

Sobering Report on Black Achievement Comes as Obama Signs New K-12 Law

By Arianna Prothero on December 10, 2015 11:01 AM

Although African-American students have made gains on a number of key academic success indicators over the last 25 years, they are still far from achieving their full potential, according to a new report released today by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The number of African-American 4th grade students scoring proficient in 1990 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, in reading and math were 8 and 1 percent, respectively. Those numbers climbed to 18 and 19 percent in 2015, but the national average for 4th grade proficiency is 36 percent in reading and 40 percent in math.

The Chamber's report, called "The Path Forward, Improving Opportunities for African American Students," aims to paint a detailed portrait of where African-American students are today. It looks at a variety of metrics ranging from elementary and middle school achievement scores to the percentage of students taking remedial courses in college.

Despite the incremental progress of black students documented in the report, the overall tone is a sobering one, and comes on the same day that **President Barack Obama is signing the first update of the federal education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act** in nearly 15 years. The new law, called the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, passed both houses of Congress on a bipartisan basis and will put states more directly in charge of accountability, even as it keeps intact requirements for schools to focus on closing achievement gaps between poor students, racial minorities, students in special education, and English-learners. (A **great explainer of the measure** can be found here.)

In an event with the NAACP today, the Chamber is releasing the report with the aim of underscoring the urgency for public schools to make the academic success of black students a top priority.

Among the report's key findings:

- Although African-American students' NAEP scores have gone up over the last 25 years, they remain low overall compared to their peers;
- There is a mismatch between how many African-American students are graduating from high school and how many are prepared for credit-bearing college courses;
- Too few African-American students are taking Advanced Placement courses and even fewer are passing the exams
- Many African-American students are not excelling in STEM subjects, an area the report deems especially important in terms of international competitiveness.

The study features state rankings in academic achievement, postsecondary readiness, and international competitiveness broken out by different metrics.

For example, to gauge the college readiness of African-American students, states are compared based on their graduation rates, ACT scores, Advanced Placement exam taking and passage rates, and rate of enrollment in college remedial courses.

The report also highlights a couple of programs and organizations that have moved the needle on African-American student achievement and points to the Boston school district as a model for the nation in that regard.

Finally, the report urges "staying the course on accountability, promoting school choice, working with industry, and focusing on students in the greatest need."

Full report: The Path Forward, Improving Opportunities for African-American Students

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Rich

4:01 PM on December 11, 2015

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This is the usual scapegoating of public schools by the US Chamber of Commerce. Of course they're promoting school choice...especially for the for-profit and private school sectors. If they promoted more money for urban and rural schools, a substantial increase in the minimum wage (that'll be the day,) and a viable social safety net for inner city and rural families...then they might actually be dealing with reality instead of promoting policies that ultimately will not benefit

most African American students.

When the percentage of African-American students living in poverty drops to the same level as it is for white students, then the performance of these students will be the same as it is for white students. When the percentage of African-American students living amidst drugs and violence is the same as it is for white students, then the performance will also be the same as it is for white students. The key variable for student performance is still the zip code where each student lives.



[wpewen](#)

5:11 PM on December 11, 2015

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This seems a bit like garbage. As is said here by another poster-promotion of school choice and I will add total denial of reality. All the black students in places like the rural South cannot possibly participate in anything approaching Boston or any other well funded urban area. Throw this away, it does not tell anyone much they do not know. A GOP skill if there ever was one.



[Ebasco](#)

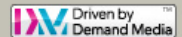
7:53 PM on December 11, 2015

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-1

I'm sorry but the American educational system can't duck this and just blame students, parent(s), community, Republicans, poverty, blah blah blah. Look in the mirror! You don't see an urban poor African-American male because most teachers are suburban privileged white females. Is that supposed to be a coincidence? The students in our classrooms who fail are predictably the most opposite of the teacher. Why is it that fraternal twins enter our schools everyday but exit with the male student behind his sister? Students in every demographic fail by economic background, by race, and by gender if they are not privileged white females. Most likely male students will end up in low paying jobs, the military, and the penal system while females students pack our colleges. Any wonder 90% of US suicides are male? If you want a different outcome, then you must change entirely the way we approach education, not tweak it and exacerbate the problem. Show me you can get white and African-American males to reach parity with their similarly placed sisters, and then let's move to racial parity. The schools, the teachers, and the curriculum won't look like it does now. I am certain of that. I don't think American education is interested in fixing our part of this grotesque problem ... in any way, shape, or form. Sorry. Not.



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