

Achievement Gap Widening, Study Reports

Progress of Minority Students Has Stalled

By Lynn Olson
Washington

The achievement gap between white and minority students is widening again after decades of progress, warns a comprehensive analysis of the 50 states that is scheduled to be released this week.

"The fact that progress in minority achievement has stopped at a time when minorities comprise a growing portion of the student population should sound a wake-up call to the whole country," the report by the Education Trust says. The Washington-based nonprofit organization directs its efforts toward closing the performance gap between children from poor and minority families and their more advantaged peers.

Relying primarily on existing data, researchers gathered for the first time information from a multitude of sources to present an unusually blunt picture of the ways individual states treat their neediest students.

"We want to provide honest data for local

people to begin discussions in their own communities about what's wrong and how to fix it," Kati Haycock, the director of the Education Trust, said in an interview. "Our silence as a profession about these numbers has let policymakers and others off the hook because we've allowed them to believe that these kids are doing as well as can be expected."

The report ranks states and the District of Columbia on 17 critical indicators, from the test scores of students by race and ethnicity to the spending disparities between school districts.

It argues that states and communities should set the same high expectations for all their students, offer them an equally challenging curriculum, and sharpen their focus on the quality of teaching and the materials available to teachers.

Large Gap Remains

Between 1970 and 1988, the report notes, minority students made dramatic gains in achievement while the performance of white students remained relatively flat.

During that time, the difference in performance between white and African-American students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress—which tests a representative sample of students nationwide—narrowed by about one-half. The gap between white and Latino students closed by one-third.

But beginning in 1988, the progress stopped. And in some subjects and some grades the gap began to yawn once again.

Today, African-American, Latino, and Native American students perform well below whites in all subjects and at all grade levels.

Similar achievement gaps persist into college. A national assessment of adult literacy shows that black and Latino college graduates also perform well below their white peers.

But underachievement is not limited to poor and minority children, the report points out. The performance of most U.S. students falls well below the competency levels set by NAEP for students in each grade and subject.

'Full of Inequities'

The report argues that poor and minority children are not performing as well as they could because the deck is stacked against them in too many states and districts.

"In fact," it concludes "we have constructed an educational system so full of inequities that it actually exacerbates the challenges of race and poverty, rather than ameliorates them. Simply put, we take students who have less to begin with and give them less in school, too."

The report, *Education Watch: The 1996 Education Trust State and National Data Book*, documents the following disparities:

- Poor and minority students are less likely than their more advantaged peers to be in classes taught by teachers who majored in their fields.

In the 1990-91 school year, for example, only 42 percent of math classes in high schools with more than 50 percent minority enrollments were taught by teachers

who were math majors. By comparison, in high schools with few minority students—less than 15 percent of enrollment—69 percent of math classes were taught by math majors.

More than two-thirds of black and Latino students attend schools with predominantly minority enrollments.

- In schools where more than 30 percent of the students are poor, 59 percent of teachers report that they lack sufficient books and other reading resources. Only 16 percent of teachers in more affluent schools report such shortages.

- Poor and minority students are more likely to be taught a low-level curriculum with low standards for performance. Only one in four students from low-income families is placed in a college-preparatory sequence of courses. Poor and minority students are overrepresented in less challenging general and vocational education programs.

- Roughly 55 out of every 100 white and Asian-American students complete algebra II and geometry. Only 35 percent of

More...

Gap Widening, Study Finds

Continued . . .

African-American and Native American seniors take this math. Although one of every four white seniors takes physics, only one in six black seniors, and one in seven Latino seniors, completes this course.

- Blacks complete high school at roughly the same rate as their white peers. About 83 percent of black Americans have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent by age 24. But only 60 percent of Latino students nationally earn a diploma.

- Blacks are much less likely than whites to go to college. For every 100 white Americans, nearly 60 attend college and 25 earn a bachelor's degree. Only 40 percent of blacks attend college, and just 12 percent earn a bachelor's degree by age 30. Only one in 10 Latinos earns a degree by that age.

Raising Standards Helps

The Education Trust argues that the lack of explicit standards for American education contributes to such disparities. In the absence of national academic standards, there is wide variation in what schools and districts expect young people to learn. Typically, schools serving the poorest students have the lowest expectations.

The report cites several examples of schools and school systems that are proving that poor and minority youngsters can excel if they are taught at high levels.

"Fortunately, there are some schools and districts that are responding to the needs of their poor and minority students, not by lowering standards, but by accelerating learning," it says.

Five years ago, for example, the Providence, R.I., district began requiring that all students take higher-level mathematics as part of the College Board's Equity 2000 initiative. Today, 97 percent of Latino and African-American students there take algebra, compared with only 37 percent of black students and 27 percent of Hispanic students in 1991.

Some states provide disadvantaged students with better teachers and a more challenging curriculum than others do, the report says. For example:

- In Tennessee, 23 percent of public K-12 students were black in 1992, and 24 percent of students in Advanced Placement mathematics and science courses were African-American. In Virginia, 26 percent of public K-12

students were black, but only 7 percent of students in A.P. mathematics and science courses were black.

- In New York State in 1992, 20 percent of public K-12 students were African-Americans, and 20 percent of students in gifted-and-talented programs were black. In Mississippi, 51 percent of public

K-12 students were black, but African-Americans made up only 7 percent of those in gifted-and-talented programs.

On the Web

For past stories and related Web links, click on **This Week's Links** at <http://www.edweek.org>.

Notes for Press briefing on long term trends

Two general observations and then four specific, important points.

1. First; About the tests themselves: Administered in the Spring of 1994 -- with my tongue firmly in my cheek remind you that Clinton initiatives not passed until later on in 1994: firmly expect that the two year results would have been very different and far more positive had G200 and Title I changes been in effect for the two years between 1992 and 1994. Second, tests are primarily basic skills -- stayed the same since 1970s. Eg. Do not reflect calculus, advanced science. OK for early and middle grades.

2. Dr. Forgione -- emphasized two general conclusions from the data: one conclusion was the stability in scores from 1992 - 1994 (expect this) -- two year changes a little like the tracking polls. Need to look at trends. Other conclusion was the stability over time -- actually quite a bit up though only a small amount. (8 of 9 up for science, math and reading) This directly contradicts much conventional wisdom which has achievement going to hell in a handbasket. See Table 1.

More specific points relate to longer term trends: for there are a number of stories in these data.

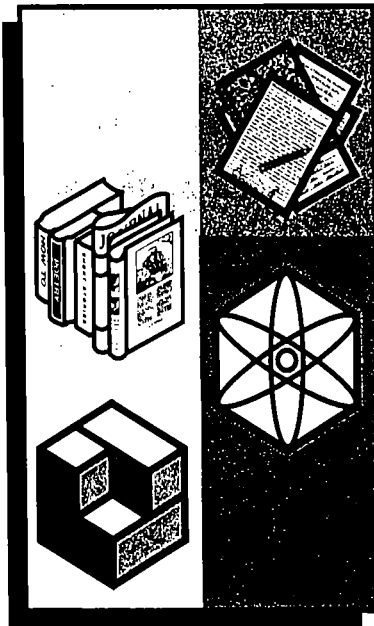
1. Over time the population has changed: poverty up, LEP students up, single parent families up -- many out-of-school indicators that typically predict lower achievement have increased. This argueably makes it more difficult for schools to keep achievement up. Moreover the dropout rate is down -- a greater variety of students are in the later grades in school which also can depress averages. YET THE SCHOOLS STAYED LEVEL OR IMPROVED!!!!

2. Two big trends in the long-term data -- actual drop from early 70s to early 80s -- then a climb from early 80s into the 90s. (Look at Figure I especially for science and math. Figure I. What was it about the 80s? REFORMS STARTED - RILEY, CLINTON, NATION AT RISK IN 83. MORE CHALLENGING COURSES, TEACHER INCENTIVES, ETC. STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT GAINS AT ALL GRADE LEVELS FOR MATH AND SCIENCE.

3. There is also a second story within the trends: Since the early 70s and into the late 80s there were substantial increases in by African - American and Hispanic American students in math, science and reading. (See Table I). What this Table does not show is that since the very late 80s some of the gains made by these groups have eroded. (See other paper) Figure 2 presents the data as a comparison between black and white Americans. Note drop in difference from very early 70s to 1986-88 for all ages for science, math and reading.

REPORT IN BRIEF

NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress



Jay R. Campbell
Clyde M. Reese
Christine O'Sullivan
John A. Dossey

in collaboration with

Patricia L. Donahue, Peggy Carr,
Brent Sandene, Claudia Gentile,
Karen Miller, and John Mazzeo

October 1996



Prepared by Educational Testing Service under contract
with the National Center for Education Statistics.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

Trends in Differences in Average Scale Scores Between Racial/Ethnic Groups of Students and Between Males and Females

As noted earlier, one of the national education goals emphasizes increases in students' academic achievement.⁵ A stated objective of this goal is that the performance distribution for minority students will more closely reflect that of the student population as a whole. In some subject areas, results indicated progress toward meeting this goal. Trends in the differences between average scores for subgroups of students are reported in this section.⁶

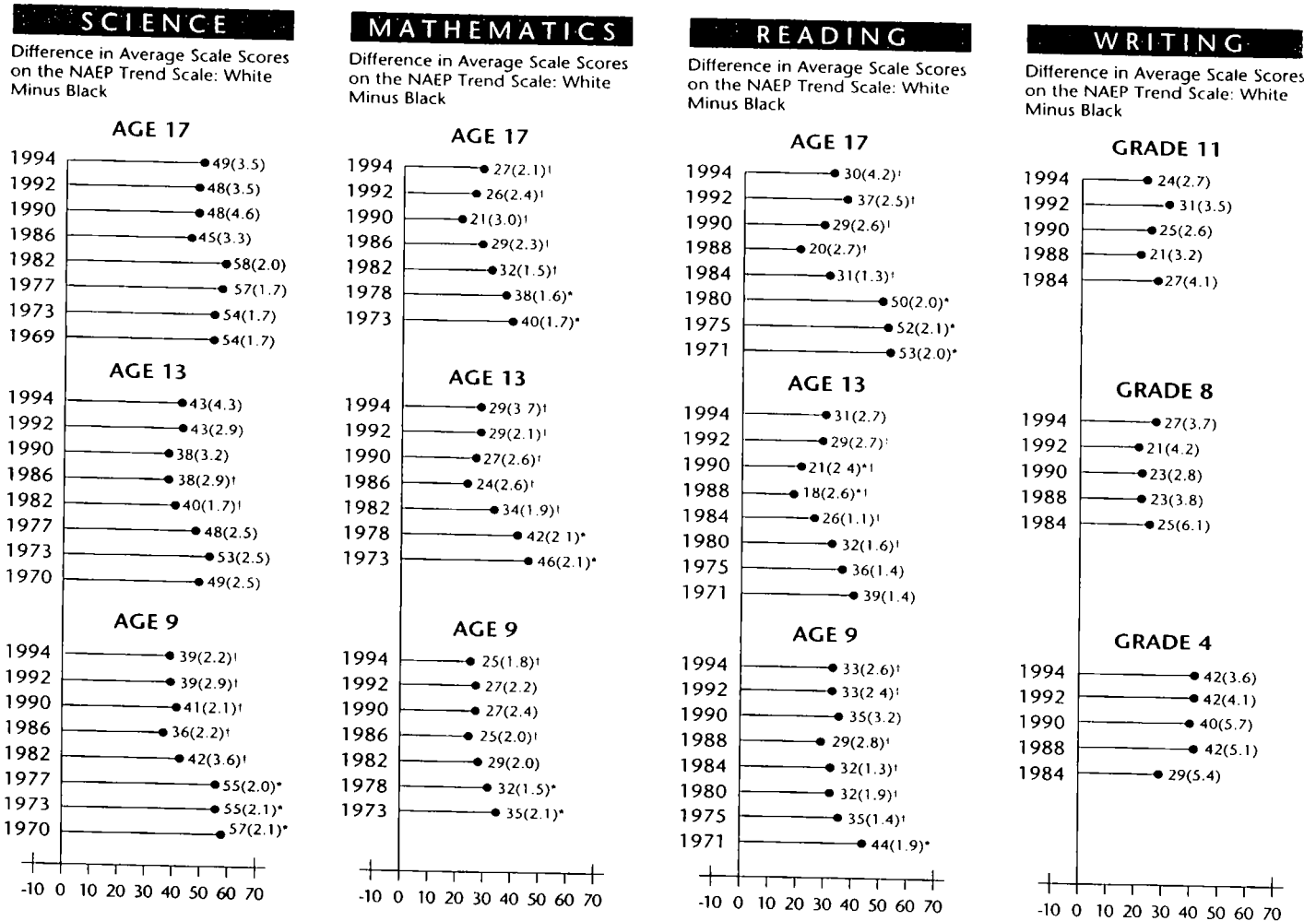
Differences between White and Black Students. Trend analyses of the differences between White and Black students' average scale scores at each age revealed an overall pattern of narrowing gaps in mathematics and reading, resulting in a smaller gap between White and Black students in 1994 than in the first trend assessment. (The 1971 and 1994 gaps for 13-year-olds in reading were not significantly different.) However, there was some indication that the gap has increased since the late 1980s for 13-year-olds in mathematics and for all ages in reading (see Figure 2). The gap between White and Black students in science scores has decreased for 9- and 17-year-olds. However, for 17-year-olds the gap was not significantly different in 1994 than in 1969. At age 13, the gap between White and Black students in science scores decreased slightly until 1986. Since that time it returned to a level not significantly different from that in 1970. The gap between White and Black students' average writing scores has remained relatively stable since 1984 at each grade. Despite a narrowing of the gap between the average performance of White and Black students in three of the four subject areas assessed, in 1994 White students at all three ages or grades had average scores in each subject area that were higher than the average scores of Black students.

⁵Executive Office of the President, *National Goals for Education*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990).

⁶Complete results for various subgroups in each assessment year are presented in the *NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress*.

Figure 2

Trends in Differences in Average Scale Scores of White and Black Students Across Subject Area



* Statistically significant difference from 1994, at a 5 percent combined significance level per set of comparisons.

† Statistically significant difference from the initial assessment year in each subject. The standard errors of the estimated differences in scale scores appear in parentheses. It can be said with 95-percent certainty that for each population of interest, the value for the whole population is within plus or minus two standard errors for the sample. In comparing two estimates, one must use the standard error of the difference.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Long-Term Trend Assessment.

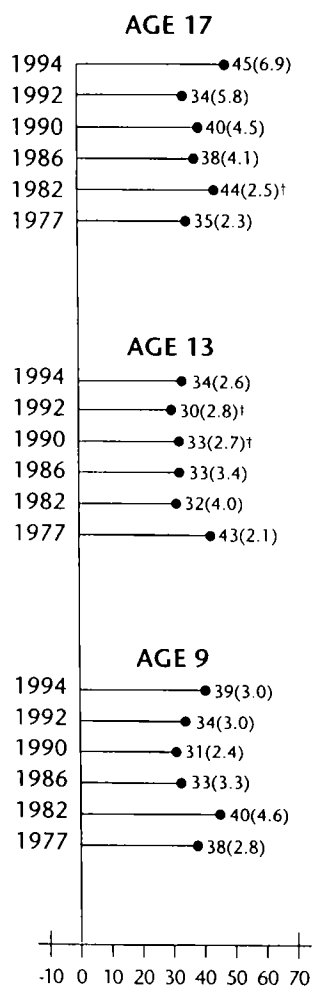
Differences between White and Hispanic Students. Trend analyses of the differences between White and Hispanic students' average scale scores revealed an overall pattern of narrowing gaps for 17-year-olds in mathematics and reading, and for eleventh graders in writing. A similar pattern was observed for 13-year-olds in science and mathematics (see Figure 3). However, there was some indication that the trend of narrowing gaps reversed during recent assessments for 17-year-olds in reading and for 13-year-olds in science and mathematics. When differences between White and Hispanic students in the first assessment were compared to those in the most recent assessment, only one instance of a statistically significant change was revealed: the difference between White and Hispanic 13-year-olds' mathematics scores in 1994 was smaller than that observed in the first assessment. In 1994 the average scores of White students at all three ages or grades were higher than the average scores of Hispanic students in all subject areas.

Figure 3

Trends in Differences in Average Scale Scores of White and Hispanic Students Across Subject Areas

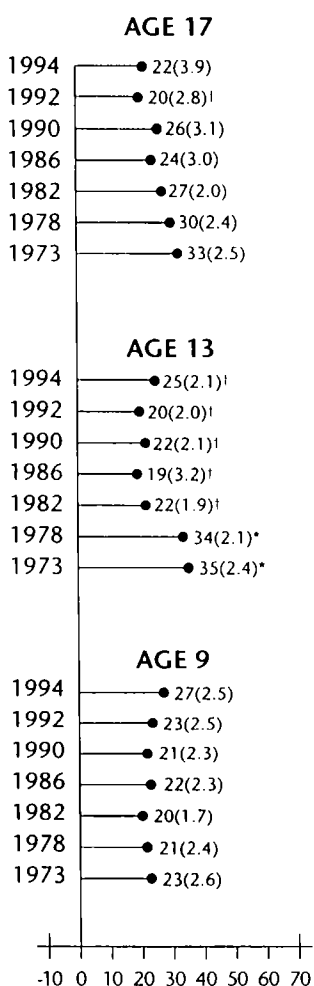
SCIENCE

Difference in Average Scale Scores on the NAEP Trend Scale: White Minus Hispanic



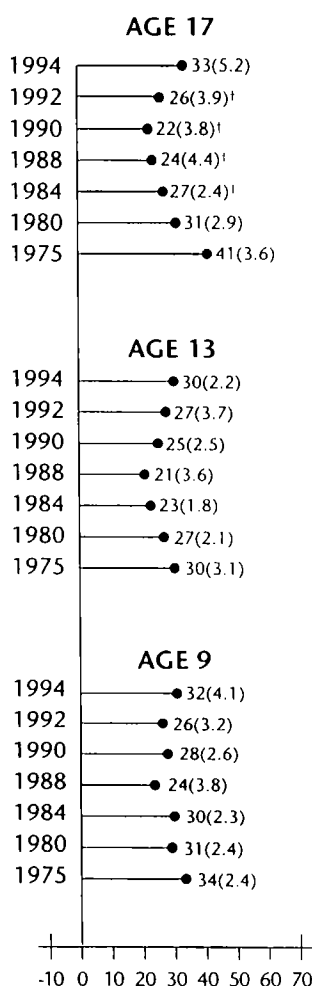
MATHEMATICS

Difference in Average Scale Scores on the NAEP Trend Scale: White Minus Hispanic



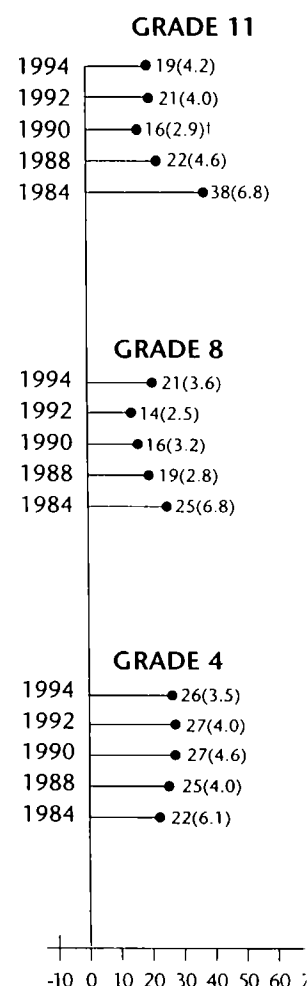
READING

Difference in Average Scale Scores on the NAEP Trend Scale: White Minus Hispanic



WRITING

Difference in Average Scale Scores on the NAEP Trend Scale: White Minus Hispanic



* Statistically significant difference from 1994, at a 5 percent combined significance level per set of comparisons.

[†] Statistically significant difference from the initial assessment year in each subject. The standard errors of the estimated differences in scale scores appear in parentheses. It can be said with 95-percent certainty that for each population of interest, the value for the whole population is within plus or minus two standard errors for the sample. In comparing two estimates, one must use the standard error of the difference.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 Long-Term Trend Assessment.

National Dropout Rates
Freshman to Sophomore Year
by
Type and Selectivity of Institution
PUBLIC

Self-Reported Admissions Selectivity		Associate	BA	MA	PhD
Highly Selective	Mean % =	NA	12.4	11.7	9.7
	N =		5	3	20
	*SD =		5.0	3.1	4.1
Selective	Mean % =	1.0	16.9	22.9	20.5
	N =	1	10	42	73
	*SD =		4.9	7.1	8.2
Traditional	Mean % =	25.7	36.4	29.9	28.3
	N =	22	17	114	70
	*SD =	9.5	7.7	8.8	7.3
Liberal	Mean % =	40.9	33.1	38.3	33.9
	N =	47	17	40	20
	*SD =	13.9	9.4	9.4	10.4
Open	Mean % =	48.3	43.8	40.9	36.5
	N =	714	23	31	13
	*SD =	15.5	14.3	12.9	6.0
Number of Institutions		784	72	230	196

* Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

National Dropout Rates

**Freshman to Sophomore Year
by
Type of Institution**

Degree Level/Control	N	Mean %	S.D.*
Two-year Public	784	47.2	15.8
Two-year Private	170	31.1	18.5
BA/BS Public	72	33.6	14.4
BA/BS Private	503	29.2	15.9
MA/1st Prof'l Public	230	31.3	11.1
MA/1st Prof'l Private	464	25.0	12.0
PhD Public	196	24.6	10.5
PhD Private	145	17.4	13.0
Number of Institutions	2564		

***Standard Deviation**

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

National Dropout Rates
Freshman to Sophomore Year
by
Admissions Selectivity
for Institutions Reporting Cut-off Scores

Selectivity level	Typical Test Scores		N	Mean %	S.D.*
	ACT	SAT			
Highly selective	27-31	1220 - 1380	118	8.7	5.2
Selective	22-27	1030 - 1220	401	18.7	8.1
Traditional	20-23	950 - 1070	699	27.8	11.3
Liberal	18-21	870 - 990	415	35.2	14.3
Open	17-20	830 - 950	927	46.3	16.2
Number of institutions			2560		

*Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

National Dropout Rates
Freshman to Sophomore Year
by
Type and Selectivity of Institution
PRIVATE

Self-Reported Admissions Selectivity		Associate	BA	MA	PhD
Highly Selective	Mean % = N = *SD =	8.0 1 6.1	8.4 29 6.1	10.4 20 5.3	7.0 40 4.8
Selective	Mean % = N = *SD =	6.7 3 11.5	17.5 100 8.3	19.1 119 7.3	15.9 53 7.8
Traditional	Mean % = N = *SD =	26.4 27 21.1	28.9 172 13.1	26.1 236 10.5	24.2 41 10.0
Liberal	Mean % = N = *SD =	30.7 86 16.5	36.3 132 14.1	33.6 67 15.0	37.7 6 10.1
Open	Mean % = N = *SD =	36.0 53 19.1	42.8 67 16.4	31.3 22 14.6	43.0 4 37.8
Number of Institutions		170	500	464	144

*Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

National Graduation* Rates
by
Type of Institution and Level of Selectivity
Public

Self-Reported Admissions Selectivity		Associate	BA	MA	PhD
Highly selective	Mean % = N = **SD =	NA	72.6 5 12.5	65.7 3 15.0	73.3 22 13.0
Selective	Mean % = N = **SD =	85.0 1 N/A	64.8 10 11.8	44.4 41 18.6	52.7 73 16.1
Traditional	Mean % = N = **SD =	39.4 22 21.2	48.7 11 19.4	43.5 109 13.6	39.7 61 13.9
Liberal	Mean % = N = **SD =	48.1 48 22.4	34.1 14 16.0	34.4 35 14.2	33.9 18 20.9
Open	Mean % = N = **SD =	35.2 751 20.7	31.8 11 12.2	34.4 23 14.9	31.1 12 15.0
Number of Institutions		822	51	211	186

*Graduation in 3 years for Associate Degree; 5 years for BA/BS

**Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled from the ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

National Graduation* Rates
by
Type of Institution and Level of Selectivity
Private

Self-Reported Admission Selectivity		Associate	BA	MA	PhD
Highly Selective	Mean % = N = **SD =	NA	83.3 29 11.0	78.6 20 9.0	83.1 40 10.7
Selective	Mean % = N = **SD =	85.0 4 12.9	66.7 95 12.3	63.6 115 11.6	66.1 54 13.0
Traditional	Mean % = N = **SD =	71.0 25 16.3	53.6 148 16.0	54.8 215 14.8	56.9 43 16.1
Liberal	Mean % = N = **SD =	62.5 93 21.3	42.8 102 18.8	45.8 58 19.3	42.0 6 17.9
Open	Mean % = N = **SD =	59.2 50 23.4	40.0 49 18.3	46.4 17 18.0	35.5 4 12.8
Number of institutions		172	423	425	147

*Graduation in 3 years for Associate Degree; 5 years for BA/BS

**Standard Deviation

Source: Compiled from the ACT Institutional Data File, 1996.

© 1996. The American College Testing Program. All Rights Reserved.

Author: Dan Madzelan at WDCA09

Date: 8/1/96 3:05 PM

Priority: Normal

TO: Daniel Goldenberg at WDCT01

TO: Kenneth Tolo at WDCT02

CC: Sally Kirkgassler at WDCA02

CC: Francine Picoult at WDCA02

Subject: Re: ACT Report on College Dropouts

----- Message Contents -----

Ken...

I think this report is a little light which is disturbing because ACT used to have some heavyweight analysts. That said, I think the information they reported is similar to what we already know (or at least think we know).

The ACT "report" appears to consist of six tables -- 2 for graduation rates and 4 for dropout rates -- with precious little description. However, the tables are sourced as "Compiled from ACT Institutional Data File, 1996" which indicates to me that the grad/dropout rates are national averages of institutional rates (reported to ACT in summary fashion) rather than national averages of student-level behavior (which I'm guessing ACT can't get because of FERPA considerations). This approach is probably OK if the institutional rates are somehow weighted by enrollment (you don't want bad dropout rates at a few small schools to mask good graduation rates at a few big schools), but there's no indication ACT did this.

ACT's analyses of both national graduation (AA within 3 years, BA/BS in 5 years) and dropout (1st to 2nd year) rates consists of 2,564 institutions divided among 40 cells: self-reported admissions selectivity (5) by institutional sector (8). Selectivity categories are (1) highly selective, (2) selective, (3) traditional, (4) liberal, and (5) open. There's a table that shows typical ACT and SAT test scores for these types (e.g. SAT between 1220 and 1380 for "highly selective" to 830 and 950 for "open"). The 8 sectors are public and private (1) 2-year, (2) BA/BS only, (3) Master's/1st professional, and (4) PhD-granting.

As you'd expect, the graduation and dropout rates get better as institutional admissions selectivity increases.

For example, BA/BS attainment at "highly selective" schools exceeds 80% for privates and around 70% for publics; it's around 2/3 for all "selective" schools. Even at the least selective, i.e. "open admissions," 4-year schools the graduation rate is approximately 40% and 30% for privates and publics, respectively. (ACT provides cell totals not table totals, i.e., they don't provide an overall graduation rate for all selectivity categories combined.)

Dropout rates for "highly selective" 4-years are a little less than 10% for privates and around 12% for publics. Rates for "traditional", "liberal" and "open" publics range from 33% to 44% and 29% to 43% for privates.

Earlier this year (March) NCES published the "Descriptive Summary of 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Five Years Later." I

haven't examined the pub in great detail (yet), but the graduation/degree attainment rates look very much like ACT's. For example, about 60% of the BPS students who began at a 4-year school had attained a degree within 5 years.

That's what I know today.

DanM

Reply Separator

Subject: ACT Report on College Dropouts

Author: Kenneth Tolo at WDCT02

Date: 7/31/96 1:48 PM

Dan and Dan:

Not sure who might be on vacation this week, so dropping this note to you both; I would appreciate hearing from either or both of you regarding the following.

On July 12, the newspapers reported on an ACT report released July 11 reporting that 27 percent of freshmen are failing to return to campus for a second year -- a 2.5 percent increase over the rate for 1983; most of the increase this year reflects private college dropouts.

What do we know about this report? Is it legitimate? Significant? Any insights and/or observations? I could guess at some possible reasons, but Mike asked what we knew about college dropout rates, etc. when he saw this report cited, and I would welcome your thoughts (immediate is more useful than detailed, since Mike leaves on vacation this Friday or so!).

Thanks.

Ken

Academe Today**THIS WEEK'S CHRONICLE**

The Chronicle of Higher Education

Date: July 19, 1996

Section: Students

Page: A35

*Retention-
persistence*

Data Show More Students Quitting College Before Sophomore Year

***Many institutions are trying to help
their freshmen adjust to campus life***

By Mary Geraghty

The proportion of freshmen who leave college before becoming sophomores has reached a record high, according to a report by the American College Testing Program.

The A.C.T. found that since 1983, when it began collecting enrollment data from colleges and universities, the number of freshmen who did not return for sophomore year at four-year colleges and universities has risen by 2.4 percentage points, to 26.9 per cent.

Public institutions reported a smaller increase than did private colleges, but public-college dropout rates were higher to begin with.

Public colleges reported that 29 per cent of the freshmen who enrolled in fall 1994 did not return for their sophomore year. At private colleges, the rate was 26 per cent.

Many colleges are already developing programs to keep students from dropping out, says Kelley Hayden, a spokesman for the A.C.T., adding that if this were not the case, the picture would have been much bleaker.

"These numbers are useful for people to think about and should start some conversations," he says.

But some experts say that even colleges' best efforts to make programs more accessible to students won't be enough without more help from federal and state governments. Thomas Mortenson, a higher-education policy analyst in Iowa, says a "pattern of severe retrenchment in state funding of higher education" has left little money for financial aid.

Many students, he says, are unwilling or unable to take on more debt to finance a college education. The A.C.T. data, he says, "tell an important story about the general problem of the redistribution of educational opportunity."

To avoid heavy debt, an increasing number of students work full-time while attending college. These students cannot carry a full course load at the same time, so many are taking six or more years to graduate.

The A.C.T. report says that the proportion of students who graduate within five years has declined over the past 13 years. Among students who entered college in the 1991-92 academic year, 53.3 per cent had graduated by the end of

academic 1995-96. That represents a decrease of 4.2 points since 1983. The rates have fallen at both public and private colleges, but the decline at public institutions has been greater.

Even before the report came out, many colleges had begun to look into ways to insure that students return for their second year. Approaches include increasing the number of students who live on campus, providing more information about where students in academic trouble can turn, and encouraging students to become involved in campus or local activities.

A number of colleges now require freshmen to take a course that provides them with basic information about campus resources and gives them suggestions about ways to adapt to the college environment.

James Garringer, a spokesman for Taylor University, says the orientation course there is one way to introduce students to the general-education program and, at the same time, give them something to unify them as a class.

The course is one factor that contributes to Taylor's high retention and graduation rates, he says. Of the freshmen who enrolled at Taylor in 1994, 89 per cent returned for the second year.

Madonna University has seen its freshman-dropout rate decrease sharply since it started a similar course six years ago, says Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz, vice-president for student life. The university now requires all traditional-age freshmen to take an orientation course, called College 101, in their first or second semester.

What's more, since 1990 the university has employed a full-time retention coordinator, who keeps track of students who may be at risk of dropping out and works to identify ways to help them.

Before the retention position was created, Sister Nancy Marie says, about 26 per cent of the freshmen did not return for their sophomore year. By last year, that figure had dropped to 10 per cent.

At Wichita State University, students can take elective courses that are designed to help them establish career goals, learn how to write a resume, and master study skills. Martha Shawver, associate vice-president for academic affairs, says those courses are helping, but "we're still not at the point where we think we ought to be."

Wichita State's freshman-dropout rate, 36 per cent, is higher than the national average for public institutions, but Stephen L. Chambers, director of institutional research, says it represents a decrease of two points since 1992.

Ms. Shawver says new students are also encouraged to meet with peer advisers, upperclassmen who can call upon their own experiences and point freshmen toward on-campus resources that suit their individual needs.

Southern Illinois University has seen the dropout rate increase during the past few years on its Carbondale campus, while just the opposite has occurred on its Edwardsville campus. Ted Sanders, president of both campuses, says the better performance at Edwardsville is the result of a "deliberate plan" established by Nancy Belck when she became chancellor there two years ago.

The plan included streamlining procedures in the bursar's and financial-aid offices, among others, to make them easier for students to use. The university also opened a new dormitory to encourage more commuter students to live on the campus and become involved in university life.

A similar effort is in the works for the Carbondale campus, Mr. Sanders says. "We're trying to learn from that experience. These are two very different institutions, so doing the exact same things won't work. But there is a lot to learn from the success at Edwardsville."

Jason E. Coyne, a senior at Carbondale, says the university provides a wide variety of services but could do more to let students know what the services are and where to find them. He came to the campus after three years at a junior college, he says, but "even so, when I got here I was confused, and I didn't know where to go for answers."

He eventually figured it out, he says, but his sister was not so lucky. She found it difficult to adjust to the independence of college life, he says, and left last fall, after only one semester.

Mr. Coyne, associate editor of the campus newspaper, *The Daily Egyptian*, says the staff is preparing a special issue that will provide some of the information that the editors think freshmen need.

But all these efforts might not be enough. Dropout rates could continue to rise as students deal with the increasing financial burden of a college education, according to the A.C.T.'s Mr. Hayden.

Increasing tuition and the shift of federal student-aid money from grants to loans have forced students to take out more loans than ever, and many students realize only after their first year that they cannot manage the debt, he says.

"I'm sure not many Congressmen thought, 'This is going to cause people to drop out of school,' but everything has its effects," Mr. Hayden says.

At Stonehill College, where 15 per cent of the freshmen who entered in fall 1994 did not return the following year, officials say money is the most common reason for a student to drop out.

Fred C. Petti, vice-president for administration, says the college has programs to help students academically. But because it does not fully meet the financial needs of all of the students it accepts, he says, "we suffer attrition more often than not due to financial concerns."

One of the best ways to insure that students stay in college to finish their degrees, Mr. Hayden says, is to make sure they know exactly what they're getting into at the outset, both academically and financially.

"If they aren't expecting things that then hit them in the face, that could be part of the problem," he says. "The more we can do to paint a realistic picture, the better."

Freshman Dropouts

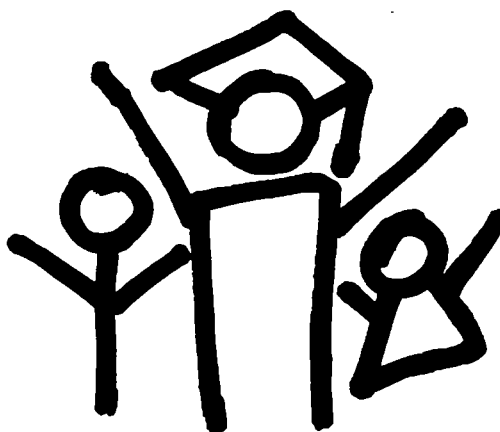
Proportion at 4-Year Colleges Who Do Not Return for Sophomore Year

	Public	Private	All
1983	28.6%	22.8%	24.5%
1985	28.8	23.4	24.9
1986	29.5	24.0	25.6
1987	29.3	24.3	24.8
1988	29.6	23.8	25.5
1989	29.3	23.6	25.3
1990	28.6	23.8	25.2
1991	28.3	23.8	25.1
1992	28.4	23.8	25.2
1993	28.1	24.0	25.2
1994	28.3	24.8	25.9
1995	28.6	25.1	26.2
1996	29.0	25.9	26.9

calculate mean and standard deviation, graph.
 Note: Data are not available for 1984
 Source: American College Testing Program

weighted avg? yes.
 Is this based on a sample?
 If so, what is standard error?
 Nonreturn freshmen - did it rise or fall?

EDUCATION WATCH
The 1996 Education Trust
State and National
Data Book



The Education Trust
Washington, D.C.

Copyright © 1996 by the Education Trust

All rights reserved.

The Education Trust was created to promote high academic achievement for all students, at all levels, kindergarten through college. While we know that all schools and colleges could better serve their students, our work focuses on the schools and colleges most often left behind in efforts to improve education: those serving low-income, Latino and African American students.

Education Trust staff work alongside policy makers, parents, education professionals, community and business leaders—in cities and towns across the country—who are trying to transform their schools and colleges into institutions that genuinely serve all students. We bring lessons from these communities back to Washington to ensure that in the national policy debate there is a strong, clear voice for what's right for students in that debate.



For more information:
The Education Trust
1725 K Street, N.W., Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone (202) 293-1217
Fax (202) 293-2605

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
 The National Picture.....	3
How To Read The State Data	17
The State Picture	
Alaska	22
Alabama	26
Arizona	30
Arkansas	34
California	38
Colorado	42
Connecticut	46
Delaware	50
District of Columbia ..	54
Florida	58
Georgia	62
Hawaii	66
Idaho	70
Illinois	74
Indiana	78
Iowa	82
Kansas	86
Kentucky	90
Louisiana	94
Maine	98
Maryland	102
Massachusetts	106
Michigan	110
Minnesota	114
Mississippi	118
Missouri	122
Montana	126
Nebraska	130
Nevada	134
New Hampshire	138
New Jersey	142
New Mexico	146
New York	150
North Carolina	154
North Dakota	158
Ohio	162
Oklahoma	166
Oregon	170
Pennsylvania	174
Rhode Island	178
South Carolina	182
South Dakota	186
Tennessee	190
Texas	194
Utah	198
Vermont	202
Virginia	206
Washington	210
West Virginia	214
Wisconsin	218
Wyoming	222
State Rankings	227
Sources and Definitions	235

The staff at the Education Trust decided to publish a databook on student achievement more than two years ago. We made that decision for two reasons. First, when we reviewed education data, we came away deeply worried about the continued underachievement of American young people. While most Americans seem to share that concern, much of the data that is available to us (and to others who are willing to work hard at acquiring it) is not available to them in an understandable form. People don't have the data they need to *act*.

Second, we were alarmed by the silence around the fact that the academic achievement gap between minorities and Whites is growing once again. For decades, we made dramatic progress as a nation at accelerating minority achievement. That progress was shouted from every rooftop by practically every educational and political leader who could get his or her hands on the data. But around 1988 the progress stopped; in most subjects at most grade levels the gap is now growing once again. But rather than talk about this problem—and decide what to do about it—there is only silence.

We want, quite simply, to get folks in every state talking about both of these problems. We believe that, unless we talk openly about these problems in our communities, we won't do anything about them.

Honest data can be a good starting place for such conversations. In this book, we provide basic data on educational attainment, achievement and practices for each state, as well as for the nation. We selected and organized the data to point toward solutions and to discourage still more unproductive fingerpointing. In a companion book, *Education Watch: The Education Trust Community Data Guide*, we provide help to local communities that want to pull together similar data about their own children and schools. Both should be useful helping to start—or restart—a conversation between educators and parents, and between schools and colleges, about what we can do together to raise achievement and close the achievement gap.

The data in both books are far from complete. But when you limit yourself, as we did, to data consistently available from most or all states, this is about the best you can do: there is way too much educational data on the things nobody wants to know, and way too little on what matters most.

The data are also far from perfect, even though they come in all cases from official sources. We checked and rechecked the data, and we asked all state education agencies to recheck the numbers, too. Despite our best efforts, mistakes may creep in. More important, because some of the data are derived from samples, you may find that your state has even more complete data on the same subject.

For both of these reasons, our data should be a starting point for your journey into educational dataland, rather than an endpoint.

Given the years of effort put into this first volume, it is nearly impossible to remember everyone we should thank. We're going to try anyway, because without these people, there wouldn't be a book: Vinci Daro and Akiba Solomon, who did the first year of work; Paul Smith, Phil Steitz and Arloc Sherman, who provided ongoing expert advice; Tony Phipps and Tony Blank at the Commerce Department, who helped with Census data; and Carol Berthold at the University of Maryland System who helped us navigate CASPAR. Also, thanks to our outside reviewers—John Barth, Cindy Brown, Carlos Esparza, Doug Rivlin, Margaret Ruiz, and Mark Steitz—and to Lauren Maher. We are especially grateful to Michael Bell and Mark Jordan who came to this job as “temps,” but who quickly became part of the Education Trust family.

This book would not be possible without the active support of the entire Education Trust staff, most of whom were involved in checking the data and fielding calls from states. But we are most grateful to Jeremy Wallace, whose wonderful data work provided the foundation for this book; Patte Barth, whose clear prose and careful design tell the story; and Amy Wilkins, who wrote parts, oversaw the state review process, cracked the whip on the fact checkers, and otherwise made absolutely certain that we didn't screw up.

We hope that you will use this book in the spirit in which it is intended: as a foundation for widespread discussion and action. Only by involving all necessary parties—educators, parents, community leaders, and policy makers—will we solve these problems once and for all.



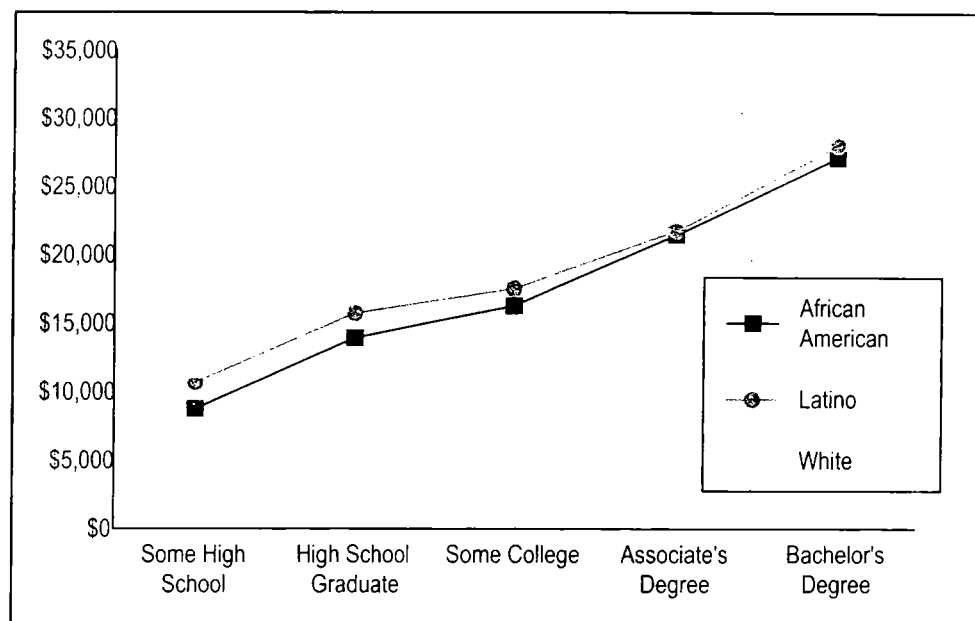
Kati Haycock
The Education Trust

Overall, we are graduating more young people from high school and sending more of them to college. But the diplomas and degrees we award mean too little for life in the 21st century.

While the achievement of White students has remained relatively flat for almost 30 years, minority students made significant progress. But that progress stopped around 1988, and the gap has begun to widen again.

We need to mount a two-pronged effort: we must raise the academic achievement of all students, while accelerating the performance of schools serving our neediest children so that we can close the achievement gap forever.

More Education Means More Income



Source: *Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1993 and 1992*
Table 8 US Department of Commerce

That effort must involve more than simply rolling out reform across the top of an educational system riddled with inequities; it must confront and eliminate those inequities. Honest data can be the launching pad for such an effort. It can help all Americans understand that they have a vested interest in improving the achievement of every student, especially the very poorest; and it can help us identify what makes a difference and what doesn't.

Education matters. To the nation, it means having the human capital to keep our economy vibrant and competitive, and a citizenry equipped to participate responsibly in the democratic process. Education also matters to the individual. More education converts into more personal income, greater employability and less dependency. For many Americans, education offers a weapon against poverty and the effects of racism.

Education matters to a greater extent now than at any time in our history. The world is entering a technological age that could well exceed the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Knowledge in some fields is doubling almost every year, while our capacity to disseminate new information expands exponentially. Success in this new age is awarded to individuals who have enough knowledge to negotiate the information explosion and the skills necessary to adapt well to constant change.

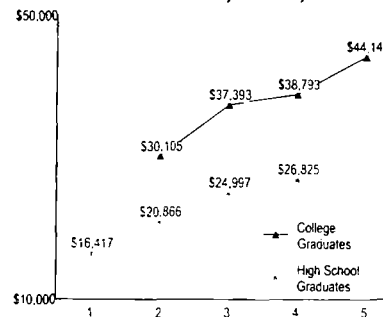
In today's market, it takes more than a general high-school education to provide an individual with a reasonable amount of economic security. The factory job that in the last half century raised the blue collar worker into middle class prosperity has been redefined as a high-skilled occupation. The Big Three motor companies—once the symbol for offering relatively high pay for low skills—

Educational Attainment per Every 100 Americans

	High School Diploma	Some College	BA
African American	83	40	12
Latino	60	30	10
White	88	58	25

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports in *Education Attainment in the United States: March 1993 and 1992* Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, March 1993

Graduates with Better Skills Earn More, Males, 1992



Source: US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992 in *The Condition of Education, 1995*.

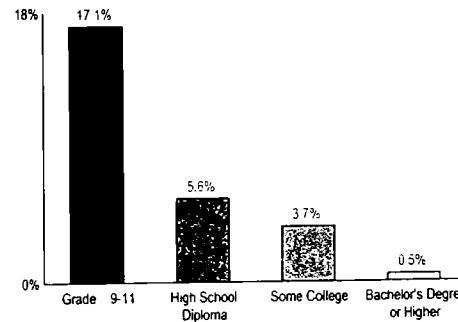
now want entry-level workers who show competency with algebra, geometry, and computers in addition to the ability to solve problems and think creatively and independently.¹

The need for high-skilled workers has put an unprecedented premium on a college education. Today's college graduate can expect to earn *twice* the wages of a high-school graduate and nearly *triple* those of high-school drop out.² College-educated workers are also more able to hold a job that supports a family; not only are their earnings higher, their chance of being unemployed is half that of a high-school drop out.³ And what students learn really matters: among individuals with the same level of educational attainment, those with more highly developed skills earn significantly more.

More than economic security alone is at stake. The continuation of a civil and democratic society is becoming a greater challenge as the issues we face as voters grow more complex and our concerns more diverse. The shrinking world is more than just a metaphor, for we daily conduct business with people and cultures from across the globe by means of high-speed travel and electronic communications, as well as face to face in our neighborhoods. Society needs an informed populace prepared to handle the ambiguity of modern life, to accept differences among us, and to seek out solutions to our common problems.

We need to engage in a two-front campaign to improve American education. We need to raise the academic achievement of all students. And we must accelerate the performance of schools serving our neediest children so that we can close the achievement gap forever.

Graduating from High School Reduces the Probability of Being on Welfare



Source: US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys in National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 1995* (p. 96) Washington, DC: US Department of Education 1995.

The case for high-level, universal education has never been stronger than it is today. The advantages to the individual are evident in jobs and high wages. Moreover, when all are educated the benefit redounds to the nation as well in the form of a healthy and productive society.

By some measures, American schools have improved in recent years. Overall we are graduating more young people from high school and sending more of them to college. But the fact is that the diplomas and degrees we award mean little. We are still failing to educate most Americans to high levels. And too many students, particularly those who come from poor and minority families, are consigned to an academic diet of low expectations and the most rudimentary skills. Those who manage to escape being bored out of school altogether are cast out to a world unprepared to earn a decent wage.

We need to engage in a two-front campaign to improve American education. We need to raise the academic achievement of all students. And we must accelerate the performance of schools serving our neediest children so that we can close the achievement gap forever.

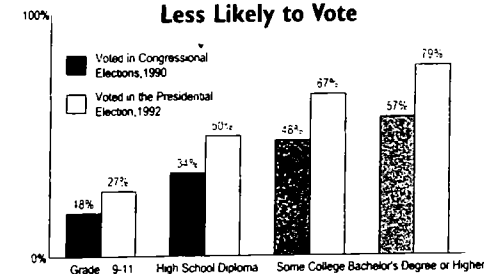
WHO RECEIVES AN EDUCATION

The national education goals call for a high-school completion rate of 90% by the year 2000.⁴ At present, about 86% of our students are earning diplomas or the equivalent by age 24. Although this may look encouraging, the fact remains that one out of every seven young adults is not even minimally prepared for work. African American students complete high school at the roughly the same rate as their White peers. But the numbers are devastating for Latino students, of whom only 60% nationally earn a high school diploma.

Despite the importance of postsecondary education, only 62% of all high-school graduates enter two- or four-year colleges; just about half of these students earn a degree. College attendance and completion rates are much lower for minorities. While 83 out of every 100 African Americans now complete a high school education, only 40 attend college, and 12 earn a bachelor's degree by age 30. Only one in ten Latinos earns a degree.⁵

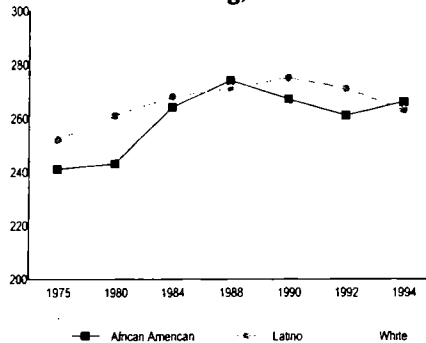
Just because students remain in school doesn't mean they are learning as much as they should. Though a lot of energy and resources have been poured into the effort to improve public schools over the last 13 years, student achievement is about the same as it was in the 1970s. Some areas, such as math and science,

Citizens with Less Education are Less Likely to Vote



Source: US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports in National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 1994* Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1994.

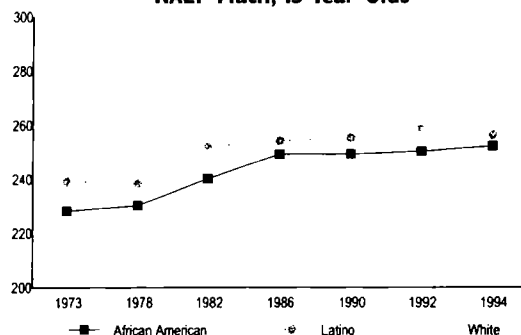
Gap Narrows, then Widens Again NAEP Reading, 17 Year-olds



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *NAEP Trends in Academic Progress*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1992, 1994.

have shown recent improvement, and the majority of students now master basic reading skills. But reading comprehension and writing have remained flat or declined. Far fewer of our students perform well on problems requiring high-level thinking than do students in other industrial nations. While the vast majority of American 17-year-olds, for example, show a command of basic mathematical skills, (over 90% of all ethnic and racial groups), performance

Gap Narrows, then Widens Again NAEP Math, 13 Year-Olds

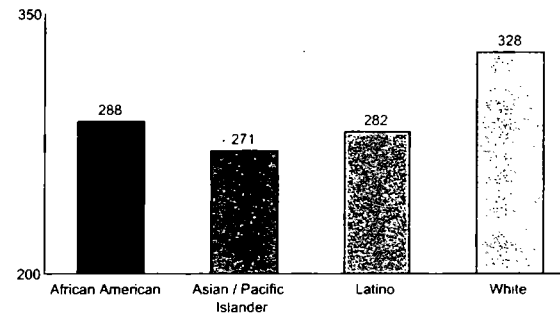


Source: US Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports in Education Attainment in the United States: March 1993 and 1992*. Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, March 1993.

drops off dramatically—and gaps between groups widen—as the procedures become more complex.⁶

African American, Latino and Native American students perform well below other students in all subjects, and the gap has actually grown in the past six years. This trend is a sad reversal of progress made between 1970 and 1988, when minority students—and the schools that serve them—registered striking gains even while achievement among White students remained fairly flat. During this time, the difference in performance between White and African American students narrowed by about one-half;

The Gap Persists in College Prose Literacy: College Graduates



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Adult Literacy in America*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education 1992.

between Whites and Latinos it closed by one-third.⁷ Beginning in 1988, though, that progress stopped.

Although not widely known, there are similar achievement gaps at the postsecondary level too. Assessments of adult literacy show that African American and Latino college graduates perform well below their White peers.

The fact that progress in minority achievement has stopped at a time when minorities comprise a growing portion of the student population should sound a wake-up call to the whole country. For

The fact that progress in minority achievement has stopped at a time when minorities comprise a growing fraction of the student population should sound a wake-up call to the whole country.

while virtually all minority students master basic skills by age 17, disproportionately few master the higher level skills they need to assume productive roles in society.

WHY AREN'T RESULTS BETTER?

There are many African American and Latino students who perform at the highest academic levels and go on to make valuable contributions to the American enterprise. But most poor and minority students don't achieve at the same levels as their more advantaged peers.

Why, after nearly two decades of progress, does the performance of poor and minority students continue to lag? When asked, the public—and many educators—are quick to point to harmful external circumstances: pervasive poverty, single parent homes, violent neighborhoods, welfare dependency, drug and alcohol use, lead paint ...the list goes on and on.

These conditions matter, but not nearly as much as many people believe. What matters more is the way schools respond to neighborhoods and family conditions. Certainly, the abject circumstances surrounding many children's lives can make getting them to high standards more challenging.

But they don't make it impossible. Schools in some of the most desperate neighborhoods are succeeding every day, proving that poor and minority children can achieve at the highest levels *if they are taught at the highest levels.*

But most schools don't teach all students at the same high level. In fact, we have constructed an educational system so full of

inequities that it actually exacerbates the challenges of race and poverty, rather than ameliorates them. Simply put, we take students who have less to begin with and give them less in school, too.

Despite the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, most minority youngsters are still educated separately from other youngsters. More than two-thirds of African American and Latino students attend predominantly minority schools. Still others who attend more diverse schools are frequently herded into low-track classes where they are educated separately—and differently—from their high-achieving peers.

WHERE EDUCATION DOLLARS GO

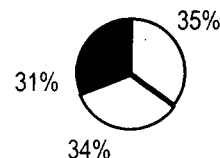
In his book *Savage Inequalities*, Jonathan Kozol vividly describes the inequities between schools serving poor and minority students and those serving others. He calls on voters and policymakers to dramatically increase support for these schools, so that they can provide their students with the decent education that they need and we need them to have.

Recent research supports Kozol's charge that we spend much less educating children of the poor than we do on children of more affluent families. In 1990, for example, we spent an average of \$6565 nationally per student in schools with less than 5% of their children in poverty, and \$5173 per student in schools with more than 25%

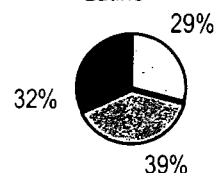
of their children in poverty. When these numbers are adjusted for local costs and need, the gap is still substantial: \$5209 per student in low-poverty schools and \$4044 per student in high-poverty schools.⁸ The difference is less, but still significant when schools are compared on the basis of minority enrollment: \$4389 in cost- and need-adjusted dollars per student in low-minority schools, compared with \$4103 per student in high-minority schools.⁹

African Americans and Latino Students Attend Predominantly Minority Schools

African American



Latino

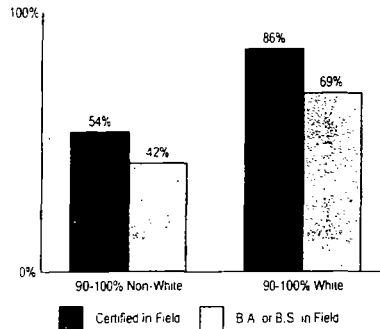


■ 90-100% Minority Schools
□ 50-90% Minority Schools

□ <50% Minority Schools

Source: Orfield, Gary, Frank Manfort, and Melissa Aaron (1989). *Status of School Desegregation 1968-1986*.

Science Teachers in Racially Isolated Schools Have Less Education



Source: Jeannie Oakes. *Multiplying Inequalities, the Effects of Race, Social Class, and Tracking on Opportunities to Learn Mathematics and Science* (Rand: 1990)

The way school dollars are spent is as important as the amount of funds that are allocated. Resources such as well-educated teachers, up-to-date textbooks, challenging curricula, ongoing professional development for teachers, computers and laboratory equipment have direct bearing on students' learning, and they too are not distributed equitably.

INVESTMENTS IN INSTRUCTION

Parents know very well that good teachers and good books are absolutely critical to learning. That's why they work hard to get their children assigned to the best teachers, and why they oust superintendents who don't arrange for on-time delivery of textbooks.

But poor and minority children often lack the proper materials and books. And they are frequently taught by undereducated teachers. According to researcher Linda Darling-Hammond, "(E)mergency hiring, assignment of teachers outside their fields of preparation, and high turnover in underfunded schools conspire to produce a situation in which many poor and minority students are taught throughout their entire school careers by a steady stream of the least qualified and experienced teachers."¹⁰

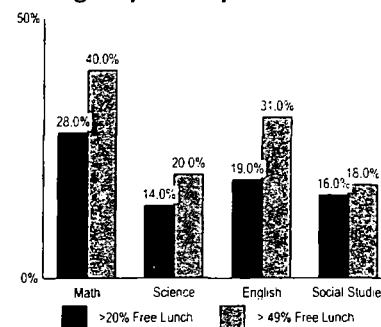
There are a variety of ways to examine teacher qualifications. By virtually every measure the U.S. comes up short. According to the 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "by standards of...teacher education in other countries, U.S. teacher education has historically been thin, uneven, and poorly financed." Further, "more than 12% of all newly hired teachers enter without any training at all and another 14% enter without having fully met state standards...States pay more attention to the qualifications of veterinarians treating the nation's cats and dogs than to those of teachers educating the nation's children and youth."¹¹

Though bad on average, these problems are much worse for poor and minority children. Nearly one in four central-city schools, for example, reported in 1991 that they had vacancies that they could not fill with a qualified teacher. In response, principals use substitutes, hire less-qualified teachers, or cancel courses. Consequently, central-city high school students have only about a 50% chance of having a qualified math or science teacher.

This pattern persists even outside of central cities. In 1990-91, a whopping 40% of high-school mathematics courses in high-

The way school dollars are spent is as important as the amount of funds that are allocated.

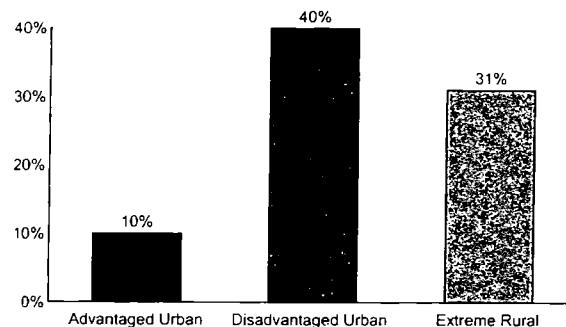
Classes in High Poverty High Schools More Often Taught by Underqualified Teachers*



*Teachers teaching without at least a minor in field.

Source: US Department of Education *Schools and Staffing Survey*, 1990-91.

8th Grade Students in Poor School Districts More Often Lack Math Resources



Source: Mullis, Ina V.S. et al. *The State of Mathematics Achievement: NAEP's 1990 Assessment of the Nation and the Trial Assessment of the States*. Educational Testing Service, June 1991.

poverty schools were taught by teachers with no expertise in math, who were teaching "out of field." Similarly, while approximately 69% of math classes in low-minority schools were taught by mathematics majors, only 42% of these classes in high-minority schools were so taught. Across subjects, poor and minority students were less likely to be in classes with teachers who have at least a minor in the fields they are teaching.¹²

Even when they have well-prepared teachers, poor and minority students are less likely to have textbooks, calculators, computers, laboratory equipment and other instructional supplies. In schools where more than 30% of the students are poor, for example, 59% of the teachers report that they lack sufficient books and other reading resources. By contrast, only 16% of teachers in more affluent schools claimed such shortages. Similar inequities were reported for mathematics.

The explosive growth in the use of technology in schools seems, unfortunately, to be exacerbating current inequalities in instructional resources. High-poverty schools have fewer computers per student and what little equipment they have is usually out of date. Moreover, the technology often is used ineffectively: to drill students on basic skills, rather than explore information available on

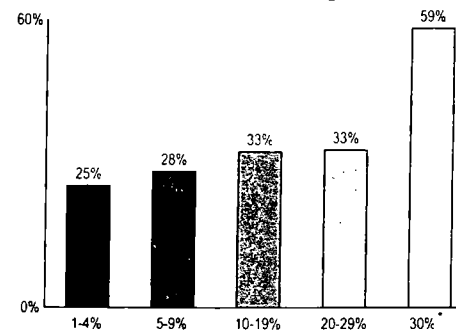
the Internet or engage in other high-level learning.

A CURRICULUM THAT CHALLENGES

Students not only need better prepared teachers in order to achieve to high levels, they need a curriculum that offers challenging subject matter. Analyses of student performance on standardized assessments show that a rigorous curriculum improves scores for all students. On the most recent national assessment in mathematics, scores increased significantly for each additional year spent in college-prep mathematics.¹³ Students who completed more courses in advanced math and science also scored higher on college admissions tests.¹⁴

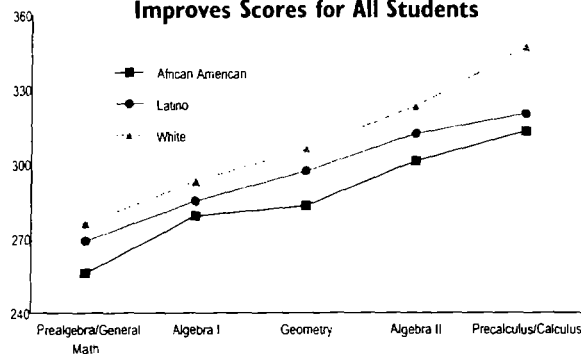
The data—and common sense—clearly suggest that the most direct approach to increasing student knowledge is to provide students with access to more knowledge. But again, the overall national record is not good. Only 46.8% of all high-school graduates complete the full complement of courses recommended by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. While this represents a major improvement over the last 13 years, it still leaves more than half of all students unprepared for the twenty-first century. Moreover, growth during the past decade has been uneven, with Whites and Asians showing more progress than African Americans and Latinos.

4th Grade Students in Poor School Districts More Often Lack Reading Resources



*Percent of students receiving free lunch
Source: Educational Testing Service. *Teacher Questionnaire from the 1988 NAEP Reading Assessment, Grade 4*, unpublished.

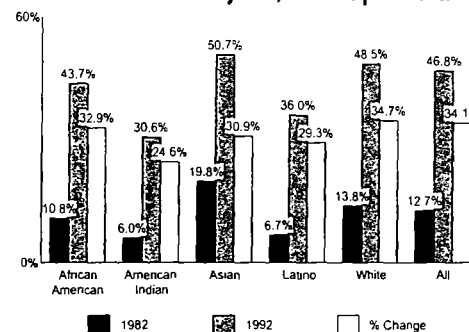
A Rigorous Math Curriculum Improves Scores for All Students



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1992 Mathematics Trend Assessment, National Center for Education Statistics. *NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1994.

There is general agreement that, while flawed, the college preparatory curriculum is still the best preparation for both college and work. Yet over half of all students are not enrolled in this curriculum. The problem is worse for minority and low-income students, who continue to be under represented in the college prep track and over represented in general and vocational programs. Only one in four students from low-income families is placed in

More Graduates Complete Recommended Units in Core Subjects, But Gaps Remain

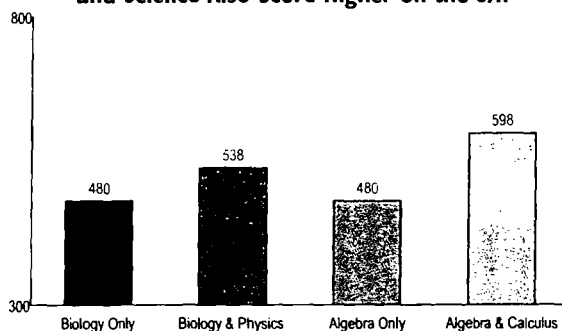


Source: US Department of Education National Center of Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education*, 1995.

the college prep sequence of courses.

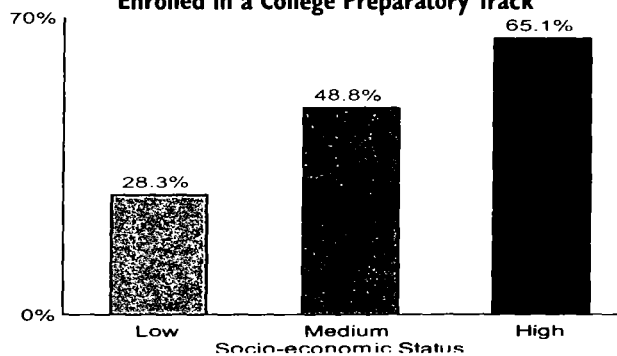
As a result of our apparent inability to agree that all students need a rigorous core curriculum, too few students, a disproportionate number of poor and minority students among them, take courses that build the knowledge and skills they will need as adults. Roughly 55 out of every 100 White and Asian students complete Algebra II and Geometry—precisely the math that industry

Students Who Complete Advanced Math and Science Also Score Higher on the SAT



Source: The College Board, *College-Bound Seniors: 1994 Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers*. Washington, DC: The College Entrance Examination Board and Educational Testing Service, 1994.

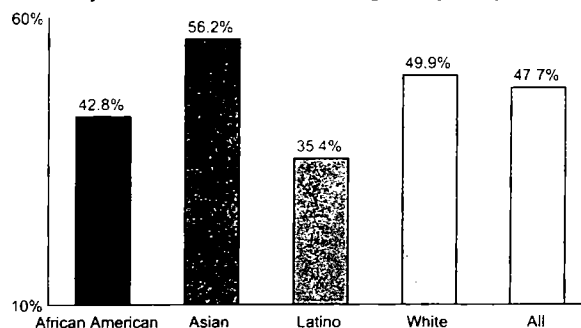
Poor Students Are Less Likely to be Enrolled in a College Preparatory Track



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Second Follow-Up, 1992 in: *A Profile of the American High School Senior in 1992*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, June 1995.

Student placements in secondary schools determine who will have access to high-level knowledge and who won't.

African American and Latino Students Are Less Likely To Be Enrolled in A College Preparatory Track.

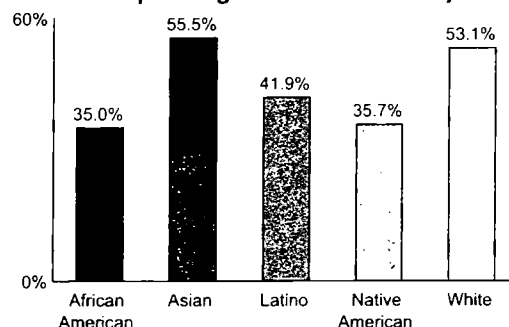


Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. Second Follow-Up, 1992 in: *A Profile of the American High School Senior in 1992* Washington, DC: US Department of Education, June 1995.

increasingly wants for entry-level work. That means that 45 in every 100 don't. And only 35 of every 100 African American and Native American seniors take this math. Physics fares even worse: only one in *four* White seniors completes this science, one in *six* African Americans, and one in *seven* Latinos.

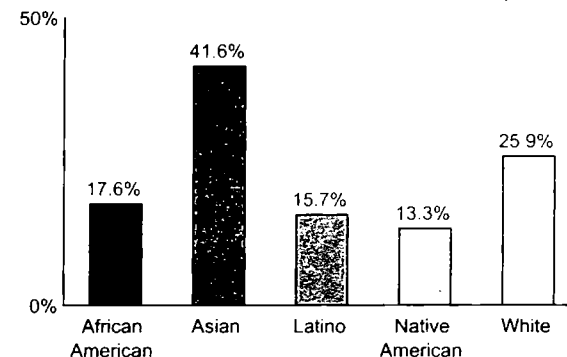
Student placements in secondary schools determine who will

Not Enough High School Graduates Complete Algebra II and Geometry



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Second Follow-Up, 1992 in *Trends Among High School Seniors*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, June 1995.

Physics Completion Rates Vary Dramatically

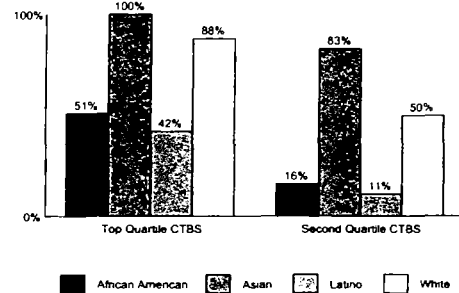


Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. Second Follow-Up, 1992 *Trends Among High School Seniors*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, June 1995

have access to high-level knowledge and who won't. Most school districts report having objective placement policies for courses like algebra that are typically based on students' scores on standardized tests. One recent study, however, suggests that placements are far less objective than the public is led to believe. Researchers reviewing the relationship in one large California school district between performance on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) and placement in algebra found some glaring inequities: 100% of the Asian and 87.5% of the White students performing in the top quartile were enrolled in algebra, while only 51% African American and 42% of Latino top-quartile students were enrolled. Moreover, it turned out that Asians who performed in the *third quartile* were more likely to be placed in algebra than African Americans and Latinos scoring in the *top quartile*.¹⁵

Nationally the flip side of minority under representation in college prep math and science courses is the over representation of African American and Latino students in vocational programs. Despite a nascent movement to redefine school-to-work programs (now often called school-to-career) with high standards, typical vocational education still does not offer the curricular rigor that prepares students to high levels. On the 1990 national reading

Percent of High Scoring Students Placed in Algebra in One Southern California School District



Source: The Achievement Council, Inc. Los Angeles, CA. Unpublished tabulations.

assessment, for example, students who took a significant number of vocational courses scored well below students who took few or no vocational courses.¹⁶

WHERE ARE STANDARDS?

The uneven results from school to school beg the question: Where are standards? How can a community know, for example, that sixth-grade student work in their central-city school equals the rigor of sixth-grade work in a high-achieving suburban school?

The answer right now is that there are no explicit standards for American education. However, this situation is slowly beginning to change. In the last six years, several national professional subject-area organizations have attempted to define what students should know and be able to do in their respective fields. These standards documents are excellent reference points for schools and communities. Yet because they are so new, they are only now beginning to influence new state- and local-level standards, assessments, and curriculum.

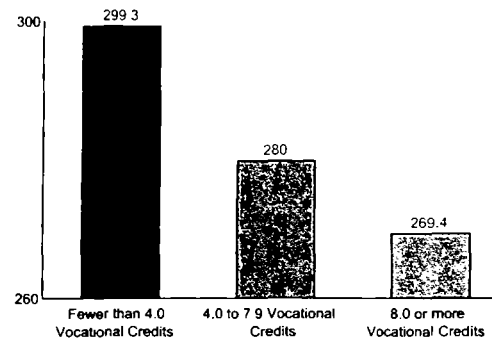
In the absence of broad standards, districts, schools and individual teachers have been left to establish their own. This has resulted in considerable confusion about the purposes and goals of schooling. Too many districts and schools have only vague goals

for what should be taught, and little or nothing about what students should learn and how well they should learn it. The lowest student expectations are typically held by schools serving high-poverty communities. These schools ask little from their students and, not surprisingly, get what they ask for.

Studies show that there is a strong tendency for high-poverty schools to award high grades for low-level student work. In a recent study, researchers disaggregated the reading and math scores on national assessments by the poverty level of school and by the student grades in these subjects. They found that students in low-poverty schools (less than 10% receiving free lunch) who reported earning mostly C's in English scored about the same as students earning mostly A's in high-poverty schools (over 76% free lunch recipients). This pattern was repeated when they looked at math test scores and grades.¹⁷

Those of us at the Education Trust who work in urban schools have seen too often how schools' low expectations play out in classrooms. We witnessed English classrooms where 14-year-olds were assigned to *color* the definitions to a list of vocabulary words and required to recite—over and over again—the parts of speech.

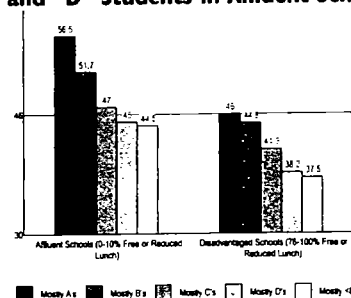
Students Who Take More Vocational Courses Score Lower on Reading Proficiency



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Vocational Course-Taking and Achievement: An Analysis of High School Transcripts and 1990 NAEP Assessment Scores* Washington, DC: US Department of Education, May 1995.

These schools ask little from their students and, not surprisingly, get what they ask for.

"A" Students in High Poverty Schools Achieve at About the Same Level in Math As "C" and "D" Students in Affluent Schools



Source: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988; in *Educational Research Report*, January, 1994.

Poor and minority youngsters will achieve at the highest levels if they are taught at the highest levels.

At the same time, their peers in high-achieving schools are stretching their command of vocabulary and using the parts of speech writing essays about rich and challenging subject matter. Likewise, math assignments in high-poverty schools are typically dittoed worksheets filled with disconnected math facts; students rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to connect and apply these lessons to solve complex, real-world problems. The reasons schools don't work for poor and minority students are partly a lack of sufficient resources and partly a tradition of offering a low-level curriculum with low standards for performance. But schools *can* act to raise all students—including poor and minority students—to high academic achievement. And indeed many have succeeded.

SUCCESS STORIES

Fortunately, there are some schools and districts that are responding to the needs of their poor and minority students, not by lowering standards, but by accelerating learning. These schools are proving every day that poor and minority youngsters will achieve at the highest levels if they are taught at the highest levels.

Mission, Texas

Waitz Elementary school is located not too far from the Mexican border. Many live in Texas's notorious *colonias*, communities with-

out paved streets, running water or adequate sewage systems. Ninety-four percent of the students receive free- or reduced-price lunches. Virtually none of the students arrives at school speaking English. Waitz's scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), however, are the envy of even the most affluent school districts in the state. Last year, 93.5% of its students passed the English portion of the fourth grade TAAS test, 96.5% passed in math, and 98.3% passed in writing.¹⁹ Why? A relentless focus on teaching English and building strong academic skills—with careful monitoring and aggressive intervention when children fall behind—and a close partnership with parents.

TAAS 4th Grade Pass Rates, 1995

Waitz	High Pov.	State Average
93.5%	69%	79%
96.5%	58%	70%
98.3%	77%	84%

Source: *Texas Monthly*, Nov. 1996 and Texas Education Agency.

Milwaukee

Educators in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, have set new, nationally benchmarked standards for what they want their students to learn by key grade levels. They have also set new graduation requirements for 2004 that require, among other things, three years of mathematics beyond algebra and a minimum of three years of science.

In the meantime, they developed and administered a tough new mathematics proficiency test aimed at ensuring that high school students are learning both basic and high-level mathematics. When four out of five juniors failed the test in its first year, district leaders were pressured to lower the standard. But they resisted. Instead, they refocused instruction, organized students to help each other, and recruited "math buddies" from the community. And it paid off. The next year, after an all-out, community-wide effort, first-time pass rates for juniors jumped to 46%, and more

Milwaukee School District Math Pass Rate by Ethnic Group For Graduating Class of 1996

	March 1996	June 1996
African American	7%	87%
Asian	39%	93%
Latino	14%	93%
Native American	16%	89%
White	38%	97%
Total	21%	92%

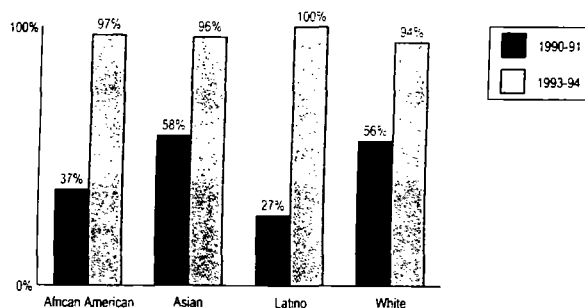
Source: Milwaukee Board of Education: Action on Resolution 9596R-025, June 1996.

than 81% of all seniors passed the exam.

Providence, Rhode Island

Five years ago, Superintendent Arthur Zarella and his team set out on a mission to make sure that all Providence students develop the high-level mathematics skills they need to succeed in post-secondary education and work. Zarella knew that large numbers of Providence students weren't then mastering those skills; in fact,

Providence School District 9th Graders Enrolled in Algebra



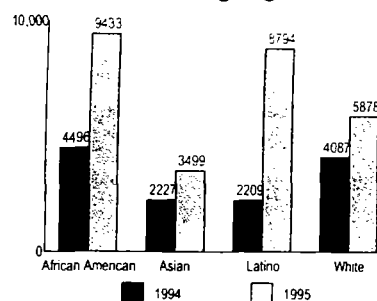
Source: The College Board Equity 2000 Annual Report July 1995

because they had been placed in low-level mathematics courses, they weren't even being taught those skills. The tracking system had to change: somehow he had to convince teachers, counselors, parents, and sometimes the students themselves that every student could succeed in college preparatory mathematics. Zarella had support from the College Board's Equity 2000 Program, which enabled him to provide training for teachers and counselors and establish a Saturday Academy for students who needed extra help. The results are dramatic: whereas only 37% of African-American and 27% of Latino students were taking Algebra in 1991, more than 97% are today.

New York City

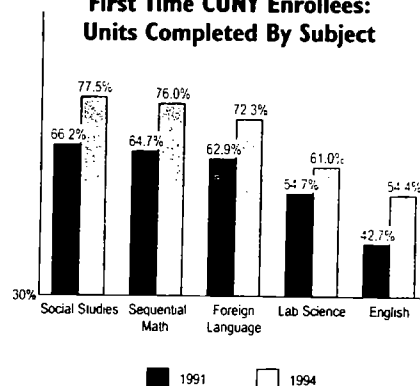
When he arrived in New York City, newly appointed Chancellor Ramon Cortines spent a lot of time visiting schools and classrooms. What he found was troubling: mostly low-level instruction in the city's high schools, and too few students in the college-preparatory Regents' courses. Cortines shared his concerns with high school principals and teachers, most of whom assured him that this was about the best these particular students could do. Cortines didn't agree. He knew his students could achieve at higher levels if they are taught at higher levels. In one stroke, he wiped out non-Regents'-level mathematics and science courses for ninth

New York City 9th Graders Passing Regents Science



Source: New York City Chancellor's Office

**First Time CUNY Enrollees:
Units Completed By Subject**



Source: Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, City University of New York

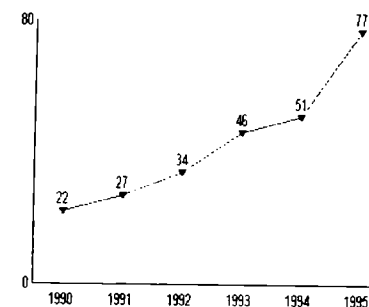
grades, and provided support for teachers who needed retraining to teach higher level courses. The results were stunning: in one year alone, the number of Latinos passing Regents'-level science tripled; the number of African Americans doubled.

Cortines's action succeeded at least in part because he had a solid foundation to build on. The College Preparatory Initiative (CPI), a multi-year collaboration of the Chancellor's Office, the United Federation of Teachers, and the City University of New York, was set in motion by CUNY Chancellor Ann Reynolds after reviewing data on persistence rates in the University. She had found that students who entered CUNY after completing twelve or more college preparatory classes succeeded at much higher rates than those who completed few such courses. As an open admissions institution, CUNY didn't want to shut its doors on students who could benefit from the education it offered; at the same time, it didn't want to signal prospective students, incorrectly, that preparation didn't matter. The CPI partners were asked to figure out a way to significantly increase the number of well-prepared entering students without cutting off access. And they did. By agreeing on new standards for what college-intending students should learn and by phasing in increased course requirements, they managed to produce the best prepared—and most diverse—freshman class in years.

Xavier University

Colleges and universities can also increase their success with minority and poor students by adopting clearer standards and by accelerating or enriching, rather than simply remediating, students who enter with below-level skills. New Orleans's Xavier University, a historically black institution, provides one such example. In the late 1970s, Xavier had fewer than 50 biology majors and a similar number in Chemistry. As of 1995, there were more than 850 biology majors and more than 250 chemistry majors. More important, because of their outstanding academic performance, Xavier's graduates are recruited by the best medical schools across

**Medical School Entrants from
Xavier University of Louisiana, 1990-95**



Source: Association of American Medical Colleges Project 3000 by 2000 Year Four Progress Report, Washington, DC, 1996.

the country, making this small university the largest producer of African American medical students in the country.

SCALING UP FOR SUCCESS

Closing the achievement gaps described in this book will require enormous effort and carefully crafted strategies. Those strategies need to be designed to raise achievement among all students, while simultaneously closing the gap between groups of students. So which strategies make the most sense?

Some people believe that these twin goals can be met with full implementation of the standards-based effort set in motion by the Governors and the President at their 1989 Education Summit. We wish they were right, because we share in the conviction that clear standards for what we want students to know and be able to do are a fundamentally important ingredient of true education reform. So, too, are better assessments of what students are learning, as well as improved accountability systems that reward improvements in student learning and assure change where there are no such improvements.

Early evidence from the states that are furthest ahead with standards-based reform, notably Kentucky and Maryland, suggests that students are learning more. Unfortunately, the gap between groups is actually growing. Why? Because standards-based reform is too often rolled out generically, as if all systems were operating on a level playing field to begin with. Until standards-based reformers acknowledge and deal with inequities, their efforts will not yield the kind of progress we need as a nation, because even more of our students will be left behind. For this reason alone, we must give high priority to eliminating inequities even as we move to raise standards for all.

We know, for example, that teachers in schools serving concentrations of poor and minority children typically have less education than their counterparts in more affluent schools. And it stands to reason that, in a standards-based system, such teachers will need more support than other teachers, both in regard to deepening their own knowledge of the subjects they teach and time to teach it. But seldom are those greater needs acknowledged; most frequently, teachers in high-poverty schools get less help, not more.

Similarly, we know that student placement policies and practices have resulted in many students getting a watered-down curriculum that does not prepare them to meet high standards, to succeed in postsecondary education, or to qualify for an increasing number of entry-level industrial jobs. In too many places, practices that unfairly track students remain untouched and students get the blame

when they don't learn things that they were in fact never taught.

The above success stories show how, with enough resources and will, schools can raise the achievement of poor and minority students.

It is essential for all of us—K-12 educators, higher educators, parents and policymakers—to join forces to root out inequities.

We recommend that communities do the following.

1. SET HIGH STANDARDS

Set clear, high goals or standards for what all students should know and be able to do. Give everyone—teachers, parents, and students—samples of student work that meets the standards so they know what they should expect.

2. ASSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS GET A CHALLENGING CURRICULUM

Eliminate watered-down courses; make certain that all students have a curriculum and assignments aligned with the standards.

3. MAKE SURE ALL CHILDREN HAVE EXPERT TEACHERS

Invest heavily in professional development and assure that teacher expertise is fairly distributed; teachers who have more expertise in their subjects and how to teach that content will get more gains in student achievement.

4. KEEP YOUR OWN EDUCATION WATCH

Monitor progress constantly; teachers, parents and students must have regular information about how they are doing so that mid-course corrections can be made—and results can be rewarded. The data should be presented publicly, because every community needs good, honest information about how its young people are faring as they take the journey through school.

There are those, of course, who resist these ideas because they are fearful that higher standards and tougher curricula will force poor and minority children out of school. "What these children need," they say, "is more mentors, more counselors, more nurses,

Practices that unfairly track students remain untouched and students get the blame when they don't learn things that they were in fact never taught.

more nurturing of all kinds."

But when we talk to "these" children, they say something else entirely. One youngster who grew up under excruciatingly difficult circumstances summarized the general sentiment like this: "Teach me," she said. "Make sure I have the best possible education. I need to know everything that the rich White kids in the suburbs know and more."

Many poor and minority youngsters are painfully aware of the low-level curriculum they receive. Others only realize it when they go off to college, only to find that the A's they received in high school weren't anything like the A's received by their classmates from the suburbs. Both groups feel cheated. And they should.

Schools and school districts that work respond to poor and minority youngsters not by lowering standards but by accelerating learning. These schools are proving every day of the school year that poor and minority youngsters achieve at the highest levels if they are taught at the highest levels.

Every American has an interest in improving the education we provide our young people. The time is long past to debate whether or not all children can learn. They can. The burden is on each one of us now to make sure all of them do.

NOTES

1. Meredith, Robyn, "New Blood for the Big Three's Plants" *New York Times*, (April 21, 1996): Section 3: 1,9-11.
2. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, *Education Attainment in the United States: March 1992 and 1993* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, March 1993).
3. National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1995*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1992).
4. National Education Goals for the Year 2000, Goal 2, states: "The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%."
5. National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 1995*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1995), 195.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, School Enrollments*

-Social & Economic Characteristics, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, October 1993).

6. National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, July 1994), 100.
7. Ibid, 15.
8. National Center for Education Statistics, *Disparities in Public School District Spending, 1989-90*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, February 1995), 17.
9. Ibid, 15.
10. Darling-Hammond, Linda, "The Role of Teacher Expertise and Experience in Students' Opportunity to Learn," in *Strategies for Linking School Finance and Students' Opportunity to Learn*, (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association).
11. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, (New York: Carnegie Foundation, 1996), 14.
- 11a. Ibid, 15.
12. Students who had calculus or pre-calculus outscored students with only pre-algebra or general math by 70 points. In National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1992 Trends in Academic Progress*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, July 1994), 113.
13. National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: Second Follow-up 1992 in *Trends Among High School Seniors*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, June 1995), 61.
14. The College Board, *College-Bound Seniors: 1994 Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers*, (Washington, D.C.: The College Entrance Examination Board and Education Testing Service, 1994) 5.
15. Unpublished survey conducted by The Achievement Council, Los Angeles, California.
16. National Center for Education Statistics, *Vocational Course-Taking and Achievement: An Analysis of High School Transcripts and 1990 NAEP Assessment Scores*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, May 1995), 20.
17. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, "What Do Student Grades Mean? Differences Across Schools," in *Education Research Report*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, OERI, January 1994).