

## EDUCATION

# 66%

**THE PERCENT OF ALL PUBLIC SCHOOL EIGHTH GRADERS UNABLE TO READ OR COMPUTE AT GRADE LEVEL.**

For generations of families, education has been the path out of poverty. With a quality education children can acquire the economic, social, cultural and political capital they need to realize their potential and support their future families. Educational opportunities continue to be grossly unequal across the country. The lottery of geography and birth means children in higher income and White and Asian families are more likely to have access to high-quality early education that sets them up for later academic and social success, while children of color and poor children are disproportionately denied the opportunity for a strong start.<sup>1</sup> Some children make it across the high school graduation stage and enter college prepared for the rigor of higher education, while thousands of others are left behind.

Unequal opportunities and outcomes have lifelong impacts that extend across generations. Children with low educational success are less likely to obtain a well-paying job and more likely to suffer ill health and to be incarcerated as adults. They are more likely to become parents before they are ready, and less likely to provide their own children the head start needed to break the cycle of poverty. The nation is failing to prepare our children to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

- Nearly 60 percent of all fourth and eighth grade public school students could not read or compute at grade level in 2013:
  - 66 percent of fourth graders could not read at grade level, 59 percent could not compute at grade level (*see Table H-1*).
  - 66 percent of eighth graders could not read or compute at grade level (*see Table H-2*).
- Only 78 percent of public school students graduated from high school in four years in 2010 (*see Table H-6*).
- Over half a million public school students (514,238) dropped out of grades 9-12 during the 2009-2010 school year.<sup>2</sup>
- Although three-quarters of high school students who took the ACT college entrance exam took a core curriculum in high school, only one-quarter were ready for college-level English, math, science, and reading.<sup>3</sup>

Poor children and children of color fare worse in our educational system:

- Almost three-quarters or more of lower income fourth and eighth grade public school students could not read or compute at grade level in 2013, compared to 52 percent or fewer of higher income students.
- Almost three-quarters or more of fourth and eighth grade Black and Hispanic public school students could not read or compute at grade level in 2013 (*see Tables H-1 and H-2*).
- One in 3 Black students and 3 in 10 Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native students did not graduate from high school in four years (*see Table H-6*).

### High Expectations

A lot of teachers judge and stigmatize their students based on where they come from. A lot of my teachers thought that since I was from the South End of Louisville and I grew up in Section 8 housing that I wasn't capable of doing all the things that I did. And the first time that I really felt like I was someone, it was the first time my fifth grade teacher actually pulled me to the side and said, "What can I do for you to help you as a student?"

— Janol Vinson, Florida International University graduate student

School funding between poorer and richer communities is far from equitable. Equitable funding is commonly defined as spending 40 percent more on poorer students than richer students to make up for the fact that poorer children face many more challenges to learning.

- Only Alaska spent 40 percent more per student in its poorest school districts than its richest districts in 2007-2008, the most recent year of data (*see Table H-4*). Six states underfunded their poorest districts by more than \$5,000 per student. Thirteen states spent *more* on students in their richest districts than their poorest.

Common Core State Standards, adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia assume strong instruction taught over a full day starting in kindergarten.

- In only 11 states and the District of Columbia are school districts required by law to offer full-day kindergarten to all eligible students.<sup>4</sup> All of them have adopted the Common Core State Standards.

Disparate school discipline practices contribute to achievement gaps:

- In 2009-2010, more than 1 in 6 Black students received at least one out-of-school suspension compared to 1 in 50 Asian/Pacific Islander students and 1 in 20 White students (*see Table H-5*).<sup>5</sup>
- More than 1 in 8 students with disabilities were suspended, compared to 1 in 14 students without disabilities.<sup>5</sup>
- Black children were nearly two-and-a-half times more likely to be corporally punished than White children, and nearly eight times more likely to be corporally punished than Hispanic children.<sup>6</sup>

For students who don't graduate on time, the GED® is meant to provide an opportunity to gain some of the advantages associated with a high school diploma. However, a high school degree is worth more than a GED®:

- GED® holders earned on average \$4,100 more per year than high school dropouts, but \$4,100 less than high school graduates. Even with a college degree, GED® holders made \$1,400 less per year than high school graduates with a college degree.<sup>7</sup>
- One in 5 GED® test takers nationally is between the ages of 16 and 18 and could be earning a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup>

States spend nearly three times more a year for prisoners than it would cost to provide a child with a quality early learning experience<sup>9</sup> and more than twice as much as they spend to provide K-12 education.<sup>10</sup> Twenty-one states spent over three times more to house a prisoner than to educate a student in 2009-2010 (*see Table H-8*).

Find state data in Education tables in Appendix.