to the Internet by the year 2000 and all students will be technologically literate.
7. Every school will be strong, safe, drug-free and disciplined.

Secretary Riley and senior Department officials developed seven priorities (see *Working Document* and the *Strategic Plan*) for the Department, based on the "Call to Action" issued by the President in his State of the Union Address (February 4, 1997). These seven priorities are as follows...

All students will read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade.

- [America Reads Challenge](#)
- [Reading Excellence Program](#)
- [The Reading Summit](#)
- [Class Size Reduction and Teacher Quality Initiative](#)
- [America Goes Back to School: Get Involved!](#)
- [Voluntary National Tests](#)
- [Family Involvement](#)

All students will master challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of 8th grade.

Visit the [America Counts website](#), where you will find information such as speeches, fact sheets, publications, reports and the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).

By 18 years of age, all students will be prepared for and able to afford college.

- [America's HOPE Scholarship](#)
- [Direct Loan Program](#)
- [Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education](#)
- [Project EASI](#)
- [Think College-- Learn for a Lifetime](#)

All states and schools will have challenging and clear standards of achievement

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and accountability for all children, and effective strategies for reaching those standards.

- Voluntary National Tests
- Goals 2000
- School-to-Work
- Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 -- Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program

There will be a talented, dedicated and well-prepared teacher in every classroom.

The Teacher Quality Website offers information for policymakers and educators on a range of issues -- recruiting and preparing teachers, providing professional development opportunities, and raising teaching standards. It includes classroom resources, research, and information for individuals interested in becoming a teacher.

Every classroom will be connected to the Internet by the year 2000 and all students will be technologically literate.

- U.S. Department of Education Technology Initiatives
- The Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)
- North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
- Regional Technology in Education Consortia (R*TEC)

Every school will be strong, safe, drug-free and disciplined.

- School Construction and Design
- Safe & Drug Free Schools Program
- US Charter Schools
- Flexibility and Waivers
- Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 -- Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education supports the seven priorities through family and community involvement in children's learning. As members of the Partnership, thousands of family-school partners, employers, community organizations, and religious groups work together to help all children learn to high academic standards.



This page last modified -- January 6, 2000 (mhm)



FY2000 Major Initiatives and Funding Opportunities

- Summary of Department's 2000 Initiatives and Funding Opportunities
- Class Size Reduction
- Special Education Grants to States Program
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Reading Excellence
- Safe and Drug Free Schools -- Middle School Coordinators
- Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration
- Charter Schools
- Advanced Placement Initiative
- Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants
- Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology
- Bilingual Professional Development
- GEAR UP
- Learning Anytime, Anywhere Partnerships
- New American High Schools
- 2000 New Initiatives and Funding Opportunities
 - Small Schools
 - Elementary School Counseling and Demonstration Program
 - Safe and Drug Free Schools -- Alternative Strategies
 - Adult Education/English Literacy Civics Education Grants

Class Size Reduction

\$1.2 billion in FY1999, \$1.3 billion in FY2000
(a \$100 million increase)

Helps school districts hire 100,000 teachers over 7 years to reduce class sizes in grades 1-3 to a nationwide average of 18.

Special Education Grants to States Program

4.31 billion in FY1999, \$4.99 billion in FY2000
(a \$679 million increase)

A formula grant program to assist the 50 States and territories in meeting the excess costs of providing special education and related services to our nation's 6.25 million children with disabilities.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

\$200 million in FY1999, \$453.7 million in FY2000
(a \$253.7 million increase)

Funds school-community partnerships to keep schools open after-school and summers as safe havens for enhanced learning.

Reading Excellence

\$260 million in FY1999, \$260 million in FY2000
(no increase)

Helps children learn to read well and independently by the end of the third grade through reading instruction based on scientifically based reading research, professional development, family literacy, and extended learning activities.

Safe and Drug Free Schools—Middle School Coordinators

Enables Middle Schools to hire alcohol, drug and violence prevention coordinators.

\$35 million in FY1999, \$50 million in FY2000
(a \$15 million increase)

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration

\$145 million in FY1999, \$220 million in FY2000
(a \$75 million increase)

Helps raise student achievement by assisting public schools across the country to implement effective, comprehensive school reforms that are based on reliable research and effective practices, and include an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement.

Public Charter Schools

\$100 million in FY1999, \$145 million in FY2000
(a \$45 million increase)

Helps charter schools meet start-up costs associated with creating their new public schools, such as developing curriculum, purchasing equipment, or providing professional development for teachers.

Advanced Placement Incentive Program

\$4 million in FY1999, \$15 million in FY2000
(an \$11 million increase)

Enables States to reimburse part or all of the cost of test fees for eligible low-income individuals.

Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants

\$75 million in FY1999, \$98 million in FY2000
(a \$23 million increase)

Funds State, Partnership, and Teacher Recruitment projects that support systemic change in state teacher licensure policies and practices; projects to promote comprehensive and lasting change to teacher preparation programs; and the recruitment and preparation of excellent teachers for America's classrooms.

Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3)

\$75 million in FY1999, \$75 million in FY2000
(no increase)

A national teacher preparation reform initiative to ensure that all future teachers are technology-proficient educators who are well prepared to teach 21st Century students.

Bilingual Professional Development

\$50 million in FY1999, \$75 million in FY2000
(a \$25 million increase)

Three competitive grant programs to meet the need for fully certified bilingual and ESL teachers and other educational personnel, and to insure well-prepared personnel to provide services to limited English proficient students.

GEAR UP

\$120 million in FY1999, \$200 million in FY2000
(an \$80 million increase)

A long-range early college preparation and awareness program that gives low-income students and their families pathways to college by partnering middle and high schools with colleges and community

organizations or through
State-administered programs.

Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnerships

\$10 million in FY1999, \$15 million in FY2000
(a \$5 million increase)

Supports postsecondary partnerships among colleges, businesses, and other organizations to promote technology-mediated distance education that is not limited by time or place.

New American High Schools (NAHS)

\$4.05 million in FY1999, \$4 million in
FY2000
(no increase)

Showcases and supports outstanding high schools that have committed to extensive reform efforts, raised academic standards for all students, and achieved excellent results.

New Initiatives

Small Schools Initiative

\$45 million in FY2000

Helps LEAs plan, develop and implement smaller learning communities (goal of not more than 600 students in a learning community) for students in large high schools (defined as 1,000 students or more) to create a more personalized high school experience for students and improve student achievement.

Elementary School Counseling and Demonstration

\$20 million in FY2000

Provides grants to establish or expand counseling programs in elementary schools.

Safe and Drug Free Schools—Alternative Strategies

\$10 million in FY2000

Helps school districts identify effective procedures, policies, and programs that serve to discipline students without suspending or expelling them.

Adult Education/English Literacy Civics Education Grants

\$7 million in FY2000

Helps states and communities provide limited English proficient (LEP) adults with expanded access to high quality English literacy (EL) programs linked to civics and life skills instruction, including understanding and navigating the U.S. government system, the public education system, the workplace, and other key institutions in American life.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Vice President

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, January 12, 2000

Contact:
(202) 456-7035

**VICE PRESIDENT GORE ANNOUNCES NEW INVESTMENT TO CREATE
SMALLER, SAFER AND MORE SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOLS**

Washington, D.C. – Vice President Gore today unveiled a \$120 million initiative to create smaller, safer and better high schools. The Administration's Small, Safe and Successful High Schools initiative -- which will be included in the Administration's budget for Fiscal Year 2001 -- exemplifies the Vice President's commitment to reforming the American high school, and ensuring a world-class education for all of America's students.

"The idea is simple: small schools give kids a big boost," said Vice President Gore. "Smaller schools mean more personal attention to the varied needs of all our children, helping both those who are struggling and those who are excelling to achieve their full potential."

The program would offer competitive grants to local school districts to create smaller schools or break up larger schools by funding innovative strategies such as autonomous schools-within-schools, career academies, restructured school days, and other innovations that allow schools to ensure that every student receives personal attention and academic support. Funds to create smaller schools could be used for planning and implementation costs, including costs to reorganize schools, train teachers, renovate facilities, and provide extended learning time and support services for students.

In addition to creating smaller, better high schools, the grants would help schools create a clear focus on student success: innovative, engaging and challenging curriculum integrated around a coherent focus; teachers working together to meet the needs of their students; strong leadership; the involvement of families and community; and technology to enhance achievement.

Research confirms what parents intuitively believe: that smaller schools are safer and more productive because students feel less alienated, more nurtured and more connected to caring adults, and teachers feel that they have more opportunity to get to know and support their students. Smaller schools also have better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems. Research also shows that small schools can offer a strong core curriculum and, in most cases, a level of academically advanced courses comparable to large schools.

Recent incidents of school violence, like the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, are causing serious alarm among parents and students who are unsure what has caused such tremendous alienation and aggression in some of our teenagers. In addition to the need for more parental involvement and stricter discipline policies, many educators are pointing to a systemic problem - the model of the American high school.

In response to these concerns, Representative David Obey (D-WI) included \$45 million in the Fiscal Year 2000 budget to create smaller high schools. The new Administration initiative announced today will build on Rep. Obey's down-payment and will help our children make the most of their education.

"Tragic incidents of school violence make it clear that many of our teenagers need more attention than larger high schools can give them," added the Vice President. "We must help working families struggling to give their children attention and direction, by ensuring that our public high schools offer connections to caring adults as well as high academic standards."

Since the end of World War II, the number of schools nationwide has declined seventy percent, while average enrollment has grown 500 percent, or fivefold. There are more than 12,400 three and four year high schools in the United States. More than seventy percent of students in these schools attend a school with more than 1,000 students, and enrollments of 2,000 and 3,000 are common.

"As our economy changes, so must our schools. It's time for the large, factory-like high schools of the 20th century to make way for the smaller, more flexible and innovative institutions that will mark the 21st century," Gore said.

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PRESIDENT CLINTON'S COMMITMENT TO INVEST IN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION

January 5, 2000

"Today too many of our schools are so old they're falling apart, or so over-crowded students are learning in trailers. Last fall, Congress missed the opportunity to change that. This year, with 53 million children in our schools, Congress must not miss that opportunity again."

-- President Clinton, State of the Union Address, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S FY2001 BUDGET DEMONSTRATES A STRONG COMMITMENT TO INVESTING IN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION. THE FY2001 BUDGET:

- **RENEWS THE PRESIDENT'S STRONG COMMITMENT TO HIS SCHOOL MODERNIZATION TAX CREDIT BOND PROPOSAL**

The President's School Modernization Bond proposal provides \$24.8 billion in tax credit bonds over two years to modernize up to 6,000 schools. This proposal has an estimated cost of \$3.7 billion over five years, and is fully paid for in his budget. Within this program, \$2.4 billion is reserved for Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.

- **INCLUDES A NEW \$1.3 BILLION SCHOOL URGENT/EMERGENCY RENOVATION LOAN AND GRANT PROPOSAL**

This \$1.3 billion program could support nearly \$7 billion of (approximately 8,300) renovation projects in high-poverty, high-need school districts with little or no capacity to fund urgent repairs over the next 5 years. Both loans and grants would be made available, with the smaller grant program directed toward the neediest districts.

NATIONALLY, THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

- **One-Third of All Schools Need Extensive Repairs.** One third of all public schools – about 25,000 schools – need extensive repair or replacement. *School Facilities: The Condition of America's Schools*, GAO Report Number HEHS-95-61, 1995-6.
- **Average School is 42 Years Old.** The average public school in America is 42 years old, and school buildings begin rapid deterioration after 40 years. *How Old are America's Schools*, NCES, 1999.
- **\$112 Billion Needed Just for Repairs.** \$112 billion is needed just to repair the existing schools across the nation. *School Facilities: The Condition of America's Schools*, GAO Report Number HEHS-95-61, 1995-6.
- **School Enrollment Higher than Ever.** A record 52.7 million children are enrolled in elementary and secondary school today, and this number will climb to 54.3 million by 2008. 2,400 new public schools

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION TAX CREDIT BOND PROPOSAL

- This new type of bond – a tax credit bond – would provide interest-free financing to help state and local governments pay for school construction and renovation to help address issues of aging facilities and overcrowding.
- Instead of paying the interest and principal on school construction bonds, the issuer would only be responsible for repaying the principal. The federal government would provide tax credits to the bondholders in lieu of interest payments.
- The Administration's proposal would support nearly \$25 billion in bonds over the next two years to help states and districts build and modernize up to 6,000 public schools.
- President Clinton's proposal has an estimated cost of \$3.7 billion over five years, and is fully paid for in his budget.

SCHOOL RENOVATION LOAN AND GRANT PROGRAM

- The School Renovation program would provide interest free federal loans and grants to needy school districts to fund urgent renovations – approximately 8,300 renovation projects would receive funding over 5 years.
- The loan program would be targeted to those districts unable to finance the interest cost associated with facilities renovation.
- The smaller direct grant program would provide direct funding to the needy school districts unable to finance the capital expenditures associated with school renovation.
- Renovations funded through loans and grants could include repairs to roofs, climate control systems, or plumbing. Loans and grants could also fund school modernization to improve technology capability, if no other source of funds is available.



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Funding Opportunities

If you're interested in applying for a grant or contract, here's information you'll need to know.

- [Discretionary Grant Application Packages](#) -- lists grant competitions that are currently open and provides links to downloadable application packages, forms, and other information you'll need to apply.
- [Federal Register documents](#) -- includes notices inviting applications for grant competitions, as well as funding priorities, selection criteria, regulations, and relevant workshops and meetings.
- [FY 2000 Forecast of Funding Opportunities under ED Discretionary Grant Programs](#) -- lists the dates, estimated number of awards, and funding amounts for virtually all the Department's direct grant and fellowship competitions for new awards.
- [What Should I Know About ED Grants](#) -- offers a non-technical summary of ED's discretionary grants process (application, review, award, administration, grant closeout, and audit) and the laws and regulations that govern the process.
- [Guide to ED Programs](#) -- provides a concise description of each of about 175 programs that ED administers, identifies who may apply, and gives the name and telephone number of the ED office to contact for more information.
- [ED General Administrative Regulations \(EDGAR\)](#) -- defines the administrative requirements for managing projects funded by discretionary grants awarded by ED.
- [Grants and Contracts Information](#) -- provides additional information including currently available contract solicitations, a forecast of upcoming contract opportunities, grants policy bulletins, and [databases of contract and grant awards](#).
- [ED Budget](#) -- provides an overview of the Federal role in education, an explanation of the Federal budget process, news about ED's budget, and program-by-program details of the President's budget request.
- Some ED offices and programs maintain pages that may provide additional information of interest:
 - [Bilingual Education and Minority Languages \(OBEMLA\) Funding Opportunities](#)
 - [Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program](#)
 - [Migrant Education Grant Information](#)
 - [Rehabilitation Services Administration \(RSA\) Program Application Kits](#)
 - [Resources for Postsecondary Institutions](#)
 - [Safe & Drug-Free Schools Program](#)
 - [Special Education Programs](#)

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FOR RELEASE
December 9, 1999

Contact:
Jim Bradshaw
(202) 401-2310

NEW WEB SITE AIMS TO HELP TEACHERS FIND LEARNING RESOURCES

www.thegateway.org

A new tool is now available to help teachers pinpoint -- from thousands of learning resources on the Internet -- the one that is right for their students, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley announced today. The Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) at www.thegateway.org is designed for teachers to type a topic, grade level, and other information into a search screen that then retrieves -- from more than 140 web sites -- lessons, instructional units, and other free educational materials on that topic, for that grade level.

"The web," Riley said, "puts many thousands of learning resources within reach of anyone with Internet access. It's no surprise that one of the most popular uses of this new medium, among teachers, is searching for resources that can help students learn. But finding the right resource on a particular topic for your students can take time. And time is in short supply for our teachers. That's one reason GEM is so important."

GEM lets teachers, as well as parents and students, search instructional materials of more than 140 federal, state, university, non-profit, and commercial organizations. These materials may also be browsed by subject area or key word. Currently, more than 7,000 items are included in GEM with hundreds of new resources being added and new consortium members joining each month.

"GEM is more than a web site," said Linda Roberts, special advisor to the secretary for technology. "It is a solution that was developed by a consortium of organizations that got together and said, 'Let's find a way to make it easier for teachers to find lesson ideas across all our web sites with one simple search'."

Roberts noted that GEM is one of the Education Department's responses to President Clinton's April 19, 1997, call for federal agencies to improve and expand access to teaching and learning resources on the Internet. The department and more than 40 other federal organizations also responded by creating a web site that makes teaching and learning resources from across the federal government available in one place: the Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) web site at www.ed.gov/free/. While teaching and learning resources are the aim of both GEM and FREE, FREE focuses only on those created with federal support. GEM includes mostly materials not created with federal support. Also, the search tools differ.

"FREE relies on an off-the-shelf tool that searches the full text of each resource," explained Keith Stubbs of the National Library of Education, who oversees the department's support for GEM. "GEM works like the card catalog system in a library. GEM looks through the card catalog, or what are technically called 'metadata records,' for resources that match what the teacher requests. The teacher can then read the card catalog descriptions of those resources, or go directly to the resources, which reside on the server of the organizations that created or own them. A GEM search retrieves fewer resources than most search tools, and with more precision. Also, in the future, teachers will be able to search and find resources by state academic standards."

Both GEM and FREE respond to the president's technology goal of improving content and online learning resources. The president's technology goals also include Internet access for all students and teachers, connections to the Internet for all schools and classrooms, and training and support for all teachers, so that all teachers can integrate technology into instruction.

The GEM Consortium is spearheaded by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology with

support from the National Library of Education in the U.S. Department of Education. The ERIC Clearinghouse, located at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, also developed the software and architecture for GEM.

###

NOTE TO EDITORS: A list of organizations that are GEM Consortium Members may be found at www.geminfo.org/Consortium/members.html



ADMINISTRATION INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS CONTACTS

AGENCY	NAME	TITLE	PHONE	FAX	E-MAIL
Agriculture	Maria Hernandez	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/720-6643	202/720-8819	Maria.Hernandez@usda.gov
Commerce	Edward Prewitt	Deputy Assistant Secretary for IGA	202/482-1389	202/482-6072	eprewitt@doc.gov
Corporation for National Service	John Vezina	Intergovernmental Affairs	202/606-5000	202/565-2784	Jvezina@cns.gov
Defense	Linda Leeman	Special Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs	703/695-1436	703/697-8299	leeman_linda@osd.pentagon.mil
Education	Cheryl Parker Rose	Director of IG and Interagency Affairs	202/401-3728	202/260-7465	Cheryl_Parker_Rose@ed.gov
Energy	Linda Lingle	Principal Deputy & Asst. Secretary for Congressional & IGA	202/586-5450	202/586-4891	linda.lingle@hq.doe.gov
Environmental Protection Agency	Diane E. Thompson	Associate Administrator for Congressional & IG Relations	202/260-5200	202/260-4046	thompson.dianee@epa.gov
	Richard Dickerson	Director, Mayor's Desk	202/564-3704	202/501-1544	Dickerson.richard@epa.gov
FEMA	Martha S. Braddock	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/646-4515	202/646-4039	martha.braddock@fema.gov
General Services Administration	Rachel Hirschberg	Congressional Liaison for Congressional and IGA	202/501-0563	202/219-5742	rachel.hirschberg@gsa.gov
Health and Human Services	Andy Hyman	Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/690-6060	202/205-2727	ahyman@os.dhhs.gov
Housing and Urban Development	Nancy Kirshner-Rodriguez	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations Office of the Secretary	202/708-0030	202/708-9981	Nancy_Kirshner-Rodriguez@HUD.gov
Interior	Grace Garcia	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/208-5336	202/208-1821	grace_garcia@ios.doi.gov
Justice	Brian de Vallance	Director Office of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/514-3465	202/514-2504	Brian.deVallance@USDOJ.gov
Labor	Mona Mohib	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/693-4600	202/693-4642	Mohib-mona@dol.gov
NASA	Ted Nakata	Senior Advisor for IGA, Office of Policy and Plans	202/358-0724	202/358-4336	ted.nakata@hq.nasa.gov
Office of Nat'l Drug Control Policy	Alejandra Castillo	Director, Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director	202/395-7286	202/395-5653	Alejandra_Y._Castillo@ONDCP.eop.gov
OPM	Elizabeth Harrington	Special Assistant to the Director	202/606-1000	202/606-4489	ekharrin@opm.gov
Overseas Private Investment Corp.	VACANT	Intergovernmental Affairs Representative	202/336-8649	202/218-0201	
Small Business Administration	Lance Simmens	Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/205-7279	202/205-6802	Lance.simmens@sba.gov

Social Security Administration	Juan Lopez	WH Liaison and Special Assistant	202/358-6093	202/358-6076	juan.lopez@ssa.gov
State	Herb Tyson	Director Intergovernmental Affairs	202/647-5024	202/647-3340	tysonh@panet.us-state.gov
Transportation	Evelyn Fierro	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/366-1304	202/366-7907	evelyn.fierro@ost.dot.gov
	Harold Gist	Associate Director	202/366-1524	202/366-7907	harold.gist@ost.dot.gov
Treasury	Lisa Andrews	Deputy Asst. Secretary for Public Liaison	202/622-9760	202/622-3638	lisa.andrews@do.treas.gov
US Trade Rep.	Christina Sevilla	Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	202/395-6120	202/395-3692	csevilla@ustr.gov
	Emory Mayfield	Special Assistant to the COS	202/395-9480	202/395-4549	emayfield@ustr.gov
Veterans Affairs	Maria Fernandez-Greczmiel	Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs	202/273-5760	202/273-5716	maria.fernandez@mail.va.gov

THE WHITE HOUSE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS STAFF

DEPARTMENT	NAME	TITLE	PHONE	FAX	E-MAIL
WH IGA Staff	Mickey Ibarra	Assistant to the President and Director of IGA	202/456-7060	202/456-6220	Mickey_Ibarra@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Raymond Martinez	Deputy Director to the President and Deputy Director of IGA	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Ray_Martinez@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Matthew Bennett	Special Assistant to the President for IGA	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Matthew_L_Bennett@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Maria Soto	Associate Director to the Director of IGA	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Maria_E_Soto_@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Rachel Redington	Associate Director to the Director of IGA	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Rachel_A_Redington@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Todd Bledsoe	Special Assistant to the Deputy Director of IGA	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Todd_A_Bledsoe@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Seth Applebaum	Special Assistant to the Director of IGA	202/456-7062	202/456-6220	Seth_J_Applebaum@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Adrienne Elrod	Special Assistant to the Director of IGA	202/456-7060	202/456-6220	Adrienne_K_Elrod@who.eop.gov
WH IGA Staff	Jacqueline Lain	White House Fellow	202/456-2896	202/456-2889	Jacqueline_F_Lain@who.eop.gov

Do You Know...

THE
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ABOUT
AMERICAN
EDUCATION?

CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY
and
AMERICAN YOUTH POLICY FORUM

Center on Education Policy

The Center on Education Policy is the national independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. We do not represent any special interests. Instead, we help citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.

Working at the national, state and local levels, the Center achieves its mission by producing publications, writing articles, convening meetings, making presentations and, upon request, providing expert advice. The Center also works jointly with many other education, business, state and civic organizations.

Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in January 1995, the Center receives nearly all of its funding from charitable foundations. To learn more about our work, please visit our web site: www.ctredpol.org.

American Youth Policy Forum

The American Youth Policy Forum is a nonpartisan professional development organization providing learning opportunities for policymakers and practitioners working on youth issues at the local, state and national levels. AYPF's goal is to provide participants with information, insights and networks on issues related to the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers and participating citizens in a democratic society, including: schooling, transition to careers and career development, training and preparation for employment, postsecondary education, national and community service and related forms of youth development.

Since 1993, AYPF has conducted an average of 40 events each year for over 2,000 participants, including lunchtime meetings and out-of-town field trips and foreign study missions with a thematic focus. Forum participants include Congressional staff, officials of various federal agencies, state and local government officials, policymakers from national non-profit and advocacy associations and members of the media who report on youth issues. AYPF also publishes, for the benefit of policymakers, practitioners and scholars, a wide variety of inexpensive and brief policy reports and background materials on youth issues. These may be consulted on our web site: www.aypf.org.

Credits

This publication was researched and written by Nancy Kober, a freelance writer and consultant to the Center on Education Policy, and Diane Stark Rentner, the Center's associate director. They received assistance and advice from Jack Jennings, the Center's director, and from Samuel Halperin, Betsy Brand, Glenda Partee and Donna Walker James of the American Youth Policy Forum. Cutting Edge Graphics of Washington, D.C., designed the publication.

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Do You Know...
 THE
GOOD NEWS
 ABOUT
**AMERICAN
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INTRODUCTION

Many people believe American public schools are failing. Such views are not surprising, since critics of public education emphasize only what's wrong with public schools, and negative stories about education appear frequently in the media. Seldom do people hear *the good news about public education*.

There's no question that our public schools must become better. But the public also needs to recognize that *there have been major improvements in public education since the early 1980s*, when the nation started focusing seriously on school reform.

The Center on Education Policy and the American Youth Policy Forum publish this report because informed citizens need to be aware of these positive trends. This booklet highlights important improvements in public education over the past 15-20 years, along with other positive data about the state of public education. This report updates and expands on the monthly one-page briefs issued by the Center on Education Policy in 1998 and 1999. The only findings included are those supported by objective national data banks, such as the National Center for Education Statistics. By laying out the facts in a succinct, straightforward way, we hope to dispel some widely-held misconceptions about public schools and give citizens solid evidence to inform their opinions, policy decisions and future actions.

We present indicators that we believe are meaningful and interesting to parents and the general public. If an aspect of education is not discussed in this report, that does not mean it is negative. Many positive trends were not included for lack of space. Other areas, such as reading achievement, have not been included because the trends are mixed or vary by age groups.

Emphasizing the positive, we do not ignore the problems facing public schools. Public schools must be improved, and many more students need to benefit from the general progress already made. For that reason, we include a brief discussion of *The Work Ahead* at the end of each group of indicators. These sections discuss some of the various actions that states, school districts and citizens can take to build on the progress already made—for example, by paying special attention to groups of students who are not doing as well, or by eliminating obstacles that stand in the way of greater progress.

By featuring objectively good news in this brief report, we hope to restore public confidence that school reform *can* make a difference and to encourage everyone to keep working to make public schools better for *all* students.

DATA USED IN THIS REPORT

This report includes a variety of statistics showing positive trends in education. These statistics are grouped into five broad categories:

- **School Participation and Curriculum.** Trends in school dropout rates, student course-taking patterns, and participation of students with disabilities.
- **Student Achievement.** Trends in student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, various college entrance exams and other nationwide measures.
- **Educational Climate.** Data on school safety and crime and other environmental factors that affect student learning.
- **Teachers.** Statistics on the qualifications and experience of K-12 teachers.
- **Higher Education.** Trends in postsecondary enrollment and completion of degrees.

The higher education data and a few of the K-12 indicators include data for students in both public and private institutions. Since 89% of K-12 students and 76% of postsecondary students attend public institutions, these indicators still reflect improvements in public education.

To the extent possible, we have compared baseline data from the early 1980s with the most recent year available. The specific years vary depending on which data are available for a particular indicator. In some cases, we also include data earlier than the 1980s to show longer-term trends. For several indicators, reliable data on trends over time are not available, but we include current data showing positive aspects of public education.

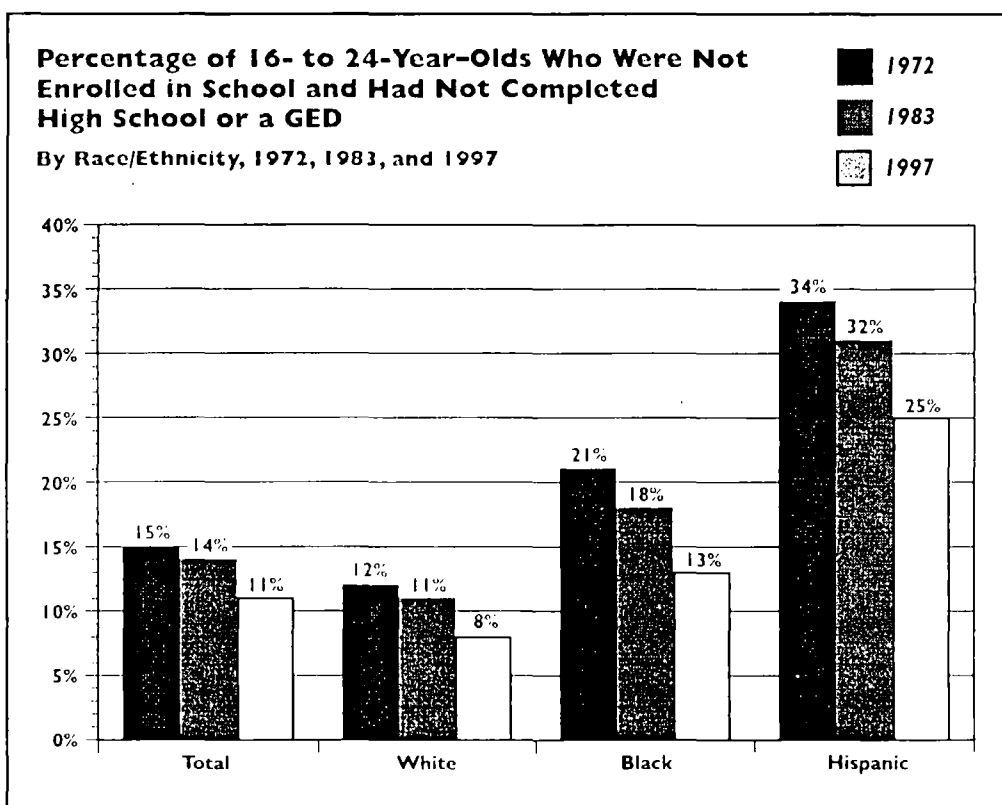
We chose the early 1980s as our primary baseline because that's when school reform became a major national issue. Since then, educational improvement has remained a high priority at the local, state and national levels, although the specific strategies have changed as the school reform movement has matured. Most recently, nearly all states have adopted standards to define what students should know and be able to do by the time they finish high school, along with new state tests to measure student progress. Most of these standards-based reforms are too new to have influenced the trends discussed in this report, but their effects on student learning should soon begin to appear.

Do You Know?

FEWER STUDENTS ARE DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

THE FACTS

Two-thirds of citizens surveyed mistakenly believe that high school dropout rates are going up and are higher than they were 25 years ago (*1997 Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup Poll*). In fact, dropout rates are lower today than they were in the 1970s and 1980s. Especially noteworthy is the sharp decline in the dropout rate of black youth.



Note: This chart shows the "status dropout rate," the percentage of the U.S. population ages 16-24 who were not enrolled in school, had not completed high school, and did not possess a general education development (GED) certificate.

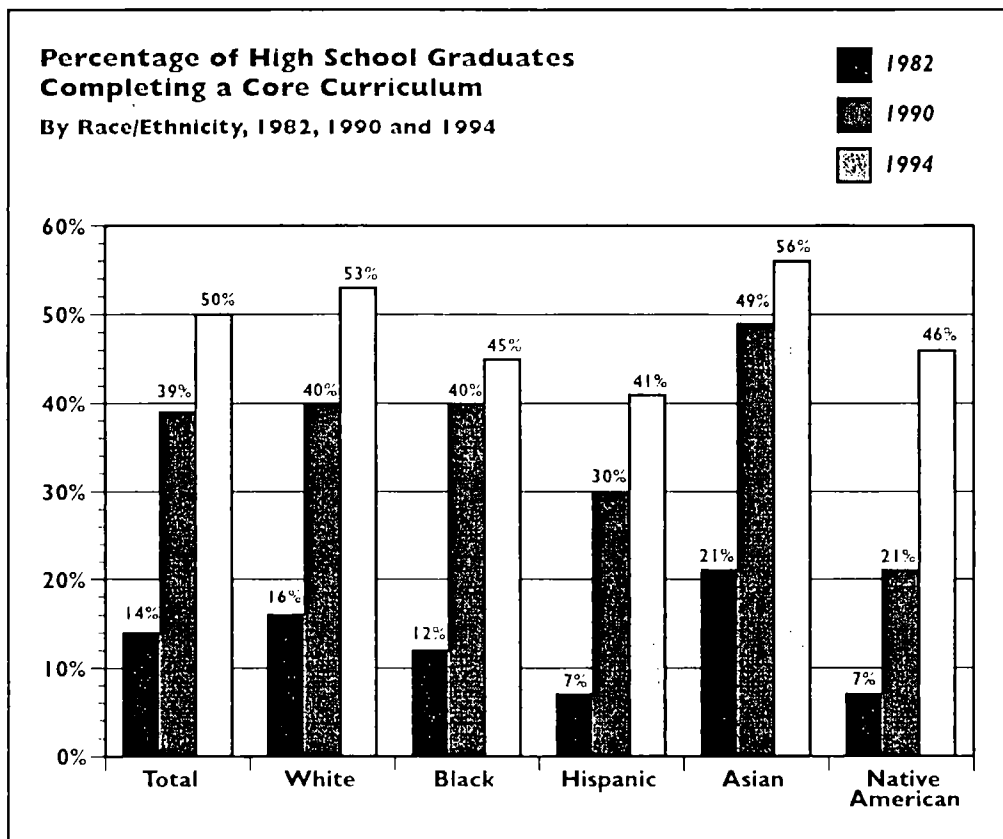
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 1998*, Table 105.

Do You Know?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE TAKING MORE CHALLENGING COURSES

THE FACTS

The education reforms of the 1980s focused on raising the coursework requirements for high school students. As a result, more students today are taking tougher courses than their predecessors did in the early 1980s. The percentage of students completing a core academic curriculum that includes 4 years of English and 3 years each of social studies, science and mathematics more than *tripled* between 1982 and 1994, with large increases across all racial and ethnic groups.



Note: The "core curriculum" consists of 4 years of English and 3 years each of social studies, science and mathematics.

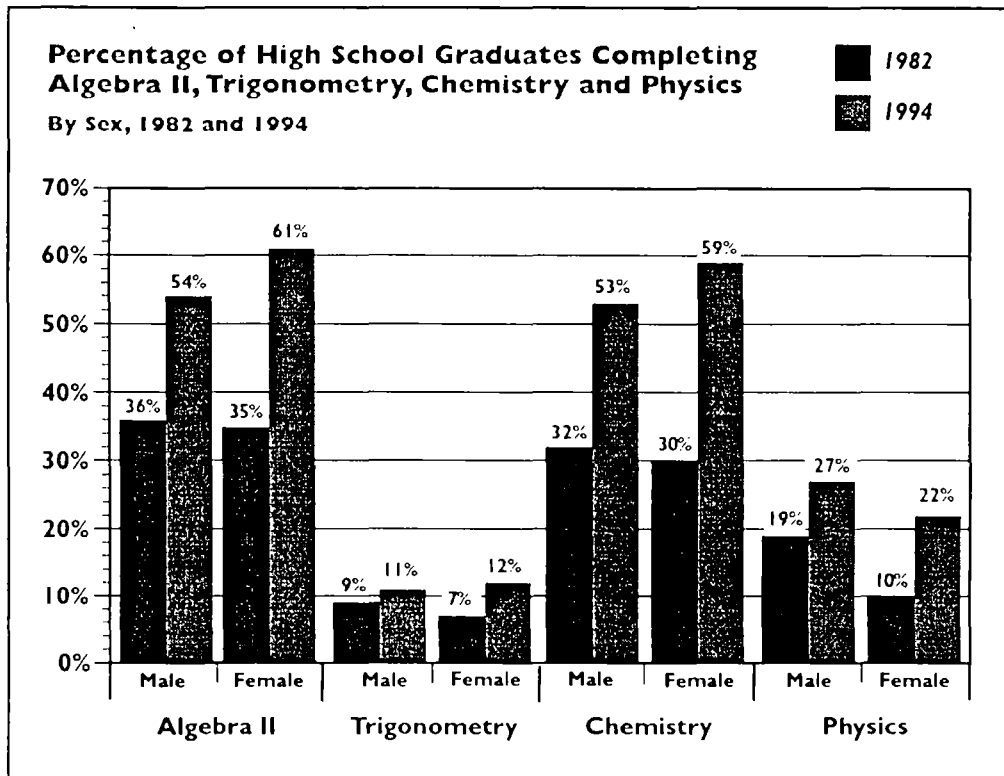
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1994 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates Revised*, 1998

Do You Know?

MORE GIRLS ARE TAKING HIGH-LEVEL MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE COURSES

THE FACTS

The gender gap in mathematics and science that had limited educational and career opportunities for girls and women is disappearing. The percentage of girls taking rigorous high school mathematics and science courses, such as algebra II, trigonometry, chemistry and physics, has gone up significantly since 1982. For example, 59% of the girls who graduated in 1994 had completed a chemistry course, compared with only 30% of the girls in the class of 1982. In fact, gender patterns have reversed for some courses, with girls enrolled at higher rates than boys in courses like algebra II and chemistry. Boys still had slightly higher rates of enrollment in physics and calculus in 1994.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1994 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates Revised*, 1998.

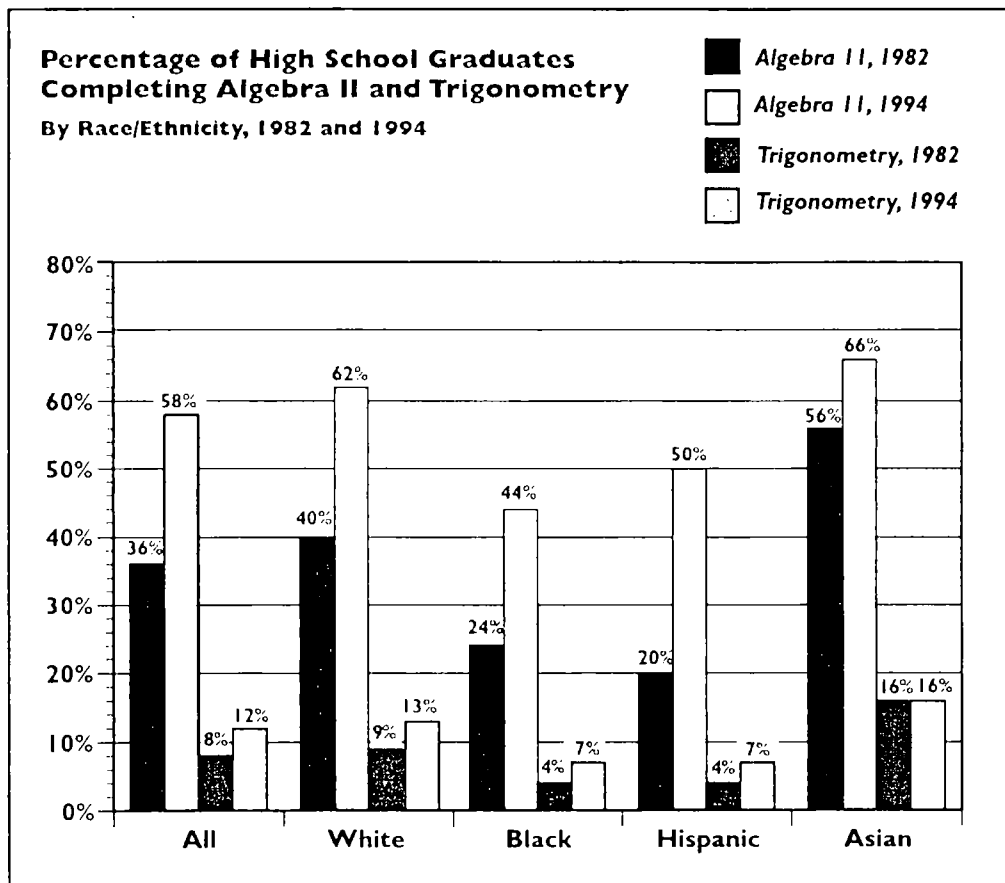
Do You Know?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE TAKING TOUGHER MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE COURSES

THE FACTS

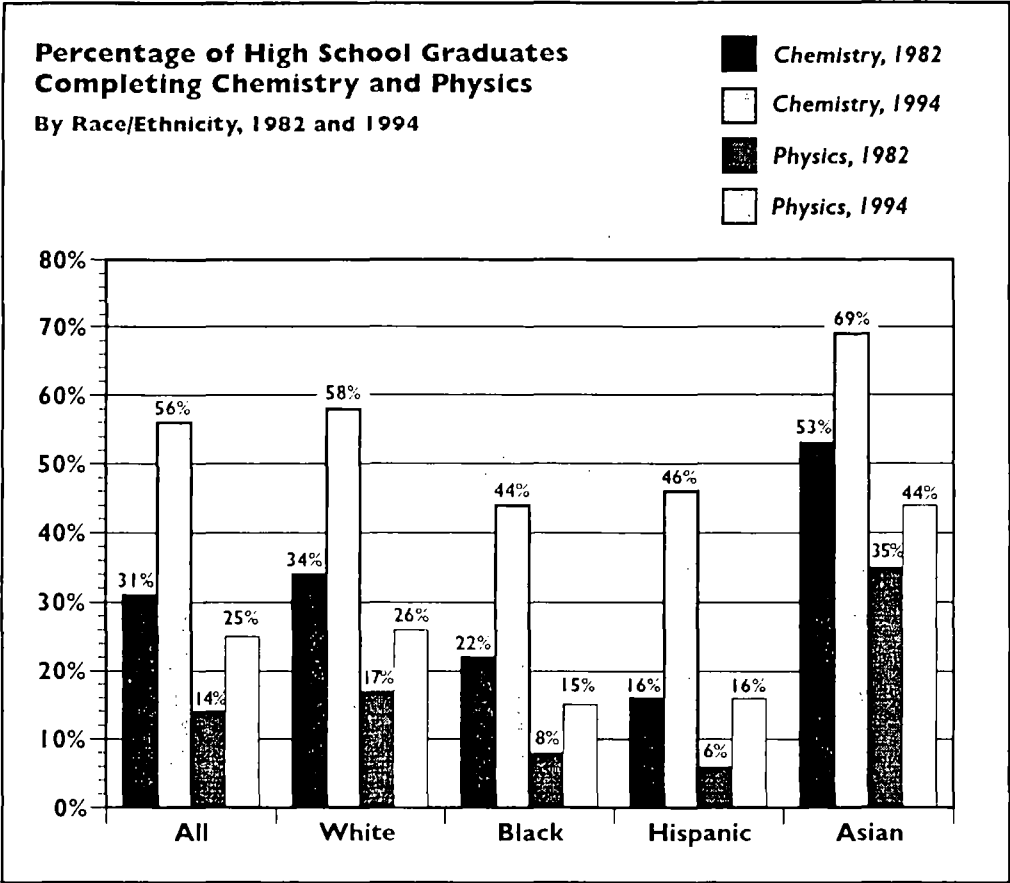
Recent education reforms emphasize the need for students to take more rigorous mathematics and science courses. Since 1982, the percentages of students taking higher-level courses, such as algebra II, trigonometry, chemistry and physics, have gone up significantly. (Enrollments have also gone up for other courses not shown here, from algebra I to calculus, and from biology to astronomy.)

These increases in higher-level course-taking occurred across all racial and ethnic groups. Especially impressive is the growth in the numbers of black and Hispanic students taking courses like algebra II and chemistry.



Note: These percentages do not include students who took these courses before they entered high school.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1994 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates Revised*, 1998.



Note: These percentages do not include students who took these courses before they entered high school.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The 1994 High School Transcript Study Tabulations: Comparative Data on Credits Earned and Demographics for 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 High School Graduates Revised*, 1998

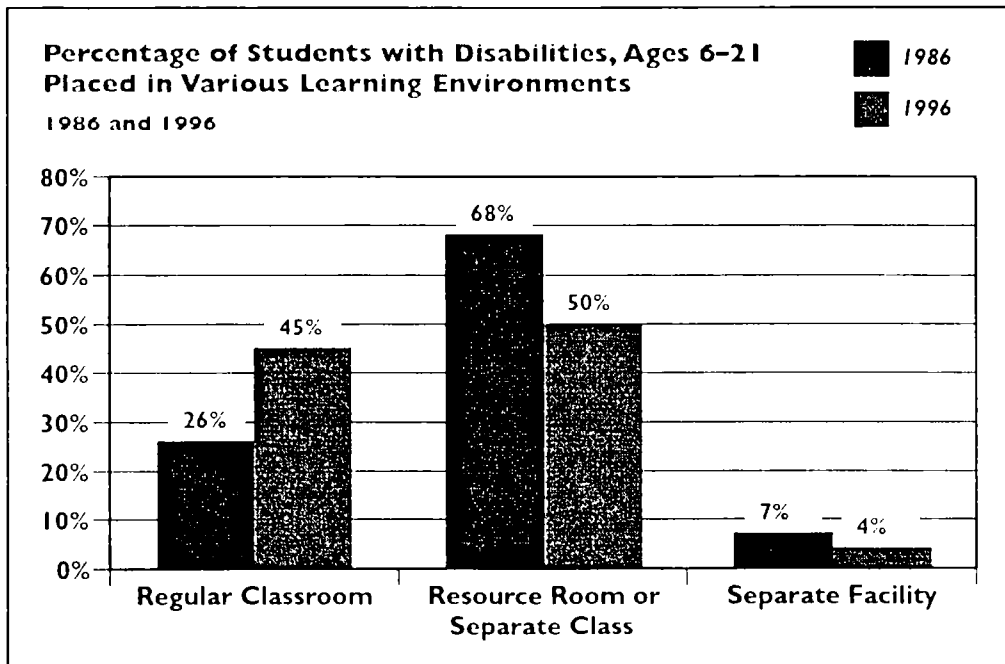
Do You Know?

MORE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE BEING EDUCATED IN REGULAR CLASSROOMS

THE FACTS

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires children with disabilities to be educated in the “least restrictive environment” and encourages them to be educated in general classroom settings, with appropriate services and supports. When students with disabilities are educated alongside other children in regular classrooms, they have increased opportunities to study the same curriculum as their peers, meet higher performance expectations, and learn the knowledge and skills necessary for independent adult life. This approach also helps children without disabilities avoid damaging stereotypes and understand how much people have in common.

Between 1986 and 1996, the percentage of children with disabilities who were educated in regular classrooms increased from 26% to 45%. The proportion of children with disabilities served in resource rooms or separate classes decreased, except for students with certain severe disabilities, such as autism. The percentage educated in separate facilities, such as state institutions for the disabled, dropped from 7% to 4%. These trends represent significant progress from 25 years ago, when 90% of developmentally disabled children were housed in state institutions and approximately 1 million children with disabilities were shut out of schools altogether (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *IDEA General Information: Overview*, 1997).



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 1999*, Indicator 20. Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding

THE WORK AHEAD: SCHOOL PARTICIPATION AND CURRICULUM

The U. S. job market has changed considerably since the early 1970s. Young people without a high school diploma are limited mostly to low-paying jobs with little chance for advancement. Indeed, some economists predict that the only way to get a well-paying job and have a secure career will be to complete additional study beyond high school. So the first step of the work ahead is for states and school districts to ensure that all students earn at least a high school diploma.

Students need more than a credential, however, to be ready for the workplace or higher education. They also must have high-level knowledge and skills, which are best learned by pursuing a rigorous high school curriculum. In a technology-dependent workforce, a strong mathematics and science background is especially important.

The growth in the number of students taking challenging coursework is a promising trend. The work ahead should include aggressive efforts to encourage *all* students to complete four years of English and three years each of social studies, science and mathematics before they graduate. These efforts should begin in middle school, with strategies that encourage students to take gateway courses like algebra before 9th grade. At the high school level, states and school districts should eliminate the "general track" of courses that do not adequately prepare students for either the workplace or higher education. High schools should also offer advanced courses like calculus and physics, so that students are not hindered from progressing because these key courses are not available.

Some students will need extra help to meet graduation requirements and succeed in a rigorous curriculum. States and school districts should adopt strategies that have proved to be effective with students who are struggling to keep pace or who learn in different ways. These strategies include:

- counseling and mentoring programs that connect students with caring adults who can guide their academic progress;
- teaching methods that emphasize how academic knowledge applies in real-world contexts;
- "tech-prep" programs that integrate academic and technical education and lead directly into a two-year college or technical certificate program; and
- "career academies" that teach high-level academic skills through a curriculum centered around particular employment sectors, such as health care, hospitality, or finance.

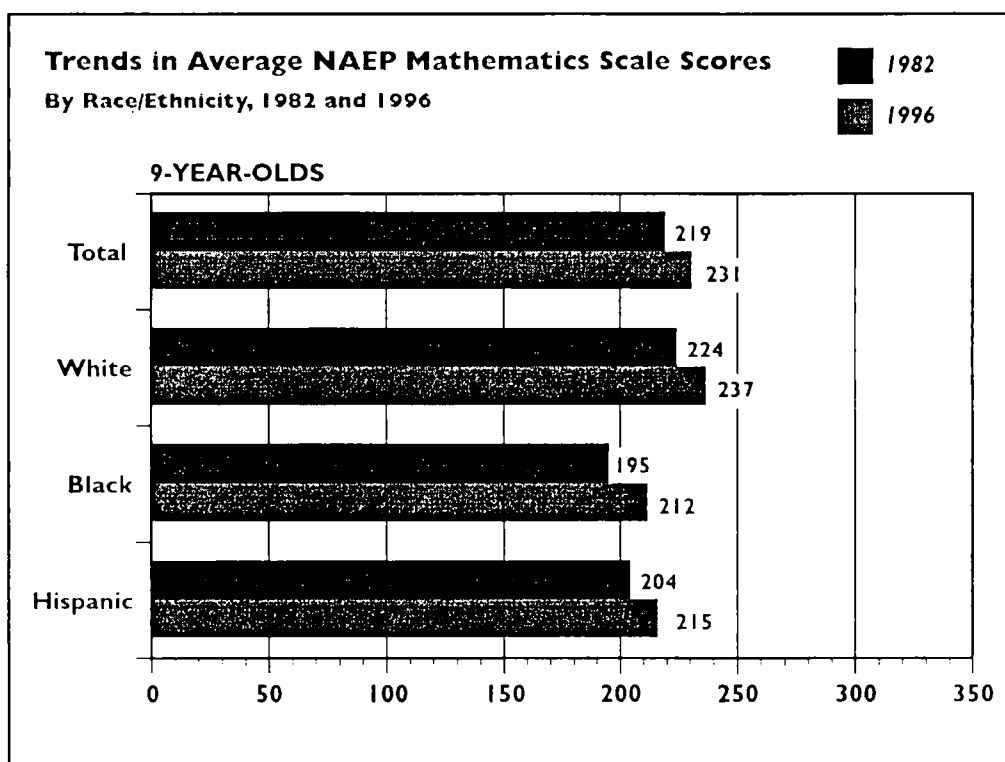
The work ahead must also include continuing attention to students with disabilities. Although these students have benefitted from inclusion in regular classrooms and are graduating at higher rates than 15 years ago, they still drop out at twice the rate of their peers (OSERS, *IDEA General Information: Overview*, 1997). States and school districts should hold students with disabilities to high standards, while recognizing that they often need intensive assistance to graduate and make the transition from school to work or further education. Effective strategies include building relationships between students and caring adults, teaching problem-solving strategies and monitoring student behavior.

Do You Know?

STUDENT MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT IS IMPROVING

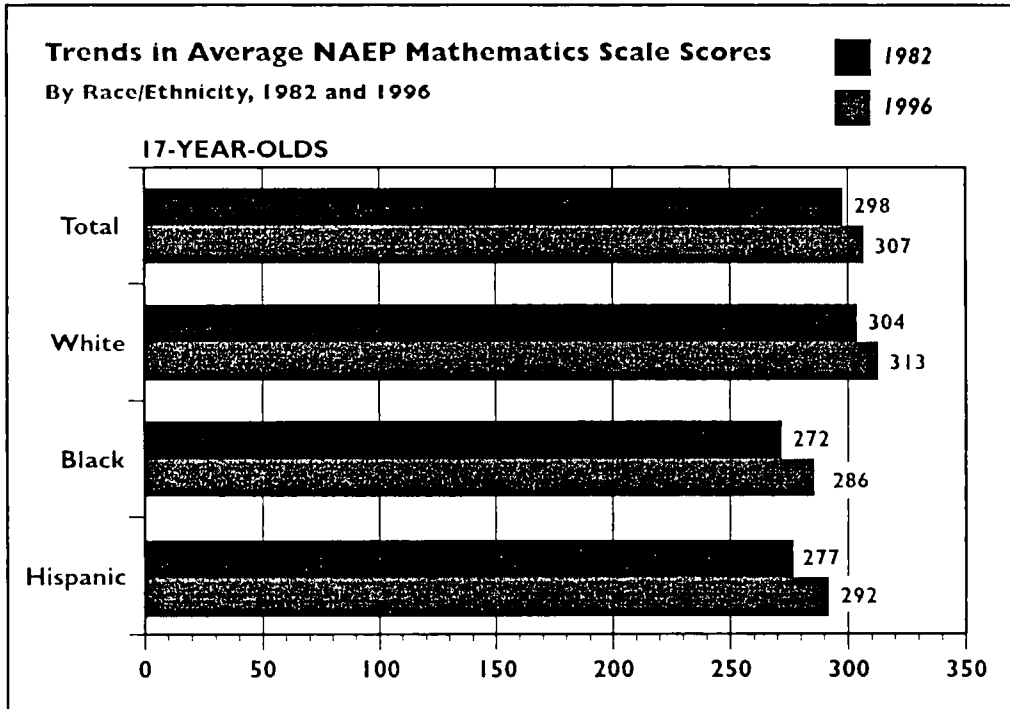
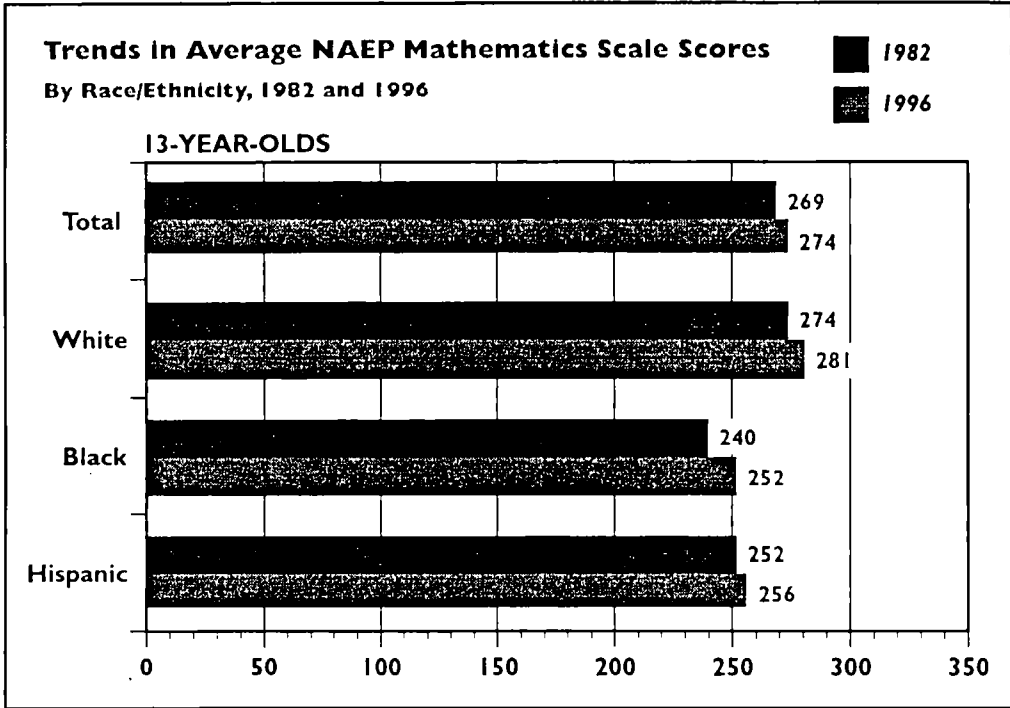
THE FACTS

Between 1982 and 1996, students improved their achievement in mathematics, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. (NAEP is the only national testing program that measures trends in student achievement in key subject areas.) Average NAEP mathematics scores rose for all three age groups tested, with 9-year-old students making the most progress. Black and Hispanic students have made significant gains so that racial/ethnic differences in achievement have narrowed since 1982.



Note: NAEP uses a scale of 0–500. Students who score at or above 200 on the NAEP mathematics scale can add and subtract two-digit numbers and recognize relationships among coins. Those who score at or above 250 can add, subtract, multiply and divide using whole numbers and solve one-step problems. Those who score at or above 300 can compute with decimals, fractions and percents; recognize geometric figures; solve simple equations; and use moderately complex reasoning.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress* and *The Condition of Education 1998*, Indicator 18



Note: NAEP uses a scale of 0–500. Students who score at or above 200 on the NAEP mathematics scale can add and subtract two-digit numbers and recognize relationships among coins. Those who score at or above 250 can add, subtract, multiply and divide using whole numbers and solve one-step problems. Those who score at or above 300 can compute with decimals, fractions and percents; recognize geometric figures; solve simple equations; and use moderately complex reasoning.

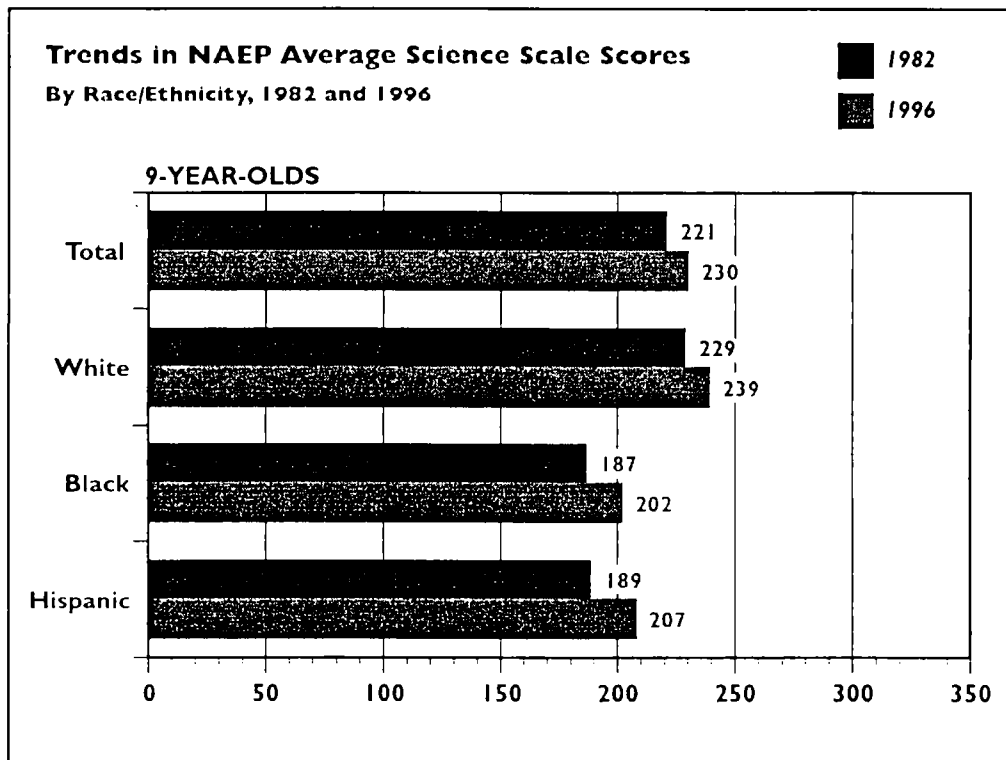
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress* and *The Condition of Education 1998*, Indicator 18.

Do You Know?

STUDENT SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT IS IMPROVING

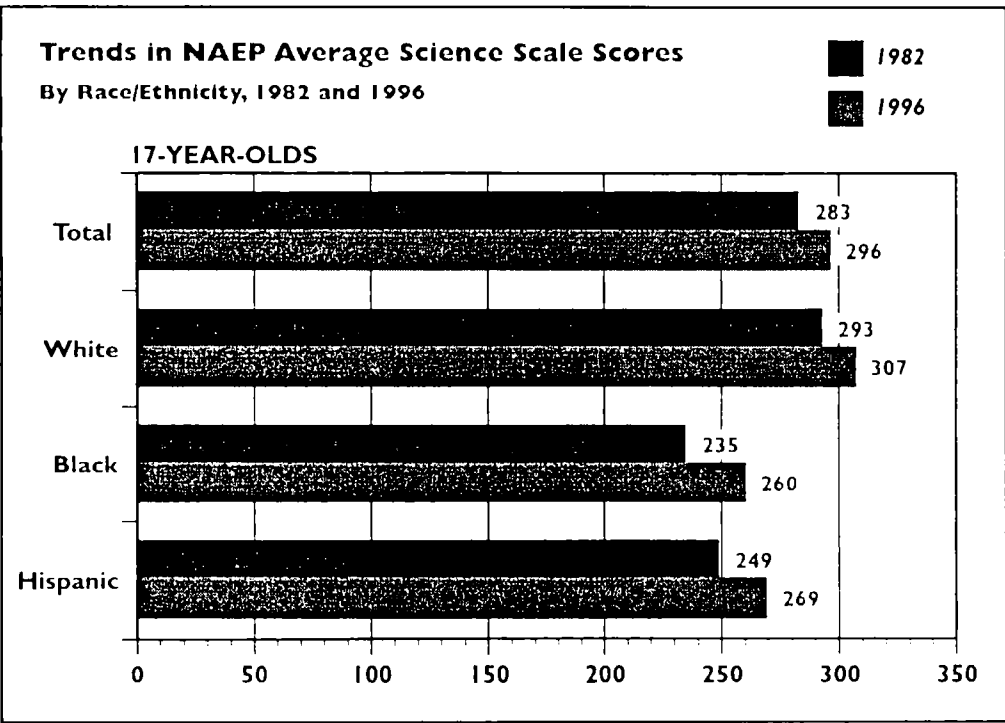
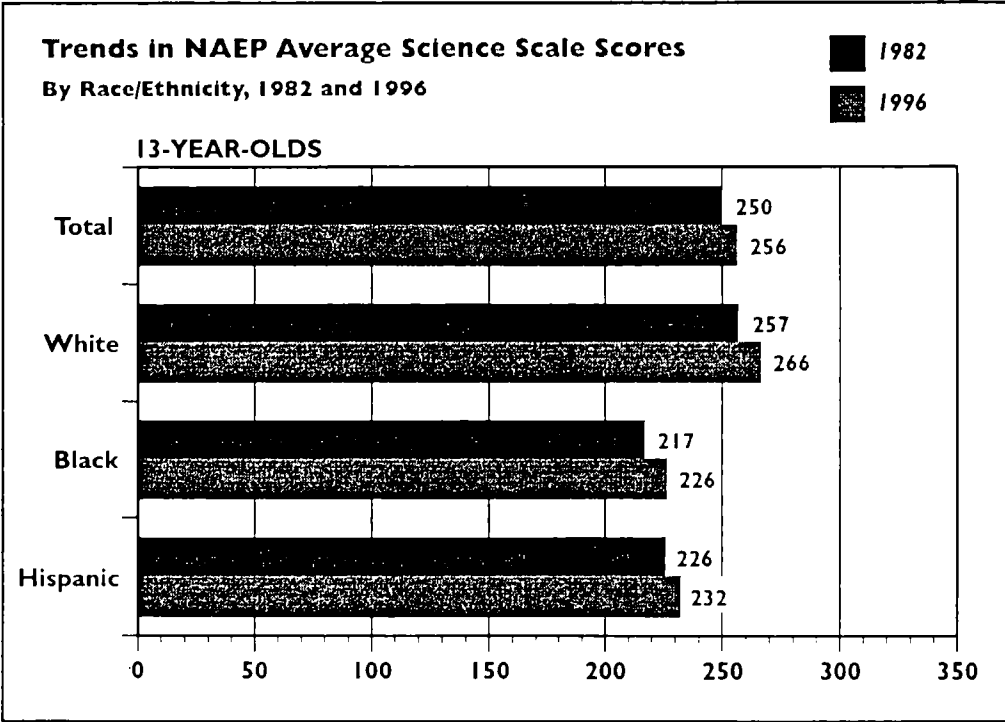
THE FACTS

Between 1982 and 1996, science achievement increased for all three age groups tested by NAEP, with the greatest gains among black and Hispanic students. (NAEP is the only national testing program that measures trends in student achievement in key subject areas.)



Note: NAEP uses a scale of 0-500. Students who score at or above 200 on the NAEP science scale understand simple scientific principles; for example, they show some knowledge of the structure and functions of plants and animals. Those who score at or above 250 can apply general scientific information; for example, they can interpret data from simple tables and make inferences about the outcomes of experiments. Those who score at or above 300 can analyze scientific procedures and data.

Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1999*, Indicator I.



Note: NAEP uses a scale of 0–500. Students who score at or above 200 on the NAEP science scale understand simple scientific principles; for example, they show some knowledge of the structure and functions of plants and animals. Those who score at or above 250 can apply general scientific information; for example, they can interpret data from simple tables and make inferences about the outcomes of experiments. Those who score at or above 300 can analyze scientific procedures and data.

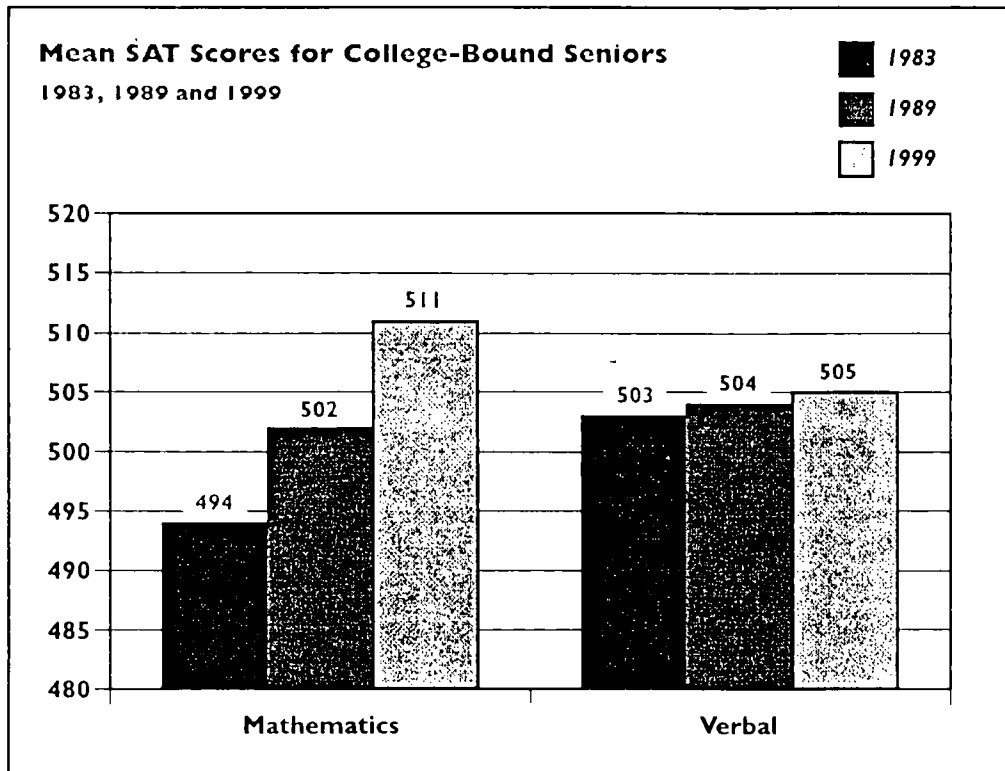
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1999*, Indicator I.

Do You Know?

SAT SCORES INCREASED DURING THE 1990s

THE FACTS

High school students who plan to apply to college often take the college entrance examination known as the SAT, or Scholastic Assessment Test. Although some people are under the impression that SAT scores are falling, scores actually went up during the 1990s. The 1999 SAT mathematics average is markedly higher than the average for either 1983 or 1989. The 1999 verbal average is 1 point higher than it was in 1989 and has remained the same for the past four years. This is good news, since the proportion of test-takers who did not speak English as a first language increased from 6% in 1989 to 8% in 1999. It is also encouraging that mathematics and verbal scores have increased even as the population of test-takers has grown much larger and more racially and ethnically diverse.



Caution: College entrance exams, such as the SAT and ACT, are designed only to be predictors of college success and should not be used as indicators of how well American schools and students are doing. Further, since students voluntarily choose to take these tests, the results are not based on a representative sample.

Note: The SAT uses a scale of 200–800.

Source: The College Board, *News From the College Board*, "College Board Reports 'Decade of Promise' for America's College-Bound Students As Record Numbers Take the SAT and Advanced Placement Courses," August 31, 1999.

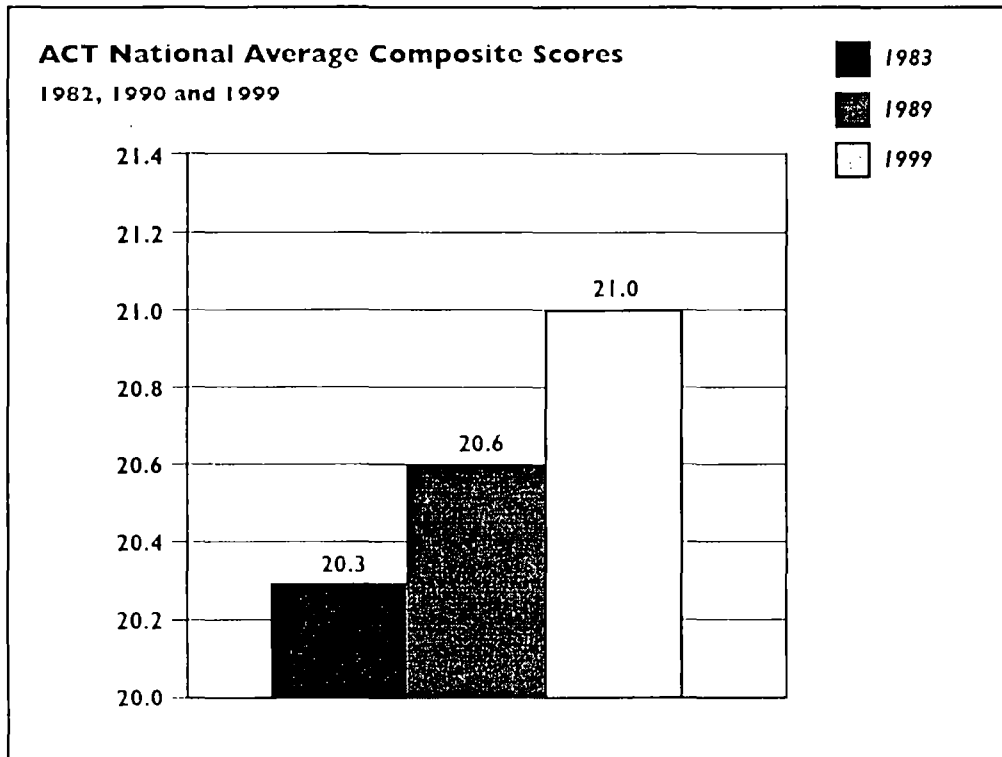
Do You Know?

ACT TEST SCORES ARE UP

THE FACTS

The ACT is another popular college entrance examination taken by high school students who want to go to college. In 1999, the national average composite score on the ACT remained the same as in 1998, continuing a 10-year trend of stable or increasing scores. These results have occurred at a time when record numbers of students are taking the exam—a factor that normally would cause scores to drop. The ACT program has concluded that the students taking the exam today must be at least as well prepared as those tested in the past.

Student Achievement



Caution: College entrance exams, such as the ACT and SAT, are designed only to be predictors of college success and should not be used as indicators of how well American schools and students are doing. Further, since students voluntarily choose to take these tests, the results are not based on a representative sample.

Note: The ACT uses a scale of 0–36.

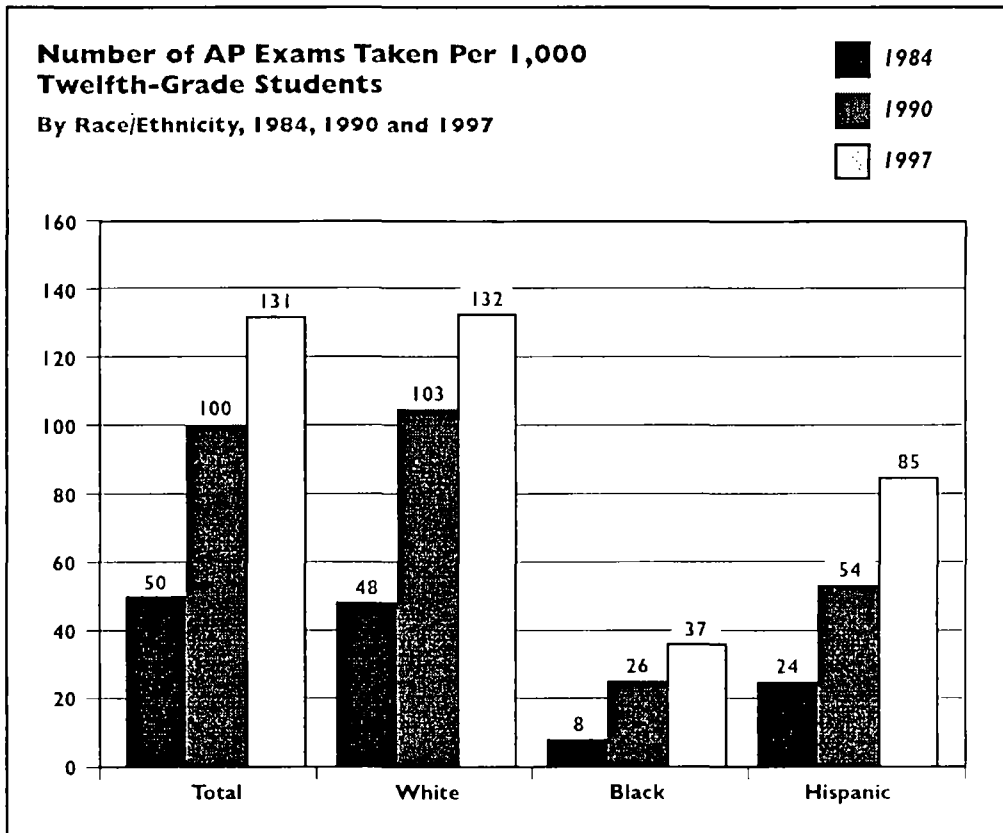
Sources: ACT August 17, 1999 press release; and U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics 1997*

Do You Know?

STUDENTS ARE TAKING MORE AP EXAMS

THE FACTS

Between 1984 and 1997, the number of Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by high school students nearly *tripled*, growing from 50 exams per 1,000 twelfth-grade students to 131. Since then, the numbers have continued to rise. Minority students now comprise 30% of all AP test-takers, up from 22% a decade ago (The College Board, press release, August 31, 1999). AP exams are annual tests offered in many different subject areas that give students an opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement. Many institutions of higher education offer college credits to students who score at least a 3 on a scale of 0 to 5.



Note: Includes exams taken by both 11th and 12th graders.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1999*, Indicator 14.

THE WORK AHEAD: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Although U.S. students have made promising achievement gains during the past 15 years, the nation still has a way to go before all young people are academically well prepared. This is especially apparent at the secondary level. In a recent international achievement study, U.S. 4th graders performed above average in math, but our 8th and 12th graders lagged behind students from many other countries. In science, U.S. 4th graders performed in the top tier of nations, and our 8th graders achieved above the international average, but our 12th graders performed below average (U.S. Department of Education, *Third International Mathematics and Science Study*, 1998).

States and school districts should persist in their efforts to raise achievement in all core subjects. Students who take rigorous academic courses have higher test scores than other students. All students, whether headed for the workplace or higher education, should be encouraged to take challenging academic courses. Other critical steps for states and school districts include:

- setting high standards for student learning;
- strengthening the secondary school curriculum to provide more focus and depth;
- ensuring that subject-matter courses are taught by qualified teachers with credentials in the field they are teaching;
- encouraging all students to take college entrance examinations and providing extra help to prepare them for these tests; and
- making AP courses available in the 44% of high schools that do not offer them.

Strategies to raise achievement should also include extra assistance or different teaching methods for students who are struggling to meet high academic standards. In science and math, for example, many students do better when teachers make clear how the content and skills being taught apply to real-life problems and careers.

Closing the gap between white and Asian students and their black and Hispanic counterparts should be a major thrust of the work ahead. Although minority students have made considerable gains, a gap still remains. Socioeconomic factors, such as racial-ethnic differences in family income and parents' educational levels, play a role in this gap. Poverty has a negative correlation with school achievement, and black and Hispanic children are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as white children (NCES, *The Condition of Education 1997*). Yet teachers in schools with high minority enrollments or high poverty are somewhat less likely to have a master's degree or a college major or minor in their main field of assignment than teachers in schools with few minority children or low poverty (NCES, *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers*, 1999).

To close achievement gaps, states and school districts should make special efforts to:

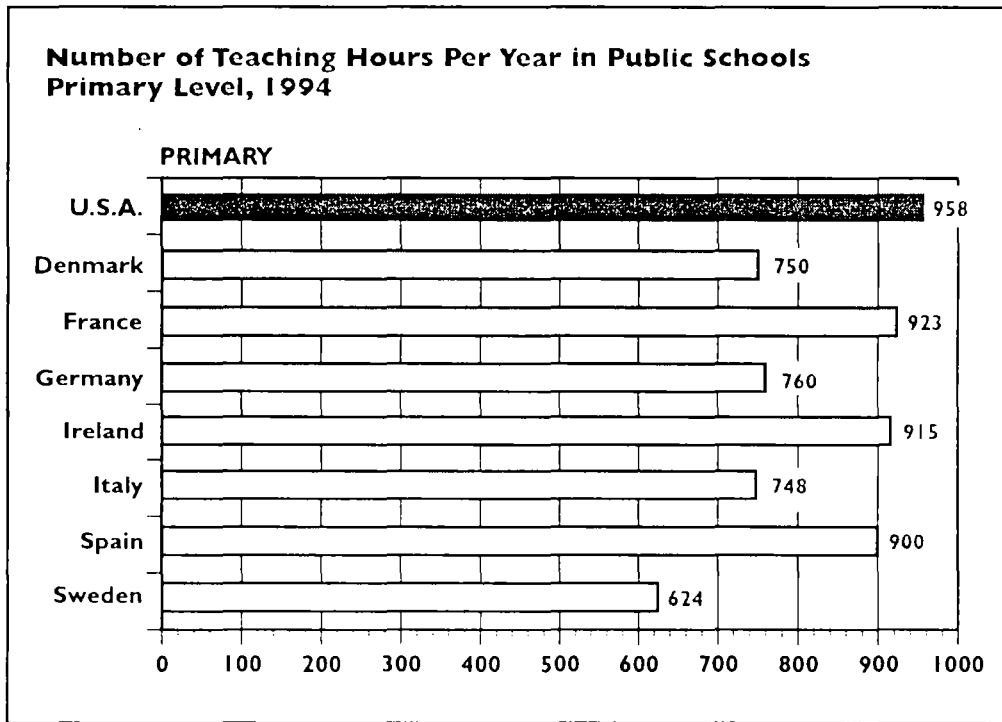
- recruit and hire teachers for high-poverty and high-minority schools who have academic backgrounds and full certification in the fields they are teaching;
- encourage all middle school students to take rigorous coursework; and
- make low-income students aware of programs to help finance the costs of AP exams, as well as the costs of postsecondary education.

Do You Know?

U.S. STUDENTS RECEIVE MORE INSTRUCTIONAL TIME THAN EUROPEAN STUDENTS

THE FACTS

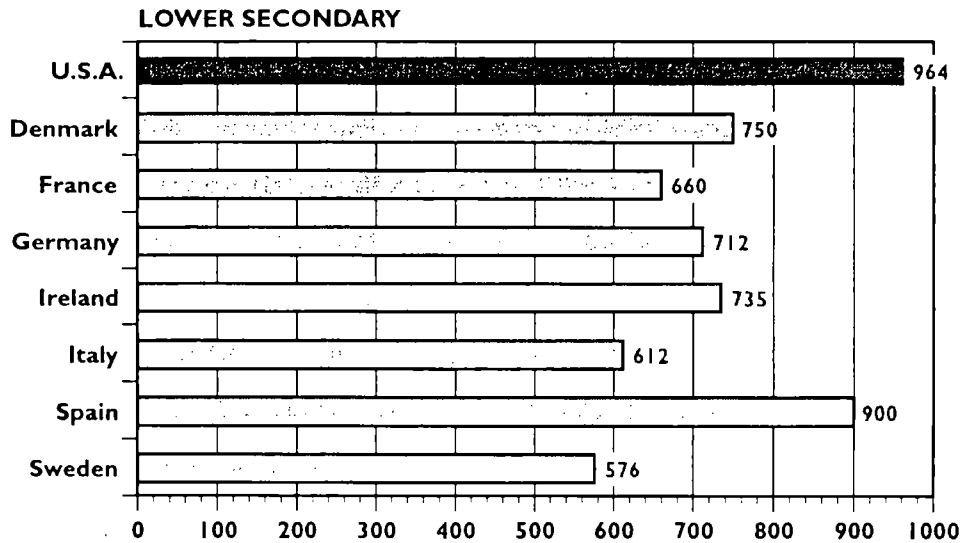
Students in the United States receive more instructional time than students in the seven European countries studied by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In 1994, U.S. primary schools provided an average of 958 teaching hours per year, compared with 923 in France and 760 hours in Germany. The U.S. secondary school averages were also higher.



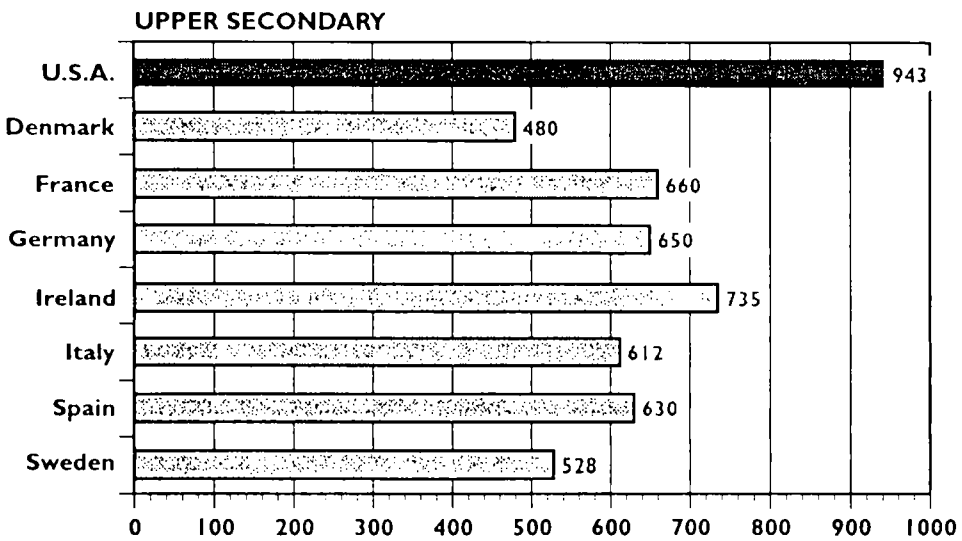
Note: Number of teaching hours is the total number of hours per year during which a full-time classroom teacher is responsible for teaching a group of students.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, 1996, and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1998*, Indicator 38.

**Number of Teaching Hours Per Year in Public Schools
Lower Secondary Level, 1994**



**Number of Teaching Hours Per Year in Public Schools
Upper Secondary Level, 1994**



Note: Number of teaching hours is the total number of hours per year during which a full-time classroom teacher is responsible for teaching a group of students.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, 1996; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1998*, Indicator 38.

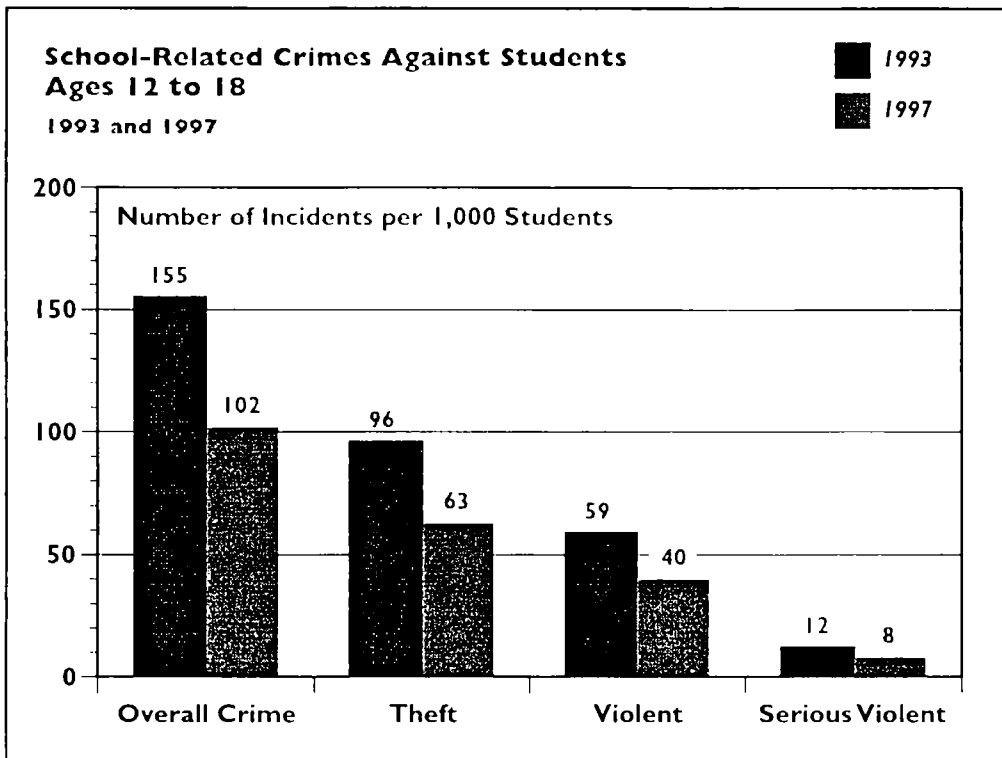
Do You Know?

SCHOOL CRIME IS DECLINING

THE FACTS

The overall school crime rate decreased between 1993 and 1997. In 1993, there were 155 school-related crimes for every 1,000 students ages 12 to 18, while in 1997 there were 102 such incidents. The most common crime at school is theft, rather than violent crime.

Although recent, tragic school shootings have reminded the nation that violent death at school is intolerable no matter how rare an event, children are safer in schools than in the community or at home. Less than 1% of the 2,500 child homicides and suicides during the last 6 months of 1997 took place at school or on the way to and from school. There were also significant decreases between 1993 and 1997 in the percentages of high school students who carried a weapon on school property or were involved in a physical fight at school (U.S. Department of Education, *1999 Annual Report on School Safety*).



Note: Serious violent crimes are defined as rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault. Violent crimes include serious violent crimes and simple assault.

Source: U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety 1999*.

THE WORK AHEAD: EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE

Creating a safe climate that promotes learning is a joint responsibility of the community, schools, educators, parents and students. Continuing steps to reduce crime and violence at home and school should be part of the work ahead. Even though serious crime is down, students seem to feel less safe at school than they did a few years ago. In 1989, 6% of students ages 12 to 19 feared being harmed at school, but by 1995, this figure had risen to 9%. Street gangs and drugs on school property continue to be a problem at some schools. In 1995, 28% of students reported that there were gangs at their school, and almost one-third said they had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1999*).

Parents and families need to teach children respect for others and help them to resolve conflicts through non-violent means. States, communities and schools should ensure that schools have and enforce strict codes of student behavior and have in place preventive approaches, such as conflict resolution strategies, counseling for troubled students and character education. States, communities and schools also should develop special strategies to improve the safety of children in urban areas, who are more vulnerable to serious violent crime than suburban or rural children.

Time devoted to teaching and learning is another factor that both educators and parents can influence. Recently many schools have sought to boost the amount of time spent on instruction, and the international data cited above suggest these efforts may be paying off. Whether added instructional time translates into higher achievement, however, depends on how well the time is used. To improve the educational climate, states, communities and school districts should:

- organize the school day so that students have adequate instructional time to learn core academic subjects;
- keep interruptions to a minimum;
- * ■ provide teachers with professional development in effective use of classroom time; and
- * ■ offer before- and after-school activities in a safe and structured environment.

Students themselves must also make a serious effort to stay focused and learn while in class.

Parents can shape the learning environment by setting clear guidelines for children about study, homework, television, and other recreational activities. Children who spend several hours a day watching TV or playing computer games obviously have less time to spend on homework, reading and other active pursuits. In addition, parents can help to create a learning climate at home by reading aloud to their young children and having their children read to them, and by talking with their children about the television programs they watch and the books they read.

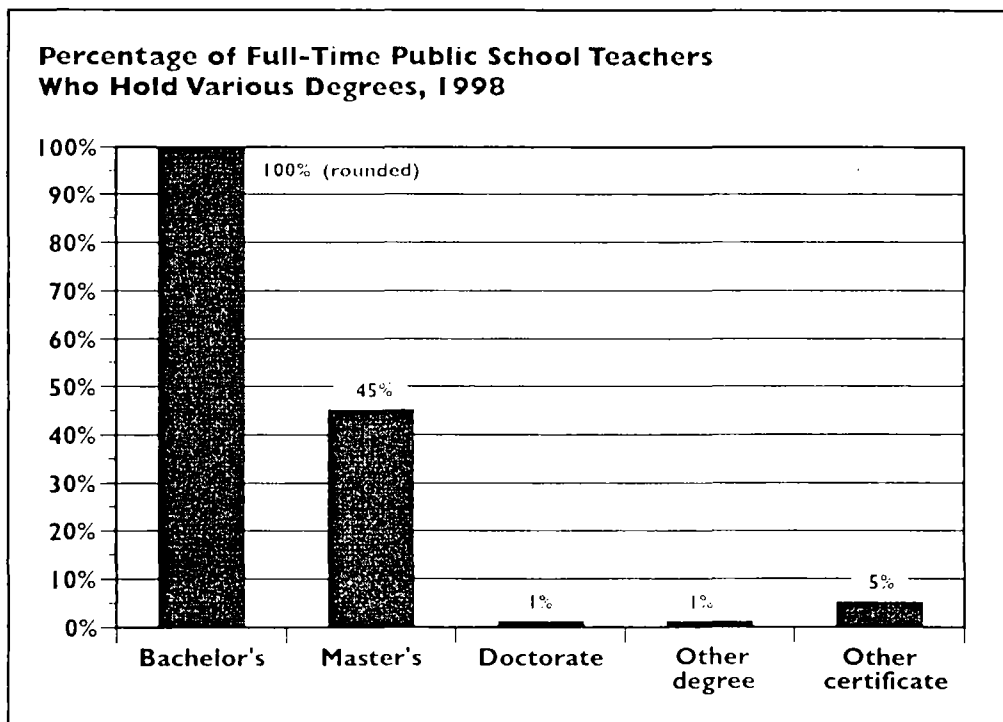
PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE WELL-EDUCATED

THE FACTS

Public school teachers are well-educated, according to a 1998 national survey by the National Center for Education Statistics. Virtually all public school teachers have a bachelor's degree, and nearly half (45%) hold a master's degree. One percent have doctorates. These percentages have remained much the same since 1993-94.

Other good news about teacher qualifications came out of this survey:

- Teachers have stronger backgrounds in academic disciplines than critics have asserted. Two-thirds of high school teachers, 44% of middle school teachers and 22% of elementary teachers have an undergraduate or graduate major in an academic field (such as English or mathematics), rather than a major in an education field (such as general education or mathematics education).
- Ninety-three percent of general elementary teachers and 92% of subject-matter teachers are fully certified in the field of their main teaching assignment (in other words, the field in which they taught most often).



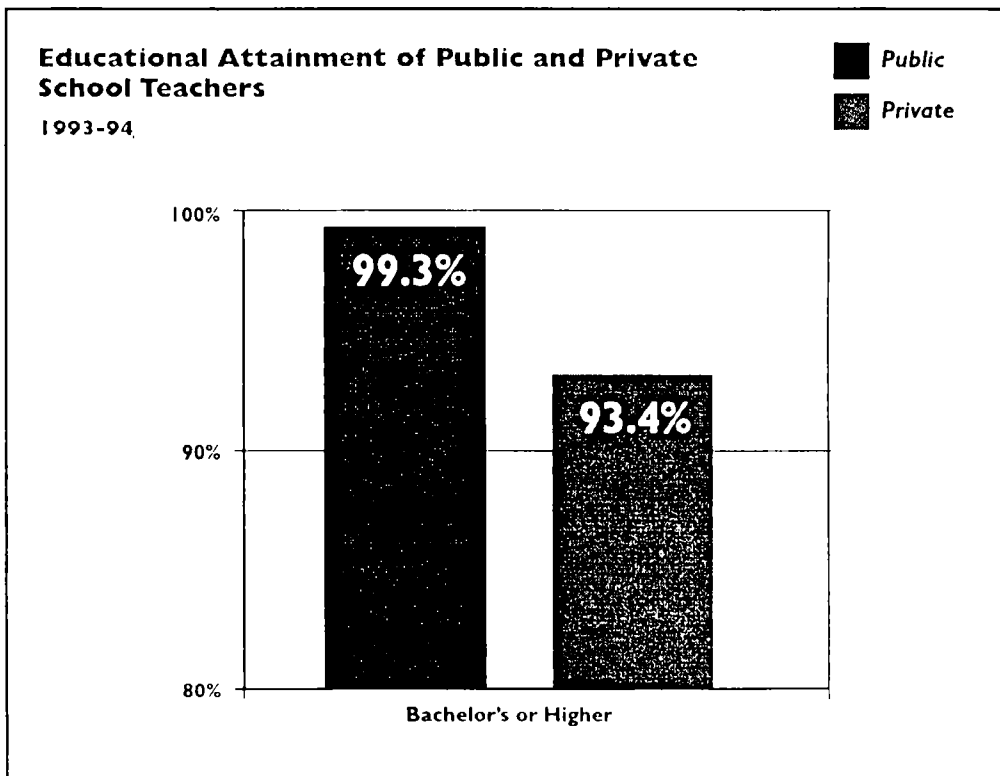
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers*, 1999.

Do You Know?

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE BETTER EDUCATED THAN PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

THE FACTS

In 1993-94, virtually all public school teachers (99.3%) had completed at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 93.4% of private school teachers. Public school teachers also had more experience on average: 14.8 years of experience for public school teachers versus 12.2 years of experience for private school teachers.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993-94* and *The Condition of Education 1998*.

Note: Although data on teacher education were updated for public school teachers in 1998, comparable data were not collected that year for private school teachers.

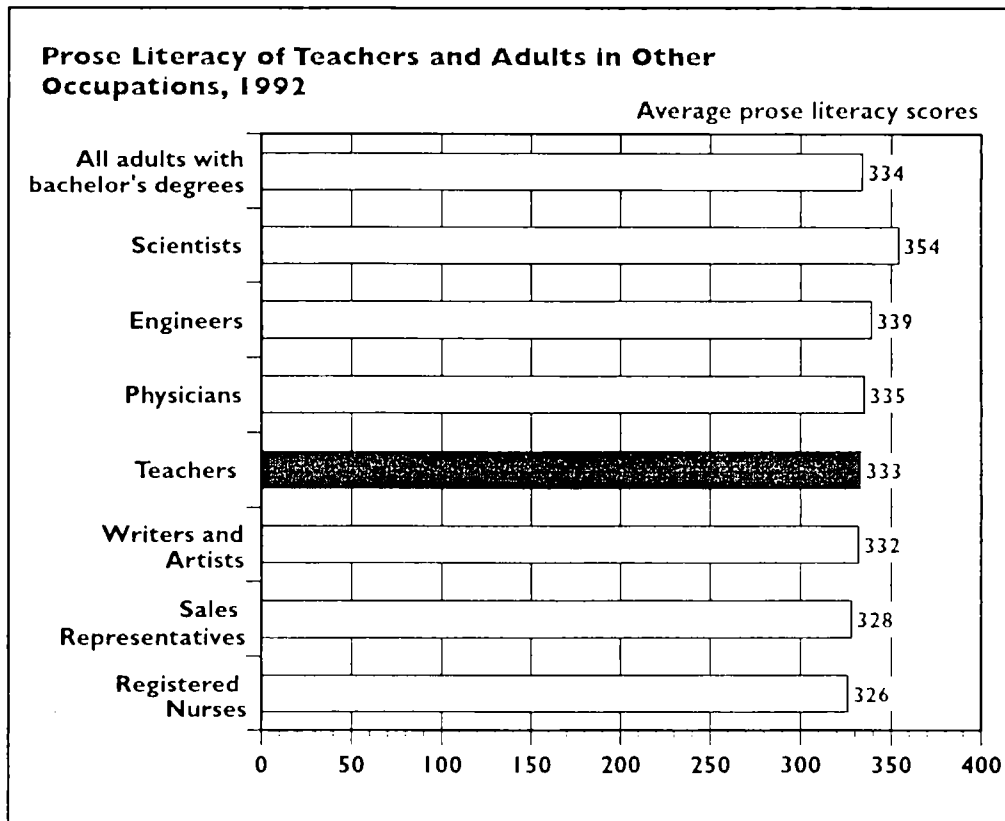
Teachers

Do You Know?

TEACHERS HAVE LITERACY LEVELS COMPARABLE TO OTHER COLLEGE GRADUATES

THE FACTS

Some critics of public education contend that school teachers have low literacy skills, but this isn't the case. Data from a 1992 national study of adult literacy suggest that teachers have a level of literacy comparable to that of other college graduates. The prose literacy of teachers is not significantly different from that of engineers, physicians, writers, sales representatives, registered nurses and other college-educated professionals. ("Prose literacy" means the ability to understand, analyze and synthesize information from written texts.) Scientists were the only professionals who had measurably higher prose literacy skills than teachers.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Adult Literacy Survey 1992* and *The Condition of Education 1995*, Indicator 58.

THE WORK AHEAD: TEACHERS

Public school teachers have the education, certification and academic backgrounds necessary for teaching. States, school districts, colleges and universities must next address the issues of out-of-field teaching, recruitment and retention, competitive compensation, teacher preparation and professional development.

Although the vast majority of public secondary school teachers have an undergraduate or graduate major or minor in their main field of assignment, some still teach courses outside their field. In 1998, 18% of mathematics teachers, 14% of English teachers and 12% of science teachers in grades 7 through 12 did not have a major or minor in their main field of assignment (NCES, *Teacher Quality*, 1999). These figures probably understate the problem because they omit teachers who teach most of their courses in their major field but teach a few courses outside their field. Issues of teacher qualification are most acute in low-income areas, central cities, and schools with high minority enrollments; teachers in these settings are somewhat less likely than other teachers to have full (rather than provisional) certification, to have a master's degree, or to have a major or minor in their assigned field. States, higher education institutions and school districts should work together to ensure that *all* teachers—especially in schools with the greatest needs—have at least a major in the subject they are teaching.

Large cohorts of experienced teachers are approaching retirement age at the same time that secondary school enrollments are about to surge—a combination that could intensify existing teacher shortages. College graduates with good literacy skills can choose from a wide range of occupations, including many that pay better than teaching. In 1992, for example, teachers who scored at prose literacy level 3, the middle range of the National Adult Literacy Survey, had median weekly wages of \$475, compared with \$603 for other college graduates scoring at level 3 (U.S. Department of Education, *National Adult Literacy Survey 1992*). School districts should raise teacher salaries and offer other incentives to attract and keep highly qualified candidates. States and higher education institutions should develop incentives, such as alternative certification, to encourage knowledgeable, experienced people from other fields to become teachers.

State and local reform initiatives have raised the bar for student learning, which places greater demands on teachers. To prepare new cohorts of teachers for these heightened expectations will require reforms in teacher education programs. Colleges and universities should strengthen the academic course requirements for prospective teachers and should provide them with high-quality education and practice in effective teaching methods. School districts should provide supports for new teachers, such as mentoring and sustained professional development.

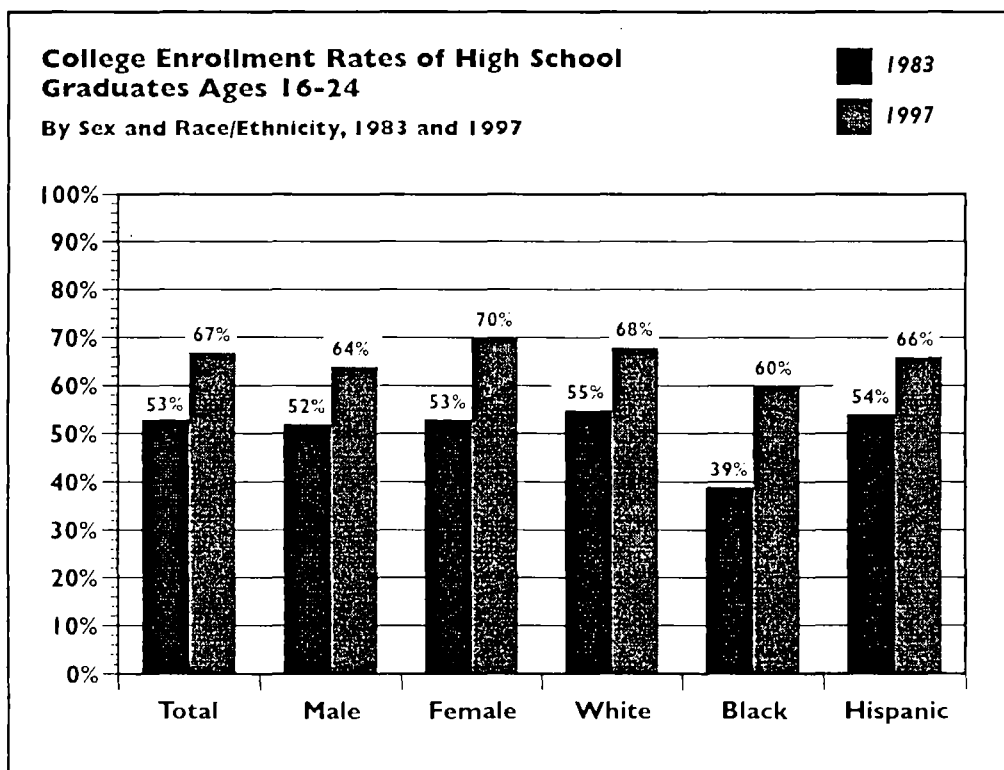
School districts should also provide all teachers with more sustained professional development, rather than short-term workshops. Teachers need professional development in such areas as teaching to high standards, integrating the use of technology into their teaching, acquiring deeper content knowledge in their field, teaching students with limited English proficiency, and teaching students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Currently, 37% of teachers said they felt only somewhat well prepared or not at all prepared to address the needs of children with disabilities (NCES, *Teacher Quality*).

Do You Know?

MORE STUDENTS ARE GOING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION

THE FACTS

Compared with young people of the early 1980s, many more students today are going to college soon after they complete high school. Especially noteworthy are the increases among black students and women.



Note: Chart shows percentage of high school completers (including GED recipients) ages 16-24 who were enrolled in college during the October after they finished high school. Due to small sample sizes, the percentages shown for black and Hispanic students are subject to relatively large sampling errors

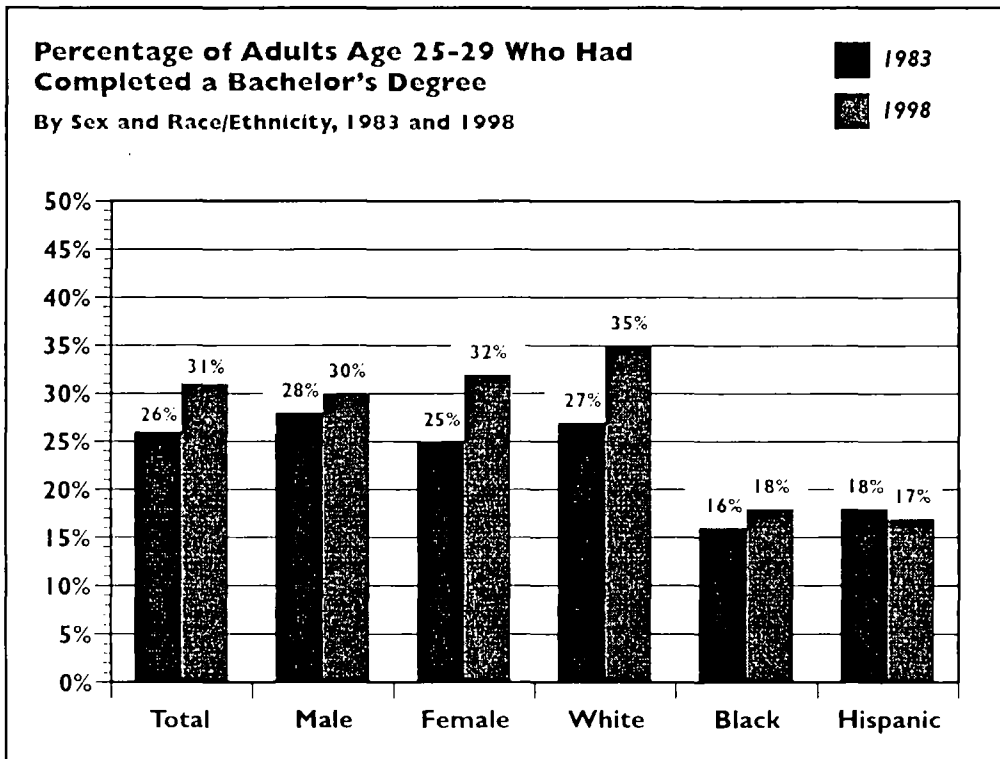
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 1998*, Tables 183 and 184.

Do You Know?

MORE YOUNG ADULTS ARE COMPLETING 4-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREES

THE FACTS

Between 1985 and 1998, there was an increase in the percentage of young adults who had completed a bachelor's degree or higher by age 29. The completion rates rose for white and black students, but decreased for Hispanic students. Particularly noteworthy is the rising rate among women, who are now more likely than men to complete a college degree.



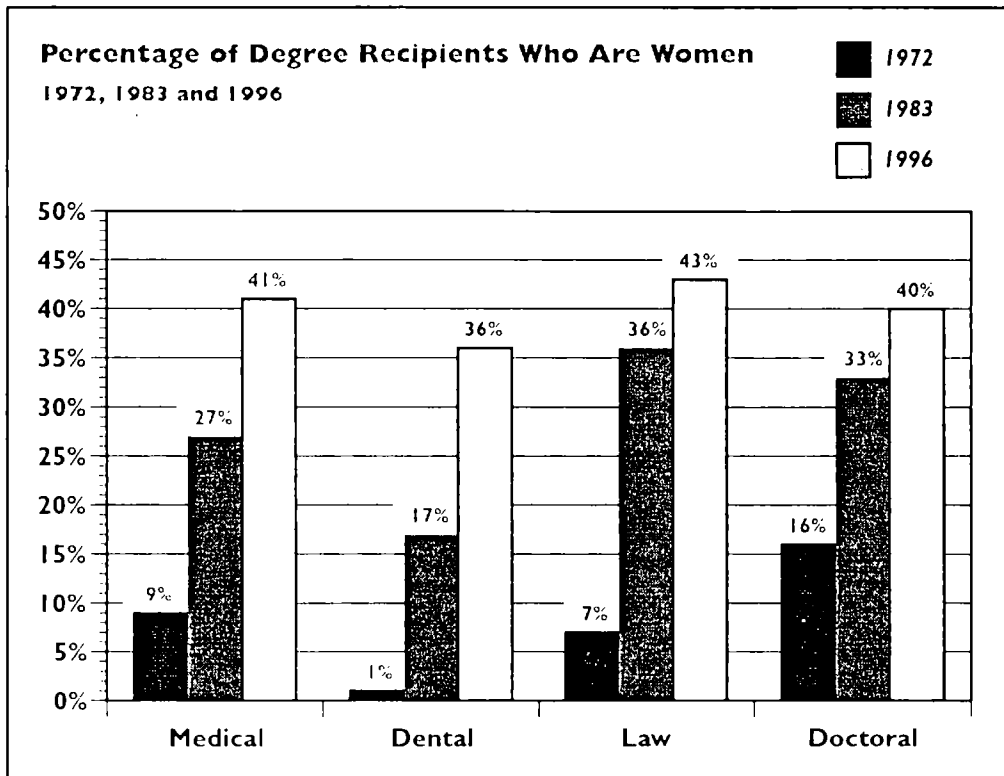
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education 1999*, Table S9-3.

Do You Know?

MORE WOMEN ARE EARNING GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

THE FACTS

Since passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which aimed to bring about equal educational opportunity by gender, the number of women earning graduate and professional degrees has gone up significantly. Women now constitute a larger share of medical, dental and law graduates, and of doctoral degree holders, than they did two decades ago. For example, women earned 43% of the law degrees granted in 1994, compared with only 7% in 1972.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 1998*, Tables 244 and 259.

THE WORK AHEAD: HIGHER EDUCATION

More students are enrolling in college than ever before, but only about 31% of high school graduates ages 25 to 29 had completed a bachelor's degree or higher in 1998 (U.S. Department of Education, *Condition of Education 1999*). About 9% had completed an associate's degree (U.S. Department of Commerce, *Current Population Survey*, March 1998), although this figure does not include students who left higher education with a technical certificate or who transferred from a two-year to a four-college to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Higher education institutions and secondary schools must work together to ensure that more students who start college complete a technical certificate or an associate's or bachelor's degree. This is especially important for black and Hispanic students, who have lower college completion rates. States and school districts should implement programs in middle and high schools to:

- let students know early on which courses they need to take—particularly mathematics, science and language courses—to prepare for success in postsecondary education;
- provide more intensive academic help for students who are struggling; and
- strengthen counseling programs to help students better understand the kinds of preparation required for various jobs, make wise choices about courses of study and types of institutions, and be well-informed about access to financial aid.

Although gender and racial-ethnic gaps have narrowed in higher education, women and minorities are still underrepresented in mathematics, engineering and the physical sciences. A mathematics or science degree often leads to a high-paying career and is good preparation for a job in fast-growing technological fields. Schools and higher education institutions should take steps to:

- kindle early interest in mathematics and science among girls and boys, and particularly students of color;
- be aware of and address gender and racial differences in attitudes about mathematics and science;
- provide better counseling about course decisions and career options related to mathematics and science; and
- provide supports so that students can persist in a challenging curriculum all the way through high school and postsecondary education.

CONCLUSION

The statistics highlighted in this brief report are a sample of the many benefits emerging from a decade and a half of school reform and sustained investment in our schools and our teachers. What is perhaps most remarkable is that our nation has made these improvements with a very diverse population, a strong tradition of local control of education, and enormous variation among states and school districts in their student population, policies and practices.

Americans should give credit to public education for the progress made thus far in course-taking, school completion, student achievement, school safety, teacher quality and access to higher education. But this is just a beginning. There are still many areas where our nation should improve or fine-tune education reforms. Examples of needed improvements include:

- closing racial and ethnic gaps in achievement, high school graduation and completion of postsecondary degrees;
- encouraging more students to take harder courses at an earlier age;
- improving student achievement in reading, writing and other key subjects and accelerating the gains already made in mathematics and science;
- continuing the drop in school crime and eliminating violent crime; and
- strengthening the preparation of new teachers and ensuring that all courses are taught by teachers with a certification or major in that field.

As the data in this report demonstrate, educational improvement is an achievable goal. Public education is moving in the right direction. Continued support from citizens and political leaders will maintain this welcome momentum.

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Center on Education Policy
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 619
Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: 202-822-8065

Fax: 202-822-6008

E-Mail: ctredpol@ctredpol.org

Web Site: www.ctredpol.org



American Youth Policy Forum

1836 Jefferson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: 202-775-9731

Fax: 202-775-9733

E-Mail: aypf@aypf.org

Web Site: www.aypf.org