

---

# STRONG AMERICAN SCHOOLS

---

## Americans Deserve Leadership on Education

More than ever, the prospects of a nation and its children depend on the strength of its schools. Unfortunately, our schools are failing to prepare students for college, careers, and life—with dire consequences for all Americans.

- **Too many students drop out.** This spring 1.2 million students will fail to graduate with their peers. More than 6,000 students drop out of school every day.
- **Failure starts early.** By eighth grade, nearly 70% of students are below proficient in reading, and most will never catch up.<sup>2</sup>
- **Too many graduates are unprepared for college, careers, and life.**
  - **Not ready for college:** More than one in three college students (34%) must take remedial math or English courses to catch up on skills they should have learned in high school. In community colleges, the remediation rate climbs to 43%.<sup>3</sup>
  - **Not ready for careers:** Nearly half of recent high school graduates who enter the workforce (46%) say they are not prepared for the jobs they hope to get in the future. Employers agree, estimating that 45% of recent high school graduates are not prepared with skills to advance beyond entry level jobs.<sup>4</sup>
  - **Not ready for life:** American students have a hard time solving real-life problems that call for practical decision making and troubleshooting. Among 29 developed countries, the U.S. had the fourth-highest percentage of very *weak* problem-solvers and the sixth-lowest percentage of *strong* problem-solvers.<sup>5</sup>
- **Education has huge economic consequences for families and the nation as a whole.**
  - The poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that of families headed by high school graduates.<sup>6</sup> Each cohort of dropouts costs the U.S. \$192 billion in lost income and taxes.<sup>7</sup>
  - Remediation in public institutions costs roughly \$2.5 billion every year to provide students with the content and skills that high schools failed to provide them. The total cost of remediation per student is between \$2,025 and \$2,531 for public four-year institutions.<sup>8</sup>
  - If America could increase the cognitive skills of its students to the level of the highest performing nations over the next decade, our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would grow by an additional 4.5 percent over 25 years.<sup>9</sup>
- **Solving the problem will take strong leadership to raise standards, improve teaching, and provide time and support for learning.**
  - 25 million students attend school in states have set proficiency standards for fourth grade reading below even the most basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.<sup>10</sup>
  - More than 12 million students in grades 7-12 are taught academic courses by teachers who have no degree in the subject they're teaching.<sup>11</sup>
  - High schools where teachers have time to provide students with high levels of support manage to cut dropout rates in half.<sup>12</sup>
- **Minority students are most disenfranchised by the lack of national leadership on education.**
  - Less than 60 percent of the nation's Black and Latino students graduate on time from high school.<sup>13</sup>
  - Only 15 percent of Black eighth graders read at a proficient level and less than 60 percent have been taught to read at even the most basic level.<sup>14</sup> By the time they near graduation, Black and Latino teenagers have math and reading skills that are no higher than those of White middle school students.<sup>15</sup>
  - Black and Latino graduates are only about half as likely as White students to leave high school adequately prepared for four-year colleges.<sup>16</sup>
  - More than 10 million Black and Latino students attend school in states that have set proficiency standards for fourth grade reading so low they fall below even the most basic level.<sup>17</sup>
  - Teachers in high-minority schools are almost twice as likely to be inexperienced as teachers in low-minority schools.<sup>18</sup>

1150 17th St., NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

[www.strongamericanschools.org](http://www.strongamericanschools.org)

*Strong American Schools, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is a nonpartisan campaign supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. SAS does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.*

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Education Week. (2008, June 5). *Diplomas Count 2008: School to College, Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition?* Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Per day figure derived by dividing 1.23 million by 180 school days per year.
- <sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). Computation by DAS-T Online Version 5.0 on 10/29/2007 using U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-04 National Postsecondary Students Aid Study (NPSAS:04).
- <sup>4</sup> Achieve, Inc. (2005). *Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work?* Prepared for Achieve, Inc. by Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>5</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2004). *Problem-Solving for Tomorrow's World*. Paris, France: Author. Accessed at [http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en\\_32252351\\_32236173\\_34002550\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_32252351_32236173_34002550_1_1_1_1,00.html).
- <sup>6</sup> Baum, S. & Payea, K. (2004). *Education Pays 2004*. New York: The College Board. Accessed at [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf).
- <sup>7</sup> Rouse, C. (2005, September). *The Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education*. Paper presented at Teachers College, Columbia University. Accessed at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/EquitySymposium/symposium/resourceDetails.asp?PresId=3>.
- <sup>8</sup> See Appendix B of Strong American Schools. (2008). *Diploma to Nowhere*. Washington, DC: Author.
- <sup>9</sup> Hanushek, E., et al. (2008, Spring). Education and Economic Growth: It's not just going to school, but learning something while there that matters. *Education Next*, 8, 2, 62-70.
- <sup>10</sup> Strong American Schools analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. (2007, June). *Mapping 2005 State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>11</sup> Ingersoll, R. (2002). *Out-of-Field Teaching, Educational Inequality, and the Organization of Schools*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- <sup>12</sup> Croninger, R. & Lee, V. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record*, vol. 103, pp. 548-581.
- <sup>13</sup> Education Week. (2008, June 5). *Diplomas Count 2008: School to College, Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition?* Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.
- <sup>14</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>15</sup> Haycock, K. (2007, May). *Facing the Facts about Achievement for All Groups of Students*. Presentation to the North Carolina Science Summit, Raleigh, NC, May 23, 2007, slides 67-68. Accessed at <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/Product+Catalog/recent+presentations>.
- <sup>16</sup> Greene, J. & Winters, M. (2003, September). *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States*. New York: Manhattan Institute.
- <sup>17</sup> Strong American Schools analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics. (2007, June). *Mapping 2005 State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>18</sup> The Commission on No Child Left Behind. *Beyond NCLB*. (2007). Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. (p. 31)