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Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis

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LOSING OUR FUTURE:
How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis

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Advocates for Children of New York
The Civil Society Institute

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Additional copies of this report may be obtained from our website at:
http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu

CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS

The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University (CRP) was founded in 1996 by Professors Christopher Edley, Jr. of Harvard Law School and Gary Orfield of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Its central mission is to help renew the civil rights movement by bridging the worlds of ideas and action, and by becoming a preeminent source of intellectual capital and a forum for building consensus within that movement. We achieve this by interweaving strategies of research and policy analysis, and by building strong collaborations between researchers, community organizations, and policy makers. Our dual objectives are to: (1) raise the visibility of, and attention to, racial justice national policy debates; and (2) arm local and national civil rights and educational organizations with credible research to inform their legal, political and public education efforts. ***CRP wrote the narrative and worked closely with the Urban Institute to analyze the data contained in the report.***

The Urban Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research and educational organization, examines America's social, economic, and governance problems. It provides information, analyses, and perspectives to public and private decisionmakers to help them address these problems and strives to deepen citizens' understanding of the issues and trade-offs that policymakers face. Its Education Policy Center conducts research on education reforms involving accountability, school vouchers, standards, after-school programs, technology, teacher quality, and the new increased flexibility in using federal funds. ***The Urban Institute created the indicator for graduation rates used in this study (the Cumulative Promotion Index), conducted all data analysis contained in this report, and contributed to preparation of the narrative.***

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) Founded in 1971, AFC is New York's leading educational advocacy and legal services organization. Our mission is to make sure that New York's children get access to a quality and appropriate education. AFC does this work through direct service, training, policy reports, impact advocacy and information dissemination. In the past 33 years, we have helped hundreds of thousands of New York City children obtain the resources they need to succeed in school. ***For this report AFC reached out nationally to document the individual and systemic stories about why children are being pushed out or dropped out of school.***

Results for America is a project of the nonprofit **Civil Society Institute**, (CSI) which is based in Newton, Massachusetts. The mission of the Institute is to serve as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business, that can help to improve society. A key goal of Results for America is to shape and tap the tremendous amount of community-level knowledge, experience and innovative action that could solve America's problems in education under its initiative on Great Kids, Great Schools, Great Communities. Results for America supports investing in public schools, making sure parents have more of a say in their schools and creating conditions that will lead to learning and success for every child. ***CSI is supporting the efforts to disseminate this report in order to bring more voices and perspectives, particularly those of students, into the debate about the costs and benefits of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.***

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Losing Our Future:
How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis

I. Introduction: An Invisible Crisis

In an increasingly competitive global economy, the consequences of dropping out of high school are devastating to individuals, communities and our national economy. At an absolute minimum, adults need a high school diploma if they are to have any reasonable opportunities to earn a living wage. A community where many parents are dropouts is unlikely to have stable families or social structures. Most businesses need workers with technical skills that require at least a high school diploma. Yet, with little notice, the United States is allowing a dangerously high percentage of students to disappear from the educational pipeline before graduating from high school.

Nationally, high school graduation rates are low for all students, with only an estimated 68% of those who enter 9th grade graduating with a regular diploma in12th grade. But, as the table below makes clear, they are substantially lower for most minority groups, and particularly for males. According to the calculations used in this report[1], in 2001, only 50% of all black students, 51% of Native American students, and 53% of all Hispanic students graduated from high school. Black, Native American, and Hispanic males fare even worse: 43%, 47%, and 48% respectively.

National Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

By Race/Ethnicity	Nation	Female	Male
American Indian/AK Nat	51.1	51.4†	47.0†
Asian/Pacific Islander	76.8	80.0†	72.6†
Hispanic	53.2	58.5	48
Black	50.2	56.2	42.8
White	74.9	77	70.8
All Students	68	72	64.1

To make matters worse, official "dropout" statistics neither accurately count nor report the vast numbers of students who do not graduate from high school. For a variety of reasons that are detailed later in this report, the two major sources used most often – the Center for Educational Statistics and the Current Population Survey – to calculate dropout and graduation rates produce misleading figures. Moreover, because states rarely disaggregate graduation rates by race or socio-economic status, the extremely low graduation rates for racial and ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, low-income students, and students with limited English proficiency subgroups are rarely the focus of debates on education reform. As a result, the public remains largely unaware of this national crisis.

This report seeks to highlight these disparities to draw the public's and policymakers' attention to the urgent need to address this educational and civil rights crisis. Using a more accurate method for calculating graduation rates developed by The Urban Institute (see discussion on p. 8), we provide estimates of high school graduation rates, distinguished at the state and district level, and disaggregated by race. We assert that these figures provide a far more realistic portrait of graduation rates in this country than those commonly reported by states and the federal government.

Our analysis of this data focuses on three major questions: First, how deep and widespread are the racial disparities that exist at the state and district levels? Second, how has the misleading and incomplete reporting of this issue obscured both the magnitude of the crisis and its racial dimensions? Finally, focusing primarily on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, we ask whether state and federal accountability systems, as implemented, are appropriately structured to improve high school graduation rates, especially among children of color.

Low Graduation Rates for Students With Disabilities

According to data reported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), graduation rates for students with disabilities are just over 32%. Another 11% no longer identified as needing special education services which means that they became fully mainstreamed students without an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Even if all of those students who were no longer listed as having a disability earned regular diplomas, that would still mean that only 43% of students identified as in need of special services earn a high school diploma. Six states (Georgia, Mississippi, Nevada, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida) graduate under 25% of students with special needs. Yet, despite these deeply alarming figures, there is little to no publicly reported data on graduation rates for this subgroup at the district level.

Sources: *Education Week, Quality Counts 2004 Citing U.S. Department of Education Office for Special Education Programs. See State Pages for more information on New York.*

Woven throughout this report are narratives about students from a sampling of states—Alabama, Florida, New York, Illinois, and Mississippi—who have either dropped or felt "pushed" out of school (some are in the 12 state review). Several of these stories illustrate the "dark side" of high stakes testing policies. Many of these students and their families express shock and dismay when they are told they will not be allowed to return to school or to graduate because of their poor test performance. Some were conscientious and hard-working, had done well in their classes and had made plans to pursue post-secondary education. Others had experienced severe problems outside of school, but still expressed interest in continuing their education. Yet, they found themselves stranded in an educational no-man's land with few options or advocates. Collectively, these stories suggest that there may be "perverse incentives" in many states to push low-performing students out the back door. If true, without more powerful incentives for schools to "hold onto" students through graduation, the "push-out syndrome" is likely to grow more severe.

II. How Deep and Widespread are the Racial Disparities that Exist at the State and District Level?

State Analysis: When graduation rates for each racial group were calculated for each state, the racial gap between whites and most minority groups[2] was pronounced. However, closer examination of the data for each minority group revealed that across 50 states, there were a few states where the gap was non-existent or reversed. For Blacks the gap averaged 24.7 percentage points nationally and ranged from 0.0 (Alaska) to 41.3 (Wisconsin) percentage points. For Hispanics, the disparity average for the nation was 21.7 points and ranged from being 6.2 points (Louisiana) higher than whites to 43.4 (New York) points below. For Native Americans the average was 23.8 below whites nationally, but had the largest range, from 2.8 (Alabama) above to 56.4 (Pennsylvania) below. Despite these wide ranges, in every state (except Hawaii) that had disaggregated data, for at least one minority group, there existed a large (5 or > points) and negative gap compared to whites. (see tables A-F in Appendix 4).

The chart on the following page reveals that even when the states with the lowest graduation rates are compared, the worst rates for Blacks and Latino students are over 20 percentage points lower than the worst rates for white students.

Jefferson Davis County, Mississippi

In 2000, the Mississippi Board of Education approved a change to graduation requirements. The policy revision applies to students who began the 9th grade in school year 1999-2000 or later. The new requirements are that in order to graduate, all high school students must pass four subject area tests. The subject area tests are: Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and US History from 1877 to the present. These tests are to be phased in over time to replace the Functional Literacy Exam (FLE) as a requirement for graduation.

In the spring of 2003, Tamara was in her senior year of high school and planning to attend college in the fall. She had completed all of the requirements for graduation. She had even raised her grade point average over the course of her senior year; she was getting B's and even some A's. She was, however, unable to pass the reading portion of the Functional Literacy Exam. After failing it once, she studied for over a year for the test, taking remedial classes offered by her school. She was unable to master it. Her mother had always suspected that her daughter had a learning disability with regard to reading. However, this disability had never been diagnosed.

Tamara had never had an educational assessment performed, much less received any special services. Tamara's mother wanted desperately for Tamara to be re-tested over the summer so that she could attend college in the fall. She was told that there was to be no re-testing over the summer and that Tamara would need to retake the test in September if she wanted another opportunity to pass it. However, this made it impossible for Tamara to enroll in college, which began in August. Discouraged, Tamara did not re-take the exam this past fall, has not received a diploma, and recently got a job working at a local factory.

Source: *Clara Hall, Chapter President, Parents for Public Schools – See State Pages for more Information on Mississippi*

Four Lowest State Graduation Rates By Racial Group

Race/Ethnicity	State / Rate	State / Rate	State / Rate	State / Rate
Black	New York-35.1	Ohio-39.6	Nevada-40.5	Florida-41.0
Hispanic	New York-31.9	Mass.-36.1	Michigan-36.3	Nevada-37.6
White	Florida-57.9	Nevada-62.0	Georgia-62.4	Mississippi-63.3

(Derived from Urban Institute Analysis of 50 states. All states listed in Appendix 4, Tables A-F)

District Analysis: A closer look at the nation's 100 largest school districts reveals more disturbing figures. For the predominantly Latino populations in New York City and Houston school districts, the graduation rates are 38% and 40%, respectively; and lower still for the predominantly Black districts of Oakland (30.4%), Atlanta (39.6%), Cleveland (30%) and Columbus (34.4%). (see Appendix 4, Table G for complete list of 100 districts) [3]

A review of characteristics of districts with low graduation rates across the nation highlights a number of trends. As the table below indicates, districts with high poverty, located in central cities, with high percentages of students with disabilities, or with high percentages of English language learners are more likely to have low graduation rates.

Graduation Rates by District Type

District Type	CPI Grad. Rate
Racial Composition	
Majority White	74.1%
Majority Minority	56.4%
LEP Participation	
Low (<9%)	70.3%
High (>9%)	60.1%
Free/Reduced Lunch	
Low (<38%)	76.0%
High (>38%)	57.6%
Special Education	
Low (<13%)	69.7%
High (>13%)	65.0%
Location	
Central City	57.5%
Suburb	72.7%
Town	69.1%
Rural	71.9%

Brief Definition of Terms

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): The percent of students in the district who are being served in language assistance programs, where the language being learned is English.

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): The percent of students in a district who are eligible to participate in either the free or reduced price lunch programs under the National School Lunch Act.

Special Education: The percentage of students in a district that have a written Individualized Education Program (IEP) under IDEA-Part B.

Location: A description of a district's locale classified according to its general level of urbanization or population density, expressed in terms of four mutually-exclusive categories: Central City, Suburb, Town, and Rural. *For more detailed descriptions, see Appendix - Definition of Terms.*

Impact of Segregation: Not surprisingly, poverty is a powerful predictor of failing to graduate. However, this report reveals that**,** independent of poverty, the level of segregation and the proportion of nonwhite students is also related to higher dropout rates. The Urban Institute has estimated statistical models to predict graduation rates while at the same time taking into account the effects of multiple district characteristics including: the percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch; minority enrollment; segregation levels; and funding levels to explore the relationship between district context and failing to graduate. We find that the poverty of the school district matters a great deal. Results further indicate that whether a student attends a school district with a high concentration of minority students and has little exposure to white students in school is also a strong predictor of failing to graduate.

The Human Cost and Economic Loss of Dropping Out

The number of jobs offering livable wages for individuals without high school diplomas grows fewer each year, as demonstrated by the rapid shrinkage of the industrial work force, which lost 2.3 million jobs since 1991. In 2001, the unemployment rate for dropouts 25 years old and over was almost 75 percent higher than for high school graduates—7.3 percent versus 4.2 percent. Approximately, two thirds of all state prison inmates have not completed high school.

The U.S. Census estimates that high school dropouts will earn $270,000 less than high school graduates over their working lives. Census data also show that the earnings gap between high school graduates and dropouts has grown over the last two decades – in 1975, high school graduates earned 90% as much as high school graduates; in 1999, high school dropouts earned 70% as much.

The negative impact of not graduating may be more severe for some minority groups. For instance, a 2002 Census Bureau report shows that the mean earnings of young adult Latinos who finish high school are 43% higher than those who drop out. The earning gaps are much larger for graduates with some college education, even if they do not finish a degree. A 2003 report on the Chicago job market shows that more than half of young adult male African American dropouts in that city have no job at all[4].

These findings are consistent with an independent study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University.[5] They looked at urban high schools across the country and performed an enrollment comparison based on what they termed the "promotion" or "holding power" of a school. [6] When they examined enrollment data in urban schools from the 100 largest school districts in the country,[7] they found that, in almost half of the schools sampled (317 of the 661), the twelfth grade class had shrunk by more than half from the school's ninth grade class four years earlier. *Most noteworthy is that, in schools where 90% or more of the enrollment were students of color***,** *only 42% of all the freshmen advanced to grade 12* (see state analysis of school promoting power in Appendix 5, Tables A and B).

In other words, the growing segregation of our public schools, cited in The Civil Rights Project's 2004 report, "*Brown At 50*: *King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?*" is likely a contributing factor to low graduation rates.[8] Almost 9 of 10 intensely segregated minority schools also have concentrated poverty. These schools are characterized by a host of

problems, including lower levels of competition from peers, less qualified and experienced teachers, narrower and less advanced course selection, more student turnover during the year, and students with many health and emotional problems related to poverty and to living in ghetto or barrio conditions. Few whites, including poor whites, ever experience such schools.

III. How has the Misleading and Incomplete Reporting of this Issue Obscured Both the Magnitude and Racial Dimensions of the Crisis?

Inaccurate and Misleading Estimates: There is little or no state or federal oversight of graduation rate reports for accuracy. In some schools, a missing student is presumed to either be in school or to have graduated, when, in fact, that student may well have dropped out. Incredibly, some states report a 5% dropout rate for African Americans, when, in reality, only half of its young adult African Americans are graduating with diplomas. For example, very low dropout rates for grades 9-12 are reported for Blacks in Florida (3.9%), Texas (2.6%), and Missouri (5.4%),[9] but as this report reveals, Blacks in these states are graduating in the 50% range or lower. Graduation rates based on reported enrollment suggest strongly that there are large numbers of "missing" students that go completely unaccounted for in either official dropout or graduation rate reports (See Tables A-F and state profiles in Appendix 4 for comparison of CPI with official graduation rates).

As a nation, we expend considerably more funds gathering and checking test data than we commit to accurately assessing whether students graduate from high school. Phillip Kaufman, of MPR Associates, commented in 2001 that, "the Federal Government spends over $40 million on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It probably spends less than $l million on dropout statistics."[10]

One tragedy of such weak policies on graduation rate reporting is that no state can say with precision what percentage of students who start high school actually earn a bona fide diploma. Moreover, the graduation and dropout estimates that most states have been accustomed to reporting were often grossly inaccurate and therefore misleading.[11] For example, some dropout rates reported were limited to enrolled 12th graders, and thus excluded the sizeable numbers of students who dropped out before reaching the 12th grade.[12]

Unfortunately, the modified National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula used by most states relies heavily on underestimated dropout data, and significantly overestimates graduation rates compared to other methods.[13] For example, schools often report students who never receive degrees as successfully transferring to some other school. In Texas, any student that cannot be accounted for is removed from the calculation of dropouts as if they never existed.[14] Sometimes students who are incarcerated or who have left school but are over the mandatory attendance age in their high schools are not counted as dropouts, though they never graduate. Moreover, because data on dropouts are often unavailable, the NCES calculations are based on only about half of the districts nationally, and therefore represent far fewer students than measures that avoid using dropout data.[15]

The other major source for publicly reported information on graduation rates is the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted by the Census Bureau. Findings from the CPS produce inaccurate estimates of the graduation rate in public high schools for a number of reasons. For instance, CPS graduation rates are based on a survey conducted on a statistical sample of the young adult population rather than on data from actual public school systems. In this self-report survey, respondents may not clearly distinguish between diplomas and GED's (General Educational Development High School Equivalency Diploma Test) or may otherwise misreport their actual levels of educational attainment. In addition, because the survey does not sample institutionalized populations, the CPS has been criticized for its

Economic Benefits of GED vs. High School Diploma

In the past ten years, the percentage of high school students completing a GED or other alternative degree has more than doubled. Specifically, 10 percent of all young people completed high school through an alternative means in 1998 compared to 4 percent in 1988.
A review of the most recent research by Russell Rumberger of U.C. Santa Barbara suggests that, a high school equivalency diploma does not yield the same benefits to its holders as a high school diploma. One study compared a sample of male dropouts who earned a GED with high school graduates and concluded that exam-certified high school graduates are statistically indistinguishable from high school dropout. (Cameron & Heckman, 1993). Another study of a younger sample of male respondents, found that although exam-certified graduates did not earn significantly more than dropouts immediately after completing school, their earnings did grow at a significantly faster rate over the first six years of post-school work experience (Murnane, Willett, & Boudett, 1995). Two more recent studies found more varied effects of obtaining a GED—one study found it only benefits male dropouts with weak cognitive skills (Murnane, Willet, & Tyler, 2000); the other found it only benefits whites but not minority dropouts (Tyler, Murnane, & Willet, 2000). A final study found that GED holders were less likely to be employed and invest in post-high school education and training than graduates with diplomas (Rumberger & Lamb, 2003). A recent review of the research that includes these and other studies supports these conclusions and also finds that the GED option may encourage more students to drop out of school (Tyler, 2003).
Source: *Russell W. Rumberger, The Economic and Social Impact of High School Dropouts, Draft, January 12, 2004.*

undercount of young Blacks and Latinos, who are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates.

Some states like Texas do not rely on estimates. Instead Texas tracks every student with individual identifiers and has been praised often for its computer-based accountability system. The Texas graduation rate calculation for NCLB accountability, however, removes students from the enrollment data once they drop out and enroll in a GED program and fundamentally treats such students as if they no longer exist. Although the regulations specifically prohibit counting GED recipients as graduates, the Texas graduation rate formula has been approved by the federal government. Moreover, research shows that even states like Texas that claim to track individual students report that significant numbers of students disappear from enrollment with no explanation.[16]

Finding A More Accurate Measure: The most accurate method for tracking high school graduation rates would be to provide each student with a single lifetime school identification number that would follow him or her throughout his or her entire school career. Until this nation implements and carefully monitors such a system, we will never know exactly what happens to students.[17]

The 9th Grade Enrollment "Bubble" Suggests that Graduation Rates are Driven Lower by Test-Driven Grade Retention Policies.

A recent national study of enrollment trends produced by researchers at Boston College suggests that state policies that require schools to retain students in grade or deny them high school diplomas on the basis of test scores alone are increasing the likelihood that these students will drop out before graduating. The study points out that in the last 10 years there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of students forced to repeat 9th grade, and a decline in the percentage of students graduating. According to the report, "the decline in graduation rates is greatest in states that require students to pass exams in order to be promoted to the next grade and/or to graduate from high school. Walt Haney, the lead author of the study, points out that there is a wealth of research depicting a robust correlation between grade retention and eventually dropping out. When factors such as migration, home-schooling, private school enrollment and teen mortality were accounted for, the trends remained.

Source: *The Educational Pipeline in the U.S., 1970--2000, January 2004. Walter Haney, George Madaus, Lisa Abrams, Anne Wheelock, Jing Miao, and Ilean Grura.*

We believe that the most useful and accurate estimates of high school graduation rates currently are based on the actual enrollment data that each district provides annually to the nation's Common Core of Data. Using this Common Core, Dr. Christopher Swanson of The Urban Institute developed the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) which we consider the most accurate of all the methods for estimating graduation rates. CPI is not only more accurate than the method developed by the U.S. Department of Education and chosen by most states, it could generate more useful estimates in two years rather than the four required by the other methods. (see Appendix 4 for full discussion of the CPI formula including related technical issues).

The CPI statistically examines changes in enrollment and likelihood of graduating with a high school diploma by combining the average success of groups of students moving

from ninth grade to tenth grade, from tenth grade to the eleventh grade, from eleventh grade to twelfth grade, and from twelfth grade to graduation, at the district and state level.[18] This method allows comparisons across years, districts, and states using a common metric treatment and a constant statistical treatment. It is very useful for determining which groups experience the greatest difficulty graduating from high school and whether progress in improving high school completion rates is being achieved.

Such estimates based on enrollment data are often criticized because they do not accurately adjust for a large, well-documented statistical 9th grade "bubble" that is likely caused when 9th grade students are retained in grade (see sidebar on previous page). When simulations were run to test the accuracy of commonly used methods, including the NCES modified method, the CPI graduation rate estimate, though not perfect, was the least susceptible to bias caused by the 9th grade enrollment bulge.[19] However, it should be noted that an enrollment bulge caused the CPI and all other measures examined to overestimate, not underestimate, the actual graduation rate. Therefore, this suggests that all measures are currently overestimating graduation rates, and actual rates would likely prove even lower.

IV. Can State and Federal Accountability Systems, as Implemented, be Appropriately Structured to Improve High School Graduation Rates, Especially Among Children of Color?

Recently, Congress took a first step in recognizing the severity of the dropout problem in this country by including graduation rate accountability provisions in the *No Child Left Behind*, (NCLB) legislation enacted in 2002. Unfortunately, this provision is not being seriously enforced, while provisions creating incentives for removing low-scoring students are rigidly followed.

In general, NCLB seeks to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students by targeting federal resources to those states, districts and schools with large percentages of children in poverty. Attached to the federal dollars are implementation requirements regarding school and district accountability that Congress believed would stimulate effective education reforms. Specifically, the *No Child Left Behind Act* required states to develop achievement tests, in at least reading and math, and use the test scores to evaluate the efficacy of all schools and districts. The central element of this evaluation was that all schools and districts demonstrate that their students have achieved 100% proficiency in reading and math in twelve years. To ensure the goal will be met, each state is required to establish annual benchmarks for academic outcomes for its schools and districts. The state monitors progress of the districts, which are in turn required to monitor their schools, to ensure that each school is making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward reaching the 100% goal.

If a school or district fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress for two years in a row, it is flagged for technical assistance and labeled as "needing improvement."[20] If it cannot improve by utilizing technical assistance provided by the overseeing agency, that agency

must intervene.[21] NCLB provides choices that range from harsh—whereby schools can be closed, federal funds withdrawn and staff fired—to the less aggressive approach, such as the agency may require a school or district to hire a consultant and submit a school improvement plan on the other end of the spectrum.[22] Decisions about interventions are made by the agency responsible for oversight.[23]

The overwhelming focus of many states and school districts aiming to avoid test-driven accountability sanctions has led to increased reports across the nation of schools that "push out" low achieving students (see sidebars throughout this report and in Appendix 1: State Profiles) in order to help raise their overall test scores. The following scenario illustrates this incentive. Imagine a school has one thousand 10th grade students. Three hundred are very low achievers and fail a proficiency test. The remaining 700 are predominantly moderate achiever students, and pass. The school does not make the AYP testing goals. The next year the pressure is higher because two years under the goal will result in state intervention. NCLB requires that an even higher percentage of the students who are enrolled will have to pass the test for the school to make AYP. 95% of the enrolled 11th graders must take the test. However, if 200 of the 300 low achievers leave for a GED program or simply drop out before the year gets underway, the "leavers" will not be tested or counted for test-based accountability. As a result, the smaller test pool will have far fewer low achievers and the test scores of this group, compared to the original, should rise considerably. Without one additional dollar spent on instruction or academic support for the low achievers, the school's test profile will have improved dramatically in just one year.

NCLB also requires that racial and ethnic minorities, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families make "Adequate Yearly Progress," as defined in the Statute. If any of these groups of students do not meet the state's standards, the educational agency in question has not made "Adequate Yearly Progress." It is well established that students in these groups are disproportionately low achieving. Despite the great benefits that could accrue from a sound system of subgroup accountability for academic achievement, students in these groups are more likely to get pressure to leave when test scores alone determine whether schools and districts are sanctioned.

There is one accountability second chance for schools and districts under NCLB. That second chance mechanism is called the "safe harbor" because it allows a school or district to "make AYP" even if a given subgroup does not meet a test proficiency goal.[24] In such cases, the number of students within the subgroup in question who score proficient or better must increase by 10 percent over the previous year. In addition, the subgroup in question must also demonstrate improvement on one other academic indicator. In the case of a high school, the subgroup's graduation rate, or another indicator could be chosen. Under the safe harbor, graduation rate improvement of a subgroup could only prevent a school from failing AYP if graduation rate was chosen as the "other indicator."

Graduation rate accountability provisions were inserted into the Act's definition of "Adequate Yearly Progress," in part, to create a counter incentive for school officials to

hold onto, rather than push out, struggling and disadvantaged students.[25] The original intent of the legislation was that a district or school's failure to achieve adequate graduation rates would also result in failing to make adequate yearly progress. If a school failed to meet adequate rates for two consecutive years, it would be sent into "school improvement status."[26] However, our review of federal and state graduation rate accountability thus far suggests that the Department of Education has allowed confusion and inconsistency to reign.[27] In fact, in some instances, the Department of Education has taken steps that demonstrably weaken the graduation rate accountability provision in the law.

The Failure of States and the Department of Education to Effectively Implement Graduation Rate Accountability*:* This report's review of "federally approved" state plans, including a follow-up survey of state officials (completed in January of 2004), revealed that most states have no meaningful graduation rate accountability in place.[28] In fact, 39 states set a "soft" AYP goal for graduation rates. By "soft," we mean schools and districts that fall below the graduation rate goal established by the state can still "make AYP" if they exhibit even the smallest degree of improvement from one year to the next. Only 10 states set a true floor for adequacy in graduation rates whereby schools and districts that do not meet the stated goals for two consecutive years are designated as having failed to make AYP.[29] (see table on p. 14).

New York

Felicia is a 19-year-old Latina student who often struggled academically in high school. In January 2001 at the age of 17, Felicia and her mother were told by Felicia's school that Felicia was too old to stay in high school, did not have enough credits to remain in high school, and had to attend a GED program. At this meeting, Felicia and her mother repeatedly stated that Felicia wanted to stay in high school, but the school insisted that she was too old and had to go to a GED program. At the time of this meeting, Felicia had 16 credits. It would have been possible for her to accumulate enough credits and Regents exams to graduate before her 21st birthday. Instead, she was forced to spend over two years out of school. Other than one session of summer school, Felicia was never provided tutoring, counseling or other services before being told she could no longer remain in high school. Felicia was never informed of her right to be in school until age 21. Felicia attended a GED program from February 2001 to December 2001. In March 2003, Felicia contacted Advocates for Children (AFC), who advised her of her right to be in school and worked with Felicia to reenroll her in a high school. Felicia attended high school for the remainder of the 2002-2003 school year and passed all of her classes except one. She returned to high school in September 2003 and is now working towards a Regents diploma.

For More Information on New York, see Appendix 1: State Profiles.

The Texas system is representative of the 39 "soft" systems. The Texas plan requires schools to either meet the "70%" benchmark "*or show improvement*." The required "improvement" in Texas is tiny, just 1/10th of 1 percent per year for any school or district that falls below the 70% goal. The New York plan is slightly more rigorous. New York sets a lower graduation rate goal of 55% and requires a full 1% improvement for schools and districts under the goal to achieve AYP.

Similarly, California sets a lofty goal of 100% yet gives passes on AYP for "any improvement." Given that Native Americans, Blacks and Hispanics are currently

graduating at rates of between 49% and 57%, (see California State Profile in Appendix 1), we estimate that meeting California's 100% goal could take over 500 years if they disaggregated for graduation rate accountability. But the state of California, like Texas, New York and most others, disaggregates for test score accountability, but not for graduation rate accountability,[30] except where improvement in graduation rates could help an otherwise struggling school make AYP by using the "safe harbor" provision. In other words, if a school or district's aggregate graduation rate is high enough, and if the racial and ethnic subgroups meet the test proficiency goal, the state does not look at the graduation rates of racial and ethnic subgroups when determining AYP.

In a controversial decision, United States Secretary of Education Rod Paige issued regulations stating that graduation rates did not have to be disaggregated by minority subgroups for accountability purposes except for the "safe harbor" provision.[31] This decision represents a substantive departure from the law's disaggregation requirement for accountability purposes in testing, and does not reflect the will of the Congress. It means that each state is now required only to set a graduation rate for students, *in the aggregate.* In fact, not only were systems similar to those in New York, California and Texas approved in every state, but "off the record," some state education officials suggested that the Department of Education's approval of weaker systems had encouraged them to employ "softer" graduation rate requirements than they had originally proposed.[32] In essence, by approving these permissive plans, while holding firm on test-driven accountability, the Department has effectively allowed the incentives to push out low achieving minority students to continue unchecked.

For graduation rate accountability to cancel out this incentive, school systems and state governments must report accurate graduation rate statistics as required in *No Child Left Behind* and then seriously enforce the graduation rate requirement by first, setting reasonable graduation rate floors; second, requiring significant progress toward meeting those floors over a reasonable period of time; and third, extending graduation rate accountability benchmarks to the subgroups. They also need to provide schools with the resources and programs that can effectively reduce dropout rates and support students to successfully complete their high school degrees.

Thus far, the resistance to rigorous graduation rate accountability at both the state and federal level casts serious doubt on whether there is the political will to educate ***all*** children to high standards. Despite the oft-stated goal of leaving no child behind, under current accountability systems, schools can be deemed "highly performing" even if half of their minority freshmen never graduate.

50 State Survey of Graduation Rate Accountability As Reported By State Officials Or State Accountability Plans: The following survey was performed in the fall of 2003 through January 2004. A review of each state's web site was conducted for available information on graduation rate accountability and officially reported graduation rates. In many cases, there was no posted graduation rate goal or minimum requirement for NCLB accountability. For every state, researchers followed their web review with an interview of the appropriate state official. In many cases, these interviews proved critical for

finding out how graduation rate accountability was conducted. Frequently, more than one official was interviewed. To determine whether there was a "floor" or a "soft" accountability system, each interviewee was asked whether a school or district that fell below the stated goal could still make "adequate yearly progress" by showing some improvement in the rate from the prior year. If the interviewee answered yes, then the system was put into the "soft" category, and excluded from the category of states that were listed as having a "floor." [33]

State Graduation Rate Accountability Summary

Absolute Floor for AYP?	State's Goal For Graduation Rate	Required Degree of Graduation Rate Improvement	Does State Disaggregate Graduation Rates By Race For Initial AYP Determinations?
No = 39 Yes = 10 N/A = 1	Range 50-100%	Between 1/10 of 1% to 10% annually	No = 40 Yes = 9 NA = 1

See the Appendix for Complete Information on all 50 States.

The positive news is that four states—Colorado, Illinois, North Dakota, and Oregon—have implemented graduation rate accountability plans that include both a floor and require that data be disaggregated by race. Unfortunately, three of the four—Illinois, North Dakota and Oregon—are among the majority of states that, as this report demonstrates, use NCES accounting methods that tend to inflate graduation rates.

All the states for which disaggregated graduation rates could be calculated (46 and D.C.)[34] would fail if a real standard for graduation rates and meaningful accountability were imposed. Assuming a minimum district graduation rate requirement of 66 percent and graduation rates estimated in a consistent and accurate manner across the nation, 46 states and the District of Columbia would fail to meet this benchmark either for their student population as a whole or for at least one minority subgroup. In Pennsylvania, for example, graduation rates for whites are among the highest in the nation (at 81 percent), while fewer than half of Latino and African American students earn a diploma (41 and 46 percent respectively).

The drop-out/push-out problem for minority school children in the U.S. is likely to grow more severe with the continued overemphasis on test-based accountability. Schools and districts may find it easier and more cost-effective to raise overall test scores by removing low performing students from the test-taking pool than investing in the resources and programs needed to improve the academic performance of struggling students. Unless the test-driven accountability system for schools in this country is balanced with more powerful incentives for schools to "hold onto" students through graduation, the "drop-out/push-out syndrome" is likely to worsen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations do not constitute a comprehensive list of the actions, remedies and programs needed to improve on-time high school graduation rates in this country. Rather, they offer a narrower set of recommendations that directly address some of the reporting and accountability issues discussed throughout this report.

1. Immediate action must be taken to ensure that accurate graduation rates are reported to the public, and that these rates are disaggregated for all major student subgroups. Under an accurate system, the number of graduates, the number of dropouts, the number of confirmed transfers, and legitimate removals from school rosters should be equivalent to 100% of the entering high school class. The National Center for Education Statistics should begin collecting the number of graduates at each school by race for inclusion in the Common Core of Data. Currently districts collect the data from individual schools and report it to the Common Core. Since schools must collect the school data, this requirement would also help detect reporting errors and identify schools that are failing to report any data.

2. States should be strongly encouraged to institute longitudinal tracking of all students through a unique common identifier system that would follow students throughout their schooling. When this system in a given state achieves a sufficiently high level of coverage, it should produce the publicly reported statistics on graduation and dropouts. But we recommend using a CPI or other estimated system to check even individualized tracking systems. Such cross-checking would help detect errors or the inappropriate exclusion of certain groups of students (i.e. those who enroll in a GED program should be included in the cohort) from the longitudinal individualized system.

3. Pending the development of ideal systems, states should implement the congressional mandate for accurate graduation rate reporting and accountability by using the more accurate CPI graduation rate estimates. No estimate is perfect, but there is no individualized tracking system with a proven record of accuracy either. Therefore, while such systems are being developed, the legal obligation for graduation rate accountability under NCLB must still be fulfilled. The current requirements include a process for schools and districts to challenge AYP determinations on statistical and other grounds safeguarding schools from being sanctioned unfairly.

4. Graduation rate accountability must include a reasonable graduation rate floor. A pass for accountability purposes should be available to some schools and districts falling under the floor, but there must be a far more rigorous standard for such exceptions, one that is tied to significant and steady improvement over a period of years. To be approved, accountability systems must be more rigorous, and eliminate all incentives to raise test scores by excluding students and to focus school leadership on graduation as a central goal.

5. The regulations that specifically removed the requirement of disaggregation of graduation rates for determining adequate yearly progress and sanctions should be rescinded. Nothing in the NCLB statute suggests that graduation rates should be excepted from disaggregated accountability. The exception for graduation rates means that every school and district meeting the aggregate graduation rate requirements can make AYP regardless of how low the graduation rates of a given minority group may be. In doing so, the regulations also increase the likelihood that racial disparities in graduation rates will increase. It heightens the incentive of school officials to push out low achieving minority students because sanctions would never be levied on the basis of low minority graduation rates alone, and because pushing out low achieving minorities improves the likelihood of meeting the testing requirements for that subgroup.

6. Incentives to push students out of school should be replaced with rewards for keeping students in school. Improved accountability for low graduation rates alone will not solve the dropout crisis. This report and other research suggests that multiple factors may contribute to a student's eventual dropping out of school. Further research is needed to identify and evaluate effective intervention and dropout prevention programs, as well as those policies and practices under a school's control that may exacerbate the crisis. We recommend increasing the use of Title I funds in high schools, particularly for transition and dropout intervention programs. We also recommend the federal government establish a research priority in this area. The goal of experimentation and research should be to develop long-term investments that will lead to increased high school graduation rates, particularly for minority and disadvantaged youths.

7. The extremely low graduation rates of Black, Native American and Latino males cries out for immediate action informed by research. While the plight of minority male children is no secret in America, there is little research, intervention or accountability directed specifically at subgroups of minority males. Education policymakers need to use research and proven interventions more proactively to address the unacceptably high rates of school failure experienced by Black, Latino and Native American males.

END NOTES

[1] The reported rate estimates used in this table are based on enrollment data. No estimates are flawless, but as discussed later in this report, the rates reported here are among the most accurate available.
[2] Asian American /Pacific Islanders are included in the tables in the appendix but excluded here because their average graduation rate was higher than whites.
[3] While it is important to note that there are occasional irregularities in how schools report their data which contribute to inaccuracies at the district level, the very low numbers for Black and Latino students are found fairly consistently in hundreds of smaller districts throughout the nation.
[4] Sources for this section include:
U.*S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Manufacturing," on-line table, modified October 2, 2003*
(U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, Table 380);
U.S. Census, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, (2003). Retrieved February 18, 2004 from: http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf; and
Russell W. Rumberger*, The Economic and Social Impact of High School Dropouts,* Draft, January 12, 2004.
[5] Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters, *Weak Promoting Power, Minority Concentration, and High Schools with Severe Dropout Rates in Urban America: A Multiple Cohort Analysis of the 1990s Using the Common Core of Data,* Prepared for The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Conference on *Making Dropouts Visible,* June 3, 2003 Teachers College, Columbia University.
[6] This measure only requires considering the number of students that a school "loses" from ninth grade through grade twelve, without counting actual diplomas. Although it does not offer a true graduation estimate, the holding power analysis provides a useful and quick calculation for identifying and highlighting districts and schools with problematic graduation rates.
[7] See Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters, *Weak Promoting Power, Minority Concentration, and High Schools with Severe Dropout Rates in Urban America: A Multiple Cohort Analysis of the 1990s Using the Common Core of Data,* Prepared for The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, Conference on *Making Dropouts Visible,* June 3, 2003 Teachers College, Columbia University.
[8] Orfield, Gary & Lee, Chungmei. (2004). *Brown At 50: King's Dream or Plessy's Nightmare?* Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.
[9] *Missouri*
http://www.dese.state.mo.us/commissioner/statereportcard/studentperformance.html#High%20School%20Graduation%20Rates
Texas
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/0001drpt.pdf
Florida
http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/eias
[10] Kaufman, Phillip. (2001). *The National Dropout Data Collection System: Assessing Consistency,* p. 30. Presented at the "Dropouts in America" conference sponsored by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and Achieve, Inc., January 13, 2001.
[11] The 2001 national conference *Dropouts in America*, co-sponsored by The Civil Rights Project and Achieve, Inc., reported that the two dominant sources of information most commonly used to compute dropout and graduation rates—the National Center for Education Statistics estimates and the survey data collected by the Current Population Survey of the Census Bureau—seriously underestimate the number and percentage of students who fail to graduate from school.
[12] Kaufman, Phillip. (2001). *The National Dropout Data Collection System: Assessing Consistency,* p. 30. Presented at the "Dropouts in America" conference sponsored by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and Achieve, Inc., January 13, 2001.
[13] The coverage varies from state to state. For detailed reporting including coverage statistics see Christopher B. Swanson (2003.) *Keeping Count and Losing Count. Calculating Graduation Rates for All Students Under NCLB Accountability.* Washington DC: The Urban Institute.
[14] *http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/pdfs/0001drpt.pdf*
[15] The coverage varies from state to state. For detailed reporting including coverage statistics see Christopher B. Swanson (2004.) *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High*

School Graduation, Class of 2001. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

[16] Kaufman, Phillip. (2001). *The National Dropout Data Collection System: Assessing Consistency,* p. 30. Presented at the "Dropouts in America" conference sponsored by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and Achieve, Inc., January 13, 2001.

[17] No system can provide completely accurate data. In their proposals to comply with the requirements for graduation accountability in *No Child Left Behind*, only eight states planned to actually track students, and most of the systems they have devised leave room for large improvements. Setting up new systems and obtaining data over the high school career of students would require a minimum of five years to produce answers, assuming a very high quality system could be established. Until then we have to rely on statistical analysis of existing data, which is far less costly but has limits.

[18] See definitions in Appendix 4.

[19] Swanson, Christopher. *In Search of the Graduation Rate: Issues, Methodology, and Potential Solutions* (2004). Presentation for the National Panel on High School Dropout and Graduation Rates, National Center for Education Statistics, Washington D.C., January 14, 2004. The simulated tests did show that the CPI method, like all the methods commonly used, became less accurate as the size of the bubble grew.

[20] *Id.*

[21] *See* 20 U.S.C. § 6311, 115 STAT 1444; 20 U.S.C. § 6317, 115 Stat 1479.

[22] 20 U.SC 6317(b) 115 Stat 1479-1498.

[23] The LEA does not set AYP or the indicators for "needs improvement" but LEA's are responsible for intervening when benchmarks are not met.

[24] The "safe harbor" regulations read as follows: "Sec. 200.20 Making adequate yearly progress.

(b) If students in any group under Sec. 200.13(b)(7) in a school or LEA do not meet the State's annual measurable objectives under Sec. 200.18, the school or LEA makes AYP if--

(1) The percentage of students in that group below the State's proficient achievement level decreased by at least 10 percent from the preceding year; and

(2) That group made progress on one or more of the State's academic indicators under Sec. 200.19 or the LEA's academic indicators under Sec. 200.30(c)."

[25] Also note, the concern that AYP is not made by increasing dropouts is shared by the Secretary.

> " Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the graduation rate should not include students who have dropped out of school as students who have transferred to another school. With the passage of the NCLB Act, the expectations for schools to make AYP have increased; it is critically important that schools do not make AYP simply because students have dropped out of school. The Secretary also agrees that graduation rate should be measured from the beginning of high school in order to capture students who drop out before reaching 12th grade." Final Rule; Federal Register: December 2, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 231) at 71743.

[26] 20 U.S.C 6311 (b)(2)(vi), 115 STAT 1447.

[27] Jeff Archer, "Graduation-Rate Plans Called All Over the Map*," Education Week*, October 1, 2003, p. 5.

[28] In June of 2003, the administration approved the plans of all 50 states even though most had not met NCLB's requirements and few had any information on graduation rate accountability. The information in this report is based on a combination of reviewing state websites and interviewing a designated employee for each state. The interviews and website reviews were conducted between October 1, 2003 and January 25, 2004. Each state was given an opportunity to confirm the information reported about them.

[29] In some cases state officials insisted they had set a clear floor for AYP determinations. Further questions, however, often revealed the loophole that any increase in rates would permit the school or district to avoid AYP any time the rate improved over the prior years rate. When asked hypothetically whether AYP would be granted if a district slipped 20 points one year and improved $1/10^{th}$ of one percent the next, many said yes.

[30] The one exception, "safe harbor" is discussed infra.

[31] *See* 34 C.F.R. § 200.19 (d)(2); Title I--Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Final Rule; Federal Register: December 2, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 231)

[Rules and Regulations] The Secretary, in defending this reading, cites other regulations, not the statute to insist that:

> Section 200.19(d)(2) makes clear that the State must disaggregate its other academic indicators, including graduation rate, by each subgroup in order to report that information under section 1111(h) of the ESEA and to calculate whether schools that do not meet the State's annual measurable objectives but have decreased for each subgroup the percentage of students below proficient by at least 10 percent can be considered to have made AYP. As indicated in Sec. 200.19(d)(2)(ii), however, the State need not disaggregate its other academic indicators for determining AYP. The Secretary is confident that publicly reporting disaggregated data on the other academic indicators will ensure that schools, LEAs, and the State are held accountable for subgroup performance.

Id. at 71741. *available at* http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2002-4/120202a.html. Further, the fact that graduation rates were added to the definition of "adequate yearly progress" in the statute did not seem to convince the Secretary that any method of measuring "yearly progress" on graduation rates was required for "making adequate yearly progress." "The regulations do not require states to proffer graduation rate goals or hinge accountability success on making yearly progress." 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(b)(2)(2002). For the Secretary's comments See also Final Rule; Federal Register: December 2, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 231) at 71743.

[32] For example, an education official in South Carolina told us that although they currently have a genuine "floor" in their plan now, they are likely going to move toward a softer requirement of "any improvement" for graduation rate accountability.

[33] Each interviewee was sent an email with a description of their graduation rate accountability as understood by the researcher. The description sent for confirmation did not include the words "floor" or "soft" because researchers found that in their discussions some officials objected to these terms. For example, at least one official insisted on using the word "floor" even though there was complete agreement about the details of their system and that it did not constitute a "floor" as defined for the survey. In most cases there was no discussion of the categorical terms used in this survey.

[34] The four left off, Arizona, Idaho, New Hampshire and Vermont, did not disaggregate their data by race, and their overall rate was above 66%.

APPENDIX 1: STATE PROFILES

12 State Profiles[1]

Alabama
California
Colorado
Florida
Illinois
Michigan
Mississippi
Missouri
New York
North Carolina
Ohio
Texas

State Profiles: These reviews of data and policy of 12 states will reveal what the Secretary of Education's decision to remove racial and ethnic subgroups from graduation rate accountability means at the state level. The report will show how that decision, combined with the Department's approval of very weak graduation accountability standards, will reduce the likelihood that low graduation rates will trigger the failure to make "adequate yearly progress."

This report demonstrates that in most states there is no prevention or counter-incentive to schools and districts, directly or indirectly, designed to offset the heavy emphasis on test-driven accountability. So long as the graduation rate accountability structure from NCLB is applied weakly or monitored poorly, few schools with very low Black and Hispanic graduation rates will be flagged for failing to make AYP on that basis. Specifically, the report will show how even a modest requirement of a 66% graduation rate would cause many of each state's largest districts to be flagged as not meeting the adequate yearly progress.

For each of the states selected, the report describes the magnitude of the graduation rate crisis at both the state and district level, distinguishes the numbers by race and ethnicity, describes their relationship to school segregation, and documents how each state plans to include graduation rates in its accountability system. The report also describes how

[1] Together, the 12 state profiles represent conditions of education for a high percentage of the nation's student enrollment and represent a wide demographic sample. The officially reported graduation rate was obtained either from a report on a state's website or was provided by a state official interviewed for this report. In a few cases, researchers were unable to obtain the official rate from the website and or from requests for this information from state officials. The data for these profiles combined the survey of 50 states on accountability with the research from Johns Hopkins University in appendix 5, with The Urban Institute's statistical profiles of every state. For data sets on each state and the District of Columbia, *see* Christopher B. Swanson (2004.) *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation. Class of 2001*, at 38-93, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

policymakers in a small handful of states appeared to take the issue very seriously. Yet, even these more rigorous state plans appear to use formulas that will yield inflated graduation rates and do not accurately reflect the numbers of students who are leaving school without high school diplomas. For example, in states like Illinois, the graduation rate compares graduates with students who leave school for a variety of reasons, including dropping out. But because there are large numbers of students in Illinois who leave high school without diplomas but are excluded from being counted as dropouts, the resulting inflated graduation rates are not terribly effective for accountability purposes. For most states, these profiles do not provide a deeper analysis of these issues.

The actual comparison between how many districts will be flagged under current practices, and how many actually were doing poorly, is also beyond the scope of this report, but a question that deserves closer analysis.[2] One obstacle to understanding all the facets of this problem is that failure to meet AYP usually gets triggered by low test scores. Because many districts with low graduation rates also have inadequate reading or math scores, it is difficult to know how many districts or schools failed to make AYP solely because of the graduation rate requirement. However, many share a deep concern that, as districts face growing pressure to raise test scores in order to make AYP, officials will accelerate the practice of encouraging low achievers to leave school. Only states that put serious graduation rate accountability in place will have a safeguard against such perverse incentives.

[2] For a regional analysis of projected "AYP" based on a 66% standard for graduation rates, *see* Christopher B. Swanson (2004.) *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation. Class of 2001*, at 25, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

1. Alabama

As the following story documents, the pressure to remove low achieving students to boost a school's profile was very strong in at least one city in Alabama.

Alabama's graduation rate of 61.4% is among the lowest in the nation (43rd). In fact, Alabama has the third lowest graduation rate among whites in the country. This low rate for whites in Alabama may explain why the racial gap for Blacks (11.8) and Hispanics (22), in comparison to whites, is not even larger (see tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

Alabama's Graduation Crisis:

High school graduation rates in Alabama, like those for the nation, are alarmingly low for most minority groups. While low rates are related to poverty, our research supports the theory that racial isolation is related to low graduation rates independent of poverty. Furthermore, the 17 point difference in graduation rates between Black males and females (see table below) is not explained by poverty.

Alabama Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Alabama report using modified NCES	77.02	n/a	
Alabama Students CPI	61.4	67.3	56.0
By Race/Ethnicity			
Asian/Pacific Islander	66.3	68.4	56.4
Hispanic	43.8	n/a	n/a
Black	54.0	62.3	45.0
White	65.8	69.8	61.6

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:

Given the state's long struggles with racial segregation in its schools, it is interesting to note that approximately one third of Alabama's districts are "majority minority" and that such districts tend to have lower graduation rates than the state's average.

Alabama Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	**% of Dists**	**CPI (%)**
Majority White	69	63.6
Majority Minority	31	57

The central city districts consistently graduated lower percentages than rural and suburban districts[3]. At the same time, as the table below shows, several districts that are majority white (Baldwin, Tuscaloosa, and Elmore) are clearly struggling with low graduation rates for all their students. The racial gap in graduation rates was most pronounced in Elmore (27% between Blacks and whites), which also had the lowest aggregate graduation rate (45.6%) of the 10 largest districts.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University explored the contribution of urban high schools to the minority graduation rate crisis. In Alabama, the research showed that, of the minority students attending urban high schools, approximately 7,991 attended schools in which 60% or less of the enrolled 9th graders returned as 12th graders. The researchers calculated that 36% of the minority youth attending these schools were enrolled in a high school that failed to hold on to most of the students that entered.

Alabama's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates Total	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Mobile Co.	64,976	Black	52.8	63.2	57.3	50.3	56.6	57.1
Jefferson Co.	40,726	White	24.3	26.7	64.9	---	60.8	65.8
Birmingham City	37,843	Black	97.2	42.1	55.4	28.1	55.2	63.2
Montgomery Co.	33,267	Black	75.2	62.5	57.6	---	54.7	62.7
Huntsville City	22,832	White	46.8	38.3	59.8	---	---	75.6
Baldwin Co.	22,656	White	19.1	30.6	59.9	---	42.1	63.6
Shelby Co.	20,129	White	14.4	20.4	72.5	69.5	65.9	73.2
Tuscaloosa Co.	15,666	White	25.3	41.8	60.4	---	44.6	66.7
Elmore Co.	10,064	White	28.8	37.8	45.6	---	27	53.6
Hoover City	9,839	White	16.9	7.6	92.3	---	79.1	92.6

Alabama Does Very Little to Account for Low Graduation Rates:

Like most states, Alabama uses a modified NCES calculation to determine its graduation rates. Using this formula, the state reports an official graduation rate of 77%. However, this official rate fails to account for large numbers of students who were enrolled in 9th grade, but neither dropped out officially, nor graduated with a diploma. When the CPI formula is used and all the students are accounted for, the graduation rate drops to 61.4%

[3] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

Alabama is among the 39 "soft" states identified in this report. While it sets a graduation rate goal of 90%, it gives an accountability pass to any school or district that falls below the goal, yet shows "any improvement." Furthermore, in the initial analysis, Alabama does not even consider the low graduation rates of subgroups when determining AYP.[4] Under Alabama's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of Blacks, Hispanics, students with disabilities, and LEP students can be ignored completely, because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes. Under the state's current accountability system, fewer would fail to make AYP because of unacceptably low graduation rates.

Many Alabama Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: This report calculates what would happen in Alabama if a true floor were established for graduation rates, and no pass was given for mere "improvement." In this example, failing to make a rate of 66% percent would trigger identification as failing to make AYP. If used as an aggregate measure only two of Alabama's ten largest districts would make AYP, but three more would be very close (within 5 points). If used as a disaggregated measure only one of the state's districts would make AYP for all subgroups, and only two would be within 5 points. If a pass was given for "any improvement," few if any of the districts with low graduation rates would likely be labeled as needing improvement (two consecutive years of not making AYP). Specifically, under Alabama's current system, Elmore County, where nearly 75% of the Black students fail to graduate, could satisfy the state's requirements by showing just a $1/10^{th}$ of one percent increase in the overall graduation rate.

Alabama Specific Recommendations: Alabama should consider implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate. Until such a system is established, however, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes, the state should set a clear floor and hold all major racial and ethnic groups to the same standard. Below the floor, only schools and districts demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement in graduation rates should be allowed to avoid sanctions that come with being identified as "needing improvement."

Finally, Alabama should not set forth a goal of 90% graduation and then permit "any improvement" to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead, a reasonable floor should be set and districts that are above the floor should be given further incentives to meet challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement.

[4] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup can mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

An Alabama Story

In March 2000, 16-year-old Renae[5] enrolled in the Birmingham City Schools adult education program where Steve Orel had been teaching for four years.[6] She reached into her purse and pulled out a folded piece of paper that he recognized as a form from the high school she had been attending. Like the others, it said, "Withdrawal. Reason: Lack of Interest." Renae's mother later told Mr. Orel that she had tried to get her daughter back in school but was informed that her daughter's standardized test scores were low and that she probably wouldn't graduate. Despite the mother's insistence that she wanted her daughter to remain in school, school officials refused to readmit her. It was thereafter that Renae found her way to Mr. Orel's adult education program.

In Spring 2000, Mr. Orel met about 15 students who had been pushed out from several of Birmingham's public high schools. Since that time, Mr. Orel has come into contact with literally hundreds of students who have been pushed out of school, at least a hundred from that particular Spring. The first pushed-out students with whom Mr. Orel met presented withdrawal forms that were filled out by hand. Within a couple of weeks, students were bringing computerized withdrawal forms. Mr. Orel's supervisors explained that the students were withdrawn to remove low-achieving (i.e., low-scoring) students in order to raise Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (SAT-9) scores. He also learned that six local high schools were on academic alert status by the State Department of Education and that low SAT-9 scores could mean school takeovers by the State. Some principals had been transferred the year before, when SAT-9 scores did not get their schools off academic alert. In fact, the Superintendent's bonus hinged upon raising achievement test scores.

Of all of the pushed out students with whom Mr. Orel came in contact, none had voluntarily withdrawn. In fact, some had actually returned to the school with their parents or guardians and asked to be readmitted, but their requests were denied. Parents had not been included in the withdrawal meetings, and some parents did not even know their children had been withdrawn.

Lindsay explained, "I showed up for class and my teacher told me that my name was on a list, and he sent me down to the office. When I got there I saw my name was on a list, and they told me that I had to be withdrawn." Bradley provided more details, "About 2-3 months ago, there was a school assembly. The principal spoke to us and said that he didn't want any students to interfere with the SAT scores. He said that the SAT scores were already low, and that the State was going to take over. He said that he would try to get the students out of the school, who he thought would bring the test scores down. He also gave us this same message over the intercom a couple of times after that. On the last day that I went to school, I was told to report to the principal's office because my

[5] Pseudonyms are employed.

[6] In 2000, this adult education program was shut down. Steve Orel reopened it as the World of Opportunity, a nonprofit organization that has worked with more than a thousand students, providing GED and Adult Basic Education (ABE) services.

name was not on the roster. I was given a withdrawal slip which said, 'Lack of interest.' I did miss a lot of school days. I had family problems. I had allergies."

Ladarius described how his older brother moved back home, terminally ill with cancer. When his brother became bed-ridden, Ladarius stayed home from school to care for him while his mother and sister worked. Within a couple of weeks, Ladarius's brother passed away in bed at home. A week after the funeral, Ladarius returned to school, only to learn that he was withdrawn for "lack of interest."

Board representatives have now admitted that 522 students were administratively withdrawn (i.e., involuntarily) in the Spring of 2000.[7] Despite Mr. Orel's reporting of the practice to the School Board and despite coverage of the issue in the local paper, to Mr. Orel's knowledge, none of the pushed-out students with whom he worked were ever contacted and offered readmission. While the practice ceased briefly after the issue received public attention (and while the SAT-9 was no longer administered), it began again with the administration of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam in Spring, 2002. To this day, students continue to be "withdrawn" from school for lack of interest, academic failure, and poor attendance, and the Birmingham schools continue to be under enormous pressure to raise standardized test scores. And when "withdrawn", these students are often not assigned to any alternative educational forum. The withdrawal forms indicate that an alternative educational environment is supposed to be supplied for the student. However, it is often not filled in. When it is filled in, it refers these students to GED or ABE (Adult Basic Education), programs which do not confer high school diplomas and which remove students from their peer groups, and consequently deny them the opportunity to socialize and graduate with classmates.[8]

Source: Steve Orel and Silent No More: Voices of Courage in American Schools.
ReLeah Cossett Lent and Gloria Pipkin (Editors) Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003

[7] This admission was made in a deposition taken in connection with a lawsuit filed by Mr. Orel against the Alabama school system for wrongful discharge after he 'blew the whistle' on the push-out problem.
[8] The overwhelming majority of the 522 students who were pushed out in 2000 were African-American. Although the World of Opportunity works with White and Latino students, the composition of the program remains predominantly African-American.

2. **California**

At first glance, California's official graduation rate appears to be a robust 86.9% and its stated graduation goal of 100% ambitious. Yet, as is the case in most of the states we reviewed, these figures are misleading. The official graduation rate is based on a flawed NCES formula, and schools that fall below the 100% goal are unlikely to suffer any negative consequences, no matter how far below they fall.

When the CPI index is used, California's graduation rate comes to only 68.9%, just slightly above the national average of 68%. As with most states, the rates for minority groups are substantially lower. For Blacks the graduation rate is 55.3%, for Latinos it is 57%, for Native Americans 49.7%, and for whites it is 75.7%. The racial gaps are: 20.4 between Blacks and whites; 18.7 between Hispanics and whites, and 26 between Native Americans and whites. These gaps are large and typical of the racial gaps across the country (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

California Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
California report using modified NCES	86.9		
California Students CPI	68.9	73.2	64.5
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	49.7	n/a	n/a
Asian/Pacific Islander	82.0	84.6	77.6
Hispanic	57.0	62.3	51.3
Black	55.3	58.3	49.2
White	75.7	79.3	71.8

The Graduation Rate Crisis in California: High school graduation rates in California are alarmingly low for most minority groups. They are also particularly low for Black and Hispanic males. Among racial groups, Hispanics show the greatest gender variation of 11 points. Moreover, the large gender differences within each racial group are not explained by poverty.

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation: Similar to the findings in the main report, segregation and percentage of minority students in a district had a strong relationship with low graduation rates.[9] Approximately 45% of California's districts are majority

[9] Christopher B. Swanson (2004.) *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation. Class of 2001*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

minority and these more segregated districts tend to have graduation rates that are below the state's average.

California Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	54.8	78.1
Majority Minority	45.2	64.1

Like most states, California's central city districts consistently graduated lower percentages than rural and suburban districts by about 10-13%.[10] Seven of the state's 10 largest districts were predominantly Hispanic, one Black, one Asian and one white.

California's disaggregated graduation data is perhaps best expressed by comparing two of its ten largest districts, Oakland, and San Juan. Oakland is 94% non-white and, among the ten largest districts, it recorded the lowest graduation rate for each racial group except for whites (55.6%). The graduation rate for Blacks was lowest (23.4%) in Oakland where they were the largest minority group. Of these 10 districts, only in the predominantly white suburban district of San Juan did white students have graduation rates that exceeded their state average (plus 5). But San Juan was also recorded above state averages for every minority group with available data, with the greatest differentials for Blacks (plus 21) and American Indians (plus 25). These district level data are consistent with our national findings that low graduation rates coincide with the percent of minority students and racial segregation within a school district.

http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

[10] Id. at 47.

California's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates					
					Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Los Angeles Usd	721,346	Hispanic	90.1	73.5	46.4	50.8	76.6	40.2	48.1	68.1
San Diego City Usd	141,804	Hispanic	73.0	46.3	61.3	79.5	77.9	47.0	49.2	74.0
Long Beach Usd	93,694	Hispanic	82.2	98.7	74.8	59.9	84.6	67.0	69.7	83.7
Fresno Usd	79,007	Hispanic	79.8	71.5	55.8	---	77.7	44.3	---	68.4
Santa Ana Usd	60,643	Hispanic	96.4	73.4	61.7	33.3	66.5	61.0	32.2	---
San Francisco Usd	59,979	Asian/PI	88.9	54.2	66.7	---	76.3	48.4	49.2	64.1
Oakland Usd	54,863	Black	94.4	53.8	30.4	9.3	49.5	25.3	23.4	56.6
Sacramento City Usd	52,734	Hispanic	75.1	60.5	70.0	43.4	89.3	61.8	63.8	59.0
San Bernardino City Usd	52,031	Hispanic	79.7	74.8	42.1	27.0	65.2	40.0	37.2	45.0
San Juan Usd	50,266	White	24.9	28.8	80.9	74.2	90.4	---	76.8	80.3

School Level Data Reveal Similar Trends: An independent study of high schools in major cities, conducted by researchers from Johns Hopkins University, revealed that, in 70 high schools in California's major cities, fewer than 60% of the students who enrolled in 9th grade were enrolled in 12th grade four years later (see Appendix 5, Table A). Called "weak promoting power," the Johns Hopkins University report shows that the 70 schools in question represented nearly half of the "majority minority" high schools in California's large cities (Appendix 5, Table B). This study lends additional support to the inference that attending a high school with a high minority population significantly increases the risk of not graduating.

California's "500 Year" Plan Does Very Little to Account for Low Graduation Rates: California's appearance of having a high graduation rate standard is an illusion. For accountability, California is among the weakest of 39 "soft" states identified in this report. These "soft" states set a graduation rate goal but give an accountability "pass" to any school or district that falls below the goal, yet shows "any improvement." When a state official was asked to explain the system, he said that a school or district only had to show improvement from whatever their current graduation rate happened to be. But "any improvement" is defined as including even 1/10th of 1 percent growth over the prior year for accountability. When the official was told that it could take more than 500 years for a district like San Bernardino (42.1) to meet the state's goal of 100% he replied, "In California, we're patient."

Furthermore, California does not consider the low graduation rates of any subgroup when determining AYP.[11] For example, Native Americans in Santa Anna could have their extremely low rate (33.3%) slip to below 5%, and it could remain there, and the district would never be deemed "needing improvement" because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes. Under California's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of minority groups can be ignored completely wherever the aggregate rate shows even 1/10th of 1 percent improvement over the prior year. Under the current system it is expected that less than 1% of all California's districts would fail to make AYP because of graduation rates that were too low.

Many Californian Districts Would Fail AYP If They Employed the CPI Method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, then only four of California's largest districts would make AYP if this floor was used in the aggregate. If this measure was required for all racial and ethnic subgroups, then only one of the state's districts would make AYP.

California Specific Recommendations: California should not set forth an unattainable goal of 100% graduation while simultaneously settling for "any improvement." The combination of an unattainable goal with an absurdly easy to reach second chance, all based on calculations that inflate the graduation rate, gives the impression that the state is not serious about graduation rate accountability.

California should use CPI for both reporting and accountability purposes until a more accurate measure is developed and ready for implementation. For accountability purposes the state should set a clear floor and the floor should be calculated for major racial groups, not just students in the aggregate. Exceptions from AYP sanctions should be made where schools or districts falling below the floor have made substantial and steady progress over a number of years. Giving credit for growth is a good strategy when the improvement requires effort, but should be realistically calibrated to the context. Challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement should be set for those districts that satisfy the floor, but still have not met a challenging goal set by the state.

[11] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup can mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

3. Colorado

At first glance, Colorado's official graduation rate appears healthy at 83.6%, and a review of its graduation rate goal of 55.3% seems less than ambitious. Like most states we reviewed for this report, these numbers are not what they seem. The official graduation rate is likely inaccurate. However, Colorado officials explained that they do not intend to rely on the flawed NCES definition and are moving to a more accurate tracking system. Moreover, Colorado is one of the few states where the graduation rate "goals" are also "absolute floors" for accountability purposes. This means that schools and districts with very low graduation rates will be expected to make great increases in graduation rates, as well as in achievement scores on tests, in order to meet the AYP requirements.

When the CPI index is used, Colorado's graduation rate becomes 69%, just slightly above the national average of 68%. For Blacks the graduation rate is 49%, for Latinos it is 47.6%, for Native Americans 40.7%, and for whites it is 75.2%. The racial gaps are: 26.2% between Blacks and whites; 27.6% between Hispanics and whites, and 34.5% between Native Americans and whites. These gaps are larger than in most states (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

Colorado Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Colorado Students as Reported	83.6		
Colorado Students CPI	69.0	72.9	65.1
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	40.7	n/a	n/a
Asian/Pacific Islander	72.6	77.7	n/a
Hispanic	47.6	51.8	41.4
Black	49.0	55.7	33.8
White	75.2	78.2	71.4

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:

Most alarming is that the state average for Black males to graduate with a real diploma is just 33.8%. With all Blacks making up only 5.7 percent of the population, this low rate for Blacks and Hispanics should be picked up under the new system. However, no state is currently even reporting rates by race and gender together, which means that the low rate for Black males might not be addressed specifically. Also worth noting is that the gender gap is most pronounced among Blacks (22), followed by Hispanics (10) compared to whites (7). Poverty fails to explain why the gender gaps should be so large, and greatest between minority males and females.

Colorado Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	86.2	75.2
Majority Minority	13.8	45.5

Colorado's districts are predominantly white. The few highly segregated districts have an average graduation rate of (45.5%), which is substantially below the state's average. Like most states, Colorado's central city districts consistently graduated lower percentages than rural and suburban districts by about 10-17%.[12] Nine of the state's ten largest districts were predominantly white, with one, Denver, predominantly Hispanic. The two large districts (Denver and Adams-Arapahoe) with the largest minority populations had the lowest graduation rates for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians, but Native Americans had relatively better rates in Adams-Arapahoe.[13]

Colorado's Ten Largest Districts

					CPI Graduation Rates					
District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Jefferson Co.	87,703	White	17.5	13.7	74.9	38.7	87.3	64.1	90.6	75.6
Denver Co.	70,847	Hispanic	78.0	59.9	40.5	26.4	69.9	30.5	38.6	61.0
Cherry Creek	42,320	White	23.0	9.2	86.5	---	---	82.9	80.3	85.9
Douglas Co.	34,918	White	9.8	1.8	83.0	---	84.7	---	---	81.3
Colorado Springs	32,699	White	29.5	30.3	59.0	---	---	---	53.0	63.2
Adams-Arapahoe	30,453	White	59.5	36.1	41.0	57.1	49.2	26.7	33.3	51.9
Northglenn-Thornton	30,079	White	30.9	21.7	80.7	50.5	---	83.7	87.5	79.8
Boulder Valley	27,508	White	19.4	11.6	75.8	42.3	68.8	50.8	46.0	79.9
Poudre	24,052	White	17.5	16.9	80.9	51.4	81.3	65.4	60.4	83.2
Mesa Co. Valley	19,688	White	16.7	36.0	66.2	---	---	46.6	---	68.6

Colorado's disaggregated graduation data reveal stark variances in rates for every racial group. For example, Hispanic graduation rates were as low as 30.5% in Denver and as high as 83.7% in Northglenn-Thornton. This makes Denver one of the worst large districts in the country for Hispanic students on this measure. Although in two districts Black students had higher graduation rates than whites, Colorado's district level data is

[12] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* at 48, Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

[13] Id.

otherwise consistent with our national findings. For example, low graduation rates coincide with both higher minority enrollment and racial segregation in a school district.

School Level Data Reveal Similar Trends: An independent study by Johns Hopkins University researchers of high schools in urban districts revealed that there are 9 high schools in Colorado's majority minority cities whereby fewer than half of the students who enrolled in 9th grade were enrolled in 12th grade four years later (see Appendix 5, Table A). Called "weak promoting power," the prevalence of this phenomenon at high schools with a high minority population significantly increases the risk of not graduating. As the Hopkins study indicates, approximately 11,591 minority students, nearly two thirds of their total numbers in these cities, attend high schools with weak promoting power (Appendix 5, Table B).

Colorado's Plan Goes Further than Most to Account for Low Graduation Rates: Colorado's appearance of having a low graduation rate standard is, ironically, not accurate. For accountability, Colorado is among the strongest states identified in this report. Colorado's graduation rate is a hard "floor." Unlike the "soft" states that set a graduation rate goal but give an accountability "pass" for "any improvement," Colorado's plan holds every school and district accountable for meeting this floor. Moreover, the state has scheduled a gradually rising floor so that by 2014 it will have inched up to 65%. Finally, Colorado is among a very small minority of states that disaggregates graduation rate accountability. For example, even if Denver's test scores meet the AYP standard, they will be identified as needing improvement unless the graduation rates of the Black, Native American, and Hispanic students rise to meet the standard of 55.5% in year one, and 58% in year two. In other words, under Colorado's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of minority groups cannot be ignored.

Many of Colorado's Districts Would Fail AYP If They Employed the CPI Method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, and no credit was given for improvement, four of Colorado's ten largest districts would fail to meet the AYP benchmark. If used as a disaggregated measure, only two of the state's largest districts would make AYP.

Recommendations Specific to Colorado: Colorado's strong paper standards provide little solace in the face of some of the lowest minority graduation rates in the nation. Meaningful improvements in graduation rates will only occur if the system is enforced and useful resources are directed at the state's high minority districts. Giving credit for growth is a good strategy when the improvement demands are realistically calibrated to the problem at hand. With a floor as low as 55%, and even with the floor gradually rising to 65%, additional goals based on percent improvement should be set for those districts that satisfy this low floor.

4. Florida

In an initial review, Florida's official graduation rate, at 65%, appears low, and its graduation rate goal of 85%, ambitious. But Florida, which, among all the states, has the second lowest overall graduation rate (using CPI) of 53 percent, also has the lowest graduation rate for white students of all states. The official graduation rate is 12 points higher. Because the state uses its own unique longitudinal formula, the reasons for this inaccuracy are not as readily identifiable as they are in other states.

On the other hand, Florida is one of the few "soft" states where the alternative to missing the graduation rate "goal" for accountability purposes is more rigorous than the "any improvement" standard so common in other states. According to state officials, Florida requires that schools and districts under the 85% goal must make 1% improvement each year. While this is still a "weak" alternative, over time this means that schools and districts with graduation rates under 85% will be expected to improve in graduation rates, as well as in achievement scores on tests, in order to meet the AYP requirements.

With such low rates for whites, it is not surprising that the racial gaps in graduation rates are smaller than most in the nation (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state). However, the fact remains that the rate for Blacks (41), Native Americans (48) and Hispanics (52) fall below their national average.

Although beyond the scope of this report, an analysis of the low rates in Florida should consider the fact that Florida has both a high school exit exam and requires grade retention if students fail to pass a grade level test. Other research suggests that use of high stakes tests to hold students back in grade and to deny them diplomas drives down graduation rates[14].

[14] Jay P. Heubert and Robert M. Hauser, Editors, (1999). *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Florida's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Dade Co.	368,625	Hispanic	88.7	59.3%	52.1	---	84.7	52.8	46.8	60.7
Broward Co.	251,129	White	58.8	37.1%	47.2	49.5	79.5	---	35.2	55.7
Hillsborough Co.	164,311	White	48.2	47.4%	55.0	---	86.3	51.0	41.5	60.2
Palm Beach Co.	153,871	White	50.4	39.6%	46.6	60.4	78.0	47.3	32.2	55.6
Orange Co.	150,681	White	55.9	47.8%	51.8	61.3	85.2	48.8	40.1	59.4
Duval Co.	125,846	White	49.8	46.6%	46.3	29.9	76.3	64.7	35.7	53.5
Pinellas Co.	113,027	White	27.3	36.3%	45.5	---	61.3	47.2	28.6	49.5
Polk Co.	79,477	White	36.5	50.5%	48.3	---	90.7	---	36.7	51.6
Brevard Co.	70,597	White	20.8	30.8%	59.4	31.4	85.4	70.0	41.4	61.8
Volusia Co.	61,517	White	26.1	38.5%	54.8	21.2	86.4	49.8	39.5	58.2

Florida Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	83.6	55.2
Majority Minority	16.4	49.6

School Level Data Reveal Similar Trends: An independent study by Johns Hopkins University researchers of high schools in urban districts revealed that there are 12 urban high schools in Florida whereby fewer than 60% of the students who enrolled in 9th grade were enrolled in 12th grade four years later (see Appendix 5, Table A). Called "weak promoting power," the prevalence of this phenomenon at high schools with a high minority population significantly increases the risk of not graduating. As the Hopkins study indicates, approximately 33,025 minority students, approximately four fifths of their total numbers in these cities, attend high schools with weak promoting power (see Appendix 5, Table B).

Many Florida Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: This report calculates what would happen in Florida if a true floor was established for graduation rates, applied to minority subgroups, and no pass was given for mere "improvement." In this example, failing to make a rate of 66% would trigger identification as "failing AYP." With rates so low in Florida, none of the 10 largest districts would "make AYP." But, as

important, a district such as Brevard County would not be able to boost scores by pushing out lower achieving minority students.

Florida Specific Recommendations: Florida should conduct research to determine whether its use of high stakes tests to retain students in grade and to deny them high school diplomas contributes to its extremely low graduation rates. Although the state is reportedly considering implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate, the state needs accountability in the immediate future. Until such a system is established, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes, the state should set a clear floor below which only those schools demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement should be allowed to avoid NCLB sanctions.

Finally, Florida should not set forth a goal of 85% graduation and then permit "1 percent improvement " to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead, a reasonable floor should be set with exceptions granted only where substantial and sustained graduation rate improvement was demonstrated. Moreover, districts that are above the floor should be given incentives to meet challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement.

A Florida Story

In July of this year, 17-year-old Danny[15], an African-American boy between his junior and senior years at a high school in Tampa, Florida, received a letter saying that he could not come back to school in September.[16] The reason given was that he had not passed the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test). Danny had, along with the entire junior class, taken the mandatory test in the spring. He had been unaware, until receipt of this letter, that he had actually failed the test.

The letter indicated that he was to enroll in another school in the fall. It went on to list several choices that he had. They were all adult education programs, awarding high school equivalency diplomas. Several of Danny's peers received the same letter, although the precise number of students who were told not to come back to their school is not known. Danny had always been a decent student; he didn't get straight A's, but consistently received B's and C's. He had already had his senior yearbook photo taken and was planning to attend college. He had never been in trouble at school, having never once been suspended, and yet he was now told that he was no longer welcome to attend school.

Understandably, both Danny and his mother were extremely upset. His mother's attempts to contact the school throughout the remainder of the summer were to no avail; she never got a call back from anyone at the school who could explain why Danny had to leave his school. Several weeks later, after the school year had begun, Danny's aunt, Nancy Leasburg, learned of his expulsion. Enrolled in an adult education program herself, she knew how inappropriate it would be for Danny to attend a GED program, as recommended by the letter. She called a local news station and, as a result, was able to obtain an appointment with the principal for the next day. Danny's family showed up at the school that following morning with the local news in tow. The principal would not allow the media on school property, so the reporter waited outside while the family met with the principal. At that meeting, the principal agreed to readmit Danny. The principal further promised that all of the students who had received similar letters would also be reenrolled, To date, no other re-admissions have been confirmed. Danny, however, is doing fine in school this year and is on track to graduate with his class this summer, provided he passes the FCAT.

[15] Pseudonyms are employed.
[16] Danny attended a mainstream public high school that serves mostly Hispanic and Black students.

5. Illinois

At first glance, Illinois' official graduation rate appears healthy at 83.2%, and a review of its graduation rate goal of 65% seems less than ambitious. But there is a more complicated story behind these numbers. When the CPI index is used, Illinois' graduation rate becomes 75%. The official graduation rate is 8 points higher and may not be accurate because it is based on school completion. There is some question whether categories like GED recipients are being included, or whether students whose whereabouts are unknown are excluded. On the other hand, like Colorado, Illinois is one of the few states where the graduation rate "goals" are also "absolute floors" for accountability purposes. This means that schools and districts with very low graduation rates will be expected to make great increases in graduation rates, as well as in achievement scores on tests, in order to meet the AYP requirements.

Even using the CPI, Illinois rates all students at 75%, which is significantly above the national average of 68%. Yet, the racial gaps in graduation rates are among the highest in the nation. For Blacks the graduation rate is 47.8%, for Latinos it is 57.8%, for whites it is 82.9%, and for Asian Americans it is 88.8%. The racial gaps are: 35.1 between Blacks and whites; and 25.1 between Hispanics and whites (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

Illinois Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Illinois Students as Reported	83.2		
Illinois Students CPI	75.0	77.5	71.1
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	n/a		42.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	88.8	89.7	84.7
Hispanic	57.8	63.4	48.8
Black	47.8	54.1	40.8
White	82.9	84.3	80.2

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:

Illinois' districts are predominantly white. The few highly segregated districts have an average graduation rate of 51.8%, which is substantially below the state's average.[17] As described in the main report, research indicates a strong relationship between segregation

[17] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

and low graduation rates that is not accounted for by poverty. In addition, the large gender gaps among Black (13) and Hispanic (14) male and female students is noticeably larger than the (4) point gender differential between white students. Such differences are not explained by poverty alone.

Illinois Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	94.8	82.9
Majority Minority	5.2	51.8

The sizeable 41 point gap between Blacks and whites is nearly identical to the gap between majority minority and majority white districts.

Like most states, Illinois' central city districts consistently graduated lower percentages than rural and suburban districts by about 21-28%.[18] Seven of the state's ten largest districts were predominantly white, with two, Chicago and Peoria predominantly Black, and one, Waukegan, predominantly Hispanic.

Illinois's Ten Largest Districts

					CPI Graduation Rates					
District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
City Of Chicago	435,261	Black	90.4	---	48.8	---	80.6	50.8	42.1	65.3
Elgin	36,767	White	45.1	---	76.6	---	---	---	53.1	80.5
Rockford	27,399	White	49.0	---	50.5	---	54.5	---	37.6	58.5
Indian Prairie	23,173	White	20.0	---	100.0	---	98.9	---	96.3	95.6
Naperville	18,762	White	17.0	---	94.4	63.6	87.6	---	---	93.2
Comm Unit 300	16,711	White	27.0	---	82.3	47.6	---	71.1	42.3	85.6
Peoria	15,724	Black	60.7	---	66.4	---	88.2	---	56.3	77.7
Waukegan	15,510	Hispanic	86.8	---	49.5	---	70.7	46.6	45.4	60.9
Springfield	15,387	White	36.7	---	63.4	---	---	---	53.2	66.4
Community Unit 200	14,308	White	15.4	---	97.3	0.0	68.9	---	---	98.0

Illinois' disaggregated graduation district data reveal stark variances in rates for every racial group. Although in one district Black students had higher graduation rates than

[18] Id. Swanson, at 56.

whites, Illinois' district level data is otherwise consistent with our national findings. For example, low graduation rates coincide with both higher minority enrollment in a school district.

School Level Data Reveal Similar Trends: An independent study by Johns Hopkins University researchers of high schools in central cities revealed that there are 42 urban high schools in Illinois whereby fewer than 60% of the students who enrolled in 9th grade were enrolled in 12th grade four years later (see Appendix 5, Table A). Called "weak promoting power" the prevalence of this phenomenon at high schools with a high minority population significantly increases the risk of not graduating. As the Johns Hopkins University study indicates, approximately 53,029 minority students, nearly two thirds of their total numbers in these cities, attend high schools with weak promoting power (Appendix 5, Table B).

Illinois' Plan Goes Further than Most to Account for Low Graduation Rates: For its accountability system, Illinois has some of the strongest elements of all the states identified in this report. The state's graduation rate is a hard "floor." Unlike the "soft" states that set a graduation rate goal but give an accountability "pass" for "any improvement," Illinois' plan holds every school and district accountable for meeting this floor. Moreover, the state has scheduled a gradually rising floor so that by 2014 it will have inched up to 85%. Finally, Illinois is among a very small minority of states that disaggregates graduation rate accountability. For example, even if Rockford's test scores met the AYP standard, they will be identified as needing improvement unless the graduation rates of each of the minority groups met the graduation rate. In other words, under Illinois' accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of minority groups, if calculated using the CPI index, could not be ignored. But that brings the analysis full circle to the way Illinois calculates its rate, which is not at all accurate.

Many of Illinois' districts would fail AYP if they employed the CPI method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, six of the state's largest ten districts would make AYP. However, if the accountability for graduation rates of minorities were included, as they are under the state's new system, only two of the largest districts would satisfy AYP.

Recommendations Specific to Illinois: Illinois' strong paper standards provide little solace in the face of the seriously inflated graduation rates it reports publicly. Meaningful improvements in graduation rates will only come about if the system is based on accurate measures and if resources to improve rates are directed at the state's high minority districts.

In other respects, the Illinois accountability system, as it appears on paper, should be a model for other states. Illinois takes the challenge of improving minority graduation rates seriously. Moreover, its beginning goals are realistically calibrated to the problem at hand. With a real floor set at 65%, and with the floor gradually rising to 85%, Illinois' system seems to both start reasonably and aspire toward substantial improvement. One modification that Illinois should consider is providing support and positive incentives,

rather than imposing sanctions, on those schools and districts that start low, but sustain substantial improvement over a period of years.

An Illinois Story

A number of recent Chicago "dropouts" report that they were pushed out of public high schools by officials who told them that their truancy or bad grades showed that they did not want to be there. Illinois law allows school officials to "disenroll" 16-year-olds who can't be expected to graduate by their 21st birthday. Seventeen-year-old Jennifer[19] said she started missing school regularly in her junior year because she was having problems with chemistry. "I felt stupid and I couldn't get the help I needed," she said. "Then one day I went to first period class and they told me I wasn't on the roster any more. I was shocked." Another "dropout", John, also 17, said he started missing high school because of family problems, including having to stay home with an ill sibling. "I came back and they told me I wasn't on the roster anymore," he said.

While the Chicago Public Schools system reports that its high school dropout rate has been falling in recent years, a different set of data indicate it has gone up. "Chicago has been choosing to publicize the rates that make them look better," said William Leavy, executive director of the Greater West Town Community Development Project. West Town released two separate reports in the fall of 2003 showing that school officials have been understating the dropout crisis. Chicago school officials say the difference in the rates is explicable by the exclusion of approximately 27 special or alternative schools (such as schools for pregnant teens) that were not included in state report card data. But exclusion of these schools flies in the face of the public education prerogative. "You can't just throw your hands up about the high-risk kids and say they don't count if you want an accurate picture of what's going on," says Leavy. His report provides a snapshot of a severely troubled neighborhood high school system that has produced more dropouts than graduates in recent years. In 2001-2002, while the school system graduated 15,653 seniors from high school, 17,404 students in grades 9 through 12 dropped out.

While school reform efforts have resulted in the establishment of a few specialized high schools for high-performing students, the local neighborhood high schools are hemorrhaging kids.

As a consequence of this trend, a number of community-based organizations in the Chicago area have coalesced to advocate for policy changes. They are mobilizing in support of state legislation addressing dropout prevention and expanding the educational options for disadvantaged youth. The Chairman of the Illinois State Senate's Education Committee recently called a public hearing on the dropout crisis in January, 2004. And a Senate Bill is pending that would protect students between the ages of 16 and 20 from being pushed out of school. However, another Bill would permit students to dropout by simply informing the school by phone, with no discussion with their parents.
Source: Advocates for Children of New York

[19] Pseudonyms are employed.

6. Michigan

Michigan reports a graduation rate of 87.8% for 2000-01. This rate exceeds the state's accountability targets of 80% for 2003 and 85% for 2006, and is only 2.2% shy of its 2009 target of 90%. Michigan is calculating its graduation rate using the flawed NCES method, however. Under the more accurate CPI method, Michigan's graduation rate for 2000-01 was 74%.

Michigan's graduation rate for whites was 76.6%; for Latinos, 36.3%; and for Native Americans, 39.5%.[20] Michigan's graduation gap between whites and Latinos is 40.4, which is almost 20 points higher than the national average of 21.7. The graduation gap between whites and Native Americans was 37.1%, which is 13.3% points higher than the national average of 23.8%.

What Michigan Reports and Doesn't Report: Like most other states, Michigan does not publicly report its graduation rates by race, gender, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, or LEP status down to the district level. In addition, the enrollment data for Blacks was deemed insufficient for the purpose of state level analysis because of a reporting problem with Detroit's data.

Michigan Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Michigan Students as Reported	87.8		
Michigan Students CPI	74.0		
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	39.5	38.7	34.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	--	--
Hispanic	36.3	41.3	28.1
Black	--	--	--
White	76.6	78.1	73.4

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:
This report reveals dramatic gaps in graduation rates in Michigan between majority white and majority minority districts. An overwhelming majority of Michigan's school districts (93%) are majority white. In these districts, the CPI graduation rate was 77.4%. In the 7% of districts that are majority minority, the graduation rate was 44.4%.

[20] Due to reporting problems with the survey, data for Blacks in Michigan is unavailable.

Michigan Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	93.0	77.4
Majority Minority	7.0	44.4

The divide in Michigan between Rural, Suburban, Town, and Central City districts runs along very similar lines. 93.2% of Michigan's school districts are outside of central cities: 49.1% of them are Rural, 31.2% are Suburban, and 12.9% are in Towns. The graduation rate in these districts averaged between 76 and 78 percent. By contrast, Central City districts made up 6.8% of Michigan districts and had a graduation rate of 55.7%.[21]

Michigan's Ten Largest Districts

					CPI Graduation Rates					
District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Detroit City	162,194	Black	96.3	65.9	---	---	---	37.0	---	31.8
Utica	27,786	White	4.4	6.8	91.5	---	---	---	---	88.7
Grand Rapids	25,625	Black	67.3	63.0	26.6	---	46.7	19.3	20.4	---
Flint City	22,532	Black	80.0	63.9	38.8	5.9	---	56.5	38.0	42.8
Livonia	18,347	White	7.0	5.0	88.7	53.6	---	69.8	61.9	89.2
Lansing	17,610	White	58.4	53.2	44.9	---	53.7	---	44.6	45.2
Dearborn City	17,129	White	5.0	31.9	73.6	---	---	38.0	17.7	76.8
Ann Arbor	16,539	White	30.7	17.1	79.5	---	89.7	---	53.2	84.9
Plymouth-Canton	16,518	White	14.4	5.2	80.4	33.3	91.4	86.7	84.8	78.8
Warren Consolidated	14,602	White	6.5	15.4	86.6	---	---	---	---	87.3

The table above shows some interesting contrasts among Michigan's ten largest districts.[22] The Central City districts with the largest minority populations show alarming low graduation rates across the board. In Flint, for example, the population is 80% minority and the district's overall graduation rate is only 38.8%. White students in the district graduated at a low rate of 42.8%, joining Black students at 38%, Latino students at 56.5%, and Native American students at an alarmingly low 5.9%.

[21] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

[22] There was insufficient data reported by Detroit.

In Central City districts with minority populations of various sizes, different results were obtained. In Dearborn City, where minority population is a very low 5%, white students graduated at 76.8%, which is almost identical to their statewide average. The gap between white students and minority students, however, was very large: Black students graduated only 17.7% of the time (a gap of 59.1 points) and Latino students graduated 38% of the time (a gap of 38.8 points).

In Ann Arbor, where minority students make up a more significant percentage of the population (30.7%), the racial gaps are smaller but still substantial. While white and Asian students graduated at a rate of 84.9% and 89.7%, respectively, Black students graduated at a rate of 53.2%. This is still a substantial racial gap between white and Black students (31.7 points), but the gravity of the situation is reduced here because students of all races are graduating at much higher rates.

In Suburban districts, racial gaps are generally even smaller, and in some places non-existent. In Livonia, which is only 7% minority, there are still significant racial gaps between white and minority students, but students of all races are graduating at rates significantly above statewide and national averages. In Plymouth-Canton, which is 14.4% minority, the normal trends are reversed among Black and Latino students, who actually have higher graduation rates than white students there. While white students in Plymouth-Canton graduated at a rate 2.2 points higher (78.8%) than the statewide average, the graduation rates for Latino students were 86.7% and for Black students 84.8%.

Michigan is "Soft" on Graduation Rates:

Michigan is one of 39 "soft" states examined in this report, and like most uses an inaccurate modified NCES method to calculate its graduation rates. According to one state official, Michigan sets a graduation rate goal of 80% for 2003, but gives an accountability pass to any school or district that falls below the goal, yet shows a 10% improvement over two years.

In addition to these problems, Michigan also does not disaggregate its data on graduation rates by racial subgroup when making its initial determination of AYP.[23] Under Michigan's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of minorities in places like Dearborn (Hispanics 38.0%) (Blacks 17.7%) can be ignored completely, because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes.

Many Michigan districts would fail AYP under the CPI method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, then six of the largest districts above would make AYP if this floor was used in the aggregate. If this measure was

[23] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup (in Michigan's case, a 10% reduction in racial gap over 2 years) can mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

required for all racial and ethnic subgroups, however, only two of the state's districts would make AYP.

Michigan Specific Recommendations: Michigan's 80% goal and credit for 10% improvement seems quite reasonable and could prove effective if the calculation method used was more accurate and disaggregated for accountability purposes. Michigan should consider implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate. Until such a system is established, however, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes the state should set a clear floor below which only schools or districts demonstrating substantial and steady improvement should be allowed to avoid interventions associated with being identified as needing improvement. For that purpose, the current requirement of improving 10% over two years seems appropriate. The floor should be applied to the major racial and ethnic groups, not just students in the aggregate.

7. Mississippi

Mississippi reports a graduation rate of 72% for 2001-2. The state's graduation rate target is, conveniently, also 72% with a "growth expectation" standard for evaluating yearly progress. Below that mark some credit is given for "growth." This figure is inflated, however, because Mississippi calculates its graduation rates using the flawed NCES method. If the more accurate CPI method is used, Mississippi's graduation rate for 2000-01 is 58.0%, which is 10.5% below the national average of 68.5%. The state's low graduation rate makes it 45th in the country in that category.

When disaggregated by race, Mississippi's graduation rates are low across all racial groups, though significant racial gaps do still exist there. The state's graduation rate for whites is 63.3%; for Blacks, 52.6%; and for Asians, 45.6%.[24] Mississippi's racial gap between whites and Blacks is 10.7%, which is 14 points lower than the national average. The state's racial gap between whites and Asians, however, is 17.7%. This is in striking contrast to national graduation rates, where Asian students graduate 1.9% more often on average than white students. Mississippi's graduation rate for Asian students is 32nd in the country out of 34 states that have significant populations of Asian students.

What Mississippi Reports and Doesn't Report: Like most other states, Mississippi does not publicly report its graduation rates by race, gender, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, or LEP status at the district level.

Mississippi Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Mississippi Students as Reported	72.0		
Mississippi Students CPI	58.0	64.4	51.8
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	---	---	---
Asian/Pacific Islander	45.6	42.2	44.2
Hispanic	---	25.8	---
Black	52.6	60.8	42.5
White	63.3	66.5	58.9

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:

A majority of Mississippi's public school student population is Black (51.1%), and only 46% of the state's school districts are majority white. In the majority white districts the

[24] CPI graduation rates for Native Americans and Hispanics are unavailable due to insufficient survey data.

CPI graduation rate was 62.6%. In the 54% of districts that are majority minority, the CPI graduation rate was 52.7%.

High school graduation rates in Mississippi are alarmingly low for most minority groups. They are also particularly low for males, and lowest among Black males. The table below is consistent with the research in the main report suggesting that segregation and percentage of minority students in a district had a strong relationship with low graduation rates. Moreover, the large gender differences within each racial group, and most pronounced between Black females and males (18 points) is not explained by poverty.[25]

Mississippi Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	46.0	62.6
Majority Minority	54.0	52.7

A slim majority of Mississippi's school districts (52%) are rural, and these districts have the highest graduation rates in the state at 61.1%. 37.3% of Mississippi's school districts are in towns, and these districts had a CPI graduation rate of 57.2%. Only 7.3% of the state's school districts are in suburbs, and only 3.3% of its districts are in central cities. These districts had graduation rates of 59.1% and 45.4%, respectively, creating a city-suburb gap of 13.7[26].

As seen in the table below, two of Mississippi's ten largest school districts (Jackson and Greenville) are extremely segregated, and these districts are also the ones with the lowest graduation rates (38.1% and 49.9%, respectively). The district with the highest graduation rate on the list, Harrison Co., is only 27.3% minority and has a graduation rate of 66.6%. It is interesting to note, however, that it is the Black students who are raising the average here, with a graduation rate of 76.1%. White students in the districts graduate at a rate of 61.7%.

[25] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

[26] Id.

Mississippi's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates					
					Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Jackson	31,351	Black	94.4	81.1	38.1	---	17.5	---	39.4	22.4
Desoto Co	19,812	White	19.7	28.0	58.8	---	---	41.7	55.8	59.6
Rankin Co	15,013	White	21.8	33.3	62.6	---	---	---	50.3	65.7
Harrison Co	12,796	White	27.3	55.4	66.6	---	---	---	76.1	61.7
Vicksburg Warren Co	9,180	Black	59.8	61.3	54.1	---	25.0	0.0	50.8	60.2
Madison Co	8,857	White	39.1	31.3	65.6	---	---	6.3	56.5	71.2
Jackson Co	8,654	White	10.5	40.8	64.9	---	---	---	---	62.7
Jones Co	7,812	White	23.2	57.5	64.0	10.0	---	---	59.7	75.7
Greenville	7,649	Black	95.8	87.8	49.9	---	---	---	49.5	---
Pascagoula	7,469	White	44.6	55.1	62.7	---	69.4	---	65.4	60.8

Mississippi Does Very Little to Account for Low Graduation Rates:

Mississippi uses a modified NCES calculation to determine its graduation rates. Using this formula, the state reports an official graduation rate of 72%. However, this official rate fails to account for large numbers of students who were enrolled in 9th grade, but neither dropped out nor graduated with a diploma. When the CPI formula is used, and those students are accounted for, the graduation rate drops to 58%.

Mississippi is among the 39 "soft" states identified in this report. The state does not require specific yearly progress in graduation rates, using only a "growth expectation" standard. Furthermore, in the initial analysis, Mississippi does not even consider the low graduation rates of subgroups when determining AYP.[27] Under Mississippi's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of minority groups can be ignored almost completely, because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes. Under the state's current accountability system, few, if any, of Mississippi's districts would fail to make AYP because of unacceptably low graduation rates.

Many Mississippi Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, then, only two of the largest districts above would make AYP if this floor was used in the aggregate. If this measure was required for all racial and ethnic subgroups, then none of the state's districts would make AYP. Further, in many districts a given minority group has a very low rate. It

[27] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup can mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

would be reasonable to assume that if graduation rate accountability required minority groups to meet the benchmark over time, few districts would be able to reach 66%. However, if credit is given for "any improvement, " then Jackson, Vicksburg, Madison and Jones each with rates below 25% for a minority group, could avoid the "needs improvement" designation without any meaningful improvement in rates for the lowest groups.

Mississippi Specific Recommendations: Mississippi should consider implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate. Until such a system is established, however, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes the state should set a clear floor below which only schools or districts making substantial improvement over many years could avoid being identified as needing improvement. The floor should be applied to all major racial groups, not just students in the aggregate.

Finally, Mississippi should not use a "growth expectation" standard for evaluating yearly progress. Instead, districts that are above the floor should be held to a standard of yearly improvement that requires effort, but is realistically calibrated to the context. Challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement should be set for those districts that satisfy the floor, but still fall below a more challenging goal set by the state.

8. Missouri

Missouri's published graduation rate for 2000-01 is 81.4%, which is only twelve percentage points shy of their laudably ambitious graduation rate target of 93%. These numbers do not tell the whole story, however. Missouri calculates its graduation rates using the flawed NCES method. If the more accurate CPI method is used, Missouri's graduation rate for 2000-01 is 72.9%, which is only 4.4% greater than the national average of 68.0%.

While Missouri's graduation rate for whites is 76.1%, for Blacks it is 52.3%, and for Native Americans it is 22.7%.[28] Missouri's racial gap between whites and Blacks is 23.8%, which is 2.1 points lower than the national average. The state's racial gap between whites and Native Americans, however, is 53.4%, which is 28.4 points higher than the national average.

What Missouri Reports and Doesn't Report: Like most other states, Missouri does not publicly report its graduation rates by race, gender, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, or LEP status at the district level.

Missouri Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Missouri Students as Reported	81.4		
Missouri Students CPI	72.9	75.8	69.4
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	22.7	---	---
Asian/Pacific Islander	73.4	68.1	71.7
Hispanic	---	---	---
Black	52.3	58.1	43.8
White	76.1	77.9	73.0

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation:

An overwhelming majority of Missouri's school districts (96.7%) are majority white (see table below). In these districts, the CPI graduation rate was 76.3%. In the 3.3% of the state's districts that are majority minority, the CPI graduation rate was 52.6%.

High school graduation rates in Missouri are alarmingly low for most minority groups. They are also particularly low for Black males. The table below is consistent with the

[28] CPI graduation rates for Hispanics are unavailable due to insufficient survey data.

research in the main report suggesting that segregation and percentage of minority students in a district has a strong relationship with low graduation rates. Moreover, the large gender differences within each racial group, and most pronounced between Black females and males (14 points) are not explained by poverty.[29]

Missouri Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	96.7	76.3
Majority Minority	3.3	52.6

A significant majority of the state's school districts (65.3%) are predominantly rural. In these districts, the CPI graduation rate was 74.9%. 16.9% of Missouri's school districts are in towns and had a CPI graduation rate of 73.0%. 15.3% of the state's school districts are in suburbs; these had a CPI graduation rate of 77.0%. Only 2.4% of Missouri's school districts are in central cities. Their CPI graduation rate was 61.5%.

As the table below shows, however, the graduation rates of Missouri's central city school districts vary wildly. For example, the Kansas City School District showed remarkably low graduation rates across all racial groups. On the other hand, in districts such as North Kansas City and Columbia, graduation rates exceeded statewide averages, both in the aggregate and when disaggregated by racial group.

[29] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

Missouri's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates					
					Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
St. Louis City	44,412	Black	83.2	74.3	37.3	---	44.7	---	38.0	33.2
Kansas City	37,298	Black	84.2	68.3	31.4	14.6	49.5	32.8	31.3	29.0
Springfield	24,630	White	9.9	34.5	80.7	48.8	82.0	82.6	78.9	80.5
Rockwood	21,203	White	16.3	12.2	85.2	---	89.3	---	58.2	90.0
Parkway	20,433	White	26.2	13.3	84.1	---	92.3	---	60.7	88.7
Francis Howell	19,497	White	5.5	5.4	80.6	0.0	---	---	---	81.3
Hazelwood	18,855	White	50.5	24.1	76.4	---	61.9	37.4	75.3	78.3
North Kansas City	17,258	White	12.5	20.8	89.7	---	---	---	92.2	85.0
Ft. Zumwalt	16,521	White	4.9	9.0	87.0	---	85.7	---	---	86.2
Columbia	16,178	White	26.2	26.0	85.1	---	---	100.0	66.5	86.4

Missouri Does Very Little to Account for Low Graduation Rates:

Missouri uses a modified NCES calculation to determine its graduation rates. Using this formula, the state reports an official graduation rate of 81.4%. However, this official rate fails to account for large numbers of students who were enrolled in 9th grade, but neither dropped out nor graduated with a diploma. When the CPI formula is used, and those students are accounted for, the graduation rate drops to 72.9%

Missouri is among the 39 "soft" states identified in this report. While it sets a graduation rate goal of 93%, it gives an accountability pass to any school or district that falls below the goal, yet shows "any improvement." Furthermore, in the initial analysis, Missouri does not even consider the low graduation rates of subgroups when determining AYP.[30] Under Missouri's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of Native Americans can be ignored completely, because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes. Under the state's current accountability system, fewer than 1% of all Missouri's districts would fail to make AYP because of unacceptably low graduation rates.

Many Missouri Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, then, 8 of the 10 largest districts would make AYP if this floor was used in the aggregate. If this measure was required for all racial and ethnic subgroups, then only three of the state's largest districts would make AYP.

[30] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup can mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

Missouri Specific Recommendations: Missouri should consider implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate. Until such a system is established, however, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes the state should set a clear floor below which no school or district could avoid being identified as needing improvement. The floor should be calculated for major racial groups, not just students in the aggregate.

Finally, Missouri should not set forth a goal of 93% graduation. While an absolute floor should be set at the current state average (using CPI), Missouri should stop permitting "any improvement" to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead, districts that are above the floor should be held to a standard of yearly improvement that requires effort, but is realistically calibrated to the context. Challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement should be set for those districts that satisfy the floor, but still fall below a more challenging goal set by the state.

9. New York

New York's official report on graduation rates is hard to find, not because it isn't available, but because so many different measures are presented for public consumption. New York State Total Public School Report Card says that the graduation rate is 50% for all students and 53% if students with disabilities are excluded from the calculus. [31] In the report to the legislature, graduation rates are not mentioned, just the official dropout rate of 3.8%. [32] Despite numerous tables on ostensibly tracking student exit rates in the report card, such as the non-completers listed at 6.8% for the same year, the missing 45.2% are not ever accounted for (graduates minus dropouts). Finally, a different report found on the state's website claims a 75% graduation rate for the state. The fine print clarifies that this is the graduation rate for the same period if local diplomas are added to full Regents diplomas.[33] But NCLB only permits "regular" diplomas, to the exclusion of GEDs and alternative certificates. It is not clear whether "local" diplomas meet the federal standard, but for the purpose of this report we assume they do.

Whether based on a local or a full Regents diploma, the state's accountability goal of 55% is hardly a rigorous one. Among all the states, New York has the seventh lowest overall graduation rate based on a CPI of 61.4 percent, and is among the lowest states for every minority group.

New York Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
New York Students as Reported	*		
New York Students CPI	61.4	64.0	67.3
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	36.2	38.0	30.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	61.2	69.5	54.1
Hispanic	31.9	34.7	28.6
Black	35.1	39.5	29.6
White	75.3	77.1	71.2

*The New York State Education Department had different graduation rates reported in different documents on their website making it hard to determine which was the "official" rate.

[31] In a separate report on 1998 Cohort Graduation Rate Outcomes Report www.emsc.nysed.gov/repcrd2003/links/grad-cohort-outcomes.html

[32] *NEW YORK: THE STATE OF LEARNING: A Report to the Governor and the Legislature on the Educational Status of the State's Schools June 2002 Edition* http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/ch655_2002/655_vol2_nrc_tables_2002.xls

[33] http://www.nysed.gov/

The following racial gaps between whites and minority groups in New York are also among the largest in the nation with the following percentage point gaps: Native Americans (39.1) Asian American/Pacific Islander (14.1) Hispanic (43.2) and Black (40.2).

Although beyond the scope of this report, the extremely low rates in New York should be considered along with the fact that it has a high school exit exam. Other research--that suggests that use of high stakes tests to deny diplomas drives down graduation rates--is indirectly supported by these data.

New York provides probably the clearest anecdotes of test-driven accountability gone awry. It is worth noting that the latest description of test-driven unscrupulous practices in New York City, described below, comes on the heels of more widespread scandals implicating numerous school principals throughout the state in cheating on tests by changing student answers.

The New York City Schools Chancellor's admission above, although limited to the City, might very well apply to other large New York districts that are confronted with the same demanding Regents tests with all the pressures that come with it.

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation: High school graduation rates in New York are alarmingly low for most minority groups. They are also particularly low for Black and Hispanic males. The district data showing low graduation rates in high minority districts are consistent with the findings in the main report, that segregation and percentage of minority students in a district had a strong relationship with low graduation rates, independent of poverty. In New York the district composition difference is pronounced with a graduation rate gap of nearly 40 points between majority white districts and majority minority districts like New York City. Moreover, the large gender differences within each racial group are not explained by poverty.[34]

New York Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	94.3	78.5
Majority Minority	5.7	40.0

While only 5.7% of New York's districts are majority minority, these more segregated districts include New York City, and therefore describe the districts in which most of New York's minority students attend.

[34] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

As recent research out of Johns Hopkins University revealed, there are 120 high schools in major cities in the state where fewer than 60% of the students who enrolled in 9th grade return as 12th graders. Moreover, approximately 190,276 minority students in the state attend such high schools.

New York's Ten Largest Districts

					CPI Graduation Rates					
District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
New York City	1,066,516	Hispanic	84.7	71.9	38.2	41.2	60.9	30.1	32.2	57.9
Buffalo City	45,721	Black	71.5	74.5	47.3	48.7	44.5	36.6	45.7	51.8
Rochester City	36,294	Black	83.9	73.7	---	100.0	---	---	---	39.9
Yonkers City	26,237	Hispanic	79.4	67.9	43.5	50.0	65.0	36.9	38.3	58.2
Syracuse City	23,015	Black	54.8	66.4	26.2	4.4	30.5	25.0	25.5	27.8
Brentwood Ufsd	15,565	Hispanic	80.3	62.4	---	---	---	---	---	---
Sachem Csd	14,948	White	8.4	9.6	94.1	---	---	86.2	---	93.3
Greece Csd	13,860	White	9.9	17.1	78.2	---	---	---	---	79.5
Newburgh City	12,603	White	60.0	54.6	---	---	---	---	---	73.3
Wappingers Csd	11,836	White	15.6	10.2	77.2	---	72.3	54.3	83.3	77.3

One of the things that stands out in the table above is that graduation rates are extremely low, consistently in the 30- 40% range, in high minority districts, and in the 25% range in Syracuse. With rates so low, it is hard to imagine that New York City's "push-out" problem is not more widespread.

Unfortunately, New York is among the many "soft" states where a modicum of improvement will prevent serious accountability interventions. To its credit, New York is one of the few "soft" states where the alternative to missing the graduation rate "goal" for accountability purposes is more rigorous than the "any improvement" standard so common in other states. Specifically, according to state officials, New York requires that schools and districts under the 55% goal must make 1% improvement each year. But once they reach or exceed the goal there are no further improvement requirements. In many respects this low goal combined with a "soft" accountability system places New York among the weakest of the weak accountability states, as only low schools and districts with graduation rates under 55% will be expected to improve in order to meet the AYP requirements.

Finally, New York fails to hold schools and districts accountable for low graduation rates of minority students. Because there are a small number of very large and highly segregated districts, this accountability loophole would not mask the issue, but in places like Yonkers, and in large suburbs like Newburgh, it very well could.

Many New York Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: This report calculates what would happen in New York if a true floor were established for graduation rates, if applied to minority subgroups, and no pass was given for mere "improvement." In this example, failing to make a rate of 66% would trigger identification as "failing AYP." With rates so low in New York, just three of the state's largest districts would "make AYP." Because the data on minority graduation rates were largely unavailable, one of the three would not make AYP if the rates were disaggregated, but we don't know whether the others would make AYP if held accountable for the minority students, as well. But, as important, with subgroup accountability for graduation rates, no district would make AYP with improved scores by pushing out lower achieving minority students.

New York Specific Recommendations: New York should conduct research to determine whether its use of high stakes tests to retain students in grade (in NYC) and to deny them high school diplomas contributes to its extremely low graduation rates. Although the state is reportedly considering implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the day they graduate, the state needs accountability in the immediate future. Until such a system is established, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes, the state should set a clear floor below which only those schools demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement should be allowed to avoid NCLB interventions associated with being identified as "needing improvement."

Finally, New York should not set forth a goal of just 55 % graduation and then permit "1 percent improvement" to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead, a more challenging floor should be set with exceptions granted only where substantial and sustained graduation rate improvement was demonstrated. Moreover, districts that are above the floor should be given incentives to meet challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement.

A New York Story

Tanya[35] is an African-American female. When Tanya was 15 years old, she was placed by her high school into the high school's pre-GED program because, according to her school, her grades were too low to allow her to remain in the regular high school program. In December 2002, the school told Tanya and her mother that Tanya could no longer attend high school because she had not earned enough credits and would not be able to catch up to grade level, and therefore had to go to a full-time GED program. Tanya was never provided with tutoring, counseling or other services before being told to attend a GED program. Tanya's mother asked the school about Tanya's right to stay in school until she was 21 years old and was told that Tanya was so far behind that her right to remain in school did not matter. When Tanya attempted to enroll in a GED program because she believed this was her only choice, the admissions counselor at the GED program did not accept her into the program because she was too young. Tanya was then placed on a waiting list for 2 months and eventually enrolled in the program. Tanya lost valuable time in her education because she was never provided with a high school curriculum, and by the age of 17, had not been offered the opportunity to earn many high school credits. Tanya is committed to staying in school for as long as necessary and working as hard as necessary to earn a Regents diploma. With Advocates for Children's assistance, Tanya started attending a regular high school in September 2003.

Unfortunately, Tanya is just one among thousands of students who have been discharged recently from New York City public high schools. In fact, more than 55,000 students were discharged from New York City's public high schools during the 2000-2001 school year. Five high schools discharged more students that year than they graduated. Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. filed three federal, class-action lawsuits on behalf of discharged students. The suits allege that students are being pushed out because of pressure on principals to boost the percentage of students who graduate in four years and who pass the Regents exams (New York State's high-stakes test). The suits further allege that these students are being asked to leave without written notice or an opportunity to be heard, in violation of federal law.[36] Advocates for Children, an institution in New York City that represents individual students in disputes with the New York City Department of Education (DOE), reports that students all over the city are being told that they should leave high school and enroll in alternative schools or general educational development (GED) high school equivalency programs instead.

City-wide DOE data make it impossible to determine just how many students are being pushed out, where they are going, and what becomes of them. Four out of ten discharged students were categorized as "transferred to another educational setting," a DOE category that can hide the push-outs. But administrators of high school equivalency programs say that the number of push-outs seems to be growing, with students shunted

[35] Pseudonyms are employed.

[36] The lawsuits' allegations regarding the motivation for the push-outs are bolstered by the fact that schools discharge the most students around the end of October and March, right before the schools are evaluated for student attendance and performance. Since the suit, the Department of Education has begun to adopt new procedures, and put out adds to notify students that they have a right to be in school until age 21.

out at ever-younger ages. Community-based adult education programs say they are now seeing students as young as 16 and that the proportion of younger students in these programs has grown tremendously over the past couple of years. Additionally, the evidence demonstrates that while more and younger students are being crammed into these alternative programs, these students are not successfully completing them; the number of students enrolled in GED programs rose from 18,000 in 2000-2001 to 28,000 in 2002-2003 while the number of GED diplomas granted stayed constant. Moreover, students are not being advised of their legal right to remain in school until the age of 21, nor are they told that the value of a GED certificate is not the same as that of a regular high school diploma.[37]

New York City Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein conceded that this pushing out of students is a city-wide crisis. "The problem of what's happening to the students is a tragedy," he said, "It's not just a few instances, it's a real issue." Many of the pushed-out students are English language learners or have disabilities. Schools need the tools to engage such struggling students. The Chancellor went on to say that although the goal is for students to graduate in four years, "we've got to stop giving the signal that we're giving up on students who don't do that. We need more programs for them, at the same time as we keep up our high expectations for the system."
Source: Advocates for Children of New York

[37] Except for those GED recipients who go on to college (about 2% of them), their earning capacity is far lower than their counterparts' who have earned a high school diploma.

10. North Carolina

For 2002-03, North Carolina publicly reports an astonishingly high graduation rate of 97.0%. This is a striking contrast, however, to a statement that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction included in one of its own press releases:

"The current national estimate of North Carolina's four-year graduation rate, for which no precise count yet exists, is approximately 63 percent. An additional percentage of students graduate, but take longer than four years. The graduation status of other students not accounted for in the dropout rate is often unknown – these are students who move out of the state or out of the country."[38]

As this press release acknowledges, North Carolina's own report greatly exaggerates the actual graduation rate. Under CPI, North Carolina's 2000-01 graduation rate was 63.5%. This is very close to the national average of 63.8%, but far below the state's accountability target of 90%.

North Carolina's graduation rate for white students was 69.2%; for Black students, 53.6%; for Latino students, 58.4%; for Asian students, 68.3%; and for Native American students, 33.8%. The large racial gaps in graduation rates are not as sizeable as many other states in this survey, though the gap between whites and groups such as Blacks (15.7%) and Native Americans (35.4%) should generate a high level of concern.

What North Carolina Reports and Does Not Report: Like most other states, North Carolina does not publicly report its graduation rates by race, gender, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, or LEP status at the district level.

North Carolina Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
North Carolina Students as Reported	97.0		
North Carolina Students CPI	63.5	67.1	59.6
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	33.8	39.2	29.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	68.3		
Hispanic	58.4		
Black	53.6	62.2	44.9
White	69.2	69.5	65.7

[38] Press Release, No. Ca. Dep't of Pub. Instruction, State's Dropout Rate Decreases for Fourth Consecutive Year, Feb. 5, 2004, *available at* http://www.ncpublicschools.org/news/03-04/020504.html.

North Carolina's Racial Gaps:

As with its graduation rates for white and Black students, North Carolina's graduation rates in majority white districts (65.7%) are lower than the national average (74.1%), while its graduation rates in majority minority districts (59.8%) are higher than the national average (56.4%).

North Carolina Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	69.8	65.7
Majority Minority	30.2	59.8

A review of North Carolina's ten largest districts reveals larger racial disparities and some extremely low rates, in the single digits, for some groups. The lowest-performing district, Robeson County, contains a very large Native American population, which graduated at a rate of 34.7%. Other racial subgroups in the district also fared poorly, as whites graduated at a rate of 45%, Blacks at a rate of 36.4%, Latinos at a rate of only 9.7%, and Asians at a rate of 30.3%.

This report reveals that Native Americans in North Carolina consistently have extremely low graduation rates, ranging from 4.8 to 40.0. Even in Guilford County, one of the higher-performing districts, all racial subgroups perform comparably well except for Native Americans, who only graduated at a rate of 28.4%. The gap in that district between whites and Native Americans is 49.2 points, and among the largest racial gaps in the state.

While the graduation rate gaps between cities and suburbs and between majority white and majority minority districts were not as pronounced as they are nationally, there are some exceptions among the ten largest districts. In Charlotte and Durham, both Central City districts with overall graduation rates of 59.4%, significant gaps exist between white and Black students. In Charlotte, the graduation rate gap between white students (69.7%) and Black students (48.1%) was 21.6 points, and in Durham, the graduation rate gap between white students (73.5%) and Black students (48.7%) was 24.8 points.

North Carolina's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	103,336	White	53.4	35.0	59.4	---	56.2	74.6	48.1	69.7
Wake Co.	98,950	White	37.1	22.9	75.0	---	98.4	59.1	56.6	83.2
Guilford Co.	63,417	White	50.4	39.0	70.9	28.4	61.7	68.5	63.9	77.6
Cumberland Co.	50,850	Black	57.1	49.0	68.7	---	---	80.8	66.3	67.1
Forsyth Co.	44,769	White	46.1	35.3	65.7	---	---	---	56.1	70.5
Gaston Co.	30,603	White	24.6	33.2	62.7	40.0	45.3	44.6	61.3	63.5
Durham	29,728	Black	67.3	38.4	59.4	4.8	88.1	78.1	48.7	73.5
Buncombe Co.	24,708	White	11.1	29.7	65.6	---	76.7	---	55.4	66.7
Robeson Co.	23,911	Nat. Am.	78.1	74.1	37.0	34.7	30.3	9.7	36.4	45.0
Union Co.	22,862	White	24.8	25.8	70.8	---	---	48.1	55.1	75.8

North Carolina is "Soft" on Graduation Rates:

North Carolina is one of 39 "soft" states examined in this report. While it sets a graduation rate target of 90%, it gives an accountability pass to any school or district that falls below the goal but shows as little as one tenth of one percent improvement. North Carolina uses the less accurate NCES (modified) method to calculate its graduation rates. If it used the more accurate CPI method, the state would have fallen well below its accountability goals.

In addition to these problems, North Carolina also does not disaggregate its data on graduation rates by racial subgroup when making its initial determination of AYP.[39] Under North Carolina's accountability system, the unusually low graduation rates of Native Americans can be ignored completely, because only the aggregate graduation rates count for accountability purposes.

Many North Carolina districts would fail AYP under the CPI method: If a true floor of 66% (using CPI) were established for graduation rates, then only four of the largest districts above would make AYP if this floor was used in the aggregate. If this measure was required for all racial and ethnic subgroups, then only one of the state's districts would make AYP.

North Carolina Specific Recommendations: North Carolina should consider implementing a system that tracks all students from the day they enter school until the

[39] There is a "safe harbor" where meeting the graduation rate goal for a minority subgroup mitigate failing to make AYP based on missing the proficiency test score goal for that subgroup.

day they graduate. Until such a system is established, however, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates.

For accountability purposes the state should not set a target of 90% graduation. Instead, the state should set a clear floor below which only those schools and districts demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement should be allowed to avoid interventions associated with being identified as "needing improvement." The floor should be calculated for major racial groups, not just students in the aggregate.

11. Ohio

Ohio's state plan and subsequent reporting indicates that the state has an officially reported graduation rate and a graduation rate goal, but neither are readily accessible. Whatever the rate and goal are, elements of the state's accountability system put Ohio squarely within the group of "soft" accountability states. This means that Ohio schools and districts with very low graduation rates can meet the AYP requirements if they make any improvement whatsoever from one year to the next. Furthermore, if a minority subgroup is very low, that low rate alone will never trigger an accountability intervention, even if the rate goes lower.

Based on the CPI, Ohio's graduation rate of 70.7% is slightly better than the national average. For Native Americans and Blacks, however, the rates are the first and second lowest in the nation, 22.4% and 39.6% respectively. Not surprisingly, the racial gaps in graduation rates are among the highest in the nation. For Native Americans the gap is 53.5 points, for Blacks 36.3 points, and for Latinos it is 32.7 points (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

Ohio Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Ohio Students as Reported			
Ohio Students CPI	70.7	73.8	67.0
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	22.4		
Asian/Pacific Islander			
Hispanic	43.2	45.5	32.7
Black	39.6	45.6	32.4
White	75.9	78.2	72.3

Ohio's crisis is pronounced at the district level: One of the things that stands out in the table below is that graduation rates are extremely low--consistently between 20 and 40 percent--in high minority districts. With rates this low, it is hard to imagine that Ohio is doing all it can to foster academic success in these districts.

In fact, the state's highest court has declared the school finance system unconstitutional for its inadequate support to lower income areas.[40] The state's legislature has reportedly rebuffed the court and has yet to comply with the mandated requirements.

[40] *DeRolph v. State*, 97 Ohio St.3d 434, 2002-Ohio-6750. This case, now referred to as DeRolph IV, is based on a complaint filed in 1991 against the state of Ohio. The Ohio Supreme Court eventually ruled in 1997 that Ohio's school system violated the state constitution. *See* De Rolph v. State, 677 N.E.2d 733

Ohio's Ten Largest Districts

District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	CPI Graduation Rates					
					Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Cleveland	75,684	Black	80.7	75.7	30.0	34.3	70.8	31.3	29.0	30.9
Columbus City	64,511	Black	62.9	55.5	34.4	12.0	40.3	36.2	37.5	29.4
Cincinnati City	46,562	Black	74.3	57.2	32.4	---	31.7	21.4	25.7	56.4
Toledo City	37,738	Black	53.9	53.2	38.8	---	93.3	32.6	32.5	45.2
Akron City	31,464	White	50.9	50.2	54.3	---	---	29.5	46.1	61.7
Dayton City	23,522	Black	72.3	69.8	36.3	---	---	---	39.8	26.3
South-Western City	19,216	White	14.6	29.4	60.2	---	---	28.7	---	60.2
Lakota Local	14,659	White	10.3	3.8	---	---	---	---	---	85.0
Westerville City	13,571	White	15.6	7.0	81.0	---	---	34.4	---	82.5
Parma City	13,197	White	4.4	17.6	65.6	---	---	---	44.4	66.0

Persistent Racial Gaps and Racial Isolation: The district data showing low graduation rates in high minority districts are consistent with the findings in the main report, that both segregation and having a majority minority population in a district had a strong relationship with low graduation rates, independent of poverty. In Ohio the district composition difference is pronounced with a graduation rate gap of over 50 points between the majority white districts of Westerville (81.0%) and majority minority districts of Cleveland (30.0%). Moreover, the large gender differences within each racial group depicted in the first table are significant and are not explained by poverty.[41]

Ohio Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	96.8	77.3
Majority Minority	3.2	40.6

While only 3.2 percent of Ohio's districts are majority minority, these more segregated districts include the largest cities. As the chart below shows, districts with low graduation rates and in "academic emergency" according to the state are those which

(Ohio 1997) [De Rolph I].

[41] Christopher B. Swanson 2004. *Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

most of Ohio's minority students attend. Specifically, Ohio's 2002 performance report identified twelve school districts as in a state of "Academic Emergency." Ten of the twelve school districts are well above Ohio's average Black enrollment (approximately 16%), and most were high poverty urban school districts. The data below concluded that a disproportionate percentage of Black children in Ohio were attending school districts in "Academic Emergency." [42]

Black Enrollment in 10 of 12 Academic Emergency Districts in Ohio for 2002

District	*Number of Black Students*	*Percentage Black (rounded)*	*Number of White Students*
Akron	14,583	48%	14,711
Cleveland	50,928	72%	13,688
Columbus	38,641	60%	23,330
Dayton	14,998	72%	5,583
East Cleveland	5,793	100%	8
Lorain City	2,879	28%	4,675
Springfield City	2,941	29%	6,965
Toledo City	16,981	46%	17,046
Warren City	3,278	45%	3,951
Youngstown City	7,315	67%	2,886
Totals	158,337		92,843

Approx. 52.9% of Ohio's total black student enrollment (299,448) was enrolled in these districts while only approximately 6.4% of Ohio's white student total enrollment was in these districts. Blacks in Ohio were over 8 times more likely to be enrolled in an Academic Emergency school than whites.

Approximately 50% of all enrolled Black students attend the failing districts, while only about 7% of white students attend school districts in "Academic Emergency".

What this means for the high poverty, predominantly high minority districts is that despite the state's clear failure to meet its resource obligations to these districts under state law, the NCLB entrusts the state with sanctioning these same districts for underperforming.

Under NCLB the state's accountability system is "soft" on graduation rates and hard on testing. Given this context, it is hard to recommend stiffer accountability enforcement where no meaningful assistance seems to be forthcoming. On the other hand, there are

[42] Daniel J. Losen, *Challenging Racial Disparities: The Promise and Pitfalls of the "No Child Left Behind" Act's Race Conscious Accountability*, Howard Law Review, Winter 2004 (in press).

likely intense pressures among local educators in Ohio's cities, as there are in New York City, to boost test scores by removing low achieving students. Finally, Ohio fails to hold schools and districts accountable for low graduation rates of minority students. Because there are a small number of very large and highly segregated districts, this accountability loophole would not mask the issue entirely, but in places like Akron and Westerville, and in large suburbs, it very well could. Under this "soft" accountability system, increasing dropout rates for low achieving minority students could be reported as improved achievement at no extra cost.

Many Ohio Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: This report calculates what would happen in Ohio if a true floor were established for graduation rates, if applied to minority subgroups, and no pass was given for mere "improvement." In this example, failing to make a rate of 66% would trigger identification as "failing AYP." With rates so low in Ohio, just one of the state's largest districts (Westerville) would "make AYP." If held accountable for the minority students, as well, none of these large districts would pass. There is, however, some evidence that Ohio is enforcing graduation rate accountability to some degree. Specifically, an August 15, 2003 presentation to the state legislature (House) said those 6 Districts and 27 schools failed to make AYP based on graduation rates in 2003-04.

Ohio Specific Recommendations: Ohio should conduct research to determine whether its use of high stakes tests to deny high school diplomas contributes to its extremely low graduation rates. Until an effective individualized tracking system is established, the state should use the CPI index to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes, the state should set a clear floor below which only those schools demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement should get opportunities.

Finally, Ohio should not set forth a goal for graduation rates and then permit an undefined degree of improvement to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead a more challenging floor should be set with exceptions granted only where substantial and sustained graduation rate improvement was demonstrated. Moreover, districts that are above the floor should be given incentives to meet challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement.

12. Texas

Texas has a serious credibility gap when it comes to its graduation rate reports following news of student dropout data being shredded, and the now infamous claim that Houston had a 1.5 percent dropout rate.[43] The state's report on Secondary School Completion for 2000-2001 states that Texas has an 81.1% graduation rate. However, based on the CPI, Texas has a graduation rate of 65%, which is slightly below the national average.

For Blacks and Latinos, however, the rates are far lower, 55.3 and 55.9 precent, respectively. The racial gaps in graduation rates are also very substantial 18.2 for Blacks and 17.6 for Hispanics, but not among the highest in the nation. For Native Americans the gap is far larger at 36.8 points (see Tables A-F in Appendix 4 comparing graduation rates by race for every state).

Texas Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

	All Students	Female	Male
Texas Students as Reported	81.1		
Texas Students CPI	65.0	69.4	61.0
By Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian / AK Nat.	36.7	N/A	37.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	85.3	86.3	81.2
Hispanic	55.9	60.4	50.5
Black	55.3	61.1	48.2
White	73.5	76.0	70.1

Similar to the findings in the main report, segregation and percentage of minority students in a district had a strong relationship with low graduation rates, independent of poverty. Moreover, poverty cannot explain the large graduation rate differences by gender.

As the table below shows, approximately 30 percent of Texas' districts are majority minority and these more segregated districts tend to have graduation rates that are below the state's average.

[43] *See e.g.,* CBSNews.com, *The Texas Miracle,* January 7, 2004, at wysiwyg://2http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/06/6011/printable591676.shtm.

Texas Graduation Rates By District

Racial Composition	% of Dists	CPI (%)
Majority White	69.8	72.8
Majority Minority	30.2	59.5

According to independent research from Johns Hopkins University on schools in major cities, 72% of the city high schools where 60% or fewer 9th graders return as 12th graders have majority minority enrollment. (see Table A in Appendix 5). Together, 110,028 minority students attend these "weak" schools. (see Table B in Appendix 5). This study lends additional support to the inference that attending a high school with a high minority population significantly increases the risk of not graduating.

Texas's Ten Largest Districts

					CPI Graduation Rates					
District	Enrollment	Largest R/E Group	% Minority	% FRL	Total	Nat. Am.	Asian	Hisp.	Black.	White.
Houston Isd	208,462	Hispanic	90.0	70.7	40.2	---	78.1	34.7	39.5	62.3
Dallas Isd	161,548	Hispanic	92.2	70.7	47.9	27.2	51.8	45.8	46.3	59.3
Fort Worth Isd	79,661	Hispanic	78.6	56.7	42.4	25.4	56.9	35.4	42.4	55.8
Austin Isd	77,816	Hispanic	66.3	46.4	58.9	42.2	82.5	48.4	50.0	75.6
Northside Isd	63,739	Hispanic	63.3	43.9	75.2	---	85.3	72.1	80.8	78.0
Cypress-Fairbanks Isd	63,497	White	41.5	20.7	86.7	---	99.2	79.5	86.9	86.3
El Paso Isd	62,325	Hispanic	84.8	66.9	59.0	---	---	56.0	58.2	70.5
Arlington Isd	58,866	White	52.7	37.5	55.8	22.2	83.9	40.2	49.0	62.2
San Antonio Isd	57,273	Hispanic	95.8	51.5	52.0	0.0	---	51.7	49.8	60.4
Fort Bend Isd	53,999	White	62.2	20.0	80.0	80.0	96.1	64.5	72.6	82.1

The data for Texas' 10 largest districts reveals even more critical graduation rate failure in several districts including the largest four of Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth and Austin There, Black and Hispanic graduation rates consistently fall in a range from 34 to 50 percent. Native American rates, where there was data, were generally even lower, between 0 and 42 percent with the exception of Fort Bend where 80% graduated.

Elements of the state's accountability system put Texas squarely within the group of "soft" accountability states. This means that Texas schools and districts with very low graduation rates can meet the AYP requirements if they make any improvement whatsoever from one year to the next. Furthermore, if a minority subgroup is very low,

that low rate alone will never trigger an accountability intervention, even if the rate goes lower.

In addition, the Texas accountability plan circumvents the statute and regulations under NCLB because it treats all GED enrollees as if they were never part of the public school system for accountability purposes.

Under NCLB the state's accountability system is "soft" on graduation rates and hard on testing. The Houston incident suggests that there are intense pressures among local educators in Texas to boost test scores by removing low achieving students. In Texas, the high stakes testing system includes a high school exit exam and teachers and principals are often paid bonuses for boosts in scores. Finally, Texas fails to hold schools and districts accountable for low graduation rates of minority students. Because there are a small number of very large and highly segregated districts, this accountability loophole would not mask the issue entirely, but in places like Fort Bend and Austin, and in large suburbs, it very well could. The worst case scenario would be if these districts took advantage of the almost non-existent graduation rate accountability and claimed cost-free academic improvements that were actually based not on improved achievement, but by ridding the schools of low achieving minority students.

Many Texas Districts Would Fail AYP Under the CPI Method: This report calculates what would happen in Texas if a true floor were established for graduation rates, if applied to minority subgroups, and no pass was given for mere "improvement." In this example, failing to make a rate of 66% would trigger identification as "failing AYP." With rates so low in Texas just three of the state's largest districts would "make AYP." If held accountable for the minority students, only two of these large districts would pass.

Texas Specific Recommendations: Texas should conduct research to determine whether its use of high stakes tests to deny high school diplomas contributes to its extremely low graduation rates. Moreover, the state's individualized tracking system is up but includes countless ways that students are excluded from the enrollment data for calculating graduation rates. Until Texas resolves its credibility issues the state should use the CPI index along with its tracking system to more accurately estimate its graduation rates. For accountability purposes, the state should set a clear floor below which only those schools demonstrating substantial and sustained improvement should be allowed to avoid the sanctions that flow with being labeled "needing improvement."

Finally, Texas should not set forth a goal for graduation rates and then permit an undefined degree of improvement to suffice for accountability purposes. Instead a more challenging floor should be set with exceptions granted only where substantial and sustained graduation rate improvement was demonstrated. Moreover, districts that are above the floor should be given incentives to meet challenging but realistic goals based on percent improvement.

A Texas Story

Rose (a pseudonym) is a Hispanic female. She attended schools in Florida and then Texas until 1997. Her school experiences in Florida were positive, but she experienced school difficulties after she moved to Texas. She did not like the school she attended, felt that teachers were not positive and did not treat her fairly. Under a Texas statute passed in 1993 that made truancy a misdemeanor, she was fined for being tardy at school. Below, Rose explains how this policy contributed to her dropping out:

> *Well the reason that I dropped out of high school is because they put me on probation because I missed a lot of school. And me and my mom went to talk to a judge. I don't know how many months I was on probation. But after that, I went to school every single day. I was in school and doing my work, but the thing about it is that I was tardy a lot. I was fifteen minutes late and because of my tardies; they counted it as though I was absent. They added all that up and they still made us pay the fine for me not going to school. Even though I was in school and doing my work, I was late. Because they had that policy, after three tardies you're absent. …That just didn't work for me….If they are going to charge us, might as well drop out anyway. Now they are coming out saying that I didn't pay when my mom and me worked out a payment plan to pay it. My mother passed away last year and now I have warrants for tardies.*

Rose dropped out of school in 1997. She is now 23 years old and pursuing a G.E.D. degree.

Source: Donna Joseph Diaz, Doctoral Candidate at University of Texas, Austin

APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF 50 STATE SURVEY OF GRADUATION RATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Researchers at The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University performed the survey below. The research is summarized in the body of this report. The survey was conducted from the fall of 2003 through January 2004. Each state's web site was reviewed for available information on graduation rate accountability and officially reported graduation rates. In many cases, there was no posted graduation rate goal or minimum requirement for NCLB accountability. For every state, the appropriate official was interviewed in order to fill in missing details about the state's NCLB plan pertaining to how the accountability system would address substandard graduation rates. In many cases, these interviews were the primary source of the information on each state listed below.[44]

The terms "floor" and "disaggregated accountability for initial 'Adequate Yearly Progress' (AYP) determinations," were selected to categorize how graduation rate accountability worked, especially with regard to minority subgroups. States with "floors" require schools or districts to achieve an absolute minimum graduation rate in order to make AYP. States without floors usually allow some degree of improvement over the prior year to suffice if the graduation rate standard was not met. In this report, we describe states that allow something less than compliance with an absolute floor to satisfy AYP as "soft states."[45]

The phrase "disaggregated accountability for initial AYP determinations," indicates that the accountability system considered separately the graduation rates of the major racial and ethnic subgroups when the initial AYP determination was made. This category excluded states that only disaggregated graduation rates for accountability when a school or district's subgroup failed to meet a testing standard and was seeking to implement the "safe harbor" provision, which provides a second chance to make AYP. To make AYP under the "safe harbor" provision, the school or district in question must show that an otherwise under performing subgroup both improved its test scores by 10% over the previous year, and improved its graduation rate.

The ten states that were identified as having a "floor" are Illinois, Colorado, Maryland, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, West Virginia and Alaska.

The nine states that disaggregated for AYP graduation rates are Hawaii, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Due to limited information on the state website and no response to inquires, these measures are unavailable for Delaware.

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[44] Each interviewee was sent an email with a description of their graduation rate accountability as understood by the researcher for confirmation purposes.

[45] The description sent for confirmation did not include the words "floor" or "soft" because researchers found that in their interviews, some officials objected to these terms. For example, as least one official insisted on using the word "floor" even though there was complete agreement that it did not constitute a "floor" as defined for the survey.

50 STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SURVEY

ALABAMA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 90%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

ALASKA
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 55.58%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 10% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

ARIZONA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 71%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

ARKANSAS
AYP Floor: No
Goal: "Some improvement"
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

CALIFORNIA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 100%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1/10 of 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

COLORADO
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: Raised 1% per year until 65% by 2014.
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

CONNECTICUT
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 70%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

DELAWARE
AYP Floor: Not Available
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Not Available

FLORIDA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 85%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

GEORGIA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 60%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

HAWAII
AYP Floor: No
Goal: Raising goal from 75% to 90% by 2014
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

IDAHO
AYP Floor: No
Goal: None
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

ILLINOIS
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: Raising floor from 65% to 85% incrementally by 2014
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

INDIANA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 95%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

IOWA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 89.4% - within confidence interval – only on the district level
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1/10 or 1 percent
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

KANSAS
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 75%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

KENTUCKY
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 98%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

LOUISIANA
Appears to only use drop out rate.
AYP Floor: No
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MAINE
AYP Floor: No
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MARYLAND
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: Yearly improvements until 90% by 2014.
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MASSACHUSETTS
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 70%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Alternate system used.
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MICHIGAN
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 80%; 90% by 2009
Yearly progress required for AYP: 10% over two years.
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MINNESOTA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 80%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1/10 of 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MISSISSIPPI
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 72%
Yearly progress required for AYP: "growth expectation"
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MISSOURI
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 93%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

MONTANA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 80%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEBRASKA
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 83%
Yearly progress required for AYP: No
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEVADA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 50%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEW HAMPSHIRE
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 85%
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEW JERSEY
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 2.6% drop-out rate
Yearly progress required for AYP: .5% less than previous year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEW MEXICO
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 100%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 6% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NEW YORK
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 55%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NORTH CAROLINA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 90%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1/10 of 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

NORTH DAKOTA
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 89.9%
Yearly progress required for AYP: No
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

OHIO
AYP Floor: No
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

OKLAHOMA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 68.8%, gradually increasing to 100% by 2014
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

OREGON
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 68.1%, increased every three years
Yearly progress required for AYP: Safe Harbor
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

PENNSYLVANIA
"Does not do Graduation Rates"
AYP Floor: No
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

RHODE ISLAND
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 71.4%
Yearly progress required for AYP: No
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No, but intend to once they have sufficient data.

SOUTH CAROLINA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 100%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

SOUTH DAKOTA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 90%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Revising to 0.1%
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

TENNESSEE
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 60%
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

TEXAS
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 70%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1/10 of 1% over prior year
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

UTAH
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 88%
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No, but will start in 2007.

VERMONT
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 75%
Yearly progress required for AYP: 1% improvement
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No, but intend to in 4 years.

VIRGINIA
AYP Floor: No
Goal: --
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No, but intends to in 2006.

WASHINGTON
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 73%, raised to 85% by 2014.
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

WEST VIRGINIA
AYP Floor: Yes
Goal: 80%
Yearly progress required for AYP: --
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

WISCONSIN
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 90% of state average; 98% by 2014
Yearly progress required for AYP: some growth
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: Yes

WYOMING
AYP Floor: No
Goal: 80%
Yearly progress required for AYP: Any
Disaggregate for AYP purposes: No

APPENDIX 3: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

District Size: The total number of students served by the district at the elementary and secondary levels. Large agencies are often of particular significance for national and state education politics. The largest districts typically include disadvantaged urban systems. This is not always the case, however, since state education systems sometimes organize school districts as county-wide agencies. Large districts, therefore, display considerable diversity and may potentially include rural or affluent suburban agencies.

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): The percent of students in a district who are eligible to participate in either the free or reduced price lunch programs under the National School Lunch Act. Eligibility criteria for these programs are based on family size and income. In educational research, FRL eligibility is a widely employed measure of poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage. High FRL districts are those where the proportion of students eligible for the lunch programs is above the national average (38 percent).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): The percent of students in the district who are being served in language assistance programs, where the language being learned is English. These programs might include: English as a Second Language, High Intensity Language Training, or bilingual education. Students classified as LEP are typically individuals: born outside the United States; whose native language is something other than English; who come from areas where languages other than English are dominant; or those from areas where other languages have a significant impact on their level of English proficiency. Since many LEP students are born outside the United States, this measure also serves as a proxy for the percent of immigrant students. In some parts of this study, we draw a distinction between High and Low LEP districts. This categorization uses a cutoff point of 9 percent, the proportion of all students nationally who are identified as LEP based on data from the CCD.

Local Education Agency: As defined by the U.S. Department of Education as a public board of education or other public authority within the state that has administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district or other political subdivision of a state.

Location: A description of a district's locale classified according to its general level of urbanization or population density, expressed in terms of four mutually-exclusive categories: Central City, Suburb, Town, and Rural. The classifications used in this study are derived from the NCES Locale Code included in the CCD, which is based on the prevailing pattern of school locations and student enrollment within district boundaries. Detailed definitions for each locale category appear below.

> Central City: a central city of Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). This definition combines NCES Locale Codes for large and mid-size central cities.
>
> Suburb: any incorporated place, Census Designated Place, or non-place territory within a CMSA or MSA of a large or mid-size city and defined as urban by the Census Bureau. This definition combines NCES Locale Codes for urban fringes of large and mid-size cities.

Town: an incorporated place or Census Designated Place with a population greater than or equal to 2,500 and located outside a CMSA or MSA. This definition combines NCES Locale Codes for large and small towns.

Rural: any incorporated place, Census Designated Place, or non-place territory and defined as rural by the Census Bureau. A rural area may be within or outside of a CMSA or MSA of a large or mid-size city.

Per Pupil Expenditures: Total amount of district expenditures divided by total student membership. This measure refers to the 1999-2000 school year, the most recent time point for which CCD fiscal survey data are available.

Racial and Ethnic Composition: The percentage of minority (non-white) students enrolled in the district. The five reporting categories for race-ethnicity used in the CCD are: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black (not Hispanic), and white (not Hispanic). Some analyses in this report use the overall percentage of minority students. In other places, to simplify the presentation of results, we distinguish between districts where the majority of students are white versus those in which racial-ethnic minorities make up the majority of the student population.

Segregation Index: An indicator of the level of segregation between racial-ethnic minorities and white students in the school district. This measure is calculated using school level enrollment data and captures the extent to which minority students are isolated from white students. The value of this index ranges from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating a greater level of racial isolation. The mathematical formula for this district-level minority isolation index appears below. A detailed description of this measure can be found in Massey and Denton (1988).

$$xPx = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left[\frac{x_i}{X_i} \right] * \left[\frac{x_i}{t_i} \right]$$

where:

xPx is the value of the Segregation Index
x_i is the number of minority students in school i
X is the total number of minority students in the district; and
t_i is the total number of students in school i

Special Education: The percentage of students in a district that have a written Individualized Education Program (IEP) under IDEA-Part B. A district identified as displaying a "High" level of Special Education has a proportion of students with IEP's greater than the national average of 13 percent.

APPENDIX 4: NATIONAL AND STATE GRADUATION RATES

CPI National Averages for Graduation Rates: The following tables present the graduation rate using the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) for each state. The tables include all students, followed by each major racial and ethnic group. The tables with racial and ethnic groups also compare the gap in graduation rates between whites and the group in question. For these tables the percentage of the total public school enrollment, K-12, is provided as well.

Table A. All Students

All Students	CPI Graduation Rate	State Rank (out of 51)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	*68.0*	
ALABAMA	61.4	43
ALASKA	64.2	40
ARIZONA	67.3	33
ARKANSAS	70.5	29
CALIFORNIA	68.9	32
COLORADO	69.0	31
CONNECTICUT	77.0	12
DELAWARE	64.3	39
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	65.2	36
FLORIDA	53.0	50
GEORGIA	55.5	48
HAWAII	66.0	34
IDAHO	79.6	2
ILLINOIS	75.0	15
INDIANA	72.4	23
IOWA	78.2	7
KANSAS	74.1	16
KENTUCKY	65.3	35
LOUISIANA	64.5	38
MAINE	72.1	25
MARYLAND	75.3	14
MASSACHUSETTS	71.0	26
MICHIGAN	74.0	17
MINNESOTA	78.9	5
MISSISSIPPI	58.0	46
MISSOURI	72.9	22
MONTANA	77.1	11
NEBRASKA	77.3	10
NEVADA	54.7	49
NEW HAMPSHIRE	73.9	18
NEW JERSEY	86.3†	1
NEW MEXICO	61.2	45
NEW YORK	61.4	43
NORTH CAROLINA	63.5	41
NORTH DAKOTA	79.5	3
OHIO	70.7	27
OKLAHOMA	69.8	30
OREGON	73.6	20
PENNSYLVANIA	75.5	13
RHODE ISLAND	73.5	21
SOUTH CAROLINA	50.7	51
SOUTH DAKOTA	79.4	4
TENNESSEE	57.5	47
TEXAS	65.0	37
UTAH	78.3	6
VERMONT	77.9	9
VIRGINIA	73.8	19
WASHINGTON	62.6	42
WEST VIRGINIA	70.7	27
WISCONSIN	78.2	7
WYOMING	72.4	23

** Low Coverage – Rate not reported because statistic covers less than 50% of student population*
t Moderate Coverage – rate covers between 50 and 75% of student population

Table B. American Indian

	Am. Indian % of Student Population	Am. Indian Graduation Rate	Race Gap *White–Am Ind* (within State)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	***1.2***	***51.1***	***-23.8***
ALABAMA	0.7	68.6	2.8
ALASKA	24.9	46.5†	-19.8
ARIZONA	6.6	---#	---
ARKANSAS	0.5	69.3†	-5.1
CALIFORNIA	0.9	49.7†	-26.0
COLORADO	1.2	40.7†	-34.5
CONNECTICUT	0.3	42.9†	-39.0
DELAWARE	0.2	---*	---
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	0.1	---*	---
FLORIDA	0.3	47.9†	-10.0
GEORGIA	0.2	34.3†	-28.1
HAWAII	0.4	70.9	6.2
IDAHO	1.3	---#	---
ILLINOIS	0.2	---*	---
INDIANA	0.2	33.9†	-41.0
IOWA	0.5	---*	---
KANSAS	1.3	---*	---
KENTUCKY	0.2	---†	---
LOUISIANA	0.6	58.1†	-9.9
MAINE	0.5	33.0†	-39.3
MARYLAND	0.4	---*	---
MASSACHUSETTS	0.3	25.4†	-48.3
MICHIGAN	1.0	39.5†	-37.1
MINNESOTA	2.0	35.7†	-45.7
MISSISSIPPI	0.1	---	---
MISSOURI	0.3	22.7†	-53.4
MONTANA	10.5	45.8	-33.5
NEBRASKA	1.5	32.3†	-49.4
NEVADA	1.7	47.8	-14.2
NEW HAMPSHIRE	0.2	---#	---
NEW JERSEY	0.2	---*	---
NEW MEXICO	11.1	60.0	-7.8
NEW YORK	0.4	36.2†	-39.1
NORTH CAROLINA	1.5	33.8†	-35.4
NORTH DAKOTA	7.5	52.6†	-31.5
OHIO	0.1	22.4†	-53.5
OKLAHOMA	16.9	63.9†	-8.2
OREGON	2.1	42.4†	-29.0
PENNSYLVANIA	0.1	24.9†	-56.4
RHODE ISLAND	0.5	---*	---
SOUTH CAROLINA	0.2	---#	---
SOUTH DAKOTA	10.0	32.1†	-51.3
TENNESSEE	---#	---#	---
TEXAS	0.3	36.7†	-36.8
UTAH	1.5	52.8†	-30.9
VERMONT	0.6	---#	---
VIRGINIA	0.3	68.6†	-7.5
WASHINGTON	2.6	---#	---
WEST VIRGINIA	0.1	52.8†	-18.5
WISCONSIN	1.4	47.0†	-35.4
WYOMING	3.1	34.4†	-38.9

** Low Coverage – Rate not reported because statistic covers less than 50% of student population*
t Moderate Coverage – rate covers between 50 and 75% of student population

Table C. Asian/Pacific Islander

	A/PI % of Student Population	A/PI Graduation Rate	Race Gap *White–A/PI* (within State)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	***4.2***	***76.8***	***1.9***
ALABAMA	0.7	66.3†	0.5
ALASKA	5.5	71.4	5.1
ARIZONA	2.1	---#	---
ARKANSAS	0.9	76.8†	2.4
CALIFORNIA	11.2	82.0	6.3
COLORADO	2.9	72.6†	-2.6
CONNECTICUT	2.9	73.7†	-8.2
DELAWARE	2.2	---*	---
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	1.6	---*	---
FLORIDA	1.9	79.9	22.0
GEORGIA	2.2	79.8†	17.4
HAWAII	72.3	66.8	2.1
IDAHO	1.2	---#	---
ILLINOIS	3.4	88.8	5.9
INDIANA	1.0	---*	---
IOWA	1.7	66.2†	-13.1
KANSAS	2.2	48.0†	-30.9
KENTUCKY	0.6	63.3†	-5.2
LOUISIANA	1.3	74.2	6.2
MAINE	1.1	35.2†	-37.1
MARYLAND	4.4	92.9	13.0
MASSACHUSETTS	5.0	60.5	-13.2
MICHIGAN	1.8	---*	---
MINNESOTA	5.1	66.3†	-15.1
MISSISSIPPI	0.7	45.6†	-17.7
MISSOURI	1.2	73.4†	-2.7
MONTANA	1.0	---*	---
NEBRASKA	1.5	---*	---
NEVADA	5.7	75.1	13.1
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1.3	---#	---
NEW JERSEY	6.3	83.3†	-3.1
NEW MEXICO	1.1	64.2†	-3.6
NEW YORK	6.0	61.2	-14.1
NORTH CAROLINA	1.9	68.3	-0.9
NORTH DAKOTA	0.8	30.6†	-53.5
OHIO	1.1	---*	---
OKLAHOMA	1.4	---*	---
OREGON	4.0	78.4†	7.0
PENNSYLVANIA	2.0	63.5†	-17.8
RHODE ISLAND	3.3	53.8†	-20.0
SOUTH CAROLINA	1.0	---#	---
SOUTH DAKOTA	0.9	61.2†	-22.2
TENNESSEE	---	---#	---
TEXAS	2.7	85.3	11.8
UTAH	2.8	69.3†	-14.4
VERMONT	1.4	---#	---
VIRGINIA	4.1	80.4	4.3
WASHINGTON	7.3	---#	---
WEST VIRGINIA	0.5	---*	---
WISCONSIN	3.3	73.2†	-9.2
WYOMING	0.9	---*	---

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t Moderate Coverage – rate covers between 50 and 75% of student population

Table D. Hispanic

	Hispanic % of Student Population	Hispanic Graduation Rate	Race Gap *White–Hisp.* (within State)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	***16.6***	***53.2***	***-21.7***
ALABAMA	1.3	43.8†	-22.0
ALASKA	3.4	58.3	-8.0
ARIZONA	34.0	---#	---
ARKANSAS	3.6	---*	---
CALIFORNIA	43.5	57.0	-18.7
COLORADO	22.0	47.6	-27.6
CONNECTICUT	12.9	50.1	-31.8
DELAWARE	6.0	42.2†	-27.5
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	9.2	56.1	---
FLORIDA	19.3	52.2	-5.7
GEORGIA	4.8	43.2	-19.2
HAWAII	4.5	59.9	-4.8
IDAHO	10.7	---#	---
ILLINOIS	15.5	57.8	-25.1
INDIANA	3.5	50.4†	-24.5
IOWA	3.6	40.5†	-38.8
KANSAS	8.9	47.6†	-31.3
KENTUCKY	0.9	62.8†	-5.7
LOUISIANA	1.4	74.2†	6.2
MAINE	0.6	---*	---
MARYLAND	4.8	71.2	-8.7
MASSACHUSETTS	12.0	36.1	-37.6
MICHIGAN	3.5	36.3†	-40.3
MINNESOTA	3.4	---*	---
MISSISSIPPI	0.8	---*	---
MISSOURI	1.8	---*	---
MONTANA	1.7	56.8†	-22.5
NEBRASKA	7.3	46.9†	-34.8
NEVADA	25.6	37.6	-24.4
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1.8	---#	---
NEW JERSEY	15.4	---*	---
NEW MEXICO	50.2	54.7	-13.1
NEW YORK	18.6	31.9	-43.4
NORTH CAROLINA	4.5	58.4†	-10.8
NORTH DAKOTA	1.3	---*	---
OHIO	1.7	43.2†	-32.7
OKLAHOMA	6.0	56.2†	-15.9
OREGON	10.5	56.2†	-15.2
PENNSYLVANIA	4.5	40.9	-40.4
RHODE ISLAND	14.0	67.7	-6.1
SOUTH CAROLINA	1.9	---#	---
SOUTH DAKOTA	1.2	---*	---
TENNESSEE	---	---#	---
TEXAS	40.6	55.9	-17.6
UTAH	8.9	---*	---
VERMONT	0.6	---#	---
VIRGINIA	4.9	65.2	-10.9
WASHINGTON	10.3	---#	---
WEST VIRGINIA	0.4	---*	---
WISCONSIN	4.5	54.4†	-28.0
WYOMING	6.9	57.1†	-16.2

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t Moderate Coverage – rate covers between 50 and 75% of student population

Table E. Black

	Black % of Student Population	Black Graduation Rate	Race Gap *White–Black* (within State)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	***17.0***	***50.2***	***-24.7***
ALABAMA	36.4	54.0	-11.8
ALASKA	4.6	66.3	0.0
ARIZONA	4.6	---#	---
ARKANSAS	23.3	62.7	-11.7
CALIFORNIA	8.4	55.3	-20.4
COLORADO	5.7	49.0	-26.2
CONNECTICUT	13.2	60.7	-21.2
DELAWARE	30.4	53.4	-16.3
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	84.6	60.4	---
FLORIDA	25.1	41.0	-16.9
GEORGIA	38.2	43.7	-18.7
HAWAII	2.3	60.7	-4.0
IDAHO	0.7	---#	---
ILLINOIS	21.0	47.8	-35.1
INDIANA	11.7	52.9†	-22.0
IOWA	4.0	48.0†	-31.3
KANSAS	8.9	52.1	-26.8
KENTUCKY	10.5	47.5	-21.0
LOUISIANA	47.7	57.7†	-10.3
MAINE	1.2	---*	---
MARYLAND	37.1	64.8	-15.1
MASSACHUSETTS	9.6	49.4	-24.3
MICHIGAN	19.5	---*	---
MINNESOTA	6.6	51.0†	-30.4
MISSISSIPPI	51.1	52.6	-10.7
MISSOURI	17.6	52.3	-23.8
MONTANA	0.6	71.4†	-7.9
NEBRASKA	6.7	45.2	-36.5
NEVADA	10.2	40.5	-21.5
NEW HAMPSHIRE	1.1	---#	---
NEW JERSEY	17.4	62.3†	-24.1
NEW MEXICO	2.4	55.9†	-11.9
NEW YORK	20.2	35.1	-40.2
NORTH CAROLINA	31.2	53.6	-15.6
NORTH DAKOTA	1.0	72.1†	-12.0
OHIO	15.7	39.6	-36.3
OKLAHOMA	10.8	52.8	-19.3
OREGON	2.8	58.0	-13.4
PENNSYLVANIA	14.7	45.9	-35.4
RHODE ISLAND	7.8	84.1	10.3
SOUTH CAROLINA	42.1	---#	---
SOUTH DAKOTA	1.2	---*	---
TENNESSEE	---	---#	---
TEXAS	14.2	55.3	-18.2
UTAH	1.0	---*	---
VERMONT	1.1	---#	---
VIRGINIA	27.0	62.8	-13.3
WASHINGTON	5.3	---#	---
WEST VIRGINIA	4.3	58.0	-13.3
WISCONSIN	10.0	41.1	-41.3
WYOMING	1.2	67.7†	-5.6

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Table F. White

	White % of Student Population	White Graduation Rate
NATIONAL AVERAGE	***61.0***	***74.9***
ALABAMA	60.8	65.8
ALASKA	61.6	66.3
ARIZONA	52.8	---#
ARKANSAS	71.7	74.4
CALIFORNIA	36.1	75.7
COLORADO	68.2	75.2
CONNECTICUT	70.8	81.9
DELAWARE	61.1	69.7
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	4.5	---*
FLORIDA	53.5	57.9
GEORGIA	54.7	62.4
HAWAII	20.4	64.7
IDAHO	86.0	---#
ILLINOIS	60.0	82.9
INDIANA	83.6	74.9
IOWA	90.2	79.3
KANSAS	78.7	78.9
KENTUCKY	87.7	68.5
LOUISIANA	48.9	68.0
MAINE	96.6	72.3
MARYLAND	53.4	79.9
MASSACHUSETTS	73.2	73.7
MICHIGAN	74.1	76.6
MINNESOTA	82.9	81.4
MISSISSIPPI	47.3	63.3
MISSOURI	79.1	76.1
MONTANA	86.3	79.3
NEBRASKA	83.0	81.7
NEVADA	56.8	62.0
NEW HAMPSHIRE	95.5	---#
NEW JERSEY	60.7	86.4
NEW MEXICO	35.3	67.8
NEW YORK	54.7	75.3
NORTH CAROLINA	61.1	69.2
NORTH DAKOTA	89.5	84.1
OHIO	81.4	75.9
OKLAHOMA	64.9	72.1
OREGON	80.5	71.4
PENNSYLVANIA	78.7	81.3
RHODE ISLAND	74.4	73.8
SOUTH CAROLINA	54.9	---#
SOUTH DAKOTA	86.6	83.4
TENNESSEE	---	---#
TEXAS	42.3	73.5
UTAH	85.8	83.7
VERMONT	96.3	---#
VIRGINIA	63.6	76.1
WASHINGTON	74.5	---#
WEST VIRGINIA	94.7	71.3
WISCONSIN	80.8	82.4
WYOMING	87.9	73.3

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t Moderate Coverage – rate covers between 50 and 75% of student population

Table G. The Graduation Rate for The 100 Largest Districts

		Enrollment	Minority Enrollment (%)	Largest Racial Group	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Grad. Rate (%)
	Median for Largest 100	***64,744***	***59.3***	***White***	***46.8***	***59.6***
1	NEW YORK CITY, NY	1,066,516	84.7	Hispanic	71.9	38.2
2	LOS ANGELES , CA	721,346	90.1	Hispanic	73.5	46.4
3	CITY OF CHICAGO, IL	435,261	90.4	Black	---	48.8
4	DADE CO., FL	368,625	88.7	Hispanic	59.3	52.1
5	BROWARD CO., FL	251,129	58.8	White	37.1	47.2
6	CLARK CO., NV	231,655	50.1	White	26.3	51.9
7	HOUSTON ISD, TX	208,462	90.0	Hispanic	70.7	40.2
8	PHILADELPHIA CITY, PA	201,190	83.3	Black	66.7	41.9
9	HAWAII DEPT OF ED, HI	184,360	79.6	Asian/PI	43.7	66.0
10	HILLSBOROUGH CO., FL	164,311	48.2	White	47.4	55.0
11	DETROIT CITY, MI	162,194	96.3	Black	65.9	---
12	DALLAS ISD, TX	161,548	92.2	Hispanic	70.7	47.9
13	FAIRFAX, VA	156,412	39.2	White	17.1	85.9
14	PALM BEACH CO., FL	153,871	50.4	White	39.6	46.6
15	ORANGE CO., FL	150,681	55.9	White	47.8	51.8
16	SAN DIEGO CITY , CA	141,804	73.0	Hispanic	46.3	61.3
17	MONTGOMERY CO., MD	134,180	51.0	White	21.8	83.9
18	PRINCE GEORGES CO., MD	133,723	88.6	Black	41.5	68.5
19	DUVAL CO., FL	125,846	49.8	White	46.6	46.3
20	MEMPHIS CITY, TN	113,730	---	---	---	41.9
21	PINELLAS CO., FL	113,027	27.3	White	36.3	45.5
22	GWINNETT CO., GA	110,075	35.8	White	20.8	74.3
23	BALTIMORE CO., MD	106,898	38.3	White	26.5	83.4
24	CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG, NC	103,336	53.4	White	35.0	59.4
25	BALTIMORE CITY, MD	99,859	89.2	Black	71.5	47.9
26	WAKE CO., NC	98,950	37.1	White	22.9	75.0
27	MILWAUKEE, WI	97,985	81.3	Black	68.9	45.8
28	JEFFERSON CO, KY	96,860	38.0	White	47.0	49.0
29	DEKALB CO., GA	95,958	87.3	Black	54.9	50.7
30	COBB CO., GA	95,781	34.2	White	19.6	73.4
31	LONG BEACH , CA	93,694	82.2	Hispanic	68.7	74.8
32	JEFFERSON CO., CO	87,703	17.5	White	13.7	74.9
33	ALBUQUERQUE, NM	85,276	60.0	Hispanic	44.1	56.0
34	FORT WORTH ISD, TX	79,661	78.6	Hispanic	56.7	42.4
35	POLK CO., FL	79,477	36.5	White	50.5	48.3
36	FRESNO , CA	79,007	79.8	Hispanic	71.5	55.8
37	AUSTIN ISD, TX	77,816	66.3	Hispanic	46.4	58.9
38	ORLEANS PARISH, LA	77,610	96.1	Black	74.6	---
39	VIRGINIA BEACH CITY, VA	76,586	36.7	White	24.3	68.4
40	CLEVELAND, OH	75,684	80.7	Black	75.7	30.0
41	ANNE ARUNDEL CO., MD	74,491	24.9	White	15.6	69.0
42	MESA , AZ	73,587	32.2	White	---	71.7
43	JORDAN, UT	73,158	7.6	White	17.6	86.6
44	GRANITE, UT	71,328	23.0	White	32.0	75.9
45	DENVER CO., CO	70,847	78.0	Hispanic	59.9	40.5
46	BREVARD CO., FL	70,597	20.8	White	30.8	59.4
47	DIST. OF COLUMBIA, DC	68,925	95.5	Black	69.4	65.2
48	FULTON CO., GA	68,583	51.5	White	31.6	61.8
49	NASHVILLE-DAVIDSON CO., TN	67,669	---	---	---	45.0
50	MOBILE CO., AL	64,976	52.8	Black	63.2	57.3

		Enrollment	Minority Enrollment (%)	Largest Racial Group	Free or Reduced Lunch (%)	Grad. Rate (%)
51	COLUMBUS CITY, OH	64,511	62.9	Black	55.5	34.4
52	NORTHSIDE ISD, TX	63,739	63.3	Hispanic	43.9	75.2
53	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS, TX	63,497	41.5	White	20.7	86.7
54	GUILFORD CO., NC	63,417	50.4	White	39.0	70.9
55	BOSTON, MA	63,024	85.3	Black	72.0	42.0
56	EL PASO ISD, TX	62,325	84.8	Hispanic	66.9	59.0
57	TUCSON , AZ	61,869	58.5	Hispanic	---	70.6
58	VOLUSIA CO., FL	61,517	26.1	White	38.5	54.8
59	SEMINOLE CO., FL	60,869	29.9	White	22.5	68.9
60	SANTA ANA , CA	60,643	96.4	Hispanic	73.4	61.7
61	SAN FRANCISCO , CA	59,979	88.9	Asian/PI	54.2	66.7
62	GREENVILLE CO., SC	59,875	33.1	White	31.9	59.7
63	DAVIS, UT	59,578	8.1	White	19.4	87.1
64	ARLINGTON ISD, TX	58,866	52.7	White	37.5	55.8
65	LEE CO., FL	58,401	33.2	White	43.2	61.1
66	ATLANTA CITY, GA	58,230	93.2	Black	76.4	39.6
67	SAN ANTONIO ISD, TX	57,273	95.8	Hispanic	51.5	52.0
68	WASHOE CO., NV	56,268	34.0	White	30.0	55.2
69	OAKLAND , CA	54,863	94.4	Black	53.8	30.4
70	PRINCE WILLIAM, VA	54,646	39.8	White	21.4	64.2
71	EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LA	54,246	72.0	Black	64.3	67.8
72	FORT BEND ISD, TX	53,999	62.2	White	20.0	80.0
73	PORTLAND, OR	53,141	37.8	White	39.1	71.9
74	SACRAMENTO CITY , CA	52,734	75.1	Hispanic	60.5	70.0
75	ALDINE ISD, TX	52,520	89.8	Hispanic	71.6	54.6
76	SAN BERNARDINO, CA	52,031	79.7	Hispanic	74.8	42.1
77	KNOX CO., TN	51,944	---	---	---	55.3
78	CHESTERFIELD, VA	51,212	28.2	White	13.1	78.8
79	JEFFERSON PARISH, LA	50,891	59.8	Black	67.0	62.4
80	NORTH EAST ISD, TX	50,875	50.9	White	34.0	78.7
81	CUMBERLAND CO., NC	50,850	57.1	Black	49.0	68.7
82	GARLAND ISD, TX	50,312	52.8	White	32.6	74.0
83	SAN JUAN , CA	50,266	24.9	White	28.8	80.9
84	PASCO CO., FL	49,704	12.3	White	44.9	53.0
85	ANCHORAGE, AK	49,526	36.6	White	17.9	69.4
86	MINNEAPOLIS, MN	48,834	72.8	Black	65.6	63.8
87	GARDEN GROVE , CA	48,742	80.3	Hispanic	57.7	---
88	WICHITA, KS	48,228	47.5	White	54.9	57.8
89	ELK GROVE , CA	47,736	61.3	White	37.3	76.8
90	SEATTLE, WA	47,575	60.0	White	---	66.6
91	PLANO ISD, TX	47,161	30.8	White	9.5	80.9
92	ALPINE, UT	47,117	7.9	White	21.3	80.4
93	SHELBY CO., TN	46,972	---	---	---	74.2
94	CLAYTON CO., GA	46,930	76.9	Black	55.1	44.2
95	CINCINNATI CITY, OH	46,562	74.3	Black	57.2	32.4
96	YSLETA ISD, TX	46,394	91.4	Hispanic	52.1	66.2
97	BUFFALO CITY, NY	45,721	71.5	Black	74.5	47.3
98	OMAHA, NE	45,197	47.9	White	50.8	54.3
99	CADDO PARISH, LA	45,119	63.9	Black	52.8	61.2
100	ST. PAUL, MN	45,115	66.7	White	63.1	---

APPENDIX 5: PROMOTING POWER

Weak Promoting Power and Minority Concentration in Urban High Schools

A high school has weak promoting power when its senior class has 60% or fewer students than its freshmen class four years earlier. This indicates that close to half the students in the school are not earning on-time promotion to the 12th grade and that it is likely that less than half the students in the high school are graduating within four years.

In most of the nation's largest cities (with populations of 200,000 or more) there is a strong relationship between minority concentration and weak promoting power. This can be seen in the following tables. They show the percent of weak promoting power high schools in major cities that are majority minority and the percent of minority students in major cities that attend high schools with weak promoting power.

TABLE A
WEAK PROMOTING POWER SCHOOLS IN MAJOR CITIES THAT ARE MAJORITY MINORITY

State	Number of Schools	Percent of Majority Minority HS's in Major Cities that have Weak Promoting Power
Illinois	42	68%
Missouri	14	93%
California	70	48%
Michigan	23	77%
Massachusetts	5	36%
Mississippi	7	88%
New York	120	81%
Texas	71	72%
Colorado	9	75%
New Mexico	6	100%
Arizona	8	62%
South Carolina	5	100%
Nevada	4	44%
Alabama	6	30%
North Carolina	5	45%
Florida	12	86%

TABLE B
MINORITY STUDENTS IN MAJOR CITIES ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOLS WITH WEAK PROMOTING POWER:

State	Number of minority students in major cities attending	Percentage of minority students in major cities attending
Missouri	13,115	94%
New York	190,276	84%
Mississippi	6277	84%
Florida	33,025	80%
Michigan	30,573	79%
New Mexico	10,381	79%
South Carolina	6950	78%
Texas	110,028	74%
Illinois	53,029	66%
Colorado	11,591	65%
California	181,778	56%
Arizona	13,175	45%
Alabama	7991	36%
North Carolina	10,282	34%
Massachusetts	4612	31%
Nevada	7271	29%
TOTAL	690,354	66%