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EXCELLENT EDUCATION

# StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



## LEFT OUT AND LEFT BEHIND: Economic and Social Repercussions of High School Dropouts

In a recent op-ed for the *New York Times*, columnist Bob Herbert discusses the “wretched state of millions of young people in America’s urban centers.” Because of the war against Iraq, he argues, the nation’s dropout problem is receiving even less attention than usual.

Herbert points to the city of Chicago as an example of the silent crisis that occurs every school day in cities around the country. Not only is Chicago’s dropout rate at an all-time high, 22 percent of the city’s residents between the ages of 16 and 24 are out of school and out of work. Forty-five percent of young black men in Chicago are in the same situation. As a result, Herbert argues, these “disconnected youth” are “leading the kinds of haunted lives that recall the Great Depression. They hustle, doing what they can—much of it illegal—to get along. Some are homeless.”

Echoing Herbert’s argument in an *Education Week* commentary, **Richard M. Freeland, president of Northeastern University**, and **Joseph M. Tucci, chairman of the Business Roundtable’s education and workforce task force**, called the dropout crisis one of the most vexing social and economic challenges of our time. According to research from the Center for Labor and Market Studies at Northeastern University, 5.5 million young men and women nationwide between the ages of 16 and 24 are both out of school and unemployed—2.2 million (40 percent) of them are high school dropouts.

Freeland and Tucci write that young people without work or access to job-skills training and employment programs are statistically more likely to engage in petty crimes and gang activity, give birth without being married, or suffer from drug dependency. “At a time when they should be acquiring the kinds of knowledge and skills that can lead to a lifetime of productivity and opportunity, these disconnected youths have instead developed severe skills deficits that can lead to a lifetime of dispossession, especially in the contemporary, high-skills-based economy.”

The authors applaud the *No Child Left Behind Act’s* attention to annual testing in math and reading beginning in grade three and lasting through grade eight, but stress that such testing comes too late for the 5.5 million disconnected young adults who have already dropped out of school. In an effort to reengage this audience and bring them back into the mainstream job market, Freeland and Tucci argue for programs that provide young trainees opportunities for hands-on work experience. These opportunities would be supplemented by basic literacy instruction and skills development that is tied to specific occupations.

## **Left Out and Left Behind: Economic and Social Repercussions of High School Dropouts**

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Freeland and Tucci admit that answering the question “Where the resources will come from?” continues to present a great challenge:

*The answer may emerge when the nation’s business, government, and education leaders realize that our long-term economic vitality depends on getting more of these young Americans back on a route toward opportunity. An investment in our young now will pay enormous dividends—for us and for them—in the future. It is time for our civic leaders to place this challenge higher on the nation’s agenda.*

If the nation is to achieve its education and economic goals, they contend, we must “confront this challenge with the same level of vision, focus, and energy that led to the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.”

“Locked Out at a Young Age,” by Bob Herbert:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/20/opinion/20HERB.html>

“Out of School and Unemployed,” by Richard M. Freeland and Joseph M. Tucci:  
<http://www.edweek.com/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=01freeland.h23>

### **\$64,000 Question in Rochester, New York: Acute Dropout Problem Leads to Disappearing Students**

The situation in Rochester, New York, is an excellent example of how the dropout crisis is affecting cities across the country. According to the *Democrat and Chronicle*, the “disappearing student” syndrome is commonplace in many of Rochester’s high schools, where graduating classes of twelfth graders shrink by roughly one-third compared to the level in ninth grade. In all of Rochester’s high schools combined, the average class declines by about 70 percent from freshman year to senior year.

The article, “City Struggles to Keep Kids in School,” provides an in-depth look at the education challenges that many of the nation’s cities are facing. It quotes Rochester police chief Robert Duffy and C. Michael Robinson, the school district’s chief of development and operations, who assess the dropout crisis in terms of economic impact and crime.

“The dropout situation in Rochester has a tremendous impact on many of the issues of crime and violence that we are currently dealing with,” said Duffy. “These young people end up in drug houses, on corners, involved in crimes and all of these activities that are dragging us down.”

Robinson stressed the long-term problems for Rochester’s economy: “It’s a huge cost. In the long run, it’s a huge cost to our economy, it’s a huge cost to our support systems. And it’s the right thing to do, to keep kids in school.”

Read the complete article at:  
[http://www.democratandchronicle.com/news/forprint/102683267P0\\_newdropout\\_news.shtml](http://www.democratandchronicle.com/news/forprint/102683267P0_newdropout_news.shtml)



## STATES REPORT NUMBER OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS: State Officials Admit Guesswork in Reporting Data

In September, 33 states reported that over 75 percent of their core classes were being taught by “highly qualified” teachers as defined in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Of these, 12 states reported highly qualified teachers in more than 95 percent of classes. Surprisingly, 28 states said that the percentage of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools vis-à-vis low-poverty schools was about the same.

According to *Education Week*, some state officials admitted to a certain amount of guesswork when they compiled data for the U.S. Department of Education. Eleven states did not provide any statistics at all. Even more confusing were the comparable percentages between the number of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools compared to the rest of schools. Only eight states reported differences of greater than 5 percentage points. These results have led some observers to question the integrity of the data. The numbers are even more puzzling given that past research has indicated that nationally, classes in high-poverty secondary schools are 77 percent more likely to be assigned an “out-of-field” teacher—a teacher without experience in the subject they will teach—than classes in low-poverty schools, according to *All Talk, No Action: Putting an End to Out-of-Field Teaching* by C. Jerald and R. Ingersoll.

Among those states reporting, Wisconsin had the largest percentage of classes that were taught by highly qualified teachers (98.6 percent) and Wyoming had the highest percentage of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools (99 percent). The lowest rate was reported by Alaska, with 16 percent of all classes being taught by a highly qualified teacher.

Part of the disconnect between the data and the established research on the subject could be explained by the fact that some states have yet to determine how they will assess subject matter competence, particularly among veteran teachers. Under *NCLB*, when the term “highly qualified” is used with respect to teachers who are not new to the profession, it means that they hold at least a bachelor’s degree and have met one of two requirements:

- passed a rigorous state academic subject test or hold a major in the field in which they teach; or
- demonstrated competence in subjects in which they teach based on a “high objective uniform state standard of evaluation” (HOUSSE)

The specifics of HOUSSE are up to individual states and, in some cases, have not been set. Veteran teachers in these states have yet to be assessed.

As part of *NCLB*, states had to report the percentage of highly qualified teachers teaching in core subjects—English, math, science, foreign languages, social studies, and the arts—to the U.S. Department of Education. While the department did not plan on releasing this information until spring 2004, as part of Secretary Rod Paige’s report to Congress, several news organizations and *Education Week* were able to obtain the data through the Freedom of Information Act.

“States Claim Teachers Are ‘Qualified’ ”:

<http://www.edweek.com/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=09Qualified.h23>

## High-Poverty Schools Hire More Certified Teachers, but Teacher Retention Still a Problem

The tight job market and new hiring practices such as alternative certification have allowed high-poverty school districts to hire more certified teachers, according to a recent *Education Week* article. In Los Angeles, the article reports, “fewer than 6 percent of this fall’s newly hired teachers have had licensure requirements waived or have not yet reached ‘intern’ status, compared with 51 percent in 2001.” In Philadelphia, only 4 percent of the city’s new teachers are working with emergency permits, and all 9,000 of New York City’s newly hired teachers are state certified. While a state licensure does not necessarily mean that a teacher is “highly qualified” under *No Child Left Behind*, it is certainly a step in the right direction.

However, despite their success with recent new teacher hires, many school districts, especially in high-poverty areas, worry that they will have a hard time retaining their highly qualified teachers. Research has shown that teachers who do end up in high-poverty schools often don’t stay long, creating a “hole in the bucket” that recruiters must try desperately to fill. According to the **National Center for Education Statistics**, beginning teachers leave the profession at rates five times higher than those of their more experienced colleagues. Because of this, helping new teachers become veteran teachers is an important step in addressing teacher shortages.

In *New-Teacher Excellence*, the Alliance recommended that schools and districts provide well-organized induction programs for all beginning teachers. These programs allow schools and districts to hire, keep, and professionally develop new teachers who both meet their state’s definition of “qualified” and majored in the subject they will teach, regardless of whether they were trained in a traditional or alternative teacher preparation program before they began teaching.

In addition, many schools are still struggling to find qualified teachers to fill shortages in science, mathematics, and special education classes. At the federal level, the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, H.R. 438, sponsored by **Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC)** and passed by the House of Representatives, would build on the current \$5,000 loan-forgiveness provision in the Higher Education Act and would increase college loan forgiveness to up to \$17,500 for every reading, math, science, and special education teacher who teaches for five years in a Title I school (those schools with a poverty rate over 40 percent). A similar bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate by **Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, but it has yet to see action.

*Every Child a Graduate* is available on the Alliance Web site at:  
<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/NewTeacherExcellence/index.html>



### **READY FOR TOMORROW: National Governors Association Calls for a Focus on High Schools to Help All Students Achieve Secondary and Postsecondary Success**

A new report by the **National Governors Association (NGA)** says the nation’s high schools, second-chance institutions, and public colleges and universities are leaving too many young people unprepared to fully contribute to society. As a result, these individuals incur an

unacceptable cost to states' civic, social, and economic well-being. The report, released in conjunction with **Jobs for the Future** at their Doubling the Numbers conference, asks states to improve their education pipeline—from kindergarten through college—by implementing a state policy framework that is based on research and the most promising examples already underway in states throughout the country.

The report cites research by **Anthony Carnevale** of the **Educational Testing Service** as a powerful incentive for states to “plug the leaks in their education pipeline.” According to Carnevale, if current economic and demographic trends continue, the nation will need as many as 14 million more workers with some college education than the country's education systems will have produced. He also estimates that an expansion of college access among African-American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic whites could result in earnings improvements that would “certainly narrow income differences and could add as much as \$230 billion in national wealth and \$80 billion in new tax revenues every year.”

While stressing the importance of *No Child Left Behind* and its emphasis on academic achievement for all youth, the NGA report emphasizes that “more attention must be paid to the complexities of high schools and the needs of older adolescents.” It argues that state policies must promote “dramatic gains in high school completion and in postsecondary success for all population subgroups.”

The report encourages governors and other policymakers to consider implementing a state policy framework that includes each of the following:

- a statewide benchmark for postsecondary attainment;
- an integrated K–16 data system;
- better alignment between K–12 and higher education expectations and incentives;
- promotion of more learning options; and
- a focus on low-performing schools.

These recommendations are a result of what the report calls a decade of experimentation, and build upon the incremental success of governors and other state policymakers. The report includes examples of promising and effective state programs from over 30 different states.

(Read the complete report at: <http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0310READY.pdf>.)

The Doubling the Numbers conference, hosted by **Jobs for the Future**, engaged leaders from schools, districts, postsecondary institutions, businesses, states, and national organizations concerned with K–16 education improvement to promote policies that can dramatically improve postsecondary outcomes for underrepresented students—doubling the numbers of students who graduate from high school and attain a postsecondary credential.

(More information on the conference, including speakers and other related reports and papers, is available at: <http://www.jff.org/jff/DTN.html>.)

## NGA Forms Standing Committee on Education: New Panel Hopes to Better Communicate Position on Federal Education Issues

During the closing plenary at the **National Governors Association** annual meeting, **Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne (R)** announced the creation of a new NGA standing committee on education. The panel will help focus the NGA's position on federal education issues and possibly allow the organization to speak with a more unified voice. During their winter meetings in Washington, DC, some Republican governors were hesitant about pushing the White House for more federal funding for education, homeland security, and Medicaid costs.

The new education committee grew out of the human resources committee and will be chaired by **Virginia Governor Mark Warner (D)**, with **Florida Governor Jeb Bush (R)** acting as the vice chairman. In an interview, Governor Warner said that NGA positions have not always been "sharply focused," and that the NGA does not always have the active participation of all governors. He hopes that the new committee will help change this trend, especially on K-12 education and related topics, according to *Education Week*.

Warner and Bush were selected for leadership roles with the committee because of the active role on education that they have taken within their states. Warner not only supports a plan to significantly boost education spending in Virginia, he has also developed a "lifetime learning agenda," which includes plans to help eligible high school seniors complete their high school diploma and concurrently earn a semester's worth of credits (15 credit hours) that can be used toward a college degree. He has also proposed creating a Virtual Advanced Placement School that will provide high school students with access to a broader range of AP courses via existing distance-learning networks. For his part, Governor Bush has developed a comprehensive school accountability program that issues letter grades to schools based on standardized test scores. He also oversaw the institution of a voucher program in Florida that allows students to transfer out of failing schools.

"This new committee will focus on our children and their future," Kempthorne said. "As we deal with state budgets and finite resources, we must be assured that we are investing in practices that will provide the best opportunities for our children."

Membership of the NGA's Standing Committee on Education:

<b>Chairman: Gov. Mark Warner (D-VA)</b>	<b>Vice Chairman Gov. Jeb Bush (R-FL)</b>
<b>Gov. Michael F. Easley (D-NC)</b>	<b>Gov. Jim Douglas (R-VT)</b>
<b>Gov. Bob Holden (D-MO)</b>	<b>Gov. Mike Huckabee (R-AR)</b>
<b>Gov. Janet Napolitano (D-AZ)</b>	<b>Gov. Linda Lingle (R-HI)</b>
<b>Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D-KS)</b>	<b>Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R-MN)</b>
<b>Gov. Tom Vukusack (D-IA)</b>	<b>Gov. Sonny Perdue (R-GA)</b>
<b>Gov. Gray Davis (D-CA)</b>	<b>Gov. John G. Rowland (R-CT)</b>
	<b>Gov. Felix Camacho (R-Guam)</b>



## "CRAM SCHOOLS" FIND NEW PARTICIPANTS IN URBAN AREAS: African-American, Hispanic, and Indian Students Fill Nontraditional Schools

In New York City, proactive parents are taking measures into their own hands in an effort to better prepare their children for life after high school. According to an October 20 article by Michael Luo in the *New York Times*, "Taking Lessons from Another Culture," a growing number of non-Asian parents are enrolling their children in so-called cram schools largely created (and marketed toward) Asian children. In Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, competition for college entrance is remarkably more intense than in the United States. In an effort to gain a leg up on the competition, many parents place their children in cram schools. From third grade through high

school, and meeting after school, on weekends, and during the summer, cram schools focus on rigid discipline and rote memorization, and typically prepare students for specific tests. In New York, those tests are the SAT and the entrance examinations to select area high schools.

Luo writes that about a quarter of students at Elite Academy, a Korean cram school in Flushing, New York, were neither Korean nor Chinese. Instead, students' ethnic backgrounds ranged from Indian and Greek to Hispanic and African-American. Similar percentages were reported by Bayside Academy, a Korean cram school in Queens, and Mega Academy in Flushing. Cram schools are popular among non-Asian populations not only because of their cost—they offer much more classroom time than traditional SAT prep classes at the same price—but also because of their success in getting students into prestigious colleges. Elite, for example, has placed high school seniors at Harvard, Yale, and Stanford, among others.

In an article for the *St. Petersburg Times*, Bill Maxwell writes that his cousin, Shirley Harrell, has been sending her sons to a Korean cram school for the past two years and appreciates the work ethic it offers. "A lot of people, even some of our kinfolds, told me I was pushing my kids too hard," she says. "I told them to get lost. When people don't understand what you're doing, you have to shut them out and do what you know is right. My kids don't complain. They love making good grades. They really want to study hard." The effects of the cram school are seen in Ms. Harrell's sons' report card. Before enrolling in the school, they made C's and the occasional B. Now they make all A's and B's.

"Black Families Open Up, Cram Education In":

[http://www.sptimes.com/2003/10/22/Columns/Black\\_families\\_open\\_u.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2003/10/22/Columns/Black_families_open_u.shtml)



**OVER 194,000 STUDENTS SPEAK OUT DURING "SPEAK UP DAY":  
Results from Student Survey to Help Shape U.S. Department of Education  
Technology Plan**

As of October 31, more than 194,256 students, with participation in every state, shared their ideas about using technology and the Internet in the classroom. "Speak Up Day," hosted by **NetDay**, marked the first-ever national event in which students of all ages and grades, and from all communities and schools, went online from their classrooms and shared their thoughts and ideas on how technology should be used in schools.

As part of the survey, students were asked if their use of technology in school differed from "out of school" use. They were also asked what part of technology they would make a priority if they were designing a new school. NetDay, a national education technology nonprofit organization, will compile the results and provide a report to schools for use in technology planning. It will also give a final report to the U.S. Department of Education to help shape the National Educational Technology Plan. More information on the event, as well as the complete survey, is available at: <http://www.netday.org/speakupday.htm>.

**Straight A's: Public Education Policy and Progress** is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, DC, and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a nonprofit organization working to make it possible for America's six million at-risk middle and high school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.



ALLIANCE FOR  
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

1101 Vermont Ave., NW  
Suite 411  
Washington, DC 20005

Phone 202 842-4888  
Fax 202 842-1613  
Alliance@all4ed.org  
www.all4ed.org

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Susan Frost, President  
Jason Amos, Associate Editor

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