

Improving School Success & Student Outcomes

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

– Nelson Mandela

The Data

- **Difficult starts.** Over 40% of new kindergartners do not enter school fully prepared to learn. (Kauffman Early Learning Exchange, *Set for Success*, v.1 no.1, 2002, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation)
- **High school completion rates.** While government figures indicate that in 2001 about 11% of the U.S. population aged 16-24 had dropped out of high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts>), non-governmental figures show a bleaker picture (e.g., J.P. Greene, *High School Graduation Rates in the United States*, 2002, www.manhattan-institute.org, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/news/pressreleases/book_dropout.php)
- **Ramifications across one’s lifetime.** Students who fail to receive a high school diploma or GED have higher unemployment rates and make a median 50% less than those with only a diploma or GED. They are also more likely to become single parents, rely on public assistance, and become incarcerated. (J.P. Greene, *High School Graduation Rates in the United States*, 2002, www.manhattan-institute.org)

The Issues

- **Continuing income and race segregation of schools.** Eighty-two percent of the students in low poverty schools are white, while black and Latino students are isolated by both race and poverty in their schools. The bulk of what have been called “dropout factories” are 200-300 high schools in large city school systems that are highly segregated by race and income. (G. Orfield & C. Lee, *Why Segregation Matters*, 2005, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/deseg/deseg05.php)
- **Inequitable school resources.** High poverty schools tend to have a less stable and less qualified teaching staff, less safe facilities, and insufficient supplies of quality educational materials. Schools where at least 75 percent of the students were low-income had three times as many uncertified or out-of-field teachers in both English and science. (G. Orfield & C. Lee, *Why Segregation Matters*, above)
- **Differential punishment.** In 1998, more than 3.1 million children in America were suspended and another 87,000 were expelled. African-American children are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than white students for subjectively determined offenses such as “disrespect.” (*Opportunities Suspended*, The Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000, www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/discipline/opport_suspended.php)
- **Uneven performance of market solutions.** Research on vouchers shows increased parental satisfaction but at best modest improvements for some students in selected subjects. (M. Carnoy, *School Vouchers: Examining the Evidence*, Economic Policy Institute, 2001) Performance of students in charter schools compared to children in other public schools was not measurably different. (NAEP, *The Nation’s Report Card: America’s Charter Schools*, 2003, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/charter/2005456.asp>)

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Options for Philanthropy

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

Key Resources

- **Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.** Collaborates with education reform organizations, school districts, school improvement networks, and education funds to develop the capacity of urban communities to improve teaching and learning. (www.annenberginstitute.org)
- **The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.** Focuses on key opportunity issues including education reform, desegregation, school dropouts, school discipline, and Title I. (www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu)
- **Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.** Offers information, tools, guides, and links relating to comprehensive school reform and school improvement, including an in-depth catalog of school reform models. (www.csrclearinghouse.org)



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