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High School Graduation Rate Improves Over Past Decade; Recent Declines Threaten Progress

***Report Identifies Big-City School Districts Beating Graduation Expectations;
Examines Efforts to Prepare All Students for College***

WASHINGTON—June 9, 2009—A new national report from *Education Week* and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center paints a cautiously optimistic picture of high school graduation trends, finding that the national graduation rate has improved over the past decade, though a recent one-year downturn—the first significant annual decline in that 10-year period—raises cause for concern.

Despite overall progress, three out of every 10 students in U.S. public schools still fail to finish high school with a diploma, the report finds. That amounts to 1.3 million students lost from the graduation pipeline every year, or almost 7,200 students lost every day, it adds. The report also points out that there is no firm consensus among states, schools, and policymakers on what it means to be ready for postsecondary education or how to measure college readiness.

The report, *Diplomas Count 2009: Broader Horizons: The Challenge of College Readiness for All Students*, investigates one of the most critical issues facing the nation's educational and economic future—the challenge to prepare all students for college. As leaders at all levels of public life call for Americans to engage in some education beyond high school, *Diplomas Count* examines this growing movement by:

- Mapping the policy and reform landscape that defines the college-ready agenda;
- Profiling one high school's efforts to nurture a college-going culture;
- Examining how better data and accountability systems can help support readiness initiatives; and
- Highlighting the cutting-edge efforts of a state working to put actionable information about college preparation in the hands of educators.

This push for college comes amid sobering statistics on the proportion of U.S. students who currently finish high school and on the level of college preparation that comes with a high school diploma. The report—part of a multi-year project supported by the Seattle-based Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—also tracks graduation policies for all 50 states and the District of Columbia and presents an updated analysis of graduation rates and trends for the nation, states, and the country's 50 largest school systems.

"The nation is failing to reach a level necessary to put the United States on a solid footing in a competitive global market," said EPE Research Center Director Christopher B. Swanson. "However, the longer-term trajectory of change for the country's graduation rate does offer some reason to be cautiously optimistic."

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Overall, graduation rates have made slow but steady progress during the last decade, according to an original analysis by the EPE Research Center using its Cumulative Promotion Index method and data from the U.S. Department of Education. Over this period, the nation's graduation rate increased by almost 3 percentage points, rising from 66.4 percent in 1996 to 69.2 percent in 2006, the most recent year for which data were available. Graduation rates improved, at least marginally, in 34 states during this time, with several—Arizona, South Carolina, and Tennessee—experiencing double-digit gains. Ten states saw drops of at least 1 percentage point, with the largest decline occurring in Nevada.

Long-term improvements can be found for all major demographic groups, though gains have been considerably stronger among non-Hispanic whites than for racial and ethnic minorities. In most respects, progress has been more rapid in areas where graduation rates have historically languished. Conditions have improved much faster in high-poverty school systems, urban communities, larger districts, and those serving majority-minority student populations.

According to the report, 2006 marked the first time in the past decade that the nation's graduation rate has posted a noticeable annual decline, falling more than 1 percentage point from 2005 to 2006. Graduation rates fell nationally for all major racial and ethnic groups. In addition, half the states showed a measurable drop, signaling that the consistent improvements found for the nation and many states in recent years may be in jeopardy of eroding.

With Native American, Hispanic, and African-American students from the class of 2006 graduating at rates of no more than 55 percent, a graduation gap of as much as 26 percentage points divides these historically underserved minorities from their white peers. A gulf of 35 points separates the highest-performing state in the nation (New Jersey) and the lowest (Nevada). The report also finds great variation across the nation's 50 largest school districts. Within that group, Detroit had the lowest graduation rate at 26.8 percent, while Cypress-Fairbanks, Texas, tops the nation at 80.7 percent.

"As a nation, we have a long way to go in order to reconcile the goal of raising college attendance and completion rates with troubling data on the proportion of U.S. students who graduate from high schools in the traditional four-year time span," Swanson said. "The rates are generally not as high as we would like them to be, and the pace of improvement needs to be much faster."

REPORT IDENTIFIES OVERACHIEVING DISTRICTS

Despite recent downturns, *Diplomas Count 2009* finds widespread long-term gains at the district level. From 1996 to 2006, the majority of the nation's local school systems posted improvements in their levels of high school completion. In fact, graduation rates rose by 15 percentage points or more for about 1,500 districts across the country.

The EPE Research Center also conducted a special analysis to identify school systems that exceed expectations for current graduation rates or improvements over the past decade. The report finds stellar performance in some of the nation's most at-risk communities, recognizing 50 "overachieving" big-city school systems from across the country.

Among these top-ranking urban districts, especially strong showings were posted by: Merced Union High School District (Calif.); Sharyland Independent School District (Mission, Texas); Stockton Unified School District (Calif.); Texarkana Independent School District (Texas); and Metropolitan School District of Warren Township (Indianapolis). In each of these districts, both graduation rates for 2006 and graduation-rate improvements from 1996 to 2006 surpassed expected levels by at least 15 percentage points.

UPDATED ROAD MAP TO STATE GRADUATION POLICIES

To provide context for high school graduation rates and reform efforts, *Diplomas Count 2009* examines state policies in three key areas: definitions of college and work readiness, high school completion credentials, and exit exams. Among the findings:

- **College and work readiness:** Twenty states define what students should know and be able to do to be prepared for credit-bearing courses in college, while 28 states have a definition of work readiness.
- **Advanced diplomas:** Twenty-four states award advanced diplomas or some type of formal recognition to students who exceed standard graduation requirements.
- **Exit exams:** Twenty-four states require exit exams for the class of 2009, with 20 of those states basing exit exams on standards at the 10th grade level or higher.

SPECIAL WEB-ONLY FEATURES AVAILABLE AT EDWEEK.ORG

- **State Graduation Briefs** for every state feature detailed state-specific data on current graduation rates and trends over time, definitions of college and work readiness, and state requirements for earning a high school diploma.
- **EdWeek Maps**, a powerful online mapping service, lets users access graduation rates and other data for every school district in the nation and easily compare district, state, and national figures at maps.edweek.org.

Visit *Diplomas Count* at www.edweek.org/go/dc09

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Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education Inc. publishes Education Week, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, edweek.org, Digital Directions, the Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports as well as books of special interest to educators.

The EPE Research Center conducts annual policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the Quality Counts, Technology Counts, and Diplomas Count annual reports. The center also produces independent research reports and contributes original data and analysis to special coverage in Education Week and edweek.org.

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Diplomas Count 2009 Examines Graduation Rates & College Readiness

Broader Horizons: The Challenge of College Readiness for All Students

About Diplomas Count 2009: Broader Horizons

The 2009 edition of *Diplomas Count*, titled *Broader Horizons: The Challenge of College Readiness for All Students*, will be released June 9, 2009. The report investigates one of the most critical issues facing the nation's educational and economic future—the challenge to prepare all students for college. It offers data on graduation rates for the nation, states, and 50 largest school districts, and also maps out the policy and reform landscape defining the college-ready agenda. To help guide your reporting, we have highlighted some of the key findings below. Additional information will be provided as it is available.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Nationally, **graduation rates have moved upward over the past decade**. However, **a recent one-year downturn raises cause for concern**.

- In the class of 2006, 69.2 percent of all public school students in the nation graduated from high school with a regular diploma. From 1996 to 2006, the nation's graduation rate increased by 2.8 percentage points, an average of about three-tenths of a point annually.
- From 2005 to 2006, the national graduation rate posted a noticeable annual decline for the first time in the past decade, falling more than 1 percentage point. Half of states showed a similar drop.
- Graduation rates in the majority of states have improved since 1996. South Carolina, Tennessee, and Arizona have seen the greatest increases, of 13.1, 12.8, and 12.1 percentage points, respectively. Ten states saw drops of at least 1 percentage point, with the largest drop occurring in Nevada. At the district level, graduation rates rose by 15 percentages points or more in about 1,500 districts.

While all demographic groups have made progress, nationwide achievement gaps persist, both across states and among different racial and ethnic groups.

- In states leading the nation—Iowa, New Jersey, and Wisconsin—more than 80 percent of all high school students graduate with a diploma. By contrast, just under half of students finish high school in the District of Columbia and Nevada.
- More than three-quarters of white and Asian students earn a high school diploma, while just 55 percent of Latino, 51 percent of African-American, and 50 percent of Native American students do. Though graduation rates for all major racial and ethnic groups have shown long-term improvements, gains have been strongest among non-Hispanic whites.

- Progress has been more rapid in areas where graduation rates have historically been low. From 1996 to 2006, high school completion rates in urban districts rose by 3.1 percentage points, compared with 1.9 percentage points in suburban districts. Similarly, rates rose 50 percent faster in high-poverty districts than in more affluent ones.

A number of urban school systems are performing better than expected given their demographic and structural profiles.

- Thirty-three big-city districts posted 2006 graduation rates at least 10 percentage points higher than expected. Two districts, Warren Township in Indianapolis and Texarkana Independent School District in Texarkana, Texas, exceeded expectations by more than 20 points.
- Twenty-seven districts across the country surpassed expected graduation-rate improvements from 1996 to 2006 by at least 10 points. The graduation rate in Stockton Unified School District in Stockton, Calif., for example, rose by 27 percentage points, although the school system’s characteristics would have predicted a 1 point drop.
- **A complete list of “overachieving” urban districts is included in the report.**

More states are spelling out a definition of “college readiness,” although movement on other high school graduation requirements is slower.

- Currently, 20 states—five more than last year—have described the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in entry-level college work. Fourteen states include academic-content standards in their definitions of college readiness, and 13 recommend or require college-preparatory courses.
- Twenty-eight states have defined work readiness, while seven other states are in the process of crafting such a definition.
- Twenty-four states offer students in the class of 2009 advanced recognition for exceeding standard graduation requirements, the same number as last year.
- Twenty-four states require exit exams for the class of 2009, one more than in 2008. All but one of those states test knowledge in both English and math, and about half also have exams that cover other subjects, such as science and history. The number of states basing exit exams on standards at the 10th grade level or higher has increased from six in 2002 to 20 in 2009.

Enthusiasm and support are building for data systems, which can help educators and policymakers understand and focus on what matters most in preparing students for college.

- Just six states have all 10 of the elements identified by the Data Quality Campaign as necessary to track how well students are prepared for college and how well they do once there.
- Funding of \$250 million for data systems was set aside in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help states and school systems build their information systems. This is in addition to \$150 million that the Institute of Education Sciences awarded to 27 state agencies earlier this year for use in building data systems.

RESOURCES

The *Diplomas Count 2009* release will also include special online resources.

- An interactive trends map tool allows users to explore changes in state graduation rates over the past decade.
- *State Graduation Briefs* for every state feature detailed state-specific data on current graduation rates and trends over time, definitions of college and work readiness, and state requirements for earning a high school diploma.
- EdWeek Maps, a powerful online data service, lets users access graduation rates and other data for every school district in the nation and easily compare district, state, and national figures at maps.edweek.org.

These resources will be available on the *Education Week* Web site: www.edweek.org/go/dc09.

Diplomas Count 2009

online at www.edweek.org/go/dc09



Graduation in the United States

About 69 percent of all public school students in the nation graduated from high school with a regular diploma in the class of 2006. Thirty-five percentage points separate the graduation rates in the best-performing and worst-performing states. More than eight in 10 students graduate in Iowa, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. But that proportion drops to fewer than six in 10 in the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, and New Mexico. Results reported in *Diplomas Count 2009* show that, from 2005 to 2006, the nation's graduation rate decreased by more than 1 percentage point, the first sizable annual decline in the past decade.

	TEN-YEAR GRADUATION TREND (ALL STUDENTS)			GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENT SUBGROUPS, CLASS OF 2006						
	Class of 2006	Class of 1996	Change 1996 to 2006 (percentage point)	Male	Female	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
Alabama	61.4%	57.0%	+4.4	56.5%	68.0%	63.4%	66.9%	42.2%	51.3%	68.3%
Alaska	65.9	66.1	-0.2	62.1	69.9	45.2	69.0	55.6	59.7	72.4
Arizona	68.6	56.6	+12.1	64.1	72.7	45.6	81.3	60.8	67.6	74.0
Arkansas	71.9	69.4	+2.5	67.7	76.0	50.3	‡	60.0	63.6	74.5
California	67.5	67.5	0.0	63.5	70.6	49.6	80.2	56.9	54.6	77.1
Colorado	72.7	71.5	+1.2	69.6	75.9	46.3	80.7	51.2	58.9	80.1
Connecticut	78.9	76.1	+2.7	75.3	81.5	‡	80.4	55.3	63.2	85.0
Delaware	66.0	63.2	+2.8	59.3	71.1	‡	89.2	‡	53.8	71.1
District of Columbia	48.8	49.7	-0.9	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Florida	57.5	57.5	0.0	50.4	58.9	58.5	81.7	53.7	43.0	58.6
Georgia	55.9	55.1	+0.7	51.5	61.9	37.9	79.8	40.8	45.6	65.1
Hawaii	63.9	59.0	+4.9	61.1	67.1	57.6	65.4	59.7	60.3	59.0
Idaho	76.8	78.6	-1.7	73.9	80.9	50.9	‡	56.3	59.5	79.9
Illinois	74.1	78.7	-4.6	70.1	77.0	30.1	86.5	56.7	51.0	83.2
Indiana	73.3	69.8	+3.5	66.3	72.7	48.2	70.3	50.5	52.6	71.1
Iowa	80.7	79.1	+1.6	77.7	81.7	‡	73.3	56.0	52.6	82.4
Kansas	75.4	72.8	+2.5	74.7	78.6	61.3	83.5	55.1	58.9	81.0
Kentucky	72.0	62.9	+9.0	64.9	75.3	‡	82.7	55.4	59.2	70.3
Louisiana	61.9	54.0	+7.8	55.4	68.7	‡	74.1	73.5	51.2	69.3
Maine	76.3	75.1	+1.2	72.8	78.5	40.5	‡	‡	‡	76.1
Maryland	73.5	73.5	0.0	68.7	78.1	59.1	92.9	65.4	62.7	79.8
Massachusetts	75.9	75.2	+0.7	72.8	78.8	37.2	79.9	50.9	56.3	81.6
Michigan	69.6	69.0	+0.5	65.9	72.8	49.4	75.5	43.5	38.4	76.5
Minnesota	79.2	77.1	+2.1	77.2	83.2	39.8	73.3	37.3	‡	84.2
Mississippi	60.5	54.5	+6.0	54.0	67.2	37.1	57.1	43.2	54.9	66.1
Missouri	74.4	70.4	+4.0	71.4	77.2	58.2	77.8	53.9	52.6	78.7
Montana	76.1	76.2	0.0	73.7	77.7	48.3	‡	54.8	44.5	79.5
Nebraska	78.7	79.3	-0.6	74.5	79.7	38.3	‡	50.9	46.9	84.1
Nevada	47.3	70.5	-23.2	42.7	52.8	37.9	72.1	36.3	34.5	54.0
New Hampshire	77.0	71.3	+5.6	74.4	78.5	†	†	†	†	†
New Jersey	82.1	83.1	-1.0	79.7	83.3	‡	86.7	66.8	67.3	85.8
New Mexico	56.0	55.3	+0.8	53.2	61.3	49.5	64.7	51.6	49.2	67.8
New York	68.3	61.1	+7.2	63.8	71.0	39.6	75.7	45.8	47.4	79.0
North Carolina	63.3	61.9	+1.4	55.1	65.1	43.6	73.7	49.5	45.4	69.8
North Dakota	79.0	80.9	-1.9	76.7	81.5	39.9	‡	27.7	‡	83.7
Ohio	74.3	67.8	+6.6	71.9	77.5	31.3	76.0	48.3	47.3	80.3
Oklahoma	70.6	67.0	+3.6	68.7	73.4	64.1	79.7	57.1	54.9	73.2
Oregon	74.9	66.0	+8.9	†	†	39.1	72.7	57.6	54.4	73.1
Pennsylvania	77.6	74.8	+2.8	75.0	80.0	36.4	79.1	49.7	49.3	83.9
Rhode Island	72.8	69.0	+3.8	68.6	76.3	40.2	60.7	60.4	63.4	76.5
South Carolina	66.3	53.2	+13.1	‡	71.2	‡	72.3	‡	‡	69.5
South Dakota	77.1	77.6	-0.5	74.2	76.8	33.5	58.0	41.8	53.0	81.7
Tennessee	69.5	56.7	+12.8	65.0	73.8	‡	73.5	51.7	58.1	73.0
Texas	65.3	58.5	+6.8	61.7	68.9	51.7	85.2	56.3	52.7	75.7
Utah	72.2	78.5	-6.3	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
Vermont	78.7	75.2	+3.5	75.8	79.3	41.7	‡	‡	‡	81.7
Virginia	69.2	73.4	-4.2	64.4	75.3	52.8	83.7	56.5	55.0	75.8
Washington	62.4	68.0	-5.5	60.1	67.6	37.9	71.7	49.3	46.1	66.8
West Virginia	71.8	75.7	-4.0	69.1	75.3	26.7	78.0	‡	61.1	72.7
Wisconsin	81.7	77.0	+4.7	78.3	83.8	55.4	78.0	53.8	49.4	85.9
Wyoming	73.2	75.9	-2.7	69.7	75.2	25.8	‡	‡	‡	76.7
U.S.	69.2%	66.4%	+2.8	64.9%	72.2%	50.0%	78.9%	55.0%	51.2%	76.1%

† Value not calculated because necessary data field(s) not reported in the Common Core of Data, the U.S. Department of Education database used for this analysis
‡ Value not reported because of insufficient data for reliable estimate.

How Does the EPE Research Center Calculate Graduation Rates?

The Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center uses the **Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI)** method to calculate graduation rates. The CPI represents the high school experience as a process rather than a single event, capturing the four key steps a student must take in order to graduate: three grade-to-grade promotions (9 to 10, 10 to 11, and 11 to 12) and ultimately earning a diploma (grade 12 to graduation). Each of these individual components corresponds to a grade-promotion ratio.

The equation below illustrates the CPI formula for calculating graduation rates. The class of 2005-06, the most recent year of data available, is used as an example.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{\text{10th graders, fall 2006}}{\text{9th graders, fall 2005}} \times \frac{\text{11th graders, fall 2006}}{\text{10th graders, fall 2005}} \times \frac{\text{12th graders, fall 2006}}{\text{11th graders, fall 2005}} \times \frac{\text{Diploma recipients, spring 2006}}{\text{12th graders, fall 2005}}$$

Multiplying the four grade-specific promotion ratios together produces the graduation rate, the percent of public school 9th graders who will complete high school on time with a regular diploma. The CPI counts only students receiving standard high school diplomas as graduates, following the definition of a graduate established by the No Child Left Behind Act.

We can use a simplified example to further demonstrate how the center calculates the CPI. Let us suppose that a particular school district currently has 100 students enrolled in each grade from 9 through 12. We will also assume that 5 percent of students currently in grades 9, 10, and 11 will drop out of school this year and that 5 percent of seniors will fail to earn a diploma at the end of the year. So, for example, we would count 100 9th graders at our starting point but only 95 10th graders the following fall.

$$\text{CPI} = \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} \times \frac{95}{100} = .815$$

Carrying out the calculation (shown above), we arrive at a graduation rate of 81.5 percent for this district. Given conditions in this hypothetical district (an effective 5 percent annual attrition rate for students at each grade level), only about 82 out of every 100 9th graders would be expected to finish high school with a diploma.

The CPI can be calculated for public school districts that have students enrolled in the secondary grades (9 through 12). State and national statistics are generated by aggregating the district-level data upward.

Notes on the Methodology

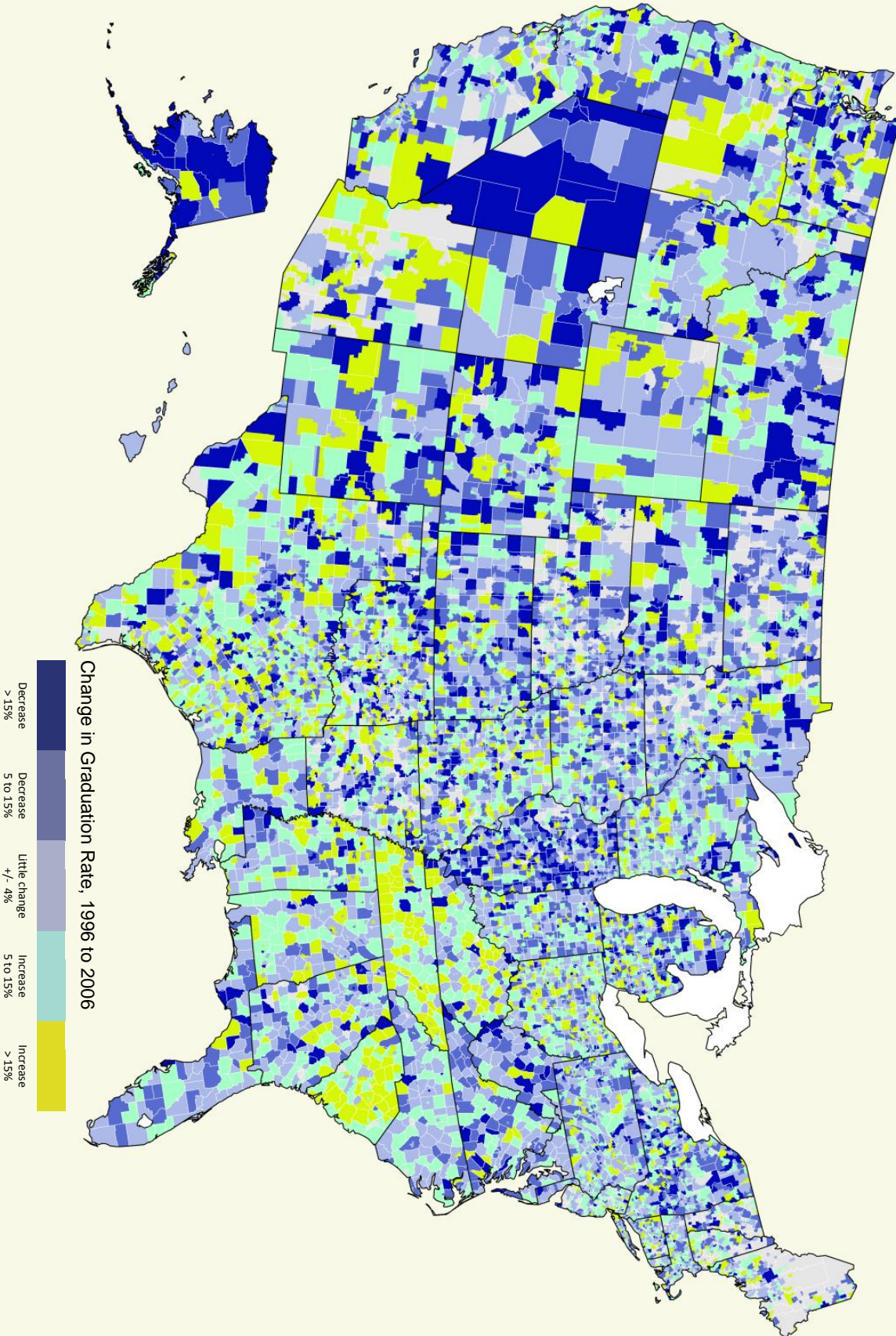
The EPE Research Center calculates graduation rates using data from the Common Core of Data (CCD), an annual census of public schools and school districts in the United States conducted by the U.S. Department of Education. Detailed methodological descriptions of the CCD can be found in technical documentation published by the National Center for Education Statistics (available online at nces.ed.gov/ccd). For the 2005-06 school year, diploma counts for the District of Columbia, Kentucky, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Utah were not available from the CCD. In these instances, the EPE Research Center obtained those data directly from the respective state education agencies.

The center's goal is to provide a direct measure of the graduation rate for each of the roughly 11,000 school districts in the nation that enroll high school students. It was possible to do this for districts serving the vast majority (96 percent) of all public school students nationwide. But in a small number of cases—for example, if a particular piece of information needed to calculate the CPI indicator was missing—the center could not directly compute the graduation rate.

To avoid the unintentional disclosure of information about individual students, the EPE Research Center does not report results for very small demographic subgroups, those with fewer than five students in a given category. Additional procedures are employed to ensure that results are only reported in situations where sufficient data are available for a reliable calculation.

Graduation Rates on the Rise

This map illustrates the change in high school graduation rates from 1996 to 2006 for every public school district in the country. An original analysis conducted by the EPE Research Center found that the nation's graduation rate rose by almost 3 percentage points over the past decade, increasing from 66 percent in 1996 to 69 percent for the class of 2006. The American public education system encompasses 11,000 local education agencies that enroll high school students. Of those, about 1,500 districts have increased their graduation rates by 15 percentage points or more. Examples of such dramatic improvements can be found in nearly every state. Detailed data for each school district can be found on the EdWeek Maps Web site, online at maps.edweek.org.



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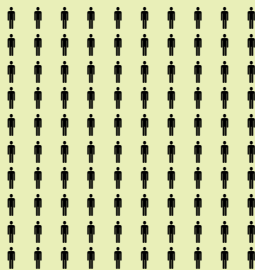
U.S. Public High Schools Losing 7,200 Students Per Day

Nationally, 1.3 million members of the public high school class of 2009 will fail to graduate with a diploma. That amounts to a loss of nearly 7,200 students from the U.S. graduation pipeline per day. With close to 1,000 students falling through the high school pipeline daily, California—the country's most populous state and the largest source of leakage from the graduation pipeline—accounts for one out of every eight nongraduates in the nation.

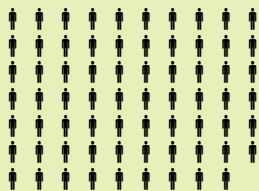
**Class of 2009:
1.3 Million Students
Will Fail to Graduate**

Diplomas Count uses the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI) method to measure high school graduation rates as the percent of 9th graders who will earn a diploma four years later. The center can project the expected numbers of graduates and nongraduates for the class of 2009 by multiplying the CPI value for 2005-06 by the number of 9th grade students enrolled that year.

4.2 Million
9th Graders in 2005-06



2.9 Million
Graduates in 2009



= Approximately
42,000 students

1.3 Million
Nongraduates in 2009



Projection of Graduates and Nongraduates

	9th graders 2005-2006	Projected outcomes 2008-09		Total students lost each school day
		Graduates	Nongraduates	
Alabama	65,192	40,056	25,136	140
Alaska	11,405	7,512	3,893	22
Arizona	76,025	52,191	23,834	132
Arkansas	38,860	27,929	10,931	61
California	538,113	363,102	175,011	972
Colorado	63,759	46,368	17,391	97
Connecticut	44,427	35,033	9,394	52
Delaware	11,121	7,338	3,783	21
District of Columbia	4,543	2,215	2,328	13
Florida	244,395	140,405	103,990	578
Georgia	145,167	81,115	64,052	356
Hawaii	17,167	10,965	6,202	34
Idaho	21,548	16,559	4,989	28
Illinois	178,230	132,100	46,130	256
Indiana	87,675	64,261	23,414	130
Iowa	40,743	32,884	7,859	44
Kansas	38,215	28,796	9,419	52
Kentucky	57,749	41,556	16,193	90
Louisiana	52,497	32,486	20,011	111
Maine	16,088	12,278	3,810	21
Maryland	79,788	58,655	21,133	117
Massachusetts	63,111	47,890	15,221	85
Michigan	152,066	105,771	46,295	257
Minnesota	67,380	53,381	13,999	78
Mississippi	41,146	24,900	16,246	90
Missouri	79,867	59,412	20,455	114
Montana	12,730	9,692	3,038	17
Nebraska	24,837	19,544	5,293	29
Nevada	39,290	18,568	20,722	115
New Hampshire	18,243	14,041	4,202	23
New Jersey	109,372	89,799	19,573	109
New Mexico	30,026	16,816	13,210	73
New York	255,874	174,795	81,079	450
North Carolina	127,098	80,423	46,675	259
North Dakota	8,461	6,684	1,777	10
Ohio	156,699	116,501	40,198	223
Oklahoma	50,026	35,319	14,707	82
Oregon	45,154	33,804	11,350	63
Pennsylvania	156,467	121,441	35,026	195
Rhode Island	12,429	9,052	3,377	19
South Carolina	64,820	42,947	21,873	122
South Dakota	10,266	7,918	2,348	13
Tennessee	81,397	56,541	24,856	138
Texas	383,404	250,244	133,160	740
Utah	37,796	27,293	10,503	58
Vermont	8,272	6,507	1,765	10
Virginia	108,902	75,362	33,540	186
Washington	90,054	56,204	33,850	188
West Virginia	24,482	17,569	6,913	38
Wisconsin	76,525	62,505	14,020	78
Wyoming	7,443	5,448	1,995	11
U.S.	4,176,344	2,889,430	1,286,915	7,150

Identifying Overachievers

An EPE Research Center analysis identified a pool of school districts matching the profile of the nation's largest urban systems and then singled out those demonstrating the highest graduation rates and strongest growth, relative to expectations based on their demographic and structural characteristics. Thirty-three of these big-city peer districts posted 2006 graduation rates at least 10 percentage points higher than anticipated, while 27 districts from across the country surpassed expected graduation-rate improvements from 1996 to 2006 by 10 points or more.

Graduation Rates for Class of 2006					Ten-Year Trend in Graduation Rates 1996 to 2006				
District	City, State	Graduation Rate 2006		Actual minus Expected	District	City, State	Percentage-Point Change		Actual minus Expected
		Actual	Expected				Actual	Expected	
Warren Township*	Indianapolis, IN	81%	60%	+21	Stockton Unified*	Stockton, CA	27%	-1%	+29
Texarkana ISD*	Texarkana, TX	79	59	+21	Sharyland*	Mission, TX	32	+4	+28
Fort Smith	Fort Smith, AR	84	66	+18	Phenix City*	Phenix City, AL	30	+3	+28
Euclid City*	Euclid, OH	78	61	+17	Texarkana ISD*	Texarkana, TX	31	+5	+26
Stockton USD*	Stockton, CA	77	60	+17	Warren Township*	Indianapolis, IN	24	-2	+26
Yuba City USD	Yuba City, CA	85	69	+16	Cincinnati City	Cincinnati, OH	25	+2	+23
Steubenville City	Steubenville, OH	79	63	+16	San Marcos CISD	San Marcos, TX	25	+5	+21
Merced Union*	Merced, CA	78	62	+15	Lafayette Parish	Lafayette, LA	20	+4	+16
United ISD	Laredo, TX	72	57	+15	Opelika City	Opelika, AL	17	+2	+15
Leon County*	Tallahassee, FL	66	52	+15	Merced Union*	Merced, CA	14	-1	+15
Sharyland ISD*	Mission, TX	80	65	+15	Calhoun County ISD	Port Lavaca, TX	19	+5	+14
Guilford County	Greensboro, NC	68	53	+14	Gilroy Unified	Gilroy, CA	14	-1	+14
Clintondale Schools	Clinton Township, MI	72	58	+14	Galveston ISD	Galveston, TX	19	+4	+14
Phenix City*	Phenix City, AL	69	56	+13	San Angelo ISD*	San Angelo, TX	20	+6	+14
Wayne Township	Indianapolis, IN	73	60	+13	Temple ISD	Temple, TX	19	+5	+14
Yuma Union High School	Yuma, AZ	72	60	+13	St. Lucie County	Fort Pierce, FL	11	-2	+13
Thornton Township HSD 215	Calumet City, IL	76	64	+13	Euclid City*	Euclid, OH	15	+2	+13
Hillsborough County	Tampa, FL	63	50	+12	Leon County*	Tallahassee, FL	12	0	+12
San Angelo ISD*	San Angelo, TX	77	65	+12	Portland*	Portland, OR	20	+8	+12
Flagstaff Unified	Flagstaff, AZ	75	63	+12	Oklahoma City	Oklahoma City, OK	13	+2	+11
Newport-Mesa Unified	Newport Beach, CA	75	63	+12	Putnam City	Warr Acres, OK	12	+2	+10
Paducah Independent	Paducah, KY	75	63	+11	Marysville Joint Unified	Marysville, CA	11	+1	+10
Des Moines Independent	Des Moines, IA	79	68	+11	Warren City	Warren, OH	13	+3	+10
Tuloso-Midway ISD	Corpus Christi, TX	80	69	+11	Kansas City	Kansas City, KS	9	-1	+10
Monrovia Unified	Monrovia, CA	77	66	+11	Wichita	Wichita, KS	10	0	+10
Cumberland County	Fayetteville, NC	65	55	+10	Riverside Unified	Riverside, CA	10	0	+10
Mesa Unified	Mesa, AZ	67	56	+10	Austin ISD	Austin, TX	14	+5	+10
Portland*	Portland, OR	74	63	+10					
Visalia Unified	Visalia, CA	72	62	+10					
Tucson Unified	Tucson, AZ	67	57	+10					
East Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge, LA	59	50	+10					
Riverbank Unified	Riverbank, CA	73	64	+10					
Waterbury	Waterbury, CT	69	59	+10					

* District exceeds expectations for both 2006 graduation rate and change in rate from 1996 to 2006.

Note: All values have been rounded to nearest whole number.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009

Diplomas Count 2009

online at www.edweek.org/go/dc09



Graduation Policies for the Class of 2009

	DEFINING READINESS				HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION CREDENTIALS				
	State has defined college readiness	How college readiness is defined	State has defined work readiness	How work readiness is defined	K-12 work-readiness definition is different from college readiness	Total number of credits required to earn standard diploma	Standard diploma options	Advanced recognition for exceeding standard requirements	Focus for advanced recognition
Alabama			Yes	skills		24.0	standard, CTE	Yes	academic, CTE
Alaska			Yes	standards		21.0	standard		
Arizona			Yes	standards		20.0	standard	Yes	academic
Arkansas	Yes	courses, standards, tests	Yes	courses, standards, tests		22.0	standard		
California	Yes	courses	Yes	standards	Yes	13.0	standard	Yes	academic
Colorado							standard		
Connecticut	in progress		Yes	skills		20.0	standard		
Delaware						22.0	standard		
District of Columbia						23.5	standard		
Florida	in progress		in progress			24.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
Georgia	in progress		Yes	skills, standards		22.0	college prep, CTE	Yes	academic, CTE
Hawaii						22.0	standard	Yes	academic
Idaho						21.0	standard		
Illinois						16.0	standard		
Indiana	Yes	courses, standards, tests	Yes	courses, standards, tests		20.0	standard	Yes	academic
Iowa	Yes	standards, tests	Yes	standards			standard	Yes	local option
Kansas			in progress			21.0	standard		
Kentucky	Yes	courses, skills, standards, tests				22.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
Louisiana	in progress		in progress			23.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
Maine	in progress		in progress			16.0	standard		
Maryland	Yes	courses	Yes	skills, standards	Yes	21.0	standard	Yes	local option
Massachusetts			Yes	standards			standard	Yes	academic
Michigan	Yes	courses, standards	Yes	courses, skills, standards, tests			standard		
Minnesota	Yes	standards	Yes	standards		21.5	standard		
Mississippi	Yes	skills				21.0	standard		
Missouri	in progress		Yes	standards		22.0	standard	Yes	academic
Montana	in progress		Yes	standards		20.0	standard		
Nebraska						200 credit hrs ¹	standard		
Nevada						22.5	standard, CTE	Yes	academic
New Hampshire			Yes	standards		19.75	standard	Yes	local option
New Jersey	Yes	courses, standards	Yes	courses, skills, standards		22.0	standard		
New Mexico	Yes	courses, standards, tests	Yes	courses, standards, tests		23.0	standard		
New York	Yes	courses, standards, tests	Yes	courses, standards, tests		22.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
North Carolina	in progress		in progress			20.0	standard	Yes	academic
North Dakota			Yes	standards		21.0	standard		
Ohio	Yes	skills				20.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
Oklahoma	Yes	courses, standards, tests	Yes	standards, tests		23.0	standard	Yes	academic
Oregon	in progress		Yes	standards		22.0	standard		
Pennsylvania	Yes	standards	Yes	standards			standard	Yes	academic
Rhode Island	in progress		in progress			20.0	standard		
South Carolina	Yes	courses, skills, standards	Yes	courses, tests	Yes	24.0	standard		
South Dakota						22.0	standard	Yes	academic
Tennessee	Yes	courses, skills	Yes	skills, standards	Yes	20.0	standard		
Texas	Yes	standards, skills				24.0	standard	Yes	academic
Utah						15.0	standard		
Vermont						20.0	standard		
Virginia			Yes	skills, standards		22.0	standard	Yes	academic, CTE
Washington	Yes	standards	Yes	skills, standards		19.0	standard		
West Virginia	Yes	courses, skills, tests	Yes	courses, skills, tests	Yes	24.0	standard		
Wisconsin	in progress		in progress			13.0	standard		
Wyoming						13.0	standard	Yes	academic
U.S.	20		28		5	20.7²		24	

NOTES:

- CTE refers to career and technical education.
- Exit-exam subjects tested: E=English (includes writing), M=Mathematics, S=Science, H=History/Social Studies, and T=Technology

SOURCE: For information on indicator definitions and sources, see *Diplomas Count 2009* (Page 38).

FOOTNOTES:

1. Credit hours for Nebraska are not expressed in Carnegie units.
2. Subject-specific credits for states that do not have total course-credit requirements are not listed in the total credits column and are not reflected in the national average for total credit requirements.
3. Students must pass either the science or social studies components of the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) to receive a standard diploma.
4. To receive the standard diploma, students must earn at least six verified credits by passing end-of-course assessments. One of these credits may be earned by passing a student-selected test in computer science, technology, career and technical education, or other areas.
5. For the graduating classes of 2009, students must pass an exit exam in reading and writing, but may meet the state's math requirement by passing its standardized math assessment or continuing to earn math credits until they graduate.

Graduation Policies for the Class of 2009 (cont.)

	HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION CREDENTIALS				HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS				
	Basis for advanced recognition	Alternative credential for not meeting all standard requirements	Basis for alternative credential	K-12 system offers pathway leading to industry-recognized certificate or license	State has exit exam	Subjects tested	Exam based on standards for 10th grade or higher	State finances remediation for students failing exit exams	Appeals or alternative route to diploma
Alabama	courses	Yes	disabilities	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alaska		Yes	fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EM	Yes		Yes
Arizona	tests			Yes	Yes	EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arkansas				Yes	Class of 2010				
California	tests	Yes	pass proficiency test	Yes	Yes	EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colorado									
Connecticut				Yes					
Delaware		Yes	disabilities						
District of Columbia		Yes	disabilities						
Florida	courses, GPA, tests	Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	courses, GPA	Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hawaii	courses, GPA	Yes	disabilities	Yes					
Idaho					Yes	EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
Illinois									
Indiana	courses, GPA			Yes	Yes	EM		Yes	Yes
Iowa	local option			Yes					
Kansas									
Kentucky	courses, tests	Yes	disabilities	Yes					
Louisiana	courses, GPA, tests	Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EMSH ³	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maine				Yes					
Maryland	local option	Yes	disabilities	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	courses, GPA, tests	Yes	local option	Yes	Yes	EM	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michigan		Yes	local option	Yes					
Minnesota					Yes	EM		Yes	Yes
Mississippi		Yes	disabilities	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes		Yes
Missouri	courses, GPA, tests			Yes					
Montana									
Nebraska									
Nevada	courses, GPA	Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EMS	Yes		Yes
New Hampshire	local option	Yes	local option	Yes					
New Jersey				Yes	Yes	EM	Yes		Yes
New Mexico		Yes	fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EMSH		Yes	Yes
New York	tests	Yes	disabilities	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes		Yes
North Carolina	courses, GPA	Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam		Yes	EMT		Yes	Yes
North Dakota				Yes					
Ohio	courses, GPA, tests			Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	courses, GPA, tests			Yes	Class of 2012				
Oregon		Yes	local option						
Pennsylvania	tests			Yes					
Rhode Island		Yes	disabilities	Yes					
South Carolina				Yes	Yes	EM	Yes		
South Dakota	courses, GPA								
Tennessee		Yes	disabilities, fail exit exam	Yes	Yes	EMS	Yes		
Texas	courses, tests	Yes	local option	Yes	Yes	EMSH	Yes	Yes	
Utah		Yes	district criteria	Yes					
Vermont				Yes					
Virginia	courses, GPA, tests	Yes	disabilities	Yes	Yes	EMSH ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington				Yes	Yes	E ⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes
West Virginia		Yes	disabilities	Yes					
Wisconsin				Yes					
Wyoming	tests	Yes	local option						
U.S.		27		38	24		20	17	21

Virginia B. Edwards

President, Editorial Projects in Education
Editor and Publisher, *Education Week* and edweek.org



As president of Editorial Projects in Education, Virginia B. Edwards oversees the nearly 90-person nonprofit corporation that publishes *Education Week* and edweek.org. She has held the post since 1997.

Ms. Edwards has been the editor of *Education Week*—the “newspaper of record” for precollegiate education in the United States—since 1989. The newspaper, which covers policy developments in K-12 education and is published 37 times a year, has a paid circulation of about 50,000 and is read by more than 160,000 others. The newspaper also publishes three highly anticipated reports each year: *Diplomas Count*, *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*.

For the past 13 years, Ms. Edwards has also served as the editor and publisher of edweek.org. Currently, edweek.org serves up 2 million page views to nearly 400,000 unique visitors each month. In addition, 275,000-plus people now subscribe to the site’s weekly newsletter, *EW Update*, and hundreds of thousands have subscribed to a growing array of themed weekly and monthly e-newsletters. Among its other offerings, the site routinely hosts live Web chats with key education players and houses the most comprehensive K-12 research center and education news archives to be found anywhere on the Web.

Ms. Edwards is also publisher of EPE’s *Digital Directions* magazine and its *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*.

Before joining EPE, Ms. Edwards worked for two years for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, for the nearly 10 years before that, was an editor and reporter for *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Ky.

A frequent speaker on education policy issues, Ms. Edwards serves on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the Center on Education Policy, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the Student Press Law Center, and Learning Matters.

EDITORIAL PROJECTS IN EDUCATION

EDUCATION WEEK

Christopher B. Swanson

Director, EPE Research Center
Editorial Projects in Education



Christopher B. Swanson, Ph.D., is the director of the EPE Research Center, a division of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. In this capacity, he oversees a staff of full-time researchers and interns who conduct annual policy surveys, collect data, and perform analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts*, *Technology Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports of *Education Week*. The Center also contributes data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week*, the *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, and edweek.org, publishes the monthly *Research Connections e-Newsletter*, hosts live Web chats on research topics, and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources.

Among the EPE Research Center's major projects is *Quality Counts*, an annual special issue of *Education Week* supported throughout its 13-year history by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Pew Center on the States. In 2006, the EPE Research Center and *Education Week* launched a four-year project to examine graduation rates and related issues facing the nation's high schools. The project's major releases include the annual *Diplomas Count* report and EdWeek Maps, a powerful GIS-based online data tool that allows users to map out information on graduation rates and generate customized reports for any school district in the nation.

Prior to joining EPE in 2005, Swanson was a senior research associate at the Urban Institute, where his work focused on issues of federal policy and urban high school reform involving small-school restructuring. During the past few years, much of Swanson's research has examined the implementation of accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. In particular, he has extensively investigated the persistent challenges associated with accurately measuring high school graduation rates, a required element of the performance-based accountability mandated under the federal law. Swanson's body of research on this topic has been widely profiled in the national and regional media and has provided policy leaders important insights into this critical issue.

Swanson's work on a variety of educational policy issues—among them, standards and accountability, instructional reform, high school dropout and completion, student mobility, and public school choice—has been presented at national conferences and published in leading scholarly journals and edited volumes. He is a frequent speaker and commentator on these and other topics and has advised the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Government Accountability Office, the National Governors Association, the U.S. Department of Education, and other organizations and foundations.



Sterling C. Lloyd

Senior Research Associate, EPE Research Center
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Sterling Lloyd is senior research associate with the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. In this capacity, he manages the development of policy surveys and data collection for the *Diplomas Count*, *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts* annual reports from *Education Week*.

Prior to joining EPE, Lloyd assisted researchers at the Education Trust in collecting data on academic assessments, high school reform, and state accountability systems. While serving as an intern at the Education Trust, he co-authored the organization's report on black superintendents and their districts.

Lloyd developed a broad background in education policy while teaching courses for high school students participating in an enrichment program at Howard University. For that program, he designed a course on policy issues in American education that familiarized students with a wide range of key topics including racial/ethnic and income-based achievement gaps, charter schools, and teacher quality.

As a volunteer, Lloyd has assisted a mentoring and tutoring program focused on better preparing public school students in the District of Columbia for college and careers. In this program, he has worked to help high school students make the transition to college by organizing campus visits, field trips, informational events with guest speakers, and tutoring sessions.

Lloyd earned a B.A. in Government from Georgetown University.



Ann Bradley

Assistant Managing Editor
Education Week



Ann Bradley is executive project editor of *Diplomas Count 2009* and an assistant managing editor of *Education Week*. Ms. Bradley has worked for *Education Week* for 20 years as a reporter and editor. As an assistant managing editor, she currently oversees coverage of school leadership and management, school districts and urban education, college and career pathways and school dropouts, special and early-childhood education, and student health and school safety.

She joined the newspaper in 1989 as a reporter and became an editor in 2000. Before joining *Education Week*, Ms. Bradley worked as a reporter and editor for *The Miami Herald*. Ms. Bradley holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

EDUCATION WEEK

Dakarai I. Aarons

Staff Writer
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Dakarai I. Aarons is a staff writer for *Education Week*, covering business, local school districts, and school leadership. Before joining the newspaper in 2008, he covered local and state education issues for *The Commercial Appeal* newspaper in Memphis, Tenn., earning recognition from the Society of Professional Journalists and the Tennessee Press Association. His work has also appeared in *The Washington Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Des Moines Register*, and *The Miami Herald*.

Mr. Aarons holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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