Achievement and Opportunity in America: Critical Next Steps for School Boards

NSBA Equity Symposium
Washington, DC
January, 2017
America: Two Powerful Stories
1. **Land of Opportunity:**

Work hard, and you can become anything you want to be.
2. **Generational Advancement:**

Through hard work, each generation of parents can assure a better life — and better education — for their children.
These stories animated hopes and dreams of people here at home

And drew countless immigrants to our shores
Yes, America was often intolerant…

And they knew the “Dream” was a work in progress.
We were:

- The first to provide universal high school;
- The first to build public universities;
- The first to build community colleges;
- The first to broaden access to college, through GI Bill, Pell Grants,
Percent of U.S. adults with a high school diploma

- 1920: 21%
- 1940: 38%
- 1960: 61%
- 1980: 85%
- 2000: 88%
- 2012: 90%
Percent of U.S. adults with a B.A. or more

2012

33%
Progress was painfully slow, especially for people of color. But year by year, decade by decade...
Percent of U.S. adults with a high school diploma, by race

2012

- White: 95%
- Black: 89%
- Latino: 75%
Percent of U.S. adults with a B.A. or more, by race

2012

White: 40%
Black: 23%
Latino: 15%
Then, beginning in the eighties, growing economic inequality started eating away at our progress.
In recent years, most income gains have gone to those at the top of the ladder, while those at the bottom have fallen backwards.

Instead of being the most equal, the U.S. has the third highest income inequality among OECD nations.

Note: Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates total income equality and 1 indicates total income inequality.

Not just wages and wealth, but social mobility as well.
U.S. intergenerational mobility was improving until 1980, but barriers have gotten higher since.

The falling elasticity meant increased economic mobility until 1980. Since then, the elasticity has risen, and mobility has slowed.

The US now has one of lowest rates of intergenerational mobility

Cross-country examples of the link between father and son wages

- United Kingdom: 0.5
- Italy: 0.48
- United States: 0.47
- France: 0.41
- Spain: 0.4
- Germany: 0.32
- Sweden: 0.27
- Australia: 0.26
- Canada: 0.19
- Finland: 0.18
- Norway: 0.17
- Denmark: 0.15

At macro level, better and more equal education is not the only answer.

But at the individual level, it really is.
There is one road up, and that road runs through us.
So, how are we doing?
First, 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.
Since 1999, large gains for all groups of students, especially students of color

9 Year Olds – NAEP Reading

*Denotes previous assessment format

Source:
Since 1999, performance rising for all groups of students

9 Year Olds – NAEP Math

*Denotes previous assessment format

Source:
Looked at differently, and on the other NAEP exam...
1996 NAEP Grade 4 Math

By Race/Ethnicity – National Public

- African American
  - Proficient/Advanced: 3%
  - Basic: 24%
  - Below Basic: 73%
- Latino
  - Proficient/Advanced: 7%
  - Basic: 32%
  - Below Basic: 61%
- White
  - Proficient/Advanced: 26%
  - Basic: 49%
  - Below Basic: 26%

Source:
2013 NAEP Grade 4 Math

By Race/Ethnicity – National Public

Middle grades are up, too.
Record performance for students of color
13 Year Olds – NAEP Reading

Average Scale Score


• African American
• Latino
• White

*Denotes previous assessment format

Over the last decade, all groups have steadily improved and gaps have narrowed.
Bottom Line:

When we really focus on something, we make progress!
Clearly, much more remains to be done in elementary and middle school

Too many youngsters still enter high school way behind.
But at least we have some traction on elementary and middle school problems.

The same is NOT true of our high schools.
Achievement is flat in reading for students overall.

Source: NAEP Long-Term Trends, NCES (2004)
Math achievement for students overall is flat over time.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP 2008 Trends in Academic Progress

* Denotes previous assessment format
And despite earlier improvements, gaps between groups haven’t narrowed much since the late 80s and early 90s.
Reading: Not much gap narrowing since 1988.

17 Year Olds – NAEP Reading

*Denotes previous assessment format

Source:
Math: Not much gap closing since 1990.

17 Year Olds – NAEP Math

*Denotes previous assessment format

Source:
Moreover, no matter how you cut the data, our students aren’t doing well compared with their peers in other countries.
Of 35 OECD Countries, U.S.A. Ranks 19th in Science Literacy

PISA Science, 2015 – All Students

Of 35 OECD Countries, U.S.A. Ranks 20th in Reading Literacy

Of 35 OECD Countries, U.S.A. Ranks 31st in Math Literacy

Math, 2015 – All Students

Up until the latest results, the only place we ranked high was someplace we didn’t want to rank high: Inequality!

But we made a little progress there.
The gap between high and low-SES students in the United States is slightly smaller than the OECD average.


Note: High SES students are those in the top quartile on the ESCS. Low SES students are those in the bottom quartile. The ESCS (Index of Economic, Social, and Cultural Status) is comprised of information related to parents’ occupational status, parents’ educational attainment, family wealth, home educational resources, and possessions related to “classical” culture in the home.
The U.S. Gap Between High-SES and Low-SES Students is Equivalent to Over Two Years of Schooling

Math, 2015 – Gaps in low- and high- SES performance

Note: High SES students are those in the top quartile on the ESCS. Low SES students are those in the bottom quartile. The ESCS (Index of Economic, Social, and Cultural Status) is comprised of information related to parents’ occupational status, parents’ educational attainment, family wealth, home educational resources, and possessions related to “classical” culture in the home.

The U.S. Gap Between High-SES and Low-SES Students is Equivalent to Over Two Years of Schooling

Science, 2015 – Gaps between low- and high- SES performance

Note: High SES students are those in the top quartile on the ESCS. Low SES students are those in the bottom quartile. The ESCS (Index of Economic, Social, and Cultural Status) is comprised of information related to parents’ occupational status, parents’ educational attainment, family wealth, home educational resources, and possessions related to “classical” culture in the home.

PISA results indicate that U.S. schools are equipping white and Asian students with higher levels of preparation in reading.

Source:
PISA results indicate that U.S. schools are equipping white and Asian students with higher levels of preparation in Math.

Math, 2015 – U.S. results by race/ethnicity

PISA results indicate that U.S. schools are equipping white and Asian students with higher levels of preparation in science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Average Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD Average</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Science, 2015 – Performance by race/ethnic group

So let’s talk about those gaps.
Gaps in achievement begin before children arrive at the schoolhouse door.

But, rather than organizing our educational system to ameliorate this problem, we organize it to exacerbate the problem.
How?

By giving students who arrive with less, less in school, too.
Some of these “lesses” are a result of choices that policymakers make.
## National Inequities in State and Local Revenue Per Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Poverty vs.</td>
<td>−$1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Poverty Districts</td>
<td>per student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Minority vs.</td>
<td>−$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Minority Districts</td>
<td>per student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Trust analyses based on U.S. Dept of Education and U.S. Census Bureau data for 2010-12
In truth, though, some of the most devastating “lesses” are a function of choices that we educators (and school board members) make.
Choices we make about what to expect of whom.....
Students in poor schools receive As for work that would earn Cs in affluent schools.
Choices we make about what to teach whom...
Even African-American students with *high math performance* in fifth grade are unlikely to be placed in algebra in eighth grade.

And choices we make about *who* teaches whom...
Students at high-minority schools more likely to be taught by novice* teachers.

Note: High minority school: 75% or more of the students are Black, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. Low-minority school: 10% or fewer of the students are non-White students. Novice teachers are those with three years or fewer experience.

Math classes at high-poverty, high-minority secondary schools are more likely to be taught by out-of-field* teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Minority</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: High-poverty school: 55 percent or more of the students are eligible for free/reduced-price lunch. Low-poverty school: 15 percent or fewer of the students are eligible for free/reduced-price lunch. High-minority school: 78 percent or more of the students are black, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. Low-minority school: 12 percent or fewer of the students are non-white students. Data for secondary-level core academic classes (math, science, social studies, English) across the U.S.

Source: Education Trust Analysis of 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey data.
Los Angeles: Black, Latino students have fewer highly effective teachers, more weak ones.

Latino and black students are:

3X as likely to get low-effectiveness teachers

1/2 as likely to get highly effective teachers

The results are devastating.

Kids who come in a little behind, leave a lot behind.
And these are the students who remain in school through 12\textsuperscript{th} grade.
Students of color are less likely to graduate from high school on time.

Class of 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add those numbers up and throw in college entry and graduation, and different groups of young Americans obtain degrees and very different rates…
Whites attain bachelor’s degrees at nearly twice the rate of blacks and almost three times the rate of Hispanics

Bachelor’s Degree Attainment of Young Adults (25-29-year-olds), 2014

- White: 41%
- African American: 22%
- Latino: 15%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Educational Attainment in the United States: 2014
Young adults from high-income families are more than three times as likely as those from low-income families to earn bachelor’s degrees by age 24.
These numbers are not good news for our country—or for the lives of the young people in question.
What Can We Do?

An awful lot of Americans have decided that we can’t do much.
What We Hear Many Educators Say:

• They’re poor
• Their parents don’t care
• They come to schools without breakfast
• Not enough books
• Not enough parents

Source: N/A
Let’s be clear, these things do matter.
Child Poverty in the US, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau
And let’s also be clear: tolerating high child poverty rates is a policy choice. Though we remain the richest nation on earth…
U.S. Ranks Second to Last in Child Poverty

Percent of Children Aged 0-17 Living in Households with Incomes Below 50% of National Median Income

Source: Unicef, 2013
Yet, how we respond to the effects of that choice is a choice, too.
We can choose to go along with what has become *conventional wisdom* in our profession—that, until we fix poverty, there’s not much we educators can do…
Or we can choose differently.

...joining colleagues in schools all over this country that serve very poor kids but get very good results.
Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School
New Orleans, Louisiana

- 505 students in grades PK – 6
- 99% African American
- 90% Low-Income

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2016
Bethune Elementary Outperforming the State

PARCC, 2016

Grade 6 ELA Bethune
- Unsatisfactory: 8
- Approaching Basic: 28
- Basic: 53
- Mastery: 17

Grade 6 ELA Louisiana
- Unsatisfactory: 3
- Approaching Basic: 19
- Basic: 36
- Mastery: 35

Source: Louisiana Department of Education
Bethune Elementary Outperforming the State

PARCC, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 3 Math Bethune</th>
<th>Grade 3 Math Louisiana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching Basic</td>
<td>Approaching Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Unsatisfactory
33 Approaching Basic
41 Basic
16 Mastery
22 Advanced
6 Unsatisfactory
31 Approaching Basic
30 Basic
22 Mastery
11 Advanced

Source: Louisiana Department of Education
Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary School
Miami-Dade, Florida

• 511 students in grades PK – 5
• 98% Latino
• 86% Low Income
• 57% English Language Learners

Note: Data are for 2012-2013 school year.
Source: Florida Department of Education
Finlay Elementary Outperforming the State

Source: Florida Department of Education
Elmont Memorial High School
Elmont, New York
1,739 students in grades 7-12

76% African American
14% Latino
9% Asian
1% White

Source: New York State Department of Education, 2016
High Performance by ALL Students at Elmont Memorial High School

Secondary Level Math (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>EMHS</th>
<th>New York</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Performance by ALL Students at Elmont Memorial High School

Secondary Level English (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Proficient and Above</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduation Rates, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Elmont</th>
<th>New York</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New York State Department of Education, 2016
Graduating with an Advanced Designation, 2015

- All Students: Elmont 43, New York 32
- African American: Elmont 46, New York 10
- White: Elmont 44, New York 39
- Economically Disadvantaged: Elmont 46, New York 17
- Not Economically Disadvantaged: Elmont 44, New York 44

Source: New York State Department of Education, 2016
High Graduation Rates at Elmont Memorial High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of 2011</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Economically Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Not Economically Disadvantaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Includes students graduating by June 2011.

Source: New York State Department of Education
This is what happens when teams of educators choose differently.
Available from Harvard Education Press and amazon.com
Just flukes, outliers?

No. Very big differences at district level, too—even in the progress and performance of the “same” group of students.
Average Scale Scores, by District
Low-Income African American Students

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2015)

Note: Basic Scale Score = 208; Proficient Scale Score = 238

Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES
Average Scale Scores, by District
Low-Income Latino Students

Grade 4 – NAEP Math (2015)

Note: Basic Scale Score = 214; Proficient Scale Score = 249

Source: NAEP Data Explorer, NCES
Change in Average Scale Scores, by District Low-Income African American Students

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2003-2015)

Change in Mean Scale Score, 2003-2015

Note: Chart includes only districts that participated, and had members of this specific subgroup, in both the 2003 and 2015 NAEP TUDA

Source: NCES, NAEP Data Explorer
Change in Average Scale Scores, by District Low-Income Latino Students

Grade 4 – NAEP Reading (2003-2015)

-5 0 5 10 15

Boston
District of Columbia (DCPS)
Charlotte
San Diego
Chicago
National public
Los Angeles
Large city
Houston
New York City
Cleveland

Change in Mean Scale Score, 2003-2015

Note: Chart includes only districts that participated, and had members of this specific subgroup, in both the 2003 and 2015 NAEP TUDA
Change in Average Scale Scores, by District Low-Income African American Students

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2003-2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Change in Mean Scale Score, 2003-2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large city</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia (DCPS)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National public</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chart includes only districts that participated, and had members of this specific subgroup, in both the 2003 and 2015 NAEP TUDA administrations.
Change in Average Scale Scores, by District Low-Income Latino Students

Grade 8 – NAEP Math (2003-2015)

San Diego: 19
Boston: 19
Los Angeles: 18
Chicago: 14
Large city: 13
Houston: 13
National public: 12
District of Columbia (DCPS): 10
New York City: 9
Cleveland: 8

Change in Mean Scale Score, 2003-2015

Note: Chart includes only districts that participated, and had members of this specific subgroup, in both the 2003 and 2015 NAEP TUDA
Source: NCES, NAEP Data Explorer

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Bottom Line:
What We Do Matters!
What Can School Board Members Do?
1. Like good teachers, good schools and districts don’t ignore what is going on beyond their walls.

Instead, they seek and use teachable moments—and they work hard at creating a real sense of community, where kids and parents of all sorts feel safe and valued.
Right now might be an important moment for Board members to ask where your schools stack up on that measure.

Whether you agree with their reasons or not, kids and parents are scared and need some reassurance that they are valued. (And your staff may need some training here.)
Good morning, E-Town –
This is Dr. Witherspoon.

Once in a while it’s important that we pause and reflect on who we are and reaffirm our appreciation for one another.

This morning I want to remind all of you that ETHS is a safe and welcoming place for you. You attend a school where we not only respect differences, we embrace our diversity.

We embrace one another’s race and ethnicity. We embrace one another’s family background, heritage, language and culture.

Source:
We embrace one another’s religion and your right to your own personal customs and beliefs.

We embrace your sexual orientation and your gender identity.

We embrace your special needs.

We embrace you and value you as individual human beings.

Never forget: you belong here at ETHS—each and every one of you.

Today, I urge you to be kind and caring to one another. Redouble your support for one another. And even though we cannot always control what is going on in the larger world around us, we can define our own school, our own community.
Let’s make this school year a year of strengthening our sense of community here at ETHS, and let’s reaffirm a community legacy for all the students today and for those who will follow you at ETHS.

The sun is shining today. Your school is a nurturing place for you to learn and grow. Your futures are bright.

Let’s protect and take care of each other. Everything is going to be okay.

I love all of you. Fill your hearts with love for each other. And no matter what, remember, even today, that it is a great day to be a Wildkit.
#2. Good schools, districts don’t leave anything about teaching and learning to chance.
An awful lot of our teachers—even brand new ones—are left to figure out on their own what to teach and what constitutes “good enough” work.
What does this do?

Leaves teachers entirely on their own to figure out what to teach, what order to teach it in, HOW to teach it…and to what level.
‘A’ Work in Poor Schools Would Earn ‘Cs’ in Affluent Schools

Students can do no better than the assignments they are given...
A frequent theme in literature is the conflict between the individual and society. From literature you have read, select a character who struggled with society. In a well-developed essay, identify the character and explain why this character’s conflict with society is important.
Write a composition of at least 4 paragraphs on Martin Luther King’s most important contribution to this society. Illustrate your work with a neat cover page. Neatness counts.
Essay on Anne Frank

Your essay will consist of an opening paragraph which introduced the title, author and general background of the novel.

Your thesis will state specifically what Anne's overall personality is, and what general psychological and intellectual changes she exhibits over the course of the book.

You might organize your essay by grouping psychological and intellectual changes OR you might choose 3 or 4 characteristics (like friendliness, patience, optimism, self doubt) and show how she changes in this area.
### The "ME" Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three words which describe me best:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three words others would use to describe me:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My best feature:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A neat expression:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My best friend:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite food:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A chore I hate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something I wish would happen at my home:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My hero:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favorite sport:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>A car I want:</td>
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<tr>
<td>The best thing about my school:</td>
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<td>My biggest secret:</td>
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<td>A television character I don't like:</td>
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<tr>
<td>My worst fear:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A contest I want to win:</td>
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<tr>
<td>My favorite movie star:</td>
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<tr>
<td>My heartthrob:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A political office I would like to hold:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Something I want to buy:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My chosen career:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My favorite beverage:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A place I want to visit:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A school subject I adore:</td>
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<tr>
<td>My favorite book:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A nightmare I have:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Someone I would like to have as a relative:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A movie I would like to be the star in:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Something I would like to do for my family:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A teacher I respect:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What I would do if I were in Hollywood:</td>
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<td>A friend I would like to have:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What I would do to change our school:</td>
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<tr>
<td>My dream for America:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Grade 7 Writing Assignment

- **My Best Friend:**
- **A chore I hate:**
- **A car I want:**
- **My heartthrob:**

**Source:** Unnamed school district in California, 2002-03 school year.
That was pre-Common Core.

Do common standards change that?

A brand new EdTrust study
A Deeper Look at What We Did

Analyzed and scored close to 1,600 assignments using our Literacy Assignment Analysis Framework.

- Alignment With the Common Core
- Centrality of Text
- Cognitive Challenge
- Motivation and Engagement

**Additional Features Analyzed**
- Text Type and Length
- Writing Output
- Length of Assignment
- Student Thinking
How can we make out voices heard? After reading *I am Malala*, write a literary essay in which you answer this question. Select and analyze one of the following:

- Any key person from the text
- The setting
- A theme from the text

Support your argument with evidence from the text. In your piece, be sure to write at least 5 paragraphs and follow the structure of a literary analysis.
Read the poem, then fill in the blanks to create your own poem to communicate your thoughts and feelings about unfinished business in your life.

The Song I couldn’t Finish
by Jeanne

The words I couldn’t say
The call I couldn’t make
The time I couldn’t spend with you
The walls I couldn’t break through

The breath I couldn’t take
The air I couldn’t release
The love I couldn’t feel
The person I couldn’t convince
The song I couldn’t finish
The words I couldn’t say
I couldn’t say ___________________________

The things I couldn’t change
I couldn’t ______________________________

The walls I couldn’t break through
I couldn’t find a way to __________________

The feelings I couldn’t feel
I couldn’t ______________________________

The help I couldn’t give
I couldn’t ______________________________

The song I couldn’t finish
The song was about ____________________
In isolation, the low assignments can reflect targeted skill building and student practice...not necessarily harmful in moderation
However when compounded over *multiple* class periods, in *multiple* subjects, over *multiple* years, the effect is detrimental.
Ed Trust Assignment Study: What We Found

- Fewer than 4 in 10 middle grades assignments are targeted at a grade-appropriate standard;
- In high poverty schools the proportion drops to only about one third, compared to nearly half of assignments in low poverty schools;
- That said, only about 5% of assignments in both kinds of schools tapped into the higher-level cognitive demands of the CCSS;
- Most efforts at engagement and relevance were superficial, and often condescending.
And don’t think that your students don’t know the difference....
“We were going to be taking the same exact AP test as the students we met from the other school. We needed to know the same exact things. But, while they were starting to read the Odyssey, we were reading the Hunger Games. There’s nothing wrong with the Hunger Games. I love the Hunger Games---I read it when I was 12. It just really struck me as unfair.”
“My teacher right now, she’s hard but she does it for our own good. Because when we go to college, it is gonna be hard. Like Shakespeare—that was really hard for me. When I came over here I was like, ‘man, what am I reading? I can’t understand anything!’ I was like, ‘how could they talk like that?! Did they really understand each other?!’ But then she taught me how to understand it. And it felt good cuz I actually learned Shakespeare—it’s weird but I’m getting it.”
Critical questions for board members:

• Who—district office versus schools—is responsible for what in the standards implementation effort? Who, in particular, is translating standards into curriculum?

• Are we getting regular reports from district staff on the status of implementation efforts?

• What other kind of evidence—surveys of teachers or students, or periodic audits of classroom assignments, for example—should we be collecting to understand where things are going well…and where not?
#3. Good schools, districts know how much teachers matter, and they act on that knowledge.

Not leaving anything to chance means not leaving who teaches whom to chance, either.
15 years of research makes it very clear: there are big differences among our teachers in their effectiveness in growing student learning.
Students in Dallas Gain More in Math with Effective Teachers: One Year Growth From 3rd-4th Grade

DIFFERENCES IN TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS ACCOUNT FOR LARGE DIFFERENCES IN STUDENT LEARNING

The distribution of value-added scores for ELA teachers in LAUSD
ACCESS TO MULTIPLE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS CAN DRAMATICALLY AFFECT STUDENT LEARNING

CST math proficiency trends for second-graders at ‘Below Basic’ or ‘Far Below Basic’ in 2007 who subsequently had three consecutive high or low value-added teachers.
And, no matter how you measure, some kids aren’t getting their fair share.
Students at High-Minority Schools More Likely to Be Taught By Novice* Teachers

Note: High minority school-75% or more of the students are Black, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. Low-minority school -10% or fewer of the students are non-White students.

*Novice teachers are those with three years or fewer experience.

Math Classes at High-Poverty and High-Minority Schools More Likely to be Taught by Out of Field* Teachers

Note: High Poverty school - 75% or more of the students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch. Low-poverty school - 15% or fewer of the students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch. High minority school - 75% or more of the students are Black, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander. Low-minority school - 10% or fewer of the students are non-White students.

*Teachers with neither certification nor major. Data for secondary-level core academic classes (Math, Science, Social Studies, English) across USA.

Tennessee: High poverty/high minority schools have fewer of the “most effective” teachers and more “least effective” teachers.


Note: High Poverty/High minority means at least 75% qualify for FRPL and at least 75% are minority.
Los Angeles: LOW-INCOME STUDENTS LESS LIKELY TO HAVE HIGH VALUE-ADDED TEACHERS

ELA
A low-income student is more than twice as likely to have a low value-added teacher for ELA.

MATH
In math, a student from a relatively more affluent background is 39% more likely to get a high value-added math teacher.

A low-income student is 66% more likely to have a low value-added teacher.
Low-Achieving Students are More Likely to be Assigned to Ineffective Teachers than Effective Teachers

Source: Sitha Babu and Robert Mendro, Teacher Accountability: HLM-Based Teacher Effectiveness Indices in the Investigation of Teacher Effects on Student Achievement in a State Assessment Program, AERA Annual Meeting, 2003.
These patterns not, however, inevitable.

Charlotte’s Strategic Staffing Initiative
Putting it All Together: Charlotte’s Strategic Staffing Initiative

• Experienced, high performing principal;
• Gets to bring in 6 high performing teachers from elsewhere in district, and bump out that many low performers;
• Two years of autonomy to produce turn around results;
• Near 100% results.
The practice of assigning weaker teachers to the kids who come in behind is so longstanding, that many educators don’t even think about it any more.

But school board members can—and should.
When is the last time you asked:

• Are there differences in teacher quality (experience, education, effectiveness) between our high poverty and low poverty schools?
• Are there differences, even within schools, in who teaches the more advanced courses and kids…and who teaches the remedial courses and kids?
• What are we doing about this?
#4. Good schools, districts don’t think about closing the achievement gap only as “bringing the bottom up.”
In part because of the push from NCLB, there’s been a lot of energy directed at bringing bottom achievers up.
Percentage Below Basic Over Time

African-American Students (National Public) – Grade 8 NAEP Math

% of Students at Below Basic

- 1990*: 79%
- 1992*: 81%
- 1996: 75%
- 2000: 70%
- 2003: 61%
- 2005: 59%
- 2007: 53%
- 2009: 51%
- 2011: 50%
- 2013: 49%

*Accommodations not permitted

Source:
Percentage Below Basic Over Time

Latino Students (National Public) – Grade 8 NAEP Math

Percentage of Students at Below Basic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990*</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992*</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>38%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Accommodations not permitted

Source:
At the same time, though…
Percentage Advanced Over Time

White Students (National Public) – Grade 8 NAEP Math

- 1990*: 3%
- 1992*: 3%
- 1996: 5%
- 2000: 6%
- 2003: 7%
- 2005: 7%
- 2007: 9%
- 2009: 10%
- 2011: 10%
- 2013: 11%

*Accommodations not permitted

Source:
Percentage Advanced Over Time

African-American Students (National Public) – Grade 8 NAEP Math

*Accommodations not permitted
Source:
Percentage Advanced Over Time

Latino Students (National Public) – Grade 8 NAEP Math

Source:

*Accommodations not permitted
We need to focus on growing students at all ends of the spectrum.
Questions for school board members to ask:

• What do the data tell us about students reaching advanced levels of performance?
• Are we making progress? Are we making progress with all groups of children?
• What are we doing at every level—including in advanced courses in high school—to make sure we are raising achievement of middle- and high-achieving kids from every group?
#5. In good schools, educators know that they have enormous power to shape children’s lives.
They know that it’s not about heroic individuals.

That path, as we all know, is unsustainable.
But they have seen the awesome power of the collective—some describe it as the “huddle”—to lift children up.

As well as the destructive power of individual adults to tear children down.
So they organize and celebrate the lifting, and they do not tolerate those who tear down.
No, things aren’t fair out there.

And we should fight hard to make sure families get what they need.
But in the meantime, we have enormous power to pave the path upward for far more children...
And they need us to exercise that power.
For board members, that means:

• Holding up and celebrating schools and classrooms that are producing real gains for vulnerable students;
• Not accepting excuses from those who are not.
Download this presentation on our website

www.edtrust.org