



EDUCATION IN AMERICA: A NATION STILL AT RISK

The Facts About School Choice



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This past year marked the 25th anniversary of the landmark federal report, “A Nation at Risk.” The report was a stinging indictment of an education system that failed to educate our children. “A Nation at Risk” was supposed to be a call to action, but 25 years later and despite massive spending increases, we remain at risk.

Parents—especially those in low-income families—deserve immediate options for their children’s education. School choice provides real options and true hope for kids, right now.

Education spending has skyrocketed.

Public school per-pupil expenditures increased 128 percent between 1970 and 2005, when adjusted for inflation, and 1,059 percent in unadjusted dollars.¹

Student achievement remains mediocre.

Reading achievement for 17-year-olds has declined since 1984, remained the same for 13-year-olds, and slightly increased for 9-year-olds.²

Today, only 17 percent of low-income fourth-graders are proficient in reading, while 50 percent are below basic. And a mere 15 percent of low-income eighth graders are proficient in math, while 45 percent are below basic.³

While just 14 percent of African-American fourth-graders and 17 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders are proficient in reading, 54 percent and 50 percent, respectively, are below basic. And in math, a mere 11 percent of African-American eighth-graders and 15 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders are proficient, while 53 percent and 45 percent, respectively, are below basic.⁴

More than 5 million students are attending more than 10,000 schools that are failing under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.⁵

Nearly one-third of students drop out of high school.

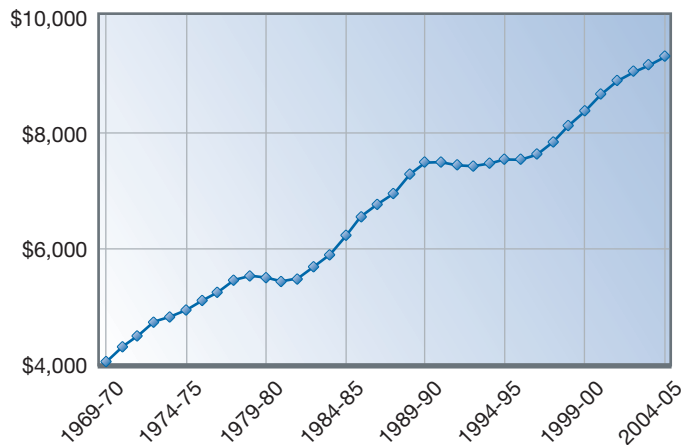
An estimated 1.2 million students failed to graduate from high school in 2008. That is nearly 7,000 dropouts a day or one dropout every 26 seconds.⁶

An estimated 45 percent of African-American students and 42 percent of Hispanic students do not graduate from high school, compared to 22 percent of white students.⁷

More than one in 10 high schools are considered to be “dropout factories,” meaning no more than 60 percent of ninth-graders make it to 12th grade.⁸

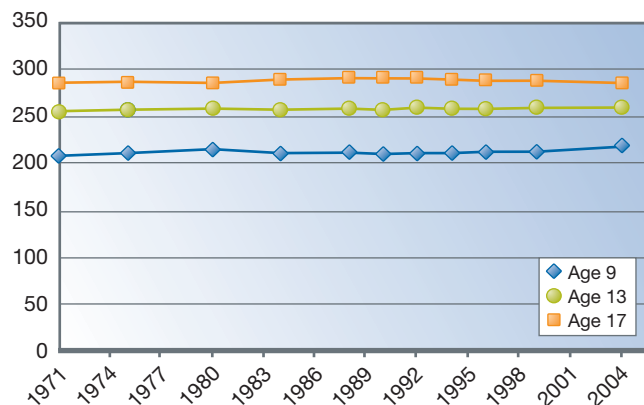
Nearly 50 percent of children in our nation’s largest cities do not graduate from high school.⁹

Per-Pupil Public School Expenditures



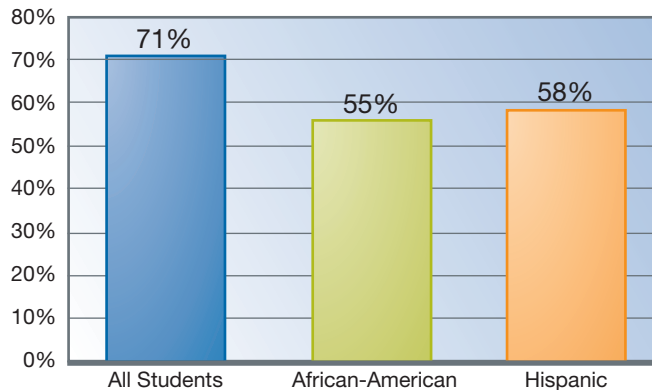
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2007 (NCES 2008-022), Table 171.

NAEP Long-Term Trend in Reading



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, NAEP Long-Term Trend Reading Scale Scores.

Class of 2005 Graduation Rates



Source: Editorial Projects in Education, *Education Week*, Diplomas Count 2008

American students are behind in international rankings.

American 15-year-olds scored below average in science when compared to students in the 29 other countries that are part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In math, our students are outperformed by their peers in 23 other countries.¹⁰

Low achievement and stagnant graduation rates have lifelong consequences for children and our nation's economy.

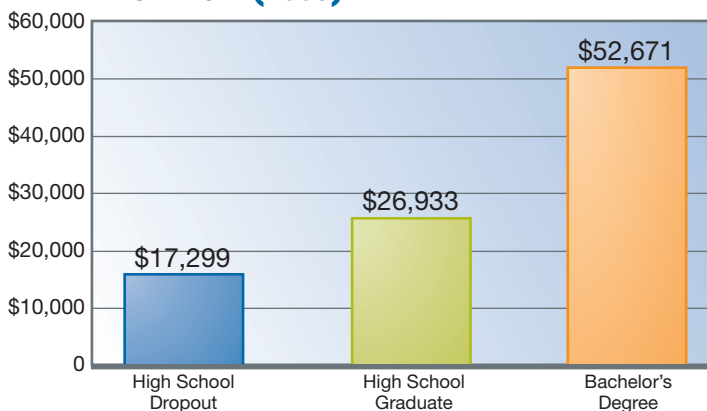
The income of high school dropouts is less than two-thirds of that of high school graduates and one-third of the income of those with a bachelor's degree.¹¹

“Only college graduates have experienced growth in real median weekly earnings since 1979. In contrast, high school dropouts have seen their real median weekly earnings decline by about 23.4 percent.”¹²

If high school dropouts from the “Class of 2008 had graduated, the nation's economy would have benefited from an additional \$319 billion in income over their lifetimes.”¹³

Seventy-five percent of state prison inmates and 59 percent of federal inmates did not complete high school.¹⁴

Average Income by Educational Attainment (2005)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Educational Attainment in the United States: 2006, Table 9, Income in 2005 by educational attainment of the population 18 years of age and older.

Notes

1. Calculations based on National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics: 2007, Table 171.
2. National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, Long-Term Trend Reading Scale Scores.
3. National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2007 Mathematics and Reading Report Cards.
4. Ibid.
5. U.S. Department of Education, Mapping America's Educational Progress 2008, <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/progress/nation.pdf>, accessed January 2, 2008.
6. Editorial Projects in Education (EPE), “Diplomas Count 2008: School to College: Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition,” *Education Week* vol. 27, no. 40, June 5, 2008.
7. Ibid.
8. The Associated Press, “1 in 10 schools is ‘dropout factory,’” October 29, 2007.
9. Editorial Projects in Education (EPE), “Cities in Crisis: A Special Analytic Report on High School Graduation,” April 1, 2008.
10. S. Baldi, Y. Jin, M. Skemer, P.J. Green, and D. Herget, “Highlights From PISA 2006: Performance of U.S. 15-Year-Old Students in Science and Mathematics Literacy in an International Context (NCES 2008-016),” National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 2007.
11. U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Educational Attainment in the United States: 2006,” Table 8. Income in 2005 by Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race Alone, and Hispanic Origin: 2006, Current Population Survey 2006, March 15, 2007.
12. U.S. Department of Labor, *America's Dynamic Workforce: 2008*, August 2008, p 35.
13. Alliance for Excellent Education, “The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools,” Issue Brief, June 2008.
14. Caroline Wolf Harlow, “Education and Correctional Populations,” *Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report*, U.S. Department of Justice, January 2003.