

# Facts for Education Advocates

## Demographics and the Racial Divide

The United States Census Bureau projects that about 50 percent of the U.S. population will be black, Hispanic or Asian by 2050. As the nation's population changes, trends in the education of minority students and the characteristics of the schools they attend are especially important for today's education advocates. The Facts for Education Advocates in this edition focus on the demographics and racial divide in today's schools.

## Population Shifts

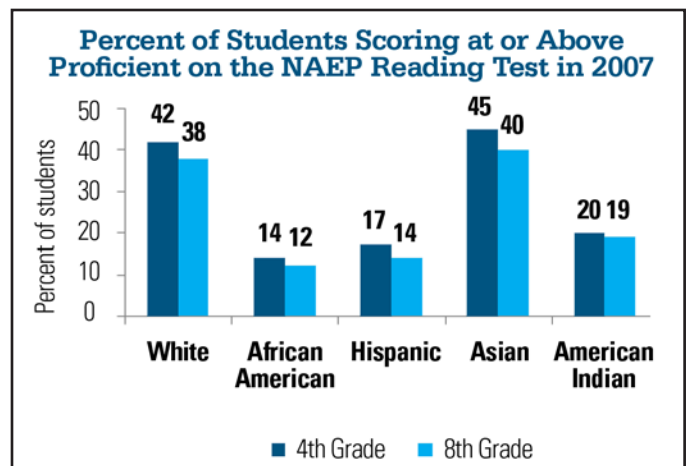
- Between the 1995-96 and 2005-06 school year, minority K-12 enrollment increased from 35 percent to almost 43 percent. The Hispanic student population grew fastest, from 13.5 percent of students to almost 20 percent. Black student enrollment increased from 16.8 to 17.2 percent of students. Asian students showed similarly modest growth (from 3.7 to 4.6 percent). American Indian enrollment remained stable at just over 1 percent. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008)
- Over the same time frame, minority enrollment in postsecondary education increased from 25 percent to almost 31 percent, but a significant gap remains between white and minority student college enrollment. The Hispanic student population grew from 8.1 to 10.8 percent, while black enrollment grew from 10.5 to 12.7 percent. The proportion of Asian students grew from 5.8 to 6.5 percent, and American Indian enrollment remained stable at roughly 1 percent. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) In conjunction with these demographics shifts, American classrooms have become more linguistically diverse. Between 1980 and 2002, the percent of high school students who identified English as their native language declined from 95 to 86, with a large decline among Hispanic students (from 65 to 48 percent). (Cahalan et al., 2006)
- Although Spanish is the most common native language of English Language Learner (ELL) students, it is followed successively by Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese and Korean. (Hood, 2003)

## Inequality in the Public School System

- More than 60 percent of black and Hispanic students attend high-poverty schools (more than 50 percent of the school population is identified as living in poverty), while only 30 percent of Asian and 18 percent of white students attend high-poverty schools. (Orfield & Lee, 2005)
- Minority students are far more likely than white students to attend schools in which minority students make up the majority of students. This is disproportionately true for black and Latino students, of whom 73 and 77 percent, respectively, attend majority minority schools. In contrast, just over half of Asian and American Indian students and only 12 percent of white students do so. (Orfield & Lee, 2005)
- Nearly half of black and nearly 40 percent of Latino students, but only 11 percent of white students, attend a high school where 60 percent or fewer freshmen are promoted to senior status on time. Ninth-grade students in majority minority schools are five times less likely to graduate on time than those in majority white schools. (Balfanz & Legters, 2004)

## Readiness

- Only about one-third of students who enter high school obtain a diploma and complete the necessary course work to meet college entry requirements, but the situation is worse for minority students. Of all students in the class of 2002 who entered public high schools, only 23 percent of black students and 20 percent of Hispanic students, compared to 40 percent of white students, left high school with the minimum set of skills and credentials needed to meet requirements for entry to a four-year college. (Greene & Winters, 2005)
- Black students had the lowest mean score on each portion of the SAT®, scoring at least 70 points below the national average and 94 points below white students. A similar gap in scores exists between whites and both Hispanics and American Indians. (College Board, 2008)



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## Graduation Rates and College Retention

- Overall, roughly 71 percent of students graduate from high school. With the exception of Asian students who have the highest graduation rate, minority students drop out at higher rates than white students. Only 58 percent of Hispanics, 55 percent of black and 51 percent of American Indian students completed high school in 2007. (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008)
- Due to a lack of disaggregated data, statistics on Asian American performance tend to reflect East Asians' academic successes and obscure the scholastic struggles of groups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders. For example, about 50 percent of Cambodians and Laotians and about 60 percent of Hmong age 25 and older who live in the United States have less than a high school education. (Reeves & Bennett, 2004)
- Graduation rates of minority males are especially troubling, as only 52, 48 and 46 percent of Hispanic, African American and American Indian ninth-grade males, respectively, made it to graduation four years later. (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008)
- Asian American and white students are also more likely than their black and Hispanic counterparts to obtain a bachelor's degree on time. In 1995-96, roughly 36 percent of Asian American students and 27 percent of white students, versus only 17 and 18 percent of black and Hispanic students, respectively, obtained a bachelor's degree within five years of enrolling in postsecondary education. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

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