



*Fifty Years After
Brown v. Board of Education:
A Two-Tiered Education System*

Prepared for the National Commission
on Teaching and America's Future
By Thomas G. Carroll, President
Kathleen Fulton, Karen Abercrombie, and Irene Yoon

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National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

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Executive Summary

As we mark the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, millions of low income students and children of color are concentrated in separate and unequal schools. Many are being taught by unqualified teachers, with insufficient instructional materials and a limited supply of textbooks and inadequate technology, in crumbling buildings - with vermin and broken bathrooms. These substandard teaching and learning conditions are rarely found in schools where the majority of students come from more affluent backgrounds and have a low risk of school failure. We have a two-tiered education system.

It is unacceptable to hold students accountable for meeting high standards that their schools are not equipped to help them reach. As a nation we say that our goal is to leave no child behind, but the schools we provide for some children say otherwise. Students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds constitute an emerging majority in this country – the future health of our economy hinges on the knowledge and skills they will acquire in the schools we provide for them today. But the deck is too often stacked against low income students and children of color – conditions in their schools are just not adequate to support quality teaching and learning.

To understand the extent of this problem, NCTAF staff analyzed the responses of 3,336 teachers randomly surveyed by the Peter Harris Research Group for Lou Harris in California, Wisconsin, and New York. When compared with their colleagues in more affluent communities, teachers in schools serving large numbers of low income students and children of color reported:

- ▲ Higher numbers of uncredentialed teachers;
- ▲ An insufficient number of teachers who are qualified to prepare students for high stakes tests;
- ▲ Serious teacher turnover problems;
- ▲ Unfilled teacher vacancies and large numbers of substitute teachers;
- ▲ Low levels of parental involvement;
- ▲ Inadequate physical facilities;
- ▲ Evidence of vermin (cockroaches, mice, and rats) in school buildings;
- ▲ Dirty, closed, or inoperative student bathrooms;
- ▲ Inadequate textbooks and materials for students to use in class or to take home;
- ▲ Inadequate computers and limited Internet access;
- ▲ Inadequate science equipment and materials; and
- ▲ Higher personal expenditures to compensate for insufficient classroom materials and supplies.

As a nation we say that our goal is to leave no child behind, but the schools we provide for some children say otherwise.

As a nation, we have called on our teachers and students to meet demanding standards. Now we must give them the schools they need to succeed. To close the student achievement gap, we must close the teaching quality gap, and to do that, we must ensure that every school provides an equal opportunity for successful teaching and learning. To live up to the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, we must:

- ▲ Acknowledge unequal school conditions and marshal the political will to seek solutions;
- ▲ Listen to what teachers and students tell us about conditions in their schools;
- ▲ Establish school standards that sustain quality teaching and learning for every child;
- ▲ Establish funding adequacy formulas based on per-pupil needs in lieu of per-pupil averages;
- ▲ Use better data to report on the relationship between school conditions and student performance;
- ▲ Hire well qualified teachers and principals, support them and reward them for performance; and
- ▲ Hold officials publicly accountable for keeping the promise of educational equity.

**We must give our
teachers and
students the
schools they need
to succeed.**

Fifty Years After *Brown v. Board of Education:* A Two-Tiered Education System

The *Brown* decision, a half-century ago, was a promise that every child would have access to the same quality public education. It is a promise we must keep. Competent, caring, qualified teaching in schools organized for success should be every child's birthright. To better understand what must be done to close the teaching quality gap for low income students and children of color, the staff of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) analyzed three large-scale surveys of school conditions reported by teachers in California, Wisconsin, and New York. The Peter Harris Research Group conducted these random surveys of 3,336 public school teachers for Lou Harris, one of the nation's most well-respected pioneers in polling public school teachers.¹

The findings paint a chilling picture of inequitable school conditions that can overwhelm even the best efforts of our teachers and their students. Harris describes "... a two-tiered public school system: one for the more affluent, who enjoy the privileges of a relatively healthy educational environment, and the other for the least privileged, who suffer an educational environment that virtually forecloses their chance of learning."²

Competent, caring, qualified teaching in schools organized for success should be every child's birthright.

The evidence cited by the teachers, school by school, proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that children at risk, who come from families with poorer economic backgrounds, are not being given an opportunity to learn that is equal to that offered to children from the most privileged families. The obvious cause of this inequality lies in the finding that the most disadvantaged children attend schools that do not have basic facilities and conditions conducive to providing them with a quality education. Without such facilities and conditions, both the teachers and the students will be hard-put to achieve any semblance of quality education.³

Conditions in these schools deprive children of their most basic civil right: an equal opportunity to learn.

What Must Be Done

Well prepared teachers in schools organized for success are the most valuable resources a community can provide for its young people. Thousands of public school districts across the country are giving their children excellent teachers and supporting them with top quality teaching conditions in classrooms that meet high standards. Many of their schools deliver an education that ranges from good to world-class, and their students are achieving at high levels. But we cannot be content as long as a significant number of teachers and students are struggling in schools with unacceptable teaching and learning conditions.

We know that public schools can do the job; high need does not have to mean low quality. A growing number of studies provide portraits of schools that do an exemplary job of educating large numbers of high need students. In its study of “High Flying Schools,” the Education Trust reported that it found good student achievement in many public schools that enroll higher proportions of poor and minority children than the nation’s public schools as a whole.⁴ Research on high performing, high poverty schools reveals that they are consistently staffed by well qualified teachers and principals who work in a professional environment that supports sound instructional practices and high standards.⁵

Why are some schools able to rise to the challenge, while many others do not? The conventional wisdom has been that we can’t find enough teachers to do the job. But the truth is that we can’t keep them. The problem is not that we have too few teachers entering high-risk schools; it is that too many good teachers are leaving. They leave because conditions in their schools do not meet even the most basic requirements for successful teaching and learning.

We have reached a troubling conclusion. As a nation we are committed to improving teaching quality by increasing the supply of qualified teachers for hard-to-staff schools, but an over reliance on teacher supply strategies is protecting the status quo in dysfunctional schools. The heavy emphasis on keeping these schools supplied with teachers is focusing the energy for improvement on recruitment strategies instead of on the need to **change the conditions that make these schools so hard to staff in the first place**. In too many cases idealistic new teachers are treated like cannon fodder – thrown into schools with the most challenging assignments, given little support, and even less chance for success. A few individuals emerge as heroes who are heralded for their personal ability to succeed in the face of dysfunctional conditions. But when the majority of new teachers drop out, after being worn down by overwhelming odds, they are cast aside to be quickly replaced by the next cohort of novices. Better preparation programs and incentives to attract more teachers to hard-to-staff schools are important, but they are not enough – we must change the conditions that make these schools such difficult places for teaching and learning.

Faced with substandard conditions, it should be no surprise that teachers and students drop out in droves. As the teachers leave, they are replaced by inexperienced individuals who are even less equipped to deal with obstacles that stand in the way of effective teaching. The teachers come and go, and the students with the greatest needs are left behind to be taught by a passing parade of under qualified and inexperienced individuals. Teaching quality declines, student achievement suffers, and the cycle of educational inequality is repeated from one generation to the next. It is time to break this cycle.

Faced with substandard conditions, it should be no surprise that teachers and students drop out in droves.

Recommendations

As a nation, we have called on our teachers and students to meet demanding standards. Now is the time to give them the schools they need to succeed. It is time to let our teachers and students know that we will not let them down as they prepare to face the complex challenges of a diverse world and a global economy in the 21st Century. We must form a strong chain of support, steering clear of finger pointing and top-down mandates, to make every school a place that can deliver on the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Our findings and recommendations are summarized below (a full discussion of recommendations appears on pages 33-36).

1 Acknowledge inadequate school conditions and marshal the political will to seek solutions.

This report paints a grim picture of inequities that deny the civil rights of our most vulnerable citizens. The nation's leaders will not like what they see – but this picture will not change unless we acknowledge these conditions and summon the political will to put things right. Until we take this step, nothing else will matter. We call upon Governors and other leading policymakers at the state and local levels to convene the business and education leadership in their states to publicize this report and plan ways that states and school districts can act on its recommendations.

2 Listen to the teachers and the students. *Teachers and students are telling us that their schools are inadequate when they walk away in droves – with dropout rates that can be 50% or higher. They are telling us that teaching and learning conditions in their schools are impossible. It is time to listen, and to act on what we know to be true.*

3 Establish school standards that can sustain quality teaching and learning for every child. *To ensure that our schools offer a sound education for every child, they should provide the following resources: highly qualified teachers and principals; appropriate class sizes in sound facilities; sufficient books, supplies and equipment; modern information technologies and Internet access; a curriculum that meets high standards; adequate resources for special learning needs; and a safe, orderly, clean and well maintained environment.*

4 Establish funding adequacy formulas based on per-pupil needs in lieu of per-pupil averages. *School financing policies should be based on an analysis of what it will cost to raise the bar and close the gaps in student achievement – bringing teaching and learning conditions in all schools up to a high standard.*

5 Collect, analyze and use better data for better decision making, and publicly report on the relationship between school conditions and student performance. *Set standards for school conditions that are aligned with teaching and learning standards, and use data collection systems to measure and report on the extent to which they are being met.*

6 Hire well qualified teachers and principals, support them with strong professional communities, and reward them well. *Create incentives that attract strong principals and teams of promising and accomplished teachers to high-risk schools, and reward them for turning around low performance.*

7 Hold officials publicly accountable for keeping the promise of educational equity. *A basic determinant of our success in realizing the dream of *Brown v. Board of Education* has become clear – we must have strong lines and structures of accountability for quality teaching in schools organized for success. Adequate resources and rewards for performance should be tied to a reciprocal obligation to remove teachers, principals, and school leaders who are not performing adequately. Our education leaders and publicly elected officials at every level also should be judged by their commitment to ending two-tiered public education systems.*

What Teachers Tell Us About Our Two-Tiered System of Public Schooling

Who can tell us about the conditions in our schools? Just ask the teachers. Much like embedded reporters, they are witnesses to the events in their schools and the daily challenges they face. Asking the teachers was exactly what Lou Harris, a nationally recognized pollster, did in a series of statewide surveys. Harris asked teachers in a cross-section of schools in three states to describe what really happens in their buildings. Over the Spring and Fall of 2002, Harris conducted surveys in California, New York, and Wisconsin on working conditions – the physical environment, resources, and professional atmosphere – that shape the quality of teaching and learning opportunities available in American schools.⁶

The Harris survey conclusions are stark:

It is perfectly obvious that the highest-at-risk students have the poorest, most run-down physical environments, the greatest instability of teachers coming and going, the fewest fully qualified teachers, a shortage of textbooks and instructional materials, far less availability of technology in the classroom, overcrowded classes, poor working conditions for the teachers, and fewer resources to teach students to pass tests that they have little chance of being properly prepared to take. To compare these schools with those serving the most affluent majority of students is akin to comparing a backward, emerging nation with a highly industrial nation. It is no contest.⁷

The cumulative evidence across these three surveys suggests that, fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, unequal teaching and learning opportunities are still common in American schools. If we are serious about leaving no child behind, we must keep the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* by ensuring that every school meets high standards.

Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, unequal teaching and learning opportunities are still common in American schools.

How Teachers Were Surveyed

Using an “Index of Risk” based on each school’s percentage of students who are classified as members of ethnic and minority groups, students with limited English proficiency, and students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, the Lou Harris surveys compared teachers’ responses in schools that serve high numbers of children at risk (“high-risk schools”), with those of teachers in schools serving low numbers of children at risk (“low-risk schools”).

Surveys in California and New York State were conducted first, and their results were remarkably similar, showing wide gaps in teaching and learning opportunities between schools that serve high numbers of at-risk children and those that serve relatively low numbers of children at risk.⁸ Dramatic differences also appeared across geographical areas within states (i.e., city vs. suburb vs. rural). To extend the analysis and to test whether these findings were a fluke of East coast/West coast “outlier” characteristics of New York and California, Harris conducted a third study in the heartland of America: in the cities, suburbs, and rural areas of Wisconsin.⁹ The disturbing pattern was repeated – teachers from schools with high percentages of at-risk students reported conditions far different from those in more affluent schools.

It is important to note that in all three states the survey design compared the findings from the 51% majority of schools with low scores on the Index of Risk with the 20% of schools with high scores on the Index of Risk. For example, in New York State, with a public school enrollment of 2,829,960

students, there are 1,400,000 students in the lowest-risk schools and 566,000 in the highest-risk schools. So the numbers in this report tell us that a large number of students and teachers in America's public are in schools where conditions are generally good. This makes it all the more reprehensible that thousands of low income and minority students are being left behind in high-risk schools where conditions are simply not adequate to support quality teaching and learning.

The basic questions in the three studies were the same across the three states. Teachers, chosen through random sampling (with an over-sampling of teachers in low income areas), were asked about the status of their working conditions, including:

- ▲ The number of qualified and fully credentialed teachers in each school;
- ▲ The amount of professional development and training available to teachers;
- ▲ The ways in which schools involved parents;
- ▲ The quality and availability of textbooks, instructional materials, and technology; and
- ▲ The adequacy of physical facilities, including cleanliness of school bathrooms and evidence of vermin.

There were also a few questions on some state surveys that were not asked in other state surveys. For example, questions on testing (their quality, appropriateness, and fairness) and questions on out-of-pocket expenses teachers spend for supplies and materials were asked in both the New York and Wisconsin surveys but not in the California survey.

Some Bright Spots Emerged

As we report what NCTAF found in its analysis of the Lou Harris surveys, it is important to remember that, in the majority of the schools represented in these surveys, teachers say that their working conditions are fairly good. There are indeed bright spots to report. In the Wisconsin survey, for example, in 16 critical areas, representing approximately 40% of the survey items, most schools are in relatively good condition, as judged by the teachers who work in them. For example, in more than 90% of the schools in the Wisconsin survey, discipline is not seen as a major problem. Teachers there report a high degree of home support from parents, and they give generally positive ratings to the quality of textbooks and instructional materials they work with, as well as to the availability of technology.

In New York State, there were fewer items with overall positive ratings statewide, but teachers did give positive ratings to their job satisfaction (37% rated job satisfaction excellent; 47% rated it good), and most are satisfied with the textbooks and other instructional materials they work with (76% positive ratings statewide).¹⁰ They also generally gave good marks to ways in which their schools involve parents (73% positive ratings statewide).¹¹ In California, only slightly fewer teachers felt that they were teaching in overcrowded classrooms in the higher-risk schools (15%) than the low-risk schools (18%).¹²

In general then, across the three surveys, we found that large numbers of teachers report positive conditions in their schools. But it is important to recognize that these bright spots in the surveys are heavily weighted in favor of the greater numbers of teachers who work in low-risk, more advantaged schools. When we compare their responses to the responses of teachers working in high-risk schools, a disturbing picture of overwhelmingly inadequate conditions emerges.

A Cross-State Summary of Gaps Between High-Risk and Low-Risk Schools

Across the three states, and within each state, the pattern was clear: teachers in schools with the highest numbers of at-risk students report their schools are beset by a host of problems, largely beyond the teachers' control. In fact, in many of these schools, conditions would make it nearly impossible for the teachers to provide their students with a quality education.

While there are variations in what was found across the three states surveyed, the discussion below summarizes important areas where the gaps are consistent and substantial between high-risk schools and low-risk schools.

1 Teacher Quality and Teacher Turnover are Far Greater Problems in High-Risk Schools

Each of the three state surveys asked teachers to report on the qualifications of teachers in their schools, and the impact of teacher turnover in their schools. The results point to a discouraging teaching quality gap between high- and low-risk schools.

The number of uncertified teachers in a school is a strong indicator of teaching quality and student achievement in that school. The ability of teachers to teach to state standards and to prepare students for tests may also be taken as an indicator of teaching quality. Low-performing schools tend to have a high percentage of teachers who are uncertified or teaching out-of-field. Research has shown convincingly that variations in teaching quality make an enormous difference in student academic growth. In studies conducted in Tennessee, Dallas, and Boston, students who are unfortunate enough to have had an ineffective teacher for the school year test fully one year behind peers taught by an effective teacher. Those with weak teachers for three or more years in a row may never catch up.¹³ The teachers in the Harris survey report that the number of unqualified teachers in many high-risk schools is so high that the students in these schools are certain to have a series of unqualified teachers year after year in their classrooms.

A. Teachers in High-Risk Schools Report High Numbers of Uncredentialed Teachers (20% or more)

In California, only 4% of the teachers in low-risk schools report that their schools have high numbers of uncredentialed teachers. But in high-risk schools, this figure rises sharply to 48% (Figure 1). Teachers in high-risk schools in California are 12 times more likely to report that 20% or more of the teachers in their schools are on some form of emergency teaching permit. The odds are very high that a student in one of these schools will be taught by a succession of unqualified teachers.

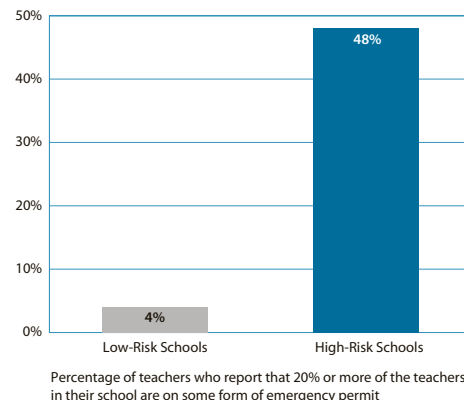


Figure 1: Teachers Reporting High Numbers of Uncredentialed Teachers (CA)

B. Teachers in High-Risk Schools Report an Insufficient Number of Qualified Teachers to Prepare Students for High-Stakes Tests

Under the glare of NCLB, when student test results are the basis for Adequate Yearly Progress, the ability of teachers to prepare students for effective performance on high-stakes tests has tremendous consequences. When teachers in Wisconsin were asked about barriers to students' doing better on tests, 56% of teachers in high-risk schools cited a lack of qualified teachers as a barrier. In contrast, only 29% of teachers in low-risk schools cited teacher qualifications as a barrier to student test performance. In New York, 70% of teachers in the high-risk schools cited this barrier, almost double the percentage (37%) of teachers in low-risk schools who said the lack of qualified teachers was a barrier to preparing students for exams (Figure 2).

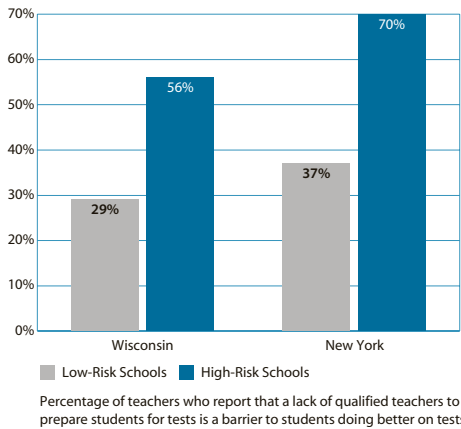


Figure 2:
Lack of Qualified Teachers to Prepare Students for Tests (NY & WI)

C. Teachers in High-Risk Schools Feel Underprepared to Teach to State Standards

When New York teachers were asked how well prepared they themselves felt to teach all students to the state standards, only 66% in high-risk schools felt very well prepared, as compared with 86% of teachers in low-risk schools – a 20% gap (Figure 3).

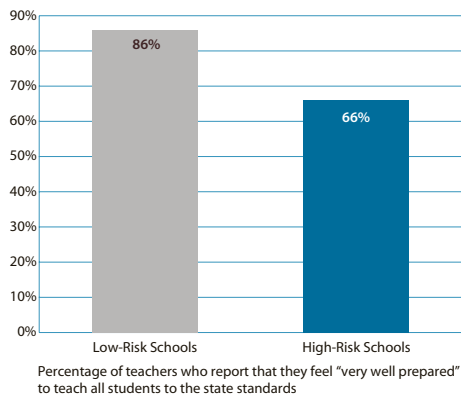


Figure 3:
Teachers Feeling Prepared to Teach All Students to the State Standards (NY)

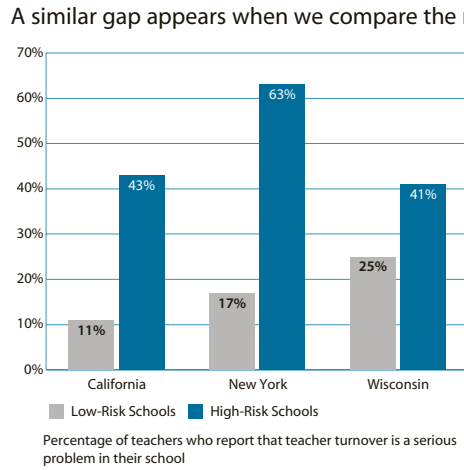
The Bottom Line: High-risk schools have large numbers of uncredentialed teachers and teachers who are unprepared to teach to state standards. This puts their students at a disadvantage when it comes to taking tests that determine their futures, and the future of their schools.

D. Teachers in High-Risk Schools Report Teacher Turnover is a Serious Problem

Schools with high teacher turnover do not have the capacity to sustain the rigor, relevance and relationships that are fundamental to high-performing schools. We know from organizational change studies that workforce continuity and coherence – pulling together around a common vision for improvement – are essential if schools are to sustain reform efforts. Schools in which teachers are constantly coming and going cannot establish this coherence of effort to meet long-term goals. Nor can they develop the sense of community in which students, teachers, and parents know each other well and work together to support each child. High teacher turnover also contributes to a self-perpetuating negative cycle that short-changes students when school leaders rely on substitute teachers, uncredentialed teachers, or novice teachers on a continuing basis to fill constantly recurring vacancies. On average, the national annual teacher turnover rate is 15.7%, but teacher turnover rates are much higher in urban and high-risk schools – where they can reach as high as 50% in some cases.¹⁴

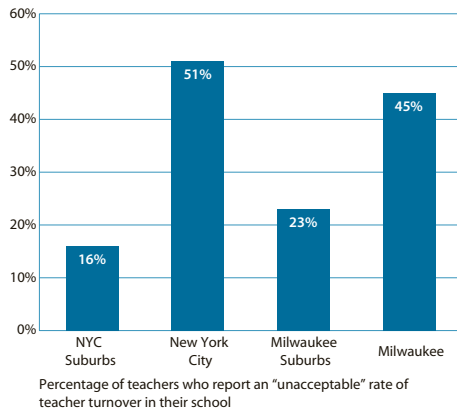
In each of the states surveyed by Harris, teachers said that teacher turnover was a more serious problem if they were teaching in schools with greater numbers of high-risk students (Figure 4). In California, teachers in the high-risk schools were four times more likely than their colleagues in low-risk schools (43% vs. 11%) to report that the rate of teacher turnover is a serious problem. In New York, 63% of teachers in high-risk schools reported an “unacceptable” rate of teacher turnover, compared to only 17% of teachers in low-risk schools. The gap was not quite so great in Wisconsin, but, at 41% vs. 25%, it reflects a considerable difference between high- and low-risk schools.

Figure 4:
Teacher Turnover Considered a Serious Problem (WI, NY, & CA)



A similar gap appears when we compare the responses of teachers surveyed across geographic areas in New York State and Wisconsin. In New York City, 51% of teachers surveyed said teacher turnover was unacceptable; by contrast, only 16% of teachers in the New York City suburbs voiced these concerns (Figure 5). Between these extremes were teachers in major cities outside the New York City area and those teaching in other upstate schools. Similarly, 45% of teachers in Milwaukee rated teacher turnover a serious problem in their schools; far fewer teachers said this was a problem in the Milwaukee suburbs (23%), in other midsized cities (30%), or in rural areas of Wisconsin (21%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5:
Teacher Turnover Rates Considered Unacceptable (NYC vs. NYC Suburbs and Milwaukee vs. Milwaukee Suburbs)



E. Teachers in High-Risk Schools Report that Vacancies are Left Unfilled or are Filled By Substitute Teachers

The corollary of high teacher turnover is a high rate of unfilled vacancies in the teaching staff. In New York State, 43% of teachers in high-risk schools said their schools don't fill long-term vacancies or must hire substitutes, as compared to 18% of those in the low-risk schools. In Wisconsin, 46% of teachers in high-risk schools said this was a problem, compared to 21% of those in low-risk schools (Figure 6).

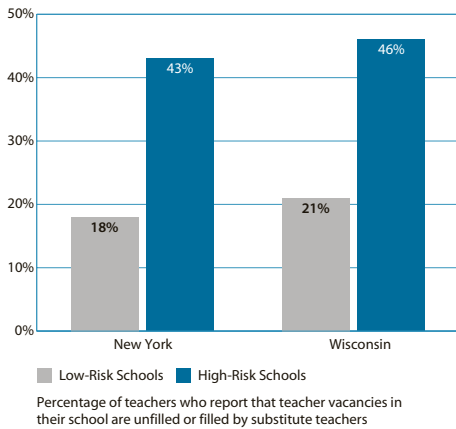


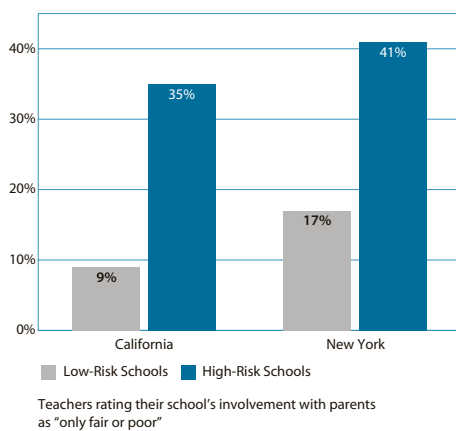
Figure 6:
Teacher Vacancies Go Unfilled or Are Filled by Substitute Teachers (NY & WI)

F. Teachers in High-Risk, High-Turnover Schools are Frustrated by Inadequate Efforts to Involve Parents

It is no surprise that schools with high levels of teacher turnover have less chance to build strong, continuing relationships with parents. When parents are confronted with a passing parade of teachers, they are unable to establish a sustainable working relationship with the school's staff. In New York State, 41% of teachers in high-risk schools reported that school involvement with parents is "only fair or poor"; but just 17% of the teachers in the low-risk schools said this was a problem (Figure 7). In California, almost four times as many teachers in high-risk schools (35%) said their school was failing to reach the parents, as compared to the 9% of the teachers in low-risk schools who expressed this concern (Figure 7).

The problem of a lack of parental involvement may become a self-perpetuating cycle. Parents who are frustrated by high teacher turnover may disengage from their schools, and low parental involvement, in turn, may become a negative school condition that drives more teacher turnover.

Figure 7:
School Involvement with Parents is Low (CA & NY)



Among California teachers who indicated they wanted to leave their schools in the next three years, 29% reported lack of parental involvement was a concern, and 45% of teachers who were generally concerned about the working conditions in their schools reported that lack of parental involvement was a factor.¹⁵

The Bottom Line: In high-risk schools the constant churn of teacher turnover undermines teaching quality. This lack of staff continuity makes it difficult to establish program rigor and frustrates efforts to build strong learning communities necessary to sustain quality teaching and learning opportunities.

2 Physical Facilities in High-Risk Schools Are Found Inadequate

The quality of the physical environment can vary dramatically depending on whether the school is serving predominantly high-risk or low-risk students. Harsh indicators of these inadequate physical facilities include evidence of vermin and closed, inoperative or dirty bathroom facilities.

A. Physical Facilities Overall are Rated Lower in High-Risk Schools

Teachers in high-risk schools in New York State are nearly twice as likely as their colleagues in low-risk schools (51% vs. 26%) to say that their school's overall physical facilities are inadequate. This is true in California as well, where 47% of teachers in high-risk schools say their school physical facilities are inadequate, compared to 22% of those in low-risk schools. In Wisconsin, 39% of teachers in high-risk schools give physical facilities a negative rating, compared to 21% in low-risk schools (Figure 8).

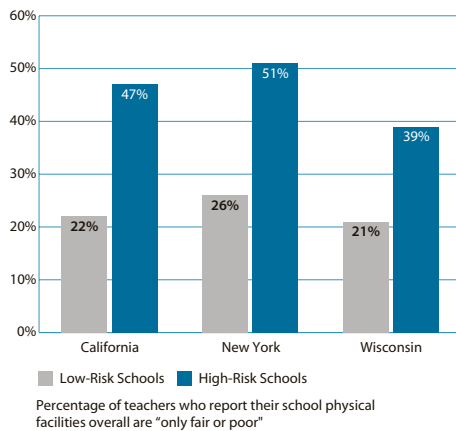


Figure 8:
Physical Facilities Rated Inadequate (CA, NY & WI)

B. Cockroaches, Mice and Rats are Commonly Reported in High-Risk School Buildings

Grim conditions prevail in high-risk schools. In New York State, 63% of teachers in high-risk schools report evidence of vermin, compared to 15% of teachers in low-risk schools. Teachers in high-risk schools in Wisconsin and California are somewhat less likely to report evidence of vermin in their schools, but the contrast between high-risk and low-risk schools in those states (35% vs. 8% in Wisconsin, and 38% vs. 24% in California) remains high (Figure 9).

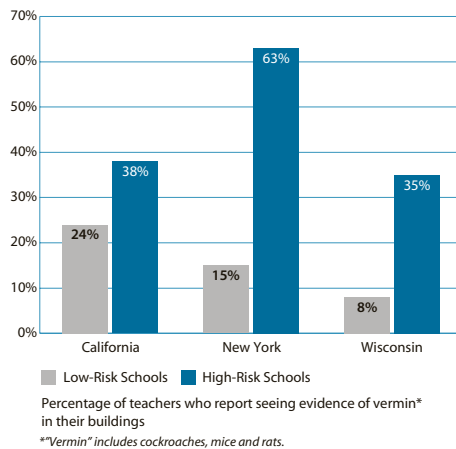


Figure 9:
Evidence of Vermin* in School Buildings (CA, NY, & WI)

When New York City schools are compared with those in New York City suburbs and upstate, sharp differences were found again: 54% of teachers in New York City schools report evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats, while in the suburbs of New York City, only 17% of teachers cite these conditions (Figure 10).

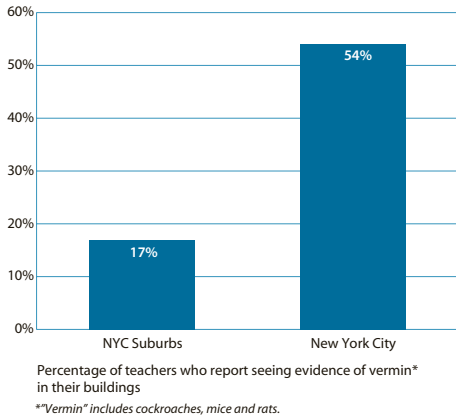


Figure 10:
Evidence of Vermin* in School Buildings (NYC vs. NYC Suburbs)

C. Teachers Report Student Bathrooms in High-Risk Schools Too Often Dirty, Closed or Not Working

Bleak indicators of the quality of physical facilities are dirty, closed or inoperative student bathrooms, reported almost four times as often (26% vs. 7%) in high-risk schools in New York State than in low-risk schools (Figure 11). The situation is similar in California, where teachers in high-risk schools are twice as likely (25% vs. 12%) to report dirty, inoperative bathrooms, compared to teachers in low-risk schools (Figure 11).

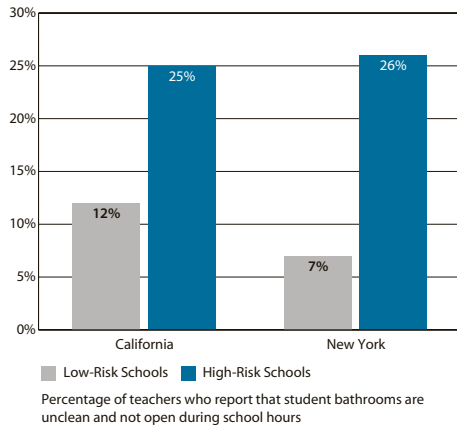
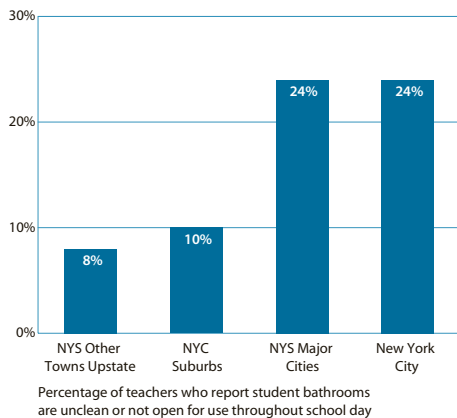


Figure 11:
Student Bathrooms Dirty, Closed, or Inoperative (CA & NY)

The Bottom Line:
High-risk school buildings can be dismal places in which to teach and learn.



The condition of bathroom facilities appears to be a particular problem in urban areas: 24% of teachers in New York City and 24% of teachers in major cities upstate report this issue, compared to 10% of teachers in New York City suburbs and 8% of teachers in upstate schools overall (Figure 12).

Figure 12:
Student Bathrooms Dirty, Closed, or Inoperative (NYS by Geographic Region)

3 Teachers in High-Risk Schools Find Instructional Resources Often Inadequate

Effective teaching and student learning require access to a wide array of quality instructional materials, from textbooks to technology. In all three states surveyed, teachers in high-risk schools are less likely to have these resources at their disposal than those in the low-risk schools. These fundamental resource gaps undercut the opportunity to teach effectively and undermine the capacity of the high-risk schools to provide meaningful opportunities for their students to learn.

A. Teachers in High-Risk Schools are More Likely to Report Inadequate Textbooks and Teaching Materials

In New York State, twice the percentage of teachers in high-risk schools (22%) report that they do not have adequate materials for students to use in class than do teachers in low-risk schools (10%). Similarly, nearly twice the percentage of teachers in high-risk schools say they do not have an adequate number of textbooks for students to take home, as compared to teachers in low-risk schools (31% vs. 16%). Wisconsin teachers report a similar pattern, with 14% of teachers in high-risk schools reporting they have an inadequate number of textbooks and other materials for students to use in the classroom, compared to 8% of teachers in low-risk schools. Teachers in high-risk Wisconsin schools are also almost twice as likely to report an inadequate number of textbooks and other materials for students to take home than their colleagues in low-risk schools (30% vs. 17%). In California, more than twice as many teachers in high-risk schools give negative responses on the availability of textbooks and other instructional materials than do teachers in low-risk schools (26% vs. 12%) (Figure 13).

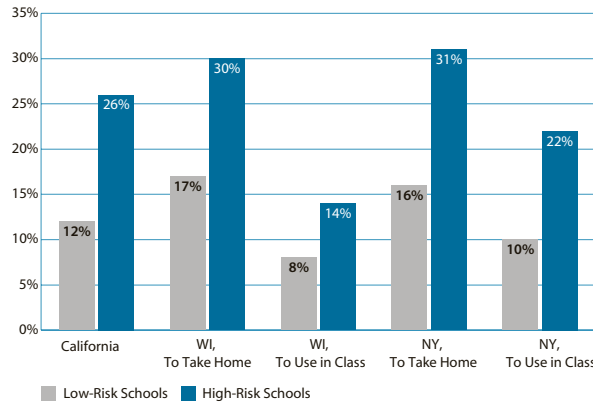


Figure 13:
Lack of Texts and Materials for Use in Class or At Home (CA, WI & NY)

Percentage of teachers who report they do not have adequate textbooks or other instructional materials for every student to use

In Wisconsin, 40% of those surveyed in high-risk schools report they lack the necessary equipment and materials to teach effectively, whereas only 24% of teachers in low-risk schools in the state report they lack necessary equipment and materials (Figure 14).

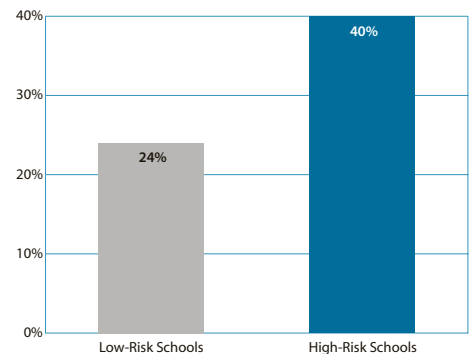


Figure 14:
Lack of Equipment and Materials to Teach Effectively (WI)

Percentage of teachers who report they lack adequate equipment and materials to most effectively teach students

B. Teachers in High-Risk Schools are More Likely to Report Inadequate Computers and Other Technology

In California, 39% of teachers in high-risk schools report inadequate availability of technology, compared to 25% of teachers in low-risk schools (Figure 15). The gap in Wisconsin is similar: 35% of teachers in high-risk schools report inadequate technology availability, compared to 22% of those in low-risk schools (Figure 15).

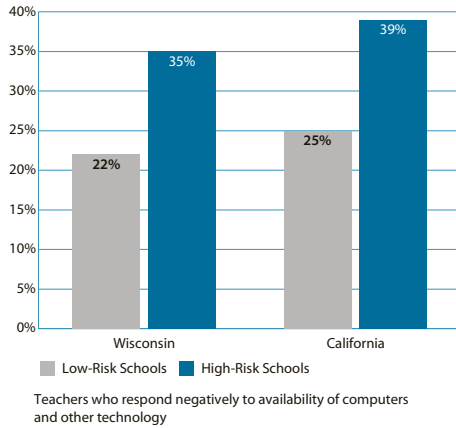


Figure 15: Inadequate Availability of Computers and Other Technology (CA & WI)

In New York State, teachers in high-risk schools are less likely to report that they have usable computers in their classrooms that allow students to access the Internet. In high-risk schools, only 38% of teachers report they have Internet access for students in their classrooms, far less than the 64% of teachers in low-risk schools. Furthermore, while just 5% of teachers in low-risk schools report that students in their school have no Internet access at all anywhere in their schools, nearly four times this percentage (19%) of teachers in high-risk schools report their students have no Internet access anywhere in their schools (Figure 16).

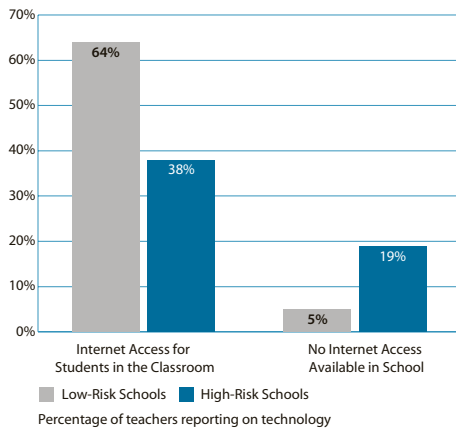
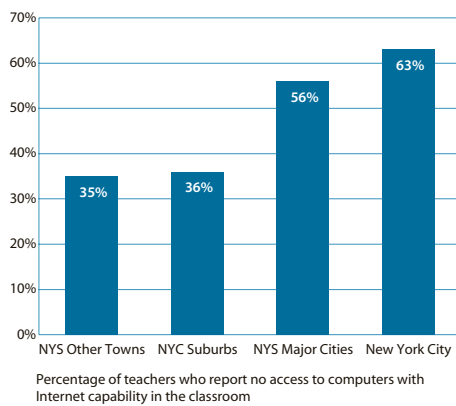


Figure 16: Inadequate Access to Computers and the Internet (NY)



The pattern of inequitable access to technology holds true in New York City and major cities upstate, when they are compared to technological and Internet access in New York City suburbs or in other upstate communities (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Inadequate Classroom Access to Computers and the Internet (NYS by Geographic Region)

The Bottom Line: Teachers have inequitable access to the kinds of instructional materials they need to do their jobs. Teachers in high-risk schools, clearly caring about what happens to their students, typically must reach deep into their own wallets to try to make up for what their classrooms lack.

C. Teachers in High-Risk Schools are More Likely to Report Inadequate Equipment and Materials for Science Lab Work

Similar results appeared when science teachers were asked about science resources. In the New York survey, 68% of science teachers in high-risk schools reported inadequate science equipment, compared to 27% of science teachers in low-risk schools (Figure 18). In Wisconsin, the gap was slightly smaller: 51% of science teachers in high-risk schools said they did not have enough equipment to do science lab work, compared to 33% who reported this problem in low-risk schools (Figure 18). The geographic breakdown in New York State puts the spotlight on urban areas. In New York City, 54% of science teachers in high-risk schools said they had a shortage of science equipment, closely followed by 50% of science teachers in high-risk schools in major cities upstate. In contrast, 35% of science teachers in other upstate schools reported this problem, and only 22% of science teachers in New York City suburbs considered this a problem (Figure 19).

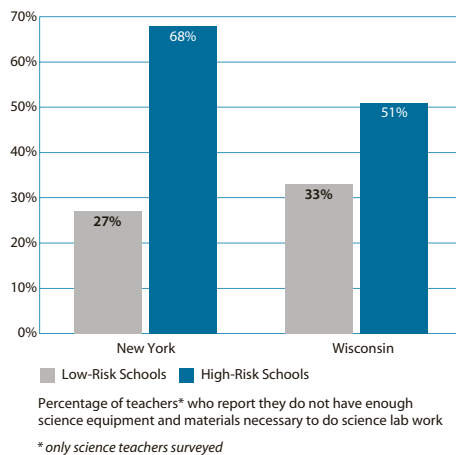


Figure 18: Inadequate Science Equipment and Materials (NY & WI)

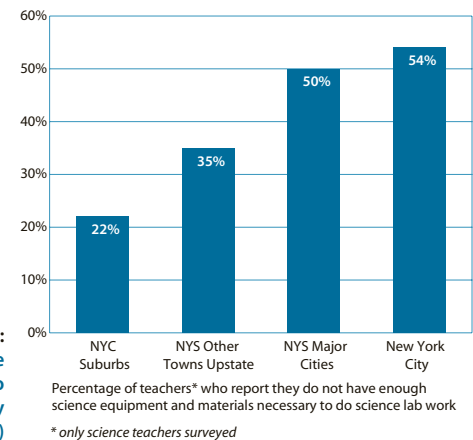


Figure 19: Inadequate Science Equipment to do Lab Work (NYS by Geographic Region)

D. Teachers Pay Twice: Poor Conditions Mean They Must Reach Into Their Own Pockets

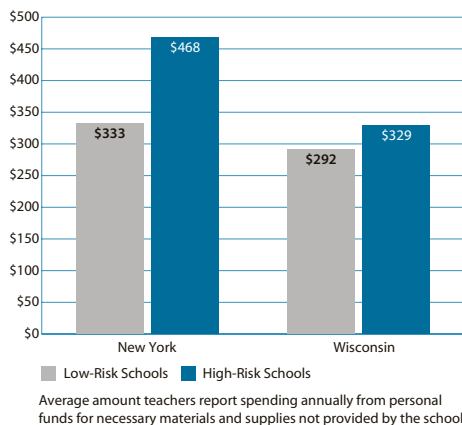


Figure 20: Teachers in High-Risk Schools Spend More (NY & WI)

Perhaps the most poignant fact of all is that the teachers in our schools are fighting to make up for the differences and gaps in teaching conditions by taking money from their own pockets. In order to acquire materials that their schools should furnish but do not, teachers in high-need schools use more of their own money than the better paid teachers in more advantaged schools. Specifically, in the New York and Wisconsin studies, teachers were asked about the average out-of-pocket amount they spend on school materials that would normally be provided by the local or state government. In the high-risk schools in New York, the annual out-of-pocket expenditure by teachers for school materials averaged \$468, compared to \$333 per year in low-risk schools (Figure 20). In Wisconsin, the disparity was between \$329 spent per year by teachers in high-risk schools, compared to \$292 a year spent by teachers in low-risk schools

(Figure 20).¹⁶ This gap (a 40% difference in NY and a 13% gap in Wisconsin) appeared despite the fact that teachers in high-risk schools rank close to the bottom in salaries, while teachers in low-risk schools rank near the top in salaries. Thus, teachers in high-risk schools are spending a greater proportion of their lower salaries to make up for shortages of school materials.

Telling The Story State-By-State

This analysis of findings across the three states paints a stark picture, a canvas full of gaps and inequities between high-risk and low-risk schools. The analysis in the following sections presents a snapshot of the conditions reported in each of the surveyed states.

California: Where “Minority” Students Are the Majority

The majority of California’s public school students now come from what used to be called “minority groups”: 61% of all students attending public schools are children of color, and 25% are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Will the education of California’s new majority guarantee that they graduate with the skills they need to compete in and contribute to the knowledge-based media, technology, and communications industries of today? Will California’s schools assure that the new majority is ready for productive employment that will sustain a healthy, expanding economy? Will these citizens be prepared adequately to engage in public debate and participate in our democratic institutions?

This report finds a troubling array of inadequate teaching and learning conditions that diminish the educational opportunity in schools that serve large numbers of new-majority students. These conditions place these students at a high risk of school failure, with potentially devastating economic and social consequences for the state’s future.

Certification Differences. Teachers in high-risk schools start from behind at the get-go. To begin with, the California teacher surveys suggest that as many as one in every five teachers entering the high risk schools is less than fully certified to teach. Almost half (48%) of teachers in high-risk schools report that 20% or more of the teachers in their schools are on an emergency permit, waiver, intern credential or pre-intern credential. Only 4% of teachers in the state’s low-risk schools report having so many teachers on any of these temporary credentials, a gap of 44% between the “haves” and the “have nots” in California’s public school system. With California now reporting teacher certification status on a school-by-school basis, the public can see how dramatically schools can vary in terms of qualified teachers.¹⁷

High Turnover Rates. Teachers in high-risk schools also struggle constantly with an extraordinarily high rate of teacher turnover, as many of their colleagues leave. The teachers left behind must cope with insurmountable challenges and extra work; the students are left with a passing parade of substitutes. Only 11% of teachers in low-risk schools report that high teacher turnover is a problem, but almost four times as many (43%) in high-risk schools say it is a problem. In only 8% of schools where the student body is primarily composed of non-Latino whites do teachers voice concern over teacher turnover.¹⁸ Teacher turnover problems also appear to be greater at higher grade levels. While statewide 22% of California teachers report that teacher turnover is a serious problem, the rate jumps to 24% in middle schools and 31% in high schools.¹⁹

Lower Parental Involvement. Perhaps it is not surprising that teachers in high-risk schools with high teacher turnover also report that parental involvement – long considered central to student success – is a problem. Fully 47% of teachers who say their schools do not have strong parental involvement also report a serious problem with teacher turnover.²⁰ Parents are unable to build a

The majority of California’s public school students now come from what used to be called “minority groups”

lasting relationship with teachers when the teachers in their schools are coming and going in a continual churn that destroys the chances of building supportive relationships and a sense of community to promote student learning. The constant change among their children's teachers makes it difficult for parents to discuss their children's academic progress, problems and successes.

Poor School Facilities. Inadequate working conditions add to the likelihood that teachers will leave. Almost half of the teachers in California's high-risk schools give their facilities a negative rating, but in low-risk schools, less than a quarter (22%) say physical conditions are a problem. Among teachers who say they want to leave their current school in three years or less, 37% cite the poor conditions of the physical plant as a major reason.²¹

It is easy to understand why these teachers are frustrated with the quality of their schools' physical facilities. Half of the California teachers who are dissatisfied with their physical facilities report evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats in their buildings. One quarter of the teachers in high-risk schools report that student bathrooms regularly are dirty or closed during the time students are attending class. These teachers in high-risk schools are also much more likely to be dissatisfied with the availability of technology, textbooks and other instructional materials. Overall, one in three teachers in high-risk schools reports that his or her working conditions are not good, that students do not have proper access to computers and other technological aids, or that textbooks and other instructional materials simply are not adequate.

Table 1, below, presents nine key dimensions where the size of the gaps between high-risk schools and low-risk schools is substantial.

Table 1:
California Teachers Report
Large Gaps Between Low-Risk
Schools and High-Risk Schools

Indicator	Statewide Average	Lowest Risk Schools	Highest Risk Schools	Gap Between High & Low-Risk Schools
Teachers reporting schools with 20% or more teachers non-credentialed	18%	4%	48%	44%
Teachers reporting turnover of teachers as a serious problem	22%	11%	43%	32%
Teachers reporting school does not involve parents adequately	20%	9%	35%	26%
Teachers reporting inadequate physical conditions in school	32%	22%	47%	25%
Teachers reporting negatively on working conditions	23%	16%	35%	19%
Teachers reporting technology not available	31%	25%	39%	14%
Teachers reporting evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats in school	27%	24%	38%	14%
Teachers reporting inadequate textbooks or instructional materials	17%	12%	26%	14%
Teachers reporting student bathrooms not working, closed or dirty	17%	12%	25%	13%

New York State: Location, Location, Location!

There is a saying in real estate that there are three things that matter in terms of home value: location, location, and location! It turns out that this may be true for schools as well. With this idea in mind, the Harris survey in New York State looked at teacher responses across two levels of variation: whether they taught in high-risk or low-risk schools, and whether these schools were located in New York City, New York City suburbs, major cities upstate, or other upstate locations that were not major urban areas.

Their findings are blunt: *“New York State has a two-tiered public school system: one for the more affluent, who enjoy the privileges of a relatively sound educational environment, and the other for the least privileged who suffer conditions that virtually foreclose their chances of learning.”*²² Furthermore, regional analysis leaves little doubt that the most favorable conditions exist in the suburbs of New York City, while the worst are centered in New York City itself, followed closely by those in major cities upstate.

Teacher Turnover. In New York State, 63% of teachers in high-risk schools say that teacher turnover is a serious problem, and 43% say their schools can’t fill long-term vacancies or must hire substitutes. But in the schools at the other end of the spectrum, those serving low numbers of at-risk students, only 17% of teachers report problems with high turnover, and only 18% say their schools can’t fill vacancies. The teacher turnover problem also varies greatly by region: 51% of teachers in New York City schools report high turnover, compared with 28% of teachers in major cities upstate, 22% of upstate, non-urban teachers, and only 16% of teachers in New York City suburbs.

Why are these teachers leaving? There is only a 10% gap between those who report that they themselves want to leave teaching in the next three years (31% of the teachers in high-risk schools vs. 21% in low-risk schools). However, retirement is more likely to be the reason for leaving low-risk schools (where 67% of those planning to leave intend to retire); while in high-risk schools, only 34% of those leaving are planning to retire. Over 75% of teachers planning to leave high-risk schools cite non-retirement reasons, with salary, lack of school leadership, class size/pupil load, lack of supplies and materials, or bad school facilities reported as reasons for leaving high-risk schools.²³ These factors are cited far less often as reasons for teachers planning to leave low-risk schools.

Teachers in low-risk schools are able to make a career commitment to teaching, because teaching conditions in their schools provide a quality opportunity for success. The exit at the end of a career is not an escape strategy for these teachers, but rather the capping of careers of professional service, with retirement at an appropriate age after meeting rewarding challenges. In high-risk schools, in contrast, few teachers last long enough to build a career that leads to retirement; negative school conditions drive teachers out of teaching in high-risk schools well before they have served long enough to consider retirement.

Testing and Teaching. The New York survey also asked teachers about the quality and usefulness of the tests they are required to administer. Statewide, New York teachers were slightly positive on the value and quality of state tests, but 79% overall still felt there was an excessive emphasis on testing that led students to spend more time on learning how to take tests instead of on learning how to think, solve problems or learn things useful for later in life.²⁴

Barriers to Student Testing Success. When asked about barriers to student success on statewide tests, the biggest gap existed on whether students had funds for private tutors. While 64% of teachers in high-risk schools saw this as a major barrier, only 16% of those in low-risk schools cited this barrier. This 48% gap, which was one of the highest recorded in these surveys,

New York State has a two-tiered public school system: one for the more affluent, who enjoy the privileges of a relatively sound educational environment, and the other for the least privileged who suffer conditions that virtually foreclose their chances of learning.

reflects the reality that students in wealthier schools have access to extra teaching resources that are not an option for students in poorer schools. But school conditions were also seen as substantial barriers to student preparation for tests: 67% of teachers in high-risk schools cited “lack of time to give individual help” as a major barrier, compared to 42% of those in low-risk schools who saw this as a problem.²⁵

By region, it was teachers from schools in major cities upstate who were most frustrated by lack of time to help students prepare for tests (69%), closely followed by 65% in New York City. These rates were much higher than rates reported by other upstate teachers (48%), and about double the percentage of teachers citing this problem in the New York City suburbs (33%). A similar barrier to student success on tests was that “classes are too large”: 66% of New York city teachers and 59% of teachers in major cities upstate rated this a major problem, compared with 38% of teachers upstate overall and 33% in New York suburban schools. Three other barriers with almost twice the impact in high-risk schools were “lack of qualified teachers to prepare students for exams” (cited by 70% of teachers in high-risk schools, compared to 37% in low-risk schools); “having no school funds to spend for test training” (35% in high-risk; 19% in low-risk schools); and “lack of proper preparation materials” (31% in high-risk; 19% in low-risk schools).²⁶

Taken together, these data suggest that at-risk students, who typically need the most help to prepare well for tests, face substantial barriers of limited resources when compared to their more affluent counterparts. The dice are loaded against these students, and it should come as little surprise that students in these schools continue to score lower on statewide tests than do their more privileged peers in other schools.

Tables 2 and 2a display indicators where the gaps between high and low-risk schools and across regions in New York State were substantial.

Indicator	Statewide Average	Lowest Risk Schools	Highest Risk Schools	Gap Between High & Low-Risk Schools
Teachers reporting children not prepared for school	52%	34%	85%	51%
Teachers reporting evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats	30%	15%	63%	48%
Teachers reporting excessive teacher turnover rates	32%	17%	63%	46%
Teachers reporting lack of equipment and materials for science lab work	39%	27%	68%	41%
Teachers reporting average yearly out-of-pocket expenditures for school materials	\$383	\$333	\$468	40%
Teachers reporting negative working conditions overall	30%	16%	52%	36%
Teachers reporting weak incentives to remain a teacher	57%	47%	80%	33%
Teachers reporting that cuts in available funds significantly undermine quality	21%	11%	39%	28%
Teachers reporting physical facilities inadequate	36%	26%	51%	25%
Teachers reporting inadequate school involvement of parents	26%	17%	41%	24%

Table 2:
New York State Teachers Report Large Gaps Between High-Risk and Low-Risk Schools

Indicator	NY City Schools	Schools in NY City Suburbs	Schools in Major Cities Upstate	Other Schools Upstate
Teachers reporting children not prepared for school	68%	29%	73%	48%
Teachers reporting evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats	54%	17%	24%	15%
Teachers reporting excessive teacher turnover rates	51%	16%	28%	22%
Teachers reporting lack of equipment and materials for science lab work	54%	22%	50%	35%
Teachers reporting average yearly out-of-pocket expenditures for school materials	\$437	\$359	\$421	\$349
Teachers reporting negative working conditions overall	48%	19%	28%	20%
Teachers reporting weak incentives to remain a teacher	76%	32%	63%	52%
Teachers reporting cuts in available funds significantly undermine quality teaching	32%	9%	31%	16%
Teachers reporting computers with internet access not available in classroom	63%	36%	56%	35%
Teachers reporting physical facilities inadequate	48%	28%	38%	29%
Teachers reporting inadequate school involvement of parents	35%	17%	43%	23%

Table 2a:
New York State Teachers Report
Gaps by Region

These data suggest that at-risk students, who typically need the most help to prepare well for tests, face substantial barriers of limited resources when compared to their more affluent counterparts. The dice are loaded against these students.

Wisconsin: All is Not Equal in Middle America

Wisconsin provides an important comparison to the New York and California surveys because it is demographically far more typical of the country than either California or New York, with their large numbers of ethnic and racial minorities. Yet the basic picture presented here is very much like what was found in the other two states.

It might be possible to suggest that our picture of a two-tiered education system is distorted by California and New York’s student demographics, where ethnic and racial “minorities” now constitute the majority. To test this argument, Harris conducted a third survey in Wisconsin, where the demographic composition of students is more typical of the nation as a whole. If the results found in Wisconsin – a state with lower numbers of racial or ethnic minority students – paralleled the patterns found in New York and California, it would be fair to conclude that the two-tiered education system is a national phenomenon, found even in states where the minority student population was smaller.

In fact, this is the case. The results found in Wisconsin do parallel the findings for California and New York. Although it is important to note that the gaps are generally less extreme, teachers in Wisconsin still report that high-risk students are clustered in inadequate schools with substandard teaching conditions. Indeed, there were 19 areas where there was a gap greater than 15 percentage points when reports from teachers in schools with large numbers of high-risk students (high-risk schools) were compared to those from teachers in schools with low numbers of at-risk students (low-risk schools) (Table 3).

Testing’s Impact. In Wisconsin, teachers were also asked about the fairness of tests required for all students, as well as barriers to student success on tests. The percentage of Wisconsin teachers overall who find the required state tests to be unfair to their students rises with the student grade level; nevertheless, at all grade levels, teachers in high-risk schools are far more likely to say they think the state tests are unfair to their students. As a group, 28% of third grade teachers statewide say the third grade test is not fair to their students. The gap between teachers in high-risk schools versus those in low-risk schools is the greatest at this

Indicator	Statewide Average	Lowest Risk Schools	Highest Risk Schools	Gap Between High & Low-Risk Schools
Teachers reporting state reading test not fair to 3rd grade students	28%	18%	56%	38%
Teachers reporting weak incentives to teach in schools with disadvantaged students	33%	26%	60%	34%
Teachers reporting state 4th grade test unfair to students	38%	31%	61%	30%
Teachers reporting evidence of cockroaches, mice and rats	13%	8%	35%	27%
Teachers reporting adequate numbers of novels and other books for students to use and to take home	81%	87%	60%	27%
Teachers reporting lack of qualified teachers to prepare students for tests as a barrier	34%	29%	56%	27%
Teachers reporting state 8th and 10th grade exams unfair to students	42%	36%	62%	26%
Teachers reporting teacher vacancies going unfilled or filled by substitute teachers	25%	21%	46%	25%
Teachers reporting poor quality and limited usefulness of required tests	45%	40%	62%	22%
Teachers reporting students required to learn algebra in 8th or 9th grade	51%	56%	36%	20%
Teachers reporting poor physical facilities in school	25%	21%	39%	18%
Teachers reporting not enough equipment in labs to do science work	37%	33%	51%	18%
Teachers reporting students not having money for private tutoring as a barrier to doing better on tests	60%	56%	73%	17%
Teachers reporting rate of teacher turnover a serious problem	26%	25%	41%	16%
Teachers reporting use of spaces not designed as classrooms for instruction	48%	44%	60%	16%
Teachers reporting inadequate quality of classroom management	10%	7%	23%	16%
Teachers reporting lack of equipment and materials to teach effectively	27%	24%	40%	16%

Table 3: Wisconsin Teachers Report Large Gaps Between High-Risk And Low-Risk Schools

level: 56% of teachers in high-risk schools say the third grade reading tests are unfair to their students, compared with only 18% of teachers in low-risk schools who voice this concern. Even more fourth grade teachers statewide (38%) are concerned about unfairness of the Wisconsin fourth grade tests, with teachers in high-risk schools almost twice as likely to call these tests unfair for their students than are their colleagues in low-risk schools (61% vs. 31%). And high school teachers are the most concerned group of teachers overall when asked about the fairness of required tests for their eighth and tenth grade students: 42% of high school teachers statewide say these tests are unfair, with twice as many teachers in high-risk schools registering this concern, compared to teachers in low-risk schools (62% vs. 36%) (Table 3).

Barriers to Student Testing Success. The reasons why so many teachers believed the tests are unfair can be found in the follow-up responses. The lack of qualified teachers was viewed by many as a barrier to preparing students for the tests they must take. When asked about barriers to student success on statewide tests, almost twice as many teachers in the high-risk schools (56% vs. 29% in low-risk schools) reported a lack of qualified teachers as a barrier. In the high-risk Wisconsin schools where the majority of students in the classroom were non-white, this barrier was even more marked: 63% of those teaching high-risk students, a majority of whom were nonwhite, said the lack of qualified teachers was a problem, as opposed to 29% of teachers with a majority of white students in low-risk schools.²⁷ In other words, many of these teachers are telling us that it is not the tests themselves, but the lack of capacity of the schools to prepare students for tests that is the problem.

Geographic Differences. Harris also broke down the Wisconsin findings across geographic regions, comparing the Milwaukee public schools to schools in Milwaukee’s suburbs, schools in mid-sized cities in Wisconsin, and schools in the state’s rural areas. The analysis showed some dimensions on which views were generally positive across the state, but in all cases, the ratings of teachers from Milwaukee were lower than the statewide average. This pattern is reflected in Table 3a.

As in the New York and California surveys, teacher survey results in Wisconsin suggest that far too many children at risk, no matter what their ethnic or racial background, are clustered in schools with environments and conditions which make it nearly impossible for the schools to provide even a modicum of quality education.

Indicator	Statewide Average	Milwaukee Schools	Milwaukee Suburban Schools	Mid-Size City Schools	Rural Schools
Teachers reporting high rate of teacher turnover	26%	45%	23%	30%	21%
Teachers reporting overcrowding of classroom	35%	52%	30%	39%	23%
Teachers reporting inadequate parental involvement in school	20%	35%	8%	26%	18%
Teachers reporting poor classroom management in school	10%	22%	5%	11%	9%
Teachers reporting inadequate technology	24%	35%	19%	25%	21%
Teachers reporting inadequate physical facilities	25%	36%	23%	28%	22%
Teachers reporting inadequate quality and usefulness of tests	45%	68%	41%	44%	41%
Teachers reporting weak incentives to teach in high-risk schools	33%	61%	26%	34%	28%

Table 3a:
Wisconsin Teachers Report Gaps That Vary By Region In The State

The results found in Wisconsin do parallel the findings for California and New York

Other Studies Shed Light On Gaps In The Two-Tiered Education System

This is not the first research study to document that inadequate working conditions in low income and minority schools can diminish teaching and learning opportunities.²⁸ In addition to the Harris surveys that NCTAF analyzed for this report, a 2003 survey by Public Agenda found that, while 56% of teachers nationwide gave their schools high ratings for having “an orderly, safe, and respectful school atmosphere,” just 35% of teachers in schools with a majority of African-American or Hispanic students said the school atmosphere was good, compared with 68% of teachers in schools with few minority students. The urban/suburban breakdown in this survey shows disparities as well: only 41% of teachers in urban schools described their school environments as very good, compared with 61% of those in suburban or rural areas.²⁹ A subsequent analysis of the Harris survey data for California confirmed that teacher turnover problems in low income and minority schools were more strongly influenced by school conditions and salary levels than by student characteristics.³⁰

In report after report, teachers are telling us that school conditions matter. As early as 1990, Rosenhotz and Simpson linked teacher turnover to teachers’ commitment to the workplace, as measured by teacher absenteeism, disaffection, and defection.³¹ More recently, others have begun to study how school architecture, the design and quality of buildings, affects teachers’ decisions to stay or flee. A survey of teachers in Washington, D.C., schools, funded by the Ford Foundation and the 21st Century School Fund, conducted in May and June 2002, found a host of school facility issues that affected teachers’ interest in remaining in teaching. In that study, teachers were asked about indoor air quality, thermal (temperature) control, light (both artificial and daylight), and noise levels. The quality of school facilities was found to be an important predictor of the teachers’ decisions to leave or stay in a school.³²

Two-thirds of teachers surveyed in Washington, D.C.’s predominantly urban schools reported poor indoor air quality in their schools. In a parallel study of Chicago teachers, over one-quarter reported asthma and respiratory problems, and an additional 16% reported problems such as sinus infections that might be related to the poor air quality in their schools. Similarly, despite numerous studies linking appropriate lighting with improved test scores and student achievement, 21% of teachers responding to the Washington survey reported that lighting in their schools was inadequate, and one in five said they couldn’t even see out of the windows in their classrooms! Almost 70% reported that their classrooms and hallways were so noisy that it affected their ability to teach. And in the Spring of 2004, environmental studies in Washington, D.C. were confirmed dangerously high lead levels in the drinking water that runs through school water fountains, a factor that has been linked to a range of cognitive and developmental problems in children.

After finding that the probability of teacher retention increased as the perceived quality of school facilities improved, the authors of the Ford Foundation/21st Century School Fund study offer a radical proposal – they suggest that:

...the benefits of facility improvement for retention can be equal to or even greater than those from pay increases. Furthermore, a major facilities improvement is likely to be a one-time expense, last for many years, and have alternative sources of state or federal funding available. It could thus be a more cost-effective teacher retention strategy than a permanent salary increase for teachers in the medium-to-long term.³³

Citing research on facilities in developing nations, where facilities improvement has been shown to offset low wages, the authors suggest that the investment in school facilities may be an equally compelling factor for change in the United States.³⁴ This conclusion is consistent with the nation’s largest national survey of teachers (conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics), which has shown that school conditions far outweigh pay as a source of dissatisfaction for teachers in high poverty, urban public schools.³⁵ The survey reports and the research studies are voluminous and complex, but the voice of teachers in high-risk schools comes through loud and clear – they are telling us that if we don’t improve conditions, we can’t pay them enough to teach in these schools.

A Two-Tiered Public School System Is Built On An Inadequate Allocation of Resources

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, 2001-2002, **rates the U.S. dead last among developed countries when it comes to the difference in the quality of schools available to rich vs. poor children.** The President's Commission on Education Resource Equity declared in 2001, "long-standing gaps in access to educational resources exist, including disparities based on race and ethnicity."³⁶ These economic reports are new, but the news is not. Thirty years ago, the Presidential Commission on School Finance found that disparities in educational resource distribution among public school districts resulted from a reliance on local district financing for educational revenues. Since that time, there have been lawsuits in forty-five states targeted at remedies for unequal and inadequate funding of public schools. It is likely that the "most powerful policy stimulus, at least for the foreseeable future, is that the judicial system is beginning to take state constitutions at their word."³⁷

In 1971, the California Supreme Court ruled that education was a fundamental constitutional right, and, in 1976, the same court affirmed a lower court's finding "that wealth-related disparities in per-pupil spending generated by the state's education finance system violated the equal protection clause of the California constitution."³⁸ The Advocacy Center for Children's Educational Success with Standards (ACCESS) reports further that, in May 1999, several California organizations filed a class-action "adequacy lawsuit – *Williams vs. State* – which cites deplorable conditions in school districts across the state, and ask[ed] the court to require the state to ensure the provision of certain educational basics, such as qualified teachers, safe facilities, and textbooks."³⁹ Although this case has not yet been settled, in September 2002, the State adopted a law establishing the California Quality Education Commission to develop a model for pre-K through grade 12 that would determine the "educational components, educational resources, and corresponding costs 'necessary' so that the vast majority of pupils can meet [state] academic standards." The court held that a sound basic education "consists of the skills that students need to become productive citizens capable of civic engagement and sustaining competitive employment."⁴⁰

In New York State, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. (CFE), filed a constitutional challenge in 1993 on the grounds of an inequitable education finance system. According to the CFE report, each year the state spends over \$25 billion to educate its three million students. The 711 localities contribute about 55% of all school funds; the state pays 40%; and the federal government pays 4%. CFE reports that "the state aid 'formula' is actually a haphazard collection of 48 different formulas, funding streams, caps and hold-harmless provisions."⁴¹ In 1996-7, low-wealth districts in the state spent \$6,681 per pupil, while high-wealth districts spent \$12,752. For the last 15 years, New York City's per-pupil expenditures have lagged behind the state average, despite the fact that New York City schools have over 80% of the state's LEP students, and 62% of its students are impoverished.

In 1999, New York ranked 48th in equity in spending per pupil among districts, according to *Education Week*.⁴² A survey by CFE of a random selection of one out of every two schools in New York City's five boroughs revealed that conditions in New York City's schools "deprive students of their constitutional right to the opportunity for a sound basic education."⁴³ New York City also has among the lowest teacher salaries in the state: teachers in New York City earned almost

A sound basic education "consists of the skills that students need to become productive citizens capable of civic engagement and sustaining competitive employment."

\$2,000 below the state average, and nearly \$20,000 less than the average downstate suburban teacher, according to a 1998 report.⁴⁴

On January 10, 2001, the New York Supreme Court ruled that “New York State has over the course of many years consistently violated the State Constitution by failing to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education to New York City public school students.”⁴⁵ The court ordered that, to ensure that public schools offer a sound basic education, “the state must take steps to ensure at least the following resources: qualified teachers, principals and other personnel; appropriate class sizes; adequate and accessible school buildings; sufficient and up-to-date books, supplies, libraries, and educational technology; suitable curricula; adequate resources for special needs; and a safe orderly environment.”⁴⁶

Following the court’s ruling, the New York State legislature is responsible for creating and implementing a comprehensive reform of the state school funding system. Governor Pataki has appointed a special Commission on Education Reform to make recommendations by July 30, 2004 (the Commission requested more time to do so, though on March 30, 2004, they published their recommendations to the Governor). CFE also assembled its own Sound Basic Education Task Force that is developing an “Adequate Foundation for All Plan” and is assembling a “Costing-Out Study” of an adequate education with the New York State School Boards Association, called “New York Adequacy Study Preliminary Report.” The implementation of the Court’s decision is overseen by New York State Supreme Court Justice Leland DeGrasse, who issued the ruling in the case.

Although there is no current adequacy suit in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s “most recent decision...holds the state accountable for ensuring schooling that ‘will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally.’ The court specifies that the purpose of an adequacy criterion is to ‘adopt a standard that will equalize outcomes, not merely inputs.’”⁴⁷

The information on school conditions in this report is focused on data from California, New York State, and Wisconsin; nonetheless, the question of school adequacy is a civil rights concern in every region of the country. In January 2001, the outgoing U.S. Secretary of Education wrote to every state, encouraging them to examine the adequacy of educational resources available in low income and minority communities:

... I am concerned about long standing racial and ethnic disparities in the distribution of education resources, including gaps in access to experienced and qualified teachers, adequate facilities, and instructional programs and support, including technology, as well as gaps in the funding necessary to secure these resources.... These resource gaps are likely to be particularly acute in high-poverty schools, including urban schools, where many students of color are isolated and where the effect of the resource gaps may be cumulative. In other words, students who need the most may often receive the least, and these students often are students of color.”⁴⁸

The question of school adequacy is a civil rights concern in every region of the country.

Leaving Students Behind In Factory-Era Schools

Inadequate conditions in high-risk schools clearly deprive children of their most basic civil right: an equal opportunity to learn. But these conditions also have serious implications for the economic and social health of the country. In a 21st Century economy, many low income students are attending 19th Century schools. Designed to meet the needs of an earlier time, these factory-era schools served as a sorting mechanism for America's industrial economy. In the first half of the last century, those who did not complete high school could earn an adequate income to support a family through good jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, forestry and mining. Today, that is no longer possible. Technology has automated much of the work of factories, farms and businesses, leaving fewer jobs for those with a limited education, and increasing the demand for higher skill levels among all workers. During the last decade, the percentage of jobs requiring an education beyond high school jumped from 65% to 85%.⁴⁹

To succeed in today's economy, every student must graduate ready for college, ready for productive work in a knowledge-based economy, and well prepared for effective citizenship in a diverse society.⁵⁰ Students who drop out of school without the necessary knowledge and skills to compete in today's economy have few good options. High school drop-outs are typically employed in low-wage positions with limited health care or pension benefits. Dropping out is strongly correlated with welfare dependency and incarceration: over the last decade, the nation's prison population has tripled, with the largest increases among school drop-outs – more than 50% of inmates are functionally illiterate.⁵¹

On a personal level, the student dropout rate is a tragedy, but the consequences for the nation's economy are just as grave. Today our national GNP is based on our GIP – Gross Intellectual Product – the brainpower and creative genius needed to drive media, biotechnology, electronics, and other knowledge industries yet to be dreamed. The future of America's economy will be heavily dependent on the educational success of racial and ethnic populations that were once called "minority groups." In his January 2001, New York school adequacy decision, Justice DeGrasse "rejected as insufficient for the 21st Century a conventional state constitutional standard of 'basic literacy,'" and specified instead the necessity of schooling for "productive" citizenship – not just voting or sitting on a jury, but doing so capably and knowledgeably. The judge went on to charge schools with closing "the disconnect between the skills of the state's and city's labor force and the skills of the high-technology sector."⁵²

In 1990, non-Latino white citizens made up 74% of the U.S. population, but by the 2000 Census, this figure had dropped to 60%. The number of racial minorities rose from 26% to 40% in this ten-year span.⁵³ The public schools are on the leading edge of this population shift. In California, 61% of public school students come from what were once considered minority groups, and, in the state as a whole, whites have become the new minority. In New York State, the minority/majority scale is just at the tipping point: whites, excluding Latinos, now make up only 51% of the public school population. By the 2010 U.S. Census, a majority of New York's student population is likely to be made up of "minority groups."⁵⁴ Wisconsin has a relatively small percentage of its public school enrollment drawn from racial and ethnic minorities across the state as a whole (20%), but in Milwaukee, the largest population center in the state, minority groups make up 85% of the school-age population.⁵⁵

This changing demographic picture is a legacy of the nation's vibrant multiethnic heritage. Our economy and culture thrive on the rich backgrounds, experiences, and contributions of the ethnic

In a 21st Century economy, many low income students are attending 19th Century schools.

and racial groups that make the United States a nation of nations. But today, America's ethnic and racial minorities are faring poorly in our two-tiered education system. In state after state, we find alarming gaps in school graduation rates. In its recent report on dropout trends in the fifty states, the Urban Institute found disturbing graduation rates for black and Hispanic students compared to their white counterparts in California, New York, and Wisconsin.⁵⁶

State	Graduation Rate: Black Students	Graduation Rate: Hispanic Students	Graduation Rate: White Students	White/Black Gap	White/Hispanic Gap
California	55.3	57.0	75.7	20.4	18.7
New York	35.1	31.9	75.3	40.2	43.4
Wisconsin	46.6	54.4	82.4	41.3	20.8

Table 4:
High School Completion Gaps

If our nation continues to consign its ethnic minority students to high-risk schools with inadequate teaching and learning conditions, it risks writing off what is becoming the majority of the student population in many areas of the country. In a global information economy, we cannot afford to leave a single child behind; to do so would be to jeopardize the development of America's future human capital. The Harris study reminds us:

The nation's ethnic and racial minorities are faring poorly in our two-tiered education system.

The challenge...is to know how well or how poorly this emerging majority is being educated. The stakes are enormously high. If the children of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other racial and ethnic groups are as equally well educated as their more affluent white counterparts, the outlook for the future of ... the nation is bright and positive. We will know that the future labor force ... will be well educated to fill labor market demands for skilled, informed workers who can compete with any country on earth. We will also know that a new majority of former minority children will have incomes commensurate with sophisticated jobs providing the basis for economic growth that will be the envy of the rest of the world. They will be well-rounded citizens, aware of America's positive attributes, and possessed with a self-interest in the country's survival. There is, however, another possible script, one full of foreboding for ... the nation. If the children of minorities and lower income families are not receiving a quality education, the ... nation will have a work force that cannot fill the jobs of the future. Moreover, American consumer demand, so dependent on the workforce earning relatively high salaries and wages, will take a nosedive. The economy will spiral downward and the ... nation will be in the deepest kind of trouble.⁵⁷

Recommendations

To realize the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, we must provide every teacher and every child in America with 21st Century schools where teaching and learning can thrive. We make the following recommendations to achieve that goal.

1 Acknowledge unequal and inadequate school conditions, and marshal the political will to seek solutions.

This report paints a grim picture of inequities that deny the civil rights of our most vulnerable citizens. The nation's education leaders will not like what they see in this report – but this picture will not change until we acknowledge these conditions and summon the political will to put things right.

The Learning First Alliance has demonstrated that the courage to acknowledge negative information is the first step toward building the will to change.⁵⁸ In its study of five high-poverty school districts that have exhibited sustained improvements in student achievement, the Alliance found that the leaders of these districts were able to build the political will for reform by following four steps that we recommend here.⁵⁹ We reiterate the importance of these steps. To realize the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, federal, state, and local leaders must:

- ▲ Publicly acknowledge that teaching and learning opportunities in high-risk schools are inadequate and unacceptable;
- ▲ Accept responsibility for the problem;
- ▲ Clearly establish that all stakeholders must be part of the solution;
- ▲ Commit to long-term improvements and innovations, and sustain these efforts even if they do not show immediate results.

We call upon the Governors and other leading policymakers in every state to convene the business and education leadership in their states to publicize this report, discuss its implications in their states, and implement a plan to act upon its recommendations.

2 Listen to the teachers and the students.

In many communities, the gap between the schools we have and the schools we need is great. Teachers and students are telling us that their schools are inadequate as they walk away from their classrooms, closing the door behind them, never to return. With dropout rates that can exceed 50%, they are telling us that teaching and learning conditions in their schools are impossible. It is time to listen to the teachers and students. Exit interviews and surveys can tell us why so many leave, but equally important is establishing continuing community conversations to learn from teachers, students and parents about what needs to be improved. It is time to listen, and to act upon what we know to be true.

Publicly acknowledge that teaching and learning opportunities in high-risk schools are inadequate and unacceptable.

We are wedded to public schools of the past.

③ Establish school standards that can sustain quality teaching and learning for every child.

As a nation, we have set a challenge for our public schools that they were never designed to meet. We are calling on our teachers to **educate every child** to high standards – the standards of an information-age economy – but in too many cases, we are asking them to do this with factory-era methods and tools. We are wedded to public schools of the past.

In the 21st Century, we need public schools that enable teachers to act on what research tells us about how children learn so that every student has an opportunity to succeed. To ensure that our schools offer a sound education for each child, **every school** should provide the following resources:

- ▲ Highly qualified teachers, principals, and other personnel;
- ▲ Appropriate class sizes;
- ▲ Adequate and accessible school buildings – sound facilities with sufficient space to ensure appropriate class size and implementation of a curriculum that meets high standards;
- ▲ Sufficient and current books, supplies, equipment, and other educational materials for use in class and after school;
- ▲ Up-to-date information technologies of all kinds, including computers with high speed Internet access, in adequate numbers in every classroom;
- ▲ A curriculum that meets high standards, with a portfolio of options and tools that enable teachers to adapt instruction and learning activities to student needs;
- ▲ Multiple measures of student performance, supported by teacher training, instructional strategies, and sufficient resources to meet state standards;
- ▲ Adequate resources for students with exceptional needs; and
- ▲ A safe, orderly, clean and well maintained environment.

④ Establish funding adequacy formulas based on per-pupil needs in lieu of traditional per-pupil averages.

The essential school finance task is to determine the actual cost of providing a sound education for every child in each district and school. School financing policies should be based on an analysis of what it will cost to raise the bar and close the gap in specific areas of student achievement – bringing the teaching and learning conditions in all schools up to a high standard. Funding formulas based on the average per-pupil expenditure for students in a district can mask funding inequities between schools in low income and high-income neighborhoods.⁶⁰ School adequacy funding formulas should reflect what is required to help all students meet high standards, and they should be based on what is necessary to meet the student learning needs within each school.

Basing district and school budgets on student learning needs is neither novel nor radical. The Committee for Economic Development (CED), a non-partisan research and policy organization of 250 business leaders and educators, recommends decentralizing spending authority via student-based budgets. The CED notes that “while principals and other school-level educators are now being held accountable for improving the performance of their students, these individuals generally have little or no control over how their school’s resources are spent. Their accountability is undermined when authority over spending decisions lies elsewhere.”⁶¹

Canada’s city of Edmonton, Alberta, began moving to a decentralized spending authority in 1973, and it now has 90% of its school budgets under the control of the principal.⁶² Based on this

experience, Cincinnati, Houston, Milwaukee, Sacramento, and Seattle are experimenting with giving schools control over their budgets. When teachers in schools become part of leadership teams making decisions about how to allocate funds, the alignment of resources with student learning needs can become even stronger.

Following the parameters outlined by Justice De Grasse in *CFE v. State of New York*, school finance reforms at the state and district level should:

- ▲ Ensure that every school district, and every school within each district, has the resources necessary to provide a sound education;
- ▲ Take into account variations in local costs between districts and schools;
- ▲ Provide sustained and stable funding that promotes long-term planning by districts and schools;
- ▲ Provide as much transparency as possible, so that the public understands how the State and district distribute school funds; and
- ▲ Ensure a system of public accountability to measure whether the allocation of funds provides an opportunity for a sound education for each child, with particular attention given to the question of whether inequitable distributions result from socio-economic background or racial isolation of students.⁶³

5 Collect, analyze and use better data for better decision making, and publicly report on the relationship between school conditions and student performance.

It is unacceptable to hold students and teachers accountable for standards that their schools are not equipped to help them meet. It is time to align standards with data collection systems that measure the extent to which states and districts provide their teachers and students with adequate opportunities to teach and learn. As funding allocations become more adequate, it also will become essential to closely monitor districts and schools to make sure they deliver results.

Technology makes it possible to collect better data, more easily. The power of this data is lost, however, when it is not used well. Under *No Child Left Behind* and its requirements for documenting annual yearly progress, most schools today are “awash in data” – the real challenge is “turning data into knowledge and knowledge into wise action.”⁶⁴

Smart decision making and an adequate allocation of resources at all levels means knowing what a school has to work with in terms of human, physical and financial capital, and comparing this data with school completion and student learning outcomes to see where gaps exist. It means collecting data that includes, but goes far beyond, information on the race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and academic achievement of students. What is needed, in addition, are data on important characteristics of the principal and teaching staff: training, certification, years serving in that school, and their beliefs about student potential, strengths and needs. Publicly available data should be reported on each school’s teacher attrition and turnover rates, including information on why teachers leave, where teachers go, and what it costs the school each time a teacher walks out the door. School data should be available on the quality of physical facilities, instructional resources, and access to modern technologies. And data on community resources – commitments from parents, community and business leaders – should complete the picture of the physical, intellectual and social capital that are available to support teaching and learning in a school.

It is unacceptable to hold students and teachers accountable for standards that their schools are not equipped to help them meet.

6 Hire well qualified teachers and principals, support them with strong professional communities, and reward them well.

None but the best should be encouraged to become teachers and school leaders. Every preparation program should set and maintain high standards for entry, completion and performance of their graduates. Certification systems should ensure that these standards are met. Good preparation pays off. Research consistently shows that teachers who are better prepared to teach – not just those who know *what* to teach, but those who know *how to teach it well* – will stick with teaching at a rate that can be twice as high as those who have not had this preparation.⁶⁵ Every teacher also needs solid skills for responding to the diversity of students they will work with in today's schools, including students from a wide range of socioeconomic, ethnic or racial backgrounds, students whose first language may not be English, and students with special learning needs.

Once we have hired the best teachers and principals available, we need to support their efforts to build strong professional communities in schools that can sustain them as they work with their students in a shared quest for excellence. An extensive body of research suggests that creating smaller, more personal school environments that are learner-centered can improve academic achievement and social outcomes for students, and increases teacher and parental engagement with the learning enterprise.⁶⁶ Data show that teachers are attracted to schools that have strong professional learning communities, and that the sense of shared responsibility in these schools translates into a greater sense of professional empowerment for improvement.

Hiring well prepared teachers is critical, but it is also essential to give them a strong start once they are in the school. It is time to end the sink-or-swim practice of placing the most inexperienced teachers in the most challenging schools and expecting them to cope on their own – this is a recipe for disaster. New teachers need seasoning and time to master their craft; they should have a support network of mentors and a community of colleagues to work with. This means giving them collegial support, strong induction programs, and ready access to resources and assistance on an as-needed basis. High-need schools will always be “high-need” if they are staffed by the most inexperienced teachers left to fend for themselves.

It is equally essential to develop compensation systems and staffing plans that address the needs of at-risk schools. Districts should create incentives that attract strong principals and teams of promising and accomplished teachers to work in the high-risk schools where they are needed most. New staffing plans and salary systems should support and reward these teams whose mission is to turn around low-performing schools. It is our obligation to bring the best teaching and school leadership to the students who need it most.

It is our obligation to bring the best teaching and school leadership to the students who need it most.

7 Hold officials publicly accountable for keeping the promise of educational equity.

A basic determinant of our success in realizing the dream of *Brown v. Board of Education* has become clear – we must have strong lines and structures of accountability for quality teaching in schools organized for success. Until now most of the high-stakes consequences for meeting state standards have fallen on our children. To ensure that every child has equal access to a quality public education, it is time to establish a chain of accountability – a shared commitment to school quality that links educators, community leaders, and elected officials who have a common responsibility for ensuring that every school provides an equal opportunity for successful teaching and learning. Everyone who has a stake in the quality of our schools must become a strong link in the chain. Adequate resources and rewards for performance should be tied to a reciprocal obligation to remove teachers, principals, and school leaders who are not performing adequately. In this era of accountability, our education leaders and publicly elected officials at every level also should be judged by their commitment to ending two-tiered public education systems.

A Concluding Comment

As a nation, we have called on our teachers and students to meet demanding standards. We must now give them the schools they need to succeed.

It is our hope that this report will serve as a wake-up call, shining a spotlight on the inadequacy of public schools in low income neighborhoods and minority communities. We know that public schools can work, and that in many communities they are providing a world-class education. But we cannot be content as long as so many teachers and students are struggling in schools with unacceptable teaching and learning conditions. These inequitable conditions must be addressed to deliver on the promise made a half-century ago in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Our children cannot wait. They are, after all, the ones who will create America's future. We have made progress on setting high standards for student achievement, but until now, most of the high-stakes consequences for failing to meet those standards have fallen on the shoulders of our children. It is unfair and unjust to expect students to meet expectations that their schools are not equipped to help them meet.

To put things right, we must form a strong chain of support that can overcome finger pointing and top-down mandates. We must acknowledge that unequal and inadequate school conditions exist and marshal the political will to seek solutions. We must establish school standards that can sustain quality teaching and learning for every child, and we must implement these standards with adequate funding. Because we all have a stake in quality teaching and learning – for every child – we must all be accountable for creating the best teaching and learning opportunities in every school. For that, in the final analysis, is what is at stake. We are betting the future of this country on the quality of our teachers and schools. The shape of that future is ours to decide.

**Our children
cannot wait. They
are the ones who
will create
America's future.**



Methodology

Three series of in-depth telephone interviews with public school teachers were conducted in California (January 2-23, 2002), New York State (March 10-April 12, 2002), and Wisconsin (October 14-November 9, 2002), by the Peter Harris Research Group for Lou Harris.⁶⁷ In each state, an “Index of Risk” was created based on the percentage of students in each school who were receiving free or reduced-price lunches, the number of students who could be classified as a racial or ethnic minority, and the socioeconomic distribution of the students in each school.⁶⁸ A score was calculated for each school by measuring the percentage point distance of that school from the statewide norm, either plus or minus. Then, the aggregated percentage score for each school was calculated on a low-to-high basis on the Index of Risk.

The key comparison in the study is between the 51% of schools in each state survey that scored lowest on the Index of Risk (called “low-risk schools” in this analysis), and the 20% of schools with the highest numbers of at-risk students (called “high-risk schools”). To capture differences that also might be of interest based on variations in the ethnic and racial composition of student populations across geographic areas, analyses by school location were also done in the New York and Wisconsin studies. In New York, data were analyzed by whether the schools from which teachers were interviewed were located in New York City, the New York City suburbs, the major cities in “Upstate New York,” and “Upstate New York” overall. For Wisconsin, these analyses looked at schools in the city of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee suburbs, mid-size cities across the state, and rural areas.

Teachers were reached at their homes in telephone interviews conducted by the Peter Harris Research Group. Up to six attempts were made to reach each respondent. The numbers of calls and completed interviews were as follows:

- ▲ California: 5,525 attempts, with 1,071 completed interviews
- ▲ New York: 7,401 attempts, with 1,009 completed interviews
- ▲ Wisconsin: 5,993 attempts, with 1,256 completed interviews

The survey questions asked in each state are found in the full reports for each state study located at www.nctaf.org.

Endnotes

- ¹ Since the 1980s, Louis Harris has conducted annual surveys of public school teachers.
- ² Louis Harris. *If You Want to Know About the Schools, Ask the Teachers: A Survey of the Status of Public Education in New York State*. Prepared for Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (July 2002), p 37.
- ³ Louis Harris. *If You Want to Know About the Schools, Ask the Teachers: A Survey of the Status of Public Education in New York State* (September 2002), p. viii.
- ⁴ Craig Jerald. *Dispelling the Myth Revisited: Preliminary Findings from a Nationwide Analysis of "High-Flying" Schools*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust, Inc., 2001.
- ⁵ See, for example, U.S. Department of Education. *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools*. Washington, DC: Author, December 1999. <<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/urbanhope.execsumm.html>>. Also, R. Rothman. "Closing the Achievement Gap: How Schools are Making It Happen." *The Journal of the Annenberg Challenge* 5.2, (Winter 2001/02). <http://www.annenbergchallenge.org/pubs/cj/gap_cj.htm>. Also, Council for Basic Education, *Closing the Gap: A Report on the Wingspread Conference*. Washington DC: Author, 2000. And, National Center for Educational Accountability. Best Practices Framework. <<http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/index.cfm>>.
- ⁶ Assistance with sampling, interviewing, and computer tabulations was provided by Peter Harris Research Group. Dr. Mildred Hudson of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., also assisted with the study design.
- ⁷ Harris, New York survey (July 2002), p.20.
- ⁸ There were 1,071 completed interviews in California and 1,009 completed interviews in New York State.
- ⁹ There were 1,256 completed interviews in Wisconsin.
- ¹⁰ Harris. New York survey (September 2002), p. 5.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ¹² Louis Harris. *If You Want to Know About the Schools, Ask the Teachers: A Survey of the Status of Public Education in California*. September 2002, p. 8.
- ¹³ William I. Sanders. *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research & Assessment Center, 1996. See also, Jeff Archer. "Students' Fortunes Rest with Assigned Teacher." *Education Week* (February 18, 1998). <<http://www.edweek.org/>>.
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