

CA K-16 Initiatives	CA Data and Presentations	CA State and Local Policy	CA District and School Services	CA Community Center	CA Press Room	
CA Press Room	GO	EdTrust West Home	NCLB in California	College & Work Prep/A-G for All	Conferences and Meetings	Reports and Publications



#### -About EdTrust — West

- Mission and History
- Contact Us

#### -Career Opportunities

#### -Internships

- Related Links to CA
- Información y recursos en español

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2003

Contact: Russlynn Ali, (510) 465-6444

### **The Unfinished Business of *Brown v. Board of Education***

***While it sometimes takes place in the same building, education is still separate, and still unequal***

(Oakland , CA ) -- On the eve of the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ending legalized segregation in public schools, The Education Trust today released two reports documenting an educational system that is still very much separate and unequal.

The first report, “A New Core Curriculum for All,” marshals findings from several recent large-scale economic and education studies to argue that educators and policymakers working to ensure that all students are prepared for success in work and in college must attend, first and foremost, to ensuring that students take the kinds of rigorous courses that research makes clear are necessary for such success.



The report cites research showing that students of all sorts benefit when placed in higher level classes. Despite those benefits, the report finds that minority students are often not enrolled in upper-level classes. For instance, nationally, only one-half or fewer African American, Latino or Native American students are enrolled in Algebra II compared to nearly two-thirds of their White and Asian peers. This gets worse in California, with only 34% of our high school students enrolled in at least one upper level math course.

The second report, “Education Watch: Achievement, Attainment and Opportunity from Elementary School Through College” documents the continued academic segregation of low-income and minority students from other students. The California report shows that minority students are more often enrolled in lower level classes, assigned to less-qualified teachers, and disproportionately placed in special education—or suspended from school entirely. This pattern holds true nationally and in almost every state.

“We now know that students don’t have to be in legally segregated schools to be segregated into different classes and therefore very different futures. Frankly, many minority students still attend schools where there are few if any White students. But students can be in the very same school and receive two very separate and unequal educations,” said Kati Haycock, Director of The Education Trust on releasing the report in Washington, D.C.



“Despite the years of reform since Brown, in California separate and unequal educations abound. It is clear that we have very different K-12 paths and consequently very different futures for different groups of students. By and large, Latino, African American and poor students in California are channeled into a curriculum that significantly limits their postsecondary options while the opposite is true for their White, Asian and more wealthy counterparts,” said Russlynn Ali, Director of The Education Trust – West upon the report’s release.

Millions of high school students will be sent out into the “real world” in the coming weeks, looking to continue their education or find employment. Regardless of which path they have chosen, young people are gambling on the same thing – that their high school diploma will prepare them to succeed. But that’s not a safe bet.

“The research is clear and compelling: the single biggest predictor of success in college is the quality and intensity of a student’s high school curriculum -- more significant than test scores or class rank. In fact, these factors trump socio-economic status as an influence on student success,” said Patte Barth, the report’s author.

Courses traditionally thought of as “college prep” are essential in today’s workplace, where most jobs that pay a family-supporting wage demand high skills.



“While a student with a high school diploma without higher-level classes such as Algebra II may get an entry-level job, he or she may end up sweeping the factory floor. Even in fields like manufacturing, students now need advanced courses in subjects like mathematics both to secure a foothold on the ladder and to gain real job security,” Barth noted. “The absence of college prep courses also cuts off their opportunity to choose later down the road to go back to school for additional training.”

“In view of all this, you would think that we would make sure that all students complete a rigorous academic core. After all, nobody loses. Yet we continue to give low-income and minority students less of the rigorous, demanding coursework they need,” said Barth.

#### **Higher Education’s Role – Education Trust’s Analysis of State Policies:**

Few states have clear policies lining up what high schools require and what students need for college and work. In some states, though, the problem starts in higher education, where there has been no statewide agreement on the curriculum that entering students need. Not in California, however. Our public four-year colleges and universities are quite clear on the course work required for admission into the systems, otherwise known as the “A-G curriculum.”

“About 64% of California’s high school graduates enroll immediately in some type of postsecondary education, yet only 35% successfully complete the A-G coursework. With evidence of such a strong college going culture among our high school

graduates, isn't it just plain common sense to equip all of them with the curriculum necessary for postsecondary success? Otherwise, the high school diploma remains an empty promise," added Ali.



### **Achievement, Attainment and Opportunity Gaps in the California:**

The Education Watch California State Summary Report includes state-specific data on:

#### Achievement Gaps –

- Only 36% of California 's 4<sup>th</sup> graders are proficient or above on the California Standards Exams in reading. And only 20% of our 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or above on NAEP in reading.
- Huge achievement gaps persist: 56% of White 4<sup>th</sup> graders performed at or above proficient in reading compared to 19% of Latino 4<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Between 1992 and 1998, California 4<sup>th</sup> graders made *no* gain on the NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading assessment. During that same time period, the gap between White and Latino students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading *increased*.
- California 's Latino 4<sup>th</sup> graders perform second to last among all states in NAEP reading.
- These gaps persist at all grade levels in both reading and mathematics.

#### Opportunity Gaps –

- California 's African American and Latino high school students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP classes, and succeed once in those classes at lower rates than their White and Asian counterparts.
- Over 25% of California 's secondary classes are taught by teachers lacking either a major or minor in the field.

#### Attainment Gaps – High School and College Success

- California 's African American and Latino students graduate from high school at much lower rates than their White and Asian peers, and these gaps persist in college entry and success.



### **What's to be done?**

Haycock, Ali and Barth call on K-12, higher education, business and policymakers to engage in meaningful K-16 efforts and take immediate action on putting into place a common default curriculum that will prepare students for success in both postsecondary education and work, and provide it to all, not just some. They should first look at enrollments, achievement and attainment of their students and examine how resources, including qualified teachers, are distributed. With data in hand, policymakers, educators and communities must take action.

Specifically, they call for an action agenda that includes:

- The State and districts putting into place the A-G curriculum as the rigorous "default" high school curriculum;
- Ensuring that all students have access to teachers who can provide instruction equal to the quality of content, and do more to increase the numbers of such teachers; and
- Providing time and support for students to learn challenging content.

###

- [San Francisco Chronicle Op-Ed by Congressman George Miller \(D-Martinez\) and EdTrust West Director, Russlynn Ali Leave Education Myths, not California's Children, Behind](#)
- [EdTrustWest issues press statement](#) on "Implementing NCLB in California: One Step Forward, Three Steps Back?" January 13, 2003
- [EdTrust West issues press statement](#) on "California Takes a Major Step Backward In Education Reform" August 5, 2002

[\[back to top\]](#)

---

[\[home\]](#) [\[about us\]](#) [\[press room\]](#) [\[contact us\]](#) [\[related links\]](#) [\[site map\]](#)

[\[terms of usage\]](#)

©2009 The Education Trust. All rights reserved.