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Recent Trends in School Accountability

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The Education Trust

About Ed Trust

Who We Are	What We do
<p>The Education Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college, and forever closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement that separate low-income students and students of color from other youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Research and policy analysis on patterns and practices that both cause and can eliminate these inequities. ❑ Advocacy to share that knowledge and push for policies and practices that help to close gaps ❑ Technical assistance to districts, states, and community-based organizations.

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Goals for our time together

- ❑ Set the context with data on current achievement trends
- ❑ Discuss how school accountability fits into this context
- ❑ Talk about recent and upcoming policy developments

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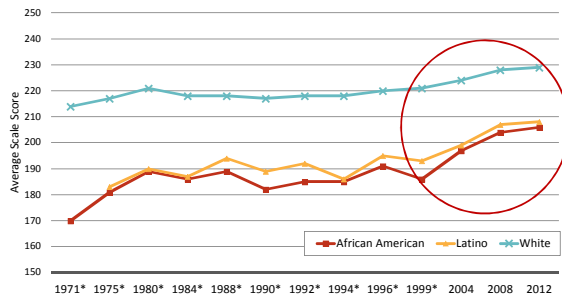
Let's start with some good news.

After more than a decade of fairly flat achievement and stagnant or growing gaps in K-12, we appear to be turning the corner with our elementary students.

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Since 1999, large gains for all groups of students, especially students of color

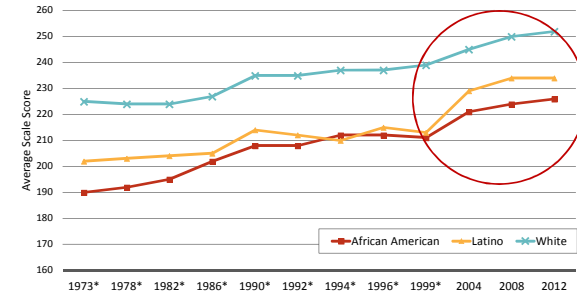
9 Year Olds – NAEP Reading



*Denotes previous assessment format
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012"

Since 1999, performance rising for all groups of students

9 Year Olds – NAEP Math

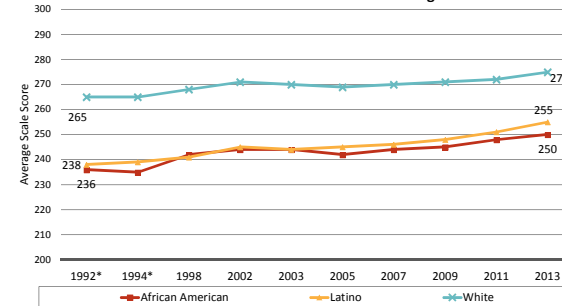


*Denotes previous assessment format
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012"

Middle grades are up, too.

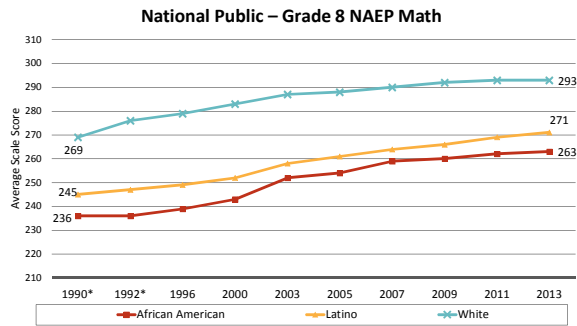
Reading: Modest improvement and some gap closing over the last decade

National Public – Grade 8 NAEP Reading



*Accommodations not permitted
Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 281)

Math: More improvement and gap narrowing.



*Accommodations not permitted
Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES (Proficient Scale Score = 299)

These national trends are the result of the hard work and success of individual schools...

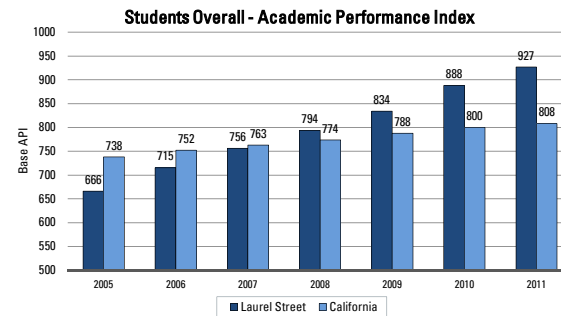
Laurel Street Elementary Compton, CA

- 497 students in grades K-5
 - 78% Latino
 - 16% African American
- 87% Low Income
- 61% Limited English Proficient



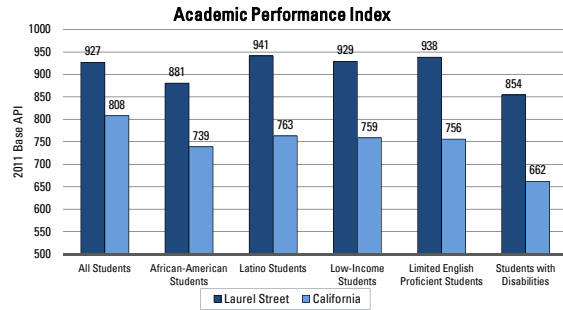
Note: Enrollment data are for 2011-12 school year.
Source: California Department of Education

Improvement Over Time at Laurel Street Elementary



Note: Base API incorporates student performance in English language arts, math, and science. The index ranges from 0-1000, with 800 serving as the statewide benchmark. California Base API includes Grades 2-6.
Source: California Department of Education

All Groups Outperforming the State at Laurel Street Elementary



Note: Base API incorporates student performance in English language arts, math, and science. The index ranges from 0-1000, with 800 serving as the statewide benchmark. California Base API includes Grades 2-6.
Source: California Department of Education

Elmont Memorial High School

Elmont, New York

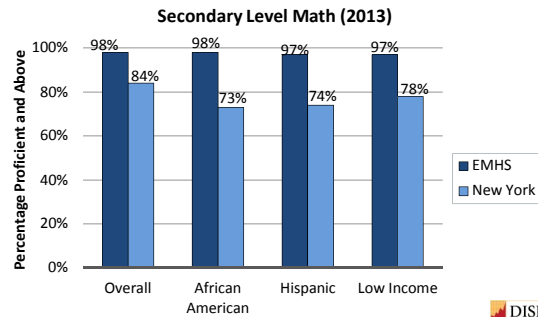
- 1,847 students in grades 7-12
 - 79% African American
 - 12% Latino
 - 8% Asian
- 32% Low Income



Note: Data are for the 2012-2013 school year.
Source: New York State Education Department

DISPELLING THE MYTH
2005 Award Recipient

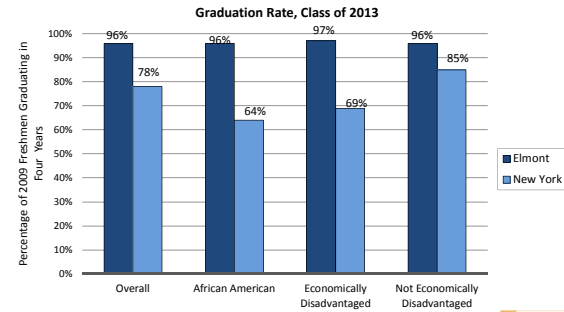
High Performance by ALL Students at Elmont Memorial High School



Source: New York State Education Department

DISPELLING THE MYTH
2005 Award Recipient

High Graduation Rates at Elmont Memorial High School



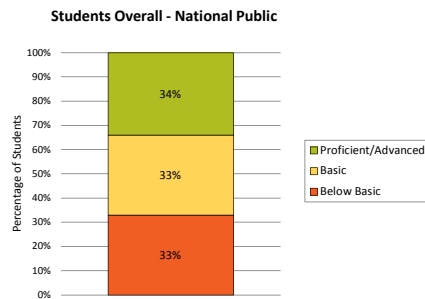
Includes students who graduated by August 2013
Source: New York State Education Department

DISPELLING THE MYTH
2005 Award Recipient

And gains aren't limited to individual schools.
 We've seen real progress in some districts and states
 as well.

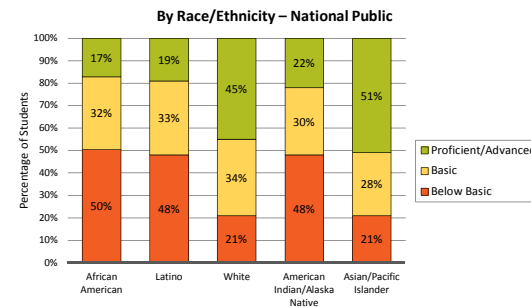
But despite these gains, we've still far from where we
 need to be, especially for our low-income students and
 students of color.

2013 NAEP Grade 4 Reading



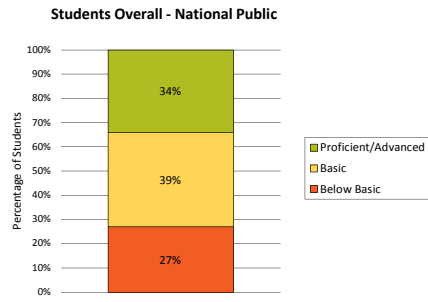
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/index/>

2013 NAEP Grade 4 Reading



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/index/>

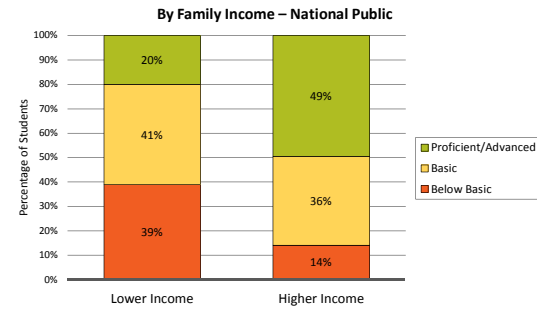
2013 NAEP Grade 8 Math



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

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2013 NAEP Grade 8 Math



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>

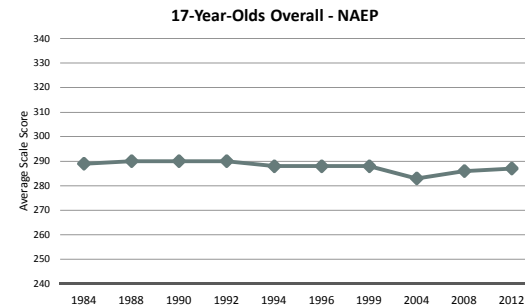
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But least we have some traction on elementary and middle school problems.

The same is NOT true of our high schools.

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Achievement is flat in reading for students overall.



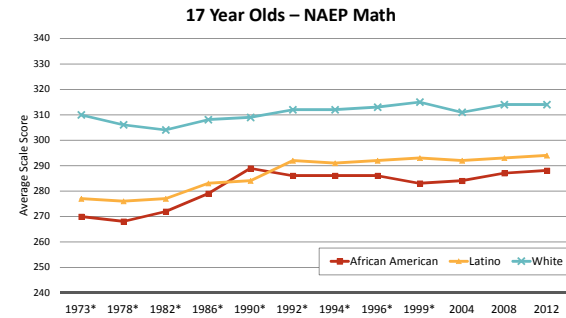
Source: NAEP Long-Term Trends, NCES (2004)

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And despite earlier improvements, gaps between groups haven't narrowed much since the late 80s and early 90s.

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Math: Not much gap closing since 1990.



*Denotes previous assessment format

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012"

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There is a lot we need to do to improve these outcomes

- We need to eliminate resource inequities
- We need to better train, recruit and support our teachers and school leaders
- We need to ensure that all students get access to rigorous and engaging learning opportunities
- We need to better integrate services so that students get the supports they need inside and outside of school.

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So, how *does* accountability fit into all of this?

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Before we go any further, let's to make sure we're on the same page

- People mean lots of things when they say “accountability.”
- We use this term to refer to the policies for measuring and holding schools responsible for student performance, rewarding those that are serving all of their students well and prompting improvement in those that are not.

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Accountability systems in and of themselves don't improve student achievement

Only the hard work of teachers and principals can do that.

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But good accountability systems can and should help set the conditions that enable improvement to happen.

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How?

- By sending a clear signal about what is expected of our education system;
- By prompting and supporting improvement where improvement is needed; and
- By providing information to parents, educators, and community members about how their schools are doing.

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School Accountability in Recent Years

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Policy Context: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act

- Originally passed in 1965, ESEA is the main federal education law in the U.S.
- ESEA set up the Title I program, which currently provides more than \$14 billion dollars to states to support the education of disadvantaged students. The law also indicates what states have to do as a condition of receiving Title I funds.
- There have been many iterations of ESEA since the 1960s, and the law has changed a lot over time
 - Initially – lots of requirements related to inputs (how money could be used, etc.)
 - Starting in 1994 – More flexibility regarding how money could be used, but an expectation of improved outcomes.
 - The latest version of ESEA is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

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Policy Context: No Child Left Behind

Big step forward on expectations and transparency:

- For the first time, set expectation that in order to be considered a good school, the school had to be serving all groups of students well.
- Required reporting of student assessment results (and later graduation rates) by student group.
- Research has shown that this focus makes a real difference for students – especially for low-income students and students of color.

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Policy Context: No Child Left Behind

- **But the law had a number of shortcomings**
 - Goal of 100% proficiency by 2014 wasn't based in evidence of what's possible.
 - States could – and did – set vastly different expectations for what students need to know and be able to do.
 - Too blunt: No differentiation between schools that were missing expectations for all groups by a lot, and those missing them for one group by a bit.
 - Insufficient attention to resources and supports.

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Policy Context: ESEA Flexibility, or Waivers

- In 2011, when Congress was unable to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Obama administration offered states the opportunity to apply for waivers from some of the more onerous requirements of NCLB.
- The waivers gave states more flexibility in:
 - Setting goals for schools
 - Using additional indicators (other than state assessments and graduation rates)
 - Identifying which schools need additional support/intervention
 - Defining what those supports/interventions should be

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Advances in accountability policy under the waivers

- Ambitious, but achievable goals
- Accountability for additional important indicators, like science and social studies performance, ACT performance
- Accountability for academic growth over time in addition to proficiency
- Greater differentiation among different types of schools
- Targeted supports and interventions to the lowest performers

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Areas of Concern: The Equity Perspective

- Many states shifted away from focusing on outcomes of all groups of students. Some common trends:
 - Student groups lumped together into “Supergroups”
 - School determinations – such as an A-F grade – that are not based on performance of individual groups of students
 - Defined interventions in the lowest-performing schools only

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What’s the impact of these decision?

To better understand the signals that accountability systems are currently sending about group outcomes, we analyzed student performance data from three states – **Florida, Minnesota and Kentucky.**

In each state, we asked:

“How are schools that earn the highest accountability rating, as well as lower ratings, performing for all students? How about for low-income students and students of color?”

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For full results, see our brief
“Making Sure All Children Matter:
Getting School Accountability
Signals Right,”

at:

[http://www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/
all_children_matter](http://www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/all_children_matter)



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Key finding: Right now, school ratings are not telling us much about how schools are performing for individual groups of students.

- In each state, schools are getting top ratings despite low performance for some groups.
- Top rated schools often perform similarly for their low-income students and students of color as middling to low-rated schools do for their white and higher income peers.
- In many top-rated schools, performance of some historically underserved groups is declining.
- Student growth data also don't sufficiently counter the patterns we see in proficiency results.

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Why advocates, and others, are concerned about this

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1. We cannot close achievement gaps on the backs of low-performing schools alone

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2. It's a question of transparency

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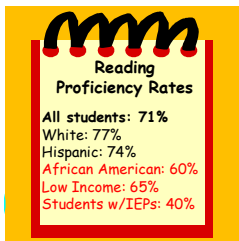
Transparency for Parents

- Many parents make decisions about where to send their child to school in part based on that school's accountability rating. Unfortunately, current accountability systems aren't telling all parents the same thing – an "A" school for one child may be a "C" for another.

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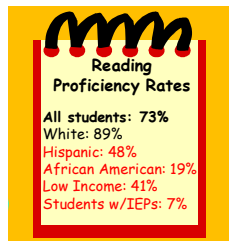
Three "A" Schools: Reading

School 1



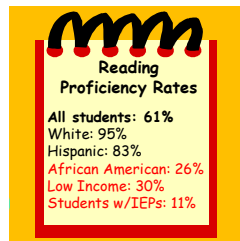
Note: This elementary school is approximately 30% African American, 40% Hispanic, and over 50% Low-Income

School 2



Note: This elementary school is approximately 20% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 40% Low-Income

School 3



Note: This middle school is approximately 50% African American, 5% Hispanic, and over 50% Low-Income

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2014

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Transparency for Educators

- Educators gauge progress in part based on these systems. A high rating despite low performance for some groups paints a false picture of success and allows some students to get overlooked.

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What's happening now?

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1. Waiver Renewal Process

- States have to apply to U.S. Department of Ed to renew their ESEA waiver.
- Waiver renewal guidelines include additional requirement: That states can no longer allow schools to get the top accountability rating if they have big gaps that are not closing.
- Requirement is step in the right direction, but should be floor, not ceiling.

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2. ESEA Reauthorization

- **We are closer than we've been in 14 years to rewriting NCLB**
 - Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have passed their versions of a revised ESEA.
 - Next step is for the two bills to get combined into one (conference process). Then the final bill has to pass both the House and Senate, and be signed by the President.

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What's in these bills?

- Both bills require states to set standards and to administer assessments aligned with those standards. They also require states to report assessment results by student group.
- Both give states flexibility to use additional indicators in their accountability systems
- But both bills – especially the House version – are weak when it comes to holding schools and districts accountable for how they are doing for historically underserved students.
 - Both bills require states to create school ratings systems that take the performance of student groups into account.
 - But neither bill requires any action when schools aren't doing well for one or more groups.

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Why is this a problem?

- Our education system is nowhere close to where it needs to be when it comes to giving all students the learning opportunities they need to succeed. This is not the time to stop demanding that they get those opportunities.
- There's a long history of inaction on the part of some states. Moreover, without stronger subgroup accountability requirements, state leaders will lose important political cover.
- Given the more than \$14 billion investment in Title I, the federal government has an obligation to expect results.

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What's being done about it?

- Our coalition of civil rights, business and disability organizations had been working hard to add an amendment demanding stronger subgroup accountability to the Senate bill.
- Amendment failed, but got the votes of all but two Democrats, as well as one Republican senator. This sends a clear message that the accountability issue will need to be addressed during the conference process.
- We will continue to fight for greater subgroup accountability in federal law. Regardless of what happens in ESEA though, a lot of decisions about accountability will happen at the state level.
- This means that the work you do in supporting your states will be absolutely critical to ensuring that there is a continued push for greater equity.

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Questions and Contact Information

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