

The State of the American Child

Useful Facts for the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee on Children and Families Hearing
June 8, 2010

Every American child deserves the opportunity to flourish. However, too few students receive the education needed to thrive in today's world. Low graduation rates, low literacy rates, insufficient investments, and persistent achievement gaps are among the challenges that must be addressed to unlock the potential of the nation's youth. The future of America is dependent upon the investments made in the children of today. Unfortunately, the State of the American Child warrants increased federal attention in order to fortify the nation's democracy, as well as its economy.

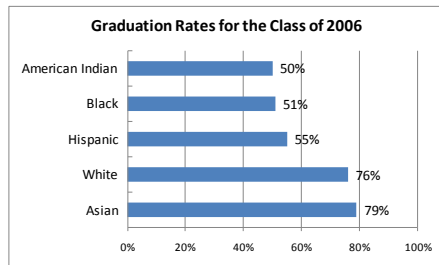
THINGS TO KNOW

Education in America must be improved.

- Thirty percent of students do not graduate with their class.¹
- Only one third of eighth-grade students are proficient in reading.²

Persistent achievement gaps challenge the nation's education system.

- Students of color have lower graduation rates than their white peers.³
- Students of color are five times more likely than white students to attend one of the nation's lowest-performing high schools where the graduation rate is less than 60 percent.³
- Students in the lowest quartile of family income are seven times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers in the highest quartile.³



Early investments are critical, but they are insufficient on their own to strengthen outcomes for children.

- Nobel Laureate Jim Heckman finds that early investments alone in high-risk youth yield a graduation rate of only 66 percent, whereas investments throughout the life of a child produce a graduation rate of 91 percent.⁴

Older students are overlooked by federal education policy.

- High schools receive approximately 7 percent of federal education dollars.⁵
- High schools only receive 10 percent of Title I funds but educate 23 percent of the nation's low-income students.⁶
- Nearly one third (31 percent) of the lowest-performing high schools are ineligible for Title I or School Improvement Grants, the primary federal sources of funding targeted to turn around low-performing schools.⁷

The best stimulus package is a high school diploma.

- Without improvements to the nation's high schools, twelve million students will drop out in the next decade at a cost of more than \$3 trillion to the U.S. economy.⁸
- Over the course of their lifetimes, if the dropouts from the Class of 2009 would have graduated, they would have earned an additional \$335 billion.⁹
- In the nation's fifty largest cities, earning a high school diploma will increase a dropout's annual salary by \$10,000. On average, college graduates annually earn almost 3.5 times more than high school dropouts.¹⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year.
- Codify the goal of graduating all students from high school on time, ready for college and careers.
- Establish accountability for meaningful progress on graduation rates and college and career readiness for all students and subgroups in all high schools, regardless of receipt of Title I funds.
- Leverage state- and district-led improvement systems that are differentiated, data driven, and prioritize the lowest-performing high schools, such as those proposed by the Graduation Promise Act (S. 1698, H.R. 4181).
- Provide a regular, formula-based funding stream to support solutions to address the needs of all low-performing high schools, prioritizing the lowest-performing.
- Build the capacity of states and school districts to provide targeted, comprehensive, and systemic supports and interventions to schools, school staff, and students.

For additional legislative recommendations, visit
<http://www.all4ed.org/files/ESEAReccs.pdf>.

¹Editorial Projects in Education, "Diploma Counts: 2009 Broader Horizons," special issue, *Education Week* 28, no. 34 (2009); ²U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2009* (NCES 2006-451) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010); ³T. Tucci, "Prioritizing the Nation's Lowest-Performing High Schools" (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010); ⁴America's Promise Alliance, *Every Child, Every Promise* (Alexandria, VA: Author, 2006); ⁵Alliance for Excellent Education analysis of the FY 2010 budgets for the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; ⁶U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, *State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume VI-Targeting and Uses of Federal Education Funds* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009); ⁷Alliance for Excellent Education analysis of data from the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data; SIG eligibility is based upon Title I eligibility; ⁸J. Amos, *Dropouts, Diplomas, and Dollars: U.S. High Schools and the Nation's Economy* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008); ⁹Alliance for Excellent Education, "The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools" (Washington, DC: Author, 2009); ¹⁰C. Swanson, *Cities in Crisis 2009: Closing the Graduation Gap: Educational and Economic Conditions in America's Largest Cities* (Bethesda, Maryland: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009).