

## Americans Deserve Leadership on Education

More than ever, the prospects of a nation and its children depend on the strength of its schools. Unfortunately, our schools are failing to prepare students for college, careers, and life—with dire consequences for all Americans.

■ **Too many students drop out.** This spring 1.2 million students will fail to graduate with their peers. More than 6,000 students drop out of school every day.<sup>1</sup>

■ **Failure starts early.** By eighth grade, nearly 70% of students are below proficient in reading, and most will never catch up.<sup>2</sup>

■ **Too many graduates are unprepared for college, careers, and life.**

- **Not ready for college:** More than one in three college students must take remedial math or English courses to catch up on skills they should have learned in high school.<sup>3</sup> In the community colleges, which enroll half of all undergraduates in America, the remediation rate climbs to 42%.<sup>4</sup>
- **Not ready for careers:** Nearly half of recent high school graduates who enter the workforce (46%) say they are not prepared for the jobs they hope to get in the future. Employers agree, estimating that 45% of recent high school graduates are not prepared with skills to advance beyond entry level jobs.<sup>5</sup>
- **Not ready for life:** American students have a hard time solving real-life problems that call for practical decision making and troubleshooting. Among 29 developed countries, the U.S. had the fourth-highest percentage of very *weak* problem-solvers and the sixth-lowest percentage of *strong* problem-solvers.<sup>6</sup>

■ **Education has huge economic consequences for families and the nation as a whole.**

- The poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that of families headed by high school graduates.<sup>7</sup> Each cohort of dropouts costs the U.S. \$192 billion in lost income and taxes.<sup>8</sup>
- Just at the community college level, families spend \$283 million to pay for remedial courses every year, and taxpayers foot an additional \$978 million. Counting lost productivity because students who take remedial courses are much less likely to earn a degree, poor preparation costs \$2.3 billion annually.<sup>9</sup>
- If we raised the academic performance of American students to just middle of the pack of European nations, our Gross Domestic Product would grow by five percent over 30 years—a gain of about \$700 billion annually.<sup>10</sup>

■ **Solving the problem will take strong leadership to raise standards, improve teaching, and provide time and support for learning.**

- 25 million students attend school in states have set proficiency standards for fourth grade reading below even the most basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.<sup>11</sup>
- More than 12 million students in grades 7-12 are taught academic courses by teachers who have no degree in the subject they're teaching.<sup>12</sup>
- High schools where teachers have time to provide students with high levels of support manage to cut dropout rates in half.<sup>13</sup>

■ **Minority students are most disenfranchised by the lack of national leadership on education.**

- Only about half of the nation's Black and Latino students graduate on time from high school.<sup>14</sup>
- Only one out of ten Black eighth graders reads at a proficient level, and only half have been taught to read at even the most basic level.<sup>15</sup> By the time they near graduation, Black and Latino teenagers have math and reading skills that are no higher than those of White middle school students.<sup>16</sup>
- Black and Latino graduates are only about half as likely as White students to leave high school adequately prepared for four-year colleges.<sup>17</sup>
- More than 10 million Black and Latino students attend school in states that have set proficiency standards for fourth grade reading so low they fall below even the most basic level.<sup>18</sup>
- Teachers in high-minority schools are almost twice as likely to be inexperienced as teachers in low-minority schools.<sup>19</sup>

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Education Week. (2007, June 12). *Diplomas Count 2007: Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life after High School*. Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Per day figure derived by dividing 1.23 million by 180 school days per year.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2005. Accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Strong American Schools analysis of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (2003-2004) and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Survey (2003-2004).
- <sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Condition of Education 2007*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2004/section5/indicator31.asp>
- <sup>5</sup> Achieve, Inc. (2005). *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* Prepared for Achieve, Inc. by Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>6</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2004). *Problem-Solving for Tomorrow's World*. Paris, France: Author. Accessed at [http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en\\_32252351\\_32236173\\_34002550\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_32252351_32236173_34002550_1_1_1_1,00.html).
- <sup>7</sup> Baum, S. & Payea, K. (2004). *Education Pays 2004*. New York: The College Board. Accessed at [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf).
- <sup>8</sup> Rouse, C. (2005, September). *The Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education*. Paper presented at Teachers College, Columbia University. Accessed at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/EquitySymposium/symposium/resourceDetails.asp?PresId=3>.
- <sup>9</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. (2006, August). *Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation*. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>10</sup> Hanushek, E. (2006). Alternative school policies and the benefits of general cognitive skills. *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 25, pp. 447-462.
- <sup>11</sup> Strong American Schools analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. (2007, June). *Mapping 2005 State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>12</sup> Ingersoll, R. (2002). *Out-of-Field Teaching, Educational Inequality, and the Organization of Schools*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- <sup>13</sup> Croninger, R. & Lee, V. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record*, vol. 103, pp. 548-581.
- <sup>14</sup> Education Week. (2007, June 12). *Diplomas Count 2007: Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life after High School*. Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Education, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2005. Accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- <sup>16</sup> Haycock, K. (2007, May). *Facing the Facts about Achievement for All Groups of Students*. Presentation to the North Carolina Science Summit, Raleigh, NC, May 23, 2007, slides 67-68. Accessed at <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/Product+Catalog/recent+presentations>.
- <sup>17</sup> Greene, J. & Winters, M. (2003, September). *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States*. New York: Manhattan Institute.
- <sup>18</sup> Strong American Schools analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. (2007, June). *Mapping 2005 State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>19</sup> The Commission on No Child Left Behind. *Beyond NCLB*. (2007). Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. (p. 31).