

# Project

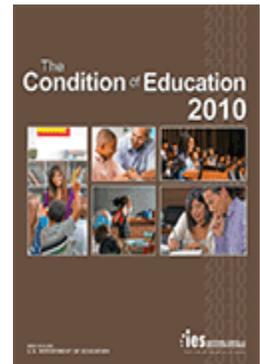
## Graduation: Latest Snapshot of High-Poverty US Schools



Each year the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) releases a report on important education developments and trends in the U.S. This year's edition, [\*The Condition of Education 2010\*](#), includes a special section on high-poverty schools. The report is online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010028.pdf>.

Using as its poverty measure, the percentage of students who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program's free or reduced-price lunch, NCES reports that nearly one-fifth of all public schools in the U.S.—including nearly 10 percent of public high schools—educate students from high-poverty homes.

The report's statistics, which are for the 2007-08 school year, demonstrate once again the strong link between poverty and the likelihood students will fail to complete high school.



- 1. The number of high-poverty schools has increased.** Seventeen percent of US public schools (16,122 schools) were high-poverty schools; that is, seventy-five percent or more of their students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This is a five percent increase from 1999-2000 at which time 12 percent of the nation's schools fit into the high-poverty category.
- 2. Cities have the most high-poverty schools.** About 40 percent of city elementary schools were high-poverty schools compared with 15 percent of schools in towns, 13 percent of suburban schools, and 10 percent of rural elementary schools. A similar pattern was found at the secondary level. Twenty percent of secondary schools in cities were high poverty, while only 5 to 8 percent of secondary schools in suburbs, towns, and rural areas fit this classification.
- 3. More racial/ethnic minority than white students attended high-poverty schools.** One-third (34 percent) of Black students, and an even higher percentage (40 percent) of Hispanic students, attended high-poverty elementary schools compared to 14 percent of White students. Similarly, in high-poverty secondary schools, only 11 percent of students were White, while 38 percent were Black and 44 percent were Hispanic.
- 4. High-Poverty Secondary Schools . . .**
  - **Were about 10 percent of U.S. schools.** Slight more than 2,000 schools, or nine percent, of the nation's secondary schools, were high-poverty schools.
  - **Graduated less than 70 percent of their seniors.** About 68 percent of 12th-graders in high-poverty schools graduated with a high school diploma compared to 91 percent of 12th-graders in low-poverty high schools.
  - **Experienced a 20 percent decline in graduation rates over the last eight years.** Since 1999–2000, the average percentage of seniors in high-poverty schools who graduated with a diploma has declined by 18 percentage points, from 86 to 68 percent. There was no measurable decline in low-poverty high schools.

- **Produced fewer students who attended four-year colleges.** Twenty-eight percent of graduates from high-poverty schools attended a four-year college compared with over half (52 percent) of graduates from low-poverty high schools.
- **Were located in all regions of the country, with lowest percentage in the Midwest.** Twelve percent of all public secondary schools in the West, and 11 percent each of schools in the Northeast and South were high poverty, compared with 5 percent of secondary schools in the Midwest.
- **Were concentrated in four states.** States with the highest percentages of high-poverty secondary schools were Mississippi (43 percent), New Mexico (34 percent), Louisiana (27 percent), and New York (21 percent).
- **Enrolled eight times as many English language learners than low-poverty schools.** About 16 percent of students attending high-poverty secondary schools were identified as English language learners compared with 2 percent of students attending low-poverty secondary schools.

## 5. High-Poverty Elementary Schools . . .

- **Were in every region, with the highest percentages in the South and West.** Almost one quarter (24 percent) of public elementary schools in both the South and West were high-poverty schools compared with 16 percent in the Northeast and 12 percent in the Midwest.
- **Were concentrated in six states.** States with the highest percentages of high-poverty elementary schools were Mississippi (53 percent), Louisiana (52 percent), New Mexico (46 percent), the District of Columbia (37 percent), and California (34 percent).
- **Enrolled 40 percent of U.S. Hispanic and Black students.** Forty-two percent of Hispanic, 40 percent of Black, and 28 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students were enrolled in high-poverty elementary schools. By comparison, 5 percent of White and 15 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students attended these schools.
- **Served high percentages of English language learners.** Twenty-five percent of students in high-poverty elementary schools were identified as English language learners compared with 4 percent of students attending low-poverty elementary schools. At the secondary level, about 16 percent of students attending high-poverty schools were identified as English language learners compared with 2 percent of students who attended low-poverty schools.

**NOTE:** NCES uses U.S. Census geographic regions. Midwest: IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, and WI; Northeast: CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT; South: AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV; and West: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, and WY.