

December 2005

New from Achieve

Using data to improve student achievement. Achieve has released a [policy paper](#) (PDF) and [companion brochure](#) (PDF) outlining the 10 essential elements of a high-quality, longitudinal data system and making the case to state policymakers that such a system is critical to their reform efforts. The reports are part of the newly launched [Data Quality Campaign](#), a partnership of 10 national organizations committed to improving the quality, accessibility and use of data in education.



A closer look at proficiency. The 2005 scores for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have been released, and Achieve has compiled a series of charts showing that the Proficient standard on most state tests is set at a level closer to Basic on NAEP. The exceptions are Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Wyoming, which have consistently higher standards. To see the charts comparing state and NAEP results, go to the [Achieve Web site](#).

Commentary: Time To Learn. Time To Act.

Although the latest [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) (NAEP) results in 4th and 8th grade reading and math show progress in some areas, the achievement gap is still a significant problem in every state. African American and Hispanic students continue to lag substantially behind white students, and low-income students are similarly outperformed by more advantaged students.

The disappointing results are not for lack of trying. Over the past decade or more, states have put in place standards, assessments and accountability systems. They have disaggregated achievement data and paid renewed attention to the preparation and quality of teachers. These strategies are necessary, but so far they have not been sufficient.

In many states, the reforms have been designed to bring high-poverty students *the same* level of instructional resources that are available to their more advantaged peers. But simply leveling the playing field is not

News Clips

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1. **Gaps hurt the economy.** The achievement gap is not just a problem in grade schools -- too few Hispanic and African American students earn a high school degree, and [even fewer](#) make it through college, which is bad for the economy. As [Business Week](#) points out, the baby boomers are retiring, and they are being replaced by a growing number of young Hispanics and African Americans who are much less likely to have earned degrees.
2. **Getting on track.** Fourteen states have been awarded grants to build longitudinal data systems to enhance student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education's

enough. Because students from low-income families and communities often start with significant educational disadvantages, giving them the *same* kinds of classroom experiences their more advantaged peers have will not fully close the achievement gap. They must be given *more* than their counterparts to enable them to learn at a faster pace and make more than a year's worth of gain per school year.

Last month, Massachusetts took an important but largely unnoticed step in this direction. The state awarded grants to 16 local school districts to help them plan strategies to provide an additional 30 percent of learning time in the lowest-performing schools -- the equivalent of two additional hours per school day. The state Legislature intends to provide \$1,300 per student to districts that expand learning time by at least 30 percent.

A provocative study released last month by Massachusetts 2020 ([Time for a Change: The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement](#)) provides evidence that this strategy can work. The study found that high-achieving, high-poverty schools often use 20 percent to 30 percent more time for instruction and enrichment than similar schools that they outperform. These schools -- a mix of charter schools and regular public schools -- use the added time to provide longer periods and more in-depth instruction and tutoring in core academic subjects. They use the expanded school day to provide students with opportunities for art, music, electives and a range of enrichment activities. A number of schools also use the time for concentrated planning and professional development for teachers. Principals and teachers in these schools worked to gain the support of parents, teachers and students for extended hours, despite its effect on individual and family routines. Overall, the schools provided 15 to 45 percent more time, at an additional cost of 7 to 12 percent more per pupil.

Time alone is no panacea. The Massachusetts study is clear on this point. But the Bay State's effort to couple higher academic standards with increased learning time holds real promise and warrants attention from policymakers in other states. Some will no doubt balk at the cost, but states that have

\$25 million [Institute of Education Sciences grant program](#) was announced at the launch of the national Data Quality Campaign. The states sharing the grant are Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

3. **ADP state update.** [Michigan](#) is one of the few states that does not have statewide course requirements, but now, led by Gov. Granholm, the state is considering mandating that all high school students study four years of math and English and three years of science and social studies.
4. **Taking on college remediation.** Only about two-thirds of [Illinois'](#) 2002 high school graduates were at least minimally ready for college based on their ACT scores and GPAs -- and a disproportionate number of the unprepared were poor and minority students. For the first time, the Illinois Board of Higher Education is collecting data from the universities about the number of students enrolling in remedial courses, and the board is making the results public. Collecting these data will help build public understanding and support for policies that ensure students are ready for college when they graduate from high school.
5. **Adding value to AYP.** The [U.S. Department of Education](#) is going to allow up to 10 states to measure student progress over time instead of comparing the scores of students from one year to the next. But the department still expects full proficiency in reading and math by 2014 -- growth alone will not be enough.
6. **Honor states.** The [National](#)

thus far failed to close persistent achievement gaps can ill afford to continue with the strategies already in place without considering bold moves that hold the promise of a sizeable impact.

Related Resources

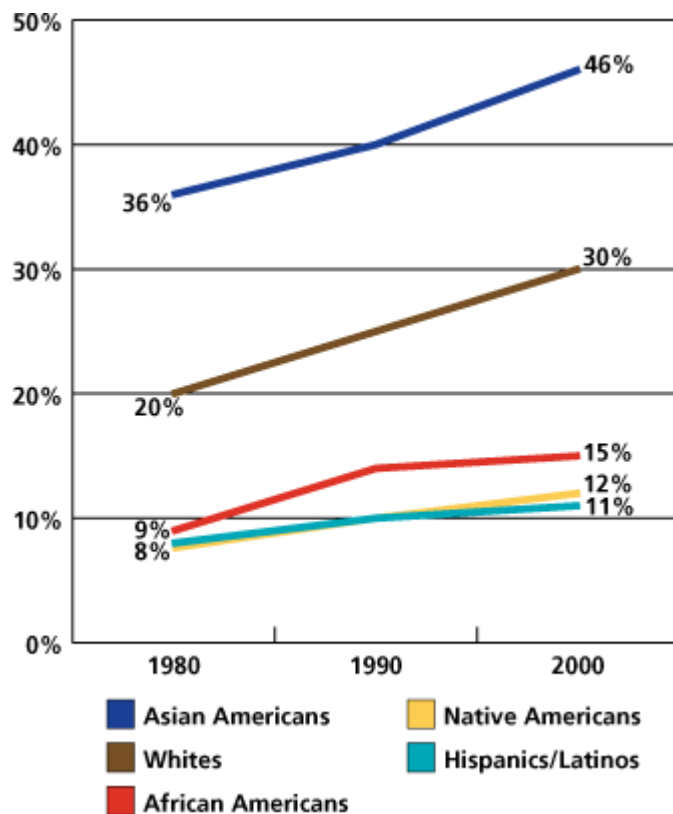
For more information about the Massachusetts grants, read an article from the [The Boston Globe](#) or visit the [Massachusetts Department of Education](#) Web site.

[Governors Association](#) recently awarded honor grants to 17 states. This is phase two of a grant program meant to help states better prepare students for college and work. In phase one, 10 states were granted money to meet long-range, 10-year goals. The states in the second round will share \$5.2 million to carry out discrete strategies for improving high schools. Seven of the 17 states are members of the ADP Network. They are Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania.

Did You Know?

More Americans Earn Bachelor's Degrees, but Gaps among Racial/Ethnic Groups Widen

Percentage of Working-Age Population (Ages 25-64) with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 5% Public Use Microdata Samples (based on 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census).

To succeed in the knowledge-based economy, workers need higher levels of skills than ever before. The good news is that more Americans are earning bachelor's degrees. The bad news is that attainment gaps are widening between whites and minorities, who are projected to make up a substantially larger percentage of the U.S. workforce over the next two decades.

New Resources

- Minority populations are growing rapidly in the United States, but their educational attainment is not keeping pace. A new [Policy Alert](#) from The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education warns that unless states can raise the educational level of all ethnic/racial groups, smaller percentages of the working-age population will have high school diplomas and college degrees and the personal income of Americans will decline over the next 15 years. This projected decline could have a significant impact on the U.S. economy because it coincides with increasing levels of knowledge and skills required in workplaces.
- In southern states, more minority students than ever before are going to and staying in college, but the percentage of minority students overall who enroll is still far too small, according to the Southern Regional Education Board's [Fact Book 2005](#). The report looks at a variety of indicators to assess educational progress and warns that even as demographic shifts mean that more middle- and low-income students will be seeking to enroll in college in the future, costs of going to college are becoming a bigger challenge.
- A new survey of Teach For America (TFA) corps members reveals that these young teachers have unconventional and oftentimes refreshing views on the causes and solutions to the achievement gap in American schools. According to [Equity Within Reach](#), first- and second-year TFA teachers do not believe that students' family situations and poor funding of schools are the most significant barriers to closing the gap. They point instead to low expectations in the classroom and teacher quality.

Perspective is sent to you monthly by Achieve, a bipartisan, non-profit organization founded by the nation's governors and CEOs to help states raise standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work and citizenship. Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to your colleagues.

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