Welcome to the Southeastern North Carolina Dropout Prevention Newsletter. We highlight dropout prevention activities and accomplishments in the region, as well as local and national events, resources, funding and research. Please send us your stories, highlights, accomplishments and upcoming events.

In the fourth year of the state's A-F grading system, the percentage of A or B schools (35.8 percent) continued to climb and the percentage of D and F schools (22.6 percent) fell compared to the 2015-16 school year, according to school accountability data released today to the State Board of Education. In addition, the state's four-year high school cohort graduation rate continued its upward trend, moving to 86.5 percent from the 85.9 percent figure from the 2015-16 school year. North Carolina's public schools have set a record graduation rate for a 12th consecutive year.

School Performance Grades are based 80 percent on the school's achievement score and 20 percent on students' academic growth. The only exception to this is if a school meets expected growth but inclusion of the school's growth reduces the school's performance score and grade. A majority (56.5 percent) of the state's high schools earned a grade of B or better.

Growth data for the 2,531 schools rated showed little change from the previous year, with the percentage of schools meeting or exceeding growth targets changing from 73.6 percent in 2015-16 to 73.7 percent in 2016-17. The proportion of schools not meeting growth dropped slightly as well. Growth is measured by a statistical model that compares each student's predicted test score, based on past performance, against his or her actual result.

"It's great news that the top-line trends are in the right direction. We can all be proud, for instance, that most schools meet or exceed growth," said Mark Johnson, state superintendent of public schools. "But deeper into the data, the results show stubborn concerns that call out for innovative approaches. It is with innovation and personalized learning that we can transform incremental progress into generalized success."

### North Carolina Graduation Rates All-Time High

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<th>2010-11 Grad Rates %</th>
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Data demonstrated improvements to outdoor skills, self actualization and esteem, leadership, environmental stewardship and civic responsibility.

Group seeks to empower students through outdoor education

Check out this video about Education Without Walls!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QPJ8bwe6Wc&feature=youtu.be

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The GradNation Action Platform

The GradNation Action Platform identifies the six areas that every community should act on to accelerate high school graduation rate improvements. These are not one-shot, silver bullet focus areas. In fact, a comprehensive approach—one that addresses three to six of these platform areas—is probably required in most places.

These six platform areas are based on the collective experience and expertise of individuals at organizations engaged with young people across the country, the experience of young people themselves, and our own research. The platform areas are a statement of best practice—they are what has been demonstrated to work to improve graduation outcomes for young people.

High Quality Data: Use High Quality Data to monitor cohort progress, identify struggling students, inform effective interventions, and provide accountability for overall progress. Learn More

Non-Academic Factors: Respond to the non-academic factors that influence school participation and performance. Learn More

School Climate: Improve school climate by promoting a sense of caring and connection between students and in-school staff through disciplinary practices and policies that are inclusive and ensure students stay in school through to graduation. Learn More

Caring Adult Relationships: Increase the number and quality of caring adult relationships in students’ lives. Learn More

Youth Re-Engagement: Re-engage young people who have left school by providing accessible and effective options for completing high school prepared for success in college and/or career. Learn More

Pathways: Connect the high school experience with pathways to postsecondary education, workforce readiness and participation, and overall adult success. Learn More

The 2017 GradNation Report

This year signifies two key milestones in the GradNation campaign to raise high school graduation rates. First, the release of the 2015 federal graduation rate data marks five years since states began reporting graduation rates with a common formula, the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). Second, there are now just five years of federal data reporting between now and the culmination of the GradNation goal to raise high school graduation rates to 90 percent by the Class of 2020.

At 83.2 percent, the national graduation rate is at an all-time high. All told, 2.8 million more students have graduated from high school since 2001, resulting in significant benefits for young people, the economy, and the nation.

There are now roughly 1,000 large, low-graduation-rate high schools, and less than 900,000 students attending them—down from more than 2,000 such schools and 2.5 million students enrolled in them in 2002. Most notably, low-income students made up nearly half of the class of 2015.

The nation must double its pace of progress over the next five years to reach the 90 percent goal by 2020. For many states, progress has stagnated, often due to specific student subgroups that these states continue to leave behind. Low-income students, students with disabilities, Black and Hispanic/Latino students, and English Language Learners continue to graduate at lower rates than their peers.

The Dropout Prevention Coalition is a co-sponsor!

Call for Proposals until November 15! Full descriptions and proposal forms are available at:
One Black Teacher Can Improve Outcomes for Black Students
By Lauren Camera

Having at least one black teacher in elementary school significantly increases the chances that low-income black students graduate high school and consider attending college – and, for poor black boys, it decreases the risk of dropping out by nearly 40 percent.

The finding, from the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, headlined a study released looking at the long-term impact of students taught by teachers of the same race.

The researchers studied approximately 100,000 black students who enrolled in third grade in North Carolina’s public schools between 2001 and 2005 and found that the risk of dropping out for black students decreased by 29 percent if they had at least one black teacher in third through fifth grades. And for persistently low-income black boys, the risk decreased by 39 percent.

Among that cohort of students, about 13 percent ended up dropping out of high school, while about half graduated but with no plans to pursue college. However, low-income black students who had one black teacher were 18 percent more likely to express interest in college when they graduated, and persistently low-income black boys were 29 percent more likely to say they were considering college.

"We think it's an eye-popping result," says Nicholas Papageorge, assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University and one of the co-authors of the research paper.

Papageorge cautions that the result could be reframed by saying that the impact is simply a 9 percent increase in high school graduation for black students who had a black teacher.

"Even so," he says, "39 percent is massive, and we did all the things one would do to make sure the findings are robust."

Indeed, the researchers replicated their findings by looking at black students in Tennessee who entered kindergarten in the late 1980s and found that students who had at least one black teacher in kindergarten through grade three were 15 percent less likely to drop out.


Why have thousands of smart, low-income NC students been excluded from advanced classes?
By Joseph Neff, Ann Doss Helms and David Raynor

About this time every year, roughly 5,000 North Carolina 8-year-olds show they’re ready to shine. Despite the obstacles of poverty that hobble so many of their classmates, these third graders from low-income families take their first state exams and score at the top level in math.

With a proper push and support at school, these children could become scientists, engineers and innovators. They offer hope for lifting families out of poverty and making the state more competitive in a high-tech world.

But many of them aren’t getting that opportunity, an investigation by The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer reveals. Thousands of low-income children who get “superior” marks on end-of-grade tests aren’t getting an equal shot at advanced classes designed to challenge gifted students.

As they start fourth grade, bright children from low-income families are much more likely to be excluded from the more rigorous classes than their peers from families with higher incomes, the analysis shows. The unequal treatment during the six years ending in 2015 resulted in 9,000 low-income children in North Carolina being counted out of classes that could have opened a new academic world to them.

This occurs in school districts across the state, in rural and urban areas, including the Triangle, which a recent Harvard study ranked as near the bottom of the country in economic mobility, the measure of how difficult it is for children from low-income households to climb out of poverty.

Updates from CIS Cape Fear

2016-2017 Program Results

At Communities In Schools of Cape Fear, we work directly inside public schools, helping vulnerable students and those with the greatest risk of dropping out. Each year, we empower more than 1,000 students to stay in school and on the path to graduation. Our trained staff accomplish this by being on campus at targeted schools all day, every day; partnering with administration and teachers, mobilizing the community to offer students extra support, and doing whatever it takes to help them succeed. Our unique model works because it’s based on national research, driven by community relationships and supported by local resources.

During the 2016-2017 school year, we served a total of 10,086 students, and provided case-managed support to 943. Of those:

- 92% graduated;
- 97% stayed in school;
- 96% improved academically;
- 81% improved their attendance; and
- 86% improved behavior.

Other program highlights include:

- Stuff The Bus collected more than $75,000 in supplies and donations;
- 739 volunteers provided 11,330 hours of service;
- 377 students attended afterschool and summer programs;
- 85 students engaged in career exploration and job shadowing activities; and
- 46 young parents were supported academically and emotionally.

Thank you to our volunteers, community partners and donors who help make our work possible. And thank you to our students who open up and let us into their lives every day. They are our inspiration and we appreciate the opportunity to serve them.
WIRE Afterschool Opens!

Thanks to a new partnership between Communities In Schools of Cape Fear and the City of Wilmington, area students now have a new welcoming space to find support and resources! We have moved the WIRE afterschool program from its former location in the Harrelson Center, to a newly renovated building on the corner of Orange and 11th Streets downtown, just behind Gregory elementary, Williston Middle, and New Hanover High schools.

The Wilmington Youth Center for Inspiration, Recreation and Education (WIRE) will support the needs of at-risk students and their families by providing positive, daily programming, free of charge.

Not just a safe place filled with caring adults, WIRE will offer New Hanover County students, grades 3-12, educational, physical, and mental health support, as well as resources and referrals as needed.

Community service partners across the area will be invited to be a part of the center, creating opportunities for even greater collaboration among all those committed to helping our kids succeed.

For information regarding student registration or volunteer opportunities, please email Marrio@ciscapefear.org, or call 910-343-1901 ext. 1001. For sponsorship opportunities, please email Louise@ciscapefear.org.

WIRE reopens at 1102 S. Orange Street, on the corner of Orange and 11th.

Volunteers from PPD, Corning, Alcami, GE, Port City Java, Pathfinder Wealth Consulting, and more came together to help transform the exterior and interior spaces.

KNOW YOUR IX

Title IX is a landmark federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. It is not just about sports, it also addresses sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and sexual violence.

Title IX does not apply to female students only. Male and female non-conforming students are protected from sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence.

Schools must take immediate action to ensure a complainant-victim can continue their education free of ongoing sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence.

Schools must have an established procedure for handling complaints of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Schools can issue a no contact directive under Title IX to prevent the accused student from approaching or interacting with you.

Schools may not retaliate against someone filing a complaint and must keep a complainant-victim safe from other retaliatory harassment or behavior.

Schools must be proactive in ensuring that your campus is free of sex discrimination.

Schools cannot encourage sex-segregated extracurricular activities. Non-educational sex-segregated educational programs are permissible.

In cases of sexual violence, schools are prohibited from encouraging or allowing mediation of the complaint. However, they may still offer an alternative process for less severe situations.

Schools should not make survivors pay the costs of certain accommodations that they require in order to continue their educations after experiencing violence.

Schools should provide free counseling, therapy, guidance in campus housing, and other accommodations to survivors, as needed.

If your school isn’t respecting your rights, you have options. Learn more and get involved at knowyourix.org.
Don’t Suspend Students. Empathize. By David Kirp

Can an online tutorial on empathic discipline help reduce student suspensions?


To his teachers at Ridgeway High School in Memphis, Jason Okonofua was a handful. During class, his mind drifted and he would lose the thread of the lesson. He slouched at his desk and dozed off. His teachers seemed to take it personally, as a sign of disrespect. He earned detention and was suspended several times.

Jason wasn’t trying to rile his teachers. He wasn’t paying attention in class because his thoughts were being consumed by his friends’ misfortunes — one had just been arrested, another had accidentally shot himself. He couldn’t stay awake because he was bone-tired from having worked at a restaurant until midnight.

His teachers knew none of this. They’d regarded Jason as a troublemaker. Research shows that his being black — in his case, Nigerian-American — made it more likely that she’d jump to that conclusion. Jason felt attacked and humiliated, and reacted defiantly.

Today Jason Okonofua is a newly minted psychology professor at Berkeley whose research focuses on empathy. As a Ph.D. student, he examined how helping couples understand each other’s feelings enabled them to talk to, not at, each another. Then he began applying the idea to education: How can you help teachers understand the ways adolescents make sense of the world? Tackling the problem from the teachers’ instead of the students’ perspective was a novel approach. If he could change the behavior of a single teacher, could he improve the chances of a whole classroom of Jason Okonofuas? The answer, it turns out, is yes.

Mini-rebellions like young Jason’s unfold in classrooms thousands of times a day. The Department of Education estimates that 7 percent of the student population — nearly 3.5 million students in kindergarten through high school — was suspended at least once in the 2011-12 academic year, the last for which these data are available. Despite the Checkpoint Charlie climate in many urban high schools, where students are herded through metal detectors when they enter the building, suspensions are rarely prompted by violence. Ninety-five percent are for “willful defiance” or “disruption.”

African-American students are hit hardest. They are more than three times as likely than their white classmates to be suspended or expelled. As a result, as early as middle school, many black students have concluded that when it comes to discipline, the cards are stacked against them. They stop trusting their teachers, and their negative attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. They fall behind when they’re suspended, and many drop out or are pushed out.

Getting rid of bad-seed students is supposed to benefit their “good” classmates, but that turns out not to be the case. When students witness their classmates being shown the door for trivial offenses, they worry that they may be next. Studies show they grow anxious and do worse on high-stakes math and reading tests.

In short, this kind of discipline is a lose-lose proposition. What’s to be done? Enter empathy.

The aim isn’t to turn teachers into softies who let students get away with murder, but to demonstrate that they can combine discipline with rapport, to good effect.

They created brief interventions that stressed the power of “empathic discipline,” including a 45-minute online tutorial and one 25-minute online module. The results of this experiment wildly exceeded the researchers’ expectations — the teachers’ online experience halved suspension rates. Surveys of the students also found that they came to respect their teachers more. The most disaffected — those who had already been suspended — reported feeling more regard for teachers who had taken the tutorial.
An excellent source for funding information is the Foundation Center. Listings of foundations and guidelines for writing grants are available. Sample proposals and common grant applications are also provided. The Foundation Center provides a variety of other resources and materials.

Many businesses donate money to the communities in which they are located. You will usually find giving guidelines on corporate websites under headings such as “community” or “corporate citizenship.” Business grants can be found at: http://dropoutprevention.org/resources/e-newsletters/

- Government grants can be found at UCLA Center’s Mental Health in Schools site.
- Grants Alert – A website dedicated to making life a little easier for those who devote their time to searching for education grants.
- Grant Station can help your organization make smarter, better-informed fundraising decisions.
- Grant Watch – A free grants listing service that helps teachers find classroom grants for school funding.
- GrantWrangler – A free grants listing service that helps teachers find classroom grants for school funding.

More grant information is available at Dropout Prevention, Youth Today and America’s Promise Grants.

Strong Collaborative Relationships for Strong Community Schools

Julia Daniel

Community schools have gained attention as mechanisms to bring about equitable access to high-quality educational resources, extended learning time and opportunities, integrated student supports, and collaborative engaging relationships with parents and communities. In order to effectively create conditions that provide equitable access to such resources, community school leaders need to employ specific strategies and collaborative practices for the implementation of such strategies can support their efficacy. This brief examines research on educational leadership and the importance—for school climate, student learning and relations—of strong collaborative relationships between community partners, teachers and school leaders.

http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/leadership

NOTE: Please send any items you would like to have included in upcoming newsletters to Janna Robertson. We want to share your news!