

FEDERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

An Opportunity for Every Child:

Recommendations for Federal Action to Provide All Students A Fair and Substantive Opportunity to Learn

Yet, in the United States, inequities in educational opportunity exist on many levels, including those of race, class, gender, language, migrant and disability status. These core inequities themselves are perpetuated in the composition of corporate executive boards and construction crews, enrollment in our institutions of higher education and confinement in our prisons, in our classrooms and in our emergency rooms, in inheritance lines and unemployment lines. Research shows, however, that from one generation to the next, equitable access to high-performing public schools can break these barriers. President Barack Obama has established as a national goal that the United States produce the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. We will only achieve this goal if we are able to increase the number of post-secondary credentialed or post secondary graduates by 16 million more than our current rate. Providing all students a fair and substantive opportunity to learn is critical, if our end goals are systemic education reform, transformative innovation, consistent progress, increased participation in our democratic society and global leadership in a knowledge-based economy.







Opportunity For Success



Por the U.S. to achieve these ambitious goals, the country must first embrace the notion that every child – regardless of race, socio-economic status, family education, or past academic performance – has an inalienable opportunity to succeed. For too long, we have used race and economic status as a significant predictor of educational resource access or outcomes. The time has come to end such behaviors. Working through both federal and state-by-state policy frameworks, advocates for educational opportunity must institutionalize access to the research-proven and appropriate education resources needed to provide each and every student in the United States a fair and substantive opportunity to learn. This is done, first and foremost, by providing all learners: 1) access to highly effective teachers; 2) early childhood education; 3) college preparatory curricula; and 4) equitable instructional resources.

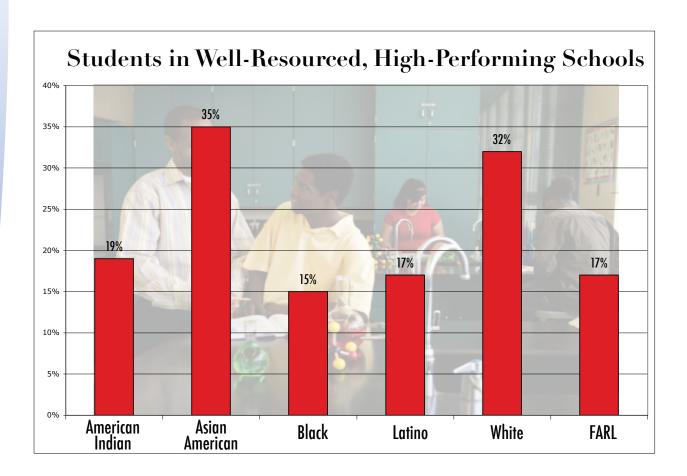
Despite the rhetoric and activities of the past decade, current student achievement data indicates that far too many students continue to be left behind. In an abundance of schools and communities, opportunity is still a dream, and not a reality. Students – particularly those from historically disadvantaged groups – are continuously denied access to a high-quality education and an ability to maximize the opportunities that come with it.





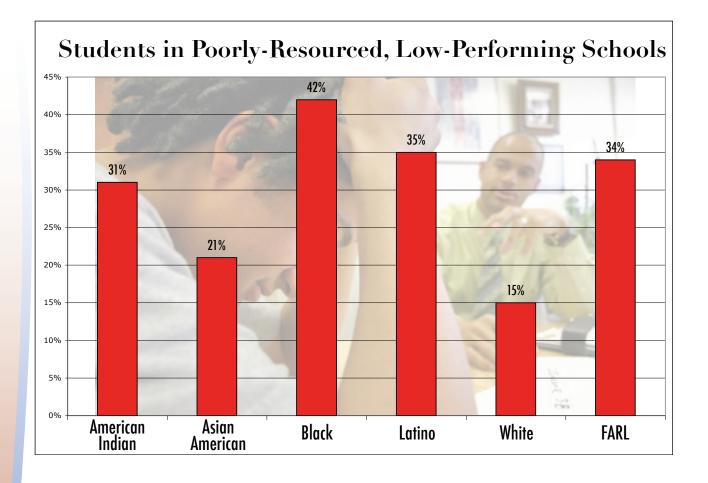
In an effort to refocus both the public debate and federal and state policymaking on specific solutions that can extend true and meaningful educational opportunities to all students, the Schott Foundation for Public Education codified the educational opportunities for our nation's students, using data available through state departments of education to "map" such opportunities and disaggregate the "opportunity gap" throughout the United States.

The data are both clear and startling. It demonstrates the need for immediate and strong action to refocus federal education policies on the reforms and resources designed to provide meaningful opportunities for all students. As the chart below indicates, less than one-third of White, non-Latino students are in those schools where nearly all students graduate and are prepared for post-secondary success.



Even more disturbing is the unquestioned fact that the racially-identifiable resource disparities are in conflict with our constitutional ideals. Actual state-level data demonstrate that education resource allocations are the furthest thing from providing a fair and substantive opportunity for students in many of our schools and school districts. Fewer than 20 percent of students from historically disadvantaged groups are enrolled in those well-resourced, high-performing schools.

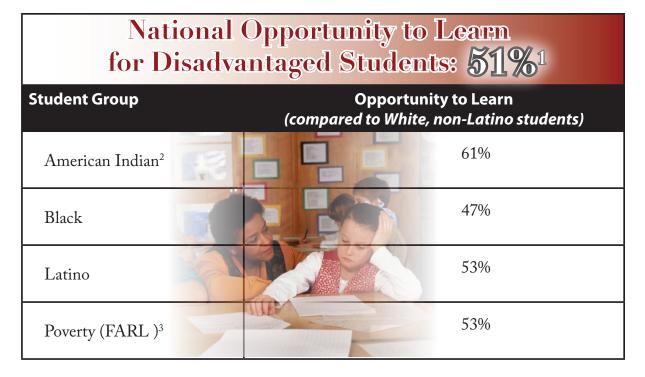




American Indian, Asian-American, Black, Latino and low-income students are more likely than White, non-Latino students to be disadvantaged by attending schools where they have little chance of becoming proficient in basic skills and graduating on time. While only 15 percent of Black students are in well-resourced, high-performing schools, 42 percent are in poorly resourced, low-performing schools. The picture is similar for American Indian, Latino and low-income students. The opportunity gap is startling, particularly when one observes that the average White, non-Latino student is twice as likely to be in a well-resourced, high-performing school. This disparity cannot be disputed, and is validated through the education data collected by state departments of education themselves. The result of such a gap is equally clear – poor educational opportunities lead to growing achievement inequities and an ever-expanding achievement gap, two problems that our policymakers remain focused on reversing.

Using a moderate methodology constructed through the Schott Foundation for Public Education's Opportunity to Learn Index, which compares the access of disadvantaged groups to the small group of White, non-Latinos, disadvantaged groups have less than a 51 percent "opportunity to learn" nationally. This is determined by looking at access to core resources such as: early childhood education, highly effective teachers, college preparatory curricula, and equitable instructional resources.





American Indian, Black, and Latino students, taken together, have just over half of the opportunity to learn in the nation's best-supported, best-performing schools as the nation's White, non-Latino students. A low-income student, of any race or ethnicity, also has just over half of the opportunity to learn of the average White, non-Latino student.

This is not merely a statistical concern. Currently, only slightly more than half of Latino and low-income students have access to high-quality opportunities to learn. Less than half of Black students have access to such opportunities. These are the young people we are looking to to lead our nation, drive our economy, and innovate in the 21st century, yet we are denying them the access and opportunity to the educational experiences they need to fulfill the challenges set before them. To date, we have lamented the poor returns on federal and state education investments, embodied in student achievement numbers and a growing achievement gap between the haves and have nots. If we are to reverse this trend, and provide every student – regardless of race or socio-economic status – access to the resources they need to succeed and rise to the top, we must take bold and immediate action to ensure that those students with the most need have the most direct access to educational opportunities. We should not, cannot, and must not be satisfied with a 50 percent opportunity rate. If we told corporate America that 50 percent of their product would fail, they would retool, rethink, or remove themselves from the market. We must use the current opportunities, particularly those available under ARRA, to ensure our schools retool, rethink, and refocus resources, ensuring every student has equal access to high-quality public education. Not doing so has dire consequences with immense long-term implications.

National **H PPORT**

¹The Schott 50 State Report on the Opportunity to Learn in America, The Schott Foundation for Public Education, May 2009

² Total enrollments (2005/6): American Indian: 130,968, Asian American: 1,950,425, Black, non-Latino: 5,570,253, Latino: 5,066,273, White, non-Latino: 10,482,662, FARL: 10,260,933.

³ Students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch. This measure is similar to the percentage of children living in poverty: American Indian (32%), Asian American (20%), Black, non-Latino (41%), Latino (34%), White, non-Latino (32%).

	Economic Consequences Total Annual Economic Burden to Taxpay Because of Inequity: \$59.2 billion	
4	State Annual Total Lifetime Health Loss State Annual Crime Related Loss State Tax Losses	\$11.6 billion \$7.6 billion \$40 billion
\$	Annual Lost Lifetime Earnings (Difference attributable to high school graduation per an	\$82.2 billion nual cohort)
5	Net Annual Potential Revenue Increase from Equity (After deducting estimated cost of improving schools) Potential Return on School Improvement Investment:	\$36.5 billion 250%

For federal policymakers and legislators focused on the need to deliver a significant return on investment (ROI) for increased federal education dollars, the previous data points are essential.

According to, *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools*, a study by McKinsey & Company, which detailed the long-term financial impacts of our growing opportunity gap, closing the educational-achievement gap between the U.S. and higher-performing nations such as Finland and South Korea could boost the U.S. gross domestic product by as much as \$2.3 trillion, or about 16%. The report also estimated that closing the gap in the U.S. between White students and their Black and Latino peers could increase annual GDP by as much as an additional \$525 billion, or about 4%. Furthermore, the annual GDP would have increased by as much as \$670 billion, or 5% if the performance of students from families earning less than \$25,000 a year would have been raised to those from families earning more.

Simply stated, direct investments to improve student opportunities to learn can result in a net annual potential revenue increase of \$36.5 billion after factoring in the costs associated with delivering such opportunities. And for every dollar spent on school improvements focused on closing the opportunity gap, federal and state governments can realize \$2.50 in ROI. Those are the sorts of ROI that every industry in the United States would do virtually anything to achieve, and they are within the grasp of public education with the correct policy priorities and focus.

⁴Amounts are rounded





THE FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Schott Foundation has long worked at the state level, supporting research and advocacy efforts in numerous states to guarantee that all children have the resources they need for an equitable opportunity to learn. The Opportunity to Learn Initiative recognizes that state remedies have not been sufficient to address the deep inequities in educational opportunity found both within and across states. A larger federal role is needed to ensure that all students have a fair and substantive opportunity to learn.

For decades, many reports, studies and statements have pointed to the nature and consequences of the inequities laid out by Schott in its Opportunity to Learn Initiative. For some, this fight for opportunity is centuries old. For others, it began 55 years ago following the Brown v. Board of Education decision. And for many of those currently involved in school improvement and equity issues, the movement began 26 years ago, upon the release of the landmark *A Nation at Risk* report. No matter which road marker we use, it is clear that we have struggled for real, actionable solutions to the opportunity gap in our public schools for quite some time.

The fight for opportunity has gained greater attention in recent years, with the clarion call continued through the work of groups such as The Forum for Education and Democracy and its *Democracy at Risk:* The Need for a New Federal Policy in Education report presented during the 25th anniversary of A Nation at Risk, The Education Trust and its Core Problems report, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Center for American Progress and its Leaders or Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness report, New Commission on Skills and of the American Workforce and its Tough Choices or Tough Times report, and the recent efforts emerging from A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education initiative. In many of these instances, these reports and the statements surrounding them highlight the need for a serious U.S. investment in education and the relatively little progress we have made toward achieving it.





Guaranteeing the opportunity to learn will require not just more equitable funding of public education, but that education dollars are spent in ways we know will work. Funding increases must have a system of accountability in place to track where and how the dollars are invested. The core objective of the Opportunity to Learn Initiative is to develop and implement a system of resource accountability and equity standards called the **OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN RESOURCE INDEX** (OTLRI). The central federal policy recommendation calls for developing and monitoring a set of research-based resource equity standards. Federal guidance, oversight, and enforcement should then be used to ensure all states and districts meet Opportunity to Learn standards. Central to the successful implementation of the OTLRI would be the creation of a system of public education where race or ethnicity is no longer a significant predictor of educational resource access or achievement outcomes.

The **OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN RESOURCE INDEX** (OTLRI) would track students' access to the following RESOURCES which research has demonstrated improves academic outcomes such as reading, math achievement AND graduation from high school:

- Access to high quality early education;
- Access to highly qualified teachers and instruction in grades K-12;
- Access to a college preparatory curriculum including the arts and
 physical education that will prepare all youth for college, work, and citizenship; and
- Access to equitable instructional resources.

The Schott Foundation proposes the federal government use the Opportunity to Learn Resource Index (OTLRI) to evaluate state and district performance, to improve their resource investments in education. The OTLRI is built on the principle that holding children and schools accountable for success means that the federal government, states, and school districts have a reciprocal and ongoing obligation to provide every child with the necessary resources to meet high standards. Therefore, the OTLRI would include an accountability system designed to complement existing accountability for outcomes. Like an early warning system, the OTLRI indicators could predict poor performance. Indicators would signal when resources were low or inequitably distributed and trigger effective interventions well before resource shortfalls translate into achievement failures and negative outcomes.

In all cases, the resources that comprise the index should be quantifiable, so that measurable standards can be developed. Progress toward meeting those standards can then be measured, and inadequate access to key resources reported. OTLRI progress reports would be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status at the state and district levels, and school level where practicable. Both monitoring and accountability would be disaggregated for each group and publicly reported. Specifically, the current research, as well as preliminary findings from the Schott Foundation's soon to be released 50 State Report on the Opportunity to Learn, shows that the four OTL resource standards, combined with the OTLRI, are critical for students to achieve high educational outcomes and overcome the harm from larger systemic societal inequities for students.



Development of Enforceable OTL Resource Standards



Access to high quality early education: Many disadvantaged children enter kindergarten already significantly behind their non-disadvantaged peers because of a lack of access to a high-quality early childhood education. Research by Nobel laureate James Heckman and others has demonstrated the clear educational benefits -- such as higher graduation rates -- of having attended a high quality pre-school program. To reap those benefits we must first develop a quantifiable standard for high quality pre-school access, informed by the research and informed with consideration of the level of expertise and training of early childhood education providers.





Access to highly qualified teachers and instruction in grades K-12: Access to highly qualified teachers, as an OTL Resource Standard, would be determined by grouping the data on teacher certification, combining years of experience (greater than three years) and expertise in subject matter together as one "bundled" indicator. While research indicates the individual importance of each attribute, a stronger correlation with student achievement can be obtained when these individual attributes are bundled.ⁱⁱ

Access to a college preparatory curriculum – including the arts and physical education – that will prepare all youth for college, work, and citizenship: Simply achieving proficiency in K-12 education is not a high enough standard. Globally leading countries possess young adult populations in which more than half of the members are degree holders, while the U.S. two-year and four-year degree attainment rate has remained stagnant at 39 percent for four decades. The Schott Foundation supports the goal of our philanthropic partner, Lumina Foundation, to increase the U.S. higher education rate to 60 percent by 2025. And we join with President Barack Obama in working to ensure that the United States produces the highest proportion of college



graduates in the world by 2020. Preparing students to succeed in our highly skilled labor force and to be productive citizens and community leaders requires that higher percentages of students completing high school are also prepared to succeed in post-secondary education.

A growing body of research demonstrates that students learn more, and learning is distributed more equitably, when the school curriculum consists of largely academic courses with few low-level coursesⁱⁱⁱ. Access to college-preparatory curriculum, including the arts, could be directly measured by course offerings -- such as Advanced Placement "AP" enrollment -- and hours of actual instruction in elementary, middle, and high school. Further research and analysis would inform the development of this standard into a measurable indicator.





Access to equitable instructional resources: Instructional resources are those that are intended to directly improve both teaching and learning. Education researchers and economists agree that some instructional expenditures show a higher correlation with positive student outcomes than others. These instructional expenditures should be tracked at the federal level and selected based on sound research. Once established, analysis of the selected expenditures will reveal the degree of spending inequity within a given state. Interventions would be triggered where large and persistent inequities in spending within a given state mean a denial of the opportunity to learn for students, especially those attending districts at the bottom

of the spectrum. Where necessary, a federal Opportunity to Learn Trust Fund should be established and made available to prevent disruption in the implementation of a state's OTLRI plan during a fiscal downturn in the state.

Monitoring and Accountability for the Opportunity to Learn: Resource distribution using the OTLRI would be audited at the state and district levels. Evaluating the OTLRI would be a critical component of the federal enforcement scheme. Annually, states would have an obligation to review inter-district resource distribution using the OTLRI indicators. Where practicable, states would also oversee district review of OTLRI resources within each district.

After the quantifiable standards for each resource are established, a fair accountability system for states and districts would be designed. Incentives to correct for inadequate resources are preferred and would serve as a primary form of intervention, with consequences reserved for states and school districts that persistently failed to provide children with adequate instructional resources. The exact nature of the accountability system would be developed based on research and with input from key stakeholders.

The OTLRI indicators would be used to identify states and districts in need. For example, if children who are poor or are members of disadvantaged minorities in a given district did not have the same access to highly qualified teachers as others, and the state failed to develop or implement a successful plan to address the highly qualified teacher issue, that failure could lead to a required federal appropriations or enforcement response designed to correct the specific problem. Toward this end, state officials would receive guidance on how to become OTLRI compliant and leadership academy grants and opportunities would be awarded to state education leaders for remarkable gains or successful implementation of OTLRI standards.









Opportunity to Learn Resource Index Enforcement



Where a state or school district persistently failed to provide adequate resources, or failed to monitor or intervene, the federal government would have several enforcement mechanisms at its disposal. Some measures would be strictly in response to state failure, while others could be developed by the state with regard to district enforcement. Measures could include the following:

Resource Accountability Plan: The state or district would first be required to develop a resource equity improvement plan. The plans would specifically address how the resource shortfalls in question would be remedied, as well as other related resource concerns where relevant. The respective federal or state agency would monitor the implementation of the plan over three or four years. If these implementation plans were not followed, these states and districts would be subject to additional federal or state intervention.

Inter-District Choice: Where a state failed to provide adequate resources to a district, out-of-district transfers could be included among the possible remedies. Such transfers must also include transportation funding, so that students would have the practical ability to transfer from inadequately resourced districts to those that consistently met or exceeded the standards. In such cases, the state, not the receiving district, would provide the full per-pupil expenditure to the receiving district, including Title I funds, as well as additional social and academic supports for the transferring students. Where insufficient numbers of adequately resourced districts resulted in no viable transfer choices, other opportunities would be explored, including the development of charter schools and magnet schools. The operating charter and magnet schools would be required to meet OTL resource requirements and would need to be certified OTL schools.

Targeting Funds, Withholding Funds, and Additional Enforcement: If a state or district had a gross record of failing to provide adequate resources or failing to implement the adequacy plan, the reauthorized federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) would give the U.S. Secretary of Education the authority to withhold Title I administrative funds, offer targeted assistance, or take other corrective measures to urge states to meet their obligations to their students. Such provisions would ensure that the withholding of federal funds and other financial responses would apply pressure to improve access and opportunity without punishing the intended recipients of such improvements.

Opportunity to Learn Resource Index and Relationship to Outcomes

Accountability: Where persistent low performance caused a district to be labeled as part of the outcome-based, performance-driven accountability system, the school or district would also be required to develop a resource equity improvement plan. Both the state distribution of finances among districts as well as the resource distribution among schools would be analyzed. If these implementation plans were not followed, the state or district would be subject to additional federal or state intervention. In addition, more accurate assessments should be developed to ensure that "college-bound" resources tracked significantly increase the likelihood of the attainment of post-secondary credentials including, but not limited to, college graduation.



CONCLUSION:

The Opportunity to Learn Federal Recommendations represent a significant shift, rather than a tweak, in the role the federal government plays in ensuring all students have a fair and substantive opportunity to learn. Resource inequity has confounded attempts at systemic education reform efforts for decades. For too long we have witnessed institutional paralysis in the face of profound educational inequities. In response, these policy recommendations call for an enhanced federal role in the effort to yield higher return on investments in federal and state resources committed to providing equitable educational opportunities and higher outcomes. The recommendations merge the concept of identifying and tracking key resources to support those children most in need; with the notion that federal powers of oversight and accountability are necessary.

Because equity is not satisfied by an equal share of a dwindling pie, these recommendations assume a large increase in federal education spending will be coupled with an increased resource accountability system supported by and monitored at the federal and state level. We now have the public's attention, and ample justification for the federal government to take the action steps necessary to provide every child a high quality education. If a substantial funding increase is coupled with this Opportunity to Learn Resource Index and system of increased accountability for educational resources, we believe this would ensure that each state does, in fact, provide every child with a fair and substantive "Opportunity to Learn" and our nation has the opportunity to continue as a global leader.











ENDNOTES

i Pre-school: Research showing long-term benefits of a high quality early childhood educational program by Nobel Laureate James Heckman and others is well established. It is important to note high quality pre-school programs provided by well trained educators showed far larger benefits than pre-school attendance generally. James Heckman & Dimitri Masterov, The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children (2004), available at http://www.ced.org/docs/summary/summary_heckman.pdf. See also, Beck A. Taylor, Eric Dearing & Kathleen McCartney, Incomes and Outcomes in Early Childhood, 39 J. HUM. RESOUR. 980-1007 (2004); Arthur Reynolds, Judy A. Temple, Dylan Robertson & Emily Mann, Long-Term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Attainment and Juvenile Arrest, 285 JAMA 2339-2346 (2001); Arthur J. Reynolds et al., Effects of a School-Based, Early Childhood Intervention on Adult Health and Well-being: A 19-year Follow-up of Low-Income Families. 161 ARCH. PEDIAT.ADOL. MED. 730-739 (2007). James J. Heckman, POLICIES TO FOSTER HUMAN CAPITAL (1999) (paper presented at the Aaron Wildavsky Forum, Richard and Rhoda Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley); Heckman, J., and LaFontaine, P., (2008) Henry Levin, Clive Belfield, Peter Muennig & Cecilia Rouse, The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for America's Children, Working Paper, Teachers College, Columbia University (2006) http://www.cbcse.org/pages/cost-benefit-studies.php. Highly Qualified Teachers: Among the school-related influences on student achievement, teacher quality accounts for the greatest variance in school improvement. Darling-Hammond, L. & Sykes, G., Creating A National Manpower Policy For Education: The Right Way To Meet The "Highly Qualified Teacher" Challenge (2003); STEVEN G. RIVKIN ET AL., TEACHERS, SCHOOLS, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Research, Working Paper No. 6691, 1998), available at http://papers.nber.org/papers/w6691 (last visited Oct. 25, 2003). See generally Willis D. Hawley & Andrew J. Wayne, Good Teaching, Good Schools, in HARD WORK FOR GOOD SCHOOLS: FACTS NOT FADS IN TITLE I REFORM, THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT, (1999). Hawley and Wayne cite Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 1998; Ferguson 1998; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997; and Sanders & Rivers 1996. Among the school-related influences on student achievement, teacher quality accounts for the greatest variance in school improvement. See id. (citing Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 1998). At least two studies suggest that not only does teacher quality have a tremendous impact on achievement, but that impact, after controlling for socio-economic factors, accounted for a great deal of the disparity between White and Black achievement. Ronald F. Ferguson, Paying For Public Education: New Evidence On How And Why Money Matters, 28 HARV. J. ON LEGIS. 465 (1991); Robert P. Strauss & Elizabeth. A. Sawyer, Some New Evidence on Teacher and Student Competencies, 5 ECON. OF EDUC. REV. 41 (1986).: College Bound Curriculum, including Arts. According to WestEd., "Research shows that access to a rigorous academic high school program is the single most reliable predictor of students' College Success, especially for Blacks and Hispanics." See e.g. Grace Calisis Corbett and Tracy A. Hubner, Rethinking High School: Preparing Students for Success in College, Career and Life, Report by WEST Ed (2007) Available on line at www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/842; citing, "Adelman, C. (1999 June) Answers in the Toolbox: Academic, attendance patterns, and bachelor's degree attainment. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education; For Arts See also., Learning, Arts, and the Brain, The Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition, (2008) available on line at http://www.dana. org; Equitable Instructional Expenditures: Although research on the relationship between per pupil expenditures and student outcomes is mixed, several studies indicate a high correlation between certain instructional expenditures and student outcomes. With additional research we believe that a subset of instructional resources that are most often correlated with achievement gains and increased graduation rates can be identified. Based on such research findings the specific instructional expenditures that would constitute this indicator would narrowed down. Richard Murname, for example, in an article, Improving Urban Schools: Two Approaches that Need Each Other, March 17, 2008, speaks of the need to reallocate resources to address low achievement. Murname includes among his list of resources, well educated teachers, training that increases the effectiveness of educators, and time for educators to work together on instructional improvement. See also, MICHAEL ESKENAZI ET AL, EQUITY OR EXCLUSION: THE DYNAMICS OF RESOURCES IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (2003), available at www.ncscatfordham.org/pages/publications.cfm.

ii Further qualifications could be considered, but the listed criteria are currently measured and reported for every district as part of the federal survey and two are required for teachers to be considered "highly qualified" pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

iii See Valerie E. Lee & David T. Burkham, Dropping Out of High School: The Role of School Organization and Structure (Paper Presented at Conference on Dropouts in America, Harvard University, Jan. 13, 2001); NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, supra note 40, at 105 (citing extensive research showing that students would learn more if they received a demanding curriculum). Attewell, Paul and Thurston Domina, "Raising the Bar: Curricular Intensity and Academic Performance." 30 Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, pp. 51-71, March 2008 (showing a positive relationship between high school curricular intensity and 12th grade test scores and probability of entry to and completion of college).





Schott Foundation for Public Education