

INFORMATION CAPSULE

Department of Research Services

February 2001

Do You Know . . . The Good News About American Education?

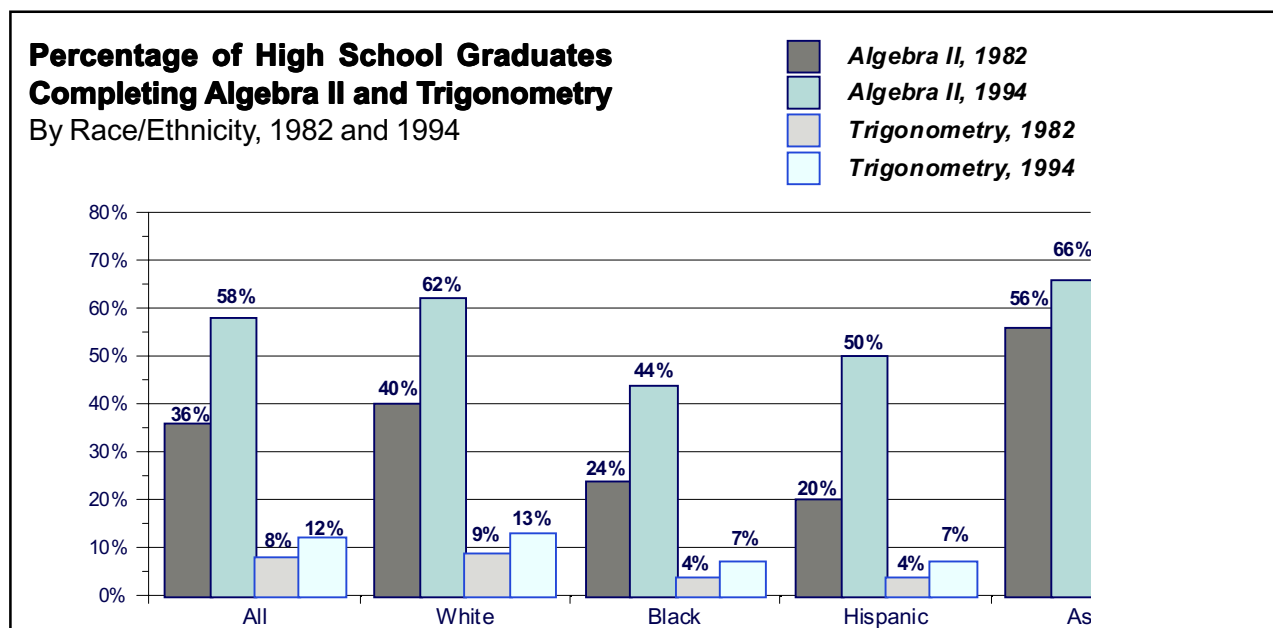
A recent report has been published by the Center on Education Policy and the American Youth Policy Forum entitled, *Do You Know . . . The Good News About American Education?* This analysis is important reading for educators and non-educators alike. The report highlights statistics which show advances made after ten years of national education reform. A sample of the results discussed in the report are summarized below.

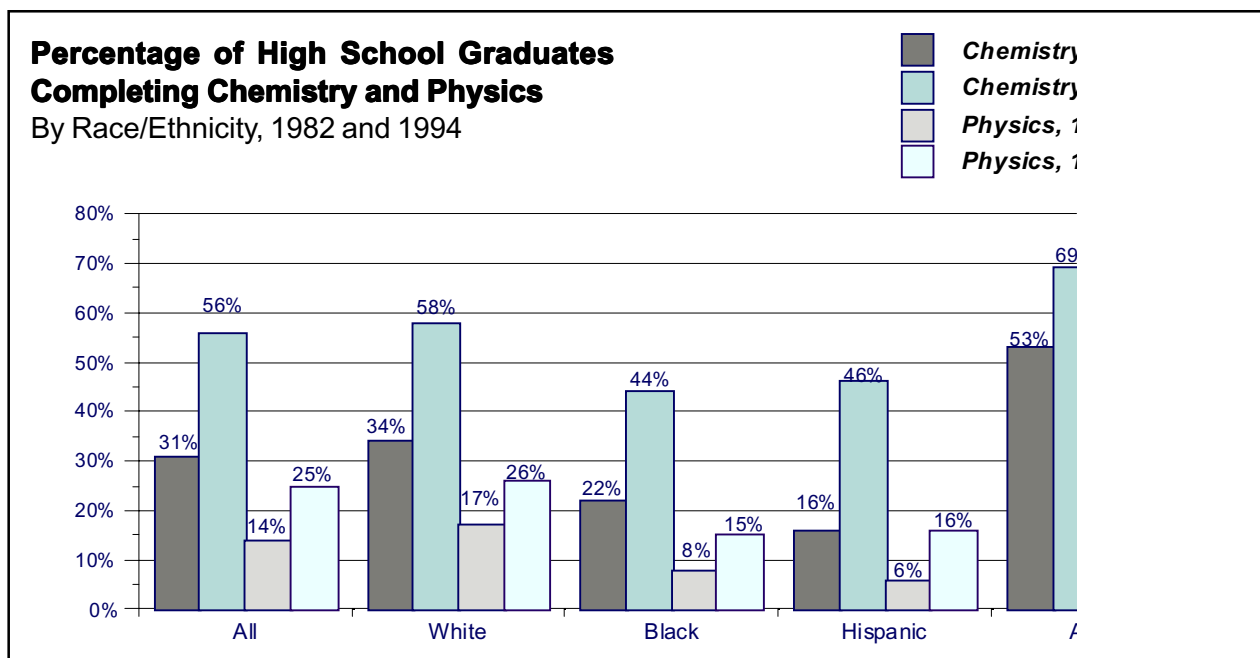
DROPOUT

- *Fewer Students are Dropping Out of School.* Current dropout rates are lower than they were in the 1970s and 1980s. A total of 11% of public school students dropped out nationwide in 1997 compared to 14% in 1983, and 15% in 1972.

COURSE ENROLLMENT

- *High School Students Are Taking More Challenging Courses.* The percentage of graduates completing a curriculum including four years of English and three years of mathematics, science, and social studies has increased threefold (14% to 50%) from 1982 to 1994. Although enrollment increases in higher-level courses occurred in all ethnic/racial groups, the growth in the percentage of Hispanic graduates taking courses such as algebra II and chemistry rose to a greater extent than did that for other ethnic groups.





GENDER GAP IN HIGHER-LEVEL COURSES

- *More Female Students are Taking Higher-Level Mathematics and Science Courses.* Thirty-five percent of female graduates took algebra II in 1982 compared to 61% in 1994. Additionally, the percentage of females enrolled nationally in chemistry increased from 30% in 1982 to 59% in 1994.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

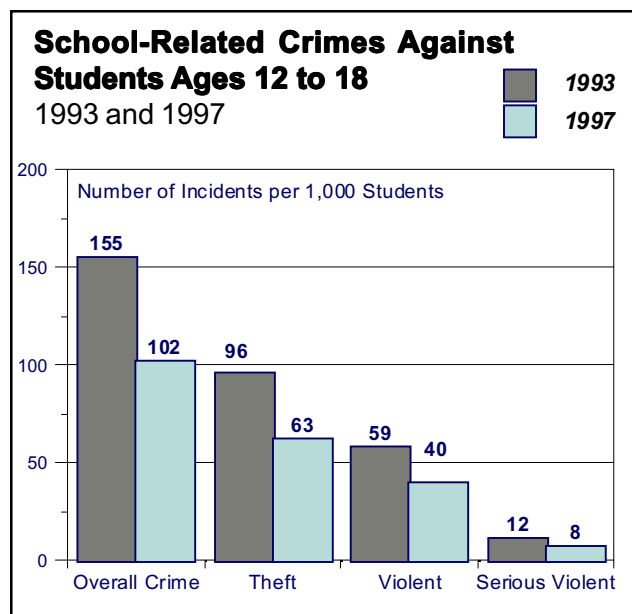
- *Student Mathematics and Science Achievement is Improving.* The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a national testing program that measures trends in student achievement in vital subject areas. Although nine-year-old students made the most progress (from 1982 to 1996), the NAEP mathematics scores rose for all three age groups tested (i.e., 9, 13, and 17 years old). Additionally, black students in all age groups and 17 year-old Hispanics reduced their achievement gap with whites in mathematics. Science achievement increased with the greatest gains among black and Hispanic students.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE

- *College-Bound Students Performed Better on Both the SAT and ACT.* Students sitting for the SAT and ACT today “... must be at least as well prepared as those tested in the past.” According to *The Good News About American Education*, SAT and ACT scores went up during the 1990s.
- *More Students Continue on To Higher Education and Graduate With 4-Year Degrees.* Compared to the early 1980s, today’s students are continuing on to college at a higher rate (67%) than they did in the 1980s (53%). College enrollment rates for black high school graduates have increased from 39% in 1983 to 60% in 1997. The total of 4-year degrees increased from 26% in 1983 to 31% in 1998.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

- *School Crime is Declining.* The overall crime rate declined from 1983 to 1997. The report concluded that, “Although recent, tragic shootings have reminded the nation that violent death in school is intolerable . . . , children are safer in schools than in the community or at home.” The number of school-related crimes per 1000 students declined from 155 in 1993 to 102 in 1997.



TEACHER QUALITY

- *Public School Teachers are Better Educated than Private School Teachers.* On average, virtually all (99.3%) public school teachers had more experience (14.8 years) than private school teachers (12.2 years) and had attained at least a bachelor's degree (99.3%) as compared to private school teachers (93.4%).

CONCLUSION

The report entitled *Do You Know . . . The Good News About American Education?* has provided considerable data that many educational professionals should avail themselves. Negative and contrary evidence concerning public education abounds in all facets of the national and local news media. There is no question that our public schools should continue to improve. However, these data serve to provide another perspective relative to the fact that public schools nationally have experienced major improvements since the early 1980s.

Copies of the Full Report

A copy of the full report is available from the Center on Education Policy, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 619, Washington, D.C. 20036 or by calling the Center at (202) 822-8065.

Companion Power Point Slide Presentation

A new Educational Research Services (ERS) CD entitled, *Help Spread the Good News About American Education: A Resource for Public School Leaders* has been released. The CD contains materials to assist educators in their role as advocates of public education. The presentation features statistics showing positive trends as grouped into the five areas of school participation and curriculum, student achievement, educational climate, teachers, and higher education. Information about the CD can be obtained from ERS at 2000 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington Virginia 22201 or by calling (800) 791-9308.