

Improving School Success & Student Outcomes

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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world .”

– Nelson Mandela

The Data

- **Difficult starts.** Over 40% of new kindergartners do not enter school fully prepared to learn. (*Set for Success*, v 1 2002, Kauffman Foundation)
- **Lower achievement and school completion rates.** There are significant achievement gaps between students of color and other students. (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2005) While federal data indicate that in 2001 about 11% of the those aged 16-24 dropped out of high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts>), non-governmental data are bleaker. (e.g., J.P. Greene, *High School Graduation Rates in the US*, 2002, www.manhattan-institute.org, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)
- **Less desirable lifetime outcomes.** Students not receiving a high school diploma or GED have higher unemployment rates, make a median 50% less than those with only a diploma or GED, are more likely to become single parents, rely on public assistance, and become incarcerated. (J.P. Greene, *Graduation Rates in the US*, 2002, www.manhattan-institute.org)

The Issues

- **Income and race segregation of schools.** Eighty-two percent of the students in low poverty schools are white, while black and Latino students are isolated by both race and poverty. The bulk of “dropout factories” are 200-300 high schools in large city school systems that are highly segregated by race and income. (G. Orfield & C. Lee, *Why Segregation Matters*, 2005, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)
- **Insufficient school resources.** High poverty schools tend to have a less stable and less qualified teaching staff, less safe facilities, and insufficient supplies of quality educational materials. Schools where at least 75 percent of the students were low-income had three times as many uncertified or out-of-field teachers in both English and science. (G. Orfield & C. Lee, *Why Segregation Matters*, above)
- **Differential punishment.** In 1998, more than 3.1 million children in America were suspended and another 87,000 were expelled. African-American children are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than white students for offenses such as “disrespect.” (*Opportunities Suspended*, The Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)
- **Scant information on performance of alternative solutions.** Early and limited research on charters, vouchers, and other alternatives shows increased parental satisfaction, with modest or mixed achievement improvements for some students in selected subjects. (*School Choice: Doing It Right Makes a Difference*, National Working Commission on School Choice, Brookings Institution, 2004)

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Options for Philanthropy

- **Support promising practices.** A comprehensive set of specific organizational, instructional, and teacher support changes, when well implemented, can significantly improve student chances of success. (J. McPartland & W. Jordan, *Essential Components of High School Dropout Reforms*, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/dropouts/mcpartland.pdf) The opportunity should exist for parents, caregivers, and community organizations to be effective partners.
- **Invest in leadership development.** School systems undergoing reform can benefit from formal opportunities for professional development for teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders. (www.annenberginstitute.org/work/leadership.html and www.aecf.org/initiatives/ldu)
- **Underwrite policy advocacy.** Because access to high-performing schools is related to class and race segregation, some communities are exploring the concept of regional equity in resource allocation as a solution to these deeply embedded inequities. (V. Kay, *Creating Regional Equity for Families and Children*, 2003, Institute on Race and Poverty, www.irpumn.org)
- **Convene stakeholders.** Education increasingly is everyone's business, which requires conveners that can work across stakeholder groups. In St. Louis, for example, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform is working with municipal officials and funders on a broad-based community and parent engagement initiative following a major district reorganization. (www.annenberginstitute.org/work/community_NLC.html)

Key Resources

- **Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.** Collaborates with education reform organizations, school districts, school improvement networks, and education funds to develop the capacity of urban communities to improve teaching and learning. (www.annenberginstitute.org)
- **The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.** Focuses on key opportunity issues including education reform, desegregation, school dropouts, school discipline, and Title I. (www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)
- **Center for Reinventing Public Education.** Offers information, tools, guides, policy analysis, and links relating to how to reinvent public education using high standards and more educational options for families. (www.crpe.org)



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