THE PATH FORWARD

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

A Special Edition of
the *Leaders* [&] *Laggards* Series

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[TABLE OF CONTENTS]

[INTRODUCTION]

In July 2000, while still on the presidential campaign trail, then-Texas Governor George W. Bush addressed the 91st annual National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) convention. During his speech, he spoke about how as president he would work to bridge historical divides in our neighborhoods, in our schools, and in our social institutions that have separated American citizens from one another.

In making his case, Bush said his goal was to dispel the "soft bigotry of low expectations," a phrase that would follow him for his entire presidency and would live on after he left the White House. Specifically, the Bush administration worked to pass No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, which for the first time held every school in the nation accountable for how well *all* students achieved. The Obama administration built on these efforts through Race to the Top, which encouraged states to evaluate teachers, adopt college- and career-ready standards, and open more charter schools. These federal efforts, paired with decades of work at the state and local levels, represent an extended, concerted effort to improve education for all students, and an unprecedented opportunity to discover weaknesses and focus efforts to improve on the academic performance of students of color.

But the struggle continues.

To be certain, all states and all student sub-groups are performing at a level that should spur us to action—it is not only African-American student performance that should raise concern. The purpose of this report, however, is to offer a portrait of the performance of African-American students in the United States today. How successful have interventions to improve the quality of education been? In what areas are African-American students succeeding? In what areas are they struggling? In what areas are there opportunities that passionate leaders can take advantage of to improve the lives of African-American children?

Over the past 25 years, the performance of African-American students on key academic success indicators has improved, in some cases markedly. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an exam given to a representative sample of students every two years since the 1970s, the percentages of African-American students deemed proficient in fourth and eighth grade reading and math have increased significantly. Graduation rates for African-American students are up as well, and the nationwide average of 71% represents significant progress. It could be inferred that many of these improvements follow from NCLB's stricter accountability standards. The requirement that states set academic achievement goals for sub-group populations, disaggregate data to bring shortcomings

to light, and intervene when goals are not met remains groundbreaking. Accountability can do wonders for motivation.

In absolute terms, though, there is much more room for improvement. On the 2015 NAEP, only 18% of African-American fourth graders were found to be proficient in reading and only 19% scored proficient in math. The eighth grade numbers were even worse, with only 15% of African-American students rated proficient in reading and only 12% rated proficient in math. Only three states saw more than 5% of the African-Americans in their graduating class pass at least one Advanced Placement (AP) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) exam during high school, and four states saw less than 1% of African-American students graduate having passed one of these exams. No state with at least 500 African-American ACT (American College Testing) test-takers saw more than 17% score college-ready on all four tested subjects.

It is easy to look at this report and despair. It puts front and center the fact that too many of our nation's young people are failing to achieve their potential, and that African-American students are disproportionately impacted by the shortcomings in our education system. We need to continue to constantly strive for improvements and identify solutions that work well for students. We can use the information contained in this report to continue making the case for changes that will benefit all students.

Many company-, state-, and community-based programs are targeting low-income students and students of color to provide mentorship support and increase interest in high-demand areas such as STEM. To find the right solutions for a region or a school, we need to understand how well states are advancing educational equity, and put the pedal to the metal on opening up opportunities and capitalize on efforts that demonstrate results. Like most issues in education reform, it is unlikely that there is a silver bullet or one-size-fits-all approach that will work across the board. However, there are elements of promising programs that could be a "fit" in your community. Samplings of these programs are included in the report to showcase how to get results and expand opportunities for students of color.

By staying the course on accountability, promoting school choice, working with industry, and focusing on students in the greatest need, we can work to turn around these distressing numbers in ways that will significantly benefit African-American students who deserve a high-quality education experience that will prepare them for the path forward.

[KEY TAKEAWAYS]

1. Overall performance levels are low, though there is some evidence of improvement.

On the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 18% of African-American fourth graders were found to be proficient in reading and only 19% scored proficient in math. The eighth grade numbers were even worse, with only 15% of African-American students rated proficient in reading and only 12% rated proficient in math. These percentages are up substantially from the early 1990s, when only 8% of African-American fourth graders scored proficient in reading and 1% scored proficient in math, and 9% of African-American eighth graders scored proficient in reading and 5% scored proficient in math. Some states have demonstrated significant progress: the District of Columbia's student population, for example, is made up of almost 74% African-American students and has witnessed the most gains nationally. In 1990, only 1% of the district's African-American eighth graders were proficient in math; in 2015 the percentage is up to 13%. There has been progress, but there is still much work to be done to get students where they need to be.

2. There is a clear mismatch between graduation rates and rates of college readiness for African-American students in many states.

Graduation rates for African-American students range from 84% (in Texas) to 57% (in both Nevada and Oregon). But, according to the ACT, the percentage of African-American students who are college-ready in all four tested subjects (English, math, reading, and science) ranges from 17% (in Massachusetts) to only

3% (in Mississippi).[1] The ACT is not a perfect barometer, and there should be some discrepancy between these numbers, as not all high school graduates are planning on attending college. But college preparedness rates that equal only one-tenth of the graduation rate seem extreme.

3. Many African-American students are gaining access to rigorous classes—but not to the degree they should be. And, unfortunately, it is not clear that those who enroll in higher-level courses are experiencing success.

In three states, more than 40% of African-American students graduated having taken at least one Advanced Placement (AP) exam—the District of Columbia at 47.5%, Hawaii at 43.7%, and Florida at 43.6%. However, Hawaii was the only state to see more than 15% of African-American students actually pass (score a 3, 4, or 5 on a 1–5 scale) at least one of those exams during their high school years. Expanding access is clearly important, but there is the additional task of supporting students so they can meet that higher bar.

4. Far too few African-American students are excelling in STEM subjects.

Only three states saw more than 5% of the African-American students in their graduating class pass at least one AP STEM exam during high school—Colorado at 5.9%, Massachusetts at 5.4%, and Hawaii at exactly 5%. At the other end of the spectrum, four

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1 If we exclude New Hampshire, which had only a small number of African-American students take the ACT.

states saw less than 1% of African-American students graduate having passed an AP STEM exam—West Virginia at 0.7%, Missouri at 0.7%, Louisiana at 0.5%, and Mississippi at 0.4%. As *Leaders & Laggards 2014* demonstrated, states across the country are struggling mightily to drive success on AP STEM exams for all students, not only African-Americans. Several of the fastest-growing (and highest-paying) jobs in America are in STEM fields, and today many of those are sitting unfilled. Better K–12 preparation in STEM fields could go a long way to help fill these jobs.

5. Not surprisingly, there is a strong correlation between access and success—states that see more students take AP tests see more students pass AP tests.

If one runs a simple correlation calculation between the percentage of African-American students in a given state taking at least one AP exam and the percentage of African-American students who graduate having passed at least one AP exam, the result is a robust 0.72—a strong relationship by almost any definition.

[AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS BY STATE]

Before we present information on the academic performance of African-American students across the country, it is important to note that the African-American population is not evenly distributed from state to state. Some states have a far higher concentration of African-American students than others.[2] This is a word of caution when interpreting some of the findings later in this report, as statistics showing that some states perform particularly well or particularly poorly are educating a very small number of African-American students might be affected by the state's small sample size. Where appropriate, we will note where we think state results are clear outliers driven by a small number of students, and we will not produce top five/bottom five lists for several indicators because of the variance.

To put together this table, we pulled enrollment numbers from the National Center on Education Statistics Elementary/Secondary Information System (ElSi). These are enrollment numbers for public school students during the 2013–2014 school year, the most recent data available.

2 For the purpose of this report, some of the consulted data sources stated student race as either African American or black, and some use both interchangeably. For consistency purposes, we use African American. In addition, several data sources include data for "multi-racial", "biracial", or "two or more races." Given that we are unable to discern if that includes African-American or black students, that data was not included.

State	Number of African-American Students	Total Number of Students	Percentage of African-American Students in the State
Alabama	251,078	743,018	33.8%
Alaska	4,463	130,942	3.4
Arizona	57,269	1,096,885	5.2
Arkansas	102,803	489,979	21.0
California	384,291	6,215,786	6.2
Colorado	41,107	876,147	4.7
Connecticut	70,655	546,020	12.9
Delaware	41,046	131,539	31.2
District of Columbia	57,483	78,153	73.6
Florida	623,058	2,720,739	22.9
Georgia	637,740	1,723,909	37.0
Hawaii	3,869	186,825	2.1
Idaho	3,161	294,262	1.1
Illinois	362,760	2,049,231	17.7
Indiana	128,865	1,047,385	12.3

State	Number of African-American Students	Total Number of Students	Percentage of African-American Students in the State
Iowa	26,745	494,278	5.4%
Kansas	35,511	491,553	7.2
Kentucky	72,929	675,587	10.8
Louisiana	316,473	695,632	45.5
Maine	5,844	176,881	3.3
Maryland	301,996	866,169	34.9
Massachusetts	82,990	955,739	8.7
Michigan	283,322	1,506,431	18.8
Minnesota	82,447	850,454	9.7
Mississippi	242,946	492,586	49.3
Missouri	151,159	916,933	16.5
Montana	1,351	144,129	0.9
Nebraska	20,522	307,677	6.7
Nevada	44,798	451,831	9.9
New Hampshire	3,522	185,299	1.9
New Jersey	220,307	1,369,790	16.1
New Mexico	6,401	339,058	1.9
New York	496,248	2,719,824	18.2
North Carolina	390,455	1,498,344	26.1
North Dakota	3,271	101,687	3.2
Ohio	280,171	1,721,825	16.3
Oklahoma	62,614	680,989	9.2
Oregon	14,745	554,656	2.7
Pennsylvania	264,886	1,734,286	15.3
Rhode Island	11,493	140,605	8.2
South Carolina	261,583	742,982	35.2
South Dakota	3,532	130,837	2.7
Tennessee	227,513	993,556	22.9
Texas	653,221	5,149,025	12.7
Utah	8,088	625,093	1.3
Vermont	1,697	85,407	2.0
Virginia	296,347	1,273,785	23.3
Washington	47,752	1,058,509	4.5
West Virginia	13,177	280,958	4.7
Wisconsin	85,220	873,841	9.8
Wyoming	1,133	92,563	1.2
National Total	**7,792,057**	**49,704,129**	**15.7%**

[IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE]

NATIONWIDE EFFORTS WITH A SIZABLE IMPACT

Education equity is not a problem confined to one laggard state; it is a national problem that requires leveraging key players, community strengths, and a united resolve. Although there are countless programs that support schools and students, fewer have demonstrated success of improving academic performance for students of color. There are some, however, with proven results to help ensure that students of color have as many opportunities as their peers.

Through these initiatives, communities across the country have become part of a network to learn from best practices and how to overcome this nationwide challenge.

Advancement Via Individualized Determination (A.V.I.D.)

The premise is simple: Take average "C" students who want to go to college, have them enroll in rigorous courses, and teach them how to succeed. AVID schools run advanced classes composed of a mix of excelling students and struggling students. Teachers foster a symbiotic relationship whereby struggling students learn from excelling students, and excelling students reinforce learned concepts in their own minds by helping others.

In addition to teaching core subject areas such as math and reading, participating schools run AVID elective courses designed to provide resources for students unfamiliar with the rigor of college preparatory classes. These electives focus on developing effective note-taking skills, promoting healthy organizational habits, and encouraging critical thinking. "We hope to simultaneously increase students' access to rigorous classes and their ability to engage with challenging materials," explains AVID Senior Director and Chief Research Officer Dennis Johnston. The schools also follow AVID's learning support structure that stresses **W**riting, **I**nquiry, **C**ollaboration, **O**rganization, and **R**eading to learn (commonly known in the AVID network as WICOR).

After 30 years, AVID boasts impressive accomplishments in equalizing student performance. The program is available to students of all races, but it concentrates on schools with large minority populations. Today, AVID reaches more than 800,000 students annually in more than 5,000 elementary and secondary schools across 44 states. Ninety-three percent of African-American and 92% of white AVID seniors in 2015 met the entrance requirements for four-year colleges, making the gap statistically nonexistent.

AVID followed its student cohort from the class of 2010 and found that the effects last. Once in college, 86% of white and 83% of black students returned for a second year, both well above the national average for all races of 77%. After four years, the gap between white and black AVID students making it to the senior year of college was only 3%.[3]

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3 AVID Center. "2010 AVID Grads and Persistence" report received on November 2, 2015.

AVID's tremendous success and commitment to making college an option for all its students has earned it a spot as a leader in the fight to close the achievement gap.

The National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI)

NMSI is a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the declining numbers of students prepared for the rigors of college and career, particularly in STEM fields, by supporting and advancing a strong AP agenda. Working in a variety of school settings from coast to coast, NMSI has made great strides in closing the STEM achievement gap, dramatically increasing participation and success in AP STEM courses among traditionally underserved populations. "AP exams are a great equalizer," says Gregg Fleisher, chief academic officer at NMSI. "We know that students who do well in rigorous AP courses do well in college, and that's why we focus on increasing the number of students participating in these classes. We remove barriers that students, teachers, and schools face in maximizing student performance." NMSI's program provides more time on task for students with extra study sessions, extensive training for teachers, and achievement-based financial awards.

Perhaps the biggest impact NMSI has made in the nearly 800 schools it works with is a redefinition of expectations. NMSI believes that *all* students, regardless of background or ZIP code, can achieve at high levels with the proper resources and support. After NMSI enters a school, AP enrollment and success not only become the norm, but they are celebrated with an enthusiasm more common for sports achievements.

NMSI typically relies on businesses to help support its work in local communities. The initiative started in 2007 in Dallas and has since spread to 30 states. Partnerships with ExxonMobil, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Texas Instruments, and others, have jump-started efforts across the nation that now receive both private and public funding. For example, part of ExxonMobil's inaugural $125 million commitment to NMSI was to fund statewide programs dedicated to advancing STEM performance in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Massachusetts. These contributions—and the outstanding results among participating schools—have resulted in follow-on investments from state and local education agencies in each of those states.

By working closely with teachers, school administrators, as well as public, private, and philanthropic partners, NMSI has moved the needle on AP STEM achievement for African-American students. After just one year in the program, African-American students show a 90% increase in the number of passing scores earned on AP math and science exams, well above the national average increase of 12%. Moreover, in 2015, African-American students in NMSI partner schools accounted for 9.4% of the entire country's passing AP scores among African-American students in 2015. Fleisher offered NMSI's secret to success, "When you set high expectations and provide support, students and teachers typically rise to the occasion and succeed."

[ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT]

The primary metric we use to measure academic performance is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a series of tests in various subjects given since the 1970s to a representative sample of students in fourth and eighth grade. It is a highly regarded assessment, and because it is considered "low stakes" (that is, teacher or school evaluations are not tied to it) there is little concern that there is "teaching to the test" or cheating.

Looking at the national picture, two clear findings emerge. First, in absolute terms, scores for African-American students are low. On the 2015 NAEP assessment, only 18% of African-American fourth graders were proficient in reading and only 19% were proficient in math. For African-American eighth graders, 15% were proficient in reading and only 12% in math. This is in comparison with a national average for all students of 36% proficiency in fourth-grade reading, 40% in fourth-grade math, 34% in eighth-grade reading, and 33% in eighth-grade math. On history, civics, and geography exams given to eighth graders in 2014, 6% of African-American students were proficient in history, 9% in civics, and 7% in geography (compared with national averages for all students of 18%, 24%, and 27%, respectively).

At the same time, we should not discount the progress that has been made in these subject areas. In terms of the percentage of students identified as proficient, in all four math and reading tests, African-American students have made statistically significant advances. In 1990 (or 1992 depending on the test), only 8% of African-American fourth graders were proficient in reading and 1% were proficient in math. Only 9% of African-American eighth graders were proficient in reading and only 5% were proficient in math. The gains in social studies were not as drastic, but still represent growth over the past 20 years. These represent significant gains that should be applauded.

Looking into state performance, we can identify the top five and bottom five performing states in each of the assessments in terms of the percentage of African-American students rated proficient or above. For states that tied at the same proficiency rate, all states were all included.

Percentages Proficient, NAEP Exams, National Averages by Grade and Subject

	1990/1992		2015		Difference	
	Reading	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**
African-American Students Fourth Grade	8%	1%	18%	19%	10%	18%
African-American Students Eighth Grade	9%	5%	15%	12%	6%	7%
All Students Fourth Grade	29%	13%	36%	40%	7%	27%
All Students Eighth Grade	29%	15%	34%	33%	5%	18%

	1994	2014
African-American Students Eighth Grade History	3%	6%
African-American Students Eighth Grade Civics	7%	9%
African-American Students Eighth Grade Geography	5%	7%

Top Five and Bottom Five Performers, Percentages Proficient by Grade and Subject

4th Grade Math	% Proficient	8th Grade Math	% Proficient	4th Grade Reading	% Proficient	8th Grade Reading	% Proficient
Top Five							
Arizona	32%	Massachusetts	22%	Arizona	27%	Hawaii	23%
Texas	29%	New Jersey	20%	Colorado	27%	South Dakota	23%
Massachusetts	26%	Arizona	19%	Rhode Island	27%	Washington	22%
Minnesota	25%	Alaska	17%	Alaska	25%	Colorado	20%
Virginia	25%	North Dakota	17%	Massachusetts	25%	Connecticut	20%
				Washington	25%	New Jersey	20%
						West Virginia	20%

4th Grade Math	% Proficient	8th Grade Math	% Proficient	4th Grade Reading	% Proficient	8th Grade Reading	% Proficient
Bottom Five							
Alabama	10%	Alabama	5%	Michigan	9%	Arkansas	8%
Michigan	10%	Michigan	5%	Wisconsin	11%	Mississippi	8%
South Dakota	11%	Louisiana	7%	California	14%	Michigan	9%
West Virginia	11%	Wisconsin	7%	Iowa	14%	Oklahoma	9%
Illinois	12%	Iowa	8%	Maine	14%	Wisconsin	10%
Nebraska	12%	Nevada	8%	Mississippi	14%		
Ohio	12%	Oklahoma	8%	Nevada	14%		
		Pennsylvania	8%				
		South Carolina	8%				
		West Virginia	8%				

Academic Achievement: 2015 NAEP African-American Student Results, Percentages Proficient by Grade and Subject

State	% of 4th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Math Exam	% of 4th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Reading Exam	% of 8th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Math Exam	% of 8th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Reading Exam
Alabama	10%	15%	5%	12%
Alaska	14	25	17	14
Arizona	32	27	19	19
Arkansas	15	17	10	8
California	18	14	14	16
Colorado	21	27	15	20
Connecticut	13	15	12	20
Delaware	19	21	13	16
District of Columbia	20	18	13	12
Florida	21	20	11	15
Georgia	19	22	13	15
Hawaii	‡	‡	‡	23
Idaho	‡	‡	‡	‡
Illinois	12	15	12	13
Indiana	22	22	10	19
Iowa	18	14	8	13
Kansas	14	15	13	14
Kentucky	20	23	12	15
Louisiana	16	17	7	12
Maine	18	14	‡	16
Maryland	21	18	14	19
Massachusetts	26	25	22	18
Michigan	10	9	5	9
Minnesota	25	16	14	16
Mississippi	15	14	10	8
Missouri	15	15	11	14
Montana	‡	‡	‡	‡
Nebraska	12	22	13	14

State	% of 4th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Math Exam	% of 4th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Reading Exam	% of 8th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Math Exam	% of 8th Grade African-American Students at or Above Proficient on NAEP 2015 Reading Exam
Nevada	15%	14%	8%	16%
New Hampshire	‡	‡	‡	‡
New Jersey	21	22	20	20
New Mexico	‡	‡	‡	‡
New York	14	18	15	17
North Carolina	22	23	16	13
North Dakota	24	21	17	15
Ohio	12	16	11	14
Oklahoma	15	17	8	9
Oregon	17	‡	‡	‡
Pennsylvania	15	17	8	13
Rhode Island	17	27	14	15
South Carolina	16	15	8	11
South Dakota	11	15	‡	23
Tennessee	20	16	9	15
Texas	29	17	16	19
Utah	‡	‡	‡	‡
Vermont	‡	‡	‡	‡
Virginia	25	19	12	16
Washington	24	25	13	22
West Virginia	11	21	8	20
Wisconsin	13	11	7	10
Wyoming	‡	‡	‡	‡
National Average African-American Students	19%	18%	12%	15%
National Average All Students	40%	36%	33%	34%

‡ Signifies reporting standards not met as determined by NAEP.

[BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOWS CITIES HOW IT'S DONE]

Boston Public Schools (BPS), the nation's oldest public school system, established its Office of the Achievement Gap in 2009 under the restructuring of then-Superintendent Carol Johnson. The department and its leader, Dr. Carroll Blake, intended to add new programs and focus on continuing the successful Ten Boys Initiative. This initiative selects and provides individual attention to 10 typically African-American students from 50 BPS schools who are at the cusp of proficiency. Since the initiative began in 2007, it has served more than 3,000 boys and continues to help 400–500 annually. Each student gets a mentor and additional resources to improve his proficiency. A 2014 study found that in just one year, participants documented an 11.6% increase in those scoring proficient or advanced on the state's English and language arts test. That same cohort saw a 6.8% increase in the students' daily attendance and a 10% reduction in the number of suspensions. The BPS recently started a similar program for Boston's female students.

The district also recognized that achievement gaps appear from the start of a child's education. BPS developed a robust early education program (preschool to grade 3). Parents apply for a select number of seats in the BPS preschool programs, K0 and K1, which begin at ages three and four, respectively. The results have raised DRIBELS Next scores (measuring literacy skills) for all the participants, but have had resounding impacts on the achievement gap. A Harvard study followed students from K1 to K2 (kindergarten) and found that the achievement gap between white and black students fell to 4%, versus the 11% gap between white and black students who did not enroll in K1. The gap between white and Hispanic students fell by 14% for the cohort that completed K1. The study concluded that the program had some of the greatest academic gains from a large-scale pre-K program to date—findings that were highlighted during a congressional hearing on early childhood education.[4] Today, BPS provides approximately 500 free seats in K0 and 2,400 in K1. BPS spends approximately $10,000 per preschool student compared with the declining national average of $4,125.

Boston has steered the charge on personnel leadership to close the achievement gap. The district

4 Boston Public Schools. "BPS early childhood study: program helps close achievement gaps, expands learning." March 10, 2014. www.bostonpublicschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=14&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=3439&PageID=1

has focused diversifying its workforce and 37% of its teachers are minorities.[5] Diversity and sensitivity training has also become a priority. The dropout rate since 2006 for African-Americans has decreased from 10% to 4.5% and from 11% to 5.2% for Hispanics.[6] And Boston is one of only five urban school districts where black students outperform the NAEP average scaled scores for black students nationwide.[7]

Unlike many cities, Boston did not just set a goal of reducing test score discrepancies based on race; the local school district drafted plans, implemented new programs, and became a laboratory committed to eliminating the gap.

5 Boston Public Schools. "BPS Teacher Diversity Action Plan to develop highly-qualified, diverse teaching force." January 16, 2014. www.bostonpublicschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&Do-mainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=14&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-84 24-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=3330&PageID=1
6 Boston Public Schools. "Opportunity and Equity." www.bostonpublicschools.org/opportunity
7 Boston Public Schools. "Update on Eliminating the Achievement Gap" presentation given on June 18, 2014. www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/162/2014-06-18%20Achievement%20Gap%20presenta-tion%20FINAL.pdf. Accessed November 5, 2015.

[POSTSECONDARY READINESS]

School does not stop at the eighth grade. Ultimately, our K–12 system must produce students who are ready to get a postsecondary credential or enter a career at the end of their schooling experience.

To report on the readiness of African-American students for college, we compiled four indicators: graduation rates, American College Testing (ACT) scores, participation and passage rates on Advanced Placement (AP) tests, and postsecondary remediation rates. Taken together, they paint a familiar picture: Far too many African-American students are failing to make it through our education system, and for those who do, far too many are unprepared for college.

Let's start with graduation rates. As a source, we looked to *Education Week*'s annual *Diplomas Count* publication. Nationally, graduation rates have been on the rise in recent years. For all students in the country in the class of 2013, for whom the most recent data are available, the graduation rate was 81%. For African-American students it was 10 points lower, at 71%. Looking state by state, rates for African-American students ranged from 84% on the high end (in Texas) to only 57% on the low end (in Nevada and Oregon).

For those students who graduated, we have three metrics of how well they were prepared for college. The first is ACT scores. The ACT creates a "college-

ready" benchmark—scores that their research predicts give students a 75% chance or better of earning a "C" or higher and a 50% chance of earning a "B" or higher in the corresponding entry-level college course in their tested subjects. Nationally, only 12% of African-American students were college-ready in three or more of the four tested subjects in 2015 (English, mathematics, reading, and science).[8] We present the state-by-state breakdown of the percentage of students who scored college-ready on *all four* tested subjects.

In interpreting this table it is important to keep in mind that the population of students taking the ACT varies from state to state. In some states, all graduating students are required to take the exam. In other states, a large number of college-bound students take the exam, even though it is not required. In several other states, much smaller numbers of students take the test.

Second, we present results from AP tests taken by the class of 2014. AP tests can be an important first step in performing college-level work. In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to increase the number of students taking AP tests and specifically to increase the number of low-income and minority students

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8 ACT. *The Condition of College & Career Readiness.* 2015. www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr15/pdf/CCCR15-National-ReadinessRpt.pdf

taking AP exams. To see the fruits of these efforts, we were granted access to data on both exam-taking rates and exam-passing rates (scoring a 3 or higher on AP's 1–5 scale) by the College Board, the organization that administers the tests. We show the state-by-state percentage of African-American graduates in the class of 2014 who graduated having taken an AP exam and the percentage of African-American graduates in the class of 2014 who graduated having passed an AP exam. It also allows us to assess states on which have the largest gaps between the number of students taking exams and the number of students passing exams.

Nationally, 24.2% of African-American graduates of the class of 2014 left school having taken an AP exam, compared with a national average of 35.7% for all students. Only 7.2% of African-American students successfully passed at least one of those AP exams, only one-third of the national average for all students of 21.6%. States varied widely both in the percentage of students who took exams, ranging from 47.5% of African-American students in Washington, D.C., to only 5.1% of African-American students in North Dakota. Regarding percentages of students passing, Hawaii led the pack with 16% of its African-American students passing, and Mississippi brought up the rear with a paltry 1.2% of African-American students passing, though again, it bears repeating that Hawaii educates a small number of African-American students and

Mississippi has the largest number, outside of the District of Columbia.

Fourth, we worked with Complete College America to display their data on college remediation rates for the most recent cohort year available (which varied by state). They provided us with key indicators for the states in which they operate: enrollment in remedial coursework (math, English or math and English); success in remedial coursework (completed all required remedial coursework for the subjects in which student required remediation); and success in gateway college courses (completed a gateway course in all subjects for which they were enrolled in remedial courses). There are fairly serious limitations to these data, one problem being that Complete College America does not have data for every state and that not all institution types are included in all states. But, to our knowledge, it is the best, most comprehensive, and most comparable set of data available on college remediation rates. Given those, and other limitations noted in the table, certain states and school systems do stand out for remediation enrollment rates for African-American students. In Rhode Island the rate is 73% of African-American students and in Oklahoma it is 72%. Few states or school systems were in the 20% to 30% range—Montana at 29% and the Pennsylvania system of higher education at 28%.

Top Five and Bottom Five Performers, High School Graduation Rates for African-American Students

Top Five and Bottom Five Performers, ACT College Readiness for African-American Students (of the 34 states with at least 500 test takers)

Top Five (five tied at 78%)	
Texas	84%
New Hampshire	82%
North Dakota	80%
Arkansas	78%
Kentucky	78%
Maryland	78%
North Carolina	78%
Tennessee	78%
Bottom Five	
Nevada	57%
Oregon	57%
Minnesota	58%
District of Columbia	61%
Michigan	61%

Top Five (three tied at 11%)	
Massachusetts	17%
New York	17%
Connecticut	15%
California	13%
Maryland	11%
New Jersey	11%
Virginia	11%
Bottom Five (six tied at 4%)	
Alabama	3%
Mississippi	3%
Arkansas	4%
Louisiana	4%
Michigan	4%
North Carolina	4%
South Carolina	4%
Tennessee	4%

Top Five and Bottom Five Performers, AP Exam-Taking and Passage Rates for African-American Students

AP Taking	AP Passing	Gap
Top Five		
District of Columbia (47.5%)	Hawaii (16.0%)	North Dakota (1.6 points)
Hawaii (43.7%)	Utah (14.5%)	New Hampshire (3.0 points)
Florida (43.6%)	Idaho (14.2%)	Wyoming (6.5 points)
Colorado (38.2%)	Montana (14.1%)	South Dakota (6.6 points)
Maryland (34.4%)	Colorado (13.9%)	Michigan (7.5 points)
Bottom Five		
South Dakota (11.2%)	North Dakota (3.5%)	Colorado (24.3 points)
Michigan (10.8%)	Michigan (3.3%)	Hawaii (27.7 points)
Mississippi (9.9%)	Missouri (2.7%)	Arkansas (29.3 points)
New Hampshire (6.8%)	Louisiana (1.8%)	Florida (31.5 points)
North Dakota (5.1%)	Mississippi (1.2%)	District of Columbia (41.0 points)

Postsecondary Readiness I: High School Graduation Rates, ACT Scores, and AP Exams

State	African-American High School Student Graduation Rates, Percentages	All High School Student Graduation Rates, Percentages	Percentage of African-American Students Scoring College-Ready in All Four ACT Tested Subjects, Class of 2015	Number of African-American Students Taking ACT Test, Class of 2015
Alabama	74%	80%	3%	15,615
Alaska	65	72	8	75
Arizona	70	75	8	1,551
Arkansas	78	85	4	4,540
California	68	80	13	5,724
Colorado	70	77	9	2,140
Connecticut	76	86	15	694
Delaware	76	80	11	287
District of Columbia	61	62	8	733
Florida	65	76	6	28,151
Georgia	64	72	7	18,068
Hawaii	75	82	10	136
Idaho	*	*	14	74
Illinois	71	83	6	21,180
Indiana	74	87	6	2,624
Iowa	74	90	10	628
Kansas	76	86	8	1,249
Kentucky	78	86	5	4,084
Louisiana	66	74	4	15,908
Maine	75	86	13	31
Maryland	78	85	11	4,051
Massachusetts	74	85	17	820
Michigan	61	77	4	15,608
Minnesota	58	80	10	2,744
Mississippi	70	76	3	11,658
Missouri	72	86	6	6,146
Montana	77	84	7	69
Nebraska	77	89	6	768
Nevada	57	71	8	587
New Hampshire	82	87	37	67
New Jersey	76	88	11	3,159
New Mexico	69	70	15	180
New York	63	77	17	4,088
North Carolina	78	83	4	21,055

Percentage of All Students Scoring College-Ready in All Four ACT Tested Subjects, Class of 2015	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Took an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of All Public High School Graduates Who Took an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of All Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014
0%	22.8%	3.6%	29.2%	11.5%
28	14.2	4.7	23.5	14.7
22	17.5	6.5	26.3	15.1
21	33.7	4.4	48.6	16.9
37	28.4	11.8	43.9	29.1
26	38.2	13.9	43	26.8
50	24.8	9.9	41.8	30.8
42	18.2	5.8	33.1	18
33	47.5	6.5	60.2	15
21	43.6	12.1	57.2	30
26	30.7	8.1	41.5	22.2
15	43.7	16	31.6	13.5
37	27.4	14.2	19.6	13.1
26	25.5	7	35.4	23.5
34	26.7	6.2	36.7	18
33	15	5.4	20	12.2
32	13.7	4.8	18	11
21	21.1	6.3	35.4	17.9
16	14.2	1.8	20.2	6.2
47	25.3	11.7	36.8	22.9
39	34.4	11.6	50.9	31.8
51	31.4	12.1	41.7	29.4
22	10.8	3.3	29.5	19.4
39	20.9	8.7	32.5	21.2
13	9.9	1.2	15.3	5
30	12.5	2.7	17.3	10.5
24	26.6	14.1	21.7	13.8
29	12.5	3.6	18.4	10.6
26	28.9	9.9	37.8	20.9
49	6.8	3.8	24.7	18.4
42	15.6	6.5	33.4	24.9
20	27.1	8	29.1	12
46	23.7	8.9	39.5	26.5
18	18.5	6	34.4	20.5

Postsecondary Readiness I: High School Graduation Rates, ACT Scores, and AP Exams

State	African-American High School Student Graduation Rates, Percentages	All High School Student Graduation Rates, Percentages	Percentage of African-American Students Scoring College-Ready in All Four ACT Tested Subjects, Class of 2015	Number of African-American Students Taking ACT Test, Class of 2015
North Dakota	80%	88%	4%	134
Ohio	63	82	7	10,333
Oklahoma	77	85	6	2,058
Oregon	57	69	9	407
Pennsylvania	73	86	8	2,887
Rhode Island	72	80	12	90
South Carolina	75	78	4	7,105
South Dakota	72	83	11	88
Tennessee	78	86	4	12,350
Texas	84	88	8	13,792
Utah	70	83	6	452
Vermont	73	87	13	40
Virginia	77	85	11	4,011
Washington	66	76	8	782
West Virginia	75	81	6	382
Wisconsin	66	88	5	3,125
Wyoming	66	77	8	38
National Average	**71%**	**81%**		

Percentage of All Students Scoring College-Ready in All Four ACT Tested Subjects, Class of 2015	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Took an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of All Public High School Graduates Who Took an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014	Percentage of All Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP Exam During High School, Class of 2014
24%	5.1%	3.5%	13.8%	9.2%
33	15.6	5.1	24.8	15.8
22	15.9	4.3	23.2	11.4
31	21.7	8	24.7	15.5
40	14.8	4.1	25.4	17
42	18.8	4	29	17
23	15.9	5.3	32.2	19.1
33	11.2	4.6	19.7	12.8
20	15	3.7	20.4	10.7
27	30.7	8.6	39.1	20.3
23	25.6	14.5	36.2	25.2
44	23.8	9.2	33.8	23.9
41	29.6	10.6	46.3	30
39	31.3	10.5	36	21.9
21	12.8	4.5	23.2	10.2
35	15.6	4.3	33.6	23.6
22	13.1	6.6	18.4	10.7
	24.2%	7.2%	35.7%	21.6%

Postsecondary Readiness II: Remediation Enrollment and Success*

Student Cohort Year	State or Network	Enrolled in Remedial Courses	
		All Students	African-American Students
2010	Arkansas	48%	75%
2010	Colorado	31	56
2010	Connecticut	43	65
2010	D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education	48	61
2009	Florida Department of Education	55	74
2010	Georgia	35	51
2010	Hawaii	49	53
2010	Idaho	35	DS
2010	Illinois	40	56
2010	Indiana	40	63
2010	Kentucky	42	67
2010	Louisiana	39	57
2010	Maryland	50	67
2010	Massachusetts	54	68
2010	Mississippi	43	59
2010	Missouri	42	68
2010	Montana	36	29
2010	Nevada	44	54
2010	New Mexico	58	50
2010	Ohio	46	69
2010	Oklahoma	46	72
2010	Oregon	33	37
2010	Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASHE)	15	28
2007	Rhode Island	39	73

Completed Remedial Courses		Remedial Students Who Completed All Gateway Courses	
All Students	African-American Students	All Students	African-American Students
57%	50%	22%	17%
62	44		
65	57	19	16
54	DS	14	DS
69	63	30	23
49	43	26	22
39	DS	23	DS
71	DS	31	DS
70	57	23	12
67	52	23	11
38	32	14	16
47	39	5	5
49	39	26	18
62	56	27	20
66	64	32	29
55	33	27	12
69	DS	40	DS
73	63	25	20
72	61	29	17
48	30	26	14
58	45	22	15
75	58	22	12
88	85	83	77
60	55	38	DS

(Continued from previous page)

Postsecondary Readiness II: Remediation Enrollment and Success*

		Enrolled in Remedial Courses	
Student Cohort Year	State or Network	All Students	African-American Students
2010	South Dakota Board of Regents	33%	66%
2010	Tennessee	43	50
2010	Texas	39	56
2010	University of Wisconsin System	24	63
2010	Utah	21	31
2010	West Virginia	36	53
2010	Wyoming	43	DS

Completed Remedial Courses		Remedial Students Who Completed All Gateway Courses	
All Students	African-American Students	All Students	African-American Students
61%	DS	37%	DS
47	35	18	9
40	37	19	16
68	57	NR	NR
63	DS	10	DS
40	29	16	DS
58	DS	26	DS

*Includes first-time entering full-time and part-time students enrolled in remedial English and/or math who completed all required remedial and gateway courses in the same subject(s). Includes students across all institution types except in the following cases: South Dakota includes only institutions overseen by the Board of Regents (not community colleges), Pennsylvania includes only the PASHE system, and Wisconsin includes only the University of Wisconsin System.

DS = Fewer than 10 students, so data were suppressed.

[EMPLOYERS SEEK THEIR FUTURE WORKFORCE]

Businesses are the primary direct consumer of America's students. In many ways, they have the most to lose from an unresolved achievement gap. Luckily, businesses have made tremendous contributions to their local communities as well as nationally to support students of color and expose them to the possibilities for what comes after high school or college.

Tata Consulting Services' (TCS') goIT Program
The IT community has long understood the need to increase diversity in STEM fields. Since 2009, TCS has reached more than 9,000 students through its goIT student technology awareness program, which offers hands-on technology-related workshops and mentorship programs to students. TCS employees share their technical knowledge with the students and serve as mentors in an effort to, as one volunteer says, "dedicate time to prepare a new generation of creators and makers of technology." TCS' goIT programs target minority and female students, exposing them to the field and empowering them to enter STEM careers.

In 2014, goIT reached students in 12 cities. The program is expanding to 27 cities across 20 states and provinces in Canada by the end of 2016. The interaction between mentors and mentees is crucial, so TCS ensures that adequate time is spent training volunteers and teaching them how to be effective corporate mentors. "We are bringing the people who make interactive technology and innovate for our clients everyday across the U.S. and Canada, and pairing them up with students, many of whom do not have access to technology or role models. That's what makes our program different," says Pam Rodrigues of TCS's corporate social responsibility team.

goIT partners with schools and nonprofit organizations—such as the Boys and Girls Club, NPower, TechBridge, National 4H Council, and Teach for America—to further its reach. Programs range from basic coding challenges to design thinking and app development. In 2014, 1,800 students completed goIT programs, and TCS intends to reach 2,500 in the upcoming year. Surveys indicate that 70% of goIT students experience an increase in STEM interest, while participating schools report on average a 27% increase in the number of graduates pursuing STEM education or careers postgraduation.

EverFi, Inc.
EverFi, Inc., a leading education technology innovator, works to empower its learners with the critical skills that prepare them for success in work and life. With backing from some of technology's most innovative leaders including Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, Google Chairman Eric Schmidt, and Twitter founder Evan Williams, EverFi has built a comprehensive skills learning platform focused on STEM Career Readiness, Financial Education, Health & Wellness, Diversity and Inclusion, and Entrepreneurship. The EverFi Education Network partners with more than 1,200 organizations—mostly businesses—across all 50 states and Canada and has certified more than 12 million students in these key skills, with a particular focus on low-income and underserved communities.

Specifically, in EverFi's STEM Career Readiness work, EverFi has committed to lighting a spark that connects students to the possibilities and workforce opportunities in STEM. It has developed three digital STEM education platforms designed to inspire and empower students with essential STEM skills and interest: *Radius-STEM Readiness™*, *Future Goals-Hockey Scholar™*, and *Ignition-Digital Literacy™*. With an on-the-ground team of former teachers, EverFi

partners with educators across the country to implement these courses into classrooms, particularly those in low-income and underserved communities. The *Ignition* and *Radius* courses alone have impacted more than 800,000 students. In an analysis of more than 3,000 students who completed the *Radius* course in 2014, EverFi demonstrated a 15% increase in computer science and engineering interest, a crucial component to keep students taking STEM courses.

Detroit Regional Chamber's Commitment to Make College a Reality for Local Students

Many chambers of commerce across the country have led the business community in increasing student access to college. Over the past 25 years the Detroit Regional Chamber has provided Compact Scholarships to enable more than 2,000 students to attend four-year universities in the state. The Compact has served as a last-dollar financial aid program where Detroit Public Schools (DPS) students had to graduate with a 3.2 GPA, an ACT score of 21, and file a FAFSA form to be eligible. The chamber then provided a scholarship to cover the residual costs of attendance. Federal, state, and the generous institutional aid from the participating schools typically covered most of the costs for students, but providing that extra $1,000 to $2,000 made college a reality for up to 150 Detroit students each year. Greg Handel, vice president of education and talent, shares the real value in a program like this. He says, "A lot of kids are mystified by the financial aid process. We have helped them realize its full potential and then made an effort to pick up the rest of the tab for some of Detroit's most underserved students." Of those students, who are predominately African-American, 59% graduate in four years—a substantially higher rate than the average for African-American students nationwide.

Though a significant source of support, the scholarship program did not reach every student who qualified. "We estimate that each year approximately 400–500 Detroit students met our requirements for a scholarship," Handel adds, "which is why we are transitioning to a new program called the Detroit Scholarship Fund that will help cover the costs of college for every student that deserves one." With the help of Governor Rick Snyder, the state has established the Michigan Education Excellence Foundation (MEEF) to raise funds and support various education efforts statewide, including the new Detroit Scholarship Fund. MEEF will continue to collect donations from the business community to help finance the chamber's expansion efforts.

The chamber's work has recently led to the creation of an inclusive community college scholarship program eligible to all Detroit students. Through pilot testing, the chamber realized the threat attrition poses to any new program's return on investment. Only 170 of the original 550 community college students returned for a second year. To encourage retention, peer mentoring and coaching initiatives will accompany the launch of the new program. After the implementation of the new scholarship structure, the Detroit Regional Chamber hopes to help finance the education for 500 four-year and 500 community college students from Detroit each year, and provide the tools and resources necessary to help them graduate.

[INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS]

Given increasing global competition, the demands on the graduates of our K–12 system are much more pressing. Instantaneous communication, interconnected financial markets, and the spread of wealth and prosperity around the globe have made competition for work and products steeper every day. It is no longer sufficient for our schools to prepare students to succeed in their town, city, or state; schools have to think about how those students match up to their peers from around the world.

No group of students is spared from this, so we thought it important to look at the performance of African-American students on a range of indicators that can give us some insight into how they compare with their international peers. American students as a whole tend to lag on the following indicators, and given that African-American students tend to lag in the nation as a whole, comparing them to a set of international students reveals an even greater gap.

The first indicator is passage rates on the 10 Advanced Placement (AP) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) exams (Biology, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Chemistry, Computer Science A, Environmental Science, Physics 1 and 2, Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, Physics C: Mechanics, and Statistics). STEM fields are growing around the globe,

and can be a source of stable, high-paying work. According to STEM advocacy group Change the Equation, STEM jobs are slated to grow at a rate of 17% between 2014 and 2024, while non-STEM jobs are slated to grow at only a 12% rate.[9] But it won't be only American students looking for those jobs; educated young people from all over the world will be competing.

Unfortunately, African-American students pass AP STEM exams at low rates. The national average for African-American graduates of the class of 2014 is only 2.6%. Only three states saw more than 5% of the African-Americans in their graduation class pass at least one AP STEM exam during high school—Colorado at 5.9%, Massachusetts at 5.4%, and Hawaii at exactly 5%. At the other end of the spectrum, four states saw less than 1% of African-American students graduate having passed an AP STEM exam—West Virginia at 0.7%, Missouri at 0.7%, Louisiana at 0.5%, and Mississippi at 0.4%.

The second indicator is passage rates on AP World Language exams. To succeed in a global business environment, it can be helpful for students to know a

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9 Change the Equation. *The Diversity Dilemma*. 2015. changetheequation.org/solving-diversity-dilemma.

foreign language. The College Board offers eight World Language exams—Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Spanish Language, and Spanish Literature.

Unfortunately, passage rates are abysmally low for African-American students on these tests. The national average passage rate for African-American students in the class of 2014 was a paltry 0.5%. Only four states saw more than 1% of their African-American graduates pass a World Language exam—Vermont at 2.3%, Massachusetts at 1.9%, Florida at 1.2%, and Colorado at 1.1%.

The third indicator looks at how well African-American students perform on international assessments. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam is given every three years to a representative sample of 15-year-old students in 65 education systems around the world. It tests mathematics, science, and reading. On the 2012 exam, African-American students in the United States scored an average of 421 in math, which was significantly lower than the national average of 481 and lower than the international average of 494.[10] In reading, African-American students scored

an average of 443, again lower than the national average of 498 and the international average of 496.[11] In science, African-American students scored an average of 439, lower than the national average of 497 and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) average of 501.[12]

One way to interpret these results is to ask the question "If African-American students were their own country, what country would their performance most resemble?" With an average score of 421 in math, African-American students are on par with students from Chile (average score 423), Malaysia (421), and Mexico (413). In reading, the average score of 443 looks like the performance of students from Thailand (441), Bulgaria (436), and Romania (438). In science, the average score of 439 resembles students from Romania (439), Cyprus (438), and Serbia (445).[13]

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10 National Center for Education Statistics. Programme for International Student Assessment. nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/
pisa2012/pisa2012highlights_3f.asp. Accessed November 5, 2015.
11 National Center for Education Statistics. Programme for International Student Assessment. nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/ pisa2012/pisa2012highlights_5e.asp. Accessed November 5, 2015.
12 National Center for Education Statistics. Programme for International Student Assessment. nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/ pisa2012/pisa2012highlights_4e.asp. Accessed November 5, 2015.
13 OECD. "PISA 2012 Results in Focus: What 15-year-olds know and what they can do with what they know." 2014. www.oecd.org/pisa/ keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf. Accessed November 5, 2015.

Top Five and Bottom Five Performers, AP STEM and AP World Language Passage Rates

AP STEM	Percentage of African-American Students Passing	AP World Language	Percentage of African-American Students Passing
Top Five			
Colorado	5.9%	Vermont	2.3%
Massachusetts	5.4%	Massachusetts	1.9%
Hawaii	5.0%	Florida	1.2%
Utah	4.8%	Colorado	1.1%
California	4.7%	California	0.9%
		Maryland	0.9%
Bottom Five			
Mississippi	0.4%	Mississippi	0.0%
Louisiana	0.5%	Alabama	0.1%
Missouri	0.7%	Arkansas	0.1%
West Virginia	0.7%	Louisiana	0.1%
Tennessee	1.1%	Missouri	0.1%
		South Carolina	0.1%

2012 PISA Results

	Math	Reading	Science
African-American Average	421	443	439
U.S. Average	481	498	497
OECD Average	494	496	501

International Competitiveness

State	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP STEM Exam, Class of 2014	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP World Language Exam, Class of 2014
Alabama	1.4%	0.1%
Alaska	3.3	***
Arizona	2.5	0.4
Arkansas	1.5	0.1
California	4.7	0.9
Colorado	5.9	1.1
Connecticut	4.2	0.6
Delaware	2.1	0.4
District of Columbia	1.3	0.4
Florida	3.3	1.2
Georgia	2.7	0.4
Hawaii	5	***
Idaho	4.2	***
Illinois	2	0.5
Indiana	2.4	0.3

Continued — International Competitiveness

State	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP STEM Exam, Class of 2014	Percentage of African-American Public High School Graduates Who Scored 3 or Higher on an AP World Language Exam, Class of 2014
Iowa	2.2	0.4
Kansas	1.6%	0.4%
Kentucky	2	0.4
Louisiana	0.5	0.1
Maine	4.5	***
Maryland	4.3	0.9
Massachusetts	5.4	1.9
Michigan	1.2	0.2
Minnesota	3.2	0.3
Mississippi	0.4	0
Missouri	0.7	0.1
Montana	4.7	***
Nebraska	1.4	0.7
Nevada	4	0.2
New Hampshire	1.2	***
New Jersey	3	0.5
New Mexico	3.4	0.5
New York	4	0.7
North Carolina	2.3	0.3
North Dakota	1.5	***
Ohio	1.7	0.4
Oklahoma	1.2	0.4
Oregon	2.4	***
Pennsylvania	1.4	0.4
Rhode Island	1.7	0.4
South Carolina	2.1	0.1
South Dakota	3.1	***
Tennessee	1.1	0.3
Texas	3.3	0.4
Utah	4.8	***
Vermont	3.8	2.3
Virginia	3.7	0.7
Washington	3.4	0.6
West Virginia	0.7	-
Wisconsin	1.2	0.3
Wyoming	***	-
National Average	**2.6%**	**0.5%**

*** Percentages are calculated when there are 5 or more AP Examinees.
—WV and WY did not have any African-American World Language examinees.

[THE PATH FORWARD]

Education equity is a complex problem, and no one-size-fits-all solution exists. However, the "spotlight" programs throughout this report prove it is effective to identify a strategy, integrate it into everyday work, and make it a long-lasting priority rather than a fleeting program. There are lessons to be learned from what has worked to date—both factors to replicate and challenges to overcome.

Researching these programs has led to introductions and relationships with educators, administrators, business leaders, community activists, policymakers, and even the students themselves. What follows are common themes these leaders believe are key to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

The Small Things Matter

While the achievement gap is a macro-problem, some of the smallest countermeasures prove to be the most beneficial. As one administrator told us, "You can never underestimate the effect of a positive building. It's things like cleanliness that let parents know we care and make them want to take a more active part in their children's education."

The Michigan Department of Education launched a three-year pilot program in 2013, the American Young Men of Promise Initiative (AAYMPI), which stresses creating an environment conducive to learning. Participating schools strive for goals ranging from keeping the building clean to ambitious challenges directed at teachers like the Positive Phone Calls Home Initiative. "Teachers' perceptions of their students positively or negatively influence how students view themselves," the AAYMPI reference guide states. For the most part, only poor behaviors warrant communication with parents, but the initiative encourages teachers to call the homes of male students to reinforce positive behavior. Principal Melissa Paschall of Northeast Elementary School in Jackson, MI, says: "It can't be a call to let mom know Johnny fell on the playground today. It has to be something good—something to let the parents know we are proud of his or her child."

Get Support From the Right Places

Gaining community support is imperative. Dr. Blake of BPS points out that City Hall is often the best place to target for public outreach. Without the public's and parents' support, efforts can be short-lived. Several of

the people we spoke with encouraged collaboration between nonprofits, schools, and business. Each has its own motivations, but in the end, everyone wants the same outcome—success for *all* students.

Don't Forget to Follow Through

Even more disappointing than seeing gaps in college admittance rates is seeing subsets of the population dropout at disproportionate rates. In Detroit, promoting access to college is only part of the battle. The long-term goal of getting productive and career-ready members of society requires work beyond counting college acceptance letters. Every step toward improving the gap must be accompanied with a game plan for sustainability.

Educators in the Boston Public Schools warn against "fade-out" from their pre-K programs. With an intense focus on early education, student performance can plateau and eventually decrease without special attention. Jason Sachs, director of the Early Childhood Program at BPS says, "It is critical to make efforts to sustain these gains made in the first few years. Going forward, we can say K0 and K1 are great,

but ultimately we need to improve upon K2, first grade, and beyond to make sure that students' whole educational careers are conducive to their success." Despite this concern, the results continued through third and fifth grade where students who completed K1 scored higher on state standardized tests than those who did not.

Demonstrate Success

Great education reform does not start and end in pilot programs. Measurement of progress is essential for long-term success. Programs such as President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* initiative emphasize the importance of consistent program measurement. The most promising of programs highlighted are able to connect success stories to real data that are moving the needle on improving student performance. Investing in what works makes perfect business sense, and all students deserve to be a success story.

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